



Concept of ideal person and trait approach personality: A comparative analysis according to modern and buddhist psychology

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Abstract

The concept of an ideal life is crucial in shaping an individual into a well-rounded person, complemented by a remarkable personality. Each person holds different aspirations, ranging from becoming exemplary teachers, doctors, and outstanding students, to professors, among others. These ideals shape people's perceptions of an ideal person, yet no universal definition of an ideal person exists since standards vary based on individual perspectives, knowledge, and behavior.

In modern psychology, the ideal person is evaluated based on character, physical well-being, and behavior. Conversely, Buddhist psychology goes beyond external attributes and encompasses internal traits, focusing on the development of spiritual life. Within Buddhism, the ideal person comprises Arahants, Bodhisattvas, and Buddha, who have completely eliminated their impurities and assisted sentient beings in attaining liberation from suffering and reaching Nibbāna.

Furthermore, personality development through the trait approach is emphasized in various fields. Modern psychologists identify five major traits—openness, extraversion, conscientiousness, agreeableness, and neuroticism—as indicators of a good personality. However, Buddhist personality development transcends the scope of modern psychological perspectives. It encompasses both the physical and spiritual advancement of individuals and society. From a Buddhist standpoint, the Buddha and the Arahants exemplify fully functioning individuals in the world.

Moreover, Buddhism describes personality not as a fixed entity but as a process of emergence and dissolution, nourishment, combustion, and grasping. Buddhist teachings extensively analyze the concept of personality within the framework of the five aggregates (*pañcakkhandha*). Additionally, Buddhism posits that personality is influenced not only by present circumstances but also by past and present actions. One's character is not predetermined by biases but can be transformed through the cultivation and training of the mind through moral conduct (*sīla*), concentration (*samādhi*), and wisdom (*pañña*). Buddhist personality development is intimately linked to the path of the stream-enterer (*sotāpatti*), once-returner (*sakadāgāmi*), non-returner (*anāgāmi*), and the arahant (*arahants*). Thus, the diversity of personality in Buddhism can be understood in its unique manner.

Keyword: Concept of ideal person, exemplary teacher, physiological aspect

Introduction

Buddhists and modern psychologists examine mental states, emotions, behaviors, perceptions, and unconscious cognitive factors. However, Buddhism focuses on therapeutic practices and denotes the superior ethical and philosophical system.

Regarding the ideal person and personality, modern psychology investigates a person's ingrained behaviour, thought, and emotion patterns to understand them as a psycho-physiological phenomenon. However, Buddhism considers the Bodhisattva, Arahant, and Buddha as ideal persons, and personality is classified based on morality, concentration, and wisdom to show them the true path to liberation. Further, Buddhist psychology does not deal with external and internal traits to improve the efficacy of psychotherapists' practice. Personality plays a prominent role and the entire teaching of the Buddha. Buddha's teachings can be termed a system of psychoanalysis. In the fundamental analysis of the individual into mind and matter (*nāma-rūpa*).

1. Literature Review

Many authors also research the concept of an ideal person and personality traits, and writers, namely:

An Inquiry into the Concept of Personality from the Buddhist Perspective by Vijitha Moragaswewa.

In this article, the author mentioned various people and personalities from a Buddhist perspective. He also emphasizes that personality plays a vital role in the Buddha's teaching, and the concept of personality is wholly and broadly analyzed in the analysis of the five aggregates (*pañcakkhandha*).

The physiological Aspect of the Buddhist Personality Type Theory by Nishadini Peiris.

In this article, he points out three types of personality in Visuddhimagga, that is passion (*rāga*), hatred (*dosa*), and delusion (*moha*). In addition, he also points out three types of personality according to *ayurveda* based on three senses of humor: *vata* (air), *pitta* (fire), and *kappa* (earth). Further, this article also provides traits and types of persons in the Chinese version and compares the ayurvedic and Buddhist concepts of person. The only difference between these two is based on the mind component of the person. Throughout, this research has not mentioned the personality traits according to *Ayurveda*.

