

BRAHMAVIHĀRA AND HUMANISM: A BUDDHIST APPROACH

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Introduction:

Humanism is considered to be a category broad enough to accommodate teachings of active ethical philosophies. It teaches people to respect the dignity and worth of all the people. The teachings are based on the ability to make out the right or wrong in universal human qualities. It also mainly refers to Rationalism. People who follow the teachings based on Humanism are known as Humanists. Humanists mainly approve of Universal Morality. These ideas are based on the commonality of human nature. According to the Oxford Dictionary of Philosophy (1994), humanism in the Renaissance sense "was quite consistent with religious belief, it is being supposed that God had put us here precisely in order to further those things the humanists found more important. Later the term tended to become appropriated for anti-religious, social and political movements."¹ According to N. K. Devaraj, "Humanism is an attitude towards and an approach to man's life and values regarded as phenomena confined to the earth."²

The Buddha has propounded a philosophy of humanism and launched a powerful movement for social revolution by denying the existence of all supernatural elements in life. He devoted his time in studying the human problems and put his finger on the fact of life that "people are living in suffering." The recognition of suffering and the removal of it were the starting steps of Buddhist humanism. The Buddha revolted against all blind traditions and cruel orthodoxy of *Brāhminism*, which mutilated the beauty and grace of human existence. This aim of life was to liberate the fettered humanity from the clutches of injustice and barbarism prevalent in his time.³

Buddhism, as a theory of humanism, has "No God, no immortal soul, no creation, and no last judgment. The Buddha himself is not a savior but a teacher, and more especially, an exemplar of Good life. He was born as a man and died as a man: everything about him is unequivocally within the domain of nature. Every human being, therefore, can aspire to imitate him wholly and indeed, to become himself a Buddha, an enlightened one. The whole drama of salvation, as Buddhism depicts it, takes place on the stage of this life, on his earth. Buddhist humanism sets man even above the gods, but without a trace of the impiety of worshipping man as God. Buddhism does face the serious problem of two to cultivate detachment without weakening the impulse to

¹ Mahapatra, P. K., *Facets of Humanism*, General Editor, Utkal Studies in Philosophy, vol. VI: 8.

² Ibid.: 8.

³ Ibid.: 4.

improve man's lot, whether is society or against the forces of nature.”⁴

Humanistic Buddhism or Buddhist Humanism:

Buddhism of the 21st century has come a long way to evolve and encompass a vast historical growth and development and touching a large part of humanity across several countries. Buddhism today comes to display different varieties and reflected an increasingly appealing position in the modern world. The teachings of the Buddha have remained unshakable and have become even more relevant as time goes by. Buddhism in various countries could adjust and combine the local conditions and customs, faiths or traditions and the like. Such a pre-eminent position of Buddhism owes primarily to the pivotal status that the most Buddha assigns to humanism in the large perspective of Buddhist philosophy and discourse as evidenced in the canonical literature.

The term “Humanistic Buddhism” (1900s) or “Engaged Buddhism” (1960s) have won currency even in evaluation and development of the world, as also in motivating research work by scholars. All through its history, humanism has been the mainstay of Buddhism. A Buddhist Humanistic Approach or Humanistic Buddhism is a modern Buddhist philosophy practiced mostly by Mahayana Buddhist. It is the integration of people's spiritual practice into all aspects of their daily lives. Buddhist monastic have pioneered the propagation of Buddhist Humanistic Approach. Buddhist Humanistic approach claims to encompass all of the Buddhist teachings from the time of the Buddha to the present. Its goal is to live the Bodhisattva way, which means to be an energetic, enlightened, and endearing person who strives to help all sentient beings to themselves. It focuses on issues of the world rather than on how to leave the world behind; on caring for the living, rather than the dead; on benefiting others, rather than benefiting oneself and on universal salvation, rather than cultivation for only oneself.

