

Buddhist Education Techniques Related To The Question And Answer In The Discourses

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Introduction

Learning Tripitaka texts, memorizing, practicing and self-realizing are recognized as Buddhist education. These techniques are followed by Buddhist monks and devotees from the time of the Buddha up to present for the preservation and propagation of the Buddha *sāsanā*. The discourses highlight to discern that when expounding the Dhamma and solving the problems of his disciples, the Buddha usually began with a question as a preamble. Occasionally, his disciples or other religious followers would discuss some issue and then go to inquire the Buddha for the right answer. The Buddha as a great teacher expounded the Dhamma-vinaya to his disciples based on their character and intellectual ability. Hence, questioning and answering (*pucchā-visajjanā*) can be considered as a part of the Buddhist education techniques.

The main objective of this paper is to examine Buddhist education techniques related to the question and answer recorded in the discourses. The discourses are frequently described as either gradual teachings (*anupubbīkathā*) or brief providing of the four noble truths (*sāmuṅgalakkhaṇa desanā*). These two methods are mostly exposed in the techniques of question and answer applied by the Buddhist and his disciples. The diversities of questions: *aditthajotānā pucchā*, *ditthasamsandanā pucchā*, *vibhijjabyākaraṇiya-pañha*, etc., can be found in the *Puṇṇakamaṇavapucchāniddeśa* from the *Cūḷaniddeśa pāli*, the *Pañhabyākaraṇa sutta*. How to reply with coherent answers related to the questions inquired by questioner?

Methodology

Data collections were gathered from the discourses, especially in the *Gaṇakamoggallāna sutta*, *Pañhabyākaraṇa sutta*, *Cūḷamālukya sutta* and so forth. The collected data were approached to as an analytical, inductive and deductive way to discern the concept of question and answer from the discourses.

Findings and Discussion

The question and answer found in the discourses highlight Buddhist education techniques, which cover in learning, practicing and realizing of Theravāda Buddhism. Discerning the way how to provide correct and coherent answers to the questions enriches knowledge and wisdom. The *Puṇṇakamāṇavapucchāniddesa* from the *Cūlaniddesa pāli* mentions (Myn-VRI 50) five types of questions. First, *adiṭṭhajotanāpucchā* is the questions for gaining knowledge, wisdom, which have not yet understood before. The second is *diṭṭhasaṃsandāpucchā* which means the question for discussion of views which has already learnt and seen. Third, *vimaticchedanā pucchā* is denoted the question to clear up doubts. When one has doubt: Is it thus, is its not thus, what is it, how is it? Fourth, *anumatipucchā* is indicated the question to discover opinion. In the *Cūlarāhulovāda sutta* (M III 278-280), the Buddha inquired *Rāhula* thus: *Rāhula*, what do you think? Is the eye permanent or impermanent? Impermanent, Lord. Is what is impermanent suffering or happiness? Suffering, Lord. Is what is impermanent, suffering, and subject to change fit to be regarded thus: ‘This is mine, this I am, this is myself? No, Lord. The rests for forms, eye consciousness, etc., are also applied in the same manner.

The last question is *kathetukamyatā pucchā* (the question for purposes of explanation). The Buddha clarifies to his disciples: Monks, there are four foundation of mindfulness. What are the four? The Buddha in the *Mahāsatipatṭhāna sutta* (M I 56-63) obviously describes that there are four foundation of mindfulness—body, feeling, mind and mental objects. This contemplation is required to establish four mental qualities— diligence (*ātāpī*), clear comprehension (*sampajāna*), mindfulness and abandoning covetousness and displeasure. Mindfulness practice is the only path of insight meditation towards the realization. This exposition signifies *kathetukamyatāpucchā*. Remarkably, among the fivefold question, *adiṭṭhajotanāpucchā*, *diṭṭhasaṃsandāpucchā* and *vimaticchedanāpucchā* do not occur in the Buddha, but only *anumatipucchā* and *kathetukamyatāpucchā* do appear in Him.

Besides, the *Pañhabyākaraṇa sutta* (A II 47) formulates four categories of questions (*pañha*). They are question that should be answered categorically with ‘yes’ or ‘no’ (*pañho ekasabyākaraṇīyo*), question that should be answered analytically (*pañho vibhijjabyākaraṇīyo*), question that should be answered with counter question (*pañho paṭipucchākaraṇīyo*) and question that should be kept aside (*pañho ṭhapanīyo*). The exposition of this fourfold question is not appeared in this sutta, but merely lists them. However, the way how to answer to those questions properly can be found in various discourses. The *Kathāvatthu sutta* (A I 198) suggests that *ekasabyākaraṇa-pañha* should be answered *ekasabyākara*; *vibhajjabyākaraṇa-pañha* to *vibhijjabyākara*; *paṭipucchābyākaraṇa-pañha* to *paṭipucchābyākara*; and *ṭhapanīya-pañha* should be left.

