

Buddhist Response to Social Conflict: A Study of Kalaha Vivada Sutta

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Abstract— There are many different viewpoints about social conflicts. Some believe that the only way to fight force is by applying more force. Sometimes even religions justify certain types of conflicts or wars as reasonable. However, Buddha has clearly rejected any kind of violence, in any type of situation, with total compassion. It is the cause and effect process which generate social conflicts, and if one understand real causes for any kind of suffering, it is possible to overcome such sufferings within this life. The Kalaha Vivada Sutta in Samyukta Nikaya of Sutta Pitaka of Tipitaka explains cause and effect principle with relevance to all categories of conflicts which may occur and how to overcome them. This paper presents a comprehensive study of it to explain the Buddhist response to Social Conflict.

Keywords—Buddhism, Kalaha Vivada Sutta, Social Conflict, Tipitaka.

I. INTRODUCTION

THERE are many different categories of social conflicts observable at present in the world. They can be varied from personal or family level to wars between nations. Whatever the category of conflict, it is important to identify the root causes of it so as to take any preventive measures to avoid such situations for the benefit of society at large. The main objective of this paper is to investigate the Buddha's explanations of this with reference to the Kalaha Vivada Sutta, which is found in Pali Tipitaka(Sn4.11).

The belief that the only way to fight force is by more force has led to the arms race between the great powers. And this competition to increase the weapons of war has brought mankind to the very brink of total self-destruction. (1) When the United Nations was formed after the horrors of the Second World War, the heads of nations who gathered to sign the charter agreed that it should begin with the following preamble: 'Since it is in the minds of men that wars begin, it is in the minds of men the ramparts of peace should be erected.' This very same sentiment is echoed in the first verse of the Dhammapada which states: 'All states have mind as their forerunner, mind is their chief, and they are mind-made. If one speaks or acts, with a defiled mind, suffering follows one even as the wheel follows the hoof of the draught-ox (1). War and conflict can be defined in many different ways and the United Nations defined the military conflict as a major war in which 1000 soldiers die in battlefields per year. In 1965 there were 10 major wars and in 2005 there were 8 major wars. Since

1960 there were more than 20 major wars in African countries such as Rwanda, Somalia, Angola, Sudan, Liberia, and Burundi. During the last 3,000 years, men have fought 15,000 major wars. Is it a characteristic of man? (1).

Different religions have various opinions towards social conflicts. In certain situations they justify the war and conflicts which they might think that it would help spread or protect their religions. They may lead to killing many innocent people in the name of protecting their religion, which may not be the original intention of the founder of that particular religion.

The Bible and Quran teach deferent doctrines which tend people toward war based on their religious purposes. Christianity and Judaism describe God as "man of war" who is full of fury. (2) The texts says,

" He is a vengeful God whose "sword shall devour and be sated, and drink its fill of their blood." (Jer. 46:10)

In the Old Testament God repeatedly exhorts the Israelites to wage war and violence:

"And you shall destroy all the peoples that the Lord your God gives over to you, your eye shall not pity them." (Deut. 7:16).

"When the Lord your God gives them over to you and you defeat them, you must utterly destroy them and show no mercy to them." (Deut. 7:2) Main causes for the religious wars are due to this kind of teaching available in religious texts which may mislead the followers. In these facts Quran is worse than the Bible and it directly advice Islamic people to kill non-Muslims.

"Fight those who do not believe in Allah, nor in the latter day, nor do they prohibit what Allah and His Messenger have prohibited, nor follow the religion of truth, out of those who have been given the Book, until they pay the tax in acknowledgment of superiority and they are in a state of subjection." (3)(Qur'an 9:29)

YUSUFALI: But when the forbidden months are past, then fight and slay the Pagans wherever ye find them, and seize them, beleaguer them, and lie in wait for them in every stratagem (of war); but if they repent, and establish regular prayers and practice regular charity, then open the way for them: for Allah is Oft-forgiving, Most Merciful.

