

The Levels of Balance Family Life in Buddhism

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The Meanings of Balance in Buddhism

The meaning of the crucial word “balance” in this particular context. As the term is extensively used in various fields of study; educational sciences, social sciences, mathematics, science, physiology, biology, etc.

The English term “balance” in this contextual study, according to Venerable PhraDhammakittivaṃsa (*ThongdīSuratejo*) in his book named Dictionary for Buddhist Studies: Analytical Terminologies, he defined it has been originated and translated from the Pali term “*Tulaya*” which can also translated as match or equal (PhraDhammakittivaṃsa (*ThongdīSuratejo*), 2550 BE, p. 299) This is so true when the Buddha mentions this word in the connected discourses of the Buddha, the *SamyuttanikāyaNidānaVagga*: “*natthikāyasmīntulayatā*”. Whereas Bhikkhu Bodhi rendered those passage in the The Connected Discourses of the Buddha A New Translation of the *SamyuttaNikāya*:

“Geese, herons, and peacocks,

Elephants, and spotted deer,

All are frightened of the lion

Regardless of their bodies’ size”. (Bhikkhu Bodhi (tr.), 2000), p. 718)

From the above translation, even though he did translated word *tulayatā* textually as “Regardless of their bodies’ size” which synonymously refers to the “balance” in the sense that the Buddha suggests there is no physical balance among the various kinds of animals who live together in the jungle. In addition, PhraDhammakosācāra (PrayoonDhammacitto) also mentioned that “balance” contextually can also derived from another Pali word “*samatā*”. (PhraDhammakosācāra (PrayoonDhammacitto), 2553 BE, p. 37)

In the same way BhanteShravastiDhammika exhibits *samatā* (or *samatta*) as “balance is a situation in which different things exist in equal and mutually beneficial amounts. Having one virtuous quality to counterpoise another is an essential element in the development of a healthy and growing spiritual practice . . .” (BhanteShravastiDhammika, 2017)

In general way, as appeared in the Dictionary of Science and Technology, Simon Collin gives general definition of “balance” up to six broader definitions;

1. A state in which two sides are equal or in proportion,
2. A state in which weights or forces are evenly distributed,
3. A state in which proportions of substances are correct,
4. A state of staying upright and not falling,
5. The placing of text and graphics on a page in an attractive way,
6. A device for weighing made with springs or weights. (Simon Collin, 2010) : 1)

The above definitions from the Dictionary can be analyzed and optimized that “Balance” thus generally means “A state that two sides of substances are equal in terms of proportion, weight, force and correctness that make a proper staying in an attractive way”. Moreover, the use of the word balance according to the various fields of modern sciences can also be extensively used as “equilibrium” (Talcott Parsons, 2011), p. 121) which is still maintain its same contexts well.

Family as Gratitude (*kataññūkataveditā*)

Family, a social institution signifies gratitude (*kataveditā* or *kataññūtā*) of each members. Gratitude is one of the most powerful practices for living the *Dhamma* in a marriage life. It is the most easily cultivated, requiring the least sacrifice for what is gained in return. It is particularly effective for a couple who have depressed or self-defeating feelings, or those who habitually notice everything that's wrong in life.

As a *Palī* quoted: “*nimittamsadhurūpanaṃkataññūkataveditā*” in which translated as gratitude is a mark of a good person. The Buddha teaches every human birth is precious and worthy of gratitude, he said that truly good people are thankful and grateful. He also suggested that gratitude is something that is not easy to find in the world: “These two types of people are very hard to find in the world. What two? One who will do a favor first and one who is grateful for a favor done.” The gratitude thus reflects the balance of life on a family level.

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Family as Socialism

Family is a social institution in the society. Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari stated about the difference between individual and social:

...in the end, the difference is not at all between the social and the individual (or inter-individual), but between the molar realm of representations, individual or collective, and the molecular realm of beliefs and desires in which the distinction between the social and the individual loses all meaning since flows are neither attributable to individuals nor overcodable by collective signifiers.(Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, 1987, p. 219)

From this point, family in a sense of social unit sometimes is very difficult to be differentiated from individual. However when living together in the broader unit as society, family will create a good system. A system in which people cannot encroach on each other's rights or plunder their possessions is in accordance with nature and occurs naturally, and that is how it has become a society continued to be one, until trees became abundant, animals became abundant, and eventually human beings became abundant in the world. (PreechaChangkhwanyuen, 2003 118)In conclusion, family is a social unit that plays a crucial role as socialism.

Family as Shared Common Activities

The clearest picture of family is that family membership imposes obligations on social actors. In the *Puggala-paññatti* scripture (Designation of Human Types) the Exalted One expounds “A man who strives after his own welfare as well as that of others.” (BimalaCharan Law (tr.), 2006, p. 12)To this matter, the Buddha further explains about one who shared his benefit to others:

How does a person strive after his own welfare as well as after that of others? Here a person himself attains to the moral life and also encourages others to attain the moral life . . . meditation . . . insight . . . emancipation . . . the perception of a consciousness of emancipation . . . Such a person is one who strives after his own welfare as well as after that of others.

Conclusion

Buddhism views balance synonymously as match, equal or equilibrium in which has been originated and translated from the three Pali terms “*Tulaya*”, “*samatā*” or “*samatta*”. The balance refers to “a situation or state in which different two or more things exist in equal in terms of proportion, weight, force and correctness that make a proper staying in an attractive way and mutually beneficial amounts. Having one virtuous quality to counterpoise another is an essential element in the development of a healthy and growing spiritual practice”. This definition indicates the multiple sides of entities not just something with only one single side that is the two members sharing their life together as a family.

Reference

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