INTRODUCTION

Happiness

Everybody in this world wants happiness. It is a real truth that nobody likes suffering. All human beings therefore make efforts as possible to prevent or alleviate sufferings and to enjoy happiness in their daily life. They devote all their times and energies to seeking material possessions, such as wealth, honour, power, fame, etc, and to enjoying sensual pleasures, hoping that those material possessions and sensual pleasures will give them happiness and will prevent or alleviate sufferings.

In fact, sufferings associated with birth, old age, disease, death and many other different kinds of problem and trouble in human life cannot be overcome by material means. They can be overcome only by mind-training and mental development as they arise out of non-satisfaction of wants and desires, anger and delusion.

Furthermore, material possessions and sensual pleasures add sufferings, miseries and anxieties, rather than giving genuine happiness as they depend on greed, lust, thirst and selfish desires. Actually, genuine happiness can be gained not by material
treasures, but by moral and spiritual treasures. In other words, genuine happiness can be found by moral and spiritual perfection, not by material possessions.

As human beings we have achieved a level of material progress we would not have even dreamed of barely a century ago. The marvels of modern technology have given us enormous power over the forces of nature. We have conquered many disasters but the ultimate question is: ‘Are we happier than our ancestors were in the past?’ The answer is ‘No’. Desires for sensual gratification, greed for money and power and selfishness, etc, lead the people to suffering.¹

Real happiness is found within, and is not to be defined in terms of wealth, power, honours, conquests or fame. If such worldly possessions are forcibly or unjustly obtained, or are misdirected, or even viewed with attachment, they will be a source of pain and sorrow for the possessors.²

**Buddhist Conception of Happiness**

In the ordinary way, the enjoyment of sensual pleasures and material comfort is the highest happiness to an average man. However, according to Buddhism, it is not true and lasting happiness- it is merely the gratification of man’s insatiable desire

---

and emotional satisfaction, and it disappears at the very next moment because of the fleeting nature of it.

Moreover, at the moment when we are enjoying sensual pleasures and material comfort, we may be quiet and look nice, but when we lose them, our attitudes soon change and we become angry and ugly. It is therefore evident that happiness gained through the enjoyment of sensual pleasures and material comfort is not true happiness since true happiness comes freed from mental impurities.

From the Buddhist point of view, the true happiness exceeds the material pleasures. It means that passing beyond the sensual enjoyment, or, in other words, absence of desire for worldly pleasures is the true happiness and the greatest bliss.

Buddhism views that suffering exists as long as there is craving, i.e. craving is its cause and it will end provided that craving is completely annihilated. According to the Buddha, the total cessation of craving, Nibbāna, is the greatest bliss.  

What is Buddhism?

Buddhism is the name given to the Teachings of the man, named Siddhattha Gotama, known as the Buddha, the Fully-Enlightened, Knower of the Four Noble Truths, who can make

---

3 “Nibbānaṁ paramaṁ sukhaṁ” (Khuddaka Nikāya, Dhammapada Pāli, Sukha Vagga, verse-204)
others understand them as he himself has understood. It would be better off knowing about the short life story of the Founder of Buddhism and His Teaching to study Buddhism.

Prince Siddhattha, the only son of king Suddhodana of the Sākiya clan and of his queen Mahā Māyā Devī was born at Kapilavatthu, the capital city of Kosala, a district of modern Nepal, on the full moon day of May, in the year 623 BC. He was brought up in luxury at the court in the capital city and kept in total ignorance of the old age, sickness and death to which all mundane beings are naturally subject. At the age of sixteen, completing an education befitting a prince, he was married to his cousin princess Bhaddakaccanā Yasodharā of Devadaha City and took the royal throne.

In his twenty-ninth year, on the day his son, named Rahulā, was born, he renounced all worldly pleasures and set off in search of the ultimate Truth and real Peace as he realized the vanity of sensual enjoyments and worldly amusement. He resolved, in other words, to find the key to human happiness and to make it known to the world, realizing the universality of suffering.

First, he wandered about in the deep forests and sit at the feet of the great religious teachers of the day to learn the ways to understand the ultimate Truth or to overcome suffering and attain the highest happiness from them. They taught him as much as they can, but none of them really knew the cause of human suffering and how it could be overcome.
Then, leaving them, he devoted himself alone to the great effort. For six long years, he strenuously practiced severe austerity, in Pāli term, the Dukkaracariya, the difficult practice, which no ordinary person can undertake.

However, through the personal experience, realizing that the practice of self-mortification (attakilamathānuyoga) which weakens one’s bodily and mental powers, and the practice of self-indulgence (kāmasukhallikānuyoga) which retards one’s intellectual progress, would not lead to the Awakening (bodhi), he finally decided to follow the Middle Path (Majjhima Paṭipadā), between the two extremes of self-mortification and self-indulgence.

