

Nirvana and Tranquility

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Good morning! Welcome to International Buddha Dharma Society for Cosmic Law to listen to today's Dharma talk! Today is the last talk of the Three Dharma Seal and we will talk about the third Dharma Seal, Nirvana and Tranquility. In the last two weeks, we talked about impermanence and non-self. The forms, feelings, perceptions, mental formations and consciousness are all impermanent and changing, illusory and so they are the sources of sufferings. There is no Self in these and these are not in the Self. If one is attached to them, sufferings and annoyances would arise. When one realizes this, one would be dispassionate of them and their desires would disappear and so would their annoyances, sufferings, unease, fears and obstacles. And one would be able to be free and return to Nirvana and Tranquility.

Nirvana means the ultimate tranquility. It means one achieves the perfection of wisdom, merits and virtues. Tranquility means that after all the disturbing from annoyances and forcing from all the sufferings stop, one reaches the tranquil state of no birth and death.

The Mahaparinirvana Sutra says, "Nirvana, is the Dharma Nature of all Buddhas."

The Mahaparinirvana Sutra says, "Nirvana means liberation."

The Buddha Dharma is pure and clean, which is Nirvana.

The Buddha Nature is constant, unchanging, bright and free, which is Nirvana.

In the Aguma Sutra, Nirvana is described as being permanent, tranquil, cool, freshing, peaceful and happy.

The Mahaparinirvana Sutra concludes the characteristics of Nirvana as being eternal, happy, self and pure, which is the opposite of impermanence, non-self, sufferings and filth. Today, we will read some parts of the Mahaparinirvana Sutra in Vol.39.

In this Vol., the Buddha spoke to Venerable Kaundinya about how to observe the five skandhas and extinguish them to obtain liberation. After hearing what the Buddha said, some Brahmins were not happy and they went to see the King

Ajatashatru and wanted the King to help them to drive the Buddha out of their country. Though the King did not agree with what they said about the Buddha, he came to see the Buddha with the Brahmins and the Buddha started to answer questions from the Brahmins. After listening to the Buddha's teachings, the Brahmins understood Nirvana quickly. They willingly became the Buddha's disciples and obtained Arhatship quickly. We will listen to some of the dialogues between the Buddha and the Brahmins.

The Buddha Spoke to Kaundinya:

Then the World-Honoured One spoke to Kaundinya: "Material form is non-eternal. By doing away with this form, one arrives at the Eternal form of Emancipation. So, does it obtain with feeling, perception, volition, and consciousness, too. By doing away with consciousness, one arrives at the Eternal form of Emancipation and Peace. This also pertains to feeling, perception, volition, and consciousness."

"O Kaundinya! Form is Void. By doing away with the form that is All-Void, one arrives at the Non-Void form of Emancipation. So, does it obtain also with feeling, perception, volition, and consciousness."

"O Kaundinya! Material form is non-Self. By doing away with such form, one arrives at the form of the True Self of Emancipation. Feeling is non-Self. By doing away with such feeling, one arrives at the feeling of the True Self of Emancipation. Perception is non-Self. By doing away with such perception, one arrives at the perception of the True Self of Emancipation. Volition is non-Self. By doing away with such volition, one arrives at the volition of the True Self of Emancipation. Consciousness is non-Self. By doing away with such consciousness, one arrives at the consciousness of the True Self of Emancipation."

"O Kaundinya! Form is the non-Pure. By doing away with this form, one arrives at the Pure Form of Emancipation. So, does it obtain also with feeling, perception, volition, and consciousness. "

"O Kaundinya! Form is what represents birth, old age, illness, and death. By doing away with such form, one arrives at the form of the non-birth, non-old-age, non-illness, and non-death form of Emancipation. So, does it also obtain with feeling, perception, volition, and consciousness. "

"O Kaundinya! Form is the cause of ignorance. By doing away with such form, one arrives at the form of the non-cause of ignorance of Emancipation. So, does it also obtain with feeling, perception, volition, and consciousness. "

"O Kaundinya! Or form is the cause of birth even. By doing away with such form, one arrives at the form of the non-birth cause of Emancipation. So, does it also obtain with feeling, perception, volition, and consciousness. "

“O Kaundinya! Form is the cause of the four inversions. By doing away with inverted form, one arrives at the form of the four non-inverted causes of Emancipation. So, does it also obtain with feeling, perception, volition, and consciousness. ”

