

KARMA AND ECONOMIC PROGRESS

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Introduction

Buddhists believe that happiness or unhappiness in the life of living beings is a retribution of acts done intentionally in the past and that intentional acts in one's present life shape one's future destiny. Buddhists of the Theravada denomination are mainly concerned with accumulating good karma in their religious practices anticipating a better life in the future. Future means both immediate future and continuous life cycle of individual beings after the death. The majority of Buddhist believers are more concerned with this aspect than with spiritual purification to win liberation from samsāra. Since it seems that fatalistic adherence to the belief of karma stands in the way of social progress, I try to evaluate the concepts of karma and social progress within the context of Theravada Buddhism, not as a representation of related concepts from the Pali sutras, but rather a free observation of facts available in the Pali sutras.

I—THE CONCEPT OF KARMA

Karma and fate

The concept of karma may prima facie resemble the concept of fate. Fate is a metaphysical concept that defies empirical

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explanation. If the nature of human life and the world are pre-determined, there is no chance for that the lot of human beings would improve. Buddhism refutes determinism as a heretical view that disavows the freedom of man.¹⁾ According to *the Buddhist theory of causality which replaces determinism, every phenomenon is dependent on a variety of causes and conditions. Therefore karma itself is not an independent and unchangeable factor of life.*²⁾ So it is reasonable to assume that the belief in karma does not impede man's endeavor for self progress or for that of society.

Can the Karma Theory be repudiated?

In fact this concept lays a moral weight upon the behaviour of beings. Belief in karma, that every act brings about its own consequences, restrains to a certain extent one's freedom to behave according to one's emotions. Though everybody checks his or her impulses and weighs the immediate unfavourable consequences before acting, the believer in karma goes deeper. He looks into the distant future which may not be relevant to the present. According the concept of karma the consequence of an act could be immediate or could arise in distant future. From the standpoint of rebirth concept, the consequence of an act does not necessarily appear within this life. It may appear in any of future births. Therefore the time that takes an act to bring about its retribution is rather longer. This attitude could be an obstacle to perform freely the activities that bring about immediate favorable results. An act is not right just because it produces a good result now. It may produce greater harm in the long run.³⁾

We can imagine a person who does not believe in karma and

does not think that the sense of moral responsibility is important. Naturally he can decide quite easily to perform an act that brings about immediate good results. For example he can be very shrewd and dishonest to create a big profit margin in business. As long as he does not anticipate adverse effects of his dishonesty and shrewdness he freely continues accumulating wealth. But for the person who lives according his conscience, it is not easy to be shrewd and dishonest to widen the profit margin even though the conditions of the market were very favourable for him. The believer in karma controls his emotions further. He may even forgo his profit to help another because he believes his good act definitely brings about appropriate reward in this life or in a future life. So the freedom to act is, from our secular standpoint, is restrained to one who accept the concept of karma.

Is it possible for a Buddhist to repudiate this concept? Basic tenets of Buddhism are verifiable facts of life. One of the characteristics of Buddhism is its openness to verification (ehipasika, 'come and see'). In fact the karma theory is not as verifiable as the concepts of impermanency (anicca), suffering (dukkha) etc. But if a Buddhist refuses to believe it, he may not easily discover any alternative concept that makes moral responsibility meaningful.

God

People who believe in a monotheistic God are constantly aware of the omnipotence of God. Though they do not believe in the natural process of retribution of acts as Buddhists do, they accept individual moral responsibility for they must discipline themselves constantly keeping the proper relation with God. This

concept helps them to review their motives and restrain their behavior.⁴⁾

Karma. as the Agent of Discipline

Buddhism does not maintain the concept of an almighty God who creates and controls the world. Instead, Buddhism advocates the theory of natural principles; principles of matters, mind, karma, and nature. If a Buddhist denies the principles of nature (or of karma) he cannot find any means to control his impulses to produce benefit for himself and society. The theory of karma is given as an universal principle that conditions the nature of living beings. No one can change one's nature merely disregarding this principle. One has to accept and study the way karma functions if one intends to improve one's nature and the quality of one's life. Social rules and codes of laws are not powerful and effective enough to maintain social harmony and peace. The theory of karma presses the responsibility of decision and action on the conscience of individuals. Since there is no super-power over an individual to punish or reward, one has no room to argue or complain about one's lot. This is because retribution is a natural process. One must take the responsibility of intentional actions. Therefore, in order to restrain acts of selfish motivation and to safeguard the peace and happiness of everyone, there is no better alternative for Buddhists than to believe in karma.

