

An Analytical Study of the Benefits of Khantī (Tolerance) in Buddhist Literature

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Abstract

This paper studies the benefits of tolerance found in Buddhist literature. The purpose of this study is to prove that according to Buddhism, it is beneficial if tolerance is applied in real life in Myanmar society. This paper is a religious study in which analytical method was used to analyse the sayings, novels and stories of Buddha's life extracted from the *Pāli* Text, commentaries and Sub-commentaries concerning with tolerance. The result of the study proves that tolerance is a practice which supports the achievement of prosperity, peaceful society and what more is to gain benefits for existence after life.

Keywords: *Khantī* (tolerance), *Mettā* (loving kindness), *Dosa* (anger)

Introduction

Man cannot live alone in a society. There is communication among family members, relatives, colleagues, different groups of people and even in different countries for different daily purposes. Sometimes misunderstanding or the greed, anger and selfishness of a particular person or a group of people may cause disrespect or insult for the other person or group of people. In such kind of situation, if the problem is solved based on anger instead of tolerance, it will not be settled and even hatred may be increased and both sides may suffer physically and mentally.

Furthermore, all human beings face difficulties and obstacles or ups and downs in their life journey to reach their destinations. In these situations, if they give up not resisting these difficulties, they will face failure instead of achieving their goal.

Therefore, when people confront with such kind of situations, they should apply tolerance and avoid quarrels and arguments to create a peaceful and harmonious world. In addition, one can definitely achieve one's goal. Therefore, tolerance should be practiced as an important principle in society.

Research questions

1. How importance is tolerance in Buddhism?
2. What benefits can a person get by practicing tolerance?

Aim

To prove that tolerance, which is included in Buddha's teaching, can be applied for the benefits of people in Myanmar society.

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Literature Review

Theoretical Background

1. The Definition of “Khantī” (Tolerance)

‘*Khantī*’ is a *Pāli* word and it means tolerance or the principle of tolerance. In *Pāli*, it is defined as “ *Adhivāsanakhantī* ”¹.

Adhi = on oneself

Vāsana = existing

When a person beats you or swears at you and you return him or her with the same deed then it means you do not receive it. If you do not return the deed and tolerate it, then it means you receive this action.

In addition, tolerating the hot or cold weather is also a kind of *Adhivāsana khantī*. Some people cannot stand the cold or hot weather. They complain with anger on the weather condition whether it is cold or hot. Therefore, if one can tolerate the weather condition and accept it as it is, it is called *Adhivāsanakhantī*

2. Two types of *Khantī*

- a. Tolerating the torture committed by other people on a person physically or verbally
- b. Tolerating the weather condition such as coldness or the heat

Therefore, in the *Sāratthadīpanī*, it is said that a person who has *Adhivāsanakhantī* reacts equally to both good sense or the bad sense .He is neither happy to see good thing nor sad to see bad thing².

In addition, in the *Samyutta Aṭṭhakathā*, it is stated that tolerance of the heavy task and making effort to carry out it without any complaint (diligence) can also be called *Khantī*.³

Related Researches

It is accepted as an absolute truth by Lord Buddha, Himself and other wise men that loving kindness is important for peace making. Especially, Lord Buddha preached the sermon about loving kindness which was essential to gain peace internally (*Ajjhata*) and externally (*Bahiddha*). In the same way, based on loving kindness mentioned in the *Metta Sutta*, many scholars have already written books and literary work of classical standard. “Handbook on the Extensive Definition of *Metta*”(1961) written by San Kyaung Sayadaw, “Loving kindness: A Man on the Right Track Who Has Lost His Way”(2001) by Maha Myaing Sayadaw U Zaw Ti Ka, “A Peaceful and Pleasant World” (1998)by Maha Myaing Sayadaw *Bhaddanta sajjanasāra*, “The Ideology of Loving kindness” (1987)by Dhammācariya U Htay Hlaing, “A Quiet life with Loving Kindness” (1999)by Min Kyaw Win and “Loving Kindness according to the *Visuddhimagga*”,(2009)a Dissertation submitted by Ma Myint Myat Chit for PhD degree are the good examples of books on loving kindness which have already been published. However, there are only a few books written about tolerance unlike loving kindness.

