

Buddhist Approach To Self-Modification, Inner Purity And Well Being

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Abstract: The teaching of Buddha gives us a path to live a moral life having a normative value, which we would prefer to make a healthy society. We know that Buddhism does not encourage any hatred which we may witness in our life. It always gives an approach where a layperson and monk can lead their life with their choice and still have the opportunity to the attainment of *nirvāṇa*. Though according to Buddhism, *nirvāṇa* is just about the cessation of suffering. While *ahimsā* is the prime key to Buddhist ethics. The paper is an attempt to show how helpful it is to apply the path suggested by Buddhism. The study would also have a set up to show how Hīnayāna and Mahāyāna Buddhism gives a different approach to the attainment of *nirvāṇa*. Towards building well-being and peace in the society, how the model of Buddhist morality can take an important role is to be discussed in the concluding part of the paper.

Keywords: Self- mortification, Inner purity, *Nirvāṇa* and Peace

Introduction

At the very beginning of Both Jaina and Buddhist philosophy, we may have seen a pessimistic orientation regarding worldly life. Dealing with the difficulties (suffering, depression, etc.) what we witness in our daily life, they have tried to find out a better way of living life with some kind of determination by which we can minimize suffering. It is true that in the end, they do not provide similar types of ideas regarding liberation, but their way of leading life may match in some sort. If we look into the teaching of Buddha, we will find out that in his work (*Vinaya-pitaka*, *Sūtra-pitaka* and *Abhidharmapitaka*) deals with religion and ethical behavior by which one can lead his moral life. Morality in Buddhism prefers to understand the prolonging journey of life as we know that in early Buddhism, theoretical speculation has not much important because the main aim of Buddhist teaching is human sufferings and the path of cessation of suffering.

Defining *Karma*

In Buddhism, we can see three kinds of *karmas* (action), which are of the body, speech, and mind/mental. To explain those actions, let us take an example. Suppose a person has visited a forest to slaughter animals, but after a long search, he does not find any suitable animal to kill. With this, we have to understand that physically the person does not wish to kill any animal, but the nature of killing is there in his mental instinct. On the other hand, if a person ordered to slaughter animal, but if it did not carry out with the body, then it would be a misdeed by speech (*vācika*). Though in all the cases of misconduct of bodily and speech actions depends on mind/mental. Therefore, one can say if there is no involvement of mind, then it possible to think that there would be no misconduct by body and speech. Though, based on consequences, we can think of four kinds of *kammas* (actions)-

- (a) Wicked deeds are those which gives impure result
- (b) Good action is those who provide pure result
- (c) Partial Wicked deeds and incomplete Good deeds
- (d) The actions which have no result (both in terms of Wicked deeds and Good action)

Regarding action (*karma*) there are opinions in Indian school that God monitors every action and so, no actions are freely performed by an individual self. Though in Buddhist philosophy, it is different. According to them, actions are free from any subtle force or any other agent like God. They state that all actions are performed by an agent independently and freely, it does not depend on any condition.

In Buddhism, they also accept the law of *Karma* for the divergence between and an individual to another. There might indeed be differences in an individual to another based on their physical structure (e.g., color, power, and height, etc.). Here, one may ask the question of why do we have this difference in individuals?¹ To answer this question, we cannot have any reasoning in our present life, where we can have a clear answer about these differences. But we may say it is because of our past life actions as we know that we do not get the result of every action performed by an individual in their present life. Therefore, in Buddhism also, we accept that the result of some actions may preserve to produce in future life. And they have clearly stated that only those actions can produce results that are performed based on 'the expectation on gaining fruit' (applied for both present and future). That can lead to suffering.

¹ In *Milinda Pañca* we find Nāgasenā saying “it is through a difference in their karma that men are not all alike, but some long lived, some short, some healthy and some sickly, some handsome and some ugly, some powerful and some weak, some rich and some poor, some of high degree and some of low degree, some wise and some foolish”- Warren, H. C., *Buddhism in Translations*, p. 215.

Contrarily, the actions which are performed without having any desire and compulsion can produce no results/fruits. Buddha once said that as we cannot have plant from burned seeds, in the same way, we cannot have the fruit of those actions which are performed without having any sorts of expectation and desire. While performing such action where an individual does not expect or desire to get something out of it, lead no sufferings.² Therefore, we may conclude that if we can minimize our expectations and desires while performing any action, then it will lead to the state of 'non-sufferings'³.

