

# Contentment

## The Supreme Wealth

(*Santutti paramam dhanam*)

The main purpose of everybody's life is happiness. We do everything in name of happiness in our day today life. However, we are being distanced from happiness day after day. The reason is that we try to gain happiness from the things what change and decay. In this situation, we have to find the real path for happiness. All Buddhist doctrines focus on happiness. Buddhism emphasizes this idea as "**Contentment is the supreme wealth**" (*santutti paramam dhanam*). We think that happiness comes from external sources, but real happiness generates inside. According to Buddhism, our happiness completely depends on how far we have purified our mind. If someone is able to live with a pure mind among the ordinary people, that is the highest skill.

Let's live happily without anger among the people those who are angry.

Let's live happily without mental illnesses among the people those who are mentally ill.

Let's live happily without longing in sensual pleasures among those who are seeking sensual pleasures.

Let's live happily without any impediments (obstructions) like radiant divine beings in the Brahma realm.

According to Buddhism, this is the best achievement. The main purpose of everyone should be purifying their mind from greed, anger and delusion completely, and cultivating loving kindness and wisdom to the maximum level.

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 1<sup>st</sup> of January or a birthday. We are so lucky as the people who were born in this period of time when the Buddha's message is alive in the world. We can find out 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. The Supreme Buddha points out the real enemies who steal our inner peace. They are greed, anger and delusion. The more we purify our mind from these defilements the more we have overcome suffering, and the more we are happy.

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 (*mano pubbangamā dhammā*); mind is the chief of all states (*mano settā*) and mind-made are they (*manomayā*). 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 we can for the peace of our mind. Purified mind is the path that leads to our happiness. Similarly, 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 as well. Positive thoughts like loving kindness, compassion and generosity bolster peace in our mind. If we do something with a pure mind, then our mental, verbal and physical actions are also pure and correct. Meditation focuses on purifying the mind.

When we consider the main message in Buddhism, we can see above idea. Buddhism in nutshell can be summarized in a stanza. It is,

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

(Dhammapada)

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

Developing the mind in a correct way, practicing meritorious thoughts such as loving kindness, compassion and understanding the world reality as it is, is meditation. By practicing meditation in Buddhism, we are trained to perceive our mind and body. First, Buddhist meditation aims to purify the mind from hindrances such as greed and anger, and then understand the reality of the world, which leads to overcome suffering and delusion as well. The final goal of meditation that the Buddha mentioned is happiness and peace which nobody or nothing can disturb. If we don't have any severe attachment or conflict about visual objects, sounds, smells, tastes, body impressions and thoughts, when we experience the world through our senses; eyes, ears, nose, tongue, body and mind, it is the result we gain practicing meditation. Finally, we live in the present moment with full awareness and wisdom seeing arising and ceasing of all our experiences that we receive through our six senses.

The main purpose of Buddhist meditation is, increasing mindfulness (*Sati*) and wisdom (*Sampajañña* or *Paññā*). According to Buddhist perspective, meditation can be divided into two, which are tranquility (*Samatha*) meditation and insight (*Vipassanā*) meditation. By practicing tranquility meditation, we develop mindfulness. It means we focus our mind on a particular object. Here we purify our mind from negative thoughts such as desire, anger, jealousy etc. Buddhism always appreciates practicing mindfulness. Practicing mindfulness is the only way to purification of beings. Mindfulness is the only way to overcome sorrow and lamentation. Mindfulness is the only way to cease suffering. Mindfulness is the only way to achieve wisdom. Mindfulness is the only way to attain enlightenment. Mindfulness is the awareness of body and mind.

When mindfulness is established as the Buddha mentioned, our mind is very quiet, calm and concentrated. Simultaneously, practicing insight meditation we develop intelligence or wisdom. The final goal of Buddhist meditation is to get rid of suffering. If we can live mindfully every moment seeing the world reality which is impermanence, that is the highest result of meditation. At that moment we live completely without suffering in the present moment. With this understanding, when we remember the

past or future, we have our attention or awareness fully that now I read my own mind not the real situation. Then we can overcome suffering. Also, we see the arising and ceasing about present experience too.

When we are going to practice any kind of teaching in Buddhism, we have to fulfil three steps. They are knowledge, reflection according to knowledge and practice meditation as tranquility (*Samatha*) and insight (*Vipassanā*) with the discipline of speech and behavior. At the very beginning when listening to the Buddha's message, if we have good attention, gratitude honesty and loving kindness, it is easy to go on the path of liberation successfully. We are able to find good friends who point out the real path of purification as much as we have good human values.

The 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 about 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 (*Sila*). 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 of all our experiences 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 should be clever to increase the time 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 Bhāvana*) and insight meditation (*Vipassana Bhavana*). 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.

The very first step of meditation is to focus our mind on a particular object such as reflecting on breathing, loving kindness, compassion. Here it is very important to **understand the sign of mindfulness (*Sati nimitta*)**. When we do any kind of meditation, it is important to keep our attention on the tip of our nose or upper lip. Again, and again we have to try to develop this skill. As the result of practicing mindfulness for a long time, we are able to keep our mind in the same wholesome thought for a long time. It is named as concentration or tranquility. Furthermore, if we can not only do sitting meditation but also do all our day today activities with mindfulness, we can improve our meditation rapidly. When we are aware of negative thoughts such as anger, greed, ill will, lust and jealousy, they are unable to come to our mind. Then there are no disturbances to peace in our minds. It means we are happy with positive thoughts which are wholesome.

