

Practical Ways of Humanistic Life in Theravada Buddhist Perspective

Ven. Vilasaka*

Acharya Nakarjuna University, A.P., India

Received: 12/02/2022

Revised: 17/03/2022

Accepted: 20/05/2022

Corresponding Author Email: vilasaka.874@gmail.com*

DOI: 10.14456/jdl.2022.6

Cite: Vilasaka. (2022). Practical Way of Humanistic Life in Theravada Buddhist Perspective. *Journal of Dhamma for Life*, 28(3), 1-15.

Abstract

The research article aims to study the concept of humanism involved the practical ways of humanistic life in Theravada Buddhist perspective. there are formed as sentient beings by two mental and physical aggregates. There is no human being without emotion. That is why Abhidhamma philosophy revealed about six Temperaments that are motionable in every human being regarding human nature. Those are Raga, Daso, Moha, Sadha, Buddhi and Vitakka. They are called Carita in Pali.

Carita signifies a person's intrinsic nature or innate style, revealed when one is in a normal state without being preoccupied with anything. The temperaments of people differ owing to the diversity of their actions. Habitual actions tend to form particular characters as ways of practice. Rāga or lust is predominant in some, while dosa or anger, in others. Most people belong to these two categories.

According to the Philosophical point of view, different men have different kinds of philosophy. So, People have nothing in common in a turn of mind and phrase each other. According to Myanmar said, many men have many kinds of characters.

Keywords: Practical Ways; Humanistic Life; Theravada Buddhist

1. Introduction

Humanism and Buddhism have a nature of homonym. They opposed each other. Why is humanism considered to be a Western concept? Buddhism arose in India in the fifth century in Asia. In humanism, there is no “God” and no “external divine agency” (Kakati, 2012) between humans and the physical environment. They believe everything must be based on reason, human experience, effort, and dignity. Humans have to determine themselves for their fate.

In Buddhism, humans have to rely on themselves for their release from suffering. There is no savior to rely on. God is a fundamental delusion. Humans have no obligation toward God or to obey any supernatural agent. To believe in God is to disbelieve in oneself. Buddhism does not demand blind faith from its adherents. It must be confidence based on knowledge. The Buddha, as a Teacher, instructs us, but we ourselves are directly responsible for our purification. The Buddha gives instructions on how individuals should conduct themselves in various suttas. We may see in Mangala-sutta, Metta-sutta, Parabhava-sutta, Singala-sutta, Gosinga-sutta and many other Jatakas etc. (Lysenko, 2018).

The great humanism of Buddhism is thus “Dhamma is a dhamma of justice for all”. Then the Buddha exhorts: “Abide with oneself as an island, with oneself as a Refuge. Abide with the Dhamma as an island, with the Dhamma as a Refuge”. Seek no external refuge. A humanistic philosophy refers to a few specific ideas. Humanistic thinkers aren’t religious. They don’t believe in a “God,” “soul,” or “afterlife in Heaven, Hell”. This philosophy is called humanism (Wahl, 2019). They believe that we only have this life that ends forever when we die. As regards this, we see here the totally discrepancy between humanism and Buddhism. In Buddhism, all life is in a cycle of death and rebirth called samsara. This cycle is something to escape from. Buddhists believe in karma or ‘intentional action’. By developing concentration and wisdom, Buddhists hope to either gain enlightenment or ensure a better future for themselves.

2. Research Problems Statement

Today, we are living in the world of diversity in culture, character, faith and political and economic system. In this world, different people may have different opinions on different problems. There will be no final solution to our human problems. In the Buddha's message, "The world is blind, the world is unstable, and the world is burning internally and externally". In the world history, we have seen much bloodshed due to the power of craving and ignorance. So, beings make violence each other, the Dhammapada pointed out thus "Animosity cannot be eradicated by animosity. Violence is never ceased by violence. Hatred is never ceased by hatred". This is the eternal law.

3. Research Objectives

The present research aimed to study the concept of humanism as the Buddha regarding Theravada treasure

- 1) To focus on the practical aspects of humanism and ethics
- 2) To understand the role of Buddhist morals and ethics, human society
- 3) To understand the role of human action
- 4) To trace out the issues and gaps in the theory and practice of certain humanistic values.

