

THE RELEVANCE OF BUDDHIST PHILOSOPHY IN THE 21ST CENTURY: A RETROSPECTION

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ABSTRACT

In Buddhist thought the central issue in life is neither philosophical in the sense of resolving ultimate mysteries nor religious in the sense of worship, grace and salvation. Rather, the prime concern is happiness and sorrow. There are moments of true happiness and fulfilment and moments of sorrow, frustration, irritation and despair. Whether it be the delights of heaven, the satisfaction of a task well done, the joy of unselfish love or the sweet taste of good foods, it is some sort of pleasurable experience or the expectation of such that makes life worthwhile and gives positive value to our existence. Conversely, be it the agonies of hell, the loss of loved ones, humiliation, physical illness or the dread of such things, there are moments of negative value that we continually struggle to avoid. The Buddha's teachings resemble those of science in that all things mental or physical come about through cause and effect, and pleasurable and painful mental states are no exception. Thus the solution to living is to understand those factors that produce desirable or undesirable states of mind and with such understanding guide our lives in such a way as to minimise the unwholesome while developing the wholesome to its maximum possible realisation.

KEYWORDS: Enlightenment, Nirvana, Noble Truths, Craving, Grasping