

# BUDDHIST THEORY OF PEACEFUL CO-EXISTENCE

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## ABSTRACT

*In the modern world one of the main issues that require urgent and complete answers is the conflict among nationalities and religions. This has become the main threat to the global peaceful environment and co-existence. To view this position from anthropologically, the human culture is a production of both nationality and religion. Even in modern culture, both of them play very important parts to integrate individuals. This is the time to enlighten them for a global co-existence. In other words to show the world the way to keep the identity while accepting diversity. In Buddhist philosophy one of the theoretical views is the *paticcasamuppada* or Dependent Origination. This theory has a broad meaning in the Buddhist context. However to put this theory into a simpler form one would call it as the Buddhist Causal Theory. This means that nothing in the world is independent. Everything depends on others. Everything exists on others. This theory clearly emphasizes that there is nothing in the universe separated from others. If somebody thinks he/she can live isolated from other things in the universe according to Buddhism it is the state of ordinary thinking. If somebody can enlighten his/her mind then he/she can have this broad and rational thought. This theory shows that even phenomena like religion and nationality also interdependence. If we imagine that there is only one nationality or religion in the world, the life on earth may become monotonous and dull.*

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## 1. PRELUDE

In the modern world one of the main issues that require urgent and complete answers is the conflict among nationalities and religions. This has become the main threat to the global peaceful environment and co-existence. There is no question of loving one's own religion or nationality because they represent one's identity among the others. One becomes so special among the others because of his/her particular language or faith. To view this position from anthropologically, the human culture is a production of both nationality and religion. Even in modern culture both of them play very important parts to integrate individuals. However the problem arises when keeping the identities among diversities. To understand the reality of this question and to have a right view on this there should be an intellectual as well as a rational outlook. Unlike in the past the modern youth is well equipped with the knowledge of science, technology and rational thinking. This is the time to enlighten them for a global co-existence. In other word to show the world the way to keep the identity while accepting diversity.

In Buddhist philosophy one of the theoretical views is the *paticcasamuppada* or Dependent Origination. This theory has a broad meaning in the Buddhist context. However to put this theory into a simpler form one would call it as the Buddhist Causal Theory. This means that nothing in the world independent. Everything depends on others. Everything exists on others. This theory clearly emphasizes that there is nothing in the universe separated from others. If somebody thinks he/she can live isolated from other things in the universe according to Buddhism it is the state of ordinary thinking. If somebody can enlighten his/her mind then he/she can have this broad and rational thought. This theory shows that even phenomena like religion and nationality also interdependence. If we imagine that there is only one nationality or religion in the world, the life on earth may become monotonous and dull. But because of the diversity in many ways in the universe has brought

this beauty. The thing is to integrate this marvelous diversity. For that the Buddhist theory of Dependent Origination can be applied as rational way of thinking. Any particular religion or nationality can be identified identically from others because of their existence. They are interdependent and mutually existence. In more scientific way to say that differences are relative to the others.

## 2. BUDDHIST THEORY OF CAUSALITY

*Paticcasamuppada* (hereafter PS) theory is the core concept of Buddhism that interprets the nature of existence by means of a causal theory. However PS as a causal is completely different from other theories of that like as it not only explains the causes of existence but also envisages the cessation of existence. As Buddhism understands the knowledge of PS is very crucial because it paves the way to find the causes and ultimately that helps to eliminate the causes. Through the destruction of causes any types of problem can be solved. Therefore in the Buddhist context the insight and profound knowledge of PS is paramount important especially to overcome man's basic problem of suffering in the *samsaric* existence. Until the liberation from this cyclical and longtime existence he should live in a social context. Even in the social context the theory of PS can be very successfully applied especially for a co-existence not only with other humans but also with the nature also.

PS is the philosophical foundation of Buddhism that underlies all main teachings. This terminology is a unique one that the Buddha used to present the Buddhist theory of causation. This doctrine aroused from the critique of Indian theories of causality which belonged either to eternalism or to nihilism. The Pali term, *paticcasamuppada* is a combination of three words. Here '*paticca*' means 'because of' and 'dependent on', '*sam*' means 'well' and '*uppada*' means 'arising' or 'origin'. Hence it is known in English as the law of dependent origination.