¹ ဝိပဿနာ၊ အဝိညာဏ် (၆)၊ ၄၄၅။

² SāratthaII, 359.

³ S A I , 305.

According to the practice of loving kindness, a person who is going to spread loving kindness to others must have tolerance first. According to Abhidhamma, the real meaning of tolerance is *Kusalacittuppāda* which is based on *Mettā*. It means that *Khantī*, *Mettā* and *Adosa* (good will) are different words with same meaning. In addition, tolerance is the basic of precept, mindfulness, and wisdom and only a person who has tolerance can do good deeds whether worldly or unworldly. To keep a successful Sabbath, a person must tolerate without having food after noon, using perfume, watching TV and concert and listening to songs.

In the same way, one must tolerate physical tiredness and fatigue to accomplish *bhāvanā* (practice of cultured thoughts). It is hard to get concentration if one cannot tolerate aches in body and change posture often. If only a person has tolerance and does meditation, he will get concentration and *vipassanā* and get enlightenment.

Furthermore, in worldly affairs, there are ten principles to follow by the kings. They are *Dāna* (generosity), *Sīla* (morality), *Pariccāga* (abandoned), *Ajjava* (Honesty and integrity), *Maddava* (kindness and gentleness), *Tapa* (Austerity in habits), *Akkodha* (freedom from hatred), *Avihimsa* (Non-violence), *Khantī* (tolerance, patience) and *Avirodhana* (Non-opposition, non-obstruction) and *Khanti* is in the ninth position¹.

Similarly, in the six qualities of leaders, *Khamā* (Patience), *Jāgariya* (alertness), *Uṭṭhāna* (industry), *Samvibhāga* (Sound judgement), *Dayā* (mercy) and *Ikkhanā* (vision) *khantī* is in the first position.²

Therefore, it is proved that *khantī* is beneficial to practice for both worldly or unworldly affairs, and the Lord Buddha said that *khantī* is the most virtuous morality.³

“*Khantī*” is also important for every person whether they are of different appearances, different ideas etc. The Indian National leader Mahattama Gandī who believed in Non-terrorism said, “If we don’t have sympathy and tolerance, we can never coordinate between differences and settle them”.⁴

To conclude, the aim of this paper is to present that *Khantī* is the essential policy to practise for peaceful society as well as for the benefit of existence after life.

Materials and methods

Since this study is a religious study, library research was done to find out the data from the sources such as *Mahādāna sutta* in the *Dīgha Nikāya*, *Puṇṇovāda sutta* in the *Majjhima Nikāya*, *Vepacitti sutta* in the *Samyutta Nikāya*, *Dhammapada Text*, *Jātaka* in the *Khuddaka Nikāya* and their Commentaries and analysis was made in order to prove that tolerance can be applied for the benefits of people in Myanmar society.

¹ J II 97.

² သုတေသနသရုပ်ပြအတိဓာန် ၃၂၀။

³ D II 42.

⁴ မဟာတ္ထမဂန္တိ၏ မိန့်ခွန်းတော်ကုတ်ချက်များနှင့်အဆိုအမိန့်များ၊ ၄၇။

Findings and Discussion

Naturally, human beings tend to return with the same action if someone does something wrong to them. This is to prevent not to happen the same thing again. However, it is not the right way, but only for one's satisfaction and one will be on an extreme. On the other hand, if one tolerates these actions contradicting with one's own will, one will feel desperate and will be on the other extreme.

Therefore, to avoid two extremes, one should choose the kind of tolerance which can create peace for both sides.

Buddhist tolerance, according to his teaching is "One should tolerate without any emotion, happiness or anger, when the other does something wrong to you physically or verbally like the Great Earth which tolerates and receives anything poured down on it".¹

In this section, some stories which give the good examples of tolerance in Buddhist history are presented to illustrate the benefits of practising tolerance.

1. Different ways of Tolerance

Two different ways of tolerance can be identified in the following stories.

