

How Liking and Disliking Creates Conflict

A Study Based on the Kalahavivāda Sutta and the Abhidhammic Analysis of Mind Process

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Peace as a Global Need

Conflicts (*viggaha*) can be caused by many factors either gender, caste, religion and political views. Conflicts not only happen in the recent times but they have already existed since the first beginning of the humans' history. In the *Aggaññā Sutta* of the *Dīgha Nikāya*,¹ conflicts occur when people start to recognize their physical characteristics so that they are entrapped in the conflict due to the concept of superiority and inferiority. This fact can be evidenced by the statement "We are better looking than they are" (*mayameteḥi vaṇṇavantatarā, amhehete dubbaṇṇatarā*) among human beings. The other cause of conflict is by holding on the border of their land. Since the ancient time, people

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1. D.N. I, 80, ff

would do everything to depend on what so called “my land”. In the *Aggañña Sutta* it is narrated that for a long period of time, people are taking foods from everywhere. Due to the course of time, people divide the lands into plots.² Each has his own plot. When someone takes something from the other’s plot, people condemn it as taking what is not given, rebuke it and give punishment upon it.

In the modern time, conflicts also often occur among people, groups, castes, clans and nations. Conflicts among people happen everywhere and they dominate the TV’s news. Problems regarding minority and majority create dispute and conflict in many groups of people and society. Nations in this planet are not always helping each other. Tension and conflict happen among nations due to many reasons such as territorial, political view, natural resources, etc. As the result, there was World War I as well as World War II. Should there a World War III in this human history?

When conflicts among nations are everywhere and not being controlled, it will endanger the existence of the whole beings in this planet. There will be a terrible destruction if among nations are fighting each other using many kinds of weapons. Our planet will be end up soon. Hence, peace among people, groups and nations is a must, and it is a global need.

Internal and External Peace

Whatever the cause of the conflict, it exists due to the defiled mind. It is the Buddhist view that firmly laid down in every teaching regarding conflict and its resolution. As there are many conflicts in the recent times, can it be concluded that there are so many people with defiled minds? According to the Buddhist view, the answer is positive. However, it is pointless to putting out our fingers to others and saying that “they have defiled mind, so they are the conflict makers”. It is much better to ask ourselves “Is my mind defiled?” When everybody is asking himself in this way and then he will do something to clean the mind up, it’s the only way to reduce conflict. How do we clean up the mind and create peace in this planet?

2. *ibid*

The only way to make peace in this planet is to create peaceful mind in every human being who dwells in it. It is in agreement of what the Buddha said that “Mind is forerunner for everything (*Manopubbaṅgamā dhammā*)”.³ When the defiled mind is becoming the forerunner, action and speech will become mean and wicked. This natural law of mind and action is not created by the Buddha but it works as it is. The Buddha is the only being who shows this truth for other human beings. How can people reduce the defilement in mind? Should people close the senses up?

It is impossible to close all senses and not to interact with others while people are in the society. The sense doors will always receive the objects and then perceive them. Finally, people will make judgment over it either as good or bad. The effect of the existence of judgments either good or bad is the occurrence of feeling namely “liking and disliking”. Usually, when liking happens then the wish to depend and to hold on to what is liked comes into existence. In the other hand, when disliking is in present, the hatred creeps into the mind. Liking and disliking is not only about food, it might cover many aspects in societal life. Liking and disliking might happen when people are watching the campaign of another political party, listening to the speech of various religious and political leaders, thinking of the ideas given by others, etc.

Liking and disliking is the seed either for absolute acceptance or absolute rejection. Absolute acceptance will bring blind faith. As can be witnessed in the Medias, there are many wicked actions that happen due to blind faith. There are many bombers who kill many innocents for useless reason. The other kind of extremist is the absolute rejection. This attitude will make endless hatred, neglecting any kind positive sides of others. Either absolute acceptance or absolute rejection endangers the so called peace and harmony in the society.

The Arising of Liking and Disliking : An Analysis Based on Kalahavivāda Sutta

The clear picture of the occurrence of liking and disliking during

the sense process is well explained in the *Kalahavivāda Sutta* of the *Suttanipāta*. In this sutta there is a question, “What is the cause for many kinds of quarrels, disputes, along with selfishness, conceit and pride?” The answer is quite simple, yet it is meaningful and the exact answer ever made for such a question. The answer is that “all conflicts occur from what is dear” (*Piyappahūtā kalahā vivādā*).⁴ What is dear in this context does not only refer to the person, it refers to many aspects either things or views. As stated above, this so called “liking”. “Liking” will drag people to take position on something, and people will not be neutral anymore. People will not perceive something as they really are. When people like something, they will say that it is good and otherwise.

