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## “PRACTICABILITY OF PARENT—CHILDREN RELATIONSHIP DEPICTED IN SINGALOVADA SUTTA”

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### ABSTRACT: -

**T**he parents are like gardeners who grow various kinds of flowers in their big garden and prepare his flowers systematically and righteously. Likewise, the parents need to give the guidelines to their children. If they take it wrong way, their children will go down the lowest state of life and never go up from this state up to grow old and die.

**KEYWORDS:** good parents produce good children and practice make perfect.

### INTRODUCTION

This sutta is called “Singalovadasutta” which is composed of ‘Singala+ovada’ and Singala implies the layman who has been worshipping to four directions in memory of his father and ovada means teachings by Buddha to this layman.

In this sutta, the Buddha pointed out the inter-relationships between parents and children, teachers and pupils, husband and wife, friend and companion, employer and employee and ascetic and Brahman.

Among them, I would like to discuss about the practicability of parent – children relationship depicted here. I think that this title is very important role of our human society because parents are our first teachers or pubbasariya who give their children to good destinations and teach what wrong or right to this world.

The parents are like gardeners who grow various kinds of flowers in their big garden and prepare his flowers systematically and righteously. Likewise, the parents need to give the guidelines to their children. If they take it wrong way, their children will go down the lowest state of life and never go up from this state up to grow old and die.



### THE DUTIES OF PARENTS TO THEIR CHILDREN

The duties of layman are part and parcel of morality which should be observed in the spirit and in the letter; in this way there is peace and happiness. The SingalovadaSuttashines pre-eminently among the numerous discourses delivered by the Buddha particularly to householders. Singala was the son of a wealthy family in Rajagaha near Patna in Bihar. The parents were devout followers of the Buddha but the son could not be persuaded to accompany them to see the Buddha and listen to Dhamma. Singala was concerned only with his material progress and to pay visits to the bhikkus entailed for him a material loss. He

complained further that paying the conventional respects to them would make his back ache and his knees stiff, and as he would have to invite the bhikkus at home and give them as presents, he would lose still more money. When, however, Singala’s father lay dying, Singala consented to carry out any order his father might be pleased to give him and the father asked him to “salute the six quarters” every morning after his death.

This was symbolic of the duty to protect one’s parents, teachers, wife, children, friends and companions, servants and workers, and religious teachers and Brahmans; each group being represented by the directions, east, south, west, north, nadir and zenith respectively. The father’s chief hope, however, lay in the possibility that the Buddha might at some time pass by and, seeing Singala so engaged might speak to him.

### TO DISSUADE THEM FROM EVILS

This occurred and the Buddha asked Singala what he was doing, Singala replied that he was carrying out the order of his late father, where-upon the Buddha explained to him the whole duty of a layman, that such a person guarded the six quarters if he avoided the following evils:

1. The four vices of conduct; destruction of life, taking that which is not given, adultery and lying speech.
2. Committing any action from the motives of partiality, enmity, stupidity or fear.
3. Pursuing the ways of dissipating wealth; taking intoxicants, frequenting streets at late hours, attending fairs, gambling, consorting with bad companions and idleness.

If parents carry out the responsibilities towards their children in a proper way, they will have well behave, disciplined children. It is not correct for parents to expect the best from children if they do not carry out their responsibilities in a proper way. Parents should always think to prevent children from indulging in sinful acts. The first teachers of children are their parents. The future of the child depends on the first experiences the child receives at home Parents have the chance to correct children when they made small mistakes. If these small mistakes are neglected, when the children grow up they will start to make bigger mistakes and make a mess of their own lives at a later stage. The can also be considered as giving authority for the child to carry on the wrong doing.

Even a young plant must be pruned at an early stage for it to grow in a better way, but if someone tries to alter it after it is fully grown it will only damage it further. It is the same with children. Correct the mistakes made at a very young age and the child will grow up with a proper discipline that will be appreciated by society. It must not be taken lightly when a child uses slang or raises his hand to parents at a young age. Even at a very young age children must be taught the value of the lives of insects and animals. They must be punished for telling even a very small lie. If the parents fail to do this, the child will grow up retaining these bad habits which can be disastrous to the adult.

