

## **Satta Bojjhaṅga** The Seven Steps Leading to Enlightenment

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Siddhārtha Gautama, the son of King Suddhōdhan and Queen Mahāmayā of Kapilvatthu renounced his princely life and new born son Rahūl, at the young age of 29 years on Asāda Purnimā<sup>1</sup>, known as Mahābhinishkarman, in 534BCE<sup>2</sup> with the sole purpose of, to make the life free from sufferings of human beings in this mundane world. He wandered in search of right and harmonious path of wisdom that eradicates suffering from the life of human beings. He approached, to the then Saṅkhayā Āchāriyā Alāra Kālāma and thereafter Āchāriyā Rāmaputta Udaka to learn how to achieve the perfect knowledge: The Enlightenment. He worked and meditated for a long span of six years under their pious and appropriate guidance, in the dark caves of the forests of Vesālī, Rajgrahā and Urevellā to achieve perfect wisdom as his desired aspirations but he did not satisfied with the outcome and their teachings as well as the mode of meditations. He assessed that something is still lacking which obstructed him to do away with his desired achievements<sup>3</sup>. During meditation period he become so thick and thin, when he touched his stomach, he touched his backbone and when he touched his backbone, he touched his stomach. He became too weak to walk even a step. He came out of the cave where he practised severest sorts of austerities and mortification for the achievement of desire aspiration. Thereafter he took bath in the river Nirājanā and after that he sat down at the root of Nigrōdha tree. There he was provided with milk rice food by a Senāni village homely lady named, Sujātā who vowed to Nigrōdha Tree if she should had a son, she would served milk rice food to the God of Nigrōdha. He ate the rice food served by Sujātā. Then he crossed river Nirājanā and approached at Urevellā where he sat with cross legs and upright with strong determination beneath the Peepal Tree at the bank of river Nirājanā and he pledged that he did not leave this place unless and until he had not achieved perfect Enlightenment what so ever had gone. This tree thereafter is known as Bodhi-Tree in memorandum of the event. After all on Veśāka Purnima day he achieved perfect Enlightenment and he became Samyāsama Buddha, the enlightened one, for the welfare of all sentient beings. He understood and observed each and everything so minutely that no iota was there for any doubt in the perfection of the knowledge, he achieved. In the way of meditation he had observed some impediments which obstruct the path of achieving perfect enlightenment known as Nivarna and some were helping-up

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<sup>1</sup> The Full Moon day in the month of Asāda according to an Ancient Solar Calendar of Jambu Divp.

<sup>2</sup> The Buddha and His Dhamma- by Dr. B.R. Ambedkar. Considering his date of Birth of Siddhartha Gautama as 563 BCE less 29 years

<sup>3</sup> The Buddha and His Dhamma –By Dr. B.R. Ambedkar

the process in getting perfect Enlightenment, such factors of Enlightenment are known as Bojjhaṅga.<sup>4</sup> These factors help the meditator indisputable and undeniable in achieving Perfect Enlightenment and also helpful for the development here and after for the benefit of all sentient beings. This Bojjhaṅga Sutta is recited and meditated since the time of

Buddha till now as a panacea to protect one from physical, mental diseases and adversities.

The word *Bojjhaṅga* consist two words- one is *Bodhi* that means perfect Enlightenment and other is *aṅga* means factors or parts. Therefore the word *Bojjhaṅga* means “The Factors of Enlightenment.”<sup>5</sup> These are seven factors that supports in the meditation to achieve complete Enlightenment step by step. Therefore we can say seven steps of Bojjhaṅga.

The Bojjhaṅga have the following seven factors or steps:-

- (1) Sati- The systematic intersection or Mindfulness
- (2) Dhamma Vicaya- Investigation of Dhamma or Investigation of Phenomena properly
- (3) Viriya- Cognitive strength or Cognitive Energy
- (4) Pīti- Cognitive contentment or Happiness
- (5) Passaddhi-Physical Relaxation or Physical Calmness
- (6) Samādhi- Mental Equilibrium or Mental Balanced State
- (7) Upekkhā- Apperception or Equanimity.

The Seven Bojjhaṅga are applied step by step in achieving the perfect enlightenment and they are also antidotes against the five impediments (Nivarana). The impediments are obstructing the meditator strongly to withdraw from the practice of meditation and ultimately achieving enlightenment. However, on the other hand the seven factors of enlightenments are improving practice step by step to achieve enlightenment day by day.