Further, the discourse explains that what is dear comes due desires (*candha*) and greed (*lobha*). These two qualities are due to the existence of “appealing and unappealing” (*sātaṃ asātanti yamāhu loke*). As stated in many discourses,⁵ the cause for appealing and unappealing is contact (*phassa*).⁶ Contact happens when there are sense door, object and the consciousness. For example, there is so called eye contact when there are eyes, visible objects and the eye consciousness. These three are called contact (*nāmañca rūpañca paṭicca phasso*). However, as stated above that it is impossible and it is not the Buddhist way that in order to get release from appealing and unappealing, from desires and from greed and from what is dear, people should close all the sense doors up. What should be done for cutting off all these?

The process for the occurrence of liking and disliking happens naturally if people are not receiving object with mindfulness. In the other hand, the process will happen in different way when people are receiving objects with mindfulness. It is because the mindful mind will be able to recognize every object that comes into senses as it is. As the result of the receiving object with mindfulness, liking and disliking will not occur. The *Kalahavivāda Sutta* tells that cutting off liking and disliking is done by not blinded up with any kind

4. Sn. 168

5. Such as Madhupiṇḍika Sutta of the Majjhima Nikāya

6. *Sātaṃ asātanti yamāhu loke*, Sn. 168

perception.⁷ In the other word, after contact takes place, mind should not perceive it based on desires and greed. The result is the view of something as it really is. The one who has this kind of mind will be free from liking and disliking.

The Psychological Process of Liking and Disliking : An Abhidhamic Analysis

The *Abhidhamma* explains that there four realities: Material form (*rūpa*), consciousness (*citta*), mental concomitants (*cetasika*) and *Nibbāna*. Since *rūpa* analyzes purely about the material form, the ethical actions are analysed and included in consciousness (*citta*) and mental concomittants (*cetasika*). It is said that among 89/121 consciousnesses there are 12 unwholesome consciousnesses and 7 unwholesome resultant consciousnesses. The rest of the consciousness can be categorized as wholesome, resultant, and functional.⁸ The mental concomitants which are 52 in number can be divided into ethically variables (13), unwholesome factors (14), and beautiful factors (25).⁹ It is said that consciousness and mental concomitants arise and cease together and they have the same object and base.¹⁰ Thus, it can be said that both are inseparable.

In order to maintain that consciousness works in all conditions without any interruption or disturbance, the term stream of consciousness (*bhavaṅgacitta*) had been introduced in the Abhidhammic study. The function of the *bhavaṅgacitta* is to serve as the basis for all mental process. Thus, the perceptual process which also includes mental process (*citta vīthi*) will be started from *bhavaṅga*. For a normal perceptual process, every single thought will have 17 thought moments (*khana citta*). As it is explained in the *Abhidhammatthasaṅgaha*, if the sense-object, having passed one thought moment (*ekacittakkhaṇātitaḥam*), which is usually referred

7. *Na saññasaññī na visaññasaññī, nopi asaññī na vibhūtasaññī; Evaṃsametassa vibhoti rūpaṃ, saññānidānā hi papañcasaṅkhā*. Sn. 168

8. Bodhi, Bhikkhu, *A Comprehensive Manual of Abhidhamma* Second Edition, Kandy, BPS, 1999, p. 28.

9. Ibid, p. 79.

10. Ibid, p. 76.

to as *atitabhavaṅga*), enters the venue of sense organ, two thought moment will take place. Firstly, it is the vibration of *bhavaṅga* (*bhavaṅga-calana*) and secondly, it is the arrest of *bhavaṅga* (*bhavaṅga-upaccheda*). The succeeding thought moments are arising of five door adverting (*pañcadvaravajjana*), sense-consciousness (*pañcaviññāṇaṃ*), receiving (*sampaticchana*), investigating (*santirana*), determining (*votthapana*), seven moments of cognition (*javana*), and two moments for registration (*tadārammaṇa*).¹¹

From these seventeen thought moments, one cannot observe in which stage that liking and disliking thought will arise as the seventeen thought moments will not lend any room for such quick observation. These seventeen thought moments are presented in the technical terms so that they are not easy understood without the help of commentary. It can be said that the object is fully apprehended at the level of arising sense-consciousness (*pañcaviññāṇa*), but it should be highlighted here that at this level what happens, in the case of seeing for example, is merely seeing and there is no judgemental attitude.¹² In the next level, when perception takes place, there will be two possible reactions of the reception: liking and disliking. Thus, it is starting from here that mind will react, judge the value of the object. But, in this stage the judgement is still at the initial state. The judgement will become stronger when it comes to the level of investigation (*santirana*). In the stage of determining (*votthapana*), the investigated object will be arrange into such manner as to constitute it into definite objects. It is done by differentiation and limitation, by discrimination and definition. Accordingly, it is in these three successive stages that the object comes to be gradually comprehended by the discriminative and selective functions of mind.¹³

It is said that in the stage of *javana* is very important in the

11. Ibid, p. 154.

12. *Cakkhuvīññāṇāhi rūpadassanamattameva, ettha rajjanaṃ vā dussanaṃ vā muyhanaṃ vā natthi*. MA. III, 349.

