

## **THE ENCOUNTER BUDDHISM AND GERONTOOLOGY: THE BUDDHIST RESPECTIVE AND UNDERSTANDING ON AGEING AND LIFE COURSE IN GERON-SOCIETY**

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### **Introduction**

Today population ageing is taking place in nearly all the countries of the world. According to a 2013 UN survey, the global share of older people (+60 years) increased from 9.2 per cent in 1990 to 11.7 percent in 2013 and will continue to grow as a proportion of the world population, reaching 21.1 percent by 2050. With the rapid disintegration of families and the ageing phenomenon, one of the major problems in ageing society is that many older people are having trouble supporting themselves. The problem will get worse as more and more children cannot support their elderly parents any more. Various pensions and retirement money also cannot play as a social safety net for the elderly. Though ageing is a natural process in human life, nobody wants to speed up the ageing processes. In a society obsessed with fetishism following the rapid industrialization and the disruption of traditional values, modern people try to find a way to stop or turn back ageing. Even scientists have been studying how to slow down the human ageing process. The most serious problem is in here that people do not know how to manage their old age. A new gerontological perspective which is different from Western views conceptually, theoretically and practically is needed, and here we can find it through Buddhism. The prime objective of this paper is to introduce Buddhist Gerontology, that is, the Buddhist perspective and understanding of ageing, old age, and life course beyond limitation of Western Gerontology.

### **Methods and Materials**

The literary survey for this paper is based on the reading of the English translations of the aforementioned primary and secondary sources.

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The literary survey for this paper is mainly based on the discourses in early Buddhism. Many *suttas* and tenets in the *Dīghanikāya*, *Majjhimanikāya*, *Samyuttanikāya*, *Aṅguttaranikāya* of the *Sutta Piṭaka*, some books of the *Khuddakanikāya* like *Dhammapada*, *Suttanipāta*, *Visuddhimagga* were analytically surveyed without deviating from the Buddhist perspective. The data after collecting, analyzing and classifying observed on comparative and critical bases. The collected data analyzed comparing with the various views and general conclusions derived depending on such discussions.

### Results

Buddhism explains that ageing is the basis for the bodily and mental suffering that arises owing to many conditions such as leadeness in all the limbs, decline and warping of the faculties, vanishing of youth, undermining of strength, loss of memory and intelligence, contempt on the part of others, and so on. But differently from the Western viewpoint, Buddhism exposes three aspects of ageing including all things in the universe not only human ageing but also cosmic ageing. In Buddhism, life span is divided 10 periods and each 10 years it is characterized by *manda*, *khiḍḍha*, *vaṇṇa*, *bāla*, *paññā*, *hāni*, *pabbhāra*, *vanka*, *momūha*, *sayana*. It shows more concretely how our mental and body change and especially are getting older after 50 years. Concurrently, it presents what we should to prepare in our later life.

### Discussion and Conclusion

The Buddhist Scriptures offer numerous cases and significant lessons tell us what is successful ageing and how it can be achieved. Also, as one of the Buddhist practices such as offering (*dāna*) and virtue (*sīla*), meditation (*bhāvanā*) is a good method which can change or destroy the force of *kamma* (*kammanirodha*) to helps people to free the mind from these states of clinging and attachment to permanence, and then to create mental and physical well-being. Buddhism helps modern people to reflect life and death, well-being and well-dying, then life-course totally. This perspective may be called by Buddhist Gerontology. Based on the *dhamma*, it remind us a reality

of human life that there is nothing to expect than ageing and death for one who has taken birth, without exception in socio/economic status, sex, race,. But it stresses the *dhamma* of the good does not decay. People should to accept their ageing and decay, further they try to develop their spiritual power in their later life.

**Key words:** Ageing, Buddhist Gerontology, Geron-society, Gerontology

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