PICKTHAL: Then, when the sacred months have passed, slay the idolaters wherever ye find them, and take them (captive), and besiege them, and prepare for them each ambush. But if they repent and establish worship and pay the poor-due, then leave their way free. Lo! Allah is Forgiving, Merciful.

SHAKIR: So when the sacred months have passed away, then slay the idolaters wherever you find them, and take them captives and besiege them and lie in wait for them in every ambush, then if they repent and keep up prayer and pay the poor-rate, leave their way free to them; surely Allah is Forgiving, Merciful. (Qur'an 9:5) (3)

However, Buddha never encouraged any sort of wars or hatred, and in fact, he had directly involved himself in stopping such situations. In the Dhammapada, he has stated hatred cannot be overcome by hatred.

“nahiverena verani - sammantida kudacana
Averenaca sammanti - esa dhammo santtano”

Hatred is never appeased by hatred. Hatred is appeased by non-hatred. That is the Buddhist teaching about hatred. Peace cannot exist on this earth without the practice of tolerance. To be tolerant, we must not allow anger and jealousy to prevail in our mind (1). The Buddha says, ‘No enemy can harm one so much as one’s own thoughts of craving, hate and jealousy.’ (Dhammapada 42)

There are many places where the Buddha has explained the near causes for any social conflict. For example, according to Cakkavattisihanada Sutta and Kutadanata Sutta major cause of conflict or war is natural resources and material wealth. When people try to collect material wealth it leads competition between people or groups of people or countries. Then it can gradually grow into conflicts. However, in another verse of the Dhammapada, it says,

“yo sahasam sahasena - sangāme mānuse jine
ekanca jeyya attānam - sace sangāma uttamo”

The man who wins himself from craving is the greater winning than who wins in thousand wars against others.

According to Mahadukkhakanda sutta of the Majjhima Nikaya Buddha has mentioned that the people go for battle and kill each other because of desire or lust or craving (“kamahetu,

kama nidana, kamānamevahetu”). Again, in Rattapala Sutta, he has mentioned the people of this world are slaves of craving and hence, it is difficult to give up (“uno loke atitto tanha dāso”).

In the Kalaha vivada sutta, Buddha explained not only the apparent nearby causes but also the root causes for all Quarrels & Disputes and in the following chapters of this paper, it would be explained in detail.

II. A BRIEF HISTORY

One of the six suttas preached at the Mahasamaya held in the Mahavana near Kapilavatthu. It deals with the origin of contentions and disputes. Disputes arise about objects which one holds dear; such affection is the result of desire, etc. It forms the eleventh sutta of the Atthakavagga of the Sutta Nipata (Sn.vv.862ff; SnA.361, 551ff).

It is said that the discourse was especially meant for those in the Assembly, whose temperament was malicious (dosacaritanam) (MNidA.222).

We are told that Maha Pajapati heard the sutta and renounced the world. (ThigA.3, 141).

Probably the Attadanda Sutta was also called by this name. See AA.i.186, where the story of the 500 Sakiyan youths is given. In other accounts the Sutta which led to their joining the Order is called Attadanda.

There can be different viewpoints and translations of Pali texts. For example, the verse 876 of Kalaha Vivada Sutta, following translations are available as in the Table: 1.

