

Dhamma and Sangha – Dhamma Talk

Introduction

1. The Triple gem is an important concept of Buddhism: 3 gems, or 3 precious ideas
 - a. They are The Buddha, The Dhamma and the Sangha
2. For the past three weeks, Chris and Ron talked about the Buddha:
 - a. His life, (the life of the historical Buddha), and what a Buddha is
3. Today I'm going to talk about the Dhamma and the Sangha
 - a. What they are, What the Buddha said about them, and also an introduction to the origin of the schools of Buddhism

Body

1. I'm going to start by explaining what the Dhamma and Sangha are.
 - a. The Dhamma is a pali word that has two meanings:
 - i. The teachings of the Buddha that lead to enlightenment
 - ii. "The constituent factors of the experienced world" which means everything around us, as we perceive it
 - b. I am going to talk about the 1st meaning today.
 - c. Sangha is a word that means "Community." It means the ordained community of monks and nuns.
 - i. In a broader sense it also means the community of practicing Buddhists
2. So let me move on to how the Dharma is described by Buddhism
 - a. To do this, I'm going to use the liturgy on the Pamphlet that describes the qualities of the Dharma.
 - b. This liturgy is a traditional teravadha Buddhist description of the qualities of the Dharma.
 - c. It describes the following:
 - i. Svakkhato: That it is Well Proclaimed, that it is a universal law, and that it is real; observable, and can be experienced in real life
 - ii. Sanditthiko: That it stands up to examination, can be tested by practice, that he who follows will see by himself what results from it
 - iii. Akaliko: It is immediate, Timeless; unlike Hinduism, you don't have to reincarnate to gain benefits
 - iv. Ehipassiko: It welcomes all beings to listen, understand and experience; again, unlike Hinduism (and other mystery religions) there is no hidden mystery – all is open for everyone!
 - v. Opanaiko: The dhamma is worthy of being part of one's life
 - vi. Paccattam veditabbo vinnuhiti: That it can be understood by the wise, and that a wise man can understand, experience it...
 - d. On the subject of the Dharma, when talking about its place in the life of a Buddhist, I want to refer back to a story Ron recounted about the passing of the Buddha
 - i. The Buddha did not appoint a successor to take his place in the event of his passing; instead he proclaimed that the Dhamma should lead the monkhood in his place
 - ii. This is an illustration of the place of the dharma in life, be it of the laity or the monkhood

3. And now to move on to the Sangha...
 - a. As with the Dhamma, I want to go through a few qualities the Sangha, in this case the Monkhood, should have, as per the liturgies.
 - b. Here I refer to the liturgy regarding the Sangha, which describes 4 qualities the Sangha should have.
 - i. Supatipanno: The Monkhood is well practiced in the Dhamma, in the way the Buddha taught
 - ii. Ujupatipanno: it is Honest, transparent, and straightforward
 - iii. Gnayapatipanno: it has a methodical, logical understanding of the Dhamma
 - iv. Samichipatipanno: it has a masterful understanding of the Dhamma
4. I want to finish by sharing with you a very brief explanation of why there are so many schools of Buddhism in the modern world.
 - a. We have Zen Buddhism, Tibetan Buddhism, Teravadha Buddhism, and the list goes on and on
 - b. Part of the reason for this multiplicity has to do with 3 councils of monks that were held after the buddha's passing.
 - c. I want to mention the first and the third councils; the second really doesn't concern the reasons the monkhood split.
 - d. The first was held the year after the death of the Buddha
 - i. The Monk who led the Monkhood, Maha Kassapa, one day heard a monk say "We are all well rid of the great recluse: Now we can do as we like, and not do as we do not like"
 - ii. This worried him, and he began to think about how to preserve Buddhism
 - iii. He called a council of 500 arahants
 - iv. They met at the mouth of a cave, and went over all of the sermons the Buddha gave, as well as through all the rules he established.
 - v. Ananda's memory helped do this
 - vi. They codified the Sermons and the Laws into the pali canon, and arranged for it to be passed on through an oral tradition
 - e. The Third was held during the reign of Emperor asoka.
 - i. Asoka was a rather blood thirsty emperor when he was young and fought a series of bloody wars against a neighboring people, the Kalinga
 - ii. Later on, he became remorseful at the suffering he caused and became a great patron of Buddhism
 - iii. He donated so much to the monkhood that people began to get ordained just to enjoy the status that monks had at the time
 - iv. This worried the emperor, who asked the Monks to have a council
 - v. They did, and the heretics were cast out.
 - vi. At the same time, he sent Buddhist missions to many countries, such as Kashmir, Mysore, Greece, Himalayas, Sri Lanka, Thailand, Myanmar, Egypt
 - vii. Many of these missions were successful and established their own schools of Buddhism
 - f. Now, the Buddha said to his monks, when they first set out into the world: "Change the rules of the monkhood as you see fit, to better suit the place you are in"
 - i. The dharma is not about set rules, since if you understand it you do what is right be default and the small rules fall into place, especially if you are an arahant
 - ii. But over the years, the separation of the schools of Buddhism that were established would have led to considerably different monastic tradition, and completely different schools of Buddhist thought

- g. Now, although these schools of thought are different, the core tenets of these schools are the same:
 - i. These being the Four Noble Truths and The eightfold path, the middle path, etc..
 - ii. Also most of the Suttas, or discourses, although the relative emphasis placed on each varies.