

The Buddha and His Teachings

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The Buddha, who was a great spiritual teacher in the world, was born as a human being in India, present Nepal in B.C. 623. His personal name was *Siddhattha* and his family name was *Gotama*. His parents were king *Suddhodhana* and queen *Mahamaya*. According to the Buddhist canon, he had practiced his spirituality a lot in his previous lives as a *Bodhisatta*. As the results of his spiritual development, he was born with great wisdom and merit. He received a good education as a prince as well as a child. Following the Indian custom, he was married quite young, at the age of sixteen, to a beautiful and devoted young princess *Yasodhara*. Living in luxury palaces, young couple spent a very happy life. Meanwhile prince *Siddhattha* wanted to realize the life and find a solution for suffering of mankind. At the age of 29, when his only son, *Rahula* was born, he left his kingdom, doing his great renunciation and became an ascetic searching for a solution to end suffering.

The young ascetic *Gotama* wandered for six years around the valley of the Ganges, meeting famous religious teachers, studying and following their traditional systems and methods, and submitting himself to rigorous ascetic practices. *Siddhattha* was not satisfied with those teachings and he gave up all traditional religions and methods. Finally, he decided to practice his own way. One evening, he was seated under the Bodhi tree on the bank of the *Neranjara* River. Practicing the Noble Eight-Fold Path, analyzing the cause of suffering and the cessation of suffering, he attained enlightenment at the age of 35. After his enlightenment, he was known as the *Gotama* Buddha, the supreme one, the enlightened one, the awakened one.

After his great discovery about the world to get rid of suffering, the Lord Buddha explained his discovery to the world compassionately about 45 years. At the age of 80, he passed away. His noble disciples protected his teachings and they brought it from generation to generation for more than 2500 years.

The Dhamma that the Buddha explained has six special characteristics. The Dhamma, the Buddha's teaching is well expounded (*Svākkhāto*), directly visible (*Sanditthiko*), immediately effective (*Akālika*), calling one to come and see (*Ehipassiko*), leading onwards (*Opanaiko*), to be personally realized by the wise (*Paccattam Veditabbo Viññuhi*). To achieve final bliss of liberation, we have to listen to the Buddha's message with good attention for our knowledge and follow it honestly as much as we can.

According to Buddhism, four factors help us to develop wisdom. Presenting these four qualities, Buddhism encourages us to practice the path of purification as much as we can. Those four factors are;

1. Association with a good friend who explains the Buddha's real message
(*Sappurisa sansevo* - සප්පුරිස සංසේවෝ)
2. Listening to the Buddha's Message
(*Saddhamma savanam* - සද්ධම්ම සවණං)
3. Wise Reflection
(*Yoniso manasikāro* - යෝනියෙස මනසිකාරෝ)
4. Practicing the message
(*Dhammānudhamma patipatti* - ධම්මානුධම්මපටිපත්ති)

When we associate a noble friend, we can listen to the sublime truth that a Buddha emphasized. Listening to this noble message, we go forward practicing the message with wise reflection. Here, wise reflection plays a main role in the path of enlightenment.

The Buddha said very clearly, his teaching is not a creation, it is a discovery. Whether a Buddha appears or not in the world, what he realized is forever. We respect him because he discovered this world reality by himself without any help from others and preached it to the world. He himself explained his teachings' summary in a stanza. It is,

*'Sabba pāpassa akaranam kusalassa upasampadā,
Sacitta pariyodapanam etam buddānasānam'.* (Dhammapada)

Not to do any evil, do good and purify one's mind is the message of all Buddhas.

All Buddhas who arise in the world during certain periods of time discover this very same message and kindly preach it to the world. In summary the Buddha pointed out to the world the path of happiness that is getting rid of suffering. Here we can see three steps. According to this message the Buddha's effort was avoiding going to hell, encouraging going to heaven (*Saggamagga*) and showing the path to liberation (*Mokkhamagga*).

