

A Handful of Dhamma

Preface

Buddhism teaches about practice to help us handle psychological distress. There are numerous versions of Buddhist texts which have myriad interpretations of what Buddha taught. This book called “A Handful of Dhamma” which is a teaching summary of the Lord Buddha for laymen who seek relief from life’s suffering. Buddha’s epistemology is the solution for suffering, and his teaching points out the cause and effect of the suffering. Buddha teaching establishes causality so that humans can understand the problem and find the solution. This book aims to help people to deal with unpleasant things in their life. I want to see the world having sustained peace, so I hope this book can help you to find the way which leads to the cessation of life suffering.

Techapanyo Phikku

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Buddhabutr Habitat

Sichang Island, Chon Buri, THAILAND

Two types of religion

All human beings wish they were happy. Unfortunately, we face many problems in life both physical and psychological. These problems cause us to suffer. The physical problem is discomfort and unsatisfied experience such as pain, hunger, thirst, discomfort, aging, sickness, death and persecution by humans, animals and natural disasters. The psychological problems include suffering, sorrow, regret and fear caused by passion such as not wanting to get old, not wanting to be hurt, not wanting to die, not wanting to separate, not wanting to be disappointed and so on. Human assets, wealth or knowledge of pure science cannot solve the mind problem. Therefore, religion was born to help us solve human psychological problems and to help humans escape from the suffering of the mind.

Buddhism relates to the nature that is perceived as "sovereignty". The word sovereignty means the sovereign in the world and in the universe that keeps everything keep everything in control or inspires things to go and destroy things when the time comes. There are two types of religion as follows:

- 1.Theism is the worship of a supernatural entity of the highest power.

2. Atheism is a religion that respects nature as the highest power.

The word "nature" refers to things that we can perceive or experience or prove by our senses through eyes, ears, nose, tongue, body and mind. In the truth of this nature, there will be reasons to explain which principle is rational and verifiable. This is the heart of science. The principles of science are based on reason, systematic study and the belief that any principle or theory is correct or true only when the results have been proven clearly. This principle is always up-to-date and is a principle accepted by all intellectuals.

As for the word "supernatural", this means something beyond ordinary, beyond reason, and beyond proof. Therefore, we have to exercise our faith in a supernatural story. Superstition is a personal belief that does not have any support or evidence from the research. Laymen who believe in a supernatural power, they fail to see and apply logic in their life. Theism is the belief in a supernatural God with a supreme power in the world and in the universe. Theism will teach you to believe that God exists and can solve the problems of human life. Theism makes you believe in God and to do what God has commanded by having a prophet who is able to communicate with God and brings instruction from God to teach people to abstain from doing evil, teach to love and help others.

An atheistic religion does not believe in supernatural things. Rather, it will accept a nature that can be touched or proven to be the most powerful, which can then help to solve our mind problems. Buddhism with "Buddha" as a prophet (teacher discovered the ultimate truth of nature called the Four Noble Truths, and he brought this highest truth to teach people. Buddhism will teach you to use wisdom to escape from suffering.

Buddhism: Nature is the most powerful

The lord Buddha taught that the most powerful thing in the world and in the universe is "nature", which we can actually experience. Nature is a common thing in the world that influences living thing. There is one supreme law that the lord Buddha called Itappajjayata, which means living together and then occurring. This law is the rule that has the ultimate power to keep everything in control or destroy things when the time comes. This law is the rule that controls everything, and the ultimate law of nature is a matter of cause and effect, which we already know well enough. In fact, the ultimate law of this nature is a basic rule that everyone already knows and accepts. When there is a cause, there is an effect, when there is no cause, there is no effect. This is about understanding the truth of nature. In conclusion, the Buddha's teaching is based on natural factors. There is no god or sacred thing in Buddhism. It's the most important thing that all Buddhists must know and understand to properly study the Four Noble Truths of the Buddha, so that

they are able to understand and put this understanding into practice in order to escape from life suffering. Let's now look at what Buddha taught.

