

AN ENHANCEMENT OF POSITIVE THINKING IN THE PERSPECTIVE OF BUDDHISM

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ABSTRACT

The main purpose of this paper is to expose positive thinking from the Buddhist perspective & to enhance its universal utility to contemporary society. Buddha in His actions as well as in His teachings has clearly demonstrated positivity as a productive, proactive mental property. Positive thinking in the Buddhist perspective offers us an impression of an overlapping mixture of mental, behavioral, and spiritual (moral) qualities. This paper demonstrates & explores the actions concerned with the Buddhist positive mental framework upholding its present-day validity and in fact, how to enhance advance positive thinking as a way of resolving various human conflicts. The effort of this paper is to urge the reader to make an endeavor to gain happiness by avoiding negative thoughts and situations, by cultivating positive thinking in the human mind living in a harmonious environment, commensurate with the practicing of the Buddhist teaching which benefits not only securing it but also improving happiness both in the sense of the afterlife as well as in this world itself. In this way, the exploration of the Buddhist attitudes in this respect has been focused on at a fair length regarding the positive thinking as appeared in Buddhism by providing a considerable number of instances and evidence which seem to be a vacuum in most of the present-day reading material found in this field of study. This paper also deals with particular suttās in Sutta Piṭaka which can be applied to enhance the positive mental skills of the people in the current society. It moreover discusses the relationship between the human mind and positive thinking by interpreting Buddhist teachings in depth. The paper concludes by exposing the adoptable approach aiming at the enhancement of positive thinking as an essential prerequisite to being grasped and used to reach an individual's mental happiness, social peace & harmony as well as explaining how to achieve the final goal of Buddhism the emancipation; Nibbāna by way of positive approach.

Introduction

Positive thinking is a particular mental attitude in which one can expect good and favorable results, in this very life and hereafter. In other words, positive thinking is a mental and spiritual process of creating thoughts and feelings that create and transform energy into reality. A positive mind gravitates for happiness, health and a happy ending in any situation.¹

Positive thinking can be defined as a method to achieve health and contentment. It concentrates on sublime, positive qualities such as inner peace, strength, valor, love, compassion, altruistic joy, equanimity and happiness. In this direction of research, the positive psychology is viewed as a part and parcel of positive thinking which is a vibrant mental technique, which must be practiced often wisely. It should not be misused to repress feelings (such as sadness, depression, loneliness, etc) or problems that you want to get rid of. Positive thinking must be used sensitively and healingly.²

Positivity is a mental attitude which supports to develop mental and physical health. Additionally, positive thinking plays a vital role to manage & maintain the stability of the society. It is beneficial to a person in many ways by providing meaningful essentials to life such as better health, strong confidence, happier life, longevity; reduction of the stressful mental phenomena and better management of life.

Religions, philosophies, dogmas, all genera of Isms and even science, embody, exemplify, great attempts made by man to find solutions to the riddle of his life, in its diverse forms. The majority of these branches of man's perception and knowledge are mainly of spiritual and material aspects. The principal objective of each one of them is to understand the intricacies of life, and to offer some viable solutions to make it stress-free, to the extent that the respective arenas can fathom the issues and offer possible, viable answers in their corresponding capacities depending on divinity, (Theism) mysticism or black magic.

Buddhist perspective on positive thinking process in this context, differs from the other spheres of man's voyages of discoveries, as listed above, mainly because of its unique way of diagnosing the issues and dispensing the lasting remedies with strong efficacy to be experienced with a touch of morality practiced by oneself, through the development of the mindfulness in this life as well as in the life hereafter. So, Buddhism cannot be termed as a religion in its strict sense, that the Buddha unlike other spiritual leaders or philosophers, at no time, endorsed rituals, magic, divinity or interstellar powers to find out a way out for the ills of human beings, in the literal and metaphorical sense. It cannot be identified as rationalism or agnosticism for it refutes the concept of soul and the almighty creator. It is a way of life showing us, how to be contended in our

¹ Leading Personality, *What is Positive Thinking?*, Accessed April 15, 2023, <https://leadingpersonality.wordpress.com/2013/03/15/what-is-positive-thinking>.

² Wikiversity, *Happiness/Positive thinking*, Accessed April 15, 2023, https://en.wikiversity.org/wiki/Happiness/Positive_thinking.

mundane affairs while guiding the world relations to Nibbāna the ultimate truth on the path of morality, concentration and wisdom. To realize wisdom, one has to be qualified on the former, preceding stages; morality and concentration stepping on to the positive path. One can't reach the stage of wisdom, if one is unable to go past sīla (morality) and samādhi (concentration).

In spite of the fact that, the Buddhism highlights dukkha, suffering as a salient feature of life, it never ends there itself but, rather exposes the cause and the way out for the cessation of suffering. In this sense Buddhism is not a negative form of teaching but, entirely positive in its approach and spirit. Depending on the external powers is out rightly rejected by the Buddha who advocated self-reliance on seeking the truth.

