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THE CONCEPT OF HAPPINESS AS MYANMAR ETHICAL TERM IN THERAVADA BUDDHISM

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ABSTRACT :

In a practical Buddhist way of life, we must essentially develop Moral Discipline Concentration (Samadhi) and Wisdom (Panna). There are three other simple methods to practice Buddhism. They are Dana, Sila, and Bhavana. Dana means contribution or sacrificing something for the benefit of others. But this must be done without any selfish motive. The real Buddhist attitude of Dana is not the act of giving in the hope of gaining some reward in return. Dana is to reduce selfishness. One may commit mistakes in one's life. So, when he contributes something for the benefit of others he actually reduces his own selfish desires.

By leading a pure life according to the Noble Eightfold Path, we will become noble persons and life becomes more meaningful. Through morality, concentration and wisdom, one will have the peerless freedom or the highest Happiness of Nibbana. Myanmar people usually follow the Buddhist norms, social duties, moral conducts and cultivating loving-kindness. A good Buddhist has the virtues such as Metta and Karuna. So, the role of morality is very important in Myanmar society.

KEYWORDS : Society, Dhammapada, Abhidhamma, Buddhist, Theravada.

INTRODUCTION

There are very important things in human life and human society. Among them, one thing is the happiness because all human beings want to be happy. All men desire possession of the good; this is called happiness. Health, Wealth and Beauty are really good and they contribute to happiness. Happiness is an essential concept in human life. Human emotion can be sometimes happy and sometimes sorrow. However, man wants to be happy. He always tries to find happiness not only through material gain but through spiritual means as well.

Happiness is often sketched as a state of purely subjective or internal pleasure. A happy life is a string of satisfying inner sensation. Happy people have being satisfied, being optimistic and having good relationship. Happiest people are not worrying and think clearly. So they do not do evil and they can face with daily problems easily. Happiness is essential in all societies. The concept of happiness plays an important role in all ethical traditions. Since all men are different, their desire of happiness is different. The concept of happiness can be seen in both Western and Eastern philosophies. This paper will present the concept of happiness in Myanmar ethical thought.

The aim of paper is to point out how the role of happiness plays in human life and human society. The concept of happiness in Western Philosophy will be presented. All people want to be happy, but not all known how to find happiness. Happiness is not a passing feeling or emotion but is a lasting state of being. Some people can maintain that happiness is satisfaction. Happiness is a subjective condition make necessarily the existence of desire in oneself. Happiness is conscious state of satisfaction of the good.

Morality is the essence of human being and it can guide how people should conduct themselves to live a good life. Ethics is the study of the moral principle and rules which guide man to follow and practice in order to be a good member of human society. The ethical terms such as "good", "bad", "right", "wrong",

"justice", "injustice", "pleasure" and "happiness" are essential in the field of ethics. This chapter tries to present the concept of happiness is one of Myanmar ethical terms.

WHAT BUDDHIST ETHICS IS?

In Eastern Philosophy, Buddhist Ethics emphasizes on keeping the moral precepts and practice of meditation. Buddhist ethics arose out of the ethical teachings of Gautama Buddha. He was born in a Royal family at Kapilavatthu on the foot hills of Himalayas in the 6th century BC. He was the founder of Buddhism. He always tried to enlighten persons on the most important questions of sorrow, its origin, its cessation and the path leading to its cessation. The answer to these four questions constitutes the essence of Buddha's enlightenment which He is eager to share with all fellow beings. These have come to be known as the Four Noble Truths – All the teachings of Gautama Buddha centre round these four. The ethical teachings of Buddha are mainly concerned with the Fourth Noble Truth that is a path to reach a state free from suffering. This path recommended by Buddha is called the Eightfold Noble Path. This gives in a nutshell essential morality of Buddhist ethics. According to Buddhists, the Noble Eightfold Path gives the absolute benefit for human being. This Noble Eightfold Path consists of eight good things or steps. These are Right View, Right Resolve, Right Speech, Right Conduct, Right

Livelihood, Right Effort, Right Mindfulness and Right Concentration. Among them, Right Speech, Right Conduct and Right Livelihood are concerned with Buddhist ethics. The Eightfold Noble Path is grouped as three categories: morality (Sila), concentration (Samadhi) and wisdom (Panna). This Path is called "The Middle Path" (Majjhima Patipada). Nibbana, the ultimate goal of Buddhists, is to be realized by the following Eightfold Noble Path. According Buddhist Ethics, a man is morally good if he observes the five precepts in our daily life. Moreover, according to Buddhist ethics a man is morally better if he observes the eight precepts.

The eight precepts are the mentioned above five precepts and the following three precepts. For Buddhist ethics the five precepts and the eight precepts are standards by which we can judge whether a morally good or bad. In Buddhists ethics, there are many moral actions or good deeds. Among them, Dana, Sila and Bhavana are guidance for religious life and social life. These moral deeds: Dana, Sila and Bhavana are regarded as moral value in Buddhist ethics.

