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## UNDERSTANDING THE RELEVANCE OF DHAMMAPADA IN MODERN MIND: A CONCEPTUAL STUDY

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### Abstract:

Lord Buddha was the great preacher of non-violence and humanism. Dhammapada is an essential treatise on Buddhism. It regards as the most concise expression of Buddha's teachings from ancient to the present day. After the passing away of Lord Buddha, *Arhants* were accumulating to exercise his teaching. They collected some poetic speeches and many pieces of advice of Buddha, which is known as *Tripitaka*. We find Dhammapada as a part of *Khuddaka Nikāya* of the *Sutta pitaka*. Dhammapada is a reflective and poetical thought in Buddhist literature. Today we are facing different kinds of challenges. Especially the new generation becomes intolerant and violent because they are confused and sometimes, they are misguided. They do not have a clear path in their lives. As a result, they become frustrated. This paper attempts to show how the Dhammapada can become a significant and essential text to reduce the aggressive manifestation of intolerance from the early to modern-day. This paper also focuses on some positive teachings of Lord Buddha, such as 'Four Noble Truths,' 'Eight-Fold Paths,' 'Pratitya samudpāda,' which offer definite ways to be patient and tolerant some extent.

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The great message of Lord Buddha is 'Ātma Dwīpa Bhava.' After the passing away of Lord Buddha, some of his disciples found short collections containing some speeches of Lord Buddha, his poems, tales, rules, conduct, etc. These collections are known as Tripitaka. Tripitaka comprises sutta, Vinay, and Abhidhamma, which are writes in the Pali language. Five sections or nikāyas are there in Sutra Pitaka. Khuddaka nikāya is one of them, consisting of fifteen books, and Dhammapada is the second one. 'Dhammapada' means the realization of religion, way of virtue, way of truth, etc. Dhammapada may be considered an inspiration, motivation, consolation, relief, and instruction in time of need rather than merely a novel. In the Pali version, Dhammapada includes 26 chapters (Vagga) and 423 verses. It should mention here that the Buddha religion spread massively at the time of Samrat Aśoka. The influences of Dhammapada, especially when Aśoka heard the essence of Appamāda vagga, which shows the way towards immortal life by non-infatuation, changed his life towards divinity from cruelty. So, it may say that by following the message of Dhammapada, one can get re-birth in the present and the future.

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From ancient history, we know that around 563 B.C.E to 483 B.C.E, Gautama Buddha was Alive. By supporting some precise calculation, the renowned writer Sunil Chattapadhaya wrote that Lord Buddha was born in 566 B.C.E. at groves located presently on the border of India and southern Nepal. (Chattapadhaya, 1983). Again, by appearing some impression on the pillar created by Mauryan Emperor Aśoka approximate 258 B.C.E, some Buddhist scholars claimed that Lord Buddha was born in 623 B.C.E. at the famous holy garden Lumbini *near* the *Kapilāvastu*. The emperor *Aśoka* marks the particular spot with a column where Gautama was born, and it still stands to show that the Blessed one was born there.

Though his childhood and youth have a mythical appearance, there is no reason to disbelieve the traditional accounts of his family. The worldly name of Lord Buddha was Siddhartha Gautama. In the Pali canon, "*Tathāgata*" Gautama Buddha's name is used, which interprets as having the significance of beyond all coming and going, beyond all momentary phenomena. His father, *Suddhodana*, was a powerful and wealthy king of a small clan called *shākya*. His mother was *Mahāmāyā*, who died after one week after his birth. In childhood, Siddhartha was nurtured and raised by his stepmother *Mahāprajāpatī Gautami*. After the birth of Gautama, religious persons observed that he had some excellent marks of a great man. They remarked that either the child would become a great king and turn the wheel of conquest or become a religious teacher and turn Dharma. When Siddhartha was only sixteen, he got married to the princess *Yośodharā*, daughter of *Dandapāni* and, at the age of twenty-nine, their only child Rahul came in their lap full of joy and happiness.

Siddhartha became the owner of the whole empire; he had a luxurious life and a beautiful family. Still, the transience of worldly life made him very upset, disappointed, and unhappy internally. In his early thirties, he traveled outside the palace and saw an overaged and infirm person. Suddenly, he realized that human beings are not young forever; they will undoubtedly grow and become old. Another day, he saw a man with the disease, and on a third outing, he saw a funeral of a dead body. Again, he realized the impermanence of worldly life. He realized that we are not free from our illness; we are bound to fall sick and human beings are also not an everlasting entity. These three worldly incidents deeply moved him. On a fourth outing, Siddhartha saw a man with yellow robes; he left his home, his head was bald, fully shaved, and searching for a life of truth, the life of virtue, the life of wisdom and tranquility. This scene inspired him to leave the luxurious life from the palace with the desire to seek a religious life. Gautama had a religious temperament, so the idea of the mendicant life attracted him, and immediately, the monk became an idol to him. Then he started his life as a seeker of truth.

