

A Study on the Social Strategies of the Buddha

Myint Myint Oo¹, Myint Myint Khaing², Khin Nyein Chan Win³

¹Dr, Associate Professor, Department of Oriental Studies, Meiktila University, ²Lecturer and Head, Department of Pāli Sanskrit, University of Traditional Medicine, ³Lecturer, Department of Oriental Studies, Meiktila University

Abstract

The main object of this paper is to know the social strategies for human society. As Aristotle said, “Human is a social animal”, human beings cannot live in isolation, they have to deal with others. This research was written to share some strategies for successful social interactions. People should follow and practice the social strategies of Lord Buddha.

Key words – social strategies, culture, ethics

Introduction

Gotama Buddha got the enlightenment for the welfare of the beings. Therefore, omnipotent Buddha preached Dhamma for 45 Buddhist Lent. Those Dhammas assisted a lot for human resource development. Buddha knew that social skills were crucial in dealing with people. While preaching Dhamma, Buddha highlighted the importance of social strategies, and he used those strategies while dealing with people.

Materials and methods

In this research paper, all of the data about the social strategies of the Buddha were collected from libraries, by using descriptive method. The materials used for the purpose of the research are the Canonical Texts, Commentaries and *Ganthantara* Texts..

Findings

Addressing

People are usually interested in their names rather than the others. They feel proud if they are addressed. Most of the people think that the voice addressing their names is the sweetest. People love and give respect to the person who addresses their names. The person who greets people by addressing their names will get wealth.

Buddha usually addressed people who contributed a lot to *sāsana*. He also addressed people who did not contribute to *sāsana* if addressing would give them benefits. Buddha addressed Anāthapiṇḍika, the donor of *Jetavana*, as “Come, Sudatta!” Sudatta was the childhood name of Anāthapiṇḍika. Kasibhāradvāja Brahmin was also addressed on his way to the farm. Buddha addressed not only people who visited him as a visitor, but also the host.

While addressing, Buddha used the person’s family name, for example, “Son, Kassapa”. Sometimes, Buddha used the person’s honorary name, such as, “*Mahārāja* Pasenadi”. Addressing the name is effective and people should address the person’s name while dealing with him.

Welcoming People by Himself

People usually welcome the guests: the elder, the younger, and people of the same age, by themselves for their self-interest in the satisfaction of the guests. Buddha welcomed some people by himself for the dispensation of *sāsana* or for the interest of the person although he did not contribute anything for *sāsana*.

Buddha walked for *tigavatamagga* (3 quarters of *yojana*) to welcome Venerable Mahākassapa. Buddha walked for (35) *yojanas*, (120) *yojanas*, (7) *yojanas*, and (30) *yojanas* to welcome King Pakkusāti, King Mahā Kappina, Dhaniya and Aṅgulimāla respectively (*Dī, tha, I*, p- 213). People who were welcomed by Buddha realized four noble truths. Sometimes they followed Buddha’s order. People are glad and satisfied to be welcomed. They like the welcoming person for his hospitality. The welcoming person also gets happiness and benefits for worldly matter. Therefore, it is important to warmly welcome everyone.

Taking the initiative to greet first

People like the person who greets them first. They would like to be acknowledged even if it is a nonverbal behavior. People’s tiredness disappears and they get peacefulness when they are warmly welcomed Buddha usually greeted monks by saying, ‘Come here! Come here! You all are good guests (*ehi svāgatavādī*)’ (*Dī, I*, p-109, *Dī, tha, I*, p- 256) . Those words are catchy and pleasant to the ears. People feel that they are acknowledged when they are asked with the questions, such as, “How are you?”, “Do you get

along with each other?" and "Is everything OK?" etc. People get satisfaction and a sense of acknowledgement when they are being asked such kinds of questions.

Some think it is weird to ask a person question like "Are you alone?" or "How are you?" although we see him alone and healthy. Asking questions is not an ingratiating act. Greeting is an act to show one's kindness and people should accept that kindness and response it politely and suavely with kindness. Lord Buddha knew that what kinds of questions were appropriate, and he never asked inappropriate questions although he knew the matter. Lord Buddha knew everything.

Therefore, Buddha asked the questions not because he did not know the matter, but because he knew the circumstance and situation. Buddha asked questions for specific purpose; to set some rules for the monks based on the matter (*Vi, I, p-7, Vi, tha, I, p- 148*).

Buddha preached *Dhamma-vinaya* to solve the problem of the answer, or to make him peaceful, or to purify his mind, or to help him escape from trouble and get welfare. Therefore, it is important to take the initiative to greet first both the elder and the younger, or people of higher rank and lower rank.

Having Heartfelt Conversation

People like the person who starts the heartfelt conversation, and they hate and avoid the person who does not make heartfelt conversation. They never visit that person again. They stop communicating with that person.

