

The Highest Bliss

Nibbānam Parmam Sukham

The main purpose of every being's life is happiness. Everyone dislikes suffering and like happiness. That is why the Buddha says; every being urges happiness and avoids suffering (Sukha kama, dukkha patikkula). However, most people may lose their happiness because of not having a real understanding what happiness is and having no clear path. We think that happiness is external, but real happiness is internal. According to Buddhism, our happiness or suffering completely depends on how far we have purified our mind. If we are clever to keep our mind pure and calm living in the present moment reflecting on impermanence, we can make every day as happy as the 1st of January or a birthday. We are so lucky as the people who were born in this period of time. We can know the path of happiness learning what the Buddha taught. Also, practicing that path, we are able to achieve the real happiness which no one or nothing can disturb or steal.

Mind makes our physical body. Also, mind controls our body. Mind decides what kind of body we have. Mind plays the main role in our entire life to keep us active and functional. Mind is the forerunner; mind is the chief of all states. If someone speaks or acts with a wicked mind, suffering follows him because of the polluted mind, just as the wheel follows the hoof of the draught-ox. Negative thoughts, such as cravings, anger, lust etc. collapse our happiness. Simultaneously, if someone speaks or acts with a pure mind, happiness follows him, just as one's shadow that never leaves its object. In this situation, we have to purify our mind to the maximum level as much as possible for the peace of mind. Purified mind is the path that leads to our happiness. If we purify our mind from negative thoughts such as desire, anger, ill will, lust, jealousy etc., and also, if we can see the world wisely, then our mind is pure, calm, quiet and strong. Positive thoughts like loving kindness, compassion and generosity bolster peace in mind. If we do something with pure mind, then our mental, verbal and physical actions are also pure and correct. Meditation focuses on purifying the mind.

Buddhism points out several ways how to gain happiness from the basic level to the highest supra mundane level. The discourse on the blessings (Mangala Sutta) in Khuddakapata, explains the supreme blessings that someone can have in his life.

Not associating with fools,
associating with the wise,
honoring those worthy of honor:
this is a supreme blessing.

*“Asevanā ca bālānaṃ, paṇḍitānañca sevanā;
Pūjā ca pūjaneyyānaṃ, etaṃ maṅgalamuttamaṃ.*

Living in a suitable place,
 formerly having done good deeds,
 having the right aspiration for oneself:
 this is a supreme blessing.

*Patirūpadesavāso ca, pubbe ca katapuññatā;
 Attasammāpaṇidhi ca, etaṃ maṅgalamuttamaṃ.*

Having great learning and craft,
 being disciplined and well trained,
 and whatever words are well spoken:
 this is a supreme blessing.

*Bāhusaccañca sippañca, vinayo ca susikkhito;
 Subhāsītā ca yā vācā, etaṃ maṅgalamuttamaṃ.*

Attending on (taking care of) one's mother and father,
 looking after one's wife and sons,
 having work that is not confusing:
 this is a supreme blessing.

*Mātāpituupaṭṭhānaṃ, puttadārassa saṅgaho;
 Anākulā ca kammantā, etaṃ maṅgalamuttamaṃ*

Practicing generosity, and living by the Dhamma,
 and looking after one's relatives,
 performing actions that are blameless:
 this is a supreme blessing.

*Dānañca dhammacariyā ca, ñātakānañca saṅgaho;
 Anavajjāni kammāni, etaṃ maṅgalamuttamaṃ.*

Abstaining, refraining from bad deeds,
 restraint from intoxicating drinks and drugs,
 being heedful regarding all things:
 this is a supreme blessing.

*Āratī viratī pāpā, majjapānā ca saṃyamo;
 Appamādo ca dhammesu, etaṃ maṅgalamuttamaṃ.*

Having respect and being humble,
 being satisfied and grateful,
 listening to the Dhamma at the right time:
 this is a supreme blessing.

*Gāravo ca nivāto ca, santuṭṭhi ca kataññutā;
 Kālena dhammassavanaṃ, etaṃ maṅgalamuttamaṃ.*

Being patient and easily spoken to,
 having sight of ascetics,
 discussing the Dhamma at the right time:
 this is a supreme blessing.

*Khantī ca sovacassatā, samañānañca dassanaṃ;
 Kālena dhammasākacchā, etaṃ maṅgalamuttamaṃ.*

Austerity, living spiritually,
 insight into the noble truths,
 and experiencing Emancipation:
 this is a supreme blessing.

*Tapo ca brahmacariyañca, ariyasaccāna dassanaṃ;
 Nibbānasacchikiriyā ca, etaṃ maṅgalamuttamaṃ.*

He whose mind does not waver,
 when it is touched by things of this world,
 being griefless, dustless, and secure:
 this is a supreme blessing.

*Phuṭṭhassa lokadhammehi, cittaṃ yassa na kampaṭi;
 Asokaṃ virajaṃ khemaṃ, etaṃ maṅgalamuttamaṃ.*

In above discourse, the Buddha declares the path how to develop blessings gradually. Experiencing emancipation, making an unshakable mind is the highest bliss that anyone can gain in this world.

Here especially Buddhism empathizes the highest bliss. Nibbana is the highest bliss. We get a lot of bliss in our lives, but they may change sooner or later, and we can't keep it as we like. According to Buddhism, Nibbana the final bliss of liberation is not like that. It is forever. It is the highest liberation from all kinds of suffering. It is not hereafter, it can be gained in this life itself. It is a visible result of practicing the real path. Peace is not achieved through violence, but through understanding and compassion. The final bliss of liberation completely depends on purification of mind from negative thoughts. There are three main unwholesome thoughts that pollute our mind. They are desire, anger and delusion. Practicing generosity and contemplating on impurity of physical body are the primary techniques to reduce desire. Cultivating positive thoughts with loving kindness is the path to overcome anger. Listening to the Dhamma, reflecting on it and practicing it is the path to get rid of delusion.