During the early stage of his meditation, two successive teachers guided him named *Ālārakālāma* and *Uddaka Rāmaputta*. But he was not satisfied with them, so he left these teachers. Having departed from these teachers, Siddhartha joined with a group of five ascetics, and he started the meditation under the peepal tree at Bouddha Gaya. He spent six years in long, painful austerities. During this time, Buddha brought himself to a state of extreme emancipation by eating almost nothing. But finally, he found the ultimate goal of life. At the age of thirty-five, he achieved enlightenment, and he was known as Buddha. "Buddha" literally means enlightened one. "Buddha" means one who is awake. A Buddha has attained Bodhi, and Bodhi means wisdom, an ideal state of intellectual and ethical perfection.

In the traditional sense, Gautama Buddha was not a philosopher at all. He was not interested in confining himself only to the metaphysical and theoretical discussion. His main intention was to eliminate the masses' misery and help them become enlightened. His great message spreads all

through the world, and gradually, the Buddha religion became Universal religion. Buddha was crying for the misery of ordinary people. It is the first religion in humanity's history, which talks about incredible love and gives services to all living beings to find a way of release from their suffering. Lord Buddha was ready to give up his own life for all God's creatures. In his view, the so-called God and permanent self are delusions, and both are only conceptual entities.

Lord Buddha's philosophy has two aspects: his positive teachings and his silence on metaphysical questions. He does not believe anything beyond the world. According to him, everything is a succession of impressions which exist for a moment only. Though he denied the permanent existence of the soul, he has accepted karma and re-birth.

Today, the world is fighting against extraordinary challenges. Most people agree that our world is now full of conflict, unrest, disharmony, and most people are always anxious. Consequently, toleration of their life is eliminating day by day. Intolerance leads a person and society to the worst disaster. Mental stress and loneliness are also some of the vital problems which we face in our modern society. Every day, we see many examples of our country's intolerances, our community, and even our family in newspapers and television. At present religious biases are also a vital issue. If we look at our history and mythology, we observe the variety of horrible acts of intolerance. We are always busy forcing others to accept our religion, our views, and our practices. Our mental setup does not support us to receive the differences. Hence, due to our narrow-mindedness, we are unable to make the right decision. As a result, conflict, and disharmony take place everywhere.

So, it is essential in current circumstances to grow the inner virtues like humanity, kindness, charity, etc., which we may find in Buddhism, especially in the lesson of Dhammapada. K.Sri. Dhammananda (1997) states that without spiritual improvement, it is tough to handle our problems. Dhammapada is very much relevant in present-day life. The second chapter of it is 'Appamāda Vagga,' which means non- infatuation. 'Apramatta' specifies the calm, quiet and peaceful position. It also indicates thoughtfulness, mindfulness, and watchfulness.

The right person should guide people in the right way and the proper manner because, from the Buddhist perspective, the man himself creates all the problems. As man is liable to create problems, he should find out the solutions to the issues himself. Here is the charm of Buddhism that leads to religious values, philosophy, and way of life because Buddhist ethics starts with the individual conduct and then spreads it to the whole world. Dhammapada declared, "Let one first establish oneself in what is proper and then instruct others. Such a wise man will not be defiled". (Narada Thera, 1963, p.119)

In Buddhism, Dhammapada regards as the most significant and influential book. The fundamental idea is the proper conduct of human beings, consideration, and meditation, which appeals to the modern mind. According to Buddhism, these principles are more important than the useless suppositions about the supreme divine. In Dhammapada, Lord Buddha articulated some stories which express true things, and these are the modes of expression available to ordinary humanity. Juan Mascaro, the translator of the Bhagavad Gitā and the Upanishads, said that one could hear the voice of Buddha in the Dhammapada. "This gospel of light and love is amongst the greatest spiritual works of man. Each verse is like a small star, and the whole has the radiance of eternity." (Mascaro,1973, p.8).

Nowadays, it is crucial and essential to follow the Buddha's teachings and lessons to reduce intolerance. Buddha's message is eternal, everlasting, and infinite. It expresses love, humanity, sympathy, happiness, and peace. Buddhism is a way of insight learning and practice for the

improvement of the lifestyle. If we find out the root of shady practices such as aggressiveness, hostility, etc., perhaps we will overcome it with the help of Buddha's teachings. Again, if we act according to the instruction of Dhammapada, then it will be possible for us to reduce brutality and cruelty from our minds. Only then, the human race can become respectable, estimable, and venerable. So, the long-lasting solutions can get from the ethics of Lord Buddha. "Today, the world fights extraordinary challenges. To these challenges, lasting solutions can come from the ideals of Lord Buddha. They were relevant in the past. They are relevant in the present. And, they will remain relevant in the future." (Modi, 2020, Sambad Pratidin). So, it says that "there is no civilization on which its effect has not felt in some way or other." (CWS, Vol. 8., P. 95). Buddhism is the first historical outburst of world religion, and it is also the first missionary religion in the world.