When our mind is polluted, evils happen in our life. That polluted mind causes suffering in this life and hereafter. That is why the Buddha said not to do any evil. Not doing evil is not enough for happiness, but also, we have to cultivate good for the real happiness with a meritorious mind. Buddhism emphasizes the three merits for the happiness. The three meritorious deeds of generosity (*dāna*), virtue (*Sīla*) and meditation (*bhāvanā*) cause us to succeed in this life and hereafter. If a person has done a lot of meritorious deeds in this life, it means that his mind is rich in merits. A Meritorious mind can gain happiness. When we do good deeds, it means our mind is pure, calm and quiet. A pure mind can bring happiness to our life. Further we have to understand the cause of suffering and getting rid of suffering in this life itself. That is why the Buddha explained how to purify one's mind. Virtue, concentration or tranquility and wisdom with understanding of dependent origination cause us to get rid of all sufferings and develop real happiness. Virtue means a very high level of discipline in behavior and speech with right vision. If a person focuses his mind in a particular meritorious object such as loving kindness or breathing meditation with a good discipline, then he can concentrate his mind with pure thoughts. With that concentration, one has to reflect on the world reality according to impermanence (*anicca*), suffering (*dukkha*) and selflessness (*anatta*) in the correct way. As a result, one can live without desire and hatred because there is no delusion. When he investigates that present moment he has only present moment as nothing comes to the present from the past and nothing goes to the future from the present. The most valuable and interesting explanation in Buddhism is impermanence. It is said in Buddhism; **Not being occurred (in the past) comes to an occurrence. Being occurred (at the present) will not come to (the future) occurrence (*ahutva sambhutam hutva na bhavissati*)**. This is the nature of impermanence that Buddhism illustrates. He sees the arising and ceasing of all his experiences at the moment very well. Then he can live as a person seeing the truth of world reality in a new fresh way. This is the ultimate truth that Buddhism teaches us to be able to get rid of all sufferings.

The Path to Increase One's Glory in Buddhism- (The Secret of Glory)

The Supreme Buddha always points out the path of success, happiness and glory in our lives. The Buddha explained that he who practices the Dhamma can develop his or her below qualities to the maximum level in their lifetime.

There was a rich but humble young person who lived like a poor man spending very cautiously in the Buddha's time. When the king introduced him to the Buddha, the Buddha described the characteristics of those who prosper in below stanza which comes in the Dhammapada.

*Uṭṭhānavato satīmato,
Sucikammaṣṣa nisammakārino;
Saññatassa ca dhammajīvino,
Appamattassa yaso-bhi-vaḍḍhati. (Dhammapada)*

Ever grows the glory of him who is energetic, mindful, pure in conduct, discerning, self-controlled, righteous, and heedful.

Practicing those qualities anyone can succeed his glory and can live with prosperity and happiness.

1. **Energy (Uṭṭhānavato):** The effort to do good deeds and not to do evil.

The success of our education and employment depends on our energy or dedication. According to Buddhism we should not only do good things but we should have an effort to avoid misbehaviors.

2. **Mindfulness (Satīmato):** Awareness of body and mind.

We should have complete attention to what we do at the present moment. Having mindfulness and good attention brings success to what we do.

3. **Pure in conduct (Sucikammaṣṣa):** Having physical, verbal and mental actions with a pure mind.

A tree has three results; leaves, flowers and nuts. Likewise, our life also has three results. They are physical actions, words and thoughts. If we are clever to keep them pure and correct, we can succeed in our life.

4. **Discerning (Nisammakārino):** Wise attention before doing something.

Before we do something, we should reflect on it again and again whether it is correct or not. Buddhism explains it as wise reflection or wise investigation.

5. **Self-controlling (Saññatassa):** Discipline in senses

We experience the world through our six senses; eye, ear, nose, tongue, body and mind. If we can always keep guards near these senses, we are able to overcome our mistakes.

6. **Righteousness (Dhammajīvino):** Earning righteously. When we earn money and properties, we should earn them righteously. Then we can be happy when we think about our wealth.

7. **Heedfulness (Appamattassa):** Going forward in education, employment, health and decency with heedfulness.

From the beginning to the end in any what we do, we should have continuous dedication until it succeeds.

A Wise Man's Duty that can be Fulfilled by his Supramundane Knowledge

All kinds of teachings that the Buddha explains, focus on the understanding about our body and mind. That understanding results to overcome suffering and unsatisfactoriness. If we can listen to and read the Buddha's real message with confidence in the Buddha's enlightenment and investigate it wisely, we can get rid of suffering according to our understanding, intelligence and effort in this life. Because the Dhamma is with visible results, we are so fortunate, we can gain the results not only after death but while living. In this discourse called Abhinna Sutta, the Buddha illustrates four kinds of qualities that we have to practice with supernormal knowledge in the name of real happiness.

