

AN ANALYTICAL STUDY ON THE CONCEPT OF THE WISE (PAṆḌITA) IN THERAVĀDA BUDDHIST PERSPECTIVE

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ABSTRACT

This universe is existing with the duality of the wise and foolish or good and bad. As we are social human beings, to associate with others, we need to know who is wise persons and what is wise concepts. So, this research was to analyze the concept of the wise in Theravāda Buddhist perspective. In this research article, specifically, the writer will present the teaching of the wise in Buddhist Scriptures, the doctrines relating to the wise in Buddhism, the concept of the wise according to Theravāda Buddhist Perspective. As an analytical research, qualitative research method was applied in the study. To practice and to be wise, we need to know the meaning of the wise, characteristic of the wise, types of the wise. According to Theravāda Buddhist scripture, the person who is cleaver, skillful, circumspect, and intelligent or knowledgeable, in general sense, can be called as a wise person. Wise persons think good thoughts, speaks good words, and does good deeds. On the other hand, wise persons cultivate straight mind, forgiveness, friendliness and fearlessness. According to Buddhist literature, a person can be intellectually wise with by listening to teachers, by thinking right way, by taking notes or writing, and by practice mindfulness meditation. Wise person process with middle way. Wise persons practice threefold training which are morality or ethic, concentration or stability and wisdom or inspiration. The persons who can defeat ignorance, is really wise. Wise persons' real mental qualities are development of insight meditation and realizing ultimate truths.

Introduction

To distinguish the wise concepts, characters and wise persons, the Lord Buddha delivered many discourses and stories such as *Mahamangala sutta* and the 11 *vatthu* (stories) of *panditavagga*. These all discourses and stories illuminate what are wise persons' characters, concepts, and who are wise persons as well as these stories give the ways to practice for wisdom which can give even liberation of Buddhism (Nibbana).

In Theravada Buddhist scripture consist of many concepts and theories about the wise. Specially, the concepts are involving in *Mahamangala sutta*, *Balapandita Sutta* in *Majjima Nikaya* in *Khuddakanikaya*, *Dhammapada panditavagga*, *Sunnakatha vānānā* in *Saddhammapakāsinī*. The writer deeply believes that these concepts can illuminate people to know wise concepts, wise characters, wise factors, wise people's mentality so on. Therefore, in this article, the writer will present the concept of the wise, specifically, meaning of wise, characteristic of wise person, teacher, students and their actions. Moreover, the writer will present the wise people's mental quality, intellectual wisdom, wise persons and their right view, their confidence, their training, and their way to solve ignorance, *papaṇcca-dhamma* and hindrances in Theravāda Buddhist Scriptures; to explore the characteristic and diagnostic of wise in the concepts and to analyze the concept of wise for understanding of wise persons and for correct association and then to avoid foolish persons.

Meaning of the wise

According to *Pāli* -English dictionary, the English word, the wise is known in *Pāli* as *pandita* which gives many definitions such as: wise, clever, skilled. circumspect so on. Occasionally, wise men are also called as *Medhāvi* which is directly defined as 'intelligent or knowledgeable person. a wise man (*pesala*) in the general senses is one who has knowledge of general subjects or things and finished an education with a high degree of study.¹ The Buddha explained in the *Dhammapada*, Fools, men of little intelligence, give themselves over to negligence, but the wise man protects his diligence as a supreme treasure.²

¹ Thomas W. R. Davids and William Srede, *Pāli-English Dictionary*, (London: The Pāli Text Society, 1921-1929), 922.

² Walpola Rahula, *What the Buddha Taught*, (Taiwan: The Corporate Body of the Buddha Education Foundation, 1978), 126.

Characteristic of wise

As personal point of view, 1) characteristic of wise man is one who thinks good thoughts, speaks good words, and does good deeds. 2) the characteristic of wise men is straightening their mind. 3) forgiveness, friendliness and fearlessness are characteristics of a wise man.