MORALITY IN MYANMAR SOCIETY

It can be said that Myanmar Ethical thought is based on Buddhist Ethics because Myanmar moral rules are based on the teachings of Buddha. Morality is the basic foundation of Myanmar society. In "A Dictionary of Buddhist Term", the word "morality" is defined as follows: It can be said that Myanmar literature flourishes through the Ages because it is based on Buddhist culture. For Buddhists, morality is a basic foundation that supports to higher stages of concentration and wisdom. In Buddhism, there are many excellent moral rules for the monks as well as for the layman. Basically, Myanmar moral rules can be found in the five precepts that are to observe in daily life.

According to five precepts, one does not do all evil deeds. These five precepts are useful for cultivating human qualities and virtues such as kindness, honesty and understanding. They are essential qualities for maintaining peace and security. The intention of observing these precepts is not for fear of punishment, but for understanding and compassion. These precepts lead people to have values of life such as compassion, generosity, contentment, truthfulness and mindfulness.

According to Buddhist ethics, the five precepts and the eight precepts are the standards by which we can judge whether a man is morally good or bad. These standards may help one to control one's greed. Greed is one of the main causes of exploitation from others. According to Buddhist doctrine, greed, attachment or clinging is the main causes of suffering. So, these precepts indeed teach us not only to respect all forms of other existence but also to control our greed. This can be assimilated as a norm for Ethics. In Buddhism, Buddha has given very useful advice on the duties of people.

The Singalovada Sutta is perhaps the best known of these valuable responsibilities. Buddha gave a useful meaning by a practical interpretation to a young man Sing la whopays respect to the six directions. Buddha said that the act of paying respect to the six directions means to fulfill duties and obligations. The Buddha laid down

great emphasis on a person's relationship with others. As human beings, one should perform some service to others by practicing generosity, kindness and help. Myanmar people usually follow these rules of duty in their society. These are socio-ethical duties. One is morally good if he or she performs these duties. Myanmar rules of duty are found in the verses written by Thingaza Sayadaw. In his verses, duties to be performed by each member of the society are mentioned. In Myanmar society, everybody ought to do one's duties in relation to others. These duties are as follows:

1. Five rules of duty to be performed by sons and daughters in relation to their parents.
2. Five rules of duty that parents have to follow in relation to their sons and daughters.
3. Five rules of duty to be obeyed by the pupils and students in relation to their teachers.
4. Five rules of duty that teachers have to follow in relation to their pupils.
5. Five rules of duty to be followed by friends to one another.
6. Five rules of duty to be performed by a wife in relation to her husband.
7. Five rules of duty to be performed by a husband in relation to his wife.
8. Six rules of duty to be followed by a person holding an important and leading post.
9. Five rules of duty to be followed by the master in relation to the servants.
10. Five rules of duty to be followed by the servants in relation to the masters.

In Buddhism, Buddha has given very useful advice on the duties of parents towards their children, teachers towards their pupils, husband towards wife, master towards servants and vice versa. By practicing these duties, society may be happy and peaceful.

In Mingala Sutta, Buddha expounded thirty-eight principles that can ensure one every success and all kinds of prosperity. The Mingala Sutta is one of the most widely known of the Buddha's discourses. Mingala means something good or auspicious. In this explanation of the concept of Mingala, a person can realize to do one's duty to one's parents, to one's own family and relatives, to the community, and to one's own country. The thirty-eight principles of Mingala should be followed by every person in proper order and progressive order. Mingala Sutta is the guidance of practical works for human beings. "The Thirty-Eight principles" are to guide man in all aspects of life. They are simple and easy to understand. It has been the ethical foundation of Myanmar society since ancient time and it plays a vital role in social life of Myanmar people.

All those who follow the thirty-eight principles to Auspiciousness shall attain wealth, happiness, grace, free from danger, love by man, content in mind and body. The Thirty-Eight principles guide to man for this life as well as for future realization of Nibbana. These thirty-eight principles are called a moral code in mundane life. Myanmar ethical thought can be deduced from the behavior of Myanmar way of living in Myanmar society. There are Four Cardinal Virtues in Myanmar society. These virtues are Metta, Karuna, Mudita and Upekkha. These virtues are fundamental values that contribute towards protecting the environment and prohibiting development at the cost of nature and other living beings. Myanmar believed that nurturing of the four cardinal virtues for the well being of living beings is noble living. Such living is called Brahmavihara as it differs from the living in hatred (Dosa), covetousness (Abhijjha) and envy (Issa). Of these Four Cardinal Virtues, Metta must be extended to all beings. Metta means loving-kindness or benevolence. Myanmar people emphasize the importance of Metta, universal and all-embracing love. Another definition of Metta is as follows: - beings. Like a mother who makes no difference between herself and her only child protects her child even at the risk of her own life, one thinks to identify himself with all. Metta embraces all living beings including animals. Metta appeals to both the rich and the poor, and both the ignorant and the enlighten one.

