

“Nobody Can Separate One Another” - Implementing the Buddhist Theory of Dependent Origination for a Peaceful Co-existence

Samantha Ilangakoon

Head, Department of Religious Studies and Comparative Philosophy, Buddhist and Pali University of Sri Lanka, Homagama, Sri Lanka

Abstract: *In the modern world one of the main issues that require urgent and complete answers is the conflict among nationals and religions. This has become the main threat to the global peaceful environment and co-existence. There is no question of loving one's own religion or nationality because they represent one's identity among the others. One becomes so special among the others because of his/her particular language or faith. To view this position from anthropologically, the human culture is a production of both nationality and religion. Even in modern culture both of them play very important parts to integrate individuals. However the problem arises when keeping the identities among diversities. To understand the reality of this question and to have a right view on this there should be an intellectual as well as a rational outlook. Unlike in the past the modern youth is well equipped with the knowledge of science, technology and rational thinking. This is the time to enlighten them for a global co-existence. In other word to show the world the way to keep the identity while accepting diversity.*

Keywords: Co-existence, Diversity, Nationality, Identity

1. Introduction

In Buddhist philosophy one of the theoretical views is the *paticcasamuppada* or Dependent Origination. This theory has a broad meaning in the Buddhist context. However to put this theory into a simpler form one would call it as the Buddhist Causal Theory. This means that nothing in the world independent. Everything depends on others. Everything exists on others. This theory clearly emphasizes that there is nothing in the universe separated from others. If somebody thinks he/she can live isolated from other things in the universe according to Buddhism it is the state of ordinary thinking. If somebody can enlighten his/her mind then he/she can have this broad and rational thought. This theory shows that even phenomena like religion and nationality also interdependence. If we imagine that there is only one nationality or religion in the world, the life on earth may become monotonous and dull. But because of the diversity in many ways in the universe has brought this beauty. The thing is to integrate this marvelous diversity. For that the Buddhist theory of Dependent Origination can be applied as rational way of thinking. Any particular religion or nationality can be identified identically from others because of their existence. They are interdependent and mutually existence. In more scientific way to say that differences are relative to the others.

2. Buddhist Theory of Causality

Paticcasamuppada (hereafter PS) theory is the core concept of Buddhism that interprets the nature of existence by means of a causal theory. However PS as a causal is completely different from other theories of that like as it not only explains the causes of existence but also envisages the cessation of existence. As Buddhism understands the knowledge of PS is very crucial because it paves the way to find the causes and ultimately that helps to eliminate the causes. Through the destruction of causes any types of problem can be solved. Therefore in the Buddhist context

the insight and profound knowledge of PS is paramount important especially to overcome man's basic problem of suffering in the *samsaric* existence. Until the liberation from this cyclical and longtime existence he should live in a social context. Even in the social context the theory of PS can be very successfully applied especially for a co-existence not only with other humans but also with the nature also.

PS is the philosophical foundation of Buddhism that underlies all main teachings. This terminology is a unique one that the Buddha used to present the Buddhist theory of causation. This doctrine aroused from the critique of Indian theories of causality which belonged either to eternalism or to nihilism. The Pali term, *paticcasamuppada* is a combination of three words. Here „*paticca*“ means „because of“ and „dependent on“, „*sam*“ means „well“ and „*uppada*“ means „arising“ or „origin“. Hence it is known in English as the law of dependent origination.

As the theoretical discourse of Buddhism PS plays a pivotal role in keeping Buddhism as a non-contradictory philosophy. Because of this causal theory Buddhism has been able to hold its consistency and commensurability from its outset. Therefore in early Buddhism there is nothing to find which contradicts each other. D. J. Kalupahana and T.V. R. Murti rightly introduce PS as the central philosophy in Buddhism that gives two distinctive meanings in the Buddhist context. The origin of *dukkha* (suffering) as well as cessation of *dukkha* can be well realized only by the knowledge of PS.

Two formulae that Summarized PS doctrine with its sequence and reverse orders go on to explain the universal application of PS. This type of a theory of causation was a new introduction to the Indian Religious and philosophical context. Ven. *Assaji* clearly emphasized this novelty when he was asked the uniqueness of the Buddha's teaching by *Upatissa*.

“Whatever Firm a cause proceeds, thereof
The Tathagata has explained the cause
Its cessation too he has explained
This is the teaching of the Great Sage.”

This is the reality of everything or all *dhammas*. This is the nature of everything. Realization of this reality leads to know the things as they are i.e. whatever is of the nature of arising all that insists of the nature of ceasing. Therefore PS as the theoretical basis of Buddhist philosophy can be found in each doctrine of the Buddha. The Buddha has categorically and logically explained all teachings according to PS.

The general formula of PS runs as follows.

“When this is present, that comes to be;
From the arising of this, that arises.
When this is absent, that does not come to be;
On the cessation of this, that ceases.”

