

# Vision & Mission in Buddhism

## *Sammādiṭṭhi Suttaṃ*

The vision in Buddhism is based on the Four Noble Truths; *Dukkha, Samudaya, Nirodha, Magga*, which state suffering, its arising, its cessation and the path to overcome suffering. Suffering arises from craving and attachment, suffering can be overcome, and there is a path to the cessation of suffering. Understanding the four noble truths as a truth is vision (*Sacca Ñāṇa*). Mission in Buddhism refers what we should do (*kiicca Ñāṇa*) to achieve the ultimate goal of emancipation. This is often described as the Noble Eightfold Path. In short, three trainings; virtue, concentration and wisdom (*Sīla, Samādhi* and *Paññā*).

When we practice the Dhamma wishing the destruction of all the sufferings, first we need a clear vision about where we go to and what we achieve. Vision is the forerunner (*Sammādiṭṭhi pure javam*), then mission. **Mission without vision is blind. And, vision without mission is useless.** By listening to Dhamma having wise consideration with the association of good friendship, we are able to gain the right vision. Then we can achieve our spiritual goals as our courage, dedication and the level of the spiritual faculties that we have practiced in our previous lives. The Buddha always emphasizes the importance of the understanding of the path saying that 'I proclaim the liberation for those who know the path who see the path not for those who don't know the path who don't see the path' (*Jānto aham bhikkhave passata āsavānaṃ khayam vadāmi, no ajānato no apassato*).

Wisdom or Insight, which mainly helps us to overcome suffering and attain liberation from defilements, is highly praised in Buddhism. The main cause of whether we are happy or not is the level of our wisdom. Our real success depends on how much we have achieved wisdom. Hence, wisdom has been compared to a gem (*Paññā Narānaṃ Rataṇaṃ* - පඤ්ඤා නරානං රතනං). Wisdom brings purification (*පඤ්ඤාය පරිඤ්ඤා*). There is no other bright light like wisdom (*නන්ථි පඤ්ඤා සමා ආනා*). Wisdom is used in several terms in Pāli language such as *Sammādiṭṭhi* (*සම්මාදිට්ඨි*), *paññā* (*පඤ්ඤා*), *Amoha* (*අමෝහ*). Wisdom should be increased from the beginning until the end to the maximum level of the path of enlightenment. Therefore, Buddhism always guides us to gain wisdom through all kinds of advice that the supreme Buddha explained in his entire life. At the very beginning of his first sermon, Dhammacakka Sutta the Buddha declared his experience about gaining wisdom "Eye arose in me (*Cakkhum Udapādi*), knowledge arose in me (*Ñāṇam Udapādi*), wisdom arose in me (*Paññā Udapādi*), science arose in me (*Vijjā Udapādi*), light arose in me (*Āloko Udapādi*)". What the Buddha explains here was the wisdom that he realized when he attained enlightenment. The main purpose of the Buddha was to give *Sammādiṭṭhi* or right understanding (wisdom) to the world. The reason is that the right understanding should be first on the path of liberation (*Sammādiṭṭhi pure javam*) since the right understanding cleans the path.

In *Sammādiṭṭhi Sutta*, Arhat Ven. Sāriputta (MN1) explains 16 ways as he heard from the Buddha.

### **1. The Unwholesome and the Wholesome (*Akusala & Kusala*)**

"When a noble disciple understands 1.the unwholesome, 2.the root of the unwholesome, 3.the wholesome, and 4. the root of the wholesome, in that way he is one of right view, whose view is straight, who has perfect confidence in the Dhamma, and has arrived at this true Dhamma.

"And what, friends, is the unwholesome, what is the root of the unwholesome, what is the wholesome, what is the root of the wholesome? 1.Killing living beings is unwholesome, 2. Taking what is not given is unwholesome, 3. Misconduct in sensual pleasures is unwholesome. 4.False speech is unwholesome, 5. Malicious speech is unwholesome. 6.Harsh speech is unwholesome, 7. Gossip is unwholesome, 8. Covetousness is unwholesome, 9. Ill will is unwholesome, 10. Wrong view is unwholesome. This is called the unwholesome.

"And what is the root of the unwholesome? Greed is a root of the unwholesome; hate is a root of the unwholesome; delusion is a root of the unwholesome. This is called the root of the unwholesome.

