CHAPTER V

The Signification of Buddhist Education to the Questions of Existence

V.1. Attitude of the Buddha to the Questions of Existence

Buddhism today appeals not only to its adherents or to its scholars; it has become a universal phenomenon and, consequently, an object of universal interest. It is one of the greatest spiritual traditions, and as such is drawn in a complex interaction with other traditions, a combination that forms the cultural make-up of the contemporary globalizing world. Therefore, knowledge of Buddhism that presupposes an understanding attitude toward Buddhism and a respectful attitude toward its practitioners is necessary for anyone wishing to correspond to the requirements of the times and be attuned to the spirit of the 21st century.

Knowledge of the world is perennially incomplete and imprecise, and constantly in need of additional knowledge and greater concreteness. Knowledge is relative in nature and has no direct effect on man’s position with regard to the meaning of his life; to the contrary, knowledge itself depends to a substantial extent on the practical attitude of man toward the world. Metaphysical questions remain questions for all times. They are eternal in the sense that they are inexhaustible and can be dealt with for ever.
There can be no definite answer of indubitable verity to such a question. To decline them (that is to leave them unanswered) is all the more easier since they are not directly linked to the question of the meaning of life. This may well be the most essential aspect of the Buddhist worldview. The Buddha’s ethics depends neither upon his metaphysics nor, for that matter, upon his epistemology. It needs not, nor does it seek a substantiation in these bases. Rather, ethics itself is a key to both the former and the latter. What concerns the Buddha and is the goal of all his efforts—his ethics, or what we would call his ethics, and which is in the striving to break away from darkness and attain light, to break away from ignorance and attain wisdom, to break away from earthly existence and attain the irreproachable Nirvana— all this is the beginning of his ontology and his gnoseology. The Buddha is not interested in the deep structures of the world as such; he is primarily concerned with them to the extent to which they are present in his self and depend upon his self. Being to him is his own individual-responsible existence. In this way, ontology becomes ethics and is confined by ethics. Further, to possess knowledge of the world means to the Buddha the same as having knowledge of how to live properly. Therefore, true knowledge exists only in the form of truth of one’s own being, of the proper meaning of life.
The scriptures mention a few occasions when the Buddha remained silent to questions posed to Him. Some scholars, owing to their misunderstanding of the Buddha's silence, came to the hasty conclusion that the Buddha was unable to answer to these questions. While it is true that on several occasions the Buddha did not respond to these metaphysical and speculative questions, there are reasons why the Buddha kept noble silence. When the Buddha knew that the questioner was not in a position to understand the answer to the question because of its profundity, or if the questions themselves were wrongly put in the first place, the Blessed One remained silent.

Thus have I heard. On a certain occasion The Blessed One was dwelling at Saavatthi in Jetavana monastery in Anaathapi.n.dika's Park. Now it happened to the venerable Maalunkyaaputta, being in seclusion and plunged in meditation that a consideration presented itself to his mind as follows: "These theories which The Blessed One has left unelucidated, has set aside and rejected that the world is eternal, that the world is not eternal, that the world is finite, that the world is infinite, that the soul and the body are identical, that the soul is one thing and the body another, that the saint exists after death, that the saint does not exist after death, that the saint both exists and does not exist after death, that the saint neither
exists nor does not exist after death, these The Blessed One does not elucidate to me. And the fact that The Blessed One does not elucidate them to me does at please me not suit me. Therefore I will draw near to The Blessed One and inquire of him concerning this matter.\(^1\) He thought, 'If the Buddha does not explain these things to me, I will give up this training and return to worldly life'.

when Malunkyaputta approached the Buddha. He put these questions to the Buddha who replied: "Now did I ever say to you that if you led a religious life you would understand these things? It’s just as if a man were wounded with an arrow thickly smeared with poison. His friends & companions, kinsmen & relatives would provide him with a surgeon, and the man would say, ‘I won’t have this arrow removed until I know whether the man who wounded me was a noble warrior, a brahman, a merchant, or a worker.’ He would say, ‘I won’t have this arrow removed until I know the given name & clan name of the man who wounded me… until I know whether he was tall, medium, or short… until I know whether he was dark, ruddy-brown, or golden-colored… until I know his home village, town, or city… until I know whether the bow with which I was wounded was a long bow or a crossbow… until I know whether the bowstring with which I was

wounded was fiber, bamboo threads, sinew, hemp, or bark... until I know whether the shaft with which I was wounded was wild or cultivated... until I know whether the feathers of the shaft with which I was wounded were those of a vulture, a stork, a hawk, a peacock, or another bird... until I know whether the shaft with which I was wounded was bound with the sinew of an ox, a water buffalo, a langur, or a monkey.’ He would say, ‘I won’t have this arrow removed until I know whether the shaft with which I was wounded was that of a common arrow, a curved arrow, a barbed, a calf-toothed, or an oleander arrow.’ The man would die and those things would still remain unknown to him.”

The Buddha who had truly realized the nature of these issues observed noble silence. An ordinary person who is still unenlightened might have a lot to say, but all of it would be sheer conjecture based on his imagination. The Buddha's silence regarding these questions is more meaningful than attempting to deliver thousands of discourses on them. The paucity of our human vocabulary which is built upon relative experiences cannot hope to convey the depth and dimensions of reality which a person has not himself experienced through insight. On several occasions, the Buddha had very patiently explained that human language was too limited.

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2 M.Vol. II. P. 99.
and could not describe the Ultimate Truth. If the Ultimate Truth is absolute, then it does not have any point of reference for worldlings with only mundane experiences and relative understanding to fully comprehend it. When they try to do so with their limited mental conception, they misunderstand the Truth like the seven blind men and the elephant. The listener who had not realized the Truth could not fathom the explanation given, just like a man who was blind since birth will have no way of truly understanding the color of the sky.

The Buddha did not attempt to give answers to all the questions put to Him. He was under no obligation to respond to meaningless questions which reflected gross misunderstanding on the part of spiritual development. He was a practical Teacher, full of compassion and wisdom. He always spoke to people fully understanding their temperament, capability and capacity to comprehend. When a person asked questions not with the intention to learn how to lead a religious life but simply to create an opportunity for splitting hairs, the Blessed One did not answer these questions. Questions were answered to help a person towards self-realization, not as a way of showing His towering wisdom. The Buddha remained silent when asked these questions. He described them as a net and refused to be drawn into such a net of theories, speculations, and dogmas.
He said that it was because he was free of bondage to all theories and dogmas that he had attained liberation. Such speculations, he said, are attended by fear, unease, bewilderment, and suffering, and it is by freeing oneself of them that one achieves liberation. The questions imply two basic attitudes toward the world. The Buddha speaks of these two attitudes in his dialogue with Mahakashyapa, when he says that there are two basic views, the view of existence and the view of nonexistence. He said that people are accustomed to think in these terms, and that as long as they remain entangled in these two views they will not attain liberation. The propositions that the world is eternal, that the world is infinite, that the Tathagatha exists after death, and that the self is independent of the body reflect the view of existence. The propositions that the world is not eternal, that the world is finite, that the Tathagata does not exist after death, and that the self is identical with the body reflect the view of nonexistence. These two views were professed by teachers of other schools during the time of the Buddha. The view of existence is generally the view of the Brahmins; that of nonexistence is generally the view of the materialists and hedonists.

When the Buddha refuses to be drawn into the net of these dogmatic views of existence and nonexistence, he has two things in mind: the ethical consequences of these two views, and the fact that the views of
absolute existence and nonexistence do not correspond to the way things really are. The eternalists view this self as permanent and unchanging. When the body dies, this self will not die because the self is by nature unchanging. If that is the case, it does not matter what this body does: actions of the body will not affect the destiny of the self. This view is incompatible with moral responsibility because if the self is eternal and unchanging, it will not be affected by wholesome and unwholesome actions. Similarly, if the self were identical with the body and the self dies along with the body, then it does not matter what the body does. If you believe that existence ends at death, there will be no necessary constraint upon action. But in a situation where things exist through interdependent origination, absolute existence and nonexistence are impossible. Another example drawn from the fourteen unanswerable questions also shows that the propositions do not correspond to the way things really are. Take the example of the world. According to Buddhist teaching, the world does not exist absolutely or does not exist absolutely in time. The world exists dependent on causes and conditions, ignorance, craving, and clinging. When ignorance, craving, and clinging are present, the world exists; when they are not present, the world ceases to exist. Hence the question of the absolute existence or nonexistence of the world is unanswerable. Existence and nonexistence, taken as absolute ideas,
do not apply to things as they really are. This is why the Buddha refuses to agree to absolute statements about the nature of things. He believed that the absolute categories of metaphysics do not apply to things as they really are. The Buddha refused to give any teaching about these issues, although the monk Malunkyaputta challenged him. But the Buddha's fundamental point - which was always for him the soteriological point - was that to know the answers to these questions is not necessary for liberation and that to treat them as though they were will only hinder our advance toward liberation. To make his point he told the parable of the man pierced by a poisoned arrow. If he insists, before receiving medical treatment, on knowing who shot the arrow, and of what clan he is, what kind of bow he was using, what the bow string and the shaft of the arrow were made of, from what kind of bird the feathers on the arrow came, and so on, he will die before his thirst for knowledge is satisfied. Likewise, if we distract ourselves from the path to enlightenment by trying to settle these disputed cosmological and metaphysical issues we may well fail to be healed from birth, ageing, dying, grief, sorrow, suffering, lamentation and despair. And so these matters are set aside by the Buddha because such knowledge 'is not connected with the goal, is not fundamental to the Brahma-faring, and does not conduce to
turning away from, nor to dispassion, stopping, calming, super-knowledge, awakening nor to nibbana.

According to the Samyutta Nikaya a wandering monk, Vacchagotta, once asked the Buddha about the state of the Tathagata after death. A Tathagata is a fully enlightened being, a Buddha, and the question concerns the ultimate conclusion of the process of finite human existence. This is not the question of the fate after death of ordinary unenlightened individuals; the Buddha's answer to that was the doctrine of rebirth. In response to Vaccagotta's question he rejects as inapplicable the entire range of possible answers in terms of which the question was posed - namely, by specifying in what sphere the Tathagata arises after death:

"'Arise', Vaccha, does not apply."

"Well then, good Gotama, does he not arise?"

"'Does not arise', Vaccha, does not apply."

"Well then, good Gotama, does he both arise and not arise?"