In Dhammapada, Lord Buddha stated that one must attempt hard and use his strength to improve morality and self-purification. There is no human power or supernatural power that can make people good or bad. One is self-responsible and self-creator of his destiny. Lord Buddha uttered:

*"Utthānavato satimato  
sucikammassa nisammakārino  
Saññatassa ca dhammajīvino  
Appamattassa yaso'bhivaḍḍhati".*

( Narada Thera,1963, p.21)

Narada Thera translated in Dhammapada that the glory of an active, spirited, respectable, understanding, and well-ordered person increases slowly but confidently. They are always cautious about defeating their difficulty and dilemma, and finally, they can achieve the ultimate goal. They become immortal, eternal, but the unmindful and lazy people are worthless because they spent their lives without creativity.

Narada Thera stated that Lord Buddha compared the wise man with a swift horse. Buddha said that just as solid and fast horses leave the weak horse behind, similarly, the careful and attentive people are awake amongst the sleeping people, and they reach their ultimate aim. To achieve the ultimate goal, one should not be fascinated. He should be steady and stable, calm and patient. So, watchfulness, thoughtfulness, and attentiveness are the fundamental qualities of success.

The unique feature of Buddhism is that being a godless religion, it stands purely on morality, and there is nothing in the world that is above character. Tolerance in Buddhism is a natural outcome of several Buddhist doctrines, and it is an attitude of acceptance. Buddhism has generally known as a tolerant religion. It does not believe in the concept of a God, but they never disbelieve in the Dharma. Buddhism has always declared that the activities and conduct can only determine the condition of one's destiny after death rather than a religious attachment.

Some of the positive teachings of Lord Buddha also offer various means to reduce the violent expressions of human beings, such as four noble truths, eightfold paths, the theory of pratitya samudpāda, etc. The foundational doctrine of Buddhism is four noble **truths**. After getting Enlightenment, Lord Buddha declared the Four Noble Truth.

The First Noble Truth expresses the eternal truth of life that is 'Sarvaṃ *Dukkhaṃ*.' According to Lord Buddha, the fundamental truth of the world is suffering, which manifests to all. Nobody is free from suffering. Lord Buddha said that life is full of misery, painfulness, sadness, and these are

innate characteristics of existence in the realm of saṃsāra. Nobody is capable of overcoming illness, infirmity, and death. "...birth is sorrow, decay is sorrow, sickness is sorrow, death is sorrow and to be conjoined to things which we dislike, to be separated from things which we like- that also is sorrow, not to get what one wants –that too is sorrow." (Radhakrishnan, 1950, p.16)

In Pali Dhammapada, we also find that "Not in the sky, nor in mid-ocean, nor in a mountain cave, is found that place on earth where abiding one will not be overcome by death." ( Narada Thera,1963, p.100). So, the existence of suffering and sadness is the first and foremost fact in Buddha's philosophy. We should have the capacity to accept it physically and mentally.

The second Noble truth expresses Dukkha *samudaya* that means the origin of the suffering. Lord Buddha said that there are causes behind the suffering. The immediate cause of suffering is lust and thirst. According to Buddhism, every consequence has its grounds. So as hell is not impracticable; it also has the root. In the Second Noble Truth, Lord Buddha focuses on the direct and indirect causes of suffering. We are selfish; we always think only for ourselves. Our greediness, high expectation makes us unhappy and ferocious. If we become aware of the limitation of our expectations, it will help to decrease the aggressiveness of desire to some extent.

The third Noble Truth is Dukkha *nirodha* that means cessation of the suffering. According to Lord Buddha, it is possible to overcome misery. *Avidyā* and *Jarāmarañ* are causally related. So, if it is possible to ruin the *Avidyā*, then *Jarāmarañ* and another suffering will disappear.

