



The Path of Making Life : An Educational Buddhist Perspective

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Abstract: *The present world is made up of complex societies which have undergone tremendous changes through the ages and these changes will continue on. The spread of ideas and developments is so swift that no corner of the world is left untouched. The impossibilities of yesteryears have become possibilities today. The world is coming closer day by day than before. Countries can easily get connected by various modes of transport and communication and people can update any event happening in any corner of the world any time. These changes are not without its problem, such as environment problem, social problem and personal problem have become a serious problem around the world. However, the personal problem is more serious than that of the others two. Education ideally, is the principle tool of human growth. Education provides the solution to a myriad of global problem and leads the way to changing one's suffering into happiness. Educational system of Buddhism is unique. This system can be approached by anyone who is from any part of the society. There are many methods used in educational which is used mostly by the Buddha himself in his holy work of helping beings develop one's ability. In this respect, the Buddha has drawn the Noble Eightfold Path.*

Keywords: *Buddhism, Educational system, thought, life, mindfulness.*

1. INTRODUCTION:

The present world is made up of complex societies which have undergone tremendous changes through the ages and these changes will continue on. The spread of ideas and developments is so swift that no corner of the world is left untouched. The impossibilities of yesteryears have become possibilities today. The world is coming closer day by day than before. Countries can easily get connected by various modes of transport and communication and people can update any event happening in any corner of the world any time. These changes are not without its problem, such as environment problem, social problem and personal problem have become a serious problem around the world. However, the personal problem is more serious than that of the others two. Education ideally, is the principle tool of human growth. Education provides the solution to a myriad of global problem and leads the way to changing one's suffering into happiness. Positive functioning is linked to a meaningful existence, including happiness, contentment at work, hope, positive affect, and overall increased well-being. According to McAdams (1993), people often create tales to make sense of the events in their lives. A life narrative is a means of giving life purpose and linking [via justification] the person to the experience.¹

Educational system of Buddhism is unique. This system can be approached by anyone who is from any part of the society. There are many methods used in educational which is used mostly by the Buddha himself in his holy work of helping beings develop one's ability. In this respect, the Buddha has drawn the Noble Eightfold Path.

Buddhism is a religion of equality, compassion, and goodwill. Buddhism, a well-known religion, is referred to as a non-theistic religion since it places a strong emphasis on human effort and rejects the idea of divine force. It emphasizes how difficult it is for humans to break the cycle of birth and death. Everyone, in this regard, could distribute love and compassion and make efforts to establish an equitable society. A society in which every person can contribute his best for overall human development. The Buddhist human developmental system stands for every human being to acquire the positive values and for complete literacy to create a better world environment. Being a psycho-practical educator, the Buddha has drawn an educational system aimed to fully develop realization and action in students: the psychological and the physical, the individual and the social. This was undertaken using the Noble Eightfold Path (*Ariya-Aṭṭhaṅgika-Magga*), which is known as Middle Path (*Majjihimā-paṭipadā*), because it avoids the two extremes self-mortification and sense-pleasures.² It is a system of self-development and a graded process of moral evolution. In other

words, the path produces the spiritual insight and intellectual wisdom by which things can be seen in their true perspectives.

The Noble Eightfold Path is the central ethical doctrine that contains the essences of all kinds of Buddhist ethics. In the *Dhammacakkappavattana-sutta* (the first sermon) delivered by the Buddha, he proclaims his standpoint saying that:

“The Tathāgata reached Enlightenment via the Middle Path that avoids the two extremes, i.e., *Kāmasukhallikānuyogo* (the extremes hedonism) and *Attakilamathānuyogo* (the extremes of self-mortification). The Path gives us eyes (sight), gives us insight (knowledge), and leads to peace, higher knowledge, enlightenment and *Nibbāna*.”³

By following this path, the man can reach the end of suffering. This is the only way that leads to the highest aim of life. They are:

2. Right View of Human :

It is significant that the first factor on the list begins with Right View or Right Understanding. It related to seeing accordance with conditions – seeing according to the things as they are, seeing how things proceed along a course of cause and effect. By this reason we can know how to avoid becoming deluded. All of these must consistently depend on critical reflection (*Yonisomanasikāra*) so that it leads to mindfulness and clear comprehension (*Satisampajañña*) freedom, self-assurance, along with decision making and actions based on wisdom. This is the level at which Right Understanding bring its fruits to bear on the other factor of the Noble Eightfold Path. Regarding *Sammā-diṭṭhi*, the Buddha said:

“Bhikkhus, what constitutes Right Understanding? Understanding *Dukkha*, understanding the arising of *Dukkha*, understanding the extinguishing of *Dukkha*, and understanding the way to the extinguishing of *Dukkha*. This is Right Understanding.”⁴

From the above passage, we come to know that Right Understanding is knowing what is real problem, what is the rising of problem, what is the extinguishing of problem, and knowing the way to the extinguishing of the problem. Knowing evil and roots of evil, goodness and roots of goodness, seeing five aggregates as impermanent (*aniccam*), suffering (*dukkha*) and not-self (*anattā*). Seeing Dependent Origination, which is the process of nature.

When thoughts and ideas are clear and wholesome, man's speech and actions are likewise brought into correct relation. Once more, right understanding leads to the cultivation of right effort, which in turn fosters right mindfulness. Right effort and right mindfulness, when directed by right understanding, result in right concentration. Therefore, the primary source of Buddhism, Right Understanding, causes the other coordinate system limbs to move in correct connection to one another.⁵

3. Right Thought in Human :

Right Thought denotes the thoughts of selfless renunciation or detachment, thoughts of love and thought of nonviolence, which is free from lust, free from ill-will and free from delusion. Right Thought must never have the slightest touch of evil in it.⁶ Grouped on the wise side is Right Thought. It should be noted that ideas of wisdom are associated with thoughts of selfless detachment, love, and nonviolence. This indicates that true wisdom is endowed with these noble qualities, and that all ideas of selfish desire, ill will, hatred, and violence stem from a lack of wisdom in all areas of life, whether they be social, political, or individual.⁷ Whenever there is anything, which seems in the least suspicious or unkind, it must be shut out of thought.⁸ It must be sure that Right Thought here is on kind and good, which free from lust, ill-will and delusion. They can be overcome through Right Thought:

• *Nekkhamma-saṅkappa*: This is a thought free from greed (*Lobha*) and sensuality (*Kāma*). The thought is not becoming entangled nor mixed up with things that promote desire of any kind. A person who possesses such thoughts is ready to do true welfare for others because his mind is not cluttered with thought of greed and sensuality.

• *Abyāpāda-saṅkappa*: This is a thought, which does not harbor resentment or feelings of revenge and does not view the world in a negative way. This thought is an antidote against thought of ill-will (*Dosa*). It is an attitude of having loving-kindness (*Mettā*), good intentions towards others, wishing that they have happy life.

• *Avihimsā-saṅkappa*: This is a thought free of malice and bad intentions. A person possessing this kind of thought is compassionate (*Karuṇā*). In other words, he always readies to help others to overcome their grievances.

The Buddha has generally defined the Right Thought thus:

“Bhikkhus, what is Right Thought? It is thought free from sensuality (*Nekkhamma-saṅkappa*), thought free from ill-will (*Abyāpāda-saṅkappa*), and thought free from violence (*Avihimsā-saṅkappa*) – this is the Right Thought.”⁹

4. Right Speech of Human :

The sense of *Sammā-vācā* is to refraining from lying speech (*Musāvādā*), from slanderous speech (*Pisuṇavācā*), from harsh speech (*Pharusavācā*), and from gossip (*Samphappalāpa*). The power of speech is often underestimated. In fact, it is extremely influential. Therefore, in the development of the Path, the role of speech is emphasized. At first, let us see the definition of Right Speech available in the Buddhist text:

“Bhikkhus, what is Right Speech? Right Speech is abstention from false speech (*Musāvādā veramaṇī*), abstention from libel/slander (*Pisuṇāya vācāya veramaṇī*), abstention from harsh speech (*Pharusāya vācāya veramaṇī*), abstention from vain talk/gossip (*Samphappalāpa veramaṇī*).”¹⁰

As a matter of fact, the Buddha’s speech is always described as being well-spoken (*Svākkhāta*). It is timely and effective: “And whatever speech the Tathāgata knows to be best, true, connected with the goal, and liked by them, agreeable to them, the Tathāgata is aware of the right time for explaining that speech.”¹¹ The sweet words not only generate loving kindness but also are beneficial to others. Words truthful and trustworthy produce harmony among the fellow beings.

