

Āyasmā Guṇavīro is a student of the Buddha. This is a brief summary of some of the most common themes of the Awakened One's teaching.

Qualities of the Buddha Dhamma Sangha

Followers of the Awakened One would often take refuge, seek protection and shelter in the Awakened One himself, the Quality he taught, and the Order of monks he established.

The quality of belief, faith, and inspiration around the Awakened One, the Quality, and the Order can be an important source of energy and motivation and a vehicle for a wholesome, balanced, contentment and joy. When one has a basis of that wholesome balanced contentment and joy, it can be very conducive towards concentration and unification and ultimately letting go completely.

However, to generate that belief, one needs to have a sense for what they are. The canonical description of the Awakened One, the Quality, and the Order are:

He is auspicious, worthy, and fully and completely awakened, perfect in wisdom and conduct, virtuous, knower of the universe, unsurpassable trainer of men, teacher of deities and humans, awake and auspicious.

Well described by the auspicious one is the quality, visible, timeless, "come and see," progressive, to be individually experienced by the perceptive.

Well practiced is the order of disciples of the auspicious one. Rightly practiced is the order of disciples of the auspicious one. Correctly practiced is the order of disciples of the auspicious one. Properly practiced is the order of disciples of the auspicious one. That is the four pairs of men, the eight types of men. That is the order of disciples of the auspicious one who are to be made offerings, to be hosted as guests, to be given gifts, to be offered añjali, an unsurpassable field of rewards of the world.

(e.g. AN 3.70)

Giving

The Awakened One was constantly pointing out the benefits of giving. The results he described are both in this life and after death.

Monks, if beings would know the results of giving and having shared as I know them, they would not eat without having given, and the impurity of stinginess would not stay in their psyche. Even the last bite, the last handful, from that they would not eat without sharing, if there were ones who could receive them. But because, monks, beings do not know the results of giving and sharing like I know them, they eat without having given, and the impurity of stinginess stays in their psyche.

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Monks, these are five benefits in giving. Which five?

Many people love it and find it pleasing.

Those who are true men share.

A good reputation spreads.

Worldly things don't disappear.

With the breakup of the body, after death, one arises in a good destination, a heavenly world.

These are the five benefits in giving.

*Giving is loved.
Remembered, the quality follows
Those who exist in that always share
Restrained and celibate.*

*They teach the quality
Which drives out all pain.
Which that quality here having understood,
Completely extinguishes, without any impulses.
AN 5.35*

Morality & The Results of Deeds

The Buddha often taught about the importance of morality both in leading to our long-term worldly well being and also being a crucial part of the path that leads to ultimate freedom.

There are ten core parts of morality the Buddha laid out (MN 41):

The three parts of bodily moral conduct are:

Refraining from killing living beings

Refraining from stealing

Refraining from wrong sexual behavior, that is, with one who is under someone else's protection, is a monastic, is in another relationship, or with someone with whom sex involves punishment.

The four parts of verbal moral conduct are:

Refraining from lying

Refraining from speaking divisively

Refraining from speaking coarse speech

Refraining from useless chatter

The three parts of mental moral conduct are:

Not being covetous

Not being hostile

Believing in mundane right view:

1) There are fruits which mature from good and bad actions.

2) The visible world exists, as well as a world beyond. One is born into this world through a mother and a father. One is born into a world beyond through falling into them spontaneously.

3) There are well practiced renunciates who have experienced with direct knowledge this world and the world beyond and make it known.

The Buddha taught that it is these 10 types of moral or immoral conduct which determine whether one is born in heavenly or human realms or goes down to lower realms.

Kamma

One of the central pieces of the Awakened One's teaching is the results of karma, deeds. He outlined four types of deeds. There are bright deeds, dark deeds, bright and dark deeds, and deeds that lead to the end of deeds.

All the types of immorality described above are dark deeds. Giving and abandoning those are types of bright deeds. Bright and dark deeds are ones which are mixed in good and bad qualities. The deeds that lead to the end of deeds are when one is implementing the noble eight-part path.

