

An experience

Buddhism is essentially an experience... Unlike thought, experience is direct, unmediated; it is knowledge by acquaintance. Hence it is characterized by a feeling of absolute certainty. When we see the sun shining in a clear sky we do not doubt that it is bright; when a thorn runs beneath our fingernail we do not speculate whether it is painful.”

“Concepts had therefore better be treated as symbols, the value of which lies not in their literal meaning so much as in their suggestiveness. They should be handled in the spirit not of logic but of poetry...

Enlightenment-experience is not just a blind sensing of things, but, as the English word suggests, the shining forth of a light, an illumination, in the brightness of which things become visible... should not mislead us into thinking that there is any real difference between the subject and the object of the experience, between the light and the things illuminated”

The path in principle

“This subdivision of the Dharma, being the central one and pragmatically the most valuable, ought to be the clearest and simplest. In fact, however, it is often the most complex, not to say complicated... formulations of the Path... are so numerous, so rich in variety, and so often seemingly divergent, that what the Path is in principle, is... lost sight of ...

In this account we shall be concerned with **what the Path is in principle** and with the formulation that seems to exhibit that principle with the greatest distinctness.”

This **process of [the unfolding of] a progressive order** constitutes the basic principle of the Path taught by the Buddha as distinct from the various formulations

a process of natural growth

[the Buddha] sat at the foot of the Bodhi Tree and he just recollected that incident which happened when he was a boy... he didn't refer to the stage but more to the manner and the method, of letting things sort of grow naturally, encouraging them and coaxing them, not forcing them by sheer effort of will, and therefore he found that that was the real way. Allowing the previous stage to develop, and then on the basis of that the next. Not trying to push things ahead more rapidly than nature... it's a process of natural growth and development. Not that effort isn't needed but it's a wise, gentle, smooth, regular effort... So this is a very important question in connection with meditation, because people often think of it in terms of technique. We can have an intensive weekend and do forty hours - you'll get there forty times as quickly! Not at all!

The nidanas

In the canonical passage referred to the twelve factors constituting what may be termed the positive and progressive aspect of the pratītya-samutpāda are enumerated... there is causal association of saddhā with dukkha, pāmojja with saddhā, pīti with pāmojja, passaddhi with pīti, sukha with passaddhi, samādhī with sukha, yathābhūta-ñāṇadassana with samādhī, nibbidā with yathābhūta[...]" you begin to go... from happiness to greater happiness; from greater happiness to joy; from joy to rapture; rapture to bliss; bliss to ecstasy...