Buddhist Analysis on Positive Thinking in Relation to Mind & Body Interdependency

In order to grasp some essential features of the positive thinking, it is necessary to understand the mind-body link which is a central teaching of the Buddha. Both mind & body (mental & physical) interdependency in terms of individual's emancipation a self- realization of vital significance. Proper understanding of the mutual connection between these two components facilitates to form a positive mind-set. Unless the powers of the two phenomena are geared in unison no positive results can be achieved and the foremost requirement in this connection is to see the correlation of the pair.

The mind (citta) can be introduced as the principal conveyor of a person's behavior which has a direct link with it. A person's positive or negative profile is illustrated in accordance with the wholesome or unwholesome naturalistic feelings of the mind. In fact, it can be shown as the seat of bodily actions and also 'rūpa' which is stationed in the five aggregates, is the material base of it. Here, what is emphasized as pain, perception, aggregate and consciousness are the mind and thoughts, its internal process.

The Buddha, presenting a methodical and analytical view of the mind, emphasizes that, it is consolidated in the phenomena, the 'nāma' (emphatic particle) and the form (matter). In this context, mental qualities or makings connected with the mind are explained as nāma and man in this sense, and is a combination of both name plus form. Paticca Samuppāda -Vibhaṅga Sutta in Saṃyutta Nikāya has clearly explained this. "And what bhikkhus, is name-and- form? Feeling, perception, volition, contact, attention: this is called name. The four great elements and the form derived from the four great elements: this is called form. Thus, this name and this form are together called name –and –form."³

³ Bhikkhu Bodhi, *The Connected Discourses of the Buddha*, (USA: Wisdom Publications, 2000), 535.

It can be understood here, what is integrally related to the mind is *nāma* element and what is linked to the body is form element. Proper understanding of mind & body dual intimate relationship, leads to right awareness of man who is a composite configuration of the same. To comprehend the term ‘Man’ in the proper sense, it is necessary to grasp the general nature of the mind as well as that of the body.

Mental states like, thinking, belief, suspicion (skeptical feelings) determination and so on, are affiliated to the mind while, functions such as, inhaling, exhaling, blood circulation, perspiration etc. are associated with the body. The entirety of this complex process is ‘man’ in sum. It is conceivable to conclude that, mind-body dual relationship occurs mutually hence, ‘*nāma-form*’ hyphenated (compound) word, is in currency in Buddhism. Buddha, clarifying the inter-relationship between mind and body, pronounced, it is cited that in *Naḷakalāpa Sutta* in *Samyutta Nikāya*. “Well then friend, I will make up a simile for you, for some intelligent people here understand the meaning of a statement by means of a simile. Just as two sheaves of reeds might stand leaning against each other, so too, with name and form as condition, consciousness, with consciousness as condition, name and form (comes to be). With name and form as condition, the six sense bases (comes to be); with the six sense bases as condition, contact, such is the origin of this whole mass of suffering.”⁴

It is discernible, apparent that, while the perception of the mind and the body exists together in relativity, hence, when the mind quits, the body too will follow the suit and also, with the extinction of the body, the individuality of the mind also will lose itself. This consciousness will not leave name and form. It occurs that, it (consciousness), is born, decays, dies, quits or gets rebirth. That means, the consciousness is present due to the form and the form is present because of the form.⁵ The reality of the human body, a unified entity of mind-body phenomena is well enumerated in the *Sāmaññaphala Sutta* in *Dīgha Nikāya*. This body of mine is gorgeous; composed of four major elements, conceived by my parental sperm (semen)-ovary combination (amalgamation).⁶

The terms *mano*, *citta*, and *viññāna* refer to the mind in complementarily & interchangeably⁷. Thus, the consciousness is a stage of the mind which is mutually related to the body. In particular, the nature of the former is investigating or grasping mental objectives. *Citta* has the potential to free from defilements (*cittam vimuccati*). In accordance with the objects grasped by

⁴ Ibid., 609.

⁵ “*paccudāvattati kho idam viññānam nāmarūpamhā nāparam gacchatiettavatā jīyetha vā jāyetha vā mayetha vā cāvetha vā upapajjetha vā yad idam nāmarūpapaccaya viññānam viññānapaccaya nāmarupam*” S II 104

⁶ *Ayaṃ kho me kayo rūpī cāturi mahā bhūtika mātika pettika sambhavo odana kummās upacayo aniccucchādana parimaddana bhedana viddhamāna dhammo idaṃ ca pana me viññānaṃ etthasitaṃ ettha paṭibaddhaṃ ti.*” D I 76

⁷ “*Yaṃ kho etambhikkhave vuccati cittam iti pi mano iti pi viññāmiti pi*” S II 94.

the five faculties, in can be surmised whether the mind is pure or impure. The mind can be regarded as an organ (manīndriya) faculty but, citta or the consciousness cannot be termed as such. As Rhys Davids points out, citta means the calm state of the mind; mano means its motivational aspect and the consciousness means its functional aspect. It can be cited as “citta, hadaya, incorporating man’s personality, and as mental status, contrasted to physical status, weary in body & mind. As intellectual status, citta, manas, & viññāna (mind, thought & understanding) these three constitute the invisible energizer of the body, alias mind in its manifestations.”⁸ Accordingly, the primary nature of the mind is citta and it is illuminating (shining) which can be dirtied by external defilements.⁹ Pāli Dhammapada graphically illustrates how the mental state is reflected on the behavioral pattern of a person. “The mental faculties are dominated by mind, governed by it, and made up it. Though the word mind has, in English mainly in intellectual connotation it can also be used in the sense of the whole content of consciousness. Mana in the sense of viññāna is the active thinking principle.”¹⁰

