

The Life of Prince Siddhartha and the Principal Doctrine of the Buddha

Dr Pushkar Singh, MPhil, PhD (DU)
Former Assistant Professor (DU)
Assistant Registrar
Pondicherry Central University

As Siddhartha, son of Suddhodana, the chief of the Sākya Republic, the Buddha was born and raised in Kapilvatthu. His mother Mahāmāyā gave birth to him in a grove at Lumbini while she was travelling from kapilavatthu to her parents' home¹ and died after seven days after the birth of Siddhartha. The story goes that soon after he was born, an old sage named Asita visited King Suddhodana's palace to see the newborn child. It is said that "*on seeing the marks of greatness on its delicate limbs, Asita laughed and shed tears of sorrow*"² These marks can be related to the 32 marks of a Mahapurusa³. According to the Buddhist tradition, a mahāpurusa can be of two kinds – "*A World Conqueror or World Renouncer.*" But King Suddhodana wanted his son to be an Emperor. He did not want his son to turn his back on the world and hence took great pains to shield him from its sorrows and protect the young prince from worldly suffering. So he brought him up in a highly artificial atmosphere, with three palaces to suit the three seasons, surrounded by luxury and pleasant things. Siddhartha married Yashodhara, and they were blessed with a son named Rahula. The hagiography tells us that when Siddhartha was 29 years old, he saw four things that completely shattered his composure – *An old man, a diseased man, a corpse and an ascetic*". The first three scenes brought home to him the harsh realities and inevitabilities of old age, sickness and death. The fourth pointed out the way of dealing with these inevitabilities. Siddhartha left his home and family; he tore himself away from everyone and rode towards the forest. He wandered in his quest for knowledge for six years, seeking the truth. Siddhartha attached himself to teachers, such as Alāra Kalāma and Udraka Rāmaputra, but was not satisfied by their instruction. Accompanied by five wandering ascetics (Assaji, Mahānāma, Vappa, Bhaddiya and Kondanna), he also practised severe austerities with the belief that the mind became elevated by emaciating the body until he was reduced to a skeleton. However, at the end of six years, he then realized that he must nourish his body and try to attain peace of mind by partaking in food again. His companions misread his intentions and abandoned him, thinking he had compromised his asceticism. A young woman named Sujāta offered him a bowl of milk-rice. Nourished with food, he resolved not to get up until he had attained Enlightenment:

"Skin, sinew and bone may dry up as it will; my flesh and blood may dry in my body; but without attaining complete enlightenment shall I not leave this seat."⁴

The encounter between Gautama and Māra is of much interest and can be interpreted in several ways. Some texts describe his rise to progressively higher and higher states of knowledge through

¹Devadaha is described as Mahamaya's parents home ,P.V.Bapat , 2500 years of Buddhism

²ibid

³The mahapurusha or great men is believed to possess 32 marks of greatness on his body

⁴Mahaniddesa, p.476

meditation. Others describe how a wicked being, Māra, tried to tempt and taunt him out of his meditative state but ended all in vain. The story of the attainment of Enlightenment by the Siddhartha Gautama Buddha is one of the most central themes of the Buddha's life.

The Siddhartha ultimately attained Buddhahood and became known as the Buddha, the enlightened one or the awakened one. Here, it is essential to note that the significance is laid so much on the Enlightenment because it is what made Gautama, the Buddha when he discovered the law of causation or *pattica samuppāda*, which is a cycle of twelve causes and effects conditioning the universe which had not been thought before by anyone.

'Bodhi' means 'wisdom' or 'Enlightenment' of the Buddha, which is the wisdom of attaining supreme knowledge. Bodhi is wisdom that can cease suffering, come off the cycle of life or *samsāra*, and destroy the root of evil such as greed (*lobha*), hatred (*dosa*) and delusion (*moha*). After reaching the Sambodhi, the Buddha becomes *sammā sambuddha*. Before preaching the Dhamma to the world he had acquired, he remained according to the tradition for seven weeks at Uruvela, enjoying the bliss of emancipation.

During the first watch of the night, the Buddha sat cross-legged at the root of the Bodhi tree and filed his mind upon the *Paticcasamuppāda* (Dependent Origination) in directed and reverse order (*Anuloma* and *Patiloma*).

Paticcasamuppāda (Dependent Origination) means that a cause leads to an effect unalterably, and the cause and effect are inseparable. The word '*Paticca*' means a thing that neither originates by itself nor by depending on certain other things as fruition.