At the age of thirty-five, through the Middle Path, the new way which he himself discovered, he eradicated all moral defilements (kilesa), purified the mind and realizing things according to the reality (yathābhūta), and attained Enlightenment (Buddhahood) at the foot of the Bodhi Tree, which is in modern Bodh-gaya near the town of Gaya, India. Thenceforward, he was called the Buddha, the Awakened or Enlightened One.

After becoming the Enlightened One, the Buddha taught the Dhamma for forty-five years of Buddhahood, for the welfare (hita) and happiness (sukha) of all living beings both by his deep wisdom and boundless compassion.

In His eightieth year, since the Buddha, like every other human being, succumbed to the law of change, he passed away; or, in other words, he attained Parinibbāna in the Sāla-grove of the
Malla kings, at Kusinara, addressed the monks: “Handa dāni bhikkhave, āmantayāmi vo, vayadhammā saṅkhārā, appamādena sampādetha- Behold now, monks, I exhort you: All compounded things are subject to vanish. Strive with earnestness!”

The Buddha is a man, not God. As a man, he was born, lived and died, and anyhow he never proclaimed to himself that he was an immortal divine being or God. In other words, though the Buddha is a man, he is not just an ordinary man; but he is an extraordinary man (acchariya-manussa) owing to his unique characteristics.

Moreover, the Buddha is a teacher, not a saviour. He exhorts his followers to rely on themselves and make individual striving for their deliverance and happiness.

The Buddha addresses as follows:

“Etañhi tumhe paṭipannā, dukkhassantaṁ karissatha, akkhāto vo mayā maggo, aññāya sallakantanaṁ- Walking upon this path, you will make an end of suffering. Having discovered how to pull out the thorn of lust, I make known the path.”

“Tumhehi kiccamātappatiṁ, akkhātaṁ tathāgatā, paṭipannā pamokkhanti, jhāyino mārabandhanā- You yourselves must strive. The Buddhas only point the path. Only those meditative ones, who tread the path, can be released from the fetter of Death.”

---

4Dīgha Nikāya, Mahāvagga Pāli, Mahāparinibbāna Sutta, p-128.
5Here, the path means the Noble Eightfold Path.
“Attadīpā, Bhikkhave, viharatha attasaraṇā anaññasaraṇā!-Oh Monks, be ye islands unto yourselves; be ye refuge unto yourselves; do not seek for refuge in others!”

Further, He said to Venerable Ānanda as follows:

“Siyā kho panānanda, tumhākaṁ evamassa ‘atītasatthukaṁ pāvacanaṁ, natthi no satthā’ti. Na kho panetaṁ, Ānanda, evaṁ daṭṭhabbarṁ. Yo vo, Ānanda, mayā Dhammo ca Vinayo ca desito paññatto, so vo mamaccayena satthā- Ānanda, maybe, you will think thus ‘The teacher’s instruction has ceased; now we have no longer a teacher!’ You should not think like that, Ānanda. The Doctrine (Dhamma) and the Discipline (Vinaya), that I have preached and promulgated to you, will be your teacher after my passing.”

Throughout his missionary career of forty-five years, the Buddha’s innate proclivity to address to reason, making the listener wise and rational in ethical and spiritual matters, is vividly manifested in the canonical dialogues of the Buddha. (Here) He is a teacher par excellence, who saw the potential of each and every individual irrespective of his clan, caste, creed or social status and devoted a considerable part of his discourses to instil awareness of the bare facts of life.

The Buddha’s teaching, known as Dhamma, which he taught for forty-five long years, mainly includes a body of instructions explaining the true nature of existence that help to achieve the

---

8Dīgha Nikāya, Mahāvagga Pāli, Mahāparinibbāna Sutta, pp-126/127.
liberation from suffering or the realization of Nibbāna ultimately. Furthermore, it also contains several instructions that help to achieve the material and mental welfare of humanity in this present life immediately.

Buddhists hold that the Buddha’s teaching is designed to fulfil three primary objectives: first, to meet human welfare here and now; second, to help mankind in order to get a favorable rebirth in the next life; and last, to guide people to attain the ultimate good— the extinction of suffering, Nibbāna, which is the final goal of Buddhists.

The general guideline given by the Buddha to fulfil those three objectives is: to avoid all bad deeds, to cultivate all good deeds, and to purify the mind.  

To fulfil the first aim dealt with establishing well-being and happiness in the immediate sphere of human life here and now, Buddhism provides the man with ethical instructions: to live honestly and righteously, to live at peace with himself and his surroundings, to fulfill his duties and responsibilities, to get rid of the irritation and the bitterness which cause conflict, violence and war that bring such immense suffering to the individual life, human society, and the world.

