

# Transformation through Suffering to Liberation: The Journey of Patachara

Bhalerao G. A. M.

Ph. D. Research Scholar (Eng)

Supervisor - Dr S. L. Wankhede.

Research Guide in English, Swami Vivekanand Senior College Mantha, Dist – Jalana, Maharashtra, India

**Abstract:** *The present research paper highlights universal suffering and liberation of the character Patachara. Patachara (Rupvati), the rich girl marries her servant and had two babies. She lives utterly poor life. The greatest tragedy occurs in her life as loses all his family members in a day! Consequently, she loses her sense of body and self. She wanders naked. She meets Buddha and comes back to her senses. She becomes familiar with her own mind. Hence understands the real causes of suffering i. e. attachment to the self. So she sees the things as they are! Means, realizes the universal truth of Anicca (impermanence) Anatta (Insubstantiality), and Dukkha (Suffering). The traditional story of her transformation seems quite illogical and unscientific. Probably her transformation was due to compassionate care of Bhikkuni Sangha and of course diligent practice of the Noble Eightfold Path.*

**Keywords:** Patachara, Psychological Suffering, Liberation, Anicca (Impermanence), Anatta (Insubstantiality) and Dukkha (Suffering).

According to Webster's Dictionary the word 'Universal' means including or covering all (human beings) or whole collectively or distributively without limit or exception and the word 'Psychological' means 1. Of relating to psychology i. e. science of mind and behavior 2. Mental. And the word 'Suffer' means 1. to endure death, pain or distress 2. To sustain loss or damage 3. To be subject to disability or handicap. While 'psychological suffering' means psychological pain, mental pain, or emotional pain; an unpleasant feeling of a psychological, non physical origin. The technical words like Algopsychalia and Psychalgia are used to describe above mentioned words. Psychological suffering is widely believed to be an inescapable aspect of human existence. (Source - Wikipedia)

But the Buddha claims again and again with confidence that this suffering can be annihilated. This suffering is universal in nature as every human being without any bar of caste, class, race, gender or nationality suffers psychologically. Every human being is a victim of greed, hatred and delusion due to ignorance about his or her own real nature mind!

The Buddha used the word 'Dukkha' which connotes all types of sufferings including social sufferings too.

The concept of Nibbana (Liberation) has many views and counter views. According to one view Nirvana means total liberation from the cycle of birth and rebirth. While other view says that liberation is 'here and now', in this world; not after death or any rebirth (The main proponent of this opinion is great meditation practitioner and a scholar Bhikku Buddhadasa.) But both agree that for liberation one has to cease or eradicate *Raga* (Attachment), *Dosa* (Enmity), and *Moha* (Delusion) which are the root causes of all evil passions. Mind becomes pure, equanimous, detached, stable and hence, peaceful. Naturally one thinks and does good always. This can be done by practising Sila, Samadhi and Panna i. e. The Noble Eightfold Path.

Nobody can experience or experienced his /her previous or next birth. But surely experience this psychological suffering which is universal in nature.

Actually, every human being desires to be happy i. e. liberation from this suffering. Human suffering is an inevitable universal truth. Unfortunately very few can understand the cause of suffering and liberation from the suffering. Buddha's Dhamma (teachings, universal truth, natural laws) is build up on this fact. It has only aim i. e. to eradicate the human suffering. In his time, he helped to liberate hundreds of people from this suffering. Patachara is among them who became an *Arhant* (one who got complete liberation from the suffering).

Patachara's childhood name was Rupvati (a very beautiful girl) and was an only daughter of a super rich merchant of *Savathi* (the biggest city of India in Buddha's times). Hence, she was highly pampered and reared with extreme care and protection. But due to this she feels lonely and fell in love with her servant and elopes with him far away from Savathi. The day of their elopement was her an arranged wedding day! Later on the new couple settles in a village far away from Savathi. After few years, she gets pregnant. During pregnancy, she wants to go her parent's home but the husband neglects continuously. Consequently she starts off to Savathi. But in journey, she gives birth to a baby boy. Then there is no question of going Savathi and she returns. During Second pregnancy the same thing happens. But this time the storm with heavy rain arises. Meanwhile, she gets pains and her husband goes to cut buses to have her shelter. But a poisonous snake bites him and he dies at the very spot. However, the wife gives birth to a second baby boy. She waits him for that night. In the morning, she sees the dead body of her husband on the way and laments by blaming herself. Helplessly, she starts off to Savathi. During a river cross, an eagle takes her new born baby and flies away. During this tragedy, the elder son also flows away in the river. With great sorrow she comes to know the deaths of her

Volume 13 Issue 8, August 2024

Fully Refereed | Open Access | Double Blind Peer Reviewed Journal

[www.ijsr.net](http://www.ijsr.net)

parents and a brother during last night's storm! Due to this triple tragedy in a single day, she loses her sense of body and self! She wanders the roads of Savathi naked; shouting, laughing and weeping. Children pelt the stone at her.