5. Right Action of Human :

According to Pāli Canon, Right Action is abstention from three wrong actions: killing (*Pāṇātipātā*), stealing (*Adinnādānā*) and sexual misconduct (*Kāmesumicchācārā*). The definition of Right Action is given as follows:

“Bhikkhus, what is Right Action? Right Action is abstention from taking life (*Pāṇātipātā veramaṇī*), abstention from taking what is not given (*Adinnādānā veramaṇī*), and abstention from sexual misconduct (*Kāmesumicchācārā veramaṇī*).”¹²

Accordingly, Right Action is the keynote of the Noble Eightfold Path. Buddhism is a religion of action. By the practice of Right Action one acquires merit. Craving, anger and ignorance cause the production of evil actions. They retard his mind in the progress of his desired Path. An unemotional mind restrains mental, moral and physical actions. A certain amount of mental discipline must be developed since an unbridled mind will constantly find reasons to do or say wicked things. “unprotected thought leads to unprotected bodily activity, speech, and mental action.”¹³ In the *Aṅguttara-Nikāya*, the Buddha said:

“A fool is known by his actions and so is a sage. By conduct is knowledge made bright.

One endowed with three qualities should be known as a fool. With what three? With wrong bodily behavior, wrong speech and wrong thought. A fool should be known as one endowed with these three qualities.

One endowed with three qualities should be known as a sage. With what three? With right bodily behavior, right speech and right thought. A sage should be known as one endowed with these three qualities.

So, monks, you should train yourselves thus: We shall live having given up the three things endowed with which a man is known as a fool, and shall practice three things endowed with which a man is known as a sage. Thus, monks, should you train yourselves.”¹⁴

6. Right Livelihood of Human :

(Right Livelihood means that the right way of earning that the humankind must obtain from making other's living through a profession that brings harm to other. So Right Livelihood is the Noble disciples completely stop all improper means livelihood. As the Buddha's words cyclically state:

“Bhikkhus, what is Right Livelihood? Right Livelihood is the Noble disciples completely stop all improper means of livelihood and sustain themselves according to the ways of proper livelihood.”¹⁵

According to the aforementioned quote, we shouldn't injure any animals in order to support ourselves. We ought to be morally upright, innocent, and devoid of wrongdoing. It is evident that the Buddha is adamantly against all forms of warfare, believing that the trade in weapons, including deadly ones, is a wicked and unfair source of income. The Buddha specified five kinds of trades that Buddhist should not engage in because these vocations indirectly cause harm to the welfare of society for trading in:

- 1) human beings,
- 2) weapons,
- 3) flesh,
- 4) intoxicating drinks and drugs,
- 5) poisons.¹⁶

In other words, greed, lust, selfishness and desire for power condition these wrong livelihood. To be involved in this wrong ways of life will degrade the quality of our lives day by day and will ultimately lead us away from *Nibbāna*. Aside from mundane (*Lokiya*), there is another definition that is divided according to supramundane (*Lokuttara*) level thus: Right Livelihood at the supramundane level amounts to “abstaining from, stopping, completely giving up any inclination towards improper livelihood. The person with a noble mind, free of intoxications (*Āsava*), and endowed with the Noble path is truly progressing along the Noble path.”¹⁷

7. Right Efforts of Human:

Effort is a quality of utmost importance in Buddhism that around, which all others revolve.¹⁸ And in other parts of the teachings that discuss practice we will find effort incorporated in one way or another, as well. According to the Pāli-Canon. Right Effort is of four kinds, as follows:

- 1) *Samvara-padhāna*: The effort to prevent or to avoid unwholesome things from arising.
- 2) *Pahāna-padhāna*: The effort to abandon or limit unwholesome things that have arisen.
- 3) *Bhāvanā-padhāna*: The effort to maintain, mature, and sustain wholesome things that have already arisen.¹⁹

All of these *Dhamma* are for those who are industrious, not for those who are lazy. Aside from the points already mentions, the reason for stressing effort relates to one of the fundamental tenets of Buddhism. The Truth (*Saccadhamma*) is comprised of natural laws or true principles to be found naturally. The Lord Buddha and other great teacher discover these laws and reveal them to others. The fruits of practice are attained in accordance with a natural process of causes and effects – the teacher is not a creator who mete rewards. For this reason, all people must exert their own efforts in order to attain any goal. There should be no time spend sitting around hoping or imploring other sources for benefits without lifting a finger. In the practice of cessation of suffering, the Buddha encourages his follows to exercise the Right Effort with utmost strength:

“Bhikkhus, I clearly understand two valuable things about the *Dhamma*:

(Firstly) I am not merely content with the good things, I have already done and, (secondly) I do not allow any backsliding in the course of ceaseless efforts.

Therefore, all of you should know that we will establish effort that does not cease, until only skin, sinew and bones remain. Our tissue and blood may dry up, but we will continue to seek the fruit that can be attained via human energy, hard work and struggle. There is no slack in our efforts- all of you should know this and carry on in this way.”²⁰

Moreover, we have already cited the following maxim:

“*Tumhehi kiccam ātappaṃ, akkhātāro Tathāgatā,*
All of you must put forth your own efforts;
The Tathāgata only point the way.”²¹

8. Right Mindfulness of Human life:

Buddhism emphasizes the significance of Sati in all facets of ethical behavior. Consciousness, or “Appamāda,” is a key component of Dhamma practice and is necessary for advancement in the Buddhist ethical system. Non-separation from Sati is the general definition of this concept. Here the Buddha says:

“Bhikkhus, the footprints of all animal fit within the footprint of the elephant; the elephant’s footprint is said to be supreme in terms of size. Similarly, all wholesome *Dhammas* having conscientiousness (*Appamāda*) as their base fall within the bounds of conscientiousness may be said to be supreme amongst those *Dhammas*.”²²

Sati (mindfulness), especially, when speaking of ethical conduct, the functioning of Sati is often compare to that of gatekeeper, whose job is to keep his eyes on the people posing in and out, restricting entry and exist to only the proper people.²³ An explanation of Sati (mindfulness) is:

“Mindfulness, attention, awareness, recall, recollection: the mind’s ability to know and observe itself. Sati is the vehicle and sport mechanism for *Paññā* (wisdom). Without Sati, wisdom cannot be developed retrieved or applied. Sati is not memory or remembering although it is related to them. Nor is it mere heedfulness or carefulness. Sati allows us to be aware of what we are about to do. It is characterized by speed and agility.”²⁴

Sati is therefore quite helpful in our day-to-day existence. “Mindfulness, O monks, I declare is essential in all things everywhere,” stated the Buddha. We should remain alert and conscious at all times, whether we are moving, sitting, standing, talking, eating, or drinking. Because the Buddha values attention so highly:

“The only way that leads to the attainment of purity, to the overcoming of sorrow and lamentation, to the end of pain and grief, to the entering upon the right path and the realization of *Nibbāna*, is by the Four Foundations of Mindfulness.”²⁵

Again, the Four Foundation of Mindfulness (*Satipaṭṭhāna*), as referred to in the Pāli Canon, incorporate both the cultivation of *Samatha* (calm-meditation) and *Vipassanā* (insight-meditation). For practice of the Foundation of Mindfulness (*Satipaṭṭhāna*) and insight-meditation (*Vipassanā*) one neither requires withdrawal from society nor a fixed time schedule. Therefore, this kind of practice can be integrated into general daily life.

