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BUDDHIST CONCEPT OF SADDHĀ (FAITH)

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Abstract:-Saddhā 'faith' is a key element playing prominent role in Buddha's teachings. The Buddha clearly asserted that in realm of his Dhamma and Vinaya, any kind of development- mundane or supra-mundane-cannot be achieved without faith as its foundation. It is made clearly regarding Saddhā "faith" in many suttas that Saddhā is a seed to success in this dhamma and Vinaya. Of many suttas, Āḷāvaka of Suttanipata also states that "Saddhā is the treasure of men; the whirlpool of this suffering could be over-crossed by faith".

Keywords: Buddhist , Saddhā , Dhamma and Vinaya , key element .

INTRODUCTION

In every religion, there uses "faith" to describe their belief in something or someone to which people refer as their guide or leader or God. In Buddhism faith is also used as a most important fundamental element in order to go further in religious achievement. But Buddhism doesn't demand blind faith; but rather faith with right understanding (Sammādi||hi). Besides, for personal liberation, Buddhism doesn't depend only on faith in spite of its importance in the process.

The Pali term "Saddha" is in general defined in English as "faith", conviction or confidence and belief. Grammatically definition of the term could be a bit complicated for who lack of Pali knowledge. Saddha grammatically means "Clearing" or making its associated dhammas clear in obtained objects.

Faith meant by Buddhism, is called something to believe in the five kinds of object, the Buddha, the Dhamma, the Sangha and Kamma and its results. Therefore, it is to note that Saddha can be called- Ratanattaya Saddha and Kammaphala Saddha. Radanattaya Saddha is faith to believe in the three Gems- the Buddha, the Dhamma and the Sangha (monks). Kammaphala Saddha, is faith to believe in the two kinds of kamma and its results .

The characteristic of Saddha is belief and clarity of mind . It is a belief with reasoning knowledge. It is a belief in five places- Buddha, Dhamma, Sangha, Kamma and its results. It is clarity of mind because one in whom Saddha is arising has clarified mind in the five places above. It means that his mind is free from defilements as long as Saddha is sustained.

In this context, the way of belief is not belief in the ascetic teachers such Puranakassapa, Makkhaligosala, etc, who hold the wrong views of Akiriyavada. Having belief that there are neither good deeds nor bad deeds and there neither is any result of good or bad deeds:

Ahetukavada- Having belief in the view that there is no cause of good or bad deeds, Ucchedavada- Having belief in the view that there is no next life after one's death . Without having such kind of faith, one's deep conviction in belief that it is the real thing takes refuge in the Buddha, the Dhamma and the Sangha.

Faith has the quality of clearing doubt in mind. When one's clear mind of faith arises in him, his mind can be detached from hindrances, when his mind is detached from hindrances, there is the appearance of one's clear mind of conviction, it will become pure having no unclear condition of mind. A man of Yogavacara with his clear mind makes his donation, observes his morality, observes the Uposatha precepts, practises the insight meditation. In this way, the conviction, Saddha or faith has the nature of sampasadanalakkhana; the nature of clear condition of one's mind.

For example, just as a universal monarch (Cakkavatti) when on a long march with army in its fourfold array, might cross over a small stretch of water, and the water disturbed by the elephants and cavalry, the chariots and foot-soldiers, might become fouled. When array had done the crossing, the universal monarch might give command to his attendants, saying; "Bring some water my good men. I would fain drink". Now suppose the universal monarch had a water-clearing gem, and those men saying in response, "very good your Majesty", they immerse the water clearing gem in that stretch of water, then at once the aquatic plants, big, small or brown would disappear, the mud and mire would sediment, and the water would become

transparent, immaculately clean and unsoiled, and they would then bring some of it and offer it to the monarch saying, "Here, O your majesty, is water for you to drink".

In this simile, the water should be taken to mean the mind, these attendants should be taken to mean the meditating disciples or those who practice Mind Development, the aquatic plant, big, small, should be taken to mean the defilements (Kilesa) and the water-clearing gem should be taken to mean the Element of faith. Just as, at the moment of immersing the water-clearing gem in that stretch of water, the aquatic plants, big, small or brown, disappear and the mud and mire sediments (to the bottom) and the water become transparent, immaculately clean and unsoiled, even so, O king, faith has the characteristic mark or nature of tending to purify.

