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**SELF-ACTUALIZATION: A COMPARATIVE STUDY
WITH REFERENCE TO ABRAHAM MASLOW AND THE
TEACHINGS OF EARLY BUDDHISM**

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Self-Actualization: A Comparative Study with Reference to Abraham Maslow and the Teachings of Early Buddhism

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Abstract

The concept of self-actualization is one of the most discussed concepts in the contemporary Western world because when considering the modern world rather than human beings of early ages have desired to attain their highest goals and to become a better version of them. Thus, the term self-actualization is more familiar to human beings today, when they search for how to achieve their highest potential in life. However, the concept of self-actualization is defined by both Eastern and Western worlds in two different ways to interpret their highest achievements. In the Western world of thought, Abraham Maslow was the pioneer who introduced the concept of self-actualization in his theory of Motivation and Personality as the highest level of psychological development where the 'actualization' of full person potential is achieved. On the other hand, one of the Eastern worlds of thoughts, early Buddhism recognized the term self-actualization in two different ways such as attaining Nirvana or becoming Chakravarthi King. So, the main purpose of this research is to compare both these perspectives and try to solve the problem of how far both Maslow's and early Buddhist perspectives on self-actualization differ from each other. Several philosophical methodologies such as content analysis, critical and comparative methods were used to analysis and develop this thesis. Mainly primary and secondary sources have been used in analyzing Maslow and early Buddhist teachings on the concept of self-actualization. According to the comparative analysis of this research, it can be seen that both Maslow's and early Buddhist views of the concept of

self-actualization have a considerable connection even though people may tend to find a paradoxical combination between them.

Keywords; Abraham Maslow, Chakravarthi King, early Buddhism, Nirvana, Self-actualization

Introduction

Man's inclination to explore the unknown and to explain the aspects of life and the world began from the very beginning and philosophy provided him with a rational framework to do so. Philosophy is such a knowledge which has a close or loose relation with almost all of the prevailing branches of knowledge. So, therefore, philosophy is the study of the most general and abstract features of the world and categories with which we think; mind, matter, reason, proof, truth etc. There were systematized philosophical thoughts throughout the history of philosophy and we divide that into two as such western and Eastern philosophies. In particular, these philosophical thoughts cannot be grasped by the ordinary man. Here we should remember one thing this is not one person's work or a group. Of course, this is done by every philosopher throughout the history of a human being.

Philosophy is ordinarily considered as the mother of many disciplines in the world and psychology is one of the sub-disciplines of it (until around 1879). Even though, today psychology is considered a separate discipline, psychology and philosophy have an inseparable and indistinct relation between them. The concept of self-actualization is mainly a psychological but slightly philosophical concept. In psychology, the concept of self-actualization is one of the major concepts introduced by Abraham Maslow in his theory of the hierarchy of needs, the term self-actualization was first used by the German psychiatrist Kurt Goldstein on the other side, in consideration

of philosophers the concept of self-actualization has a long history in relation with theology.

Oxford Dictionary defines the term self-actualization as “the realization or fulfilment of one’s talents and potentialities, especially considered as a drive or need present in everyone”. This concept was first introduced in psychology in the study of motivation and personality, and the concept of self is central here. According to Maslow’s need theory, which made a hierarchy under human needs and self-actualization is the highest level of psychological development where the “actualization” of full personal potential is achieved, which occurs usually after basic bodily and ego needs have been fulfilled. However, this self-actualization is not expected by everyone and only if there is an upward mobility in this hierarchy, an individual can reach it.

On the other hand, at the beginning, it was a religious concept and it has a religious meaning. According to theology, self-actualization means getting the total blessing from God. Hindu or in any other Eastern context we can see again that self-actualization means harmony with Brahma (Brahmasahayathā). That is the self-actualization or getting rid of the defilements (klesha) or preventing the negative aspects of thoughts. From a religious point of view, there are two kinds of religion, which are,

- I. Theistic religion (Theological)
- II. Atheistic religion

In atheistic it is something developing a mind or being a noble person or it is a completely moral person who possesses good moral conduct and is self-actualized. For instance, such people like Buddha, and Arahant. In

Jainism liberated people are self-actualized and they are liberated from evils (liberated mind from evil lives).

However, Maslow provided a different shape or another aspect of the concept of self-actualization. Earlier it was kind of a transcendental concept (supramundane concept), but what Maslow did was he took that concept into human day-to-day life or worldly life in a sense of the mundane aspect (secular aspect). He did not use it from a religious point of view or there is no sense of liberation from life or there is not any sense of a developed mind. For instance, the self-actualization of a carpenter is sometimes having his own furniture house. For a driver, maybe buy his own vehicles and being an owner of several vehicles and have several drivers and conductors under him. That is the self-actualization for him.

