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SOFT SKILLS IN THE BUDDHIST LITERATURE

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ABSTRACT

India, the land of different languages, cultures and traditions, is a unique place with its diversified culture and rich heritage. Acquiring soft skills is the need of the hour as people are moving far away from people's skills. Good attitude is essential to attain success in one's life. One should possess positive attitude to be a complete man. Attitude is the way we think, feel and look at the things and issues. My aim is to give some insights of soft skills interrelated with Buddha's life. These skills are relevant to the present scenario. The effectiveness of Buddhism to make men humans is also discussed.

Key words: Culture, Soft skills, Positive attitude.

Introduction

India, where Hinduism dominates the people through numerous religious rites, is an amalgamation of various cultures. In spite of the domination of Hindu religion in this land, Buddhism brought a philosophy which is relevant to the present society. Buddhism paved the way as people religion. It fought against yagnas, yagas, sacrifices which existed in the Indian society. Some kings like Ashoka the great, Kanishka, Harsha, great Chinese ambassador Huenstang who visited India, great writers like Ashwagosh, Acharya Nagarjuna and great Indian politicians like Dr. B. R. Ambedkar made rich contribution to this religion and endeared it to the people. Vedas, puranas composed in Sanskrit the language of the rich and the learned, but Buddhist literature like pitakas appeared in pali language, the language of the rustic. Buddha preached his dharma in Magadhi language and propagated Astanga Marga (Eight fold path). Those principles are Samyak Dhrushti (right view), Samyaksankalp (right intention), Samyak Vakku (right speech), Samyak Karma (right action), Samyak Jivana (right livelihood), Samyak Smirithi (right

mindfulness), Samyak Dhristi (right concentration), Samyak Shrama (right effort).

Soft skills are nothing but life skills. These skills originate from our mind and thoughts. Actually speaking these are essentially part of mind management. I would like to highlight Positive thinking, Anger management and Stress management which are being instilled hard to the present day people, based on the Buddhist views.

Positive Thinking: When we say positive thinking, many people might sit back and say that they have heard it all a number of times, without even realizing and understanding the actual meaning of it. So, what is Positive Thinking? In Scientific terms, it is a mental attitude that admits into the mind thoughts, words and images that are conducive to growth, expansion and success. Positive thinking is expecting, talking and visualizing with certainty what a man wants to achieve, as an accomplished fact. Of course, those who know its power realize that it is a mental attitude that expects good and favourable results. A positive mind always expects happiness, joy, health and successful result for every effort and action. When we think of

a benefit or a desired outcome out of a situation, Positive Thinking finds it.

Success depends upon a strong foundation of the right state of mind. Thomas Alwa Edison illustrated it; Charles Chaplin proved it and Dhirubhai Ambani showed it to the world. A well known successful personality once said, "Our life is what our thoughts make of it" So, the true greatness of each one of our lives depends on the awareness of the actual and frank understanding of our purpose in life, which in turn depends on our understanding of our abilities.

Consider the following step by step process which holds good for most of us:

- a) We act on whatever we believe. So belief in or about something prods us for action and thus is the first step in itself.
- b) We manifest whatever we act on. Whatever we do in life, leads to some or other consequence. People who are successful and happy are people who have mastered the art of change.

Here I want to illustrate the story interrelated with Buddha's Life. The story runs thus:

"Buddha was roaming by teaching in many ways. On the path, he met one famous prostitute by named Ambika. She adorned herself well and sat at Buddha for his mystic teachings. In part his teaching she heard "Just as treasures are uncovered from the earth, so virtue appears from good deeds and wisdom appears from pure and peaceful mind. To walk safely through the maze of human life, one needs the light of wisdom and the guidance of virtue.

She realized herself that she spoilt many lives with seduce, and asked Buddha to forgive her with virtue mind. Then she started her new life with enlightenment of mind."¹

Right from our childhood, we believe in one principle not to commit any mistake. Over years, we brushed up our mind not to commit mistakes. We hesitate to take risks with the fear that we may fail! The fact is that, as people say, failures are stepping stones to success! So every failure is an opportunity and when we do a mistake, it is an indication that

our thought processes are working and there is every possibility of hitting on the right solution. Thus we need to understand that committing a mistake is no big deal- it is part and parcel of life and learning. Anger Management: Many of us get angry and temporarily lose control of ourselves when anger takes over. Let us understand anger's impact in a constructive use.

