



**INTRODUCTION TO BUDDHISM
AND
VIPASSANA MEDITATION**

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Introduction

Buddhism, the philosophy of awakening, is the teachings of one who awakened. It is not a religion in the sense in which the term religion is commonly understood in the west but way of life. It is the teachings of the Buddha, the man who transformed himself to superhuman through his perfections (*paramis*). Buddhism, therefore, also known as the way of good conduct brought about by mind development, training and leading to perfect peace. This article concentrates the basic Buddhism and its major teaching based on mental yoga, in particularly basic instruction to insight meditation.

Who was the Founder ?

The Buddha, the founder of Buddhism, was neither the god nor the prophet of a god. He was born, lived and died as a man 2645 years ago in Lumbini, present day Nepal. Buddhist, in general, would not put much emphasis on the Buddha's biography but concentrate on his teachings. Nevertheless, the scripture purport to be simple collections of the Buddha's own words, with no authorial input from the monks and scattered in the Canon. Basic information and believe suggest that the Buddha, given name was *Siddhattha (Siddharth)*, was born to one of the leading men of *Kapilavatthu* and provided with every pleasure he could desire. He was married at the age of 16 with a princess *Yasodhara* and had a son at the age of 29 years called *Rahula*.

One night toward the end of the sixth century B.C.E., the Siddhattha Gotama walked out of his comfortable life and became 'a holy life' (*brahmachariya*). The scripture suggests that when he had chance to opened world, he looked at human life, the Prince could see only a grim cycle of suffering, which began with the trauma of becoming and proceeded inevitably to aging, illness, death sorrow and corruption. This is a universal fact; no one is exception to this fact. Realising the fact, He crept away in his 29 years of age without saying goodbye to wife and son. It could be though he did not trust himself of holding his determination to his resolve should if his wife beg him to stay in quest of salvation. Once the Siddhattha had left the luxurious life, he travelled in quest of true nature of life for six years. The scripture records his quest in different discourses, in particularly, pali vide detail information about his austerity during his search. He had strong faith and confidence towards his quest. His dedication and determination was firm and unshakable despite physical towards his quest

to find the ultimate reality of nature. As a result, his eyes wide opened, ultimate light arose in him and ever since known as the Buddha, which means fully awakened one, perfectly enlightened, who has gone completely, the knower of the world and its condition that keep it running. The Buddha, one who has completely extinguished all sensual pleasure (*bhagga rago*), hatred (*bhagga doso*) and delusion (*bhagga moho*), travelled cities and villages sharing his teaching based on social, individual and psycho-phenomenal exercise to human kind until 80 years of his age.

Greatest hope for human life

Buddhists are indeed the followers of the Buddha and of his teachings, but not in the same way that any other religions. The Buddha did not claim any unalterable truth, nor did he demand that his teachings should simply be accepted, take on trust or acquired through an act of faith. He instead encouraged people to experiment for themselves as individuals, retaining what is useful to them and abandoning what is not.

The Buddha's mortality is man's greatest hope for the future, since he showed the great heights to which a man could reach. He acknowledged it by himself and introduced the way to all sentient but few of us will possess the courage and determination to approximate his great example. Yet it is within our capability to follow his teachings and eventually attain the gold of sublime peace. *Ehipassiko*, inviting all to come and see is one of his main teachings that providing wide space for everyone to come and investigate towards his teachings, not 'come and believe. It is an open question that provides enough space to doubt its teaching and practice in order to fulfill human hope of liberation.

Basic Buddhist teachings

What did the Buddha teach, is a very common question that generally asked by new faces. The Buddha preached that birth is suffering, aging is suffering, death is suffering, sorrow, lamentation, pain, distress and despair are suffering, associating with things disliked and separation from things liked is suffering, not getting what is desired is suffering, in short the Buddha said, the clinging to form, feeling, perception, mental formation and consciousness are suffering. Therefore, entire his life for 45 years, he often instructed to his listeners that these five aggregates are subject to change and impermanent. These five aggregates are, as a result, should not be accepted as me and mind or should accept it is not-self.

Buddhism basically is based on the three mainstays called the Triple Gem; the Buddha- one who awakened, the Dhamma- truth/ teachings of awakened and the Sangha- Buddhist community. The Triple Gem known as the cornerstones of the Buddhist's beliefs and are the most valuable possessions in their spiritual armoury. A formal, ceremonial commitment is made to all three whenever one decides to follow the path of the Buddha; not to do any evil, to cultivate good deeds and to purify the mind.

In the study of Buddhism, a mere superficial glance or even the learning and repetition of word is useless unless it leads us to deep understanding; understanding of true nature of life. The Buddha explained Four Noble truths as a core foundation of Buddhist teachings. They are noble truth of suffering, noble truth of its cause, noble truth of end and the way leading to the end of suffering; the middle path or the Noble Eightfold Path, which is likened to foundation stones; living moral

life, peaceful of mental state and good understanding of living standard, on which the entire Dhamma is based. Living moral life, according to Buddhism, is generating loving-kindness to all beings, being generous to all, respecting each other, being truthful and mindful of every thing. Generally known as practice five precepts: not to harm or kill, not to take thing, which is not given, not adultery, do not lie and do not take any alcohol. These will lead to control bodily, verbal and mental action, that certainly lead peaceful life. Deep understanding, however, could be possible only through the Meditation (*Bhavana*); vipassana meditation, according to Buddhist principles.

