

PHILOSOPHY OF INTEGRATION: IN THE LIGHT OF BUDDHISM

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The main problem of human history consists in dissension among men resulting from some fanaticism or ignorance. But the main principle of human society is that of harmony. Where the realization of this principle is feeble, the feebleness happens to invade the country from all quarters. The first and foremost problem is that the people who have gathered together must be made to unite. But this unity should be one of sincere kinship and not merely of other conditions. Every history holds the dominant advice, '*Samgacchadhvam Samvadadhvam Sam vo Manāsi Jānatam*'- 'move together, talk together, and know everyone's mind as one'. The practice of this *mantra* is nowhere as difficult as in India.

It is true that not violence, but peace is the root which should be nourished to make life worth living to enable man to stand erect in order to conquer all adversities and violence by the message of love and compassion. This is the true spirit of humanity which is one and is common to all irrespective of geographical boundaries. Here comes the great sage, Lord Buddha who declares most courageously that the mission of man is to embrace man within oneself and in this universal embracing shines the true humanity of man which is eternally luminous and shows the path ahead.

The most outstanding event in the cultural history of India In the sixth century B.C is the emergence of Buddhism, led by Lord Buddha, the Enlightened. The Buddha is considered to be the first historic figure in Indian civilization to conceive the fundamental unity of all beings, and to give effective expression to a feeling that humanity has a common bond and common end. The message of this great teacher and humanitarian - the doctrine of unity, and universal brotherhood of man may now sound stale, but the idea was undoubtedly revolutionary in the extreme at the time of 2500 years back. Lord Buddha seems to have been the only prophet who did everything for others and absolutely nothing for himself. He gave up his home and all the enjoyment of life to spend his days in search of the medicine for the terrible disease of human suffering. That is why; Buddha is called 'physician of the worldly disease' (*bhava-roga-vaidya*). In an age, when men and priests were more interested in discussing the essence of deity, he discovered that people had

overlooked the existence of human suffering. Buddhism in general represents the way of compassion. The Buddha is an embodiment of compassion and hence he is regarded as the compassionate protector of all beings. As ‘thirst’ (*tanha*) has been taken as the root cause of all ‘worldly diseases’ (*bhava-roga*), the path as shown by Buddha is to be restored to and hence he is called a ‘physician of the worldly diseases’ (*bhava-roga-vaidya*). To him the individuals following his path should practice loving kindness which implies not to harm the life of all beings. It is advised always to protect mankind as well as animals and vegetations. It is his wisdom through which one can see all human beings in the universe as equal in nature. The well-being of all human and non-human being is inter-related and mutual.

The contribution of Buddhism towards human integration throughout the centuries is indeed exemplary. It holds the view that the goal of human life is to attain perfection, enlightenment and liberation. All these come through the disinterested performance of action. He was the only man who was ever ready to give up his life for animals to stop sacrifice. He once said to a king, “If the sacrifice of a lamp helps you to go to heaven, sacrificing a man will help you better; so sacrifice me”. (1) The teaching of the Lord Buddha constitutes a rational, pragmatic, spiritual philosophy, leading to individual happiness, enlightenment, wisdom, peace and bliss. Buddhism, in its initial stage, is not so much a religion. It emphasizes certain fundamental verifiable truth about humanity: the fact of human suffering (*duhkha*), the cause of suffering (*duhkha-samudaya*), the cessation of suffering (*duhkha-nirodha*) and the way leading to this cessation of suffering (*duhkha-nirodha-mārga*). The noble eightfold path (*aṣṭāṅga mārga*) consists of right faith, right resolve, right speech, right action, right living, right effort, right thought and right concentration. (2). So, there is an ethical and spiritual path by following which misery may be removed and liberation may be attended.

It is clear that self-indulgence and self-mortification are eventually ruled out in Lord Buddha’s ethical and spiritual ‘middle-path’. In his very first Sermon at Sāranāth he said ‘there are two extremes, O monks, from which he who leads a religious life must abstain. One is life of pleasure, devoted to desire and enjoyment: that is base, ignoble, and unspiritual, unworthy, unreal. The other is life of mortification: it is gloomy, unworthy, unreal. The Perfect One, O monks, is removed

from both these extremes and has discovered the way which lies between them, the middle way which enlightens the eyes, enlightens the mind, which leads to rest, to knowledge, to enlightenment, to Nirvana' (3).