4. Scope and Limitations

This research work focuses on human manners and mentions the motive of the human characters. One's thought, and deed is related to each other. Only when good thought begets good deed. Apart from that, good begets good, and evil begets evil. We should recognize the thought and why in our daily activities because they become words. We should recognize the words why, because they become conduct. We should recognize the conduct why because, they become a habit. We should recognize the habits why because they become characters or temperaments. We should recognize the characters

or temperaments why because they become deeds. This re-rapprochement of study is remarkable notes from the scope and limitation of Buddhist literature.

5. Research Methodologies

In this study, I have used analytical, critical, descriptive, and philosophical methods to define the human being, the factors needed for human birth, the diversity of human types, and the different manners and concepts of individuals. Moreover, human value and dignity are reviled as modes of a humanistic world. For every human success, there is no supernatural agency, creator, or savior between humanity and the environment. We are directly responsible for our purification. The studies of material have been collected from different books of Buddhism and other books written by some scholars. The secondary references mostly referred to some modern works, conference articles, journals, and books.

6. Literature Review

6.1 Humanism and Buddhism

In humanism, there is no external divine agency between human beings and the physical environment. In Buddhism, humans have to rely on themselves for their release from suffering. There is no external authority or savior to rely on. The existence of a supreme creator, God is a fundamental delusion.

In secular humanism, there is no role of God or any divine agency, and everything must be found in reason and human experience. Humans themselves determine their fate. Thus, in Buddhism, humans have no obligation toward God or to obey any supernatural agent, to believe in God is to disbelieve in oneself.

Buddhism does not require blind faith from its followers but rather knowledge-based confidence. A Buddhist seeks refuge in the Buddha because he discovered the way to salvation. A Buddhist does not seek the Buddha in the hope of being saved through personal purification. The Buddha makes no such assurance. A Buddha does not have the

ability to cleanse the impurities of others. It was impossible to purify or defile another. Although the Buddha, as a Teacher, instructs us, we are solely responsible for our own purification. The Buddha is not a savior but a teacher and model of the good life.

Buddhism, as a secular religion, proclaims a just society. The Buddha gives instructions on how individuals should conduct themselves in various suttas. We may see in Mnagala-sutta, Metta-sutta, Parabhava-sutta, Singala-sutta, Gosinga-sutta and many other Jatakas etc.

6.2 The Motive of Sensuous World (Kāma-Loka)

Kama-Loka is the sensual world of the three Lokas. It has eleven levels of life that are all about sensual pleasure. They built their bodies from all five aggregates. So, they are called "Pancavokara-Bhumi," the physical and mental aspects of being. In the eleven Kama-Lokas, Manussa-Loka is one of the places where we live or were born. The word Manussa-Loka is divided into two words: Manussa and Loka. Manusia means "human being." Loka means her birthplace. That is why Manussa-Lok is the human birthplace, the human world. Otherwise, it is the mass of human beings.

The Buddha has taught this teaching "Ye dhammā hetuppabhavā" to Assaji Thera in the Vinaya canon. For all Buddhists, what is One of the main tenets in the Buddha's Teachings is that all things happen due to a cause. Here, all things are meant as "Paññcakhandhā", "the mass of mentality and physicality" (Fraser, et al, 2020). These two phenomena are one process in this regard of birth and death. The Law of Causality says that after you die, you are born again right away. Death pronounces the end of a phase of kamma and at that point the beginning of the next phase of kamma gives immediate rebirth in another plane of existence as examined by the quality of the kamma arising at that moment in time.

By the universal Law of causality, death is followed by immediate rebirth in one of the thirty-one planes of existence due to the previous kamma. That is to say that a

being arises in the appropriate sphere, in which past conscious actions and habitual tendencies culminate in the "death-proximate kamma." (Lien, 2019).