### TO PERSUADE THEM TO DO WELL

It is the responsibility of parents to prevent children from being involved in sinful acts while providing guidance to children to do the correct things in life. Just because a child does not do any wrong does not mean that the child will be a successful adult. It is important for the parents to point children in the right direction and discipline them to make them understand the difficulty in earning money in a proper way. Whatever things parents teach children in the early days will be helpful for them when they grow up. It is sad to see that today, even in Buddhist societies, parents trying to teach their children the western way of life rather than value the old Buddhist traditions. Today’s parents must take the responsibility for the destruction of a way of life for most children. Most parents have neglected teaching the proper Buddhist culture and traditions. The dignity of a race or religion depends entirely on the attitude and the respect shown for them by the society. Respecting the parents, the religion, reciprocating the good things done for them by others, using pleasant language, helping strangers are some of the true Buddhist traditions dating back to thousands of years. It is the responsibility of today’s parents to teach their children these good habits. They must be taught to earn money in the right way, work hard and not to waste time. Children should not be allowed to waste time doing nothing. They must be given certain work at home, to help the parents, who in turn can teach them how to do things and so on during their free time. It must be remembered that the mind of a small child will always turn to mischief. They always

tend to do the wrong things. By understanding this and getting them involved in the day to day work of the house will keep them occupied with the parents.

### LET THEM LEARN IN ARTS AND SCIENCE

“Anakulacakammanta” mangala: At this point it may be asked: “Since a person is required to support his parents and also take care of his children and wife, how would he find the money to discharge his duties toward them? What would he do under the economic system of the Mangala country? The answer is anakulamangala. Anakulakammanta means to work or to engage oneself in some business, occupation or any other means of livelihood. What sort of occupation should one look for? The usual translation of “anakula” is being free from complications. This, in fact, is the business or occupation which is without fault, which does not involve any wrong-doing or demerit. The Mangala country does not tolerate any business or occupation which does harm or bring tears to someone, nor does it accept any property or riches gained through such occupations.

The business or occupation which does no harm to anyone is “anakulakammanta” mangala. To be able to support one’s parents and to care for and children one’s children and wife, one must have some work or some business. As long as the kind of business or occupation is in accordance with the anakulakammantamangala it is perfectly all right. The kind of work itself does not matter. Nowadays many people are eager to work only in the government service, or in other jobs which might be offered by other people. This sort of man is not a man of wisdom. Any person having been trained in the four aspects of education would have the initiative to set himself up in some kind of business, or take up an occupation under any circumstances. Provided that his business harms no one or brings tears to no one who will be anakulakammantaMangala.

This responsibility of the parents is to give the maximum education to the children. Guiding them with discipline or teaching the good things in life will not be sufficient for a child. It is essential that parents give them the proper education in order that their intelligence can be developed.

In the past it was seen how children were taught to do many things by themselves including farming, carpentry religious work, astrology and even natural medicine, but now using modern technology the education system has reached a very high level in most countries. The modern education system in developed countries has changed according to the needs of society. Therefore using these modern education systems, parents should know how to give the correct education to their children which will help them develop fully as productive adults. If it is thought that children should be educated in the old fashioned way, this is a big mistake. In the olden days some parents thought if their children could read a few lines or if they were able to read a prescription from a native doctor that would do. Education is not only learning to read letters. It is a system to improve the knowledge of a person. Before the world knew how to write letters there were many intellectuals. Most religious leaders and intellectuals lived long before letters were introduced in most languages.

Today, it is essential to teach children more languages so that they can use them to gain more knowledge of the world. 2600 years ago the Lord Buddha said that the intelligence of a person is the most valuable asset. The child should be given the education which will assist him/her gain a better knowledge of the society, to fulfill their dreams in life and to enhance their intelligence. This will open up ways to a successful life for the child when they grow up.

No one will ever be able to learn everything in the world or fulfill every dream of their lives, but the education that a child receives will and no doubt will help the child to organize his / her life in a better way, fulfill most of their dreams and move forward with a vision. It is the parents who should provide the initial education of the child. Success in life will depend on what they learn as children.