Lord Buddha was primarily an ethical teacher and a social reformer than a theoretical philosopher. So, it is needless to say that the teaching of Lord Buddha scrupulously avoids metaphysical speculations and philosophical theories and dogmas. Buddha was very much practical and he was very much concerned about the problem of humanity. It is interesting to note in this connection that Lord Buddha was once asked about the origin of the world, creation, end of the world, and so on. He was answered beautifully with the following analogy: "Two things only, my disciples, do I teach misery and the cessation of misery'. Human existence is full of misery and pain (*Sarvam dukkham*). Our immediate duty, therefore, is to get rid of this misery and pain. If instead we bother about barren metaphysical speculations, we behave like that foolish man whose heart is pierced by a poisonous arrow and who, instead of taking it out while away his time on idle speculation about the origin, the size, the metal, the maker and the shooter of the arrow (4)

Lord Buddha believed in the well-being of all. He discovered an evil. According to him this evil is curable by becoming unselfishness; it is not curable by force. For, the cause of evil is our desire to be superior to others and our selfishness. The moment when the world becomes unselfish all evil will vanish. So long as society tries to cure evil by laws and institutions, evil will not be cured. Force against force never cures and the only cure for evil is unselfishness. So, we have to make unselfish men and women by proper teaching. Buddhism being essentially a religion of love and compassion forms the basis of unqualified integration. Because of his limitless compassion for all living beings, the Lord Buddha began preaching the *dharma* to all people, irrespective of any caste, colour and creed. He thus sent the Bhikkhus to dedicate their lives 'for the good of the many, as well as for the happiness of the many' (*Bahujana-hitāya bahujana-sukhāya*) : 'Go forth, O Bhikkhus, on your wonderings, for the good of the many- for the happiness of many, in compassion for the world, for the good , for the welfare , for the happiness of gods and men. Let not two of you go the same way. O Bhikkhus, proclaim that *dharma* which is gracious at the beginning, at the middle and at the end '. (5) In this

connection, it is relevant to quote Vivekananda, ‘all religions teach us to do good for our brothers. Doing good is nothing extraordinary - it is the only way to live. Everything in nature tends to expansion for life and contraction for death. It is the same in religion. Do good by helping others without ulterior motives. The moment this ceases contraction and death follow.’(6)

Lord Buddha preached universal brotherhood and equality of man. It taught that compassion and service to all life, is the dynamic way of translating those teachings into practice. Human integration automatically follows and naturally ensures from the deep conviction that all life is one and that humanity is one indivisible whole; and that each self is, as it were interfused with all other selves; and that what affects one, equally affects others. So, the teaching of Lord Buddha is: ‘A mother protects her only child at the risk of her own life. Like a mother cultivate a boundless love towards all beings’. Again, his teaching is: ‘do not deceive another, do not despise any person whatever in any place. In anger or in ill-will do not wish to do any harm to anybody.’ The integration, the Buddhists think does not only remain among social beings but also it remains in mental and environmental world. In the modern time we find that human beings have misused their power and destroyed the animals, forests and mountains resulting in environmental crisis. The greedy minds due to excessive ‘thirst’ (*tanhā*) of mankind lead to such changes and the destructions of the ecological balance. The ‘thirst’ (*tanhā*) in human mind does not pollute his mind alone but the whole environment. So, mental unrest due to the non-fulfillment of desire can affect the whole environment.

The external environment is seriously polluted because of the pollution of the internal environment in the mind having the lack of peace. The excessive greed is one of the reasons for internal pollution, which is the impediment of peace. This disease may be eradicated if an individual finds some satisfaction and contentment through the Buddha’s teaching. That the external pollution is related to our internal one is evidenced in the *Dhammapada*. It is said that just as the maker of an arrow makes the end of it straight, so, an individual should simplify his mind, which is wavering, fickle, uncontrolled and unprotected. (*Dhammapada* 1/3). The contentment in the context of Buddhism does not mean the eradication of all desires but to live in harmony with all beings and nature. It is said in the *Dhammapada* that a pure and

developed mind alone can understand others mind (*panditavagga, verse no. 3*). It is further emphasized that when the world is burning (*Prajjalite*) there is no opportunity for adopting laughter (*hāso*) and joy (*ānanda*). In the like manner, if our mind is covered with darkness, would we not seek for light? (*jaravagga, verse no. 1*). Those who believe in the teaching of Buddha will control their desire and live in harmony with nature keeping the environment in healthy condition. It is rightly mentioned in the *Dhammapada* that one who sees only the apparent beauty, who is not self-restraint in enjoying consumable things, who is lazy and weak is always attacked by one's enemies just like a weak tree. On the other hand, an individual refraining from seeing apparent beauty becomes self-controlled and respectful and hence he is not overpowered by the enemies just like a firm and stony mountain. (*Dhammapada 1/7-8*).

