

*Buddhist Philosophical Concepts: their relevance in modern times

-DR. KAKALI GHOSH

Assistant Professor, Department of Sanskrit, Jadavpur University, Kolkata

1.0. Buddhism, though initially came into bud as a religious institution, it took a comprehensive profile along with its philosophy and long literary heritage. It offers a storehouse of canonical texts, which though may appear apparently as ‘*prabhusammita-upadeśa*’ (commanding form of teaching), includes ‘*jātaka*’ and ‘*avadāna*’¹, the two most popular forms of Buddhist literary devices for imparting education to *pr̥thag-jana*-s, i.e. to common people. In other words it can be said that those forms of literature paved the way towards the four ultimate results, i.e. *caturvarga* even for *alpadhī*, i.e. people of mediocre aptitude. Imparting knowledge through popular narrative stories, though has a long literary heritage in India, it was most effectively utilized by the Buddhists for expanding their philosophical views and religious as well as ethical principles and practices.

1.1. The present paper humbly attempts to prepare a collage of philosophical views, strewn in the Sanskrit Buddhist *Jātaka*-s and *Avadāna*-s, which may be utilized in several ways from modern viewpoint.

2.0. Buddhist concepts and conceptual terms, reflected and recorded in the Sanskrit Buddhist literary works supplement several regions of Indian Scientific tradition.

2.1. Inherent scientific thoughts in Buddhist Concepts:

- I. Buddhist theory of momentariness developed from the law *sarvaṃ kṣaṇikam kṣaṇikam*, taught by the Lord. Whatever is regarded as *sat*, i.e. existent, must be momentary – this is the nucleus of the doctrine. Whatever possesses the potentiality of doing something is called *arthakriyākārin*, and this potentiality is the sign of existence (*sattva*), according to the Buddhist Logic. Therefore, whatever is potential is momentary, – it is the root of the Buddhist theory of momentariness. This theory has been gradually become critical through different

¹ *Jātaka* and *Avadāna* were included in the *Khuddakanikāya* of *Sutta-piṭaka*. (Cf. Satkari Mukhopadhyay: “Glimpses of Buddhist Canons and Their Divisions”, in: *Buddhist Literary Heritage in India: Text and Context* (pp. 7-19).

Buddhist *navāṅga-dharma* includes *Jātaka* and *dvādaśāṅga-dharma* includes both *Jātaka* and *Avadāna*. (Cf. Ratna Basu: “Jātaka, Avadāna and Āryaśūra’s Jātakamālā”, in: *Samskṛta Bhāratī* (pp.95-102). Calcutta; University of Calcutta, 1997).

discourses. But the authors and connoisseurs of the Buddhist narrative literary works never attempted to go deeper into those critical discourses, because their main objective was not to be lost in the deep forest of logical discourses, rather to preach, to expound, to realize or to enjoy the grace of the Lord or the *Bodhisattva*s and to distribute and enjoy the literary essence.

That the Buddhists believe in the momentariness of every worldly object has been suggested almost in all the Buddhist narrative texts, time and again. Especially the momentariness of money and worldly pleasures has been indicated a number of times. E.g.,

- ...*aiśvaryaṃ dhig anāryaṃ uddhatanadī-toyapravegopamaṃ*... (KMa 27, p. 149/267).
- *phenapiṇḍopamaṃ rūpam asāram anavasthitam*// (Ibid. 2, p. 48).
- *kṣanakṣaṇī hi deho 'yaṃ rakṣyamāṇo 'pi nākṣayaḥ*// (BAKL 2.89).
- *aho vibhavalobhena kṣanakṣayini jīvite*/ (Ibid. 3.98ab).
- Theory of momentariness in comparison to thunder has been elucidated in PPA and KA. E.g.,

kāmopabhogyadhanadhānyaśarīrarājyaṃ

sarvam<hy>anartham aticañcalabhaṅguraṃ ca/

saudāmanīva jagataṃ kṣaṇamātra hr̥dyaṃ... (PPA 2.18abc)

rātrau yathā meghaghanāndhakāre

vidyut kṣaṇaṃ darśayati prakāśam// (KA 4.8ef)

All the scientific applications, irrespective of space and time admit the momentariness of each and every particle of the universe.

