



THERAVĀDA BUDDHIST PERSPECTIVE ON LIFE (BHAVA): AN ANALYTICAL STUDY

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ABSTRACT:-

In general point of view, Buddhists believe that every definition comes from the human attitude or mind, as taught by the Buddha that everything are mind-made: mind is their chief as their forerunner. Then, matter and mind are interdependent process of Kamma. What is life is defined in many ways and many approaches according to the researchers' environment, aspects, latent dispositions and their temperaments. Some people see widely whereas some people have narrow vision of life as reflected by their meaning and definition.



According to Theravada Buddhism, life (Bhava) is the becoming compose of mind and matter processes. The life is defined as the existence, becoming and the process of mind and matter, caused by intention (Cetanā) and resultant good or bad mind and matter. The view of life in Buddha Abhidhamma in every aspect is very interesting to know, understand and realize. In general life is a condition by many respective causes (Saṅkhata). As a its directly and indirectly supportive conditions, Kamma, consciousness, and craving should be observed together with the process of mind and matter. Here, this article will analyze the life (Bhava) in the Theravada Buddhist perspective.

KEYWORDS: *Life (Bhava), Mind, Matter, Becoming, Condition (Saṅkhata).*

1.0 INTRODUCTION:

According to Buddhism, actually human beings with very high level intellectually, spiritually and ethically in contrast to other like animals, devas (celestial beings), can understand and develop the definition of life from button to top. But sometimes it is needed to look into inside, sometimes outside and, near or far, so on. For instance, to see the whole form of mountain we need to go out from the jungle forests. Even though the form of life is seen it can be wrong as the true meaning of life because human beings always live by the eyes of perception, but without the eyes of understanding. This is called hallucination or perversion (*Vippallāsa*) in Buddhism. Human beings have the potentiality to hallucinate their minds. This is one of the situations that life can be defined wrong by the human beings. In this aspect, Buddha delivered the two Suttas that mentions about the life with as follows: "Then Ven. Ānanda went to the Blessed One and, on arrival, bowed down to him and sat to one side. As he was sitting there, he said to the Blessed One, "Lord, this word, 'becoming, becoming' — to what extent is there becoming?" Thus, kamma is the field, consciousness the seed, and craving the moisture. The consciousness of living beings hindered by ignorance and fettered by craving is established in/tuned to

a refined property. Thus, there is the production of renewed becoming in the future. This is how there is becoming." Thus, Buddhism particularly accepts that life is the combination of the Five Aggregates, a combination of physical and mental energies. These elements are constantly changing; these elements do not remain the same for two consecutive moments. Buddhist literature said that "Every moment they are born and they die. When the Aggregates arise, these decay and die, O Bhikkhu, at every moment you are born, decay and die."

1.1 Life on the view of some scholars:

Some people say that life is not needed to know, except to feel the happiness and sufferings of life. Some people believe that there is nothing in life, but three things; to be born, to live or to survive and to die. Some hedonists say that the search for the true of life is to make essential like the food, shelter, and life is to live happily without thinking about death. For other groups basically life has no meaning, but the composition of arising, continuing and disappearing. Life without basic meaning can be defined by many ways like the pure water without color, smell and taste.

Some people may prefer to live peacefully in saint life, because the meaning of life is not the sensual life, but for peaceful life. However, for ordinary persons the view what is real is related with the definition, meaning and purpose of life. The meaning of life is the transformation of effect or quality as a goal according to variety of dimensions with human actions. According to *Paticca Samuppāda*, life exists or is a round of defilement (*Kilesavaṭṭa*), action (*Kammavaṭṭa*) and result which make formation as living life. Therefore, life definition or meaning is related to the ways that human beings prepare to develop the mental and spiritual culture, and how they practically live in society or human civilization. According to grammatical standpoint, real meaning of one word cannot be understood without defining its roots, its context, usages and so on. To understand the real meaning Buddhism also emphasizes the knowledge of skill in alphabets and words (*Akkharapada kosallaññana*), which is the understanding of words, their meanings, and so on. For the definition of life (*Bhava*), its alternative meanings will be explained according to Buddhist Pāli grammar and scholars' perspective.

