

Compassion and Empathy

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Introduction

The blessed one is the portrait of compassion and wisdom. The foundation of buddhism is compassion. Every morning as a routine of his noble time table his limitlessly spreads great compassion towards the people in the world. The very first determination and aspiration during his bodhisatva period was to be enlightened and make other so, to be free from suffering and make other so, to conquer the metempsychosis and make other so which is a result of compassion. 'Buddhoḥaṃ bodhyissāmi - muttoḥaṃ mocaye pare'

Discussion

The word 'compassion' is a common word among buddhists. In pali we introduce it as 'karuṇā'. This word has various definitions according to commentaries.

'Paradukkhe sati sādḥūnaṃ hadya kampanaṃ karohīti karuṇā'. Compassion is the shock arises on minds of great people at the sorrow of others. According to abhidhamma there are ten words used to introduce mind where 'hadaya' is one of them. Which means the compassion. Also compassion is one of the two illimitable mental factors. One other meaning found in commentaries for compassion is 'paradukkhaṃ dūsaṭīti karuṇā'. Which means the nature of relieving others from sufferings. One more definition can be seen in commentaries is 'kirati vā dukkhiteto paramavasena pasāretīti karuṇā'. Which means spreading mercy at painful situation.

There are four factors to be analyzed in order to identify compassion.

- Lakkhana-nature
- Rasa-execution
- Paccupaṭṭhāna- understanding
- Padaṭṭhāna- foundation.

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In the 'brahmavihāra' section of Visuddhimagga, and extensive description on compassion can be found in 'karuṇā bhāvanā' section. Especially, in commentary of anguttara nikaya 'manorathapūraṇī', five, seven and ten ways of developing compassion are described. This commentary starts with 'karuṇā sītala hadayaṃ' which means extra ordinary compassion of noble one.

Also in 'patisambhidāmagga pāli' the wisdom of great compassion is analytically complimented. 'Bahukehi ākārehi passantānaṃ buddhānaṃ bhagavantānaṃ sattesu okkamati loko atinno, loko amutto, loko adanto loko asanto'. 'Karuṇā sutta' in ānāpāna vagga, bojjhanga saṃyutta of saṃyutta nikāya describes the benefits of compassion. The main characteristic possessed by bodhisattva is compassion.

Certain incidence in the life of the blessed one such as, controlling tusker nālāgiri, helping maṭṭakundali, suneeta, sopāka cullapantaka are few examples of the great compassion of the noble one. Out of nine qualities of buddha 'anuttaro purisa damma sārathī' is purely based of compassion.

The mental factor arises in the mind of the person who develops compassion is known as 'empathy'. The lord buddha was the most empathic person in the world. In the modern world destruction of lives human and animals, flora and fauna happens due to lack of compassion and empathy. Poverty, armed struggles, natural catastrophes, diseases are few occasions we can develop compassion and empathy. Intra national conflicts, intra religious conflicts, racism and cast conflicts erupt due to absence of compassion and empathy.

Conclusion

Compassion and empathy are two qualities could be easily developed without time restrictions in our minds for welfare of the world society and to calm the mind set of people. Then world will become a congenial living space for everyone.

For this research i have referred tipitaka, aṭṭhakathā, tīkā, magazines and related compilations from western psychology.

Keywords: Empathy, Illimitable, Metempsychosis, Catastrophes, Flora and Fauna