***Paticcasamuppāda* in the direct (Anuloma) consists of the following factors, they are:**

- 1&2 *Avijjapaccaya sankhāra* - Dependent on ignorance arise productions
- 3 *Sankharapaccaya viññanam* - Dependent on productions arises consciousness
- 4 *Viññana paccayā Nāma- Rupā* - Dependent on consciousness arise mind and body
- 5 *Nāmārūpāpaccayā saḷāyatana* - Dependent on mind and body arise the six sense bases
- 6 *Saḷāyatana paccayā phassa* - Dependent on Six sense bases arises contact
- 7 *Phassa paccayā Vedanā* - Dependent on contact arises feeling
- 8 *Vedanāpaccayā Taṇhā* - Dependent on feeling arises craving
- 9 *Taṇhāpaccayā Upādāna* - Dependent on craving arises clinging
- 10 *Upādānapaccayā Bhava* - Dependent on clinging arises becoming
- 11 *Bhavapaccayā Jāti* - Dependent on becoming arises birth

12 *Jātipaccayā Jarāmarāṇa* - Dependent on birth arise decay and death

Sokaparidevadukkhadomassupayasa sambhavanti, kevalassa dukkhakkhandssa nirodho hoti - Sorrow, lamentation, pain, grief and despair arise. Thus, arises this whole mass of suffering.

Paticcasamuppāda in reverse dependent origination (Patiloma)

1-2 *Avijjātveva asesavirāganirodha Saṅkhāra nirodho* - By the cessation of ignorance, Saṅkhāra are destroyed

3. *Saṅkhāranirodhā Vinnānanirodho* - By the cessation, the ignorance consciousness is destroyed.

4. *Vinnānanirodhā Nāma-rūpanirodho* - By the cessation of consciousness, mind and body are destroyed.

5. *Nāma-rūpanirodhā Saḷayatananirodho* - By the cessation of Mind and Form, Six sense bases are destroyed.

6. *Saḷāyatananirodhā Phassanirodho* - By the cessation of six senses bases, contact is destroyed.

7. *Phassanirodhā Vedanānirodho* - By the cessation of contact, the feeling is destroyed

8. *Vedanānirodhā Taṇhanirodho* - By the cessation of feeling, craving is destroyed.

9. *Taṇhānirodhā Upādānanirodho* - By the cessation of craving, a clinging is destroyed.

10. *Upādānanirodhā Bhavanirodho* - By the cessation of clinging, becoming is destroyed.

11. *Bhavanirodhā Jātinirodho* - By the cessation of becoming, birth is destroyed.

12. *Jāti nirodhā Jārāmaranasokaparidevadukkadomanassupāyāsa nirujjhanti* - By the cessation of birth, old age and death, grief, lamentation, suffering, sadness and despair are destroyed.

Evametassa kevalassa dukkakkhandhassa nirodho hoti - Such is the cessation of this whole mass of suffering.

Knowing this, the Buddha then, on that occasion, pronounced this solemn utterance:

*"When the real nature of things is revealed,
Brāhmaṇa, who meditated then that its cause,
Has understood the cessation of causation,
He conquers the hosts of Māra,
Like the sun that illuminated the sky."*⁵

Māra means the killer, and in the Buddhist tradition, it stands for 'Tempter-figure'. He is often called 'Māra (the Evil one) (pāpima māro).' He appears in the texts as a real person (i.e., a deity)

⁵Vinaya, Mahavagga, I, 1, 7 (translation by Horner)

and as a personification of evil and passions, the totality of worldly existence, and death.

Later Pāli literature often speaks of a 'fivefold Māra' (pancamāra), namely;

Devaputta Māra (Māra as a deity)

The meaning is as a real person, Māra is regarded as the deity ruling over the highest heaven of the sensuous sphere (Kāmāvacara), that of the *Paranimmitavasavātti-devas*, the 'deities wielding power over the creation of others'.

