**Why Buddhism emphasize on performing meritorious deeds?**

1) The performance of good actions gives rise to merit (punna). It is a quality which purifies and cleanses the mind. If the mind is unchecked, it has the tendency to be ruled by evil acts, leading one to perform bad deeds and get into trouble.

2) Merit purifies the mind of the evil tendencies of greed, hatred and delusion. De-meritorious deeds give rise to more suffering and reduce the opportunities for a person to know and practise the Dhamma.

3) Merit is important to help us along our journey through life. It is connected with what are good and beneficial to one self and others, and can improve the quality of the mind.

While the material wealth a person gathers can be lost by theft, flood, fire etc, the benefit of merits follows him from life and cannot be lost, although it can be exhausted if no attempts are made to perform more merits. A person will experience happiness here and now as well as hereafter through the performance of merit.

4) Merit is a great facilitator. It opens the doors of opportunity everywhere. A meritorious person will succeed in whatever venture he puts his effort into.

If he wishes to do business, he will meet with the right contacts and friends. If he wishes to be a scholar, he will be awarded with scholarships and supported by academic mentors. If he wishes to progress in meditation, he will meet with a skilful meditation teacher who guides him through his spiritual development.

His dreams will be realized through the grace of his treasury of merit. It is merit which enables a person to be reborn in the heavens, and provides him with the right conditions and support for his attainment of Nibbana.

The Buddha has taught ten meritorious deeds for us to perform in order to gain a happy and peaceful life as well as to develop knowledge and understanding:

**1) Giving / Charity / Generosity (dāna)**

* It is the act of relinquishing oneself and one’s belongings; it dispels greed for things that can be given away; to give generously and freely to those who deserve gifts has a profound impact on the whole.
* Giving is of prime importance in the Buddhist scheme of mental purification because it is the best weapon against greed or attachment. Miserliness is not the only hindrance to giving, carelessness and ignorance of the working of kamma and survival after death are equally valid causes. If one knows the moral advantages of giving, one will be vigilant to seize theopportunities to practice this great virtue.
* There are two types of gifts:

1) Material gift (āmisadāna)

* Gifts of a religious nature include contributions towards the erection of a new temple or shrine or the purchase of a Buddha statue for a temple. The recipients of such gifts are the general public who comes to the temple or worships before the Buddha image.
* Mundane gifts to the citizens of a country include donations to various welfare organizations, contribution to a hospital or public library, keeping a neighbour park neat and clean.
* If one does not merely contribute funds for such projects but provides physical labour as well, the kammic results will be even greater. Gifts of this sort can be quite meritorious if preceded, accompanied and followed by pure mental volitions.

2) Spiritual gift (dhammadāna)

* The Buddha said, the gift of the noble teachings excel all other gifts (Dhammapada 354). Those who expound his teachings, teaches meditation, frequently share the truth, are practising the highest kind of generosity.
* We can donate dhamma books or pay for the translation or publication of rare or new manuscript propagating the Buddha words. We can discuss the dhamma informally and encourage others to keep precepts or to take up meditation.
* We might write an explanation of some aspect of the dhamma for the benefit of others. Giving cash or labour to a meditation centre or helping to support a meditation teacher can also be considered the gift of the dhamma, as the purpose of the centre and the teacher is the transmission of the Buddha’s teaching.

**2) Morality / Virtue (síla)**

* It is the good conduct of body and speech; one’s ethical conduct benefits all beings that come into contact with him.
* The householders are expected to take the three refuges and observe the five precepts throughout the life and the eight precepts or ten precepts on full moon days or any other day convenient for such observance.

**3) Concentration (bhāvanā)**

* The mental development through meditation. It brings peace to oneself and inspires others to seek peace as well.
* One can meditate or contemplate on either the forty exercises for attainment of mental tranquillity (samatha) or the three universal characteristics of existence impermanence, misery and non-soul (tilakkhana). There are other forms of meditation such as anapanasati, maranaussati etc

**4) Transference of merit (patti)**

* Requesting another to share the merit or moral deeds done by a person. Transfer of merit to the dead, devas and to all beings and wishing them to be well and happy. It shows compassion towards others welfare.

**5) Rejoicing in receiving merit (pattānumodanā)**

* Rejoicing in others’ merit and congratulating them for their meritorious conduct; encouraging them to perform more merits.

**6) Rendering service (veyyavacca)**

* Providing service and assisting others to do meritorious deeds; it promotes the Dhamma and improves the lives of others.
* Giving assistance to those worthy of respect as well as to the sick, old and weak people. Keeping the home, the school and the temple clean and tidy too come under this service.

**7) Paying reverence to the deserving (apacāyana)**

* Showing respects to the Triple Gem, elders, parents, teachers, monastic and all those leading a virtuous lives. Paying respect is shown by worshipping, offering flowers or offering seats to the needy. It creates a harmonious society.

**8) Instructive preaching (desanā)**

* Dhammadesana helps to spread the teaching either through writing or speech. It is done out of compassion to the listeners with a pure mind, and without the impure intention of obtaining offerings, honour, praise and fame.

**9) Listening to instructive preaching (suti)**

* Hearing, reading or studying the dhamma with a pure mind for the purpose of practising morality (sila), oncentration (Samadhi) and insight (panna).

**10) Rectification of one’s view (diţţhiju)**

* Continues to learn the Dhamma in order to understand it correctly such as the four Noble Truths, Dependent Origination etc.

The performance of these ten meritorious deeds will not only benefit oneself, but others as well:

* Moral conduct benefits all beings that one comes into contact.
* Mental culture brings peace to others and inspires them to practise the Dhamma.
* Reverence gives rise to harmony in society, while service improves the lives of others.
* Sharing merits with others shows that one is concerned about others’ welfare, while rejoicing in others’ merits encourages others to perform more merits.
* Teaching and listening to the Dhamma are important factors for happiness for both the teacher and listener, while encouraging both to live in line with Dhamma.
* Straightening one’s views enables a person to show to others the beauty of Dhamma

In the Dhammapada:

“Should a person perform goods, he should do it again and again;

He should find pleasure therein;

For blissful is the accumulation of good.”

“Think not lightly of good, saying, it’ll not come near to me?

Even by the falling of drops a water-jar is filled.

Likewise the wise man, gathering little by little, fills himself with good.”