Some parents neglect the children’s education due to poverty or their own lack of education. Also, society will be stronger if there are more educated people. Here, education does not mean the ability to read or write, it is the knowledge that one receives through a proper education.

### TO HAVE OVER TO THEM THEIR INHERITANCE AT THE PROPER TIME

There are only two categories of people in this world, viz., the parents and the children. There is no other category besides these two. So the parents must take care of their children and bring them up to be good



citizens; the children must support their parents and minister to their needs with proper attention and willingness. If both parents and children do their respective duties for the good of one another, then the fulfillment of these two duties alone is quite sufficient for the building of a nation. In our mangala country, each and every one of the parents must train their own children to be properly educated, to be wise and to be good, and help them to be comfortably off. The children on their part must, to the best of their ability, support their parents and keep them comfortable, free from worry of from care. If this is done, we can say that the building of the Mangala country is as good as complete.

There are two people who are not easy to repay. Which two? Your mother and father. Even if you, were to carry your mother on one shoulder and your father on the other shoulder for 100 years, and were to look after them by anointing, kneading, washing and rubbing their limbs and they were to excrete and urinate correct there (on your shoulders), you would not in that way pay or repay your parents. If you were to establish your mother and father in absolute sovereignty over this great earth, abounding in the seven treasures, you would not in that way pay or repay your parents. Why is that? Mother and father do much for their children.

They care for them, they nourish them and they introduce them to this world. But anyone who rouses his unbelieving mother and father, settles and establishes them in conviction; rouses his virtuous mother and father, settles and establishes them in virtue; rouses his stingy mother and father, settles and establishes them in generosity; rouses his foolish mother and father, settles and establishes them in discernment: To this extent one pays and repays one’s mother and father.”

Every parent will not have the means to give wealth to their children as some parents struggle all their lives just to bring up children and give them a reasonable standard of education. They may not have the ability to set aside some of their earnings for the children since they need to take care of their education, health, clothing and all other expenses for many years until the children are grown. Some parents have to sell their land, sell their property and personal possessions in order to educate their children. Some parents, even before they die, make the mistake of handing over all wealth to their children which is not the best thing to do in certain circumstances and families. Once the child receives all the inherited wealth, they have on many occasions deceived the parents and do not take care of them anymore. Therefore, some parents hand over the wealth legally to their children with a clause that it will only take effect only after their deaths. It can easily be seen that after receiving their inheritance from their parents there are many children who would get rid of their parents from their houses. Most of these unfortunate parents spend the rest of their lives in care homes for the elderly.

### **TO GIVE THEM IN MARRIAGE TO A SUITABLE WIFE OF HUSBAND**

The next Mangala is “Puttadarassasangaha” which is generally translated as cherishing or tenderly caring for means one should not ignore or neglect one’s family, especially one’s own children. One should give proper education to one’s children. Nowadays, many children grow up to be bring up and strays, homeless and straying in the streets. This is because parents have neglected their own children. It is not so much the duty of the government to solve this problem. In any country, if 75% of the parents take care of their children and keep proper watch over them, that country will have no wicked people or evil-doers.

Thus, in according with this mangala, it is the responsibility of all parents to prevent and care for their own children. Why they are waifs and strays homeless and straying in the streets, they do not care what their parents said. We should think whatever we will be judged according our work is good or bad. Looking casually at these two mangalas, it may be said that there is nothing new in them and that everybody is doing just that. But actually, it is not everybody who is adhering to these two mangalas, and that is the trouble.

If this is not done, it is a grave mistake made by the parents. Marriage is a very important juncture for a lay person. Therefore, it is the duty of the parents to see that their children are marriage to partners of equal standard, and it must take place at the correct time and not later in life. Most partners prefer to arrange marriages for their children, but any individuals choose their own partners in what are known as love matches. When it comes to marriage, parents always look for partners of equal status, same caste or creed, same religion and equal family background and education. Most parents are not satisfied with the love matches that take place where their children find their own partners. At the time, children should not have grievances against their

marriages, on time, due to poverty and financial difficulties. Every parent strives hard to provide more for their children, but sometimes they fail due to unforeseen situations arising.