"And what is the wholesome? Abstention from killing living beings is wholesome; abstention from taking what is not given is wholesome; abstention from misconduct in sensual pleasures is wholesome; abstention from false speech is wholesome; abstention from malicious speech is wholesome; abstention from harsh speech is wholesome; abstention from gossip is wholesome; non-covetousness is wholesome; non-ill will is wholesome; right view is wholesome. This is called the wholesome.

"And what is the root of the wholesome? Non-greed is a root of the wholesome; non-hate is a root of the wholesome; non-delusion is a root of the wholesome. This is called the root of the wholesome.

"When a noble disciple has thus understood the unwholesome, the root of the unwholesome, the wholesome, and the root of the wholesome, he entirely abandons the underlying tendency to lust, he abolishes the underlying tendency to aversion, he extirpates the underlying tendency to the view and conceit 'I am,' and by abandoning ignorance and arousing true knowledge he here and now makes an end of suffering. In that way too, a noble disciple is one of right view, whose view is straight, who has perfect confidence in the Dhamma and has arrived at this true Dhamma."

### **2. Nutriment (*Āhāra*)**

Saying, "Good, friend," the bhikkhus delighted and rejoiced in the Venerable Sāriputta's words. Then they asked him a further question: "But, friend, might there be another way in which a noble disciple is one of right view... and has arrived at this true Dhamma?" — "There might be, friends.

"When, friends, a noble disciple understands nutriment, the origin of nutriment, the cessation of nutriment, and the way leading to the cessation of nutriment, in that way he is one of right view... and has arrived at this true Dhamma.

"And what is nutriment, what is the origin of nutriment, what is the cessation of nutriment, what is the way leading to the cessation of nutriment? There are these four kinds of nutriment for the maintenance of beings that already have come to be and for the support of those seeking a new existence. What four? They are physical food as nutriment, gross or subtle; contact as the second; mental volition as the third; and consciousness as the fourth. With the arising of craving there is the arising of nutriment. With the cessation of craving there is the cessation of nutriment. The way leading to the cessation of nutriment is just this Noble Eightfold Path; that is, right view, right intention, right speech, right action, right livelihood, right effort, right mindfulness and right concentration.

"When a noble disciple has thus understood nutriment, the origin of nutriment, the cessation of nutriment, and the way leading to the cessation of nutriment, he entirely abandons the underlying tendency to greed, he abolishes the underlying tendency to aversion, he extirpates the underlying tendency to the view and conceit 'I am,' and by abandoning ignorance and arousing true knowledge he here and now makes an end of suffering. In that way too a noble disciple is one of right view, whose view is straight, who has perfect confidence in the Dhamma and has arrived at this true Dhamma."

### 3. The Four Noble Truths (*Sacca*)

Saying, "Good, friend," the bhikkhus delighted and rejoiced in the Venerable Sāriputta's words. Then they asked him a further question: "But, friend, might there be another way in which a noble disciple is one of right view... and has arrived at this true Dhamma?" — "There might be, friends.

"When, friends, a noble disciple understands suffering, the origin of suffering, the cessation of suffering, and the way leading to the cessation of suffering, in that way he is one of right view... and has arrived at this true Dhamma.

"And what is suffering, what is the origin of suffering, what is the cessation of suffering, what is the way leading to the cessation of suffering? Birth is suffering; aging is suffering; sickness is suffering; death is suffering; sorrow, lamentation, pain, grief and despair are suffering; not to obtain what one wants is suffering; in short, the five aggregates affected by clinging are suffering. This is called suffering.

"And what is the origin of suffering? It is craving, which brings renewal of being, is accompanied by delight and lust, and delights in this and that; that is, craving for sensual pleasures, craving for being and craving for non-being. This is called the origin of suffering.

And what is the cessation of suffering? It is the **remainderless** fading away and ceasing, the giving up, relinquishing, letting go and rejecting of that same craving. This is called the cessation of suffering.

And what is the way leading to the cessation of suffering? It is just this Noble Eightfold Path; that is, right view... right concentration. This is called the way leading to the cessation of suffering.

"When a noble disciple has thus understood suffering, the origin of suffering, the cessation of suffering, and the way leading to the cessation of suffering... he here and now makes an end of suffering. In that way too a noble disciple is one of right view... and has arrived at this true Dhamma."