"'Both arises and does not arise', Vaccha, does not apply."

"Well then, good Gotama, does he neither arise nor not arise?"

"'Neither arises nor does not arise', Vaccha, does not apply."  

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3 M. Vol. II. P. 101
Vaccha then expresses his bewilderment and disappointment, and the Buddha responds, 'You ought to be at a loss, Vaccha, you ought to be bewildered. For Vaccha, this dhamma is deep, difficult to see, difficult to understand, peaceful, excellent, beyond dialectics, subtle, intelligible to the wise…..'\footnote{M. Vol. II. p.165} referring all the time to the mystery of parinirvana, nirvana beyond this life. It is misleading to say that after death the Tathagata - that is, the fully enlightened individual that we know in this life - exists, or does not exist, or both exists and does not exist, or neither exists nor non-exists beyond this life. The Buddha then illustrates the idea of a question which is so put that it has no answer by speaking of a flame that has been quenched:

"I will now put some questions to you. Answer as you see fit. What do you think, Vaccha: If a fire were burning in front of you, would you know that, 'This fire is burning in front of me'?"

"...yes..."

"And suppose someone were to ask you, Vaccha, 'This fire burning in front of you, dependent on what is it burning?' Thus asked, how would you reply?"

"...I would reply, 'This fire burning in front of me is burning dependent on grass and timber as its sustenance.'"
"If the fire burning in front of you were to go out, would you know that, 'This fire burning in front of me has gone out'?

"...yes..."

"And suppose someone were to ask you, 'This fire that has gone out in front of you, in which direction from here has it gone? East? West? North? Or south?'

Thus asked, how would you reply?"

"That doesn't apply, Master Gotama. Any fire burning dependent on a sustenance of grass and timber, being unnourished — from having consumed that sustenance and not being offered any other — is classified simply as 'out' (unbound).

"Even so, Vaccha, any physical form by which one describing the Tathagata would describe him: That the Tathagata has abandoned, its root destroyed, made like a palmyra stump, deprived of the conditions of development, not destined for future arising. Freed from the classification of form, Vaccha, the Tathagata is deep, boundless, hard to fathom, like the sea. 'Reappears' doesn't apply. 'Does not reappear' doesn't apply. 'Both does and does not
reappear' doesn't apply. 'Neither reappears nor does not reappear' doesn't apply.⁶

To those who believe in a true findably existent “me” or “self” and a true findably existent universe, Buddha did not answer when they asked are the “I” or the “self” and the universe: eternal, not eternal, since they undergo gross impermanence at the time of their destruction, as both, in the sense that some beings and their environments, like the Creator Brahma and his heaven, are eternal; while all else, such as his creations, are not eternal and end at the time of their destruction, neither, since it is impossible to know? Are “I’s” or “selves” and the universe: finite, infinite, both finite and infinite, in the sense that limited beings are infinite in number, but the universe is finite in size, neither, since it is impossible to know? Does the “I” or the “self” of a Buddha: continue to exist after death, not continue after death, both, in the sense that the body does not continue, but the life-force does, neither? Buddha did not answer these because there is no such thing as a true findably existent “me” or “self” for either limited beings or a Buddha, and no such thing as a true findably existent universe. Therefore, there can be no question whether such things are eternal or not eternal, or finite or infinite. It is like asking do rabbit-horns, turtle-hair or chicken-lips last

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⁶ M. Vol. II.pp.165-167.
forever or only a limited time. If Buddha said the “me,” and so on are eternal, these people would fall to the position of eternalism. If he said they are not eternal, they would fall to the position of nihilism, since they would not understand his answer. Therefore, it was more skillful not to specify an answer at all. To those who believe in a true findably existent body and life-force, Buddha did not answer when they asked are the body and life-force: the same entity, totally separate and different entities? He remained silent for a similar reason, since they would only misunderstand anything he said.

When a group of ascetics came and asked the same question from certain disciples of the Buddha, they could not get a satisfactory answer from them. Anuradha, a disciple, approached the Buddha and reported to Him about their conversation. Considering the understanding capacity of the questioners, the Buddha usually observed silence at such questions. However in this instance, the Buddha explained to Anuradha in the following manner:

'O Anuradha, what do you think, is the form (Rupa) permanent or impermanent?'

'Impermanent, Sir.'

'Is that which is impermanent, painful or pleasant?'
'Painful, Sir.'

'Is it proper to regard that which is impermanent, painful and subject to change as: 'This is mine; this is I, this is my soul or permanent substance?''

'It is not proper, Sir.'

'Is feeling permanent or impermanent?'

'Impermanent, Sir.'

'Is that which is impermanent, painful or pleasant?'

'Painful, Sir.'

'Is it proper to regard that which is impermanent, painful and subject to change as 'This is mine, this is I, this is my soul''?''

'It is not proper, Sir.'

'Are perfection, formative tendencies and consciousness, permanent or impermanent?'

'Impermanent, Sir.'

'Is that which is impermanent, painful or pleasant?'

'Painful, Sir.'

'Is it proper to regard that which is impermanent, painful and subject to change as: 'This is mine, this is I, this is my soul'?''
'It is not proper, Sir.'

'Therefore whatever form, feeling, perception, formative tendencies, consciousness which have been, will be and is now connected with oneself, or with others, gross or subtle, inferior or superior, far or near; all forms, feelings, perceptions, formative tendencies and consciousness should be considered by right knowledge in this way: 'This is not mine; this not I; this is not my soul.' Having seen thus, a noble, learned disciple becomes disenchanted with the form, feeling, perception, formative tendencies and consciousness. Becoming disenchanted, he controls his passion and subsequently discards them.'

'Being free from passion he becomes emancipated and insight arises in him: 'I am emancipated.' He realizes: 'Birth is destroyed, I have lived the holy life and done what had to be done. There is no more birth for me.'

'What do you think, Anuradha, do you regard the form as a Tathagata?'

'No, Sir.'

'O Anuradha, what is your view, do you see a Tathagata in the form?'

'No, Sir.'

'Do you see a Tathagata apart from form?'

'No, Sir.'
'Do you see a Tathagata in feeling, perception, formative tendencies, consciousness?'

'No, Sir.'

'O Anuradha, what do you think, do you regard that which is without form, feeling, perception, formative tendencies and consciousness as a Tathagata?'

'No, Sir.'

'Now, Anuradha, since a Tathagata is not to be found in this very life, is it proper for you to say: 'This noble and supreme one has pointed out and explained these four propositions: A Tathagata exists after death; A Tathagata does not exist after death; A Tathagata exists and yet does not exist after death; A Tathagata neither exists nor does not exist after death?'

'No, Sir.'

'Well and good, Anuradha. Formerly and now also I expound and point out only the truth of Suffering and cessation of Suffering.'

In summing up the correct position to Anuradha, the Buddha says that both formerly and now “it is just suffering and the cessation of suffering” that he proclaims. This statement could be considered as the final answer to the question why any predication on the post-mortem status of the

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liberated saint is not legitimate. From the Buddhist perspective, if anything arises it is only suffering, and if anything ceases it is also only suffering. And it is just suffering and its cessation that the Buddha proclaims. Therefore what is extinguished when Nibbana is won is only suffering. It is not the annihilation of an independently existing self-entity, i.e. the ego-illusion and all that it entails and implies.

The Buddha's doctrine of the unanswered and the unanswerable questions might apply to the developments in Buddhist thought after his time. And any doctrine that generalises dogmatically beyond the scope of experience, including crucially the experience of enlightenment, will be affected by it. Thus we find ourselves to be part of a vast continuous process of interdependent change (Paticca-samuppāda), in which there is no entity, or self-existence, but everything is mutually co-constituted by everything else, is to affirm a doctrine based upon experience and the analysis of experience. But to go beyond this to assert that this continuum of Paticca-samuppāda is uncreated, and not structured towards any end or fulfilment, is to go beyond the witness of experience. The existence of a creator is not dogmatically denied, according least to some well-known scholars of Buddhism. Thus Edward Conze, who was himself a Buddhist, wrote that 'Buddhist tradition does not exactly deny the existence of a creator, but it is
not really interested to know who created the universe. The purpose of Buddhist doctrine is to release beings from suffering, and speculations concerning the origin of the universe are held to be immaterial to that task\textsuperscript{8}.

From the Buddhist perspective, all the ten questions are a product of the personality view. They range from the four primary elements of matter to such abstract categories as diversity and unity, the idea of totality and Nibbana as the supreme goal. Thus as long as what is referred to as personality view (sakkaya-ditthi) persists, so long will our pronouncements on the nature of reality be conditioned by the egocentric perspective. The Buddha does not answer the ten undetermined questions it is because the Buddha is free from the personality view. What this clearly implies is that once the ego-notion is eliminated, the very validity of raising such questions gets eliminated. In other words, in the context of the Buddhist teaching relating to the nature of reality, they become meaningless questions. The Buddha observed silence because He knew that it would be impossible to explain the ultimate truth to an unenlightened person due to the limitations of human language and also to the person's lack of insight regarding the nature of reality. Also if the questions reflected gross misunderstanding on the part of the questioner, the Buddha would not answer them. Being a

\textsuperscript{8} Buddhism, Its Essence and Development, Harper Torchbooks, 1975, p. 39
practical teacher, the Buddha thought that such questions were not relevant to the person's spiritual development. If the questioner's intention was not to lead a religious life but simply aimed at splitting hairs, the Buddha would not answer his questions. The Buddha would only answer questions to help a person towards self-realization, not to show off His wisdom. Therefore the Buddha kept noble silence to the questions of existence.

V.2. The value of emancipation in the Buddha’s teachings

Siddhartha Gautama, known as the Buddha or enlightened one, left his castle because he could no longer bear to live a privileged life while the world was full of suffering. He went forth for the welfare of all sentient beings into a life of service and a mission to create a different kind of community based on wise compassion. He saw the root of the suffering in the world to lie in false consciousness – in prejudice, in acquisitiveness, in power seeking, in hatred and cruelty, in the mind of oppression that springs from fear and desire.