1.2 Life of the Buddhist Pali grammar scholar's perspectives:

In most of Pāli dictionaries and literature, seven definitions of life are stated as follows: 1. Growing or development (*Vuḍḍhi*), 2. Becoming (*Janana*), 3. The element of sensual desire, pleasure, material element etc. (*Kama-dhatvadi*), 4. Arriving (*Patti*), 5. Being (*Satta*), 6. Circle of birth and death (*Sarīsāra*), and 7. Eternal personality or belief in being (*Sassatadiṭṭhi*).

Another book called *Abhidhānappadipikāsuuci*, referring to the words of Tipitaka life is mentioned in seven ways: 1. Well-being (*Sampatti*), 2. Five aggregates with the world of existence (*Saloka-sakhandha*), 3. Action or kamma process (*kamma-bhava*), 4. Result or effect or kamma-produced rebirth, regenerating process (*Upappatti-bhava*), 5. Wholesome or merit (*Puñña*), 6. Craving for eternal existence (*Bhava-taḥṇā*), and 7. Belief in eternal personality (*Bhava-diṭṭhi*).

2.0 CLASSIFICATION OF LIFE:

According to *Theravāda Abhidhamma*, the becoming of mind and matter is called life. There is another ways, by which it is to be noted that every thought moment and matter moment has its life or vital principle. In the ultimate essence, life is composed of mind and matter, which are conditioned by wholesome and unwholesome, good and bad, internal and external, three time frame, gross and subtle and far and near. As a whole life is of conditioned by many its respective causes (*Sarīkhata*). In *Abhidhamma*, which is analyzed in the ultimate and natural truth teaching (*Yathādhamma or Sabhāvattha desanā*), life is taught, classified into nine kinds as an ultimate truth. The resultant mind and body aggregates according to *Bhava* individuals. They are basically 1. *Kamma bhava*, and 2. *Upapatti bhava*.

Although there are nine kinds of *Bhava*, these are combined into three groups; 1. *Saññabhava* is made up of three *Bhavas*; (1) sensual bhava (*Kāmaabhava*), fine-material bhava (*Rūpabhava*) and immaterial bhava (*Arūpabhava*), 2. Non-perception existence and *ekavokārabhava* are the same with

fine-material Bhava, and *catuvokārabhava* with immaterial existence, 3. Neither perception nor non-perception existence are related to immaterial, then, *Pccavokārabhava* is the same with sensual and fine-material existence. Thus, the *Upapattibhava* also classified into three kinds – *kāma*, *rūpa* and *arūpa bhava* in brief. All definitions are related to worldly mundane mind and matter according to Sutta method without supra-mundane. In Abhidhamma method supra-mundane-resultant mind also is included in *Upapattibhava*.

2.1 Thirty one Realms (Bhavas):

In addition, one of Abhidhamma texts, “A Comprehensive Manual of Abhidhamma”, classifies thirty one kinds of existence or plane based on different combinations of mind and matter as follows: The four woeful plane - such as hell, the animal kingdom, the sphere of *peta*, and the host of asūras. The seven sensuous blissful plane - such as the human realm, the realm of the four great *Deva* kings, the realm of the thirty-three gods, the realm of the *Yāma* gods, the delightful realm, the realm of the gods who rejoice in their own creation, and the realm of the gods who lord over the creation of others, and finally the group of twenty higher realms for those who have developed meditative attainments or *Jhānas*, - such as the sixteen fine-material-sphere plane, the four immaterial-sphere plane.