Two levels of Dhamma

Dhamma in summary means the teachings of the Buddha and are divided into two levels.

1. Dhamma for laymen teaches that focusing on living in the present with happiness and learning how to sacrifice, forgive, and to show gratitude to a benefactor.

2. Dhamma for mind focuses on controlling the mind to be free from suffering. This level requires a lot of consideration and critical thinking to achieve the cessation of suffering. This matter is a matter of importance for human life.

Why do we have to end suffering?

The reason that the lord Buddha teaches the cessation of suffering is because the suffering is bothering our life. Especially, suffering from death and the

separation from beloved persons are the most unpleasant experiences for all human beings. Mind suffering is the most problematic issue for laymen. Therefore, the Four Noble Truths of suffering can help us to critically analyse our thinking as follows:

1. Dukkha is suffering, pain, sorrow or misery.
2. Samudaya is a cause or the origin of Dukkha
3. Nirodha is the cessation of Dukkha
4. Magga or Ariyamak is the path leading to the cessation of Dukkha

What is suffering?

Suffering is attachment to our life. There are two types of attachment: mind attachment and belongings. Firstly, attachment can mean holding on to sensations such as love, passion, greed and hate. Secondly, physical attachment such as husband or wife, parents, siblings, children, grandchildren, relatives, friends, as well as possessions or things. These two types of attachments cause Dukkha: hidden suffering and revealed suffering. Suffering according to the Four Noble Truths can be separated in 2 ways: hidden suffering and revealed suffering. Hidden suffering is a symptom of our mind when we feel hot, anxious, not calm, unpleasant etc.

Human do not often think of hidden suffering because it has been wrapped in happiness but it also makes our minds suffer. So, we have to really look at it from our own mind. Does it really cause our minds to have hidden suffering or not? In order to develop wisdom, we need to recognise this hidden suffering.

Revealing suffering is the grief that occurs when we have dissatisfaction of the body conditions. For example, from old age, hunger, thirst, death, dissatisfaction and etc. This is called "Revealed suffering" because these physical states can be witnessed with the naked eye. This can be frightening and is common to us all. The Buddha teaches that one must know suffering correctly. One must understand that suffering happens based on satisfaction and dissatisfaction. If one knows suffering correctly, one will know the cause of suffering and the right way to end suffering.

Passion: cause of suffering

The Lord Buddha teaches that "Lust" is the utmost foolishness of humanity and is the instinct of our subconscious minds. Lust is a symptom of passion which makes the mind distracted. The definition of lust can be seen as follows:

1. The desire of satisfaction, joy and happiness, these are called positive passions which still cause hidden suffering.

2. The desire to push away from oneself, which is the lack of wanting, not wanting to be or anger, hate, fear, unsatisfied, these are classified as negative passion which causes distress.

3. The desire to be neutral or indifferent. Layman is recommended to remain calm and focused regardless of happiness or grief. This passion is classified as a middle path in Buddhism.

When one's mind experiences a delightful condition, the mind has a craving for this delightful state. This can cause our minds to have hidden suffering immediately. Unlike, when our minds face with unsatisfactory condition, our minds become not wanting, not wanting to experience that unpleasant condition. This will cause our minds to be reveal suffering immediately. If our minds have not yet experienced both states of delight and an unfavourable condition, our minds are in a neutral state all the time. When our mind is in this neutral state, our mind will not have any suffering. Therefore, this type 3 of lust is not considered to cause suffering to our mind.

Nirvana: peace of the mind

The law of nature is "when there is a cause, there is an effect, when there is no cause, there is no effect" and so a passion causes suffering of the mind. We can understand that if our mind lacks passion, suffering will not occur. When our mind is not lustful, our mind will not have suffering. Consequently, our mind will be calm, focused, clear, fresh, light and peaceful. Buddhism calls this state of mind "Nirvana".