According to the Buddha’s teaching every one is equal in suffering. Suffering is neither special for any caste nor except any one. This idea was inherited from ancient Indian religions by Buddha but the revolutionary point in his teaching is to affirm that every one are equal in ability of
achieving enlightenment and on the way to emancipation; especially, the way to emancipation is not paved by any god or supernatural one, but every one must decide by himself, step up by himself and realize by himself and only by passing over just the human life of oneself with his entire believe and morals. "The freedom of thought allowed by the Buddha is unheard of elsewhere in the history of religions. This freedom is necessary because, according to the Buddha, man's emancipation depends on his own realization of Truth, and not on the benevolent grace of a god or any external power as a reward for his obedient good behaviour."\(^9\) Final emancipation for any Buddhist is Nirvana. This could be described as non-being-the extinction of personal existence by absorption into pure Being. Nirvana is passionless peace, detached serenity, cessation of desire, freedom from both pain and pleasure. Most Buddhists resist the idea that Nirvana means the annihilation of the soul; for they do not believe there is a soul to annihilate. One popular Vietnamese Buddhist writer, Thich Nhat Hanh, explains Nirvana to be “the extinction of ideas and concepts and suffering based on ideas and concepts; the ultimate dimension of reality.”\(^10\) In order to attain

\(^9\) Rahula,\(^2\)
Nirvana a person must overcome the “three unwholesome roots-desire, hatred and delusion.”\textsuperscript{11}

To avoid the two extremes of lust and mortification which were non-stop argued by the ancient Indian, the Buddha’s teaching paved the Middle way (\textit{Madhyamika}) which proves that the true nature of human is \textit{not-self} (\textit{anatman}) but because of the leading of ignorance and craving sentient being misunderstands that there is a real \textit{self} (\textit{atman}) and then tries to possess it (by both ways of lust or mortification). It is the cause of pain and evil that can begin and grow uncontrolled from then. This is the basic point investigated by Buddha to build up the Buddhist theory of human suffering and emancipation. Liberating knowledge of Buddhism also is the realization of the true nature of reality more specifically nature of being, non-being and becoming. The goal of life is to rise above or stand apart of the ceaseless motion of life. This is the state of quiescence, attainment of highest bliss, known as Nirvāṇa. The enlightened one attains the insight and knowledge of the real. This wisdom of Prajñā or (Pannā) has been variously described in Buddhist literature. Buddha's followers differ on the question of

what this real is and the nature of Nirvana. There is general agreement that Nirvāna is absolute extinction of suffering and attainment of unique intuitive wisdom (Pannā).

In Buddhist teaching the theory of emancipation and ethics are not separated each other. It is taught that good or evil and right or wrong are attributives which are neither originally decided by birth nor created or determined by any god, but deeply rooted just in the realization of self or no-self. Because of ignorance (avidya) sentient being attaches his mind to the self (atman), then arising his craving (kama) and forming his deeds through body action, speech and thought which would be stored and accumulated to be karma that consists of good, evil, right and wrong... and the more karma is accumulated the longer people is floating in the circle of birth and death with suffering (duhkka).

The Buddhist way for emancipation is closely combined with the way of moral. On this way, firstly, sentient being has to avoid the ignorance to be conscious of not-self by regular introspection. So that he should avoid the attachment of the self; latter, he consciously practices self-discipline of concentration to control his deed (body, speech and thought). So that he should change himself from wrong (even from evil) to right and good; finally, by regular meditation (zen) he should automatically avoid kama and
reach the ultimate enlightenment and turn himself to be his own nature of no-self. It is the ultimate emancipation where there is no more good or bad, right or wrong, good or evil... and perfection becomes human’s no self-character (the natural character). This way to emancipation is at the same time the one to moral goal.

The core of Buddhist teaching is the Four Noble Truths that leads sentient being from suffering to emancipation, at the same time from wrong or evil to right and good. In Pariññeyya Sutta The Buddha said: “The noble truth of unsatisfactoriness is to be fully understood. The noble truth of the origin of unsatisfactoriness is to be abandoned. The noble truth of the stopping of unsatisfactoriness is to be realized. The noble truth of the way leading to the stopping of unsatisfactoriness is to be developed.”12 First, The Noble Truth of Suffering teaches about all kinds of suffering. Second, The Noble Truth of Cause of Suffering explains that the initial cause of pain of sentient being is the ignorance which is always in chase of pleasure and lust, namely the craving for passion, for existence or non-existence... Third, The Noble Truth of Cessation of Suffering teaches about realization of the cessation of pain by non-attachment, abandonment, forsaking for that craving. Fourth, The Noble Truth of the Way that Leads to the Cessation of

12 S. Vol. V. PP.368-369.
Suffering teaches about *The Noble Eightfold Path* (*Ashtangika-Marga*), namely, right view, right intention, right speech, right action, right livelihood, right effort, right mindfulness, and right concentration.

The Buddha's Teaching is based on the Four Noble Truths. To realize these Truths is to realize and penetrate into the true nature of existence, including the full knowledge of oneself. When we recognize that all phenomenal things are transitory, are subject to suffering and are void of any essential reality, we will be convinced that true and enduring happiness cannot be found in material possessions and worldly achievement, that true happiness must be sought only through mental purity and the cultivation of wisdom.

The Four Noble Truths are a very important aspect of the teaching of the Buddha. The Buddha has said that it is because we fail to understand the Four Noble Truths that we have continued to go round in the cycle of birth and death. In the very first sermons of the Buddha, the *Dhammachakka Sutta*, which He gave to the five monks at the Deer park in Sarnath was on the Four Noble Truths and the Eightfold Path. The Buddhist ethics is repeatedly emphasized by the Buddha as being preoccupied with the problem of human suffering and the way leading its utter cessation: "O, monks, what I have revealed is that this is suffering, this is arising of
suffering, this is the ceasing of suffering and this is the practice leading to the ceasing of suffering\textsuperscript{13}.

There are many ways of understanding the Pali word 'Dukkha'. It has generally been translated as 'suffering' or 'unsatisfactoriness', but this term as used in the Four Noble Truths has a deeper and wider meaning. Dukkha contains not only the ordinary meaning of suffering, but also includes deeper ideas such as imperfection, pain, impermanence, disharmony, discomfort, irritation, or awareness of incompleteness and insufficiency. By all means, Dukkha includes physical and mental suffering: birth, decay, disease, death, to be united with the unpleasant, to be separated from the pleasant, not to get what one desires. However, many people do not realize that even during the moments of joy and happiness, there is Dukkha because these moments are all impermanent states and will pass away when conditions change. Therefore, the truth of Dukkha encompasses the whole of existence, in our happiness and sorrow, in every aspect of our lives. As long as we live, we are very profoundly subjected to this truth. \textquotedblleft Now this, monks, is the noble truth of unsatisfactoriness: birth is unsatisfactory, aging is unsatisfactory, illness is unsatisfactory, death is unsatisfactory; association with what is unpleasant is unsatisfactory; separation from what is pleasant is

\textsuperscript{13} S. Vol. V. P. 370.
unsatisfactory; not getting what is wanted is unsatisfactory. In brief, the five aggregates of grasping are unsatisfactory.”

Some people may have the impression that viewing life in terms of Dukkha is a rather pessimistic way of looking at life. This is not a pessimistic but a realistic way of looking at life. If one is suffering from a disease and refuses to recognize the fact that one is ill, and as a result of which refuses to seek for treatment, we will not consider such a mental attitude as being optimistic, but merely as being foolish. Therefore, by being both optimistic or pessimistic, one does not really understand the nature of life, and is therefore unable to tackle life's problems in the right perspective. The Four Noble Truths begin with the recognition of Dukkha and then proceed to analyze its cause and find its cure. Had the Buddha stopped at the Truth of Dukkha, then one may say Buddhism has identified the problem but has not given the cure; if such is the case, then the human situation is hopeless. However, not only is the Truth of Dukkha recognized, the Buddha proceeded to analyze its cause and the way to cure it. How can Buddhism be considered to be pessimistic if the cure to the problem is known? In fact, it is a teaching which is filled with hope.

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14 S. Vol. V. P, 357.
In addition, even though Dukkha is a noble truth, it does not mean that there is no happiness, enjoyment and pleasure in life. There is, and the Buddha has taught various methods with which we can gain more happiness in our daily life. However, in the final analysis, the fact remains that the pleasure or happiness which we experience in life is impermanent. We may enjoy a happy situation, or the good company of someone we love, or we enjoy youth and health. Sooner or later, when these states change we experience suffering. Therefore, while there is every reason to feel glad when one experiences happiness, one should not cling to these happy states or be side-tracked and forget about working one's way to complete Liberation.

If we wish to cure ourselves from suffering, we must first identify its cause. According to the Buddha, craving or desire (tanha or raga) is the cause of suffering. “And this, monks, is the noble truth of the cause of suffering: craving which leads to further existence, associated with delight and passion, seeking delight here and there; that is, craving sensual pleasure, craving existence, craving non-existence.”15 This is the Second Noble Truth. People crave for pleasant experiences, crave for material things, crave for eternal life, and when disappointed, crave for eternal death. They are not

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15 S. Vol. V. P, 357. Dhammacakkappavattana Sutta SN 56.11
only attached to sensual pleasures, wealth and power, but also to ideas, views, opinions, concepts, beliefs. And craving is linked to ignorance, that is, not seeing things as they really are, or failing to understand the reality of experience and life. Under the delusion of Self and not realizing Anatta (non-Self), a person clings to things which are impermanent, changeable, perishable. The failure to satisfy one's desires through these things causes disappointments and suffering. The Buddha is interested only in those questions, whose answers are somehow helpful in eradicating human suffering. The ethical meaningfulness of the questions is the principal parameter of its answers. Empirical validity of the questions is another parameter to consider whether questions are worth answering or not. These are interrelated criteria for the practicality of Buddhist ethics. In brief, the Buddha only teaches "the ethical teachings or the truth which are profitable, basically conductive to holy life, leading to aversion, to detachment, to cessation, to tranquillity, to supernatural knowledge, to perfect enlightenment, to nibbaana"\textsuperscript{16}.

Once we have realized the cause of suffering, we are in the position to put an end to suffering. So, how do we put an end to suffering? Eliminate it at its root by the removal of craving in the mind. This is the Third Noble

Truth. The state where craving ceases is known as *Nibbana*. The word *Nibbana* is composed of 'ni' and 'vana', meaning the departure from or end of craving.