TABLE I
PALI TO ENGLISH TRANSLATIONS MAY VARY AS SHOWN FOR AN EXAMPLE OF KALAHA VIVADA SUTTA VERSE 876

| Pali | | Norman | John Ireland | Bhikkhu Thanissaro | Dhīvan |
|--|---|---|--|--|--|
| Ettāvavataggampi vadanti heke Yakkhassa suddhim idha paṇḍitā se, Tesaṃ paneke samayaṃ vadanti Anupādisese kusalā vadānā | Some here who are wise say that: The purity of the yakkha is the best to this extent [only]. However, some of them who call themselves experts reply It is the condition of no-fuel-remaining. By way of contrast here are some other translations | "Some wise men here do say that the supreme purity of the yakkha is to this extent [only], but some of them, who say they are experts, preach that there is a time for [quenching] with no grasping remaining." | "Some of the learned do declare purification of the spirit as the highest. But contrary to them some teach a doctrine of annihilation. Those clever ones declare this to be (final liberation) without basis of life's fuel remaining" | "Some of the wise say that just this much is the utmost, the purity of the spirit is here. But some of them, who say they are skilled, say it's the moment with no clinging remaining." (4). | This is what some clever people say about it, that the purity of the individual is best to this extent. But some of them, who call themselves experts, teach that there comes a time when there is no grasping left. |

So it is advisable not only to depend on one translation (Table 1), but use your own wisdom to read other views and identify a proper meaning so that it would be useful

for one’s own practice. However, here for general reference and understanding, the Pali text of the whole sutta and the translation by Thanissaro Bhikkhu is listed in the Table 2

below in the section III.

III. KALAH VIVADA SUTTA

TABLE II
KALAH VIVADA SUTTA IN PALI AND ENGLISH

| PTS: Sn 862-877 | Translated from the Pali by Thanissaro Bhikkhu (4) © 1994-2012 |
|--|---|
| 862. Kuto pahutā kalahā vivādā Paridevasokā sahamacchirā ca, Mānātimānā sahapesuṇā ca Kuto pahutā te tādīṅgha brūhi. | "From where have there arisen quarrels, disputes, lamentation, sorrows, along with selfishness, conceit & pride, along with divisiveness? From where have they arisen? Please tell me." |
| 863. Piyā pahutā kalahā vivādā Paridevasokā samaccharā ca, Mānātimānā sahapesuṇā ca Macchiriyayuttā kalahā vivādā Vivādajātesu ca pesuṇāni. | "From what is dear there have arisen quarrels, disputes, lamentation, sorrows, along with selfishness, conceit & pride, along with divisiveness. Tied up with selfishness are quarrels & disputes. In the arising of disputes is divisiveness." |
| 864. Piyāsu lokasamaṃ kutonidānā ye cāpi lobhā vicaranti loke, Āsā ca niṭṭhā ca kutonidānā Ye samparāyāya narassa hontī. | "Where is the cause of things dear in the world, along with the greeds that go about in the world? And where is the cause of the hopes & fulfillments for the sake of a person's next life?" |
| 865. Chandanidānāni piyāni loke Ye cāpi lobhā vicaranti loke, Āsā ca niṭṭhā ca itonidānā Ye samparāyāya narassa hontī. | "Desires are the cause of things dear in the world, along with the greeds that go about in the world. And it too is the cause of the hopes & fulfillments for the sake of a person's next life." |
| 866. Chando nu lokasmiṃ kutonidāno Vinicchāyi vāpi kutopahutā, Kodho mosavajjaṇca kathaṃkathaṃ ca Ye cāpi dhammā samaṇena vuttā. | "Now where is the cause of desire in the world? And from where have there arisen decisions, anger, lies, & perplexity, and all the qualities described by the Contemplative?" |
| 867. Sātaṃ asātanti yamāhu loke Tamupanissāya pahoti chando, Rūpesu disvā vibhavaṃ bhavaṇca Vinicchayaṃ kurute janatu loke. | "What they call 'appealing' & 'unappealing' in the world: in dependence on that desire arises. Having seen becoming & not-with regard to forms, a person gives rise to decisions in the world; |
| 868. Kodho mosavajjaṇca kathaṃkathaṃ ca Etepi dhamamā dvayameva sante, Kathaṃkathā nānapathāya sakkhe Ñatvā pavuttā samaṇena dhammā. | "Anger, lies, & perplexity: these qualities, too, when that pair exists. A person perplexed should train for the path of knowledge, for it's in having known that the Contemplative has spoken of qualities/dhammas." |
| 869. Sātaṃ asātaṇca kutonidānā Kismiṃ asantena bhavanti hete, Vibhavaṃ bhavaṇcāpi | "Where is the cause of appealing & un-? When what isn't do they not exist? And whatever is meant by becoming & not- : tell me, Where is |

