

The Supreme Blessings Which Bring us Happiness

Maṅgala Sutta (Sutta Nipata)

The main purpose of every being's life is happiness. Everyone dislikes suffering and likes happiness. That is why the Buddha says; **every being urges happiness and avoids suffering** (*Sukha kāmā, dukkha patikkulā*). However, most people may lose their happiness because of not having a real understanding what happiness is and having no clear path. We think that happiness is external, but real happiness is internal. According to Buddhism, our happiness or suffering completely depends on how far we have purified our mind. 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 1st of January or a birthday. We are so lucky as the people who are born in this period of time. 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.

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; mind is the chief of all states. 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. destroy 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 possible for the peace of mind. Purified mind is the path that leads to our happiness. 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. Positive thoughts like loving kindness, compassion and generosity bolster peace in mind. If we do something with pure mind, then our mental, verbal and physical actions are also pure and correct. Meditation focuses on purifying the mind. Hence one of the main advises in Buddhism is that purifying one's mind (*Sacittapariyodapanam etam Buddhānasāsanam*).

Buddhism points out several ways how to gain happiness from the basic level to the highest supra mundane level. The discourse on the blessings (*Maṅgala Sutta*) in Khuddakapāṭa, explains the supreme blessings that someone can have in his life.

1. Not associating with fools,
associating with the wise,
honoring those worthy of honor:
these are supreme blessings.

*“Asevanā ca bālānaṃ, paṇḍitānañca sevā;
Pūjā ca pūjaneyyānaṃ, etam maṅgalamuttamaṃ.*

2. Living in a suitable place,
formerly having done good deeds,
having the right aspiration for oneself:
these are supreme blessings.
*Patirūpadesavāso ca, pubbe ca katapuññatā;
Attasammāpaṇidhi ca, etaṃ maṅgalamuttamaṃ.*
3. Having great learning and craft,
being disciplined and well trained,
and whatever words are well spoken (pleasant speech):
these are supreme blessings.
*Bāhusaccañca sippañca, vinayo ca susikkhito;
Subhāsītā ca yā vācā, etaṃ maṅgalamuttamaṃ.*
4. Attending on (taking care of) one's parents,
looking after one's wife and children,
having work that is not confusing:
these are supreme blessings.
*Mātāpitu upaḥhānaṃ, puttadārassa saṅgho;
Anākulā ca kammantā, etaṃ maṅgalamuttamaṃ*
5. Practicing generosity, and living by the Dhamma,
and looking after one's relatives,
performing actions that are blameless:
these are supreme blessings.
*Dānañca dhammacariyā ca, ñātakānañca saṅgho;
Anavajjāni kammāni, etaṃ maṅgalamuttamaṃ.*
6. Abstaining from bad deeds,
refraining from intoxicating drinks and drugs,
being heedful regarding all things:
these are supreme blessings.
*Āratī viratī pāpā, majjapānā ca saṃyamo;
Appamādo ca dhammesu, etaṃ maṅgalamuttamaṃ.*
7. Having respect and being humble,
being satisfied and grateful,
listening to the Dhamma at the right time:
these are supreme blessings.
*Gāravo ca nivāto ca, santuṭṭhi ca kataññutā;
Kālena dhammassavanaṃ, etaṃ maṅgalamuttamaṃ.*

8. Being patient and easily spoken to,
having sight of ascetics,
discussing the Dhamma at the right time:
these are supreme blessings.

*Khanṭī ca sovacassatā, samaṇānañca dassanaṃ;
Kālena dhammasākacchā, etaṃ maṅgalamuttamaṃ.*

9. Austerity (Self-control), living spiritually (chastity),
comprehension of (insight into) the Noble Truths,
and experiencing Emancipation; Nibbana,
these are supreme blessings.

*Tapo ca brahmacariyañca, ariyasaccāna dassanaṃ;
Nibbānasacchikiriyā ca, etaṃ maṅgalamuttamaṃ.*

10. He whose mind does not waver,
when it is touched by things of this world,
being griefless, dustless, and secure:
these are supreme blessings.

*Phutthassa lokadhammehi, cittaṃ yassa na kampaṭi;
Asokaṃ virajaṃ khemaṃ, etaṃ maṅgalamuttamaṃ.*

In above discourse, the Buddha declares the path how to develop blessings gradually. Experiencing emancipation, making an unshakable mind is the highest bliss that anyone can gain in this world.