Karuna is an essential attribute of all Buddhas. It is compassion on miserable. Karuna is a virtue which makes the tender hearts of the noble quiver at the sufferings of others. Metta and Karuna are limitless. It is not restricted only to co-religionists or co-nationals or to human beings alone. Limited compassion is not true Karuna. Compassion is a fundamental principle of Buddhist laymen and Bhikkhus.

In Buddhism, morality alone does not lead to one's deliverance or perfect purity. It is the first stage on the path of purity. Beyond morality is wisdom. The base of Buddhism is morality and wisdom is its apex. Wisdom is like man's eyes and morality is like his feet. One of the appellative of the Buddha is Vijjagaranasampanna

endowed with wisdom and conduct. Morality, concentration and wisdom are the three stages of Buddhism. Morality is only the preliminary stage. Morality is a means to an end, but not an end in itself. By realizing the value of good conduct, one will avoid the evil deeds.

As a Buddhist, one must have full confidence in the Buddha, Dhamma and Sangha. One must also have an understanding of the significance of the Triple Gems. By studying Dhamma, one can decide for oneself as what is right or wrong, and he can choose the right way of living.

The Dhamma guides one to avoid evil deeds and to maintain good deeds. By understanding the Dhamma, we have to cultivate human values and to harmonize ourselves with other living beings. Living in this way, we are to be good. In Buddhism, Buddhist people learn how to live as harmless and gently human being. Discipline, good conduct, precepts and morals are all synonymous with "Sila". The practice of Sila means respecting the right of others to exist. A good Buddhist has a deep respect and concern for the well being of other beings. Sila alone is not enough as we also need to develop Samadhi, and Panna.

Another important thing is Consciousness. Consciousness is a very dynamic mental faculty. All the five senses bring objects from the outside to influence the mind and create mental objects. The mental training for gaining mental purity is the second stage in Buddhism. This is called "Samadhi". After having cultivated our moral conduct, we have to concentrate on training our mind. All human beings have great latent potential in our mind, but such potential is eclipsed by our anger, delusion, ignorance, craving, selfishness and other mental defilements. So, we must cultivate our mind to be virtue such as kindness, compassion, sympathy and understanding.

Meditation is the only method of ultimate goal. A person can practice to attain purity and enlightenment through meditation. Meditation is the only way for our final release from all kinds of suffering. The third important thing is Panna, which means Supreme Wisdom. Wisdom is not simply academic or scientific knowledge. Wisdom cannot appear if mind is dominated by selfishness, hatred and delusion. Through mental development the real wisdom will appear. Wisdom is like brightness. In Buddhist way of life, we have to cultivate our moral background, then try to understand the nature of our mind and try to discover a remedy to cleanse the mental impurities.

CONCLUSION

Happiness is the supreme good that supplies the purpose and measures the value, of all human activity and striving. Happiness is one of the most common moral concepts and it is broadly practice in every society. Religious and society traditions are based on the concept of Happiness. But the aim and mean of happiness is different from one another, happiness is regarded as virtue in every society. It is an important spiritual quality for mankind. Happiness has been a topic of interest for many centuries, starting with Ancient Greek Philosophy to current quality of life and well-being research in social, political and economic sciences.

According to Aristotle, happiness consists in the practical life of moral virtue as well as in the life of theoretical activity. Happiness is not a passing feeling or emotion, but is a lasting state of being. Happiness is the end or goal of all human beings. It is not only the activity of the practical reason but also of the theoretical reason because it is the good life and of the highest virtue. The highest good is well-being. Happiness is activity in accordance with virtue and it does not come from wealth.

Happiness is something entirely external to virtue, a further consequence of acting virtuously. Virtue is only an instrumental means to the agent's happiness. In the objective approach to virtue is the means to value, including the supreme value happiness. Virtue is practical in the sense that is happiness. However virtue is purely instrumental to happiness. Virtue is partly a means to happiness and partly an end in itself. An adequate analysis of the virtue requires that we recognize virtuous activity as an ineliminable constituent of happiness, and an adequate analysis of happiness requires that we recognize it as partly constituted by virtuous activity. The conception of virtue and happiness is also the one. The best captures the vision of the ideal individual and of the ideal life. A virtuous character must put as in the best state for achieving the supreme value, happiness, conceived of as a successful state of life and its emotional concomitant. The connection of virtue and happiness is one more reason why virtue must be seen as an integrated intellectual-emotional disposition. For inner

harmony and a solid connection with reality both require an integration of our emotions with our reason. If moral virtue is excellence of character, then virtuous deposition must be one that incorporates our intellectual and our emotional attitudes.

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