“O Kaundinya! Physical form is the cause of innumerable evil things. It is the carnal body of the male, etc. It is the love of the food of lust. It is greed, anger, and jealousy. It is an evil and a grudging mind. It is ordinary food [i.e. food that has flavour, taste, and touch, and which can be cut and eaten], consciousness food [i.e. consciousness serving as food. For example, the mental power that at times checks one’s sense of hunger], thought food [i.e. the power of thinking, or the volitional power], and touch food [i.e. the emotional sense that at times serves to check one’s sense of hunger]. There is egg-birth, embryo-birth, and transformed birth. There are the five desires and the five overshadowings. All of these are grounded on material form. "By doing away with form, one arrives at the form of Emancipation, which does not contain any such evil things. It is the same with feeling, perception, volition, and consciousness. ”

“O Kaundinya! Form is bondage. By doing away with the form of bondage, one arrives at the form of Emancipation, which is no bondage. It is the same with feeling, perception, volition, and consciousness. ”

“O Kaundinya! Form is a stream. By doing away with the form which is a stream, one arrives at the form of Emancipation, which is not a stream. So is it also with feeling, perception, volition, and consciousness.

"O Kaundinya! Form is non-taking-of-refuge. By doing away with form, one arrives at the form of Emancipation, which is the taking of refuge. The same also applies to feeling, perception, volition, and consciousness. ”

“O Kaundinya! Form is the pox and warts. By doing away with form, one arrives at Emancipation, which is not the pox or warts. The same applies to feeling, perception, volition, and consciousness, too. ”

“O Kaundinya! Form is non-quietude. By doing away with this form, one arrives at the form of quietude of Nirvana, which is quiet. So, does it also obtain with feeling, perception, volition, and consciousness. ”

“O Kaundinya! If there is any person who can so know things, such a person is a sramana or a Brahmin, and such a one is perfect in the Dharma of the sramana or Brahmin. “

“O Kaundinya! If one parts from Buddha-Dharma, then one is no sramana or Brahmin; nor is there any Dharma of the sramana or Brahmin. All tirthikas speak falsely and cheat. And there is no action that is true [with them]. Also, they pretend to say that there are such two. But this is not true. Why not? If there is no Dharma of the sramana or Brahmin, how can one say that here is a sramana or

Brahmin? I always give a lion's roar amidst the congregation. You, too, should do the same amidst this congregation."

The Dialogue between the Buddha and Vasistha

Also, there was a Brahmacarin called Vasistha, who said: "O Gautama! Is the Nirvana you speak of eternal?"

"It is so, O Brahmacarin!"

Vasistha said: "O Gautama! When there is no defilement, do you not call this Nirvana?"

"It is thus, O Brahmacarin!"

Vasistha said: "There are four instances where we say 'not-is'. These are: 1) a thing which has not yet come about. This is a not-is. This is as in the case of a pot when it has not yet come out of the mud. And we say that there is no pot; 2) whatever has gone is called 'not-is'. This is as in the case of a broken pot. At such a time, we say that there is no pot; 3) whatever does not exist in things that are different in nature, when we say is-not, as in the case of a cow, in which there is nothing of a horse, and in that of a horse, in which there is no cow; 4) when nothing exists in any circumstances whatsoever, as in the case of the hair of a tortoise or the horns of a hare. "

"O good man! If Nirvana is that which is when defilement is done away with, Nirvana is a 'not-is'. "

"If so, how can we say that there are the Eternal, Bliss, the Self, and the Pure?"

The Buddha said: "O good man! Nirvana as such is not like a pot that did not exist when as yet in the mud. Also, it is not like the 'not-is' of extinction, or the not-is of a pot that is broken. Also, it is not the not-is if the absolute not-is, as in the case of the hair of a tortoise or the horns of a hare; nor is it the not-is of that which is different by nature. "

"O good man! You can say that there is no horse in a cow. But you cannot say: 'There is no cow.' "

There is no cow in a horse, but you cannot say: 'There is no horse.' So, does it also obtain with Nirvana. There is no Nirvana in defilement, and no defilement in Nirvana. So, we say that different things do not mutually possess each other."

Vasistha said: "O Gautama! If you say that Nirvana is what does not exist in what is other, this will entail your saying that the Eternal, Bliss, Self, and the Pure do not exist in the noneness of a different thing. O Gautama! How can you say that there are the Eternal, Bliss, the Self, and the Pure?"

The Buddha said: "There are three nonenesses in what you say. The case of the cow and the horse is what was not before, but what is. This is what was not before. What was, but what is not [any longer], is what comes about when a thing breaks up. The not-is by way of difference is as you say."

