Volume 25 : 2022-2023
Journal of Philosophy and the Life-world
Vidyasagar University Midnapore 721102 WB

Psychological Perspective of Buddhist Motivation

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Abstract

Psychology, as it is usually understood is the study of the mind in its different perspectives and functions. Nowadays highly developed neurology is making possible the objective study of many psychological factors/phenomena. Investigation of psychological phenomena in the discourses of Buddha offers noteworthy perceptions into the nature of consciousness and the psychology of human behaviour. Buddhism has developed the extraordinarily shrewd and penetrating analysis of human nature and the human condition on which its direction towards liberation is based. Buddhist psychology of motivation is right away concerned with the issues that lead to human turmoil, tension, disquiet, and suffering in general. The psychological investigation found in the treatises of the Buddha, primarily concerning motivation, is deeply surrounded by the desire to disclose the roots of unrest and to describe a positive path towards happiness. Buddha's philosophy of motivation is grounded on certain key issues shared by all human beings and is generally worried about the nature of human discontent and suffering (dukkha) and how to drive out it.

Keywords: Buddhism, Psychology, Behaviour, Motivation

I

Psychology, as it is usually understood is the study of the mind in its different perspectives and functions. Psychologists arrive at positive conclusions and develop theories of human psychology by analyzing the behaviour and conduct of human beings abnormal, normal, and supra-normal under different circumstances. They also study animal behaviour, and the decisions taken are applied to human beings. Nowadays highly developed neurology is making

possible the objective study of many psychological phenomena. In the light of several technical experiments and investigations, psychologists are entering into the hitherto unknown regions of the human psyche revealing unanticipated factors affecting human behaviour and conduct.

Although the discipline of psychology is a well-developed pragmatic science in the west today, few psychologists have dimmed into the religious and philosophical literature of the east. Yet the investigation of psychological phenomena in the discourses of the Buddha offers noteworthy perceptions into the nature of consciousness and the psychology of human behaviour. Buddhism has developed the extraordinarily shrewd and penetrating analysis of human nature and the human condition on which its direction towards liberation based. It's the central non-soul doctrine, according to which a human self is not a permanent psychic entity or substance but a karmic process, a patterned flow of change through time, remains one of the great selections for understood, and one which we dare not write down. Again, we cannot overlook the Buddhist account of the 'grasping' or persistent desirous which keeps the individual karmic procedure going, not only through a lifespan but, according to the Buddha's teaching, through a long succession of lives. In accession to this, the Buddhist convention has significant things to say about the methods in which we observe our world; about our emotional and volitional life; our sexuality, our societal nature, and our fierceness; about the tinny disguise of the outward personality; and the very significant ethical implications of this Buddhist understanding of man.

The dialogues of the Buddha deliver seemingly simple but sophisticated and inducing discussions relating to different facets of man's life: his codes of individual conduct, the ideal of the righteous life, the nature of man and the universe, the puzzle of life and death, the nature of human reasoning and sensory experience, and man's search for wisdom, knowledge, and truth. All the above discourses investigate a so far more fascinating sphere of the human mind the underworld of man's immersed and conflicting desires, the nature of his emotions, and the paths of human temperament. A distinctive feature of Buddhist psychology is that it is surrounded by the greater Buddhist ethical and philosophical methods, and its psychological terminology is colored by ethical connotations.

Basically, Buddhist psychology has two therapeutic aims. One is the healthy and righteous life of a householder, which is 'pleasant living' and another, is the final objective of nirvana, the total termination of dissatisfaction and suffering (*dukkha*). Subsequently, a leading concern of the psychology of Buddhism is the necessity to analysis to the roots of human suffering and the contemporary way out of it. However, Buddhist psychology of motivation is right away concerned with the issues that lead to human turmoil, tension, disquiet, and suffering in

general. The psychological investigation found in the treatises of the Buddha, primarily concerning motivation, is deeply surrounded by the desire to disclose the roots of unrest and to describe a positive path toward happiness. Buddha's philosophy of motivation is grounded on certain key issues shared by all human beings and is generally worried about the nature of human discontent and suffering (*dukkha*) and how to drive out it.