1. Kilesa – Māra (The Māra as deity)

The meaning is, defilement or passion. There are mind-defiling; thus, they are called so because they are defiled and defile the mental factors associated with them. They are:

Lobha - Greed

Dosa - Hatred

Moha - Delusion

Māna - Conceit

Diṭṭhi - Speculative views

Vicikicchā - Skeptical doubt

Thina - Mental torpor

Udhacca - Restlessness

Ahiraṅka - Shamelessness

Anottappa - Lack of moral dread or unconscientiousness

2. Khandha-Māra (the Māra of the aggregates)

In Buddhist teaching, five Aggregates, 'Khandha' or 'Khandha-Mara', consist of five Khandhas and are concerned with material and immaterial substances. They are as follows:

Rupākhandha - The corporeality

Vedanākhandha - The aggregate of sensations

Sannākhandha - The aggregate of perceptions

Samkhārakhandha - The aggregate of mental formations or volitional activities

Viññāṇakhandha - The aggregate of consciousness

3. Kamma-Māra or Abhisāṅkhāra-Māra

It means the Māra of the Kamma-formations. There are:

Puññābhisāṅkhāra - The formation of merit; meritorious formation

Apunnābhisāṅkhāra - The formation of demerit; de-meritorious formation

Anenjābhisāṅkhāra - The formation of the calm; imperturbability-producing volition

4. Mavu-Māra - Māra as Death

During the life of the Buddha, Māra appeared many times in various forms, which can be depicted as follows:

- i. When the Buddha practiced severe austerities on the bank of Nerajjāra.
- ii. In the fifth week after Enlightenment, three daughters of Māra, namely - Tanhā, āraṭi and Rāgā, appeared.
- iii. Once the Buddha went around seeking alms in a village, owing to the intervention of Māra, the Buddha did not obtain any food.
- iv. Months before Nibbāna of the Buddha, Māra appeared to haunt the mind of Ānanda.

According to the Buddhist tradition, when the Bodhisattva was seated under the Bodhi tree, Māra tried in vain to obstruct his attainment of Enlightenment, first by frightening him through his hosts of demons, etc., and then by his three daughter's allurements. This episode is called Māra's war (Māra-yuddha). For seven days Māra had followed the Buddha, looking for any weakness in him; that is, six years before Enlightenment and one year after it. He also tried to induce the Buddha to pass away into Parinibbāna without proclaiming the Dhamma, and also when the time of the Buddha's Parinibbāna had come, he urged him on but the Buddha acted on his own insight in both the cases.

Thus, it is believed that the Buddha then sat for few weeks at the Bodhi tree, tempted to keep his extraordinary experience and knowledge to himself.

*"This that through my toils I have won,
Enough, why should I make it known?
By folk with lust and hate consumed,
The truth will not be understood."*⁶

According to the Buddhist tradition, the Brahma himself had to implore the enlightened one to go forth and spread his insight to the world. Another account talks of how Mara's daughters try to seduce him with their charms, which Buddha easily overcomes as such attempts were for men who have not yet subdued their feelings but not with him.⁷ Hence, the Buddha gave his first sermon on deliverance from suffering to his five former companions who had left him in despair and had

⁶Vinaya Mahavagga, 1,5,3

⁷Nidanakatha, Kosambi's edition, para 131

settled there in the deer park of Sārnath near Vārānasi. This event of the Buddha is known as dhammacakkapavattan (Turning the wheel of dharma). "Dhammacakka" here means "the wheel of truth" or "the Wheel of righteousness", "Dhamma" means wisdom or knowledge, and "Cakka" means establishment. According to the Mahāvagga belonging to the Vinaya Pitaka, the Buddha preaches the Dhammacakka which is his first sermon to five monks: Kondinya, Vapra, Bhadrīka, Asvajit and Mahanama (*Pancavaggiya Bikkhus: Kondiya, Vappa, Bhaddiya, Asajji, Mahānāma*) at Isipattana, on the full moon day of Asādah. In this discourse, the Buddha preaches the Four Noble Truths, the Noble Eightfold Path, called the Middle Path (*majjhimaṭṭipadā*). The Buddha opens the discourse by advising the monks to avoid the two extremes of sensual indulgence and self-mortification as follows:

These two extremes, O Bhikkhus, should not be followed by one who has gone out from home to live a homeless life.

What are these two extremes?

- *The giving up to the pleasures of sense, which is base, vulgar, wordy, ignoble and profitless.*
- *Giving up on self-mortification is painful, ignoble, and profitless.*

In the King of Samādhi Sutra, the Buddha said:

*Existence and non-existence are extremes,
Purity and impurity are extremes as well,
Thus, having relinquished both extremes,
The wise do not dwell even in the middle.*

The Nāgārjuna explained:

*To say "it is" is a conception of permanence,
To say "it is not" is a view of nihilism,
Therefore, the learned should dwell
In neither existence nor non-existence.*

By avoiding these two extremes, O Bhikkhus, the Tathagata has gained the knowledge of the Middle Path (*Majjhimaṭṭipada*), which leads to insight, knowledge, which leads to peace (*Vupasaṃyasa*), higher wisdom (*abhinna*), Enlightenment (*Sambodhi*) and Nibbāna.