The Buddha was among the few in the world, who held high his lamp of wisdom to the humanity. He took religion to the doors of the common people above all barriers of race, sex, caste and creed, by democratizing religion and declaring all human being as equals. The Buddha is said to be the pioneer in establishing a disciplined and organized monastic order. He stood for peace and harmony by showing the path of compassion and love to the humanity. An important teaching of Buddhist Ethics is the suppression of covetousness, malice and ignorance which are the three fundamental evils according to Buddhism. Covetousness is the evil of evils. The complete destruction of this evil, therefore, amounts to attaining *nibbāna* and one who is free from covetousness is a Buddha. Covetousness must be controlled, suppressed, forsaken, destroyed, extirpated root and branch. Buddhist culture is nothing but a continual struggle against this monstrous evil.⁵

Brahma Vihāra:

In the term ‘*Brahma Vihāra*’ the word ‘*Brahma*’ means ‘Noble’ and the word ‘*Vihāra*’ conveys the meaning of ‘dwelling’, or ‘abiding’, or living. Hence, *Brahma Vihāra* purports the meaning of ‘Noble Living’, or rather, living in the exercise of goodwill. Literally these are way of living (*Vihāra*) like *Brahmā*, or they are ‘the best’

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Ibid.: 29.

(*Brahmā*) ‘way of living’ (*Vihāra*).⁶ The *Brahma Vihāra* is similar to the word *Brahmā* because men who follow these noble things live like *Brahmā* and known as “*Brahmā*”.⁷ Then *Brahmā* can be divided into two types which forms sentient being (*Rūpa Brahmā*) and formless sentient beings (*Arūpa Brahmā*). These *Brahmā* dwell, mind-made, feeding on delight, self-luminous, moving through the air, glorious – and they can stay for a very long time their life-span in realm⁸. In Pāli texts, *Brahmā Bhūmi* is mentioned as *Brahmā Loka*, a realm of *Brahmā*. How *Brahmā* live with? *Brahmā* lives (dwells) and practices love-kindness etc. Therefore it could be a divine abode and noble living. The expression ‘*Brahma Vihāra*’, will include *Mettā*, friendliness or loving-kindness, *Karuṇā* or compassion, *Muditā* or good-will or rejoicing with others in their happiness, and *Upekkhā*, equanimity or indifference to pain and pleasure. These are four kinds of *Brahma Vihāras*. It has, however, been mentioned in *Mahāgoviddha Sutta*⁹ as ‘*Brahma Cariya*’ which means Noble practice.

Therefore, ‘*Brahma Vihāra Dhamma*’ is commonly named as ‘*Brahmacariya*’ *Dhamma*. *Brahmacariya* means life of holiness or living a virtuous life. This can therefore, be also called as *Brahmacariya Dhamma*. Here, *Dhamma* means neither religion nor ‘ism’ which in fact *Dhamma* is relevance with all universes. It can be applied to religious persons and non-religious persons, human beings and non-human beings. This *Dhamma* is existence itself without depending on any matter. And also it can be realized by anyone who bear and strive to gain the fruit of *Dhamma* rightly in the end without exception, irrespective of sex, race, caste colour, community, creed. *Dhamma* means embracing all living beings and non-living being, small and great, far and near, be it on earth, in the water or in the air without space between them. Thus, *Brahmacariya Dhamma* is not only religion called ism, but for all of universe, universal *Dhamma*.

Therefore, these *Brahmacariya* can able to make human being noble one and liberation from feeling greed, anger, ignorance that is the root of unwholesome. Every sentient being including human being and non-human beings have emotion. That is why, in *Dhammapada*, the Buddha expounded as follows:

‘*Abhittharatha kalyāṇe, pāpā cittaṃ nivāraye.*

*Dandhaṃ hi karoto puññaṃ, pāpasmim ramati mano*¹⁰

It means: ‘A man should hasten towards the good; he should restrain his thought from evil. If a man is slack in doing what is good, his mind (comes to) rejoice in evil.’ Therefore, if these roots of unwholesome have been controlled as well by cultivating *Brahma Vihāra*, they will achieve the state of Noble persons. They can engage with their life of pleasure until *Nibbāna*. It is very important for a Buddhist that how he lives with throughout his life. It is rare to develop *Brahma Vihāras* as the role and relevance in engaged Buddhism.