Types of Saddha

Saddha may be classified into various types based on grammatical explanation to the word. But here the well-known types used are intended to be explained under this section. There are;

1. Pasada Saddha,
2. Okappana Saddha and
3. Adhigama Saddha.

1. Pasada Saddha

This kind of faith is faith in appearance because it lays its foundation in the senses of things such as the Three Gems because the Buddha, the Dhamma, and the Saṅgha are recognized as being worthy of reverence. It is based upon a superficial high regard for the Three Gems and not on a deep conviction, so it is not stable.

Faith through belief is belief through repeating the Triple Gem- the Buddha, Dhamma and Sangha. Ledi Sayadaw explains that this means a superficial high regard and not a deep conviction. Therefore, it is not a firm type of faith. The sub-commentary mentions Maha-Kappina as an example, though his faith was very strong. He was a king at the time of the Buddha. He sent out four riders to see if the Triple Gem had appeared in the world. Eventually, traders came to his city from Savatthi and informed him that the Triple Gem had indeed appeared. He immediately set out with a thousand courtiers to find the Buddha and ordain.

2. Okappana Saddha

The faith in the noble attributes of the Buddha, the Dhamma, and the Saṅgha, is called "Okappana Saddha". It comes out of conviction and it endures for a lifetime, but after one's death it vanishes from one's consciousness.

Established confidence is a believing after having settled on and having put one's trust in the Triple Gem. Ledi Sayadaw defines this as faith which is inspired by the noble attributes of the Triple Gem. It is firm and lasts for one's whole life. After death, however, it vanishes from one's consciousness.

The commentary says that both these types of confidence can be understood in two ways--as being very strong or as leading to more superficial actions. In the second case, one carries out the duties towards a pagoda terrace and Bodhi-tree terrace (such as sweeping), and with regard to a bhikkhu, he carries out all the duties towards his preceptor and teacher.

A stronger faith, the commentary says, is found in the case of Vakkali. He was so devoted to the Buddha that he wished to be with him all the time. So much so, the Buddha had to reprove him, saying that seeing a mere physical body is of no importance. Seeing the Dhamma is the important thing. "He who sees the Dhamma, sees me," the Buddha told Vakkali. Venerable Buddhaghosa mentions Vakkali as an example of someone whose confidence needed to bring into balance as it was too strong.

This is faith or confidence developed in bodhisattas. After receiving recognition and assurance of future Buddhahood, a bodhisatta has unwavering confidence in the Three Gems, which implies an abiding confidence in the merit of good deeds. Faith in one's own destiny is the confidence of one who is bent on attaining Awakening and becoming an omniscient Buddha who teaches the Path to others. The excellence of the Great Bodhisatta is unlimited. He cannot be shaken and has firm determination. His confidence, therefore, is stronger than for those who are preparing either for self-awakening without teaching, as in the case of Pacceka Bodhisattas, or for attaining Awakening as the disciple of a Teaching Buddha, as in the case of Savaka Bodhisattas. Ledi Sayadaw points out that after receiving a sure prediction for becoming a Teaching Buddha from a Buddha, the Great Bodhisatta has unwavering faith in the Triple Gem. This means that he never doubts that merit comes through doing good deeds.

3. Adhigama Saddha

The faith of this kind is developed in the Noble One (Arahanta) who, having won the fruits of path knowledge, has realized Nibbana. Faith developed through attainment is the faith of Noble individuals, those who have attained the fruition states of the four stages of Awakening. The sub-commentary mentions the layman Cula-Ambattha as an example of this kind of

confidence. He is mentioned by the Buddha as foremost among the laymen in his absolute belief. He was a follower of the heretics, but after hearing a discourse by the Buddha, he attained the first stage of Awakening (Sotapanna). Afterwards, Mara, disguised as the Buddha, came to tell him that he had changed his mind. Although he had said that all volitional actions are impermanent, he now thought that only some were impermanent. Cula-Ambattha, through the confidence he acquired on attaining the first Path, saw through the disguise and drove Mara away.

Of these four types, the last type of faith is said to be relatively inferior faith occurring in surface level. But even this faith is difficult to develop in one who never meets noble persons and never hears noble dhamma.

