



Bodhi Leaves

A newsletter created by children for children

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The Buddha's View on Prayers



"Anatapindika, if a noble householder wishes to have long life, beauty, happiness, fame and rebirth in a heavenly realm it is not befitting that he should pray for long life, beauty, happiness, fame and rebirth in a heaven or take delight in doing so. He should rather follow a path of life that is conducive to long life, beauty, happiness, fame and rebirth in a heaven. By doing so he will obtain long life, beauty, happiness, fame and rebirth in a heaven".

Anguttara Nikāya

Who is a Buddhist?

There are many Buddhists in the world. Most of them call themselves Buddhists because they are born to Buddhist parents. There are also people who call themselves Buddhists just because they offer flowers, lamps and incense to a Buddha statue. This does not make them a real Buddhist. The only true Buddhists are the ones that practice Buddhism. Those are the true followers of the Buddha's teachings.

The Buddha's definition of a Buddhist can be taken from the sevenfold Aryan treasure. The sevenfold Aryan treasure is what the Buddha gave his son, Rahula, when he asked his father for his inheritance. The Buddha valued this treasure more than his many palaces, treasures, and his whole kingdom. There are seven elements that make up this treasure.

The first element is Suta, the learning of Dhamma. This is very important because you can't attain enlightenment

without the Dhamma. There are many ways to learn the Dhamma. You can learn from books, Dhamma talks, participating in Dhamma discussions, and you can also learn a lot by teaching the Dhamma too.

The second element is Saddha, the confidence in the Buddha, Dhamma and Sangha. You must also have confidence in yourself. You must build this confidence by learning, studying, and practicing the Dhamma. If you don't have this confidence, you won't be very motivated to practice the Dhamma. If you take refuge in the triple gem, you have to do it in full confidence.

The third element is Caga, the practice of letting go, or generosity. To give something and gain the full merits for it, you have to give something acquired without any wrongdoing. You must also give something suitable for the person's needs at that certain time. You should also let go without having any second thoughts or regrets. You should feel happy throughout the whole process of giving; before you give the

gift, when you give the gift, and after you give the gift. That is true generosity.

The next two elements are called Hiri Otappa. They are the shame, fear and loathing and complete reluctance to perform a bad deed, and the regret of performing a bad deed. You should reflect on the evil deeds you have done, so you will realize the evil of those acts and will not repeat them again. The shame of exposure and the fear of the consequences is what can stop a person from doing bad deeds. Some people may start to perform bad deeds if their shame and fear of doing bad deeds were lost. True Buddhists should not perform a bad deed under any circumstances.

The sixth element is called Sila, or morality. It is stopping yourself from doing unwholesome deeds, and doing the right thing instead. The first practice of morality is observing the five precepts mindfully, not just chanting the words mechanically. You should complete the practice of morality with loving kindness, compassion, sympathetic joy and equanimity. You should have compassion and loving kindness in all your thoughts, actions and words.

The last element is Panna, or wisdom. Wisdom is seeing things for what they really are. It can be practiced

through Vipassana meditation. We experience our perception of the truth from our five senses, but Vipassana meditation helps develop our mind, to experience what we can't with our five senses, so we can really see everything for what they really are.

The practice of these elements of the seven fold Aryan treasure are what really make a true Buddhist.

There were no Buddhists at the time of the Buddha, just people who practice the Dhamma. There was also no religion called Buddhism. The teaching of the Dhamma became known as Buddhism later on. The practice of the seven-fold Aryan treasure would have been the best definition of a Buddhist given by the Buddha.

Yasas (14)



Taking Refuge in the Buddha Dhamma, and Sangha

Many people tend to believe that taking refuge in the Buddha, Dhamma, and

Sangha is simply to chant the verses; "I go to the Buddha as my refuge, I go to the Dhamma as my refuge...etc" and do not take the effort to understand the essence of the words they speak. The chanting only exists in order to create the base or structure for

"Do not depend on others for your salvation; Develop your self-confidence to gain it".
Digha Nikāya

the true lessons of Buddhism to be compiled on.

Taking refuge in the Buddha essentially means to accept the perfect nature of

the Buddha and to attempt to adopt these traits and incorporate them into a one's own lifestyle. These traits include compassion and wisdom and all of their sub-divisions. All Buddhists should endeavor to have the qualities of the Buddha that made him an enlightened being. Similarly, taking refuge in the Dhamma means to learn the Buddha's teachings and to live in accordance to it, to apply the Dhamma to one's daily routine. The knowledge of the teachings will help one to find the conviction required to continue to take further steps toward enlightenment. Allowing the Dhamma to provide guidance will surely open the path towards Nibbāna. One should allow the Dhamma to direct him/her to making the correct decisions in life. Taking refuge in the Sangha is equivalent to modeling one's

life after the lives and ways of the Buddha's more intellectually developed disciples, who are either enlightened or near enlightenment. In addition the determined followers of the Dhamma (monks and nuns) should be provided with the necessary material requisites.

