

Skillfulness in Buddhism

The main purpose of everyone is happiness. People do everything in the name of happiness. Especially, people are eager to develop their skills among others in education, employment, personality and strength to succeed in their life. In modern technology and communication, people are interested in going forward passing others in the world. Dedicating their all strengths people wish to live peacefully and happily in the lifetime. Unfortunately, most people in the world day by day are going away from happiness and live with unsatisfactoriness at the old age. Finally, they end their lives unhappily.

All teachings that the Buddha illustrated focus on developing our skills to the maximum level. The purpose of Buddhist view is not to worry or suffer in any kind of issues in our life. The main goal of all Buddhist doctrines is to point out suffering and how to get rid of suffering. Similarly, Buddhism explains happiness and the way to achieve happiness. Buddhism realized and discovered the main challenges in our lives. They are old age, death and rebirth. To get rid of these challenges Buddhism always guides us to develop mindfulness and wisdom in the name of real happiness and liberation from all sufferings. By practicing this path if anyone can overcome life challenges, that is the skillfulness which Buddhism describes.

Buddhism points out the main reasons of suffering. If we suffer any time, our mind is polluted with lustful desire (or greed), anger and ignorance. If someone wants to overcome suffering he or she has to eradicate these three defilements from his or her mind completely. Our real happiness depends on how far we have to overcome unwholesome thoughts like greed, anger and delusion. Also, our proficiency depends on decreasing above defilements.

The Buddha says very clearly in his words, I declare the cessation of suffering to the person who knows the Dhamma, who sees the Dhamma, not to the person who doesn't know the Dhamma, who doesn't see the Dhamma (*Janato aham bhikkhave passato asavanam khayam vadami, no ajanato no apassato*). Here it is very important to know the process of arising and ceasing of suffering. Understanding of getting rid of suffering depends on understanding of the dependent origination (Paticcasamuppada). Also, understanding of the dependent origination means understanding of the process of our entire life.

We continuously experience through our six senses which are eyes, ears, nose, tongue, body and mind. When objects such as forms, sounds, smell, taste reach the senses, we experience about the world. The Buddha describes our entire world is these six internal senses and external objects. The nature of this experience is arising at the moment and instantly ceasing at once. Anything is not permanent among those twelve things. They arise and cease at the moment according to the condition. They are not being occurred (in the past) comes to an occurrence. Being occurred (at the present) will not come to (the future) occurrence. (අනුත්වා සම්භූතං නුත්වා න භවිස්සති). It means if we experience something now, it was not happened in the past in the same way like now. This is the

special teaching that Buddhism teaches us as impermanence in the concept of the dependent origination. If we can understand and keep our mindfulness according to this knowledge, we can overcome all kinds of sufferings. Here, first we have to develop our knowledge, secondly, according to knowledge, we have to reflect on it, and finally, we have to apply it in our life practicing tranquility and insight meditation.

Whenever we experience something through our senses five aggregates arise. We experience something about forms, sounds, smell, taste, touch and volitions as the result of arising of five aggregates. Not only arising five aggregates, but they immediately cease without remaining anything. This is the nature of any experience we receive through our senses. Five aggregates are form, feelings, perception, mental formations and consciousness. These five aggregates are also impermanent. Buddha says very clearly he declares to reflect on these five aggregate as arising and ceasing to persons who are in any kind of spiritual state. As the result of reflecting five aggregate as arising and ceasing, impermanence can be realized by the disciple who knows the Dhamma, who sees the Dhamma. Then unsatisfactoriness and selflessness are also comprehended. The skillful learned disciple always lives reflecting three characteristics like close friends. Simultaneously, learned disciple frequently practices tranquility and insight meditation like his breathing. If someone can be on this path, he or she is always going on the path of purification reaching ultimate liberation.

