HOW TO DEAL WITH THE EQUAL-AND-UNEQUAL OTHER?: THE THERAVADA BUDDHIST APPROACH

Pradip Kumar Gokhale*

Abstract: *With the two basic premises that (1) man is an unsocial social animal and (2) the other is both equal as well as unequal to us in diverse respects, the paper explains the Buddhist doctrine of brahmavihāra as a systematic way of dealing with others in a moral way. The paper develops in three parts: 1) In the first part the author discusses the critical response of Buddhism to the Brahmanical approach to equalities and inequalities. Here the author explains how Buddhism criticizes the hierarchical approach of Brahmanism and in what sense the Buddhist approach can be called egalitarian. 2) In the second part the author discusses the constructive approach of Buddhism to equalities and inequalities which is manifest in the doctrine of four sublime attitudes called brahmavihāras. Drawing on the transactional psychological analysis of four life positions given by Thomas Harris in his book, I'm OK You're OK, the author reconstructs these life positions as objective conditions and explains the four sublime attitudes as moral responses to them. 3) In the last part the paper raises some related issues. Here he compares the Buddhist doctrine of brahmavihāras with the Pātañjala-Yoga concept of four bhāvanās and juxtaposes the Buddhist doctrine with the doctrines of anattā and śūnyatā.*

I. Stage-Setting

How to behave with the other is a problem. Should I simply deny the existence of the other? Can I do so? Some philosophers have tried to do that. They have shown that from a logical point of view we cannot establish the existence of the other. On the other hand the defenders of common sense would say that such a skeptical argumentation involves at least a pragmatic contradiction. But why are skeptics inclined to question the existence of the other in spite of a pragmatic contradiction? It is either because they believe that logic can be detached from life so that it is possible to conduct logical-intellectual exercises for intellectual satisfaction without any implications for actual life or may be some of them want to achieve some psychological satisfaction by isolating themselves from others at least for the few philosophical moments. The underlying conviction behind the latter may be that self-assertion or self-esteem is possible only by denying others at least temporarily or it may be that perfection in self-realization is possible only in a non-dualistic experience in which the other appears as illusion or does not appear at all. In the case of the other-negating self-realization, it may not be just the denial of the other persons or

*PRADEEP KMAR GOKHALE, Research Professor, Central University of Tibetan Studies, Sarnath, Varanasi, India-221007. E-mail: pradeepgokhale53@gmail.com.

other beings but it may be a part of the denial of external world as a whole. Such solipsistic-idealistic positions are seriously maintained by some philosophers by maintaining a distinction between different realms or levels of existence, by distinguishing between what is ultimately real and what is empirically or conventionally real. Here the difference between western and Indian philosophical traditions seems to be that in the former such an ultimate realm of existence, idealistic or solipsistic, was regarded as intelligible or thinkable by those who argued for it, but not empirically achievable, whereas in the latter such a realm of existence was regarded as achievable in a kind of mystical experience, a kind of meditative trance.
But in both these cases when it comes to the level of common sense or to the level of ordinary experience and practice, the recognition of the external world and also of other persons becomes inevitable. However, the question of recognition of the other and denial of the other occurs even at this level though in a different way. At this level, recognition of the other would mean recognition of the other as someone equal to us, as someone with whom we can share things or ideas or plans and denying the other would mean denying such a status to the other. In fact recognizing and denying the other in this sense occur simultaneously in interpersonal relationship. I want to suggest further that this two-fold relation (of recognition and denial) with the other becomes possible because of the dual nature of a human being as an unsocial social being. Here I want to suggest that both socialness and unsocialness are natural to human person. They are inseparably related to each other and also, in a loose sense, imply each other.

Because of socialness one mixes with others, communicates with others, assimilates oneself with others and tries to establish a sharing relation with others. But this sharing relation has serious limitations. Generally there are certain things, ideas and plans one has, that one does not like to share with all others. One likes to reserve them for oneself or for a selected few. Just as one likes to assimilate oneself with others, one also likes to differentiate oneself from others. One likes to realize oneself as unique in some important respects. This uniqueness implies inequality with others and taken in comparative or competitive spirit can indicate one's superiority or inferiority to others. Hence social-ness which is indicated by sharing relation, sense of equality and communication is necessarily surrounded by a sense of inequality and uniqueness which indicates isolated-ness and unsocialness. But this unsocialness has a natural tendency to be communicated and shared in a social framework and hence it leads to a social manifestation. Social-ness and unsocial-ness in this way lead to each other, 'imply' each other (though not in a strict logical sense).