Taking refuge is not as simple as the mechanical chanting itself. The true purpose of taking refuge in the Buddha, Dhamma, and Sangha is to change oneself and take a few more steps toward the ultimate goal of enlightenment by following the path laid out by the Buddha.

Sashika (14)



Is the Buddha a Saviour?

In many religions it is believed that there is a supreme being that can save you from unhappiness just by believing in him or her. I was taught that in Buddhism there was nobody we prayed to or entrusted our wellbeing to. I wanted to know why or why not the Buddha was our saviour.

In the English Webster's dictionary a saviour is defined as one that saves others from danger or destruction or one that brings salvation, specifically Jesus. I would not say that the Buddha was a saviour, but a really compassionate and caring teacher. For example a teacher would do as much as they could to help the student understand the subject. The teacher couldn't just pass the student unless the student had practiced and studied the subject for the test. In the same way the Buddha will teach with all of his compassion, but it is up to the student to practice his teachings.

One day a young man had asked the Buddha why some students were gaining more spiritual development than others. He asked why the Buddha couldn't just use his wonderful powers to help everyone gain full liberation. The Buddha answered by asking the man if he had lived here his whole life. The man answered by saying he had lived in Rajagaha but was now living in Savatthi. Then the Buddha asked if he knew the way from one city to the other, and if he ever gave directions to people. The young man had said he knew his way and had told many people the way to go. Then the Buddha had asked if all of them made it to their destination. In answer

the man told the Buddha that the people who listened carefully and followed his direction made it. He also said that some had not. After that the Buddha had said that similarly, he could not carry his students to liberation. He could only teach as well and compassionately as he could but after that it was up to the student to practice and reach full liberation.

In this wonderful story you can see why the Buddha cannot just take us to liberation it is up to us to do so. We are our own saviour!

Onari (12)



You yourselves must strive; the Buddhas only point the way. The meditative ones who tread the path are released from the bonds of death.

"Dhammapada 276

Why there are Inequalities among Mankind.

The Lord Buddha has taught that the inequality amongst

mankind is determined by the actions committed by one. Karma is what determines the state of life granted upon a being. One may receive a state of happiness or sorrow considering what karma they have perpetrated. The Buddha has taught that the causes of the differences amid human beings are initiated by the law of cause and effect. This law is also referred to as karma.

He who kills, destroys one's life, hunts or shows no sympathy towards another, when born to mankind, will be conceded to a short life. Whereas one who refrains from killing, destroying another's life, hunting and shows compassion towards others, will be given a long life when born to mankind.

If any person has a habit of mutilating others, or has no sympathy or concern towards another's agony, he will collide with several diseases during his following lifetime as a human being. If he conversely abstains from harming others and is compassionate regarding another in misery, he will be bestowed with a healthy life when born as a human.

A person, who shows anger in unruly ways, will be born with a repulsive image in his birth as a human. He will be born with revolting features as a result of showing rage to others considering their treatment towards him.

If one is being treated inadequately yet does not show any sign of resentment to another, he will be born elegant and pleasing to the eye in his following birth among mankind.

He who possesses jealousy regarding another's accomplishments, will be born consequently in his

following lifetime

as a human being without power. He who has delight and shows

pleasure in others' achievements, will attain much power in his next birth as a human.

A person who does not participate in charitable causes and instead adheres to everything he possesses, will be born poor because of his greed. A person, who shows liberality towards giving to others, will as a result be born wealthy for his contributions in his following birth as a human being.

If a person is arrogant and conceited and does not show respect and honour to people who are much valued for it, he will be born as an undignified person and will be low born. In contrast, someone who shows appreciation in relation to another's success will

be born as a noble person in his next birth as a human.

A person who does not attempt to differentiate right from wrong and good from evil will be born as an ignorant person in his following birth amongst mankind. If a person conversely is open-minded

about learning right from wrong and good from evil, and has a positive attitude towards learning the truth, he will be born intelligent.

In the teachings of the Buddha, He has taught about the inequalities found

amid every human being. The inequalities are a result to the actions committed by each individual. Karma is the reason to the condition that many human beings are put into. Some may obtain a life of happiness and some will attain a life of sorrow. Karma is what determines the type of life one will obtain. The reasoning behind the differences between one another is the law of cause and effect or the law of karma.

"All living beings have their kamma (intentional actions) as their own, their inheritance, their congenital cause, their kinsmen, their refuge. It is kamma that differentiates beings into low and high states."
Majjhima Nikaya

Melanie (14)





Everything that Happens is not due to Kamma.