Many who are born in Buddhist countries do not have even this kind of confidence. One who has the second kind of confidence can revere a bhikkhu whose conduct is far from being correct, knowing the nine attributes of the Ariya Saṅgha to which a bhikkhu belongs. One endowed with Āgama Saddha cannot refrain from doing some sort of perfect merit even for a day.

The Noble Ones, who have won attainments in the path knowledge, are endowed with a faith that is a great attainment (adhigama). They have an abiding faith in the Three Gems, the upkeep of the five precepts, the performance of the ten kinds of meritorious deeds, and the practice of the thirty-seven factors of enlightenment.

The importance of faith in Buddhism

Buddhism sees faith as a pivotal factor and an initial step in one's spiritual journey to his own liberation. This initial faith, called "Saddha", means a permanent acceptance of the Buddha as the competent Teacher, The Dhamma as the perfect teaching and the Sangha as the ideal living examples. But this initial stage is not totally blind faith in the Triple Gem. Because of this initial faith one does not surrender oneself to the Triple Gems. But one desires to conduct oneself to the Triple Gems.

Saddha plays very important role in Buddhism. It is set to be the foundation of all kinds of achievement in His Dhamma-Vinaya. It is so because without faith, the further succeeding factors could not come to action. This point is clearly made in the Kitagiri sutta of Saṅgīyutta nikaya.

And further faith is sometimes likened to the seed in Buddhism. "Saddha" is an indispensable factor governing all spiritual growth; it is called the seed from which is born the tree that bears the fruit of deliverance. Five factors of spiritual powers and spiritual faculties; Saddha (faith), Viriya (energy), sati (mindfulness), Samadhi (concentration), Pañña (intuitive wisdom), the primary factor is "Saddha". It, if accurately cultivated, conditions the development of the rest.

"Saddha" is indispensable to uproot the root of defilements. Hence, only will one who has faith, perform good deeds, it can wash the defilement to purity and it can lead to attainment of the Ariya Magga (noble supermundane path). So, in the Udana Aṅgīhakatha, faith is likened to the water and it is stated thus:-

The dirty clothes are washed with the water; they can be cleansed better by washing with the soap, soap powder, etc. So, for cleaning dirty clothes, there must be present the perfect things like water, soap, etc, and then only the dirty clothes can be cleansed and can become even brighter than they originally were.

Similarly, one's mind smeared with the defilements of lust etc. will have to be washed with the water of conviction in order to be pure. The conviction like water, makes the mind wet. The fault of anger is lessened with sati (mindfulness), Samadhi (concentration) and Pañña (wisdom or knowledge). Then one must strive to gain the final purity of the mind with the support of conviction etc. If one do so, he will attain the end of his life with mind of magga (supra-mundane path) detached from defilements. So, in doing so, one must have the complete mind of conviction, mindfulness, concentration and wisdom. Thus, the mind smeared with defilements lust, etc. surely gains its purity and it also obtains Ariya magga ñāṇa (a noble supra-mundane path knowledge).

CONCLUSION

When Saddha is translated as belief, it is also not to be meant as a dogmatic belief. As stated in several suttas, dogmatic belief can definitely be dangerous to the spiritual path. Yet, this lack of a dogmatic perspective does not lessen the importance of the term Saddha in the Pali Canon. In the Dantabhumi sutta the Buddha represents the possibility of realizing the end of suffering through a process of letting go, i.e. renunciation. Therefore it is a matter of faith in the Buddha, a faith that is not a blind belief, but a trust, a confidence in the Buddha and his teachings. In the Suttas, the existence of the Buddha proves the effectiveness of the path to freedom. In a way, the word Saddha implies not only this confidence, but all the factors of the path, that are strictly interconnected.

Regarding the faith, most people due to their ignorance do not know well whether the faith they have is genuine or fake. Mostly people are ignorant of this point. Therefore in this regard, the question may be raised as to how to know the faith one has is genuine or fake according to Buddha's teachings. To judge faith to be genuine or not, that meant by Buddhism, the criteria for that is that belief in the three gems, kamma and its results is said to be genuine Saddha whereas believing in the lives of those who live at the pagoda as their homes that the pagodas were shining with unusual bright light of rays without happening so, believing in the saying of others, that these were the real-Buddha-relic without being so, believing in the wrong views and such kind of wrong beliefs is not the kind of genuine Saddha, (conviction). This is unreal Saddha, (conviction or faith).

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