Therefore, it can be seen that there are no similarities on the surface level of both views. Although self-actualization was not actually at the beginning a psychological or philosophical concept or religious concept, however after Maslow introduced this concept in that kind of worldly sense but at present, there are some may misunderstand this concept as a religious or philosophical concept. Therefore, in this paper, one of the main purposes is to solve the problem of how far both Maslow's and early Buddhist perspectives on self-actualization differ from each other. Therefore, this researcher has selected Buddhism as an atheistic religion which emphasises self-actualization as the highest goal of humans.

Also, this research paper tries to provide a comparative analysis of the needs and characteristics of self-actualization in the early Buddhist period and the needs and characteristics of self-actualization in Maslow's theory. Because Maslow emphasizes that there are requirements that a person must fulfil to

achieve self-actualization, and the characteristics of a person who has attained self-actualization are emphasized. On the other hand, the requirements and characteristics of a person who achieves the ultimate goal of Nirvana are also stated in the early Buddhist texts. However, this will also indicate that Maslow expressed his views in a very narrow context because he only based on human motivation and personality, and in early Buddhist teachings it can be expressed in a very deep or broad context (philosophical and religious context). This research paper provides a clear understanding of the concept of “self-actualization”, as viewed by Maslow and in Buddhism, separately.

Abraham Maslow’s perspective of Self-actualization

However, the term Self-actualization was first coined by Kurt Goldstein, Abraham Maslow was the most famous person to introduce it as a concept to the modern world. His self-actualization theory was based on a social theory of healthy personality development. He created a pyramid that shows a hierarchy of human needs that talks about what will motivate individuals' behaviour and their goals. Abraham Maslow in his 1943 article A Theory of Human Motivation outlined the concept of self-actualization like this,

“... self-fulfilment, namely the tendency for him (the individual) to become actualized in what he is potentially. This tendency might be phrased as the desire to become more and more what one is, to become everything that one is capable of becoming...”¹

Maslow used this term to explain a desire, not a driving force that would result in realizing one’s capabilities. He didn’t feel that self-actualization determines one’s life; rather, he felt that it gave the individual a desire or a motivation to attain budding ambitions. Maslow’s thought of

the concept of self-actualization has been normally understood as “the full realization of one’s full potential” and of one’s “true self.

Hierarchy of Needs

Maslow’s self-actualization is a need, and as the army slogan back in the day used to talk about it, join the army be all that we can be. In other words, we want to become everything that we are capable of becoming. So self-actualization is the top need on a hierarchy that Maslow describes so it is a pyramid. Self-actualization is the highest and fifth level of his hierarchy of needs theory. On the bottom, we have our basic physical needs like food, shelter, clothing and the next level up is our safety needs. The third level is our need for belonging or affiliation with other people. The fourth level is esteem, which can be self-esteem, or it could also be the esteem of others at the top of the pyramid, once we have met all the other needs below it; people can pursue the need of self-actualization so this is clearly a need. Maslow said,

“...Even if all these (other) needs are satisfied (he is talking about the rest of them below it on the pyramid) we may still often (if not always) expect that a new discontent and restlessness will soon develop unless the individual is doing what he is fitted for. Musicians must make music, artists must paint, and poets must write if they are to be ultimately at peace with themselves. What human beings can be, they must be. They must be true to their own nature. This need we may call self-actualization. It refers to man’s desire for self-fulfilment, namely to the tendency for him to become actually in what he is potentially...”²



Figure 01; Maslow's hierarchy of seven needs

(Source:

<https://i.pinimg.com/originals/7b/59/f1/7b59f1b4b06357724f52a510e48ff1e>

According to the Maslow one of the major definitions of self-actualization is; "intrinsic growth of what is already in the organism, or more accurately of what is the organism itself ... self-actualization is growth-motivated rather than deficiency-motivated".³ This statement emphasises the actual fact that self-actualization cannot easily be reached till the other low-level necessities of Maslow's hierarchy of needs are achieved or succeeded. Whereas Goldstein outlines self-actualization as a driving force, Maslow uses the term to explain personal growth that takes place once low-level needs have primarily been met, one corollary being that, in his opinion "self-actualization... rarely happens... certainly in less than 1% of the adult population"⁴ The actual fact that "most of us function most of the time on a level lower than that self-actualization"⁵ he referred this as the

psychopathology of normality. Maslow uses this term now famous in modern psychology when discussing personality from the humanistic approach.

Characteristics of Self-actualized People

Abraham Maslow studied some of the historical figures and contemporaries whom he believed to be self-actualized including Abraham Lincoln, Thomas Jefferson, Albert Einstein, Eleanor Roosevelt, Jane Addams, William James etc. He explains that there are 15 characteristics of a self-actualized person Efficient perception of reality, Acceptance, Spontaneity, simplicity and naturalness, Problem centring, The quality of detachment and the need for privacy, Autonomy, Continued freshness of appreciation, The mystic experience and the peak experience, Identification, sympathy, and affection for mankind, Interpersonal relations, The democratic character structure, Discrimination between mean and ends and between good and evil, Philosophical, un hostile sense of humour, Creativeness, and Values and self-actualization.⁶

Needs of Self-transcendence

However, what was once considered to be the peak of Maslow's hierarchy of needs is no longer considered to be the peak of self-actualization while very important is no longer considered to be our highest need. Towards the end of Maslow's life, he formulated a stage after self-actualization, a stage he called 'self-transcendence' in his later work "The Father Reaches of Human Nature (1971)"⁷. Self-transcendence is characterized by the ability for one to realize the unity of all beings and to have an intuitive understanding of the connectedness between all things. There is a shift in values from the self to something much greater, something 'beyond' the self. Examples include altruism, spiritual awakening or liberation from egocentricity.