II—PROGRESS OF SOCIETY AND THE STATE

Towards a perfect society

The accounts of Cakkavatti Sihanāda Sutta and Kūṭadanta Sutta imply an ideal society or country where all people are well

off and satisfied in their economic needs. They do not commit any immoral act because the causes that lead to unethical practices do not exist. Peace and harmony are perfectly maintained in society and extended towards animals and birds also. Although these accounts indirectly criticize the prevalent economic and social instability of India, they also set forth the Buddhist view of society and economic progress.⁵⁾

The Economy affects morality

As is evident, Buddha's foremost concern was to instruct living beings how to win spiritual freedom. Therefore the entire Buddhist doctrine is addressed to the conscience of individuals but not to society as a body. Nevertheless, He seems to accept the concept of society when He has to explore the problems of society and the state. Cakkavatti Sihanāda Sutta describes in legendary form a state where the administration fails to comply with the economic needs of the society thus instilling the germ of degeneration in the state. People take to stealing and the king imposes punishments. The people, thinking that it is reasonable to punish wrong doers start themselves punishing the people who steal the property of others. The king becomes more strict. He imposes punishments to those who harm others. The people become caught in a vicious cycle, degenerate gradually and various forms of immoral practices appear in the society; the taking of lives, stealing, violence, lying, slander, misconduct etc. become prominent in the society while the State also practices violence in the form of punishment and finally the situation becomes so complicated that the State miserably becomes powerless over the people. Throughout this sutta the failure of the state to fulfill the economic needs of society is emphasized. The pivotal argu-

ment of this sutta is that economic progress, morality and the State maintain the equilibrium of society. If one of these three weakens, the whole system becomes endangered.

The Morality of People affects the State

The Aggañña Sutta observing the problem from a different standpoint provides the legend that explains the beginning of various social phenomena. Man's craving or selfishness, according to this sutta, can lead a prosperous society into misery and self-destruction through violence and war. The gist of this sutta is that man's inner nature, i.e. selfishness, craving, conceit, anger etc., causes the deterioration of society. Both accounts admit the mutual dependence of the State and the public. A corrupted state creates a corrupted society and brings about acute poverty. If the society is used to unethical practices then it corrupts the state also. On the other hand, an honest and active state can bring about economic and spiritual prosperity to the society. If the society adheres to moral principles, then it can create an honest and active state. It may take some time to achieve prosperity if only one party, the state or the people, act on the right path. In order to hasten realization of economic prosperity and social harmony, both the State and the people have to persevere. However, at least one of the elements, must be honest and spiritually pure to secure social stability and economic prosperity.

III—ECONOMIC PROSPERITY

Although the aim of Buddhism is to develop dispassion towards worldly things and win freedom of the mind, the discourses occasionally mention views relating to man's happiness in

terms of the fulfillment of needs.

Awareness of the Four Basic Requisites

Food, clothing, lodging, and health care are the most fundamental requisites of the human being. An awareness of the basic functions of the necessities is supposed to be obligatory to avoid human suffering, social dissatisfaction and hopelessness that necessarily arise from the conflict between man's unlimited demands and limited means.⁷⁾

Craving, the cause of suffering

Generally, we prefer to disregard altogether the most essential functions of the four basic needs. We cling to the satisfaction we earn from these essentials and develop craving, attachment, avarice and covetousness. Since no one can perfectly satisfy one's craving, one's endless seeking of satisfaction paves the way for anger, ill will, hatred, melancholy, dejection and cruelty. No one experiences these emotions on the same scale, but everybody undergoes this painful experience every day. As man is ignorant of the nature of things and the of meaning of life, he shifts his interest from the awareness of the fundamental functions of the four essentials to the satisfaction one experiences from them. All spiritual, social and emotional problems arise from this shift of values.

