

A STUDY OF THE RIGHT VIEW AND ITS RATIONAL FOUNDATION

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පුද්ගලයා හා ඔහුට සාපේක්ෂක ලෝකය පිළිබඳ නිරවද්‍ය වින්තනයක් ඇති කරගැනීමෙහිලා ඉවහල් කරගත හැකි ප්‍රධාන ක්‍රමවේදයක් වශයෙන් විෂයානුබද්ධ වින්තනය දැක්විය හැකිය. බෞද්ධ ඉගැන්වීම්වල අවධාරණය කෙරෙන සම්මාදිට්ඨි යන්නෙන් ඉහත සාධකය අවධාරණය කෙරෙන අතර මෙම කෙටි අධ්‍යයනයෙන් එමගින් ප්‍රකට වන බුද්ධිවාදී ප්‍රවේශය පිළිබඳ සාකච්ඡා කරනු ලැබේ.

According to Buddhism, the right view as the foundation of human knowledge and understanding signifies the manner of viewing an object mental or material in its true perspective¹. This provides the necessary background for our knowledge and the formation of concepts about the subjective and the objective world. The mental basis of the right view is dependent on sensation, perception, mental formation and consciousness². Sensation signifies the awareness of stimulation and belongs to the sphere of human emotions and sentiments. Perceptions signify the basic component of the formation of a concept and it belongs to the sphere of intellect and memory. On the other hand, volition denotes one's will in choosing or making a decision which has the foundation of the above two mental functions. Consciousness signifies an alert cognitive state in which one is aware of the internal and the external happenings of the world of phenomena³. On the whole, these signify different mental functions or energies that influence the formation of a view of the world of experience.

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සංස්. ආචාර්ය පුජ්‍ය මිමුරේ ගුණානන්ද හිමි, මහාචාර්ය ඊශා හේවාබෝවල, මහාචාර්ය සුසන්ත මහලල්පත, ජ්‍යෙෂ්ඨ කථිකාචාර්ය ප්‍රියංකර රත්නායක මානවශාස්ත්‍ර පීඨ ශාස්ත්‍රීය සංග්‍රහය, 20 කලාපය, 2012/13, මානවශාස්ත්‍ර පීඨය, කැලණිය විශ්වවිද්‍යාලය

1. Usefulness and Maintenance of the Right View

A right view of the phenomenal world is only possible when these inner functions of the human mind are regulated and developed to a good state. One of the main objectives of the analysis of the five aggregates is to build up a right view of the phenomenal world. The formation of erroneous concepts and the immoral behavior are all due to the inner functions of the human mind.⁴ When these functions of the human mind are assailed by the defilements shown in Buddhism, the wrong views of the phenomenal world are formed which lead to the detrimental happenings of the human society. The maintenance of inner calmness and a well-controlled mind which restricts the formation of wrong views motivated by defilements are a problem that human beings face.⁵ But, Buddhism has prescribed many a method to maintain the right view of the phenomenal world through right mental training.⁶ According to Buddhism, a view does not mean a simple abstract collection of propositions, ideas or thoughts, but it means self-centered result oriented thought concepts that shape our mental and physical activities. As our views have a strong mental basis, they have a significant effect on us and society. Therefore, the maintenance of the right view of the world of phenomena is of paramount importance.⁷ The correlation of views and attitudes are significant because our attitudes towards a certain problem or issue have its basis in our views. Attitude denotes the way of thinking, speaking and behaving.⁸ The foundation of our attitudes has its basis in our view. The view is formed on the basis of concepts and the formation of concepts is a complicated psychological process that directly influences the attitude of an individual. According to Buddhism, views stand in between the concepts and attitudes and they have a direct impact on human society. Hence, to find a solution to the issues of the world, basically, it is necessary to have the right views as they have a strong effect on human society.

2. The Influence of Defilements on Views

Wrong views lead to many discrepancies in human society and they divert the decision-taking, implementing of new things, development, planning etc in the wrong direction.⁹ According to early Buddhist teachings, the right view has a highly philosophical meaning and on the other hand, it could be discussed from a mundane point of view as well.¹⁰ Nonetheless, the highly philosophical meaning of right view is also dependent on its general meaning and therefore, getting used to the development of right view has to be started at its grass-root level. In order to provide sustainable solutions to the complicated issues of the world, it is necessary to correct our wrong views on a moral and rational basis.¹¹ This eventually leads to the attainment of supra-mundane knowledge with which one could perceive the true nature of the world of phenomena.

Basically Buddhism classifies views into two¹² as:-

- * Views with taints.(defilements)
- * Views without taints.(without defilements)

Tainted defiled views are mundane but such views could also bring merit and will support the harmonious existence of human society if they are to be made accurate to a certain degree. As ordinary beings, one cannot expect them to maintain right views always,¹³ just as the noble disciples of the Buddha. But an ordinary being also could maintain a right view regarding the day to day problems through the practice of a right mental exercise prescribed in Buddhism.