The important thing to understand is Nirvana is not the kind of happiness that we enjoy because happiness will satisfy our mind and causes hidden suffering. We have to observe that when our mind experiences suffering and hidden suffering, how does it feel? People who don't have accurate knowledge of the Four Noble Truths misunderstand Nirvana, thinking that Nirvana refers to the death of Arahant (those who never come back to be born as anything else). The lord Buddha taught it has nothing to do with the death of the body. Therefore, the Four Noble Truths of the Buddha have to be interpreted carefully.

Two levels of Nirvana

There are two levels of this Nirvana, primary Nirvana and highest Nirvana. The primary level is the initial Nirvana which is the basic calmness that we

already have as usual in our daily life while our minds are not experiencing passion and suffering. This is a peace of mind or comfort that arises from the fact that we are good people of society and have not done anything bad. This state can happen on a daily basis. The primary Nirvana is something that already exists, according to the nature of all human life. If there is no basic Nirvana, we must go crazy as passion would bother us all the time. Therefore, we should see the grace of this primary Nirvana. The highest Nirvana can be achieved by training our mind to fully concentrate. Thus, our mind will be purified and extremely calm.

If the subconsciousness brings back the passion, the suffering comes back this may cause this highest Nirvana to disappear. Therefore, Nirvana at this stage it is only temporary. The Four Noble Truths of the Buddha will help our mind reach permanent calmness or Nirvana, the highest aim of Buddhism.

Harmony between precepts, meditation and wisdom

The precepts, meditation, wisdom must be used together. The precepts are the normality of the mind whereas meditation is a pure, firm and gentle mind. The wisdom is understanding and seeing the truth and its purpose is to realize that our life does not last forever. The body and mind are temporary. The Buddha taught that precepts, meditation and wisdom need

to work together to stop the passion or obstacle. This will make our habit of passion completely fade away and it will make our mind reach the permanent Nirvana.

The precepts are the normal of mind.

Precepts mean the normal of the mind. If our mind is not normal, it becomes distracted, struggling, anxious, frightened, stressed, bored or wrathful. The five precepts of Buddhists are illustrated as follows:

1. Refrain from killing any living creature
2. Refrain from telling lies, profanity, sneakiness, and delusions
3. Refrain from stealing
4. Refrain from being promiscuous
- 5, Refrain from taking any addictive substances.

These five precepts for laymen are very important because they can help us to stay focused on a daily basis. Concentration will be the basis of wisdom. If one does not follow these precepts, it might be difficult to understand the Four Noble Truths. The laymen can practice these five precepts in order to lead them to the cessation of suffering and achieve Nirvana.

Mediation: mind focus

Concentration means being persistent. It is a condition in which our mind stays focused on doing one thing at the moment. The wrong concentration is to concentrate with passion all the time which will cause the mind to suffer from over focus. The mind will become heated and tormented by the extreme desire. For example, if one focuses on anger, this will cause one's mind to become more furious. The right concentration is constant concentration on doing something good that such as breathing, reading or listening. The concentration can be divided into three types as follows:

1. Pure concentration with no desire
2. Determined concentration
3. Easy concentration

The result of right concentration can make the mind happy, calm, mindful. When the mind does not have any desire to dominate, one can reach Nirvana. In conclusion, when the mind is concentrated the mind will be calm and not emotional. It requires that we understand the obstacles of the concentration. The obstacle of meditation prevents our mind from focusing. There are five types of obstacles as follows:

1. Satisfaction of lust
2. Satisfaction of property and belongings
3. Satisfaction of laziness, anger and hopeless
4. Being distracted
5. Being uncertain about something

These five obstacles can cause our minds to suffer. However, they will not happen to our minds all the time or all day long. They appear when there is an external stimulant via senses such as anger, sadness, suffering or happiness. When these emotions occur in our minds, they will make our mind frustrate and distracted. As a result, one might be unable to concentrate and achieve the highest Nirvana.