According to the Buddha, the qualities distinguishing the man of virtue are charity, good character, truthfulness, tolerance,

\[\text{\textsuperscript{10}}\text{“Sabbapāpassa akaranaṁ, kusalassa upasampadā, sacittapariyodapanaṁ, etāṁ buddhānasāsanaṁ.” (Khuddaka Nikāya, Dhammapada Pāli, Buddha Vagga, verse-183.)}\]
loving-kindness and compassion. These qualities maintain human
dignity and glory, and offer happiness to humanity.

In the Buddha’s teachings, life is not viewed as an isolated
occurrence beginning spontaneously with birth and ending in utter
annihilation at death. Each single life span is seen, rather, as part of
an individualized series of lives having no discoverable beginning
in time and continuing on as long as the desire for existence stands
intact. Rebirth can take place in various realms. There are not only
the familiar realms of human beings and animals, but ranged above
we meet heavenly worlds of greater happiness, beauty and power,
and ranged below infernal worlds of extreme suffering.\footnote{Bhikkhu Bodhi, The Dhammapada: The Buddha’s Path of Wisdom, p-12.}

According to the Buddha’s teachings, the cause of rebirth
into these various realms is Kamma, our own willed actions. The
ultimate sense of Kamma is intention.\footnote{“Cetanāhaṁ bhikkhave kammaṁ vadāmi” (Aṅguttara Nikāya, Chakkānapāta, p-.363).}

The Buddha distinguishes Kamma, actions into two basic
ethical types: good actions and bad actions. Good actions bring
rebirth into higher realms and bad actions bring rebirth into lower
realms.

The ethical instructions for the first aim holds a man not to
descend into states of suffering- hell, the animal and spirit world,
such as devils, and other unfortunate living beings; and it also
supports him to get a better world in the next life which is the
second among three aims.
In this second aim, the Dhamma shows that morality is critical not only in the contribution to human felicity here and now, but also in the molding human good destiny and anyway reveals our own action creates our own heaven and hell.

Following the ethical law makes human well-being and happiness in the immediately visible life and leads him to higher rebirth in the next life. On the contrary, breaking the law generates suffering in this life and rebirth in the worlds of misery.

In the Dhammapada, the Buddha says as follow:

“Idha tappati pecca tappati, pāpakārī ubhayattha tappati, ‘pāpaṁ me kata’nti tappati, bhiyyo tappati duggatiṁ gato- The evil-doer suffers here and hereafter, he suffers in both the worlds. The thought, ‘Evil have I done’, torments him, and he suffers even more when gone to realms of woe.”

“Idha nandati pecca nandati, katapuñño ubhayattha nandati, ‘puññaṁ me kata’nti nandati, bhiyyo nandati suggatiṁ gato- The doer of good delights here and hereafter, he delights in both the worlds. The thought, ‘Good have I done’, delights him, and he delights even more when gone to realms of bliss.”

It is not the final aim of Buddhism that to get higher rebirth and happiness in the next lives as the Buddha reveals that all states of existence in round of rebirths (saṁsāra), even in the higher levels, are lacking in genuine worth for they are temporary and thus suffering is subject to those who cling to them.

13 Khuddaka Nikaya, Dhammapada Pāli, Yamaka Vagga, verses-17/18.
According to the Buddha, all things, despite Nibbāna, which is unconditioned thing, are conditioned by causes and every conditioned thing is constantly becoming and is perpetually changing.

Heavenly life is also conditioned thing and must inevitably pass away and hence more rebirths and deaths have to happen constantly to heavenly being in the heaven or hell. Therefore suffering is potential to him and cannot be evaded.

The Buddha declares that Nibbāna is unconditioned state where it is not subject to rebirth and death again and there no more suffering. Additionally, the happiness of Nibbāna is totally different from ordinary worldly happiness of here and hereafter because the former is noble bliss and lasts forever and on the contrary, the later is merely the gratification of material desires and disappears in a short time.

So the man, who wants the great happiness, should try to attain Nibbāna according to Buddhism. The Buddha teachings are concerned with Four Noble Truths in the attainment of Nibbāna, which is the last of its three aims. The path leads to deliverance from suffering, that the Buddha shows is Noble Eightfold Path (Ariyaatṭhāṅgikamagga).

In brief, the entire teachings of the Buddha hinge upon ethics and meditation to guide human beings for the attainment of well-being and happiness here and hereafter, and for the attainment of deliverance from suffering, or of liberation from round of rebirths (saṃsāra).
Buddhist Ethics

Buddhist ethics can be divided into two groups: the worldly ethics and the unworldly ethics.

Buddhist worldly ethics deal with both the material and moral progress of lay followers in the present life and the next existence.