6.3 The True Nature of Existence

Since the mind and body are made up of ultimate realities – citta, cetasikas and rupas and the ultimate realities are arising and dissolving all the time very rapidly. Existence is merely transitory and fleeting. It is marked by three characteristics: impermanence (anicca), suffering (dukkha), and non-self (anatta).

What is not impermanence is not satisfactory, and what is being tortured incessantly by the continuous dissolution of the ultimate realities that make up body and mind amounts to suffering (dukkha).

Again, since there is nothing in an individual that is permanent and substantial, there is no such thing as a permanent 'Jiva', 'atta' 'soul' 'ego' or 'person'. This concept of non-self and non-ego is known as anatta.

Impermanence, suffering, and non-self (anicca, dukkha and anatta) are the three characteristics of existence (tilakkhana). They must be reflected on repeatedly in insight meditation (vipassana) to understand the true nature of reality.

Suppose we can see the true nature of existence. In that case, we can understand that all forms of existence are unsatisfactory, as they have the characteristics of impermanence, suffering, and non-self. So, the Buddha addressed the Bhikkhus as "Sabbe sankhārā aniccā, dukkhā and anattā." (Buswell, et al, 2014)

Thus, the Buddha stated the Noble truth of suffering in his first sermon, known as 'Dhammacakka-pavattana Sutta' as follows:

"Birth is suffering, aging is suffering, illness is suffering, death is suffering, union with what is displeasing is suffering, separation from what is pleasing is suffering; not getting what one wants is suffering." (Bhikhu Bhodhi; S.N. 56.11, 2015)

7. Result

The result scope in the major dimension of humanism involved the Buddha's teaching. Therefore, let us consider the problems in canonical terms. In Abhidhamma philosophy, there are six kinds of Caritas (temperaments):

- 1) Rāga-Carita (Lustful temperament),
- 2) Dosa-Carita (Hateful temperament),
- 3) Moha-Carita (Unintelligent or ignorant temperament)
- 4) Saddhā-Carita (Devout or faithful temperament),
- 5) Buddhi-Carita (Intellectual or wise temperament), and
- 6) Vitakka-Carita (Discursive or initial application temperament).

Of the six, the first three are immoral conduct. The next two are moral conduct, and the last is moral and immoral conduct. Ethical behaviors lead to good results. Otherwise, Immoral conduct leads to bad influence. As feedback, they surely return pleasant or unpleasant objects from our behavior. This is the principal or law of nature, Niyama in Pali.

A person with Raga-Carita will show a mode of wanting in everything as his behavior. A person with Dosa-Carita will behave in harshness, impudence, and cruelty. A person who has Moha-Carita will behave as the mode of very foolish with three actions and then confidence for Saddha-Carita regarding Triple Gem and action and its result, especially intuition for Buddhi-Carita and thinking in things for Vitakka-Carita and so on.

Consequently, someone may have a good position, power, and life before and after death because of his good behavior and the concept of Buddhism to the ultimate goal (Nibbana). Otherwise, we may know simply in return for being badly behaved. Good conduct leads to light as a forerunner. It means successful living (Sukha-Bhumi). Bad conduct leads to darkness as a forerunner. It means unsuccessful living (Dukha-Bhumi). In the classification of Buddha's Abhidhamma, there are forty meditations (Kammathana) for Caritas. Caritas and Meditation are inseparable things from each other. They are hand in

hand. Meditation is a medicine for meditators. So many scholars declared that Dhamma is compared to medicine. It is easily cured but must be equal to disease and medicine.

Kinds of Taṇhā used as Rāga

Taṇhā means craving, thirst, attachment, lust, human passion. Taṇhā is the technical term that is found in Buddhist philosophy and is one of the links of the paṭiccasamuppāda. The three taṇhā are kāmataṇhā, rupataṇhā, and arūpataṇhā desire for birth in the three forms of existence. Otherwise, there are three kinds of taṇhā: Kāma taṇhā (lust for sensual pleasure). Bhava taṇhā (lust for becoming) Vibhava taṇhā (lust of non-becoming) So the Buddha said to the monks that there is no fire like a rāga, as sensual passion burn, it is burning also my mind. Oh, monks, one who mere overpowered by rāga, would kill any living creature. Here is how to cuts off rāga. While a few lusts were broken by the perception of foul, they remained with the path of anāgāmī, but to an end of raga without remaining by the path of arahantship.

