

Human rights as reflected in Buddhism

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Abstract

In modern world, Many organization on human rights talk about the human rights both in all developed and developing countries. It is so important to protect the right they have to live in the world until they pass away automatically. What I want to say an important fact here is that most of the human right organization talk about the right of human beings. But Buddha advise us to protect not only human rights but also all rights of beings. It is clear that not like modern human rights, Buddha has covered all rights of all beings in the world by presenting some teachings like five precepts, eight precepts, ten precepts etc.

When we observe the five precept, we all abstain from killing all creatures both large and small. Sometimes, Modern human right organization and other organizations emphasize that beings mean the animal that can be seen with our eyes. According to the Buddha's teaching, beings mean not only which can be seen with our eyes because there are many beings like long beings, short beings, movement beings, steady beings in the world. Sometimes they can be seen. Sometimes they cannot be seen. Buddha has emphasize it in the *metta sutta* in *suttanipatha* as given following and advised us to protect their rights too. Buddha emphasizes that even embryo is also a life. Therefore destruction of that one is also a murder.

YekecipAna BhUtatthi tasA vA thAvarAvA anavasesA

dIghA vA ye mahantAvA mjjhimArassa kAnukathULA

The aim of this research paper is to show in details human rights that Buddha emphasized is existing higher than the modern modern human rights.

Keywords: animal, beings, Buddha, human right, organization

1. Introduction

It is very important to define the word of human and the right before talking about the human right that is the main fact, talked in this research paper. The word human is the adjective of the word of the word humanity. It means the man who is the marvelous creation of the natural environment. The word man is define as following in the western philosophy. From Latin "Humanitas", the concept of Man means human nature, general culture of the mind. It is also "men" in general, the human race taken as a unit. Most philosophers defined as any human being endowed with reason^[1]. Apart from that, many definitions regarding man or person are there in the compilations that written in the recent and old past. So it is clear that that not like other beings, human beings are very intelligent and creative.

Therefore, they have enacted by them self the rules and regulation, rights and rituals and many other things to be survived them in the world. Human rights is such a consent that was instituted by the people themselves. According to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, there are thirty articles of human rights as given following:

Article 1 Right to Equality

Article 2 Freedom from Discrimination

Article 3 Right to Life, Liberty, Personal Security

Article 4 Freedom from Slavery

Article 5 Freedom from Torture and Degrading Treatment

Article 6 Right to Recognition as a Person before the Law

Article 7 Right to Equality before the Law

Article 8 Right to Remedy by Competent Tribunal

Article 9 Freedom from Arbitrary Arrest and Exile

Article 10 Right to Fair Public Hearing

Article 11 Right to be Considered Innocent until Proven Guilty

Article 12 Freedom from Interference with Privacy, Family, Home and Correspondence

Article 13 Right to Free Movement in and out of the Country

Article 14 Right to Asylum in other Countries from Persecution

Article 15 Right to a Nationality and the Freedom to Change It

Article 16 Right to Marriage and Family

Article 17 Right to Own Property

Article 18 Freedom of Belief and Religion

Article 19 Freedom of Opinion and Information

Article 20 Right of Peaceful Assembly and Association

Article 21 Right to Participate in Government and in Free Elections

Article 22 Right to Social Security

Article 23 Right to Desirable Work and to Join Trade Unions

Article 24 Right to Rest and Leisure

Article 25 Right to Adequate Living Standard

Article 26 Right to Education

Article 27 Right to Participate in the Cultural Life of Community

Article 28 Right to a Social Order that Articulates this Document

Article 29 Community Duties Essential to Free and Full Development

Article 30 Freedom from State or Personal Interference in the above Rights^[2]

When it is examined to the Buddha dharma, it is clear that Buddha has preached the doctrine (*dharma*) by explaining the value of the human beings, humanity, person and also other creatures. According to the Buddha's preaching, since man