This dual character can give rise to moral issues. For instance the feeling of equality with others may not always be healthy or morally sound. An envious or conceited person feels unhappy over equality, because he likes to see himself to be above others. The feeling of inequality too can give rise to moral issues. It develops envy or jealousy if the inequality amounts to superiority of the other and may cause conceit and sadistic pleasure if it amounts to inferiority of the other. In fact the issue of dealing with the other is more complex than this. It is not just the question of

dealing with the equal *or* unequal other but with the equal *and* unequal other and the unequal other is not just superior *or* inferior other but superior *and* inferior other.

In what follows I want to discuss the Buddhist approach to equalities and inequalities and the moral issues concerning them. This approach of Buddhism is a part of its more general approach, regarding the question as to how a person should look at the world at large consisting of things and beings and also at oneself. Secondly this approach has both a critical and a constructive dimension. At critical level it is a response to materialism, Brahmanism and asceticism. At constructive level it advocates a path leading to emancipation, the path which is variously described as middle path, noble eight fold path and the three fold training consisting of morality, meditation and insight. I will not be concerned with all these aspects in this paper, though they are all interconnected, but I will concentrate on the aspects most relevant to the issue of equality and inequality involved in interpersonal relation. The discussion will be divided into three parts: (1) In the first part I will discuss the critical response of Buddhism to the Brahmanical approach to equalities and inequalities. (2) In the second part I will discuss the constructive approach of Buddhism to equalities and inequalities which is manifest in the doctrine of four sublime attitudes called *brahmavihāras*. (3) In the last part of the paper I will raise some related issues and make some observations.

II. Buddhist Criticism of the Brahmanical Approach

The Brahmanical approach to the issue of equality was complex. In the Vedic literature itself we see a tension between Brāhmaṇa texts which advocate ritualism and the Brahmin-dominated social order and the Upaniṣadic texts which criticize ritualistic way of life and assert *Ātman-Brahman* nature of all living beings. In spite of such a tension there is also a tendency to arrive at a compromise between hierarchy and equality. This is seen in *mokṣa*-centric schools of the Bramanical tradition such as Sāṁkhya and Vedānta. On metaphysical level they accept equality or unity among all living beings. While concerned with the nature of empirical or embodied selves, however, they emphasize inequalities governed by *varṇa*, caste, gender and other factors. Hence from the ultimate point of view all were equal, but from empirical point of view, which was important for all practical purpose, all were unequal. The inequalities among human beings were supposed to be created by Brahmā/Prajāpati or by the law of *Karma*. They were supposed to be determined by birth and unsurpassable in the present life.

The Buddhist approach to equalities and inequalities was different from this in some fundamental respects. Buddhism did not accept *ātman* or any such eternal metaphysical mark of equality or unity among living beings. But it accepted equality among them in terms of their mental and physical constituents viz. *Nāma* and *rūpa* which were generally divided into five aggregates or *skandha*s. Buddhists also believe that Buddha addressed his first sermon not only to the five *bhikkhu*s but to animals and celestial beings around him who understood it and benefited from it. *Jātaka* stories tell us that Gautama, the Buddha in his many previous births lived animal life

but manifested and developed different moral-spiritual perfections, i.e., *pāramitās*. Such stories, however, are mythological and should be interpreted in some figurative way. The main thrust of the Buddha's message which is relevant for our purpose, remains anthropocentric. Of course Buddhism is not anthropocentric in the sense in which Semitic religions are, according to whom humans have intrinsic value and animals have only instrumental value. Animals in Buddhism have intrinsic value insofar as they can be reborn as humans and humans can be reborn as them. Hence there was an undercurrent of equality flowing through different species beings. However the main focus of attention in Buddhism was human beings mainly because of the intellect, communicative ability and the potential for *nirvāṇa* that they had and the animals lacked. Hence all living beings were treated as moral objects – as objects of *mettā* and *karuṇā* (i.e. loving kindness and comparison) whereas, human beings, unlike animals, were also moral agents, as potential extenders of *mettā* and *karuṇā* to all. Of course one can say that this idea of different realms of living beings with an undercurrent of equality and with a special emphasis on human beings as moral agents is a common feature of Brahmanical as well as the Buddhist tradition. But there are two impoṛtant points of difference between the two traditions.