The qualitative or the quantitative nature of the open and dubious behavioral patterns of a person can be understood by the internal thinking process of a person. The drives like greed or ignorance play a pivotal role in the mundane affairs of the worldlings. The mind is automated with the drives, the mental fodder provided by the five faculties. Such train of thinking (the stream of consciousness) is called ‘Manosañcetanikāhāra’ (nutriment of volition) and the awareness that concentrates the mind is defined by Buddhism as ‘Viññānāhāra (the nutriment of consciousness), these sustenance are involved in the maintenance of the both material & mental conditions of the beings.¹¹ The stimulant giving the kinetic force to the mind is lust or craving which is a causative factor of some mental states such as sadness, (anxiety), happiness (joy) or confusion. Accordingly, the lust is contributory to cause re-birth and to kindle desire to be bound with the five faculties.¹² Thus, the Buddha says, the chief conveyor of the aggregates is the mind; the cause of the circle of saṃsāra.¹³ While the mind in force, personal mental skills too, provide a base to the qualitative and the quantitative nature of such skills and the way a person acts accordingly is also fundamental. The self is the lord of self; who else could be the lord, with self well subdued a man finds lord who is difficult to obtain.¹⁴ The Buddhism shows how sensations operate in understanding life based on sorrow and pleasure. It further elaborates how saññā (perception) assists a person to encounter conflicts and resolve them. In heaping aggregates, the precursor of re-birth, the merits and de-merits are performed having thought by

⁸ Thomas W. Rhys Davids and William Stede, *Pali English Dictionary*, (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidas Publishers Pvt Ltd., 2007), 266-267.

⁹ “pabhassaramidaṃ bhikkhave cittaṃ tañca khoāgantukehi upakkilesehi upakkiliṭṭhaṃ” AI 10.

¹⁰ “mano pubbaṃ gamā dhammā mano seṭṭhā manomayā” (Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan, *The Dhammapada*, (Madras: Oxford University Press, 1950), 58.

¹¹ “Cattārome bhikkhave, āhārā bhūtānaṃ vāsattānaṃ ṭhitiyā sambhavesīnaṃ vā anuggahāya. Katame cattāro? Kabalīkārō āhārō oḷāriko vā sukhumo vā, phasso dutiyo, manosañcetanā tatiyā, viññānaṃ catutthaṃ. Ime kho bhikkhave, cattāro āhārā bhūtānaṃ vā sattānaṃ ṭhitiyā sambhavesīnaṃ vā anuggahāya.” S II 11.

¹² “yāyaṃ taṇhā ponobhavikā nandirāgasahagatā tatra tatrābhinandini”, S V421.

¹³ cittaṇa nīyati loko cittaṇa parikkassati, Cittassa ekadhammassa sabbeva vasamanvagūti. S I 39.

¹⁴ “attā hi attano nātho.” Radhakrishnan, S. Op. cit. pp.112-113.

the mind then, producing them through the body, the speech and the mind.¹⁵ Once the whole process is aimed at achieving the target, it produces positive results.

The singular, supreme aim of the Buddhism; psycho-ethical philosophy, is to see that the worldling realizes the ultimate truth, through the awareness of reality of life, with a radical change of the mental frame. The individual mental states function in the form of energy and motivations and mental energy can be stated as a motion. The motivation finds its root in the mind and it directs a being towards his existence and behavior.¹⁶ Mental energies and motivations show an umbilical connection while the former is directly related to the mind and the latter lead to actions either wholesome or unwholesome. The mental energies that sprout as intoxicants, latent passions, impurities and hindrances are affiliated with some mundane mental tendencies such as ignorance, craving and hatred and so on, which are considered as sinful, deprave acts.

Whenever contaminated feelings arise in the mind, feelings opposing to them should be cultivated and substituted them with refined thoughts to experience positivity. For instance, when a vengeful feeling surfaces, compassion can be generated to subjugate and replace the former. It would be possible only, when a person is conscious of the presence of the defilements and being aware of the way to remedy it. Sallekha Sutta¹⁷ of the Majjhima Nikāya, forty-four forms of such austere penance for the higher life refers and forty-four modes to purge them are given.

The Sallekha Sutta mentions five ways of eradicating defilements as follows; that, roots of the defilements be annihilated, awakening the mind, that it is the way to rid sins that it leads to the heaven, and that it defuses the intoxicants.¹⁸

Anumāna Sutta¹⁹ of the Majjhima Nikāya refers to 16 such factors that cause misconduct and a similar number of factors that can cause good behavior. A person whose conduct is appalling is looked down upon by the society and such a person must abstain from such misdeeds contemplating on the disgrace affected by the society. The said Sutta explains that, similar delinquency has to be contemplated on and, two ways are shown to achieve it. That such unbecoming feelings are there in his mind and they should be got rid of and feeling that one has eliminated such ungainly thoughts, one should be pleased and live with a mind, full of merits.