How to practice meditation? First one must stay focused on the present action. For example, focus on reading a book, walking or listening to a lecture. There are different actions which can help one's mind to stay focused for a moment such as gazing at the ground, the water or one's own feeling at the moment. The practice of deep breathing in and out is practiced while walking, standing, sitting or even sleeping. However, sitting with eyes close or open is recommended firstly because it is the manner which helps the mediator to focus easier than the other movements. During meditation, one should focus on a deep breathing in and out because it will stop us from

being distracted. Focus on the deep breath. From the beginning of mediation, one can count the number in mind, this technique is used to focus on breathing.

Alternatively, while breathing, one can repeat any words in mind such as in, out, tired, bored, pain etc. Being focused with deep breathing in and out can lead to mindfulness. When the mind stays focused, it will be calm and concentrated. For the beginner, it is quite difficult to be fully focused for the first time. However, keep practicing and stay focused on the breath while inhaling in and out slowly. This practice can make the mind concentrate and can achieve critical thinking which leads to wisdom.

Contemplation gazing

Jhana is a mediation method through contemplation of one thing for long hours. First, when one looks at something for a long time, can concentrate. Next, when the mind is fully focused, one can achieve a peaceful and tranquil condition. This condition will bring happiness and joy to the person. In addition, completely focus can make the passion and distraction disappear. Once there is no passion and lust, the mind can reach Nirvana.

When the mind is utterly cool, this shows that our mind has the highest concentration. This meditation is necessary to practice in order to attain extinction of thirsts. The focus on one thing for a long time until our mind does not perceive anything outside is difficult to practice. If anyone want to practice this, they need to stay fully focused.

Atta

Before further explanation, it is important to understand the meaning of the word "Atta".

Atta means soul, self and ego. Everything is impermanent and constantly changing. The Buddha said a permanent thing is the Absolute Truth. The Absolute Truth is that there is nothing permanent, unchanging and everlasting, including the soul and the self. The realisation of this Truth helps laymen to achieve the extinction of craving thirst and the cessation of Dukkha which leads to Nirvana.

Wisdom

The word "wisdom" in Buddhism means knowledge of thing that you should know which will help the passion of humankind vanish and eliminate

suffering. This knowledge is called Trinity which refers to 3 aspects as follows:

1. Anijjang means impermanence. There is nothing unchanging except the Absolute Truth.

2. Dukkha means suffering, pain and unpleasantness.

3. Anatta means no-soul or no-self. Anatta refers to see things objectively as they are without subjective judgement. This objective viewpoint will reduce one's ego and help to think critically. In conclusion, all addition to our life will blind us from being realistic about ourselves.

Three levels of wisdom

Knowing Anijjang (impermanence), Dukkha (suffering) and Anatta (no-soul, no-self) means knowing wisdom that is practiced in conjunction with the precepts and meditation. In order to end suffering, laymen need to understand the level of wisdom as follows:

1. Recognized intelligence is the listening or reading the true teaching of the Buddha and remembering.
2. Understanding intelligence is to bring the knowledge from memories in order to consider and find reasons until the understanding penetrates completely.
3. Enlightened intelligence is to bring that understanding into practice until the suspension or disappearance of suffering.

In order to come up with an understanding of wisdom, the Buddha taught that we examine the body and mind, both ours and those of others, let's take a closer look at all aspects (Anijjang, Tukgang, Anatta in the past, present and future. As a result, we can come up with understanding of intelligence and if we practice with the precepts and meditation until suffering disappears , Nirvana appears and this will allow us to develop visible wisdom.

The finding of this wisdom in Buddhism is called the "Spiritual eye", the eye which sees the law which makes the mind with eye see this dharma become the spirit of the noble man (A noble person), initially called "Sodaban". The noble person is the first one who is enlightened. If the mind is able to practice until the end of permanent suffering, it called the mind of Arahant which is the highest wisdom of Buddhism.

