The Essence of Buddha - Dharma

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Siddhartha Gotama, popularly known as the Buddha, was the founder of “Buddha-Dharma” lived during the 5th century B.C. in Ancient India.

After his enlightenment, he spent rest of his forty-five years of life in teaching the newly invented Dharma to all walks of people in India, in native Pali language with pristine purity and clarity.

In this small article I would try to briefly the essence of the core teachings of the great grand master Buddha.

When Buddha passed away at his 80 years of age, Maha Kassapa, a wise elderly monk, an Arhant one of the chief disciple of Buddha, decided to preserve the actual teachings of Buddha. He organized a Conference [Sangeeti] with 500 Arhant monks, in that the Ananda who served the Buddha for 25 years very closely was asked to explain what exactly the Buddha taught. And all the teachings were compiled into three divisions, named as ‘Tripitaka’.

1. Sutta – Pitaka: by Ananda contains discourses addressed to public on ‘Dharma’
2. Vinaya – Pitaka: by Upali contains discourses addressed to monks and Nuns about ‘Discipline and Sila’
3. Abhidhamma – Pitaka: by Ananda contains ‘deeper truths about the laws of nature, detailed analytical study of Mind and Matter’

The core teachings of the Buddha can be divided into three parts.

I. The four noble truths
II. The Law of dependent origination
III. The Middle path or way

I. The Four Noble Truths:

A. The Truth of Suffering [Dukkha Satya]

The word suffering [Dukkha] is used for any kind of unpleasant or painful bodily sensations and for mental unpleasantness or unhappiness. The situation of misery is invariably involved in human life, from birth, old age, disease, loss of something very dear and death. Complete understanding of ‘Dukkha’ in its deeper level by exploring its entire field of attachment through sense doors of body and mind [Matter, sensation, perception, reaction and consciousness] is very much essential for practicing dharma.

B. The Truth of Arising of Suffering [Dukkha samudaya satya]

The root cause of suffering is ‘Craving [Thanha / Thrushna]’ resulting in life, bound up with any desire for sensual pleasure. This is broadly 3 types.

1. Kama Thanha – Any kind of sensual desires, mainly sexual desire.
2. Bhava Thanha – Desire to survive, even though the entire world is destroyed.
3. Vibhava Thanha – Desiring to stop life and death circle and refusing to accept misery after death. There is an unbalanced craving and clinging to philosophy that ‘this is the only existence’. These three types of thanha results in Dukkha.
C. The Truth of Cessation of Suffering [Nirodha satya]

The 3rd Noble truth is about total eradication of craving, which eradicates the suffering from its roots. The cessation must be total, both in the six sense-doors and their related objects.

D. The Truth of the Path for Eradication of Suffering [Magga satyam]

The path laid down for the total eradication of suffering is The Noble Eightfold Path [Astanga Marga].

1. Right understanding – Attainment of total experiential wisdom about suffering, its arising, its cessation and the path.

2. Right thoughts – Thoughts for wholesome acts for the benefit of self, family and society, which are free from anger, violence and hatredness.

3. Right speech – It is not false or hurtful, not back-biting or slander. It shall be real, pleasant and compassionate.

4. Right actions – Abstaining from killing, stealing and sexual misconduct [only right actions by the body].

5. Right Livelihood – Abstaining from all kinds of unwholesome livelihood, earning by right means, and practicing of Five – Precepts of Dharma [Pancha sila].

6. Right effort – A meditator makes strong effort to restrain from unwholesome impurities, and stirs up his/her energy to awaken the wisdom to see the things in their real nature.

7. Right Awareness – The word Sati, is used for right awareness or to maintain balanced observation of all activities in life, particularly while meditating.

8. Right Concentration – Is the practice of Four-levels of concentration [Samadhi]. In the first level of concentration there is detachment from sense desires and mental impurities. In the second level there is pleasantness in the mind and body. In the third level there is only pleasant bodily sensations [sukha] with the awareness of impermanence. In the fourth level of concentration there is no more sukha or dukkha, only tranquility remains in the mind with equanimity, awareness and total purification [Nirvana].

II. The Law or Cause of Dependent Origination [Pratitya Samuthpada]

The Buddha discovered this law of dependent origination, where by one condition arises out of another, which in turn arises out of prior conditions, and if the underlying cause is removed then the dependent condition is removed. According to this law the existence is seen as an interrelated flux of phenomenal events. Material and physical forms are impermanent and independent existence of their own, happenings in a series of events. Described as a chain of 12 links [causes]. Consisting of, 1. Ignorance[Avidya] 2. Faulty thought-constructions about reality [samskara], 3. Knowledge [Vignana]. 4. Physical form [Nama-Roopa], 5. Six-Sense domains[ Shadindriya], 6. Contact [sparsha], 7. Feeling [Vedana], 8. Craving [Trishna], 9. Clinging [Upadana], 10. Becoming [Bhava], 11. Birth [Jathi], 12. Old age, disease, Death and Dukkha [Jara – Marana- Dukkha].

The right understanding of the law of dependent origination in its direct and reverse order by practicing ‘Vipassna – Meditation’ leads to emancipation from the chains of misery and bondage.

III. Middle Path [Madye Marga]

Generally refers to the avoidance of two extremes of practical life, namely indulgence in sensual pleasures on the one hand and severe asceticism on the other. The middle way describes the middle ground between attachment and aversion, between being and non-being, between form and emptiness, between free will and determinism. According to Ajahn Chah about the middle path, “there is neither going forward, nor going backward, nor standing still”, try to be mindful and let things take their natural course. In the stillness your mind will see many strange and wonderful things, which come and go, but you will be still. This is the happiness of the Buddha.

The Buddha says, “This is the one and only way, monks, for the purification of beings, for the overcoming of sorrow and lamentation, for the extinguishing of suffering and grief, for walking on the path of truth, for the realization of ‘Nibbana’ [Nirvana].

“May all living beings be happy and healthy”
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**Conflict of Interest:** None declared

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**References**