#### **4. Aging and Death (*Jarā - Maraṇa*)**

Saying, "Good, friend," the bhikkhus delighted and rejoiced in the Venerable Sāriputta's words. Then they asked him a further question: "But, friend, might there be another way in which a noble disciple is one of right view... and has arrived at this true Dhamma?" — "There might be, friends.

"When, friends, a noble disciple understands aging and death, the origin of aging and death, the cessation of aging and death, and the way leading to the cessation of aging and death, in that way he is one of right view... and has arrived at this true Dhamma.

"And what is aging and death, what is the origin of aging and death, what is the cessation of aging and death, what is the way leading to the cessation of aging and death? The aging of beings in the various orders of beings, their old age, brokenness of teeth, grayness of hair, wrinkling of skin, decline of life, weakness of faculties — this is called aging. The passing of beings out of the various orders of beings, their passing away, dissolution, disappearance, dying, completion of time, dissolution of the aggregates, laying down of the body — this is called death. So, this aging and this death are what is called aging and death. With the arising of birth there is the arising of aging and death. With the cessation of birth there is the cessation of aging and death. The way leading to the cessation of aging and death is just this Noble Eightfold Path; that is, right view... right concentration.

"When a noble disciple has thus understood aging and death, the origin of aging and death, the cessation of aging and death, and the way leading to the cessation of aging and death... he here and now makes an end of suffering. In that way too a noble disciple is one of right view... and has arrived at this true Dhamma."

#### **5. Birth (*Jāti*)**

Saying, "Good, friend," the bhikkhus delighted and rejoiced in the Venerable Sāriputta's words. Then they asked him a further question: "But, friend, might there be another way in which a noble disciple is one of right view... and has arrived at this true Dhamma?" — "There might be, friends.

"When, friends, a noble disciple understands birth, the origin of birth, the cessation of birth, and the way leading to the cessation of birth, in that way he is one of right view... and has arrived at this true Dhamma.

"And what is birth, what is the origin of birth, what is the cessation of birth, what is the way leading to the cessation of birth? The birth of beings into the various orders of beings, their coming to birth, precipitation [in a womb], generation, manifestation of the aggregates, obtaining the bases for contact — this is called birth. With the arising of being there is the arising of birth. With the cessation of being there is the cessation of birth. The way leading to the cessation of birth is just this Noble Eightfold Path; that is, right view... right concentration.

"When a noble disciple has thus understood birth, the origin of birth, the cessation of birth, and the way leading to the cessation of birth... he here and now makes an end of suffering. In that way too a noble disciple is one of right view... and has arrived at this true Dhamma."

## **6. Being (*Bhava*)**

Saying, "Good, friend," the bhikkhus delighted and rejoiced in the Venerable Sāriputta's words. Then they asked him a further question: "But, friend, might there be another way in which a noble disciple is one of right view... and has arrived at this true Dhamma?" — "There might be, friends.

"When, friends, a noble disciple understands being, the origin of being, the cessation of being, and the way leading to the cessation of being, in that way he is one of right view... and has arrived at this true Dhamma.

"And what is being, what is the origin of being, what is the cessation of being, what is the way leading to the cessation of being? There are these three kinds of being: sense-sphere being, fine-material being and immaterial being. With the arising of clinging there is the arising of being. With the cessation of clinging there is the cessation of being. The way leading to the cessation of being is just this Noble Eightfold Path; that is, right view... right concentration.

"When a noble disciple has thus understood being, the origin of being, the cessation of being, and the way leading to the cessation of being... he here and now makes an end of suffering. In that way too a noble disciple is one of right view... and has arrived at this true Dhamma."

## **7. Clinging (*Upādāna*)**

Saying, "Good, friend," the bhikkhus delighted and rejoiced in the Venerable Sāriputta's words. Then they asked him a further question: "But, friend, might there be another way in which a noble disciple is one of right view... and has arrived at this true Dhamma?" — "There might be, friends.

"When, friends, a noble disciple understands clinging, the origin of clinging, the cessation of clinging, and the way leading to the cessation of clinging, in that way he is one of right view... and has arrived at this true Dhamma.

"And what is clinging, what is the origin of clinging, what is the cessation of clinging, what is the way leading to the cessation of clinging? There are these four kinds of clinging: clinging to sensual pleasures, clinging to views, clinging to rituals and observances, and clinging to a doctrine of self. With the arising of craving there is the arising of clinging. With the cessation of craving there is the cessation of clinging. The way leading to the cessation of clinging is just this Noble Eightfold Path; that is, right view... right concentration.

