A Theravada Buddhist Perspective on the Theory and Practice of Yoga

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1. Introduction:

> The absence of greed (*loba)*
> The absence of hatred (*dosa)*
> The absence of delusion (*moha)*
> That friend is freedom from suffering (*Nibbana).*
> *Anguttara Nikaya III.55*

The Sanskrit word Yoga literally means to yoke or harness. Yoga is a comprehensive spiritual discipline that yokes or harnesses one's attention or awareness with a view to a spiritual happiness that transcends the day-to-day sense pleasures that are generally viewed by mankind as happiness. As such the goal of Yoga is transcendental or divine happiness. In the classical Yoga tradition this happiness is achieved through the systematic eradication of the root cause of suffering, ignorance (*avijja)* and delusion (*moha*). This is accomplished through a process of voluntary self-transformation that brings to light the Buddha nature or divine nature of the practitioner, known as the yogi, through a many centuries old proven spiritual discipline. The word Yoga encompasses both the discipline and the goal. The diversity of the various Yoga disciplines ensures that the needs and individual temperament of almost any individual are met. As such, any individual can successfully practice Yoga within the framework of their own traditional religious beliefs and practices.[1]

There are three renowned traditions of ancient classical Yoga discipline. These are the Hindu Yoga tradition of Patanjali (3 C.E.), the Jain Yoga tradition of Mahavira (600 B.C.E.) and the Buddhist Yoga tradition of the Gotama Buddha (623 B.C.E.- 543 B.C.E.). Each of these traditions has the common goal of happiness, or freedom from stress and suffering, through self-transformation. Each of these traditions achieves this goal through the gradual but persistent eradication of ignorance and delusion by using the method and practice advocated by its founder. Even though the teachings of the Buddha are not commonly referred to as Yoga, Feuerstein argues that the Buddhist practice falls under the framework of traditional Yoga. This paper

[1] For further details, see Feuerstein (2003).

introduces the theory and practice of the Buddhist Yoga discipline under the Theravada tradition as taught by Gotama the Buddha.

The goal of Buddhist practice is Nibbana or freedom from stress and suffering. This is accomplished through the practice of generosity (*dana*), virtue (*sila*), and tranquility and insight meditation (S*amata and Vipassana bhavana*). Buddhist Yoga is a process of voluntary self-transformation based on the teachings of the Gotama Buddha that leads to awakening or enlightenment and the resulting freedom from stress and suffering.

This paper will address the practice of generosity, virtue and meditation (*dana, sila and bavana)*, the Buddha's path to freedom as documented in the Noble Eightfold Path. It will also link the practice of *dana, sila* and *bavana* to the Buddhist goal of freedom from suffering by using logic, reasoning and analysis of the Four Noble Truths, the Doctrine of Dependent Arising and the Buddhist concepts of suffering (*Dukka*), impermanence (*Anicca*) and no-permanent self (*Anatta*). Therefore this paper addresses the Buddhist path of transformation; generosity, virtue and meditation through the practice of the path, and the relationship between the practice and the key concepts of the Gotama Buddha's teachings.

2. The Foundation for Meditation: The Buddhist Yoga Theory and Practice of Generosity and Virtue

The Four Noble Truths are regarded by Buddhists as being true for all people at all times and places. Therefore, in keeping with the yoga discipline, it can be accepted and practiced by any individual irrespective of his or her religious tradition. As with classical Yoga, the goal of the Four Noble Truths is freedom from stress and suffering achieved through the eradication of the root cause of suffering.

The First Noble Truth (*dukka*) asserts the existence of stress and suffering. It is then expanded as follows: "Birth is suffering, aging is suffering, sickness is suffering, disassociation from the loved is suffering, association with the unpleasant is suffering, not to get what one wants is suffering, in short the five aggregates affected by clinging (*tanha*) is suffering."[2]

Looking at the First Noble Truth critically we can see that it is a universal truth. *Dukka* translates into English as a range of emotions that is difficult to endure; from emotions as subtle

[2] Walpola Rahula (1959), pp. 16-49.

as stress which is at the low end of pain to as strong as grief and suffering. The existence of stress and suffering cannot be denied. Even the great and the mighty, rich and the noble all fall prey to suffering. And even though there may be moments of great joy in our lives these are balanced with moments of intense pain. Suffering exists in the world.