The everlasting happiness depends on how far we have overcome suffering. Cessation of suffering depends on our understanding of arising and ceasing of suffering. Understanding life which consists of body and mind helps understanding suffering. When our eye, ear, nose, tongue, body and mind contact with external objects such as forms, sounds, smells, tastes, touches, mental formations, the experience arises at the moment. Simultaneously, five aggregates arise when a sense contacts with an object and mind. Five aggregates are: matter (*Rupa* - රූප), feelings

(*Vedanā* - වේදනා), perception (*Saññā* - සංකල්පය), mental formations (*Sankhāra* - සංඛාර) and consciousness (*Viññāna* - විඤ්ඤාණ). Five aggregates are always together. They can't be separated. They could be realized by wisdom. These five aggregates are the bottom line of all our experiences which we receive through our senses. The nature of these five aggregates is that they weren't here before the experience. And also, they won't remain after the experience. Understanding of the dependent origination directly focuses on comprehension of five aggregates. The Buddha advises everyone who are in every spiritual level to reflect on five aggregates as arising, ceasing, enjoyment, danger and liberation. Every moment five aggregates arise when conditions are together. Also, they immediately cease when conditions separate. There is an enjoyment in these five things, but enjoyment is less, danger is a lot. That is why wise people must find liberation from five aggregates. The Buddha says the highest education that a wise person should gain is the comprehension of five aggregates.

As a result of the union of the five aggregates, when factors are together, we have experiences through our senses such as eye, ear, nose, tongue, body. When factors (or conditions) are separated, the experience ceases. The highest intelligence that Buddhism declares is the intelligence that "Not being occurred (in the past) comes to an occurrence. Being occurred (at the present) will not go to (the future) occurrence" (*Ahutvā sambhutam hutvā na bhavissati* - අනුත්වා සම්භුතං හුත්වා න භවිස්සති). If someone can understand this ultimate truth practicing insight meditation, that is the only way to get rid of suffering. This is the main teaching that the Buddha realized, discovered and preached to the world to get rid of suffering

This knowledge is one of the most important things that we should have from the beginning to the end on the path of purification. We must have a clear knowledge where we go, what we practice, and what the results of our practice are. According to this knowledge, we have to know that the first step of liberation is discipline or virtue (*Seela*). The second step is tranquility or concentration (*Samadhi*) that means focusing on one's mind with positive thoughts. The third step is wisdom (*Paññā*) that means seeing impermanence as arising and ceasing about all our experiences which we get through our senses. After we get this knowledge clearly, we have to think, investigate or reflect on it again and again in our day to day life focusing on our body and mind. It is named in Buddhism as wise investigation or wise reflection (*Yoniso Manasikāra*). We must be clever to increase the time that we reflect on reality as it is, gradually. On the other hand, we have to purify our mind from negative thoughts, practicing meditation to develop above experience. Here we practice tranquility meditation (*Samata Bhāvanā*) and insight meditation (*Vipassanā Bhāvanā*). When we fulfil all these three qualities above, we have practiced mindfulness which is very important. Without mindfulness or awareness, we can't reach real knowledge, reflection or meditation. If we practice all of them, right understanding (*Sammā Ditthi*) also should increase gradually. Right understanding, understanding of impermanence is the very important quality when we go on the path of liberation.

We lose our peace of mind because of ignorance of life. Achieving wisdom leads us to get rid of suffering. It is very essential to reflect on impermanence of the five aggregates again

and again to eradicate delusion which is the main cause of suffering. Then wisdom, the understanding of body and mind gradually increases. The nature of wisdom is to overcome ignorance. When ignorance falls down, greed and anger too fall down. Also, the three characteristics the reality of life are realized. They are impermanence (*Anicca*), suffering (*Dukkha*) and egolessness (*Anatta*). When someone can completely realize this truth throughout the life, he or she doesn't have any struggle in his life. He lives with equanimity. That is the final bliss. As the result of this spiritual path, the five spiritual faculties increase to the maximum level. They are;

1. Confidence of Buddha's enlightenment (*Saddhā* – සද්ධා)
2. Energy (*Viriya* - විරිය)
3. Mindfulness or Awareness (*Sathi* - සති)
4. Concentration or Tranquility (*Samādhi* - සමාධි)
5. Wisdom (*Paññā* - පඤ්ඤා)

From the beginning to the end of the path of purification we have to develop these qualities again and again every moment with consciousness and understanding. As much as we practice them, we can see the result in this life. Developing mindfulness with wisdom seeing the world reality such as impermanence, unsatisfactoriness and egolessness is the ultimate goal. Final result of practicing them is the liberation from all sufferings and living with the highest contentment and loving kindness. This is the contentment, satisfaction, gratification, fulfillment, happiness, pleasure and cheerfulness that Buddhism explains.

Making a real refuge practicing what the Buddha taught is the highest bliss in this new year 2018. For that we should try to reach this destination dedicating our everything in this life day by day.

May the Triple Gem Bless you! ඔබ සැමට තෙරුවන් සරණයි!

May you be mindful and wise! සතිමත් සහ නුවණැති වන්න!



May You Have a Healthy, Prosperous, Peaceful and Happy New Year 2018

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