Arising negative thoughts is usually the nature of the mind. In meditation, we try to decrease negative thoughts such as desire (or craving = *lobha*), hatred (or ill will = *dosa*) and delusion (or delusion = *moha*), and on the other hand, cultivate positive thoughts such as generosity, good-will, compassion,

sympathetic joy and wisdom. Especially, the meaning of meditation in Buddhism (pali- *Bhavana*) is cultivation or development of the mind in the correct way, practicing wholesome thoughts (*Bhāveti kusaladhamme āsevati vaddheti etayati bhāvanā*). If we can keep our mind with wholesome (positive) thoughts for a long time, then we are free from suffering, it means we are happy. We should be clever to increase the time we live mindfully, that is one of the ways to our success in our spiritual life. When we go forward on this path, it is clear that our inner peace and rapture gradually increases.

The purpose of meditation is to focus or keep our mind in the correct way with wholesome (positive) thoughts. Further when we practice meditation, we have to focus on one wholesome object for a long time continuously that is called concentration. Why do we meditate? The purpose of every person is to be happy. Happiness or suffering depends on our point of view about the world. If our mind is wicked by desire, anger or ignorance, then we are not in peace. If our mind is full with wholesome thoughts such as generosity, loving-kindness, compassion, sympathetic joy or wisdom, then our mind is full with happiness. Meditation is the greatest merit in Buddhism. The Buddha says **practicing merits means practicing happiness** (*Sukho puññassa uccayo*). Also, practicing merit decorates our mind with positive thoughts (*cittāṅkaram citta-parikkhāram*).

We mostly suffer with desire and anger. If we can keep our mind away from desire and anger, we are free from suffering. When we meditate, we purify our mind from defilements. and, we focus our mind on positive thoughts continuously. It means we try to keep our mind in happiness. If we can practice some sort of meditation such as loving kindness meditation, breathing meditation, it results in calming the mind, and making it quiet, concentrated and happy. When mind is concentrated, our body is also very relaxed, comfortable and pleasant. When we can purify our mind from unwholesome (negative) thoughts, it results in happiness, not only in our mind, but also in our physical body.

When we start to meditate, our mind goes here and there. That is the nature of the mind. However, we should not worry about it. We must be clever to take the mind to the meditation object. When we do it again and again, if we are clever and we have awareness and courage, we can control our mind, as we wish. At the beginning, we can start meditation with 5 minutes per day, and later we are able to increase it little by little. When we see the result that is happiness by practicing meditation, our courage gradually increases and we do it continuously.

Among both tranquility (*Samatha*) meditation and insight (*Vipassanā*) meditation, tranquility meditation means keeping our mind for a long time in one particular wholesome thought such as loving-kindness. As the result of practicing tranquility meditation, we can keep our mind calm and quiet for a long time with happiness without defilements. If we can cultivate our mind to the maximum level in tranquility meditation, sometimes we can live even for few days without any other facilities such as food. In this situation, our mind is very rich in merits and happiness. However, this mental condition is not permanent. Anytime it can be changed. When we are out of meditation, defilements may come again to our mind. Suffering could come and disturb us because tranquility is impermanent. That is why Buddhism teaches us the second step of meditation – insight meditation (*Vipassanā Bhāvanā*).

Insight meditation aims to reflect on the world reality as *Anicca* - the impermanence, *Dukkha* – dissatisfaction, *Anatta* - selflessness. It leads to eradicate all our defilements greed, anger and ignorance. If we can think gradually that all kinds of experiences belong to above three - *Anicca*, *Dukkha* and *Anatta*, with a concentrated mind, then we are getting rid of suffering little by little. If we have some sort of experience through our senses, it means five aggregates (matter, feelings, perceptions, mental formation and consciousness) arise together and they cease together at the same moment. It is instant. As a result of the gathering of the five aggregates, when reasons are together, we have experience through our senses such as eye, ear, nose, tongue, body. When reasons are separated, the experience ceases. The highest intelligence in Buddhism is the intelligence that **"Not being occurred (in the past) comes to an occurrence. Being occurred (at the present) would not come to (the future) occurrence"** (*Ahutvā Sambhutam Hutvā na Bhavissati* - අනුන්වා සම්භුතං හුන්වා න භවිස්සති). If we can understand this ultimate truth practicing insight meditation, that is only the real way to get rid of suffering. Then we live completely in the present moment seeing arising and ceasing our experiences.

According to Buddhist point of view, there are three integral factors – morality, concentration (tranquility) and wisdom for the success of meditation. Morality means the discipline in speech and behavior. When we speak of something, it is very important to be aware of our words. And when we behave, we should take care of our actions. Before meditation we should have enough discipline to practice meditation. If we don't have good discipline in speech and behavior, it is difficult to fulfill our hopes in spirituality. When we have good discipline, it is easy to succeed in concentration and practice meditation. In meditation, we cultivate two separate qualities of the mind – mindfulness or awareness and tranquility. If we have a true knowledge about the world as The Supreme Buddha mentioned, as the result of practicing concentration, we are able to see the world reality which is impermanence, dissatisfaction and selflessness. That is the result of practicing insight meditation.

Final goal of meditation in Buddhism is to develop our mind according to *Anicca* - the impermanence, *Dukkha* – dissatisfaction and *Anatta* – selflessness. This understanding causes our permanent equanimity, which is the real happiness without any suffering even though we are in very complex situations. Living with mindfulness and wisdom, seeing the impermanence of our experiences, is the true path for the real happiness. As the result of practicing this spiritual path, we are able to overcome main challenges like decay, death and rebirth in our lives. All Buddhist doctrines finally focus on increasing our ability to face those challenges without fear, lamentation and sorrow. If we are able to face those difficulties, we can face any problems without suffering. Further, we are able to live without jealousy among the people who are jealous. Also, we can live without anger among the people who are angry. And, we can live without greed among the people who are greedy. Likewise, **we can make an unshakable mind facing eight worldly conditions which are gain and loss, honor and dishonor, praise and blame, happiness and misery.**

May the Triple Gem Bless You!

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