

GLOBAL PEACE: TO NURTURE A HEALTHY MIND & SHAKYAMUNI THE BUDDHA'S TEACHINGS

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Introduction

*Realize that the body is impermanent like a clay vessel
Know that phenomena are without inherent existence,
like mirages
Having destroyed the poisonous weapons of
attachment—
Attractive like flowers —
You will pass beyond even the sights of death —
BUDDHA¹*

The word Buddha means 'the Enlightened One'. The teaching of Buddha is 'Dharma' and the spiritual community who follow the teaching of Buddha is 'Sangha'. The Buddha, Dharma and Sangha are known as The Three Jewels or the Triple Gem.

Brief life history of Shakyamuni Siddhartha: Before Enlightenment

Queen Mahamaya gave birth to a radiant son in the garden of Lumbini in the 6th century B.C and we are all so fortunate to be here in his birth place. King Suddhodana's joy was boundless and he named the prince "Siddhartha" means the one who accomplishes his aim. Queen Mahamaya died on the 8th day of delivery and her sister Mahaprajapati (Gotami), the new queen cared for Siddhartha, as if he were her own son. Siddhartha married Yasodhara, the royal wedding was an occasion of great joy and celebration for the entire kingdom.. After a few months Yasodhara gave birth to a male child, Siddhartha lifted the infant in his arms, and said "I will name the child Rahula"

One night at the age of twenty-nine Siddhartha left his wife, his infant son, his home, his family, his extraordinary royal wealth and his safe, secure and luxurious life and began the life of a wandering monk. He was in search of the cause of suffering and the end of suffering. He wanted to know the mystery of life and death. He wanted to know the truth.

Beginning of Spiritual Practice and Enlightenment:

Siddhartha started practicing under his first spiritual teacher Master Alara Kalama near the city of Vesali. Master Alara spoke to Siddhartha "My teaching is not a mere theory. Knowledge is gained from direct experience and direct attainment, not from mental arguments". Siddhartha progressed in meditation very fast and attained the state of "Realm of no materiality". Master Alara seeing Siddhartha's fast progress said to him " Monk, you are profoundly gifted, you have attained the highest level I can teach". Siddhartha

thanked his teacher but this was not his final goal so he took to the road.

Siddhartha reached to Master Uddaka, a highly respected meditation teacher and started practicing under his guidance. In just two weeks Siddhartha realized the SAMADHI called "neither perception nor non-perception" (The path to liberation is to transcend all perceptions). Siddhartha attained the highest level that Master Uddaka had, but he knew it was not the key to liberation from birth and death, and he took to the road again.

Siddhartha realized that there were no other teachers like Alara kalama and Master Uddaka at that time to teach him, and so he had to seek the key to liberation on his own. He started practicing self-mortification in order to attain to liberation, as a result his body became terribly wasted - it was little more than loose flesh hanging on protruding bones. In the process, he realized that the peace and comfort of the body were directly related to the peace and comfort of the mind. To abuse the body was to abuse the mind. He resolved to stop self-mortification practice and regained his health.

Siddhartha sat under a Pipal tree (*Ficus religiosa*) on the flat stone, using the Kusha grass (considered auspicious) as a mat. Silently he vowed "This body may not, I may disintegrate into the dust, but until I find the answer, I will not rise". Siddhartha discovered that at the root, it is our emotions that lead to suffering. Directly or indirectly all emotions are born from selfishness in the sense that they involve clinging to the self.²

Siddhartha realized that there is no independent entity that qualifies as the "self" to be found anywhere either inside or outside the body. He understood that everything we see, hear, feel, imagine, and know to exist is simply emptiness.²

Siddhartha gained enlightenment at the age of 35, and became the Buddha. Enlightenment is called the great death, everything of the past dies, so here the Buddha is born. He continued teaching until the age of 80. "The Buddha lived probably between 560 and 480 B.C. Modern Scholars generally place the death of Buddha at 483 B.C."³

Brief History of the Buddha's life and Teachings after Enlightenment:

The word Buddha simply means one who has awakened, one who is enlightened, one who knows, one who is

aware, and as a consequence of that has fully developed his full potential....This would naturally call forth the question awakened to what? The simple answer would be awakened to his true nature and thus by implication, awakened to the true nature of all beings and the true nature of the cosmos, awakened to the condition of all beings [especially humans but not exclusively humans]⁴

Thich Nhat Hanh a Vietnamese Buddhist Zen master describes the Buddha's Enlightenment beautifully as follows" Gautama felt as though a prison which had confined him for thousands of lifetime had broken open. Ignorance had been the jail keeper. Because of ignorance, his mind has been obscured, just like the moon and stars hidden by the storm clouds. Clouded by endless waves of deluded thoughts, the mind had falsely divided reality into subject and object, self and others, existence and nonexistence, birth and death, and from these discriminations arose wrong views — the prisons of feelings, cravings, graspings, and becoming. The suffering of birth, old age, sickness, and death only made the prison walls thicker. The only thing to do was to seize the jail keeper and see his true face. The jail keeper was ignorance. And the means to overcome ignorance were the Noble Eight fold path. Once the jail keeper was gone, the jail would disappear and never be rebuilt again.⁵

A typical non-Buddhist question often raised " Is Buddha a God, or prophet of God, or a deity, or an incarnation etc? When asked by the Brahmin Drona, a contemporary of the Buddha, whether he was a deity of one form or the other or a man, he explicitly answered that he was not any kind of deity nor was he a man. So the Brahmin asked him again " Then what are you, what should we know you as?" The Buddha replied " I am a Buddha, know me as a Buddha".⁴

Buddha gained Enlightenment at Bodh Gaya (Bihar,India). When he found the key to liberation, he thought "I have found a path that is profound, peaceful, non-extreme, clear, wish-fulfilling, and nectar like. But if I attempt to express it, if I try to teach, there is no one capable of hearing, listening, or understanding. Therefore I will remain in this peaceful state - it is believed that lord Brahma Sahampati appeared before him, knowing Buddha's plan, and requested him to preach out of compassion for all living beings, to make known the truth he had discovered.

His teachings may be divided into two basic types: Sutras and Tantras. Traditionally, the sutras are held to be discourses the Buddha spoke openly in his lifetime. Tantra as an esoteric tradition originated primarily through vision and revelation rather than the spoken or written word.⁶

Important Teachings of Buddha:

1. Four Noble Truths
2. Noble Eight-Fold Path
3. Five Skandas
4. Twelve Nidanas
5. Prajnaparamita Sutras especially Diamond Sutra and Heart Sutra

The Buddha after his enlightenment, when he decided to teach, his first thought was to teach his teachers who had helped him in his early days. But he came to know that they were already dead. Then he decided to teach his five friends / followers who had left him afterwards. These five ascetics were then living in a place called Deer Park Saranath near Benares. It is believed that the Buddha taught them Four Noble Truths and Noble Eight-Fold Path following which they all gained enlightenment. This first teaching of the Buddha is known as First Turning of the Wheel of the Dharma (Dharmachakra-Pravartana)

Four Noble Truths:

- The Truths of Suffering (*Dukkha*)
- The Origin of Suffering (*Samudaya*)
- The Truth of the Cessation of Suffering (*Nirodha*)
- The Truth of the Way leading to the Cessation of Sufferings

"Here suffering means mental suffering. Physical suffering will be there. Even the Buddha suffered with injuries and back pain" . On one occasion Buddha said" My body is just like an old, broken-down cart which has been repaired many times.....But my mind is as vigorous as ever.....My intellectual and spiritual vigor is undiminished, despite the enfeebled state of my body."⁷

The First Noble Truth: *Dukkha* (Suffering): It is often interpreted by people that life according to Buddhism is nothing but suffering and pain, so it is pessimistic. But Buddhism is neither pessimistic nor optimistic. The Buddhism does not deny happiness of family life, happiness of sense pleasure etc. but they are all included in the first noble truth "*Dukkha*". Birth, aging, illness, loss, grieving and disappointment are all *Dukkha*. Separation from loved ones, contact with disliked ones and not getting what one wants are also suffering or *Dukkha*.The Buddha says that all kinds of happiness or pleasure ultimately lead to suffering, because they are impermanent. According to Buddhism, whatever is impermanent is *Dukkha*. We can have all sorts of pleasures, all sorts of achievement but eventually we still feel within ourselves dissatisfied – this is called *Dukkha*.