- II. The second among the four *āryasatya*-s is *duḥkhasamudaya*. It gives rise to the *pratītyasamutpādatattva*, i.e. the law of karma, which again was developed into the *janmantaravāda* (law of rebirth). The theory of rebirth, though may not be accepted from scientific perspective, each of the scientific clarifications about every sphere of life and universe presuppose reasoning, which is nothing but the law of *karma*. A remarkable statement from *Bhadrakalpavadāna* may be cited here contextually-

karmapradhāno loka 'smin naiva svecchāgatir bhavet//(BhKA 2).

2.2. Buddhist Concepts & Psychotherapy:

Nowadays the term 'prison' has been replaced by the usage 'correctional cell'. A number of Non-Governmental social and cultural organizations assist the government to accomplish the purpose of offering rehabilitation to the accused criminals. Rehabilitation aims to bring a criminal into a normal state of mind, or into an attitude by means of education or therapy, so that s/he could serve the society instead of being harmful to the same.

It is noteworthy that in most of the cases, mental or characteristic deterioration, which provokes a person to do crime, is preceded by rigorous poverty. So the first thing, required for rectifying one's personality is economic rehabilitation, which could not yet be provided sufficiently. And therefore, yet it is hardly possible for a marked criminal to lead a normal and healthy social life even after coming back from the 'correctional cell'. In this context *Badaradvipayātrāvadāna* (BAKL 6) and *Supriya-sārthavāha-jātaka* (BhKA 32) may be recalled. A gang of robbers is noticed to condemn their joblessness for their evil practices.² Lord Buddha in present existence and also in previous existence as Supriya-sārthavāha is noticed to take repeated attempts out of *maitrī*, *karuṇā*, *vīrya-pāramitā*³ and *dāna-pāramitā* for removing the poverty and for assuring financial stability, which encouraged them to step further towards the path of intellectual development.

There are many other instances in Buddhist narratives of modifying the personalities of demoralized persons by means of value-education. Lord Buddha and later Upagupta both defeated Māra and brought him into confidence not by applying any so-called war-weapons, but by the strength of *kṣānti-pāramitā*, which again presupposes *vīrya-pāramitā* and four *brahmavihāra*-s namely, *maitrī*, *karuṇā*, *muditā* and *upekṣā*.

Another instance of successful correctional method of education could be traced in the story of Upagupta and Vāsavadattā (AA 1). Upagupta never entertained the proposal for

² bhagavan jīvikāsmākaṃ nindyeyaṃ karmanirmitā/
na bhṛtir na kṣīra nānyarakṣaṇaṃ na pratigrahaḥ// (BAKL 6, p. 51).

śilpino bañijo nāsmā gopālāḥ kṣīṇo 'pi na//

anenopakrameṇaiva jīvikāṃ pālayāmahe/ (BhKA 32). [Ms. of the critical edition of *Bhadrakalpāvadāna* done by Soma Basu].

³ mastery/ supremacy/ perfection. Six *pāramitā*-s : *dāna*, *śīla*, *kṣānti*, *vīrya* and *prajñā* (BHSD p. 341).

enjoying the company of the courtesan Vāsavadattā, when she was on the peak of her youth, beauty and fame. But she was sympathetically counseled and enlightened by Upagupta when the king, followed by all countrymen accused her for her evil activities, punished by cutting every beautiful limb of her body and banished her from the main stream of the society. Upagupta, being motivated by four *brahmavihāra*-s applied the power of four *saṃgrahavastu*-s namely *dāna*, *priyavacana*, *arthacaryā* and *samāpatti*. By offering *abhaya* and *dharma*, i.e. by providing mental support and imparting ethical and moral teachings through *priyavacana*, i.e. sweet and inspiring words he could remove her perverted feelings and desires and brought her into total conviction (*samāpatti*). And thus Upagupta performed his noble duty (*arthacaryā*) of introducing the path of knowledge to a poor creature, who was rejected by the society because of her sinful deeds. The Buddhist outlook of *maitrī*, *karuṇā* and *vīrya-pāramitā*, reflected in this story may also throw some light to the modern attitude of implementing therapeutic education for physically and mentally challenged people to enhance their self-esteem and self-confidence.

The hint of such psychological treatment is not restricted to mere a fantasy. The experiment has already met a grand success. Drama and cinema are now performed frequently by a gang of rectified prisoners. It is noteworthy that now an institute of security-guard consists of a group of corrected prisoners provides competent service in Kolkata. It could be possible because of a courageous and devoted attempt of a cultural person, who could surpass all the barriers by her pleasant behaviour (*priyavacana*), compassionate love (*maitrī*, *karuṇā*) and tremendous patience (*kṣānti-pāramitā*). The Buddhist psychotherapeutic techniques, though may unknowingly, have been followed to attain such a noble achievement, which are eternally interwoven with our cultural heritage throughout the ages. Such psychotherapeutic measures nowadays are often practiced by the media-programmes in order to reduce the mental agony of the viewers and listeners.