These people take responsibility not only for themselves but for the world and society at large. It comes with the realization that we are only a small part of a much greater whole and so we must act accordingly. We only act in a way that promotes the well-being and functioning of the whole. Maslow's says that,

“...Transcendence refers to the very highest and most inclusive or holistic levels of human consciousness, behaving and relating, as ends rather than means to oneself, to significant others, to human beings in general, to other species, to nature, and to the cosmos...”⁸

In his book “The Farther Reaches of Human Nature” Maslow described the “B-values” (being values) of people at their highest levels of well-being⁹ which are, wholeness, perfection, completion, justice, aliveness, complexity, simplicity, beauty, goodness, uniqueness, effortlessness, playfulness, truth and self-sufficiency.

Early Buddhist perspective of the concept of Self-actualization

The term ‘early Buddhism’ is now used primarily to describe the basic teachings of the Buddha. The original teachings of Buddha include the Four Noble Truths, the Tilakkhana which are Anicca, Dukka, Anatta (Anātma), Dependent Arising (the Paṭiccasamuppāda), Karma and Reincarnation (rebirth or punnabbhava), and the Threefold (categories) of disciplines called Sīla, Samādhi and Pañña. The Pali Tripitaka is the original text that represents early Buddhism.¹⁰ In early Buddhism, the term self-actualization is recognized in two different ways such as Nirvana (also called Nibbāna in Pali) or Cakravarthi King (wheel-turning monarch). Particularly in Buddhism, there are two ways of self-actualization for layperson and monk or priest. They are,

a) According to the transcendental perspective, for monk or priest's highest actualization is the Nibbāna or free from suffering¹¹ (becoming of Buddha) and this attainment also can be achieved by a layperson (everybody has the potential to do so).

The ultimate aim or highest actualization of Buddhism is the attainment of Nirvana, in Pali called Nibbāna, which literary means the “blowing out” or “quenching”. Nirvana is the final spiritual goal in Buddhism and marks the soteriological release from rebirths in samsara. Samsara, the cycle of birth and death is full of suffering which is the great agony that a person has to face. Nirvana is defined by the Western paradigm as the state of total liberation and freedom from the cycle of rebirth and redeath. According to Buddhism Nirvana should not be thought of as a place. Instead, it is a state of consciousness which is above all others. It is the opposite of ignorance, greed, hatred and the defilements which cloud our minds and make us do stupid things. The Buddha taught that Nirvana was the ultimate goal of humans and urged his followers to strive towards it from the Dhammapada, verse 21, the Buddha is quoted as saying.

“Heedfulness is the path to the deathless, heedlessness is the path to death. The heedful do not die, the heedless are like unto the dead.”¹²¹

In verse 75 of the Dhammapada, the Buddha is quoted as saying;

“Surely, the path that leads to worldly gain is one, and the path that leads to Nibbana is another; understanding this, the

¹ Appamādo amatapadam – pamādo maccuno padam, Appamattā na miyanti – ye pamattā yathā matā

bhikkhu, the disciple of the Buddha, should not rejoice in worldly favours, but cultivate detachment”²¹³

b) According to the worldly perspective, one way of layperson’s highest actualization is the becoming of Cakravarthi King or Global King (wheel-turning monarch).

According to early Buddhism, one-way laypersons actualize their highest potential is by becoming Cakravarthi King or Global King. When we consider Indian religions (especially Buddhism) the term Cakravarthi (Sanskrit: carakvartin, Pali: cakkavatti) refers to an ideal universal ruler, particularly within the sense of an imperial ruler of the entire Indian sub-continent (as in the case of the Maurya Empire despite not conquering the southern kingdoms). The term cakravarthin is a bahuvrihi compound term, translating to “one whose wheels are moving”, within the sense of “whose chariot is rolling everywhere without obstruction”. Most commonly in Buddhism, it can even be analyzed as an ‘instrumental bahuvrihi: “through whom the wheel is moving” within the meaning of “through whom the Dharmachakra (“Wheel of the Dharma”) is turning”.