In the *Abhidhamma Vibhaṅga*¹¹, these four sublime states are mentioned to be *Appamañña*: measureless states. Because their scope is found to be immeasurable, so, measureless states their name. Then, the *Brahma Vihāra Dhamma* has been explained as

⁶ *Visuddhimagga (The Path of Purification)*, p.ix.106, (Tr.). Nyanamoli, Kandy, Sri Lanka: BPS, 1976.

⁷ *Dīgha Nikāya Pāli*, Vol.I, p.233, Yangon: Ministry of Religious Affairs, 1993.

⁸ *Dīgha Nikāya Pāli*, Vol.I, p.17, Yangon: Ministry of Religious Affairs, 1993.

⁹ *Dīgha Nikāya Pāli*, Vol.II, p.198, Yangon: Ministry of Religious Affairs, 1993.

¹⁰ *Dhammapada Pāli*, Verse. No.116, p.30, Yangon: Ministry of Religious Affairs, 1997.

¹¹ *Vibhaṅga Pāli*, p.284, Yangon: Ministry of Religious Affairs, 1997.

Appamatta, the term is derived from the word “infinite” or “boundless”. It has been named as *Appamañña* because when developing *Mettā* it could be done with unlimited or perfect exercise of the qualities of friendliness, or universe if it has a boundless region when cultivate these by pervading. It is said thus: *Mettañca sabbalokasamiṃ, Mānasam bhāvaye aparimāṇam; Uddham adho ca tiriyañca, Asambadham averamasapattam*¹² which means ‘Loving-kindness towards all in the world. One should cultivate an unbounded mind, above and below and across, without obstruction, without enmity, without rivalry.’ The gist of it is to develop unlimited loving kindness (*Mettā*) towards all being in all ten regions and wish all of them happiness. In developing and radiation *Mettā*, there is no limit in regard to the place or region and to the kind of beings present in all those places. It covers a very wide range. Next, there being no angry feeling against all living beings, one is free from internal dangers, and also, having no animosity or grudge against any kind of beings as an enemy, one is also free from external dangers. Dealing with above verse makes *Mettā* unlimited and universal.

Nirvāṇa, the ideal, requires constant spiritual exercise and contemplation. Before soaring into the subtle regions of thought, the yogin or the spiritual aspirant cultivates the Four Noble Sentiments, *brahmavihāras*, which give of foretaste of life in the *Brahma* world¹³. The term *Brahma-Vihāra*, can be explained and understood as noble, excellent, sublime and divine abodes that can be attained through spiritual practice and by inculcating unlimited friendliness, compassion, appreciative joy and equanimity which in Sanskrit it known as; *mettā, karuṇā, muditā, upekkhā*. The *mettā* is also known to us as loving-kindness, universal love and goodwill. It is one of the ten perfections called *pāramitās* and is one of the four sublime abodes. The *karuṇā* is explained as Compassion, Sympathy and aspiration to find out a way to help one-self and the others. It is an altruistic love for the entire living being and also counted as one of the ten *pāramitās*. The *muditā* is understood as appreciative and sympathetic joy towards meritorious deeds. It is a thought of having joy and happiness in one’s own goodness and that of others. The *upekkhā* is translated into English as equanimity that to observe equidistance or to maintain equi-poise toward the suffering as well as to the happiness.¹⁴ *Brahma-Vihāra* is another subject of meditation that is beneficial to practice. The word ‘*brahma*’ can be rendered as excellent, lofty, sublime or noble, and *vihāra*, “as states of living.” *Brahma-Vihāra*, therefore, means sublime states; some call it, “divine abodes.” It can also be called “the art of noble living.” There are four *brahma-vihārās*, namely: Loving kindness or universal Love (*mettā*), Compassion (*karuṇā*), Sympathetic Joy, altruistic or appreciative joy (*muditā*) and Equanimity (*upekkhā*).¹⁵

Loving kindness (*Mettā*): “Love” (*mettā*) is epitomized by the heart-felt wish, ‘may all being be happy.’¹⁶ Benevolence comprises love, kindness, friendliness, sympathy, mercy, pity and other kindered virtuous feelings and actions which are similar to Pāli words like *mettā, karuṇā, anukāmpā, ahiṃsā*. The Chief function of benevolence is toward off pain and suffering from other beings. The Buddhist ethical idea is “we

¹² *Khuddakapāṭha Pāli*, Verse No.8, p.11, Yangon: Ministry of Religious Affairs, 1997.