A good teacher's characters must be compassionate and lovely. Even the teacher is so clever and has the expertise about the subject taught and used techniques, if he or she do not have compassion and love towards students, education will not take place in its real nature. Teacher full of willingness of other's welfare and with the compassionate intentions, worked with compassion towards the followers or students till the Great Passing away. Wise teacher or good teachers always fulfil perfection of wisdom like one who gives others food and water never starve.

wise persons or wise teachers act as they say and as they say, they act (*Yathāvādī Tatthākārī*) like the lord Buddha. One of the significant characteristics of the Buddha is the truthfulness or speaking the truth. "If the Buddha preaches something, he does it so.

A wise person should have clear view and good mission, the most essential ingredient in leading their followers. A right view is a clear picture of the future. The right view can define what one wants to become or achieve as a goal. A wise person wise person view or vision must be crystallized and he or she need to practice for followers' opportunities. Thus, wise person can be leader and they can see their followers' talents.

Types of wise

Wise teachers have five responsibilities: (1) teachers have to train their pupils in the best discipline. (2) teachers have to see that they grasp their lessons well. (3) teachers have to instruct their pupils in the arts and sciences. (4) teachers introduce their pupils to their friends and associates. (5) teachers have to provide for their safety in every quarter. And, wise students also have five responsibilities: (i) by rising from the seat in salutation (ii) by attending on him, (iii) by eagerness to learn, (iv) by personal service, (v) by respectful attention while receiving instructions. If one teaches with the closed fist of a teacher, he is jealous that his pupil would come to a great place than to himself. That feeling should not be with the teacher.

A wise person must have deep mental quality which can make him or her more resilient to overcome worldly conditions. So, here we need to understand about wisdom.

‘Wisdom’ as having mindfulness (*sati*) and clear comprehension (*sampajanna*). For a wise person, mindfulness is awareness and ability to concentrate on the present. wise persons’ real mental qualities development of insight meditation and understanding natural truths.

According to Buddhist literature, a person can be intellectually wise with by listening to teachers or other (*suta*); by thinking right way (*cinta*), by taking notes or writing (*likkhita*) and by practice mindfulness meditation.

Doctrines Supporting to Wise

Right view is main necessity of wise persons and the synonym of wisdom is right view. Real wise person practices middle way, Eightfold Noble Path. Right view and right intention are one group as well as they are higher training in the higher wisdom. By cultivating right view and right intention, practitioners can achieve to liberation (*Nibbhana*). To get deep level of wisdom, concentration is also very important for practitioners. Wisdom or right view is the forerunner of the entire path, the guide for all the other factors. That is why wisdom is called as Eye of wisdom. Common right view consists of a correct grasp of the law of *kamma*, the moral efficacy of action. Right view needs more than a simple knowledge of the general meaning of *kamma*. It also requires to understand: (a) the ethical distinction of *kamma* into the unwholesome and the wholesome; (b) the principal cases of each type; and (b) the roots from which these actions spring. According to superior point of view, the right view of *kamma* and its fruits provides a rationale for engaging in wholesome actions and attaining high status within the round of rebirths. This superior right view leading to liberation is the understanding of the Four Noble Truths. The right view of the Four Noble Truths develops in two stages: a) the right view that accords with the truths (*saccanulomika samma ditthi*), b) the right view that penetrates the truths (*saccapavedha samma ditthi*).³

For a wise person, confidence is also very important pillar because whatever we do in any situation, we need to have confidence. The concept of confidence in Buddhism is referred in Pali as *saddha*. confidence is a belief linked with wisdom or belief based on understanding that has reason as its foundation (*saddhanamsampayutta*). The characteristic (*Lakkhana*) of *Saddhā* is ‘to having faith, or trust’. The function (*Rasa*) of *Saddhā* is to clarify, like a water-clearing gem or to enter into it like the setting out across a flood. The manifestation

³ Thomas W. R. Davids, *The Long Discourses of the Buddha*, (London: The Pāli Text Society, 1966), 90.