Ashin *Puṇṇa*, the venerable monk is an ideal person of great tolerance in Buddhist's time. The story goes like this. Once when The Lord Buddha was residing in *Jetavana* monastery, Ashin *Puṇṇa*, the venerable monk came and paid respect to the Buddha and asked for permission to go on religious mission to *SunāparantaJanapada*. At that time, the Buddha asked him what would he do if the natives of *Sunāparanta* swear at him as they were very rude and violent. Then, the monk replied that I would bear in my mind it's not too bad as they only swear at me but they don't beat me. If they beat me because they don't throw at me with stone, if they throw stones at me, because they don't hit me with the stick, etc. Finally, if only they kill me, I would bear in my mind that I don't have to kill myself as they do it for me". The Buddha said that he could stay at *SunāparantaJanapada* and he went there. There, he lived for 3 months of the year and Enlightened the 500 female disciples and 500 male disciples with the knowledge of Four Noble Truths and he also became "Arahat"². This story shows the benefits of a person who practises tolerance as well as of the people around him.

Next, the tolerance of the Sakka will be presented as an example of tolerance between the stronger and the weaker.

Once there was a battle between Deva and Asura. When Asura lost the war. The king of Asura was arrested and sent before the king of Deva. The king of Asura was furious and swore rudely at king of Deva. Although king of Deva is the winner, he tolerated without responding him. Then, the Mātali asked the king of Deva whether he tolerated because he was afraid of him or weaker than him. The king of Deva replied "I was neither afraid of him nor weaker than him. A wish man like me doesn't need to compete with that foolish man."³

¹Khu IV, 317.

²Thag A I,197. Khu II, 235.

³S I, 223. S A I, 313.

In this story, the tolerance of the king of Deva proves that anger should not be returned with anger. Only person who can tolerate an angry person is a winner. A person who can control oneself and tolerate when the other person is angry is doing good for the benefits of both.

For those who ask the question, ‘How can I tolerate?’, the king of Deva’s words are the best answer. Some people may think that only people of high position should tolerate and some may think that only people of low position should tolerate. Actually, both should be tolerant. However, it is more apparent if a person of higher position tolerates. If a person from lower position tolerates, it may be because of fear or weakness. Whether you are the stronger or the weaker, you should tolerate. If you respond with anger, you will be in trouble.

1. The Advantages of Tolerances

a. Tolerance as a way to Prosperity

Auspiciousness ‘Mingalar’ means a principle to follow for prosperity or a virtuous practice to be praised.¹ In Buddha’s teaching of thirty eight principles for prosperity, *khantī* is in the 27th position. Therefore, “Tolerance means auspiciousness”. In other words Tolerance is a way to prosperity.

To illustrate this, a story of “*Dighāvu*” prince, the would- be- Buddha, who attained Kinghood because of tolerance. Once, the King *Brahmadatta* ruled the country called *Bārāṇī*, In Kosala province, the ruler was *Dīghītīkosala*. The powerful king *Brahmadatta* left the country equipped with four kinds of combat arms. When the King *Kosala* heard this news, he realized that they could not defend themselves because of their weak forces. Therefore, he run away with the queen to an outskirts of the country and disguised as a poor man. The king *Brahmadatta* won the country without a battle and ruled it as his subordinate .

Queen of the king *Dīghītīkosala* , while evading, gave birth a son and he was named *Dighāvu*. When he grew up, his parents sent him secretly to another town and get education to be safe from danger. During this time, his parents were arrested and executed. Although the prince saw the scene of his parents being tortured and killed, he tolerated for the lack of power and strength. If he didn’t tolerate and hindered it he would be surely killed.