II

'Motivation is the set of forces that causes people to engage in one behaviour rather than some alternative behavior'.[1] And McFarland also defines 'Motivation refers to the way in which urges, drives, desires, aspirations, strivings needs direct, control, or explain the behaviour of human beings'.[2] There are three aspects of behaviour covered by the term 'motivation'. These three distinct aspects are a) states that motivate behaviour, b) behaviour motivated by these states, and c) the goals of such behaviour. These three aspects may be occurring in a cycle. Hunger as a motivational state would compel a person to seek food, appropriate behaviour which is instigated by this need would be the seeking of means to attain the end, and the alleviation of hunger would be the final goal. The motivation cycle then terminates until the need for food emerges again.[3] Thus terms like requirement, want, purpose, drive, etc., denote some inner condition of the organism that initiates and directs its behaviour towards an objective. Some of the objectives are positive, objectives that individual's approach; others of a negative nature, which individuals try to escape. Wherever the motivating states have a clear physiological base, the objectives are comparatively fixed as in the necessity for sleep or food whereas there will be a better degree of flexibility and variation in the case of the desire for recognition, status, position, etc. As mentioned earlier that the framework of the psychology of motivation in Buddhism is therapeutic. Though the term 'therapy' comes in different forms. These include cognitive behavioral therapy, dialectical behavior therapy, mindful-based cognitive therapy, physical therapy, etc. but here in the Buddhist perspective, it refers to the deeper predicament of discontent and psychological conflict. The psychological channel between the therapeutically 'wholesome' (*Kusala*) and 'unwholesome' (*Akusala*) cuts through the entire structure of the motivational concept of Buddhism.

The endless nature of the motivation cycle is emphasised by the Buddha in different contexts. Desires find impermanent satisfaction, but they surge up again and again, sometimes looking for new objects of exploration. Even the Pāli term tanhā (craving) etymologically connotes 'thirst', and the metaphor of thirst can be used to the diverse manifestation of desires that spring from the root of greed. The basic springs of motivation are accordingly analysed into three wholesome roots (*kusala mūla*) and three unwholesome ones (*akusala mūla*); of the unwholesome roots, lobha rendered as greed or lust, generates the positive

'approach desires'; dosa generates the 'avoidance desires' in the form of hatred and resentment; and moha, rendered as delusion, creates confusion in the mind.[4] When the unwholesome springs of activity create unrest and conflict, then their opposite's charity (*alobha*), compassionate love (*adosa*) and wisdom (*amoha*) lead to inner pleasure within the individual and harmony at the interpersonal level. With the help of the above framework, the Buddha focuses more attention on the drives with a dear psychological orientation and lessons on those with a dear physiological base. Even in the cast of certain simple physiological needs, under certain situations, a need could take the form of greed. When basic needs go beyond their biological function and take control of the whole personality, such obsessions, and attachments subjugate man and cripple his personality. However, the majority of the discourses are interested in analysing the psychologically oriented drives; for example, man's acquisitive drive to accumulate wealth, hoard and possess it, his unmeasured ambition for power and aspiration to outdo others, sexual infatuation, and generally all those pseudo-life-styles which in the long run create human misery and dissatisfaction. The Buddha does not analyse the needs and desires of man for its own sake, but rather in terms of the valuational structure which generates and directs the contentment of human drives.