(*Paccupaṭṭana*) of *Saddhā* is non-fogginess or resolution. The proximate cause (*Paḍaṭṭhāna*) of *Saddhā* have faith in or the things beginning with hearing the Good *Dhamma* (*Saddhamma*). Confidence in the Dhamma begins with a temporary conviction of a morally wholesome object.

Wise persons practice threefold training which are morality or ethic, concentration or stability and wisdom or inspiration. Morality is simply suitable behavior, behavior that conforms with the generally accepted standards and causes no distress to other people or to oneself. Concentration (*samādhi*) can give also deep wisdom. There is the development of concentration that, when developed and pursued, leads to the attainment of knowledge and vision. wisdom (*pañña*) can make practitioners to be free from suffering. wisdom can be divided into three: mundane or universal wisdom (*Lokī pañña*), supra-mundane wisdom (*lokuttara pañña*), supreme knowledge of the path (*maggañāna*). The last version of wisdom, supreme knowledge of path only can bring liberation therefore wise persons practice until supreme knowledge.

Doctrines Anticipating to Wise

As Buddhist dimension, Buddhist perspective, if a person is said to be ignorant, it normally means that they are ignorant as to the ultimate manner in which the self and phenomena exist. The practice of mindfulness of ignorance is concerned with cultivating awareness of the ignorant beliefs, behaviors, and perceptions that we have allowed to become established in the mind. According to Buddhist interpretation of Ignorance, the belief in an inherently existing self or I is considered in Buddhism to be a manifestation of ignorance. The persons who can defeat ignorance, are knowledgeable or wise. Wise persons put effort to know suffering, the course of suffering, cessation of suffering and the path of cessation of suffering.

Papañca is *tanha* (delusion), *māna* (conceit) and *tiṭṭhi* (wrong view). *Papañca* has connotations of some kind of delusion, obsession, and confusion arising in a man's mind due to sense perception. *papañca* looks like a term similar in sense to *pamāda*, indolence, heedlessness. *Papañca* has a nuance of inactivity or inefficiency, due to intoxication. The outcome of such a state of affairs is either negligence or heedlessness. The person who are with delusion, obsession, and confusion, he or she will far from *Nibbāna*. Wise persons practice

threefold dhamma: morality, concentration and wisdom to reduce their attachment, ego, and wrong view. This way is only for *nippapañca*.⁴

Hindrances are great obstacles for meditators or to get deep level of wisdom. There are five hindrances as above mentioned. To deal these hindrances, mediators must practice four ways which are four types of mindfulness meditational practices. Hindrances arise because of lake of mindfulness or lake of paying intention. Mental Hindrances -what first attracts the senses or consciousness may start a fire within the mind instead of providing soothing satisfaction. Meditators or practitioners can overcome their hindrances by practicing four types of mindfulness meditation.

Practice of the Wise in Daily Life

According to Buddhist perspective, there are five cardinal virtues to practice for the wise in our daily life, which are confidence, vigor, mindfulness, concentration and wisdom. The way of the ordinary worlding is governed by his or her sense-based instincts and impulses. To progress, new spiritual forces gradually take over, until in the end the five cardinal virtues dominate and shape everything, we do and think. These five virtues are called in Buddhism as *indriya* (faculties, controlling faculties, or spiritual faculties). These five virtues are also called as (*bala*). The persons who practice these factors or virtues, can live without stratagem in their daily life.⁵

To practice the wise without stratagem, the first factor or virtue is confidence or faith which is called as “the seed,” and without it the plant of spiritual life cannot start at all. Without faith one can, as a matter of fact, do nothing worthwhile at all. This is true not only of Buddhism, but of all religions, and even the pseudo-religions of modern times, such as Communism. And this faith is much more than the mere acceptance of beliefs. In fact, the believe must be confidence. The person who have self- confidence, will not have stratagem pretending.

