



www.dhammastream.org

Namo Tassa Bhagavato Arahato Sammasambuddhasa

Published by

Buddhist Discussion Centre Australia.

33 Brooking Street, Upwey, Victoria 3158, Australia

Email: wbu@bdcu.org.au

Website: www.bdcu.org.au

May You Be Well And Happy

Copyright - Buddhist Discussion Centre (Upwey) Ltd
Associated Institution of the World Buddhist University

Summary

One of the first steps on the Buddha Dhamma Path for the practitioner is to access correct confidence, called saddha in the Pali language.

This article outlines why saddha is so important to real improvement and the disadvantages of its opposite which is doubt. Doubt is regarded as one of the Five Hindrances to spiritual growth.

The Removal of Sceptical Doubt for a Buddha Dhamma Practitioner

Sceptical doubt can inhibit a great scholar's work, an artist's painting or an opera singers sound, a foreigner's hopes of settling into a new country.

Most persons minds are normally not tranquil or calm. They are constantly agitated by five hindrances (nivaranas); namely, sensuous desire (kammacchanda), illwill (vyapada) sloth and torpor (thina-middha) restlessness and remorse (uddhacca-kukkucca) and sceptical doubt (vicikiccha).

These hindrances can be overcome and temporarily dismissed by tranquility-meditation (samatha-bhavana).

Sceptical doubt about the Buddha, the Dhamma and the Sangha should be removed to improve Buddha Dhamma practice.

Buddha Dhamma practitioners aim to remove the hindrances because their goal is nibbana

If you can remove doubt then you can enter the path to nibbana.

The teachings of Lord Buddha in the course of 45 years of His Buddhahood have been divided into three collections called Tipitaka in Pali, meaning 'Three Baskets' literally.

The first collection is known as 'Sutta pitaka'. It is the conventional teaching (Vohara desana) in which Buddha used common vocabulary to explain His teachings. Practical aspects of tranquility and insight meditations are included in this collection.

The second collection is called 'Vinaya pitaka'. It is the authoritative teaching (Ana desana) in which Buddha used His authority over the monks to lay down rules and disciplines for them to follow. These disciplines embody the highest code of ethics and can surely purify one's action, speech and thought, thus making one noble and respectful.

The third collection is “Abhidhamma pitaka’. It is the higher teaching of the Buddha. Here Buddha employed abstract terms to describe the ultimate realities (paramatthas) in the Universe and Nibbana which is the summum bonum and the highest goal of Buddha Dhamma. So Abhidhamma may be regarded as the ultimate teaching (Paramattha desana) of Lord Buddha.

One text freely available on the Internet for Abhidhamma study is The Essence of Buddha Abhidhamma by Dr. Mehm Tin Mon ⁽¹⁾

Dr. Mon writes, "Vicikiccha is sceptical doubt about the Buddha, Dhamma, the Sangha, the Training; about things in past lives and future lives; about the Law of Causal relations; and finally about the four Noble Truths."

Vicikiccha is sceptical doubt about the Buddha, Dhamma, the Sangha, the Training; about things in past lives and future lives; about the Law of Causal relations; and finally about the four Noble Truths.

Vicikiccha is also included in the ten fetters to existence. It disappears completely at stream-entry.

The remedy for vicikicca is training you know the reality about things in past lives and future lives; about the Law of Causal relations; and finally about the four Noble Truths.

William Shakespeare said “There’s nothing good or bad, but thinking makes it so”.⁽²⁾

In the most recent edition of Suhrullekha⁽³⁾ a quarterly Buddhist Publication July-September 2003 edition compliments of the New York Times, Tenzin Gyatso states;

“It may seem odd that a religious leader is so involved with science, but Buddhist teaching stress the importance of understanding reality and so we should pay attention to what scientists have learned about our world through experimentation and measurement.

It is for this reason that I visited the neuroscience labortory of Dr. Richard Davidson at the University of Wisconsin. Using imaging devices that show what occurs in the brain during meditation. Dr. Davidson tells me that the emergence of the positive emotions may be due to this: Mindfulness meditation strengthens the neurological circuits that calm a part of the brain that acts as a trigger for fear and anger. This raises the possibility that we have a way to create a kind of buffer between the brain’s violent impulses and our actions.

An abbot of one of the Tibetan monasteries in India, was tested by Dr. Davidson using electroencephalographs to measure brain waves. According to Dr. Davidson, the abbot had the highest amount of activity in the brain centres

associated with positive emotions that had never been measured by his laboratory”.