And lastly, the fourth Noble truth expresses a way to end the suffering, which is *Astāṅgik Mārga*, or eight-fold paths. Lord Buddha indicates that the Noble Eightfold Path leads to the renunciation of thirst and ending suffering and misery. The intense struggle of Buddha was to find a way out of pain. By practicing the eight-fold path, one can get the ultimate peace and pleasure. As declared by Buddha, the eightfold approach is -

- Right View (*Samyak Dṛsti*): As *Avidyā* is the fundamental cause of all suffering, one must first acquire the proper knowledge. A false view of the world is called *Avidyā*. The word *Dṛsti* means to believe, and *samyak* means right. The right believes or learning about the Four Noble Truth is known as *Samyak Dṛsti*. So, with the help of the correct view, it is possible to abolish the *Avidyā* and soreness. Ethical improvement arises through the Right knowledge.
- Right resolve (*Samyak Saṅkalpa*): Proper knowledge only satisfies our wisdom and our consciousness. One who acquires consciousness and understanding; should practice it in his life. So, it is needed to take the Resolution for practicing the actual knowledge. According to Lord Buddha, Right tenacity arises through the Right view. Correct Resolution makes the people desire less, errorless. When one takes the Resolution of non-violence, love, and good prayer for all beings, it is known as right resolve or *Samyak Saṅkalpa*. "Mere right knowledge of right and wrong does not help the aspirant reach his goal. It must express in right resolve to do what is right and desist from doing what is wrong." (Sinha, 1985, p.96)
- Right Speech (*Samyak Vāk*): To attain the Four Noble Truths, Right Speech is also vital. Control in talking is an essential part of our daily life as well as ethical life. People should control their tongues. If our firmness does not manifest through right speech and right action, all Resolutions will be meaningless. So, people have to leave the false talking and hurting the foul language.

- Right Conduct (*Samyak Karmānta*): Non-violence (*Ahimsā*), Non-stealing (*Asteya*), and *Brahmacharya* – these three are regarded as proper conduct. Though right speech is a necessary condition for the appropriate Resolution, it is not a sufficient condition. For the correct Resolution, a good deed is essential. Proper conduct is not affected by lust, desire, anger, fascination, illusion, etc. Non-aggression to all living beings, showing compassion, humanity, and kindness to all, is recognized as proper conduct or good behaviour.
- Right Livelihood (*Samyak Ājīva*): Livelihood or occupation should be pure for leading an honest life. Lord Buddha strictly said that the work in false talking and evil for others and own should reject. He said that our whole life becomes purified through good conduct, right speech, and right action.
- Right Effort (*Samyak Byām*): Right endeavour is needed to lead an ethical life because sometimes evil and immoral thoughts may perform in one's mind due to past preconceptions. So, people should give the effort to practice for the good ideas and good propensity. One should strictly reject dishonesty and immorality. The only peaceful and non-violent mind can be able to reach the final goal.
- Right Mindfulness (*Samyak Smṛti*): It means to remember the proper knowledge of the Four Noble Truth. People have to remember that nothing is permanent in this world and if they think in this way, they won't have any affection for worldly things and will be free from all their passions.
- Right Concentration (*Samyak Samādhi*): By the above seven steps, when one becomes pure and clean in his mind, he can only reach the states of complete concentration. It is called *Samādhi*. In the first stage of *Samādhi*, one becomes calm, quiet, and peaceful, but he feels less and emotionless in the final scene.

According to Buddhism, if anyone follows the above paths sincerely, it will be easy to control their sense organ. Through meditation, they will be able to remove their depression and frustration, and as a consequence, they will not become intolerant frequently. They can find solutions because a controlled mind always directs the right way and encourages cheerfulness.

The theory of *Pratitya samutpāda* is also positive teaching in Buddhism. *Pratitya samutpāda* means conditional existence of things. According to Buddhism, whatever has dependent origination cannot have an independent presence in the world. It is a common tendency among philosophers to construct a fundamental theory such as eternalism or nihilism about reality. But the theory of *Pratitya samutpāda* is different from the theories mentioned above. This theory expresses everything as a 'becoming' form that means everything is interdependent on its previous existence. According to Buddhism, reality cannot categorize in an absolute sense. Truth never lies either in eternalism or in nihilism, as they both are extreme theories. *Pratitya samutpāda* deals with the middle position about the truth, which is called *madhyamapratipad*. According to renowned Buddhist philosopher *Nāgārjuna*, everything has a conditional existence, everything in this world is empty of intrinsic nature, and nothing is permanent. It means that reality is neither intrinsically existent, nor non-existent, or both existent or non-existent, and nor even either existent or non-existent. (Mohanta, 2009).

By this concept of Buddhism, people may get peace in their minds because nowadays we are rushing to get our desirable things anyhow and at any cost, but if we learn that, everything is

momentary, nothing instead of momentary. Nothing is permanent, then automatically, the competitive mentality, aggression may be wiped out to some level.

So, in conclusion, it is admitted that considering the lesson of Dhammapada and encouraging progressive messages of Dhammapada is deemed to be supportive and helpful to reduce the aggressive manifestation of intolerance to one and all to some extent.

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