¹³ Bapat, P. V., *2500 Years of Buddhism*, Publication Division, Government of India, 1956: 29.

¹⁴ Gaur, Veena, *The Brahma Vihāra: The Buddhist Art of Noble Living*, *Buddhist Studies*, Vol. XXXII, the Journal of the Department of Buddhist Studies, University of Delhi: 2007: 97.

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Aronson, Harvey B., *Love and Sympathy in Theravāda Buddhism*, Delhi: Motilal Banarsidas, 1980: 24.

ought not to hurt mentally and physically our fellow creatures as well as our fellowmen but to love and to protect them.¹⁷

Buddhism gives much stress upon the virtue of benevolence because it is the antidote for *do-a* (hatred). Hatred is regarded as the most cursed hindrance to Buddhism culture. It may be destroyed by its antidotes, benevolence. The first task of benevolence is to ward off hatred through its power. The Buddha says: “*Hatred does not cease by hatred at any time, it ceases by love, this is an eternal law.*”¹⁸ (*Dhammapada Verse 5*)

The *Mettā Sutta* expresses the spirit of this benevolent harmlessness and respect for others in the following way:

- Just as a mother would protect her only child,
- At the risk of her own life,
- Even so let him cultivate a boundless heart,
- Towards all Beings,
- Let his thoughts be boundless love,
- Pervade the whole world,
- Above, below and across without any obstruction,
- Without any hatred, without any enmity.¹⁹

What is striking about this quotation is that it begins with loving kindness for a particular person and then extends it to include everyone in the world. This reflects the importance of beginning loving kindness with oneself, destroying narrow selfish interests, and eradicating greed and hatred.

Compassion (*Karuṇā*): When there is suffering in others it causes (*Karoti*) good people’s hearts to be moved (*Kampana*), thus it is compassion (*Karuṇā*). Or alternatively, it combats (*Kiṇāti*). Others, suffering, attacks and demolishes it, thus it is compassion, or alternatively, it is scattered (*Kiriyati*) upon those who suffer, it is extended to them by pervasion, thus it is compassion (*Karuṇā*).

Compassion is characterized as promoting the aspect of allaying suffering. Its function resides in not bearing others’ suffering. It is manifested as non-cruelty. Its proximate cause is to see helplessness in those overwhelmed by suffering. It succeeds when it makes cruelty subside and it fails when it produces sorrow.²⁰

It can be understood by the example given in *Visuddhimagga* - suppose a robber has been caught with stolen goods, and in accordance with the king’s command to execute him, the king’s men bind him and lead him off to the place of execution, giving him a hundred blows in sets of four. Then the people give him things to chew and eat and also garlands and perfumes, unguents and betel leaves. Although he goes along eating and enjoying these things as though he was happy and well off, still no one fancies that he is really happy and well off. On the contrary people feel compassion for him, thinking ‘this poor wretch is now about to die; every step he takes brings him nearer to the presence to death.’ So too a *bhikkhu* whose meditation subject is compassion should arouse compassion for an (evil-doing) person even if he is happy: ‘Though this poor wretch is now happy, cheerful, enjoying his wealth, still for want of even one good deed done now in any one of the three doors (of body, speech and mind) he can come to

¹⁷ Pathak, Mandar Nath, *Op. Cit.*: 146.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*: 147.

¹⁹ Olson, Carl, *Op. Cit.*: 69-70.