To put into a formula using the PS theory it can be argued that

Whenever „I“ exists „others“ exist.
Whenever „I“ does not exist „others“ do not exist.
Whenever „we“ exists „I“ exist.
Whenever „we“ do not exist „I“ does not exist.

This theory had been more clearly illustrated by one of the later Mahayanic tradition called Hua-yen Buddhism. . It taught the doctrine of the mutual containment and interpenetration of all phenomena, as expressed in Indra's net. One thing contains all other existing things, and all existing things contain that one thing. This whole universe is covered with this net and threads are joined with a diamond. In all diamonds other diamonds“ reflections can be seen. Therefore this net is interrelated. No diamonds can separate from others. If one diamond separates or divides from others the net will collapse. In the same way without been isolated one another the wise man view everything from the holistic approach. Nothing can be separated each other. Everything is dependent. All are complementary to each other. Thus there is a complex type of relationship. This relationship is a relative one and all are related to all others. So no separation can be found between these dynamic processes. In the social level also according to Buddhism there are many groups. They should perform distinctive and relative functions so that the individual can live happily.

3. Interconnectedness and Interdependences

One of the main objects behind the Buddhist teaching of dependent origination is to show the relative relationships among human beings. This can be viewed from two stand points. One is from a deep and broad perspective in the context of cyclical existence. The *samsaric* existence according to the Buddhist doctrine is innumerable and empirically cannot be assumed the begging or the end. So that this long cyclical existence had created interconnectedness as well as interdependences in many forms. It is very interesting to note here that it is not only the man but also the other types of animals also had been relations of some forms in this long existence. But it is very

difficult to perceive this *samsaric* relative connection as the man in the present situation acquires only a confined knowledge of this world existence. This is the basic problem of knowledge which is called *avijja* or ignorance in the twelve link formula of dependent origination.

The unknown nature of the worldly man or the ordinary personality tends to think that he is identical and independence from the other. Such a person may try to find and understand the reality within the individual existence and hence to fail. This ultimately leads to many psychological sufferings including frustration. In the social context nobody can live without the other. The „other“ (*para* in Pali) represents all types of existence. Stereological vice the other may be a big hindrance for realizing the truth. So that leaving the household life may be bliss for the path. Therefore Buddhism encourages its disciples to leave homes and become recluses. One can definitely live a happy night if and if only by spending a loneliness life. The sacred longitude is thoroughly admired in the Buddhist context regarding its ultimate purpose. However the Buddha had preached that even a Buddhist monk should keep in mind that his existence completely depends on the other because he is not employed and living on the begged food. Therefore the mutual interdependence is an inevitable fact in the social context. This proves that there is no demarcation between what appears to be an individual creature and its natural and social environment.

4. Co-Existence

Peace at social level should start from the most important social structure i.e. the nuclear family. Peaceful coexistence within the framework of family can be taken as an example. There is no question about the dominance or the superiority of the husband and wife. Both are equally important for the wellbeing and progress of the family. The most important thing is to understand the roles of each other. Both of them should know that one's existence is the existence of the other. To put the mutual existence of husband and wife in accordance with the Buddhist causal theory.

“When the husband exists the wife exists, when the wife exists the husband exists, when the husband does not exist the wife does not exist, when the wife does not exist the husband does not exist.”

This is also the reality in the social order and structure as well. No one can separate, isolate or live without others because everybody depends on the other. This society as a whole has got a tremendous diversity. This diverse nature can be observed from various dimensions such as the nationality, culture, religion, belief, appearance, behavior, thought, value, morality, response and feeling so on and so forth. Most of these differences had been created by man himself over thousands of years of his civilization. All these differences prove nothing but the potentiality of man. Man among other creatures is superior because of the thinking force behind him. What he had achieved so far in the forms of knowledge, technology and development are best examples and proofs. These differences and distinctions are no doubt beauties of the global society. The diversity makes the all beauties in the nature including flora and fauna. It is

not difficult to imagine if all were alike and same in nature. The life would have become boring and monotonous if all were same. But there is something to note here from religious and philosophical perspective. There is a significant uniqueness and oneness of mankind. While there are many diverse among human beings there are some important unities especially the humanity. Humanity can transcend all types of verities.

References

- [1] Dharmasiri, Gunapala. Fundamental of Buddhist Ethics, The Buddhist Research Society, Singapore, 1986
- [2] Kalupahana, David.J. A History of Buddhist Philosophy, MotilalBanarsidass Publishers, Delhi, 2011
- [3] Kalupahana, David.J. Buddhist Philosophy, The University Press of Hawaii, Honolulu, 1976
- [4] Karynaratne, W.S. Buddhism Its Religion and Philosophy, The Buddhist Research Society, Singapore, 1988
- [5] NyanatilokaMahathera, The Significance of Dependent Origination, Buddhist Publication Society, 1982
- [6] Rahula, Walpola. What the Buddha Taught, Taiwan, The Corporate Body of the Buddha Educational Foundation, 2010
- [7] Story, Francis. Dimensions of Buddhist Thought, Buddhist Publication Society, Kandy, Sri Lanka, 1985