Moreover, one may ask a question by saying that how come it is possible to accept the law of *Karma* without accepting eternal self. Because if we do not accept a permanent self, then how will we describe that both the agent of past and present are the same. And that would lead to a contradictory position of the law of *Karma*. Buddhists have stated that even without accepting a permanent self, it is possible to discuss the law of *Karma*. According to them, consciousness (*vijñāna*) of an action (*saṃskāra*) leads to another sort of consciousness (*vijñāna*) and produces fruits of actions performed. And that is how the fruits of previous consciousness (*vijñāna*) leads to later consciousness (*vijñāna*). Therefore, we could say that consciousness is self. What we mistook is about we forget the constant dynamism of consciousness and which leads us to the ascertainment of a permanent self. The dynamism of consciousness depends on the relation of causation. As a way, a consciousness in present life can produce another conscious, in the same way, from the last consciousness of this present life can lead to the birth of first consciousness of future life. On the basis of this dynamism, continuity of life happens beyond death. That is what we call as rebirth.

The rationale behind defining *karma* (action) at the very beginning of the paper is to show how our actions are interconnected with the sufferings one goes through in his life. It also shows the actions which are performed without having any desire and compulsion can produce no results/fruits. While performing such action where an individual does not expect or desire to get something out of it, lead no sufferings. In the next half, the paper will deal with the idea of how one can perform such and such action without expecting any fruit/results. The paper will, therefore, deal with the idea of becoming wise through self-modification, inner purity, and how it can advocate the concept of universal love and friendship.

² “When the desire or craving (*tatha*) has once ceased the sage becomes an arhat, and the deeds that he may do after that will bear no fruit. An arhat cannot have any good or bad fruits of whatever he does. For it is through desire that karma finds its scope of giving fruit. With the cessation of desire all ignorance, antipathy and grasping cease and consequently there is nothing which can determine rebirth.”- Dasgupta, S., *A History of Indian Philosophy*, vol. I, pp. 107-108.

³ The word ‘non-suffering’ has used to determine a state which will lead a person towards *nirvana*. We can even say that the individual can lead a life of less-sufferings. It can also make a journey for an individual towards the idea of Love and Goodness. Making a worthy life by following the path of performing actions without any sorts of expectation and compulsion.

The idea of Self-Modification and Inner Purity

In Buddhism, it clearly expresses the morality of *Ahimsā*. Where we would see how we can breeze a living world where every living organism may live a secure life and become happy minded, on many occasions, we would see that Buddha tries to express the idea of love and friendship over any sort of hatred. It is easy to say that hatred can be replied with another kind of hatred, but it would be wise to return love in place of hatred. Because of the hatred it never ceases by hatred at any time, hatred ceases by love. Good for good is very noble, but returning good for evil is more generous still. Great men dissolve with sympathy in any event, for one who has fashioned the mischief. To the man who stupidly treats me terribly, I will restore the assurance of my ungrudging adoration; the more the underhanded that desires him, the more the decency that will go from me. The transgressor can't impact the purity of an upright individual; however, he insults himself and degrades his character. To become a morally vibrant agent, we could prefer to go through the teaching of Buddha and the paths he suggests to follow. To deal with the character-building (moral character) approach, we will discuss Four Noble Truths through the primary focus would be giving a brief exposition of the fourth noble truth.

As we know that the core of Buddhism preaches on the Four Noble Truths (*ārya-satya*): (1) there is suffering; (2) there is the cause of suffering; (3) cessation of suffering; and (4) the way to remove suffering. *Nirvāṇa* is the goal of life. In the first noble truth, it is seen that the world and worldly life are full of suffering. From birth to death, we can see that suffering is there any every stage of life. So, the primary point which has made in first noble truth is in the momentary phases of life prolonged with suffering whatever and wherever position one belongs to. And there is nobody in this humanism who is liberated from sufferings. The second noble truth suggests that as we cannot deny the existence of suffering, so there must some cause for its existence. To describe so, we have the dozen links (*nidāna*)- *avidyā-saṃskāra*, *vijñāna*, *nāma-rūpa*, *ṣaḍāyatana*, *sparsa*, *vedanā*, *trṣṇā*, *upādāna*, *bhava*, *jāti* and *jarā-maraṇa*. This chain sequence suggests not only present life, but it includes a reference to the previous and the coming life also. Here, ignorance (*avidyā*) is the key to this cycle. The entire cycle moves due to ignorance. So, we may think of overcoming ignorance in light of knowledge. This is what the third noble truth hints us and suggests that if we break the cause, then it will not produce any further result/effect. And it is possible through the right knowledge. If we can overcome ignorance (*avidyā*) through the right knowledge, we can have a state of stability where there would be no suffering. In the fourth noble truth, we would see how we could overcome suffering through the eight-fold path. If we follow the suggested path, then we remove our sufferings and live a wise life. Those paths are as follows:

1. Right belief- having the right belief in four noble truths, which will help to promote self-control and Peace.
2. Right resolve- the determination of doing what is right and abstain from doing what is wrong, and to uproot attachment to sensual pleasure, ill- will towards others, and desire for harming them.
3. Right speech- it comprises a kind of restrain from lying, slander, abuse, harsh words, and frivolous talk. Honesty or truthfulness should have emerged, and it will be with the harmony of right and wrong.
4. Right conduct- it suggests the kinds of abstention from killing, stealing, illegal indulgence, lying, and drinking liquor for laymen. Significantly, one can say that the person who has the motive to get *Nirvana* has to follow three-fold rearing (*Ahimsā*, *Brahmacarya* and *Asteya*). It also consists of abstention from attending social entertainment, articles of luxury, and handling gold and silver from monks. It has also said that in terms of conduct, parents should give proper intellectual and moral education to their children and handover their property to them. Children should take care of their old parents and protect their patrimony and matrimony. The main purposes of this path are to develop qualities in humans to lead a virtuous life. Here, the pupil should honor their teacher, and the teacher should teach them in arts and science and train them in virtue. It can also mention that in whatever position one-acts, they have to act upon their duty selflessly. And all should cultivate liberty, kindness, politeness, ethical manner, and selflessness.
5. Right livelihood- It consists of leading life with honest means. Therefore, all kinds of fraudulence, robbery, mutilation, and bribery should be forbidden.
6. Right effort- it alludes a constant vigilance, activity, aspires, which are necessary for controlling themselves. It also suggests having encouragement towards good thoughts and concentration of the mind on universal goodwill.
7. Right mindfulness- It will always give a hint to an agent about the impurity of his body so that one can always think of how greed, hatred, and delusion will lead him towards an immoral life. Through the right mindfulness, one will always try to grasp the real nature of anything and always think that nothing is this reality is permanent. When greed comes froth to the existence, one should always abstain from recollection. This is how one could modify their self through the right mindfulness. Right mindfulness is necessary or essential for the right concentration.
8. Right concentration- It consists of four meditations. The primary concentration recommends there is a condition of satisfaction conceived of the annihilation of erotic nature. The second concentration is about a state of delight designed of profound quietness; thought is sedated in it, and instinct prevails. The third focus is a condition of unbiased awareness wherein all interests are decimated. The fourth concentration is a condition of complete serenity and presence of mind wherein happiness and distress are devastated with this note what it suggests that we all should concentrate on producing love and friendship for all creatures. And all ought to ruminate over affection and kinship for all animals, sympathy for troubled animals, satisfaction for the righteous individual, and lack of interest to every single horrendous

individual.⁴ These are called *Brahmavihara*. The sorts of meditations for the cultivation of virtues we may also see in Jainism, the Yoga, and the *Gītā*.

Difference between Hīnayāna and Mahāyāna Buddhism approach for the attainment of *Nirvāṇa*

The word Hīnayāna refers to the school of Theravada, and as such, it is contrasted with Mahāyāna. The word is generally translated as the small vehicle (*hīna* = small, *yāna* = vehicle) and great vehicle (*makā* = great, *yāna* = vehicle). But this translation by no means expresses what is meant by Mahāyāna and Hīnayāna. Asanga discusses the reason why one school is called Hīnayāna, whereas the other, which he professed, was called Mahāyāna.⁵ Considering the point of view of the ultimate goal of religion, the instructions, attempt, realization, and time the Hīnayāna occupies a lower and smaller place than Mahāyāna. This is where the fundamental of the difference exists. The ultimate good of an adherent of the Hīnayāna is to attain his own *nirvāṇa* or salvation. While for Mahāyāna, the ultimate goal was not to seek their salvation but to seek the salvation of all beings. Mahāyāna is those who are prepared to work for infinite time in helping all beings to attain salvation. This is the primary distinction we have in respect of the view they promote for the attainment of *nirvāṇa*. In the next part of the discussion, we would see how by following the path of Buddhism, comprehensive Peace for all creatures is possible.