In the case of moral progress, Buddhist worldly ethics are concerned with the cultivation of human value and humane qualities, e.g. charity, morality, etc, which fosters the growth of attitudes based on the principles and practices of harmless and beneficial goodwill for one’s own welfare and happiness, as well as others.

Ethics are in the heart of one’s characters, habits and temperament. Good ethics make a man the decent one. The good man pleases and delights himself, his society and the world. Bad ethics bring opposite effects. The worldly ethics also associate with the development of love and compassion in order to create harmonious, liberal and peaceful individual life, human society and the world.

In the case of material progress, Buddhist worldly ethics deal with good and practical knowledge, methods and advices, e.g. Four Endowments, Parental Services, Filial Duties, etc, for the development of business, social and family affairs, for the positive approach to religion and politics and for the improvement of other
worldly affairs to make material progress of lay people in all spheres of life.

Buddhist unworldly ethics, such as Noble Eightfold Path, Enlightenment Factors, etc, are intended mainly for the benefit of the Noble One (Ariya), or the deliverance from suffering, or the realization of Nibbāna. They are concerned with the contemplative nature, and understanding of the true nature of life and the reality of worldly conditions through the analytic intelligence and insight wisdom.

The man who sees the miserable facts of life: birth, old-age, sickness and death through the following the unworldly ethics of Buddhism, does not long even for the rebirth in the heavenly realms. His aspiration is only for deliverance from round of births, which is the ultimate goal of Buddhism.

Buddhist unworldly ethics are the ways to become a noble one, to overcome suffering and to gain firm and stable happiness (sukha) and peace (santi).

Buddhist ethics is not a matter of formal acceptance, but it is a matter of intellectual adherence. Man can be saved from suffering, misery, sorrow and pain not by blind belief and passive faith in Buddhist ethics, but by the dynamic adherence to Buddhist ethics.
Meditation

Meditation is a conscious effort to change how the mind works. The Pāli word for meditation is “Bhāvanā” which means ‘to make grow’ or ‘to develop’.\textsuperscript{14}

In Buddhism, there are two groups of meditation (Bhāvanā) - Tranquility meditation (Samatha bhāvanā) and Insight meditation (Vipassanā bhāvanā), designed to overcome mental problems, to develop psychological states and to purify the mind.

Tranquility meditation, the development of mental calm with concentration, is accompanied by three benefits: it gives happiness in the present life, a favorable rebirth in the next existence, and the freedom from mental defilements, which is a prerequisite for attainment of insight.

Tranquility meditation can calm and pacify a mind distraught with worldly hopes and fears. It is too used to control one’s sensual desire, anger, worries and other mental bad situations, and to bring peace and happiness for the individual and world.

Insight meditation is associated with the realization of the three signs of being: impermanence (anicca), suffering (dukkha) and non-self (anatta) by direct insight. These three characteristics: impermanence, suffering and non-self, can be grasped intellectually and be sufficient to rid the mind of egoism and craving. It is the certain and visible assurance of Nibbāna.

\textsuperscript{14}Ven. S. Dhammika, \textit{Good question Good answer}, p-43.
In this meditation, the mind that has been established in wisdom, and has freed from the cloud of ignorance, becomes like a still, clear pool completely free from disturbance and agitation, and ready to mirror on its surface the nature of things as they really are, the aspect of them which is hidden from ordinary knowledge by the restlessness of craving.

**Conclusion**

Generally speaking, Buddhist ethics and meditation are to be practiced to contribute to peace and happiness in the individual life and the world. They are essential for our mental and physical well-being. They lead to self-control, purification and enlightenment. They serve as guards for our bodily actions, verbal actions and mental actions.

The true nature of human life is harsh and hard. We can see this situation through our daily life, surroundings, society and world. If our hearts and minds are not trained by inner principles and practices, we are likely to feel hardship and suffering.

As human being, we must uphold good principles and practices for individual happiness and universal peace. For stance, if we do not kill or harm each other, we can live without fear and horror and naturally, our life and our world will be at peace and happiness. Therefore, we need to have principles and practices in our hearts and minds.
According to Buddhism, Doctrine (Dhamma) merely held in the mind as an intellectual belief has not any driving force; it is not of any value unless and until it is applied; and practice should be the very core and essence of a religion, for it is action, not belief, practice, not theory that counts in life.

So, simply speaking, the Buddha’s teachings (Dhamma) are to be applied as human principles and practices in order to make human life and human world happy and peaceful, and additionally to lead mankind to the cessation of suffering.

To establish the precious life, to create the serene world and to won the noble life, the Buddha’s teachings (Dhamma) are the best instructions for all human begins, regardless of any nationality, cast, sex and faith.

The Buddhist Dhamma is simple, but perfect in its meaning. If we follow it, we will discover the true freedom and happiness which are greater than anything in the world. It will also help us to make our life and our world better if we practice it fully.