Teaching on kamma, deeds, is a fundamental part of the Awakened One's teaching. He encouraged all people to frequently reflect:

I am the owner of deeds, heir to deeds, born of deeds, sheltered by deeds, whatever deeds I do, good or bad, I will be their heir.

AN 5.57

In this vein, a major theme of the Awakened One's teaching is to be very careful with one's intentions and put in a lot of effort to become conscious of one's intentions and remember their consequences at every moment.

Dangers of Sense Pleasures

The Buddha offered many teachings and exhortations to monks and lay people about the dangers of sense pleasures. He described sense pleasures as any pleasing, liked, wished for, desired, pleasurable sight, sound, smell, taste, or touch.

He used many similes on the dangers of sense pleasures (MN 54). He likened them to a hungry dog chewing on a bone unable to satiate his hunger. He described them as similar to a bird carrying around a piece of meat. If the bird does not drop the piece of meat other birds of prey will attack it to take it. He likened them to carrying a torch against the wind. It's only a matter of time before one will be burned. He likened them to being dragged towards a pit of fire. He likened them to borrowed goods, which one has to return. He likened them to a dream. When one wakes up one will have to face reality. He likened them to someone who has climbed up a tree to gather fruit, but realizes that another is planning to cut the tree down to gather the fruit for himself.

He also encouraged lay people to look at how much work, and struggle, and stress goes into trying to earn money to attain possessions and experiences, which don't last and are subject to theft and destruction by various means. He encouraged them to look at how many arguments, conflict, violence, war, and destruction is caused by the pursuit of sensual pleasures. (MN 13)

Benefits of Renunciation

The way to living a content, peaceful, simple and free life with time to develop wholesome qualities and abandon unwholesome qualities is renunciation, consciously going without sensual pleasures, giving up the pursuit of sensuality, and living a celibate holy life.

In his own search for the way to ultimate freedom (MN26), he asked himself "Why if I'm subject to birth, aging, and death, do I seek out things that are also subject to birth, aging, and death?" Even before reaching his aspiration of ultimate freedom, it became clear to him that seeking out the things and experiences of the world would only distract him from his purpose and only by looking at the internal causes of attachment and birth could he find the way out.

The Four Noble Truths

The four noble truths are the centerpiece of the Buddha's teaching. They are the key to ultimate freedom. The whole path is included in the four noble truths.

The first noble truth is the truth of pain. The Buddha's description of this was "*Birth is painful. Aging is painful. Sickness is painful. Death is painful. Being stuck with those who are not loved is painful. Being separated from those who are loved is painful. Not getting what one wants is painful. In brief, the five masses which are taken on are painful.*" (SN 56.11)

His goal wasn't only to get out of the emotional or physical pain inherent in life. His goal was to get out of the cycle of birth, aging, and death. (MN 26)

The second noble truth was that the origin of that whole cycle of pain was rooted in craving: craving for sensuality, craving for existence, or craving for non-existence. This craving is to be abandoned.

The third noble truth was that the dissolution of pain was realized with the complete fading away and dissolution without a trace of that very craving, giving it up, relinquishing it completely, released, without any clinging.

The fourth noble truth is the way leading to the dissolution of pain, the whole set of preparations necessary to develop the subtlety of mind and psyche necessary to abandon craving at a moment to moment level. He described the noble eight part path as right view, right resolution, right speech, right action, right livelihood, right effort, right remembering, and right concentration.

It is the understanding of these realities and the experience of them that lays out the path to ultimate freedom. When they are understood, applied, and developed, they lead to the realization of ultimate freedom.

The Noble Eight-Part Path

The most complex part of the four noble truths is the fourth, the noble eight part path. The process involves creating a clean basis of moral purity, abandoning the pursuit of sensual experiences and unwholesome qualities, developing awareness, and unification of the psyche.