Anatta: the core of wisdom

Normally all human beings will have the consciousness of life (Body and mind) or self-consciousness that makes us all misunderstand that people are the true self. Our mind meets the desire and all sorrows without understanding and seeing the cause of suffering. This is illogical opinion of the life to perceive that life belongs to us. Prince Siddhartha discovered that human beings and all creatures are soulless, and there is not really an identity and the true self (Atta). Thus, the Buddha was enlightened and understood Anatta, and this wisdom from his teachings is taught all over the world. It can conclude that the teaching of the Lord Buddha on the mind of living thing as Anatta is the core of wisdom. Anatta is related to precepts and meditation which can end suffering. Therefore, the four noble truths are important and we need to study and correctly understand them.

5 types of Khan: sensation from body and mind

The Buddha taught that 5 Khan is the sensation of body and mind. Our physical and mental feeling arise, stand, and disappear. This changing condition will give us the wisdom to understand that our life is impermanent. The composition of Khan is illustrated as follows:

1. Roop Khan (shape) is the whole body or age that make up the body, our body or organ is formed by four elements: dirt is solid, water is liquid, fire is heat, and wind is air. These four elements create the body and appearance.

2. Vinyarn Khan (sensation) is a perception that occurs when the six parts of the body (eyes, ears, nose, tongue, body and mind) experience external reality such as an image, a sound, a smell, a taste, a touch. The sensation causes the awareness of the nerve system. For example, if you look at the picture, you will immediately see it or when a sound touches your ears, you will hear it . The spirit or awareness has been scientifically discovered to be light electricity that arise from the nerves. One should understand that the soul is the mind in both human and animals. The soul will leave the body when reaching death and this soul can turn into a new form.

3. Sanya Khan (recognition) is to remember what is perceived. This recognition can be distinguished as remembering what image, what sound or what smell and taste. We experience. Our mind relates to the brain which stores and records the data.

4. Vetana Khan (sensation) is the feeling of being perceived from the eyes, ears, nose, tongue, body and mind. These things generate three types of feeling: happiness, suffering and mind feeling.

5. Sang-Khan Khan (mind manipulation) manipulates the mind. The manipulation happens when our mind is dominated by ignorance. The mind will cause a passion that is called "distressed mind". When passion arises, the mind will have more intense suffering. Sangkhan does not purify when it is dominated by a passion. When our mind is mindfulness, the wisdom and meditation make ignorance and passion disappear. The empty mind without suffering may still cause suffering. This is because if you want to hold enjoyment of emptiness, you will suffer when you lose it. The only ultimate emptiness is Nirvana (calm and peaceful) which is pure Sangkhan.

The Buddha taught that "We don't really exist in this body and mind".

From the study of all additives, there will be three truths, impermanence, condition of endurance and no true self. This teaching will make us understand the causation of happening and disappearing. Everything happens because of the additives. From this principle it can be said that objects such as cars and cell phones are composed of many objects or parts. Consequently, it can imply that there is no real identity of both cell phone and car. There will be only additives that we suppose to call cars and mobile phones. Furthermore, the car and the cell phone cannot remain forever, sooner or later they will be broken and disappear. Thus far, the additives are impermanent and unreal. Our body is composed of bones, blood and soul,

without these components, we do not exist. Every human is born, grows old and dies. The mind is "what is imaginable". When we die, our mind disappears also. Therefore, our mind is unreal. When we sleep and not dream, there will be no mind. But when we are dreaming, the mind will arise. To conclude, we do not actually exist in this mind even though this mind has a feeling. We have been around for a long time and think this is our life, body, and mind. However, our body and our mind are not real because they are created by different additives. This creation is temporarily because we will not exist forever. This understanding focuses emphasis that our own body and mind will disappear.