(A) The higher and lower status of species beings according to Brahmanism is supposed to be attained through good and bad actions respectively where goodness and badness of actions is determined according to the prescriptions and prohibitions of the scriptures such as *Veda*s and *Smṛti*s. Though those prescriptions and prohibitions included some moral principles such as truthfulness and non-violence, they were dominated by other principles and rules which were ritualistic, dogmatic and discriminatory. As against this Buddhism, while giving norms for good and bad actions, emphasized moral-spiritual, rational and egalitarian approach.

(B) Brahmanical tradition imposed a hierarchical social order on the realm of human beings and this hierarchical order was treated as on par with the order of different realms of beings. Just as birth as a human being or an animal or as god is determined by *karma*, and then, it becomes binding throughout the respective life, the birth as a *brāhmaṇa* or *kṣatriya* or *śūdra* etc. is also determined by *karma* and is binding throughout the respective life. Just as transfer from one realm to another is not possible in the current life itself but is possible in the next life through rebirth which is determined by *karma*, similarly a transfer from one *varṇa* or caste to another is not possible in this life itself but is possible in the next birth which is determined by *karma*. This practical immobility or rigidity of the social order, as I have suggested before, was supposed to be laid down by God or Prajāpati/Brahmā through Vedas and subsequently elaborated by the sages like Manu through the *smṛti*s.

The Buddha through his different dialogues criticized this idea of hierarchical social order by pointing out that human species is one and different *varṇas* or castes are not different species which would rule out inter-caste mobility. Hence the so-called higher and lower status of ceṛtain *varṇas* and castes was the dogma of the *brāhmaṇa*s imposed by them on the society. It is well understood here that when Buddhism held that human species is one and that in a sense all humans are equal, it was not advocating an order based on economic equality to be measured

quantitatively. Though Buddhist economic approach was not egalitarian in the strict sense of the term, it did have an egalitarian implication insofar as the Buddha was in general opposed to oppression and exploitation. This is implied in *Kūṭadantasutta*, where the Buddha refers to a prescribed way of performing sacrifice, a sacrifice without oppression, exploitation and violence. Similarly though the Buddha did not directly advocate political equality of all humans, his view had a political implication because he emphasized the ideas of a righteous ruler (*dhamma-rājā*) and also supported the culture of communication and consensus when he praised the republic state of Vajjins. But the notion of equality which is central to the Buddha's teaching is expressed through his wish of the form: "May all beings be happy, may all beings attain well-being (*Sabbebhavantusukhino, bhavatusabbamaṁgalaṁ*.)." Now the question is: how can such a wish imply egalitarianism? Can we say that all can be equally happy? Can happiness be measured? Can one's happiness be compared with that of another? I suppose that here only qualitative judgment and qualitative comparison is possible and not quantitative one. Happiness here is not sum-total of pleasures acquired by fulfilling different desires; it is not a quantifiable happiness of Benthamian type. Happiness that Buddhism accepts as the goal of life is not derived by fulfilling egocentric desires; it is derived from ego-less-ness and freedom from cravings, i.e. from *tṛṣṇā-kṣaya* and the realization of *anattā*. Two persons living in different socio-economic conditions and having different material abilities can be egoless, craving-less and equally happy in this sense. Hence when we are talking of Buddhist egalitarianism, the question is not whether we are materially equal or unequal, but the question is: what is our attitude towards those equalities and inequalities? One can develop attitudes towards equal and unequal other which can make us as well as others unhappy. On the other hand one can develop attitudes towards equal and unequal other which can make us as well as others happy. One of the doctrinal contexts in which the Buddha elaborated on such an attitude was the doctrine of four *brahmavihāras*, i.e., the four sublime attitudes.