An Analysis of Individual Types from *Abhidhamma* of P.B. Tan.

In this book, the author enumerated a brief description of the five conventional *Abhidhamma* groups of the five aggregates, twelve bases, eighteen elements, truth, and the twenty-two faculties in this book, followed by the designation of the human types. Furthermore, in the introductory section of *mātika*, he references relevant suttas and the necessary reports by these referenced suttas in the subsequent Chapters. This book, however, collects the types of people but needs to analyze and explain the traits and categories of people in Buddhist literature and philosophy.

Personality traits and types in modern & Buddhist psychology: Implications for social psychologists by Indunil Philip Shantha

This article examines the classification of individuals as reflected in Buddhist texts, focusing on the social and psychological aspects of the individual. First discusses the type of persons by Modern Psychology, then the classification of persons as elucidated in Post Canonical Texts and Canonical Texts such as *Puggalapaṭṭhi* and *Visuddhimagga*. This article also describes the variety of personality types in Buddhist psychology for the effectiveness of psychotherapist practices.

2. The Reasons to Take This Research

To thoroughly understand an ideal person's personality traits, the researcher wants to examine and research widely according to the Buddhist perspective and modern psychology. Because when one penetrates oneself personality, one will know how to perfect oneself to become an ideal person.

3. Aims and Objectives of the Research

The main objectives of this paper are to discuss ideal persons and personality traits of people from the perspectives of Buddhism and psychology. This will provide an overview of the different characteristics and qualities of a person according to the point view of Buddhist psychology. Further, It will bring an achievement of knowledge in understanding the character of persons around us. By doing so, one will be more sensitive in one's behavior.

4. The Scope of Research

The scope of study focuses on the ideal person and personality traits from the perspective of Modern Psychology and Buddhist Psychology. In Buddhist psychology, the researcher will examine these characters base on the *puggalapaññatti* of the *Abhidhammapiṭaka*, the *Ariyapariyesanasutta* of the *Majjhima Nikāya*, the *Visuddhimagga*, and so forth. In addition, the researcher also tends to a comparison with modern psychology.

5. Methodology of Research

Based on this study, the researcher wants to focus on methodologies as follows:

- Analysis method: Based on sources, analyze how the Buddha used skillful means in his teaching.
- Comparative method: Compare with early Buddhist texts to find similarities and dissimilarities.

Content of The Paper

1. The Concept of the Ideal Person

To understand what is an ideal person, we need to understand the concept of a person. The term "person" comes from the Latin word "persona," which refers to a player who wears a mask. One who takes on the role of a character or in a capacity in which one acts as a living being with legal rights. Another definition comes from the Greek word "prospoon," which refers to the role that a person's mask plays in the drama of life. The word "person" is equal to the words individual, self, ego, or man, and the abstract noun is personality, individual selfless. According to Buddhist thought, these concepts are just names for different combinations of mind (*nāma*) and matter (*nāma*) and have no actual existence. In *Lankavatara sūtra* states, "Things are not what they seem... Deeds exist, but no doer can be found."

The ideal here is accumulated many factors and characteristics of a particular substance (person, phenomenon, object) that have the highest degree of positivity and reach the maximum point of an exemplary and indicative state. Therefore, when we talk about an ideal person, we have to determine the nature of various factors that affect the level of education, mental development, degree of attractiveness, ability to work, communication, and many other human qualities.

Modern psychology points out an ideal person through character, physical health, and behavior.

- **Character:** Perseverance, self-sacrifice, condescension, forgiveness, kindness, and so forth.
- **Physical healthy:** Good physical health as well as fantastic emotion.
- **Behavior:** Responsibility, concern, listening than speaking, giving, and continual effort

However, from a Buddhist perspective, the ideal person is evaluated not only based on character, physical health, and behavior, but on spiritual development and aspiration for the welfare of sentient beings. Instead, a *Bodhisattva* wishes to help sentient beings to be free from suffering and attain *nirvāṇa*; because of this, he has to go into *samsāra* to assist sentient beings with the great vow that "I will not enter final nirvana until all beings have been liberated." He cannot abandon other beings to their fate, so he does not achieve the highest liberation for himself. He stated: "I must lead all beings to freedom. Even for the sake of one living soul, I will remain here until the end."