If we observe one of these items we can understand how a shift of values results in the changing of fundamental needs into a minutely complicated and vastly widened complex of needs. In the case of food, we no longer consider it as the mean of sustaining life. The basic function of food is to supplement nutrition for the life. The taste of food is not necessarily relevant to its basic function. But our obsession for taste and beauty has

resulted in creation of a great wealth of art and technology in the science of gastronomy. With the introduction of money into the market people changed the purpose of their activities into earning money which could be converted into any type of satisfaction. The human urge to earn money merged with the craving for power. Thus the economic activities related to production, distribution and the consumption of food are no longer maintained to satisfy the man with the basic need of food. It is now a complex economic activity undertaken to secure the economic and political power of governments. Every other basic necessity of man, likewise, has already been integrated into one global economic complex.

Back to Fundamentals

When someone enters the Buddhist community, the basic requisites of life are recited in front of the new entrant as an admonition.

- i. Your life as a monk depends on a morsel of food received from begging. Invitations from the laity etc. are extra gains.
- ii. The life of a monk depends on the robes made of rags taken from heaps of dust. Robes of cotton, silk etc, offered by the laity are extra gains.
- iii. The shade of a tree is the proper dwelling for a monk. A house with a roof is an extra gain.
- iv. The urine of a cow is the suitable medicine for a monk. Proper medical treatment is an extra gain.⁸⁾

The Satisfaction of a monk

As a world renouncer, a monk is satisfied if he can receive the above mentioned four basic requirements. He must reduce his requisites of life to the minimum level. Thus he cannot cater to his

cravings or needs for satisfaction. He strictly sticks to the fundamental necessities of life. He enjoys satisfaction from whatever he receives. By the mere casting off of the action of catering to the cravings of life, a monk can enjoy greater satisfaction from receiving the fundamental requisites than a secular man does.

The Satisfaction of secular life

But the secular world is not as simple as the life of a monk. A layman needs an income, a family, friends, good relatives, proper social relations, spiritual assistance, a good and reliable work force etc. As the society becomes complex the needs of man also become complex. Whatever complex necessities a man may have he must not forget the basic requirements of life. If he becomes obsessed with the satisfaction of the senses that he receives from the fundamental necessities and develops a craving in his mind, he may try to satisfy his craving but not fulfill the necessities. *Nobody can satisfy one's craving perfectly. But one can satisfy one's needs quite well.* Therefore, in order to avoid social confusion, individual suffering, and to maintain happiness and peace of the mind man must understand that the motive of economic behavior is to supplement the necessities of life and must not try in vain to fulfill the whims of craving.

An individual might be satisfied with his lot if he confines his economic behavior to the extent that he supplements his requisites only. There is a negative side to this aspect of life. If people are content on a larger scale and do not have the impetus to earn more, the economic progress and development of society could stagnate. But if we study human nature carefully

we will realize the positive side of the Buddhist concept.

Economy subjugates man

If the economic behavior of man is motivated by craving and satisfying of the senses, man does not realize the ultimate limits of his endeavours. The life of a person who aims at amassing wealth may turn out to be miserable despite his apparent affluence because such a person easily forgets the purpose of earning wealth and his life becomes subservient to the wealth. Some people value everything in terms of money and are not concerned about nature or the effects of the means in which profits are made. Inventors and manufacturers may produce anything that can make money. If the consumer buys, the producer does not care whether the product is suitable or effective for society. Creative people can introduce new types of cravings and demands to society simply to sell their products. Thus, when we observe the world we can come across people who simply amass wealth for the sake of wealth while others produce so many unnecessary (sometimes dangerous) things for society. Such economic behavior is very unpromising. They extravagantly consume natural resources. Consumers also feel the pain because they are emotionally compelled to buy so many unnecessary things. In this everchanging society, those people can never experience the satisfaction of life.

Buddhist solution to economic woes

If society realizes the basic requisites of man and channels the resources to produce the necessities of society and also understands the unlimited nature of cravings, economic behaviour of society would never create any adverse side effects. The steady progress of society can be visualized. People could enjoy the

satisfaction of the needs. Buddhism does encourage the development and prosperity of society and there are several suttas in the Canon explaining the causes and the way towards prosperity. Some suttas study the causes that cause a society to degenerate. The admonition of Buddhism in this regard can be summarized as follows. *'Be aware of the necessities of life. Do not let craving subjugate you. Without imagining dreams that are impossible to realize, be happy and satisfied with what you have. Increase your happiness and satisfaction day by day as you improve your economy and yourself.*⁹⁾

