

A Comparative Study on Self-Actualization in Humanistic Psychology and Nibbāna in Buddhist Psychology

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Introduction

All Schools of Psychology, approaches of Psychology and any field related to Psychology always have a goal or an objective. Those schools of Psychology try to direct human beings towards those objectives. Sometimes, the goals or objectives of schools of Psychology have similarities and also dissimilarities. However, as a whole, they wish the wellbeing of the human beings. Various therapies presented by all these Schools of Psychology and approaches of Psychology aim at the psychosocial wellbeing and physical wellbeing of individuals. However, the way the Schools of Psychology and various approaches to Psychology understand and perceive the goals or the meaning of human life can be identical and different from each school. Sometimes, the same idea is shared by many schools while some Schools of Psychology have unique ideas. Further, the same concept has been differently analyzed in various Schools of Psychology.

Both Buddhist Psychology and Humanistic Psychology have their own goals or objectives. Though ultimatum: *Nibbāna (Emancipation)* is unique to Buddhism, the concepts like "self-actualization" or "fully functioning person" mentioned in Humanistic Psychology have some kind of a relationship to *Nibbāna*. Even when the characteristics of Arahants and self-actualized and fully functioning persons are comparatively studied, a similarity can be identified. However, it should be mentioned that Arahants and self-actualizing and fully functioning persons have their own unique characteristics which do not overlap. This research proposes to study the Self-Actualization in Humanistic Psychology and Nibbāna in Buddhist Psychology on comparative basis.

Research Methodology

This study is basically a qualitative research study. The Pāli Canon will be used as the Primary

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Source; and Western Psychology books and Buddhist Psychology books will be used as secondary sources for the study. Buddhist teachings on 'Nibbāna' and Humanistic Psychology's teachings on Self-Actualization will be studied comparatively and Literature review will be done on comparative basis.

Research Objectives

To identify and examine the relationship between self-actualization in Humanistic Psychology and Nibbāna in Buddhist Psychology.

Research problem

Is the concept of self-actualization in Humanistic Psychology equivalent to the concept of *Nibbāna* in Buddhist psychology?

Research Discussion

Self-actualization/Fully Functioning

According to Couture et al., (2007), Self-actualization is: “the psychological process aimed at maximizing the use of a person’s abilities and resources. This process may vary from one person to another”. According to Maslow, self-actualization is a state of fulfillment in which a person is achieving at his or her highest level of capability. As Carl Rogers points out, a fully functioning person is one who is in touch with his or her deepest and innermost feelings and desires. These individuals understand their own emotions and place a deep trust in their own instincts and urges. According to Rogers, unconditional positive regard plays an essential role in becoming a fully functioning person. According to Rogers (1969), a fully functioning person is not defensive but open to new experiences without controlling them. Rogers suggested that the fully functioning person is one who has embraced 'existential living.' In other words, they are able to live fully in the moment. They experience a sense of inner freedom and embrace creativity, excitement, and challenges.

Nibbāna

In Buddhist Psychology, *Nibbāna* or emancipation has been defined as the extinction of lust, hatred and ignorance (*Rāgakkhayo dosakkhayo mohakkhayo nibbānaṃ*). *Nibbāna* is a *Dhamma*

which is "unborn, unoriginated, uncreated and unformed." Hence, it is eternal (*dhuva*), desirable (*subha*), and happy (*sukha*). *Nibbāna* is not situated in any place nor is it a sort of heaven where a transcendental ego resides. It is a state which is dependent upon this body itself. It is an attainment (*dhamma*) which is within the reach of all. *Nibbāna* is a supramundane state attainable even in this present life. According to Buddhism, *Nibbāna* is the greatest bliss (*nibbānaṃ paramaṃ sukhaṃ*).

Characteristics of Arahants have been described in the verses 95 and 96 in the *Dhammapada* as follows.

"There is no more worldly existence for the wise one who, like the earth, resents nothing, who is firm as a high pillar and as pure as a deep pool free from mud. Calm is his thought, calm his speech, and calm his deed, who, truly knowing, is wholly freed, perfectly tranquil and wise."

Research Conclusion

The research could identify a relationship between *Nibbāna* and Self-Actualization/Fully Functioning. However, *Nibbāna* is unique to Buddhism/Buddhist Psychology. And also Self-actualization/Fully Functioning is unique to Humanistic Psychology. Similarities between Self-actualizing persons and fully functioning persons and Arahants can also be seen though there are also dissimilarities.

Keywords: Buddhist psychology, Humanistic psychology, Self-Actualization/Fully Functioning, *Nibbāna*

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