The Second Noble Truth (*samudaya*) claims that the cause of suffering is clinging, grasping or strong attachment (*tanha*). This is a new concept that the Buddha realized. If asked, most would claim that the cause of suffering is the event; the terminal sickness, the abusive husband, the critical teacher or the untimely death. But is it the event that causes stress and suffering?

A recent disaster like the tsunami in South East Asia brings to mind the fragility of human life and the mortality of living beings. While this natural disaster results in an outpouring of love and compassion in the hearts of persons all over the world, it also results in enormous grief and suffering in the hearts of those who were directly affected by the tsunami; those who lost family, their homes and their livelihood. While those who lost distant relatives and acquaintances and those who were not directly affected by the loss of life caused by the tsunami felt sorrow that translated quickly to deep compassion and an outpouring of generosity, those that lost immediate family were crippled with grief. While those who were detached were moved to compassion and generosity those who were deeply attached felt intense grief and suffering.

Realizing that the cause of suffering was strong attachment born of ignorance, the Buddha said, "Such was the vision, insight, wisdom, knowing, and light that arose in me, about things not heard before...". According to the Buddha, birth is suffering, aging is suffering, sickness is suffering not getting what one wants is suffering, disassociation from loved ones is suffering, associating with the unpleasant is suffering. However, the pain one feels, the suffering itself that one feels, is caused by one's volitional response that leads to strong grasping and clinging (*tanha*), not by the event.[3]

Do we all feel the pain or is it just those that are attached to the event, which is out side our control, that suffer the most? Upon reflection, it is apparent that it is the strong attachment and grasping that result in stress and suffering. So we have the Second Noble Truth, which is also a universal truth. The cause of the pain and suffering that one feels is not a result of the event but a result of one's strong attachment to the event.

[3] Walpola Rahula (1959), pp. 16-49.

The Third Noble Truth (*nirodha*) is the absence of the root cause of suffering and the resulting freedom from suffering. If the root cause of suffering is *tanha* then the absence of *tanha* should result in the absence of suffering. The event cannot be controlled; the death, the abusive husband the critical teacher. However, if it is one's response to the event that causes the pain and suffering then changing this response is possible, through spiritual transformation.

The Fourth Noble Truth (*magga*) known as The Noble Eightfold Path is a path of boundless compassion and profound wisdom that has to be practiced to eradicate clinging and grasping (*tanha).*[4] The Buddha observed the mind (*citta*) and found that strong unmanaged craving led to greed, lust and strong attachment (*loba)* to hold on to that which we like and aversion, ill-will, anger and hatred (*dosa)* for those that thwart our craving or stand in the way of our happiness. If strong unmanaged grasping led to *loba* and *dosa*, then one must ensure that volitional responses (*sankara*) that started out as mild attachments and aversion did not lead to *loba* and *dosa*. The Buddha advocated the practice of selfless generosity to manage *tanha* that leads to *loba,* and boundless compassion and goodwill to manage *tanha* that leads to *dosa.*[5]

2.1 The practice of selfless generosity (*dana)* to manage suffering caused by *loba*

The Pali word *dana* translates into English as "letting go". The purpose of generosity is to gradually purify the mind and achieve freedom from suffering by letting go. The Gotama Buddha laid out a comprehensive path for the practice of selfless generosity.[6] Gifts given with expectation of return or public honour did not amount to *dana*, nor did conditional gifts or gifts given as a result of coercion. Instead, the Buddha gave guidelines that calmed the mind of the giver and led to joy and happiness. When practicing *dana* one should give that which is earned lawfully and righteously, give items of value, give that which is clean, give that which is suitable for the person and occasion, give at the time of need, give with care with consideration for the feelings of the recipient and give frequently. Such gifts, the Buddha claimed, would purify one's mind and result in lasting joy and happiness.

[4] Samyutta Nikaya XLV.8 . Right Speech, Right Action, Right Livelihood (virtue); Right Effort, Right Mindfulness, Right Concentration (tranquility); Right Understanding, Right View (wisdom)
[5] Anguttara Nikaya VII, VIII
[6] Anguttara Nikaya VII.49, III.48, V34 - 36; Samyutta Nikaya III.24

2.2 The practice of virtue *(sila*) to manage suffering caused by *dosa*

The Pali word *sila* translates into English as virtue. As with *dana*, the purpose of *sila* is to gradually purify the mind and achieve freedom from suffering through the practice of virtue. The Buddha gave comprehensive guidelines for the practice of *sila* that began with modes of discipline that a yogi needs to follow to refrain from thoughts, speech and actions that would harm others.[7] The Yogi then completed the practice of *sila* through the practice of loving kindness (*metta),* compassion (*karuna),* sympathetic joy (*mudita)* and equanimity (*upekka*), and brought virtue to fruition through the practice of meditation on compassion and loving-kindness.

