



Buddhism 101 Week 1

Who was the Buddha?

A short presentation of the life of the historical Buddha based on the book, *The Buddha: His Life Retold*, by Robert Allen Mitchell (Paragon, 1989).

What Did The Buddha Teach?

The Three Turnings of The Wheel of Dharma

1. The first turning of the wheel took place in the Deer Park near Varanasi where the Buddha taught the Four Noble Truths
2. The second turning took place on Vulture's Peak and was primarily about the subject of emptiness
3. The third turning deals with the teachings on the inherent buddhanature of all sentient beings

The Four Noble Truths

- The Truth of Suffering
- The Truth of the Origin of Suffering
- The Truth of the Cessation of Suffering
- The Truth of the Path (The Eightfold-Path)
 - Right View (of reality and the path to liberation)
 - Right Aspiration (engaging in the path with certainty and with the motivation of love and compassion)
 - Right Speech (truthful, uplifting, clear)

- Right Action (ethical actions, the five precepts)
- Right Livelihood (procuring our needs ethically and modestly)
- Right Effort (directing our energies to the path)
- Right Mindfulness (fine tuned awareness)
- Right Samadhi (resting in the nature of mind)

**The term “right” can be misleading. These branches of the path have nothing to do with dualistic right and wrong per se. The Tibetan and Sanskrit terms mean something closer to “excellent”, “perfected”, or “complete”.*

Wisdom: The Heart Of The Perfection Of Wisdom Sutra

(Ārya-bhagavatī-prajñāpāramitā-hridaya-sūtra)

Thus did I hear at one time. The Bhagavan was dwelling on Mass of Vultures Mountain in Rajagriha together with a great community of monks and a great community of bodhisattvas. At that time, the Bhagavan was absorbed in the concentration on the categories of phenomena called “Profound Perception.”

Also, at that time, the bodhisattva mahasattva arya Avalokiteshvara looked upon the very practice of the profound perfection of wisdom and beheld those five aggregates also as empty of inherent nature.

Then, through the power of Buddha, the venerable Shariputra said this to the bodhisattva mahasattva arya Avalokiteshvara: “How should any son of the lineage train who wishes to practice the activity of the profound perfection of wisdom?”

He said that and the bodhisattva mahasattva arya Avalokiteshvara said this to the venerable Sharadvatiputra. “Shariputra, any son of the lineage or daughter of the lineage who wishes to practice the activity of the profound perfection of wisdom should look upon it like this, correctly and repeatedly beholding those five aggregates also as empty of inherent nature.

“Form is empty. Emptiness is form. Emptiness is not other than form; form is also not other than emptiness. In the same way, feeling, discrimination, compositional factors, and consciousness are empty.

“Shariputra, likewise, all phenomena are emptiness; without characteristic; unproduced, unceased; stainless, not without stain; not deficient, not fulfilled.

“Shariputra, therefore, in emptiness there is no form, no feeling, no discrimination, no compositional factors, no consciousness; no eye, no ear, no nose, no tongue, no body, no mind; no visual form, no sound, no odor, no taste, no object of touch, and no phenomenon. There is no eye element and so on up to and including no mind element and no mental consciousness element. There is no ignorance, no extinction of ignorance, and so on up to and including no aging and death and no extinction of aging and death. Similarly, there is no suffering, origination, cessation, and path; there is no exalted wisdom, no attainment, and also no non-attainment.

“Shariputra, therefore, because there is no attainment, bodhisattvas rely on and dwell in the perfection of wisdom, the mind without obscuration and without fear. Having completely passed beyond error, they reach the end-point of nirvana. All the buddhas who dwell in the three times

also manifestly, completely awoken to unsurpassable, perfect, complete enlightenment in reliance on the perfection of wisdom.

“Therefore, the mantra of the perfection of wisdom, the mantra of great knowledge, the unsurpassed mantra, the mantra equal to the unequaled, the mantra that thoroughly pacifies all suffering, should be known as truth since it is not false. The mantra of the perfection of wisdom is declared:

TADYATHA [OM] GATE GATE PARAGATE PARASAMGATE BODHI SVAHA

“Shariputra, the bodhisattva mahasattva should train in the profound perfection of wisdom like that.”

Then the Bhagavan arose from that concentration and commended the bodhisattva mahasattva arya Avalokiteshvara saying: “Well said, well said, son of the lineage, it is like that. It is like that; one should practice the profound perfection of wisdom just as you have indicated; even the tathagatas rejoice.”

The Bhagavan having thus spoken, the venerable Sharadvatiputra, the bodhisattva mahasattva arya Avalokiteshvara, those surrounding in their entirety along with the world of gods, humans, asuras, and gandharvas were overjoyed and highly praised that spoken by the Bhagavan.

(This completes the Ārya-bhagavatī-prajñâpâramitâ-hridaya-sûtra)

Compassion-Karaniya Metta Sutta

The wisdom of emptiness is a defining characteristic of Buddhist thought and practice. But equally important are the teachings and trainings in the good, compassionate heart. Without both, the path to true enlightenment is impossible.

Here is a version of the Metta Sutta which is one of the main sutras chanted by Theravadan monks and one of the foundations of the Buddha's teachings on practicing love and compassion for all beings.

Translator's Note:

While the Buddha was staying at Savatthi, a band of monks, having received subjects of meditation from the master, proceeded to a forest to spend the rainy season (vassana). The tree deities inhabiting this forest were worried by their arrival, as they had to descend from tree abodes and dwell on the ground. They hoped, however, the monks would leave soon; but finding that the monks would stay the vassana period of three months, harassed them in diverse ways, during the night with the intention of scaring them away.

Living under such conditions being impossible, the monks went to the Master and informed him of their difficulties. Thereon the Buddha instructed them in the Metta sutta and advised their return equipped with this sutta for their protection.

The monks went back to the forest, and practicing the instruction conveyed, permeated the whole atmosphere with their radiant thoughts of metta or loving-kindness. The deities so affected by this power of love, henceforth allowed them to meditate in peace.

The discourse gets divided into two parts. The first detailing the standard of moral conduct required by one who wishes to attain Purity and Peace, and the second the method of practice of metta.

1. "He who is skilled in (working out his own) well being, and who wishes to attain that state of Calm (Nibbana) should act thus: he should be dexterous, upright, exceedingly upright, obedient, gentle, and humble.

2. "Contented, easily supportable, with but few responsibilities, of simple livelihood, controlled in the senses, prudent, courteous, and not hanker after association with families.

3. "Let him not perform the slightest wrong for which wise men may rebuke him. (Let him think:) 'May all beings be happy and safe. May they have happy minds.'

4.& 5. "Whatever living beings there may be — feeble or strong (or the seekers and the attained) long, stout, or of medium size, short, small, large, those seen or those unseen, those dwelling far or near, those who are born as well as those yet to be born — may all beings have happy minds.

6. "Let him not deceive another nor despise anyone anywhere. In anger or ill will let him not wish another ill.

7. "Just as a mother would protect her only child with her life even so let one cultivate a boundless love towards all beings.

8. "Let him radiate boundless love towards the entire world — above, below, and across — unhindered, without ill will, without enmity.

9. "Standing, walking, sitting or reclining, as long as he is awake, let him develop this mindfulness. This, they say, is 'Noble Living' here.

10. "Not falling into wrong views — being virtuous, endowed with insight, lust in the senses discarded — verily never again will he return to conceive in a womb."