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BUDDHIST PRINCIPLES ON SOCIAL RELATIONSHIP

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ABBREVIATIONS

Digha Nikaya	DN
Majjhima Nikaya	MN
Samyutta Nikaya	SN
Anguttara Nikaya	AN
Khuddaka Nikaya	KN
Dhammapada	Dhp
Vinaya pitaka	Vin.
Mahavagga Pali	Mh.

I. Introduction:

The Buddha's Teaching

Among the religious founders of the world, Gotama Buddha left behind the greatest content of teaching which was latter categorized into three divisions or Three Baskets (**Tipitaka**) or Five Collections (**nikāya**). All the Buddha's Teaching was written down which made up a huge file of fifty-two books that are deal with 84000 dhammas- Topics. Beside that there are Commentaries (**Atthakathā**) and sub-commentaries (**Tika**). One may be surprised at it vast content and wonder how Buddha's followers learn and practice the Teacher's Messages!

Scholarly approach to the Buddha's Teaching would lead one to Philosophy, Psychology, Sociology, Ethic, History, Linguistic, etc. Practical approach claims that Buddhism is a way of life. When we speak of some thing as a way of life, it indicates principles that are accepted and lived by people. These principles cover not only philosophical, psychological and social aspects, but ethical value.

The Buddha often used the word **Dhamma**-Teaching, **Vinaya**-Discipline denoting his Teaching. This **Dhamma- Vinaya** is a practical system leading to liberation from suffering. **Ehi bhikkhū, svākhato Bhagavato dhammo cara brahma cariya dukkhassa antakiriya**¹- Come, bhikkhus, well taught is this teaching, lead the holy life which will make an end of suffering.

In the very first Sermon the Buddha proclaimed his Middle Way (**Majjhima piṭipada**) and (**Cattari ariya saccāni**) The Four Noble Truths which were considered as the fundamental teaching of the Buddha. They are:

The Noble Truth of unsatisfactoriness (**Dukkha sacca**)

The Noble Truth of the Origin of suffering (**Samudaya sacca**)

The noble truth of cessation of suffering (**Niroddha sacca**) and

The Noble Truth of the path leading to cessation of suffering (**Dukkha paṭipada niroddha-sacca**).

¹ Dhammacakkapavattanasutta,

The second Sermon is also addressed to the same group of listeners, the five ascetics at the Deer Park. In this sutta the Buddha pointed out the three marks of existence: the changing nature (**anicca**) of the five aggregates (**khandha**), what is constantly changing is unsatisfactory (**yadaniccam tadadukkham**), what is unsatisfactory and beyond subjective control has no substance to be enjoyed as self (**yadadukkhamtadanatta**). The five ascetics grasped the meaning of the Buddha's words, developed insight knowledge which penetrates into the real nature of existence and made an end of suffering and they attained Arahantship, the highest stage of sainthood. We see in many suttas that the audience listening to the sermon, developed insight and attained different stages of sainthood, or became established in the Dhamma. The Buddha did not teach the same topic to everyone. Instead, knowing the inclination of his listeners, he gave suitable teaching for the ripened beings in the audience. To some groups he gave a progressive talk on the **Dhamma**, that is, to say, talks on charity (**dāna**), talks on morality (**sīla**), talks on a better existence or heavenly states (**sagga**), the renunciation from sensual pleasure (**nekkhamma**), etc. The ultimate goal of Buddha's Teaching is the liberation from **samsāra**, the cycle of suffering of birth and rebirth, the extinction of all suffering, by attaining **Nibbāna**, the eternal peace.

The Buddha appeared in the human world and His Teaching is mainly concerning with human affairs, human problems, and human nature within their conditions of worldly existence. For the happiness, welfare, and betterment of people in this very life, he expounded the Dhamma. In the huge content of the Buddha's Teaching, many discourses are concerned with social relationships, and the ethical instructions on the matter, such as Singalovadasutta, Cakkavattisutta, Ambalaṭṭhasutta, Aggaññasutta, Sakkapañhāsutta (DN), Magandiyasutta, Rahulāvādasutta, Kosambiyasutta, ... (MN), Kesamuttisutta, Mangalasutta, Mettasutta,...(KN), and many events and accidents that are recorded in the Vinīyapitaka.

Buddhist Attitude on Human Relationship

Buddhism is a Homo-centric Religion, it means the Buddha's teaching focuses on human matters, human problems, human characters and human behavior, and these Dhammas deal with human relationship.

No one doubts that human being is a social species. Man was born alone but for security, pleasure and happiness he joins others. How does this come about? Since he was born, he was placed in a family consisting of mother, father, and may be brothers and sisters. He has, in some way or other, influenced by them. Later on he is sent to school. There are teachers and other students to whom in due course he has to be accustomed. During his course of existence, he joins small or large groups of society, leaving his influence on, or being influenced by them. In this way he is not an absolutely isolated island. Associations and intimacies do not always provide security, pleasure and joy; but confusions, upsets and conflicts are also bound to arise. Man must learn how to live harmoniously and happily among his fellows and his environment. Positive religious and ethical teaching is this art of living with wise reflection, understanding, toleration and responsibilities. Otherwise, if man just lives according to his instinctive nature and impulsion, it would lead to many conflicts and suffering within each individual, among other individuals and society.

What is the Buddhist attitude on human relationships? A message from the Ambalaṭṭhikārahulovādasutta throws some light on moral responsibility:

“Rahula, when you wish to do an action with the body (speech, or mind), you should reflect on that same bodily (verbal, or mental) action thus: would this action that I wish to do lead to my own affliction, to other’s affliction, or to the affliction of both? Is it an unwholesome action with painful consequences, with painful results? When you reflect, if you know this action would lead to your own conflict, or the conflict of others, or the conflict of both, with evil consequences, with painful results, then you definitely should not do such an action. But when you reflect if you see the action would not lead to any affliction, it is a wholesome action with pleasant consequence, pleasant result, then you may do such an action.