Gradually, the prince *Dighāvu* learnt all required skills for a prince and tried to serve at the king’s palace. After some time, he was assigned to take the duty of the best man near the king. One day, *Dighāvu* had to drive the coach of the king to go hunting. *Dighāvu* took advantage of it and drove the king away from his followers. When they reached a far away place, he stopped the coach and took a rest. While taking rest, the king fell into sleep on his lap because of tiredness. *Dighāvu* thought that he had a good chance to kill his enemy and took out his four-edged dagger. While doing this, he remembered his father’s words before he died and put the dagger back in its case without killing the king. He did like this for three times while the king woke up suddenly and said that in his dream, the son of *Dīghītīkosala* killed him with the dagger. Then, the prince said “ I was the king of *Dīghītīkosala* ”I intend to kill you because you killed my parents and took my country. However, because of my father’s words not to extend the hatred nor shorten the friendship as enmity can be ended only by tolerance. Then, they took

¹ ဝေဒဗျူဟာ ၇၄၆။

vow not to kill each other and went back to the palace. The king got him married to his daughter and returned his country to him and ruled it, as the king *Kosala*. Since that time, both kings were in peace and harmony and *Kosala* country became more prosperous than ever.¹

In this Buddhist story, although the prince *Dighāvu* had a chance to take revenge on his enemy easily, he tolerated and forgave him according to his parent's teaching. It is not easy to do like this. He tolerated fighting against his will to revenge for several times. Therefore, it is said that if you tolerate once you are more virtuous than a person who won 100 battles. Because of the tolerance of the Prince *Dighāvu*, he could regain his father's country and both countries could live peacefully and happily.

Therefore, tolerance is good not only for oneself but also for one's environment giving it peace and prosperity.

b. Tolerance (*khantī*) as a virtuous morality

“*Khantī*” is very important for nobelmen. The would-be-Buddha had to strive to attain *khantī* as one of the ten principal virtuous to attain Buddhahood.

“*Pāramī*” is a *Pāli* word which is defined as ‘completeness, perfection or highest state.’² In great history of Buddha, *Pāramī* is said to be the principals such as *Dāna* that would-be-Buddhas should strive to attain Buddhahood.³ Therefore, Buddha said “*Khantī paramaṃ tapo titikkhā*”(*Khantī* which is tolerance of everything is the virtuous morality). It is a morality that is hard to practise for ordinary people.

In the life of would-be-Buddhas as *Khantīvādī* Hermit, and also as *Campeyyaking* of Dragon, He strived to attain *Khantī Pāramī* without being angry with his enemies. The tolerance of would-be-Buddha will be presented here.

It is a story of the *Khantīvādī* Hermit (a hermit who believes in the practise tolerance of) residing in the Garden of the King of *Bārāṇasi*. While the king was falling asleep after having drunk, the dancers walked around the garden and found the *Khantīvādī* Hermit. When the king woke up and learnt that the dancers were listening to the sermon of the Hermit, he exploded with anger and went to kill the Hermit. When he saw the Hermit, he asked him what his belief was. The Hermit answered that he believed in *Khantī* (tolerance). The king asked what *Khantī* was and the Hermit answered , “*Khantī*” means “not being angry with those who beat me or swear at me” . Then the king sent for his fellow men and asked them to beat the Hermit with the canes studded with thorns for 2000 times. Then the king asked the same question and the Hermit gave the same answer till he died being tortured brutally. For the king, he was swallowed by the earth at the Garden gate and sent to hell.⁴

In this story, the Hermit the Buddha-to-be strived for the principal of *Khantī*. Therefore, he was called ‘*Khantīvādī*’. The Hermit in the story could resist and tolerate the brutal torture of the king without any anger because of the ‘*Sīla*’ (precept), *Samadhī* (Mindfulness) and *Paññā* (wisdom) and also because of

¹J A III, 197.

²Pāli – English Dictionary, 454.

³မဟာပုဂ္ဂိုလ်၊ ဝဇ္ဇမဂ္ဂ၊ ၁၁။

⁴J A III, 37.

‘*bhāvanā*’(practice of cultured thought). It is not possible for the laymen to tolerate like this.

The story highlighted that although the Hermit, the Buddh-to-be, mainly strived to attain *Khantī Pāramī*, all other *Paramis*; *DānaPāramī*(Giving or Generosity) *SīlaPāramī*(Virtue Morality), *PaññāPāramī*(Wisdom), *NekkhammaPāramī* (Renunciation), *VīriyaPāramī*(diligence),*SaccāPāramī*(Truthfulness), *AdhiṭṭhānaPāramī*(Resolution,determination), *MettāPāramī*(Loving-kindness) and *UpekkhāPāramī*(equanimity) were also practised at the same time. In conclusion, *Khantī Pāramī* is involved in every *Pāramī* and it is not for the laymen but for the noble men to strive for.