The modes of discipline the Buddha recommended in the Noble Eightfold Path included right speech, right conduct and right livelihood.[8] Right speech included refraining from telling lies, slander, gossip and harsh speech. Right conduct included refraining from destroying of living beings, stealing, and sexual misconduct. Right livelihood included refraining from manufacturing and trading in armaments and lethal weapons, intoxicating drinks or drugs, poisons and harmful chemicals, slavery, and the killing of animals or breeding them for killing

The yogi that began his practice of virtue through restraint was encouraged in the practice of using gentle words of truth that brought joy, hope and comfort to living beings and actions born of loving kindness, compassion, sympathetic joy and equanimity.[9] The practice of meditation on compassion and loving kindness was incorporated in the daily life so that one's thought, speech and actions were based on boundless compassion and loving kindness.

The cause of suffering was strong *tanha* that led to *loba* and *dosa.* The daily practice of generosity and virtue ensured the gradual eradication of *tanha* (the cause of suffering) and resulted in happiness. While in the Buddha's path to freedom generosity and virtue formed the foundation for one's practice of meditation, meditation brings to fruition the practice of generosity and virtue.[10] As such, in the Buddhist tradition, they are codependent, inseparable and an essential component of the Noble Eightfold Path.

The parallels of Buddhist virtue to Patanjali Yoga Sutra are manifold. According to Patanjali, freedom is rooted in moral behavior.[11] Stoler Miller claims that even though proper

[7] Anguttara Nikaya VIII.39, X.92; Majjhima Nikaya 135; Itivuttaka 22, 27
[8] Anguttara Nikaya X.99, X176
[9] Anguttara Nikaya VI.12, VI.13, VI.16
[10] Anguttara Nikaya IX.1
[11] Stoler Miller Barbara (1998), P2

moral action in the world is not the goal of yoga, the universal principles of nonviolence, truthfulness, avoidance of stealing, sexual restraint, and non-possessiveness or greedlessness (generosity) is specified as a precondition for further yogic practice (YS II.30-31). The Buddhist practice of *metta*, *karuna*, *mudita* and *upekka* is also deemed efficacious for achieving the absolute tranquility of yoga (YS I.33).

Whicher endorses the importance of virtue in Yoga which parallels the Buddhist thinking as follows: "Virtues such as benevolence and compassion, for example are essential to develop on the Yoga path in order to eradicate any propensity to cause fear or harm in others. Without the cultivation of higher virtues, one-pointedness or concentration of mind cannot be sustained leaving one unprepared to undergo further refining processes of purification and illumination and the arising of discriminative discernment".[12]

3. Freedom from Ignorance and Delusion: The Buddhist Yoga Theory and Practice of Tranquility and Insight Meditation

> All conditioned phenomena are impermanent *(anicca*)
> All conditioned phenomena are suffering (*dukka*)
> All conditioned and unconditioned phenomena are not self (*anatta*)
> If one discerns this truth through wisdom
> One becomes detached from suffering
> This is the path that leads to liberation.
> *Dhammapada 277-279*

If strong *tanha* resulted in grief and suffering, why then do we allow the mild volitional responses to grow to strong *tanha*? According to Gotama the Buddha, the cause of this strong clinging and grasping that led to *loba* and *dosa* was due to *avijja and moha*, not knowing or delusion regarding the true nature of the world. The true nature of the world was that all conditioned phenomena were transient (*anicca*), difficult to endure and stressful (*dukka*), and not self (*anatta*). The Buddha expounded these important concepts and their conditional relationship in the Doctrine of Dependent Arising. He then laid out a path of meditation known as tranquility (*samata)* and insight (*vipassana*) meditation to combat this ignorance and delusion so that one could transcend suffering by seeing things as they are.