III. *Brahmaviharas*: Sublime Attitude to Equalities and Inequalities

The four sublime attitudes accepted in Buddhism are *mettā*, i.e. friendliness or loving kindness; *karuṇā*, i.e. compassion; *muditā*, i.e. gladness and *upekkhā*, i.e. detachment or equanimity. In the early Buddhist dialogues and also later works like *Visuddhimagga* these sublime attitudes are discussed as the objects of meditation. As objects of meditation they assume the form of wishes or thoughts that one is supposed to develop in one's mind. For instance, meditating on 'loving kindness' towards someone means wishing and thinking in a concentrated way so that the other may be happy. Meditating on compassion towards someone means wishing or thinking consistently that the other's suffering or deficiency may be removed. Meditating on *muditā* towards someone means thinking continuously that success or excellence that the other has achieved is welcome. *Upekkhā* towards someone is thinking that whether there is pleasure or pain in someone's life, it is impermanent and insubstantial and hence not worth being attached to. Buddhism holds that these

sublime attitudes are called immeasurable (*appamāna* or *appamaññā*) meaning thereby that they are to be addressed to all beings belonging to all directions indiscriminately and impartially. The practice of *brahmavihāras* in this way is a meditative practice, a practice in cultivation of mind. But since the general principle accepted in Buddhism is that mind is the fore-runner of all actions, these attitudes cultivated in mind are expected to be translated into speech and physical behavior as well. Early Buddhism not only gives the four general principles of sublime attitude as the four objects of meditation, it also gives a technique of developing the attitudes gradually, step by step, starting with the easiest objects, covering ultimately the most difficulty ones and consequently all objects making thereby the four attitudes truly immeasurable as given in Table I below. My main point here is to see how this fourfold model suggests to us a way of dealing with equalities and inequalities. I would like to discuss the issue with reference to the fourfold framework of interpersonal situations. Thomas Harris, a psychiatrist, in his book, *I'm OK You're OK*, describes four life positions as: (1) I am OK, You are OK; (2) I am not OK, you are OK; (3) I am OK, you are not OK; (4) I am not OK, you are not OK.

Harris' treatment of the theme implies that these life-positions are subjective approaches to life one develops through the way one is brought up in the infancy and childhood. They are shaped by the treatment that a child gets (by way of stroking, scolding, negligence, etc.) from parents and the people around it. According to Harris 'I am OK, You are OK' is the ideal life position based on thought, whereas other life positions are based on feelings. Moreover, as he maintains, the 'universal position of early childhood' is 'I am not OK, you are OK' which the child may retain in later period or the child may develop one of the other positions depending upon the up-bringing it receives. Harris also holds that whatever life position one may develop, it need not be regarded as permanent or ultimate. An unsatisfactory life position can be transformed through efforts into satisfactory one or ideal one.

The above fourfold framework is relevant for understanding Buddhist conception of interpersonal relations, but for that we may have to consider the 'life positions' of Thomas Harris as the four types of objective conditions. For example it is a fact that I am better that some other person is some respect and the other person may be better than me in ceṛtain other respect. Similarly I and the other may be both deficient in some respect and both are also well off in ceṛtain other respect. Here 'being better' or 'wellness' can be understood in a general sense including the aspects such as material wealth, power, intellectual success, moral strength and spiritual achievement. (In ultimate analysis Buddhism would regard moral-spiritual parameters of measuring wellness as superior to others.) In a way we have to accept these objective conditions of wellness /better-ness or otherwise as facts of life. But the matter does not end there. The main question is what should be our attitudes to these conditions. The doctrine of sublime attitudes is partly an answer to this question.

Buddhist treatment of the fourfold framework would become different from that of Harris also in another respect. Harris discusses these life positions in the context of the psychological development of a child. From this point of view, 'I am not OK, you are OK' becomes the initial life position. Buddhism looks at these positions from

moral and soteriological point of view. From this point of view the initial condition would be 'I am not OK, you are not OK'. So let us begin with this condition and see how Buddhism deals with the fourfold framework.

(1) 'I am not OK, you are not OK' is the condition implied by suffering as the first noble truth stated by the Buddha. According to this condition all are subject to suffering. Again the question is what should be our attitude to this universal condition. There can be healthy as well as unhealthy response to this condition. For example frustration, sadism, cynicism and pessimism would be unhealthy responses to the condition 'I am not OK, you are not OK'. Buddhism advocates a healthy response to this condition according to which we should go to the root of the matter, which according to Buddhism is craving and misconception which exists in ourselves, throw away the root by following the noble eightfold path and become free from suffering. Buddhist way includes efforts to make oneself as well as others happy. Hence developing *mettā* (loving kindness, friendliness) with others becomes an important part of it.