⁴ Woodward, *The Book of the Gradual Sayings, Aṅguttara Nikāya*, (London: The Pāli Text Society, 1961), 293.

⁵ Leon M. Feer, *The Connected Discourses of the Buddha, Samyutta Nikāya*, (London: The Pāli Text Society, 1990), 10.

Second important virtue for practicing the wise without stratagem, is vigor which is known Pāli as *virīya*. If a person wants to achieve something, without vigor, without strenuous effort, without perseverance, he or she obviously cannot make much progress. Everybody knows what “vigor” is, although a generation which made the fortune of the discoverers of “night-starvation” might wish that it had more of it. The fact that faith and vigor are virtues does not, however, imply that they are good all through, and that, regardless of the consequences, they should be strengthened at all times. Excess is to be deprecated, even in virtues. All the five virtues must be regarded as one whole. Actually, if a person has vigor, he or she does not need anything to do with stratagem.⁶

Third important virtue is mindfulness which is called in Pāli as *sati*. Whereas faith and vigor, when driven to excess, must be restrained by their counterparts, for example: wisdom and tranquil concentration, the virtue of mindfulness does not share this disability. “Mindfulness should be strong everywhere. For it protects the mind from excitation, into which it might fall since faith, vigor and wisdom may excite us; and from indolence, into which it might fall since concentration favors indolence. Therefore, mindfulness is desirable everywhere, like a seasoning of salt in all sauces, like the prime minister in all state functions. Hence it is said: ‘The Lord has declared mindfulness to be useful everywhere, for the mind finds refuge in mindfulness and mindfulness is its protector. Without mindfulness there can be no exertion or restraint of the mind.

The fourth virtue is concentration which is called in *Pāli* language as *samadhi*. It continues the word of mindfulness. It deepens our capacity to regain the peaceful calm of our inner nature. But here we are at once faced with the difficulty that in Buddhist psychology “concentration” occurs twice: (1) as a factor essential to all thought; and (2) as a special, and rather rare, virtue. Right concentration exists in right way without stratagem.

The last virtue is wisdom which is known in *Pāli* language as *pañña*. It is highest virtue of the five. According to *samyutta Nikaya*, *samadhi sutta* “wisdom is based on concentration, because of the saying: ‘One who is concentrated knows, sees what really is’⁷. So, the question arises as ‘is concentration then an indispensable pre-condition of wisdom?’

⁶ Narada, *A Manual of Abhidhamma (Abhidhammattha Sangaha)*, (Malaysia: Buddhist Missionary Society Publication, 1979), 422.

⁷ Leon M. Feer, *The Connected Discourses of the Buddha, Samyutta Nikāya*, 13.

The answer lies in distinguishing three stages of wisdom, according to whether it operates on the level of: (1) learning about what tradition has to say concerning the psychological and ontological categories which form the subject-matter of wisdom; (2) discursive reflection on the basic facts of life; and (3) meditational development. The third alone requires the aid of transact concentration, whereas without it there can be proficiency in the first two. And the wisdom which consists of learning and reflection should not be despised.

The wise Practice for One's Survive

For a person survival life, the practice of the wise is one of essential thing. There are seven core factors in Buddhism for a person's daily survival life. They are mindfulness, investigation, energy, joy, tranquility, concentration, and equanimity. For the first factor, mindfulness (*sati*), the researcher would like to explain by taking a driving example. As a person stays attentive to the driving conditions in the present he or she is using an everyday form of mindfulness (*sati*). And, the person maintains this mindfulness by not letting him or herself get distracted by a conversation with a passenger. Likewise, a person should keep mindfulness anywhere and anytime. It is the first step of practice for a person's daily life.

