

Universal Psychological Suffering and Liberation of the Buddhist Characters Patachara, Angulimala and Prakriti (Chandalika): A Critical Study

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Abstract: *This research paper aims for a critical study of psychological suffering and the liberation of the Buddhist characters (which were historical too): Patachara, Angulimala, and Prakriti (Chandalika, the untouchable girl). All these characters were suffered from the pathological grief. Buddha made them to realize the true nature of reality - Anicca (Impermanence), insubstantiality (Anatta) and suffering (Dukkha). Buddha played a role of a skilful psychologist and obviously the role of Supremely Awakened Being. His Dhamma (natural laws) compelled the characters to heal themselves. After the preliminary counseling by the Buddha the characters were made ready to practise Anapana (Mindfulness) and Vipassana (Insight) Meditations. By practising Sil, Samadhi, Panna i. e. Noble Eightfold Path, they liberated themselves from the suffering and became the Arhants (who has conquered Attachment, Enmity and Delusion). Means they liberated themselves from the dangerous delusional labyrinth of the 'Self'.*

Keywords: Universal psychological Suffering, Liberation, Sil, Samadhi, Panna

1. Introduction

I have been quite surprised and curious that not much work is found on the selected characters with respect to the psychological suffering and liberation. Many stories can be found everywhere without this main approach. Hence this research work throws a fresh light on this rarely touched topic. Nowadays many psychologists are using Buddhist mindfulness techniques in their clinical trials such as John Kabat - Zinn, Robert Wright, Daniel Goleman, Jack Kornfield and Tara Brach. This is a good sign of understanding Buddhism scientifically. But on the other hand many characters like Patachara, Angulimala and Chandalika are still in waiting for their detailed psychological and the spiritual studies. The second generation psychologists of mindfulness meditation are indeed engaged in this psycho - spiritual method of healing with the aim of the complete life transformation¹. This research will definitely helpful for the general reader as well as the researcher who are keenly interested in the theme of psychological suffering and liberation regarding these three selected characters. This paper is a little attempt to have a critical study of the characters with the theme of psychological suffering and also throws a light on the Buddha's enlightened way to handle these problems.

2. Literature Survey

The character Patachara is probably one of the most tragic characters of the human world. Because she loses all her near ones: husband, two sons, father, mother, and the only brother in a day. This brings her a deep pathological grief. She loses her sense of herself and wanders across the roads naked. Then Buddha helps her to liberate from the suffering. The second character, Angulimala was also suffered from the pathological grief. This grief came after his classmates' and guru's ill treatments to him although he was a very sincere and an honest student. This injustice and his blind following to guru make him a dreaded killer. Later on he

was also helped to liberate by the Buddha but the method was different. Then the third character Prakriti, the Chandalika. Chandalika is quite different than the other two. To understand the first two characters the research work of Dr Neelam Oswal and Dr Mahesh Deokar (SSPU, India) was very helpful. I really express much gratitude to them as they are my teachers too. For the character Chandalika much logic and Imagination have been used to understand her psychological suffering and the liberation.

3. Objectives

- 1) To interpret critically how the characters suffer psychologically.
- 2) To interpret critically how these characters liberate themselves from their psychological suffering.

4. Methods

Critical and the analytical methods are used. For this, imagination is also used.

5. Discussion

Universal Human Psychological Suffering

Human Suffering is a universal truth. From this suffering every human being wants to get rid of. There is no bar of caste, race, religion, creed, gender, or nation. Something which happened against the wished desire or expectation causes suffering and unhappiness. On the Other hand if something happened according to the desire, the thing or situation does not remain forever and hence this also causes suffering. Every human being does not wish or want to be sick, old, and die! Although she or he knows it as a universal truth! Unconsciously they develop the notion of deathlessness and permanence. This leads to develop false views about themselves and of the outer world which cause

suffering. In modern terms they develop depression, anxiety, bipolar diseases, schizophrenia, dementia etc.

Buddha discovered his Dhamma universal laws to heal these psychological sufferings which are actually some parts of the whole. These laws are *Sil*, *Samadhi* and *Panna* i.e. the Noble Eightfold Path. The main feature of Buddha's Dhamma is emphasis of eradication of Psycho - Socio suffering. Social problems like caste system, gender inequality and poverty have also been tackled by Buddha very skillfully. From his times to the present, millions of people are being benefitted by the Dhamma. Thousands of people in his times got Nibbana. Freedom from suffering and became *Arihants*. Among them were Patachara, Angulimala and Prakriti, the Chandalika.

