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FOUNDATION OF SOCIAL ETHIC IN THERAVADA BUDDHISM

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ABSTRACT:-

Theravada (Pali: *thera* "elders"+*vada* "word, doctrine"), the "Doctrine of the Elders," is the name for the school of Buddhism that draws its scriptural inspiration from the Pali Canon, or Tipitaka, which scholars generally accept as the oldest record of Buddha's teachings. For many centuries, Theravada has been the predominant religion of Sri Lanka, Myanmar, and Thailand. Today, Theravada Buddhist member is over 100 million world-wide. In recent decades Theravada has begun to take root in the West-primarily in Europe, Australia and USA.

Foundation of Social Ethic is very important in Theravada Buddhism. Ethic or moral philosophy is a branch of philosophy that involves systematizing, defending, and recommending concepts of right or wrong conduct. The term ethics derives from the Ancient Greek word *ethikos*, which is derived from the word *ethos*. The branch of philosophy axiology comprises the sub-branches of ethics and aesthetics, each concerned with values.

KEYWORDS: Theravada, ethic, value, social, Buddhism.

INTRODUCTION

The Dhamma taught by the Buddha shows us the correct path which leads to ultimate peace. This path can be classified into three stages. They are Sila (morality), Samadhi (concentration) and Panna (wisdom). They are three cornerstones of Buddhism, which leads us ultimate peace. They can be fulfilled over many lifetimes with great effort. Of these, the first stage is Sila (Ethic). This is foundation to lead a religious way of life. If a house is built without laying a proper foundation, it will be very unstable. Modern man had learned how important it is to live in Sila (ethic). We must learn how to live as harmless and gentle

human beings. In simple language, we must know how to live without disturbing the peace and good-will of others. It means respecting the right of others to live in peace and harmony. If we are able to do this, it will indeed be a great achievement. A good Buddhist has a deep respect and concern for the well-being of every other being. This is the foundation of social ethics.

As a branch of philosophy, ethic investigates the questions "What is the best way for people to live?" and "What actions are right or wrong in particular circumstances?". In practice, ethic seeks to resolve questions of human morality, by defining concepts such as good and evil, right and wrong, virtue and vice, justice and crime. As a field of intellectual enquiry, moral



philosophy also is related to the fields of moral psychology, descriptive ethics, and value theory. The teachings and messages of great religious teachers, who were founders of world religions, were primarily aimed at alleviating sufferings and bringing peace and happiness to all mankind through the application of moral and ethical conduct and righteous living. Buddha taught His ethical Doctrine aiming at an individual. But He did not ignore the relationship between individuals of society. Society is made of a group of individuals. Without individuals a society does not exist. So the behavior of a person is very important role in a society. It is obvious that personal development is important for social development. The Buddha emphasized reciprocal relations among various members of a society so that there would be a perfect harmony.

THE FUNDAMENTAL SOCIAL ETHICS

The Singalovada Sutta of Digha Nikaya is an important statement of Buddhist fundamental social ethics. In this Sutta the entire human society has been classified into six units. Each unit is represented as personifying the six directions.

1. Parents and children are regarded to be the east.
2. Teachers and pupils are regarded to be the south.
3. Friends and relatives are regarded to be the north.
4. Wives and husbands are regarded to be the west.
5. Masters and servants are regarded to be the nadir.
6. Samanas and Brahmanas are regarded to be the zenith.

In Theravada Buddhism parents are highly regarded saying that parents are the Brahma (Brahmatimatapitaro) which stated in Anguttara Nikaya. It becomes clear from above statement that parents are important in Society. The society that fulfilled all duties in the family can be peaceful co-existence. Therefore, Singalovada Sutta shows that the parents fulfill their duties towards their children; in return the children also carry out their obligations towards their parents in the following manner;

1. Once supported by them, I will now be their support.
2. I will perform duties incumbent on them.
3. I will keep up the lineage and tradition of my family.
4. I will make myself worthy of my heritage.
5. I will transfer merits in due time.

Parents have the duties towards their children and should show their love for them in five ways.

1. They restrain them from vice.
2. They exhort them to virtue.
3. They train them for a profession.
4. They contract suitable marriages for them
5. They hand over their inheritance in due time.

Furthermore, we can find out relationship between the teacher and the pupil in Singalovada Sutta. The teacher should support his pupil and his duties to minister to his pupil the following way;

1. He treats his pupil with kindness.
2. He trains him well.
3. He teaches him well.
4. He thoroughly instructs him in the love of every art.
5. He introduces him to his friends.

The pupil who gets such a treatment from his teacher becomes helpful to society. He, in return, should render the following service to his teachers;

1. He rises from his seats in solution when the teacher approaches him.
2. He attends on his teacher.
3. He shows eagerness to learn.
4. He fulfills his dally activates.
5. He pays attention when receiving their teaching.