Following the Buddhist psychology of motivation, the attitude desires generated by greed take a dual form the determination for self-preservation that is bhāva-taṇhā and the determination for sensuous gratification that is *kāma-taṇhā* when averting desires like hatred produces the determination for annihilation and incursive tendencies that is *vibhāva-taṇhā.* Although needs like thirst, hunger and sleep can be described in terms of self-preservation, *bhāva-taṇhā* is also connected with the need for self-assertion, power, fame, wealth, recognition, etc. The determination for sensuous gratification goes beyond genital or sexual pleasure and describes the need for excitement, diversion, exposure to novel stimuli, and a wide variation of other pleasures. The determination for annihilation involves aggressive behaviour, suicide, and violent shortcuts to eliminate painful stimuli. Necessities like affection, love, and sympathy have to be analysed in the light of situations and perspectives. There are clear cases of benevolent loving-kindness, compassionate and sympathetic joy, but they have to be segregated from quasi-sexual love, expressions of worldly grief, attachment and possessive love, and tender sensations with an ambivalent passionate tone. A certain degree of semantic study and persistent self-analysis is required to distinguish between 'love' and 'lust'.

The stimuli in the sensory field or at the ideational level are happening due to arousal-determinative activity. Such a stimulus excites a person's feelings. Pleasurable feelings (*sukhavedanā*) and painful feelings (*dukhavedanā*) are affective responses to sensations. So, due to the stimulation of the five sense organs and the mind organ, there result in six kinds of feelings grounded on eye-

impressions, ear-impressions, body-impressions, nose-impressions, mouth-impression and mind-impressions. These feelings have a certain epicurean tone that separates them in the pleasure (*sukha*), painful (*dukkha*) or indifferent (*adukkhayasukha*) experiences. Pleasurable feelings arouse the instinct towards pleasure-giving objects, and therefore the drive for sensuous satisfaction is kindled. Pleasurable experiences also stabilize the craving for continued existence and thus fulfill the desire for self-preservation. Feeling awkward can stimulate a sense of resentment (*paṭighā*) and thus feed the drive for aggression and extinction. Therefore, we can realize that feeling is conditioned by contact and craving is conditioned by sensation.

The objects of pleasure are referred to as, 'delightful, dear, passion-fraught and inciting to lust',[5] When a person's passions are provoked by oncoming stimuli, clinging (*upādāna*), which is accustomed by craving, emerges and the object of pleasure is held on to persistently. Unless clinging persists, excitation of the sense organs is not sufficient to revive the individual to action. In the situation of painful sensations, *upādāna* may be more appropriately rendered as 'entanglement' rather than 'clinging', referring to an obsession with what we like as well as what we dislike. Other concepts account for the persistence of certain patterns of behaviour apart from the notion of 'entanglement'. Our attitudes and beliefs which have been shaped in the past impact our present responses to incoming stimuli and these attitudes are often rooted in dynamic personalities. Following the Buddha, these highnesses are not the result of deliberation at a conscious level but emerge from deep-rooted and inactive tendencies referred to as anusaya. Pleasurable feelings induce affection to pleasant objects, for they rouse latent sensuous greed (*rāgānusaya*); painful feelings rouse latent anger and hatred (*paṭighānusaya*). The 'approach desires' emerge on the root of greed and excite the rāgānusaya; the 'avoidance desires' emerge on the root of hate and excite the paṭighānusaya. The root 'delusion' is related to leaning and to the attachment to one's ego, which finds direct expression in the latent proclivity towards conceit and ignorance (*diṭṭhi-mānānusaya*). It is only when the three roots of unwholesome behaviour are properly comprehended and the addiction to these latent manifestations of attachment, hatred, conceit and ignorance eliminated, that a person is regarded as an 'end-maker of anguish'.[6]

When we are discussing some psychological mechanisms regarding the stimulation and persistence of motivational states relative to springs of motivation such as greed, hatred, and delusion, the different forms of action with the direction of behavior are also of importance. These are often discussed in the perspective of morals and ethical reflections. Facets of ideational (*mano*), vocal (*vacī*), and bodily (*kāya*) behaviour rooted in greed, hatred, and delusion are discussed in ethical perspectives, as what a person should not do; and forms of behavior rooted in non-greed, non-hatred, and non-delusion are prescribed as what a person ought to do. For example, attacks on others, stealing, sexual

misconduct, harsh, speech, greediness, and anger are forms of behaviour which are unwholesome, while kindness to animals, nursing the sick, charity, self-restraint, truthfulness, etc., are the kinds of activities suggested for the man bent on leading a righteous existence. Usually, if we take a bird's-eye view of the discussion of the ramifications of human behaviour, the Buddha at times analyses actual conditions, at other possible conditions, and occasionally specifies which actions are appropriate and inappropriate. This links between the ethical and psychological cuts across the analysis of psychological phenomena in Buddhism.