There are five impediments:-

- (1) Sensual desire ( Kāmaccaṇḍa),
- (2) Ill-Will ( Vyāpāda),
- (3) Sloth and Torpor (Thina-Midda)
- (4) Mental Restlessness ( Uḍaccā-Kukuccā) and
- (5) Doubt (Viccikiccā).<sup>6</sup>

**The meanings of seven steps of Enlightenment are as under:-**

The meanings of the seven steps of Enlightenment, in the Pāli-canon, the Pāli-dictionary and many other books and discourses of present Scholars are considered to understand each factor one by one.

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<sup>4</sup> Mahā Satthipatthana Sutta, Digha Nikaya by VRI, Dhamma Bhumi, Igata Puri, Nasik, Maharashtra.

<sup>5</sup> The Pāli Text Society 's Pāli- English dictionary

<sup>6</sup> Mahāsattipatthana Sutta by S.N.Goenka and Digha Nikaya, Majjhima Nikaya Published By VRI, Maharashtra

(1) Sati- The systematic intersection or Mindfulness

Sati is the first factor of Awakening that means to know object systematically, thoroughly as well as mindfully.<sup>7</sup>

(2) Dhamma Vicaya- Investigation of Dhamma or Phenomena

Dhamma-Vicaya means to understand each and every thing clearly and completely without any iota of doubt that is crystal clearly. This is also known as intellectual investigation of natural phenomena.<sup>8</sup>

(3) Vīriya- Cognitive strength or Cognitive Energy

Vīriya is brought from the word “Vīr”, the brave or the energetic one. That is the source of cognitive potentiality or energy.<sup>9</sup>

(4) Pīti- Cognitive contentment or Happiness

Pīti means the cognitive satisfaction, arising and passing away. At seeing the desire substance or scenery, the first action of the body is known as happiness- Pīti. For example a thirsty man when he sees a glass of water then he felt pleased but when he drink water he was fully contented. Pīti is the first part of the action of the thirsty man. Some people also means it as rapture, zest or joy but happiness is the best meaning for it.<sup>10</sup>

(5) Passaddhi-Physical Relaxation or Physical Calmness

Passaddhi means physical as well as mental contentment or tranquillity (means calm of defilement) when it is felt an impermanent as permanent. It is divided into two parts mental (Citta-passaddhi) as well as physical( Kāyā-passaddhi). When a man contented his body relaxed and mind turned calm. In the above example the said person in the second part of the action is in passaddhi. Tranquillity might be misguided and considered as final goal that is nibbāna<sup>11</sup> by some meditators.

(6) Samādhi- Mental Equilibrium or Mental Balanced State

Samadhi means the state of equilibrium and balanced condition of mind completely. Mind neither affected by any internal nor external activity. It is also known as concentration that the condition of mind placed in the object.<sup>12</sup> But the mental equilibrium is the most appropriate meaning for Samādhi.

(7) Upekkhā- Apperception or Equanimity

Upekkhā means not taking any side and remains disinterested in anything. He neither

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<sup>7</sup> Discourse of Bhante M. Punnaaji and Sylvia Bay on Bojjhaṅga

<sup>8</sup> Mahāsattipaṭṭhana Sutta by S.N.Goenka and Digha Nikaya, Majjhima Nikaya Published By VRI , Maharashtra

<sup>9</sup> The Pāli Text Society 's Pāli- English dictionary

<sup>10</sup> Discourse of Bhante M. Punnaaji and Sylvia Bay on Bojjhaṅga , Available on You Tube

<sup>11</sup> Discourse of Bhante M. Punnaaji

<sup>12</sup> Mahāsattipaṭṭhana Sutta by Bro James Ong

favours anything nor reject and be silent in all states. It is also means balance state or neutrality between sorrow and happiness with natural feeling. Not disturbed by any state of physical or mental disturbance. Upekkhā is the state of Enlightenment or nobbāna.<sup>13</sup>

### **Historical Facts about Satta Bojjhaṅga Sutta**

The Buddha after achieving enlightenment at Bodha Gaya, went to Sarnatha and bestowed his first ever discourse Dhamma Cakka Pripavatanya Sutta to his old five ascetic colleagues known as Pancavaggiya Bhikku namely Kondanīyā, Mahānāna, Bhadiya, Vappi and Asji. He never look backward, he travelled throughout the Jambu Dievp (Modren India) and preached his teachings to all and sundries. People came from all walks to his discourse meeting places and listen his preaches and got benefited by them. He preached that no human being can be benefited by his teachings unless and until he practices the meditation, His teachings of suchness in his life. He preached the technique how to be get benefited from his teachings. He preached the technique of meditation, Ānāpāna Sati and Vipassana through which people of all walks were benefited. In similar discourse at Kamasadhamma Nigam, Kuru Pardesh he address his discourse to the monks of that place with Mahāsattipaṭṭhan Sutta that covered all most all his teachings in it. Satta Bojjhaṅga Sutta is one part of that sutta. He always preached the monks to practise his teachings in his life through Mahāsattipaṭṭhan meditation technique. No one can be benefited without practising the meditation. The Bojjhaṅga Sutta helps the people in curing their physical as well as mental disease and adversities. The Mahāsattipaṭṭhan Sutta was mentioned in Digha Nikāya and the Sattipaṭṭhan Sutta in Majjhima Nikāya. The Tathagata Buddha preached Mahākassapa, Mahāmoggalāna and Mahācunda at Rājgrah, those preaching are known as Mahākassapa Bojjhaṅga Sutta, Mahāmoggalāna Bojjhaṅga Sutta and Mahācunda Bojjhaṅga Sutta respectively mentioned in Agunttar Nikaya.<sup>14</sup>