3. Disadvantages of Being Intolerance

If a problem arises between individuals or between organizations, and solved with anger, ego or pride instead of *Khantī* it will cause bad results to both sides. A story in Buddhist time is given as an example to illustrate this.

Once there lived a householder, whose wife was barren, later he took another wife. The feud started when the elder wife caused abortion of the other one, who eventually died in childbirth. In later existences the two were reborn as a hen and a cat, a doe and a leopardess, and finally as the daughter of a nobleman in *Sāvatti* and an ogress named *Kālī*. The ogress was in hot pursuit of the lady with the baby, when the latter learned that the Buddha was nearby, giving a religious discourse at the *Jetavana* monastery. She fled to him and placed her son at his feet for protection. The ogress was stopped at the door by the guardian spirit of the monastery and was refused admission. She was later called in and both the lady and the ogress were reprimanded by the Buddha. The Buddha told them about their past feuds without patient as rival wives of a husband, as a cat and a hen, and as a doe and a leopardess. They were made to see that hatred could only cause more hatred, and that it could only cease through friendship, understanding and good will.

Then the Buddha spoke in verse as follows: “Hatred is, indeed, never appeased by hatred in this world. It is appeased only by Loving-Kindness, patience. This is an ancient Law”.¹

In the above example, the elder wife and the younger wife didn’t tolerate each other and hated each other mutually. Therefore, they could not cease their hatred and revenged each other till succeeding lives. Their hatred spread to the people around them including their children and they also suffered bad results. Finally, they met with the Buddha and their hatred was appeased. Therefore, disadvantages may surely be caused to those who don’t have *Khantī*.

¹Dhp A I,29.

Conclusion

In this research paper, three *Jātaka* (Stories of Buddhist History) two *Sutta*(particular discourse delivered by the Buddha) and one ‘*Dhammapada*’ story were extracted and presented to exemplify different kinds of tolerance and analysed them. According to the analysis, one who has *Khantī*(tolerance) can be prosperous in life and make oneself and one’s community peaceful. In addition, it is a moral principal which can support the benefits of life after this existence. Therefore, *Khantī* is an essential moral principal for all Buddhists.

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စေရတု(၂၀၁၅)၊ ငြိမ်းချမ်းရေး မဟတ္တမဂန္ထီ၏ မိန့်ခွန်းကောက်နှုတ်ချက်များနှင့်အဆိုအမိန့်များ(မြန်မာပြန်)၊ စိတ်ကူးချိုချို ပုံနှိပ်တိုက်၊ ရန်ကုန်။

ဌေးလှိုင်ဦး(ခမ္မာစရိယ)(၁၉၈၇)(တတိယတွဲ)၊ မေတ္တာဝါဒ၊ သတင်းဂျာနယ်ပုံနှိပ်တိုက်၊ ရန်ကုန်။

ဝိစိတ္တသာရာဘိဝံသဦး၊ တိပိဋကဓရ(၂၀၁၃)၊ မဟာဗုဒ္ဓဝင်၊ ပဌမတွဲ(ပထမပိုင်း)၊ သာသနာရေးဦးစီးဌာနပုံနှိပ်တိုက်၊ ရန်ကုန်။

ဟုတ်စိန် ဦး(၁၉၅၄)၊ “ပဒတ္တမဉ္စူသာဓေါပါဠိမြန်မာအဘိဓာန်” သာသနာရေးဦးစီးဌာနပုံနှိပ်တိုက်၊ ရန်ကုန်မြို့။

တိပိဋကပါဠိမြန်မာအဘိဓာန်၊ အတွဲ (၆) (၁၉၇၂)၊ သာသနာရေးဦးစီးဌာနပုံနှိပ်တိုက်၊ ရန်ကုန်။

သုတေသနသရုပ်ပြအဘိဓာန်(၂၀၀၉)၊ သာသနာရေးဦးစီးဌာနပုံနှိပ်တိုက်၊ ရန်ကုန်။