Patachara: the most tragic and severely depressed woman turns into an Arihant (Saint)

The childhood name of Patachara was Rupvati means extremely beautiful woman. Like her name she was very beautiful. She was an only daughter of a wealthy sethi (merchant) of *Savathi*. Rupvati was highly protected by her parents and kept on the fourth floor of her house which was like a mansion. But in such a luxury she felt alone and fell in love with a young servant of her father. Later on, she eloped with him. The young couple settled in a remote village from *Savathi*. They worked in the nearby farms for their livelihood. After few years Rupvati became pregnant. She wanted to go her parent's home as it is a custom in India for the first pregnancy. But in fear the husband refuses to go. However, one day, the wife without telling the husband starts off to *Savathi*. After few hours, noticing the wife's departure the husband also follows her. He meets her and requests to return home but she refuses. Meanwhile she gets birth pain and gives birth to a baby boy. Now there is no reason to go *Savathi*. Hence they return back. Again the same story happens during the second pregnancy. But this time the storm arises and the husband goes with his axe to cut the bushes for a shelter to her pregnancy. But in the bushes the poisonous snake bites him and he dies on the spot. Meanwhile the wife gives birth to a second baby boy. She waits him for the whole night. In the early morning with her new born baby on her hip, she starts off her journey to see the husband. On the way she comes across the frozen dead body of her husband. She wails, laments and blames herself for his death. In the stroke of depression, she starts off her journey to *Savathi*. However due to the last night storm and heavy rain the river *Aciravati* gets flooded. To reach *Savathi* she has to cross the river. But she cannot cross it with two babies. Then she takes the new born baby and puts him on the next bank of the river in a leaves made basket. As she comes back in the river to take the older boy, an eagle mistaken him as a flesh; swoops it into its claws and flies away. Seeing this Patachara shouts and yells loudly but all goes in vain. Hearing her mother's voice, the older boy supposes it as her calling and enters into the river water. Due to the speedy and strong current of the water he flows away with water. Experiencing the triple tragedy within a day, wailing and crying she goes on the way of *Savathi*. As she comes near to *Savathi*, she meets a traveler which has just come from *Savathi*. She asks him about her family. In the beginning the traveler hesitates to tell but by her continuous insistence he tells that due to last night storm, her

father's house was collapsed and everybody were buried and died (Father, mother and her brother) under it. Now her grief was too big to tolerate. She loses her senses; tears off her clothes and wanders around the roads yelling, shouting and laughing. She loses her sense of self and social code of clothing. In the language of today's psychology, she was suffered from a pathological grief.² In the language of common people she becomes mad. However, Children of *Savathi* pelt stones at her.

After many days, Buddha was staying at *Jeta Vana*, *Anathpindaka's* monastery. When he was preaching, seeing the crowd, Patachara supposing to get food, comes there. As soon as she sees Buddha, she comes back in her senses. Then she shrinks her body as she realizes her nakedness. Buddha asks someone to cover her with a Chaddar (blanket) hence she was called as Patachara, a woman covered with a blanket. Buddha listens to her with Mahakarunika ears. He enlightens her by explaining Impermanence, Suffering and End of Suffering. Patachara becomes a *Bhikkuni* and well verse in *Vinaya*. She was as good as *Upali* in it and consequently she becomes an *Arhant*. Thereafter, she helps many women to come out of suffering. This story is a combination of three sources.^{3, 4 & 5}

Angulimala, the Dreaded killer becomes a Saint

The second story is of Angulimala, the dreaded killer. The birth name of Angulimala was *Ahimsaka* (a man of nonviolence). He was the son of the *Rajpurohit* (royal priest) *Bhaggava* of Kosal king *Pasenadi*. He was very virtuous, sincere, highly intelligent and obedient son of *Bhaggava* and *Mantani*. As a talented youth he was selected as a student in the great university - *Taxilla*, under the guidance of the most celebrated *Acharya* named *Disapamukh*. Soon he became very famous among the students and also became the most celebrated student of the *Acharya*. Even the *Acharya* gave him a room in his own quarter. The *Guru* and the *Gurumata* loved him as their own son and he too loved and respected them like his parent.