"O good man! We do not find these three kinds of not-is in Nirvana. Therefore, Nirvana is the Eternal, Bliss, Self, and the Pure. This is as with one who is ill, [where there is either]: 1) fever, 2) illness

from wind, or 3) cold. These can well be cured by the three kinds of medicine. A person suffering from fever can be well cured by butter; one suffering from wind can be cured by oil; and a person who is suffering from a cold can indeed be cured by honey. These three kinds of medicine can indeed cure the three kinds of evil illnesses."

"O good man! In wind, there is no oil, and in oil no wind; or in honey, there is no cold, and in the cold, there is no honey. Therefore, a cure indeed results. It is the same with all beings, too. They have three illnesses, which are: 1) greed, 2) ill-will, and 3) ignorance. Three kinds of medicine will cure these three illnesses. Meditation upon impurity will act as a medicine against desire; meditation on loving-kindness will act as medicine against ill-will; meditation on the knowledge of causal relations will act against ignorance. "

"O good man! In order to make away with desire, one meditates on non-desire; to make away with ill-will, the meditation upon non-ill-will is performed; to make away with ignorance, one meditates on non-ignorance. In the three illnesses we do not have the three kinds of medicine, and in the three kinds of medicine we do not have the three kinds of illness."

"O good man! As there are not the three kinds of medicine in the three kinds of illness, this is the non-eternal, non-Self, non-bliss, and non-pure. In the three kinds of medicine there are not the three types of illness. Hence, the Eternal, Bliss, the Self, and the Pure."

Vasistha said: "O World-Honoured One! You, the Tathagata, explain to me about the eternal and the non-eternal. What is the eternal, and what is the non-eternal?"

The Buddha said: "O good man! Form is non-eternal, and emancipation from form is the Eternal. And consciousness is non-eternal, and emancipation from consciousness is the Eternal. O good man! If there is any good man or woman who can well see that form down to consciousness are non-eternal, know that such a person can well attain what is Eternal."

Vasistha said: "O World-Honoured One! I have now truly come to know the Eternal and the non-eternal."

The Buddha said: "O good man! How do you know the Eternal and the non-eternal?" Vasistha said: "I now know that self and form are non-eternal and that Emancipation is Eternal. So is it with [the skandhas] down to consciousness."

"O good man! You now well repay to this carnal body what you owe."

To Kaundinya, he said: "This Vasistha has now attained the fruition of arhatship. Give him the three clothes [robes] and a bowl."

Then Kaundinya gave the clothes as instructed by the Buddha. Then, on receiving the robes and bowl, Vasistha said: "O Kaundinya, greatly virtuous one! I have now gained upon this carnal body of mine a great karmic reward. Please, O greatly virtuous one, condescend to go to the Buddha and report in detail what has transpired with me. This evil body of mine has touched and defiled the

Tathagata and now adopts his family name of Gautama. Please report on my behalf and say that I now repent of my evil self. I, also, cannot have this body of mine long in life. I shall now enter Nirvana."

Then Kaundinya went to the Buddha and said: "O World-Honoured One! The bhiksu Vasistha repents and says: "Obstinate fool that I was, I touched the body of the Tathagata and am now one of his group. I cannot have this viperous body of mine staying long in the world." He now desires to make away with this body and comes to me and repents."

The Buddha said: "O Kaundinya! Vasistha has long amassed virtue at the places of innumerable Buddhas. Having now been taught by me, he is rightly abiding in the Way. Abiding rightly in the Way, he has arrived at the right fruition. You should make offerings to his carnal self."

Kaundinya, thus directed by the Buddha, went to where the person lived and made offerings. Then, Vasistha, at the time of his cremation, performed many a divine miracle. All the tirthikas saw this and said aloud: "This Vasistha has acquired sorcery at the place of Sramana Gautama."

The Dialogue between the Buddha and Kasyapa

Among the tirthikas, there was a Brahmacarin by the name of Kasyapa. He also said: "O Gautama! Is the body life? Or are body and life different things?"

The Tathagata said nothing. So, he asked a second and a third time.

The Brahmacarin again said: "O Gautama! A man dies and does not yet gain his next body. In this in-between 2 Alternative rendering, do we not say that the body is different and the life is different? If they are different, why do you sit silently and not reply?"

"O good man! Body and life both arise from causal relations. I say that nothing comes about without causal relations. As with the body and life, so does it proceed with all things."

The Brahmacarin further said: "O Gautama! I see things in the world that do not proceed in accordance with causal relations."

The Buddha said: "O Brahmacarin! In what way do you see things that do not proceed in accordance with causal relations?"