While you are doing an action, you should reflect...

After you have done an action, you should reflect...”²

This message obviously expresses a sense of moral responsibility for one’s own actions and the consequences that would affect oneself or others. This sense of moral responsibility is base on wisdom, the discriminative knowledge of good and bad, the knowledge of morality and immorality; and the ability to reflect on each action and its consequences.

In another sutta, the Loving-kindness Discourse, a positive approach with concern to others is taught: “mātā yathā niyaṃ puttā. Ayusā ekaputtā anurakkhe, evaṃ pi sabbabhūtesu, mānaṣaṃ

² M61, p524

bhāvaye aparimāṇaṃ.” Thus as a mother, might guard her son, her only child with all her life. Should one maintain unboundedly, one’s good will for every living being”.

It can be said that two main principles leading to Buddhist social philosophy are Wisdom (paññā) and Compassion (Kārunā). Wisdom manifests in wise attention (yonisomanasikara) which is the cause for arising of right view³, reflection, and understanding things as they are (yathābhūtaṃ dassanaṃ). The Buddha said:” whatever wholesome states, all of them are rooted in the proper attention (*Ye keci kusala dhammā, sabbe te yonisomanaraka mūlā*). See things as they are or understanding is the higher degree of wisdom, it implies a discriminative but calm and equable mind without agitation caused by likes or dislikes.

Compassion (karuṇā) and kindness (metta) manifests in deep awareness of the suffering and need of other beings. Buddhist concept of compassion does not limit itself to humankind, compassion should be suffused to all living beings without discrimination. Metta and Karuṇā are two of the four Brahmaviharas: Metta is kindness and care for others as well as for oneself; Karuṇā is compassionate feeling at seeing the suffering of others and arousing a wish to remove or relieve their suffering; Mudita is sympathetic joy at seeing the success of others; Upekkhā is equanimity, by viewing that living beings have their own kamma. If every body practices the four Brahmaviharas, this world would be a perfect place to live in, and there would not be a need to design a paradise!

II Buddhist perspective on life and world

Before we proceed to the Buddhist Principles on human Relationships I would like to take a glimpse at the Buddhist perspective on life and world. Life (jīva), or being (bhūta), or existence (bhāva) according to Buddhism is a phenomena that come into being by the force of kamma, volitional action that performed in the past, and craving for existence: **kammātaṇhā**- craving for sense pleasures, **bhāvataṇhā**- craving for better existence, **Vibhavataṇhā**- craving for non-existence. Once venerable Ananda asked the Buddha: existence, what is called existence Lord? (*bhavo bhavo’ti bhante vuccati*). Thereupon the Buddha answered:

“Iti kho ananda kammā khettaṃ viññānaṃ bijaṃ, taṇhā sineho. Avijjhanivarānaṃ sattānaṃ tanhāsamyojanānaṃ hinaya dhatuyā viññānaṃ patitṭhitīnaṃ. Evaṃ ayatiṃ punabbhabhinibbatti

³ M43,p390 , M117,p 934

*hoti. Evam kho Anando bhavo hoti 'ti''*⁴ In this way, Ananda, action is the field, consciousness is the seed, and craving is the moisture. For beings that hindered by ignorance, fettered by craving, consciousness is established in lower (middle and higher) world. Thus in the future there is repeated rebirth. In this way there is becoming.”

According to Buddhist philosophy, a human being is a combination of the five khandhas-aggregates:

1. **Rupakkhandha**- the aggregate of materiality,
2. **Vedanakkhandha**- the aggregate of sensation,
3. **Sannakkhandha**- the aggregate of perception,
4. **Sankharakkhandha**- the aggregate of mental formation,
5. **Vinnanakkhandha**- the aggregate of consciousness.

The five khandhas are the object of clinging (**upadanakkhandha**) as ‘I’, ‘mine’, ‘myself’. The Buddha always affirmed that his teaching is for the removing of this wrong notion. He teaches that none of the five khandhas should be held as self or soul, also the combination of the five should not be grasped as self or soul ⁵

. What is the “ world” in Buddhism? World (**loka**) consists of three kinds:

1. **Satta loka**: World of sentient beings or the animate world.
2. **Saṅkhāra loka**: The conditioned world (mental and physical phenomena)
3. **Okasa loka**: Space-world or inanimate world which form the habitat of living beings.

Buddhism views the world in the dynamic state of formation and ever changing. “Sabbe saṅkhārā anicca”: all conditioned things are impermanent”. The beginning and the end of the world are unperceivable. The Buddha does not encourage his disciples to speculate on the inanimate world. Instead, he draught them to the inner world: the world of physical and psychological.” It is in the fathom long body of oneself with its perception and its mind that the Buddha describes the world, the origin of

⁴ AN i, sutta 76,77

⁵ Mahapunnaka sutta,MN

the world, the cessation of the world, and the way leading to the cessation of the world.”⁶. Buddhism rejects the existence of an almighty God, who created the world and every thing at will. The **Brahmajala sutta** (DN 1) enumerates sixty-two kinds of views on beings and the world. The Buddha stated that these views are either speculative or fanciful or based on limited and subjective experience, all of them are incorrect views.

According to Buddhism, a person perceives the world through six sense bases:

- Eye perceive the visible object
- Earaudible object.
- Noseolfactory object.
- Tongue.....testable object.
- Body.....tangible object.
- Mind perceives cognizable objects.

When the eye and visible object come into contact, eye-consciousness arises, there is no need for interference of a divine-object (God or Brahma). Similar is the way of other sense organs in their respective fields (visaya). In that way a person relates to the world; the process would run on like this: if the object is attractive and agreeable, he likes it (tañhā arises), wants to seize it in order to have it longer and intensify the pleasure (upādāna), and have it (bhāva); if the object is undesirable and ugly, he dislikes it (dosa), wants it to be destroyed (vibhāvatañhā), and shuns from it; if the object is not much impressive, he tend to be indifferent toward it, does not care for what is going on (moha or avijja manifests here). It is very important to see the mechanical working of the sense bases, their objects, and the psychological reactions. Then one would be disillusioned about a supernatural power outside who would give rewards or punishments to him. Seeing how the mind working helps one to control over himself in whatever controllable.