The noble truth of the way that leads to the dissolution of pain is the noble eight-part path: Right view, right resolution, right speech, right action, right livelihood, right effort, right remembering, right concentration.

Right view is the knowledge of pain, knowledge of the origin of pain, knowledge of the dissolution of pain, knowledge of the way leading to the dissolution of pain.

Right resolutions are resolutions of renunciation, non-hostility, and non-cruelty.

Right speech is refraining from lying, divisive speech, coarse speech, and useless chatter.

Right action is refraining from killing living beings, taking what is not given, and wrong sexual behavior.

Right livelihood is abandoning wrong livelihood and supporting his life by right livelihood. The full description of the types of livelihood a monastic should avoid includes a long list of activities which involve fortune telling, "animal arts" of reading omens and characteristics of people and nature, predictions about astrology, politics, weather, and mundane things, worldly livelihoods and doing errands for people, black and white magic, blessings, curses, and various forms of healing. (DN 2)

Right effort is a monk generating desire, effort, arouses energy, digs deep for will power and strives to keep unarisen unwholesome, bad qualities from arising, to abandon arisen bad and unwholesome qualities, to make unarisen wholesome qualities arise, and to sustain, develop, extend, and fulfill arisen wholesome qualities.

Right remembering is when a monk lives examining the body within the body, sensations within sensations, the psyche within the psyche, and qualities within qualities, passionate, fully conscious, and remembering, he removes greed and suffering for the world.

Right concentration is: *“A monk separated from sensuality, separated from unwholesome qualities, he lives having entered into the first focus with thought and mental movement, with joy and pleasure born of solitude.*

With the calming of thought and mental movement, internally settling down, the will having set down and unified, one enters into the second focus without thought or mental movement, with joy and pleasure born of concentration.

With the fading of joy, dwelling in observation, remembering and fully aware, experiencing pleasure throughout the body, that which the noble ones make known “This one is observing, remembering, and dwelling in pleasure.” one enters into the third focus.

With the abandoning of pleasure, and the abandoning of pain, with joy and suffering having previously come to an end, purified through observation and remembering, one enters into the fourth focus without pain or pleasure. “ (MN 141)

Often, when the noble eight-part path is presented without the explicit context of the four noble truths, it is extended to the noble ten-part path, which includes right knowledge and right freedom. When the first eight parts of the path have been developed. Right knowledge is where the first two noble truths are applied and right freedom is when the third noble truth of dissolution is realized. (MN 117)

Right Effort: Developing the Wholesome and Abandoning the Unwholesome

One key part of the path is right effort, consciously trying to abandon unwholesome qualities and develop wholesome qualities. However, to do this one needs to have a clear understanding of what wholesome and unwholesome qualities are.

The five coarsest forms of unwholesome qualities the Buddha described as obstructions or blockages. He would also often describe specific tools to overcome each of them. (DN 2)

To overcome the obstruction of covetousness, greed, envy, and sensual desire for the world, he encouraged looking at the unattractive aspects of that which one is infatuated with. For this he offered a number of different tools to either break the object down into its constituent parts, or think about what it will turn into as it dissolves. Some of the most common reflections are corpse, a skeleton, or breaking things down into the characteristic of earth, liquid, heat, wind, or breaking the body down into its head hair, body hair, nails, teeth, skin, flesh, sinews, bones, bone marrow, kidneys, heart, liver, pancreas, spleen, lungs, large intestine, small intestine, other inner organs, excrement, bile, phlegm, pus, blood, sweat, fat, tears, oil, saliva, snot, wound seepage, urine. (MN 22)

To overcome the obstruction of hostility, he encouraged developing kindness and sympathy for the well being of all living beings.

To overcome the obstruction of sluggishness and sleepiness, he recommended recognizing light, remembering, and fully aware. He encouraged the development of radiance in one's psyche, as well as remembering and being fully conscious. (AN 7.61)

To overcome the obstruction of agitation and worry, he encouraged a focus on calming one's psyche.

