

# Human Development

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Buddhism distinguishes altogether twelve classes of intelligent beings: four of the average ordinary class (puthujjana) and eight of the elect class (ariya).<sup>1</sup>

According to the Buddhists, the individual has no real existence. The term 'puggala' does not mean anything real. It is only sammutisacca (apparent truth) as opposed to paramatthasacca (real truth). Just as it is by the condition precedent of the co-existence of its various parts that the word 'chariot' is used, just so is it that when the khandhā are there, we talk of a 'being'.<sup>2</sup>

According to the Buddhists, the true view is the five masses of elements (khandhā), which constitute the world, are without any substance (anattā), impermanent (anicca), and instead of being a source of happiness they are really causes of grief (dukkha). This view of the constituted world can be obtained after a long course of physical discipline and mental training, which offer a close dissemination of Buddhist meditation and human development.

To Buddhism, life goes on continuously like a waterfall; it extends in a cyclic movement in three stages : the past, the present and the future. In life, we undergo birth, aging, illness, and death automatically, same as all material things go through the process of existence, staying, changing as well as extinction.

However, death is no destruction of life, for life it is operating continuously. Birth, aging, illness, and death are nothing but the phenomena of life. All materials and energy are interchangeable, e.g. a piece of charcoal can be decomposed into chemical elements and turned into energy. Like other living creatures, man is made up of physical components and is subject to change from one state of existence to another. However, such transformations should not be taken to be the end of life at all. When such transformation occurs, the substance of life is fundamentally unchanged.

Life continues on in the form of an invisible force or energy which called Kamma. The bodies we currently possess are just the temporary resting place of our Kamma. Our bodies will die, decay and disappear. However our Kamma will continue to live on, and return to a world, reborn in other physical bodies. The Kamma is like a computer memory bank, it

accumulates the good and bad deeds we have done in past lives and continues to accumulate in present in order to form in future. The goodness and badness of our deeds in our past and this life will determine whether we will have good or bad fortune in the rest of this life and our next lives.

<sup>1</sup> Compendium of Philosophy, by S.Z. Aung and Mrs. Rhys Davids, p. 49

<sup>2</sup> The questions of King Milinda, S.B.E., vol.XXXV, p. 45, quoting Samyutta i, 135

<sup>3</sup> Sn., Vasala sutta

Buddhist outlook of life is in conformity with the actual existing conditions. If we abide by such a rational outlook, it not only would lead us to live in peace and contentment but would also help us to make steady progress continually in our spiritual cultivation until supreme perfect enlightenment is realized.

Buddhism teaches that every man in the universe is his own lord, controls his own destiny, and is not controlled by any other man or any supernatural God. Sākyamuni Buddha attributed His own enlightenment achievements and results to His own great efforts and wisdom.

Buddhism teaches that a person's luck or misfortune, success or failure is determined by person's deeds, good or bad and his efforts. The Buddha can show him the way, but man has to do the work himself.

Man's position, according to Buddhism, is supreme. Man is his own master and there is no higher being or power that sets in judgment over his destiny.

The aim of life is to clear up the blurred vision about the real nature of the worldly phenomena. As it is neither feasible nor desirable to place the highest (paramattha) truth all at once before the eyes of a beginner, it starts with a critical and examination of the worldly objects, how they originate (samudaya) and decay (nirodha), the ways (magga) as well as means by which their final decay get effected. Of these four processes, the first two, dukkha and samudaya are concerned with objects which are not real in the highest sense, so these two should be treated as conventional (sammuti) truths. The other two, nirodha and magga, are related to the highest truth (paramattha), which is actually a matter of inner realization.

The Buddha also taught man's development depends on his own realization of Truth, not on the benevolent grace of a god or any external power as a reward for his obedient good behaviour.

Again, Buddhism thoroughly analyzes the question of the universe and life with the objective that man will obtain by the correct understanding of life.

There are two common views of life, pessimistic and optimistic. An extreme pessimist views life to be short and empty, thus living is waiting for death, not for development. Consequently, a pessimist remains sad and depressed all the time. An extreme optimist carries the attitude of 'enjoy

while you can', not meditate. He uses ecstasy and passion to fill the desires of his senses and heart; he does not really care about the meaning of life and the objective of living. He does not know and he does not care.