(2) 'I am OK, you are OK' is similar to the earlier condition in that both refer to 'equality' between I and the other. But the equality of the earlier kind is not satisfactory or desirable, whereas the equality of 'I am OK, you are OK'-type is apparently of satisfactory or desirable type. But even to this condition a healthy and an unhealthy response is possible. For example an ambitious person may not like to see that others are equal to him. He may develop ill-will or hatred to the other who is equal to him. As against this, *mettā,*i. e., loving kindness would be the healthy attitude to such a condition. In *mettā* we are wishing that the other be happy, we are rather sharing our happiness with the other.

(3) Now the third and the fourth condition are uneven conditions; they are the conditions of inequality. The third condition is 'I am OK, you are not OK'. One may respond to this condition in a healthy or unhealthy way. The unhealthy way would be unkindness, cruelty or sadistic pleasure. The healthy way would be compassion, i.e., *karuṇā. Karuṇā* can be regarded as a bridging principle which stimulates one to bring the deficient one near to oneself. *Karuṇā* in this sense can be called an extension of *mettā* to the situation of downward inequality

(4) Now the fourth possible condition, again an uneven condition, is of the type 'I am not OK, you are OK'. Again one can respond to this condition in a healthy way or unhealthy way. The unhealthy way would be jealousy or aversion. The healthy way would be *muditā, i. e.,* gladness. Through *muditā,* one tries to develop a sharing relation with the other by appreciating the other's excellence in success. *Muditā* in this sense can be called an extension of *mettā* to the situation of 'upward inequality'.

Though *karuṇā* and *muditā* seem to be two symmetrical principles, one being a response to downward inequality and the other to upward inequality, there is an, important difference between the two. *Karuṇā* is not just a passive response to the suffering of others or a deficiency of others but it is also supposed to lead to sincere efforts on the part of the agent to remove the deficiency in the other. In *muditā* on the other hand we are just accepting and welcoming the success or the excellence of the other but not trying to remove our deficiencies and bring ourselves (materially) to the

level of others. This asymmetrical relation between *karuṇā* and *muditā* arises in Buddhism because of the emphasis on egolessness on the part of the agent. [Of course developing oneself, achieving successes and excellences (spiritually in *bhikkhu*'s life and materially as well as spiritually in householder's life) is a natural process and Buddhism does not seem to be against it. But such an activity of self-development in the framework of *brahmavihāras* is not to be performed with the spirit of unhealthy competition] An interesting question can arise about *muditā.* Through *muditā* we develop joy about the success of the other. But suppose we come to know that the other person has achieved success through unjust means. Should one still develop joy? Probably one should not. Because the use of unjust means is a moral defect in the person, which I should not certainly welcome. Here the proper attitude should be that of *karuṇā* rather than *muditā*. But the question is more complex than this. Because the person may not have used wrong means and only wrong means and he may not have used them willingly. Hence his success may have some aspects which can be welcome. A mixed attitude of *karuṇā* and *muditā* could be more appropriate in this context. In this way the first three sublime attitudes in the Buddhist doctrine of *brahmavihāras* can be understood as the healthy responses to the different conditions of interpersonal relations. The last sublime attitude viz. '*upekkhā,'* which can be understood as detachment or equanimity, is a regulating principle in the sense that it defines and demarcates the scope of the other three principles. Here the idea is that *mettā*, *karuṇā* and *muditā* as the sublime attitudes are worth practicing only insofar as they are qualified by equanimity or non-attachment. In fact even their nature and scope is to be defined and demarcated in the light of the principle of non-attachment.
Here the distinction between far-enemies and near-enemies of *brahmavihāras* made in *Visuddhimagga* (See the Table II below) is significant. Far enemies of the sublime attitudes are the unhealthy attitudes diametrically opposed to them. It is easy to distinguish the sublime attitudes from them. Near enemies of sublime attitudes, on the other hand, are un-sublime attitudes, but because of their close similarity with the sublime attitudes they can be confused with the sublime attitudes. For instance *mettā* is impartial, self-less love, but it can be easily confused with attached or sensuous love which is partial and self-centered. Similarly compassion, which, as a sublime attitude, is selfless and impartial, can be confused with mundane sorrow arising from the attached concern for some near and dear one. *Muditā*, the sublime joy, which is selfless and impartial, can be confused with joy as partial attitude expressed towards the success of a near and dear one. Hence the near enemies of the three sublime attitudes are attitudes similar to the sublime attitude in their content, but are not sublime because they are not qualified by *upekkhā*.

