

Loving Kindness & Wisdom Where Buddhism Stands on

The main purpose of every word the Buddha uttered in forty-five years is to explain the nature of suffering and the cessation of suffering. Also, the Worthy One pointed out happiness and the way to happiness. For this purpose, **all doctrines** preached by the Blessed One **can be included into two pillars which are loving kindness and wisdom**. If someone is on the real path of liberation, loving kindness and wisdom in his mind should gradually increase day by day to maximum level. As the result of practicing those qualities, greed, personalization and conceit gradually decrease. Finally, he can make an unshakable mind that none or nothing can disturb in any complex situation and in any time. This is the real freedom and liberation as well.

The success in a life depends on happiness. Happiness depends on how far someone eradicates his negative thoughts. One's inner peace completely depends on reducing the three unwholesome thoughts like greed, anger and delusion. These are the real enemies who disturb our inner peace. Buddhism says it is better to defeat these internal enemies than winning hundreds of external enemies in the battle field. That is why the Buddha always points out the way to overcome these defilements.

The purpose of practicing loving kindness is to get rid of anger which is one of the main reasons of suffering and unsatisfactoriness. Therefore, the discourse of Metta explains the importance of practicing loving kindness at the beginning of the deliverance path. When someone always contemplates on '**May all beings be well, happy and peaceful**', his mind progressively purifies from anger. And stress also decreases little by little. Here, he does not only wish others' success, but acts physically and verbally. When someone always practice loving kindness meditation, he is able to see others as his only son or daughter. Practicing loving kindness helps to develop other sublime states like compassion, sympathetic joy and equanimity. These four sublime states are the mental conditions in which divine beings in the brahma realm always live. Practicing the four sublime states is the way to live like a Brahma baring a human body in the human realm. Then we are able to see the entire world like our children without any boundaries. Hence having a mind with loving kindness is one of the pillars of the path to deliverance in Buddhism. He who wishes to go on the path of liberation has to practice loving kindness as much as he can for visible results of inner peace in this short life itself.

The second pillar in Buddhist teachings is wisdom. In Buddhism wisdom which fights with the severe defilement, delusion is exceedingly emphasized. Wisdom in Buddhism is divided into two;

1. The understanding of Karmic law
2. The understanding of impermanence or the dependent origination

As much as we have this understanding in the above two areas, we are able to see the world reality how suffering arises and what the path of real happiness is. The Buddha has pointed out two paths which are the heavenly path (*Sagga magga* = සත්‍යමග්ග) and the enlightenment (deliverance / liberation) path (*Mokkhamagga* = මොක්ඛමග්ග) to the world kindly. Representing the Karmic law, the Buddha explained the heavenly path. Also explaining the dependent

origination, the Buddha pointed out the deliverance path. According to listeners' courage, dedication and wisdom, they are able to go forward on these paths. The heavenly path describes how to be reborn in blissful lives like human realm and heavenly realm. Enlightenment path describes how to achieve enlightenment breaking away from the circle of rebirth. The Right Understanding that we receive through listening to the Dhamma increases the understanding of both paths above.

With the understanding of the Karmic law, learned person knows the results of volitional actions he does. When mind is polluted with unwholesome thoughts, results are negative. Also, when the mind is pure the results are fruitful. Then he constantly tries to overcome evil and to practice good physically, verbally and mentally as much as he can. When the mind is pure, the supreme blessings happen always in his life like;

- Generosity is a supreme blessing
- Not associating with fools is a supreme blessing
- Associating with the wise is a supreme blessing
- Taking care of parents is a supreme blessing
- Gratitude is a supreme blessing
- Listening to Dhamma in the proper time is a supreme blessing
- Discussing Dhamma in the proper time is a supreme blessing
- Abstaining from intoxicating drinks is a supreme blessing
- Abstaining from evils is a supreme blessing
- Having good discipline is a supreme blessing
- Understanding the noble truth is a supreme blessing

The more the mind is pure, the more blessings happen in our lives. The more supreme blessings happen in someone's life, the more he or she is happy. All of above good qualities can be included into three meritorious deeds as generosity, virtue and meditation. He who practices this path correctly and continuously has a guarantee that he will never fall into hell. Having a blissful life hereafter is a real safety a person can gain in the world. Buddhism always guides us for this care.