Here especially Buddhism empathizes the highest bliss. Nibbana is the highest bliss. We get a lot of bliss in our lives, but they may change sooner or later, and we can't keep it as we like. According to Buddhism, Nibbana the final bliss of liberation is not like that. It is forever. It is the highest liberation from all kinds of suffering. It is not hereafter; it can be gained in this life itself. It is a visible result of practicing the real path. Peace is not achieved through violence, but through understanding and compassion. The final bliss of liberation completely depends on purification of mind from negative thoughts. There are three main unwholesome thoughts that pollute our mind. They are desire, anger and delusion. Practicing generosity and contemplating on impurity of physical body are the primary techniques to reduce desire. Cultivating positive thoughts with loving kindness is the path to overcome anger. Listening to the Dhamma, reflecting on it and practicing it is the path to get rid of delusion.

The everlasting happiness depends on how far we have overcome suffering. Cessation of suffering depends on our understanding of arising and ceasing of suffering. Understanding life which consists of body and mind helps understanding suffering. When our eye, ear, nose, tongue, body and mind contact with external objects such as forms, sounds, smells, tastes, touches, mental formations, the experience arises at the moment. Simultaneously, five aggregates arise when a sense contacts with an object and mind. Five aggregates are: matter (*Rupa* - රූප), feelings

(*Vedanā* - වේදනා), perception (*Saññā* - සංකල්පය), mental formations (*Samkhāra* - සංකාර) and consciousness (*Viññāna* - විඤ්ඤාණ). Five aggregates are always together. They can't be separated. They could be realized by wisdom. These five aggregates are the bottom line of all our experiences which we receive through our senses. The nature of these five aggregates is that they weren't here before the experience. And also, they won't remain after the experience. Understanding of the dependent origination directly focuses on comprehension of five aggregates. The Buddha advise everyone who are in every spiritual level to reflect on five aggregates as arising, ceasing, enjoyment, danger and liberation. Every moment five aggregates arise when conditions are together. Also, they immediately cease when conditions separate. There is an enjoyment in these five things, but enjoyment is less, danger is a lot. That is why wise people must find liberation from five aggregates. The Buddha says the highest education that a wise person should gain is the comprehension of five aggregates.

As a result of the union of the five aggregates, when factors are together, we have experiences through our senses such as eye, ear, nose, tongue, body. When factors (or conditions) are separated, the experience ceases. The highest intelligence that Buddhism declares is the intelligence that "Not being occurred (in the past) comes to an occurrence. Being occurred (at the present) will not go to (the future) occurrence" (*Ahuvā sambhutam hutvā na bhavissati* - අනුඤා සම්භුතං භුතං න භවිස්සති). If someone can understand this ultimate truth practicing insight meditation, that is the only way to get rid of suffering. This is the main teaching that the Buddha realized, discovered and preached to the world to get rid of suffering.

This 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 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 (*Sīla*). The second step is tranquility or concentration (*Samādhi*) 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 which we receive 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 must be clever to increase the time that 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 Bhāvanā*) and insight meditation (*Vipassanā Bhāvanā*). 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 Ditṭhi*) also should increase gradually. Right understanding, understanding of impermanence is the very important quality when we go on the path of liberation.

We lose our peace of mind because of ignorance of our life. Achieving wisdom leads us to get rid of suffering. It is very essential to reflect on impermanence of the five aggregates again

and again, to eradicate delusion which is the main cause of suffering. Then wisdom, the understanding of body and mind gradually increases. The nature of wisdom is to overcome ignorance. When ignorance decreases, greed and anger also decrease. Also, the three characteristics the reality of life are realized. They are impermanence (*Anicca*), suffering (*Dukkha*) and egolessness (*Anatta*). When someone can completely realize this truth throughout the life, he or she doesn't have any struggle in his life. He lives with equanimity. That is the final bliss. When we practice this path as the Supreme Buddha said, the five spiritual faculties increase to the maximum level. They are, namely, confidence of Buddha's enlightenment (*Saddhā* – සද්ධා), energy (*Viriya* - විරිය), mindfulness or Awareness (*Sathi* - සති), concentration or Tranquility (*Samādhi* - සමාධි) and wisdom (*Paññā* - පඤ්ඤ)

From the beginning to the end of the path of purification, we have to develop these qualities again and again mindfully every moment with understanding. As much as we practice them, we can see the result in this life. Developing mindfulness with wisdom seeing the world reality such as impermanence, unsatisfactoriness and egolessness is the ultimate goal. Final result of practicing them is the liberation from all sufferings and living with the highest contentment and loving kindness. This is the contentment, satisfaction, gratification, fulfillment, happiness, pleasure and cheerfulness that Buddhism explains.