What is Meditation?

Meditation, *bhavana*, a Buddhist terminology, means a cultivation of mental peace, is such a wonderful technique to develop inner strength recognising our own value and value of others. It is the practice and process of paying attention towards things that occurring and keeping awake that generates mental happiness and positive thoughts inside oneself rather than struggling or quarrelling to find peace and happiness. Meditation is also tool to purify one's own mind. The Buddha instructed its benefit in one of the famous discourses, the Great discourse on the foundation of awareness (*mahasatipatthana Sutta*) that:

'It is for the purification of beings, for the overcoming of sorrow and lamentation, for the extinction of suffering and grief, for walking on the path of truth, for the realisation of *nibbana*, complete extinction and ultimate happiness.'

Purification of the mind is a matter of nature and truth, not related to any particular, race, class, colour, nationality or religion. Everyone gains same result, sooner or later depending on his/her own practice, wisdom



and stages of perfection already achieved. There are two types of meditation in Buddhism, Serenity meditation (*Samatha kammatthana*) and Insight meditation (*Vipassana kammatthana*). *Samatha kammatthana*, in general translate as concentration meditation, has 40 types of meditation objects that mainly concentrates on bringing scattered mind to one object to get serene peace and tranquil in mind. Nevertheless, any object can be subject to meditation object, where mind will establish itself.

Vipassana meditation is a scientific way to realise the truth about oneself. In particular, truth about misery that one faces time to time in life. The reality and eradication of that misery is the *vipassana* meditation, so that one can live happily rest of life.

Our life is combination of mental and physical structures, which is called psycho-phenomena. *Vipassana* meditation or Insight meditation is to learn to be aware of and observe our true nature of these physical and mental phenomena. A physical phenomenon is called *Rupa* in Buddhist terminology; which we can see it, we can hear it, we can smell it, and we can touch it and also mentally can be noted. A mental phenomenon, on the other hand, is called *Nama* in pali a Buddhist terminology, which means our intension. The purpose of intension is to know, aware and observe subjects. When we see, hear, taste, touch, smell and even mentally think these two phenomena will be co-existing all the time. However, it is not effortless, easy and simple to notice these phenomena in normal life.

Why can't we notice it?

Most of the time, our mind is tangling with either past or future, which is normal behaviour of mind. We love to plan for future and wish to be in happy memories. Almost all the time, we plan for ahead but in fact planning on the basis of past memories that means living in the past. Generally, due habit pattern of duelling in past and future, we completely forget this present moment, which is the most important and precious for whole our life. Therefore, although these physical and mental phenomena occur along with seeing, hearing, smelling, tasting, touching and even thinking moment, mostly unable to notice it as they are occurring each and every moment. So, to notice as they truly are or to know these physical and mental phenomena, one has to be aware of these times; seeing, hearing, smelling, tasting, touching and even during thought moments, which occurring in our day to day life.

How can we do them?

This noticing time is very important and should be understood properly. It is simple in theory, practically, it is breath taking too. Thus, when we are noticing or observing the moment, it is vital to bear in mind that we are ready to start from beginning every time it distracted. When we see any object, we have to mentally observe it as 'seeing'. Once, the object has been observed, notice it or acknowledge it as '*seeing, seeing, and seeing*'. It should be done in diligently, attentively, carefully, conscientiously and continuously. Similarly, whenever other objects, like hearing sound, at first, observe that you are hearing sound and notice that hearing sound as '*hearing, hearing, hearing*' as closely as you can. When you smell something, observe it and notice it as 'smelling, smelling, and smelling'. When you taste something,

observe it and notice it as *'tasting, tasting, and tasting'*. When thought arises, observe it and notice it as *'thinking, thinking, and thinking'*. Being aware of these object and observe it closely and notice it as they truly are. The process of this awareness is a mindfulness, which is unique method of cultivating moment-by moment awareness of the true nature of things experiencing through physically and mentally called *insight meditation*.

However, it is not easy to observe and know these objects at the beginning. We won't be able to see and know it all. It takes some time and depends on our practice. Therefore, at the beginning of practise, first in all choose proper quiet time, place to meditate is preferable and choose comfortable posture during sitting meditation. Find a comfortable sitting posture is very important, which will assist to remain unchanged of position until the end of the meditation period. Frequent change on posture leads ongoing shifting, moving, and changing, subsequently, end of the session rather than gaining deeper level of concentration and insight just few changes to finding right posture.

Once seated on a comfortably gently close eyes but do not press on it, which will help to develop concentration. In order to bring the scattered mind, we need one object, which we can see and observe it clearly and make it as a primary object called *arammana* in pali. It is our starting point of contemplation.

Any object that we define as a main object for contemplation is called the primary object or *arammana*. It can be anything; solid or liqueate, air or water. In our practice, we will take air movement through nose, which is certain and always with us. It is happening constantly, naturally.