Maintenance of Earnings

The maintenance of earnings is also equally important to secure happiness of life. *Mangala sutta. Parābhava sutta. Vasala sutta of the Sutta Nipāta and Singālovada sutta of the Dīgha Nikāya* that record Buddha's views of the family, society, economic progress and secular happiness of life are very popular suttas in the Theravada Buddhist world. From these suttas we can collect the Buddhist view of maintaining one's income.¹⁰⁾

One divides one's net income into four parts. Two parts are invested in one's business to increase the income. One fourth is used for household expenditure. The other quarter is saved to be used in sickness and other types of distress. This distribution system seems suitable for self-employed families where the family compound provides most of the food requirements and the family expenses can be kept very low.¹¹⁾

Of course, this method of distribution is not suitable for modern society whose members mainly live on a salary. But there are three points relevant to modern society. One must put greater weight on increasing one's income. There must be an allot-

ment for unprecedented demands such as sickness or accidents. Indebtedness is not allowed.

Though necessary expenses must not be curtailed, one must avoid extravagant expenses that damage the balance between income and expenses. While savings were encouraged miserliness is deplored. Miserliness is considered a sin. Further, supporting the religious community who renounce the world to strive after spiritual perfection is another duty of the laity, for those ascetics guide the world towards spiritual progress.

We can assume that Buddhism prefers a theory of earning righteously and spending well. The flow of wealth is valued. Individuals must balance their income and expenses to keep the economy running.

Other causes of Secular Happiness

Economic progress alone does not bring about happiness in secular life. Sutras mention the importance of sound health and a strong body.¹²⁾ Besides, one must have the knowledge to appreciate and the ability to perform an art. Erudition and practical knowledge are also essential qualities. In addition to individual perfection, a layman must have the ability to maintain good social relations. If one practices giving (dāna), speaking pleasant words (piya vācā), being interested in the benefit of others (atthacariyā) and equality (samānattatā) one may win the cooperation and love of society.¹³⁾

IV—THE STATE

If the State does not function properly, economic progress cannot be realized on a larger scale. A government cannot stay aloof from the economic activities of the people. If an indivi-

dual is absolutely free to do anything he prefers to gain prosperity, the society as a whole turns out to be tremendously miserable and no justice and reason could be maintained. Therefore, the role of the State as the agent of overall administration is pivotal to economic progress of a society.

The State as seen by Buddhism

Since the Buddha was visited by many rulers of contemporary India, some records of the advice given to them can be found in the sutras. Though most of these records narrate the path to spiritual progress, advices relating to administration can be discovered to a certain extent. Out of these records three sutras from the Dīgha Nikāya are remarkable. Depending on mythical accounts these sutras reveal the Buddhist view of the origin and duties of the state. The legend of Aggañña Sutta relates the origin of mankind, the way man inadvertently created social, economic and moral problems due to the original weakness of the mind and the origin of the necessity of a state and a system of administration. The legend of the Cakkavatti Sihanāda Sutta strongly mentions that an unhealthy economic situation brings about the moral degeneration of the society and the moral degeneration, in turn, worsens the situation amounting to a total destruction.¹⁴⁾ The myth of the Kūṭadanta Sutta is rather specific. To introduce the right way of offering a sacrifice, it explains that providing suitable employment opportunities to the entire work force of the country is the duty of the king. When all the members of the community who have the ability to work are busy in their own duties, then there would be nobody in the country to create unnecessary trouble. Then the people become prosperous and peaceful. People contribute of their own will the surplus income to

the government treasury.¹⁵⁾

Duties of the State

It is easy to understand the duties of a state from the legends of the above-mentioned three sutras. It is the duty of the State to provide an employment opportunity to each citizen who is able to work. The government does not decide what a citizen must do to earn his living. Instead, the state provides the necessary facilities and material for those who prefer agriculture. Capital is provided for the experts in trade. Wages are paid to those who prefer to work for a salary. This method refuses a state-controlled economic pattern. It is admitted that by nature everybody prefers to earn their living. Children, aged people and the disabled are dependent because they cannot earn their living. The State assists people to realize their willingness to earn. Thus economic behavior becomes a very basic and natural phenomenon of the society. The state generally does not impose rules and regulations to control production and distribution.