The Second Noble Truth :Origin of Suffering: A state of incessant, never-ending thirst - a craving is the origin of

Dukkha. The abolition of craving will abolish suffering. The Buddha said “Whoever in this world overcomes this craving so hard to transcend, will find that suffering falls away like drops of water falling from a flower”.⁸

The Truth of the Cessation of Suffering (*Nirodha*): The cessation of craving and clinging is the end of suffering. Nirvana is liberation, everlasting freedom, fulfillment, and enlightenment itself.⁸

The Truth of the Way leading to the Cessation of Sufferings: This path is known as the Noble Eight-Fold Path to Enlightenment. They are:

1. Right Understanding, or Right View or Perfect Vision
2. Right Resolution, or Right Resolve or Right Intentions
3. Right Speech or Perfect Speech
4. Right Action or Perfect action
5. Right Livelihood or Perfect livelihood
6. Right Effort or Perfect Effort
7. Right Mindfulness or Perfect Mindfulness
8. Right Concentration or Right Meditation (*Samyak Samadhi*)

The Noble Eight-Fold Path:

This is one of the best known aspects of the Buddha's teaching. So let us have a look at these one by one in brief. The first step on the Noble eight-Fold Path, Perfect Vision means the nature of a spiritual experience into the true nature of existence. The Perfect Vision tells seekers “to wipe the dust from their eyes, open their inner wisdom eyes, and discover clear vision.Right View emphasizes the development of wisdom or prajna, which at its essence means knowing what is, knowing how things work, and knowing oneself and others.”⁸

The second step Right Intentions asks us to purify our attitudes and thoughts to become honest with ourselves and to develop a working loving - kindness, empathy, and compassion towards all creatures.

Perfect Speech is the speech which is truthful, which is affectionate, which promotes harmony and unity. Perfect Action includes abstention from all forms of violence, all forms of oppression, all forms of injury and killings. It also includes abstention from any kind of dishonesty, sexual misconduct, and from intoxicating drinks and drugs. Right Livelihood means that one should abstain from making one's living through a profession that brings harm to others, such as trading in arms and lethal weapons, intoxicating drinks, poisons, killing animals, cheating etc. One can clearly see here that Buddhism is strongly opposed to any kind of war, when it lays down that trade in arms and lethal weapons

is an unjust means of livelihood. Right Effort really means spiritual effort. Through this effort we are opening our hearts and minds.

Right Mindfulness: “The whole thrust of Buddha's teaching is to master the mind. Mastery of mind is achieved through constant awareness of all our thoughts and actions.....Maintaining this constant mindfulness is the practice of tranquility and insight, we will eventually be able to sustain the recognition of wisdom even in the midst of ordinary activities and distraction. Mindfulness is thus the very basis, the cure for all samsaric afflictions.”⁹

Right Concentration or Right Meditation (*Samyak Samadhi*): Concentration meditation (*Samatha*) can help the practitioner reach the highest mystic states. Insight meditation (*Vipassana*) taught by the Buddha is the path to enlightenment and has been called the heart of Buddhist Meditation. The Buddha taught that in order to meditate, we need a combination of Right Effort and Right Mindfulness. The combination of concentration and insight meditation is the method the Buddha was practicing when he realized ultimate truth. The Buddha said that he experienced indescribable bliss, rapture, peace and transcendence through meditation.

In this last stage of Noble Eight-Fold Path, we have two terms, *Samatha* (Concentration), and *Samyak Samadhi* which is Enlightenment itself. In *Samatha* the mind becomes steady, like the flame of an oil lamp in the absence of the winds.³ Words cannot explain *Samyak Samadhi*. When a question was asked to the Buddha about *Samyak Samadhi* “The Enlightened one remained silent”

Five Skandas (Five Aggregates):

An individual according to Buddhist tradition, can be analyzed into five skandas they are (i) Form (ii) Feelings which may be pleasant, unpleasant or neutral (iii) Perceptions through sense organs (iv) Impulses like greed, hate, faith, wisdom etc (v) Consciousness. These aggregates change moment to moment and there is no independently existing permanent self or - *Atman* or soul. The concept of *Anatma or Anatta or no-self* is at the heart of the Buddha's teaching. According to the teaching of the Buddha, the idea of self is an imaginary, false belief which has no corresponding reality.

