

Implication and Importance of Duty of Human Beings in Buddhism

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Abstract

This paper attempts to prove “Implications and Importance of duty of human beings”. The solution to the problem is that duty of human beings is a necessary factor for human society. All human beings have duties. Different people try to do duties in different ways. This paper will contribute towards implications and importance of duty of human beings.

Key words: duty, Human beings, Buddhism.

Introduction

One of the most important of that duty of human beings both in terms of the social and moral in Myanmar society till today. This important prescribes how a Myanmar should be dutiful himself or herself to live a good life both socially and morally. It can be said that in whatever they do the Myanmar are in pursuit of duty of Human Beings for themselves, their families and nation. But very few have ventured to inquire into its deeper meaning or why duty of human being has prevailed as a fundamental principle for either social and moral conduct since ancient time or how it was later reinforce as a fundamental ethical principle with the advent of Buddhism.

The Research Problem

In my dissertation, I shall undertake to investigate the reason why the implicatioin of the duty of human beings has had such an important influence both as a social and ethical norm in Myanmar society and culture throughout the ages. I shall also endeavour to show that with the advent of Buddhism its ethical aspect took on a stronger hold. The duty of human beings was systematically organized and explained in the Saṅgāla Sutta, an important sermon preached by the Buddha. It is sermon to which Myanmar Buddhists have adhered to since ancient times. The Saṅgāla Sutta shows that duty of human being is deeply rooted in the basic tenet of Buddhism. The final objective of my dissertation, however, is to question whether this duty of human beings are still relevant today is this age of globalization.

By globalization is meant the expansion, intensification and speed in the interconnectedness of the nations of the world in all aspects of life-in economic and technological forces, in the sphere of finance to the environmental, and above all from the culture even to the criminal¹. Globalization is a process that has been present throughout main history as witness the spread of the great religious such as Christianity, Islam, Hinduism and Buddhism since ancient times. But due to the new technologies that opened up world wide systems of transport and information and communications, the speed of globalization in all the above fields has gained tremendous velocity as well as intensity. The same can be said for ‘cultural’ globalization which is the aspect with which this paper is concerned. This is the reason when we have raised the question of whether the scope of the cultural and social of the duty of human beings and the teachings of “Saṅgāla Sutta” are broad enough to deal with life today; and whether its scope is large enough to deal with contemporary life; and whether or

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not it needs to be modified in the light of current ethical issues that have emerged with the advances in science and technology.

Method

In our attempt to do this we shall make a comprehensive literary survey to describe and identify the source (or sources) that gave rise to the adoption of the idea of the duty of human beings in Myanmar society. We shall then clarify the duty of human beings and its moral principles both as a social and moral norm. But before doing so we shall first explain the nature of society and how every society with its own cultural identity is based on important fundamental concepts that endow it with its own unique features. Likewise, we shall try to show that in Myanmar with a distinctive culture of its own, one of the most important concepts from the social, moral and religious perspectives is that of the duty of human beings. Then we shall go on to give show how some of the more superficial secular forms of the duty of human beings, which served more or less as social conventions were abandoned over time and changing conditions but that the duty of human beings prevailed and continued to influence social and moral conduct. Then with the advent of Buddhism the concept of the duty of human beings gained in both moral and religious force; it finished the ethical basis of Myanmar social and moral conduct. The religious goal of Buddhism is the achievement of Nibbāna, which will release us from the cycle of existences which is full of suffering. But undoubtedly the first step towards such liberation is to like a good life as ordinary human beings. The Buddha thus preached the “Saṅgāla Sutta” that sets out clearly the thirteen duties of human beings or the layperson’s code of thirteen Disciplines; for they thus light the way out of the darkness of over carving and greed, anger and wrath, stupidity and ignorance and ultimately into the light of the Dhamma. Those who follow this way of life, it is said attain happiness. We shall thus describe how “duty of human beings” is the keystone of Myanmar culture, how it is importance that covers all that is good from both the secular and religious aspects.

The Role of the duty of human beings and the Saṅgāla Sutta in contemporary Myanmar

A role for the Saṅgāla Sutta and the concept of the duty of human beings in Myanmar society today which must perforce keep up with today’s interconnected and rapidly changing world in attempting to do this we shall use the pragmatic method and apply its norms to the concept of the duty of human beings. In other words, in the course of my dissertation, we shall try to demonstrate that Myanmar culture and society have flourished because its cultural, moral and religious concepts in general and the Teachings of the Saṅgāla Sutta is particular have fulfilled the material and spiritual needs and aspirations of its people, for if a culture endures it is because its conceptual foundations are strong. So far, Myanmar culture has endured and flourished in spite of setback it may have suffering. But the question now is whether some of the moral principles of the Saṅgāla Sutta will still be capable of coping with totally new ethical issues that have emerged with the advances made in science and technology and the advent of globalization which has had a tremendous impact on the morals and manners of Myanmar society, or whether a whole new set of moral principles will have to be found in this rapidly changing world. It is my contention that the ethical issues although they have assumed new forms are basically the old ones due to human avarice and ignorance and that there is no need for a new set of moral principles, that the perennial truths of the Saṅgāla Sutta are as applicable today as they were in days gone by but with certain variations.