When we try to understand what the Buddha explained, first, we find the Karmic law. The Karmic law means whatever we do with intention, we will have the same results. When someone does something with impure mind physically, verbally or mentally, he will have negative results in this life or hereafter. Simultaneously, if someone does something with a pure mind physically, verbally or mentally, he will have fruitful results. The intelligent person with this understanding tries to overcome negative thoughts and tries to develop positive thoughts as much as he can. Then the intelligent person tries to keep his mind pure and practice three meritorious deeds as much as he can. They are generosity (*Dāna*), morality (*Sila*) and meditation (*Bhāvanā*). The Buddha points out that doing merits means achieving happiness. Keeping mind with meritorious thoughts always is like a refuge of the mind. The person who is with wise reflection always tries to do merits for the benefits of his life like longevity, good complexion, health and happiness.

The second level of wisdom, which is understanding wisdom, which mainly helps us to overcome suffering and attain liberation from defilements, is highly praised in Buddhism. The main cause whether we are happy is the level of our wisdom. Our real success depends on how far we have developed our wisdom. Hence, wisdom has been compared to a Gem of Men (*paññā narānam ratanam*). Wisdom brings purification (*paññāya prisujjhati*). There is no other bright light like wisdom (*natthi paññā samā ābhā*). Wisdom is used in several terms in Pali language such as Sammā Ditti (*sammā ditthi*), paññā (පාඤ්ඤ), Amoha (අමෝහ). Wisdom must be developed from the beginning to the maximum level of the path of enlightenment. Therefore, Buddhism always guides us to gain wisdom through all kinds of advices

Further, it is important to know how we apply wise reflection in our day to day life. For example, when we meet a person, we mostly think about his physical body, and we forget that he or she has a mind. Truly we meet a person in the world because he or she has a mind. If somebody doesn't have a mind, we never say he is a person. We tell it is a dead body. When we practice wise investigation, as soon as we remember a person, if we are able to reflect on his mind as well as his physical body, we can overcome 50 percent of the defilements that arise due to the ignorance of reality. Further, if we can practice loving kindness meditation towards the people, our mind is always ready to forgive anyone. The highest level of practicing loving kindness is looking at others like our only son or daughter. If we have this kind of attitude, it means we have overcome a lot of problems, stress, anger, jealousy from our mind. It means that we have overcome a lot of suffering. On the other hand, as soon as we see a person, if we can understand that person as a result of five aggregates (forms, feelings, perceptions, mental formations and mind), our mind is in the highest level which is completely free from suffering.

When we investigate our mind, we mostly live thinking about past experiences. More than 75 percent of our time in our, life we live in the past. When we think about our past experiences, unconsciously, our mind goes to the past and live in the past. Unfortunately, we don't know this nature because of ignorance. Thinking about past is not a fault or the cause of suffering. The fault is unknowing that mind goes to the past. Because of this misconception, we experience the past like present. For example, if someone has scolded you, when you think about it without mindfulness, you are scolded again. That person has scolded you once, but you are been scolded again and again because of this delusion. Also, when one of your close relatives died, you worry thinking about his life, as it is happening now. We mostly suffer living in the past. To overcome this false impression, we have to live with wise investigation. That is why the supreme Buddha emphasized the importance of practicing wise reflection.

Understanding the process of our life leads to achieve more wisdom. We usually experience through our senses such as eyes, ears, nose, tongue, body and mind. When objects such as forms, sounds, smells, tastes reach senses, we experience about the world. The nature of this experience is arising at the moment and instantly ceases at once. Whatever we experience through six senses, five aggregates arise at that moment. Also, they immediately cease. Five aggregates are forms (*Rupa*), feelings (*Vedanā*), perception (*Saññā*), mental formations (*Sankhāra*) and consciousness (*Viññāna*). These five things arise together and cease together. They cannot be divided. We learn them by intelligence. These five aggregates, six internal senses or external

objects are not permanent. They arise with the conditions at the moment, and they cease immediately when conditions separate. However, because of our ignorance we think they are permanent. Wisdom is the opposite of this delusion. The nature of all conditions is that; 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 didn't exist in the past the way we experience now and it doesn't go to the future as well.