has higher mind, he is called man (*manussa*) (*Manaso ussannattA manussa*)^[3]. Another pali term for the man is *puggala*. Even though, he is very higher in mind, the following pali statement given in the *Visuddhimagga* explains that naturally, he goes to the hell. (Punti vuccati nirayo. Tasmim galantIti puggalā) the root of the word *puggala* is the ✓pun. ✓Pun means the hell. Since, man always flows to the hell, he is called *puggala*^[4]. According to the some European and western teachings, after birth, human being becomes a man. That is why abortion is legislated by some European and western countries. It denotes us when he is in the womb of the mother he has no any human right and he is not a human being. But Buddha says that embryo is also a being. The destruction of an embryo is a murder. Buddha has enacted two hundred and twenty seven promulgations for the monks in the compilation of *patimokkha* in which all disciplinary rules have been collected. There are four defeats (*PArAjika*) for the monks and eight defeats (*PArAjika*) for the nuns in the *patimokkha*. There is one disciplinary rule among the four and eight defeats namely destruction of men. (*Manussaviggaha PArAjika*) collected in the *Bhikkhu PATimokkha* in which all disciplinary rules for monks have been collected^[5]. It explains us that the destruction of an embryo is also a murder. The meaning of that is Buddha has considered an embryo as a human being. The information given above explain us according to the Buddha's interpretation who man is and when the man gets the human rights.

Unlike other beings of the world, people are difficult to live without the help and relations of others. Man is a socialized being. It proves us the *singalovada sutta* of *Dighanikaya* by preaching the six quarters. That story is given as following. On one occasion the Exalted One was dwelling in the Bamboo Grove, the Squirrels' Sanctuary, near *Rajagaha*. at that time, young *Sigala*, a householder's son, rising early in the morning, departing from *Rajagaha*, with wet clothes and wet hair, worshipped with joined hands the various quarters the East, the South, the West, the North, the Nadir, and the Zenith. Then the Buddha, having robed himself in the forenoon took bowl and robe, and entered *Rajagaha* for alms. Now he saw young *Sigala* worshipping thus and spoke to him as follows:

"Wherefore do you, young householder, rising early in the morning, departing from *Rajagaha*, with wet clothes and wet hair, worship, with joined hands these various quarters the East, the South, the West, the North, the Nadir, and the Zenith?"

"My father, Lord, while dying, said to me: The six quarters, dear son, you shall worship. And I, Lord, respecting, revering, reverencing and honouring my father's word, rise early in the morning, and leaving *Rajagaha*, with wet clothes and wet hair, worship with joined hands, these six quarters."

"It is not thus, young householder, the six quarters should be worshipped in the discipline of the noble." "The following should be looked upon as the six quarters. The parents should be looked upon as the East, teachers as the South, wife and children as the West, friends and associates as the North, servants and employees as the Nadir, ascetics and *brahmins* as the Zenith^[6]. In this sutta, Buddha has pointed out sixty one duties of each social institution given above. When doing the duties of somebody, other's rights are protected. For an instance, when doing the parent's duties, children's rights are protected. Therefor the *Singalovada sutta* of *Dighanikaya* is one of *suttas* that is explained the human rights of people who

associate the various social institutions in the society.

The *CakkavattisIhanAda Sutta* of *Dighanikaya* point out the ten characteristics of a universal monarch as giving following.

1. The supremacy of the Dharma or supremacy of the law providing just care, shelter and guard for his own household.
2. Providing just care, shelter and guard for his armed forces.
3. Providing just care, shelter and guard for the nobility. (*khattiya*)
4. Providing just care, shelter and guard for city-dwellers.
5. Providing just care, shelter and guard for the socioeconomic elite.
6. Providing just care, shelter and guard for the monastic and religious communities.
7. Providing just care, shelter and guard for living beings and nature.
8. Providing welfare for those who are subject to him.
9. Preventing the crimes.
10. From time to time consulting the wise and morally virtuous for the sake of high moral and spiritual standards in society.

Ten points given for the universal monarch by Buddha will be protected all human rights of the people who live in that kingdom. Not only the human rights but all so the rights of other beings will be protected as the above ten points. The wheel-turner's code here is clearly a list of sociopolitical duties.

There is another list, perhaps a later one, found in the *MahAhaMsa JAAtaka* known as the 10 "royal duties or virtues" (*RAjadharna*), namely,

1. Generosity (*dāna*),
2. Moral virtue (*sīla*),
3. Self-charity or Sacrifice (*pariccāga*),
4. Integrity (*ājjava*),
5. Kind gentleness (*maddava*),
6. Austerity or self-restraint (*tapa*),
7. Non-anger (*akkodha*),
8. Non-violence (*avihiMsā*),
9. Patience (*khanti*),
10. Non-hostility and law-abiding (*avirodhana*).

The king who follow the above dharma matters will never break the human rights of the people and also the rights of other beings. They are summarized in the *MahAhaMsa JAAtaka* in a verse (a four-line stanza of eight syllables each), said to be spoken by the Buddha himself.

