

The Way to Happiness in Buddhism

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Abstract

This paper attempts to prove "The Way to Happiness in Buddhism". The solution to the problem is that way to happiness is a necessary factor for human society. All human beings are in search of happiness. Different people try to obtain happiness in different ways. This paper will contribute towards the way to happiness in Buddhism.

Key words: Happiness, Buddhism, Human society.

Introduction

What is happiness? Happiness is a mental state which can be attained through the culture of the mind. Physical sources such as wealth, name, fame, social position and popularity are but temporary sources of happiness.

People think they can find happiness in money, so they try their best to be wealthy. When they are wealthy, are they happy? If wealth were the source of happiness, wealthy people would be happier than the poor people. But we find in many cases, the ordinary people who are not very well-to-do are happier than the rich. We have even heard of some millionaires who tried to commit suicide. They would never think of committing suicide if wealth were the source of happiness. So, wealth is not really the source of happiness.

Then power, name or fame may be a temporary source of happiness. When people lose their name or fame or power, they are in a state of anxiety or worry. It shows that name or fame or power is not the main source of happiness since it can also be a source of worry and since impermanence affects it. Some people think that a partner, a good congenial partner, may be the source of happiness. It may be to some extent but not to the fullest extent. Some people think that children might be the source of happiness but when they are separated for some reasons or another, they feel unhappy. Even when they are winners, they are happy only for a short while. For a short while they are happy, but this happiness cannot last long. The outside sources are not the real sources of happiness.

But the main thing is the mind. The mind which is controlled and cultured, is the real source of happiness or the way to happiness. So the purpose of this paper is to show the way to happiness based on Theravāda Buddhism propounded in the Mangala Sutta, Triple Gem, Brahmavihāra and Satipatthāna Sutta.

The Way to happiness in Mangala Sutta

Mangala Sutta is an important prerequisite for happiness. This is to live within our means. Mangala Sutta is popular in Buddhism. Before the Buddha it was regarded as omens seen on heard or touched to predict the future. After the Enlightenment of the Buddha, it came to be understood as the way to practice for happiness. This Sutta belongs to khuddaka Pāṭha¹ and Suttanipāṭa².

¹ Khuddakapāṭha Pāli, P-2, 1960

² Suttanipāṭa, P.46, 1957

Mangala is the way to happiness as for the education, one is to associate with the wise to learn knowledge. He should live in a suitable place for his education. He should have much learning, to be skilled in crafts. As for the economics one should live in a suitable place in search of wealth. He should have much learning in economics. He should have speech that is well-spoken. He should have blameless actions. He should abstain from evil actions of speech and mind and intoxicants. He should have respectfulness, humbleness, contentment, gratitude, patience and obedience.

As for the social dealings, one should not associate with the fools but to associate with the wise. He should pay honor to the worthy one. He should keep his mind in a proper way. He should have speech well-spoken. He should have two kinds of speech: the speech which is true, beneficial but it is not liked by others; and should have speech which is true, beneficial and it is like by others. He should care the father, mother, children, wife, monks, labors, relatives and friends. He should restrain from evil actions mentally, verbally and bodily. He should abstain from intoxicants. He should have respectfulness, humbleness, contentment, gratitude, patience and obedience.

As for the health, he should have to associate with the wise to take their advice in health. He should have good actions mentally, verbally and bodily. He should live in a suitable place for him health. He should have much learning for health. He should have giving, practice what is good, support to the relatives and blameless actions. He should abstain from evil mind, body and speech. He should abstain from intoxicants and negligence in meritorious deeds. He should have to meet the monks and to have listening and discussing Dhammas. He should lead to a noble life.

As for the religion, he should have meritorious deeds done in the past. For that reason he should do meritorious deeds in this present life. He should keep his mind and body in a proper way. He should have much learning in Pāli knowledge. He should be well-trained in moral conduct and well-spoken. He should have giving, good practice, support of one's relative and blameless actions. He should have non-negligence in meritorious deeds. He should respectfulness, humbleness, contentment, gratitude and listening to the Dhamma; He should have patience, meeting with the monks, discussing the Dhamma, meditation noble practice, seeing the Four Noble Truths and realizing the Nibbāna.

As has been mentioned above, Mangala Sutta begins with mundane practices such as to keep away from the fools and associate with the wise and it end with the practice to get salvation, to realize the Nibbāna. It gives the ethical guides to the people to get happiness in mundaneness and supermandaneness.

The way to happiness in Triple Gems¹

Religion is or should be, the most important thing in a person's life. Unless we believe in something lofty, there is not much purpose in living. Our mental and physical faculties are so limited that we need to have something to protect us. In the case of a Buddhist, he can readily take refuge in the Buddha, the Dhamma and the Samgha.

The Gem of the Buddha

A Buddhist takes refuge in Three Incomparable Gems to guide his noble conduct. It is known as "Saranagamana" in Pāli. It means going to or approaching the three Greatest Gems to have a Right Path and Right Conduct for Nibbāna. The word "sarana" means refuge, protection against harm and danger.

