

A Buddhist Approach towards Euthanasia

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Introduction

Euthanasia is a medical process that has been authorized by several countries in the world. This concept can be generally defined as “the bringing about of a gentle and easy death for someone suffering from an incurable and painful disease or in an irreversible coma”. The Canadian Senate defines this process in its 1995 report as “the deliberate act undertaken by one person with the intention of ending the life of another person in order to relieve that person’s suffering is Euthanasia”. Accordingly, with that euthanasia can be connoted as the legalized suicide.

Buddhism never accepts killing intentionally. The very first precept among the five precepts also freeing from killing. On the other hand, killing deliberately is a sinful karma. Hence, it arises a controversy on how the concept of euthanasia can be accepted from a Buddhist perspective.

Research Objectives

The aim of this study is to figure out whether the concept of Euthanasia can be accepted from a Buddhist perspective, whether it is a sin, how it will affect both suicide and to the helper and what will be the rebecoming (*punabbhava*) of such a person.

Research Methodology

In doing our research, we referred to the Channovāda Sutta of the Majjhima Nikāya, the Vesāli Sutta of the Saṃyutta Nikāya, the Vakkalī sutta of the Saṃyutta Nikāya and their commentaries as the primary sources for our study. Here, we discuss the Buddhistic perspective on the concept of euthanasia.

Research Discussion

Buddhism claims that the creatures are rarely born in human existence. There is no room for deliberated killing in Buddhism at all. As mentioned earlier, the very first precept among the five precepts is also abstaining from killing. Murder (*manussaviggaha*) appears even in the fourfold

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pārājikā in the Buddhist monastic discipline while killing creatures deals with the *pācittiya*. Yet a committing suicide takes the place of *dukkaṭāpatti* in the Buddhist monastic rules. (*na ca, bhikkhave, attānaṃ pātetabbaṃ. yo pāteyya, āpatti dukkaṭassā'ti*) Furthermore, it has given a chance to the death in the commentaries by fasting or refusing medication for those who are suffering from incurable pain, but the obligation is attaining one of the acquisitions. (*sace so 'ayaṃ attabhāvo paṭijaggiyamānopi na tiṭṭhati, bhikkhū ca kilamantī'ti āhāraṃ upacchindati, bhesajjaṃ na sevati, vaṭṭati. yo pana 'ayaṃ rogo kharo, āyusaṅkhārā na tiṭṭhanti, ayañca me visesādhigamo hatthappatto viya dissatī'ti upacchindati, vaṭṭatiyeva. -Pārājikāṭṭhakathā, PTS-2.467*) Moreover, Channovāda and Vakkalī Suttas elaborate committing suicide of two arahants Channa and Vakkalī with the intention of getting rid of unbearable bodily pains.

However here the argument arises in the case of worldly persons. Vesāli sutta is one of the finest examples to examine how suicide affects a person from a Buddhist perspective. Accordingly, with that group of mendicants who lived in Vesāli becoming horrified, repelled, and disgusted with this body, they sought for an assassin. Each day ten, twenty, or thirty mendicants slit their necks. The commentary elaborates on the karmic reasons for their suicide. Those mendicants were hunters during one of their previous lives. As a result, in this particular existence, they committed suicide either by themselves or the others. This karmic impaction had been seen by the fortunate one and taught them the meditation on ugliness for the sake of the betterment of their coming existence. (*atīte kira pañcasatā migaluddakā...aparāparacetanā... attūpakkamena ca parūpakkamena ca jīvitūpacchedāya okāsamakāsi. taṃ bhagavā addasa ... tesu ca bhikkhūsu puthujjanāpi atthi... – 'ime attabhāve chandarāgena maraṇabhayabhītā na sakkhissanti gatiṃ visodhetuṃ, handa nesaṃ chandarāgappahānāya asubhakathaṃ kathemi. taṃ sutvā attabhāve vigatacchandarāgatāya gativisodhanaṃ katvā sagge paṭisandhiṃ gaṇhissanti...'* *tato tesāṃ anuggahāya asubhakathaṃ katesi kammaṭṭhānasīsena, no maraṇavaṇṇasaṃvaṇṇanādhippāyena... - Saṃyuttanikāyaṭṭhakathā, PTS-3.665*)

In this circumstance, we can assume that the karmic impaction of suicide depends on the mental culture of suicide. Accordingly, we can presume that the cultivation of the mind by the person who expects a gentle death is the most important practice in the case of euthanasia.

Now the argument focuses on how the undertaker of euthanasia is impacted karmically. In that case, it can be roughly concluded that the cultivation of his mind is also a requirement

comparison with the above incident. However, the contradiction is how it is free from the killing life, (*pāṇa-ghāta*) because in the process of euthanasia the fivefold judgment on a killing (be a living creature, knowing that living creatures, the intention of killing, the effort of killing and the death of living creature) is completed. In this circumstance, the applicability of the intention of killing also should be deeply examined. It is prominent that Buddhism always gives a priority to the intention. All the actions are preceded by the intention. Impurity of the intention caused to sufferings. Poison does not affect one who is free from wounds. In this same manner, there is no ill for him who does no evil. In the case of euthanasia, the intention of the undertaker is relieving persons' suffering not killing them. However, it does not mean that it is totally freeing from the killing-life, but it leads to assuming that the effect of this process depends on the intention of the undertaker.

Research Conclusion

At the very beginning, we initially expected to study how Buddhism can approach to the modern medical process euthanasia. All considered, it can be assumed that there is a chance to euthanasia in Buddhism, nevertheless, the cultivation of the mind in order to rebecome in a better existence is compulsory. Furthermore, the doctor also has a proper way to deals with this process cultivating his mantel culture as per the way. Yet the self-integrity is the utmost serious quality in the case of managing the intention.

Keywords: Buddhist, Euthanasia, intention, suicide, perspective

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