Freedom is vouched for every citizen. But no one has the right to infringe on the freedom of other people. Therefore, the government strictly safeguards the freedom of everybody. The State deals with those who violate the freedom of others. Not only do human beings enjoy the security and protection of the government but the life of the birds and beasts is also protected. The right to live is strictly maintained.⁽¹⁶⁾

There are many customs, beliefs and traditions in a country. The State promotes the old and valued customs of the public.

In brief, the duty of a state is to realize economic prosperity, secure peace and harmony and improve the spirituality of the citizens. If the government provides employment opportunities

and strictly safeguards the rights of life of every living being then the country would soon realize economic and spiritual progress.

V—How does the Concept of Karma affect Social Progress?

The above explanation of the economic progress of a society makes clear that *the concept of Karma is not a necessary factor to realize the progress of a society. It is not strange if one is inclined to assume that this concept which surreptitiously resembles the concept of fate could most probably bar the progress of a society.* But a closer view of this concept may reveal the possibilities of using it effectively for the progress of society. *Not a deterministic view*

Believers in karma might think that if they had done good karma in the past, the present life would be pleasurable. This is the worst form of the belief, that karma is the cause of every event, and does not contribute towards the progress of a society. The Fatalistic view of karma accepts the misery of society as it is and does not encourage man's initiative.

Subject to Conditions

Buddhist view of karma is different from the Fatalistic view of karma. Karma is not an independent factor of life. Both karma and its effects conditionally arise and therefore cease to exist when the conditions change. Buddha says, "A phenomenon that causally arises has the characteristic of ceasing". (Yamkiñci samudaya dhammaṃ sabbaṃ tam nirodha dhammaṃ¹⁷⁾). There are many causes behind a karmic act of a person. The effect of an act varies according to the causes and conditions that accompany the act. Even if two persons perform a similar act, they do not receive an equal reward because the emotional urge that

causes the act is definitely different for both persons. It is impossible to evaluate an act from the standpoint of karma by observing the act alone. The intention of the doer, the efforts he exerts to perform the act, the effects of the act to others and the number of people affected by the act should be taken into account when one evaluates an act of karma. Furthermore, the retribution of karma also does not arise independently. Even though a person performs beneficial actions, good consequences cannot arise unless the conditions for a reward are agreeable. A person or a society as a whole can enjoy the consequences of good karma under the following conditions:

(a) A good society

If a person is born in a well-disciplined society he would easily get the benefits of good karma. The government and other bodies that control the life of the people are included within the society. If the society in which a person is living is not properly beneficial for the person, he can leave the society and live in a better place.¹⁸⁾ Sometimes people change the government and other customs and practices of a society instead of leaving it.

(b) The factor of time

Time and the opportunity factor are also very important. Every instant is not suitable to receive the good effects of karma. Some periods are suitable for the retribution of bad karma. Then the good karma becomes latent. If the conditions of the time is agreeable good karma starts giving good effects. Though the time factor seems somewhat out of the control of human beings, clever people can easily avail themselves of it. It is a matter of ability of using the time successfully. A person who has fallen

seriously ill is not suitable for employment. He cannot enjoy his privilege to work and earn. But he may profitably use the time to acquire a new type of knowledge or a skill and thus avoid the bad effects of his illness.

A state or a community also can consider this factor when working towards social progress. The effects of activities are always conditioned by the current situation at the time. If a programme turns out to be ineffective due to the condition of the time, either the programme should be cancelled until a suitable time arrives or it should be changed to fit the situation.

Conditions that activate the Karma of Individuals

Karma alone is not powerful enough to affect the life of an individual. It is believed that karma causes birth in this world. If a person is born in a good environment his past good karma has a better chance to bring about retribution. Good karma can function properly if one is born to an understanding family, possesses a healthy body, is intelligent and has attractive features. Further, an individual can improve the influence of good karma on himself by good moral practices such as honesty, discipline, respecting the elders of the society, association with respectable and intelligent people, speaking pleasant and meaningful words, kindness and being helpful to others.

Effects of karma can be changed

Even if a person believes that the happiness of life depends entirely upon the retribution of karma, he should understand that karma cannot affect life independently. The conditions that control the effects of karma are very important. Because every body is free to regulate these conditions. One can ignore belief in karma altogether and pay attention to the proper regulation

of social, environmental and moral conditions that cause social progress. Karma is a latent force. No one is aware of its functions. Worrying over karma is not beneficial. People do not know whether their karma is good or bad. What they can do is persevere to maintain the conditions that help karma produce good results.