And what, O Bhikkhus, is that Middle Path which is found out by the Tathāgata which leads to insight, to knowledge, which leads to peace, higher wisdom, Enlightenment, and Nibbāna?

It is the Noble Eightfold Path, namely;

Each Factor of the Noble Eightfold Path helps one another to lead to the cessation of suffering, and its meaning is given as follows:

1. ***Sammā Dīṭṭhi (Right Understanding)*** - Right understanding is the understanding of things as they are and are; therefore, it is ultimately reduced to the Four Noble Truths.
2. ***Sammā Sankappo (Right Thought)*** - Right thought denotes selfless renunciation, or detachment, of kindness, of compassion, and the thought of elimination of greed, hatred and violence.
3. ***Sammā Vāca (Right Speech)*** - Right speech means abstaining from false speech, slandering, harsh words, and frivolous talk.
4. ***Sammā Kammanto (Right Action)*** - Right action aims at refraining from stealing, killing and sexual misconduct.
5. ***Sammā Ajīva (Right Livelihood)*** - Right Livelihood means abstaining from making a wrong living that harms others but living by an honourable, blameless profession.
6. ***Sammā Vyayamo (Right effort)*** - Right effort is the energetic will to prevent evil from arising, to get rid of such de-meritorious things that have already arisen, to cause to arise a wholesome state of mind not yet arisen, and to develop the perfect of wholesome.
7. ***Sammā Sati (Right Mindfulness)*** - Right mindfulness means that one contemplates four objects: body, feeling, thought and mind objects.
8. ***Sammā Samādhi (Right Concentration)*** - Right concentration means that one is detached from sensual objects, from unwholesome things. Strictly speaking, it is the state of mind remaining in the four stages of Jñāna (absorption).

The Buddha also gave the Four Noble truths (*Cattāri-ariyassaccāni*):

1. ***Dukkham Ariyasaccam (The noble truth of suffering)*** - The first Noble Truth is suffering of birth, decay, disease, death, association with the undesired thing, separation from the loved thing, not to obtain what we desire. In short, these five aggregates, the objects of grasping, are suffering.
2. ***Dukkhasamudayam Ariyacam (The noble truth of the origin of suffering)*** - It is the craving for sensual pleasure (Kama tanha), the appetite for continued existence (Bhava tanha) and the thirst for non-existence (Vibhava tanha).
3. ***Dukkhanirodam Ariyasaccam (The noble truth of the cessation of suffering)***- It is the complete separation from, the destruction of, the forsaking, the liberation and detachment from, this craving.
4. ***Dukkanirodha Gāmini Patipadā Ariyasaccam (The noble truth of the path leading to the cessation of suffering)*** - It is the Noble Eightfold Path, viz Right Understanding, Right Thought, Right Speech, Right Action, Right Livelihood, Right Effort, Right Mindfulness and Right Concentration.

The Buddha further said:

*The suffering should be fully understood (parinneyya)
The origin of suffering should be eradicated (pahatabba)
The cessation of suffering should be realized (sacchikatabba) and
The path leading to the cessation of suffering should be cultivated (Bhavetabba)*

After finishing the first sermon, out of five ascetics, Kondanna was the first to enlighten the Dharma. Thereupon, the Buddha uttered this solemn saying: '*Kondanna indeed has understood, Kondanna indeed has understood.*' Afterwards, the remaining four disciples soon realized the truth and became Arhats.

Thus, the nature of existence is summarized in one word, Patīccasamuppāda or Dependent Origination by the Buddha. It means there is nothing that is a self-independent entity. Everything is dependent on some cause or condition. One Dhamma comes into existence depending upon some other Dhamma. The doctrine of Patīccasamuppāda is exceedingly essential in Buddhism. It is the casual law of both the universe and the lives of individuals. It is important from two points of view: Firstly, it gives an unmistakable idea of the phenomena' impermanent and conditioned nature. Secondly, it shows how birth, old age, death and all the miseries of phenomenal existence arise in dependence upon conditions and how all the miseries cease in the absence of these conditions.