But due to his fame, some students develop jealousy against him. They plot a vile scheme to discredit and defame him. They spread rumours of an affair between *Ahimsaka* and the *Guru Mata*. The *Acharya* was also told about it. In the beginning *Acharya* rules it out. But gradually the doubt was making home in his mind. One day he sees his wife and *Ahimsaka* talking with each other happily in the bed room. He becomes very angry and in a wrath he expels *Ahimsaka* outside as well as orders to leave the university. Before his departure the *guru* demands him the *Gurudakshina* to bring one thousand little fingers of human beings and also promises him to give the knowledge of supernatural powers. In this way he wants to punish him permanently and systematically. The sincere and obedient *Ahimsaka* was shocked but followed the *Guru's* order blindly.

For getting the 1000 little fingers he hides himself in the jungle named *Jalina* forest where the highways meet. He kills hundreds of innocent people mercilessly including women and children. He kills people and hordes their little fingers in a particular place. But crows and vultures trouble him and steal his horded fingers. Hence to save the fingers from them he starts to make a garland of the fingers and

wears it around his neck. Hence he was called as Angulimala. However, nobody dared to go by the highways nearby Jalina forest. Seeing nobody coming by the roads Angulimala starts to enter the nearby small villages. Therefore due to the terror of Angulimala the villagers vacated their houses. All nearby villages were no men places. Consequently people complained about this to the king Pasenadi. Understanding the gravity of the problem the king plans to send his military to the Jalina forest to kill Angulimala. Learning this news from her husband, Angulimala's mother Mantani becomes worried about the son and decides to tell the news to her dear Ahimsaka. Therefore the compassionate mother starts off for the Jalina forest in the very early morning with some delicious food to her Ahimsaka.

Meanwhile Buddha was well aware about the news of Angulimala, Ahimsaka and the military plan of the king Pasenadi. Rather he collected all information regarding Angulimala and sets himself to the Jalina forest. On this way many people including passerby, cowherds, and shepherds warn him of the danger. The *Mahakarunika Buddha* smiles and goes on his way. Meanwhile Angulimala's mother enters into the Jalina forest. Seeing a woman comes to him from far, he decides to kill her as it was his 1000th much awaited last kill. When the mother comes near, he recognizes her and his mind for a while comes into the grip of to be or not to be. But evil in him was now super dominant and easily overcomes this to be or not to be. He decides to kill his own mother! He waits her to come closer. But for that very moment, Buddha arrives in front of him. Hence he changes his mindset and decides to kill the Buddha. As Buddha comes near to him he chases Buddha rapidly but he could not reach him. He runs fast, faster and faster but still cannot reach the Buddha until after noon comes. In the frustration he yells out Buddha loudly, "Stop ascetic! Stop ascetic." Buddha replies, "Dear Angulimala, I have already stopped, you too stop" This reply of Buddha makes him angrier and he shouts, "What are saying? You are too running. If not then how it is?" Then Buddha replies, Dear Ahimsaka, I have stopped my *Vicaras: Raga, Dvesha and Moha* (Attachment, Enmity and Delusion). Buddha preaches him the Noble Eightfold Path with his Mahakarunika speech. Means, he counsels Angulimala compassionately. After listening the Dhamma Angulimala realizes that he has been conquered by the Buddha. He throws his sword and holds the feet of the Buddha. With eyes full of tears he beseeches him to give him the *Diksha* i. e. ordination. In his own style Buddha says, "Ehi Bhikkhu" (Come Monk). Meanwhile the Ahimsaka's mother also approaches them. She offers Buddha the food which she brought for her loving Ahimsaka. Buddha takes a small portion of it as it was brought for Ahimsaka and gives the large portion to Ahimsaka. After Buddha's meal, both mother and son eat together after many years. Mother has mixed feelings. She was extremely happy that her son has left his evil job and has joined the Sangha. On the other hand slightly unhappy as she has to live without him. Finally with big heart and happiness she bids goodbye to her dear Ahimsaka.

After becoming a Bhikku, Ahimsaka practises *Sil, Samadhi* and *Panna* with all *vinayas* (Monk's code of conduct)

diligently, consistently, patiently with all his efforts. Hence he reaches Arhant hood, becomes *Arhant* i. e. freedom from suffering. Meanwhile during his *Pindpata* (alms) few people start to fear him and pelt stones at him. He comes to Buddha with his bleeding head. Buddha just smiles and says, "Endure it." Bhikku Ahimsaka understands the law of Kamma. He endures every abuse and stone pelting with *Karuna* and *Metta* to all. Slowly and gradually all people start to revere him. Angulimala Paritta is a testimony of it. Finally he dies with peaceful mind.⁶

