MATERIAL 2

BUDDHA'S TEACHINGS: WAYS TO LASTING HAPPINESS

Over 2600 years ago, during the time of an advanced civilization in what was then northern India, Buddha showed a path to liberation and enlightenment, a state of lasting happiness.

Buddha explained that the ego illusion limits experience and traps beings in the cycle of suffering. Buddha taught the dreamlike nature of all phenomena, which constantly come and go.

He did not want students to follow blindly. Buddha's teaching knows no dogmas and no mission, but is an offer for interested people and those who have a connection to Buddhism. It is about one's own experiences, whereby everyone can critically question and examine. Buddha advised unlimited self-responsibility. Many have since walked the path and achieved enlightenment.

The term "Buddhist" was never used by Buddha himself. He used an expression that means "man of the inner being." Accordingly, for Buddhist practitioners, the focus also changes. The focus goes to getting to know one's own mind. One goes on a kind of journey of discovery to develop inner qualities.

Since people are very different, Buddha gave a variety of teachings totaling 84,000. Anyone who has faith in Buddha and his teachings can find liberation, something that leads away from suffering to happiness. After Buddha's death, all his statements and their application were collected by his disciples. This collection was later systematized and different Buddhist schools developed.

The Three Paths

In the Southeast Asian region, the methods of **Theravada** (Pali: Way of the Elders) are mainly used. The focus is on mindfulness, meaningful behavior with body, speech and mind and the understanding of cause and effect (sanskr. karma). Through appropriate meditation methods, the mind comes to rest and becomes stable. At the same time, there is a growing realization that the "I" does not have an independent existence. The mental tendencies that keep one in the cycle of rebirth are overcome.



This goal is called liberation.

The Great Way (sanskr. Mahayana) addresses people who have power and surplus for others. Often used by lay people, this path emphasizes the underlying motivation not only to achieve enlightenment oneself, but to help everyone. One needs compassion and wisdom to do this. The meditations directed towards this involve all beings. In this way, one removes the separation between oneself and the world and begins to develop an understanding or sense of the emptiness of appearances. Emptiness means that everything arises interdependently, changes constantly, and eventually dissolves. The realization is practiced with the "Six Liberating Actions" (sanskr. Paramitas). The result of this path is enlightenment, in which all spiritual qualities are brought to full maturity.

The Diamond Way (sanskr. Vajrayana) appeals primarily to people who can identify with the goal of enlightenment. At this level, one realizes that Buddha is the mirror of one's own mind and that all enlightened qualities - fearlessness, joy, active compassion, and wisdom - are already inherent in each person. This potential is Buddha nature. Nothing needs to be added from outside.

Meditation is focused on identification and on becoming one with enlightenment. As aspects of meditation, one uses Buddha forms that express certain qualities of enlightenment. One's own mind is experienced as rich and playful. Every encounter and every situation is experienced on the highest and purest level possible. Pure vision means experiencing the richness contained in every situation in life. Ultimately, through identification with one's Buddha nature, one realizes the goal - enlightenment.

The Three Pillars:
Each of these three paths includes **knowledge, meditation and holding the level** in everyday life, which can be thought of as three pillars.

First pillar: Each practitioner receives the necessary information, which one may also critically question, so that one knows what one is doing and what the path and goal are. Through a clear understanding, one is motivated to apply the teachings.

Second pillar: One needs meditation to realize liberation and enlightenment. The inner qualities such as fearlessness, lasting joy, all-embracing love, compassion and wisdom are not developed and experienced through the intellect alone.

Third pillar: In everyday life, the knowledge and inner abilities discovered in meditation are put into practice. Through meaningful behavior in every situation, the knowledge already gained is secured.

Thus, the one who sets out on the Buddhist path can use every moment for his development. None of these paths is better than the other: The best path is the one that suits you.