The Buddhist concept of karma is not a deterministic view of life. Man must work hard to win happiness in life. Therefore belief of karma from the Buddhist point of view does not avert social progress.

VI—IMPORTANCE OF PERFORMING GOOD KARMA

According to the belief of karma, the intentional acts of man produce appropriate retribution in this life and life after death. Therefore, it is evident that man must perform morally good acts so that he can enjoy happiness now and also in the life after death. Concerning social progress, the function of karma in this life is important.

Conditions of the Society affect Karma

Morally good, intentional acts alone are not powerful enough to produce good consequences. Karma depends always on the conditions of society and individuals. A society means a group of people taken as a whole body. An individual is always a member of a society. Therefore, an act of an individual does not affect the individual concerned alone but it bears some consequences for society also. Therefore, people who perform morally bad acts not only suffer themselves but they cause suffering to the society also. A robber damages himself by stealing the property of another person. He definitely causes damage to the victim and

creates mental uneasiness in society. The person who has been robbed experiences unhappiness and suffering by living in a undesirable society. If such unethical acts continue, the good karma of individuals does not have an opportunity to produce happiness.

Two Types of Duty

Therefore, an individual has two duties. One is to perform good karma for his benefit and the other is to cooperate with others to create a good society. Otherwise, good karma may not produce good effects.

The State and Karma

If a state is unruly, has no proper plans for or interest in social and economic development, the past good karma of individuals recedes without producing good effects. Correcting a government or creating a suitable government is also another duty of individuals of a society. It is also an act of good karma because a suitable government body is capable of bringing about social progress and happiness. Buddhism is silent regarding political ideology. Adherence to one particular ideology alone is definitely a sin in Buddhism since such a mental attitude bars freedom of thinking. A governing body is valued by the intentions of the governing people and their performance.

Three Intergraded Aspects of Karma

Therefore, performing good karma is intergraded in three aspects. A person does good karma as an individual for his benefit. He contributes his good intentional acts to create a better society so that not only himself but everybody of the society enjoys the retribution of good karma. Then the society corrects or creates a suitable body of government so that they can enjoy the retribution of good karma in full scale securing social and

VI—The nature of Good and Bad Acts

Universality of moral acts

There are several lists of morally good and bad acts accepted in Buddhism.¹⁹⁾ It is believed that the moral value of good and bad acts is universal. But good acts such as believing Buddhist doctrine, taking refuge in Buddha, dhamma and sangha are meaningful only to Buddhists. Wrong belief or faith in a different doctrine is supposed to be a grave act. But wrong belief does not necessarily mean all non-Buddhist ideas. Upholding a teaching that denies karma or the theory of causality such as nihilism is supposed to be a sinful act. Regarding morally good and bad acts, adherence to religious teachings that promote moral values is not considered as an unskillful act that causes a bad karma.

The rest of the acts are purely universal in value. Taking life, stealing, unrestricted sexual behavior, lying, being an addict to intoxicants, anger, miserliness, etc. are bad or unskillful acts. Benevolence, practicing morality, kindness, respecting one's elders, developing wisdom etc. are good or skillful acts.

Moral acts for social progress

The karma theory assigns ethical values to intentional acts and postulates that good acts yield good effects and bad acts yield bad effects. If an act is beneficial (good in moral sense) it is called a skillful action and harmful acts are unskillful actions. As explained above, the Buddhist lists of good acts and bad acts do not have a limited value. They are generally accepted values. Bad acts such as killing, lying, stealing, alcoholism, anger, laziness, selfishness etc. render adverse effects to the doer and to

the society. Good acts such as benevolence, morality, kindness, honesty, developing wisdom, perseverance etc. are beneficial for the doer and the society. Though everybody generally accepts the values of these acts, nobody is serious enough to avoid all bad acts and practice only good acts. Influenced by selfishness or other emotions individuals commit bad acts anticipating fulfillment of their selfish need at the end. Though individuals or groups may benefit at the end from those acts they cause trouble to the society in general. We can see this phenomenon in the competitive open market and in politics. The common phenomenon that one party prospers while the other party suffers is the outcome of selfish acts. Social unrest, political problems, improper distribution of wealth in the world economy are the effects of ignoring morally bad acts while anticipating good results in the long run. It is practically impossible to eliminate this phenomenon from human society.