But things are ever changing: desirable object would give no more pleasure, and become undesirable; sweetness would ferment to be sour; and tasty things overnight turn out bitter.

⁶ Udana, p...

Impermanence and evanescence of conditioned things give rise to a sense of un-satisfactoriness (**dukkha**). No body would deny the fact of un-satisfactoriness of life; in Buddhism it is termed **dukkhasacca**. In the first Sermon preached at Deer Park to the Five ascetics, the Buddha stated: “Birth, old age, disease and death are suffering; association with the undesirable, separation from the beloved, and inability in getting what one wishes are suffering; in brief, the five aggregates of clinging are suffering.” The Buddha does not stop here, just pointing out the gloomy side of life and giving a pessimistic view on the fact of suffering. Like an excellent physician, he probed into the cause of suffering, it is craving, the impulse to renew enjoyment here and there. The fact of suffering should be seen and understood, but the origin of suffering (**dukkhasamudaya**) must be eliminated (**pahāneyya**). When a person sees the fact of suffering he become wearied of it, and he would step back to look closer into what is going on. Then one does not jump up according to one’s blind impulses, so one would avoid many undesirable situations. It is meaningful to see the fact of suffering and arouse a sense of compassion for oneself as well as other beings who are subjects of oppression by the changing nature of things. When one sees the cause of suffering, one will not blame oneself or others for the suffering one is bearing, but tries to understand its cause and finally eliminate it. Craving is a dhamma, not a person, a dhamma arises and passes away according to conditions. Its cause is ignorance, the inability to reflect and penetrate into the reality. Whenever there is a lucid understanding the reality, the darkness of ignorance is dispelled, and craving cannot creep in to operate suffering. The cessation of suffering is realizable and should be realized (**sacchikaniya**). The Path leading to the end of suffering (**dukkhanirodhapaṭipadā**) has also revealed by the Buddha as the Middle Way (**Majjhimapaṭipadā**), or the Noble eightfold Path (**ariyatthagikamagga**). This Path is to be developed (**bhavaneyya**), making an end of suffering.

Majjhimapatipada- the Middle Way is the way that avoids of two extreme practices of Asceticism and Hedonism, Annihilation-ism and eternal-ism, fanaticism and dogmatism.

Ariyatthagikamagga consist of eight factors:

1. **Sammādiṭṭhi:** Right view, or right attitude,
2. **Sammāsankappa:** Right thought, or right intention,
3. **Sammāvācā:** Right speech,

4. **Sammākamantā:** Right action,
5. **Sammā ajiva :** Right livelihood,
6. **sammāvāyama:** Right effort,
7. **Sammāsati:** Right mindfulness,
8. **Sammāsamādhi:** Right concentration

The first two is categorized in the Training of Wisdom The next three is Morality, Moral purity based on right conduct; and the last three are Concentration, the purity of mind based on concentration. Morality (**Sila**), Concentration (**Samādhi**), and Wisdom (**Paññā**) are to be developed together, each serves as the base and supports the others.

The Four Noble Truths and the Three Universal Marks of existence (**anicca, dukkha, anatta**) expressed clearly the Buddhist perspective on life and world. Aggañña sutta (DN) throws some light on the formation of the world, and the evolution of mankind and human relationships. This sutta can be categorized as some kind of Buddhist genesis. According to this sutta, at the primitive phase, the world was dark and the first group of messengers that appeared on it were some kind of self-illuminated beings who were mind- born and sexless. But as time passed on, they had been corrupted by craving for taste, and curiously, they fed on material food, which caused their bodies to be coarsened and lose their self-illumination. The more craving and thirst increased, the grosser their bodies became. And there were differentiated in their appearance give rise to conceit & pride in those who considered they were better than others. These sexless beings now developed into sex, and as they contemplated on the opposite sex, passion arose in them. They joined with each other and grouped as family. As different families were made up, the sense of private property also arose. They no longer used the natural resources in common, they divided fields and earth into boundaries. But another problem arose then, some ones did not respect the other's properties, they stole, the case of thief was found. With stealing arose lies and censures. Now, laws and leader were needed. People assembled and discussed the matter among them. Finally they chose a person who was the most handsome, the most pleasant, and the most capable of making people abide by Laws to be their king. This person was called **Mahasammata**, the great chosen. Then other classes of people also came into being according to the different functions and occupations that they played in society. Such as Brahmanas who shun from evil, Khattiyas lords of the field, Rajas were

who delight others in dharma; Vessas who engaged in various trades; Sudras who engaged in hunting and such low jobs.⁷

The State of Social Relationship at the Buddha's Time

The Buddha was born in the sixth century BC, by that time the Vedic tradition and Brahmanism had been established firmly in Indian society. The Indian society was divided by the caste system. Vedic philosophers affirmed that the division of caste systems has its origin in the divine Creator, the Brahma. According to that dogma, Brahmas were born of the Brahma's mouth; therefore they were the highest caste, the only sons of Brahma. They had many privileges as priests and royal chaplains, and teachers... they were proud of themselves as the only group deserving as spiritual seekers and holding knowledge. They would never bow down or listen to the members of the lower castes as they considered themselves superior. Next was the Khattiya caste, whose were born from Brahma's arms. They were governors and warriors. Vessa was born from Brahma thigh; they were farmers, merchants, carpenters. And Sudda, whose were born from Brahma's feet, they were workers, servants, slaves... There were also outcaste called Chandalas, the lowest class of people.