In Buddhism, the Cakravarti came to be thought of as the secular counterpart of a Buddha. Particularly in Buddhism, the term applies to temporal as well as spiritual kingship and leadership. So Cakravarti King is a righteous monarch of the law, conqueror of the four quarters, who had established the security of his realm and was possessed of the seven treasures. They are; the Wheel Treasure, the Elephant Treasure, the Horse Treasure, the Jewel Treasure, the Woman Treasure, the Household Treasure, and seventh,

² Aññā hi lābhūpanisā – aññā nibbānagāminī, Evam etam abhiññāya – bhikkhu Buddhassa sāvako, Sakkāram nābhinandeyya – vivekam anubrūhaye

the Counsellor Treasure.¹⁴ According to the early Buddhist text, he has more than a thousand sons who are heroes, of heroic stature, conquerors of the hostile army and he dwells having conquered this sea-grit land without stick or sword, by the law.

So, a Cakravarti King is a king who rules all of the greatest continents (Pubbavideha, Jambudipa, Aparagoyana, Uttarakuru) of earth. The King wins all the continents with peace and since he's virtuous, seven miracle treasures come out including a large wheel spinning (Cakraratnaya) in the sky. The king and his army will travel anyplace there within that spinning wheel in the sky. He travels over the globe and teaches all the kings the way to rule with peace Dasavidha-raja dhamma. He will visit the lower heavens realms with the power of Chakraratnaya if he needs and he only appears when humans are virtuous and long-lived.

Early Buddhist view on Needs

According to early Buddhism, Buddha states the importance of most basic needs such as food, shelter, water, etc. For example, the Buddha stated as follows in the Samanera Pañha (The Novice's Question) in the Khuddakapāta of the Kuddaka Nikāya that all animals have hunger and that is a basic physiological need.

“What is one? All animals subsist on food. (There are these four nutriments for the establishing of beings who have taken birth or for the support of those in search of a place to be born. Which four?

- 1) Ordinary material food (kabalinkarahara)
- 2) Contact (of sense organs with sense objects, phassahara)
- 3) Consciousness (viññahara) and,

4) Mental volition (manasañcetanahara)¹⁵

However, according to Buddhism, food should be eaten not for fun, not to nourish male fat, not to fatten the body, not to whiten the body, but to maintain the body and life, and to alleviate the pain of hunger. The Buddha told the monks to embrace the reflection (paccavekkati/pratyavēksā) of food, with the aim of freeing them from their greed for food and the pursuit of sāsana goals. According to Buddhism, food should be taken in a timely manner so that we can reap the benefits of the food. In the Suttas Kakacūpama and Bhaddāli of the Majjhima Nikāya, the merits of eating a single session (perabath) were stated as follows.

“...Bhikkhus, I eat at a single session. By so doing, I am free from illness and affliction, and I enjoy health, strength, and a comfortable abiding. Come, bhikkus eat at a single session. By so doing, you will be free from illness and affliction, and you will enjoy health, strength, and a comfortable abiding...¹⁶”

According to the early Buddhist texts it can be seen that finding an appropriate shelter is also a basic physiological need for a person who attained the ultimate end goal of Nirvana. For example, the Sutta called Ariyapriyesana explained how Buddha found shelter in Magadhan country, Senānigama near Uruvelā, a place where he actualized his ultimate end goal of Nibbāna¹⁷.

However, Buddha never mentioned that if someone struggling to meet these basic physiological needs (other than food) he may not be able to achieve the ultimate goal.

According to Buddha person who follows the Buddhist path will receive safety and security. For instance, in Mettānisamsa Sutta, Buddha

describes the eleven benefits (protections) that can be expected from the release (deliverance) of heart by familiarizing oneself with thought of loving kindness (*mettā*), by the cultivation of loving-kindness, by constantly increasing these thoughts, by regarding loving-kindness as a vehicle (of expression), and also as something to be treasured, by living in conformity with these thoughts, by putting these ideas into practice, and by establishing them. Those eleven are;

1. One sleep well
2. One awakens happily
3. One does not have bad dreams
4. One is pleasing to human beings
5. One is pleasing to spirits
6. Deities protect one
7. Fire, poison, and weapons do not injure one
8. One's mind quickly becomes concentrated
9. One's facial complexion is serene
10. One dies unconfused
11. If one does not penetrate further, one fares on to the Brahma world¹⁸

Furthermore, in the early Buddhist texts, Buddha also preached about (layperson) how to shape the economy properly and through it, how to find the way to true peace of mind without fear. For example, in the *Vyagghapajja*¹⁹ Sutta of the *Aṅguttara Nikāya*, Buddha has preached on the path required to maintain peace of mind.

In addition to this, as stated in the *Sabbāsava Sutta* in the *Majjhima Nikāya*, the Buddhist monk or priest consumes the *Chivara* (robe), *Senasana*

(resting place) and Gilana (medicinal requisites) based on the need for safety and protection. It is said that in order to get rid of the cold, to get rid of the heat, prevent the infestation of snakes and also from gadflies, mosquitos, wind, sun and scorpions, and cover the places of shame in the body monks will consume this²⁰.