¹ How to live as A good Buddhist Vol I, P 8-10, translated by U Han Htay and U Chit Tin, 2002

By paying homage and respects to Omniscient Buddha one knows he is the greatest teacher who shows the correct way to happiness, welfare and liberation, and he himself is completely pure, perfect in thought, word and deed. He is always blameless, always pure. So Buddhists bow down their heads in deep respect in front of the Buddha. The Buddha has all moral virtues, worthy homage by gods and men. He is a perfect and all knowing unique human being.

The Gem of the Dhamma

The homage paid to Dhamma signifies following the teaching of Right View, Right Conduct, Right Mindfulness, etc. for the sake of noblest peace and purity. Indeed, the Noble Dhamma always teaches all living beings to avoid evil, to do good and to purify the mind. By these means or guidance salvation from samsāra is achieved. Even, as one of the six Powers Virtues of Dhamma, the "Sandithika", immediate realization, peace and happiness is experienced here and now.

Also there are benefits of welfare in the next life., after truth realization too, immediate benefits in this life are quite certain. So this incomparable, unique Dhamma saves all living beings from harm and danger. Not only does it protect those who follow the right path but also it destroys evil and suffering.

The Gem of the Samgha

By paying homage to Samgha Gem, even a slight wholesome deed brings great progress and welfare for such a devotee. For the true bhikkhu in this Sāsana are properly ordained and their good virtues prevent danger and harm that best mankind. With right understanding of the virtues of ariya samgha, defilements are destroyed in heart and mind.

Dealing with other human beings, is usually a difficult task. One's happiness in life depends to a great extent on this ability. Before going out into the world, it is good to pay homage to the Buddha in one's shrine room. One feels that one is somewhat "armored" from the trails and tribulations in the world after entrusting oneself to the Triple Gems. As long as one has to make a living in this competitive world, these will be problems and heartaches but if one is fortified with the belief that one is on the side of truth and justice one can gain much courage in facing them.

The way to happiness in Brahmavihāra¹

A mind that is full of hate and jealousy can never achieve happiness. The Sublime Satates, known as Brahmavuhāra in Pāli, consists of the following:-

Mettā (loving-Kindness)

Karunā (Compassion)

Muditā (Appreciative Joy)

Upekkhā (Equanimity)

Mettā (loving kindness)

Keep your mind incessantly occupied with mettā and you will really develop mettā for all. In other words mettā must be developed so that your mind becomes enriched with loving-kindness.

¹ Janakābhivamisa, Ashin, Abhidhammā in daily life, Translated and Edited by U Ko Lay, New Burma Press, Amarapura Township, 1999.

When you radiate mettā directed to someone while concentrating your thoughts on that person and wishing, "May so and so be prosperous", your mettā will communicate with the person on the receiving end. It happens as if your mettā has reached that person's mind. Therefore, when you radiate mettā direct to someone, people today say "you sent mettā to someone".

Only when you earnestly wish well-being of someone or some beings can we say that mettā has been radiated properly. If you just say "Averā hontu, etc., by rote learning with wondering mind and without concentration, then you are not sending mettā as you intend to do. It is better therefore to recite in one's own vernacular rather than in Pāli so that you really comprehend what you are uttering. You should mention a person by name when you send mettā.

Karunā (compassion)

Karunā means loving compassion for all beings suffering from misery. The essence is the sincere wish to deliver them from their present woes. Therefore in propagating people recite in Pāli: "Dukkha muccantu" which means "May they get free from suffering and come to happiness. Wishing "May so and so die quickly" so as to bring his suffering to a quick end is not only not true karunā, but is in reality "byāpāda-ducarita" (evil conduct in thought that is ill will)

Real Karunā means noble attitude of pity for a suffering person or a being. Merely uttering "Dukkha muccantu" will not constitute true karunā.

Muditā (Appreciative Joy)

Muditā is appreciative joy at the success, propriety and achievement of others. It is the sincere wish to let others continue enjoying their wealth, position, progress, happiness, fame and so on. To send muditā, one should recite wittingly "Yathatadhasampattito ma vigacchantu" which means "May they not lose the success or happiness they have achieved" and radiate appreciative joy when you witness the will being of a person. A mere recitation of pāli words does not constitute real muditā.

Upekkhā (equanimity)

Upekkhā is equanimity which is viewing rightly and having no partiality. To send upekkhā is to reflect, "people have kamma alone as their property; whatever good or bad that happen to them is due to their kamma".

That is to say, one should reflect: "Even though I send metta for his happiness, he will be happy only if he had good kamma; even though I feel compassionate for him, he will be free from suffering only if he had good kamma; even though I am happy with his prosperity, and do not want him to lose this prosperity, he will be able to maintain this prosperity and his life only if he had good kamma. Therefore I should not be concerned about him; he has his kamma as his own property."

