

CARRY THE BURDEN YOU CAN LIFT

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The Buddha's Teachings are very simple. There is nothing mystic in them. His doctrine can face the most rigorous and minute tests. There is nothing esoteric in them. The whole doctrine can be studied, mastered and practiced by all the followers, including monks, nuns and the laity.

Although there is simplicity with all its unhidden meanings, yet its depth and profundity is immeasurable. But there is no reason for the follower to get scared at this. It is as harmless as a modern swimming pool.

In a swimming pool tiny tots can play where there is only one foot of water. Children below ten and in their early teens can go into the depth that suits them. Youngsters of full grown age can bathe at depths of five or six feet. And there are swimmers. They can swim in the deeper sections. Those who can dive may even climb up high structures, erected for the purpose, and jump from there to the deepest spots.

Those who are trained to swim for longer periods play water-polo and other games. Divers go and stay under water for quite a long time. Fun and play can be had according to their individual taste and capacity because the depth of the pool is gradual and there are no dangerous potholes in it. Moreover there is no current to pull you off your feet.

The Buddha's philosophy has even been compared to an ocean for its vastness and depth. In the ocean there are greater depths where whales of enormous size can swim without barriers: in Buddhist philosophy there is also the deeper section where only whales in intelligence would try to swim.

So we see that the Buddhist Doctrine (*the Dhamma*) is suitable for understanding by one and all but according to one's own limit of understanding. The beauty of it is that none will have to be disappointed by not being able to understand it or by being unable to practise according to it. What is wanted is the adherence to the Dhamma and it will look after the adherent.

The goal to be reached by following the Dhamma is also graduated. Those who have the iron will, firm determination, erudition and wisdom, boundless compassion, great energy and strength for long endurance would try, unaided, for the highest peak overlooking all others to fix his beacon. And when he

succeeds it will be useful to save the greatest number of unfortunate sailors who would be shipwrecked if not for its warning. That is the greatest service and glory by becoming a Buddha.

For those who are of medium will-power, lesser degree of determination, not full-scale energy and shorter power of endurance could try, also unaided, to fix his beacon on some medium-sized peak. But that will not be so useful to others because that is not so prominent as the first one. Still the glory and delight will be his and those few who may come in contact with him will be benefitted.

This requires a shorter period of training for perfection than that of the Buddhas. And they are called the Pacceka Buddhas who attain Nibbana, - complete cessation of Suffering – by gaining Enlightenment by exercising their own effort and wisdom. This is the second way to attain the Eternal Happiness.

Then there are the weaker ones – always the majority – who are anxious to get rid of Sufferings but, having no power of their own to climb a height of any size without an instructor's aid to fix their beacon. Yet, as a result of their great desire for liberation they trudge their way along cautiously until they meet a stalwart Buddha who takes compassion on them and cuts the steps to the hilltop where they can climb easily and pitch their beacon.

Such beacons will be useful to themselves as well as others because late comers could also feel their way up along the existing steps and be benefitted. They are the Arahats, the Disciples of the Buddha. They reached the goal of Nibbana and that is a glory of perfection which brings one to the end of Suffering.

Whether it be by self-enlightenment or with the instructions given by another Enlightened Being, one reaches the goal by one's own effort. The weak ones also should go up the steps. There will be none to take them bodily and leave them at the goal. And when the goal of Nibbana is reached all are equal just as people travelling by first, second and third classes, after alighting from the train are considered as travelers and lose further distinction.

So, now, what have we to do to reach this goal? We have to study the Teachings of the Buddha, because it is His Teachings that we find all the details of the path thoroughly described. There is no other place where one can find a better goal nor a clearer and correct path that leads to it.

Let us imagine that we all have to reach this goal. It is not advisable to run the fastest as soon as you start the race; it is too long a way. But Do start and Do run. Because if you don't start you'll be where you are. If you don't run, then it would have been better not to have entered the race. Therefore, the seeker

after the goal should start as well as run until he reaches the goal and becomes first, second or third. At the end all the three would have reached the same goal and no more running would be necessary for them.

According to the Buddha's Teachings (the Dhamma) a Buddhist should face real facts and recognize that Samsara is full of Sufferings. There is no touch of fatalism in it: it is a stark fact. This Suffering has not been imposed on us or thrust on to us by anyone else. We have procured it. We have inherited it as a result of our own deeds. The actions of our past lives had the potential power to send forth corresponding reactions.

So, what actions we had been doing in our past lives could be known by ourselves without the aid of fortune-tellers or predictions of outsiders, if only we know the Buddhist Teaching well enough. Whether they were good actions or evil actions should be judged by us according to our past circumstances.

But this does not mean that we should meekly submit to what is happening and simply keep quiet. Then that would be nothing but fatalism – belief that all events are predetermined and submission to all that happens as inevitable. Should we use our intelligence and energy we can change the course of many of these events and divert them to our advantage, here and hereafter.

For an understanding of this theory let us investigate our own nature as it is at the present moment. We have Craving, Hatred and Ignorance as the most prominent among a host of other passions or defilements of our minds. From where did they come to us? Did we inherit them from our parents? Did we imbibe them from our teachers or associates?

No, not the whole thing. We have them within ourselves somehow. And their quality and degree, we note, do vary with each individual. That is why the Buddha taught us that these defilements had been with us even in our past lives. We had nurtured them in the past and they became our character and nature of the present.

If we don't arrest their growth here and now we will have these characteristics in a stronger form in future. Well, what are we to do to check them? The Dhamma comes to our rescue. It teaches us that there are other forces that can also be brought forth from within us, which we have practised, not so intensively though. These forces are Charity, Morality and Wisdom.

Now let the forces recognize each other. Charity versus Craving; Morality versus Hatred; and Wisdom versus Ignorance! Allow these combatants to come to the arena of our minds, and let them openly challenge each other in our

everyday problems. If necessary, in every thought current that whisks across our alert minds.

Then let the mind itself be the referee. Here is a deserving case for charity – very deserving, indeed. Your craving nature will rush forward with its hideous face and that will thrive into an ugly frown. Craving nature comes forward first because you have fed it constantly and more in quantity – hence it is stronger. And what about the nature of charity in you?

This is a critical moment. Think seriously and quickly and deliberate on the pros and cons. Are you going to be a slave to the evil nature or are you going to overcome it and replace it with the benevolent nature? The referee, the mind, can decide it either way.

Now it is a tug-of-war. Craving nature is assisted by the other two friendly evil forces i.e. Ignorance and Hatred. Charitable nature, on the other hand, is aided by its friendly forces of Morality and Wisdom. In this tug-of-war let not the evil side gain grounds. You can help it if only you have firm resolution not to allow yourself to be pulled to the evil side. Then you win the game. You win the world. You gradually gain life's purpose – perfection.

All Suffering was created by these evil forces. If you know that it is so your duty is to strengthen the good forces to beat the evil ones. This is what the Dhamma teaches you. It explains to you in easier language, illustrating points with real and interesting stories. The Dhamma (the Teaching of the Buddha) is simple, scientific and sublime.

Buddhism is the only ethico-philosophical system without barriers for widening of knowledge.