Brahmanism forbids intermarriage between different castes, and yoke many hard forbiddances and punishments as regard to the transgression of the caste. Each caste was made of an exclusive social system, and thus invisible walls were built to excommunicate people in society. This evil designation of selfish Brahmin thinkers and philosophers as regard to social order leads to many obstacles for a healthy development of individuals and society.

The Buddha openly rejected caste system. He pointed out the groundless proof of discrimination as regard to caste. In Ambalattha, Sonadanda (DN) and AssaIaya, vasettha, kannakatthala sutta (MN), the arguments are based on biological, sociological, historical, and ethical ground of the sameness in all human beings. The Buddha told young proud Brahmin Ambattha: 'every body sees Brahmin women got pregnant and gave birth to babies. Thus Bramins also came out of the women's bodies, so what proof do they claim to be the descendents from Brahma's mouth, the only sons of the Brahma and their superior? The Buddha then traced back into the past and pointed out the real descendent of Ambattha's lineage having a maternal ancestor from a female slave of the Sakyan clan. To the learned and well-known Brahmin Sonadanta, the Buddha made him admit that only wisdom and virtue are the real essensial

⁷ DN, p413.

qualities to make a person be recognized as a respectable one (**brahmana**). In the Buddhist Order, castes are totally abolished. “ Various rivers once flowed into the sea, their water become sea -water and unable to differentiate the water of each one. In the same way people who belong to the different castes lose their caste status in the Order of Buddhist monks. They are all reckoned as the sons and daughters of the Sakya.”⁸

“None is by birth a Brahmin,

None is by birth an outcast.

By deed one becomes Brahmin,

By deed one becomes an outcast”⁹

The dogmatic belief and Vedic tradition deluded and weakened human will for freedom and knowledge. They taught people that rites, rituals or bathing in holy rivers can purify evils and impurities. They encouraged the slaughter of animals in sacrifice to please and beg favor from their God. They made people become helpless in weak and in suffering. The only thing these unfortunate beings can do is pray to their gods for mercy, and do service to the upper classes to get merits for a better rebirth in the life to come. Amidst the darkness of delusion, superstitious belief and wicked selfishness, the Buddha illuminated the light of wisdom for the world by pointing out the Truths and the Path, suffusing compassion over all living beings. He taught self reliance:

Atta hi attano nātho, Ko hi nātho parosiya?

One is one’s own refuge, Who else would be the refuge? ¹⁰

And:

So karohi dipaṃ attano, Khippaṃ vAyamo pandito bhāva.

‘Make an island (or lamp) for yourself, Strike quickly, become wise.

Rid of impurities and cleansed of taints,

You will not come again to birth and decay’ (Dhp138).

His boundless compassion is seen when he encouraged his disciples:

⁸ AN 1, nipata maha vagga; Udana and Itivuttaka, BPS, p73

⁹ Vasala sutta.

¹⁰ Dhp145.

“*Cārātha bhikkhave cārikam, bahucanahitāya, bahujanasukhāya, lokanukampāya, atthāya hitāya sukhāya devāmanussānam.*” Go, oh, monks, to teach the Dhamma for the good of the many, for the happiness of the many, out of compassion for the world, for the welfare, benefit and happiness of gods and men.¹¹”

III Classification of Social Relationship

Society is a collection of individuals. Thus the social relationships are the relations of individual to individual(s), individual to group(s), and group to groups. In how many ways a person may relate to others? A man may be a husband, a son, a father, a grandfather, a grandson, a nephew, in the way of family relations. He may be a citizen, a king, a master, a worker, etc outside the family. A woman may be a mother, a wife, a daughter, a grandmother, etc. in the family. She may also have a social status and the responsibilities outside family such as a citizen, a friend, a teacher, etc.

In the Singalovadasutta¹², the Buddha symbolized human relationships in six pairs, with the six directions as follows:

1. East: Parents/ children,
2. South: Teachers/ pupils,
3. West: Wives/ husbands,
4. North: Friends/ companions,
5. Zenith: Clergy/ laity,
6. Nadir: Employers/ employees.

The first group that a man is placed in is his family. Being aware of the importance of family life, especially the relationship of parents and children, the Buddha told young Singala to regard it as the eastern direction where the light come from. These are five commendable duties that parents should perform:

¹¹ Mhv, p21

¹² DN31, p461

1. Restrain their children from vice,
2. Exhort them to virtue,
3. Train them for a profession,
4. Suggest suitable marriage for them,
5. Hand over their inheritance in due time.

In other suttas, the Buddha said parents are deities in one's home; one should worship them like Brahma. Parents are the first teachers (pubbacariya) in one's life. In the Mangalasutta, it is stated:

mātāpitu upatṭhānaṃ

Puttadārassa sangaho,

Anākula ca kammanā

Evaṃ mangalaṃ uttamaṃ.

“Being helpful to mother& father,

Supporting wife and children.

Having a blameless means of livelihood,

This is the supreme blessing.”

Thus performing one's duties in family is called the highest Blessing in Buddhism. These are also a set of duties that the children should learn:

1. Once supported by parents, I will now be their support,
2. I will perform duties incumbent on them,
3. I will keep up the lineage and tradition,
4. I will made myself worthy of heritage,
5. I will transfer merits to them in due time.

The relations between husbands and wives are regarded as the western direction, where the sun sets. The bond between them have their roots in mutual love (**rāga**), mutual affection (**pema**), and respect and care for each other (**metta**). How should a husband behave to his wife according to the Buddha's Teaching? He should respect, be polite, and be faithful to her; handing over the household authorities to her, and providing her with adornments. On the other hand, a wife should conduct herself to the husband in five ways such as: performing her duties well; showing hospitality to relatives of both sides; being faithful to him; protecting the goods he brings home; and discharging her duties with skill and industrious.

It is interesting to note that the Buddha does not sub-ordinate the wife to husband, but rather considers her as a friend or a helper with equal status and duties. In religious and spiritual life the Buddha also declared that women have the potential to achieve the highest goal- Arahantship, the liberation from all bonds of impurities and the suffering of Samsara. This was demonstrated by the fact that there were numerous female Arahants in the Bhikkhuni Order.

