

Buddha Dhamma

Speech on Visakha Day Celebration of International Buddhist Foundation
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Lord Buddha: the Awaken One

Dhamma: the Reality

Sangha: the Exemplary Community

Venerable Monks, Nuns, Ladies, Gentlemen and Distinguished Guests,

Today I am very honored to talk about the Buddha Dhamma on this auspicious celebration, the Celebration of Visakha Day or the Day of Birth, Enlightenment and Passing away of Lord Buddha. It is admirable and we thank the International Buddhist Foundation, for their effort in holding this celebration annually. Especially, as we can see today that there are many, many of us are participating.

It is very important to remember the Birth of Lord Buddha. It is the starting point of the Dhamma. As we know, the Birth, the Enlightenment and the Passing Away was on the full moon day of Visakha or the month of sixth. So today we are celebrating the three different events of Lord Buddha's life and time. Venerable Quan has already talked about the meaning of Visak.

So I will address you only about the Buddha Dhamma. If you may ask which is more important, the Buddha, Dhamma or Sangha?. This question was also raised during the Buddha's era. Lord Buddha had replied that "O'Bhikkhu, the teachings and discipline that I have taught is your master...". More than this the word religion in Buddhism is called Sasana, this term is used in almost every Buddhist country. Sasana means teaching. So you can see the meaning of Religion and Sasana is very different in both perspective and practice. The word Buddhism means Sasana, but Buddhism and Sasana is very different in meaning. As we know, Buddhism may come from Buddha and Ism. It may be common for Westerners to use ism all the times. But for the Buddha Dhamma has no ism, ego, self, attaching or clinging at all. Buddha Dhamma is non-attachment, egoless, non-self or non-clinging. All of the phenomenons in our world are simply physical and mental processes. They are under the rule of the nature of impermanence, decaying and non-self. So whenever, we have attached to something, we will be faced with disappointment. Your attachment cannot struggle with the reality of impermanence, decaying and non-self. So if you need freedom and happiness, you have to learn about non-attachment.

There are 84,000 chapters or verses of Buddha Dhamma. But I cannot address you all of those Dhammas at this time. I want to explain to you only the main teaching of Lord Buddha, that is the Four Noble Truth or Dhammacakka Kappavattana Sutta or the Great Discourse on the Wheel of Dhamma. The four noble truth could be called the Cause and Effect, or the rationalistic teaching, or the scientific method. Scientists start their research by investigating, hypothesis,

experimentation and conclusion. Sometimes there are either four or sometime five steps.

The Four Noble truth also starts by investigating the problems that is the sufferings. So the truth of suffering are the Birth, Old Age, Sickness and Death. Or the truth of suffering are sorrow, lamentation, physical pain, grief, despair, association with hateful ones, separation from loved one, not getting what one wants and the five groups of grasping(clinging). Or we can divide suffering into two: bodily suffering and mental suffering. We can investigate this by ourselves as we are sitting here. When our legs become numb it is called bodily suffering and when our mind is worrying it is called mental suffering. We are not able to survive by not experiencing sufferings, but we have to be aware that it is the reality that we have to realize. We are not pessimistic about it. We are optimistic to learn and face it, so that it can be realized and overcome.

After that we start to formulate the hypothesis or to seek the Truth of the Cause of Sufferings. The causes of suffering are wanting, attachment and delusion or greed, hatred and ignorance. Craving is also the main cause of sufferings such as craving for being like this or like that, craving for not being like this or like that and the craving for sensual pleasure. It is our six senses that daily experience likes or dislikes, and sometime feel neutral. For example, at this moment our eyes are watching forms, our nose is smelling, our tongue is moving with taste, our mind is thinking, our body is touching the chair and your ears is listening to me. So when my talk is good you like the experience, but when my talk is bad you dislike it or sometime you don't know if my talk is either good or bad because you are not paying attention, therefore you are neutral. This is the Truth of the Cause of Sufferings.

Third: the Truth of Cessation of Suffering that it can be experimented with to see if really exists in our world. This cessation of suffering can start from our kind heart or we can be joyful with our generosity or sacrifice, or have satisfaction with our good results from the concentration on our speech and action. Or we can experience the initial application of the mind, the analytical process of the mind, the joyfulness, the pleasure and the oneness of the mind. When our mind becomes oneness or pointedness, we can experience the way of Enlightenment or Nibbana. Everybody needs happiness and bliss, but what kind of bliss do we need? Lord Buddha said "no other bliss is greater than the perfect peace, Nibbana is the Highest Peace".

Fourth: the Truth of the Path Leading to the Cessation of Suffering or the Eightfold Path. This is very important that we know now that Life is Suffering, and we realized the Causes of suffering, and we agree that Cessation of Suffering exists. So how can we practice the right path leading to the extinction of sufferings?. It is only in the Middle Way or Eightfold Path. You know from day to day, we are not in balance to experience the reality of life. Sometime we are indulgent in materials or sensual consumption. And sometime we are indulgent in practicing hardship, austerity or self-mortification. Lord Buddha said those two ways are extreme. So only the Middle Way is the balanced approach and can lead us to the extinction of all sufferings.

The eightfold path is only one way leading to the end of sufferings, it consists of:

1. Right Understanding

To understand the Law of Cause and Effect and the Four Noble Truths.

2. Right Attitude

Not harboring thoughts of greed and anger.

3. Right Speech

Avoid lying, gossip, harsh speech and tale-telling.

4. Right Action

Not to destroy any life, not to steal or commit adultery.

5. Right Livelihood

Avoiding occupations that bring harm to oneself and others.

6. Right Effort

Earnestly doing one's best in the right direction.

7. Right Mindfulness

Always being aware and attentive.

8. Right Concentration

To making the mind steady and calm in order to realize the true nature of things.

Or we can summarize into three Lessons which is called the Lesson of Life and Deliberation. First lesson is the Lesson of Morality or Ethics which constitutes of Right Speech, Right Action and Right Livelihood. Second lesson is the Lesson of Meditation or Peaceful Mind which constitutes of Right Effort, Right Mindfulness and Right Meditation. And the third lesson is the Lesson of Wisdom which constitutes the Right Understanding and Right Attitude.

So when these three Lessons are developed in an individual's heart; the individual, their families, their community and the world shall experience the real happiness, bliss, peace, and deliberation.

In closing, I would like to thank to the International Buddhist Foundation and all the kind participants here today. And this Visakha Day which is recognized by the United Nation as the sacred day for world peace and prosperity, I wish may everyone engraves this sacred day in your heart in order to remind you of the Supreme Enlightened One: Lord Buddha, His Supreme Teachings: the Dhamma and His Exemplary Monk Community: the Sangha; whenever and wherever you are experiencing the difficult situations.

May all of you be blissful and attain Nibbana in the near future!

Thank you very much,