Thus, reflecting over the mental illnesses born in a person's mind means, looking at them with mindfulness (retrospection) and wisdom, the highest positive quality. The rectifying process to

¹⁵ “cetanāhaṃ bhikkhave kammaṃ vadāmi, cetayitvā kammaṃ karoti kāyena vācāya manasā” AIII 415.

¹⁶ Edward Ferguson, *Encyclopedia of Psychology*, (New York: John Wiley & Sons, 1996), 578.

¹⁷ M I 40.

¹⁸ Sallekhapariyāyo, Cittuppādapariyāyo, Parikkamanapariyāyo, Uparibhāvapariyāyo, Parinibbānapariyāyo, Ibid., 41- 46.

¹⁹ Ibid., 95- 101.

cleanse the mind sans impure thoughts can be understood this way. Avoiding ill-feelings that distort (perverse) and discomfort the mind and keeping the mind free from them is always stressed in Buddhism as the salient feature of the positive thinking.

Some hold an erroneous view that Buddhism signifies life, free from all the emotional and mental energies. Energies do exist in association with five organs (senses) and they can cause sorrow or joy but Buddhism gives a pride of place to the wholesome feelings like compassion, equanimity, sympathetic joy and so on. This gives the idea that the mind has the potential of producing positive, conducive feelings vs unscrupulous feelings through the technique of mindfulness, right understanding, and meditation and so on.

The mind and its related feelings, their true nature, how to root out immoral feelings and also guidance to do so, are well pointed out in suttās. For instance, Vatthūpama Sutta²⁰ of the Majjhima Nikāya can be given. Taking two examples what comes about when trying to dye a dirty clothe and a clean one, the Sutta explains a tainted mind surely leads a person to sorrow and misery while the mind with purity and clarity guides the man towards a life with joy; ecstasy as same as a dirty clothe never shines itself even with dyeing but, a clean cloth will prove otherwise. In the same vain, a dirty mind is to be cleansed, before it is to be sublimated to an upper plane in order to experience pleasure and happiness as the end result of the positive mental frame work.

Buddha has explicated 16 factors concerned with the mind being contaminated. And what are the defilements of the mind. (1) covetousness and unrighteous greed are a defilement of the mind (profound greed), (2) ill will is a defilement of the mind (homicidal tendency), (3) anger is a defilement of the mind, (4) hostility (repeated anger escalating to hatred), (5) denigration (ungratefulness and intolerance of other's wellbeing), (6) domineering (comparing noble qualities of others with those of oneself), (7) envy (jealousy or the intolerance of others welfare), (8) jealousy (stinginess over the material comfort of both the others and oneself), (9) hypocrisy (tendency to conceal(deception) one's sinful acts), (10) fraud (craftiness or pretentious nature), (11) obstinacy (inflexible or stiff nature of the mind),

(12) presumption (retaliation or trying to outshine the others), (13) conceit (inferiority, superiority and compareriority complexes), (14) arrogance (extreme pride), (15) vanity (being intoxicated with race, caste, clan, youthfulness and the good health), (16) negligence is a defilement of the mind.²¹

²⁰ Ibid., 36.

²¹ “Katame ca bhikkhave cittassa upakkilesā: abhijjhāvisamalobho cittassa upakkilesa. Byāpādo cittassa upakkilesa. Kodho cittassa upakkilesa. Upanāho cittassa upakkilesa. Makkho cittassa upakkilesa. Paḷāso cittassa upakkilesa. Issā cittassa upakkilesa. Macchariyaṃ cittassa upakkilesa. Māyā cittassa upakkilesa. Sāṭheyyaṃ cittassa upakkilesa. Thambho cittassa upakkilesa. Sārambho cittassa upakkilesa. Māno cittassa upakkilesa. Atimāno cittassa upakkilesa. Mado cittassa upakkilesa. Pamādo cittassa upakkilesa.” Ibid., 36-37.

These mental states (features) are shown in the ‘*Vatthūpama Sutta* as depravities, as sinful feelings in the *Dhammadāyada Sutta*²² and as—in the *Anaṅgaṇa Sutta*.²³ These phenomena can be regarded as the extension of the natural reflectors of the world affairs. They are potent enough to change drastically a person’s inwardly and outwardly functions causing much havoc in his inter-relationship creating unhealthy social environment. In this context, the matters given in the *Madhupiṇḍika Sutta*²⁴ of the *Majjhima Nikāya* are also important in the sense that, the know-hows are built based on the experiences gained through sensory faculties.²⁵ This definition made in terms of grammar and Dhamma, interprets hindrances as craving, pride and false views. Apart from this a plethora of wild feelings like passion, doubt, ignorance and so on, latent in the deep store house of the mind, correlated to the psycho-emotional aspect of man is shown in the *Madhupiṇḍika Sutta*.²⁶

Some mental properties explained as ²⁷emotions and Impulses in the western psychology are defined as defiles or latent passion in Buddhism and, Buddha preferred to use them to demonstrate how man undergoes untold sufferings in consequence of these masquerading wild tendencies there is discussion in the *Cunda Sutta* of the *Saṃyutta Nikāya*. In respect of emotions, a salient teaching is given in the *Sabbāsava Sutta* as shown below.