A man who has a craving as a companion cannot overcome samsara for a long time, and a man who has other existences apart from this life cannot overcome samsara. So, the Buddha told the great king, magga, the entire world is always needy, unsatisfied, and a slave of craving. Thus, the Buddha said.

Otherwise, there are six kinds of taṇhā mentioned in the Mahāniddeśa Pāli:

- 1) Rūpa taṇhā – lust for form
- 2) Sadda taṇhā – lust for sound
- 3) Gaṇḍha taṇhā – lust for smell
- 4) Rasa taṇhā – lust for taste
- 5) Foṭṭhava taṇhā – lust for touch
- 6) Dhamma taṇhā – lust for phenomena

The eye enjoys in the form, delights in the form, and rejoices. That was tamed, guarded, protected, and restrained for an arahant. For the arahant utilizing restraint preaches the doctrine (dhamma). Likewise, the ear in the sound, the nose in the smell, the tongue in the taste, the contact in the body and the mind enjoys the mind object, delights in the mental object, and rejoices in the mental object. That was also tamed, guarded, protected, and restrained for an arahant. For the arahant employing restraint preaches the doctrine (dhamma).

“evamādīnavaṃ ñatvā, taṇhā dukkhassa sambavaṃ

vītataṇho anādāno, sato bhikkhu paribbaje.” (Sutta Central; S.N. 124f)

Taṇhā was the original course of suffering. Having thus understood as sin, without craving, free from attachment or desire, a virtuous monk has to wonder about the life of a religious mendicant to give up the world and become a Buddhist monk.

There are Kinds of Craving (taṇhā or tṛṣṇā) (samudaya) to be abandoned (pahātabba):

- 1) Craving for sensual pleasures (kāma taṇhā)
- 2) Craving for existence (bhava taṇhā)
- 3) Craving for non-existence (vibhava taṇhā)

Tanha caused the following vast suffering. They are:

1) Dukkha as intrinsic suffering, as bodily or mental pain (dukkha-dukkha)

- birth (jāti)
- old age (jarā)
- illness (byādhī)
- death (maraṇa)
- sorrow (soka)
- lamentation (parideva)
- pain (dukkha)
- grief (domanassa)

- despair (upāyāsā)

2) Dukkha due to change (vipariṇāma-dukkha)

- Association with the unpleasant (appiyehi sampayogo)
- Separation from the pleasant (piyehi vippayogo)
- Not to get what one wants (yampicchaṃ na labhati tampi)

3) Dukkha of conditioned formation (saṅkhāra-dukkha)

Five aggregates of clinging (pañcupādānakkhandhā)

- Material form (rūpa)
- Feeling (vedanā)
- Perception (saññāsamjñā)
- Mental formations (saṅkhārasamskāra)
- Consciousness (viññāṇavijñāna)

Taṇhā is the second Noble Truth, named Smudaya-saccā. All sufferings arise due to the taṇhā (yaṃ kiñci dukkhaṃ samboti sabbaṃ taṇhāpaccayā).

In what sense is called a human? In that case, we will surely reply. He is called a human because of analyzing every action, good and bad. Human plays an important role in the world. Everybody must die within hundred years mostly. In a short life, it is to do well, as well as speak and think for our own benefit and others. Otherwise, for someone not to do any evil, to do all good deeds, and to purify one's mind is the following or practicing as instructed by the Buddha.

In human practices, morality and wisdom are the chiefs and noblest practices. We can give similarity that morality and wisdom are hands and legs. For example, a Single hand can make purity another dirty one; a single leg can make purity the other dirty one, and also wisdom can make morality to be purity. Morality can make wisdom to be purity. They are the most excellent practices in the world.