Upekkhā in this way can be regarded as the higher principle which controls the other three principles. Now one can ask: is it advisable to practice just *upekkhā* irrespective of other principles? That does not seem to be so at least in the framework of *brahmavihāras*. In fact the trio of *mettā-karuṇā-muditā* and the fourth principle viz. *upekkhā* are complementary to each other in such a way that both are supposed to control and balance each other. *Upekkhā* as the principle of equanimity and detachment is a negative principle without a positive content. The trio on the other

hand is the three-fold concern for others with a definite positive content. This concern, as we have seen, is expected to be regulated by *upekkhā. Upekkhā* on the other hand, which is without a positive content is expected to be filled up with the positive content of the other three principles. The near enemy of *upekkhā,* therefore, is supposed to be indifference, that is, equanimity or detachment without the concern for others. Hence the relation between the trio and the fourth principle viz. *upekkhā* can be said to be that between the content and the form of the sublime attitude towards the other. The trio gives the content to the sublime attitude, but this content without the form of equanimity will be unregulated, undisciplined and therefore unsatisfactory. Equanimity is the form of the sublime attitude but if it is practiced without positive concern for others as its content, it leads to indifference, isolated-ness, a sort of unsocial attitude

I believe that Buddhism through the doctrine of *brahmavihāra* presents before us the dream of kingdom of *brahmavihārins,* the society which is based not on competition but co-operation, not based of selfishness but aiming at selflessness, based on concern for the other without attachment to the other. It provides us a way and also a technique to deal with equalities and inequalities in others in a moral and sublime way. How far this dream is practically possible is a question. The society in which we live is guided by different presuppositions according to which preserving and enhancing ego, progressing through competition, sensuous enjoyment and power struggle are regarded as essential to social life. A *brahmavihārin* in this society is as it were swimming against the stream. Hence establishing a society of *brahmavihārins* seems a utopia. But a peculiarity of this dream is also that it is possible for one to pursue it individually though the society at large is not for it. It is not paradoxical to talk about sublime individual life in an un-sublime society.

IV. Some Issues Arising from the Doctrine of *Brahmavihāra*

The Buddhist doctrine of four sublime attitudes, though interesting and appealing, can give rise to several issues. It is necessary to open up some such issues and seek for their answers. In what follows I would like to make a few observations in that direction. It is clear that though the doctrine of four sublime attitudes was first elaborated by the Buddha, it cannot be called a sectarian Buddhist doctrine. It is not surprising that the four-fold model of sublime attitudes was incorporated in some texts of Jaina Yoga and also in Patañjali's Yoga system. [In Patañjali's Yoga the four *bhāvanās*, i.e. the four meditative practices viz. *Maitrī, Karuṇā, Muditā* and *Upekṣā* are regarded as the means to tranquility of mind. The difference between Patañjali's version and the Buddhist version is that the former restricts the objects of the four meditative practices to happy, unhappy, meritorious and de-meritorious respectively, whereas the latter makes the objects of the four sublime attitudes all-pervasive.] The doctrine in its essence can be accepted irrespective of one's religions affiliation or even without a sectarian affiliation. However, in spite of its general character, the doctrine can be called a religious doctrine. By a religious doctrine I mean that doctrine which essentially stems from the presupposition of human imperfection, and

promotes the path of self-disciplining and self surrender as the way to perfection. Buddhism being an atheistic system does not teach humility or surrender before God, but a deep sense of humility and self-surrender is advocated through the doctrine of ego-less-ness or *anattā.* The religious import contained in this doctrine can come in conflict with, for example, a political approach which regards human being as essentially a power seeking animal or someone trying to assert oneself and one's own rights. But this does not mean that Buddhism would be completely unsuitable for a political stand. Here I would like to suggest that the Buddhist doctrine of ego-less-ness should be read along with its egalitarian approach. It is true that while developing sublime attitudes one develops self-less love, but one also treats all as equal. Hence not only oneself it regarded as soul-less or *anattā,* everyone else is regarded to be so. Secondly though in the framework of sublime attitudes, human beings are not recognized as power-seeking, they are recognized as happiness-seeking.