"When a noble disciple has thus understood clinging, the origin of clinging, the cessation of clinging, and the way leading to the cessation of clinging... he here and now makes an end of suffering. In that way too a noble disciple is one of right view... and has arrived at this true Dhamma."

## **8. Craving (*Taṇhā*)**

Saying, "Good, friend," the bhikkhus delighted and rejoiced in the Venerable Sāriputta's words. Then they asked him a further question: "But, friend, might there be another way in which a noble disciple is one of right view... and has arrived at this true Dhamma?" — "There might be, friends.

"When, friends, a noble disciple understands craving, the origin of craving, the cessation of craving, and the way leading to the cessation of craving, in that way he is one of right view... and has arrived at this true Dhamma.

"And what is craving, what is the origin of craving, what is the cessation of craving, what is the way leading to the cessation of craving? There are these six classes of craving: craving for forms, craving for sounds, craving for odors, craving for flavors, craving for tangibles, craving for mind-objects. With the arising of feeling there is the arising of craving. With the cessation of feeling there is the cessation of craving. The way leading to the cessation of craving is just this Noble Eightfold Path; that is, right view... right concentration.

"When a noble disciple has thus understood craving, the origin of craving, the cessation of craving, and the way leading to the cessation of craving... he here and now makes an end of suffering. In that way too a noble disciple is one of right view... and has arrived at this true Dhamma."

## **9. Feeling (*Vedanā*)**

Saying, "Good, friend," the bhikkhus delighted and rejoiced in the Venerable Sāriputta's words. Then they asked him a further question: "But, friend, might there be another way in which a noble disciple is one of right view... and has arrived at this true Dhamma?" — "There might be, friends.

"When, friends, a noble disciple understands feeling, the origin of feeling, the cessation of feeling, and the way leading to the cessation of feeling, in that way he is one of right view... and has arrived at this true Dhamma.

"And what is feeling, what is the origin of feeling, what is the cessation of feeling, what is the way leading to the cessation of feeling? There are these six classes of feeling: feeling born of eye-contact, feeling born of ear-contact, feeling born of nose-contact, feeling born of tongue-contact, feeling born of body-contact, feeling born of mind-contact. With the arising of contact there is the arising of feeling. With the cessation of contact there is the cessation of feeling. The way leading to the cessation of feeling is just this Noble Eightfold Path; that is, right view... right concentration.

"When a noble disciple has thus understood feeling, the origin of feeling, the cessation of feeling, and the way leading to the cessation of feeling... he here and now makes an end of suffering. In that way too a noble disciple is one of right view... and has arrived at this true Dhamma."

## **10. Contact (*Phassa*)**

Saying, "Good, friend," the bhikkhus delighted and rejoiced in the Venerable Sāriputta's words. Then they asked him a further question: "But, friend, might there be another way in which a noble disciple is one of right view... and has arrived at this true Dhamma?" — "There might be, friends.

"When, friends, a noble disciple understands contact, the origin of contact, the cessation of contact, and the way leading to the cessation of contact, in that way he is one of right view... and has arrived at this true Dhamma.

"And what is contact, what is the origin of contact, what is the cessation of contact, what is the way leading to the cessation of contact? There are these six classes of contact: eye-contact, ear-contact, nose-contact, tongue-contact, body-contact, mind-contact. With the arising of the sixfold base there is the arising of contact. With the cessation of the sixfold base there is the cessation of contact. The way leading to the cessation of contact is just this Noble Eightfold Path; that is, right view... right concentration.

"When a noble disciple has thus understood contact, the origin of contact, the cessation of contact, and the way leading to the cessation of contact... he here and now makes an end of suffering. In that way too a noble disciple is one of right view... and has arrived at this true Dhamma."

## 11. The Sixfold Base (*Salāyatana*)

Saying, "Good, friend," the bhikkhus delighted and rejoiced in the Venerable Sāriputta's words. Then they asked him a further question: "But, friend, might there be another way in which a noble disciple is one of right view... and has arrived at this true Dhamma?" — "There might be, friends.

"When, friends, a noble disciple understands the sixfold base, the origin of the sixfold base, the cessation of the sixfold base, and the way leading to the cessation of the sixfold base, he is one of right view... and has arrived at this true Dhamma.