A host should warmly welcome the guest who visits him, and make heartfelt conversation. By doing so, the host can get knowledge, social assistance and economic assistance from the guest. Moreover, kindness and friendship will be developed. At the same time, the speaker can state his idea. He can give vent to his feeling, and listen to the guest's feeling.

Lord Buddha had heartfelt conversation with the people who visit him, and he preached Dhamma depending on their talks and requests, and then set the discipline. This was the habitual action of Buddha (*Vi, tha, I, p- 163-164*).

Buddha talked to people who visited him by using polite and suave words. After hearing Buddha's greeting words, people's tiredness disappeared and they became peaceful. There was no sign of dourness on Buddha's face. Buddha's face was as graceful as the full moon, and it was as fresh as *Padumā* lotus. He put his straight and takes initiative to speak first. While talking, Buddha wore a smile with *mettā* and *karuṇā*.

Taking initiative to talk first shows the speaker's will ingress for the guest's interest and it gives a chance to preach Dhamma. Buddha took the first initiative to talk by saying, "*Pubbabhāsīti iminā dhammanuggaha okāsa kāraṇena hitajjhāsayataṃ dasseti*" (*Dī, I, p-109, Dī, tha, I, p- 256*). By saying

like that, monks did not feel regret for visiting Buddha like. "Why did we visit Buddha?" or "I feel regret for coming here". They felt joyful to listen to Dhamma.

While dealing with people, Buddha used appropriate words at appropriate time. He only said the words that were true and beneficial for worldly matters and beyond the worldly matters, Buddha said the words that were worth to keep in mind. After hearing kind and beneficial words from Buddha, many people took refuge on three gems, some became *upāsaka*, and some became Buddhists and some knew noble truth (*Dī, tha, I, p- 75*).

Therefore, saying appropriate words at appropriate time dispensed Buddha's *sāsana*. Therefore it is essential to have heartfelt conversation with the person who visited us.

Greeting before Departing

People like saying goodbye before leaving. Saying goodbye before leaving prevents people from unnecessary suspect and confusion. If a person leaves a place without saying goodbye, others might think like, "What's wrong with him?", "Is he angry? etc. Saying goodbye clears all the confusion and suspect, and it create cherish memories. Therefore, people should say goodbye before departing.

Lord Buddha warmly welcomed people who visited him with heartfelt conversation. When he was invited to visit the monastery of *upāsaka*, he never forgot to say goodbye to that *upāsaka* before leaving. He usually said goodbye before departing. Those are good habits of Buddha (*Vi, I, p- 11, Vi, tha, I, p- 163-164*).

Conclusion

The Buddha preached valuable and knowledgeable Dhamma. At the same time, he shared social strategies that were vital in communication. Effective social strategies of Buddha contributed a lot for the dispensation of *sāsana*, and all the beings got benefits. Those who want to get benefits and contribute the dispensation of *sāsana* should practice social strategies of Lord Buddha. While dealing with people, one should greet them by name, welcome them by oneself, take the initiative to greet, have heartfelt conversation and say goodbye before leaving. People who use those strategies will get wealth and success.

Acknowledgements

We would like to express our profound gratitude to Dr Ba Han, Rector, Meiktila University and Dr Tin Tun Aung, Pro Rector, Meiktila University, for the allowance to present this research paper. We are greatly indebted to Dr Htay Htay Thein, Professor and Head, Department of Oriental Studies, Meiktila University for her permission and valuable advices in writing this paper.

References

- Bhikkhuvibhaṅga*, Chatṭha Saṅghāyanā edition, Religious Affairs Press, Yangon, Myanmar, 2005.
- Bhikkhuvibhaṅga Dīghanikāya Aṭṭhakathā* , Chatṭha Saṅghāyanā edition, Religious Affairs Press, Yangon, Myanmar, 2005.
- Mahāvagga* Pāli of the *Dīghanikāya* , Chatṭha Saṅghāyanā edition, Religious Affairs Press, Yangon, Myanmar, 2005.
- Mahāvagga* Pāli of the *Dīghanikāya Aṭṭhakathā*. Chatṭha Saṅghāyanā edition, Religious Affairs Press, Yangon, Myanmar, 2005.
- Pārājikakaṇḍa* Pāli, Chatṭha Saṅghāyanā edition, Religious Affairs Press, Yangon, Myanmar, 2005.
- Pārājikakaṇḍa Aṭṭhakathā*, Chatṭha Saṅghāyanā edition, Religious Affairs Press, Yangon, Myanmar, 2005.
- Sīlakkhandhavagga* Pāli of the *Dīghanikāya* , Chatṭha Saṅghāyanā edition, Religious Affairs Press, Yangon, Myanmar, 2005.
- Sīlakkhandhavagga Aṭṭhakathā* of the *Dīghanikāya*, Chatṭha Saṅghāyanā edition, Religious Affairs Press, Yangon, Myanmar, 2005.
- U Nu, Mittabalaṭikā, Sarpaylawka press, Yangon. 2000.