Passion-indulgence in the pleasurable experiences brought about five senses, great liking; inclination to be in the existence being glued to the world of corporeal-form- and the formless, incorporeal world, ignorance-being ignorant of the four noble truths.²⁸ Buddha has enumerated five forms of obstacles (five hindrances) as factors causing suffering and blocking the path, the way to Nibbāna. Excitement of sensual pleasure, ill-will-liking to destroy others, sloth-not active; not taking any interest, flurry and worry-repentance and impatience (restlessness and remorse), perplexity-doubt arising of Buddha and eight-fold instances (skeptical doubt).²⁹

²² Ibid., 12.

²³ Ibid., 24.

²⁴ Ibid., 108.

²⁵ “Cakkhuñcāvuso paṭicca rūpe ca uppajjati cakkhuviññānaṃ. Tiṇṇa ṃ saṅgati phasso. Phassapaccayā vedanā. Yaṃ vedeti, taṃ sañjānāti. Yaṃ sañjānāti taṃ vitakketi. Yaṃ vitakketi taṃ papañceti. Yaṃ papañceti tato nidānaṃ purisaṃ papañcasaññāsaṅkhā samudācaranti.. Tattonidānaṃ purisaṃ papañcasaññāsaṅkhā samudācaranti” Ibid., 112.

²⁶ “yathā nidānaṃ bhikkhu purisaṃ papañcasaññāsaṅkhā samudācaranti, ettha ce natthi abhinanditabbaṃ abhivaditabbaṃ ajjhositabbaṃ, ehevanto rāgānusayānaṃ ehevanto paṭighānusayānaṃ. Ehevanto ditṭhānusayānaṃ. Ehevanto vicikicchānusayānaṃ. Ehevanto mānānusayānaṃ. Ehevanto bhavarāgānusayānaṃ. Ehevanto avijjānusayānaṃ. Ehevanto daṇḍādānasatthādāna kalahaviggahavivāda tuvantuvampesuññamusāvādānaṃ. Etthete pāpakā akusalā dhammā aparisesā nirujjhantī ‘ti.” Ibid., 113.

²⁷ S V 161.

²⁸ “Katame ca bhikkhave dhammā na manasikaraṇīyā ye dhamme manasi karoti? Yassa bhikkhave dhamme manasi karoto anuppanno vā kāmāsavo uppajjati, uppanno vā kāmāsavo pavaḍḍhati, anuppanno vā bhavāsavo uppajjati, uppanno vā bhavāsavo pavaḍḍhati, anuppanno vā avijjāsavo uppajjati, uppanno vā avijjāsavo pavaḍḍhati. Ime dhammā na manasikaraṇīyā ye dhamme manasi karoti.” M I 7.

²⁹ Kāmacchando bhikkhave āvaraṇo nīvaraṇo cetaso ajjhāruho paññāya dubbalīkaraṇo. Vyāpādo bhikkhave āvaraṇo nīvaraṇo cetaso ajjhāruho paññāya dubbalīkaraṇo. Thīnamiddhaṃ bhikkhave āvaraṇaṃ nīvaraṇaṃ cetaso ajjhāruhaṃ paññāya dubbalīkaraṇaṃ. Uddhaccakukkuccaṃ bhikkhave āvaraṇaṃ nīvaraṇaṃ cetaso ajjhāruhaṃ paññāya dubbalīkaraṇaṃ. Vicikicchā bhikkhave āvaraṇā nīvaraṇā cetaso ajjhāruhā paññāya dubbalīkaraṇā. A III 63.

The defilements that are already formed (risen) in the mind presently and the ones pending to be risen are catalogued in the *Vibhaṅgappakaraṇa*³⁰ in such a detailed way that, there cannot be a similar elucidation in any other religion, the medical history or even in the modern psychology. This clarifies the fact that Buddhism is far above the other branches of disciplines or scriptures in relation to the analysis of the positive mind because Buddhism encompasses many facets of the human mind as a psycho-ethical philosophy. Modern psychology endeavors to fathom the vicissitudes of the mind, by means of studying the inter relationship between the brain and the nervous system (a composite of biology, physiology and psychology) but, it fails to reach the far corners of the mind. Modern psychology is able to get only a glimpse of the human mind despite all the techniques having in its possession. The only *modus operandi* which is capable enough to comprehend the mind with its real nature is found only in Buddhism which can shed light into the gray areas of this invisible faculty (*citta*) for which there is no equivalent term in any other language but Pāli.