When a new building is constructed in a town, what type of mind does the building creator use while designing the building? If he doubted his ability to create do you think that the building would be built correctly and without any obstacles?

The creator would need the positive energy of confidence because the negative energy of sceptical doubt would inhibit his motivation to create.

So too, sceptical doubt would inhibit the male or female who wanted to lose weight. If they doubted their ability to lose their weight or if they doubted the reasons why they needed or wanted to lose weight in the first place why would they continue to lose weight. They wouldn't try, they would give up, because if they have doubt they are allowing room for sloth and torpor to arise and sit with doubt in their mind.

Furthermore, Scientist today would not know what they know today if they followed doubt.

Scientists believe in investigating that is different to doubt.

In the Oxford English Dictionary doubt is described as; “Uncertainty as to the truth or reality of something or as to the wisdom of a course of action; occasion or room for uncertainty.”

Furthermore, the Oxford English dictionary describes investigation as, "The action or process of investigating, systematic examination; careful research".

Doubt inhibits all types of learning.

Lord Buddha compared doubt with turbid, muddy water. Just as in such water one cannot perceive one's own reflection, so in the presence of these five hindrances, one cannot clearly see one's own benefit, nor that of others, nor that of both.

Sustained application (vicara) sustains the mind on the object by examining the object again and again; it temporarily inhibits sceptical doubt (vicikiccha).

What is the mind?

Philosophers used to refer to ‘mind and matter’ as the two basic principles of the world. But they fail to come to a unanimous conclusion as to what the mind is.

Psychologists began their task by probing the nature of the mind. But, when they cannot specify and characterise the mind, they turn to the behaviour of animals

and men. Thus psychology becomes ‘the study of behaviourism’ rather than ‘the science of the mind’.

The whole of your Buddha Dhamma practice depends on the first cetasika (saddha) being intact and known by you. If it fades even for a second you have lost the Buddha path because you will lose refuge quickly. The Triple Gem Refuge without saddha is a false consciousness called doubt. Once you are in doubt you are in ignorance.

If you have uddhacca (unrest, restlessness, distraction, flurry) or vicikiccha (sceptical doubt, perplexity), you do not have saddha. You cannot have a little saddha just like you cannot be a little pregnant. Saddha and uddhacca or vicikiccha are mutually exclusive.

To further define vicikiccha, the definitions of the English translations in the New Shorter Oxford English Dictionary⁽⁴⁾ are:

Scepticism: the doctrine of the sceptics, Pyrrhonism; the opinion that real knowledge of any kind is unattainable; a sceptical attitude in relation to a particular branch of knowledge; doubt as to the truth of some assertion or apparent fact; mistrustfulness, doubting disposition. Doubt: uncertainty as to the truth or reality of something or as to the wisdom of a course of action; occasion or room for uncertainty; an inclination to disbelieve or hesitate; a reason to disbelieve or hesitate, a reservation. Perplexity: inability to deal with or understand a thing owing to its intricate nature; confusion, bewilderment.

There is no secrecy in Buddha Dhamma. “In one of his discourses, the Buddha says: three things are characterised by secrecy: love affairs, priestly wisdom and all aberrations from the path of truth. Women who are in love; priests who claim to be in possession of special revelation; (and) all those who stray from the path of truth, seek secrecy and shun publicity.”⁽⁵⁾

We do not shun publicity about what we say. We do not hold secret any part of Abhidhamma because we are most certain that there is no doubt about the classifications listed in Abhidhamma texts. Something that is not held secret can be clearly examined without further references.

Likewise three things shine before the world and cannot be hidden... the moon...; the sun and the truth claimed by the Tathagata illumined the world and cannot be hidden... there is no secrecy about them.

The intention of approach to translation is slightly different for practising Buddhists than for academics.

The position of the Monk who shows the way knows that Buddha Dharma Blessings increases their effectiveness or performance to show the way.

In ancient times, the earlier translators were Monks. Shortly after Buddha passed away the first Council of the Sangha assembled to record the Teachings while they were fresh in their minds. The Council consisted of 500 Monks. They cross referenced dialogue. Most scholars agree to the sources of the above Blessing. A mark of sincerity is to repeat something three times.

The first resolution you must make is not to disparage the intellect or motive of any persons or institution whose Members handle Buddha Dharma texts.

Some views and opinions may be cultural matters of great interest, but tend to dilute your motive to learn and must be put down when you practice.