What could be the political implications of the doctrine of *brahmavihāra*? One thing is clear that the morality implicit in the doctrine of *brahmavihāra* is neither egoistic nor strictly altruistic but universalistic. This universalism is reflected in the practice of *brahmavihāra* as well. For instance, when *mettā* is to be developed as a sublime attitude, it is not only to be developed towards all others but also towards oneself. In fact in the gradual development of *mettā,* oneself is the first object; and then it is to be extended to others including hostile beings. (See Table I below.) This universalistic egalitarian approach can lead to active politics of social justice. It will naturally support the concept of a just society in which all are happy and no one is tortured or exploited. One who develops *mattā* and *karuṇā* can work hard for removing exploitation and bringing about just social order. However, while doing so his emotions will be under control because he has also developed *upekkhā.*

I have suggested that the Buddhist doctrine of four sublime attitudes emphasizes ego-less-ness which it derives from the doctrine of soullessness or *anattā*. The doctrine of soul-less-ness or *anattā* can give rise to many different questions. In Pali Buddhist literature we see a dual tendency towards *attā* or self. Sometimes 'self' is asserted when for instance it is said that one is the master of oneself "*attevaattanonātho"* or that "Be the island of yourself, be the refuse of yourself" "*attadīpābhavataattasaraṇā"* On the other hand self is denied when it is pointed out that I am not identical with any one of the five aggregates or all the aggregates together; neither I am beyond all these aggregates, nor someone who controls these aggregates.

Here one can distinguish between the use of the term *attā* as reflective pronoun and its use as a noun. The Buddha seems to use the term *ātman* as a pronoun but denies its use as a noun. As a pronoun '*attā*' means 'oneself'. It stands for person, who is simply understood as combination of five aggregates. The Buddha seems to imply here that the I-notion arises in the combination of five aggregates which can be used for all practical purpose for distinguishing between I and the other. But the I-notion does not refer to any substance which holds this combination together. This trend continues in Vaibhāṣika-Sautrāntika and Yogācāra schools of Buddhism. For

instance Vasubandhu in his early work *Abhidharmakośa* vehemently criticizes *pudgalavāda,* the doctrine of eternal person, but accepts the distinction between I and the other. In his later work he identifies person with a consciousness series, and accepts plurality of such series. The distinction between I and the other is strengthened in these systems further by the *apoha* or exclusion theory of meaning. In all these cases, where the distinction between I and the other is maintained, the question of relationship between them becomes impoṛtant and the doctrine of *brahmavihāras* is a part of the answer to this question.

Contrary to this trend we find in Mādhyamika Buddhism an attitude to dissolve all dualities including the duality of I and the other. It is maintained that nothing has its own essence, and since there is no own nature, there is no otherness as well. Since there is no self-nature (*svabhāva)* there is no other-nature (*parabhāva*) as well because other-nature is nothing but the self-nature of the other (*Madhyamakaśāstra*, '*Svabhāvaparīkṣā*', Verse 3). This is the Mādhyamika doctrine of *pratītyasamutpāda* – dependent origination or *śūnyatā*- essence-less-ness. It is difficult to see how the meditative practice of *brahmavihāra*s will be possible in this framework. Probably all the objects of meditation will culminate into essence-less-ness as is generally done in Mādhyamika meditative practice.

Sublime attitude	Order of ---------- (1)	Meditative ---------- (2)	Application ---------- (3)	On --------- (4)	----- ------ (5)
Loving Kindness	Oneself	Revered and Respected ones	Dearly loved friends	Neutral persons	Hostile persons
Compassion	Unlucky, Wretched ones	Evil-doing ones	Dear ones	Neutral persons	Hostile persons
Gladness	Companion, Dear ones	Neutral persons	Hostile persons	Rest--	-------
Equanimity	Neutral persons	Dear ones	Rest---	----	----

Table I (Source: Nanamoli, Chapter IX, pp. 321-344)

Sublime attitude	Near Enemy	Far Enemy
Loving Kindness	Greed (Raga), Selfish love	Ill will
Compassion	Grief based on mundane life	Cruelty
Gladness	Joy based on mundane life	Aversion
Equanimity	Equanimity qualified by ignorance based on mundane life	Greed or Resentment

Table II (Source: Nanamoli, Chapter IX, pp. 345-6)

References

Nanamoli, Bhikkhu. 1956. The path of purification, Singapore Buddhist meditation Center, Singapore.
Harris, Thomas A. 1969. *I'm OK You're OK*, Cox and Wyman Ltd. Reading, Great Britain.
Vaidya P. L. (ed.). 1960. *Madhyamakaśāstra of Nāgārjuna,* The Mithila Institute, Darbhanga.