However, once Buddha was preaching at Savathi, Patachara reaches at the very spot. Some people try to shoo her away. But the Buddha with his *Mahakarunika* eye stops them. Seeing and listening Buddha, she comes to her senses and soon realizes her being nakedness. Then she was given a blanket to cover her body. Hence she was called as 'Patachara' - a woman covered with a blanket. Obviously she goes to the shelter of Buddha, Dhamma and Sangha. Later on she becomes an Arhant and Vinayadhar like Upali 2, 3, 4 & 5

This tragic story is so fascinating, unique yet universal in nature. Very few tragic stories are as great as this one. She loses all her near and dear ones in a single day! Consequently, she goes in deep depression and loses her sense of herself and her body. But why it is so fascinating and attractive? Because she was so severely depressed yet she becomes not only a mentally strong and healthy but a saint who devotes her life to help others! For helping them to come outside of their sufferings! And she succeeds in this great job of merit!

Like every other common human being, in her adolescence age, Patachara was attracted by a youth and had a love. She has her views of happy life with full of passions. After her elopement she realizes the harsh realities of life being a farm worker. Then had a deep attachment to her husband, sons, brother and parents. After losing all these near ones, she thinks that everything is over now. She cannot bear this tragedy. Actually, she was unaware about her own mind at experience level; about the facts of life i. e. Impermanence, Insustantiality and Suffering When she got connected (practiced) with the Dhamma, she realizes these facts of life through her own experience (the universal truth of life). In fact, Buddha helped her to experience *Anicca* (Impermanence), *Anatta* (Insustantiality) and *Dukkha* (Suffering).

Traditional story of Buddha about telling her of her previous life and weeping is totally illogical and mere use of figurative language.

According to the tradition,

“The Teacher listened to her with compassion and then made it clear to her that these painful experiences she had gone through were only tiny drops in the ocean of impermanence in which all beings drown if they are attached to that which rises and ceases. He told her that all through many existences, she had wept more tears over the loss of dear ones than could be contained in the waters of the four oceans. He said: Buddha says,

But little water do the oceans four contain,  
Compared with all the tears that man hath shed,  
By sorrow smitten and by suffering distraught.  
Woman, why heedless dost thou still remain? ”<sup>6</sup>

This is nothing but the perfect example of use of figurative language, not the fact. In fact, her progress of mental well being is quite slow and normal as it happens with everyone. She must have given proper food, shelter and continuous compassionate care of Bhikkuni Sangha (nuns' organization). When she was ready, means mentally stable she must have given serious meditations through *Sil* (Morality), *Samadhi* (Proper Concentration) and *Panna* (Wisdom). Hence she could liberate herself from the dangerous labyrinth of the self which does not exist! Therefore she experienced a complete peace here and now in the present moment. This is a serious topic of research. For further studies probably the best book is by Ven. Bhikkhu Buddhadasa.<sup>7</sup> This book stresses again and again that *Nibbana is here and now* in this birth!

## References

- [1] <http://www.buddhanet.net/e-learning/buddhism/lifebuddha/28lbud.htm>
- [2] Hecker, Hellmuth. *Buddhist Women at the Time of the Buddha*. Buddhist Publication Society Kandy: 1994 - p 56 - 62.
- [3] Walters, J S. (trans) *The Legends of the Buddhist Saints* Apadanapali. Pub Whitman College 2017 P - 1071 - 76.
- [4] [www.accesstoinsight.com](http://www.accesstoinsight.com)
- [5] <https://www.accesstoinsight.org/lib/authors/hecker/wheel292.html>
- [6] Gajanan Bhalerao, "Universal Psychological Suffering and Liberation of the Buddhist Characters Patachara, Angulimala and Prakriti (Chandalika): A Critical Study", *International Journal of Science and Research (IJSR)*, Volume 10 Issue 11, November 2021, pp.859 - 863, <https://www.ijsr.net/getabstract.php?paperid=SR211117124814>
- [7] Buddhadasa Bhikkhu. *Paticcasamuppada: Practical Dependent Origination*. Bangkok: Sublime Life Mission, Translated from Thai by Steve Schmidt (1986) P.125