"Cattārome, bhikkhave, dhammā. Katame cattāro? Atthi, bhikkhave, dhammā abhiññā pariññeyyā; atthi, bhikkhave, dhammā abhiññā pahātabbā; atthi, bhikkhave, dhammā abhiññā bhāvetabbā; atthi, bhikkhave, dhammā abhiññā sacchikātabbā".

Four types of things (Dhammas) are to be dealt with supernormal knowledge (abhiññā). They are;

- The first thing that we understand with supernormal knowledge is the five aggregates
- The second thing that we get rid of with supernormal knowledge is ignorance and desire.
- The third thing that we develop with supernormal knowledge is tranquility and insight meditation.
- The fourth thing that we achieve with supernormal knowledge practicing the Buddha's message is wisdom and liberation.

• **Five aggregates (*Panca Upadanakkhanda* - පඤ්චුපාදානක්ඛන්ධා):**

Whenever we have any kind of experience through our senses which are eyes, ears, nose, tongue, body and mind, five aggregates arise. As the result of arising five aggregates, we see, hear, smell, taste, touch or think. Every moment without any interval these five aggregates arise and cease. Because of ignorance or delusion, we think the experience still continues. Then we go to the real situation as soon as we think about it, and we desire or suffer according to that experience. The result of the ignorance of this reality is suffering. The five aggregates are;

- | | | |
|-----------------------------------|------------|---------------------|
| i. The group of form | - රූප | (<i>Rupa</i>) |
| ii. The group of feelings | - වේදනා | (<i>Vedanā</i>) |
| iii. The group of perception | - සංකල්පනා | (<i>Saññā</i>) |
| iv. The group of mental formation | - සංඛාර | (<i>Sankhāra</i>) |
| v. The group of consciousness | - විඤ්ඤාණ | (<i>Viññāna</i>) |

Katame ca, bhikkhave, dhammā abhiññā pariññeyyā? Pañca upādānakkhandhā. Ime vuccanti, bhikkhave, dhammā abhiññā pariññeyyā.

If someone can understand these five things as they arise at the moment with conditions and they cease instantly, that person is ready to overcome suffering and unsatisfactoriness. Further, he realizes all his experiences arise and cease at the moment, nothing comes to the present from the past as permanent, and nothing goes to the future from the present as permanent.

• **Ignorance and desire (*Avijjā ca Bhavatanhā*- අවිජ්ජා ච භවතණ්හා) :**

As much as we have a clear knowledge about five aggregates, we further don't like to suffer. With this knowledge about the five aggregates, we know very well that if we think these five aggregates are permanent, we have to suffer and experience pain, sorrow and lamentation with our life. An intelligent, educated and faithful disciple never likes suffering.

Katame ca, bhikkhave, dhammā abhiññā pahātabbā? Avijjā ca bhava-taṇhā ca. Ime vuccanti, bhikkhave, dhammā abhiññā pahātabbā.

When we clean our knowledge according this teaching, we are able to overcome ignorance or delusion. Then we can get rid of all kinds of desire that we have attached as dear and near. As much as we reduce our strong attachment, we can overcome unsatisfactoriness. It doesn't mean that we don't fulfil our duties and responsibilities. With this knowledge, we do all our duties better than we did before because practicing the Buddha's teachings is very practicable and humane. It helps us to be successful in our daily social life.

• **Tranquility and insight meditation (*Samatho ca vipassanā ca*- සමථෝ ච විපස්සනා ච):**

With the knowledge of world reality, we hope to develop our mind. Practicing meditation is a main part of mental purification as the Buddha mentioned. Meditation in Buddhism is divided into two stages which are tranquility meditation and insight meditation.

Katame ca, bhikkhave, dhammā abhiññā bhāvetabbā? Samatho ca vipassanā ca. Ime vuccanti, bhikkhave, dhammā abhiññā bhāvetabbā.