| | |
|---|---|
| yametamatthaṃ Etaṃ me pabrūhi yatonidānaṃ. | its cause?" |
| 870. Phassānidānaṃ sātaṃ asātaṃ Phasse asante na bhavanti bhete, Vibhavaṃ bhavaṇcāpi yametamatthaṃ Etaṃ te pabrūmi itonidānaṃ. | "Contact is the cause of appealing& un-. When contact isn't they do not exist. And whatever is meant by becoming & not- : this too is its cause." |
| 871. Phasso nu lokasmiṃ kutonidāno Pariggahā cāpi kutopahutā, Kismiṃ asatte na mamattamatthi Kismiṃ vibhute na phusantiphassa. | "Now where is the cause of contact in the world, and from where have graspings, possessions, arisen? When what isn't does mine-ness not exist. When what has disappeared do contacts not touch?" |
| 872. Nāmaṇca rūpaṇca paṭicca phassā Icchānidānāni pariggahāni, Icchāya'santya na mamatta matthi Rūpe vibhute na phusanti phassā. | "Conditioned by name & form is contact. In longing do graspings, possessions have their cause. When longing isn't mine-ness does not exist. When forms have disappeared contacts don't touch." |
| 873. Kathaṃ sametassa vibhoti rūpaṃ Sukhaṃ dukhaṃ vāpi kathaṃ vibhoti, Etaṃ me brūhi yathā vibhoti Taṃ jānissāma iti me mano ahu. | "For one arriving at what does form disappear? How do pleasure & pain disappear? Tell me this. My heart is set on knowing how they disappear." |
| 874. Na saññasaññi na visaññasaññi Nopi asaññi na vibhūtasaññi, Evaṃ sametassa vibhoti rūpaṃ Saññānidānā hi papañcasankhā. | "One not percipient of perceptions not percipient of aberrant perceptions, not unpercipient, nor percipient of what's disappeared: for one arriving at this, form disappears — for objectification-classifications have their cause in perception." |
| 875. Yaṃ taṃ apucchimbha akittayā no Aññaṃ taṃ pucchāma tādīṅgha brūhi, Ettāvataṅgaṃ nu vadanti bheke Yakkhassa suddhiṃ idha paṇḍitā se Udāhu aññaṃpi vadanti etto. | "What we have asked, you have told us. We ask one more thing. Please tell it. Do some of the wise say that just this much is the utmost, the purity of the spirit is here? Or do they say that it's other than this?" |
| 876. Ettāvavataṅgaṃpi vadanti heke Yakkhassa suddhiṃ idha paṇḍitā se, Tesaṃ paneke samayaṃ vadanti Anupādisese kusalā vadānā | "Some of the wise say that just this much is the utmost, the purity of the spirit is here. But some of them, who say they are skilled, say it's the moment with no clinging remaining." |
| 877. Ete ca ñatvā upanissitāti Ñatvā muni nissaye so vimamsi, Ñatvā vimutto na vimādameti Bhavābhavāya na sameti dhīroti. | Knowing, 'Having known,' they still are dependent,' the sage, ponders dependencies. On knowing them, released, he doesn't get into disputes, doesn't meet with becoming & not- : he's enlightened." |

IV. DISCUSSION

So, it is possible to identify a flow of cause and effect combinations (Figure 1). If the cause is not there, there cannot

be an effect or result. Therefore, it is possible to identify the nearby cause to the origin of causes (root cause). If it is possible to remove the root cause, in turn it would remove each and every result of the above pyramid.