To overcome the obstruction of indecision, he encouraged clarity on what are wholesome and unwholesome qualities.

In addition to these major obstructions, he also listed a longer list of unwholesome qualities such as anger and vindictiveness, being controlling possessive, being deceitful and deceptive, arrogance and conceitedness, as well as grasping tightly to views and being unable to relinquish them.

The benefit of overcoming these five obstructions and the weakening of the other unwholesome states, is that one is able to develop a state of calm, awareness and remembering of the path. Because of this calm basis for awareness, it eventually develops into a deep contentment. One deeply content is overcome with joy. For one with a joyful mind, the body relaxes. A relaxed body feels pleasure. For one who feels pleasure, the psyche concentrates. (DN2, AN 11.1)

Calm (Samatha)

When someone has abandoned the desire for sensuality and other unwholesome states, one naturally has a sense of deep contentment, which gives rise to joy in the mind, relaxation of the body, and pleasurable sensations throughout the body. With a wholesome basis, it becomes relatively easy to concentrate one's psyche.

Here, friend, a monk separated from sensuality, separated from unwholesome qualities, one lives having entered into the first focus with thought and mental movement, with joy and pleasure born of solitude.

With the calming of thought and mental movement, internally settling down, the will having set down and unified, one enters into the second focus without thought or mental movement, with joy and pleasure born of concentration.

With the fading of joy, dwelling in observation, remembering and fully aware, experiencing pleasure throughout the body, that which the noble ones make known "This one is observing, remembering, and dwelling in pleasure." one enters into the third focus.

With the abandoning of pleasure, and the abandoning of pain, with joy and suffering having previously come to an end, purified through observation and remembering, one enters into the fourth focus without pain or pleasure. DN 2

Discerning (Vipassanā)

Some of the most common, but also most advanced teachings of the Buddha were when he taught monks and nuns all the different aspects of one's experience. In breaking down each of the aspects of one's experience, understanding their impermanent, changing, painful, and not-self nature, one becomes disenchanted with them. As one becomes disenchanted with them, infatuation fades away, and they dissolve, culminating in ultimate freedom, and in that freedom the knowledge that one won't be born again.

This discerning has two main frameworks. These are repeated many times in the chapters of the Samyutta Nikaya 22 and 35. The most well known of these discourses are the first time the Buddha taught them and are known as the Anattālakkaṇa Sutta and the Āditta Pariyāya Sutta.

The former framework involves looking at the impermanent, painful, not-self nature of each of the five masses or aggregates which are taken on and identified with: the mass of form which is taken on, the mass of sensation which is taken on, the mass of recognition which is taken on, the mass of fusions which are taken on, and the mass of perception which is taken on.

The latter framework involves looking at the impermanent, burning nature of the six internal and external aspects of the six sense fields as well as the perception of those fields, the contact between the three, as well as the sensation which arises due to this contact. The six sense fields are seeing, hearing, smelling, tasting, touching, mind, the objects of each sense doors, and the percept of each of these sense doors.

Once one establishes the awareness of the impermanent, burning nature of these experiences and the understanding that infatuation, hatred, and delusion are fueling the fire, one becomes disenchanted with them. When one becomes disenchanted, infatuation fades away. With the fading of infatuation one is freed. With the experience of freedom, one knows that one is freed and that this is one's last birth.

Extinguishing

Etam santam, etam panitam

Four Noble truths in DN2

Further Reading

This is a list of references for people who are interested to read more deeply into the Awakened One's teachings.

How do I practice?

Observing the Observance Day

The Awakened One encouraged people to observe observance days on the nights of the full moon, new moon, and 8th days of the lunar cycle. On these days, lay people would go to listen to a Dhamma talk from monastics when possible, and either reaffirm their dedication to the five precepts or if inspired to observe the eight precepts for that day. The following is the basic chanting used on those days.

Support-great, probably some refining copy editing, but already great

In food, explain that after accepting food, a monk can't receive it again.