To understand and realize the truth of *Nibbana*, it is necessary for us to walk the Eightfold Path, and to train and purify ourselves with diligence and patience. Through spiritual development and maturity, we will be able to realize the Third Noble Truth. “And this, monks, is the noble truth of the stopping of unsatisfactoriness: the remainderless fading away and stopping of that very craving; the giving up and release of it, freedom from it, non-reliance on it.”\(^\text{17}\)

The Noble Eightfold Path is the Fourth Noble Truth which leads to *Nibbana*. “This is the noble truth of the way leading to the cessation of suffering: it is the Noble Eightfold Path; that is, right view, right intention, right speech, right action, right livelihood, right effort, right mindfulness and right concentration.”\(^\text{18}\) It is a way of life consisting of eight factors. By walking on this Path, it will be possible for us to see an end to suffering. Because Buddhism is a logical and consistent teaching embracing every aspect of life, this noble Path also serves as the finest possible code for

\(^\text{17}\)S. Vol. V. P, 357. *Dhammacakkappavattana Sutta* SN 56.11; S. v. 421.  
\(^\text{18}\)Ibid
leading a happy life. Its practice brings benefits to oneself and other, and it is not a Path to be practised by those who call themselves Buddhists alone, but by each and every understanding person, irrespective of his religious beliefs.

An outstanding aspect of the Buddha's Teaching is the adoption of the Eightfold Path is the Middle Path. The Buddha advised His followers to follow this Path so as to avoid the extremes of sensual pleasures and self-mortification. The Middle Path is a righteous way of life which does not advocate the acceptance of decrees given by someone outside oneself. A person practises the Middle Path, the guide for moral conduct, not out of fear of any supernatural agency, but out of the intrinsic value in following such an action. He chooses this self-imposed discipline for a definite end in view: self-purification.

The Middle Path is a planned course of inward culture and progress. A person can make real progress in righteousness and insight by following this Path, and not by engaging in external worship and prayers. According to the Buddha, anyone who lives in accordance with the Dhamma will be guided and protected by that very Law. When a person lives according to Dhamma, he will also be living in harmony with the universal law.

Every Buddhist is encouraged to mould his life according to the Noble Eightfold Path as taught by the Buddha. He who adjusts his life
according to this noble way of living will be free from miseries and calamities both in this life-time and hereafter. He will also be able to develop his mind by restraining from evil and observing morality.

The Eightfold Path can be compared to a road map. Just as a traveler will need a map to lead him to his destination, we all need the Eightfold Path which shows us how to attain emancipation - Nibbana, the final goal of human life. To attain the final goal, there are three aspects of the Eightfold path to be developed by the devotee. He has to develop Sila (Morality), Samadhi (Mental Culture) and Panna (Wisdom). While the three must be developed simultaneously, the intensity with which any one area is to be practised varies according to a person's own spiritual development. A devotee must first develop his morality, that is, his actions should bring good to other living beings. He does this by faithfully adhering to the precepts of abstaining from killing, slandering, stealing, becoming intoxicated or being lustful. As he develops his morality, his mind will become more easily controlled, enabling him to develop his powers of concentration. Finally, with the development of concentration, wisdom will arise.

With His infinite wisdom, the Buddha knew that not all humans have the same ability to reach spiritual maturity at once. So He expounded the Noble Eightfold Path for the gradual development of the spiritual way of life
in a practical way. He knew that not all people can become perfect in one lifetime. He said that Sila, Samadhi, and Panna, must and can be developed over many lifetimes with diligent effort. This path finally leads to the attainment of ultimate peace where there is no more unsatisfactoriness.

Specifically, the *Noble Eightfold Path* consists of the following eight observances, which grouped into three broad categories:¹⁹

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<tr>
<th>Right Speech</th>
<th>Sila - Morality</th>
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<tr>
<td>Right Action</td>
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<td>Right Livelihood</td>
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<tr>
<td>Right Effort</td>
<td>Samadhi - Mental culture</td>
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<td>Right Mindfulness</td>
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<td>Right Concentration</td>
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<td>Right Understanding</td>
<td>Panna - Wisdom</td>
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<td>Right Thoughts</td>
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¹⁹ In the Pali canon, these three basic categories (Pali: *khandha*) are identified by the Bhikkhuni Dhammadinna in the "*Culavedalla Sutta*" (Majjhima Nikaya, 44); although in this sutta the categories are ordered: *sīla, samādhi* and *paññā*. These three basic categories are also similar to those articulated by the Buddha in his Threefold Training, as recorded in the Anguttara Nikaya's *Sikkha Sutta* (3:88 and 3:89).
What is Right\textsuperscript{20} Understanding? “And what, O bhikkhus, is right understanding? To understand suffering, to understand the origination of suffering, to understand extinction of suffering, to understand the path leading to the extinction of suffering; this is called right understanding”\textsuperscript{21} It is explained as having the knowledge of the Four Noble Truths. In other words, it is the understanding of things as they really are. Right Understanding also means that one understands the nature of what are wholesome kamma (merits) and unwholesome kamma (demerits), and how they may be performed with the body, speech and mind. By understanding kamma, a person will learn to avoid evil and do good, thereby creating favorable outcomes in his life. When a person has Right Understanding, he also understands the Three Characteristics of Life (that all compounded things are transient, subject to suffering, and without a Self) and understands the Law of Dependent Origination. A person with complete Right Understanding is one who is free from ignorance, and by the nature of that enlightenment removes the roots of evil from his mind and becomes

\textsuperscript{20} In all of the elements of the Noble Eightfold Path, the word "right" is a translation of the word samyañc (Sanskrit) or sammā (Pāli), which denotes completion, togetherness, and coherence, and which can also carry the sense of "perfect" or "ideal".

liberated. A lofty aim of a practising Buddhist is to cultivate Wisdom and gain Right Understanding about himself, life and all phenomena.

When a person has Right Understanding, he or she develops Right Thought as well. This factor serves a double purpose of eliminating evil thoughts and developing pure thoughts. Right Thought is important because it is one's thoughts which either purify or defile a person. “Being resolved on renunciation, on freedom from ill will, on harmlessness: This is called right thought”22 There are three aspects to Right Thought. First, a person should maintaining an attitude of detachment from worldly pleasures rather than being selfishly attached to them. He should be selfless in his thoughts and think of the welfare of others. Second, he should maintain loving-kindness, goodwill and benevolence in his mind, which is opposed to hatred, ill-will or aversion. Third, he should act with thoughts of harmlessness or compassion to all beings, which is opposed to cruelty and lack of consideration for others. As a person progresses along the spiritual path, his thoughts will become increasingly benevolent, harmless, selfless, and filled with love and compassion.

Right Understanding and Right Thought, which are Wisdom factors, will lead to good, moral conduct. There are three factors under moral conduct: Right Speech, Right Action and Right Livelihood.

“And what is right speech? Abstaining from lying, abstaining from divisive speech, abstaining from abusive speech, abstaining from idle chatter: This, monks, is called right speech”\textsuperscript{23} Right Speech involves respect for truth and respect for the welfare for others. It means to avoid lying, to avoid backbiting or slander, to avoid harsh speech, and to avoid idle talk. We have often underestimated the power of speech and tend to use little control over our speech faculty. But we have all been hurt by someone's words at some time of our life, and similarly we have been encouraged by the words of another. It is said that a harsh word can wound more deeply than weapons, where as a gentle word can change the heart and mind of the most hardened criminal. So to develop a harmonious society, we should cultivate and use our speech positively. We speak words which are truthful, bring harmony, kind and meaningful. The Buddha once said 'pleasant speech is sweet as honey, truthful speech is beautiful like a flower, and wrong speech is unwholesome like filth'. Further explicating this teaching, Walpola Rahula suggests that not engaging in such "forms of wrong and harmful

\textsuperscript{23} S. Vol. V. P, 7. \textit{Magga-vibhanga Sutta: An Analysis of the Path} (S. 45.8).
speech" ultimately means that "one naturally has to speak the truth, has to use words that are friendly and benevolent, pleasant and gentle, meaningful and useful"\textsuperscript{24}

The next factor under good, moral conduct is Right Action. “And what, monks, is right action? Abstaining from taking life, abstaining from stealing, abstaining from unchastity: This, monks, is called right action”\textsuperscript{25}. Right Action entails respect for life, respect for property, and respect for personal relationships. It corresponds to the first three of the Five Precepts to be practised by every Buddhist, that is, dear to all, and all tremble at punishment, all fear death and value life. Hence, we should abstain from taking a life which we ourselves cannot give and we should not harm other sentient beings. Respect for property means that we should not take what is not given, by stealing, cheating, or force. Respect for personal relationship means that we should not commit adultery and avoid sexual misconducts, which is important for maintaining the love and trust of those we love as well as making our society a better place to live in.

Right Livelihood is a factor under moral conduct which refers to how we earn our living in society. It is an extension of the two other factors of

\textsuperscript{24} Rahula, 47.

\textsuperscript{25} S. Vol. V. P, 7 Magga-vibhanga Sutta: An Analysis of the Path (Samyutta Nikaya 45.8).
Right Speech and Right Action which refer to the respect for truth, life, property and personal relationships.

Right Livelihood means that we should earn a living without violating these principles of a moral conduct. Buddhists are discouraged from being engaged in the following five kinds of livelihood: trading in human beings, trading in weapons, trading in flesh, trading in intoxicating drinks and drugs, and trading in poison. Some people may say that they have to do such a business for their living and, therefore, it is not wrong for them to do so. But this argument is entirely baseless. If it were valid, then thieves, murderers, gangsters, thugs, smugglers and swindlers can also just as easily say that they are also doing such unrighteous acts only for their living and, therefore, there is nothing wrong with their way of life.

Some people believe that fishing and hunting animals for pleasure and slaughtering animals for food are not against the Buddhist precepts. This is another misconception that arises owing to a lack of knowledge in Dhamma. All these are not decent actions and bring suffering to other beings. But in all these actions, the one who is harmed most of all is the one who performs these unwholesome actions. Maintaining a life through wrong means is not in accordance with the Buddha's teaching. The Buddha once said, “Though one should live a hundred years immorally and unrestrained,
yet it would indeed be better to live one day virtuously and meditatively.”

It is better to die as a cultured and respected person than to live as a wicked person.

The remaining three factors of the Noble Eightfold Path are factors for the development of wisdom through the purification of the mind. They are Right Effort, Right Mindfulness, and Right Concentration. These factors, when practised, enable a person to strengthen and gain control over the mind, thereby ensuring that his actions will continue to be good and that his mind is being prepared to realize the Truth, which will open the door to Freedom, to emancipation, to Enlightenment.