The purpose of tranquility meditation is focusing our mind in a particular wholesome thought such as breathing or loving kindness. When we practice our mind again and again using some kinds of meditation techniques, we can concentrate our mind for a long time without defilements such as desire or anger. As its results, we gain peace of mind and purification of mind that causes our happiness. With the concentrated mind, if we can focus on impermanence according to arising and ceasing of five aggregates, it is insight meditation which is the speciality in Buddhism among all other religions and teachings. Both tranquility and insight meditations are very important for the purification of mind. If someone practices this message, he or she is able to get rid of all kinds of pain, sorrow and lamentation.

- **Wisdom and liberation (*vijjā ca vimutti ca* - විජ්ජා ච විමුක්ති ච).**

By practicing above three steps, it brings wisdom and liberation as results.

Katame ca, bhikkhave, dhammā abhiññā sacchikātabbā? Vijjā ca vimutti ca. Ime vuccanti, bhikkhave, dhammā abhiññā sacchikātabbā.

Wisdom means understanding of world reality and mind & body as it is. As much as we have this understanding, we are able to liberate from all defilements. Then we have a clear knowledge that how much freedom from suffering we have. This is a visible result that a person can gain in this life itself as the result of practicing Buddha's teaching. On this path, honesty, loving kindness, knowledge, wise reflection and meditation are very important and useful qualities that we have to develop gradually from beginning to the highest level. Especially, we have to cultivate mindfulness and intelligence (the knowledge about the dependent origination- (*paticcasamuppada*) to the maximum level. If someone can go on this path correctly, he or she can reach real happiness overcoming all pain, sorrow, suffering and unsatisfactoriness. Buddhism always points out the path for this liberation. Our real success depends on how much we have overcome suffering not earning money or any other material things.

Three Refuges – The Triple Gem

To go forward with the understanding of Buddhist teachings, we need to be confident in the triple gem. They are the Buddha (or his enlightenment), the Dhamma (His sublime teachings), and the Sangha (His noble disciples). The more someone knows what the Buddha taught, the more he is confident in the triple gem. The more we practice what the Buddha taught, the more we get rid of suffering and we are confident in the triple gem. This is not just a blind faith, but an understanding confidence. Further whenever we think about the qualities of the triple gem, our minds are pure and happy because of no defilements such as greed, anger and delusion. That's why Buddhist followers chant the qualities of the Buddha as a meditation technique. When someone gets the results practicing Buddhism, he or she is grateful to the Sangha who points out the path. Then they especially take care of the Sangha with four fundamental needs such as robes, food, shelter and medicine.

Two Pillars on Which Buddhism Stands Up

All Buddhist doctrines can be included into two pillars. They are practicing loving kindness and wisdom. When someone practices loving kindness, other three sublime states like compassion, sympathetic joy and equanimity also gradually increase. When wisdom which leads to get rid of suffering increases the understanding of the Karmic law and the dependent origination also gradually increase.

The Main Teachings in Buddhism

(To practice in our day to day life in the name of happiness)

The Triple Gem :- (The Most valuable things that we received as the result of previous merits)

The Buddha (Buddha's Enlightenment)
The Dhamma (Buddha's Teachings)
The Sangha (Buddha's Noble Disciples)

The Five Precepts :-

1. Abstaining from taking lives (*Pānātipāta veramani*)
2. Abstaining from stealing (*Adinnādānā veramani*)
3. Abstaining from sexual misconduct (*Kāmesumiccācārā veramani*)
4. Abstaining from false speech (*Musāvādā veramani*)
5. Abstaining from taking intoxication drinks and drugs causing heedlessness (*Surāmeraya maddapamādatānā veramani*)

The Three Levels of practicing Buddha's message :-

First level :-

1. Education (*sippam/ suta*), 2. Economy (*dhanam*), 3. Health (*ārogya*), 4. Morality (*samacariyā*)

Second level (Three Meritorious Deeds) :-

1. Generosity (*Dāna*) 2. Virtue or Morality (*Sīla*) 3. Meditation (*Bhāvanā*)
(The Three Friends those who put the treasure inside)

Third Level (Three Disciplines) -

1. Virtue (*Sīla*) 2. Concentration (*Samādhi*) 3. Wisdom (*Paññā*)

The Vision in Buddhism – 1. Understanding the Karmic Law – Not to fall into hell
2. Understanding the Dependent Origination – To overcome Suffering at the moment

The Mission in Buddhism - 1. Doing Good (Merits) : Generosity, Virtue and Meditation
2. Practicing Three Disciplines: Virtue, Concentration and Wisdom

