

Vol 7 Issue 2 Nov 2017

ISSN No : 2249-894X

*Monthly Multidisciplinary
Research Journal*

*Review Of
Research Journal*

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THE PROPER USE OF WEALTH IN BUDDHIST PERSPECTIVE



ABSTRACT: -

This article mainly focuses on the concept of wealth in Buddhist perspective because wealth is the one of the most importance causes of suffering in Buddhist philosophy. The wealth is an essence to every individual, at the same time the selfish or lawful wealth is the cause of the every problems.

There is one word in Buddhist Pali Literatures, "Uno loko atitto tanhadaso," which means the world is never satisfied and is always insufficient. The world is demanding forever. Those who are demanding, indeed, are merely slaves to craving. As an ordinary slave has to do whatever the master wants, so the slave of craving is likely to abide by whatever craving wants.

It is a well-known fact that in the human world, there are many things after which people are chasing. Things are increasing day by day with the development of science and technology. Under the influence of desires and wishes, man does moral and immoral deeds which produce wholesome and unwholesome results.

KEYWORDS: Buddhism, Wealth, Human beings, Property, Desires.

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INTRODUCTION

The selfish desires are the root cause of suffering. The Buddha's main aim of his teachings is to eradicate the suffering of human beings. For that purpose the Buddha advised us to minimizing our desires. Even though it is true that selfish desires lead to the misfortune of beings, the unselfish desires bring about the happiness of individuals which the Buddha recommended to his followers. Accordingly, the Buddha preached to Anathapindika – who is feeder of the orphans or helpless and one of the chief lay disciple of Buddha, that four desires which are difficult to acquire in the world in a proper way. They are:

1. Acquirement of wealth lawfully
2. Acquirement of fame or good reputation
3. Acquirement of long life
4. Acquirement of blissful rebirth.

Among them, the first three categories deal with present life while the last one is for the future lives. Therefore, this article is to highlight of the first categories of wealth lawfully, because it is the one of cause of suffering in Buddhist philosophy.

The use of wealth

It seems to that the acquirement of wealth is more important than other things. Indeed, fame and longevity are desirable and delightful for everyone. But if it all does not have wealth, how can it live peacefully in the world? It is something unlikely. It is obvious from the fact that people are struggling for money from sunrise to sunset. Even though people are running the whole day for money, it is not sure to

succeed it as they wish.

Many people, including Buddhist, assume that Buddhism rejects the acquisition of material comforts and pleasure and it concerned only with spiritual development. Indeed, the attainment of “Nibbana”, which means the ultimate spiritual goal in Buddhism. At the same time, however, the Buddha was very much alive to the economic stability for man’s welfare and happiness. In the Anguttaranikaya – one of the texts regarded to Buddhist literatures, the following teaching was given to a rich man. It is known as four types of happiness derived from the wealth, in the Ananya Sutta of Anguttaranikaya:

“Herein, householder, these four kinds of happiness are appropriate for one who leads the household life and enjoys the pleasures of the sense. They are:

1. The happiness of ownership (Atthisukha)
2. The happiness of enjoyment and sharing one’s wealth (Bhogasukha)
3. The happiness of free from debt (Ananyasukha)
4. The happiness of blamelessness (Anavajjasukha).”

The person those who have the happiness of ownership, can enjoy the next two categories. The last one deal with the earning of right livelihood and spiritual development. It shows that unless someone has the happiness of blamelessness, though he possesses the first three benefits, it is unable to enjoy the genuine happiness. In earning wealth, it is important to lead blameless activities.

In order to get the happiness of ownership, everyone must handle four conditions that would lead to happiness based on faith (Saddha), virtue (Sila), generosity (Caga) and wisdom (Panna). What the Buddha mentioned in the Anguttaranikaya, his teaching is of four:

1. Utthanasampada – The accomplishment of persistent effort
2. Arakkhasampada – The accomplishment of watchfulness
3. Kalyanamittata – Having good friendship
4. Samajivikata – Balanced livelihood.

