

## Exploring the Meaning of Life: A Buddhist Approach

T. Wickremathilaka<sup>1\*</sup>

The question of whether there exists a meaning or a purpose to the existence of human life has been a much debated topic through the ages. Since the early Greek and Roman civilizations, many great thinkers within philosophical, theological, scientific and metaphysical contexts have tried to provide an adequate answer to this dilemma. With the emergence of science in the later centuries, people have turned more and more away from the philosophical and religious pursuits in life, and have been drawn to materialistic lifestyles. However, in order to be fully aware of the potential of our lives, it is crucial that we explore the nature of life and understand the purpose of our existence. Even though most of the religions in the world fail at this aspect of providing scientifically compatible, sensible and accurate answers to this question, Buddhism gives clear cut, comprehensive facts and advice about the reality of human life. Over 2500 years ago, Lord Buddha had successfully offered an answer to this existential crisis people face in the modern era. Unlike the scientific approach to examining the purpose of human existence, where the external parameters are observed for the experimental processes, the Buddhist approach involves gaining understanding and insight into one's own mind through introspection and meditation to find the answers to this problem. Buddhism also gives explanation about the continuous existence of beings in the *samsara*, and most importantly it provides us knowledge of the reality of existence, human or otherwise. In a manner none of the other approaches have used, Buddhism gives us the opportunity to see the true nature by ourselves and take necessary steps to reach our maximum potential as humans by our own will. In this paper, the perspective portrayed by Buddhism on the question of the purpose of human existence will be discussed, presenting the *suttas* and other literary sources from the *Pali* canon. It is the purpose of this paper to provide an all-inclusive answer to this dilemma and methods to alleviate the existential crisis experienced by people, within the Buddhist context.

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<sup>1</sup> Sri Lanka International Buddhist Academy (SIBA), Sri Lanka, \* thiliishere@gmail.com