The organization of wife and husband are shown. As the western direction, their relationship is brought about by love, understanding each other and mutual trust. Both are interdependent and duties: There are as follows;

1. Husband respects his wife.
2. He is courteous towards her.
3. He is faithful to her.
4. He hands over authority of household management.
5. He provides her with adornments.

The wife, in return, should treat her husband in the following ways;

1. She performs the husband work well.
2. She shows hospitality to relatives of both sides.
3. She is faithful to him.
4. She watches over the goods he brings home.
5. She discharges all her duties with skill and industry.

The mutual relationship between husband and wife has a psychological bearing. Both the husband and wife expect and regard from each other. When such things do not take place, they arises mutual misunderstanding, disagreement etc. when a woman fulfills her duties then her husband's psychological socio-economic needs fulfilled.

Man is a social animal. We cannot live in society without friends. Certainly a friend in need is a friend indeed. In this connection, the Singalovada Sutta enumerates the duties of clansman towards his friend as follows; A clansman should treat his friend with;

1. Generosity
2. Courtesy
3. Consideration
4. Equality, using his own wishes as a guide.
5. Truthfulness.

The friend, who gets treatment in the above five ways, should treat the clansman in the following way;

1. He provides protection when he is off his guard.
2. He guards his property when he is needless.
3. He becomes a refuge when he is afraid.
4. He does not forsake him in his troubles.
5. He shows consideration for his family.

In the Singalovada sutta, we can also find out the relation between master and servant. The master's duties are as follows;

1. Assigning them work according to their strength.
2. Supplying them with food and wage.
3. Tending them in sickness.
4. Sharing special treats with them.
5. Granting leave from time to time.

On the part of the employee, he should be honest, active and punctual and to be of service to the master who is sympathetic towards him. In return, he should to his master in five ways;

1. He rises before him.
2. He lies down to rest after him.
3. He is content with what is given to them.
4. He does their work well.
5. He carries about their praise and good fame.

The relationship between the Order of monks and laity is reciprocal. They laity consist of many individuals. The lay followers support the monks the temporal needs. The monks, in turn, fulfill the spiritual needs of the laity. The laity should treat the monks properly in his following ways;

1. He treats them with affection in act.
2. He treats them with affection in speech.
3. He treats them with affection in mind.
4. He keeps his house open to them.
5. He supports their temporal needs.

The monk who gets such a treatment from the laity in above five ways, in return, should have his obligation to care for the laity by;

1. Restrain them from evil.
2. Exhorting them to do good.
3. Loving them with kindly thoughts.
4. Teaching them what they have not heard before.
5. Correcting and purifying what they have heard already.
6. Revealing to them the way to a heavenly state.

These are ways, should be followed between the Order of monks and laity.

Herein, the entire human into twelve societies is analyzed constituents. They are interdependent and occupy a prominent individual development of each unit contributes to the development of society as a whole. A developed society, in turn, result in individual development problems arising within these social units are intended to be solved through mutual trust and love. Furthermore, the foundation of social ethics for laypeople is The Five Precepts which are common to all Buddhist schools. The precepts are not commands but a set of voluntary commitments or guidelines to help one live a life in which one is happy, without worries, and able to meditate well. The precepts are supposed to prevent suffering and to weaken the effects of greed, hatred and delusion.

CONCLUSION

As a conclusion, the foundation of social ethic is very important to practice and follow in our daily life. Therefore, we should put into practice above mentioned. If we Buddhist or non-Buddhist live under the foundation of social ethics, world will be very peaceful and the people will be lived in the happiness. Foundation of social ethics is basic practice in Buddhism. They are guidelines for human beings to follow on right path to future security, happiness and welfare. The purpose is to eliminate rude passions that are expressed through thought, word and deed. The ethics are also indispensable basis for people who wish to cultivate their minds. Every country has its codes which are considered to be ethical actions within its contexts. These codes are often linked to the society's interests and its code of law. These man-made codes are flexible and amended from time to time to suit changing circumstances. This man-made standard cannot serve as a reliable guide to some principles of morality which and be applied universally. By contrast, Buddhist ethic is not the invention of human mind. It is based on the universal law of cause and effect.

The social ethics based on the universal law of cause and effect should be observed by every one for happiness in this world and the next also, it is like a daily meal which has to be had. If one does not take it, he will die. Likewise one who neglects the social ethics will lose his noble human life and go to woeful states. If we love all living beings unconditionally, we have already kept them. Therefore, we should cultivate loving-kindness towards all living beings in order to observe the social ethics. If we observe these, the world will be very peaceful and the people will be lived in the happiness.

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