2.3. Buddhist Concepts & Modern Management:

All the Buddhist concepts bear multidimensional character. Circumstantial utilization of those concepts may boost up the modern Management Science.

According to modern Management Science an efficient Manager requires the following skills⁴-

⁴ Cf. http://faculty.mercer.edu/jackson_r/Ownership/chap02.pdf

- Intellectual skills
 - Technical skills
 - Ethical skills
 - Interactive skills
 - Emotional skills
- I. Intellectual skill presupposes logical thinking and ability to solve problems, which again is based on the Buddhist principle of *samyak-dṛṣṭi* (right view), the first among the *ārya-aṣṭāṅgika-mārga* and the concept of *pratītyasamutpādatattva*.
 - II. Technical skill means motor performance at various tasks, which can find out its origin in the concept of *samyak-saṃkalpa* (right thought or commitment), *samyak-karmānta* (right actions), *samyak-ājīva* (right living) and *samyak-vyāyāma* (right exertion).
 - III. Person, who claims to have ethical skill, ought to possess the ability to define and discriminate right and wrong, which invariably presupposes *samyak-dṛṣṭi*.
 - IV. Communicating intelligently and creating an atmosphere that facilitates communication may be taken as essential criteria of Interactive skill.
 - V. And that skill should be supplemented by the Emotional skill, which provides the ability to identify and handle one's feelings.

Essential professional practices as Managerial skills: To reach the summit of those skills one must have to possess the *samyak-dṛṣṭi*, right views along with the *ṛddhi-vidhi-jñāna*, the knowledge of physical feats, *divya-cakṣu*, clairvoyance, *divya-śrotra*, clairaudience and *paracitta-jñāna*, mindreading insight, the first four among the *ṣaḍ-abhijñā-s* (six kinds of supernormal knowledge or miracles). And without *samyak-smṛti* (right recollection) and *samyak-samādhi* (right meditation), none of the aforesaid managerial skills would be fulfilled. These attributes again should be followed by the regular and at least professional exercise of the four *brahmavihāra-s* as well as *priyavacana* and *arthacaryā* among the four *saṃgrahavastu-s*. *Priyavacana* again can be supplemented by *samyak-vāk* (right speech), devoid of which, all the managerial potentials would be in vain.

According to Āryaśūra's *Jātakamālāṭīkā-*

mahāmaitrī: ātmabhūtāny ātmano na bhinnātīti yasya svaparasamatayā sa tathā/
sarvahitasukhopasaṃhāralakṣaṇā maitrī/ sattveṣv ekaputrakaprema maitrī/ **mahākaruṇā:**
sarvaduḥkhāpanayāt/ svabhāvas tenākṛtrimam rūpaṃ yasya tathā/ sarvasattveṣu duḥkhāty
uddhāraṇecchā karuṇā/ duḥkhaparitrāṇalakṣaṇā karuṇā/ tadbhāvaḥ kāruṇyam
saśokacittatā/ **muditā:** duḥkhād uddhṛtya sarvasukheṣu saṃsthāpya yo 'bhinandatuṣṭiḥ sā
muditā/ **upekṣā:** evam api sarvaṃ kṛtvā na kiṃ cit paramārthataḥ kṛtam iti
dharmasvabhāvāvekṣaṇād upekṣā/ duḥkhamagne duḥkhārte sati/ upekṣā udāsīnatā/ (ĀJMt
p. 241-271).

If those principles are taken from the perspective of modern Management Science, they can be utilized to solve the organizational or individual crisis and to satisfy the rising requirements, because the prime objective of Management Science is to benefit the organization and consumers as well. The ideals like *maitrī*, *karuṇā* and *muditā*, as defined above aim to rescue others from every calamity and to provide hospitality to them, which also lead the benefactor to spiritual upliftment. As *upekṣā* means not to be proud of one's own achievement, it helps to carry on a continuous enthusiasm to perform better job, which is an inevitable attribute of a good manager.