Buddhism's perspective on life, from the strict sense, is neither pessimistic nor optimistic. It is termed the 'Middle way'- not to constantly whine and complain about life, nor to waste away life by living in a constant state of daze. The Middle way recommends the use of the vision of wisdom to remove life's fears, anguishes and misunderstanding, in order to recognize the truth about life and to control one's destiny.

Fame and fortune are temporary. We did not bring them with us when we came to this world, and we can not take them with us when we leave. Buddhism cautions man not to be too obsessed with desires and greed. It advises us to be compassionate, charitable and kind. We must not be handcuffed by the desire for fame and fortune. Wealth cannot provide us with spiritual fulfillment. Only by having good conduct and pure minds, we can achieve peace, contentment and true happiness in life.

A human being's view is given that the person is known in the sense of a real and ultimate fact, but he is not known in the same way as other real and ultimate facts are known.

He is known in the sense of a real and ultimate fact, his material quality is also known in the sense of a real and ultimate fact. But it cannot truly be said that the material quality is one thing and the person another, nor can it be truly predicated that the person is related or absolute, conditioned or unconditioned, eternal or temporal, or whether the person has external features or whether he is without any.

One who has material quality in the sphere of matter is a person, but it cannot be said that one who experiences desires of sense in the sphere of sense desire is a person. The genesis of the person is apparent, his passing away and duration are also distinctively apparent, but it cannot be said the person is conditioned.

Buddhism stands unique in the history of human thought in denying the existence of such a soul, self or ātman. According to the Buddha, the idea of self is an imaginary, false belief which has no corresponding reality, and it produces harmful thoughts of 'me and mine', selfishness, desire, craving, attachment, hatred, ill-will, conceit, pride, egoism and other defilements, impurities and problems. It is the source of all the troubles in the world from personal conflicts to wars between nations.

It was the Buddha who for the first time in the known history of mankind attempted to abolish slavery, invented the higher morality, the idea of the brotherhood of the entire human race, and in striking terms, condemned the

degrading caste system which in Indian society at the time was firmly rooted. The Buddha declared :

Na jaccā vasalo hoti, na jaccā hoti brāhmano,

Kammanā vasalo hoti, kammanā hoti brāhmano.

“By birth is not one an outcast, By birth is not one a brahmin,

By deeds is one an outcast, By deeds is one a brahmin”.<sup>3</sup>

To Buddhism, caste or colour does not preclude one from becoming an adherent of the Buddha or from entering the noble order of the Sangha where all are treated as Ariyas. Fishermen, scavengers, courtesans, together with warriors and brahmins were freely admitted into the Order and were also given positions of rank.

The Buddha provided equal opportunities for all and raised, rather than lowered, the status of people.

In Buddhism one finds milk for the babe and meat for the strong, it appeals equally to both the rich and the poor.

Buddha’s view on the class of human beings (individuals) on the basis of knowledge and wisdom divided into two categories :

(i) The puthujjana does not know the goal of life, he harms both himself and the other person because of ignorance (avijjā). He belongs to a different category separated from the category of Ariyapuggala. So he is also called Anariyapuggala. He has to take rebirth in this Saṃsāra again and again. The puthujjana can, however, develop himself to become Ariyapuggala.

(ii) Ariyapuggala is a person whose fetters have been destroyed and is not returned to become a wrong view person (micchādiööhika puggala). Such a person is said to be an Ariyapuggala (noble person).

There are four pairs of men and eight types of individual namely : (i) Sotāpatimagga (ii) Sotāpatiphala (iii) Sakadāgāmimagga (iv) Sakadāgāmiphala (v) Anāgāmimagga (vi) Anāgāmiphala (vii) Arahantamagga (viii) Arahantaphala.

The first seven men are called Sekha puggala (one who has to learn is called learner). The eighth one is called Asekha puggala (unlearned person). So the Ariyapuggala means the Noble person who does not do any harm to any being but helps all people.

Tathāgata, the meaning intended here is that there exist only these ever changing corporeal and mental phenomena, arising and vanishing from moment to moment, but no separate entity as well as no personality.

When the commentaries in this connection explain Tathāgata by ‘living being’ or ‘satta’, they mean to say that here the questioners are using the merely conventional expression, Tathāgata, in the sense of a really existing entity.

Further promotion of Buddhist meditation and human development will certainly help the learners to understand the nature of human beings better in order to deal with them in a better way, to make one personal family, social, national as well as global life free from all problems.