

Buddhist ethics and victimized children



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Dukkha and the universality of suffering

Nature has eerily endowed the hardship and sufferings of the weaker sections of society with make or break ultimatums. As a result, the hapless victims wriggle and waste away under overwhelming pressure or miraculously emerge as victors after overcoming internal and external turmoil. In the annals of social deprivation, the worst to suffer have been children. Research studies and statistics continue to surprise with worrisome figures of children in the clutches of debilitating situations, even from seemingly normal families.

The great mass of victimized children worldwide, however, is only a continuing trend which has been prevalent down the ages. Right thinking, religious and social citizenry have provided relief. Nevertheless, the end to the sufferings of these innocent victims still seems a distant dream. (Help for Victimized Children)

The Buddhist ethics highlights the eightfold path that applies to the normal citizens, perpetrators of sufferings on the victimized children, and the victims themselves. The Buddhist ethics provides gripping insights to awaken concern and care, penitence to the perpetrators and solace to the victims.

Tanha and the sensual desires of the flesh

The jungle law of ‘ Might is right’ has predators and preys following it with their own interpretations of attack or escape. The carnivores kill to satisfy their hunger. However, the perpetrators of crime on children do so to satisfy their greed and lust. Greed is like a bottomless pit and it ends in tragic

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misery. Buddhist ethics exposes the debilitating consequence and futility of greed as also other fleshly desires.

According to the second truth of Buddhist ethics, all sufferings are the results of tanha (cravings). The handling or mishandling of tanha produces fruitful results or sufferings, depending on the process. Tanha is not restricted to criminal actions alone. Tanha in all forms lead to sufferings, according to Buddhist ethics. The tanha for power and good life also leads to suffering.

(Michael C. Brannigan)

It is difficult to interpret this concept to victimized children because it is practically inconceivable and unreasonable to explain a horrified child why he or she must not crave for solace or good life.

How we as a society can free these victimized children from suffering through the eightfold path

The Buddhist concept of anatman (no self, soullessness) provides the eightfold path to freedom from sufferings. This eightfold path of right view, right resolve, right speech, right conduct, right livelihood, right effort, right mindfulness, and right concentration is instrumental in a society eager to alleviate the sufferings of victimized children.

The eightfold path specifically applies first to perpetrators of crime on children to mend ways, and also awakens the conscience of the general citizenry to the virtuous principles of karuna (compassion), metta (lovingkindness), mudita (sympathetic joy), and upekkha (impartiality). These virtues enable the citizens, especially the disciples attain nirvana (annihilation of the self), the ultimate summit.

As a society, we can free these victimized children by becoming one with them in their sufferings and help them realize the Middle Way of karuna,

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metta, mudita and upekkha. (Michael C. Brannigan)

Sources:

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