In clarifying coherent answer to fourfold question, ekamsabyākaraṇīya-pañha is required to provide a definite answer ‘yes’ or ‘no’. Are all conditioned things impermanent? The answer is ‘yes’, all conditioned things are impermanent. Are all conditioned things permanent? The answer is ‘no’, all conditioned things are not permanent. Second, vibhijjabyākaraṇīya-pañha is indicated as the question that should be answered analytical way. In the Gaṇakamoggallāna sutta (M III 1-7), Gaṇakamoggallāna brahmin approached the Buddha and asked questions: There can be seen gradual training (anupubbāsikkhā), gradual practice (anupubbakiriya) and gradual process (anupubbapaṭipadā) among brahmins, accountants. Similarly, is it possible, Master Gotama, to described anupubbāsikkhā, anupubbakiriya and anupubbapaṭipadā in this Dhamma and discipline? It is possible, brahmin to clarify them. There are six steps gradual training, practice and process in the Dhamma and discipline.

The Buddha firstly disciplines his disciples: Come, monk, be virtuous, restrained with the restraint of the pātimokkha and seeing fear in the slightest fault. He keeps going to train his disciple guard the doors of your sense faculties (indriyesu guttadvāro). This restraint is refraining from grasping signs and particulars of objects at the sense faculties to eliminate covetousness and displeasure. Then He further trains his disciples to know moderation in eating (bhojane mattaññū). Consuming food is not for amusement, but for the maintenances of body. This reflection produces healthy, blameless and comfortable. Afterwards, his disciples should continue engaging in wakefulness (jāgariya), and diligently purify the mind from obstructive states while walking or performing any activities in day and night. Then, the disciples are trained to be possessed of mindfulness and clear comprehension (satisampajañña) when going forward and returning, looking ahead and looking away, etc. This comprehension involves purposefulness, suitability, domain and non-delusion. The disciples who possessed satisampajañña are trained in secluded resting place and established mindfulness. This contemplation purifies the mind from hindrances and thereby obtains absorption (jhāna). Accordingly, Gaṇakamoggallāna’s question to the Buddha deal with adiṭṭhajotanāpucchā, vimaticchedanāpucchā and vibhijjabyākaraṇīya-pañha that should be answered analytical way. The anupubbāsikkhā, anupubbakiriya and anupubbapaṭipadā instructed by the Buddha are included in six gradual training to be qualified: sīla, indriya-guggadvāra, bhojane mattaññūtā, etc. Alternatively, this noble training involves morality (sīla), concentration (sammādhi) and wisdom (pañña). Following this noble path accordingly, practitioners have potential to become sotāpanna, sakadāgāmī, anāgāmī or arahant.

After hearing the answer of the Buddha, Gaṇakamoggallāna continuously inquired the Buddha: Do all disciples attain Nibbāna or do some not attain Nibbāna? The Buddha replied that some disciples attain Nibbāna and some do

not attain Nibbāna. Again, Gaṇakamoggallāna inquired: Since Nibbāna exists, the path leading to Nibbāna exists and Master Gotama is present as the guide, why do some disciples attain Nibbāna, some do not attain Nibbāna? The Buddha provided an illustrative traveller by counter question. What do you think, brahmin? Two travellers asked you the way how to go Rājagaha. You guided them correct direction to Rājagaha. The first man went wrong way. The second man followed the road as you guided, he would arrive safely in Rājagaha. Now, brahmin, since Rājagaha exists, the path leading to Rājagaha exists and you are present as the guide, why the first man did not reach to Rājagaha, but the second man would arrive safely in Rājagaha? What can I do about that, Master Gotama? I am one who shows the way. Similarly, brahmic, Nibbāna exists, the path leading to Nibbāna exists and I am present as the guide. Yet some disciple attain Nibbāna, some do not attain Nibbāna. What can I do about that, brahmin? The Buddha is the one who shows the way. This dialogue identifies that the question of Gaṇakamoggallāna relates to vimaticchedanā pucchā. Hence the Buddha responded to the brahmin by means of paṭipucchākaraṇīya-pañha.

The last one is question that should be kept aside. The Cūḷamālukya sutta records that Mālukyaputta approached the Buddha and raised ten questions: Is the world eternal? Is not the world eternal? etc.,. The Buddha did not declare the answer to those questions because they do not conduce to aversion, dispassion, cessation of suffering, etc. (M I 429-32). These questions are speculative in nature, and any answer to such questions will only create more confusion. Thus the Buddha's silence is more meaningful than answering on those questions. Y.Karunadasa (2015:147) postulates that the questions are meaningless and hence do not warrant answers. Meaningless questions are not answerable in the affirmative or in the negative. To make them answerable they need to be rephrased in a meaningful manner.

Conclusion

In Theravāda Buddhist education techniques, the question and answer play the significant role to enrich knowledge and wisdom. Learning, questioning and answering of the discourses is recognized as learning (pariyatti). Following them accordingly is regarded as practicing (paṭipatti). Penetrating of the Four Noble Truths is known as realizing (paṭivedha). Buddhist education system is a long term process learning: texts learning and practicing insight meditation. Following the six gradual training, practice and process in the Dhamma and discipline enhances sīla, samādhi and paññā to obtain the supramundane paths and fruits.

Key-words: Buddhist education, question and answer, discourses, development.

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