According to Buddhism, taints are the basic elements that corrupt the human mind.¹⁴ Here, it is said that the relative reduction of defilements could develop the positive side of the human mind which leads to the formation of right concepts, right views and right attitudes. According to Buddhism, a tainted, defiled mind

cannot perceive the very nature and all the aspects of a problem.¹⁵ Buddhism is of the view that mundane beings always tend to entertain two extremes, i.e. materialism and idealism and cannot discern the true nature of the world of objects,¹⁶ but with the development of the right view, one can prevent the mind from running after the extremes that lead to prejudice and bias.

It is mentioned that whatever may be the ideology, if one is attached to it, grasps it, being tied to the view and takes it as my and mine, it leads to the generation of harmful results in human society.¹⁷ This sort of strong bondage to a certain ideology does not lead one towards a correct path or find a correct solution to a certain issue.¹⁸ As it is detrimental to the right knowledge, understanding, attitude, thought, behavior etc., it avoids the entertaining of right criticism from others as well. That is why Buddhism has given the highest priority to the right view as it is the most important element of mental behavior. Specially, as far as social matters are concerned, it has a practical significance.

It is obvious that a view is involved in our vision, way of looking at a problem and understanding it as well. One of the weaknesses of the human mind is that it is impossible to see all the aspects of a certain issue. Solutions given without perceiving all the aspects of an issue, leads to much more complications in human society. In this regard, the four kinds of attachment that lead to the formation of wrong views¹⁹ shown in the discourses are important and they are as follows:-

- * Attachment to sensual pleasure
- * Attachment to views
- * Attachment to rites and rituals
- * Attachment to Self

Here, it is clear that when one's thoughts are formed on the basis of the above things, it is impossible to have a right vision of the social issues as well as the world of phenomena. In the

Dependent Origination, it is taught that Craving and Grasping are two causal factors that lead to the origin of many social issues.²⁰ According to Buddhism, the thoughts of desire that arise in the human mind does not mean craving. Craving implies the strong impulsive and dynamic inner workings of the human mind which produce intense thoughts and the unwholesome behavior manifested externally. In this context, grasping means the strong impulsive mental element of greed and such a strong mentality leads to bondage or attachment where wrong views are generated.²¹

As far as human beings are concerned, the maintenance of the right view and the timely application of it wherever necessary are the most important. One of the human weaknesses is that one cannot or it is extremely difficult to maintain the right views when the mind is assailed by the internal and external influences. The human mind is a breeding ground for the generation of defilements and therefore views are formed influenced by defilements.

3. Psychological Basis of the Right View

In this regard, the nutriments prescribed in Buddhism are also very significant as they nourish our views. In Buddhism, nutriments are basically divided into two as material and mental. Material nutriments such as solidity, fluidity, heat, motion, colour, odour, the testable and nutrient essence are basically important for the maintenance of our physical body.²² But here, the most important is the mental nutriments that develop and mould the concepts and views²³. The four kinds of nutriments are as follows:-

- * Material food
- * Contact
- * Mental volition
- * Consciousness

In this context, contact denotes the sensorial and mental impressions which provide the condition for the three kinds of

feeling i.e. agreeable, disagreeable and indifferent. In accordance with the different kinds of feelings, our concepts and views are formed. Mental volition is related to rebirth and the inner functions of the human mind. It stands as the foundation of all mental functions. Therefore, for the formation of concepts and views, it provides a very strong basis. Consciousness feeds mind and corporeality stands as an incorporeal energizer of all the human activities. The very nature of consciousness directly influences the formation of concepts and views of the world of phenomena.

The four kinds of nutriments are always nurtured by clinging and craving and they are detrimental to the formation of right views²⁴. Specifically, the four kinds of clinging lead to the formation of wrong views i.e. clinging to sensual pleasures, clinging to views, clinging to rites & rituals and the clinging to soul. According to Buddhism, grasping or clinging makes one deviate from the right view and does not lead to the generation of right thoughts in one's mind. This signifies a kind of very impulsive strong bondage to the conceptualized world of phenomena²⁵. As far as ordinary beings are concerned, they are living in an objective world which is changing or transforming into something else in every second. Hence, the clinging to the world of phenomena in transformation always covers the development of a right view. An impartial and unbiased mental foundation where one is able to observe the very nature and every aspect of an issue is of prime importance in finding a successful solution to the world of complexities faced by ordinary beings. This kind of clinging is known as prejudice. In Buddhism, this is the clinging that blemishes the right view.