Beside the family relationships are relationships to friends and colleagues. This kind of relations is also very important in one's life, especially for young people. Good friends and kind-hearted colleagues give one pleasure and joy in association, and they may raise one to fortune; but bad friends or evil colleagues may cause one's downfall to misfortune and woeful state. The Singalovada sutta records in detail how to recognize good and bad friends.

“*asevanā ca bālānaṃ, paṇḍitānaṃ ca sevanā.*” Not consorting with the foolish, with the wise associating, this is the highest blessing.”(Mangala sutta). In friendship, the Buddha commended on the following qualities: Generosity, Courtesy, Consideration, Truthfulness, and treating friends as equal to oneself. Friendship is regarded as the northern quarter. In five ways friends should treat a friend:

1. They protect him when he is off his guard,
2. On such occasion guard his properties,
3. They become a refuge in danger,
4. They do not forsake him in his trouble,

5. They show consideration for his family.

Thus the northern quarter is made safe, protected and secure.

Once, the Venerable Ananda told the Buddha: half of the noble life (Brahmācāriya) depends upon the friendship, association and intimacy with good friends. Thereupon, the Buddha said: ‘do not say like that, Ananda, indeed good friends (kalyāṇamittā) is the whole of the holy life’ (D.N 180). For religious devotees and spiritual seekers who have left their family for a homeless life, (pema) which their relations to others now is different from that of family love (rāga), or personal affection (underline attachment and bind one to rebirth and suffering in samsara). One must develop loving kindness, responsibility, and detachment. Detachment here does not mean heartlessness or irresponsibility, but rather it is the intelligent and sensible approach to relationships. Culagosinga sutta¹³, perhaps, is the most beautiful discourse that depicts the noble relation between Brahma-farers. In the sutta, the Venerable Anuruddha, the Venerable Kimbila, the Venerable Nandiya lived together in a forest near Kosambi city. On being asked by the Buddha how they live in concord, seeking spiritual development, the Venerable Anuruddha answered: ‘surely, venerable sir, we are living in concord, with mutual appreciation, without disputing, blending like milk and water, viewing each other with kindly eyes. We maintain loving acts, loving words, and loving thoughts to each other in private and in public; we perform our duties, small or big, quietly. Whenever need help, we make a sign asking for help from others. We appreciate the opportunity of living together with such noble companions and considering that: why should I set aside what I wish to do and do what these venerable ones wish.’”

How lovely and selfless is the way these venerable ones behaved! This is the most inspiring story about the ideal lives of the community of Buddhist monks. In many occasions the Buddha instructed on how to keep harmony in the community. There are six causes which maintain the concord and peace in community as depicted in the Kosambiyasutta; ¹⁴

1. A monk/nun should offer his/her fellow Brahma farers friendly acts of bodily in public as well as in private (mettaṃ kāya kammaṃ),
2. ... friendly acts of speech (mettaṃ vācī kammaṃ),

¹³ M31, p301

¹⁴ M48, p322

3. ... friendly acts of thought (*mettaṃ mano kammaṃ*),
4. He should share with his brahma farers what he has rightly and lawfully acquired, and enjoy them in common.
5. They should dwell united in virtues (*sīlesu sīlasamaGññāgato viharanti*).
6. They should dwell united in view (*diṭṭhiya diṭṭhisamaññāgato viharanti*).

These six principles to be followed by monks and nuns are indispensable factors that constitute harmony and unity in any society. The first three principles, kind acts, kind words, and kind thoughts to each other are the best glue for every relationship, for without them there would be no more pleasure and progress in association. Next is the act of sharing, in Buddhist terms it is called *dāna*- generosity, or *Cāga*- non- attachment as regard to materiality. *Dāna* is one of the Ten Meritorious deeds, and **Caga** is one of the Seven Treasures of a Buddhist monk/nun or any spiritual seeker.

The distribution of profits among the members of a community or society is an important matter to be considered carefully. An unfair distribution or selfish use of profits and resources is the cause of social conflict, fighting and war. Sharing one's properties with others is an act of loving kindness and the cause of harmony and peace.

People have different ideas and standards about virtue. Practitioners of different traditions, cultures and religions do not easily live together. Opposite views, intolerance in view have caused many disasters in the history of mankind. In many suttas, the Buddha showed his disapproval with the one-sided view based on one's limited experience that; only this is right, any thing else is wrong (*idaṃ saccaṃ moghanaññāti*).¹⁵ Therefore if we cannot live united in view, let us be kind and tolerate the other's views or ideas so that it would not come to conflicts, quarreling, taking of sticks and weapons. A Buddhist king, the great emperor Asoka (3rd century BC) of India taught:” let one listen to other's religion, let one respect other's tradition. One who for his own religious search disparages and harm other's belief, he indeed, impairs his own religion.”

There is another relationship in society, the relationship between employers and employees. According to Singalovada sutta, it is imperative on the part of employers as:

¹⁵ M136, p1063

1. Assigning them work according to their strength,
2. Supplying them with food and wages,
3. Tending them in sickness,
4. Sharing special delicacies with them,
5. Granting leave at times.

Being kindly treated like that, the employees on their part should show love and respect to their masters by:

1. Rising before them,
2. Lying down to rest after them,
3. Being content with what is given,
4. Performing their works well, and
5. Caring about their good name.

Now let us proceed to another kind of relationship that is no less important in consideration, the relation between teachers and pupils. In ancient time there were no government schools like nowadays. Children of the well to do families were sent to private schools. Thus the young often had to live far from his family for the sake of good knowledge or a profession. The rich families could invite the learned teacher to their home to teach their children. Any way, this kind of education is private and limited to personal view and care. The care and view of one's teachers left a great influence on his student's knowledge, behavior and virtue. Because of this, in ancient times pupils paid a great respect and regard to their teachers. On the side of pupils, they are instructed as follows:

1. Rising from their seat to show respect,
2. Waiting upon them,
3. Eager to learn,

4. Performing personal services, and
5. Being attentive to the teaching.

On the part of teachers, they are expected to love and care for their students with the father love in five ways:

1. Love and care for their safety,
2. Train them in what he had been trained well,
3. Make them firm in what they have learnt,
4. Constantly instruct them in every art,
5. Speak well of them among their friends.