*Right Effort* means that we cultivate a positive attitude and have enthusiasm in the things we do, whether in our career, in our study, or in our practice of the Dhamma. With such a sustained enthusiasm and cheerful determination, we can succeed in the things we do. There are four aspects of Right Effort, two of which refer to evil and the other two to good. First, is the effort to reject evil that has already arisen; and second, the effort to prevent the arising of evil. Third, is the effort to develop unarisen good, and fourth, the effort to maintain the good which has arisen. By applying Right Effort in our lives, we can reduce and eventually eliminate the number of

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26 *Dhp. Vs. 103*
unwholesome mental states and increase and firmly establish wholesome thoughts as a natural part of our mind.

*Right Effort* is closely associated with *Right Mindfulness*. The practice of mindfulness is important in Buddhism. The Buddha said that mindfulness is the one way to achieve the end of suffering. “And what, monks, is right mindfulness? There is the case where a monk remains focused on (his/her) *body* in and of itself … ardent, aware, and mindful … having already put aside worldly desire and aversion. (He/she) remains focused on *feelings* in and of themselves … ardent, aware, and mindful … having already put aside worldly desire and aversion. (He/she) remains focused on *the mind* in and of itself … ardent, aware, and mindful … having already put aside worldly desire and aversion. (He/she) remains focused on *mental qualities* in and of themselves … ardent, aware, and mindful … having already put aside worldly desire and aversion. This, monks, is called right mindfulness.”

Mindfulness can be developed by being constantly aware of four particular aspects. These are the application of mindfulness with regard to the body (body postures, breathing so forth), feelings (whether pleasant, unpleasant or neutrally); mind (whether the mind is greedy or not, angry, dispersed or deluded or not); and mind objects

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27 S. Vol. V. P, 7 *Magga-vibhanga Sutta: An Analysis of the Path* (Samyutta Nikaya 45.8).
(whether there are mental hindrances to concentration, and so on). Mindfulness is essential even in our daily life in which we act in full awareness of our actions, feelings and thoughts as well as that of our environment. The mind should always be clear and attentive rather than distracted and clouded.

Whereas Right Mindfulness is directing our attention to our body, feelings, mind, or mental object or being sensitive to others, in other words, putting our attention to where we choose to, Right Concentration is the sustained application of that attention on the object without the mind being distracted. “And what, monks, is right concentration? Quite withdrawn from sensuality, withdrawn from unwholesome states, a monk enters in the first jhāna: rapture and pleasure born from detachment, accompanied by movement of the mind onto the object and retention of the mind on the object. With the stilling of directed thought and evaluation, (he/she) enters and remains in the second jhāna: rapture and pleasure born of concentration; fixed single-pointed awareness free from movement of the mind onto the object and retention of the mind on the object. With the fading of rapture, (he/she) remains in equanimity, mindful and fully aware, and physically sensitive of pleasure. (He/She) enters and remains in the third jhāna which the Noble Ones declare to be "Equanimous and mindful, (he/she) has a
pleasurable abiding. "With the abandoning of pleasure and pain... as with the earlier disappearance of elation and distress... (he/she) enters and remains in the fourth jhāna: purity of equanimity and mindfulness, neither in pleasure nor in pain. This, monks, is called right concentration". Concentration is the practice of developing one-pointedness of the mind on one single object, either physical or mental. The mind is totally absorbed in the object without distractions, wavering, anxiety or drowsiness. Through practice under an experienced teacher, Right Concentration brings two benefits. Firstly, it leads to mental and physical well-being, comfort, joy, calm, tranquillity. Secondly, it turns the mind into an instrument capable of seeing things as they truly are, and prepares the mind to attain wisdom.

The Noble Eightfold Path is the fourth important truth taught by the Buddha. As a competent spiritual physician, the Buddha has identified a disease that afflicts all forms of life, and this is Dukkha or unsatisfactoriness. He then diagnosed the cause of the unsatisfactoriness to be selfish greed and craving. He discovered that there is a cure for the disease, Nibbana, the state where all unsatisfactoriness ceases. And the prescription is the Noble Eightfold Path. When a competent doctor treats a patient for a serious illness, his prescription is not only for physical treatment, but it is also

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28 Bodhi, 1998
psychological. The Noble Eightfold path, the path leading to the end of suffering, is an integrated therapy designed to cure the disease of Samsara through the cultivation of moral speech and action, the development of the mind, and the complete transformation of one's level of understanding and quality of thought. It shows the way to gain spiritual maturity and be released completely from suffering.

It is obvious that Buddhist teaching focuses in the Fourth Noble Truth and the Noble Eightfold Path. They are eight methods of right cultivation for every one to consciously develop oneself on the way to final emancipation, also called Nirvana. According to the Buddhist scripture The Tiripitaka, “Nirvana is the area where there is no earth, water, fire and air; it is not the region of infinite space, nor that of infinite consciousness; it is not the region of nothing at all, nor the border between distinguishing and not distinguishing not this world nor the other world; where there is neither sun nor moon. I will not call it coming and going, nor standing still nor fading away nor beginning. It is without foundation, without continuation and without stopping. It is the end of suffering”.29 In fact, in Indian tradition, Buddhism inherited the moral tradition of Hinduism in general, and techniques of introspection from Yoga in concrete. Then it was developed to

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29 as cited in Metz, W., p.234
be realizable model of self-cultivation and called Noble Eightfold Path. To practice the Eightfold Path man has to concentrate on the moral value of “right” when controlling himself in every conduct such as right view, right intention, right speech, right action, and right livelihood through right mindfulness and right concentration without cessation of right effort for the ultimate liberation (Nirvana) with right wisdom (prajna). The construction of Buddhist teaching is the combination of three parts comprehensively: Commandment (Sila) - Meditation (Samadhy) - Wisdom (Prajna), or in other word, they can be called three sections of self-cultivation: Self-cultivation of conduct (by sila), Self-cultivation of consciousness (by samadhy) and Self-cultivation of wisdom (prajna).

In Buddhist teaching, the final judgment of man’s deeds is the law of causes (karma) which acts secretly through lives not by any god’s decision. Happiness or unhappiness is the fruit caused by oneself good or bad conduct done in the past. The judgment as the law of causes admonishes people of being serious with every action (body, speech, thought) of oneself. Buddhist ideal examples are Buddha and Bodhisattvas who already enlightened the essence of the no-self and not be led by any craving or passion... They are omniscient and free from mundane attachment that means the perfect emancipation from the circle of lives, namely Nirvana.
The Buddhahood is not reserved only for chosen people or for supernatural beings. Anyone can become a Buddha. No founder of any other religion ever said that his followers can have the opportunity or potentiality to attain the same position as the founder. If we remove the delusions from our mind, in particular ignorance, we can attain a state of everlasting peace and happiness. This state is known as Liberation, emancipation or Nirvana.

However, attaining emancipation is the most difficult task a person can pursue in this world. One must work hard by sacrificing one's worldly pleasures. One has to develop and purify one's mind from all evil thoughts in order to obtain this Enlightenment. It will take innumerable births for a person to purify himself and to develop his mind in order to become a Buddha. Long periods of great effort are necessary in order to complete the high qualification of this self-training. The course of this self-training which culminates in Buddhahood, includes self-discipline, self-restraint, superhuman effort, firm determination, and willingness to undergo any kind of suffering for the sake of other living beings who are suffering in this world.

This clearly shows that the Buddha did not obtain this supreme Enlightenment by simply praying, worshipping, or making offerings to some supernatural beings. He attained Buddhahood by the purification of His
mind and heart. He gained Supreme Enlightenment without the influence of any external, supernatural forces but by the development of His own insight. Thus only a man who has firm determination and courage to overcome all hindrance, weaknesses and selfish desires can attain emancipation - Buddhahood.

The teachings of the Buddha, (better known as the Dhamma) are still relevant to the needs of today's society. This is because the Buddha has always considered himself as human religious teacher whose message was meant to promote the happiness and well-being of other human beings. The Buddha's primary concern was to help His followers to live a normal life without either going to the extremes of self-denial or totally surrendering to sensual desires.

The Buddha's teachings are human-based orientation. It has autonomous criterion as its moral principle. Here, one has to strive for one’s own enlightenment individually through personal effort without any help from God. The struggle for moral perfection and spiritual enlightenment is possible only on the basis of one’s own energy or performance. The Buddhist is one who is responsible for whatever good or bad done by him. Strive on kusala with diligence is the constant advice of the Buddha (Buddhaana saasanam). No purification or emancipation can be possible
without personal training of morality. This purification is of threefold practice. "Not to do evil" (Sabbapaapassa akara.nam) is the first negative performance of Buddhist ethics, in terms of perfecting oneself. This is followed by "performing what is morally good" (kusalassa upasampadaa) as the second positive performance of kusala in terms of benefiting others. "Purifying one’s mind" (sacittapariyodapanam) is the final advice as the most important factor leading to doing good and abandoning evil.\textsuperscript{30} In other words, the Buddha's teachings not only advise one to refrain from committing physical, vocal and mental misdeeds, but also, at the same time, instruct one to perform certain physical, verbal and mental moral conduct as well. And this individual and social direction of morality is based on the basis of purification of one’s own mind, the forerunner of every kamma.\textsuperscript{31} Such a scheme of moral trinity is aimed at bringing about happiness and benefit for all human beings in this very life and the hereafter.

The practical nature of the Buddha's teaching is revealed in the fact that not everyone is expected to attain exactly the same goal in one lifetime, since the mental impurities are deeply rooted. Some people are spiritually more advanced than others and they can proceed to greater heights according to their state of development. But every single human being has the ultimate

\textsuperscript{30} Dhp. Vs. 183; D.Vol. II. 39
\textsuperscript{31} Dhp. Vs. 1-2
potential to attain the supreme goal of Buddhahood if he has the determination and will to do so. With this experience of Enlightenment, the Buddha began His Teaching not with any dogmatic beliefs or mysteries, but with a valid universal experience, which He gave to the world as universal truth. Therefore, the real definition of Buddhism is NOBLE TRUTH. Remember that the Buddha did not teach from theories. He always taught from a practical standpoint based on His understanding, His Enlightenment, and His realization of the Truth. When the Buddha introduced His teachings, His intention was not to develop the concept of self in man's mind and create more ambition for eternal life and sense pleasure. Rather, His intention was to point out the futility of the worldly life and to show the correct, practical Path to emancipation that He discovered.