[12] Whicher Ian (1998), P192

To this point we have addressed *tanha* or deep attachment to sense pleasures that leads to *loba* and *dosa*. The Buddha also addressed *tanha* to the deep-rooted belief in a permanent self (*atma tanha*) and *tanha* for being and not being, (*bava and vibava tanha)*. These forms of *tanha* also lead to stress, grief and suffering. They also lead to rebirth consciousness and the mistaken identity of a permanent self. To understand and eradicate *avijja* and *moha* that leads to all forms of *tanha* one need to understand the doctrine of *anicca, dukka and anatta*. As such the doctrine of impermanence *anicca*, suffering *dukka* and no permanent self, *anatta* are integral to the teachings of the Buddha. We will examine each of these concepts in turn and examine their importance to the Buddhist doctrine. We will begin with the Buddhist concept of *anicca.*

When we look around us we can see that decay and death comes to all living things. We can see our friends and relatives age and pass away; we can see the death of animals and plants over time. However, it is not only living things that are transient, even inanimate objects have a life span. We can see that over time everything deteriorates and decomposes. In actual fact, at every moment material form changes so that what something was a moment ago is not the same as what it is a moment later. The perception, however, is that the form remains the same. Even objects that seem permanent such as granite rocks erode and change over time. Our vision is limited to our life span; as such, some things we know are impermanent because during our life span we can see that they change. Some others we know have changed by applying scientific methods. For example, we know that over time the earth has changed, lush forestlands have turned into deserts and ice fields have melted.

Modern science has brought understanding to the Buddhist concept of impermanence and the resulting perceived and absolute reality. In 1952 Donald A. Glaser the American physicist invented the bubble chamber to measure the speed at which the minute particles that any object was made up of changed.[13] He measured that in every second these minute particles that all substances are made up of arose and passed away 10^{22} times. In 1960 he won the Nobel Prize for Physics for his invention. All animate and inanimate objects, he says, are made up of minute particles that arise and pass away rapidly and are like vibrations. They combine together to form structures that seem solid and real. But this is perception. It is not absolute reality. In absolute terms they are all in a state of flux. Glaser's experiment quantifies the Buddhist thought of impermanence and an ever-changing reality.

According to the Gotama Buddha the entire material universe (both animate and inanimate) was comprised of sub-atomic particles called *kalapas*, or indivisible units.[14] These units exhibit in endless vibration the basic qualities of matter: mass, cohesion, temperature and movement. They combine to form structures that seem to have some permanence, but in fact, these miniscule *kalapas* are in a state of continuous arising and passing away, a state of continuous flux. As such, according to the Buddha, this body that we call "I" is comprised of an ever changing flux of minute *kalapas*.

The concept of no permanent self (*anatta*) is integral to the teachings of the Buddha. According to the teachings of the Buddha all conditioned and unconditioned phenomena is not self. This "being" that we call "I" is nothing but an aggregate of name and form (*nama, rupa*) that when analyzed breaks down to five fleeting components that change at incomprehensible speed.

Along with the physical process: *rupa*, there is the mental process: the activities of the mind, *nama.* As the Buddha examined the body, He also examined the mind.[15] He realized that the mind was comprised of four processes: consciousness (*vinnana*), perception *(sanna*), sensation (v*edana*), and volitional formations or responses (s*ankhara*).

The first process, consciousness, is the receiving part of the mind. It simply registers the occurring of any phenomena. It notes the raw data of experience without assigning labels or making value judgments.

The second mental process, perception, identifies what has been registered. It distinguishes the raw data, evaluates and categorizes them into positive and negative.

Then sensation arises. So long as input is not evaluated, sensation remains neutral. But once the input has been evaluated, the sensation becomes pleasant or unpleasant depending on the evaluation. Because of ignorance and craving, if the sensation is pleasant, then a wish forms to prolong it. If the sensation is unpleasant, the mind responds by pushing it away, to stop it.

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[13] http://nobelprize.org/physics/laureates/1960/glaser-bio.html
[14] Hart William (1991), pp. 26-29.
[15] This discussion draws heavily from Hart William (1991), pp. 26-29.

With pleasant and unpleasant sensations, volitional response (*sankara*) occurs - the volitional response of the mind to prolong a pleasant sensation or to stop an unpleasant sensation. Only after a response has been repeated many times does awareness develop in the conscious mind. Some of these volitional responses lead to *tanha; tanha* for sense pleasures, *tanha* for the mistaken identity of a permanent I, and *tanha* for being. This leads to *kamma,* intentional unwholesome actions resulting from *loba, dosa and moha* and intentional wholesome actions resulting from the elimination of *loba, dosa and moha*, the deep-rooted identification with a permanent self, and at death, during the *javana* thought process, to rebirth consciousness.