The historical account of Buddhism shows that for thousand years the Buddhist monasteries have developed a harmonious living with nature. The calm and cool atmosphere of the forest and mountain help the Buddhist practitioners to develop their inner mind, which ultimately makes them 'feel' for the protection of animals. With loving and tolerant heart the Buddhists live with natural vegetation, wild animals in the forest in harmony and for mutual survival. In the *Sutta-nipata* we find a deep appreciation of beauty and diversity of nature. Buddha says "know ye the grasses and the trees...Then know ye the worms, and the moths and the different kinds of ants...know yet also the four-footed animals small and great...the serpents...the fish which range in the water...the birds that are borne along with on wings and move through the air..."

The consideration for other individuals as a matter of moral obligation is not limited to other human beings alone but to other species. Buddhism seeks to transform in the way through which an individual conceives himself. The environmental ethics in Buddhism is not totally a matter of identifying and securing rights, but it is a matter of undertaking a practice of affirming and realizing the trans-human potential for enlightenment as an effect. The deeper inside in an individual is generated through the cultivation of it in human and trans-human species and hence it can become potential for enlightenment. This can express itself as a compassionate

environmental sustaining altruism. Such an idea has been expressed by Shantideva in 'Bodhichāryābatāra' in the following manner:

'Just as the body which is constituted with hands and other limbs should be protected as a single entity, the whole world divided into so many parts should be treated as undivided one so far as its nature is concerned. If it is taken as divided it would suffer no doubt. I should remove suffering of others because it is suffering like my own. I should help others too because they exist as I exist'. Shantideva adds that if someone is reluctant to remove sufferings of others, it would be like refusing to use one's hand to remove the thorn of one's foot, because the pain of the foot is not the pain of the hand. To get an ecological balance we should develop an ecological sensibility and actualize that sensibility in practice. So in Buddhism the phenomenon of inter-relatedness is deeply felt and hence a comprehensive developmental path leading to 'peace' is sought.

Buddhism gives emphasis on the threefold training of human mind and eight factors of the enlightenment, which are the basis of ethical sensibility to the environment. In the Mahāparinibbānasutta, *Dighanikāya* discusses about the threefold course of training like cultivation of ethical conduct (*śīla*), meditation (*samādhi*) and wisdom (*prajñā*). These three are inter-connected in the sense that the first is left behind when the second is undertaken. Without the development of these it is not possible for one to lead a happy and peaceful life. Wisdom (*prajñā*) goes beyond knowledge attained through reading books or hearing the tales. The practice of morality (*śīla*), and mental development (*samādhi*) develops a penetrative insight and realization into the nature of everything in its proper perspective. When the realization (wisdom) appears, the trained mind becomes an unshakable dynamic force that can handle any human problem without anxiety and thereby can remove the worldly problems. When the ethical conduct is firmly established the meditation becomes effective. Through the effect of meditation the transformative power of wisdom becomes possible. (*Mahāparinibbānasutta* of *Dighanikāya*, 5/67-68)

From the above discussion we may draw the following conclusion. Only advice to protect environment or to adopt *Ahimsā* will fall flat upon others until and unless they are enlightened with wisdom. The true solution of the environmental crisis will be neither technological nor legal. It must be stereological. It must involve

the evolution of a significant number of human beings to a higher level of awareness, to a higher ethical sensibility. It does not mean that the technological and legal efforts to safeguard the environment are pointless. But we think that these are only a stopgap measure but not the ultimate solution. To Buddhism there is a potentiality in human being to evolve into a higher ethical sensibility. This will happen through the concerted practice and discipline. The whole Buddhist tradition consists precisely in a sustained effort to devise effective methods for undertaking this transformation.

According to Buddhism everything has in itself, intrinsically and basically, the faculty of 'Bodhi' or the enlightenment factor. All are endowed with the 'Buddha-Nature', and so have the possibility of becoming 'Buddha', at sometime or other. The 'Buddha-Nature' is variously described as 'suchness' or 'tathātva' or the ground of all- the *Dharmakāya* or *Dharmadhātu* or *Śūnyatā*. The pursuit of the holy life is for the sake of getting enlightenment. It is to arrive at the state of Nirvāna. Nirvāna is negatively worded, since it is not possible to describe it in human terms. It is, therefore, termed as 'Śūnyatā'. Therefore, in Buddhism, the main object is the enlightenment of not only self, but all creation also. So, final conclusion is that love and compassion, wisdom and service, the feeling of the self about all life, form the foundation of philosophy of integration in Buddhism.

References:

1. *The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda*, vol-iv, Advaita Ashrama, Calcutta, 1989, page-136.
2. Mahāvaga, 1.6.18; *Samyukta- Nikāya*, (iii), page-106; *Majjhimanikāya*.1.p.47ff.
3. Oldenberg, *Buddha*, p.127
4. *Majjhimanikāya*, 63
5. Mahāvaga, 1,ii,i
6. *The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda*, vol-ii, Advaita Ashrama, Calcutta, 1989, page-494.