In Buddhism, the ultimate attainment or ultimate goal is Nibbana or Enlightenment. For the ultimate goal, there are two vital practices which are also wise practices and they are *samatha* (concentration) and *vipassana* (insight meditation). Let me explain what is *samatha*. *Samatha* is a concentration that tranquillizes the opposite mental states like *kāmacchanda*, etc. *Samādhi* that removes evil emotions and stress is to be called *Samatha*. The human mind becomes unstable when meeting sensual objects. If on perceiving an object, craving for it arises, there is mental instability and restlessness. If hatred arises, there is mental instability and restlessness. If delusion arises, there is mental instability. Such mental instability is tranquillized and removed by the meditation practice called *samatha*. That is why this *samatha* is an important practice for ultimate attainment.

Benefits and Impacts of the Wise

Mostly, the wise emerge from three points which are 1) listing or learning, thinking and meditation. So, we can get the benefits of the wise also from these three points. That is why first of all, the researcher would like to present about benefits of the wise which become from listing or learning.

a) The benefits of the wise from listening or learning: the wisdom based on listening or learning, this type of *pannā* is clearly dependent on an external source which has been gained by listening to others who are the kind of good friends. Such wisdom is inferred knowledge and may inspire one to tread on the path of Dhamma, but in itself cannot lead to the attainment of liberation. Learn or listening here refers to the listening and learning from the others who speak and teach leading in the good way. It has a duty to get hear and to learn by reasoned attention and kinds of those but it depends on the consideration of mind that what is good and bad. In brief, the benefit of listening makes a person more knowledgeable.

b) the benefit of the wise from thinking: wisdom based on thinking (*cintamaya*), it is the wisdom obtained from one's own thinking, not just from hearing others which understanding of impermanence, suffering non-self, from what one has grasped by the means of one's own intellect. One may even be able to help others realize the fact of *anicca*, *dukkha* and *anattā*, but still, one cannot obtain liberation for oneself. On the contrary, there is a danger that one may accumulate more mental defilements by developing ego since one lacks the direct experience of wisdom. Minded consciousness is a subject that has become quite important in the process of thinking. When they are just listening-pure consciousness they start thinking. When one is unconscious, he or she doesn't feel and he or she doesn't think. Consciousness, then, is like field that allows thought, memory, emotion and feeling to appear and disappear. Thus, consciousness is just awareness, this entrance into noting present and at moment consciousness. In clear description, the wisdom of thinking is beneficial for self-decision and self-awareness.

c) the benefits of the wise from meditation: meditation which is called in pāli as *bhāvanā*. The wisdom obtained by meditation which is wisdom comes from the direct experience of the truth by making the right effort to realize everything in the world which is, rather, the direct comprehension of the reality of *anicca*, *dukkha* and *anatta*. This insight is not the mere acceptance of what someone else has said, nor the product of deductive reasoning. Mental development is the mental processes involved in solving problems, formulating judgments, making decisions, and planning of the "thinking" such as reasoning is involved in the evaluation of the environment, deciding what threats or opportunities exist, and preparing a course of action.

According to the description of *Atthasālinī* commentary, there are four components which are impacts of the wise. They are: 1) brightness or comprehension in phenomena, 2) clarity of mind, 3) clear and good decision, and 4) positive emotion or right concentration.

Referring these components, wise practitioners become bright and they can be more resilient by practicing wise technique such as: listening or meditation. The persons who have wisdom, of course, their minds become clear and the practitioners also have good decisions. Real wise people always have positive emotions and they get the impact of their positivity.⁸

Conclusion

The word, wise is known in *Pāli* as *pandita* which gives the definitions: wise, clever, skilled, circumspect. Occasionally, wise men are also called as *Medhāvi* which is directly defined as ‘intelligent or knowledgeable person. There are three characteristics of the wise: 1) characteristic of wise man is one who thinks good thoughts, speaks good words, and does good deeds. 2) the characteristic of wise men is straightening their mind. 3) forgiveness, friendliness and fearlessness are characteristics of a wise man.

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⁸ Mullier Edward, *The Atthasālinī, Dhammasaṅgani*, (London: The Pāli Text Society, 1979), 106.

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