Though thirty one realms are classified as mentioned above, these can be concluded into three realms of existence, regarding with the classification of consciousness, mental statement, and owing to its causes and resultants: The sense-sphere plane (*kāmavacarabhūmī*) which comprises eleven realms – the four woeful states, the human realm, and the six sensuous realms because they exist owing to sense-sphere consciousness in which usually includes all those consciousness that have their proper domain in the sensuous plane of existence, though they may arise in other planes as well. Fine-material-sphere plane (*rūpāvacarabhūmī*) which is corresponding to the fine-material-sphere consciousness – that is the plane of consciousness pertaining to the states of meditative absorption (*Rūpajjhānas*) because they are usually attained in meditation by concentration on material objects, and the third immaterial-sphere plane (*arūpāvacarabhūmī*) which is corresponding to the immaterial-sphere-consciousness – that is the plane of consciousness pertaining to the immaterial absorption (*Arūpajjhāna*) because they mostly move about in this realm and attain the formless meditative states beyond the *rūpajjhāna*.

3.0 THE ROLE OF CRAVING ON LIFE CYCLE (SAṂSĀRA) :

According to Buddhism, human beings begin the life from craving which is called *Bhava nikantika lobha*. The purpose of life depends on craving for; which is two *kāma*: *Vatthu kāma* and *Kilesa kāma*. This is craving for sensual activities or sensuality called *kāma tanhā* together with self-view. And it support to maintain or not to destroy the activities that has got, this is *bhava taṇhā* craving for existence connected with wrong view eternalism. Then without satisfied the eternal it become craving for non-existence influenced by wrong view as nihilism called *vibhava taṇhā*. As long as craving last, life last long. As long as life have, craving is. These cravings connect with time and space: craving for sensuality is associate with duration of arising moment, craving for existence with presence moment, and craving for non-existence with dissolution.

In addition to life, mind and matter of human being is ultimate importance. Abhidhamma explains in detail about the nature of mind and matter. For example, in one’s life the mind and the body of a man exist in the forms of “Mind and Matter”, which is neither any substance nor soul combining the elements or the units together. The units of life composed of mind and matter lack permanency. Life is nothing but the functions, performing different types of actions. Life is named after the structure and functions of mind and matters. Life is conditioned and for this reason it ceases with the ceasing of the conditions. The chief generative forces of matter are the past action (*Kamma*), thought (*Citta*), energy (*Utu*) and nutriment (*Āhāra*). For the mind or thought process, there are four categories – namely the object, sense organs, sensitive activity or actions, and mental states of contact.

Another analysis of life under Buddhism’s causal relations or causal conditions. In this analysis, consciousness, mental states, objects and at their location are seen to be the main generative forces of mind or thought process. In addition, another approach is the principle of dependent origination

(*Paticcasamuppada*), which explain that life has no substance but is the process of mind and matters depending on each other. In these relations life is a conditioned thing or a state where mind and matter are causally related. The Pāli word for conditioning mind and matter is *Sarīkhata Dhamma*. Exceptionally, *Nibbāna* alone is the *Asarīkhata Dhamma*. Here it seems that life composed of mind and matter is the result of forming or to the passive state (*Sarīkhāra*) which arise and disappear out of ignorance, having the nature of impermanence, suffering and non-self. From a wider perspective *Sarīkhāra Dhamma* is caused by action (*kamma*), mind (*citta*), energy (*utu*) and nutriment (*āhāra*). Every element has three characteristics: arising (*Uppāda*), present (*Thiti*) and dissolution (*Bhaṅga*). According to the insight knowledge aspects, life is also classified into three kinds in terms of duration; 1. Momentary life (*Khanika bhava*) which is becoming of mind and matter in every moment, 2. Process of life (*Santati bhava*) which is the continuous process of mind and matter in this internal aggregates, 3. And span of life (*Addhabhava*) covering mind and matter until death (past, present, future). In the Buddhist way of learning, we come to know that to solve the problems of life, speculation is undesirable but it is needed to use the method of analysis by the practices such as the mindfulness (*Satipaṭṭhāna*). The Buddha also found out the ultimate constituent of mind-matter with the main cause by their momentariness or process. They ultimately had their existence in combinations known as atoms of mind and matter. The units of thought arise depending on physical atoms technically known as – *Kammaja Rūpa Kalapa*. These units have the capacity of generating some kinds of matter being interaction of mind and matters.