"And what is the sixfold base, what is the origin of the sixfold base, what is the cessation of the sixfold base, what is the way leading to the cessation of the sixfold base? There are these six bases: the eye-base, the ear-base, the nose-base, the tongue-base, the body-base, the mind-base. With the arising of mentality-materiality there is the arising of the sixfold base. With the cessation of mentality-materiality there is the cessation of the sixfold base. The way leading to the cessation of the sixfold base is just this Noble Eightfold Path; that is, right view... right concentration.

"When a noble disciple has thus understood the sixfold base, the origin of the sixfold base, the cessation of the sixfold base, and the way leading to the cessation of the sixfold base... he here and now makes an end of suffering. In that way too a noble disciple is one of right view... and has arrived at this true Dhamma."

## 12. Mentality-Materiality (*Nāma-rūpa*)

Saying, "Good, friend," the bhikkhus delighted and rejoiced in the Venerable Sāriputta's words. Then they asked him a further question: "But, friend, might there be another way in which a noble disciple is one of right view... and has arrived at this true Dhamma?" — "There might be, friends.

"When, friends, a noble disciple understands mentality-materiality, the origin of mentality-materiality, the cessation of mentality-materiality, and the way leading to the cessation of mentality-materiality, in that way he is one of right view... and has arrived at this true Dhamma.

"And what is mentality-materiality, what is the origin of mentality-materiality, what is the cessation of mentality-materiality, what is the way leading to the cessation of mentality-materiality? Feeling, perception, volition, contact and attention — these are called mentality. The four great elements and the material form derived from the four great elements — these are called materiality. So this mentality and this materiality are what is called mentality-materiality. With the arising of consciousness there is the arising of mentality-materiality. With the cessation of consciousness there is the cessation of mentality-materiality. The way leading to the cessation of mentality-materiality is just this Noble Eightfold Path; that is, right view... right concentration.



"When a noble disciple has thus understood mentality-materiality, the origin of mentality-materiality, the cessation of mentality-materiality, and the way leading to the cessation of mentality-materiality... he here and now makes an end of suffering. In that way too a noble disciple is one of right view... and has arrived at this true Dhamma."

### **13. Consciousness (*Viññāṇa*)**

Saying, "Good, friend," the bhikkhus delighted and rejoiced in the Venerable Sāriputta's words. Then they asked him a further question:

"But, friend, might there be another way in which a noble disciple is one of right view... and has arrived at this true Dhamma?" — "There might be, friends.

"When, friends, a noble disciple understands consciousness, the origin of consciousness, the cessation of consciousness, and the way leading to the cessation of consciousness, in that way he is one of right view... and has arrived at this true Dhamma.

"And what is consciousness, what is the origin of consciousness, what is the cessation of consciousness, what is the way leading to the cessation of consciousness? There are these six classes of consciousness: eye-consciousness, ear-consciousness, nose-consciousness, tongue-consciousness, body-consciousness, mind-consciousness. With the arising of formations there is the arising of consciousness. With the cessation of formations there is the cessation of consciousness. The way leading to the cessation of consciousness is just this Noble Eightfold Path; that is, right view... right concentration.

"When a noble disciple has thus understood consciousness, the origin of consciousness, the cessation of consciousness, and the way leading to the cessation of consciousness... he here and now makes an end of suffering. In that way too a noble disciple is one of right view... and has arrived at this true Dhamma."

### **14. Mental Formations (*Samkhāra*)**

Saying, "Good friend," the bhikkhus delighted and rejoiced in the Venerable Sāriputta's words. Then they asked him a further question: "But, friend, might there be another way in which a noble disciple is one of right view... and has arrived at this true Dhamma?" — "There might be, friends.

"When, friends, a noble disciple understands formations, the origin of formations, the cessation of formations, and the way leading to the cessation of formations, in that way he is one of right view... and has arrived at this true Dhamma.

"And what are formations, what is the origin of formations, what is the cessation of formations, what is the way leading to the cessation of formations? There are three kinds of formations: the bodily

formation, the verbal formation, the mental formation. With the arising of ignorance there is the arising of formations. With the cessation of ignorance there is the cessation of formations. The way leading to the cessation of formations is just this Noble Eightfold Path; that is, right view... right concentration.