However, in the study of some of the sermons of the Buddha, one finds contradictions to Maslow's view of the importance of needs of safety and security. For example, according to the Bāhiya Sutta of the Khuddaka Nikāya, the Bāhiya of the Bark-cloth has actualized his ultimate goal of Nirvana, without the need for safety and security²¹.

According to Buddhism, man is a social animal. Thus, he must have a society and he must be accepted by that society. The Buddha has preached that it is not easy for an individual to live alone and that duties and rights between social groups of society carry their society forward. For example, it can be seen in the early Buddhist text, "The Dhammapada", that Buddha has preached to the Venerable Mahākassapa about the importance of having the right companions (kalyana mitta) for a monk. But if one (monk or priest) does not find a person who is better than, or at least equal to oneself, it is better to be alone rather than keep company with foolish people/ non-virtuous people. There is no profitable companionship with fools.²² This is the Dhammapada, Bāla Vagga, verse 61 Buddha is quoted as saying.

"...If, as the disciple fares along, he meets no companion who is better or equal, let him firmly pursue his solitary career. There is no fellowship with the foolish..."³²³

³ Caraṇ ce nādhigaccheyya - seyyaṃ sadisamattano, Ekacariyaṃ dalhaṃ kayirā – natthi bāle saḥāyatā

Buddha also preached that lay people who live in society should maintain friendly relationships among themselves to fulfil the needs of love and belongingness. There are a large number of discussions on this subject in Buddha's discourses. For example, in Sigālaka Sutta of the Dīgha Nikāya, Buddha has preached the human duty to strengthen relationships. Here Lord Buddha saw a youth called Sigālaka, worshipping towards six directions. He preached to him the correct way of worshipping. According to the Sutta, Buddha has classified society into six groups as follows.

1. The east denotes mother and father
2. The south denotes teachers
3. The west denotes wife and children
4. The north denotes friends and companions
5. The nadir denotes servants, workers and helpers
6. The zenith denotes ascetics and Bhikkhus²⁴

These groups are interconnected; parents and children, teachers and pupils, husbands and wives, friends and companions, masters and servants, Bhikkus and laymen. There are certain duties allotted to each of these categories. If these duties are fulfilled, firm relationships will be built among social categories. Fulfillment of duties means serving each other. According to Buddhism, practising these moral values is important for both monks and laymen to actualize their highest enlightenment.

However, the Buddha states in the Mahāsaccaka Sutta of the Majjhima Nikāya that although the need for love and belongingness is necessary for the existence of a person, the one who seeks to understand the real wisdom should not cling too much to those needs²⁵.

As Maslow, Buddha also explained the importance of the need for esteem in his sermons. For example, this need (esteem for oneself) can be explained by Buddha with reference to Upananda, a monk of the Sākya clan in the Dhammapada, verse 158 (Atta Vagga), while residing at the Jētavana Monastery. It states as follows;

“If you are keen to advise others, in the first instance establish yourself in the proper virtues. It is only then that you become fit to instruct others⁴²⁶”

Other than this, in many discourses of Sutta Pitaka Buddha states that the dignity of others in the society and one’s own strength, ability, self-confidence and etc., are important to both monks as well as lay people, especially in the pursuit of ultimate liberation. For example, the Mahāsaccaka Sutta of the Majjhima Nikāya describes how much physical and emotional strength and self-confidence were required for the Buddha when he sought to attain Nibbāna²⁷.

However, according to some sermons in Sutta Pitaka, Buddha has preached that sometimes having too much self-confidence and courage in a person who seeks to actualize Nibbāna will lead him to go away from his final ultimate goal. For example, in the Sona Sutta of the Aṅguttara Nikāya Buddha used the lute as a metaphor to explain this to the Venerable Sona at Rājagaha in the Cool Grove²⁸.

Like Maslow, Buddha also preached the need for self-actualization (to become Cakravarthi King) in Cakkavatti-Sihanāda Sutta of the Dīgha Nikāya. According to this Sutta, one way of layperson’s highest actualization is the becoming of Cakravarthi King²⁹ or Global King (wheel-turning monarch) and

⁴ Attānam eva pathamaṃ - patīrūpe nivesaye, Ath’ aññaṃ anusāseyya – na kilisseyya pandito

the term Cakravarthi (Sanskrit: carakvartin, Pali: cakkavatti) refers to an ideal universal ruler, particularly within the sense of an imperial ruler of the entire Indian sub-continent (as in the case of the Maurya Empire despite not conquering the southern kingdoms). As it can be seen in this Sutta sermon Buddha was explaining the path or needs to actualize Cakravarthi King. Those needs (10 duties of an Aryan wheel-turning monarch) are explained by the Royal sage to King Khattiya (son of King Dalhanemi)³⁰. The different part of this Sutta, King Khattiya (after becoming the Cakravarti King) also explains the need to become Cakravarti King to those who opposed him in the eastern region.

According to the early Buddhist texts, like Maslow's self-actualizer every layperson who becomes Cakravarthi King has fulfilled all the above-mentioned needs such as physiological, safety and security, love and belongingness and self-esteem need.