As the theoretical discourse of Buddhism PS plays a pivotal role in keeping Buddhism as a non-contradictory philosophy. Because of this causal theory Buddhism has been able to hold its consistency and commensurability from its outset. Therefore in early Buddhism there is nothing to find which contradicts each

other. D.J.Kalupahana and T.V. R. Murti rightly introduce PS as the central philosophy in Buddhism that gives two distinctive meanings in the Buddhist context. The origin of *dukkha* (suffering) as well as cessation of *dukkha* can be well realized only by the knowledge of PS.

Two formulae that Summarized PS doctrine with its sequence and reverse orders go on to explain the universal application of PS. This type of a theory of causation was a new introduction to the Indian Religious and philosophical context. Ven. *Assaji* clearly emphasized this novelty when he was asked the uniqueness of the Buddha's teaching by *Upatissa*.

*“Whatever Firm a cause proceeds, thereof  
The Tathagata has explained the cause  
Its cessation too he has explained  
This is the teaching of the Great Sage.”*

This is the reality of everything or all dhammas. This is the nature of everything. Realization of this reality leads to know the things as they are i.e. whatever is of the nature of arising all that insists of the nature of ceasing. Therefore PS as the theoretical basis of Buddhist philosophy can be found in each doctrine of the Buddha. The Buddha has categorically and logically explained all teachings according to PS.

The general formula of PS runs as follows.

*“When this is present, that comes to be;  
From the arising of this, that arises.  
When this is absent, that does not come to be;  
On the cessation of this, that ceases.”*

To put into a formula using the PS theory it can be argued that

*Whenever ‘I’ exists ‘others’ exist.  
Whenever ‘I’ does not exist ‘others’ do not exist.  
Whenever ‘we’ exists ‘I’ exist.  
Whenever ‘we’ do not exist ‘I’ does not exist’.*

This theory had been more clearly illustrated by one of the later Mahayanic tradition called Hua-yen Buddhism. It taught

the doctrine of the mutual containment and interpenetration of all phenomena, as expressed in Indra's net. One thing contains all other existing things, and all existing things contain that one thing. This whole universe is covered with this net and threads are joined with a diamond. In all diamonds other diamonds' reflections can be seen. Therefore this net is interrelated. No diamonds can separate from others. If one diamond separates or divides from others the net will collapse. In the same way without been isolated one another the wise man view everything from the holistic approach. Nothing can be separated each other. Everything is dependent. All are complementary to each other. Thus there is a complex type of relationship. This relationship is a relative one and all are related to all others. So no separation can be found between these dynamic processes. In the social level also according to Buddhism there are many groups. They should perform distinctive and relative functions so that the individual can live happily.

### 3. INTERCONNECTEDNESS AND INTERDEPENDENCES

One of the main objects behind the Buddhist teaching of dependent origination is to show the relative relationships among human beings. This can be viewed from two stand points. One is from a deep and broad perspective in the context of cyclical existence. The *samsaric* existence according to the Buddhist doctrine is innumerable and empirically cannot be assumed the begging or the end. So that this long cyclical existence had created interconnectedness as well as interdependences in many forms. It is very interesting to note here that it is not only the man but also the other types of animals also had been relations of some forms in this long existence. But it is very difficult to perceive this *samsaric* relative connection as the man in the present situation acquires only a confined knowledge of this world existence. This is the basic problem of knowledge which is called *avijja* or ignorance in the twelve link formula of dependent origination.

The unknown nature of the worldly man or the ordinary personality tends to think that he is identical and independence from the other. Such a person may try to find and understand the reality within the individual existence and hence to fail. This ultimately

leads to many psychological sufferings including frustration. In the social context nobody can live without the other. The 'other' (*para* in Pali) represents all types of existence. Stereological vice the other may be a big hindrance for realizing the truth. So that leaving the household life may be bliss for the path. Therefore Buddhism encourages its disciples to leave homes and become recluses. One can definitely live a happy night if and if only by spending a loneliness life. The sacred longitude is thoroughly admired in the Buddhist context regarding its ultimate purpose. However the Buddha had preached that even a Buddhist monk should keep in mind that his existence completely depends on the other because he is not employed and living on the begged food. Therefore the mutual interdependence is an inevitable fact in the social context. This proves that there is no demarcation between what appears to be an individual creature and its natural and social environment.

