

# **BUDHIST MEDITATION AND HUMAN DEVELOPMENT**

By Thanh Giac

Nowadays, advances in science and technology have brought about significant changes. Based on the global economic growth, there has been said to be development. Human is the owner of technological advances and economic growth. Then are human more developed today than centuries ago?

When it comes to technological development, we have had products such as aero planes, which allow us to travel from country to country easily and quickly, or the Internet, which help us exchange information among all corners of the world. In the respect of economic development, there have been assessment indices like GDP, per capita income, profits, etc. But which is the criterion to evaluate human development?

In our opinions, human is a product with consciousness, not an ordinary material product, thus we cannot evaluate our development based on material criteria. Therefore, human development is the development of the consciousness, the ethical progress, and the love and sympathy shared among all of us. Only when we have a developed consciousness and a good health will humans be considered developed.

In the modern world, a conflict is rising as while the economic and technological development is taking place, we humans are abandoning our values. People tend to benefit themselves rather than others. The strong take advantage of technological advances to subdue the weak and of economic growth to uphold their power. Humans are going against development by nourishing more and more desires. Most people's evaluation is based on their bank accounts, the stocks and houses they own, the brands of their cars, jewellery, clothes or delicious food.... Anyone having abundance of all those things is considered to be successful. With such evaluation measures, negative values are increasing; greed, anger, ignorance, envy, rivalry, etc. are developing in many subtle ways.

When there is such a conflict, humans lose their balance in life, which is usually described by the word 'stress'. If 'stress' occurs, our consciousness lags and our body gets exhausted. And when the conflict reaches its critical point, there certainly must be a change. In order to balance between material and spiritual development, humans need to have peace of mind, to restore and maintain positive values such as love, forgiveness, tolerance, etc., in which love is the basis of all.

So as to develop human true values, we need the 'factories' that can upgrade humans into wonderful products, just like those miraculous products that science and technology have created. Buddhism has provided us with such an amazing upgrading method and that is meditation technique.

Meditation is a mind-training factory, helping us to control ourselves in every thought,

every speech, and every action. Everyday people have too many negative thoughts such as planning how to beat this party, to wipe out that company, loving-hating someone, or indulging in some kind of game or pleasure. Meditation will help us eliminate those negative thoughts because when meditating, there is only one object left, which is our self. We, therefore, will turn our custom outward and our consciousness inward, gradually eliminating negative thoughts like “I hate him” because there will be no one to hate. Meditation will help us untie ourselves from external objects since we will not see any object to get attached to. Once that is achieved, humans are truly ‘freed’.

Meditation allowing humans to delete negative thoughts and release consciousness also means humans will retrieve their inherent good values which have been lost when they react to the surroundings. Restoring and developing good values of consciousness is also gradually taking humans to their **core** values. Besides, meditation has good effects on humans’ health because once the consciousness is full of love, their health is secured and protected from diseases, as some scientists have proved.

Love is the measure of human development, thus anywhere which has a high love index can be considered developed. Meditation is the method of increasing this love index. There are a lot of meditation techniques, which may suit people’s different tastes to achieve the meditate concentration state, such as reciting Buddha’s name or mantras, observing one’s breaths or the four foundations of mindfulness, visualizations ...etc.

However, in today’s world, humans’ desires are on a significant rise, judged from the luxurious consumption, the war environment, conflicts, bombing, terrorism everywhere, as well as the act of eating the living beings by various processing methods to satisfy humans’ greed.

In order to support the meditation techniques in such a world where desires have grown quite fast compared to Buddha’s time, there needs to be some methods to suppress desires, one of which is vegetarianism. Vegetarianism can be regarded as a ‘catalyst’ for the meditation ‘reaction’ to be carried out quickly and thoroughly. Humans cannot develop love when they can still eat a chicken’s leg, a fish’ head, a lobster’s flesh or a pig’s heart, which are living beings like us. When people keep on eating more and more animals, the distance between animals’ and humans’ life becomes closer, and will there be a day when humans eat each other?

We can only succeed in meditating if we know how to avoid killing. Eating living beings will slow down the result of meditation for the modern humans, thus easily cause them to give up. As for us the Buddhists, we all know that meditation can only bear fruits when we protect the precepts, but when we eat animals, we not only kill living beings, but also steal from them, since they do not want to give us their life, and they always scream in pain when we take their life away. We use others’ things without permission, thus we break the vow not to steal. (the teachings from the Most Venerable Thich Tri Tinh, First Deputy president of Vietnam Buddhist Sangha Association)

On the whole, Buddhist meditation will help humans develop both consciousness and

health:

- If the world always thinks highly of the development of science and technology because of its high-tech which creates valuable products, meditation is the highest tech in human development because it develops the humans' consciousness & knowledge, and creates the loving-kindness human
- If humans always think there is lots of delicious food in this world, meditation is the most wonderful food since meditation brings the purest source of energy to the body.
- If the world needs different pills to treat different kinds of diseases, meditation is a mystery pill for all ills.
- If everybody needs a safe and happy home, meditation is the warmest haven.
- If the leaders of a company, a governmental ministry or a country want to benefit their employees or citizens, meditation brings the most benefit.

In short, meditation is far beyond what this world has. Only with meditation will humans have a peaceful life full of happiness and no more sorrows, which is actually a heaven on Earth.

Since the time is limited, we expect there will be more thorough analyses about Buddhist meditation and human development, as well as the problems of keeping Buddhist vows to support the process of meditation, applied meditation simple techniques to the daily life, or the impacts of meditation on the change in consciousness and curing illnesses. After this conference, we hope that the direct and indirect killing of living beings should be discouraged in order to awaken and develop Bodhi heart. We also hope that there will be globally applied programs such as a world's meditation day, Buddhist vegetarianism days or months to nourish our love for living beings....

We are appreciated and sincerely thank Vietnam Buddhist Sangha who has allowed us to attend this conference.

We are appreciated and sincerely thank Most Venerable Thich Tri Tinh who has taught us about reciting Buddha's names and meditation techniques and about developing loving kindness for living beings, which helped us to present this speech.

We are appreciated and sincerely thank the Conference Committee who has organized this conference so that we have the opportunity to express our opinions.

Best wishes to all the members and hope the Conference success

By Buddhist Thanh Giac

Master

of

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