Buddhist practice mandates a proper understanding of the Buddha’s teachings, as well as their direct application in one’s life as an ongoing practice. Both understanding and practice are required to gain liberation and to potentially realize enlightenment.

The identified dissatisfaction Dukkha is the root of all unnecessary human problems. As a prescription, the Buddha developed a path leading to the dissolution of Dukkha with the ultimate aim of realizing deliverance Nibbāna. Being historically unique as the first psycho-ethicist, among other things, he correctly identified the root problem of our existential existences Dukkha as its causation and also expounded a series of teachings that offered potential liberation from an unsatisfactory life. Although not properly acknowledged as such, the Buddha was the first Psycho-Therapist, offering liberation from mind’s delusions, as well as attainment of potential enlightenment. His core teaching is deftly and eloquently presented in his Four Noble Truths, ‘Cattāri Ariyasaccāni’, as well as the ensuing Noble Eightfold Path, ‘Ariyo Āṭṭhaṅgiko Maggo’.

The Buddha asserted that knowledge and practice of his teachings were not two discrete undertakings if one is to truly transform. He realized that knowledge and practice are nondual laying equal emphasis on proper understanding of his teachings (Pariyatti) and sincere engagement with the path (Paṭipatti) as the only viable way to realize liberation. The Buddha says that a mere cantor of the scriptures or theorist is akin to a shepherd who takes his master’s cattle to a grazing ground in the morning and brings them back again to the master’s cowshed in the evening. In so doing, the shepherd does not get mastership of the cattle. Without practical and living application of the Buddha’s teaching (Dhamma) as an exposition of Natural Law leading to the dissolution of Dukkha, a theorist is a mere parrot reciting words. Similarly, a practitioner devoid of proper understanding of the path can easily be misled in his or her ignorance. She or he is like a rudderless boat left to the arbitrary and capricious movements of the current, ultimately failing to reach the desired destination. Ardently serving a dualistic end at the expense of the whole does not lead to nondual realization and that mastership which dissolves the fetters of mind. Thus, a balance or middle road between Pariyatti and Paṭipatti theory and practice is absolutely necessary if refinement and Dhamma are to be
realized. Supporting the Buddha’s pragmatism, wisdom, and deep-realization, we have the Pāli text, *Uttamapurisadīpanī* by Venerable Ledi Sayādaw a celebrated Burmese monk who was recognized at a very young age for being highly realized in both Buddhist practice and theory. The text, also translated into English under the title “*A Manual of the Excellent Man*,” elucidates attainment of a noble life through understanding of the Buddha’s cardinal truths and the practice of virtue (*Sīla*), concentration (*Samādhi*) and wisdom (*Paññā*). The most Venerable Ledi Sayādaw emphasized the practice of penetrative or insight meditation (*Vipassanā*). He also asserted that no amount of academic learning can save one from rebirth into the lower realms if pernicious wrong views or beliefs are clung to, such as a belief in a permanent soul and ego. He felt that such views could only be uprooted by the practice of meditation (*Vipassanā*). He further suggested that people practice *Dhamma* by investigating and comprehending the arising and vanishing of phenomena within this body and mind.

In the *Uttamapurisadīpanī* Venerable Ledi Sayādaw expounds the Buddhist understanding of human beings as the formation of mind (*Nāma*) and body (*Rūpa*) which can further be reduced into the five aggregates, namely: body or materiality (*Rūpa*), feeling (*Vedanā*), perception (*Saññā*), mental formations (*Sañkhāra*) and consciousness (*Viññāna*). He further states that perception of the five aggregates is an endeavor to understand oneself psychologically, physiologically and ethically. Ultimately, this understanding imbues the practitioner with an awareness of inner-evil, confidence, active engagement towards perfection and a deep-understanding, leading to the realization of *Nibbāna*.

Buddhist psycho-ethical analysis, stemming from a realization of the Four Noble Truths, further divides the human being into six senses, twelve bases and eighteen elements, twelve links of dependent origination, twenty two faculties and four foundations of mindfulness. Such comprehensive analyses of human characteristics and personalities enables one to develop an understanding of the ‘self, others, and the outer’ phenomena from which she or he is not separate inspiring one to refine their life through the practice of such as *Sīla*, *Samādhi*, *Paññā* and *Satipaṭṭhāna*.

May all living beings in this world live in peace and harmony and may all be free from pain and sufferings.