A comprehensive account of Peace

As stated above, while discussing *Brahmavihāra*, it is the concept by which we can think of building kinship for all animals. While talking about the concept *Brahmavihāra*, we would see there is fourfold meditation which is of "*metta/ maitrī* (universal friendship), *karuṇā* (universal pity), *muditā* (happiness in the prosperity and happiness for all) and *upekṣā* (indifference to any kind of preferment of oneself, his friend, enemy or a third party)"⁶. To habituate oneself to the contemplation on all-inclusive fellowship, one should begin figuring how he should himself like to uncover all hopelessness and become glad, how he should himself like to maintain a strategic distance from death and live brightly, and afterward disregard to the possibility that different creatures would likewise have similar wants. He should, in this way, habituate himself to believe that his companions, his adversaries, and each one of those with whom he is not associated may all live and get glad. He should fix himself to such a degree in this reflection that he would not discover any contrast between the joy or wellbeing of himself and of others. He ought to never lose control of any individual. Should he, at any time, feel insulted because of the wounds perpetrated on him by his adversaries, he should think about the pointlessness of multiplying his misery by getting grieved or vexed on that account. One should also keep in mind that if he allows himself to be affected by anger, then he will spoil all his *śīla*, which he was carefully practicing. Because he knows that if he is indulging with anger, then it will only bring mischief to himself through his bad deeds. Therefore, keeping in

⁴ Sinha, J., *A Manual of Ethics*, p. 381.

⁵ Dasgupta, S., *A History of Indian Philosophy*, vol. I, pp. 125-126

⁶ *Ibid*, pp. 103-104.

mind about the *śīla*, one is practicing in his life that can free his mind from anger against his enemies and establish himself in an attitude of universal friendship.⁷ This concept in Buddhism is called *metta-bhavana*.

In the meditation of universal pity (*karuṇā*), additionally, one ought to feel for the distress of his companions and adversaries the same. The sage being increasingly sharp located will have sympathy for the individuals who are having an upbeat existence, yet are neither procuring merits nor attempting to continue while in transit to Nibbana for they are to endure abundant existences of distress. There are also other kinds of meditation we may find while describing *jhānas*. The five elements of which this *jhāna* is constituted are *vitakka*, *vicāra*, *pīti*, *sukham* and *ekaggata*. All these states of meditation suggest a different kind of concentration, which may lead to inner happiness. Again, while leading a life of inner bliss, one will perceive happiness in the prosperity and happiness of all. That states referred to *muditā*. The last state of mediation is called *upekkhā* (indifference to any kind of preferment of oneself, his friend, enemy, or a third party). This state is characterized by supreme and absolute indifferences (*upekkhā*), which was slowly growing in all the various stages of the *jhānas*.

In addition, we realize that Buddhism emphasizes the purity of inward life. This flawlessness of outside lead does not apply in same way. The psyche ought to be cleansed of eagerness, hatred and delusion. Outrage, jealousy, envy, and other disgust enthusiasm ought to be extirpated. The mind should be filtered. Buddhist morality is altruistic. Inclusive, positive attitude and love are vital for the accomplishment of *nirvāṇa*. Universal love, empathy, euphoria, and impassion are delighted in. Love produces empathy, euphoria, and indifference. So, love is more prominent than these.

However, Buddhist morality is the mean between self-indulgence and self-mortification. It advocates neither gratification nor asceticism—longing for delight springs from selfishness. At the point when pride is uncovered, longing for common and radiant joy is extinguished. Then again, a guilty pleasure is enervating and debasing. It upsets the quiet immaculateness of the brain. In any case, to fulfill the yearning and thirst, to keep the body healthy, to shield it from the warmth and cold, to spare it from weariness, and to cover it serenely and appropriately are important to keep the psyche solid and unadulterated. This is the Middle Path. It looks like Aristotle's regulation of ideals as the mean between the two boundaries of over-guilty pleasure and complete abstention. The Buddha condemns both the unreasonable quest for joy and self-mortification. Self-perfection can be attained by self-abnegation. Narrow selfish love should be consumed by universal selfless love.

Conclusion

We have seen how inner purity is possible through various kinds of meditation. From all those meditations, what we aim at is to a practice of *Ahimsā* where there is the possibility of kinship for all animals. Inclusive, positive attitude and love are vital for the accomplishment of Nirvana and purity of inward life. Non-injury in thought, word and deed, love, cooperative attitude, tolerance, pardoning, sympathy, and self-cleansing are the ideals that

⁷ Dasgupta, S., *A History of Indian Philosophy*, vol. I, p. 104.

should be developed. The Buddha favored a priest's life to a householder's life, on the grounds that the last is brimming with enticements (or one can say the latter is full of temptations). By considering all things, we can't state that Buddhist morals are ascetic in nature. We would like to call it is the halfway/midway among hedonism and asceticism. It incorporates the quiet and magnanimous existence of the movement to benefit humankind. It hates in a functioning life committed to God as the Bhagavad Gita instructs. Thusly, we could state that it teaches selfless humanism.

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