The twelve links of Dependent Origination explain the fundamental cause of Saṃsāra with the process of Dependent Origination, which is related to the second noble truth, which gives us the cause of suffering, and to the third noble truth, which shows the cessation of suffering. Suffering is Saṃsāra, and cessation of suffering is Nibbana. Buddha has called it Bodhi as well as Dhamma. It has been told by the Buddha that "*whoever understands my dhamma understands my Patīccasamuppāda*".

The ignorance of Dependent Origination is the cause of suffering, and by knowing its cause, suffering can be removed. Sentient beings run the wheel of Saṃsāra, forward and backward, because of their ignorance of the four noble truths. Ignorance causes painful human existence, and ageing and dying are its final effects. It does not end with death; death is only the beginning of a new life. The only way to step off the wheel of Saṃsāra is to break the chain, and it can be destroyed only when its root cause, ignorance, is destroyed. The Buddha had broken the chain of dependent origination; his Nibbāna freed him from rebirth.

The noble Eightfold Path explains how we can get rid of ignorance and gain Nibbāna by describing a middle path between sensual pleasure and self-mortification.

The doctrine of dependent origination is the central teaching of Buddha, and his other teachings can easily be deduced from this. This theory of Kammā and Momentariness is based on this. The theory of causality is also based on it.

However, this doctrine of dependent origination is subject to practice. Avijjā is the first cause of the doctrine of dependent origination. It is from ignorance that the cycle of the world begins. But, in fact, what is the cause of ignorance? This question remains unanswered. It may be because the

Buddha did not consider philosophical questions very important. However, later Buddhist philosophers discussed the cause of ignorance. They admitted it to be related to the Tathāgata because the cause of ignorance can be addressed only after accepting a cosmic reality, as ignorance is one of that cosmic existence.

Another important teaching of the Buddha is Ti-lakkhana, or Three Characteristics by which the Samsara should be known. According to the Buddha, nothing in this world does not come within the realm of that casual law that explains the arising and passing away of things.

The three characteristics are:

- i. **Aniccata (impermanence)**
- ii. **Dukkata (suffering)s**
- iii. **Anattumata (non self or non-substantial)**

Together, these three characteristics make up the foundation of all Buddhist Dhammas.

Anicca (impermanence) – It refers to everything in this world that is impermanent because they are characterized momentary by arising (Uppāda) and passing away (Vaya). Anything that comes into existence has to die one day in such a way that a being that is born grows into a man and then has to die. It can be explained in a way that a seed gives birth to a plant; the plant grows into a tree, and the tree provides fruits which may again give birth to too many trees. This cycle continuously changes and ultimately dies like the waves in the ocean that come and go away again and again continuously. This is the feature of Aniccata.

Dukkha (Suffering) – According to the Buddha, the world's impermanence causes suffering, and as a result, all things are suffering (Dukkha). His first discourse, the Dhammacakkapavattana Sutta, explains this truth about suffering. Dukkha means that which is difficult to endure, and the composite body itself is a cause of suffering. The Buddha also said that Tanha (craving) is the root cause of suffering. People do not understand the fundamental nature of Samsara by believing the Aniccata to be "Nitya" and thus get attached to them. And subsequently, the loss of which gives them pain. Therefore, the suffering will vanish on its own when people realize the true nature of things.

Anatta (Non-self or non-substantiality) – the Buddha gave the idea of non-self, which is considered the theory of Five aggregates or skandha, which are to be combined but are separated finally. They are

- i. *Rupa Skhandha*
- ii. *Vedana Skhandha*
- iii. *Sañña Skhandha*
- iv. *Sankhāra Skhandha*
- v. *Viññana Skhandha*

The Five Aggregates give rise to "nāma-rupa" (Form and name), and because of the wrong idea of the permanence of things, it gives rise to the feeling of "atta" or "self" as people start thinking of themselves as permanent and separate being. After that, the concept of 'I', 'me' and 'mine' is generated, and man starts performing Kamma for the pleasure of this 'self', not knowing that this

'self' is not the actual reality. Their Tanha and karma force them to be born in this samsara again and again, unable to break the cycle of birth and death.

The Buddha said that a person can get freedom from this constant attachment only if he realizes the "Anitya" (Impermanence), "Dukkha" (Suffering) and "Anatta" (Non-self) nature of the things of the world. Knowledge about these characteristics will help a person to "get rid of the attachment" (Upādana), and he will be genuinely free. Thus, is the content of Tilakkhana or the three characteristics.

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