### **THE DUTIES OF CHILDREN TO THEIR PARENTS TO SUPPORT THEIR PARENTS**

“Matapituuptthana” mangala: According to the MangalaSutta, the children after support their studies at school should. First of all, support their parents. This duty of supporting one’s parents is of primary importance. Supporting one’s parent’s means ministering to all their needs, and also obeying them and respecting them. These duties will have to be performed conscientiously and systematically, according to plan. After all, who are the people responsible for setting up this education system? Who haven this education to the children? At the same time in the past educated, it is for the children to support the parents in gratitude. If they do not support the parents but neglect them, such sons and daughters will be of no use at all to the parents. Finding their own offspring to be of no help to them and thus feeling neglected, the parents might get disheartened. If the children have a firm resolve to respectfully attend to the needs of the parents, then the parents will then be heartened to bring them up to be good children.

It is responsibility of the children to provide to the ageing parents, food, drink, clothes, transport, and medicine when required. The children should consider the parents as the “Living Buddha” at home. To carry out those duties towards the parents is not only a right but it is a responsibility. It is mentioned that there are “Four Great Accomplishments” practiced by children for parents. They are metta, karuna, mudita and upekkha. During pregnancy, a parent wishing that a new born baby will be healthy is considered metta. After the child is born, taking good care of the child’s every need is considered karuna. Providing them with proper education, teaching them social ethics, raising them as good citizens is considered mudita and when they are grown finding them proper partners for life, giving them in marriage, finding them proper jobs is considered upekkha.

Whatever faults the parents have, they will always have the highest love for their children. When they were strong and vibrant, they would work, earn and spend the most of their earnings towards the untiring of their children. Some parents do not spend on food and clothes but spend money to give greater comforts to their children. When they are sick they should spend all their wealth to cure the children. At the time of marriage, they should do all possible to provide for their comfort in their new life. When parents accomplish all of this, after the children grow up, and the parents are old and can no longer work to earn money, it is responsibility of the sons to take care of the parents, and provide them with necessities they need. During this time, the parents can only depend on their children and no one else. To reciprocate for the good things done to them from births until grown, the children should know that they have responsibilities towards the ageing parents. Even the Lord Buddha paid respect to the Bo tree that provides shelter for him.

### **TO PERFORM THEIR DUTIES OWING TO THEM**

The second responsibility of children should be to take care of aged parents when they are weak and can no longer attend to their own needs. This is the time parents expect their children to help them. From the time of birth, it is the parents who take care of all the needs of a child, taking care of their food, medicine, clothing, education, and are all done with loving care. Most marriages are performed with the blessing of the parents. They do everything for the children to have a better life after marriage. For parents, who did all this for years and years, it is the responsibility of the children to take care of them when they are old and weak. Children who do not take these responsibilities seriously are considered selfish and sinners by the society. However there are many children in our society who do not take care of ageing parents with love care and responsibility. These are also children who with the help of their parents have grown up, received a good education, found good jobs, got married to partners of equal status but have forgotten about their parents. But little do they realize that they too will get the same treatment from their children when they grow up. There was once a son who kept is aged father outside the house, provided food on a tin plate, and treated the old man so very shabbily. He too had a son. This son looked on in surprise at the way his grandfather was treated by his father. After the grandfather died, the son hid the tin plate on which his father had provided food for his grandfather.

When the funeral was over, the father looked for tin plate and asked the son if he had seen it. Replied the son “I hid that plate to give you food when you are old!” To raise children in the correct way, parents must follow the rule first. If not, it is certain that eventually that the children will follow the method of the parents. Practice is much better than later advice.

### **TO BE WORTHY OF THEIR INHERITANCE**

In each society there is culture and tradition practiced by the society which has been adopted as become the accepted norm for such a society. Effort is made to transmit the culture and traditions that belong to different races and religious. Certain traditions and cultures can vary at times in different societies within the same country. However, it is important for the next generation to adopt those cultures and traditions and protect them. There are some parents who not only suffer from the deviation of their children from those cultures but even go to the extent of committing suicide when they can no longer tolerate the behavior of their children.

These parents hate to see their children adopting western life styles, changing their religion and getting married to partners who do not respect their own cultures. To remove forwards as a nation, there must be a respect for the tradition and culture of the country of birth. They had the highest for Buddhism which helped it develop in the country. A country cannot move forward without protecting its own culture and tradition. Certain races and religions teach their children the value of such traditions from a very small age retain their purpose. People who do not respect their country or the tradition and culture of that country will never be able to respect their own parents.