2. Types of the Ideal Person

Everybody has a different idea of the ideal person, and these ideas vary according to people's beliefs, cultures, and traditions. For instance, who is the ideal friend? Some people think that a good friend should be dependable, truthful with others, compassionate, and nonjudgmental. They also think that a good friend should be able to forgive insults and be a good listener. Or who would make a good teacher? Some contend that the ideal teacher should possess excellent knowledge, teaching abilities, enthusiasm, listening skills, a good attitude, and be an excellent teacher. Or who would make a good spouse? According to some, a good spouse should be devoted to his family, gullible,

attentive, patient, thankful, faithful, warm and trustworthy, and knowledgeable.

In Buddhist psychology, in the *Kammāthānacariya sutta*, the Buddha illustrated that an ideal friend is a senior monk who is the mentor and friend of his pupil, wishing for his welfare and concerned with his progress, guiding his meditation. In the *Metta Sutta*, an ideal friend can extend their loving kindness to all living beings without exception. Additionally, Buddhism considers an ideal person comprises a bodhisattva ideal, an Arahant ideal, and a Buddha ideal. Bodhisattva's ideal is to assist sentient beings in overcoming suffering and attaining nirvāṇa. If sentient beings indulge in suffering, they also will be suffering; when sentient beings are sick, they also will be sick. It means that Bodhisattva always considers sentient beings as himself. He will enter into nīrvāṇa unless sentient beings are devoid of their suffering.

Arahant's ideal: obtaining insight into the true nature of existence, achieving *Nibbāna*, and liberating from the circle of rebirth.

Buddha's ideal: Try to illustrate the potential to become Buddha of sentient beings and lead sentient beings to be free from ignorance in saṃsāra by teaching profound dhamma with various skillful means.

Furthermore, the ideal of practitioners is different such as the goal of Mahāyāna practitioners is to become Buddhas by following the path of Bodhisattva (*Bodhisattvayāna*). The ideal of Theravāda practitioners is to become Aharants by following the path of the hearer of the Buddha's disciples (*Sāvakaṃyāna*).

3. Who is my Ideal Person?

Past: I wanted to become a good teacher, a good boss, and a good daughter of my parent.

Present: I would like to be a good nun, a Buddhist teacher, and a virtuous person.

Future: I would like to become a Buddha to help people to be free from suffering in *saṃsāra*.

4. Traits Approach Towards A Perfect Personality

4.1 Definition of Personality?

Personality is "a collection of emotional, thought and behavioral patterns unique to a person that is consistent over time." It is explained as the totality of an individual's behavioral and emotional characteristics. Personality embraces "a person's moods, attitudes, opinions, motivations, and style of thinking, perceiving, speaking, and acting. It is part of what makes each individual distinct."

Additionally, personality is based on extraordinary internal phenomena that decide one's state and traits because various shapes of personality are through internal influence.

Buddhist Psychology

The Buddhist concept of personality can be seen in the explanation of five aggregates (*pañcakkhandā*), which are impermanent (*anicca*), suffering (*dukkha*), and non-self (*anatta*). The five aggregates' analysis directly focuses on the path toward spiritual progress. The reality of the five aggregates is explained in the *Phenapiṇḍūpama sutta* through the following five parables.