It can be seen that Buddha also preached the need for self-transcendence from a different point of view according to his Sutta sermons. However, similar to Maslow's view, the Buddha also stated that after attaining ultimate liberation, one should preach the Dhamma to others and help them achieve Nirvana. This idea is stated by Buddha in the Mahāpadāna Sutta of the Dīgha Nikāya as follows;

“... Wander abroad, monks, for the good of the many, for the happiness of the many, out of compassion for the world, for the welfare and happiness of devas and humans. Do not go two together, monks, but teach the Dhamma that is lovely in its beginnings, lovely in its middle, and lovely in its ending, both in the letter and in the spirit, and display the holy life fully complete and

perfect. There are beings with little dust on their eyes who are perishing through not hearing Dhamma: they will become knowers of Dhamma.”³¹

In addition, conceptually it can be seen that the way of achieving the state of transcendence in Buddhism is different from Maslow’s view. According to the Dhammacakkappavattana Sutta of the Samyutta Nikāya, for monks and laypersons highest actualization is the Nibbāna or free from suffering (considering the transcendental perspective) and the main purpose of Buddhism is to explain the Four noble truths which are human suffering, the cause of suffering, the solution and the path to emancipation.³² According to Buddha middle path is the way of actualizing Nibbāna and the middle path means the Noble Eightfold path; Sammāditti, Sammāsankappo, Sammāvāchā, Sammākammanto, Sammājīvo, Sammāvāyāmo, Sammāsathi, and Sammāsamādhi.³³ So as said in Sutta the path to Nibbāna consists of eight elements and three categories of discipline; sīla-morality, samādhi-concentration/meditation, and puñña-wisdom which is also known as the middle path³⁴.

Furthermore, although Maslow was transcending ego-centric needs, early Buddhism was devoid of the concept of egoism in a different sense. The theory of soul (Atta/Self) is rejected in Buddhism and provides a rational foundation for a theory of soul-less (Anātta/Non-self). But Buddha does not speak of this concept of egoism (selfishness) as a theory of soul (atta/self) or theory of soul-less (anatta/non-self). He explains how a theory of soul (atta) develops in the Samanupassana Sutta (ways of regarding things) of the Samyutta Nikāya.³⁵

As the Buddha also describes in the Brahmajāla Sutta of the Dīgha Nikāya many ideologies have sprung up centering on the theory of soul.

According to it, there were two different ideologies called eternalist (Sasvatavāda) and annihilationist (Ucchedavāda) before Buddhism. According to the eternalist (Sasvatavāda) viewpoint, the soul has no beginning and no end. On the other hand, annihilationists (Ucchedavāda) that the soul has an end. But Buddha does not agree with both these ideologies.

According to Buddhism, both the theory of soul (atta) and the theory of soul-less (anatta) give rise to misconceptions. So, to understand this let's take a passage from a Buddhist sermon called Aththaththa Sutta of the Saṃyutta Nikāya. Here wandering philosopher Vacchagotta asks the Buddha whether the self exists or not. In each case, the Buddha remains silent. This silence on the part of the Buddha has been interpreted in two ways. According to some, it was because the Buddha did not want 'to shock a weak-minded hearer' by saying that there is no self. According to others, 'the logical conclusion from this would be that something is, though it is not the empirical self'. However, the correct position can be seen from the same discourse when the Buddha told Ānanda as to why he decided to remain silent.³⁶

If any conclusion can be drawn from this, it is that Buddhism does not subscribe to the theory of the self as recognized both in the eternalist and the annihilationist ideologies, not that the Buddha believed in a self.

Characteristics of Self-actualized People in Early Buddhism

According to the above discussion we can see that in Buddhism people can actualize their highest potential in two different ways such as attaining Nibbāna or becoming a Cakravarti King (Global King). Those who actualized their highest goal in Buddhism have some characteristics which are explain in the early Buddhist text "The Dhammapada". Especially in Dhammapada, the Arahanta Vagga, Pandita Vagga, Buddha Vagga, Bhahmana Vagga, and

Bhikku Vagga³⁷ contained those characteristics such as, no suffering for the emancipated, Arahants are free from attachment, be not attached to food, free are the undefiled ones, the sense-controlled are dear to all, like the earth Arahants resent not, they are calm and peaceful, noble is he who is not credulous, delightful is the spot where Arahants dwell, delightful are the forests to the passionless, the Buddha cannot be fathomed, the Buddha is passionless, Buddha are dear to all, the good are rare, non-violence, pure and noble life, no delight even in heavenly pleasure, release from suffering is gained by seeking refuge in the Buddha, Dhamma and the Sangha, the fully controlled person, sweet is his speech who controls his tongue, be contented, radiates loving-kindness radiates peace, they give up lust and hatred, have concentration and wisdom, he is peaceful who is free from all worldly things, he is holy who has discarded all evil, truthful and righteous, the non-possessive and the non-attached person, harmless, desire less and etc.