### **TO OFFER ALMS IN HONOR OF THEIR PARENTS**

It is the responsibility of children to protect the wealth of their parents. Parents collect wealth mainly for the purpose of handing it over to their some children for their benefit and comfort. Some parents spend much on themselves to protect the earned wealth for their children. It is therefore the responsibility of the children to protect this wealth and if possible improve it. Some parents do not have proper meals as they do not want to spend too much on food, they do not seek new clothes, or look for luxuries. They work day and night to earn money to provide it for their children. Some children never understand the hardships that parents go through but do not hesitate to spend lavishly, nor do the care to save. It is a great mistake that some parents make by providing luxuries and comfort for the children when they are young. When children get more than they should, this can lead them to do things that society does not accept. If children are taught the hardships of life from a very young age, they adjust themselves to a better way of life, and do not spend unnecessarily. They learn to save for the future. If not, it is possible that the children not taught prudent practice will accept unsuitable life styles such as involvement in liqueur and gambling with all the money they possess.

During childhood they never understood the value of money. They will therefore never be able to understand how difficult it is to earn money. Therefore if they do not know all these it won't be long that they will squander the wealth they inherited from their parents and will carry on a lavish life, which will bring about their downfall in life. Wealthy parents expect their children to protect the wealth they have handed down to the children and not to waste it. Today, we can see that most inherited wealth is wasted for no valid reason without thought or care for how different it was for the parents to accumulate it. Only people who work hard to earn money will truly appreciate the value of it. Children of today who inherit wealth do not know the value of it. If parents get the children involved in their businesses, or whatever they do, the children will at least have some idea of how difficult it is so earn money. It is better to train the children at a young age to spend the money properly then they have good reason to save for the future. Parents should also remember that they must not only give wealth to their children but also instill discipline which is so important in life.

### **TO PRESERVE THEIR FAMILY LINEAGE**

This is the last responsibility of children is after parents have died to give them merit for what they have done and to give alms that will bring merit for the parents. It is important to remember good things the parents have done and to appreciate them by participating in things that bring merit to the deceased parents. In certain



religious you see people singing sad hymns, praying for their souls, weeping and giving food for the poor to bring merit for the dead. In Buddhism the only and the best way to give merit to the parents is by doing correct things for the society and offering those merits to the dead.

This is the dream of parents whose children were in their womb. Then they hoped that their children would look for their heritages after they passed away.

### THE RESULTS OF MUTUAL DUTIES OF FAMILY

As Mrs Rhys Davids says; “The Buddha’s doctrine of love and goodwill between man and man is here set forth in domestic and social ethics with more comprehensive detail than elsewhere. And actually we may say even now of this Vinaya, or code of discipline, so fundamental are the human interests involved, so sane and wide is the wisdom that envisages them, that the utterances are as fresh and practically binding today and here as they were then at Rajagaha.”

“Happy would have been the village or the clan on the bank of the Ganger,” says Dr. T.W Rhys David’s, commenting on the SingalovadaSutta, “where the people were full of the kindly spirit of fellow-feeling, the noble spirit of justice, which breathes through these naïve and simple saying.” “Not less happy,” adds Mrs Rhys Davids,” would be the village, or the family on the banks of the Thames today, of which this could be said.”

Commenting on this sutta, the Venerable Buddhaghosa says; “Nothing in the duties of the householder is left unmentioned. This sutta called the Vinaya of the Housedress. Hence in one who practices what he has been taught in it, growth is to be looked for and not decay?” But, as the Buddha often pointed out, it is necessary to have a clear understanding in order to be able to avoid the bad things in life; and understanding not only of the evil results they engender but also of the control of one’s own mind which will enable one to recognize their causes and so counter them. Continuous mindfulness and awareness are outstanding features of the Buddha’s teaching, but since these and similar features naturally form a part of his positive teaching, we must consider what that positive teaching is, taking as a particular case the well-being of the Buddhist laity. According to the ByagghapajjaSutta. The Buddha was once visited by Dighajanu who asked for his advice for laymen who lived with their families and enjoyed the pleasures of the world. The Buddha expounded to him four things conducive to their well-being and happiness in this life and four things conducive to happiness hereafter.