The Brahmacarin said: "I see trees being burnt. The wind blows out the flakes [cinders, sparks] of fire, which fall in different places. Is this not what has nothing to do with causal relations?"

The Buddha said: "O good man! I say that this fire, too, comes about from causal relations. It is not the case that it does not accord with any cause."

The Brahmacarin said: "O Gautama! When the fire flakes go, these do not depend upon fuel or charcoal. So how can we say that these are dependent on causal relations?"

The Buddha said: "O good man! Though there is no fuel or charcoal, the wind drives the fire flakes away. Through the causal factor of the wind, the fire does not die out."

"O Gautama! A man dies, but does not yet gain his next body. How can we call the life that exists in between one of causal relations?"

The Buddha said: "O Brahmacarin! Ignorance and craving are the causal relations. Through the causal relations of ignorance and craving, life is able to be sustained. O good man! Through causal relations, the body can be life, and life the body. Through causal relations, the body is different, and life different. A wise person should not say that the body and life are different all through."

The Brahmacarin said: "O World-Honoured One! Please condescend to analyze and explain to me clearly, so that I will truly be able to understand causal relations."

The Buddha said: "O Brahmacarin! The cause is the five skandhas and the result too is the five skandhas. The fire not started, there cannot be any smoke."

The Brahmacarin said: "O World-Honoured One! I now know and I now have understood." "O good man! In what way have you come to know and in what way have you understood?" "O World-Honoured One! Fire is the defilement, which truly burns in the realms of hell, hungry pretas, animals, humans and the gods. The smoke is the karmic results which a person harvests, which are non-eternal, non-pure and which emit a bad smell and are defiled and to be despised. Hence, "smoke". If beings do not perform any defilement, there cannot be any karmic result of defilement. That is why the Tathagata says that where there is no fire, there is no smoke. O World-Honoured One! I now see correctly. What I wish for is that you will now allow me to renounce the world?"

Then the World-Honoured One said to Kaundinya: "Admit this Brahmacarin and allow him to receive the precepts." By order of the Buddha, he reported the matter to all the members of the Sangha and had him take the upasampada. After five days, the man attained arhatship.

The Dialogue between the Buddha and Purana

Among the tirthikas, there was a Brahmacarin by the name of Purana. He said: "O Gautama! Have you seen the fact that the world is eternal and do you say that it is eternal? Is what is said true or not true? Is it eternal, non-eternal, or eternal and non-eternal, or non-eternal and not non-eternal? Is it something that has a boundary line, is it without a boundary line, is it with and without a boundary line, or is it something which does not have a boundary line or something that has no boundary line? Are the body and life one, or are body and life different? Or after the death of the Tathagata, are you one who has gone, or are you one who is gone and not gone, or one who is not one gone and not one who is not gone?"

The Buddha said: "O Purana! I never say that the world where we live is eternal, falsely made, or real; that it is non-eternal, eternal and non-eternal, or non-eternal and not non-eternal; that it has or has not a boundary line, that it is not one that has a boundary line and one that is not one that has not a boundary line; that this is the body, this is life, that the body and life are different, that after the Tathagata's death, he is one gone, one not gone, one gone and not gone, or that he is not one gone, nor one not gone."

Purana questioned further: "O Gautama! What wrong do you see in this, that you do not say?"

The Buddha said: "O Purana! If any person should say that the world is eternal, and this is real, and that all others are false, this is what is wrongly seen. What this wrong seeing sees is the action of wrong seeing, and this is the karma of wrong seeing, and this is the clinging of wrong seeing, and this is the bondage of wrong seeing, and this is the suffering of wrong seeing, and this is the cleaving of wrong seeing, and this is the fear of wrong seeing, and this is the heat of wrong seeing, and this is the bondage of wrong seeing. O Purana! Common mortals cling to what is wrongly seen, and cannot do away with birth, old age, illness, and death. Repeating lives in the six realms, they suffer from innumerable sorrows. And the same applies to what obtains regarding matters extending to not-gone or not not-gone, also. O Purana! I see in this wrong seeing such a lapse. So, I do not cling, and so I do not speak about it to other persons."

"O Gautama! If you see such a lapse, do not cling to it and do not speak about it, O Gautama, what do you now see, cling to, and speak about?"

The Buddha said: "O good man! Now, the clinging of wrong seeing is the dharma of life and death. As the Tathagata has done away with life and death, he does not cling. O good man! The Tathagata is one who well sees and who well speaks. But he is not one who clings."

"O Gautama! In what way do you well see and well speak?"