It is this transient nature of all phenomena that results in the First Noble Truth, the existence of suffering. All phenomena are *anicca* and *anatta*. Unaware of the cause of suffering; *tanha* to sense pleasures, *tanha* to the mistaken identity of a permanent self and *tanha* for being we grasp and cling to conditions that are forever changing with the hope of making them permanent. But in keeping with Dhamma all phenomena is *anicca* and *anatta* (transient) and as such *dukka*.

The Buddha, observing at the deepest level of reality through insight meditation, realized that unmanaged volitional response (*sankara*) occurs because of ignorance and delusion. We are unaware of the fact that we respond and unaware of the real nature of that to which we respond. We are ignorant of the impermanent nature of all component phenomena and ignorant of the fact that volitional response builds to deep craving for being, the deep rooted identity of a permanent "I" and that it leads to holding onto or averting sensations, which results in suffering. Not understanding our real nature, we respond blindly. Not knowing that we have responded, we persist in our blind responses and allow them to intensify. Thus we become imprisoned in the habit of unmanaged volitional response (*sankara)* because of ignorance.

The Buddha penetrated deep into His mind and body and realized ignorance was the root cause for rebirth consciousness, the mistaken identity of a permanent I and the stress and suffering caused by attachment to sense pleasures which He called the Doctrine of Dependent Arising *(Paticca Samuppada*).[16] This is also known as the Theory of Cause and Effect:

[16] Digha Nikaya 15 (The Great Causes Discourse)

Paticca Samuppada

Cause	Effect
If ignorance arises	Volitional response (s*ankara*) occur
If volitional response arise	Rebirth consciousness occurs
If rebirth consciousness arise	Name and form occur
If name and form arise	The six senses occur
If the six senses arise	Contact occurs
If contact arises	Sensation or feeling occurs
If sensation or feeling arises	Craving occurs
If craving arises	Attachment or grasping occurs
If attachment or grasping arises	The process of becoming occurs
If the process of becoming arises	Birth occurs
If birth arises	Decay and death occur, together with sorrow, lamentation, and physical and mental suffering

Thus arises this entire mass of suffering. By this chain of cause and effect we have been brought into our present state of existence. It is this chain of cause and effect that results in rebirth consciousness, the birth of the mistaken identity of a permanent self and the stress and suffering resulting from birth, decay and death. The Buddha realized that if ignorance set this chain of cause and effect in motion then the absence of ignorance should reverse this chain of cause and effort and result in freedom from birth, the mistaken identity of a permanent "I" and the suffering resulting from old age, sickness and death.

Penetration (*pativeda*) as opposed to understanding (*anuboda*) of the Doctrine of Dependent Arising and the Doctrine of no Permanent Self (*anatta*), will occur through realization, not through study. The Doctrine of Anatta analyzes the splitting of existence into its constituent parts. The doctrine of Dependent Arising synthesizes these components and shows that they are conditionally related. Tranquility and insight meditation lets you experience this truth and destroys the ignorance and delusion that leads to rebirth consciousness, the mistaken identity of a permanent self and the suffering caused by birth, decay and death.

3.1 The practice of tranquility and insight meditation to manage suffering caused by *avijja* and *moha*

If we remove ignorance and cease to respond blindly, we shall experience the resulting peace of Nibbana. Suffering begins because of the ignorance of one's own reality. In the darkness of this ignorance, the mind responds to every sensation with liking and disliking, and craving that leads to clinging and aversion. How does one break this chain of events that leads to suffering? The Buddha realized that by the practice of *Vipassana* (insight) we develop awareness of our true nature. And we develop equanimity. We examine every sensation with a balanced mind and understanding through realization of the impermanence of all phenomena. Knowing that this too will change, we observe sensations without clinging or aversion. We do not react. Now, instead of giving rise to blind volitional responses, every sensation gives rise to wisdom and insight.

Before one starts Vipassana Meditation one needs to strengthen, develop and discipline the mind through tranquility (*Samatha*) Meditation.[17] This is because, in general, our mind tends to run from one thing to another, out of control and contrary to our wishes. It is important then to begin by disciplining the mind so that it remains still without wandering. In the Buddhist tradition there are forty types (objects) of *Samatha* Meditation, which can be used for the development of the mind. The Buddha categorized human beings into six basic types or a combination of these six types - those with lustful temperament, those with hateful temperament, those with ignorant temperament, those with devout temperament, those with intellectual temperament, and those with discursive temperament. The appropriate Samatha Meditation was then selected to ensure optimum results by matching the type of meditation to the temperament of the yogi.