They were;

1 Accomplishment in alertness (utthana-sampadā), i.e., dexterity and diligence accompanied with ingenuity in finding ways and means in the performance of duties connected with one’s profession.

2 Accomplishment in caution (arakkha-sampadā) by protecting one’s prosperity against thieves, floods, etc.

3 The keeping of good company (kalyaṇa-mittatā) with those who have confidence, virtue, charity and wisdom, and emulating them.

4 The leading of a regulated life in accordance with one’s income (samajivikata). Here the four channels of dissipating wealth are enumerated as before.

1 Accomplishment in confidence (saddha-sampada), knowing the nine good qualities of the Enlightened One.

2 Accomplishment in morality (sila-sampada) by keeping the five precepts

3 Accomplishment in charity (cagasampada), being free from meanness; generous, open-handed, easily approachable and cheerful in sharing.

4 Accomplishment in wisdom (panna-sampada) leading to spiritual growth, penetrating insight and so to the utter destruction of all ills.

Of the foregoing eight, it is recognition of the development of the duties and conduct of ordinary life to the connection between the accomplishment in wisdom and insight that constitute a characteristic unique to Buddhism. The development and culture of the essential concomitant of our everyday consciousness bring one to a cultured consciousness where one sees “yathabhuta’, according to the way things really are. As may be inferred from the preceding remarks, perfection in morality is not possible without culture of the mental faculties. Study and perfection in ethics leads also to the entire realization of the philosophy which ends all ills. In other worth words, ethics constitute not only an applied philosophy but should, if they are to have more than passing value, lead to that philosophy. The Buddha said that children should not forget their parents as mutual

duties because parents are great benefactors for them and supported by the children when their parents are old and have gone time:

“Bhikkhus, there are two persons that cannot easily be repaid. What who? One’s mother and father.

“Even if one should carry about one’s mother on one shoulder and one’s father on the other, and [while doing so] years; have a life span of a hundred years, live for a hundred years; and if one should attend to them by anointing them with balms, by massaging, bathing, and rubbing their limbs, and they even void their urine and excrement there, one still would not have done enough for one’s parents, nor would one have repaid them. Even if one were to establish one’s parents as the supreme lords and rulers over this great earth abounding in the seven treasures, one still would not have done enough for one’s parents, nor would one have repaid them. For what reason? Parents are of great help to their children; they bring them up, feed them, and show them the world.

“But, bhikkhus, if when one’s parents lack faith, one encourages, settles, and establishes them in faith; if when one’s parents are immoral, one encourages, settles, and establishes them in virtuous behavior; if when one’s parents are miserly, one encourages, settles, and establishes them in generosity; if, when one’s parents are unwise, one encourages, settles, and establishes them in wisdom: in such a way, one has done enough for one’s parents, repaid them, and done more than enough for them.”

## CONCLUSION

The Singalovadasutta is an analysis of the obligations or duties of a society based on the social concept of Buddha’s teachings. It has universal value and does not mention anything about a particular religion or Buddhism. Rather it seeks to treat all human beings alike and to share the responsibilities among equally and to teach how to move forward in a society without losing the interconnection between people.

Instead of building social relationships based on ceremonies and rituals, it teaches the responsibilities and right of people towards society and teaches the repercussions that follow the breaking of laws of correct break down as a result, and how much the economic factors affect personal life. The sutta, which is a complete lecture, explains not to build a society based on blind faith, but to control personal behavior and to use it for the benefit of the society.

When the Singalovadasutta is taken as a whole and analyzed, it contains all the people that live within the vast framework of society and prescribes the most suitable ways of working according to one’s knowledge by which there will be no conflicts in the society and by which it will have an impact on the economic co-operation within society. Therefore it is very difficult to criticize the Singalovadasutta as it gives a very broad insight into a society with a very methodical approach, giving a proper plan to build a just and fair society.

Therefore, the role of parents and children is mainly implied here to share the knowledge of relationship depicted in Singalovadasutta.

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