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HUMAN RIGHTS AND BUDDHISM

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ABSTRACT

All people are born as human beings. So, we have the inherent dignity and equal rights. These are natural and legal rights. Everyone has the rights to life, the liberty, and security of person. Everyone is entitled to all the rights and freedoms without distinction of any kind, such as race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national and social origin, property, birth or the status. In the modern world, human rights developed after the Second World War. It was Universal Declaration by the United Nations General Assembly in 1948.

Human Rights are universal. These two words supplement each other and cannot be separated. Therefore, all human beings entitle to equal Rights. No one can deprive one of his own rights and freedom which deserved to one. Human beings have the freedom to organize their actions or lifestyle according to any world view of their choice and the quality of their collective actions.

Human rights are rights inherent to all human beings, whatever our nationality, place of residence, sex, national or ethnic origin, color, religion, language, or any other status. We are all equally entitled to our human rights without discrimination. These rights are all interrelated, interdependent and indivisible.

In Buddhist perspective on human rights there are five main foundation for people there are normally call five precepts or PaññaSila. As long as people observe these five precepts every living being have a freedom for their life to be happy. On the other hand, how Buddha mentioned human Rights, we can see in to Kalama sutta and Sangalovada sutta so on.



KEYWORDS: *Universal Declaration, Pañcasīla, Second world war,*

HUMAN RIGHTS AND BUDDHISM

The human rights in the declaration are thirty articles. All member countries, nations, organizations support them. They accept that everyone has human rights. But, in the modern world, what is happening? There are tortures, inhuman treatment, inequality before the law, arbitrary arrest, unjust punishment non freedom of thought, expression and belief, force labour, etc everywhere in the world. They are local issues and global issues. They are breaking human rights. Governments, organizations, citizens are trying to stop them in many ways. They try to resolve the problems their best. As UN rules not only human Rights but also animal Rights they declaration for all around the world or for every country.

But in Buddhist perspective of human rights we might see so many sutta from Tripitaka. There are good ways to resolve human right problems in Buddhism. In Kalamasutta of the AN, the Buddha

says “Kalamas, don’t go by reports, by legends, by traditions, by scripture, by logical, by conjecture, by reference, by analogies, by agreement through pondering views, by probably or by the thought, ‘This contemplative is our teacher’. When you know for yourselves that, ‘These qualities are unskillful; these qualities are blame worthy; these qualities are criticized by the wise; these qualities, when adopted and carried out, lead to harm and to suffering’ - then you should abandon them”. According to the sutta, the Buddha loved freedom of thought. He encouraged people to analyze, consider and think deeply and freely. This is the freedom of thought that does not deprive one of his rights on religion and belief. Buddhism always has been supporting the freedom of thought to all mankind since the Buddha time and even today as well. In any other religions, there is no freedom to choose other religion for their followers to practice according to their wishes and desires but the followers are forced and frightened to accept only their religion and belief and do not allow them to study other religious books and not to participate in other religious activities and listen to the preaching of others. On the contrary, the Buddha never prevents His disciples studying other teachings like other religionists but encouraged His followers to study other teachings and compare and practice if there is something which is good and reasonable teaching.

In Singalovada sutta of the AN, the Buddha preached the duties of employers and employees. The employers have to assign the workers work according to their ability, to offer good wages, to give health care and to grant necessary leave. It means to respect workers’ rights. The workers also have duties to do upon the employers. Thus, if they follow their duties in turn, there will be no fights for workers’ rights.

In Singalovada sutta, the Buddha describes the responsibility of parents and children. The parents have to keep their children from evil deeds, to direct them towards the good and to educate them in arts and crafts. There are hundred millions of children who cannot attend school, who are child workers, who are tortured and child soldiers. Who are responsible for them? The parents are mainly responsible. If they do their duties completely the children will grow up well and have children rights.

Nowadays, in some countries, rulers rule the badly and violently. The countries are not peaceful and developed. Government servants do not get enough wages and they take bribes. Citizens are not inequality before the law. Governments spend more money for military uses than others. There are no rights for free children’s education, health care, law and order, etc. Human rights are broken. In Cakkavatti and Dhammika sutta of the AN, King Cakkavatti ruled the country well and wisely. (Raja cakkavattidhammikodhammaraja.) Here ‘dhamma’ means lawfulness. In those days, the country was peaceful and developed. Every citizen had good living. There was no robbery, no killing, no stealing and no crimes. Law and order were maintained and human rights were not broken. Therefore, lawfulness and good ruler are very important to maintain human rights.

In addition, the country is developed, law and order exist, the ruler rules the country well. Suppose a citizen is lazy, uneducated, and ill-character, he will not get equal rights with others. Therefore, in other discourse, the Buddha encouraged people not to idle, work hard, be industrious, develop good manner in order to lead a happy life with economic stability. The Buddha said that one should try for oneself not depending on others. (Attahiattanonatho, Attadipamviharatha.) Therefore, the best way to get human rights is the Buddhist way ‘try yourself’.