#### 4. RECIPROCAL IMPLICATION OF OTHERNESS

Man is considered as a social animal. He cannot live alone except the leavers of household life expecting the spiritual development. For them solidarity is an advantage to eliminate defilements. Yet an average man wants to live in society. He cannot live in solitude. Therefore man is of the society, from the society, and for the society. He derives and maintains his existence from the society that's why he owns many responsibilities towards the society. While performing these duties he serves the society. This is called the social service in today's usage. What is evident is that no social service can be done without the other. For instance generosity is a well-known social activity. Yet it cannot be practiced if there are no poor or beggars. Thus the poor helps others to engage in social services.

Mutual reciprocal behaviors play a very important role in the social context. Social psychologists are very keen on this factor as such behaviors influence to the stability of the society. Psychologically and sociologically accepted theory is that no one can live alone. A sentient being's existence is valued and functioned properly in a social context. Newly born infant is only a biological being. This biological existence becomes a fully functioned being with the socialization. Therefore the individual's personality develops with many social influences. This implies that

the individual cannot be separated from the other because others had socialized the individual. On the other hand it implies that the individual also has many duties to perform towards the society. While society performs many duties towards the individual in turn the individual also has to show his gratitude towards the society by performing many duties. This two way relationship oneself and the other treats both equally.

The doctrine in the *Sigalovada* speaks of the reciprocal existence of man by means of social duties. Today man is so keen on what rights are there and what right had been violated by others etc. This implies that in the modern context humans are so concerned on their rights and privileges. The issue is whether they have performed their duties and responsibilities towards others. On many occasions without fulfilling due responsibilities man expects to enjoy his rights very much even in the ultimate sense. However in Buddhism there is no reference to rights of man instead man is associated with duties assigned to him. Man in the society lives with others. Thus he has to perform duties to others. Then only he can enjoy his rights as a by-product of extending duties assigned to him.

Man has basically six relative relationships in the society. Accordingly the role of man also changes in relation to the nature of the relationship. For instance the same man can have dual roles in a family as the father and husband. Therefore man should be aware of the situation. Buddhism explores six such relationships as man's directions. They are,

- i. Children-Parents Relationship : East
- ii. Teacher – Pupils Relationship : South
- iii. Wife – Husband Relationship : West
- iv. Friends – Friends Relationship : North
- v. Clergy – Laity Relationship : Zenith
- vi. Employer – Employee Relationship: Nadir

Being in the center the individual has to play many social roles which are relative according to the situation and condition. What is required is the constant mindfulness of the individual. Relationship in the Buddhist sociology is the mutual interdependency. Social

institutions function because of these relationships. Here the entire human society has been analyzed into twelve constituents. The individual health depends on the health of the society. So the healthy society in turns results in individual health. Problems among them must be resolve with mutual trust and love. Another significant fact is that the individual is expected to be concern on his or her reciprocal duties towards the other, not the rights of oneself. Human rights are considered privileges gained through the performing of duties. Rights will effortlessly arrive at the individual if he has done duties perfectly towards the other.

## 5. MORALITY IN OTHERNESS

According to Buddhist moral practice all ethical standards can be practiced and applied in a social context. For example one of the moral teachings in Buddhism is found as four kinds of hospitality namely generosity, pleasant speech, altruism and equality. From outset it very clearly signifies the value of otherness in practicing these moral principles. A man should behave ethically and practice morality without expecting benefits. As Mahayana tradition in Buddha Dhamma believes all human beings are same as they all are Bodhisattvas (to be Buddhas). All are treated same as they all are having same potentiality to become a Buddha (Fully Enlightened One). Therefore all human beings are called Buddha-seeds. The other significant feature is that in the Bodhisattva path all should perform moral standards or perfections with the help of the other. It means that without the contribution of the other no one can reach the ideal. Therefore the final goal in Mahayana tradition completely depends on the acceptance of the other.