Naturally, the mind is very pure. But sometimes success (with the accessibility of money) is one of the obstacles which makes pure and honest mind dirty. The impure mind leads to the extravagant activities: (i) Debauchery (ii) Drunkenness (iii) Gambling (iv) Association with evil-doers. The Buddha said in the Anguttaranikaya, “These four are sources of destruction of the wealth.”

In addition, on account of excessive attachment to one’s own property, if it is not utilized for oneself and others, it brings to neither bodily power nor mental development in earning wealth. It must be avoided as it is the nature of stinginess. Regarding to this, there are four kind persons to be found existing in the world, expounded by the Buddha in the Savalata Sutta of Anguttaranikaya. They are:

1. Those who has not striven for his own welfare nor that of others
2. Those who has striven for others’ welfare, but not his own
3. Those who has striven for his own welfare but not others
4. Those who has striven for both his own welfare and that of others.

The first person is not good (just as a torch from a funeral pyre, burnt at both ends, and in the middle smeared with dung, useless either in village or in forest) whereas the last person is all the best and the middle two are neither good nor bad. This teaching of the Buddha is taught to the example of all human beings. It can lead to the ultimate peace of the entire world.

If one applies the wealth well and wisely, they can gain the following five advantages by means of wealth:

1. Making himself happy
2. Making his parents happy
3. Making his wife, children, slaves, workers, and servants happy
4. Making his friends and colleagues happy
5. Offering the highest gifts to recluses (Samana) and Brahmins which conduces to heavenly world.

Besides, the thing it must appreciate is every movement has the pros and cons. Based on this natural law, it ought to take advantages and disadvantages of the wealth into consideration.

In this context, the Buddha stated five disadvantages of the wealth: Wealth is common to (i) fire, (ii) to water, (iii) to the king, (iv) to robbers and (v) to unpleasant inheritors. They are the biggest enemies of all human beings and we all have noticed almost the whole world was confronting with the economic crises, floods and famines which create the problem of social duties and obligations nowadays.

The person who realizes the pros and cons of wealth must try to strive for both one's own welfare and that of others as above mentioned in the Savalata Sutta. It must share with materials and general knowledge, and do particular activities to the needy. It is likely to avail oneself of the essence of being a human.

Basically Human beings are spending money for their elements of oneself and only family's member again and again. It is needless to say in spending their own money but there is no fruit by filling the pot full of water earning wealth, keeping family members, protection from dangers, helping and offering the needy are known as the duties of a human.

Regarding to this, it would be fit to mention the Salikedara Jataka, which means one of the stories of Buddha's former births in brief. The story gives the messages as follow: In our family and society –

- As the parents, they have to feed their children as a parental duty,
- As the children, they have to feed their parents as a settling repayment of their old debts,
- As a human being, it has to share the food with the other people as the aim of the deed merit will definitely be benefit in future.

That is why, from the story we all have to know the three duties of a human.

Besides, in the Pattakamma Sutta, the Buddha mentioned that with the wealth acquired by energetic striving, the noble disciple should undertake four worthy deeds. They are:

1. Everyone must make himself happy and others such as parents, wife, children, slaves, workers, servants, friends and colleagues.
2. Everyone makes provisions against the losses that might arise on account of fire and floods, kings and bandits and unloved heirs; he makes himself secure against them.
3. Everyone makes the five kinds of offerings: to relatives, guests, ancestors, the king, and the devas.
4. Everyone establishes a lofty offering of alms to those ascetics and Brahmins who refrain from vanity and negligence.

Finally, the Buddha implicitly concludes that utilization of the wealth rather than these four means is nothing but the useless extravagance. By following these four guidelines, one can enjoy happiness in the present life as well as in the future existence.

CONCLUSION

In summary, concerning with the matter, the Buddha gives the simple simile that how to use the belonged wealth or how a man should lead a balanced life as follows:

If a water tank has four input-valves feeding it through four doors and there are also four output-valves from another similar four doors from the tank – it is possible that no water will be kept. He has not preserved what is given for future use.

On the contrary, if ever input-valve is opened and all four output valves are closed, the tank will be overflowing. This is another extreme that he is using his water miserly. Inputs and outputs must be carefully managed. It must balance the needs and wants in accordance with sustainability.

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