The tranquility meditation that is most common in Buddhist practice is the awareness of breathing meditation or *Aanapana Sati* Meditation, which is what the Buddha Himself used to attain full awakening.

As in classical Yoga the most common posture of Buddhist meditation is sitting meditation though this is often interspersed with periods of walking meditation so as to give the

[17] Digha Nikaya 22 (The Great Frames of Reference Discourse)

yogi some flexibility and ease. One can sit in the lotus position as the Buddha sat, or in the half lotus position. If this position is difficult for the yogi a low chair with the feet placed firmly on the floor is acceptable. We begin by sitting upright with our back straight and head held high. The body is relaxed and in equilibrium. The right hand is placed over the left on the lap and the eyes are half-shut and directed to a point a few feet in front of the yogi when angled from the tip of the nose. The yogi could also keep the eyes closed; however, one must then be mindful to avoid drowsiness. A quiet room with no distractions is used to help the yogi to discipline the mind.

Turning from the outer world to the world within, the yogi then turns his attention to the breath entering and leaving his nostrils. At times the yogis prefer to start by relaxing their bodies and then gradually moving to the awareness of breath. This works very well. One can begin with the bottom of the toes and slowly move up the legs, up the torso, the neck and the head, relaxing each muscle and observing the sensation until one reaches the nostrils. Then one focuses on the breath entering and leaving the nostrils. This is not a breathing exercise. It is an exercise in awareness - awareness of the breath entering and leaving the body through the nostrils. Concentration is focused only on the nostrils and on the observation of the feelings or sensations that one experiences when breathing occurs.

To benefit from this technique one must meditate regularly, preferably at a fixed time every day. One must also be patient with the wandering mind. Over time one will find that the mind does not wander as often as it did when one started. The position of sitting cross-legged is no longer as uncomfortable as it was before. In fact, after a period of meditation one is more relaxed and energized. It is said that half an hour of meditation is more restful than many hours of sound sleep.

One will also find that one is so in tune with the sensation of one's respiration that one will immediately recognize a change in the breathing pattern. When one is agitated or angry, the breath comes faster. Blood rushes to the face. With time the yogi will be aware of these changes before they result in action. He will know when the mind is agitated, as the subtle changes to the breathing will be recognized. Then with a balanced mind he can reflect before he acts so that he does not say or do something that he will later regret.

Often during meditation the yogi might be tempted to give up. Doubts will begin to creep in. The pressures of daily life will take over and it will be more and more difficult to find the

time to meditate. One may even feel that after so long no visible progress has been achieved. These doubts are normal. However, they need to be discussed with the teacher. In fact from time to time one might be faced with any of the five hindrances to progress - sensual desire, hatred, sloth and torpor, restlessness and worry, and skeptical doubt.[18] The teacher will then change the type (object) of meditation to help the yogi combat the hindrance.

With the ongoing practice of tranquility Meditation the yogi can now concentrate for longer periods of time and keep his mind focused throughout the entire period. One is also more aware of sensations. One will find that one is now aware of thoughts before they have been turned into speech or action. As such one can now concentrate with Right Effort as laid out in the Noble Eightfold Path; the Buddha's Path to Nibbana, as one now has better control or discipline of one's mind.[19] One can now:

Prevent evil or unwholesome thoughts from arising
Abandon evil or unwholesome thoughts if they should arise
Generate wholesome and good thoughts that have not arisen
Develop and bring to fruition good and wholesome thoughts that have arisen

Meditation is now moving from the "classroom" to one's daily life. One begins to be mindful in every thought, action and speech. Whether one eats, or reads, or drives, or studies, one does it mindfully. One is fully aware of what one is doing. When one engages in more than one activity at a time, it is difficult to be mindful of either one of the activities. But with meditation this slowly changes. One is now aware and mindful and practicing Right Mindfulness as laid out in the Noble Eightfold Path. One is mindful of:

Activities of the body
Sensations or feelings
Activities of the mind
Ideas and thoughts

