

Buddhist Fundamentals

The foundations of the Buddhist way of seeing

The Four Noble Truths

THE TRUTH OF SUFFERING

All things born suffer sickness, old age and death.
Birth, old age, and death are the symptoms of bodily suffering.
Not to obtain what one desires characterizes mental suffering.
The five aggregates of existence (clinging), i.e. our personality,
represent the essential form of suffering.

THE CAUSE OF SUFFERING

It is not the 'world' or its transitoriness which is the cause of
suffering but our attitude towards it, our clinging to it,
our thirst, our ignorance.

THE CESSATION OF SUFFERING.

The cessation of suffering is supreme happiness.

THE WAY OF LIBERATION.

The Eightfold Path represents the origin of happiness.

The Noble Eightfold Path

Right View

Samma Ditthi consists in the right understanding of suffering (dukkha), of its causes, and of the way to its annihilation.

Right Intention

Samma Samkappa is the conscious intention, founded upon the knowledge of the previous step, and therefore, it counteracts the subconscious tendencies (sankhara) which are based on ignorance. (avijja).

Right Speech

Samma Vaca is the right formulation of thought (discursive thinking) and its expression (right speech). Thus it implies the control of the conscious mind (vinnana; in contradistinction to the subconscious: sankhara).

Right Action

Samma Kammantra implies the control of the psycho-physical apparatus (nama-rupa) and its sense organs (salayatana).

Right Livelihood

Samma Ajiva concerns our external life and the control of our associations and contacts (phassa).

Right Effort

Samma Vayama is the conscious effort, or energy directed by knowledge, which counteracts uncontrolled emotional impulses (vedana).

Right Mindfulness

Samma Sati is opposed to craving (tanha) and clinging (upadana).

Right Concentration

Samma Samadhi is that state of perfect concentration and unification of all creative forces, which controls the process of becoming (bhava), determines rebirth (jati) and eventually makes an end of it, together with all the suffering with which it is inseparably connected.

From the Dhammapada:

All that we are is the result of our thoughts, it is founded on our thoughts, it is made up of our thoughts.

IF A MAN SPEAKS OR ACTS WITH A PURE THOUGHT,
HAPPINESS FOLLOWS HIM, LIKE A SHADOW THAT NEVER
LEAVES HIM.

It is good to train the wandering mind, a mind under control brings great happiness.
NEITHER FATHER NOR MOTHER NOR ANY OTHER RELATIVE
WILL DO ONE SO MUCH GOOD AS A WELL DIRECTED MIND.

He who loves the law lives happily, with his mind at ease.

AS A ROCK REMAINS UNMOVED BY STORM, SO THE WISE ONE
REMAINS UNMOVED BY PRAISE OR BLAME.

Though one should conquer in battle a thousand times a thousand men, he who conquers himself is the greatest warrior.

HE WHO HURTS A CREATURE WHICH SEEKS FOR HAPPINESS,
WILL NOT FIND IT FOR HIMSELF.

Hatred ceaseth not by hatred. Hatred ceaseth but by love. This is the everlasting law.

CEASE TO DO EVIL. LEARN TO DO GOOD. CLEANSE YOUR OWN
HEART. THIS IS THE TEACHING OF THE BUDDHAS.

How to Meditate

“NEITHER FATHER NOR MOTHER NOR ANY OTHER
RELATIVE WILL DO ONE SO MUCH GOOD AS A WELL
DIRECTED MIND” Dhammapada

On the floor or a chair, the basic posture criteria are the same as follows:
If you are sitting in a chair, sit on the edge with the feet flat on the floor.

Posture:

- * Back straight (align the nose above the navel)
- * Draw the chin back over the throat (tucked). *This adjustment allows the flow of Chi.*
- * The tongue should lightly touch the hard palate just behind the teeth. *If the mouth gets dry, roll the tongue around on the upper palate. This will wet the mouth.*
- * The hips are above the knees. *This allows proper blood flow.*
- * Hands folded left hand in the right palm (facing up) and resting in the lap, thumbs just touching. The tips of the thumbs should touch just under the navel. *(If you find the thumbs have dropped away, it is an indication that you are not paying attention to your practice.)*

Attitude:

The eyes are open (*Not going anywhere!*). The gaze is slightly downward, facing a blank white wall (preferably).

The attention is like a cat waiting relaxed and alert at a mouse hole for words to appear and ready to pounce on them if they do. *(If words and thoughts come across the mind, just let them go by as if on the shore watching the water flow by. Don't engage in a dialog.)*

Practices:

There are a number of practices exercised during at least a portion of the sitting. They may include simply counting the breaths from 1 to 10 over and over again. If you find yourself counting 27 for example, you are not paying attention to the practice. Paying attention while you are doing it is the important thing.

Zen Practice and Attitude

Myo and the Master Hand

Myoyu (ch-muao-yung), or daiyu (ta-yung) or simply myo is quite a difficult word to grasp in English. It is a certain artistic quality perceivable not only in works of art, but in anything in nature or life. The sword in the hands of the swordsman attains a quality when it is not a mere display of technical skill patiently learned under the tutorship of a good master, for myo is something original and creative growing out of one's own unconscious. The hands may move according to the techniques given out to every student, but there is a certain spontaneity and creativity when the technique, conceptualized and universalized is handled by the master hand.

Myo may also be applied to the intelligence and the instinctive activities of various animals: for example, the beaver building its nest, the spider spinning its web, the wasp or ant constructing its castles under the eaves or beneath the ground. They are wonders of nature. In fact, the whole universe is a miraculous exhibition of a master mind. And we humans, who are one of its wonderful achievements have been straining our intellectual efforts ever since the awakening of consciousness, and are daily being overwhelmed by nature's demonstrations of its unfathomable and inexhaustive myoyu.

The awakening of consciousness has been the greatest cosmological event in the course of evolution. We have been able by its pragmatic applications to probe into the secrets of nature and to make use of them to serve our way of living, but at the same time we seem to be losing the many things we have otherwise been enjoying which nature was liberal enough to grant us. The function of human consciousness, is to dive deeper and deeper into its source, the unconscious. And the unconscious has its strata of variable depths: biological, psychological and metaphysical. One thread runs thru them, and zen discipline consists in taking hold of it in its entirety, whereas other arts, such as swordsmanship or tea lead us to comprehension of respectively particularized aspects of the string.

Suki literally means any space between two objects where something else can enter. A psychological or mental suki is created when a state of tension is relaxed. Good (myo) here has no moral implication pure and simple to understand that the whole universe, including everything in it, good and evil, right and wrong, subject and object, you and me, goes through a transformation, which is marvelously phenomenal. The logically true or morally good is never satisfactory, never fully thirst quenching. We must come to the realization of the myo, the ultimate good (love), while surveying the creation in its infinite wholeness.

A commentator of the Tao-te-Ching says that the character (miao) myo first appears in the I Ching (Shou Kua) eighth wing where it is verbalized. It is generally used as a noun or modifier; it is unusual to see it turned into a verb. Miao-wan-wu "the ten thousand things" acquire the quality of the myo (miao). The maio may be said to be our human response to a situation in which the finites are harmoniously blended with the infinite or we can state here the absolute present touches on eternity.

It is interesting to note that myo (miao) in the I Ching is identified with the spirit (shen) that moves behind the ten thousand things. The infinite is the "unmoved mover" behind the constant flowing stream of things.