Buddha condemned the way of sensuality and the way of self-mortification because both are life-perspectives and they emerge from unwholesome roots and are a manifestation of craving; while the way of sensuality is a clear manifestation of craving, the way of self-mortification is a subtle exposition of displaced craving. As the way of sensuality has been condemned by the Buddha as leading to unrest tension and boredom, some people go to the opposite extreme and follow the way of self-mortification. The deliberate attempt to live through painful experiences and the technique for burning up the effects of karma[7] has been criticised by the Buddha in his discourses on the philosophy of the Jains. The way of the Buddha goes beyond the opposites of pleasure and pain, attraction and repulsion, attachment and shunning, and greed and hatred. What has been cultivated in terms of life perspective can also be cultivated in terms of character type- *rāga carita* that is the personality type whose conduct is dominated by greed and *dosa carita* that is the personality type whose conduct is dominated by hatred. The middle path of the Buddha is not within the grasp of those who 'walk-in greed' and those who 'walk-in hate'.

Now the question is whether motives, desires, and drives always function at the conscious level. 'Unconscious motivation' has been more important in the realm of conscious desire after the work of Freud's psychoanalytic theory. However, this is also a significant matter in the Buddhist psychology of motivation. When we state unconscious motives, we indirectly expressed that a person is not conscious of the real motives to inspire him to perform some activities. In favour of unconscious motives, three explanations can be given. The explanations are as follows:

a) Our daily events show bits of behaviour into which various goals and desires are entangled; it is difficult to isolate the motive for a particular action.

b) Since motives are too large extent habits, we acquire habits of which we are to a very great extent unaware.

c) Especially which Freud used the term, 'motives are often fashioned under unpleasant circumstances that we would like to forget'.[8]

In this sense, the unconscious is the realm of suppressed memories and emotions.

The complexity of human desires, the unrealistic habits which have enjoyed in our daily routine, and the 'defence mechanisms' which have become a part of our personalities without our conscious awareness[9] all these aspects of unconscious motivation can be adjusted within the idea of the unconscious in Buddhism. Buddha investigated profoundly the roots of human motivation through the analytical study of the human predicament. The exercise of diligent self-analysis, the methods of concentration and mindfulness, and the development of insight were all combined in a method of therapy. In this process of mental development, the dark internal sections of the mind, the patterns of compulsive attitude, and the unreasonable bias had all to be laid bare and brought to the surface of clear consciousness, mindfulness, and wakefulness. In the Buddhist context, there are at least four poles that go through the 'conscious-unconscious' dualism: calm and quiet in the face of unrest and movement; Transparency and sophistication as opposed to confusion and ambiguity; Control of domination and desire as opposed to domination by voluntary passions; Insight and knowledge as opposed to confusion and ignorance.

III

So, the concept of unconscious motivation becomes significant in the evaluation of action based on moral standards. By notable steps praise or blame can be bestowed as an action done with an intention (*cetanā*). Even if an action is done impulsively or automatically, it can be an intentional activity and evaluated in ethical terms either as wholesome (*kusala*) or unwholesome (*akusala*). However, the objective is the minimal necessity for the assessment of an action, a 'wholesome action' in the full sense of the word has other aspects its relevance, its consequences, how it is done, and the grades and types of consciousness that produce it or contribute to its emergence. For an instance, a driver who murders a person without any intention to do so; lack of vigilance on his part would have been a contributory factor, nevertheless. In this way, the concept of unconscious motivation is important for a complete evaluation of an action. From the above, it is clear to us that if any activity arises based on calmness, temptation, self-control, and knowledge, then unrest, ambiguity, passion, and delusion must be broken.

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