Early Buddhist hierarchy of Self-actualizes

According to the early Buddhist texts, both monks and laypersons can actualize their highest potential through the teachings of Buddha. So, in the Pali Canon scriptures the 'Tripitaka' there we actually can see the sixth level of a hierarchy of self-actualizes in Buddhism. As for the names of the six levels each has a title in the Pali language, the ancient language these scriptures were written in similar to Sanskrit. The six levels of self-actualization are as follows.

- 1) Sotāpanna which translates to Stream-enterer
- 2) Sakadāgāmi which translates to Once-returner
- 3) Anāgāmi which translates to Non-returner
- 4) Arahant which translates to Worthy-one

- 5) Paccekabuddha which translates to Semi-Buddha
- 6) Samma Sambuddha which is also called Buddha

In the Suttas, the Buddha highlights the specific characteristics of the first four levels³⁸ of a hierarchy of self-actualizes in two ways: by mentioning the defilements that are abandoned on each plane and the consequences its attainment bears on the process of rebirth³⁹.

Comparative Analysis of Abraham Maslow & Early Buddhism

It is well known that both Abraham Maslow's and early Buddhist perspectives are conceptually distinguished, so people often seem to find a paradoxical combination between both of them. In particular, when considering about outer appearance or surface outlook of both Maslow's and early Buddhist perspectives on the concept of self-actualization there is no real connection between them. Maslow is the pioneer who introduced the concept of self-actualization in his motivation and personality theory, and it is a final level of psychological development that can be achieved when all basic and mental needs are essentially fulfilled. On the other hand, Buddha does not introduce self-actualization as motivation and personality theory but he introduces it as a path or way to resolve human unrest, tension, anxiety and suffering. However, if a deeper level of study is done from both perspectives, major similarities can be identified as well. Therefore, it's important to look at how far these two perspectives on self-actualization differ from each other.

The similarities can be seen between Maslow and Buddha, especially in the needs and characteristics of self-actualized people. Both of them agreed that physiological needs, safety and security needs, love and belongingness needs, Esteem needs, self-actualization needs and self-transcendence needs are important for a people to fulfill highest goals. Additionally both of them

explained the characteristics of self-actualized people, particularly in Buddhism there can be seen in the Sutta discourses, commentary explanation and Dhamma stories. Those characteristics are efficient perceptions of reality, acceptance of nature, problem centering, able to be alone with the emotions of being alone, being autonomous (independent), having a continued, freshness of appreciation about life and the world around us, and profound interpersonal relationship. Other than these similarities there can be seen some similarities in characteristics between Maslow's self-transcendence people and Buddhist self-actualizers, such as truthfulness and goodness can be seen in both perspectives.

Instead of these similarities, there can be seen some differences between the two perspectives on the needs and characteristics of self-actualized people and those main differences can be summarized as follows.

According to the Maslow's perspective people can't actualize their highest potential or goal if they struggle to meet the basic bodily and ego needs. However, according to Buddha's discourses, some people actualize their highest potential even without fulfilling those basic bodily and ego needs (other than the need for food). Another difference between these two views is that, there are the six levels of hierarchy of self-actualizers in Buddhism (Sotāpanna, Sakadāgāmi, Anāgāmi, Arahant, Paccekabuddha and Samma Sambuddha), but in Maslow's view there is no hierarchy of self-actualizers. Furthermore, although Maslow transcended the ego-centric needs, early Buddhism was devoid of the concept of egoism in a different sense. Other than these differences, there are some differences in the characteristics of self-actualized people in both the views. According to Maslow, self-actualized people live according to their own standards and do not accept the rules of others, but in contradictory to Maslow, in Buddhism, it can be seen that

Buddha preached Vinaya Pitaka as a collection of rules and guidance to the Buddhist monks in common. Further there are some more characteristics which do not seem to be resemblance with Maslow which are, desire less, guard his senses, not wrathful, free from all worldly things (clam in body, clam in speech, and clam in mind), no attachment, and give up lust and hatred. Moreover, as it compare to the way that used concept of self-actualization in Maslow's view point was differ from the way that it used in early Buddhism. In particular early Buddhism the term self-actualization is recognized as a two different ways such as Nirvana (according to the transcendental perspective) or Cakravarthi King (according to worldly perspective).

Conclusion

According to the above mentioned results and facts, finally it can be concluded that both Maslow and early Buddhist view of concept of self-actualization has a considerable connection even though people may tend to find a paradoxical combination between them only considering on outer appearance of both views.

Endnotes

- ¹ Online, Available @: Abraham H. Maslow, A Theory of Human Motivation: Psychological Review, 50, pdf, <http://citeseerx.ist.psu.edu/viewdoc/download?doi=10.1.1.318.2317&rep=rep1&type=pdf>, (Accessed, 2021.02.08)
- ² Maslow, Abraham H., Motivation and Personality, 3rd edition, New Delhi: Pearson Education Asia, 2003, p. 22.
- ³ Ibid, p. 133.
- ⁴ Maslow, Abraham H., Toward a Psychology of being, 2nd edition, New York: Van Nostrand, 1968, p. 204.
- ⁵ Loevinger, Jane., Ego Development: (conceptions and theories), San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers, 1976, p. 140.
- ⁶ Ibid, Motivation and Personality, p. 128.