As the result of this spiritual path, we are able to live happily without anger among the people those who are angry. Also, we can live happily without seeking sensual pleasures among those who are longing for sensual pleasure. Further we can live happily without mental illnesses among those who are mentally ill. This is the real success and skillfulness of an intelligent person according to Buddhism.

Making a real refuge practicing what the Buddha taught is the highest bliss in this New Year 2020. For that we should try to reach this destination dedicating everything in our life day by day and from moment to moment.

May the Triple Gem Bless you! ඔබ සැමට තෙරුවන් සරණයි!

May you be mindful and wise! සතිමත් හා නුවණැති වේවා!



May You Have a Healthy, Prosperous, Peaceful and Mindful New Year - 2020

(Tuesday Dhamma Discussion at LA Buddhist Vihara in Covina - 01/07/2020)

I Practice These Supreme Blessings Daily as Much as I can

1. Not associating with fools - (*Asevanā ca bālānaṃ*)
2. Associating with the wise - (*Paṇḍitānañca sevanā*)
3. Honoring those worthy of honor - (*Pūjā ca pūjanīyānaṃ*)
4. Living in a suitable place - (*Patirūpadesavāso ca*)
5. Formerly having done good deeds - (*Pubbe ca katapuññatā*)
6. Having the right aspiration for oneself - (*Attasammāpaṇidhi ca*)
7. Having great learning - (*Bāhusaccañca*)
8. Having great craft - (*Sippañca*)
9. Being disciplined - (*Vinayo ca*)
10. Well trained - (*Susikkhito*)
11. Whatever words are well spoken (pleasant speech) - (*Subhāsītā ca yā vācā*)
12. Attending on (taking care of) one's parents - (*Mātāpitu upatṭhānaṃ*)
13. Looking after one's wife and children - (*Puttadārassa saṅgaho*)
14. Having work that is not confusing - (*Anākulā ca kammantā*)
15. Practicing generosity - (*Dānañca*)
16. Living by the Dhamma
17. - (*Dhammacariyā ca*)
18. Looking after one's relatives - (*Ñātakānañca saṅgaho*)
19. Performing actions that are blameless - (*Anavajjāni kammāni*)
20. Abstaining from bad deeds - (*Āratī viratī pāpā*)
21. Refraining from intoxicating drinks and drugs - (*Majjapānā ca saṃyamo*)
22. Being heedful regarding all things - (*Appamādo ca dhammesu*)
23. Having respect - (*Gāravo ca*)
24. Being humble - (*Nivāto ca*)
25. Being satisfied - (*Santuṭṭhi ca*)
26. Being grateful - (*Kataññutā*)
27. Listening to the Dhamma at the right time - (*Kālena dhammassavanaṃ*)
28. Being patient - (*Khantī ca*)
29. Being gently spoken - (*Sovacassatā*)
30. Having sight of ascetics - (*Samañānañca dassanaṃ*)
31. Discussing the Dhamma at the right time - (*Kālena dhammasākacchā*)
32. Austerity (Self-control) - (*Tapo ca*)
33. Living spiritually (chastity) - (*Brahmacariyañca*)
34. Comprehension of (insight into) the Noble Truths - (*Ariyasaccāna dassanaṃ*)
35. Experiencing Emancipation = Enlightenment = Nibbana - (*Nibbānasacchikiriyā ca*)
36. Making an unshakable mind among the worldly conditions - (*Phutthassa lokadhammehi cittaṃ yassa na kampati*)
37. Being griefless - (*Asokaṃ*)
38. Being dustless - (*Virajaṃ*)
39. Being secure - (*Khemaṃ*)