Morals, Manners and the duty of human beings

The concept of the duty of human beings in Myanmar society demonstrates this reciprocity between moral and manners. It is thus the very foundation of both moral and social life. The concept of the duty of human beings in relation to time may be a dimension of the future, a hope. But emphasis was and still is placed on the duty of human beings because it is expected that its practice would benefit each individual and hold Myanmar society together and lead it towards progress, both spiritually and socially. It is to be noted that at no point in his teachings did the Buddha neglect the social aspect of human life. He did not forbid accumulation of wealth through fair and just means.

A detailed study of the concept of the duty of human beings will show how its practical application has been a valuable contribution towards preserving Myanmar society and Myanmar's cultural identity throughout its history. Due to the teachings of the Saṅgāla Sutta morals and manners were given added force. Duties of children; parents; pupils; teachers; Duties of a husband to his wife; a wife to her husband; a householder to his friends and associates; the friends and associates to the householders; masters to their servants or employees; servants or employees to their masters etc: - all these and more are social and moral norms due to the concept and ideals of duty of human beings that has guided Myanmar society since ancient time.

So, Myanmar society today is in quest of duty of human beings as in ancient time. Social convention may have changed over time, but the concept and ideal of duty of human beings live on and still guides both social convention and moral and religious conduct and shall continue to do so as long as it works and continues to benefit each individual and Myanmar society itself.

Duty of human beings of the Saṅgāla Sutta

This discourse was given by the Buddha at Rājagaha for the edification of a young man named saṅgāla. The youth Saṅgāla used to worship the six cardinal points, namely, the East, the South, the West, the North, the Nadir and the Zenith in obedience to the last advice given by his dying father. The Buddha explained to the young man that according to his teaching, the six directions were: the East standing for parents; the South standing for teachers; the West standing for the wife and children; the North standing for friends and associates; The Nadir standing for servants, employees; The Zenith standing for samaṇas, brahmaṇas.

The Buddha explained further that the six social groups mentioned in the discourse were to be regarded as sacred and worthy of respect and worship. One worshipped them by performing one's duties towards them. Then these duties were explained to the youth Saṅgāla.

They are as follows:

Duties of children

- (1) By supporting them.
- (2) By performing his or her duties owing to them
- (3) By preserving the family lineage.
- (4) By being worthy of his or her inheritance
- (5) By offering alms in honour of his or her departed parents

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Duties of parents

- (1) To dissuade them from evil
- (2) To persuade them to do good
- (3) To let them learn in arts and sciences.
- (4) To give them in marriage to a suitable wife or husband.
- (5) To hand over to them their inheritance at the proper time.

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Duties of pupils

- (1) Be in harmony for all to do.
- (2) Be obedient to the teacher's instructions.
- (3) Be ready to hail or receive on the teacher's arrival.
- (4) Be willing to attend to the teacher's affairs.
- (5) Be industrious in learning all that has been taught.

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Duties of teachers

- (1) To educate.
- (2) To admonish and correct.
- (3) Not to leave anything untaught.

- (4) To protect from harm and.
- (5) To send to other suitable teachers or institutions for further education.

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Duties of a husband to his wife

- (1) To deal her with courtesy.
- (2) Not to despise her.
- (3) To treat her with faithfulness.
- (4) To hand over due authority to her.
- (5) To provide her with suitable ornaments.

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Duties of a wife to her husband

- (1) To perform her duties in perfect order.
- (2) To be hospitable to the people of the neighbourhood.
- (3) She must not be unfaithful.
- (4) To protect his possessions.
- (5) She should be industrious and not lazy in discharging her duties.

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Duties of a householder to his friends and associates

- (1) By generosity.
- (2) By courteous speech.
- (3) By promoting their good.
- (4) By equality.

(5) By truthfulness.

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Duties of the friends and associates to the householder

- (1) To protect him when he is heedless.
- (2) To protect his property when he is heedless
- (3) To become a refuge when he is afraid.
- (4) Not to forsake him when he is in danger.
- (5) To do considerate towards his family or relative.

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Duties of masters to their servants or employees

- (1) By assigning them work according to their strength
- (2) By supplying them with food and wages.
- (3) By tending them in sickness
- (4) By sharing eatables with them
- (5) By giving them holidays at due times.

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Duties of servants or employees to their masters

- (1) To get up before him
- (2) To get to sleep after him.
- (3) To take only what is given
- (4) To perform their duties to his satisfaction.

(5) reasonable

(6) considerable observant are the qualities of a leader

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Conclusion

Is the concept of the duty of human beings which has successfully functioned as the Integrative Imperative that has held Myanmar society together, and the Saṅgāla Sutta, the code of conduct that has guided the Myanmar people and contributed to their moral welfare, is still relevant today? How do we apply the living tradition of our moral principles to the development and problems of contemporary life? How should we try to incorporate whatever is worthwhile in later thoughts and views as a genuine developments, extension, clarification and applications of the duty of human beings view of ethics? Since everyone must have a starting point to think clearly and consistently about the moral problems we face daily at every level of our lives, the duty of human beings view in general and Saṅgāla Sutta in particular should be the starting point for the Myanmar.

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ပြည်ထောင်စုဝန်ကြီးဌာန (၁၉၆၃)၊ လူ့အဖွဲ့အစည်းများ၏ အကျိုးစီးပွားနှင့်

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