The entire teaching of the Buddha (Budhasaasana) is believed as a path to emancipation (mokkha-magga). The Buddha himself repeatedly emphasizes that his teaching: "As the vast ocean, O disciples, is impregnated with one taste, the taste of salt, even so this doctrine and discipline [of morality] is impregnated with one taste, the taste of emancipation." The second statement reflected his moral soteriology is found in a famous passage of the Samyuttanikaaya as follows: "Both formerly and now, O
Anuruudha, I declare only suffering and its cessation. This has been explained in details in his first sermon after enlightenment that the Dhamma is aiming at bringing about emancipation. The Buddha emphatically says that if ignorance (avidyaa) is the root cause (hetu paccaya) of bondage in samsaaric existence then its destroying and freeing the mind from defiling traits (aasavas) are the path to release from samsaara. The Noble Eightfold Path (ariya a.t.thangika magga) also called Middle Path (majjhima pa.tipadaa) consisting of perfecting one’s own morality (siila), improving mental culture (samaadhi) and sharpening enlightened wisdom (pannaa) is the only way out of samsaara. This clearly shows that the teachings of the Buddha are not negative in terms of pessimism but bringing about the cessation of suffering (dukkha pamocanam). The three categories of the eight-fold path, with generosity and ethics included in siila, meditation practices in samadhi, and insight and liberation in panna.

From here, the gradual training expands siila to include ethics, sometimes described as the cultivation of contentment, since ethical transgressions often arise out of discontentment. For a layperson, ethical training means learning to live by the five precepts:

1. To refrain from killing any living being

Vin. II. 235
2. To refrain from stealing or taking what is not given
3. To refrain from sexual misconduct
4. To refrain from speaking what is not true
5. To refrain from using alcohol or drugs that cause us to be careless or heedless  

The precepts are not meant as moralistic commandments, but rather as guidelines for cultivation. They are taught because they strengthen qualities of restraint, contentment, honesty, clarity and respect for life. They also create a healthy relatedness to other people and to other forms of life. We can more easily progress along the path of non-clinging when our relationships are in order. The Theravada tradition advocates the cultivation of four warm-hearted attitudes known as the divine abidings (brahmaviharas): loving-kindness, compassion, sympathetic joy, and equanimity. Loving-kindness is a selfless friendliness or love that desires the good and happiness for oneself and others. Compassion and sympathetic joy-complementary expressions of lovingkindness-involve sharing in, but in no way clinging to, the suffering and joys of others. Equanimity is an even, firm, balanced attitude toward whatever occurs, especially in situations

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33 For a traditional explanation of these five precepts, see the Abhisanda Sutta (A. 8.39. P. 108.)
where we cannot help others or ourselves. Theravada Buddhists commonly use these attitudes as guides for how to best live in relation to others.

Once the foundations of generosity and ethics are established, the gradual training continues with the cultivation of meditation practices. Theravada Buddhism has a large repertoire of these, including many forms of formal sitting and walking meditation practices, as well as the development of awareness in daily activities. Meditation practices are usually divided into two categories: concentration and mindfulness.

Concentration practices emphasize the development of a stable, one-pointed, fixed focus of mind on such objects as the breath, a mantra, a visual image, or a theme like loving-kindness. States of strong concentration tend to bring about temporary but often helpful states of psychological wholeness and well-being. Loving-kindness (metta in Pali) is a particularly useful theme for concentration because it is the traditional antidote to all forms of aversion and self-criticism. In addition, it helps cultivate an attitude of friendliness that can support other awareness practices. Mindfulness is the cultivation of an undistracted awareness of the unfolding of events in the present moment. In both concentration and mindfulness practices, alert awareness is stabilized in the present. With concentration practice,
awareness is channeled into a controlled focus on a single object to the
exclusion of all else. “Mindfulness brings concentration. Concentration
brings insight. Insight liberates you from your ignorance, your anger, your
craving. When you are free from your afflictions, happiness becomes
possible. How can you be happy when you are overloaded with anger,
ignorance, and craving? That is why the insight that can liberate you from
these afflictions is the key to happiness. There are many conditions of
happiness that are present, but people don’t recognize them because they are
not mindful.”\textsuperscript{34} In contrast, mindfulness develops an inclusive, at times even
choiceless awareness, noticing whatever arises predominantly in our
experience. It is an accepting awareness that clarifies our feelings, thoughts,
motivations, attitudes, and ways of reacting. Such awareness in turn helps us
to develop compassion and equanimity, both of which support emancipation.

With the foundations of \textit{sila} and \textit{samadhi}, wisdom, or \textit{panna}, starts
to grow. The key Theravada Buddhist practice leading to both insight and
emancipation is mindfulness, sometimes supported by concentration
exercises. Mindfulness develops the ground of trust and acceptance that
enables us to open to whatever our inner and outer life might bring. While
this often includes a great deal of self-knowledge, this trustful openness or

\textsuperscript{34} Love and liberation: An interview with Thich Nhat Hanh.
non-resistance is itself the door to emancipation, known in Theravada Buddhism as the cessation of all clinging. Part of the beauty of mindfulness is that each clear moment of mindfulness is itself a moment of non-clinging, and as such, is a taste of emancipation.

As mindfulness becomes stronger, it directly reveals three insights that the Buddha called the three characteristics of all experience, namely that our experience is seen as impermanent, unsatisfactory, and without self.

All things are impermanent, including the way we experience ourselves and the world. Since our experiences are ever-changing, they are inherently unsatisfactory as sources of permanent security or identity. As we see that they cannot provide us with lasting satisfaction, we also realize that anything we experience does not belong to some fixed, autonomous notion of a “self“-not our thoughts, feelings or body, not even awareness itself.

Sometimes these insights trigger fear, but as our mindfulness practices mature, we realize that we can function happily in the world without needing to cling or attach to anything. So the basic insights arising out of mindfulness practice help us to cultivate trust and a healthy equanimity in the midst of our lives. As this trust grows, it weakens our need
to cling. Eventually, the deepest roots of clinging-greed, hatred and delusion-release themselves and the world of emancipation opens.

The fruit of this emancipation is, in a sense, being in a world on to which we no longer project our clingings, fears, longings and aversions. It is to see the world of “things as they are.”

Moreover, Buddhist ethics is, in its very nature, positivistic in the sense that it recognizes the absolute possibility of conducting moral, being good and cultivating perfection of all sentient beings: "Put aside what is morally unwholesome. It is possible to do so. If it were not impossible I would not ask you”35. "Just as there is suffering there is also cessation of suffering" 36 is the starting-point but also the purpose of the Buddha's teachings. Because, according to the Buddha, freedom always means ‘emancipation from suffering’(dukkha pamocanam), from bondage (mokkhanti maara bandhanaa)37 and burdens of existence (vimutto upadhisamkhaye)38. Emancipation is freedom from suffering. Whoever sees the Absolute Reality sees the Buddha. Whoever sees the Buddha is fully emancipated from suffering.

35 A. Vol. I. 158
36 M. Vol. I. 140
37 Dhp. Vs. 37
38 A. Vol. II. 24
There are many characteristics of emancipation or Buddhahood in a Buddhist Gnostic (Buddhiyogi), the Seer of the Reality of the Buddha.

Firstly, a fully emancipated Buddhist is one who has attained Nibbana (or Nirvana). Nibbana is the complete silence of the chatter of the human mind. The noisy chatter of the human mind is caused by the superimposed illusory self-centric ego.

Secondly, a delivered Buddhist is an enlightened one who has eradicated greed hatred, delusion, pride, conceit and arrogance. These six psychological defilements activate the self-centric ego. The self-centric ego creates mental object reifications (idolatries), conceptualizations, mental obsessions and volitional actions (kammas) that cause kammic bondage.

Thirdly, a fully emancipated Buddhist is self-awakened to the relationship between the three interrelated truths of existence. The three interrelated truths of existence comprise the impermanence of the conventional reality and the Permanence of the Ultimate Reality in relation to the emancipation of a sentient being from suffering. These three interrelated truths are the Buddhist fundamental doctrine of Three Universal Characteristics (Tilakkhans) of existence of multiplicity-Unity relationship. The intuitive penetration into this doctrine of existence conditions the self-realization of the Four Noble Truths.
Emancipation is the complete annihilation of self-centric ego. The complete annihilation of the self-centric ego purifies the mind completely. The annihilation of the self-centeredness is derived from non-grasping upon one’s mind and body. Non-grasping is produced from Right View of the Selflessness or Emptiness of the human personality and the world. Right View is generated from the non-discriminative wisdom of seeing the non-duality between the knower and the known or seeing everything as either absolute existence or absolute non-existence.

The Buddha did not want people to simply believe him or attach to him. He pointed out the fault of faith even in another person, because he wanted people to be free. This emancipation, or freedom, the goal of Buddhism, is attained through wisdom, through knowledge of reality. True freedom is emancipation from our concepts, from the psychological veil that is distorting our view of the way things are. When such freedom is attained, we begin to see that life is inherently perfect, just as it is, and we end up swimming effortlessly in an abundance of joy and love. But there is a universal tendency to believe that we will find what we are searching for somewhere else. Many people look for freedom through accumulating either material possessions or spiritual knowledge. These searches amount to nothing more than a donkey chasing after a dangled carrot. When we wake
up to that truth in this very moment we realise that what we were seeking was already here. The question is, “Can we wake up to this truth?” It might be much easier than we think. Remember, great ancient masters often said that we don’t realise the truth because it is too simple and too close to us. When we finally realise it, we will be shocked by two things: how much time we wasted searching and how easy it was after all.

Buddhism is a righteous way of life for the peace and happiness of every living being. It is a method to get rid of miseries and to find emancipation. The Teachings of the Buddha are not limited to one nation or race. It is neither a creed nor a mere faith. It is a Teaching for the entire universe. It is a Teaching for all time. Its objectives are selfless service, good-will, peace, salvation, emancipation and deliverance from suffering.

Emancipation in Buddhism is an individual affair. You have to save yourself just as you have to eat, drink and sleep by yourself. The advice rendered by the Buddha points the Way to emancipation; but His advice was never intended to be taken as a theory or philosophy. When He was questioned as to what theory He propounded, the Buddha replied that He preached no theories and whatever he did preach was a result of His own experience. Thus His Teaching does not offer any theory. Theory cannot
bring one nearer to spiritual perfection. Theories are the very fetters that
bind the mind and impede spiritual progress. Theories are product of the
intellect and the Buddha understood the limitations of the human intellect.
He taught that enlightenment is not a product of mere intellect. One cannot
achieve emancipation by taking an intellectual course. This statement may
seem irrational but it is true. Intellectuals tend to spend too much of their
valuable time in study, critical analysis and debate. They usually have little
or no time for practice. A great thinker (philosopher, scientist,
metaphysician, etc.) can also turn out to be an intelligent fool. He may be an
intellectual giant endowed with the power to perceive ideas quickly and to
express thoughts clearly. But if he pays no attention to his action and their
consequences, and if he is only bent on fulfilling his own longings and
inclinations at any cost then, according to the Buddha, he is an intellectual
fool, a man of inferior intelligence. Such a person will indeed hinder his won
spiritual progress.