The Buddha, the Awaken One expounded the seven steps of awakening to cure the physical and mental disease and adversities as a protection. Some of them achieved Nibbāna after applying and practising the sutta by way of practising Ānāpāna Sati and Vipassana Sadhanā technique. The teachings of Buddha are beneficial only for those who apperceive his teachings in their life and not only by reading, listening, cramming and chanting. By reading, listening, cramming and chanting are not waste or useless but makes the meditator's sati perfect that helps him in apperceiving tranquillity (Sammā Diṭṭhi and Sammā Sati-Pragyā). And in some suttas presents about how the seven steps of Awakening are the great teaching or chanting of the Awakened One that incline to Nibbāna, tend to Nibbāna and at last achieve Nibbāna. It is most important that how Bojjhaṅga sutta starts and how to meditate properly the seven factors of awakening for the benefit of all sentient beings (Dhammānupassanā).

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<sup>13</sup> Mahāsattipaṭṭhana Sutta by S.N.Goenka and Digha Nikaya, Majjhima Nikaya

<sup>14</sup> Agunttar Nikaya by VRI

## Conclusion

The most important is the techniques of meditation, how to practice and how to see and what to see. If some failed in his exam he must study studiously instead of going to Buddha's

statue and lit a candle, pray and pay tributes by offering flowers. If someone met with an accident, he must rush to hospital instead of going to BuddhaVihar to pray Buddha. The Buddha does not wash the negativities of any one; Nor does he remove his miseries by His hands. His spiritual realisations are not transferred to anyone. It is by teaching and meditating the truth of suchness that beings are liberated.

When the man is born in this mundane world he has brought nothing with him except the consequences of actions from his last existences whether they are good or bad. His mind developed throughout his life by his actions as well as the actions of mundane world such as gravitational force of all the worldly bodies, natural changes, changing of climates and so many things going-on in this mundane world day by day. All these actions are inter-related with one another in the one way or the other. We may say, in today's computer language that the motherboards as well as its hard disc particularly RAM, both are blank and having nothing stored in it except the programming done by the company. As soon as we start working on the computer we start feeding our data as well as so many things related to our interest and requirements. Similarly the human mind develops as the time passed with mundane phenomena. The worldly actions make him thorough gentle or heinous criminal whatever the way he goes. His parents, relatives, teachers and friends make him a religious or irreligious person. At one side we have five impediments and on the other side seven factors of awakening which transcend our life. While five hindrances make our life miserable and obstruct the path of Nibbāna but the other side the seven factors of awakening protect us from suffering and clear the path towards Nibbāna. When we meditate perfectly all the seven factors of awakening by way of Vipassanā Sadhanā, we come over the miseries of life.

The Tathagata Buddha preached his disciples about the dependent origination and also the technique how to meditate and observe the things in real sense of suchness. In Mahāsattipatthāna Sutta, The Tathagata Buddha taught all about the techniques of wisdom to know the behaviour of this mundane world by way of Vipassanā Sadhanā-the four factors of mindfulness, the four harmonious efforts, the four bases of results, the five faculties of controlling, the five mental powers, seven factors of a wakening and eight factors of Eight Fold Path. In totality with thirty seven factors, The Tathagat Buddha preached how to come over your miseries by practising Mahāsattipatthāna Sutta and Vipassanā Sadhanā.

All phenomena arise from causes, the causes and cessation of causes taught by the Tathagata Buddha by way of the Eight Fold Path. All phenomena are impermanent and suffering in nature. All Dhamma are Anātmāna. The meditator when fully understand and come out of self craving ignorance (Avijja) he transcendent himself towards Nibbāna, the Arthat hood,

free from all kind of physical and mental miseries, pains, sufferings and adversities. If one wants to become free from miseries, sufferings and adversities he must be well aware of all Buddhist terms and techniques of meditation of Vipassanā Sadhanā thoroughly.

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