LOVING-KINDNESS TOWARD BEINGS (METTA SUTTA)

The most important work of Buddha was to teach people the human rights, which are called Dhamma or Dhamma- Vinaya. II. Historical Background of Buddhism on Human Rights I have been studying Buddhism for many years and involve with Buddhist practice in both prayer and spiritual practice. In these sublime things, I found universal teachings which are applicable to all humankind, without distinction of social status, and places-compassion, loving-kindness and equanimity among the goals for human behavior. Buddha has found the common pattern of understanding that every being wishes to have good life for his/ her own self and also for his and her generation. According to this pattern, one should develop good will which in Buddhism is called Metta. In Metta Sutta, sometimes known as the discourse on loving-kindness, Buddha gives advises to his disciples to practice non-

violence and loving-kindness in every corner and in every simple way. Loving-kindness is the practice of cleansing impurities from speech and action. Apart from this, he also advises his followers to develop a universal love for all. But in order to have universal love, Buddha further extended the meaning that one should love oneself first, in the sense that when one practices loving-kindness (Metta) within, then one can send this to others. In other words, everything starts from you; it is in you yourself that you begin to create peace from within. The essence of this Metta allows the concept of human rights to grow. Everything begins from you; when you honor people then people will honor you. You should not expect people to be kind to you first, but you should begin first. Let these thoughts of boundless love pervade the whole world above, below and across without any obstruction, without any hatred, without any enmity. Whether he stands, walks, sits, or lies down, as long as he is awake, he should develop his mindfulness. This, they say, is the Highest Conduct here||. (Ming, Popular Deities Of Chinese Buddhism, p. 184) By learning from the Metta Sutta, we understand the most valuable thing is how to live within ourselves and extend this to others, and we also learn to love ourselves and extend this love to others. From individual love to universal love, from loving oneself to loving others, we evolve

FIVE PRECEPTS AND HUMAN RIGHTS

I. The First Precept

Firstly, the first precept enjoins one to abstain from killing breathing or living beings. The Buddha says:

Pānāti-pātāveramanīsikkhāpadamsamādiyāmi .

The precept not only concern with abstaining from killing, but also protecting and preserving all forms of life. By way of logical extension, activities such as human trafficking; animal trading, torturing, trading weapon of mass destruction and illegal logging of trees are included in this precept.

Turning to human rights, Perera states in Article 4,

“No one shall be held in slavery or servitude; slavery and the slave trade shall be prohibited in all their forms.”

Clearly, dealing in slave trade degrades human dignity and for that reason such trade was abolished by many countries especially in the USA. However, some degree of slavery is still taking place in poor countries.

Perera continues to state in Article 3,

“Everyone has the right to life, liberty and security of person.”

Devine elaborates,

“Article 3 sets out the three main areas of rights in the sphere of personal integrity (the physical right over one’s own body).”

Undoubtedly, the starting point for protecting individual’s dignity and rights in the practical sense are stated in this article. The right to life is the right to be able to live, both in the sense of not being killed and being provided with sustenance to stay alive or the right to health.

Similarly, underlying the first precept is the principle of equality and dignity of life for all beings. Whereas, the human right is concern with all human beings yet the five precept extends this right to all living beings, therefore the precepts covers a wider scope that the Human Rights.

Devine comments,

“The right to liberty or freedom to do whatever you want to do, from movement (Article 13) to expression (Article 19) to religious practices (Article 18). This is subject to the limitation outlined in Article 29, to protect the liberties of others”

Concerning offering freedom for all beings, not just human beings, the Buddha mentioned in the AṅguttaraNikāya, the great gifts (Mahādāna) or the benefits of maintaining the five precepts, namely, one gives freedom from danger and fearlessness (abhaya concept). And in turn, one shares the same benefits. Clearly, freedom is a reward of practicing the five precepts.

Furthermore, Devine mentions in Article 1,

“All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights. They are endowed with reason and conscience and should act towards one another in a spirit of brotherhood,”

Similarly, in Buddhism, the Dhammapada underscores this point so well,

“All tremble at violence, all fear death. Putting oneself in the place of another, one should not kill nor cause another to kill.”

Underpinning the five precepts is the practice of loving kindness of living beings without exception. Whereas the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the drafters seem to be concerned about human beings only, ignoring the rights of animals and other living. Of course, all living beings have a right to live.

Devine mentions in Article 5,

“No one shall be subjected to torture or cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment.”

Certainly, Article 5 seeks to prohibit particularly appalling abuse perpetrated against individuals. The use of the word “inhuman” connects it to the concept of human dignity that is the basis of human rights, and subsequent human rights instruments state that it is incapable of being limited. Accordingly, prisoners should not be tortured or punished in a cruel way that are inhuman and degrading.

Similarly, the positive aspects of the five precepts enjoins us to preserve and protect living beings without harming them. There are many implications of the first precepts and one can extrapolate it to cover areas of depriving others of social life. In terms of Human rights, there is an article dedicated to protecting such rights.

Devine mentions in Article 9,

“No one shall be subjected to arbitrary arrest, detention or exile.”

