

Sekhavesārajja Sutta

Assurance of a Noble Learner

(A.N.3, 202 p.)

The main purpose of all Buddhist doctrines is to point out the path to liberation from suffering. For the liberation, we have to develop our inner qualities to the maximum level. According to the *Sekhavesārajja Sutta* – Assurance, we are inspired by the Buddha what qualities we should follow up are. In the discourse, the Buddha says;

“Mendicants (disciples), these five qualities make a trainee assured. What five? It’s when a mendicant is confident, ethical, learned, energetic, and wise.

“Pañcime, bhikkhave, sekhavesārajjakaraṇā dhammā. Katame pañca? Idha, bhikkhave, bhikkhu saddho hoti, sīlavā hoti, bahussuto hoti, āradhāvīriyo hoti, paññavā hoti.

Here, the Buddha explains five qualities we have to practice on the path of liberation. They are confidence in the triple gem, having a moral life with discipline in speech and behavior, learning about the spiritual path, courage or dedication and wisdom.

1. *Saddhā* - Confidence

The very first thing that we have to develop on the path of liberation is confidence in the Buddha, his sublime teachings and his noble disciples. As much as we can listen to what the Buddha taught, our confidence in the triple gem gradually increases. Here we have confidence in the Buddha's enlightenment, his noble teaching and his noble disciples' virtuous characters.

If someone hopes to go on the path of purification with practicing Buddha's message, he or she should develop the quality of faith, belief or confidence gradually. Confidence is the first step in every religion. The difference in Buddhism is it never says 'come and believe', it says 'come and see'. The confidence increases according to our knowledge and understanding of what the Buddha taught. That is why the Buddha says, **one who sees the Dhamma sees me; one who sees me sees the Dhamma** (*Yo dhammam passati so mam passati, yo mam passati so dhammam passati*).

At the beginning of the path of liberation, confidence can arise by seeing or hearing something in the world reality. Further, it increases by listening to the Buddha's real message which explains both the karmic law and the dependent origination. Then he associates with the Buddha's noble disciples. We can go forward with confidence in what the Buddha said reflecting on our body, mind and the world. Generally, we can explain confidence as the faith in the Triple Gem i.e., the Buddha, the Dhamma and the Sangha. More exposure to the noble qualities of The Supreme Buddha, His teachings (Dhamma) and His noble disciples (Sangha) along with motivation and positive attitude can be called confidence in Buddhism. Especially, the confidence of Buddha's Enlightenment is the key to cultivate all the qualities of Enlightenment.

The disciple of the Noble One is endowed with verified confidence in the Awakened Buddha as follows; Worthy (*araham*), honorable and perfectly enlightened (*sammā sambuddho*) is the Buddha! Fully consummate in knowledge and behavior (*vijjācaranasampanno*), totally transcended, expert in all the phases and dimensions (*sugato*), knower of all worlds (*lokavidu*), unsurpassable trainer of those who can be tamed (*anuttaro purisadammasārathi*), both teacher and guide of deities and humans (*sathā devamanussānam*), awakened and enlightened (*buddho*) blessed and exalted (*bhagavā*), is the Buddha. With the understanding and confidence of the Buddha's Enlightenment, the disciple is endowed with verified faith, confidence and conviction in the Dhamma as follows; Perfectly formulated is this Buddha-Dhamma (*svākkhāto*), visible right here and now (*sanditthiko*), immediately effective, timeless (*akāliko*), inviting each and every one to come and see for themselves (*ehipassiko*), inspect, examine and verify leading each and every one through progress towards complete perfection (*opanaiko*), directly observable, experienceable and realizable by each intelligent individual (*paccattam vedītabbo viññuhi*). With the confidence on the Buddha and the Dhamma, the disciple becomes clever with verified faith, confidence and conviction in the Noble Sangha as follows; perfectly trained is this noble Sangha community of the Buddha's noble disciples (*suptipanno*): Trained in the right way (*ujupatipanno*), the true way (*ñāyapatipanno*), the good way (*sāmicipatipanno*), the direct way. Therefore these 8 kinds of individuals, these four noble pairs, deserve both gifts, grants, sacrifice, offerings, hospitality (*ahuneyyo pahuneyyo dakkhineyyo*) and reverential salutation with joined palms (*anjalikaraniyo*), since this noble Sangha community of the Buddha, is an unsurpassable and forever an unsurpassed field of merit for this world (*anuttaram puṅgavakkhetam lokassa*), to honor, respect, support, offer and protect.

This confidence is not a blind faith. It depends on the understanding of Buddha's message. Buddhism explains confidence as a great wealth (*Saddhā dhanam*). If we are rich in material wealth, we are rich in happiness. However, that happiness can be changed instantly because it is material, but the wealth (treasure) of confidence is not like that. It doesn't change when material richness changes. Saddha will not die along with the physical body. If we have strong confidence in the Buddha, his teachings and his noble disciples, our mind is always full with satisfactoriness and happiness. Then negative thoughts such as anger, greed, ignorance and jealousy have no place in our mind. And positive thoughts such as loving kindness, compassion, generosity and wisdom will also be gradually developed in our mind.

