

The Essence of Buddhism

The Buddha himself realized the world as it is. Especially the Buddha discovered the main problem of being, suffering and its real solution which is the cessation of suffering. That is why the Buddha said " In the past and the present I proclaimed and proclaim only suffering (or dissatisfaction) and its cessation to the world". After the Buddha's great discovery about the world and how to get rid of suffering, the Buddha explained his discovery to the world compassionately for about 45 years. At the age of 80, he passed away. Practicing and protecting this valuable message, the Buddha's noble disciples brought it from generation to generation for more than 2500 years. The highest way to pay our gratitude to the Buddha and his noble disciples to listen to the Dhamma, practice the Dhamma and gain results throughout the Dhamma.

The Buddha says very clearly, his teaching is not a creation, it is a discovery. Whether a Buddha appears in the world or not, the message he explained is forever. We respect the Buddha because he discovered this world reality by himself without any help of others and explained it to the world. The Buddha 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 above stanza, the Buddha's effort was that avoiding going to hell, encouraging going to heaven (*Saggamagga*) and showing the path to liberation (*Mokkhamagga*).

The Dhamma, the Buddha's teachings that the Buddha discovered and preached to the world is a living message. He who listens to it and practices it can see the results in this short life itself. The disciples of the Buddha trust in the Buddha's teachings as a real path to overcome suffering. The dhamma that the Buddha delivered is not a doctrine of revelation but the teaching of enlightenment based on the clear comprehension of actuality. Also, any courageous person can practice and see the same result that other enlightened ones gained as his own experience.

There is a very especial thing that even though the Lord Buddha discovered this path himself without any help from others, this message doesn't belong to him either. Whether a Buddha appears or not in the world, this is the world reality and it is in the world forever. When a Buddha appears in the world, he discovers this reality for the first time in this period. If a Buddha doesn't appear, ordinary beings can't understand this reality by their own understanding as this reality is covered by deep ignorance. We respect the Buddha because he realized this world reality for the first time in this period and preached it to men and deities. Here it is important to contemplate on the qualities of the Dhamma. The Dhamma is well expounded by the Blessed One (*svākkhāto bhagavatā dhammo*), directly visible

(*sanditthiko*), immediately effective (*akāliko*), inviting one to come and see (*ehi-passiko*), leading onwards (*opanayiko*), to be personally experienced by the wise (*paccattam vedittabbo viññūhīti*)."

The Buddha's all teachings can be included into two levels that the teachings which cause to be born in heaven and human worlds and, the teachings which cause to get rid of suffering and attain final bliss of liberation, enlightenment or Nirvana.

When the Buddha preached His teachings, He considered the listeners' intelligence. And He has an order in His speech which is generosity, virtue, renunciation etc. First, The Buddha normally preached the path of reaching heaven and human worlds because the biggest risk is the ability to fall into hell in next life. Hence, the Buddha preached the three meritorious deeds which are the importance of practicing generosity, morality and meditation to overcome rebirth in the hell. When someone practices this path, he or she can gain happiness in this life itself. The Buddha says clearly that practicing merits means gaining happiness. If someone has done a lot of meritorious deeds in his or her life, he or she has accumulated a lot of happiness in his life. This behavior causes happiness not only hereafter but in this short life itself. When we fulfill these three meritorious deeds, our mind is pure and calm. That pure mind can gain us longevity, good complexion, comfort, strength and finally happiness. When someone always does wholesome acts in his life, deities and departed relatives also bless his life. All of these meritorious deeds cause him to be reborn in the heaven or human world developing spirituality on behalf of real happiness.

The second level of the Buddha's teaching is the path for getting rid of all kinds of sufferings and to overcome Sansaric journey. Here the Buddha has pointed out three disciplines which are virtue, concentration (or tranquility) and wisdom. For this path, first we have to gain the knowledge about impermanence (*Anicca*) and the dependent origination (*paticca samuppāda*). If we have a clear knowledge about arising and ceasing of five aggregates, we are ready to practice this path perseveringly. Here, only knowledge is not enough, but reflection (*Yoniso manasikāra*) and practice (*Dhammānudhamma patipatti*) are also important according to the knowledge. When we practice this path, we can see the results as much as we practice. Visible result is the one of the results practicing this teaching.

When we do evil, our mind is polluted. 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 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 thereafter. 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 once 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. With a good discipline, if a person focuses his mind on a particular meritorious object such

as loving kindness or breathing meditation, he can concentrate his mind with pure thoughts. With that concentration, he can 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. However, the previous thought influences the present thought and the present thought influences the next thought. 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** (*ahutvā sambhutam hutvā 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 absolute truth that Buddhism teaches us to be able to get rid of all sufferings.

The Fundamental 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 maddapamādattānā 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 of Karmic Law – Not to fall into hell

2. Understanding of 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-Greed, Hatred, Delusion)

The Best Friend – The Only Path to Liberation and purity - 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 (*Dhammānupassanā*)

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 (*Dukkha sacca*)
2. The cause of suffering (*Samudaya sacca*)
3. The cessation of suffering (*Nirodha sacca*)
4. The path that leads to cessation of suffering (*Magga sacca*)

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>)

The heart of Buddhism - Dependent Origination/ Cause and effect (*Paticcasamuppāda*)

(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'.*

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 (*Yoniso manasikāra*)
5. Mindfulness and clear comprehension. (*Sati sampajañña*)
6. Discipline in senses (*Indriya samvara*)
7. Three Disciplines in mental, verbal and behavioral 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, peaceful, mindful and wise!

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Tuesday Dhamma Discussion of Los Angeles Buddhist Vihara in Pasadena

12/31/2019