If the concept of karma is introduced to human behavior, people may tend to put more weight upon their acts. Since every act has its corresponding effect, it is not easy to imagine the benefit in the long run alone and to ignore all the consequences of acts in the process of achieving an aim. Human behavior conditioned by the karma theory can limit the adverse effects of economic and social acts to the minimum level. Every act is performed with care. Both the overall value and the value of each step decides the beneficial nature of an act.

VIII—Various Aspects of Good and Bad Acts

The comparison of ancient Buddhist values against the modern society seems necessary to understand karma and its relation to

social progress. Buddhist values of good and bad acts are general concepts acceptable to everybody and valid in every place. But these values seem prima facie archaic with little relevance to the progress of a modern complicated society. But Buddhism does not accept these values just because they are ancient. Effects of good and bad acts on individuals and on society are positively considered.

Let us examine one example to understand the effects of moral acts towards society.

Significance of Stealing

Stealing is a sin. One who steals becomes miserable in this life and suffers from poverty in the life after death. Stealing is interpreted as taking the property of others with the intention of stealing property that does not belong to oneself. "Adinnādāna" means taking what is not given (to oneself). This interpretation admits the right of possessing things by individuals. If private property is not allowed at all in a particular imaginary society, the phenomenon of stealing may not arise. Unless such an imaginary society has unlimited wealth there must be some regulations to control the excessive use of property by one person depriving others of their rights. At the minimum level the food one eats, the clothes one wears become one's private property. As long as a person has the right to possess something the concept that stealing is bad prevails in the world.

Good Acts against Stealing

The opposite good moral act of stealing is giving. Protecting the property of others, sharing, if possible, what one has with others who are in need but cannot afford to have, helpfulness, disciplining oneself to enjoy the wealth of the world under the

reasonable limits etc. also belong to this category.

Subjective reasons of stealing

The psychological background of stealing is ignorance and covetousness or craving and that of giving is wisdom and detachment. Loving-kindness, compassion, happiness and equanimity also cause the act of giving.

Various forms of Stealing

The norm is to practice giving and avoid stealing, and it aims at securing the well-being of the individual concerned and of the society. Further, it is hoped that the practitioner develops his spirituality. As far as karma is concerned, the practitioner enjoys happiness in this life and in the after life also. This moral practice is instrumental in realizing Nirvāna at the end of one's spiritual progress. Using this interpretation of stealing and giving, we can observe and identify the various forms of stealing and giving in the society. The form of stealing is quite different in a highly developed country and in a undeveloped country. It also depends on the factor of time, economic condition and values of the society.

New forms of Stealing

In the modern era, activities that harm the property or income of others can be categorized as stealing. Violating copy right laws, cheating customers by improper commercials and advertisements, under payment, giving and receiving bribes, tax evasions, careless and extravagant use of public property and funds, and other similar activities are all various form of stealing. Because the earnings are unreasonable, the whole society or a part of the society is victimized.

Karmic aspect of Stealing These acts are evaluated from the standpoint of karma also. The people who commit these acts not only damage the smooth development of the society but they damage their own spiritual progress also. They accumulate bad karma which causes suffering and misery. The gravity of the wrong act depends on the number of the victimized people, the intention of the misdemeanor or and the nature of the act. In a case of misusing public funds or stealing public property, the misdemeanor damages the entire country. Of course, in the modern world of technology it is possible to plunder mankind as a whole.

From the above explanation it is easy to understand the universality of stealing and its degenerative nature. *The same type of analysis is possible for the other wrong actions such as taking the lives of others, lying, indulgence, violence, embracing wrong views etc.*

Criteria of Karmic Acts

If an act is beneficial to oneself, or beneficial to another or beneficial to everybody in general that act is morally good and is rewarding. An act that is harmful to oneself, or harmful to another or harmful to everybody in general is morally bad and becomes oppressive.²¹⁾ On the other hand, behaviour motivated by craving, anger and ignorance is morally bad while the good motivations such as detachment, kindness, wisdom etc. make behaviour morally acceptable.²²⁾ The degenerating nature of morally bad actions and the progressive nature of morally good actions are evident. But according to the theory of karma, the effects of these acts are not limited to a short period time. The potential power of karma does not cease until proper retribution is fulfilled. Even though people can hide their abominable acts to some

extent in this world, the power of retribution does not become ineffective in the cycle of births and deaths. Therefore, the concept of karma teaches us to be very careful and cautious in our behavior.