The Buddha says clearly at the very beginning in the discourse of *Metta*, as a person who wishes to have a calm, quiet and a peaceful life has to cultivate skillfulness or proficiency (*Sakkho*). Our skillfulness or proficiency depends on how much we are clever not to worry in unpleasant situations and not to get attached in desires. Here, the Buddha's disciple who identified three defilements (greed, anger and delusion) which disturb his peace of mind always tries to overcome negative thoughts. For that he practices generosity and impurity of the body against greed or lustful desire. Also, he practices loving kindness against anger or ill will. Further, he reflects on impermanence against delusion.

As the result of listening to the Buddha's message, if somebody knows the cause of suffering as desire which arises because of ignorance, he further doesn't like to suffer and, he tries to get rid of suffering as much as he can. Then he encounters a path that leads to overcome suffering. That is the Eight Fold Path.

1. Right Understanding (*Samma ditti*)
2. Right Thoughts (*Samma sankappa*)
3. Right Speech (*Samma vaca*)
4. Right Action (*Samma Kammanta*)
5. Right Livelihood (*Samma ajiva*)
6. Right Effort (*Samma vayama*)
7. Right Mindfulness (*Samma sati*)
8. Right Concentration (*Samma samadhi*)

When a person practices this path with understanding unsatisfactoriness and, when he sees the results of practicing this path in this life itself, his confidence in the Buddha's enlightenment, the Buddha's message and his noble disciples gradually increases. With seeing results, purifying his mind, being happy he goes on the path of getting rid of suffering towards the final bliss of liberation.

By this moment he has gone some sort of distance in the Buddhist path, and here he likes to see more results. For that he develops his discipline in speech and behavior. Furthermore he develops some qualities which cause him to reduce defilements that disturb his peace of mind. They are;

- i. Practice of vigilance for the purpose of meditation (*Jagariyanuyoga*)
- ii. Discipline of senses / Restraint of senses (*Indriyasamvara*)
- iii. Discipline of speech (*Mitabhani*)
- iv. Discussion about impermanence and the dependent origination (*Dhammasakaccha*)
- v. Desire of solitude (*Viveka*)

According to Buddhism, the period when the Buddha's message appears in the world is the most valuable moment that we have. If someone who is skillful knows the value of this chance, he always uses his time in the proper way. Here, he spends his valuable time to practice this message controlling his sleep. He sleeps when only he needs. He dedicates his entire life to live with the Dhamma.

With the understanding he controls his senses which are eyes, ear, nose, tongue, body and mind. When objects come to these senses he acts with awareness as defilements can't disturb his peace of mind. Because he practices wise reflection (*Yoniso manasikara*), he spends every moment mindfully reflecting on impermanence what happens to his body and mind.

Further, he saves his words when he speaks because of right understanding. It is uncomfortable to speak rubbish because he has right thoughts. His right thoughts don't give him any chance to tell lies, rubbish, malicious and harsh words and, since he doesn't like to disturb his pure mind. And he speaks only important things.

Especially he discusses about the important topics in Buddhism such as impermanence, the dependent origination, selflessness (egolessness), five aggregates, and four noble truths in order to rid of unsatisfactoriness. He always cleanses his knowledge by discussing and listening to the sublime truth.

And he spends his leisure time by reflecting on the world reality and meditating. Therefore he likes more solitude than gathering with others and talking rubbish. Every moment is so important to him when he lives in this world with investigating the triple gem the Buddha, the Dhamma and the Sangha.

By practicing all above good qualities every moment he develops mindfulness and wisdom. Living in the present moment being aware of body and mind he always reflects everything as impermanent. This is the only way that we can become a skillful person according to the Buddha's teachings since we can overcome suffering of old age, sickness and death on this way. In this situation, we are able to get rid of suffering while we are living. Further, we can live peacefully in the complex society. As the result of practicing deliverance path, we can live without jealousy, among the people are jealous. Also, we can live without anger (or hate) among angry (hateful) people. Further, we are able to live in good mental health among unhealthy people. Also, we can live happily without yearning for sensual pleasures among those who are yearning for them. This is the life style of a skillful person that the Buddha points out kindly in his message. This is the result of a message which is immediately effective with visible results.



May the Triple Gem Bless you!

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May all beings be well happy and peaceful!

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