Any talk giving undue attention to such sundry issues is not required. Clear motive does not need extending for persons who intend to Practice the Way towards freedom from enmity.

Having formed and established right motive, each for himself or herself, (which is simple if you keep the mind free from slander), the next obstructing block should be examined.

This stage is where you have some doubt that anyone less than a "good person" could follow the Way.

Consider the "mind with doubt" as a saboteur or a dead thing which poses reasons against good things. For the time being think of it as empty of talent you could use.

Leaving this empty shell behind, replace the doubt with confidence or with faith that there exists an empty you are looking for. The first mark is it is empty of doubt so allowing confidence that makes it possible to begin the events that culminate in the mind state free of all cares.

This Way allows you to appear as a human being. There have been, are now, and will be human persons who made empty their doubt, and over time, developed their latent loving kindness mind or good mind qualities to such an emptiness power that they attain peaceful minds that are empty of ill-will towards all others.

The action step that activates a person to begin this empty method search, each for himself or herself, is to give up alibis or reasons for delay.

It is a fact that gracious human pleasant feelings appear when you decide to cultivate the first empty state, (empty of doubt); shows you can have some sort of peaceful inner strength.

After experiencing repeated intervals of discernment, you know by direct evidence that your probe into staying empty of doubt is the correct method.

Keeping empty gives a pleasant feeling which with repeated practice becomes a peaceful strength. It is something you can do for yourself, not something that can be done to you by another being.

When you are being empty of doubt, you can now picture some facts of foremost meaning.

To understand the circumstances of your lived experience depends on maintaining "trustworthy" concentration.

Here "trustworthy" means keeping the five sense bases: hearing, seeing, tasting, touching and smelling consciousness inside the volume of your present body.

The "trustworthy" mind or heart deals with your present body whether it is in health or is in illness. Being empty both of fear of "wellness" and fear of "unwellness" can feel sweet and clear like the blue sky. "Wellness" is more than mere physical health.

Stay empty of adding errors to the present living clear mind, such as guilt or false regret about your wellness, which appear as a series of phoney "untrustworthy" minds. Stay empty of the mind that suggests you give undue attention to the unwellness in past times of long dead persons or the wellness of past body happenings. The past happenings or dead persons "seen" are not real.

There is a type of memory which misreads the process (Pali: sanna) by which your present name and form developed through the coarse and fine wellness or unwellness changes since this very human birth. Keep empty of these by attending to the real - the present changes in wellness or unwellness events.

The foremost meanings of wellness and unwellness are simply stated as:

All human beings are subject to a common destiny defined by the process of birth, ageing, sickness and death.

The empty mind knows these facts, it only loses these facts when it becomes closed up with doubt.

If we wish to be rid of hatred, wars, killings, sinful acts... the best policy for all of us human beings is to commit ourselves to the search for and practice of a state of mind empty of all extreme views of wellness or unwellness.

We are being kind to ourselves when we order our lives to be happy, enjoyable and uninfluenced by our sufferings whatsoever, especially in the unwellness portion of our ageing stages from "womb to tomb" that lie ahead of ourselves, our friends and our enemies. The acid test is when you examine what you have found by your practice.

The first level of a well-practiced empty mind without doubt can answer questions of these type:

What does "state of mind free of all cares" mean to me?

Under what circumstances can I claim to be "free from all cares and troubles?"

What sort of concentration on maintaining the correct emptiness is suitable to give me desirable results?

This concludes the first stage of practice of the emptiness you are looking for. You must practice this empty until it is reliable for you.

May you be free from sceptical doubt.

May you be secure with confidence in the Buddha, Dhamma, Sangha.

May you be well and happy.

The writers and editors of this script are: Lisa Nelson, Pinayo Prommuang and Pennie White.

References:

1. Mon, Dr. Mehm Tin (1995) The Essence of Buddha Abhidhamma, Mya Mon Yadanar Publication, Yangon.
2. Dictionary of Familiar Quotations, (1988) Tophi Books, Great Britain.
3. Suhrullekha, Veerananarayana Reddy (editor), Ananda Buddha Vihara Trust, July – September 2003
4. Brown, Leslie (1993) The New Shorter Oxford English Dictionary, Clarendon Press, Oxford.
5. Dr. Dipak Kumer Barua, "Buddhism and Modern Way of Life", The Maha Bodhi, October – December 1979, Volume 87, B.E. 2523, Number 10-12, p. 259