²⁰ *Ibid.*: 344.

experience untold suffering in the states of loss.’²¹

According to the *Abhidhamma* philosophy, *Karuṇā* is the mental states arising out in its bearer on the sight of suffering in those. It also regarded as the stats which dissipates the suffering of others. It denotes the nature of a virtuous human being. It features as desire to relieve not only mankind but all sentient beings under suffering. It embraces the beings afflicted by and discards cruelty.²²

Sympathetic Joy (*Muditā*): According to *Abhidhamma* Philosophy, *muditā* is the mental state which feels joy seeing the happiness and achievement of others. It is the joy which appreciates and feels happiness over the success and fortune of others. It embraces prosperous beings. "It has the characteristic of rejoicing in the success and prosperity of others. Its function is the negation of envy. It is manifested as the elimination of aversion. Its proximate cause is to see the success of beings." It succeeds when it makes aversion subside and fails when it produce merriment.²³ One who beings the development of gladness should not start with the dear person and the rest; for a dear person is not the proximate cause of gladness merely in virtue of dearness, how much less the neutral and the hostile person.²⁴

However, the very dear companion can be the proximate cause for it - one who in the commentaries is called a ‘boon companion’; for he is constantly glad: he laughs first and speaks afterwards. So he should be the first to be pervaded with gladness. Or on seeing or heaving about a dear person being happy, cheerful and glad, gladness can be aroused, thus: This being is indeed glad. How good! How excellent! For this is what is referred to in the *Vibhaṅga*: ‘And how does a *bhikkhu* dwell pervading one direction with his heart endued with gladness? Just as he would be glad on seeing a dear and beloved person, so he pervades all being with gladness.’²⁵

But if his boon companion or the dear person was happy in the past but is now unlucky and unfortunate, then gladness can still be aroused by remembering his past happiness and apprehending the glad aspect in this way : ‘In the past he had great wealth, a great following and he was always glad’. Or gladness can be aroused by apprehending the future glad aspect in him in this way: ‘In the future he will again enjoy similar success and will go about in gold palanquins, on the back of elephant or on horseback, and so on.’²⁶ Having thus aroused gladness with respect to a dear person, he can then direct it successively towards a neutral one, and after that towards a hostile one.²⁷ But if resentment towards the hostile one arises in him the way already described, he should make it subside in the same way as described under loving, kindness.²⁸

Equanimity (*Upekkhā*): “Equanimity as a sublime attitude” (*brahmavihāra upekkhā*) is a combination of both internal balance of mind and neutrality with regard to sentient beings cultivated at the level of the fourth absorption. This neutrality is cultivated by considering that individuals determine their fate by their own activities. This attitude is said to be similar to the attitude of parents who, subsequent to their son’s leaving home

²¹ Ibid.: 340.

²² Pandey, Satyendra Kumar, *Abhidhamma Philosophy*, Indo-Asian publishing house Delhi(2002): 113.

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Ñāṇāmoli, *Bhikkhu, Op. Cit.*: 341.

²⁵ Ibid.: 341-342.

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ Ibid.

and becoming independent, think, "Now he can take care of himself."²⁹

In the moral course of practice this attitude would be developed subsequent to the development of the sublime attitudes of love, compassion, and sympathetic joy. A mediator is motivated to cultivate the sublime-attitude equanimity because he has seen the dangers in the cultivation of the earlier sublime attitudes. The danger in the cultivation of love and sympathetic joy is that the practitioner may become attracted or attached to other's well-being. The danger in the cultivation of compassion is that the practitioner may develop repulsion for the disturbing conditions besetting others and experience the mental grief associated with the non-virtuous attitude of aversion. Furthermore, the first three sublime attitudes are considered inferior because they are associated with bliss, which is gross when compared to the subtle feeling of equanimity which accompanies the sublime-attitude equanimity.³⁰ The sublime attitude equanimity, being free from the dangers associated with the first three sublime attitudes, being peaceful (*santbhāva*), and being endowed with all the virtues of the equanimity of purity, is considered the best of the sublime attitude.³¹