Twelve Nidanas (Twelve Links):

Wheel of Life is described as consisting of twelve links which are (i) Ignorance (*Avidhya*) (ii) the Propensities (*Samaskar*): These are the volitional actions of body, speech, and mind that make for further existence within the wheel of life (iii) Consciousness (*Vijyana*): In the

specific sense of the consciousness that arises in the womb of the mother at the moment of conceptions (iv) Name and Form (*nama-rupa*) : Roughly translatable as mind and body (v) Six Bases (*Shadayatan*): These are five physical sense organs plus the mind, the mind being considered as the organ of perception of mental objects (vi) Contact (*Sparsa*) : There is contact between the eye and the forms, the ear and sound, and so on and of course contact between mind and mental objects or ideas (vii) Sensations or Feelings (*Vedana*) : May be pleasant, painful or neutral feelings, and they can be experienced through all six senses, including the mind (viii) Craving (*Trishna*) : Craving for sensuous pleasure, craving for continued personal existence, and craving for non-existence. (ix) Grasping or Clinging (*Upadan*) : To sensuous pleasures; clinging to philosophical theories; and clinging to moral rules and religious observances as ends in themselves. (x) Becoming (*Bhava*) : In the sense of re-becoming within the wheel of life, whether within this human world or any other world. This link is sometimes understood as representing the period between actual conception and actual birth or between death and rebirth. (xi) Birth (*Jati*) : Re-birth (xii) Decay and Death (*Jaramaran*): Together with sorrow, lamentation, pain, grief, and despair.¹⁰

Prajnaparamita Sutras:

The most popular two sutras are Diamond Sutra and Heart Sutra. The chief message of the Prajnaparamita sutras is that perfect wisdom can be attained only by the complete and total extinction of all self-interest, and realization of emptiness.

Development of Buddhism and Buddhist Scriptures:

There are three yanas. Hinayana or the Little way: it teaches the individual realization and attainment of Nirvana. It gives great importance to monastic life. The Theravada and the Sravastivada are both forms of Hinayana. The second is the Mahayana or the Great way. It says in addition to one's own spiritual progress, one should be concerned with that of other people and try to help them according to one's spiritual qualification. The third Yana is Vajrayana also known as Tantric Buddhism. It accepts the Mahayanistic goal of universal salvation. Zen Buddhism believes in direct pointing to the mind and specializes in meditation.

Buddhist Scriptures are enormous in several hundred volumes, but they are all kept in three baskets (Tripitaka) as Sutras, Abhidharma and Vinaya . Sutras are the sayings of Buddha, Abhidharma is a collection of higher doctrine of Buddha Dharma and Vinaya is a collection of Monastic discipline.

It is commonly believed that immediately after the parinirvana of the Buddha, a council of 500 Arhats rehearsed the scriptures as Anand remembered them. Anand was the Buddha's cousin, he was with the Buddha at all the time for about 20 years and said to have a very good memory. For four centuries the scriptures were not written down, they were orally transmitted and existed only in the memory of monks.

Before closing the teachings of the Buddha these two quotes are worth mentioning.

The Buddha used to tell his followers: " Do not accept my teachings out of mere respect for me. Examine them and put them to rest as the goldsmith examines gold by cutting, heating, and hammering".¹¹ And the second quote is as follows:

" Do not believe in anything, simply because you have heard it.

Do not believe in traditions because they have been handed down for many generations.

Do not believe in anything because it is spoken and rumored by many.

Do not believe in anything simply because it is found written in your religious books.

Do not believe in anything merely on the authority of your teachers and elders.

