



## SATIPATTHANA MEDITATION SOCIETY OF CANADA

**Without Sila (precepts), Samadhi (mental concentration) and Panna (intuitive wisdom) - Nabbanic Peace (liberation from Dukkha, or total Enlightenment) cannot be attained.**

### **THREE PILLARS OF BUDDHISM - MORALITY, MENTAL CONCENTRATION AND INTUITIVE WISDOM**

By: Sa-yar Myat, April 2 & 9, 2008

Buddhism is an exploration and investigation of Self. We all are curious about self and have been in one form or another throughout human history. This “Self” (soul, ego, entity, being, individual, person) is the central focus of Buddhism, but not in a traditional sense that the majority of the people of the world believe. In Buddhism the theme is of egolessness, impersonality and non-existence of self or soul (Anatta). This concept of Anatta can truly be understood only by direct experience with intuitive wisdom. Insight meditation (Vipassana - Buddha’s contribution to the world) is the essential tool required to attain intuitive wisdom (Panna). This technique has the power to totally eradicate suffering (Dukkha). Whoever practices the Buddha’s teachings as a way of life is considered to be a Buddhist.

The Buddha's teachings are composed of three segments, Sila (morality), Samadhi (mental concentration) and Panna (intuitive wisdom). Sila is the foundation for Samadhi and Panna to build upon. Without the foundation of morality the world would be in chaos and misery. The second pillar is Samadhi, a mental state with no diffusion or dispersion. Panna is the third and final pillar of the Buddha's teachings. Understanding physical and mental phenomenon correctly in its true nature is wisdom. The Buddhist's goal is to attain intuitive wisdom, also called awakened mind or enlightenment.

### **Sila (Morality)**

Morality is not exclusive to Buddhism but can be found in all religions. Sila is precepts. The five precepts for the lay Buddhist are: refraining from killing, stealing, sexual misconduct, lying and taking intoxicants. The Buddha does not lay down these precepts as strict commandments, but as a framework to follow for the welfare of oneself and others. Immorality will bring a chaotic, miserable and disharmonious life. The choice is yours. Sila protects from all gross speech and deeds that can take one to the four woeful states (states of intense and continuous misery).

The speech and deed of immoral people, and the results that are produced, are quite obvious and need no further elaboration. However, a decent person would not normally even think of hurting or harming another person, but under anger, rage and wicked greed they can act out of character. People who observe Sila need to be aware of whenever anger and wicked greed take control over you. At that moment put yourself in the other person's shoes. If you were that person would you want to be hurt or harmed? The obvious answer is "no". In the same manner the other person would not like to be hurt or harmed. Such simple reflection will stop you from doing hurtful and harmful deeds. You are embracing others as if they are yourself, thereby becoming one with others. A sense of

oneness is morality and based on that attitude, and from that point of understanding, one refrains from the breaking of the five precepts.

In Buddhism the meaning of “not killing” extends to all living beings, not only to human beings, as every living being clings to its existence and none want to be harmed or killed. Killing arises out of hatred and ill-will.

Refraining from stealing or robbing means not taking anything that is not willingly given. The taking by stealth, force, extortion, using guilt trip or by any illegal means is caused by wanting more (greed) and to spite or take revenge out of anger. Stealing something, not out of need but to prove that you can, is due to ego and greed.

Sexual behaviour towards a spouse or between two unattached consenting adults is not sexual misconduct, but lustful behaviour towards a married person or a young child (minor) is. It is wicked desire (greed) that makes one commit sexual misconduct. In the case of rape the cause is anger.

Lying (false speech) is committed out of fear, anger, greed and ego. It is used for the purpose of gain (greed) through trickery, or to exaggerate or boast about oneself in order to seem bigger in the eyes of others (ego). Untruthful, spiteful, loud, rude and abusive speech is committed due to anger.