Equanimity as a limb of enlightenment" (*bojjhaṅga-upekkhā*) is the balance among the constituents of the mind which realizes *nibbāna*. There are seven mental factors which realizes *nirvāṇa* - mindfulness (*sati*), investigation of phenomena (*dhammavicaya*), energy (*virīya*), pleasurable interest (*pīti*), tranquility (*passaddhi*), concentration (*samādhi*), and equanimity (*upekkhā*). The simultaneous occurrence of these seven factors is with *nirvāṇa* as their object constitutes enlightenment. Equanimity as a limb of enlightenment insures that all the mental-factors present at the time of enlightenment are working in a proper proportion.³²

A Buddhist way of Living

The Buddha preached *Dhamma* which one abides by listening, learning and practicing in the following way: 'Striving should be done by yourselves, the *Tathāgatas* (*Buddhas*) are only teaching, the meditative ones, who enter the way, are delivered from the bonds of *Māra* (evil)' [*Tuṃhe hi kiccamātabbam, akkhātāro Tathāgatā; Paṭipaññā pamokkhanti, jhāyino mārabandhanā*].³³ The ethical summary of the teaching found in the *Dhammapada* illustrates its pragmatic nature more explicitly. *Sabbapāpassa akaranaṃ kusalassa upasaṃpadā; Sacittapariyodapanam etam buddhānasasanaṃ*.³⁴ 'Abstention from all evil, cultivation of good and purification of one's mind — this is the teachings of the Buddha. Therefore, a Buddhist does not do any evil, does whatever good and makes the one's mind pure. This is the way of living for a Buddhist that directed by all of the Buddha.' If a person who has already took refuge to the three gems and observe the five precepts, is a real Buddhist. On becoming a real Buddhist, one must perform the following religious tasks daily with conviction and wisdom:-

- Paying homage to the Buddha,
- Observing the moral precepts,

²⁹ Kashyap, Bhikkhu Jagdish, *Studies in Pāli and Buddhism*, University of Wisconsin, 1978: 5.

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ Ibid.

³² Ibid.

³³ *Dhammapada Pāli*, Verse. No.156, p.18, Yangon: Ministry of Religious Affairs, 1997.

³⁴ *Dhammapada Pāli*, Verse. No.155, p.41, Yangon: Ministry of Religious Affairs, 1997.

- Doing acts of charity,
- Cultivating loving-kindness, etc.
- Striving for perpetuation and propagation of Buddha's teaching,
- Practicing mindfulness on tranquility, and insight meditation,
- Sharing merit.³⁵

It is necessary to perform their duties in daily life and to practice the *Dhamma* and then teach others to understand the ideal practice. Therefore, it should be believed as ceasing the miseries in all of life. A Buddhist should be diligent to strive for daily religious tasks as compulsory duty. The term 'Buddha' means the supremely Self-Enlightened One through realization of the four Noble Truths at the foot of the Bo-tree as he had fulfilled perfections such as *dāna*, *sīla*, etc. Buddhism is the Teachings delivered by the Buddha in 45 years of Buddhahood for the benefit of all beings- men, *devas* and *brahmā*. A Buddhist is one who takes refuge in the *Buddha*, in the *Dhamma*, in the *Samgha*, and practices according to the teaching of the Buddha.

A Buddhist should not be a Buddhist for name sake only. He must practically abide by the teaching of the Buddha; only then he will be a real Buddhist. It is very hard indeed to be born a human being. Meritorious deeds such as charity, morality and meditation can be performed only in the human life. In the four miserable realms, these meritorious deeds cannot be performed, because being there have to suffer miseries all the time. Also in the realms of *devas* and brahmas, it is not easy to do meritorious deeds, because they are intoxicated with various kinds of pleasure. Human life is mingled with sensual pleasure and miseries, and so only a human being can strive for his deliverance from the whirlpool of miseries called *Samsara*. Now human beings have golden chance to be born as human being again and to study, practice, and realize the teachings of the Buddha. Therefore, it should be earnestly strived to become a real Buddhist, by practicing *Brahma Vihāras* as ideal way of living for Buddhists and others.