The mind is an active force consisting of thoughts and drives (dynamics). Thoughts can be divided into two groups: conscious thoughts (*sampajāna mano saṅkhāra*) and unconscious thoughts (*asampajāna mano saṅkāra*). Also, the mind can be described as a bundle of memories which are residues of past actions (*kamma*) of past thinking, speaking & doing.³¹ Mind & its thoughts which are invisibly surviving as memories as the sum total of actions committed through the mind, body and the speech (vocal) done both in the past (even in the previous births) and at present. According to the Darwinism man (*Homosapien*) has been descending from apian family and still man is possessed with sub-human propensities (*proclivities*) inherited in the course of his very lengthy evolutionary process and certain human behavioral patterns (*sadism* and various forms of *cides* for instance) can be understood in this light. Some genetic compositions, socio-economic factors too are contributory in this respect. But, the Buddhism identifies man as a product of karmic assemblage acquired (inherited) throughout the circle of *Saṃsāra*, during his countless births and re-births occurred all through the eons. But, it is wrong to think that *kamma* (action) is the only factor in shaping a person's way of life. Buddha pointed out so many other causative factors namely '*niyāmas*' certain laws of nature also playing an important role here, although *kamma* is a major factor, because it is a mental property which is mainly accountable for a man's destiny which is basically his own creation; not done by divinity at all. One can find volition good or bad as the base for any action and it is so as far as fore said developments. Thoughts basically appear as passion, malice (blemish) and stupidity (infatuation) as negative forces and also thoughts emerge as the other way about; non-passion, non-malice and sense as positive.

³⁰ Buddhaddatta, *Vibhaṅgappakaraṇa aṭṭhakathā*, (London: Pali Text Society, 1980).

³¹ Nissanka, *Buddhist Psychotherapy*, (Colombo: Buddhist Cultural Center, 2009), 89.

Buddhism categorically states that, the mind basically (at the original, formative stage) is resplendent and free from defilements therefore, it has its intrinsic potential to purify itself with positive ideas doing away with all the wild feelings. Love in the wider sense, can create a conducive mental frame work in the worldly affairs and thereby it is not a surprise that the internal aspect of the mind, turns to be effectively functional. Buddhism in this sense is proactive. In the same vain, love; can be viewed as a pleasant experience which penetrates the inwardly domain of the mind consolidating the upper layer of it. This will be a powerful mental state with spiritual advancement, on condition that, if the mind can be kept as a citadel invulnerable to any enemy attacks intruding as negative, destructive feelings.

Positive Thinking, Modern Science and Buddhism

Positive thinking in relation to Buddhism has already been discussed in fairly detailed way in this article and, here an attempt is made to elaborate how Buddhism (with a special reference), can help us to examine or evaluate science in the limelight of positive thinking.

First and foremost, it should be noted well that, Buddhism is not a handmaiden of science and vice versa. It is out rightly erroneous to observe that the Buddhism is intrinsically scientific and it can offer solutions as science does. They have their own unique way of finding solutions to the riddles of man. While modern science is mainly concerned with making human life more comfortable in the material sense with its fast-moving march, introducing new inventions virtually everyday, Buddhism leads us on a spiritual path; a higher echelon for man to be stress-free, in his hectic endeavor making, to find satisfaction by way of material comfort. Undoubtly, science has severed man to uplift his life to a higher position in many fields of human affairs, in his long evolutionary process but, at the same time many more issues have cropped up because of its unprecedented sometimes unwarranted upward trend, both of good and bad nature. The Buddhism is not skeptical on man's materialistic progress as a way to be happy and comfortable in life, but it rather appreciates it as a basic requirement, only on condition that, if it is achieved in a proper means as Buddha has elaborated it on very many occasions especially in the Four noble truth, starting with the 'right seeing' which is vitally needed before everything else which (the right seeing) even science accepts as a prerequisite.

The Buddha was never interested in finding answers for unfathomable questions relating to the origin (genesis) or the creation of the universe, the theories of relativity or gravity; how the atom is structured and so on. In fact, the modern science in this context has a wide compendium of explanations elucidating almost all the subjects coming under its preview. There were contemporary philosophers in the Buddha's time who were keen on such epistemological subjects whose ideas vehemently enriched the modern sciences. But, the Buddha frequently advocated the importance of having an inwardly look to search for a viable solution for the

question of suffering, the impermanence and so on although the Buddha had conceived sufficient awareness on the similar fields of mundane value. The Buddha found the answers gained through Buddha's unshaken effort by means of His accumulated, empirical knowledge and intuition and taught the world in the most lucid way in Pali, the language of the ordinary folk, not in Sanskrit; a pedantic lingua franca of the Brahmins, the elite of the society, who firmly believed in a pantheon of gods, divinity and other super natural beings whom they sought the assistance from, through the divine intervention on their plethora of problems.

The Buddha contrarily, considered such areas as boundless and irrelevant on the basic questions and taught that our emancipation lies nowhere else but within ourselves and advised not to believe anything told by anybody, until one realizes whether it is true or not through one's own observation and experimentation. This is the scientific method the Buddha sanctioned whenever doubts arise. What the modern science endorses is as same as what the Buddha showed in arriving at conclusions and common agreements on conflicting matters. But some scientific findings so far agreed upon, can be discarded as wrong in the light of a new finding while Buddhism bases its findings through the perception achieved via the mindfulness (intuition), so that they prove to be time- tested and universal. For instance, the Buddhist teaching of cause and effect, the four-noble truth, the concept of impermanence are realities that can be observed anywhere at any time.

There is no common agreement among people sometimes what is good and what is bad. Anthropologists would say it is a part of cultural and ethical heritage; what is good to somebody might be bad to somebody else depending on one's cultural and ethical upbringing. How can we find an acceptable answer for this chaotic state of affairs? It is not a serious issue to a scientific-minded person because he perceives it in a pragmatic angle not in a moral stand point. Modern sciences are calcified as natural sciences whereas a religion is looked at as a branch of humanities. It is easy to differentiate a religion from science in this context.