2.4. Analytic proficiencies may be enhanced by ārya-aṣṭāṅga-mārga:

Not only management skills, any of the analytic proficiencies may be enhanced by *ārya-aṣṭāṅga-mārga*. Those are: *samyak-dṛṣṭi*, *samyak-saṃkalpa*, *samyak-karmānta*, *samyak-ājīva*, *samyak-vyāyāma*, *samyak-vāk*, *samyak-smṛti* and *samyak-samādhi*

2.5. Buddhism does not mean silent tolerance of all the evil behaviours. Formula to overcome miseries is also given:

Buddhism does not mean to accept or tolerate all the evil behaviours of anyone else. As it propounds the ideals of *ahiṃsā*, *dāna*, *dayā* and *kṣānti* etc. as the means of providing support to others and self-upliftment, on the other hand, it also suggests the strategy for saving oneself from any awful situation. A narrative titled *Vānarajātaka* of *Mahāvastvavadāna* shows that how a monkey, the Bodhisattva escaped from the trap of a serpent by applying presence of mind. The formula to overcome miseries has been presented contextually by a *gāthā*-

asyeme caturo dharmā vānarendra yathā tava/
vīryaṃ buddhiḥ smṛtiḥ prajñā so duḥkham apavartati//

Therefore, four attributes to be possessed for leading harmless life are courage, intellect, concentration (here *smṛti* means concentration) and wisdom.

2.6. It can be concluded that the large repository of Buddhist principles enriches us from several aspects and apposite implementation of them promotes a person systematically to his total character building.

2.7. Buddhist conceptual support behind Environmental Science:

Environmental Science has found out huge support in Buddhist Narrative tradition. Environmental awareness is very stylistically expressed in the sixth chapter of *Bhadrakalpāvadāna*, where Devadatta preparing the pyre to fire Yaśodharā was scolded by a few forest dwellers for destroying trees, because the rare trees bearing fruits being burnt would mean destruction of food and consequently killing of birds.

śoṣayet kim u durlabhān pādapān phalamaṇḍitān/
śākhinaḥ sukhavṛddhās te jvalite 'gnau phalanti kim/
pikādayaḥ pakṣiṇas te sthāsyanti kim u sarvadā//
samānavibhavāḥ kāryāḥ sarve paurāḥ svakair dhanaiḥ/ (BhKL 32.)

In the *Vyāghrījātaka* of Āryaśūra's *Jātakamālā*, it has been narrated that the Bodhisattva, seeing a hungry tigress in a deep ravine, asks his disciples to leave him and go in search of food for the tigress. In the meantime, the undergoing compassion not only for the fatigued tigress, but also for all living beings flushed in his mind and he considered thus:

saṃvidyamāne śakale śarīre kasmāt parasmān mṛgayāmi māmsam/
yadṛcchiki tasya hi lābhasaṃpat kāryatyayaḥ syāc ca tathā mām ayam// (ĀJM-1.21).
tasmāt kariṣyāmi śarirakena tataprapātoḍgatajīvitena/
saṃrakṣaṇaṃ putravadhāc ca mṛgyāḥ mṛgyāḥ sakāsāc ca tadātmajanām// (ĀJM-1.25).

Immediately after this feeling the Bodhisattva threw himself before the hungry tigress, which had several little cubs. She would have devoured the cubs, if the Bodhisattva had not sacrificed his body for her sake.

Nowadays hunting of tiger is strictly prohibited. Here in this story, the enthusiasm of Bodhisattva to save both the hungry tigress and her cubs suggests the important message of protecting environmental balance.

There are so many narratives available in the Sanskrit Buddhist literary heritage, which reflect the noble motive for protecting the nature and environment.

3.0. Extensive study on Buddhist *jātaka*-s and *avadāna*-s may expose many other inherent scientific features. Though the main object of Buddhist teaching was to expand the Buddhist theological and ethical views and practices, the principles and scientific measures suggested, adopted or applied by the Buddhist teachers or schools for the said purpose may still be utilized in several ways from the modern viewpoint.

List of Abbreviations:

AA=Aśokāvadāna.

ĀJM=Āryaśūra's Jātakamālā.

ĀJMṭ=Āryaśūra's Jātakamālāṭīkā.

BAKL=Bodhisattvāvadānakalpalatā.

BhKA=Bhadrakalpāvadāna.

KMa=Kalpanāmaṇḍitikā.

MJM=Mahajjātakamālā.

PA=Praśnottarāvadāna.

PPA=Piṇḍapātrāvadāna.

RMA=Ratnamālāvadāna.

SBh=Saṃskṛta-Bhāratī : Journal of the Department of Sanskrit, University of Calcutta.

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