When loving-kindness, compassion, sympathetic joy and equanimity are cultivated according to the method of the fourfold instruction they are called the "sublime attitudes" (*Brahma Vihāra*).³⁶ Literally, the "sublime attitudes" are "ways of living (*Vihāra*) like *Brahmā*, deities" or they are "the best (*Brahmā*) ways of living" (*Vihāra*)³⁷ Each sublime attitude is an antidote to an unwholesome reaction, such as: meditative cultivation *Mettā*, loving-kindness is particularly effective for counteracting anger. *Karuṇā*, compassion is effective for counteracting harmfulness, *Muditā*, sympathetic joy is effective for counteracting displeasure and *Upekkhā*, equanimity is effective for counteracting lust (*rāga*)³⁸ Nevertheless, a person who cultivates with mind endowed with these four *Brahma Vihāras* towards beings rightly, he can experience pleasure eleven advantages mentioned in first *Mettā Sutta*,³⁹ *Aṅguttara Nikāya* and however, according to Second *Mettā Sutta*, it stated that he can attain *Ariya*, the Noble One.⁴⁰ Therefore, the sublime attitudes, *Brahma Vihāras* is not mere leading to the communion with *Brahmā* after death, can also empower the worthy one who strive meditating on

³⁵ *The teaching of the Buddha (Basic Level)*, pp.2-3, Yangon: Ministry of Religious Affairs, 1998.

³⁶ *Aṅguttara Nikāya*, Vol. III, p. 225, E. (Ed.). Hardy, London, UK: PTS, 1936; rpt., 1966.

³⁷ *Visuddhimagga (The Path of Purification)*, p.ix.106, (Tr.). Nyanamoli, Kandy, Sri Lanka: BPS, 1976.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, p.ix.109.

³⁹ *Aṅguttara Nikāya*, Vol.III, p.543, Yangon: Ministry of Religions Affairs, 1997.

⁴⁰ *Aṅguttara Nikāya*, Vol.I, p.441, Yangon: Ministry of Religions Affairs, 1997.

them and becomes *Arahat* as liberated from hindrances and defilements. However, mere cultivation of sublime attitudes will lead to rebirth in the world of *Brahmā*.

Buddhism is the path of practice and spiritual development leading to insight into the true nature of life. Buddhist practice such as meditation is mean of changing oneself in order to develop the qualities of awareness, kindness, and wisdom. The experiment developed within the Buddhist tradition over thousands of years has created an incomparable resource for all those who wish to follow a path - a path which ultimately culminates in enlightenment or Buddhahood. Because Buddhism does not include the idea of worshipping a creator God, some people do not see it as a religion in the normal, western sense. The basic tenets of Buddhist teaching are straight-forward and practical: nothing is fixed or permanent; action has consequences; change is possible. Thus Buddhism addresses itself to all people irrespective of race, nationality or gender. It teaches practical methods (such as meditation) which enable people to realize and utilize its teaching in order to transforms their experience, to be fully responsible for their lives and to develop the qualities of wisdom and compassion.

To conclude, we can say that in the light of above discussed points of contact between Buddhism and Humanism, it has came to light that the core beliefs of Buddhism are fundamentally humanistic, and in certain respects relating to the lack of relevance of the God idea it goes even further than humanism which would be quite happy to take an agnostic position. While the core propositions of Buddhism are verifiable, and indeed the Buddha asked that his disciples verify them before accepting them, there are some propositions particularly those relating to rebirth and karma which cannot be verified in a scientific manner (even though they cannot be disproved either). However the Buddha does advance a theory about the degrees of confidence that a disciple can exercise relating to Buddhist principles and it is possible to exclude the unverifiable elements by opting for a second level of confidence. On the reference to supernatural elements and the attempt to convert Buddhism into a religion based on faith we have seen that these either do not play a central part or are extensions of Buddhism to accommodate the demands for a popular religion and cannot be ascribed to the Buddha.

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