

How, according to the Buddha's teachings, can suffering (or dukkha) be eliminated?

The most important teachings in Buddhism are the four noble truths. They are the base for Buddhist practice. Following these four noble truths one can achieve Nirvana which is seen as the highest good, the end goal in Buddhism. Nirvana refers to a state of mind which can not be fully described satisfactorily as it outweighs the conceptual thought. The main idea behind is a state of mind in which one is fully awakened to the truth of the reality. However, the journey to Nirvana, all the experiences which shape us is as important as the intellectual understanding.¹

Living a good life and ultimately achieving Nirvana demands not only right moral actions but more importantly wisdom. It is not enough to simply act righteously. The important thing is to have the knowledge on why to act righteously in the first place. Combining virtue and wisdom is key to the Buddhist practice. They do not function alone without one another. Wisdom is seen as a deep philosophical understanding requiring true knowledge of the nature of reality. It is not something that can be achieved quickly by reading the information from somewhere else but instead it is a long journey of reflection and thought.²

Dukkha is often translated into suffering which is a part of the word. However it doesn't only mean painful experiences but also unsatisfactory and unfulfilling experiences.³ The four noble truths are Dukkha, Samudaya, Nirodha and Magga. The first noble truth explains how everything is unsatisfactory. The second noble truth explains how the unsatisfactory suffering arises. The third noble truth explains how the unsatisfactory suffering comes to an end. The fourth noble truth tells about the path to follow in order to get rid of the unsatisfactory suffering.⁴

Magga, the fourth noble truth is an eightfold path that leads to cessation of the Dukkha, the unsatisfactory suffering. The path is often divided into three main divisions. They are wisdom, moral and meditation. Wisdom is found in the two first parts of this path: 1. Right Understanding, 2. Right Resolve. Moral is found in the next three parts: 3. Right Speech, 4. Right Action, 5. Right Livelihood. Meditation is found in the last three parts: 6. Right Effort, 7. Right Mindfulness, 8. Right Meditation. In addition to morality, meditation and wisdom, which are seen as the base of Buddhism, rituals have an important role in Buddhism. The path to enlightenment can start only after understanding the importance of rituals.⁵

¹ *Buddhalaisuus* (2012) <<http://www.uskonnot.fi/uskonnot/view.php?religionId=48>> [accessed 12 June 2020].

² Damien Keown, *Buddhism: A Very Short Introduction* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996), p. 44.

³ Damien Keown, *Buddhism: A Very Short Introduction* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996), p. 62.

⁴ Clive Erricker, *Buddhism: A Complete Introduction* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 2015), p. 53.

⁵ *Buddhalaisuus* (2012) <<http://www.uskonnot.fi/uskonnot/view.php?religionId=48>> [accessed 12 June 2020].

Discuss the contribution of Nanak to the development of Sikhism.

There are ten Gurus in Sikhism. Guru Nanak was the first Guru and thus the creator of Sikhism.

Sikhism originated in the 15th century northwestern India, the region of Punjab. Guru Nanak's teachings and life experience is what started Sikhism. ⁶ Nanak's life was ordinary until one day in his 30s he experienced a godly revelation. One day he did not return from his daily morning swim in the river. He was thought to have drowned until he suddenly appeared after three days. After coming back after three days he stated that 'There is no Hindu, there is no Muslim so whose path shall I follow? I shall follow God's path. God is neither Hindu nor Muslim and the path I shall follow is God's' ⁷ For Nanak God was outside of the religious regimes. ⁸ Soon after this experience Nanak was considered to be fully enlightened and since then he was called Guru Nanak. He started to attract his first students, Sikhs, when travelling around India and other countries spreading his spiritual understanding. His main goal was spreading the truth, not gaining followers or reaching fame. ⁹ Before dying, Nanak initiated the second Guru of Sikhism thus enabling further development of Sikhism.

⁶ Arvind-Pal Singh Mandair, *Sikhism: A Guide for the Perplexed* (London: Bloomsbury, 2013), p. 17.

⁷ Arvind-Pal Singh Mandair, *Sikhism: A Guide for the Perplexed* (London: Bloomsbury, 2013), p. 21.

⁸ Parpola, Asko, *Intian kulttuuri* (Helsinki: Otava, 2005), p. 141-145

⁹ Arvind-Pal Singh Mandair, *Sikhism: A Guide for the Perplexed* (London: Bloomsbury, 2013), p. 22.