It is noteworthy that obedience, especially blind faith, is not encouraged by the Buddha. Elsewhere he himself told his disciples to investigate his teaching before accepting them (M47). In the Kesamutti sutta,¹⁶ the Buddha advised the Kalamas thus:

“Listen, Kalamas, be not misled by revelation (mā anussavena), or by tradition (mā paramparāya), or hearsay (mā itikirāya), nor by the authority of sacred texts (mā piṭakasampadānena), nor by reason of logic (mā takka hetu), nor by reflection on and approval of some theory (mā akaraparivitakkena), nor because it gratifies to one’s view (mā diṭṭhi nijjhanekkhantiya), nor because of personal trust (mā bhabbarupatāya), nor by reason that the recluse is our teacher (mā samaṇo no garu). But Kalamas, when you know for yourselves these things are unwholesome, blameworthy, and censured by the wise; these things if practiced and observed are conduce to loss and sorrow, then indeed, you should reject them.

But if at any time you know by yourselves these thing are wholesome, blameless, and praised by the wise, these thing can put into practice and conduce to welfare and happiness, then Kalamas, do you accept and abide by therein.”

This attitude to teaching and philosophy is unique liberation in the history of religions and ideas. These ten points of investigation give no room for dogmatic and slavish belief, nor is emotional adjustment or one-sided view to be trusted. One has the free will to choose what is right and wrong, observes and experiences it in order to know the outcome.

¹⁶ AN,P...

Again, recluses and religious also have responsibilities for their devotees and believers. In six ways should they show their concern to them as follows:

1. Restrain them from evil,
2. Exhort them to good,
3. Suffuse loving kindness to them,
4. Teach them what they have not heard,
5. Correct and purify what they have heard,
6. Reveal to them the way to heaven.

The adviser should first establish himself in goodness and purity, then instructing others. “One should first establish oneself in what is proper, and then only should one instruct others. Thus the wise man will not be reproached” (Dhp158).

Ten Meritorious deeds as the skillful means

There are ten kinds of **kusala kamma**, wholesome actions which are the abstinence from the ten kinds of evil actions. **Kusala kamma** are so called because they are skillful (**kusala**), blameless, and producing beneficial results. Another set of ten which is called Puññākāriyavatthu-Meritorious deeds as follows:

1. Generosity: dāna,
2. Morality: sīla,
3. Mental development: bhāvana,
4. Respect those who are due for respect: apacayana,
5. Assisting others in good deed: pattidāna,
6. Sharing of merits after doing good deed: veyyavacca,

7. Rejoicing at other's good deed: pattanumodānā,
8. Listening well to the Doctrine: dhammassāvanā,
9. Teaching the Doctrine: dhammadesana,
10. Straingtening one's view: diṭṭhijukamma

With regard to the Ten Kinds of Meritorious deeds, dāna means alms giving, offering, generosity, or charity; in higher form, it means liberated and non attachment (**cāga**).

It is the first of the Ten Perfections (paramitā) that must be practiced by *Bodhisattvas* who are striving for enlightenment. In Buddhist tradition any act for fulfillment of charity must be accompanied with good will (*cetana*) before the act is to be operated, while the act is doing, and when the act has been completed. Giving should be done with compassion, respect, joyously, and unselfishly, but not with carelessness or expectation of reward in some ways for it would diminish the merit. In *Dakkhinavibhanga sutta*,¹⁷ the Buddha gave a detailed analysis on giving and its reward. He enumerated fourteen kinds of donation to individual, and seven kinds of donations to the community of monks/nuns.

Sila means Morality, consisting of two kinds: moral obligation (**caritta sila**), and abstention (**virati sila**). By Moral obligation is meant certain obligations or responsibilities that must be fulfilled according to one's status or position. So far we have been dealt with this part by quoting Singalovādasutta, Mangalasutta and other sources, although the subject is far from exhausted. There are many kinds of duties for monks/nuns and novices enumerated in detail in the Vattakhandhaka, Cūlavagga and Mahāvagga Pāḷi. And the duties of a king according to Buddhist ideal (**Cakkavattiraja**) also revealed in some suttas.¹⁸

Abstention means self-restraint and abstinence by keeping precepts:

1. Abstention from evil through observance of moral precepts (*samadana virati*);
2. Abstention from evil even though not under a vow to observe (*sampatta virati*);

¹⁷ M 142, p 1103

¹⁸ DN-Mahadassanasutta, Cakkavattisutta,..

3. Abstention from unmeritorious actions through eradication of all evil roots by Path knowledges (*samuccheda virati*)¹⁹.

Sila is second **Parami** in the list of **Paramis** to be fulfilled by **Bodhisattas**. If *dāna* (giving, offering, charity, etc.) makes social relationships become smooth and pleasant, **Sila** makes individuals and society become beautiful and cultured, but they are still just in superficial level when compared with *Bhāvanā*-mental cultivation. As it has been stated at the beginning, society consists of individuals; therefore, a good and cultured society must be comprised of good and disciplined members. By means of **Sila** one can be restrained in verbal and bodily actions, *Bhāvanā* is the exercise for mental development or the training of mind. *Bhāvanā* consists of Calm meditation (**samatha**), and Insight meditation (**vipassana**). *Vipassana* literally means seeing in different ways; this indicates seeing things as impermanent (**anicca**), unsatisfactory (**dukkha**), and void of self (**anatta**). Calm meditation helps calming down and subsiding mental defilement's and superfluous activities of the mind, meanwhile, Insight penetrated into the real nature of phenomena (mind and body). Enlightenment and liberation from *samsāra* come from Insight, by means of *vipassana*, but *Sila* and *samādhi* serve as the indispensable foundation for the arising of insight knowledge. Thus *Bhavana* is the means for the refinement of each individual. A community or society, no matter how big or small it is, if it is the collection of refined individuals, it is the highest cultured society.