Richard McHugh, a leading NLP teacher says: Anger= energy+ a need of yours that is not fulfilled. This is an interesting insight. "When we get angry, we usually get caught up in the rush of this anger energy. We express this energy by shouting or throwing tantrums, withdraw, hold back or we can sulk. Even if we want to deal with it in a healthy way, we talk about calming down by doing things like counting from 10 to 1. All these are superficial ways of dealing with the energy of anger without understanding its real nature and purpose."²

For anger management the life of Budha is the best lesson. Here is an incident happened in his life One day, when Gouthama Buddha was sitting under a banyan tree, a furious Brahmin came to him and started abusing him. The Brahmin thought that Gouthama Buddha would reciprocate in the same manner, but to his utter surprise, there was not the slightest change of the expression on his face. Now, the Brahmin became more furious. He hurled more and more abuses at Buddha. However Buddha was completely unmoved and there was a look of compassion on his face. So, Brahmin tired to abuse him. He asked, 'I have been abusing like anything, but why are you not angry at all?' Goutham Buddha replied calmly 'my dear Brahmin I have not accepted a single abuse from you'. 'But you heard all of them, didn't you?' The Brahmin agreed half heartedly. Buddha said, "I do not Need the abuses, so why should I even hear them?" And Buddha explained that all those abuses remain with him only. The Brahmin remained speechless. He was ashamed of his behavior and begged for Buddha's forgiveness."³

Inner calmness and peace are keys to contented life. To live life as per our goals and ambitions we have to know about ourselves, that who you are and what you want in life. It is also a part of Indian philosophy. Even in Greek, philosophers teach 'know thyself' first to their

disciples. So that they need not respond to any person's anger. Controlling anger with patience and calmness should be learned through many ways and one of the best ways is Budha's life itself.

To live life is to be related. It is said in every relationship there are three factors; the subject, object, and the connection between subject and object. If the relationship is harmonious, life is harmonious, and if the relationship is disharmonious, life is disharmonious. The art of wisely relating is the context of a spiritual life. Also, to heighten the spirit, is being spiritual.

Is it not true that our spirit sometimes is low and sometimes high? What causes such variations? If the content of consciousness is low, life is low, and if the content is high, life is high. To check and be alert to the content of consciousness is an indispensable part of spiritual health. If the content of consciousness is hurt, jealousy, anger, ego; it pulls us down. If it is love, gratitude, compassion; then life will be high.

Stress Management: Stress is the root cause of all the evils. It shows impact on the people. In the modern world people are busy with their activities. Stress is of two types. Physical Stress, Mental Stress. Gauthama Buddha preached about the importance of Meditation. Meditation helps us to come out from the stress. We must be so calm and serene in our attitude at our home and office.

In the words of Chanakya, the Indian Macheavelli and the writer of popular ancient book "Arthashastra": "Before you start some work, always ask yourself three questions: why am I doing it? What the results might be? Will I be successful? Think deeply and find satisfactory answers to these questions, then go ahead."⁴

Most of us are caught in the small part of life and miss seeing the whole. Without leaving our room, we want to see the vastness of the sky. We live a part of the whole and that part is our pattern, our potentiality, our ego. Thus, we limit our brain to our patterns. We limit our brains to limited paradigms. To drop our shallow way of seeing and to see the whole is managing our life effectively. To take that leap, one has to have a childlike perspective.

Life is a thrilling mystery; it is vast and limitless. But we get limited by our concepts, ideas and beliefs. We have to learn how to perceive, how to look, how to see. A child sees innocently. To be innocent is to be open. Can we be open in our perception? We struggle at our school, college, and companies. It creates stressful life. When we see and know something in the outer world, there is a struggle. The struggle is to see and know in the light of what we know in the past. The present should fit into the past. So what we know, from the past, is more valuable than what we see in the present. A child like perception is freeing oneself from that background and hence inwardly be free and from that freedom to see.

Apply this in the field of relationships, at the office or home, one has an image of one's life partner or boss. This image is a product of one's conclusions, opinions, and with that mental image one relates to one's partner or boss. One does not connect to the other through the image of the other. So one's struggle is to see the other fits into one's image of one's partner or of oneself. This is a complicated way of living. Be like a child, open, innocent and then with that perception you will see something new. The ability to see something new is a product of one's inner being, free from one's past. Past will exist but will not limit a free perception. Then we will look at your projects, freely, openly, and something new happens in the way we look at the problem in the office or work or any situations.

The story related to Buddha's life as follows:

"The enlightened one laid on his death bed. Anand, Budha's disciple, tended to him and Bhadrak, a devotee, wept inconsolably. The Enlightened one asked, "Anand, who is weeping? Anand replied, "It is Bhadrak. He is here to see you." Then call him'

Bhadrak fell at his feet and burst into loud sobs, saying, 'O Master, who shall now show us the light when you are gone?' "Bhadrak, the light you seek is within you. Do not search for it in holy places, caves or forests. Those whose thoughts, speech and deeds are pure and in harmony, they find the light within their own selves. Be your

own light!" This was his last message to Bhadrak and to the world."⁵

The Buddha's teachings are applicable even to the materialistic world of today. Some of his teachings are as follows: we are shaped by our thoughts. When the mind is pure, joy follows like a shadow that never leaves. You will not be punished for your anger but by your anger. Peace comes from within the self. Virtue is persecuted more by the wicked than it is loved by the good. Hatred comes only through love, this is the eternal rule.

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