In the Buddhist practice, to get a higher and superior life for human beings need to follow as instructed by the Buddha:

- 1) What we have to do is the Noble Conducts (Parami).
- 2) The way to avoid this is the Two Extremes. (Dwe anta)
- 3) The mode of what has to live is the Noble Abiding (four Brahma-viharas).
- 4) The way to walk is the Noble Eightfold Path. (Atthingika-magga)
- 5) The methods of developing is the Universal Truths (Anicca, Dukkha, Anatta)
- 6) To penetrate is the Four Noble Truths. (Cattaro Ariyasaccani))
- 7) Nibbana is to enjoy the happiness of lasting peace. (Santisukkha)

We should know as the final realization is that ‘Jatidukkhati sabbadukkhnam’.
“where is life, there is suffering, where is no life, there is no suffering”.

To get successful points whatever we need in everything, there are four modes:

- 1) Strong wish or will ‘Chanda’
- 2) Strong effort or energy ‘Viriya’
- 3) Strong consciousness or thought ‘Citta’
- 4) Strong intellect or wisdom ‘Vimamsa’.

8. Discussion

Humanism can be defined as a non-religious "belief system." It refers to a way of thinking about how to be a human being, and humanism is a "moral system," which refers to how we should live our lives. Humanists define living well as attempting to increase human happiness. On the other hand, humanists believe that suffering and unhappiness can be avoided. He realizes that no action can cause him to suffer or be unhappy. When we see people in pain, we usually feel pity for them. In Buddhism, it is referred to as Karuna and Metta, which mean "compassion and universal love." It is so called ‘karuna’ “Paradukkhe sati sadunam hadayakampanam karotiti karuna”, and ‘metta’ “Hitakarapavuttilakkhana metta, sattanam manapabhava-dassanapadatthana”. They can be called the noble abiding as a way of humanism in Buddhism.

Humanists contribute their ideas to those who believe in what is good and bad, right and wrong. We must investigate which types of thinking and behavior lead to happiness and which lead to suffering. At the very least, it implies that humans must be able to reason about everything we do, say, and think. Having reasoning power in humanity is seeing human value or dignity. The correspondence of our actions determines every outcome. Thinking power can be obtained through mental culture, whereas experience can be obtained through daily activities.

Many religious people will also agree with these concepts and beliefs. Humanism, on the other hand, differs from most religious belief systems. Humanists do not have faith as follows:

- 1) Supernatural forces are operating in the physical world.
- 2.) God commands us to have certain beliefs or to live our lives in a certain way and rewards or punishes us for what we have done or not done in this life.
- 3) A soul that exists forever.
- 4) An afterlife of either joy in Heaven or suffering in Hell results from how well we live this life.

All humanists share these humanist beliefs and ideas. On the other hand, they believe that "this life is all we have." We should deal with problems using our own understanding and feelings, in conjunction with learning from others, because this is our only knowledge. We should do this for the sake of humanity, not for personal gain.

Humanists believe in moral principles derived from life experience and observation of the consequences of actions rather than fixed articles of faith. A desire to promote happiness and reduce misery is one of these principles. All statements and beliefs must be supported by evidence, according to humanists.

Humanists try to figure out the meaning and purpose of life for themselves and what they believe in and value. They think they are eyewitnesses. They believe you can only decide what you believe in for yourself and that everyone has the right to do so.

Humanist perspective by Buddhist

We must believe in our rationality and common sense that to alternate war and conflict is only peace, security, and co-existence. We should try to conquer ourselves by replacing hatred, anger, greed, ignorance, aggressiveness, extremism, and prejudice with loving-kindness, compassion, tolerance, and forgiveness (middle way) that consist of Hofmann, et al (2011) was mention in those moments when as to difference empathy, forgiveness, patience and tolerance.

At the same time, we must oppose extremism and aggressiveness and any manifestations worldwide. But we should be mindful that if we cannot reduce and remove evil thoughts, speeches, and evil deeds, as well as greed, hatred, and ignorance, we are like beings living in a world of darkness of, sorrow, and suffering that consist of study of Ritter (2003). When there is darkness, light is a vital necessity. The dark and the light oppose each other. They cannot co-exist. We have to put the light in place of darkness. When there is fire, water is an urgent need for us. Today, the world is under a night of sorrow and suffering caused by violence, conflict, and brutal fighting.