13. Bodhi, Bhikkhu, *A Comprehensive Manual of Abhidhamma* Second Edition, Kandy, BPS, 1999, p. 154. Cf. and Karunadasa, Y., *The Theravāda Abhidhamma: Its Inquiry into the Nature of Conditioned Reality*. Hong Kong: Centre for Buddhist Studies, The University of Hong Kong, 2010, p. 142.

perceptual process. It is very important because at this stage the object is fully comprehended. That is why the Commentary illustrates the stage with eating the fruit.¹⁴ Amongst 17 thought moments, it is only *javana* that is said to possess three aspects: cognitive, affective and volitional.¹⁵ The *javana* is said to possess cognitive aspect due to its ability to comprehend or to experience object fully (*anubhavana*). In the case of affective aspect of *javana*, the ancient commentators were of two opinions. Firstly, it is said that the feeling will arise after the object is cognized because *javana* does not produce emotional reaction toward object cognized.¹⁶ Secondly, it is believed that *javana* possesses affective tone.¹⁷ *Javana* is stated to possess another privilege, that is possessing volitional aspect, because it is in this stage that volition will occur. Thus, volition can be wholesome, unwholesome or functional.¹⁸ If it is so, therefore, in this stage liking and disliking can gain its peak. If the first beginning of the mind process the mind is defiled with the desire, liking will be manifested so strongly in this stage and will create a volition based on liking. In the other hand, if in the first beginning of the mind process the hatred is becoming the root, the disliking will become so strong and volition based on disliking will occur.

Eradicating “Liking and Disliking”, Eradicating Conflict

As in the *javana* state, the wholesome or unwholesome volition will manifest, the mind should be controlled before entering the *javana* stage. Every single mind should be undertaken by avoiding every

14. *Paribhuttakālo viya javanassa ārammaṇarasam anubhavitakālo*. DhSA. 271-272.

15. Karunadasa, Y., *The Theravāda Abhidhamma: Its Inquiry into the Nature of Conditioned Reality*. Hong Kong: Centre for Buddhist Studies, The University of Hong Kong, 2010, p. 142.

16. VbA. 356.

17. *Cakkhuvīññāṇaṇhi rūpadassanamattameva, ettha rajjanaṃ vā dussanaṃ vā muyhanaṃ vā natthi. Etasmiṃ pana dvāre javanaṃ rajjati vā dussati vā muyhati vā*. MA. III, 349.

18. *Voṭṭhabbanānantaraṃ pana sace mahantaṃ hoti rūpādīrammaṇaṃ, atha yathāvavattāpīte visaye aṭṭhannaṃ vā kāmāvacarakusalānaṃ dvādasannaṃ vā akusalānaṃ navannaṃ vā avasesakāmāvacarakiriyānaṃ aññataravasena cha satta vā javanāni javanti, eso tāva pañcadvāre nayo*. Vism. 459.

unwholesome state (*akusala*) and associating oneself with what is wholesome (*kusala*). In doing so, it should be started in the first beginning of the mind process. When the contact takes place in the stage named *pañcadvaravajjana*, or where the sense doors receive the objects, the mind should not be followed with subjective perception. It will affect the next stage namely *pañcadvaraviññāṇā*. When sense doors are receiving object without subjective perception, the sense of consciousness will not be defiled with liking and disliking and otherwise. Finally, it will make wholesome volition in the *javana* stage, and will create wholesome speech and wholesome bodily action.

If every human being takes care of their mind by avoiding subjective perception, conflict may be reduced. It is because liking and disliking will be no more in existence and conflict will cease from its roots. As the result, there is no need to make any kind of weapon to destroy another person, group, religion, or nation. Hence, in helping the programme for creating peace and harmony in this global society is by guarding the sense doors when they receive the objects. When the sense doors are guarded mindfully, it will not create liking and disliking. Finally, the mind will not be defiled. Undeclared mind is foundation for the social harmony.

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