The next Four Kinds of Meritorious deeds are respecting those who are worthy of respect, assisting others in good deeds, sharing of merits, and rejoicing at other's merit-making are also very constructive actions. They are the different manifestations of sympathetic-joy (**Mudita**) which help the healthy development of individuals and harmony and concord of society. For without these good actions the collection (group, community, or society) would become in-cohesion and the association would give no pleasure, security and joy for its members.

The last three, listening to the Law, teaching the Law, and straightening one's view aim at understanding laws, dispensing **dhmma** knowledge, and making correct attitude. They are necessary for the spiritual growth of individuals as well as the progress of society.

Pañcasīla-The Five Precepts as the basic moral law

¹⁹ According to the Dictionary of Buddhist terms, Yangon, Myanmar.

The five precepts are the common and basic moral practice of all Buddhists. They are also in conformity to any legality in ancient or modern society, and East or West. The first precept is not taking life (*Pāṇāpiātā veramani*), regardless of big or small, important or trivial, or the tormenting, or hurting others in any form. The precept has a significant that one should be aware of and respect other living beings. Killing and defeating beget enmity and fear. Abstention from depriving lives and conquering others give peace.²⁰ It also expresses the understanding and compassion for the anguish that others would undergo at being tortured or killed.

“All tremble at violence,

All fear death. (Life is dear to all)

Putting oneself in the place of another,

One should not kill, nor cause another kill”.²¹

The second precept is not taking what is not given (*adinnādānā veramāni*).

Surely, stealing is a condemned act in any society, primitive or civilized, and it brings about punishment when the act is discovered. One who observes this precept not only avoiding the trouble for him at its evil consequences, but it is a sense of respect for private and common properties that do not belong to him. In this way one maintains peace and security for community and society.

The third precept is abstention from wrong practice as regard to sense- pleasures (*Kāmesumicchācārā veramāni*). This precept is often translated as restraint from adultery. In my opinion, the word *kāmesu* (loc. pl. of *kāma*) must cover a wider meaning than sexual pleasure. It means not being stimulated by lewdness and cheap products of low arts. Wrong treading in sense-pleasures is a blameworthy act in any cultured society. Undertaking this precept expresses a sense of moral shame (**hiri**) and respects for other’s private life and family, as well as maintaining peace and harmony.

The fourth precept is not telling lies. Actually, this precept commands one to restrain from all kinds of evil speech such as lying (*mūsavādā*), slandering (*pisunāvācā*), abusive speech (*pharusavācā*), useless and idly talks (*samphappalāpavācā*). On one occasion, the Buddha admonished his son,

²⁰ Dhp..... Udana,

²¹ Dhp129,130

venerable Rahula thus: “When one is not ashamed to tell a deliberate lie, there is no evil that one would not do. Therefore, Rahula, you should train thus: I will not utter a falsehood even as a joke.”²² And:

“Speak not harshly to anyone,

For those thus spoken to might retort.

Indeed angry speech hurts,

And retaliation may overtake you.”²³

Indeed evil speech cause many trouble and disharmony in society. A good person should restrain from them by using truthful words, constructive and sensible words. Diplomatic talk is an art of speech and skillful means to help solve many problems concerning human relationships. In **Akaravibhangasutta** (M 139), the Buddha gave a detail advice on how to speak correctly, and beneficially, which brings no conflict. In the Anguttara, it is said: ‘Abandoning harsh speech, abstains there from. Whatever speech is harmless, pleasant to the ear, agreeable, touching to the heart, courteous, delightful to manifold, pleasant to manifold.’²⁴

The fifth precept is to restraint from indulgence in liquor and any kind of alcohol, or drugs which caused forgetfulness and delusion (*sura-meraya-majjam-pamadaṭṭhānā veramāni*). The commentary gives a list of five kinds of alcohol, but now in the age of science, there are many kinds of drugs and stimulants that are to be avoided by the wise. When one has been influenced by alcohol, he would violate all other precepts. He would behave foolishly, and lose all human dignity. He cannot protect himself, his properties, and his family. When he is addicted to alcohol or drugs, he damages his physical and psychological system. He causes worry and suffering for his family and beloved ones, he impairs his properties as well as his moral conduct. Drug-addictions and drunkards are considered as the burden of family and society.

Thus the Five Precepts are the basic moral laws for the well being of individuals, as well as for the peace and welfare of community and society. In many suttas, we see the statement: “He restrains from killing, put aside the cudgel and sword; full of kindness and compassion, he live for the welfare and happiness of all living beings.” Every precept has two aspects: negative and positive. Negative approach

²² M61, p524

²³ Dh113

²⁴ A I, p 182

emphasizes on abstinence in order to keep one pure, ovoid blameworthy acts, so that one is saved from censure, and punishments. The positive side is compassion and respect for other beings; one observes precepts in order to maintain peace and safety for society. Beside Pañca Sīlā, are Eight Precepts for the laity on Uposatha days; Ten Precepts for novices; two hundred and twenty seven precepts for Bhikkhus; and three hundred eleven precepts for Bhikkhuni. There are also conventional Bodhisattva precepts in Mahayana Buddhism. They are elaborated in the Sikshasamuccaya- Collection of rules of instruction, and Bodhicaryavatara-Entrance into Training for Enlightenment, written by Santideva (7th century AD). These precepts are mostly based on faith and compassion. A Bodhisatta is an ideal being who out of great compassion (*mahākaruṇā*) deliberately delays his personal escape from the suffering of Samsāra- the cycle of birth and rebirth, to work for the benefit and welfare of others, taking a vow to liberate all living beings from suffering.