But after observation and analysis, when you find that anything agrees with reason, and is conducive to the good and benefit of one and all, then accept it and live up to it"⁸

Buddhist Psychology about the Nature of Mind

As regards the psychology in general, Jung together with Freud was largely responsible for bringing us the concept of unconsciousness that has given Western understanding an invaluable map of the psyche.....The unconscious is realm beyond the reach of normal consciousness, that which contains aspects of ourselves in potential. According to this view, we cannot know directly the contents of the unconscious except when they break through into consciousness, either supporting or disrupting conscious functioning.⁶

According to Buddhist Philosophy " Mind (Manas) is a faculty or organ like the eye or the ear.....With our five physical sense organs – eye, ear, nose, tongue, body – we experience only the world of visible forms, sounds, odours, tastes and tangible objects.....Ideas and thoughts cannot be conceived by our five physical sense organs, they can be conceived by another faculty, which is mind. Hence mind is considered a sense organ.¹²

By Buddhist psychology, we mean Buddhism's teachings about the nature of mind. There are three levels of mind – the coarse level, subtle level and the very subtle level. The coarse level pertains to mental content such as

thoughts, sense perceptions and emotions. The subtle level is the fleeting mental activity surrounding sensory experience before that activity becomes full-blown mental content. The very subtle level is the level where impressions due to past actions are accumulated before these ripen in fresh experience. This very subtle mind is sometimes called storehouse consciousness.¹³

In Dhammapada, the Buddha is represented as saying these famous words "Mind is the forerunner of all mental states. Mind is their chief and they are mind made. If with pure mind one speaks or acts, happiness follows him close like his never departing shadow."¹⁰

His Holiness the Dalai Lama says about consciousness "There are different levels of consciousness. What we call innermost subtle level consciousness, is always there. The continuity of that consciousness is almost like something permanent like the space-particles. In the field of matter, that is the space particles; in the field of consciousness, it is the clear light.....The clear light, with its special energy makes the connection with consciousness."¹⁴

Sogyal Rinpoche in his spiritual classic *The Tibetan Book Of Living And Dying* explains "Saints and mystics throughout history have adorned their realizations with different names and given them different faces and interpretations, but what they are all fundamentally experiencing is the essential nature of the mind. Christians and Jews call it "God"; Hindus call it "the Self", "Shiva" "Brahman", and "Vishnu"; Sufi mystics name it "the Hidden Essence"; and Buddhists call it "Buddha Nature". At the heart of all religions is the certainty that there is fundamental truth, and that this life is sacred opportunity to evolve and realize it."¹⁵

Global Peace and Its Relationship With Healthy Mind

Buddhism places great emphasis on the virtue of nonviolence or *Ahimsa* towards all beings. King Ashoka (274 -236 B.C.) was converted to Buddhist faith repenting the slaughter which had own him his empire.

HH Dalai Lama in his book *Beyond Religion* writes " All the World's major religions, with their emphasis on love, compassion, patience, tolerance, and forgiveness can and do promote inner values.....time has come to find a way of thinking about spirituality and ethics that is beyond religion. Ethics based on any one religion would only appeal to some of us; it would not be meaningful for all.

HH Dalai Lama further says "Genuine peace must come from inner peace, without inner peace genuine lasting world peace is impossible. Genuine peace must develop

out of compassion, out of love. First level compassion is very limited and directed towards your friends, family and well wishers. Develop compassion to human beings, animals and all sentient beings, compassion even to your enemy as he is also a human being. Anger and hatred in you destroys your inner peace."¹⁶

Albert Einstein had expressed almost similar views by saying " a human being is a part of the whole called by us universe, a part limited in time and space. He experiences himself his thoughts and feeling as something separated from the rest, a kind of optical delusion of his consciousness. This delusion is a kind of prison for us, restricting us to our personal desires and to affection for a few persons nearest to us. Our task must be to free ourselves from this prison by widening our circle of compassion to embrace all living creatures and the whole of nature in its beauty.

Lama Surya Das in his book – *Awakening the Buddha within* – says ' How can there be peace in the world if we, its inhabitants, are not at peace with ourselves?. As long as there is a separation – between "us" and "them", self and other "me" as separate and distinct from "you" – conflict remains.

The principles of non-violence and interreligious harmony are utmost important in addition to other points mentioned above to bring global peace in this age of globalization.

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