But, Buddhism offers a feasible answer that can have a universal application; what is good for somebody should be good for others and what is bad for others should be bad for anybody. Here what is explained is the wholesome and unwholesome actions and their respective consequences. Take the first precept of the five precepts; killing. It can be homicide or suicide but can't be good for anybody, because it inflicts pain and causes a loss of life. This is universally condemned and serious forms of punishments are imposed on the perpetrators. In a dilemma of this nature, the Buddha's advice is to take oneself as an example and follow the suit; as what is taught in "all men tremble at punishment, all men fear death, likening others to oneself, one should neither slay nor cause to slay"³² which means before one's commit any action (not neutral actions) his volition matters a lot and see that it won't produce any bad, insalubrious result; if the resultant

³² "Sabbe tasanti daṇḍassa sabbe bhāyanti maccuno, attānam upamaṅkathvā, na haneyya na ghātaye"
S.Radhakrishnan, Op.cit.102.

fact is good for all, commit such deeds. If it generates on the other hand pain and suffering to oneself or others or to both the parties avert committing it. This affiliate with the concept of Anatta refers in Anatta Lakkhaṇa Sutta³³(not-self) which prompts a person to be selfless being an asset to the society.

Admittedly, the Buddhist law of impermanence finds classic expression in the Cūlasaccaka Sutta³⁴ and the all conditioned things or processes are transient or impermanent.³⁵ Further, the concept of Aniccā (impermanence)³⁶ the correlation between cause and effect, suffering as the fundamental nature of life, (the first noble truth) the dominance of the mind over the body as well as self-realization (awareness) as a key factor to positivism,³⁷ the power of intuition and consciousness are some of the universally accepted matters of consensus the Buddha has taught. In the same vain, there are well-accepted scientific truths which are agreed upon all over.

It has scientifically been proved most of the non-communicable deceases such as heart ailments occur mainly mentally in consequence of negative feelings. When the mind is filled with positive feelings such deceases can be got rid of. “the eschewing of all evil, the perfecting of good deeds, the purifying of one’s mind, this is the teaching of the Buddha, (the ideal is not the negative avoidance of evil but the positive performance of good and inward cleansing).”³⁸It in here relays very clearly how to keep the mind purified with positive mental qualities. The particular this verse points out three factors as essential to acquire a purified mind; “to refrain from all forms of evil deeds; to collect merits and to control the mind well. The Buddha describes them as maṅgala in Mahā Maṅgala Sutta³⁹ (noble, wholesome) facts. It is a terse but comprehensive summary of Buddhist ethics, individual and social. The thirty-eight blessings enumerated in it, are an unfailing guide on life's journey. Rightly starting with "avoidance of bad company" which is basic to all moral and spiritual progress, the Blessings culminate in the achievement of a passion-free mind, unshakable in its serenity. To follow the ideals set forth in these verses is the sure way to harmony and progress for the individual as well as for society, nation and mankind.⁴⁰

³³ S III 66.

³⁴ M I 237.

³⁵ “sabbe sankhārā aniccā” A IV100.

³⁶ S IV 214.

³⁷ “mano pubbaṅgamā dhammā, mano setṭhā mano mayā, manasā ce pasannena bhāsativā karotivā tatona ṁ sukha manveti, chāyāva anpāyini” Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan, *The Dhammapada*, 95.

³⁸ “sabba pāpassa akaranam kusalassa upasampdā, scitta pariyodapanam-etam buddhāna sāsanaṁ” S. Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan, *The Dhammapada*, 120.

³⁹ Khp V 3.

⁴⁰ Buddhist Studies, *Four Discourses of the Buddha*, Accessed April 8, 2023, https://www.buddhanet.net/e-learning/ethics_m.htm.

Modern science has developed with cumulative effect of the knowledge enriched by keen intelligent, observers of natural phenomena who tried to comprehend complex secrets of mother-nature. A land mark historical event; renaissance, between the 14th and the 17th centuries began in Italy (Rome and Greece) and later spread up to Europe, resulted thereafter an eventful change in England turning the new influence into a drastic, dynamic conversion in the field of arts, literature, science and technology. Since then the world experienced a tremendous transformation with new inventions coming into play in an impressive way expanding man's mental horizon compelling him to question even his own deep-rooted religious beliefs; especially the divinity and the theory of creation.⁴¹

Modern science is a systematic, formulated, accumulation of knowledge- based structure with clear- cut formulae made; starting with hypothesis, speculations subsequent to laboratory, clinical tests, field experiments, making constant changes as required, and finally arriving at conclusions first tentatively, and later if proved correct, they would be sanctioned by general agreement, acceptance.⁴²

The Buddha's maiden sermon Dhammacakkappavattana Sutta⁴³ explained to the five ascetics in a lucid style what Buddha realized and how His teachings can provide a solid basis for the betterment of living. We are reminded of the weight of the assertion highlighted above, when we find why the Buddha felt a tint or touch of doubt subsequent to Buddha's attaining the Buddhahood, whether Dhamma would be understood correctly by the people at large and, so Buddha preferred to explain his findings first to the five ascetics; Buddha's former teachers who rebuked their follower; prince ;Siddhārtha for abandoning their ways and stepping on to the middle path as an unwavering initiative to discover a solution for the problem of suffering. Even before the advent of the Buddha, there were Rishis who had possessed most of the psychic powers listed above except the concept of Nibbāna and the way to realize it. Some of His disciples also had known to have gained such paranormal capabilities but Buddha never

⁴¹ Gary D. Rosenberg, *The Revolution in Geology from the Renaissance to the Enlightenment*, (Colorado: The Geological Society of America, 2009), 32.