While all bad actions destroy progress, all good actions promote it. Therefore, if people decide to do good karma and avoid bad karma, the world would have no problems at all. The social progress and spiritual progress of all living beings would become a reality.

Notes:

- (1). Strict Determinism is rejected as man has freedom to initiate activities. It is called the effort of the individual' (attakāra). Man's freedom of activities is mentioned as the element of initiative (ārabhadhātu), the element of perseverance (nikkamadhātu), the element of effort (parakkamadhātu), the element of endurance (ñhitidhātu) and the element of expedience (upakkamadhātu). *Āṅguttara Nikāya*, III 337, 338.
- The view that man undergoes happiness and suffering entirely due to past activities is refuted for it invalidates man's will to act to decide what is right and wrong. *Āṅguttara Nikāya* I, 171, 172.
- (2). Man's happiness and suffering are conditionally arisen. *Samyutta Nikāya* II, 112—5.
- (3). *Dhammapada*, verse 119.
- (4). Buddhism maintains that the belief that all activities of mankind are due to the cause of Godhead (Issaranimmānāhetu) leads to denial of moral responsibility. *Āṅguttara Nikāya* I, 174.
- (5). *Kūṭadanta sutta*, No. 5, *Digha Nikāya* I, 127—149; *Cakkavatti-Sihanāda sutta*, No. 26, *Digha Nikāya* III, 58—79.
- (6). *Aggañña sutta*, No. 27, *Digha Nikāya* III, 80—98.
- (7). After the Ordination ceremony of a monk, Buddha advised to chant the Buddha's admonition regarding the four basic requisites in front of the newly admitted monk. This was a preventive measure

to avoid monks giving into indulgence of clothes, food, shelter and medicaments. Buddha's admonition inspired the following remarks. Vinaya I, 58.

(8). See above note 7

(9). Satisfaction of what one receives is one of virtues praised by Buddha.

Annañ ca laddhā vasanañ ca kāle
mattañ so jaññā idha tosanatthañ (Sutta Nipāta Verse 971).

"Having received food and clothes at the right time, he should know here the limits of satisfaction."

Criticising the degradation of Brahmins, Buddha remarks: "They receiving wealth desired to hoard it. Overcome by desire, their craving increased the more." (Sutta Nipāta, Verse 306)

Unsatisfaction of wealth always leads to misery. Raṭṭhapāla sutta, No. 82, Majjhima Nikāya II, 72—4

(10). Parābhava sutta, v.91—115; Vasala sutta, v.116—142; Mahā Mangala sutta, v.258—269, Sutta Nipāta; Sīgālovāda sutta, Sutta No. 31, p. 180f.

(11). Dīgha Nikāya III, 188.

(12). Arogyā paramā labhā, "Health is the highest gain." Dhammapada, v. 204.

(13). Dīgha Nikāya III, 192 verses.

(14). see above note 5.

(15). Dīgha Nikāya I, 142.

(16). Dīgha Nikāya III, 61.

(17). This phrase illustrates the reality that a practitioner realizes. Samyutta Nikāya V, 423.

(18). "Patirūpa desa vaso", Sutta Nipāta v. 260.

(19). Majjhima Nikāya I, 37, 42, 43; Aṅguttara Nikāya V, 263f.

(20). Dīgha Nikāya I, 63.

(21). Ambalaṭṭhikā-Rāhulovāda Sutta, No. 61, Majjhima Nikāya I, 414.

(22). Aṅguttara Nikāya I, 189—193; 193—197; 201—205.

侍者 ĀNANDA

崔 庚満 (浄印)

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侍者 Ānanda

I Ānanda の家系

Ānanda という名は、Pāli・Sanskṛit 語とも同形であり、音写は阿難陀、或は阿難とされている。意識は慶喜という。

Ānanda の家系について、次の資料から見ると、このように資料によって異なっている、『起世経』『有部破僧事』『十二遊経』『衆許摩訶帝経』には Ānanda の父が甘露王であり、『仏本行集経』