Buddhism goes beyond the boundary of the earth (globalization). According to Buddhist cosmology there are innumerable number of worlds and species. Therefore a devotee must extend his or her loving-kindness to all species whether seen or unseen. The method is so clear. This is done by one's mind. In the Metta Sutta the Buddha says that in spreading love, one must think of all possible kinds of beings. Therefore the Buddhist attitude is to extend love to all beings. This utterance is the Buddhist conception of universalism. A man should love others in the same way that a mother loves her one and only son.



## 6. DEONTOLOGY

Duties cannot be performed without accepting the existence of other. The Hindu concept of duty shows that though there are differences among people, duties can be completed if one accepts the other. The concept of duty also becomes a vague one if we reject the other. According to many religious views duties can be performed to others. Moral and spiritual perfection can be achieved with the help of the other. For instance, if somebody wants to practice giving, there must be a giver as well as a receiver. The receiver becomes the other here. Mahayana tradition says that even a beggar is deserved to be respected as without him the Bodhisattva is unable to perform his moral standard.

One of the main social doctrines of Buddhism, the Sigalovada Sutta talks about the value of performing duties towards the others in the society. Here the individual has to play many roles in social relationships such as parents, children, teachers, friends, politicians, employers etc. After identifying the role it is up to the individual to play his or her role by fulfilling all types of duties. In the Buddhist context no reference has been given to rights. Rights are considered privileges gained by doing duties. In other words no issues aroused on rights if duties are completed. Therefore first the individual must do duties and then he or she can enjoy rights. Violations of human rights happen to be a side effect of breaking due duties.

## 7. GOLDEN RULE

The golden rule is a main religious moral principle that assumes one should treat others as one would like others to treat oneself. This is the direct implication and it has an indirect implication also. That is one should *not* treat others in ways that one would *not* like to be treated. Even in Buddhist ethics one of the central themes is that “one should treat others in exactly the same way as one treats oneself” (attanam upamam katva). The Buddha has stated that the basis of the other- regarding principle is an inference from oneself to another. Firstly one can think oneself in terms of others. The value of oneself or self-personality can be derived from others. Secondly one can consider others in terms of oneself. For example one should consider that the state which is unpleasant to me must

be so to others. This reflection brings the abstaining from killing or harming others.

One of the ancient Chinese religion, Confucianism says “Do not do to others what you would not like yourself. Then there will be no resentment against you, either in the family or in the state.” It seems from this great saying that the golden rule should be the foundation of all moral principles.

## 8. CO-EXISTENCE

Peace at social level should start from the most important social structure i.e. the nuclear family. Peaceful coexistence within the framework of family can be taken as an example. There is no question about the dominance or the superiority of the husband and wife. Both are equally important for the wellbeing and progress of the family. The most important thing is to understand the roles of each other. Both of them should know that one’s existence is the existence of the other. To put the mutual existence of husband and wife in accordance with the Buddhist causal theory.

“When the husband exists the wife exists, when the wife exists the husband exists, when the husband does not exist the wife does not exist, when the wife does not exist the husband does not exist.”

This is also the reality in the social order and structure as well. No one can separate, isolate or live without others because everybody depends on the other. This society as a whole has got a tremendous diversity. This diverse nature can be observed from various dimensions such as the nationality, culture, religion, belief, appearance, behavior, thought, value, morality, response and feeling so on and so forth. Most of these differences had been created by man himself over thousands of years of his civilization. All these differences prove nothing but the potentiality of man. Man among other creatures is superior because of the thinking force behind him. What he had achieved so far in the forms of knowledge, technology and development are best examples and proofs. These differences and distinctions are no doubt beauties of the global society. The diversity makes the all beauties in the nature including flora and fauna. It is not difficult to imagine if all were alike and same in nature. The life would have become boring and monotonous if all

were same. But there is something to note here from religious and philosophical perspective. There is a significant uniqueness and oneness of mankind. While there are many diverse among human beings there are some important unities especially the humanity. Humanity can transcend all types of verities.

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