By maintaining this awareness for as long as possible one develops Right Concentration.[20] Over time one finds that one's mind is now more relaxed, breathing is slower and calmer. At this stage one who practices awareness of breathing may experience unusual phenomena, seeing lights or visions while having the eyes closed, hearing sounds not heard before. One may be able to see one's past births or know the mind of others. All these so-called

[18] Digha Nikaya 11 (Abandoning the Hindrances)
[19] Samyutta Nikaya XLIX.1
[20] Digha Nikaya 2 (Fruits of contemplative life)

extraordinary experiences are indications of the heightened level of awareness and concentration of the mind. One should, however, continue to focus on breathing awareness. These extrasensory experiences are but milestones on the path that one may or may not experience. They should, however, not distract the yogi. Some, intent on awareness, may not even notice such sensations. Others may cling to these thinking they have achieved some form of spiritual development.

Yogis develop concentration not in order to experience unusual phenomena or bliss and ecstasy. The purpose is to examine one's own reality, to remove the conditioning that causes suffering. This is Right Concentration as laid out in the Buddha's Path to Nibbana. The Yogi has now experienced Samadhi or Right Concentration. He may also at this stage attain any one of the four mental ecstasies (meditative absorptions) of form *rupa jhana* or no form *arupa jhana*. He is now ready for insight meditation.

Vipassana, or insight, is defined in the dictionary as follows: the ability to see and understand clearly the inner nature of things. Just as in the dictionary definition, the Buddha used *Vipassana* for the purpose of seeing into the true nature of self. Since the prime purpose is to be aware of the true nature of self, to be aware of every sensation and every feeling, one now begins in earnest to observe the sensations that one feels in every part of the body and mind.

The Buddha said that, everywhere within the body one experiences sensation.[21] Wherever there is life there is sensation. If you allow the attention to move at random from one part of the body to another, from one sensation to another, naturally it will always be attracted to the areas where there is strong sensation. You will neglect certain parts of the body and you will not learn how to observe subtler sensations. Your observations will remain partial, incomplete, and superficial. Therefore it is essential always to move the attention in order.

One begins the practice of Vipassana by isolating the tips of the toes and the sensation that is felt in the toes. To begin with one may feel nothing. In fact, one's attention may be diverted to the calf muscle, which is aching due to the pressure of the other leg, or to the back that is now starting to stoop. But one must concentrate only on the toes and examine and observe the sensation or the feeling. Little by little, very slowly, one moves up the foot to the ankle, the calf, and the thigh. The idea is to observe the sensation in each part of the body slowly, one at a time, in order, starting at the tip of the toes and ending with the top of the head. Over and over

[21] Hart William (1991), pp 90-101

again. If one's mind is wandering, one must move back to awareness of breathing and regain one-pointedness of mind (*samadhi*). Then one starts once again to observe, observing deeply each and every sensation.

Our goal is to be aware of every sensation and to develop equanimity. We examine every sensation with a balanced mind, without liking or disliking. The entire effort is in learning not to react. A sensation appears and liking or disliking begins. If we are unaware, the response to the sensation is repeated and intensified to craving that leads to clinging and aversion. It grows stronger and stronger until it overpowers the conscious mind. We become caught up in our emotions and all our better judgments are swept aside. The result is that we find ourselves engaged in unwholesome thoughts, speech or actions that harm others and ourselves. We create misery, suffering now and in the future as the result of one moment of blind volitional response (*sankhara*). Keeping this in mind, we observe. We observe every sensation, however subtle, in order, methodically, so that none will be omitted. We now instinctively observe our sensations with equanimity. Whether a pleasant experience has arisen in the yogi, or an unpleasant or a neutral one, it ceases, but equanimity remains.

With the heightened awareness of every sensation the yogi begins to observe the true nature of self. No longer is he merely observing the sensations of the external body. His awareness is so great, his mind so developed that he is now aware of the sensations in internal organs and the mind (c*itta*). The Yogi sees through realization that the body we called "self" is made up of ever-changing component parts of name and form. The Yogi observes his mind (*citta*) and sees that there is no separate self, only an ever-changing flux or process. The Yogi achieves Right Understanding as laid out in the Buddha's Noble Eightfold Path.