How can we take it as our object?

When we take breath-in abdomen will automatically rises and when we take breath-out abdomen will falls. This process of rising and falling of abdomen is naturally happening all the time, which can be easily noticed and observe. So, we will take this constant naturally moving of this abdomen as our primary or main object of practice. When abdomen is rising, you observe it as 'rising, rising, rising' and when abdomen is falling observe as 'falling, falling, and falling'. At the beginning, it may not be easy to notice these rising and falling activities due unstable mind. If you can observe it, then there is no problem but in case of unable to see or notice the rising and falling movement use your hand to observe it by placing on abdomen gently. Once you have placed your hand on abdomen, physical contact will help to feel the movement activities, then, try to notice the rising and falling movement. However, be careful of your breathing in and out process, try not to force and create or generate the system into long or short but let it be as naturally it flows. The reason behind it that if we are generating the breathing system as we wish then not only unnatural breath that is observed but that will makes us tire quickly and bored. Further, we are not practising breathing exercise, which is called *pranayama* exercise but mental exercise to see mental activities. Therefore, let it flow naturally as it is with no any addition and observe it closely. Know it as they truly are diligently and patiently.

In the insight meditation, in reality, does not important the word 'see or naming', observation only done by mental note. Awareness and being mindful is vital in the practice of meditation. When abdomen is rising, we have to see its beginning, middle and an end of it as closely and carefully as we can. Being aware that process from the beginning till and the end as

similar as we see by open eyes. Similarly, we have to be aware and mindful of falling process from the beginning till end closely and carefully. We have to try the process of rising and falling is followed by our mind constantly and continuously with no gaps or lapse between. The rising movement process and the observing mind should be happening together like arrow hits the destiny. Similarly, so does the falling movement process.

When we are concentrating on the rising and falling movement of abdomen our mind may wonder or thoughts arises, which is normal. Don't be disappointed and angry with it. Normally, practitioner chooses primary object, the place for establishing mind. Secondary objects, generally known as distractions choose practitioner. In this case, be aware and gently observe these distractions. Allowing these distractions to occur and accepting it with equanimity that has no regenerating mental phenomena. Acknowledging these and notice it as they really are with a neutral mind. In case of thoughts notice it as *'thinking..., thinking..., thinking...'*. Three to four times of mental note will help to know it and thoughts will stop generating. Once it has been stopped thinking, bring your mind back to primary object, which is rising and falling movement of abdomen. Therefore, while these thoughts arise observe it clearly and notice as *'thinking..., thinking..., thinking...'* and come back to primary object, rising and falling of abdomen.

However, if you don't realise it earlier that your mind is wondering off, don't worry, just relax yourself and observe the moment that you are aware of. When you are aware of that moment observe it closely and note it as *thinking... thinking... thinking...* If you see something or someone then note as *seeing... seeing... seeing...*

Whatever, situation is happening at that time being aware and

mindful of the situation without losing the feeling. If you are having thoughts acknowledge it as thinking, if you are dreaming, planning hoping etc. acknowledge it as they are. If you are feeling bore, happy or upset note them as they truly are and mentally noting it, which is called contemplating on mind or *cittanupassana*. Most of the time at the beginning of practice, we tend to tangle or generate our thoughts after thoughts, which caused more misery and un-easeful. So, all the mentally activities that arises in our mind and creation of our mind normally due lack of understanding we grasp and attach with it as we and our. We grasp that thinking process as I am, mine and me. There are only mind process and its activities. Therefore, we have to learn to see and know as they truly are. Our practice will help us to understand and observe the arising nature of these feelings. The purpose of learning to practice insight is to catch or acknowledge the arising moment of those feelings at the beginning. Once, we have recognised, noted and let it go, return back to the primary object, rising and falling of abdomen.

The true nature of distraction is to deviating mind from one object to another by grasping or generating another object, which again will be object into object of meditation. First object always follows after second and first object will fades away. Therefore, insight meditation helps us to understand this changing nature of arising, remaining and fading of each objects/distractions. Understanding of these distractions will lead to generate right understanding of nature of feeling and dissatisfactions.

The Goal in Buddhism

The entire Buddhist teaching is to recognise the *Dukka*; suffering/dissatisfactory-ness and its extinction *Nirodha*. Clearly understanding of suffering from its origin and function helps to elimination of it nature, which is a basic Buddhist declaration. To eliminate its nature, the Buddha provided a

systematic way of dealing is called meditation that helps to stop clinging to the unsolved suffering/problems. Therefore, the Noble Eightfold Path; right understanding, right thought, right speech, right action, right living standard, right effort, right concentration and right mindfulness, is the morality of obligation need to be fulfilled through mental development and training, which leads to the elimination of three roots of defilements; Greed, Hatred and Delusion, which is called **Nibbana**, the state of utter tranquillity of mind, which can enjoy in this life, leaving no conditions for new existence. The Buddha said:

'The extinction of Greed, the extinction of anger, and the extinction of delusion: this indeed is called Nibbana.' (S.N. 38).