Buddhism lays special emphasis on practice and realization. The
philosopher sees the miseries and disappointments of life but, unlike the
Buddha, he offers no practical solution to overcome our frustrations which
are part of the unsatisfactory nature of life. The philosopher merely pushes
his thoughts to dead ends. Philosophy is useful because it has enriched our
intellectual imagination and diminished dogmatic assurance which closes the mind to further progress. To that extent, Buddhism values philosophy, but it has failed to quench spiritual thirst.

Remember that the chief aim of a Buddhist is to attain purity, emancipation and enlightenment. Enlightenment vanquishes ignorance which is the root of birth and death. However, this vanquishing of ignorance cannot be achieved except by the exercise of one's confidence. All other attempts, especially mere intellectual attempts are not very effective. This is why the Buddha concluded: 'These metaphysical questions are not calculated to profit; they are not concerned with the Dhamma; they do not lead to right conduct, or to detachment, or to purification from lusts, or to quietude, or to a calm heart, or to real knowledge, or to higher insight, or to Nibbana.'

In place of metaphysical speculation, the Buddha was more concerned with teaching a practical understanding of the Four Noble Truths that he discovered: what Suffering is; what the origin of Suffering is; what the cessation of Suffering is; how to overcome Suffering and realize final Emancipation. These Truths are all practical matters to be fully understood and realized by anyone who really experiences emancipation.

If we practise emancipation, be it at home or in the society, in all aspects of our life, then we will also be emancipated when we are died. On the other hand, if in the course of our daily lives we do not conduct ourselves in a proper manner, and we do not cultivate, then it is impossible to attain emancipation when we die. Let me tell you a short story about the ability of the Buddha to liberate himself:

After Sakyamuni attained enlightenment and became Buddha, he was widely respected. There was however a little rascal who did not have any regard for Him. One day, he came up to the Buddha and insulted Him. After he has finished, Buddha told him, "You make good sense, what you have said is correct." The rascal was very happy that Buddha agreed with him even though he had insulted Him. Buddha then asked, "Is it a practice in your family to give relatives and good friends presents whenever your family has auspicious occasions to celebrate?" The young man replied proudly, "Yes, indeed. On such occasions I usually help my parents distribute the presents." Buddha continued, "What would you do if they refuse to accept your good presents?" The young man replied, "Well, I will take them home since they are mine." Buddha then said, "That being the case, I feel that what you said earlier about Buddha is a very good present. However, I refuse to accept it. How about you, taking it back with you?"
The young man was dumbfounded. He realized his mistake, knelt before the Buddha and pleaded Buddha to accept him as His disciple.

Being a well cultured person, the Buddha’s outlook of life is different from others. Even though he was treated in this manner, He remained composed and relaxed, and was able to reverse the situation without hurting anybody. This is an ideal example of emancipation. When we truly understand the principle of emancipation, then we are able to liberate ourselves in the course of our daily lives. To the extent that wherever we go, whatever we do, we are happy then we have succeeded in our emancipation.

Buddhism teaches us to liberate ourselves from this mundane world and elevate ourselves into the supra-mundane which is noble and superior. Therefore Buddhism is indeed more subtle and profound. Hence, besides advocating the performance of good deeds, Buddhism also advocates the cultivation of the mind - to eradicate all evil thoughts, achieve inner-emancipation, and finally attain enlightenment.
V.3. The application of the Theory of Dependent Origination and No-self in Human life

The theory of Anatta or No-self is of great importance in Buddha's teaching, and it is the one aspect of the teaching which is quite often found by newcomers to Buddhism, or even traditional Buddhists, to be very difficult to understand.

According to the mainstream view, Anatta means the denial of a permanent self-entity, both at the microcosmic and the macrocosmic levels. The teaching on Anatta or No-self is one of the most fundamental aspects of Buddhism, and may be the most important feature which makes the Buddha's teaching quite unique. What the teaching says is, that within this human being, consisting of mind and body, or consisting of body and the mental attributes of feeling, perception, mental formations and consciousness, there is no permanent, personal entity which can be called a self or soul or ego. It does not sound right. So the Buddha in his teaching has burst the bubble and realised for himself that there was really no self, no real point that was a centre, and there was no self as such, and taught the teaching of No-self. But No-self is not meaning nothings, no personality. Of course you are you, the person sitting there. There is a mind and body, there is a personality, but there is no permanent entity. No aspect of that which
you take yourself to be, which is permanent, or personal in the sense of being independent. The doctrine of No-self does not imply a literal negation of the self, the Buddha explicitly criticizes views that reject karma and moral responsibility\textsuperscript{40}, the doctrine of No-self should not be understood as the absolute rejection of moral agency and any concept of personal identity. In fact, the Buddha explicitly defines “personal identity” (sakkāya) as the five aggregates\textsuperscript{41}. The same procedure was repeated for the other aspects of the personality, of which, in addition to the bodily, there are a further four groups called khandas. All together the five khandas are a classification in which the Buddha summed up all the physical and mental phenomena of existence, and in particular those that appear to the ignorant as their ego or personality.

Although the Buddha rejected the existence of the Self of the nature of atman, his conception of the individual, the person, constitutes a quite definite theory which states that the individual consists of nama and rupa, name and form, mind and matter, and more usually is said to consist of the previously named five groups or aggregates: The first, corresponding to the body, and the remaining four, to the mind\textsuperscript{42}.

\begin{footnotes}
\footnotetext{40} M. Vol. II. PP, 72-73. M. I. 404
\footnotetext{41} M. Vol. I. PP. 360-361. M.I.299
\footnotetext{42} Malalasekera, op. cit. p. 14
\end{footnotes}
The Buddha accepted the definition of the *atman* without assuming its existence or non-existence. When the empirical investigation failed to reveal any such *atman*, he concluded that no such *atman* exists because there is no evidence of its existence.

The Buddha made no concession at all to the doctrine of ‘Self’. He denied the view that there exists in the human being an *atman* or *self* that is permanent and unchanging. His teaching of *anatta* or *no-self* contradicted such a possibility. The well-known story of ‘the chariot' is worth reproducing as it clearly illustrates the distinction between the concept of the Self and its aggregate parts.

*When certain things we find combined,*

*We speak of ‘chariot', speak of ‘car'.*

*Just so when all Five Groups appear,*

*We use the designation ‘man'.* 44

It is likewise with the Five Groups of Existence (khanda). If they are present, one uses the conventional designation ‘being' or ‘personality', etc. But if we examine each phenomenon in its ultimate sense, there is

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43 ibid. p. 9

44 The Three Basic Facts of Buddhism: Book III, Egolessness. Collected Essays, extract from the Sanyutta-Nikaya dealing with Egolessness, p. 37
nothing that can form a basis for such conceptions as ‘I am' and ‘I'. Hence in the ultimate sense only mental and physical phenomena exist. ⁴⁵ The greatest illusion we suffer is when we perceive ourselves as self-contained egos, clinging to various ideas and images that we have formed of ourselves as the irrefutable truth of our own identity. Because we make the view of Self the lookout point from whence we survey the world, our minds divide everything up into dualities of ‘I' and ‘not-I', and what is ‘mine' and ‘not-mine'.⁴⁶ According to this view, that to free ourselves from all defilements and suffering, the illusion of selfhood that sustains them has to be dispelled, exploded by the realisation of selflessness. We may be justified, at this stage of our exploration, to say ‘goodbye' to atman and ‘hello' to impermanence, unsatisfactoriness and selflessness. If the concept of "No-Self" which denies the existence of one's self is acceptable, how can it be applied in real life? If the ideal of "No-Self" does not work in social life, is it not just empty talk or a metaphysical notion? Why does the Dharma ignore all these realities of life and advocate "No-Self" instead? What is the real aim of such teachings? Some Buddhists even after accepting by faith or through understanding the real meaning of "No-Self," they may still encounter the following questions:

⁴⁵ The Three Basic Facts of Buddhism: Book III, Egolessness. Collected Essays, extract from the Sanyutta-Nikaya dealing with Egolessness, p. 37

⁴⁶ Bikku Bodhi, The Noble Eightfold Path, Buddhist Publishing Society, Kandy 1984, p. 120
Since there is no self, who is practicing? Who will attain enlightenment? Who will guide sentient beings to liberation? How to practice "No-Self"? How to verify whether one's practice is correct or not? The series of questions demonstrate the need and urgency to investigate the subject of How to Practice "No-Self". "No-Self" does not mean that entities as they are commonly perceived do not exist; it means that the concept of "self" has no referent which has absolutely independent existence. The contents of all our experiences are phenomena resulting from a combination of various conditions; these phenomena change following changes in their constituent conditions, hence they have neither absolutely independent existence nor autonomy. Ordinary worldly activities and personal speech and actions are all dominated by the concept of "self," without understanding of the nature of this concept, and rarely can people reflect on this issue. People are therefore imprisoned by self-attachment; they not only are trapped in endless suffering, but also reinforce entanglements based on the self. If a practitioner can cease the flow of thoughts or even loosen, in Samadhi, the subconscious constrictions of various concepts and dispositions, then he or she will be able to experience the original state which is free from the antagonism of subject and object, i.e., the absence of discriminative identification of "I," "you" and "others."
The Buddhist doctrine of *No-self* is that which has no independent existence and hence that which has no substantial nature of its own. This shows the close connection between *No-self* and the doctrine of dependent origination (*paticcasamuppada*).

Dependent origination is the literal translation of the term ‘Paticca samuppada’ which contains the basic Buddhist insight into the nature and the working of humanlife. It is quite true to say that in the teaching of the Buddha the idea of dependent origination has been used mainly to explain how suffering arises and cease, based on various causes and conditions, in the individual. The general theoretical form of the idea is presented in the discourses in the following manner:

“Asmim sati idam hoti
Imassa uppada idam uppajjati
Asim asati idam na hoti
Imassa nirodha idam nirijjhati”

“When this is, this is.
From arising of this, this arises.
When this is not present, this is not present.
With the cessation of this, this ceases.”