The yogi is now in perfect harmony with his sensations. Awareness happens so quickly that it becomes almost second nature. He knows when sensation occurs. He is aware of the point at which the process of response begins. He develops both awareness and equanimity at the deepest level. He is now conscious of every sensation and understands that it too will change. He does not respond blindly. He observes with a balanced mind and acts with wisdom, equanimity and compassion instead of reacting. He acts calmly, without letting his responses intensify to craving that leads to clinging and aversion. He observes them at the point of inception and acts with equanimity. This is true wisdom. Instead of giving rise to blind volitional responses

(*sankara*), every sensation now gives rise to wisdom (*panna*). One completes Right View as laid out in the Buddha's Eightfold Noble Path.

When the Yogi has reached this stage of wisdom and awareness he can see and experience the arising and passing away of phenomena and that there is no permanent self. When the Yogi has experienced the truth of *anicca, dukka* and *anatta,* discerned the For Noble Truths, and learned to act with wisdom, compassion and a balanced mind by observing his *citta* he is said to have attained the supreme bliss of Nibbana.

In this paper, for ease of understanding, we have segregated the Buddha's Noble Eightfold Path into *dana (*generosity), *sila (*virtue), *samadh*i (tranquility) *and panna (*wisdom and insight).[22] The Buddha, however, wanted the Yogi to practice all the steps in conjunction with one another. In reality the Yogi would be practicing *dana, sila, samadhi and panna*, daily at all times.

The psychology of both classical Yoga and Buddhism focuses on freedom from worldly suffering through a liberating practice. Virtue, meditation and mental discipline are common to both traditions. The practical means to freedom has eight 'limbs' or 'steps' in each system. Six elements found in Patanjali's Yoga Sutta are present in the Buddha's Noble Eightfold Path. They are: moral behavior, awareness of breath, control of the senses, sexual restraint, meditative absorption, and concentration and tranquility (*samadhi)* as prerequisites for liberating insight into the true nature of things (YS II.28-55 and YS III.1-8).

4. Conclusion

The goal of Buddhist Yoga is freedom from *dukka.* According to the teachings of the Buddha the cause of *dukka* is *tanha*. This paper has linked *tanha* (for sense pleasures, the mistaken identity of a permanent self, and for being) to *avijja* through the Doctrine of Dependent Arising and to *dukka* through the Four Noble Truths. It has also addressed the eradication of *avijja* (which results in all forms of *tanha* and the resulting *dukka)* through the practice of generosity, virtue, tranquility and insight meditation.

[22] Right Speech, Right Action, Right Livelihood (s*ila*); Right Effort, Right Mindfulness, Right Concentration (*samadh*i); Right Understanding, Right View (*panna*); Generosity taken from the graduated method of teaching a*nupubbikatha*.

For us, in our daily life, each time we try to discipline our minds to reduce craving that leads to clinging and aversion through the practice of generosity and virtue we reduce suffering. At this point we are trying to discipline sankhara that cause craving that leads to *loba* and *dosa*, as opposed to the sankhara that cause craving for being and the mistaken identity of a permanent self. The state of Nibbana, however, eradicates all sankhara produced through ignorance. As such the practice of tranquility and insight meditation that is overlaid on a strong foundation of generosity and virtue completes the Noble Eightfold Path, the Buddha's path to Nibbana.

In summary, suffering begins with ignorance of the reality of the true nature; (impermanence) of the phenomenon we call 'I'. Blinded by ignorance, we generate volitional responses that lead to craving, which develops, into attachment that leads to rebirth, greed, hatred, delusion and suffering. The volitional responses arise only because of our ignorance of our true nature. Resulting from this ignorance, the three roots from which suffering arises are greed, hatred and delusion. Nibbana, the destruction of suffering, is then the eradication or the total destruction (and the resulting absence) of greed, hatred and delusion.[23]

Stoler Miller claims that Patanjali's conception of seedless contemplation which leads to freedom (YS I.47-52) is related to the ancient Buddhist view that the source of suffering is the craving for permanence in a universe of impermanence, which encourages a false belief in an enduring individual self. Attachment to life is so powerful that it afflicts even those who intellectually understand the transience of all things - unless they are disciplined in yoga.[24] She continues her argument by saying "In the strictest sense yoga is the absolute detachment of one's spirit from the corruptions of the material world, an interior freedom from the insidious cycles of desire, anger and delusion (*loba, dosa* and *moha*)." Her arguments reinforce the thinking that the Buddhist practice of the Noble Eightfold Path can rightly be classified as a practice of ancient Yoga.

[23] For further details, see Hart (1991)
[24] Stoler Miller Barbara (1998) pp. 4, 9-10

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