1. The aggregate of the form (*rūpakkhanda*) is like a lump of foam
2. The aggregate of feeling (*vedanākkhandha*) is like a bubble

3. The aggregate of perception (*saññākkhandha*) is like a mirage
4. The aggregate of formation (*sankhārakkhandha*) is like a plantain trunk
5. The aggregate of consciousness (*viññāṇakkhandha*) is like an illusion

Categories of Personality

Modern Psychology

1. **Openness to experience:** It tends to be a person who is imaginative or independent and has a preference for various activities over a strict routine.
2. **Conscientiousness:** It tends to be a person who is self-disciplined, dutifulness, competent, thoughtfulness, and achievement-striving.
3. **Extraversion:** It tends to be a person who is characterized by high energy, positive emotions, talkativeness, assertiveness, sociability, and the tendency to seek stimulation in the company of others.
4. **Agreeableness:** It tends to a person who is compassionate and cooperative rather than suspicious and antagonistic towards others.
5. **Neuroticism:** It tends to a person who is characterized by the tendency to experience unpleasant emotions, such as anger, anxiety, depression, or vulnerability.

Buddhist Psychology

The Buddha saw beings with a range of good and bad traits as follows:

- Sentient beings with little dust in their eyes
- Sentient beings with much dust in their eyes
- Sentient beings with acute faculties
- Sentient beings with dull faculties
- Sentient beings with good dispositions
- Sentient beings with wrong position
- Sentient beings with docile
- Sentient beings with indocile

According to intelligence, there are four kinds of the person below:

- **Uggatithañṇu:** The person can realize the truth immediately when he listens to doctrine in a short exposition.
- **Vipatithañṇu:** The person who is incapable of realizing truth immediately at the first hearing of short discourses and requires some explanation to some extent when they listen to a detailed exposition of facts, they would know it.
- **Neiyya:** The person who can realize the truth through explanations for the people of this category step by step.
- **Padaparama:** The Person who needs to be sufficiently mature in their spiritual development to realize the truth in the same life.

The following personality types can be seen according to the development stages of these five powers.

- Persons who has strong concentration (*kāya Sakkhi*)
- A person who has strong faith (*saddhā Sakkhi*)
- A person who has strong wisdom (*ditṭhappatta sakkhi*)

Visuddhimagga mentioned six characters of people, each with a bad, excellent or negative, and positive.

- *Rāga-carita* – greed temperament
- *Dosa-carita* – hating temperament
- *Moha-carita* – ignorant temperament
- *Saddhā-carita* – faithful temperament
- *Buddhi-carita* – intelligent temperament
- *Vittakka-carita* – speculative temperament

4. How To Be A Perfect Person?

To be a perfect person, one should work for the welfare of others and practice the ten kinds of perfection (*paramitā*).

1. **Generosity (*dhāna*):** The generous person has conferred the double blessing of inhibiting immoral thoughts of selfishness while developing pure thoughts of selflessness.
2. **Morality (*sīla*):** It advocates duties one has to perform and obstinacies one should observe.
3. **Renunciation (*nekkhamma*):** Renunciation of worldly pleasure by becoming an ascetic and the temporary inhibition of hindrance (*nīrvaṇa*)
4. **Wisdom (*paññā*):** the right to understand the world concerning impermanent (*anicca*), suffering (*dukkha*), and non-self (*anatta*).
5. **Energy (*virīya*):** It is defined as persistent industriousness to work for the welfare of others in thought, deed, and work.
6. **Patient (*khanti*):** it is the patient endurance of suffering inflicted upon the individual by others and the tolerance of others' wrongs.
7. **Truthfulness (*sacca*):** This is the perfect harmonious integration of thoughts, words, and deeds.
8. **Resolute Determination (*adhiṭṭhāna*):** It is a determination to achieve the other perfection or to obtain the highest knowledge.
9. **Loving-kindness:** benevolence towards all living beings without discrimination of birth, creed, colour, and gender.
10. **Equanimity (*upekkhā*):** one who practices equanimity is neither attracted by pleasant objects nor is averse to unpleasant things.

5. A Structure Model of Our Personality

According to Freudian theory

A Structural model of personality consists of Id, Ego, and Superego.