Every Religion such as Buddhism, Christianity, Islam, Hinduism, Jainism, Judaism, Sikhism, and Confucianism can have its outer shell and inner core. In the humanism of Buddhism, the Outer shell includes paying homage, praying, and observance of religious ceremonies and customs, which make one religion different from the other. The inner core covers Charity, Morality, Concentration, Balance of mind, and Insight into knowledge. They are the essence of human life and a common ground that leads all humans to peaceful co-existence.

Base practices of humanist in Buddhism are considered as follow:

- 1) Abstaining from killing any living beings
- 2) Abstaining from stealing other's belongings not given by the owner
- 3) Abstaining from any sexual misconduct
- 4) Abstaining from any improper speech
- 5) Abstaining from any intoxicants.

The Five Precepts are described in the Buddhist canon as the global Principle.

9. Conclusion

The theory of karma was explained as causation thus: (1) executed actions of an individual affect the individual and the life he or she lives, and (2) the intentions of an individual affect the individual and the life he or she lives. Thus “good karma produces good effect on the actor, while bad karma produces bad effect”.

Buddhism does not reject kamma. Thus, both Buddhism and Hinduism accept the kamma and rebirth doctrine, and they focus on ethics in this life and liberation from rebirth and suffering as the ultimate spiritual pursuit. They have very different views on whether a self or soul exists, which impacts the details of their respective rebirth. Actually, Karma refers to our actions as “good or bad”. How did the Buddha connect to everyone in society? The Buddha used Prakrit so that everyone could understand his teachings.

Kamma is a Sanskrit word that means “action” or “doing.” Kamma, in its strictest sense, refers to all moral and immoral volition (cetan). It encompasses everything encompassed by the phrase “thought, word, and deed.” It is the moral causation law. In other words, in the ethical realm, there is action and reaction. It is one's own fault that one is reacting to oneself. Except for the actions of a Buddha or an Arahant, all volitional actions are referred to as Kamma. Because they have eradicated ignorance and craving, the roots of Kamma, the Buddhas, and Arahants do not accumulate new Kamma.

12. References

- Bhikkhu Bodhi. (2015). *Setting in Motion the Wheel of the Dhamma. Samyutta Nikaya: 56.11*. Retrieval: 15/04/2019.
<https://suttacentral.net/sn56.11/en/bodhi?reference=none&highlight=false>
- Buswell, Robert E.; Lopez, Donald S. (2014), *The Princeton Dictionary of Buddhism*. Princeton University.

- Fraser, J. J., Schmied, E., Rosenthal, M. D., & Davenport, T. E. (2020). Physical therapy as a force multiplier: Population health perspectives to address short-term readiness and long-term health of military service members. *Cardiopulmonary Physical Therapy Journal*, 31(1), 22-28.
- Hofmann, S. G., Grossman, P., & Hinton, D. E. (2011). Loving-kindness and compassion meditation: Potential for psychological interventions. *Clinical psychology review*, 31(7), 1126-1132.
- Kakati, T. (2012). *Humanism in the context of present day scenario*. Doctoral dissertation, University of North Bengal.
- Lien, N. T. T. A. (2019). *Psychotherapy for Criminal Psychology form Buddhist Perspective*. Buddhist Approach to Harmonious Families, Healthcare and Sustainable Societies, 461.
- Lysenko, V. (2018). The Buddhist philosophy of language in India: an overview. *Buddhism and Linguistics*, 19-33.
- Ritter, H. (2003). *The Transformation and Conquest of Sorrow and Suffering*. In *Theatre of the Arts* (pp. 256-263). Brill.
- Sutta Central; S.N. 124f). *Taṇhā*. Retrieved: 17/09/2019.
<https://suttacentral.net/define/ta%E1%B9%87h%C4%81>
- Wahl, J. (2019). *Philosophies of Existence: an introduction to the basic thought of Kierkegaard, Heidegger, Jaspers, Marcel, Sartre*. Routledge.