9. Right Concentration in Huaman:

The last step of the Noble Eightfold Path is Right Concentration. It is defined as ‘*Cittassa ekaggatā*’, i.e., one-pointedness of mind.²⁶ A concentrated mind is the highest aspect of the Noble-Eightfold Path. Right Concentration is the crucial factor enabling the practitioners to reach the highest aim, i.e., *Nibbāna*. In other words, *Nibbāna* can be reached by doing proper meditation. Meditation, as mentioned before, is divided into two forms; the development of *Samatha* (calm-meditation) and the development of *Vipassanā* (insight-meditation).

Through meditation, the mental states and functions are progressively stilled. When the practitioner go into deep meditation, all activity of the five senses is suspended, no visual or audible impressions arise at such a time, no bodily feeling is felt.²⁷ This kind of *Samatha* (calm-meditation) is just a pre-requisite for wisdom and *Vipassanā* (insight-meditation). One should not however, enjoy merely having experience in these types of absorption, because *Samatha* itself does not lead to the permanent deliverance. Such deliverance can be achieved by *Vipassanā* meditation. Precisely aiming of meditation or concentration is to produce a state of perfect mental health, equilibrium and tranquility. So that all good qualities are to be arisen.

It is sufficient to say that the Noble Eightfold Path or Middle Path is important. It seems to be only one path comprising eight factors that can lead people reach peace, higher knowledge, enlightenment, and *Nibbāna*. Moreover, it is a vast concept and the means explained throughout the Buddhist doctrine. The Noble Eightfold Path is the means that will help people a progress to Enlightenment according to the systematic process. The ascetics, even the former teachers of the Buddha who attained the high trances (*Jhāna*), could not attain *Nibbāna*. The reason is that they did not

perfect the training of *Paññā* (wisdom). That is why they could not reach *Nibbāna*. Again, we can say there is no other Path to lead people to the *Nibbāna*, but Noble Eightfold Path or Middle Path. Hence, the *Dhammapada* says:

“The best of paths is the Eightfold path.
The best of Truths are the Four Noble Truths.
Non-attachment is the best of mental states.
The best of bipeds is the Seeing one.”²⁸

The Noble Eightfold Path can be summarized as a mixture of Buddhist practices. It includes the entirety of the Buddhist ethical philosophy. The eight elements are not eight distinct routes or eight precepts that need to be fulfilled in order to move on to the next. They are elements of a single route. They have to be used consistently and are interdependent, much like the eight links in a chain. The Buddha continued to elaborate on this process that results in the end of suffering. Dr. Walpola Rahula comments about the Noble Eightfold Path in his work:

“Practically, the whole teaching of the Buddha, to which he devoted himself during 45 years, deals in some way or other with this Path. He explained it in different ways and in different words to different people, according to the stage of their development and their capacity to understand and follow him. But the essence of those many thousand discourses scattered in the Buddhist Scriptures is found in the Noble Eightfold path.”²⁹

When we examine the Noble Eightfold Path closely, we find that it encompasses the whole Buddhist educational system. We can infer from this study that the Noble Eightfold Path, which is a step movement toward ethical living, is not just for monks and Arahants but also for people from all walks of life. The Noble Eightfold Path is the center of Buddhist education because it incorporates *Sīla* (morality), *Samādhi* (concentration), and *Paññā* (knowledge). This structure sets Buddhist education apart from other educational approaches because it incorporates liberation as well as the objective of behavior and morality.

Even while there are advantages to giving life purpose, there is currently no one clear method for doing so. Success in building a meaningful life was associated with advantages including increased positive affect and life satisfaction, among other things. It has been demonstrated that finding meaning in a difficult situation might aid in adjustment. Buddhism holds that happiness and a meaningful existence are inextricably linked to achieving life's ultimate purpose. Therefore, in the Buddhist sense, this Noble Eight Fold Path which is the matter that the Buddha taught that “tend to aversion, absence of passion, cessation, quiescence, knowledge, supreme wisdom, and *Nibbāna*.” This noble path is the Way of Life which the Buddha encouraged human beings to follow.

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