The Buddha explains this theory in his main teaching, the dependent origination like this;

"This being - this comes to be" (*Asmim sati idam hoti*)
 With the arising of this – this arises" (*Imassa uppādā idam uppajjati*)
 This not being – this doesn't come to be" (*Asmim asati idam na hoti*)
 With the cessation of this – this ceases" (*Imassa nirodhā idam nirujjati*)

In our life, present experience doesn't go to the future in the same way. The present experience ceases at the moment and according the present experience next thoughts like feeling and perception arise in the next moment. Then mind recognizes those feeling and next thought arises. Our life continues in this way. If someone can understand this reality, he is ready to give up extremes about the past and the future. Also, he tries to live in the present moment seeing arising and ceasing wisely with full awareness. Understanding this this reality of impermanence which depends on the dependent origination is one of the qualities that we can practice for the wellbeing of our future lies and success in this life as well. This is the path to see the Buddha as well. He who sees the dependent origination sees the Buddha. Understanding the dependent origination leads to achieve wisdom. In the same way he who sees the Buddha sees the dependent origination. Also, he realizes the Dhamma too. This is the path giving us real refuge that protects us forever giving us the true safety.

According to this understanding, the wise person should reflect on it within his experience. Here Buddhism highly appreciates wise consideration. To reflect on wisely, we should have enough knowledge through listening to the Buddha's Message. Especially, we may have knowledge about the Karmic law (කර්මඵල න්‍යාය), the dependent origination (පටිච්ච සමුප්පාදය), impermanence (අනිත්‍යතාව), the noble eightfold path (ආර්ය අෂ්ටාංගික මාර්ගය), the four noble truths (චතුරාර්ය සත්‍යය), three disciplines (ත්‍රිශික්ෂාව) and three characteristics (ත්‍රිලක්ෂණ). When we experience the world through our six senses, we are able to reflect on our experience through the Buddha's message. Knowledge is the first step of the path of liberation. Wise reflection and practice of (tranquility - සමථ and insight - විපස්සනා) meditation are other two steps.

The supreme Buddha points out "I don't see any other important quality like (යෝනිසෝ මනසිකාර) wise reflection which helps to decrease defilements and develop spiritual faculties." The wise reflection or wise investigation is related to mindfulness (*Sati*-සති) and wisdom (*Paññā*-පඤ්ඤා). Reflection or attention that is always together with mind is a thought. This can be wholesome or unwholesome. Unwholesome attention creates negative thoughts, words and behaviors. It brings suffering. Wholesome attention creates positive thoughts, words, and behaviors bringing happiness.

In our day to day life, if we suffer it means we have lost our wise reflection. We have sufferings, mistakes, tears, lamentations because of unwise reflection. If we can keep wise reflection every moment developing mindfulness, we are able to overcome all kinds of mental disturbances. Our main goal in our life is happiness. As much as we like to live happily, we have to develop wise reflection continuously and promptly.

Whatever we suffer in our life completely depends on ignorance. That is why the Buddha says ignorance is the most severe defilement among all other defilements which brings us sorrow and lamentation. Therefore, practicing wisdom in Buddhism entirely focuses on reducing ignorance.

In this situation, to get rid of this ignorance, wise reflection guides us to live in the present moment seeing world reality of impermanence. Our real happiness depends on how far we are able to live in the present moment. Here, it doesn't mean that we forget our past or future. We must have a good memory about the past and the future, but we don't run to the past and future unmindfully. We see the past and future with full awareness. Buddhism never asks you to forget the past or the future. When we think about something in the past or future, we must have the awareness that now I am reading my mind. Hence, we practice to see the past and future with full awareness about the present.

Living in present moment with the awareness of body, feeling, consciousness and mental formations we have to reflect on them as impermanence. Finally, we have to contemplate only on arising and ceasing of mind and mental formations. At the moment we don't depend on anything or anyone outside. We completely depend on wisdom. Then we have overcome all the sufferings like aging, sickness, death and rebirth. This is the liberation what Buddhism points out.



May the Triple Gem Bless you!

තෙරුවන් සරණයි!

May all beings be well happy and peaceful!

(සියලු සත්ත්වයෝ සුවපත් වෙත්වා!)

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