"When a noble disciple has thus understood formations, the origin of formations, the cessation of formations, and the way leading to the cessation of formations... he here and now makes an end of suffering. In that way too a noble disciple is one of right view... and has arrived at this true Dhamma."

### **15. Ignorance (*Avijjā*)**

Saying, "Good friend," the bhikkhus delighted and rejoiced in the Venerable Sāriputta's words. Then they asked him a further question: "But, friend, might there be another way in which a noble disciple is one of right view... and has arrived at this true Dhamma?" — "There might be, friends.

"When, friends, a noble disciple understands ignorance, the origin of ignorance, the cessation of ignorance, and the way leading to the cessation of ignorance, in that way he is one of right view... and has arrived at this true Dhamma.

"And what is ignorance, what is the origin of ignorance, what is the cessation of ignorance, what is the way leading to the cessation of ignorance? Not knowing about suffering, not knowing about the origin of suffering, not knowing about the cessation of suffering, not knowing about the way leading to the cessation of suffering — this is called ignorance. With the arising of the taints there is the arising of ignorance. With the cessation of the taints there is the cessation of ignorance. The way leading to the cessation of ignorance is just this Noble Eightfold Path; that is, right view... right concentration.

"When a noble disciple has thus understood ignorance, the origin of ignorance, the cessation of ignorance, and the way leading to the cessation of ignorance... he here and now makes an end of suffering. In that way too a noble disciple is one of right view... and has arrived at this true Dhamma."

### **16. Cankers / Taints (*Āsava*)**

Saying, "Good, friend," the bhikkhus delighted and rejoiced in the Venerable Sāriputta's words. Then they asked him a further question: "But, friend, might there be another way in which a noble disciple is one of right view, whose view is straight, who has perfect confidence in the Dhamma and has arrived at this true Dhamma?" — "There might be, friends.

"When, friends, a noble disciple understands the taints, the origin of the taints, the cessation of the taints, and the way leading to the cessation of the taints, in that way he is one of right view, whose view is straight, who has perfect confidence in the Dhamma and has arrived at this true Dhamma.

"And what are the taints, what is the origin of the taints, what is the cessation of the taints, what is the way leading to the cessation of the taints? There are three taints: the taint of sensual desire, the taint of being and the taint of ignorance. With the arising of ignorance there is the arising of the taints. With the cessation of ignorance there is the cessation of the taints. The way leading to the cessation of the taints is just this Noble Eightfold Path; that is, right view, right intention, right speech, right action, right livelihood, right effort, right mindfulness and right concentration.

"When a noble disciple has thus understood the taints, the origin of the taints, the cessation of the taints, and the way leading to the cessation of the taints, he entirely abandons the underlying tendency to lust, he abolishes the underlying tendency to aversion, he extirpates the underlying tendency to the view and conceit 'I am,' and by abandoning ignorance and arousing true knowledge he here and now makes an end of suffering. In that way too a noble disciple is one of right view, whose view is straight, who has perfect confidence in the Dhamma and has arrived at this true Dhamma."

That is what the Venerable Sāriputta said. The bhikkhus were satisfied and delighted in the Venerable Sāriputta's words.

With this understanding or vision, we should enter the path which brings us to the final spiritual goal, emancipation. According to the discourse, the path is very clear that practicing the Noble Eightfold Path.

### **The Nature of the Dhamma**

The Dhamma that the Buddha explained is well expounded (*Svākkhāto*), directly visible (*Sanditthiko*), immediately effective (*Akāliko*), calling one to come and see (*Ehipassiko*), leading onwards (*Opanaiko*), to be personally realized by the wise (*Paccattaṃ Veditabbo Viññūhi*). To achieve the final bliss of liberation, we have to listen to the Buddha's message with good attention, to improve our knowledge and follow it honestly as much as we can.

The Buddha points out four kinds of lights in this world. They are;

- |                          |                     |
|--------------------------|---------------------|
| 1. The light of the moon | <i>(Candāloko)</i>  |
| 2. The light of the sun  | <i>(Sūriyāloko)</i> |
| 3. The light of fire     | <i>(Aggāloko)</i>   |
| 4. The light of wisdom   | <i>(Paññāloko)</i>  |

Among these four lights, wisdom is the most valuable light which directly causes us to overcome suffering. The opposite of wisdom is ignorance (or delusion) which is the main cause of suffering and **the most severe defilement** (*Avijjā paramaṃ malaṃ*). In this situation, wisdom is highly admired in Buddhism. Also, all Buddhist doctrines that the Buddha taught for 45 years focus on giving wisdom. The

more someone develops wisdom the more he or she reduces ignorance. He who develops wisdom to the maximum level, reduces ignorance completely and overcome suffering and the Samsāric circle as well.