"O good man! "I well see suffering, the cause of suffering, the extinction, and the Way to the extinction of suffering, and discriminate and speak about four such Truths. I see thus. So, I segregate myself from all wrong seeings, all cravings, all streams and arrogances. That is why I am garbed in pure actions, unsurpassed quietude, and the Eternal Body. And this Body also has no east, no west, no south, and no north."

Purana said: "O Gautama! Why does the Eternal body have no east, no west, no south, and no north?"

The Buddha said: "O good man! I shall now put a question to you. Answer as you will. Why? It is like making a big fire before you. When it burns, do you know whether or not it is burning?"

"That is right. O Gautama!"

"When the fire dies, do you know it or not?"

"It is thus, it is thus, O Gautama!"

"O Purana! When people ask: "From where does the burning come and where does it go to?", how would you reply?"

"O Gautama! If there were anyone who were to ask this, I should reply: "This fire starts up from various causal relations. When the original causal relation ends and the new causal relation has not yet come about, the fire dies." "If again there is a person who asks: "When extinguished, where does it go to?", how would you answer?"

"O Gautama! I should answer: "When the causal relations end, it dies. It does not have any direction to turn to."

"O good man! It is the same with the Tathagata, too. If there is any non-eternal form down to non-eternal consciousness, there is burning, because it is based on craving. "Burning" means receiving the 25 existences. Thus, one can well say, when it burns, this fire has an easterly, westerly, southerly, or northerly direction. If craving now dies out, the fire of the karmic results of the 25 existences also ceases to burn. When it does not burn, we cannot say that there are the directions of east, west, south, or north. O good man! The Tathagata has already extinguished the cause of non-eternal form and non-eternal consciousness. Hence, his Body is Eternal. His Body being Eternal, we cannot speak of east, west, south, or north."

Purana said: "I wish to make an analogy. Please condescend to give ear to it."

The Buddha said: "Well said, well said! Speak as you will!"

"O World-Honoured One! For example, outside a big village, there is a sal forest. There is a tree in it. Before the forest came into being, it was born, and 100 years passed. The owner of the forest gave water to it and spent timely care upon it. The tree is old and rotten, and the bark, branches and leaves all drop off. What there is is quietude and truth. It is the same with the Tathagata. All that is old is gone; what there is is what is true. O World-Honoured One! I now very much desire to renounce the world and practice the Way."

The Buddha said: "Welcome, O bhiksu!" When the Buddha had said this, Purana at once entered the Path and, defilement gone, attained arhatship.

The Dialogue between the Buddha and Brahmacharin "Pure"

Also, there was a Brahmacharin by the name of "Pure", who said: "O Gautama! What do all beings not know as a result of which they do not see the eternal and non-eternal of the world, and also the eternal-non-eternal, not eternal and not non-eternal, down to not-gone and not not-gone?"

The Buddha said: "O good man! Not knowing material form down to not knowing consciousness, a person does not see the eternal, down to the not-gone and not not-gone of the world."

The Brahmacarin said: "O Gautama! What do beings know, so that they do not see the eternal of the world, down to the not-gone and not not-gone?"

The Buddha said: "O good man! They know material form down to consciousness, so that they do not see the eternal, down to the not-gone and the not not-gone."

The Brahmacarin said: "O World-Honoured One! Please condescend to expound to me the eternal and the non-eternal of the world."

The Buddha said: "O good man! If one casts away the old, and does not create new karma, one truly knows the eternal and the non-eternal."

The Brahmacarin said: "O World-Honoured One! I now know."

The Buddha said: "O good man! In what way do you see and know?"

"O World-Honoured One! What is old is ignorance and craving, and the new is cleaving and existence. If one segregates one's self from the eternal and the noneternal and has no more cleaving and existence, one will know the true nature of the eternal and the non-eternal. I have now acquired the pure eye of Wonderful Dharma, and I take refuge in the Three Treasures. O Tathagata! Admit me into the Order!"

The Buddha said to Kaundinya: "Admit this Brahmacarin into the Order and let him receive sila." At these words of the Buddha's, Kaundinya took the man and went to the gathering of monks, and through the ritualistic procedure of karman, the man was admitted into the Order. After 15 days, all his defilements having been eternally extirpated, the man attained arhatship.

Amitabha! That's all for today and we have finished our Three Dharma Seal talks. Wish everyone cultivate diligently, realize that all conditioned phenomena are impermanent and there is no Self in all dharmas. Wish all return to the pure self-nature, cut off all annoyances, eradicate all sufferings and enter Nirvana! Thank you! Our subject for next month is the Four Noble Truth. See you next week!