⁴² Alecia M. Spooner, *Environmental Science for Dummies*, (New Jersey: John Wiley & Sons, 2012), 23.

⁴³ S V 420.

⁴⁴ Torkel Brekke, *Religious Motivation and the Origin of Buddhism*, (London: Routledge Curzon, 2002), 29.

⁴⁵ David R. Griffin, *Religion and Scientific Naturalism: Overcoming Conflict*, (New York: State University of New York Press, 2000), 185.

encouraged them to appreciate and be engaged in them; instead He persuaded them to endeavor and go all-out to search a way- out for the ultimate emancipation; the cessation of suffering.⁴⁴ The modern science has no place for such realities; it is stifled there being only concerned with the material comfort of man.

Interestingly enough, more and more interest and awareness are emerging in the field of para psychology and transcendental phenomena in the present world.⁴⁵ The three-dimensional approach which science relied heavily on, for decades, has given way to more enlightened theories transcending the spatial barriers. Albert Einstein in 1905 did away with the classical scientific formulae inclusive of the spatial Cartesian formula with his innovative theory of relativity.⁴⁶

Buddhism as well as modern science functions in a parallel line, when considered the basic methodology each approach adopts. There is no room at all for blind faith, dogma or a shroud of mystery behind what is exposed or disclosed by both methods. It is entirely through observation, investigation and experimentation, deductions or conclusions are arrived at. But, conversely, in most of the cases, hypothesis or speculations are formulated proceeding to the scientific findings. The Buddhism is such that, one can't find any grey areas therein so that no need to make any conjectures or speculations whatsoever to understand and practice it, for the reason that the Buddha perceived it (Dhamma) accurately having acquired it, by means of His empirical and intuitional know-how. This position is a pointer to identify the basic distinction between the Buddhism and the modern science. Some scientific findings are tentative and are subjected to further proof. When a new discovery is found, the former theories are discarded. The matter which is composed of the atom was assumed to be indivisible. But later it was proved to be dividable and once divided what the left was energy. This new discovery entirely transformed the lateral thinking pattern so far science adhered to. This open-minded, progressive leaning of the modern science takes it on its upward but fluctuating trend. But, conversely the Buddhism is time-tested, universal and not subjected to further proof. It is open to anybody to come and see (ehi passika). Accordingly, when we read the qualities of the Dhamma, we can visualize the positive and scientific nature of Buddha's teaching.

⁴⁶ Stanislav Grof, *Beyond the Brain: Birth Death and Transcendence in Psychotherapy*, (New York: State University of New York, 1985), 68-69.

Moreover, both Buddhism & science as whole find solutions to predicaments of man in order to make his life progressive positive in the existence. Science in its overall objective & application makes individual's life technologically & materially sustaining positively. Nevertheless, it does not cater to enhancement of mental & spiritual positivity just as Buddhism does. Hence the adoption of Buddhist teachings in the aforementioned perspective of behavioral mental & spiritual positivity together with application of modern science can be made.

Conclusion

A concerted effort has been made in this article titled, 'An Enhancement of Positive Thinking in the Perspective of Buddhism' to throw some light in terms of positive thinking, on the Buddha's innumerable teachings made, on varied individuals, occasions, times and themes, for the wellbeing of the peoples of various walks of life grappling with their complex problems with no solutions in their sight and to show how the Buddha guided men and women, to come out from such tricky, delicate complications and how to spend a contended life starting with morality concentration and ending in wisdom enabling him to resolve his tangled worldly affairs, leading him ultimately to the enlightenment, the Nibbāna. In this endeavor, it is being referred to peruse a vast number of Buddhist canonical scriptures as relevant source material. Further, it has been explained, the way the Buddha emphasized the significance of understanding the human psyche, the inner self (the mind and its allied qualities; both positive and negative) and how it can be used, transmuted and practiced to make life successful and happy.

Positive Thinking which is in vogue today, as a modern concept, has gained much currency, because of its efficacy in leading a successful way of life. It advocates us (as most believe) to hunt for our goals and reach at them at any cost. If the end is good, it is immaterial whether the means is good or bad. But, the Buddhism, contrary to that popular view, teaches us that, it is imperative to be good, both the means and the end; it should be in tune with loving kindness, compassion and equanimity. The Buddhism while teaching us to reach at our desired worldly objectives within the positive mentality, by proper means, it highlights the much-needed spiritual development going, on par with the materialistic progress which is discernible all through the Buddhism. In order to have an access to the super mundane existence, it is necessary to annihilate, all sorts of impurities like, defilements, intoxicants, fetters, lust, ignorance, infatuations and so on to witness the dawn of Nibbāna the upper plane of the positive thinking.

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