The other mental element that generates a kind of aversion towards the phenomenal world is ill-will. According to Buddhism, in this human world, basically two dynamic characteristics are visible in the human mind either people crave for objects of the world or they extend a kind of obsession towards the world of

phenomena.²⁶ These two lead to the formation of wrong views, thoughts, concepts etc. According to early Buddhist teachings, these two strong mental impulses have the foundation of ignorance which appears as the first condition in the theory of Dependent Origination. When one's mind is assailed by these strong defilements, one is unable to have a right view of the world. Craving and ill-will lead to the development of conflicts or attachments and they are produced by the different kinds of feelings. These two denote two aspects of the human mind. Many a method of mediation has been prescribed to control them and the gradual eradication of them.²⁷

According to Buddhism, the most important is the maintenance and application of the right view especially when there are challenging circumstances and decisive moments. This is a kind of challenge that human beings are confronted with as their mind is always assailed by strong defilements. Without getting used to the maintenance of the right view, it is extremely difficult to come to unbiased, impartial decisions. Therefore, a proper mental, physical and verbal training is necessary to maintain the right view of the world of phenomena. The practice of right effort is the first step in this process. The entrance into the processes with a balanced and calm mind, in the course of time, leads to self-motivation towards the cultivation of positive qualities of the mind. On the other hand, the gradual development of faculties is also helpful in the maintenance of the right view. In Buddhism, faculty signifies the moral powers, motives, controlling principle or the directive force.²⁸ With the help of faculties which are twenty four in number, one can maintain the right view without deviating from it.

The mental basis of the right view i.e. besides the defilements, has a close affinity with perception, mental formation or volition and consciousness. Perception signifies the awareness or understanding of sensory information and the grasping of the

distinctive character of the world of objects. The mental basis of actions, attributes, views and thoughts are dependent on each other. According to Buddhism, only right perception could give the right view of the world of objects. Therefore, right perception with regard to the world of phenomena is necessary to form the right view and it displays the ultimate experience of the world of phenomena and involves in a further processing of sensory input which leads to the conceptualization of the phenomenal world. Sensations and perceptions are impossible to be separated from each other as they are inseparably interrelated. Sensations are the immediate results of our understanding of the world of phenomena. According to Buddhism, when perceptions transform themselves into concepts or kind of organized experience, it affects our views and manifests different physical, mental and verbal behaviors. Hence, right perceptions are very useful for the right views and they finally provide the foundation for decisions which are implemented for the betterment of the world.

On the other hand, depending on perception, the mental formation also takes place which is the dynamic side of human thinking. It is a regenerative, supportive and result-oriented mental force and has a very deep connotation in Buddhism and signifies the conceptualization of the world of objects which affects our views, decisions and attributes and creates the necessary ground for views. Mental formation which conceptualizes the world of phenomena is also known as mental volition. The disposition of a person is decided by this which directly affects his views. It has a direct relationship with our physical, verbal and mental behaviour as well. When the volition is affected by craving, ill-will and ignorance, one cannot have a good mental disposition. Views are always grounded by the degree of defilements and the dynamic functions of feeling, perception, volition and consciousness.²⁹

4. Rational foundation of the Right View

The right view which has a rational foundation, emphasizes abstaining from attachment to a certain ideology or prejudices and with that foundation looking at all the facets, causes and conditions that lead to the formation and development of various issues in society and of the world of phenomena in a wider sense. Thus, the right view could provide the required direction to finding a solution to the burning issues of the world. From the Buddhist point of view, the unsatisfactory nature is the underlying causal factor for the emergence of all the social issues and in order to resolve these, one has to have a right view of such issues based on logical and moral reasoning which is known as *ehipassika* (come and perceive) or *pacchavekkhana*, (observation again and again). Without a strong rational foundation, it is difficult to have right thoughts, concepts and ideologies that lead to the formation of right views and attitudes. Hence, the right view is the science of mental, physical and verbal behaviour of the individual.³⁰ The aspirations of every human being in society are to be achieved through this if he or she is to and maintain happiness, health, peace, harmony and economic realities. In order to acquire these things and make the world a better place for human living, it is necessary to maintain these without disruption. In this objective world where the individual plays the subjective part, he needs a behavioral training i.e. physical, verbal and mental leading towards a peaceful and risk-free life. In order to achieve such objectives in life, there should be right decisions, applications, implementations etc. The achievement of these objectives become difficult when there is no right view as it plays a vital role in all human activities. It is obvious that the elementary level of the right view is useful in solving world issues. Many an issue of the world is related to the economic realities and the consequent behavioral patterns of the individual.³¹ On the whole, the significance of the rational foundation of the right view for the resolution of such social issues that lead to many a conflict of the world, is obvious in Buddhism.

Endnotes:

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