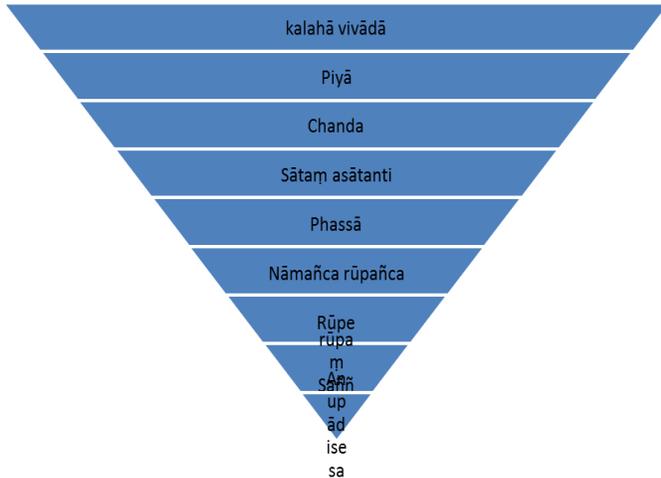


Fig. 1 How the cause and effect principle explained in Kalaha Vivada Sutta

From what is dear there have arisen quarrels, disputes, lamentation, sorrows, along with selfishness, conceit & pride, along with divisiveness. Tied up with selfishness are quarrels & disputes. In the arising of disputes is divisiveness (4). From the dependent origination (Paticca Samuppada), it is possible to see the relationship up to Nama-Rupa, however, according to this Sutta, cause for Nama-Rupa is the perception of Rupa itself, and when Rupa is not there, Phassā does not exist. According to John D. Ireland (5), "His perception is not the ordinary kind, nor is his perception abnormal; he is not without perception nor is his perception (of materiality) suspended. — to such an one immateriality ceases. Perception is indeed the source of the world of multiplicity." Here the Pali terms, Na saññasaññi na visaññasaññi Nopi asaññi na vibhūtasaññi has to be understood carefully. Na saññasaññi referring to 'it is not without any perception', in other words still uses the senses (Eye, Ear, Nose etc.) but not the ordinary way. na visaññasaññi is referring to tell it is neither a state of unconsciousness nor has not attained the state of cessation of perception and feeling. Nopi asaññi means it is not the Brahma realm which referred as the "Asanna thala" or Non-percipient Brahma world (6). na vibhūtasaññi means that still without a perception like which referred by the perception of worldly level, nor is his consciousness false, maintaining oneself in this way, forms do not occur because obsessive proliferations have perception as origin (7). So, there is a stage where one can develop the mind so that not fall into any of those four categories of perceptions, that is the highly developed level of mind by following the path shown by the Buddha, and the stage is Anupādisesa, the highest level of purification. "Some of the learned do declare purification of the spirit as the highest. But contrary to them some teach a doctrine of annihilation. Those clever ones declare this to be (final

liberation) without basis of life's fuel remaining. Knowing that these (theorists) rely on (mere opinions for their statements) a sage investigates that upon which they rely. Having understood and being free (from theories) he will not dispute with anyone. The wise do not enter into any existence." Papañca in Buddhist philosophical discourse always carries a negative connotation. It usually means a tendency of thoughts to proliferate based on a false sense of self. It is therefore frequently used in analyses of the discord between things as we perceive them and they are, as the Buddha himself does in such discourses as the Sakka-Pañha Sutta (DN 21), the Madupindika Sutta (MN 18) and the Kalaha-Vivada Sutta (Sn 4.11) (8).

Finally, according to Buddha's teachings, there is a way to end all kind of sufferings arise in different forms such as arise contentions and disputes, lamentations and sorrows along with avarice, selfishness and conceit, arrogance and slander. That is to identify the root cause, delusion about matter, and by developing the wisdom to see the truth as it is, one can eradicate all sort of suffering. May you all realize the ultimate truth!

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