"*Dānaṃ sīlaṃ pariccAgaM, ajjvaṃ maddavaṃ tapaṃ;
Akkodhaṃ avihiṃsaṅca, khantiṅca avirodhanam*^[7]."

fourth, fifth, eighth and ninth verses of *metta sutta* of *suttanipa* in *Khuddaka nikaya* points out as following how the loving kindness should be made for the living beings in the world.

- Whoever living thing be infirm or firm or otherwise, Long or huge, middle sized, short or very small (*Ye keci pānabhūtatti, tasā vā thāvarā vanavasesā; Dīghā vā ye va mahantā, majjhimā rassakā aṇukathulā.*)
- Seen and not seen, living far and near, Born and to be born, - may all beings be well and happy. (*Diṭṭhā vā ye va adiṭṭhā, ye va dūre vasanti avidūre; Bhūtā va sambhavesī va, sabbasattā bhavantu sukhittā.*)

- Develop loving kindness too towards all beings limitlessly
Above, below, across, without an obstacle, anger or enmity.
(*Mettañca sabbalokasmi, mānasaṃ bhāvaye aparimāṇaṃ;
Uddhaṃ adho ca tiriyañca, asambādhaṃ averamasapattam.*)
- Standing, sitting, or walking or even when lying as long as awake
Intend this mental attitude, it is called the divine abiding.
(*Tiṭṭhaṃ caraṃ nisinno va, sayāno yāvatāssa vitamidho;
Etaṃ satim adhiṭṭheyya, brahmametaṃ vihāramidhamāhu* ^[8].)

Above verses point out us that according to the Buddha's teaching there are many beings in the world as long or huge beings, middle sized and short beings. Some beings cannot be seen. Buddha teaches us that all rights of beings including human rights should be protected by the people who are very intelligent.

Saṅgahasutta of *Cakkavagga* in *Anguttaranikaya* points out the four kinds of Dharma matters should be followed by the king as given following. Monks, these four are the objects of sympathy. What four?

Giving gifts (*dAnaM*),
Kind language (*PeyyAvacca*),
Beneficial behavior (*AtthacariyA*)
Equality of mind (*SamAnattata*) ^[9]. When following above dharma matters, nobody can break the human rights of people in a country.

Apart from that Buddha teaches us to make the kindness (*KaruBA*), compassion (*AnukampA*), gratitude (*KataññU*) for other beings which are living in the world. Buddha too showed those characteristics in his lifetime by doing his business. Buddha advise us to follow above characteristics by comparing self. It is given in the *Dhammapada pali* as following. If self don't like to be harmed others are also same. On the other hand, he says if you like to be happy, don't harm others.

All tremble at violence; all fear death. Putting oneself in the place of another, one should not kill nor cause another to kill.

(*Sabbe tasanti daṇḍassa, sabbe bhāyanti maccuno;
Attānaṃ upamaṃ katvā, na haneyya na ghātaye.*)

All tremble at violence; life is dear to all. Putting oneself in the place of another, one should not kill nor cause another to kill.

(*Sabbe tasanti daṇḍassa, sabbesaṃ jīvitam piyaṃ;
Attānaṃ upamaṃ katvā, na haneyya na ghātaye.*)

One who, while himself seeking happiness, oppresses with violence other beings who also desire happiness, will not attain happiness hereafter.

(*Sukhakāmāni bhūtāni, yo daṇḍena vihiṃsati;
Attano sukhamesāno, pecca so na labhate sukhaṃ.*)

One who, while himself seeking happiness, does not oppress with violence other beings who also desire happiness, will find happiness hereafter.

(*Sukhakāmāni bhūtāni, yo daṇḍena na hiṃsati;
Attano sukhamesāno, pecca so labhate sukhaṃ* ^[10].)

Five precept policy that is main virtue of the lay people who follow the Buddhism is the next point should be discussed under the human rights. The first precept among the five precept is —I undertake to abide by the precept to abstain from killing~ (*PAnAtipAtA VeramanI SikkhAmdaM SamAdiyAmI*) ^[11] that is the first precept of eight precepts and ten precepts as well. It covers the all rights of human beings and also the rights of other beings which are living not only in the world but also in the universe. Not only first precept of five precepts but also other four precepts protect the human rights and rights of other living beings in the universe. According to the information given above, Buddha has preached dharma to protect all rights of beings in the universe. It goes beyond the human rights that we are talking in the modern world.

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