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47 S. Vol. II.P.28.
Dependent origination is not an invention or a creation but a discovery of an objective reality existing in the world of the Buddha. Dependent origination basically refers to the mode of explanation adopted by the Buddha to explain the origin and the cessation of the suffering. The standard expression of the idea occurs in the discourses in the following manner:

“And what, bhikkhus, is dependent origination? With ignorance as condition, volitional formations (come to be); with volitional formations as condition, consciousness; with consciousness as condition, name and form; with name and form as condition, the six sense bases; with the six sense bases as condition, contact; with contact as condition, feeling; with feeling as condition, craving; with craving as condition, clinging; with clinging as condition, existence; with existence as condition, birth; with birth as condition, aging-and-death, sorrow, lamentation, pain, displeasure and despair come to be. Such is the origin of this whole mass of suffering. This, Bhikkhus, is called dependent origination. But with the remainder-less fading away and cessation of ignorance comes cessation of volitional formations; with the cessation of volitional formations……….aging-and-
death, sorrow, lamentation, pain, displeasure and despair cease. Such is the cessation of the whole mass of suffering."48

The first part of the statement explains how suffering arises dependently and the second part explains how it ceases once one link severed. The Buddha has said in many occasions that he explains only two things, namely: arising and the cessation of suffering. Although suffering in this context is basically understood as individual suffering. Buddhism has always understood individual essentially as a part of a society. Society ultimately is a combination of different configuration of human being. Social problems are nothing other than human problems in which each individual player may not be considered very important. Buddhism understands various forms of social unrest and upheaval as manifestations of human suffering affecting, ultimately individual human beings. The key point in the teaching of dependent origination is an inter-dependent and inter-related complex of events. According to this understanding there cannot be any unconnected phenomenon in human life and reality; no phenomenon can stand on its own.

In speaking of understanding reality, we ca not forget that human being is a very important and decisive aspect of it. It is very important therefore that the nature and his relation to reality are understood as essential

aspects of dependent origination. Buddhism understands human being as dynamic interaction of five aggregates. These five are not static entities but are processes that undergo constant change. In other words, this means that human being is not a permanent or an absolute entity but a dynamic and causally conditioned phenomenon.

In this manner both reality and human being are causally conditioned phenomenon and are subject to the same characteristics. In Buddhism, these characteristics are described as impermanence (anicca), unsatisfactoriness (dukkha) and non-substantiality (anatta). Impermanence refers to the ever-present nature of change in reality in which human being is an essential part. Nothing in this world or in human life remains unchanged. It is the cause of the unsatisfactory feeling experienced by all beings and it is what is called ‘suffering’. What is changing and unsatisfactory is characterized as ‘no self’. The idea of No self in Buddhism basically means that human being is not characterized by a self believes to survive his death and last for ever. Experientially this means that there is nothing that we can grasp within or without oneself as ‘it is me’ and ‘it is mine’. A well-known statement in Buddhism says that ‘all conditioned phenomena are
impermanent⁴⁹. This indicates that everything, animate and inanimate, share certain fundamental characteristics.

There are certain significant ethical implications in this position. The position of human being in nature is an area religions do not see eye-to-eye. The Buddhist position holds that to be born as a human being is precious. This is mainly because human being has a capacity to determine his own destiny.

Everything from simple events in human life to more complicated events is explained in Buddhism as caused by factors within human experience. The explanation of Buddhism runs in the following manner: “Dependent on the eye, and forms, eye-consciousness arises. The meeting of the above three is contact. With contact as condition there is feeling. What one feels, that one perceives. What one perceives, that one think about. What one thinks about, that one mentally proliferates. With what one has mentally proliferated as the source, perceptions and notions tinged by mental proliferation beset a man with respect to past, future, and present forms cognizable through the eye”⁵⁰

The discourse describes how the process of perception take place, and based on that it describes, subsequently, how suffering arises due to

⁴⁹ Dhp. Vs. 277
⁵⁰ The Middle length discourses of the Buddha, Bhikkhu and Bhikkhu Bodhi, Buddhist Publication Society, 1995, p.203.
wrong attitude to one’s perceptions. Social manifestation of human suffering has been dealt with in the same manner. For instance, the Cakkavatti-Sihanada Sutta describes how deterioration in society takes place in a causally conditioned manner: “From the not giving of property to the need, poverty became rife, from the growth of poverty, the taking of what was not given increased, from the increase of theft, the use of weapons increased, from the increase use of weapons, the taking of life increased, and from the increase in the taking of life, people’s life-span decreased…..”51. Human life and there multiform suffering are also a part of this.

Buddhism holds that to be born as a human being is a rare opportunity and that human life is something of great value. What this basically mean is that human being, of all beings, has the capacity for shaping one’s own destiny. This view is based on human being’s developed physical and psychological aspects with potentiality for attaining higher states of development. Human beings on the other hand, share many characteristics with all the other animate and inanimate beings and objects. For instance, like all beings, he is subject to natural and moral laws; and subject to impermanence sorrowfulness and non-substantiality. Like all beings, he is desirous of pleasure and happiness and works for that end all

51 Thus have I heard, Maurice Walshe, Wisdom Publications London, 1987.pp.399-400.
through his existence and finally succumbs to death like all beings. The morality of all this is that human being is no extraordinary and part and parcel of nature as a whole.

The above analysis of reality based on dependent origination has a very significant ethical lesson in it. A very powerful religious expression of this lesson is included in the story of Ratthapala, a young and rich householder who renounced his worldly life on seeing the reality of life. On being questioned by the ruler of his country Ratthapala explains the reasons behind his act of renunciation: “Great King, there are four characteristics of nature that have been taught by the Blessed One who know and sees: Life is unstable, it is swept away; the world has no shelter and is without an overlord; the world has nothing of its own, one has to leave everything and pass on; and the world is incomplete, insatiate and the slave of craving”. The four characteristics described by Rathhapala, the first three are basically natural result of reality characterized by dependent existence. The fourth is how an uninstructed worldling would react to such reality. The aim of the teaching of the Buddha is to guide one to develop healthy attitude towards reality. There is no wonder in the dependently arisen phenomena being impermanent. The dependently arisen character highlighted by dependent

52 M. Vol. II .PP,255-267.  M. Vol II (Ratthapala sutta .no.82.)
origination show that none is immune to the problems that others face. One cannot do harm to someone else without causing harm to oneself in the process. Therefore this insight should provide us with an opportunity and a need to be generous and also to adopt a broader perspective of life in which both oneself and the other are included in a meaningful manner.

Application "No-Self" simply means giving up self-attachment in order to regain the original clarity of the mind. Being able to maintain an open perspective, let go of things, be tolerant, not compete with others, and leave causes and conditions to their natural courses would be close to practicing "No-Self". Practicing "No-Self" is merely the awakening of the innate enlightened awareness to acting and living in accordance with the truth; there is no deliberation in achieving any result, and even the salvation of beings through the spreading of the Dharma is just an activity that is necessary in accordance with the truth, hence it is not a kind of self-attachment. "No-Self" does not require practice to realize, and there is nothing to be practiced either; the so called practicing "No-Self" simply means to give up all sorts of self-attachment and one's grasping of a substantial "self". If a sentient being becomes aware of the presence of some self-attachment, then it is necessary to employ various methods to release it in order to refresh the innate "No-Self." Therefore, practicing "No-Self" is
not a fool's self-entanglement, but rather a wise man's taking appropriate medication for a diagnosed disease.

There is a consensus in the society that it is important to practice "No-Self," then an atmosphere of harmony, happiness, mutual help and understanding will naturally prevail. Only with the practice of "Non-Self" can people really understand and care for one another, as well as realize the common fate of being a sentient being subject to the suffering of birth, aging, sickness and death. Besides, whether or not one can enjoy real peace and happiness in life also relies on practicing No-Self and benefiting others. This point is much more important and fundamental than calculating gains and losses in the material world. However, due to practical considerations of human life, people cannot put their private gains after the welfare of others; hence they just spend their lives in the same old routine and are unable to set themselves free. If they see someone who really devotes himself to the practice of selflessly benefiting others, they would be most willing to lend a helping hand to such great deeds of universal salvation. After experiencing "No-Self" one would not be proud of oneself but sincerely respect everyone. No-Self would lead to no prejudice or bias, and one would not sustain fixed opinions of others which would lead to arguing and antagonism. No-Self would lead to no attachment to phenomena, and hence would not comment
on matters prematurely. No-Self would lead to no greed, no jealousy and no suspicion. Therefore, application "No-Self" will naturally result in peace of mind and harmony in the world. One's opinions and understanding are more or less biased which are habitually conditioned by environment and disposition. Many problems and disturbances can result if one insists on the correctness of one's views. If one can reflect and realize that one's view may be biased or inapplicable to others' situation, and hence applies self-restraint, without commenting too easily, then it would be easier for one to return to the original clarity and equanimity.

Application "No-Self" in daily life would not render one inoperative. Due to the practice of "No-Self," one realizes the similarity of all sentient beings in experiencing suffering and happiness, and thereby generates compassion of the common entity, and it becomes the motivation for furthering selfless service. Because of giving up "self-attachment," one can be considerate, can look at things from a totality and long-term perspective, and hence can serve others even better. If a practitioner can apply the above guidelines in daily life, then worldly interactions in life are also opportunities to improve oneself and help save others. Thus one gradually approaches the great path of "No-Self" and would peacefully abide in the original purity that is without competition, worries, and greed.
In fact, a practitioner must have undertaken long-term service, come into contact with all sorts of people, and undergone many kinds of situations to become knowledgeable of the multiple aspects and layers of life. The practitioner can then recognize what is of more significance to life, and therefore can make unhesitatingly the wise choice of devoting oneself to the propagation of the Dharma in order to benefit oneself and others. Based on this understanding, one prefers "No-Self" over "self-attachment" in terms of openness, expansiveness, equality, and universal love. Therefore, one would sublimate the caring for one's "self" into the sympathy for all sentient beings, wishing that all sentient beings under all circumstances could become free from suffering and achieve happiness. Then one further sublimates this sympathy into Bodhicitta, wishing that all sentient beings could learn and practice the Dharma, soon escape from Samsara, and completely realize their original Enlightenment.