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 samsevo*-සප්පුරිස සංසේවෝ)
2. Listening to the Buddha's Message (*Saddhamma savaṇaṃ* - සද්ධම්ම සවණං)
3. Wise Reflection (*Yoniso manasikāro*- යෝනිසෝ මනසිකාරෝ)
4. Practicing the message (*Dhammānudhamma paṭipatti*-ධම්මානුධම්මපටිපත්ති)

When we associate a noble friend, we can listen to the sublime truth that a Buddha emphasized. 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.

In the discourse of *Sabbāsava* (MN.1), further the Buddha explains the importance of practicing wise reflection. "The destruction of the defilements is for the one who knows and sees, not for the one who does not know and see. Who knows and sees what? It is wise reflection and unwise reflection. When one attends wisely, unrisen defilements don't arise and arisen defilements are abandoned. When one attends unwisely, unrisen defilements arise and arisen defilements increase.

The way that we think not to raise defilements (taints) and increase wholesome thoughts, is wise reflection. Protecting our mind from negative thoughts that are evil which disturb our peace of mind, we develop the mind to the maximum level with high spiritual progress. Mental condition is the main reason which decides whether we are happy. Mind is the forerunner of all mental conditions (මනෝ පුබ්බංගමා ධම්මා). Also, mind is chief (මනෝ සෙට්ඨා) and mind-made are mental conditions (මනෝමයා). By practicing the spiritual path, wise investigation guides us in the correct path preserving the mind.

Wisdom in Buddhism is divided into two; the understanding of Karmic law and the understanding of impermanence. As much as we have this understanding, we are able to see the world reality, how suffering doesn't arise and what the path of real happiness is. The Buddha has pointed out two paths which are the heavenly path (*Sagga magga* = සඟ්ගමඟ්ග) and the enlightenment (deliverance / liberation) path (*Mokkhamagga* = මොක්ඛමඟ්ග) 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 the human realm and heavenly realms. Enlightenment path describes how to achieve enlightenment breaking the circle of rebirth. The Right Understanding that we receive through listening to the Dhamma increases the understanding of both paths above.

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 truth (චතුරාර්ය සත්‍යය), the three disciplines (ත්‍රිශික්ෂාව) and the three characteristics (ත්‍රිලක්ෂණ). When we experience about 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 the 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 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 lives is happiness. As much as we like to live happily, we have to develop wise reflection continuously and promptly.

With the understanding of what the Buddha explained, first, we come across the Karmic law. Then the intelligent person tries to keep his mind pure and practice the three meritorious deeds as much as he can. They are generosity (*Dāna*), morality (*Sīla*) and meditation (*Bhāvanā*). The Buddha points out that doing merits means achieving happiness. Keeping mind with merits always is like a refuge to 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.

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 someone doesn't have a mind, we never say he is a person. We tell it is a dead body. When we practice wise investigation, if we are able to reflect on his mind as well as his physical body, as soon as we remember a person, we can overcome 50 percent of defilements that are arisen by ignorance of reality. Further, if we can practice loving kindness meditation towards people, our mind is always ready to forgive anybody. 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 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 we live in the past. Unfortunately, we don't know this nature because of ignorance. Thinking about the past is not the fault or cause of suffering. The fault is unknowing that mind goes to the past. Because of this misconception, we experience the past like the present. For example, if somebody has blamed you, when you think about it unwisely and unmindfully, you are blamed again. That person has blamed you once, but you are blamed again and again because of this delusion. Also, when one of your close relatives died, you worry thinking about his life, as it happens 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.

We usually experience through our senses such as eyes, ears, nose, tongue, body and mind. When objects such as forms, sounds, smell, taste reach our senses, we experience the world. The nature of this experience is arising at the moment and instantly ceasing at once. Not being occurred (in the past) comes to an occurrence. Being occurred (at the present) will not come to (the future) occurrence. (අනුත්ථා සම්භවං භුත්ථා න භවිස්සති). It means if we experience something now, it didn't happen in the past in the same way like now.