The way to happiness in Satipatthāna Sutta¹

No genuine happiness can be attained without practising Satipatthāna (foundation of mindfulness). To give just a very brief explanation of this, one has to be aware of everything one is doing. Whether one is standing, walking, sitting or eating, one is to be fully aware of everything that is taking place. If one is angry, one must be fully aware that one is angry. By being conscious of the fact that one has lost one's temper, the immediate benefit one gains is that one is able to check oneself.

¹ Samyutta Pāli, vol II, 536.

In the opening person, from this sutta;

"This is the only way, monks for the purification of beings, for the overcoming of sorrow and lamentation for the disappearance of pain and grief for catching the Noble Path, for the realization of Nibbāna, namely the Four Foundations of Mindfulness.

"Herein monks, a monk dwells contemplating the body in the body, ardent clearly comprehending and mindful, overcoming covetousness and grief in the world;

"He dwells contemplating the feelings in the feelings, ardent, clearly comprehending and mindful, over-coming covetousness and grief in the world;

"He dwells contemplating the consciousness in the consciousness, ardent, clearly comprehending and mindful, overcoming covetousness and grief in the world;¹

For The Purification of Beings means for the purification of the minds of beings. Because Buddha is more concerned about the purification of mind that the purification of the physical body although it does not mean that we do not take care of the cleanliness of the physical body- what is more important for us is the cleanliness of our mind. So, the purification here means purification of minds of beings.

As the Lord Buddha has preached, if we want to overcome sorrow and lamentation or crying aloud we should practise mindfulness. Mindfulness is the only way to overcome sorrow and lamentation. Here sorrow is a mental state and lamentation is crying loud through sorrow and saying this thing or that. To overcome sorrow and lamentation also we should practise the foundations of Mindfulness.

Pain here means physical pain, pain in the body, and grief means mental pain, depression, ill will and hatred. All these are included in the word "grief". For the overcoming and disappearance of pain and grief, we should practise the foundations of mindfulness. As I have said you may not conquest pain, you may not overcome pain altogether, pain may not disappear altogether. But, if you practise mindfulness, you will be able to live with pain and accept it.

Mind cannot take two things, or more than one thing at a time. Mind can only take one object at a time. I think we are lucky. If mind could take two or more things at a time, our suffering would be much greater. Since mind can take only one thing at a time, we can overcome sorrow and grief by the practice of mindfulness. So Buddha said, "This is the only way to overcome sorrow and lamentation and to overcome pain and grief".

This is the only way for the realization of Nibbāna. This is the same thing as reaching the Noble Path. So, when a person reaches the Noble Path, when the Path consciousness, arises in him/her and that consciousness takes Nibbāna as object, that is when he/she is said to have realized Nibbāna. So, reaching the Noble Path and realization of Nibbāna mean the same thing.²

Conclusion

In the Mangala Sutta, there are ethical guides and the way to happiness. As an ethical guide, it is important in Buddhism. The final goal of Buddhism is Nibbāna, the Ultimate Truth. The Mangala Sutta directs us to observe the mental, verbal and bodily evil deeds or morality, so also, to realize the Nibbāna having seen the four Noble Truths. These practices are thirty-eight blessings. So one should understand the way to happiness in Mangala sutta.

¹ Angattara Pāli, vol I, 579

² Sīlānamda, U., Four Foundations of Mindfulness an exposition of the summary, P 6-11, Published by Inward Path, Panang, Malaysia (1927)

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Since one cannot love and hate at the same time, if you radiate *Mettā* towards a person there will be no room for hate in your mind towards him. If we have compassion for an individual, we cannot at the same time entertain feeling of harshness against him. If you rejoice in someone's success, how can a feeling of jealousy enter your heart at the same time? We want our dear and near ones to do well in life. We admonish them as much as we can to be highly-motivated and diligent but if they do not accept the admonition, the best attitude to take is that of equanimity. There is a limit to which one individual can influence another for good or evil. If we remember this, we can practise *Upekkhā* more successfully.

Finally, when you practise all these four foundations of mindfulness (*Satipatthāna*), but you practise them at random and not one after another in the order given in the *Satipatthāna Sutta*. That is because when you practice, four foundations of mindfulness you have to be mindful of the object of the present moment. You cannot afford not to be mindful of the object at the present moment. The object of the present moment can be any one of these four. Sometimes the body, sometimes feeling, sometimes consciousness and sometimes dhamma objects. Whatever there is, your duty is to be mindful of that object so you do not have covetousness and grief regarding that object.

If you understand the *Satipatthāna Sutta* this much I think you have a firm understanding of what mindfulness practice is and so you will understand how to practise mindfulness.

Trying to be a good Buddhist, which is synonymous with following the way to happiness, is the work of a lifetime. There is no time like the present for you and me to take the first step.

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank to Dr. San Linn, Acting Rector and Dr. Aung Win, Pro-Rector, Hinthada University, for their kind permission to carry out this research. I am indebted to Daw Khin Saw Nwe, Professor and Head of the Department of Oriental Studies, Hinthada University, for her encouragement guidance and good will.

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