3.1 Momentariness of Life and Death :

On life between birth and death, Bikkhu Narada explained about the birth and death that these are only two phases of the same process. Birth precedes death, in the same life whereas death in this life precedes birth in the next life. The constant succession change of birth and death in connection with individual life flux constitutes what is technically known as samsara - recurrent without end. According to Buddhism, birth in Pāli word *jāti* comprises the entire embryonic process beginning with conception and ending with parturition. It is said in a Sutta: "The birth of beings belonging to this or that order of beings, their being born, their conception and springing into existence, the manifestation of the groups (corporeality, feeling, perception, mental formations, consciousness; five aggregates), the acquiring of their sensitive organs: this is called birth".

Death, in ordinary usage, means the disappearance of the vital faculty confined to a single life-time, and therewith of the psycho-physical life-process conventionally called 'man, animal, personality, ego', etc. However, strictly speaking, death in Pāli word '*Maraṇa*' is the continually repeated dissolution and vanishing of each momentary physical-mental combination, and thus it takes place every moment. About this momentariness of existence, it is stated as follows: "In the absolute sense, beings have only a very short moment to live, life lasting as long as a single moment of consciousness lasts. Just as a cart-wheel, whether rolling or whether at a standstill, at all times only rests on a single point of its periphery, even so the life of a living being lasts only for the duration of a single moment of consciousness. As soon as that moment ceases, the being also ceases. For it is said: 'The being of the past moment of consciousness has lived, but does not live now, nor will it live in future. The being of the future moment has not yet lived, nor does it live now, but it will live in the future. The being of the present moment has not lived, it does live just now, but it will not live in the future.'"

It is said about life in *Paticcasamuppāda* that 'through clinging condition is the process of becoming (*Upadāna-paccayā Bhavo*)'. Although there are four clinging conditions, life is produced by two main clinging to sensual desire and soul. By the sensual desire, unwholesome *Kamma bhava* is called as to do evil deeds such as killing, stealing, etc. by the clinging to soul or self also it is called to doing evils. Thus as a bad result *Upappatti bhava* become. Another by doing good deeds such as making charity, virtue, culture mind etc., wholesome *kamma* and as good result *upappatti bhava* become. Then, Manual of *Abhidhamma* pointed out as follows: "the rebirth-liking consciousness, life-continuum

consciousness, and the death consciousness in one (particular) birth or life are similar and have an identical object (sphere, nature or kind, resultant, functional - *bhūmi, jāti, sampayutta, saṅkhāra*)."

CONCLUSION

According to Buddhism, life never comes to an end, it goes on and on till the end of *Saṃsāra*, technically known as the *Nibbāna*. Here the question arises that 'Do we see the worldly things as they are?' According to the *Abhidhamma* we never see things as they are because of certain factors obstructing our vision. These are responsible for illusion or errors - *Vipallasa* (false notions); permanence (*Nicca*), wholesomeness (*Subha*), happiness (*Sukha*) and self (*atta saṃmā*). However, Buddhism analyzes life as the five aggregates to refer human beings (*Khandā*). When 'living being' is mentioned, it is just a conventional way of speaking. Following this convention is wrong views of personality-belief, permanence and substantiality. However, if we consider more carefully what a living being or a person really is we will find only a stream of ever-changing phenomena. Each living being is in five aggregates: the body or material phenomena, feelings, perceptions, mental formations, and consciousness. It should not be taken that these aggregates are something stable, they are only categories.

To conclude, definitions of life in *Abhidhamma* is called the existence, becoming and the process of mind and matter, caused by intention (*Cetanā*) and resultant good or bad mind and matter. The view of life in Buddha *Abhidhamma* in every aspects is very interesting to know, understand and realize. In general if it can be defined that 'Life' is composed of mind and matter, wholesome and unwholesome, good and bad, internal and external etc., 'life' is a condition by many respective causes (*Saṅkhata*).

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