It is interesting to note about the four kinds of person: (1) He who works neither for the good of himself nor for others; (2) He who works not for the good of himself but for others;²⁵ (3) He who works for the good of himself but not for others; (4) He who works for the good of himself as well as for others. Of the four, the Buddha extolled the last kind of person as the best, the most excellent. The next good one is the third kind of person, not the second as we might expect.

Social conflict, its causes and solutions.

As regards to social conflicts, once, Sakka the king of Devas asked the Buddha: All classes of living beings who wish to live in peace without enmity and conflict, but in fact there are conflicts and violence between different beings? The Buddha answered: conflicts have their roots in desire (*chanda*), selfishness (*macchhariya*), jealousy (*issa*), and diverted and bias view (*papañca saññā saṅkhā*).²⁶ They are rooted in ignorance, greed, and hatred. The problems ought to be treated by rooting out its roots, selfishness ('I' and not I, 'mine' and not mine, 'myself' and other) and ignorance, not by mere treating of symptoms. In another sutta, the Exposition of Non-conflict²⁷, the Buddha pointed out an important

²⁵ This kind of person seems unselfish, but it is not the case. He is a kind of person who are very enthusiastic with an emotional urge to save and sacrifice for others. But according to the Buddhist point of view, he who is sunk in the mire can not pull out another, who is also sunk in the mire, but he, who stand on the firm ground can pull others out from mire. Here, "mire" is meant mental defilement or moral impurities. One who does not work for the benefit of himself means one who neglect his own aim, to free himself from moral impurities first, then helping others. (An ii).

²⁶ Sakkapanhasutta(DN, p...)

²⁷ M139, p1081.

principle, that is one should see the dhamma, and praise or disparage the dhamma, not the person. For if one sees the person, extols or belittles the person, it would give rise to prejudice, conceit, and conflict.

In another Discourse named “The Roots of Disputes”²⁸ the Buddha pointed out six roots of disputes. They are:” angry and revengeful; or contemptuous and domineering; or envious and avaricious; or deceitful and fraudulent; or he has evil wish and wrong view; or he adheres to his own views, holding on to them tenaciously and relinquishing them with difficulty.” The Buddha proceeded to say that if these qualities were manifested in any person, such a person would create disputes in the community, caused harm, unhappiness and loss of the multitude. When one is given to greed, anger, or pride he would act foolishly and in that way bring harm, suffering, and loss to himself as well as to others. So one should wisely reflect on one’s motive, situations and the consequences that one’s actions would bring out.

The evil roots that caused rise to conflicts are three: greed (lobha), hatred (dosa), and delusion (moha). These roots are manifested in ten immoral actions such as killing, stealing, sexual misconduct, lying, backbiting, abusing, slandering, coveting, ill-will, and upholding wrong view

Buddhism teaches one restraint from immoral actions by observing precepts, and more active, by exerting in accumulating meritorious deeds. Once, social conflicts has arisen, the concerning parties should look for its roots, understand the causes of conflicts and discontent, then solve the problem there. The Buddha also taught the Principles of Cordiality²⁹ thus: “There are, monks, these six principles of cordiality that create love and respect and conduce to helpfulness, to non-dispute, to concord and unity.”(see p17,18). Buddhism does not encourage using violent means.

“Hatred is never appeased by hatred in this world.

By non-hatred alone is hatred appeased. This is an eternal law”.³⁰

And “ One who while himself seeking happiness, oppresses with violence, other beings who also desire happiness, will not attain happiness hereafter.”³¹

²⁸ AN , VI, 36

²⁹ M48, p322; AN vi, 12

³⁰ Na hi verena verani.Sammantidha kuda caram.
Averena ca sammanti. Esa dhammo sanantaro. (Dhp5)

³¹ Dhp131

Conclusion

Buddhism has no prejudice as regarding original sin in human nature. Buddhism accepts the theory of rebirth, samsāra, and liberation from samsāra (mokkha), but it denies a permanent soul or unchanging nature of the being. As it was stated earlier, man was born on earth because of his kamma-moral or immoral forces that left their force on his mind; his craving to satisfy the thirst for enjoyment, becoming and non-existence (*kāmatanñhā*, *bhāvatanñhā*, and *vibhāvatanñhā* respectively). According to Buddhist psychology, one is born with a seed (**bija**) which is identified with rebirth linking consciousness (*patisandhi citta*). In the case of human being, this seed is mixture of good and bad nature. The good is the potentiality of enlightenment (*buddhicarata*), and bad is the latent defilements (*anusaya kilesa*). And dependent on conditions the good or bad qualities are nurtured to be a good or a bad character.

In the Anguttara Nikaya,³² it is stated that original consciousness was pure, but it has been defiled by external objects during the course of existence. There are many suttas describing an ideal bhikkhu, he is said to guard his sense faculties perfectly so that when he encounters an object, the enchantment or repulsion does not invade his mind. There are also many interesting stories in the Buddhist literature that record the total change in one's nature when the person understands the Dhamma, such as the murderer Angulimala who became a saint, the haughty wife Sujata who became an obedient wife after having listened to a discourse delivered by the Buddha, and numbered other incidents. Thus indirectly Buddhism teaches that education and environment which embrace in human relationships play an enormous important role which influence the development of individuals and society.

Over two thousands five hundred years through the journey of Buddhism, its pristine teaching and principles, philosophical development has spread as a world religion, Buddhist social principles always emphasize on wisdom, humane and peaceful ways of living. In conclusion, I would like to cite a message from the Samyutta Nikaya that states that: in uncountable lives that one has passed through long suffering in samsāra, there is no being who has not been one's mother, father, sister, brother, or one's son or daughter, relative or friend; so one should develop loving kindness toward all sentient beings with the realization that they are all dear and near relatives.

The End.

³² AN, Vol I, acchara vagga

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