- ⁷ Maslow, Abraham H., *The Farther Reaches of Human Nature*, New York: Viking Press, 1971, p. 259.
- ⁸ *Ibid*, p. 269.
- ⁹ *Ibid*, p. 273.
- ¹⁰ ඥානාරාම හිමි, පානෙගම., මුල් බුදු සමය හා විවරණ ගැටළු, පානේගම: කතා ප්‍රකාශන, 1996, පිටු. 4.
- ¹¹ බාලසුරිය, බී. එම්. ඩී., දීඝනිකායවිධි කථා, දෙහිවල: බෞද්ධ සංස්කෘතික මධ්‍යස්ථානය, 2011, පිටු. 193.
- ¹² Narada Tera. *The Dhammapadam: Pali text and Translation with Stories in Brief and Notes*, (trans). Taiwan: The Coperate Body of the Buddha Educational Foundation, 1993, p. 23.
- ¹³ *Ibid*, p. 72.
- ¹⁴ Walshe, Maurice., *The Long Discourses of the Buddha: A Translation of the Dīgha Nikāya*, (trans). Boston: Wisdom publication, 1995, p. 395.
- ¹⁵ Online, Available @: Piyadassi Thera, “The Khuddakapatha”, <https://www.accesstoinsight.org/tipitaka/kn/khp/khp.1-9x.piya.html#khp-4>, (Accessed, 2021.04.04)
- ¹⁶ Bhikkhu Nānamoli and Bhikkhu Bodhi. *The Middle Length Discourses of the Buddha: A new translation of the Majjhima Nikāya*, (trans). Kandy: Buddhist publication society, 1995, p. 218.
- ¹⁷ *Ibid*, p. 259.
- ¹⁸ *The Numerical Discourses of the Buddha: A Translation of the Aṅguttara Nikāya*, p. 1573.
- ¹⁹ *Ibid*, p. 1194-96. There can be seen both term Vyagghapajja and Byaggapajja used in translation of this Sutta.
- ²⁰ *Ibid*, Bhikkhu Nānamoli and Bhikkhu Bodhi, p. 94.
- ²¹ Online, Available @: Thanissaro Bhikkhu, “Bāhiya Sutta: Bāhiya”, <https://www.accesstoinsight.org/tipitaka/kn/ud/ud.1.10.than.html>, (Accessed, 2021.04.10).
- ²² සිරි ඥානොභාස තිස්ස හිමි, මොරගල්ලේ., ධම්මපද විවරණ. කොළඹ 11: සීමාසහිත ඇම්. ඩී. ඉණසේන සහ සමාගම, 2001, පිටු. 123.
- ²³ *Ibid*, Narada Tera, p. 62.
- ²⁴ *Ibid*, Maurice Walshe, p. 466.
- ²⁵ *Ibid*, Bhikkhu Nānamoli and Bhikkhu Bodhi, p. 335-37.
- ²⁶ *Ibid*, Narada Tera, p. 144.
- ²⁷ *Ibid*, Bhikkhu Nānamoli and Bhikkhu Bodhi, p. 337-40.
- ²⁸ *Ibid*, *The Numerical Discourses of the Buddha: A Translation of the Aṅguttara Nikāya*, p. 933.
- ²⁹ එම, බී. එම්. ඩී. බාලසුරිය, පිටු. 193.
- ³⁰ *The Long Discourses of the Buddha: A Translation of the Dīgha Nikāya*, p. 396-97.
- ³¹ *Ibid*, *The Long Discourses of the Buddha: A Translation of the Dīgha Nikāya*, p. 217-18.
- ³² *Ibid*, *The Connected Discourses of the Buddha: A Translation of the Saṃyutta Nikāya*, p. 1838.
- ³³ *Ibid*, p. 1884.
- ³⁴ Online, Available @: Matthew Sockolov, “Nirvana, Buddhism, and the Path Explained”, <https://oneminddharma.com/nirvana/>, (accessed, 2021.01.25)
- ³⁵ *Ibid*, *The Connected Discourses of the Buddha: A Translation of the Saṃyutta Nikāya*, p. 885-86.
- ³⁶ *Ibid*, p. 1394.
- ³⁷ *Ibid*, *The Long Discourses of the Buddha: A Translation of the Dīgha Nikāya*, p. 73-319.

³⁸ According to the early Buddhism, this first four level of self-actualizers divided in to eight more self-actualizers such as, person who attained and attaining to Sotāpanna, Sakadāgāmi, Anāgāmi and Arahant levels.

³⁹ Ibid, The Middle Length Discourses of the Buddha: A new translation of the Majjhima Nikāya, p. 42.

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