The Ultimate Goal of life :- Happiness (Keeping mind away from all defilements)

The Best Friend – The Only Path to Liberation - Mindfulness (*Sati*)

The Fourfold Mindfulness -

1. The contemplation of matter or body (*Kāyanupassanā*)
2. The contemplation of feelings (*Vedanānupassanā*)
3. The contemplation of mind or consciousness (*Cittānupassanā*)
4. The contemplation of mental formations (*Dhammanupassanā*)

Five Spiritual Faculties - 1. Confidence (*Saddhā*) 2. Energy (*Viriya*) 3. Mindfulness (*Sati*)
(Our real Heritage, Dowry) 4. Concentration (*Samādhi*) 5. Wisdom (*Paññā*)

The Highest knowledge that a person can gain for getting rid of suffering –

1. The Knowledge about the law of the karmic law (*Kammassakatā Sammāditti*)
2. The Knowledge of the Dependent Origination (*Ariyasammāditti*)

Enemies that we should get rid of – Greed (*Lobha*), Hatred (*Dosa*), Delusion (*Moha*)
(Defilements/ Unwholesomeness /the enemies those who steal our good internal human values)

Dhamma Reflexion - Loving Kindness/Friendliness (*Mettā*), Honesty (*Uju*), Wisdom (*Paññā*)

The Four Noble Truths –

1. The suffering	(<i>Dukkha sacca</i>)
2. The cause of suffering	(<i>Samudaya sacca</i>)
3. The cessation of suffering	(<i>Nirodha sacca</i>)
4. The path that leads to cessation of suffering	(<i>Magga sacca</i>)

The Noble Eight Fold Paths –

Right Understanding	(<i>Sammā ditthi</i>)
Right Thoughts	(<i>Sammā samkappa</i>)
Right Speech	(<i>Sammā vācā</i>)
Right Action	(<i>Sammā kammantha</i>)
Right Livelihood	(<i>Sammā ājiva</i>)
Right Effort	(<i>Sammā vāyāma</i>)
Right Mindfulness	(<i>Sammā sathi</i>)
Right Concentration	(<i>Sammā samādhi</i>)

Essence (the heart) of Buddhism - Dependent Origination/ Cause and effect (*Patīccasamuppāda*)
(The Foundation to understand impermanence)

Five Aggregates :- 1. Matter (*Rupa*) 2. Feeling (*Vedanā*) 3. Perception (*Saññā*)
4. Mental Formation (*Sankhāra*) 5. Consciousness (*Viññāna*)

How to investigate these five aggregates? As;

1. Arising (*samudaya*)
2. Ceasing (*atthamgama*)
3. Gratification (*assāda*)
4. Dangers (*ādinava*)
5. Letting go = Liberation (*nissarana*)

Causes to Develop Wisdom – (*Paññāvuddhi Kāranāni*)

1. Association with a good friend who explains the Buddha's real message (*Sappurisa sansevo*)
2. Listening to the Buddha's Message (*Saddhamma savanam*)
3. Wise Reflection (*Yoniso manasikāro*)
4. Practice (*Dhammānudhamma patipatti*)

The Buddha's Message in a Nutshell - Get rid of all evil, do what is good, purify one's mind

*'Sabba pāpassa akaranam kusalassa upasampadā,
Sacitta pariyo dapanam etam buddānasānam'.*

Gradual Path Which comes in Buddhism

All above doctrines can be ordered in a particle method.

They are;

1. Associating noble friends who explain the Buddha's message (*Sappurisa samseva*)
2. Listening to Buddha's message, the Dhamma (*Saddhammasavana*)
3. Confidence in Buddha's enlightenment (*Saddhā*)
4. Wise investigation (*Yonisa manasikāra*)
5. Mindfulness and clear comprehension. (*Sati sampajañña*)
6. Discipline in senses (*Indriya samvara*)
7. Three Disciplines in behavioral, verbal and mental acts (*Thrividha sucarita*)
8. The Fourfold Mindfulness (*Satipatthāna*)
9. Seven Enlightenment factors (*Satta bojjhanga*)
10. Gaining the full knowledge and liberation from all kinds of sufferings. (*Vijjāvimutti*)



May All Beings be Well, Happy, Healthy and Peaceful!

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