Clearly, Article 9 offers three limitations on the right to liberty in Article 3: arrest, detention, and exile. It concerns the boundaries for allowing such limitations. For instance, an arrest takes place when an individual is prevented from moving freely by another individual.

II. The Second Precept

Secondly, besides abstaining from take life, the Buddhist followers are enjoined to abstain from taking things that are not given. Here things include both material and non-material things such as intellectual property. The Buddha mentions:

Adinnādānaveramanīsikkhāpadamsamādiyāmi .

The positive aspect of this precept enjoins us to develop contentment and practice generosity. As a practice to getting rid of greed, the Buddhist followers engage in giving food, shelter, medicine, cloth, time, energy and other things. The underlying principle about the second precept is respect for other's property.

Devine mentions Article 17,

“Everyone has the right to own property alone as well as in association with others. No one shall be arbitrary deprived of his property.”

Human beings depend of basic needs for their survival such as food, shelter and material and other non-material things. Taking away their property encroaches on the ability to survive. For instance, when the thief steals food or money, the aggrieved party may go without food or starve.

Related to the second precept, the Human Rights extends the same spirit to employments.

Devine mentions in Article 23,

“Everyone has a right to work, to free choice of employment, to just and favorable conditions of work and to protection against unemployment.

Everyone, with any discrimination, has the right to equal pay for equal work.

Everyone who works has the right to just and favorable remuneration ensuring for himself and his family an existence worthy of human dignity, and supplemented, if necessary, by other means of social protection

Everyone has the right to form and join trade unions for the protection of their interests.”

Devine further mentions Article 24,

Everyone has the right to rest and leisure, including reasonable limitation of working hours and periodic holidays with pay.”

III. The Third Precept

Thirdly, the Buddhist followers undertake the precept to abstain from sexual misconduct. The Buddha expounds:

Kāmesumicchāchārāveramanīsikkhāpadamsamādiyāmi .

Underpinning this precept is the principle of respect and dignity of human relationship. Promoting unity and a healthy marital relation is very important for maintaining both family and social harmony. One should be faithful to one's wife or husband. Illicit sexual such as rape, pre-marital sex and extra-marital sex relations tend to destroy marriage life. The precept enjoins us not to use sexual energy to harm others. This implies sexual arrangement between two adults with full consent is fine irrespective of whether they have same or different gender.

Devine continues Article 16,

“Men and women of full age, without any limitation due to race, nationality or religion, have the right to marry and to found a family. They are entitled to equal rights as to marriage, during marriage and at its dissolution.

Marriage shall be entered into only with the free and full consent of the intending spouses.

The family is the natural and fundamental group unit of society and it is entitled to protection by society and the State.”

IV. The Fourth Precept

The fourth precept enjoins one to abstain from lying or false speech. The Buddha teaches: Musāvādāveramanīsikkhāpadamsamādiyāmi .

To speak the truth is a key aspect of maintaining harmony in the society. Motivated by personal gain, aversion and delusion, people utter falsehood. Such practices ruin interpersonal relations and cause conflict within the liar. Respecting truth is the underlying principle behind this precept. To the Buddha: there are no evil things that a liar is capable of committing. This means that a liar is unlikely to uphold keep the five precepts much less the principle of human rights. Interestingly, underscoring the importance of truth, the Buddhist tradition holds that though the Bodhisatta may commit certain evil things but he will never tell a lie throughout his life.

V. The Fifth Precept

The fifth precept states enjoin the Buddhist devotees to abstain from taking anything that causes intoxication or heedlessness. The Buddha says:

Surā-meraya-majja-pamādaṭṭhānaveramanīsikkhāpadamsamādiyāmi.

The positive aspect of the precept is that of respect for both individual and societal health. Under the influence of alcohol and intoxicants, people not only violate other five precept but also endanger their life. Undoubtedly, excessive alcohol undermines health.

Additionally, driving under the influence of drugs increases the chances of accidents. To give an example, some of the accidents in the USA are caused by drunkards, especially the teenagers. Turning to human rights, drug abuse tends to lower one's consciousness and judgment. Drunkard can easily violate human rights such as fighting and killing others.

Therefore, when people talk about human rights on Buddhism, we can show the evidence with the five precepts, which is called the basis to protect human rights laws and to give their freedom.

CONCLUSION

According to the conclusion of this topic, how much the Buddha respect all being or animals for five precepts people should appreciate that, because the Buddha already give freedom any human being. There are many religions all the around the world they have their own culture, tradition and belief, and also related to human rights or animal rights on Hinduism they give freedom to cow or bull,

but Islam religion they killed beings for liberation to get happiness they believe such as things. Christian follow ten commandant to protect beings also. Therefore, when we talk about human rights on Buddhism, the Buddha just made the rules for Bhikkhu in 227 rules, 311 rules for Bhikkhuni. This is not human right because the Buddha say “EhiPattiko” come and see. If you like you can practice if you do not like it is not matter. In kalama sutta the Buddha gave rights to Kalama “don’t believe report” such as thing. We must practice first and can follow.

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