The Buddha says the understanding of suffering causes us to increase the confidence. If someone has the knowledge about arising of suffering as per the Buddhist perspective, his confidence will gradually increase. At the very beginning, he understands that when we do any unwholesome deeds with a wicked mind in our life, we will have the bad results (disadvantages) not only in the next life, but in this life itself as well. Similarly, we will benefit from the good results of good deeds also. If a person has this knowledge, that person doesn't like to suffer anymore, as he is intelligent. That is why he motivates himself to get rid of evils and cultivate good in his life, as soon as he can. This is the nature of the confidence in the Dhamma. Therefore, Buddhism says that all good qualities which are wholesome depend on confidence (*Saddhā mulikā sabbepi kusalā dhammā*).

Saddhā is one of the main spiritual faculties. When we practice confidence towards the Triple Gem, other spiritual qualities also develop within us. As much as we have confidence in the Triple Gem, we are able to develop four other spiritual qualities i.e., energy (*Viriya*), mindfulness or awareness (*Sati*), concentration or tranquility (*Samādhi*) and wisdom (*Paññā*) for the success of our lives.

2. *Sila* – Discipline – Moral Conduct

Discipline in speech and behavior works in two levels in Buddhism. One of them is in the mundane level as a merit among three meritorious deeds. The second one is the skill in the supramundane level among three disciplines on the path of liberation. The foundation of moral conduct in Buddhism is the five precepts. They are abstaining from killing beings, abstaining from stealing, abstaining from sexual misconduct, abstaining from false speech and abstaining from intoxicating drinks and drugs. Also, we can develop it gradually, as the eight precepts, the ten precepts, the Samanera ten precepts and the Upasampada Sil.

In the mundane level discipline in speech and behavior arises thinking there is a permanent outside world with the understanding of the Karmic law. Discipline in the supramundane level arises without going to extremes as there is or there isn't with the understanding the dependent origination (*ditthinca anupagamma silava dassanena sampanno*). Here the disciple doesn't take anything that there is or there isn't something in the world with the higher knowledge. The Buddha says very clearly, when a disciple sees the arising of the five aggregates, he doesn't take anything as there isn't. Also, when he sees ceasing of five aggregates, he never takes anything as there is. This is the highest understanding of a Buddha's follower. Sila, virtue or moral conduct in Buddhism leads to concentration and concentration helps wisdom. Accordingly, virtue, concentration and wisdom are interrelated. The foundation of these three disciplines is the understanding of the Dependent Origination.

3. *Bahussuta* - knowledge

Knowledge which is wealth is highly appreciated in Buddhism. The Buddha clearly points out that I proclaim the liberation for those who know the path, and who see the path. Hence, knowledge is very important on the path of liberation. Knowledge in Buddhism is divided in Buddhism into two as mundane and supramundane level. They are the knowledge in the Karmic law and the knowledge in the dependent Origination. When we listen to the Dhamma through the association with good friends, our knowledge within ourselves and the world gradually develops. The very first knowledge we gain is that the understanding of the Karmic law. Whatever we do with intention physically, verbally or mentally, we will receive the same results according to the mental situation. When mind is wicked, results are evil and negative. When mind is pure and calm, results are fruitful and positive.

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 parisujjhati*). 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 (සමමාදිට්ඨි), paññā (පඤ්ඤා), 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 advice.

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. The more we know what the Buddha taught the more we have motivation to go forward on the path of liberation.

4. *Āraddhavīriya* – Courage or Dedication

As the results of having confidence and knowledge in the triple gem, disciple's courage and dedication for the spiritual life increases to the maximum level. That courage feels his physical body since skin to bone marrow. The courage what the Buddha taught can be divided into four. The courage to not to do evil that we don't do yet. The courage not to do that we are already doing. The courage to do what we don't do yet. The courage to continue that we are already doing. In short, the courage abstaining evil and the courage doing good are emphasized here.

5. *Paññavā* - Wisdom

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*- යෝනිසෝ මනසිකාරෝ)
4. Practicing the message (*Dhammānudhamma patipatti*-ධම්මානුධම්මපටිපත්ති)

When we associate with a noble friend, we can listen to the sublime truth that a Buddha emphasizes. 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. Also, the disciple practices three disciplines as virtue, concentration and wisdom as much as he can.

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 හුත්වා 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. If someone doesn't know this reality, his mind is fixed in outside things and persons, and when they change, he suffers. If someone needs to overcome suffering, he has to practice fourfold mindfulness keeping his awareness on body, feeling, mind and mental formations and to reflect on impermanence again and again.

Above these five qualities make a trainee assured. He has no fear or insecurities that some has. Also, he develops his mind to the maximum level in concentration and wisdom. Finally, he sees only arising and ceasing of five aggregates. Whenever someone reflects on this reality, at the moment he has overcome the suffering of decay, sickness, death and rebirth. This is the liberation that the Supreme Buddha has pointed out kindly to the world.



May the Triple Gem Bless You!

තෙරුවන් සරණයි !

May All Beings Be Well, Happy & Peaceful!

සියලු සත්ත්වයෝ සුවපත් වෙත්වා !