- **ID:** the unconscious is the component of personality that forms the basis of our most primitive impulses. It works on the pleasure principle tendency to avoid pain and seek pleasure.
- **Ego:** Conscious is the essentially conscious controller or decision-maker of personality. It is based on the reality principle that we must delay gratification of our

primary motivations until the appropriate time with the proper outlet.

- **Superego:** Represents our sense of morality and oughts. The superego tells us everything we shouldn't do or the duties and obligations of society.

According to Buddhism, a structured mode of our personality is expressed through three fields: that is moralities (*sīla*), concentration (*samādhi*), and wisdom (*Paññā*).

- **Morality (*sīla*):** The characteristics will be developed through observing Buddhist precepts because Buddha's principles aim to help practitioners be perfect ethical and moral conduct.
- **Concentration (*samādhi*):** Concentration assists people in living a calm, peaceful life without worrying, hurrying, or agitating about the outside world. When a person is concentrated, she or he looks light and peaceful.
- **Wisdom (*paññā*):** Wisdom helps people see whether their actions are right or wrong to improve themselves.

6. Development Stages of Personality: Mordent Psychology

- **Oral:** 0-1.5 years: mouth, dependency
- **Anal:** 1.5-3 years: toilet training, give and take
- **Phallic:** 3-6 years: Oedipus complex, identification, super-ego
- **Latency:** 6-12: repression of sexuality
- **Genital:** 12-to adulthood: development of normal sexuality

Buddhist Psychology: The Five Powers

- **Faith (*saddhā*):** Faith is the Triple Gems: Buddha, Dhamma, and Saṅgha.
- **Endeavor (*virīya*):** Effort to give up unwholesome states and to obtain wholesome states
- **Mindfulness (*sati*):** to recall and remember what was done and be mindful of the present moment.
- **Concentration (*samādhi*):** to focus on one meditative object, suppress the five mental hindrances and develop five Jhanic factors.
- **Wisdom (*paññā*):** penetrating and directed towards the cessation of suffering.

7. How Can We Know Other Personalities?

In the Aṅguttara Nikāya, the Buddha mentioned four qualities to know a person's character:

- **Virtue:** He does not show weakness, defects, taints, or blemishes in his morals. He is morally consistent in his actions and conduct.
- **Integrity:** we have to check his early behavior associated with later behavior.

- **Fortitude:** misfortune falls: check someone when he faces situations like losing someone dear to him, losing wealth, or falling prey to sickness.
- **Wisdom:** through conversation, it is possible to determine whether a man knows.

Conclusion

The ideal person is motioned in the aspects of modern psychology and Buddhist literature; it is a personal style that everyone wants to be. We live and train ourselves in standard ethics and moral conduct to become perfect people for ourselves and others. The ideal person that I want to say here is a person who perfects both morals and personality. One is not only an external beautiful appearance but is inner beauty. Modern psychology opines that an ideal person is a person who has good manners, good actions, and good behaviors. But Buddhist psychology considers that the perfect person is always thinking and performing for the welfare of all living. This person is always for living beings that go around in *samsāra* and guides them to be free from suffering. That is the vow of the Bodhisattva, Arahant, and Buddha.

Modern psychology defines personality based on two traits, characteristic and distinctive traits of an individual stable, shifting patterns of relationships between markers, the origin of attributes, and the way the features interact to help or hinder the adjustment of a person. Buddhism studies personality, both traits, and types of nature. This means that the Buddha's discourse focuses on psychological qualities, which are ethical and spiritual concerns. In addition, a person's character is not fixed by any prejudice; it can be changed when the mind is trained and cultivated through the way of morality (*sīla*), concentration (*samādhi*), and wisdom (*pañña*).

Further, Buddhism describes personality as not an entity but a process of arising and passing away, a process of nutrition, combustion, and grasping. Still, it does not correspond to any fixed entity. Therefore, Buddhist teachings on personality are wholly and broadly analyzed in the five aggregates.

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