Purity of true mind

Buddha taught that the mind of every new-born child is completely empty and pure. The pure mind has no self-belief. When the child's mind perceives through the eyes, ears, nose, tongue and body, the sensation occurs. Then, the belief of self appears with suffering and ignorance dominating the mind. The original nature of every human mind is empty or pure. The human mind creates a belief that is self-possessed with selfishness. The selfishness brings joy from the materialism of the world. This happiness brings many penalties and dangers that come later. Selfishness causes catastrophic disasters in various forms all over the world such as war, pollution or assault.

Why were we born?

Man is a living being that nature created. Humans will be under the natural law or the law of changing. Human should take care of their minds to be calm and peaceful. Nirvana is the peaceful and calm state. Human beings were born to perform the functions required by nature which is the most important aspect of every human being. We have to study and achieve our own knowledge in order to understand that life is the most valuable. This understanding will help to escape mental distress and be free from physical distress.

Life after death

The question of people interested in studying Buddhism is often asked "where are we going after we die, heaven or hell?". It is believed that people are born to pay for Karma, after death, accordingly to Karma (actions). If you do bad thing, when you die, you will go to hell. Vice versa if you did good thing, you will go to heaven. That is called the Wheel of life because after death is not cessation. The soul would be reborn in hell, or in heaven to be an angel, god or in human form. This reborn is not the end. If laymen want to cess this life circle, they need to attain Nirvana.

Karma: actions

First of all, we need to understand that "karma influences life upon death, one is reborn due to Karma. Karma is an act of intent that has both good desires and negative desires. Karma is called misfortune. When we do good actions both physically or verbally, this is called merit-making. In the contrary, when we do bad things, this is called "sin". This mischief or effect of good and bad is called 'heaven and hell' in the abstract way of Buddhism. This teaching of Karma is a moral teaching for those who do not have enough wisdom to study the higher-level teaching of the cessation of suffering. To be able to understand correctly the Lord Buddha taught those who do not yet have enough wisdom just do only good (good karma) and not do bad (evil karma) in order to have happiness in present and future life.

Summary

Buddha summarises his teaching as 'Anatta' which means nothing is permanent, no-soul and no-self. This can be explained that all things do not hold a true identity because they are impermanent. Nothing exists forever, and sooner or later it will disintegrate and disappear. If our mind is manipulated, we will immediately feel bothered, tired or uncomfortable. Impermanence causes our mind to be dissatisfied, grieve or feel sorrow. If

our mind stays focused, the wisdom of understanding and seeing will make our mind detached from all additives. When there is no additives, there is no suffering. When the mind is not suffering, it is Nirvana. The buddha was enlightened and we have to learn the true teachings of the Lord Buddha. This teaching helps us to understand and practice in order to get most benefit from this life.

The beliefs of the Buddha

Buddhism is a religion that teaches wisdom before beliefs, when we have faith in Buddhism, we will have wisdom. The wisdom precedes the false beliefs or premises. The Buddha teaches about "Kalama Sutta" or ten believes of scepticism as follows:

- 1.Do not believe that it is true just because of word of mouth.
- 2.Do not believe that it is true just because it is a story from ancient times.
- 3.Do not believe that it is true just because it is a rumour.
- 4.Do not believe that it is true just because it is published.
- 5.Do not believe that it is true just because it is a speculation.
- 6.Do not believe that it is true just because it sounds reasonable.
- 7.Do not believe that it is true just because of your common sense.

8.Do not believe that it is true just because it corresponds to a personal experience.

9.Do not believe that it is true just because the person is credible.

10.Do not believe that it is true just because the person your teacher.

When we learn something , we have to consider it critically and evaluate the pros and cons. The Buddha taught critical thinking. We cannot believe anyone or any textbook because we still do not know about them. Without critical thinking, it leads to false premises. The Lord Buddha takes into consideration that it is necessary to see in every sense of the word. Therefore, one must not believe without considering apparent reasons. Kalama teaching will enable the discovery of the true teaching of the Buddha with our own intelligence and without biases.

Source: www.whatami.net - www.whatami.6te.net