The fifth precept is refraining from taking intoxicants. This refers to any substance that could cloud or unbalance your mind. Some might feel a glass of wine or beer should be considered all right. Look at it this way, some people are quite reserved and controlled, but give them a glass of wine and they open up and become talkative. Automatically their inhibitions drop. One glass can lead to two and then perhaps three and at that moment you do not have a sense of control over your emotional state. Your behaviour changes and you will do

things that you would not normally do. The taking of intoxicants opens you up to the possibilities of breaking the other four precepts. Under the influence of intoxicants you could kill, steal, lie or commit sexual misconduct.

Whenever you are under the influence of greed, anger or ego (delusion) and want to break any of the five precepts, contemplate a sense of oneness with others. Decency will arise again and you will not speak or act in any way that is hurtful or harmful to others, including yourself. Observing Sila, apart from not hurting and harming others, also functions as a tool to counteract or manage anger, greed and ego. Thorough understandings of the causes of breaking the precepts and its consequences will keep one aligned with morality.

The functions of precepts do not end at the point of refraining. Non-killing extends to safeguarding and helping, non-stealing extends to generosity, non-sexual misconduct extends to protecting and guarding those that are vulnerable or ruining others marital relationships, non-lying extends to sincere, truthful, polite and beneficial speech and not taking intoxicants extends to a clear and pure mind. When one refrains and extends the five precepts one is seeing to the welfare and benefit of others with friendliness, this is loving-kindness in action, the deeper meaning of Sila. It is vital in eliminating misery and promoting friendliness and harmony in one's life and those around us.

The five precepts, intended for the layperson's daily life, are a prerequisite (foundation) for meditation. Without this foundation meditation progress or spiritual growth is not possible. Meditators at retreat (continuous meditation for days or weeks or months) observe 8, 9 or 10 precepts. (Nun observes 10 precepts and monk observes 227 rules). When observing the eight precepts they are the same as the original five, with the following additions: sexual misconduct becomes refraining from any form of sexual activity (chastity). Taking no meals after 12 noon until the next dawn (with the exception of clear

liquids). Refrain from any adornment (jewellery, makeup, perfumes). Sila is far superior to any adornment one can put on the skin or body (think of how you perceive someone who is morally upright, generous and kind, compared to someone who is morally corrupt, angry, greedy and deluded). Also refrain from distractions, such as listening to music or dancing. In addition, one does not use luxurious places to sit or sleep. If one takes the tenth precept it includes avoiding handling or using any money.

Observe the precepts to the best of your ability, but should you break a precept you must be fully aware of it. Guilt is not the way to go, but through awareness, understanding and putting more effort the next time. Affirm to yourself daily to refrain from breaking the five precepts.

### **Samadhi (Mental Concentration)**

Why do we meditate? We meditate to contribute happiness and peace to the world, but not to be admired, respected or to appear holy. When one first meditates collectiveness and concentration of mind is achieved, then clarity arises and purity and happiness follow. Purity of mind is the cause and happiness is the effect. With increased degree in purity of mind peace (calm, serene and quiet experience) arises. At this stage one's behaviour becomes the reflection of peace and happiness. You are not wild, aggressive or abusive, but compassionate, loving, caring, kind and calm. Your thoughts, speech and deeds become wholesome and good. It is because concentration is based on the foundation of Sila. Naturally and automatically one uses understanding, harmony and peace as tools to relate to the world around (sphere of influence). This is how meditation contributes peace and happiness to the world. It is an immediate affect that we become peaceful through meditation and it flows into our daily lives and through to the people we come in contact with. Mental concentration can be

achieved either by tranquility or calm or concentration (Samatha) meditation, which can be found in any system or religion, and by insight or mindfulness (Vipassana) meditation, which is exclusive to Buddhism.

### **Panna (Intuitive Wisdom)**

Intuitive wisdom can only be achieved through the practice of Insight (Vipassana) meditation. It is about knowing experientially that all physical and mental phenomena are nothing but transient, dissatisfactory and insubstantial.