Chandalika, the Untouchable Girl Becomes a Saint

The third story is of Prakriti, the Chandalika (the untouchable girl). One day Ananda, one of the most celebrated disciples and a personal attendant of Buddha was returning from *Pindpata* from *Savathi*. He was thirsty and wanted some water. Therefore went to a river and asked to give water to a girl. The girl refuses to give it and tells him that she was a Chandalika, an untouchable. Replying her, Ananda says, "I am concerned about water not your caste." Then she gives water, Ananda drinks and goes to Jetvana. Ananda leaves but his action of humanity touches the heart of the untouchable girl, Prakriti. She falls in love with Ananda. She follows him and gets all information about Ananda. She tells about this to her mother - Matangi and cries with full of love and emotions. She expresses her decision to marry with him only. She requests her mother to use her skills of sorcery on Ananda. In the beginning the mother refuses to do it as Ananda was a Buddha's disciple monk. But she melts as her only loving daughter was in full of tears. They make a plan and invites Ananda for a meal. Ananda comes. After having meal, Matangi requests him to marry with Prakriti. Ananda refuses and tells her that he is under the vow of celibacy. Consequently they lock him into a room and use the sorcery on him. But there was no effect on him. Prakriti tries to use the sensual effects on him but all goes vain. Ananda remains calm, firm and detached. Finally, Matangi has to leave Ananda in the Morning.

After returning from Jetvana, Ananda tells to Buddha what happened yesterday. However, Prakriti chases her wherever he goes. Again he tells it to the Buddha. This time Buddha orders to summon the Chandalika. In the meeting, Buddha asks her to shave her head to have a discussion on Ananda and for this she has to take permission of her mother. Her mother in the beginning refuses to give permission but the continuous insistence of her daughter compels her to give permission. Then Buddha asks her what exactly does she like of Ananda. She replies that she likes his nose, eyes, mouth and his whole body. In reply, Buddha explains nose as the house of dirt, eyes tears, mouth - spit, and body dung and urine.⁷ Again he asks her what exactly she likes. This time she cannot answer. Seizing the opportunity he explains and makes her to experience the reality of *Anicca*. She realizes her ignorance and expresses her wish of becoming a Bhikkuni. After the permission of her mother she becomes a Bhikkuni (female monk). I believe this is an incomplete version of the story, but at this moment it is sufficient. Thus, a lowest class woman joins the Sangha. This was an ideal example for the upper castes laities as well as Bhikkuni who were prejudiced by the caste mentality.

All these characters: Patachara, Angulimala and Chandalika represent the humanity as they suffered psychologically like all human beings suffer. The character Patachara had a deep rooted attachment to her husband, children and parents. When all of them die in a day, she could not bear this great shock. Consequently loses her senses. In fact, she was deeply attached to her own 'I' i. e. 'Self' or 'Ego.' She wanted to cling to I, Me, My and Mine. This attachment made her to believe impermanent as permanent and changing as unchanging. This attachment to her own unconscious sensations brought her suffering. It is quite illogical that in the first meeting she became aware of everything. Buddha must have ordered Bhikkuni to feed and to clothe her (Patachara). Thus she must have got compassionate treatment from the Bhikkunis. After few days of having some good food and sound sleep, she must have realized about herself. After that she must have listened the Dhamma preaching of the Buddha many a times. And then she might have started to practise the Dhamma slowly and steadily. They practiced Anapana and Vipassana meditation. By practising *Sila, Samadhi, Panna, Karuna*, and *Metta* continuously and experiencing Anicca she becomes equanimous, balanced, detached and free from attachment, aversion and delusion. Means she gets freedom from the sufferings. Finally she becomes an *Arhant*. Her ardent skilful practice and devotion leads to become a Vinaydharini (female master in monastic laws) like Upali the Vinaydhar (male).

The healing of Angulimala was also an excellent example of a skilled clinical psychologist and the Enlightened Teacher. The traditional story of Angulimala running after Buddha for hours has a symbolical meaning. Buddha was stopped means he had totally stopped his passions, annihilated the evil passions: attachment (Greed, Lust & infatuation), Enmity (Hatred, jealousy and repugnance) Delusion (temptation and fantasy). On the other hand Angulimala was continuously running means he was continuously running after the above mentioned evil passions. This story also must not have so simple as it looks outwardly and the way it is narrated traditionally. As Buddha was fully enlightened being, he was totally aware about the differences of the persons and the situations. He must have collected the basic data of Angulimala i. e. regarding his family, education and nature. After collecting all information about his history, he set himself for Jalina Forest. There must have been a long compassionate and insightful conversation between Buddha and Angulimala. In the beginning Buddha must have realized him (Angulimala) that he is ready to be his 1000th kill. The story of plucking of three leaves must be a part of this compassionate conversation with wisdom. Once Angulimala was Ahimsaka in his earlier life, hence he must have asked many questions. Obviously Buddha must have answered them with great impact on his (Angulimala's) head and heart. Questions like why his Guru was so cruel and asked him such Gurudakshina, why did other fellow students ill behave with him?. Buddha gave all answer with great reason and compassion. In today's psychological terms, Angulimala was given rationalistic behavioral therapy. Killing somebody means becoming the victim of the extreme stage of hatred and repugnance. Buddha made him to realize his own hatred which caused his mind full of stress, anxiety, imbalanced, impatient, turbulent, totally