When the tsunami waves hit Sri Lankan shores in the year 2004 I was a small child. I saw in the television how the laughter and joy of people who were enjoying their holiday in sandy beaches changed in to cries and misery. I was shocked to see thousands of dead bodies lying around coastal cities. When I questioned my grandmother about those incidents, she explained that it may be due to bad kamma done in their past lives. However I was not satisfied with her answer, because how come same thing happen to hundred thousands of people at the same time, have they done the same bad kamma together? How come some of the people escaped unharmed even though they were in the same area? Was it really the bad kamma of the people that caused the Tsunami?

I eventually learned more about Lord Buddha's teachings, then I realized that

there are many more reasons other than Kamma which explains things that happen in the world. According to Lord Buddha's teachings there are five natural laws or orders (Niyamas) which control everything in the Universe. Namely they are: Utu Niyama, Bija Niyama, Kamma Niyama, Dhamma Niyama and Chitta Niyama.

Utu Niyama means changes in the inorganic order which happens due to the heat energy of the sun and the core of the earth. The resulting natural environmental factors such as earth quakes, famine, ice storms and floods are a result of Utu Niyama. Bija Niyama explains things that happen due to genetic order, such as seeds produce its own kind (barley seeds not produce wheat), and parents with certain cancers passing it down to their children. Kamma Niyama is the law of cause and effect. Bad and good actions of persons past and present lives result in unpleasant and pleasant results. Dhamma Niyama is the effort of the nature or truth such as all things are impermanent. Finally Chitta Niyama is order of mind such as exceptional psychic powers gained by Nobel persons through meditation.

So now I know that the cause of the Tsunami was because of the natural law of Utu Niyama. But the reason that some

were hurt and others escaped even though they were in the same area was because of their past good and bad actions. It could be that some of these people had got together and done unskillful actions together. But it is also possible that they had each done unrelated unskillful actions on their own. The effects of kamma take place when the opportunity is there. Similarly the reason that some grave sicknesses like cancer is handed down from parent to child is because of Bija Niyama. But the reason that some of the children only get the cancer and others do not is because of their own past bad and good kamma. Lord Buddha's teaching will definitely help us understand everything happening around us in more practical and realistic way.

Charmie (12)



Can the Effects of Karma be Changed?

Karma is an intentional action forced by one's determination and desire it is not just an action that one takes. The law of Karma explains how every intentional action that one takes, has a consequence. However, effects of Karma can be changed because one

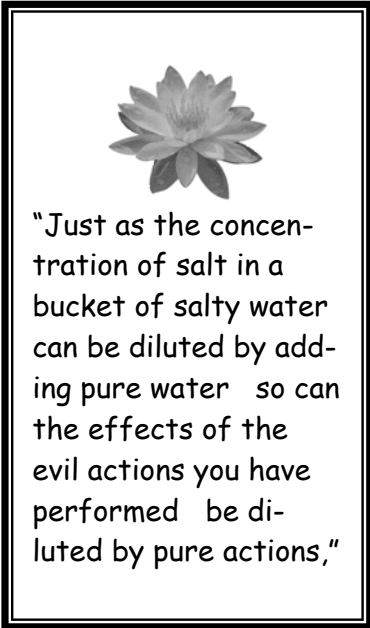
has the chance to dilute the effects of Karma one has collected through previous actions, in the present.

The saying "what goes around comes around," is very much the basic understanding of Karma. The "Law of Karma" states that when one does wholesome actions, one will receive good outcomes. An unwholesome action however, gives one bad outcomes. Unwholesome actions can be delivered in 3 main ways; by body, speech and by mind.

By "body," one can kill, steal and do sexual misconduct. Through "speech," one can lie, speak harshly to another and can gossip. The last category is by "mind;" one can create greed, anger and can think of bad thoughts of another being. When one does any of these unwholesome actions, one will have to face the consequences; which lead to suffering. The effect of Karma depends on the weight of the Karma. Meaning, the life that one is born to; either in misery or in happiness, all depends on ones past Karma.

One is able to reduce the effects of ones past bad Karma by canceling it out with good deeds. Karma is an action that one has created in their past

and therefore the only person who can change its effects, is yourself. One can change the effects of unskillful Karma by doing many good simple deeds;



such as, not being jealous of another's success and being happy for them. When one does good deeds, they are reducing the effects of past bad deeds.

Their Karma is there, the effects are just being reduced by all the good deeds. However, there are some Karma's that are so severe, that it takes a very long time to reduce the effects. These are; killing your mother or father, trying to break the Sangha, and shedding blood from the Buddha. These unwholesome deeds are so grave, that they take an enormously long time for the effects of such actions to wear off.

Melissa (14)



The Buddha's View on Prayers for Salvation

"Vasettha, it is just as if this River Aciravati were brimful of water and a man should come along wishing to cross over, to get to the other side, to get across, and standing on this bank, were to call out: "Come here, other bank, come here!" What do you think, Vasettha? Would the other bank of the River Aciravati come over to this side on account of that man's calling, begging, requesting or wheedling?"
 "No, Rev. Gotama."
 "Similaly no amount of wheedling or prayers will lead you to salavation".

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