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

"When this being - this comes to be" (*Imasmiṃ sati idaṃ hoti*)

With the arising of this – this arises" (*Imassa uppādā idaṃ uppajjati*)

When this not being – this doesn't come to be (*Imasmiṃ asati idaṃ na hoti*)

With the cessation of this – this ceases" (*Imassa nirodhā idaṃ nirujjati*)

Also, present experience doesn't go to the future in the same way. If somebody 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.

In this situation to get rid of this ignorance, wise reflection guides us to live in the present moment seeing world reality as impermanence. Our real happiness depends on how clever we are to live in the present moment. Here, it doesn't mean we forget our past or future. We may have good memories about the past and the future, but we don't run to the past and future without mindfulness. We see the past and future with full awareness. Buddhism never says to forget the past or the future. When we think about something in the past or the future, we have a real awareness that now I read my mind. Likewise, we practice to see the past and the future with full awareness about the present.

To make this experience permanent, we have to follow a path that is the noble eightfold path.

It is,

- |                        |                            |               |
|------------------------|----------------------------|---------------|
| 1. Right Understanding | ( <i>Sammā diṭṭhi</i> )    | සම්මා දිට්ඨි  |
| 2. Right Thoughts      | ( <i>Sammā saṃkappa</i> )  | සම්මා සංකප්ප  |
| 3. Right Speech        | ( <i>Sammā vācā</i> )      | සම්මා වාචා    |
| 4. Right Action        | ( <i>Sammā kammantha</i> ) | සම්මා කම්මන්ත |
| 5. Right Livelihood    | ( <i>Sammā ājīva</i> )     | සම්මා ආජීව    |

6. Right Effort	( <i>Sammā vāyāma</i> )	සම්මා වායාම
7. Right Mindfulness	( <i>Sammā sati</i> )	සම්මා සති
8. Right Concentration	( <i>Sammā samādhi</i> )	සම්මා සමාධි

As much as we have a right understanding about the path by listening to the Buddha's message, we are ready to practice other steps gradually. Day by day we go forward in this path wisely seeing the reality which is impermanence. These eight steps consist of three disciplines; virtue, tranquility (or concentration) and wisdom. With the understanding of The Noble Eightfold Path, we form self-discipline in our speech and behavior. Discipline helps us to go forward in the path of purification practicing meditation. In purification of the mind, we mainly use two meditation techniques that are concentration or tranquility and insight. In the tranquility meditation, we keep our mind with a particular good thought. As a result of concentrated mind, we can live for a long time without suffering and stress, but it is not permanent and it can be changed. Here we practice and develop our awareness especially in our mind and body. We practice doing all kinds of activities mindfully. Mindfulness is one of the most important qualities that we have to develop for purification of our mind.

Concentration is not enough to eradicate defilements completely. That is why the Buddha asks us to develop another step that is insight meditation for permanent happiness. Here, with the concentrated mind, we reflect on all kinds of things that are mental and physical on three characteristics of existence (ත්‍රිලක්ෂණ). They are;

- i. Impermanence, (*Anicca*-අනිච්ච)
- ii. Unsatisfactoriness (*Dukkha*-දුක්ඛ)
- iii. Selflessness (*Anatta*-අනන්ත)

We reflect on these three characteristics of existence (ත්‍රිලක්ෂණ) again and again. As a result of practicing this world reality, we develop wisdom with the knowledge of impermanence. Simultaneously, we develop five qualities which are confidence (*Saddā*-සද්ධා), effort (*Viriya*-වීරිය), mindfulness (*Sati*-සති), concentration (*Samādhi*-සමාධි) and wisdom (*Paññā*-පඤ්ඤා). As the result of practicing The Noble Eightfold Path with mindfulness and wisdom, we gradually reach happiness decreasing defilements. Final experience of this effort is living in the present moment with full awareness seeing arising and ceasing without any desirable attachment or destruction. That is the highest goal of practicing the Buddha's message which is the world reality. Then we are able to overcome dissatisfaction, sorrow, lamentations and all kinds of sufferings completely in this life itself.



May the Triple Gem Bless you!

The Annual Monastic Retreat Conducted by the Bhāvanā Society,  
West Virginia – 2023 June (18<sup>th</sup> Sunday)