unstable and disturbed. After realization, he wanted to come outside of it. He expressed 'his readiness' to come out of it. Hence Buddha made him a Bhikkhu.

After entering into the Sangha, Bhikku Ahimsaka practiced *Sil, Samadhi, Panna, Karuna*, and *Metta* ardently, diligently, and with perseverance having faith in Buddha, Dhamma and Sangha. In this way he could transform his evil mind into a pure and peaceful mind. Due to this state of mind he could endure every adverse incident or situation with peaceful and stable and mind with a constructive way. For example people pelted stones at him while he was on *Pindpata* (alms) but he bore everything smilingly even though his forehead was bleeding. He was well aware about his past bad *Kamm*s (actions) Hence he blessed everyone with a lot of *Metta* and full of *Karuna* in his heart.

The same story is of Prakriti, the Chandalika. When Prakriti had entered into the premises of Jetvana, she must have experienced the atmosphere of peace and equality as she was a Chandalika. Surely she was much influenced by the casteless atmosphere of the Vihara. Then after shearing her head, she was quite ready to get freedom from her defilements especially attachment. As a wise and enlightened teacher Buddha used his special ability i. e. *Pannamay Mahakarunik Talk*. (Talk with full of wisdom and compassion). Rationalistic behavioral therapy is a small part of this talk. He listened his every statement wisely and then analyzed them with compassionate logic. Hence he impelled her to become a Bhikkuni. Likewise Patachara and Angulimala she also became an Arhant. All these characters experienced impermanence (Anicca), insubstantiality (Anatta) and suffering (Dukkha) through the rigorous practice of mindfulness and Vipassana Meditation. No doubt, the towering personality of Buddha, ceaseless help of Dhamma and the Kalyan Mitra Sangha had great influence on them to free from the trap of the Self.

6. Results

All characters Patachara, Angulimala, and Chandalika had pathological grief due to the attachment to the self and were liberated by the practice of *Sil, Samadhi, Panna* i. e. the *Noble Eightfold Path*. What we needed is not just a psychological healing but the enlightened Psycho - Spiritual life to see the things as they are; means, to understand and experience the reality of life i. e. impermanence (Anicca), insubstantiality (Anatta) and suffering (Dukkha)

7. Conclusion

All these stories are the stories of great psychological transformation from attachment, hatred and delusion to peaceful and liberated mind i. e. freedom from suffering. This suffering is universal in nature. Generally people run after money, fame, status and material pleasure (sensual desires). They consider them source of happiness. After achieving them, for few days they feel happy but, again their thirst for 'more' arises and it never stops. This cycle is circular in nature, there is no end. Hence they never get happiness. In reality they are so ignorant about their own mind that they cannot diagnose the problem correctly. They try to solve their problem with a wrong belief. This wrong

belief makes them to believe impermanent (*Anicca*) as permanent (*Nitya*) and changing as unchanging. Hence they try to cling the impermanent things continuously and fail inevitably. Unconsciously they develop the views: 'I should not die', 'my near ones should not die', 'I or my near ones should not fall sick', 'I should not become old' or 'my material things should last forever'.

Hence Buddha targets to correct all these basic and universal wrong views. Therefore his remedy *Sil*, *Samadhi* and *Panna* is universal in nature, applicable to every human being like Patachara, Angulimala, and Chandaliika!

8. Future Scope

The future scope will be of the detailed and full psycho - socio interpretation of the selected characters. The traditional stories of these characters are indeed meaningful and symbolic not complete and satisfactory to the scientific mind. This research work will surely play a major role to rewrite these stories with extensive psycho - socio approach. Apart from this, other characters like Yashas, Khema, and some untouchable characters like Sunita, Sopaka, and Suppiya are worthy of further future research.

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