

AN APPRAISAL OF BUDDHIST APPROACH TO EDUCATION IN ETHICS FOR THE GLOBAL SUSTAINABILITY

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INTRODUCTION

What refers to the United Nations' Development Goals is that it is still an aim yet to achieve global sustainability through an organized system of action toward sustainability at a global level.

When we look at the prevailing host of social ills and antisocial behavior of people in the world of today, it is more likely that the accessibility to the goal of sustainability goes further away from us. Problems such as extreme poverty and hunger, inequality of gender and economy, misuse of ecosystem, and threads to justice, peace and harmony remain worldwide so far in a great scale irrespective of action plans of the United Nations for the eradication of such problems. The fact that the social ills which are detrimental to sustainability mostly depend on the lack of ethical earnestness of people is undeniable. So long as people are not ready to behave with their ethical conscience, global sustainability would be a mere expectation which can never be accomplished. Therefore, it is quite evident that the global education in ethics would be pivotal to bring out corporate social responsibility for the implementation of development goals to achieve the global sustainability.

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There is no any other religion in the world than Buddhism which lays much emphasis on the ethical earnestness of people for the common wellbeing. It is the viewpoint of the scholars that Buddhism itself has the ethical earnestness as one of its marked characteristics¹. The common wellbeing to which Buddhism referred to, is nothing but the wellbeing that can be derived from the sustainability of the world. Wellbeing and happiness for Buddhism is not exclusive, it is for the multitude or mass of people. The Buddha was thoroughly emphatic on the fact that his disciples should educate people with his doctrine for the happiness and wellbeing of the maximum possible number of people (*bahujana hitāya bahujana sukhāya*)². This kind of wellbeing and happiness can only be possible in a sustainable society.

The concept of sustainability is not unknown to Buddhism. When ethical and social teachings in Buddhism are taken together as a whole, it reflects quite evidentially that the Buddha had an idea in his mind of organizing and qualifying people by means of his teachings towards the sustainability at the global level. It was the intention of the Buddha to upgrade the people to the status that each one in the entire universe looks at each other with an affectionate eye wishing each other's wellbeing (*sabbe sattā bhavantu sukhittā*)³. This is the idea reflected throughout the discourse of loving kindness (*Metta-sutta*). Without such an attitude of people, sustainability would be a mere dream which can never be actualized. Attitude that one should focus on others is illustrated by the Buddha in that discourse in the following way: "Just as a mother would protect her only child with her life even so let one cultivate a boundless love towards all beings"⁴. This, of course, reflects the necessary psychological pre-condition for the required actions towards the sustainability worldwide.

1. See. Radhakrishnan. S. (1999). P.358

2. *Caratha bhikkhave cārikam bahujana hitāya bahujana sukhāya...* The Vinaya Piṭaka. (The Mahāvagga) (1879) p. 2.

3. *Suttanipāta*, (1948). Verses 143-152.

4. "Karaniya Metta Sutta: The Discourse on Loving-kindness" (Sn 1.8), translated from the Pali by Piyadassi Thera. *Access to Insight (BCBS Edition)*, 29 August 2012, <http://www.accesstoinight.org/tipitaka/kn/snp/snp.1.08.piya.html> [Accessed 12 January 2019].

BUDDHIST EDUCATION IN ETHICS

The Buddha was aware of the fact that it is not an easy task to bring people on to a common platform due to their different mental inclinations and temperaments. Although at the beginning he was reluctant to preach his teaching to the people knowing the differences of the people in their mental dispositions, he made his mind to adopt a suitable method by means of which people can be gradually awoken qualitatively to a required level. The method used by the Buddha for awakening people is variously known as gradual training, (*anupubba-sikkhā*), gradual course of action (*anupubba-kiriya*) and gradual path (*anupubba-paṭipadā*)⁵. As Prof. Y. Karunadasa pointed out “it involves self-transformation from a lower to a higher level”⁶. What is significant here is that the Buddha followed a method of instruction (teaching) as the medium for the purpose of awakening people into what has to be achieved through the gradual path as mentioned above.

The method of instruction was named by the Buddha as miracle of instruction (*anusāsani pāṭihāriya*⁷). The term “miracle” (*pāṭihāriya*) used with the instruction (*anusāsani*) is very important. Instruction or teaching is considered in Buddhism as a miracle. It is the miracle in the sense that it can transform a person completely into another different position. This implies that what Buddhism can contribute for the wellbeing of the mankind is that it can transform people gradually, through its principles and by means of miracle of instruction into a position that persuade people to work for the mutual wellbeing.

The Buddhist process of transformation of people into the position that highest happiness and wellbeing can be achieved is consisted of three kinds of training (*tisso sikkhā*) namely training of morality (*adhisīla sikkhā*), training of mental concentration (*adhisamādhi sikkhā*) and training of wisdom (*adhipññā sikkhā*). Training of morality or in other words education in ethics is the most relevant part in this discussion. That the proper development

5. *Majjhima nikāya*, (1977). iii. P.1.

6. Karunadasa, Y. (2001) p.8.

7. *Aṅguttara nikāya*, (1961). i. p.168.

of both the physical aspect as well as the spiritual aspect, which brings out real happiness for the mankind, is possible with suitable action based on morality is a fundamental assumption in Buddhism. That is why Buddhism takes morality as the basis of progress (*sīle patitṭhāya naro sapañño* [S.I. I. 23]- “wise man having based on morality” ...), Therefore, it is obvious that Buddhist education in ethics looms large in the formation of the mental condition of people towards the universal sustainability.

Special significance of Buddhist education in ethics in respect of global sustainability lies in the fact that Buddhist ethics encompasses not only almost all the necessary factors that the United Nations’ development goals refer to, but also the way how to implant the psychological background in the mind of the people which, is necessary for the effective implementation of Development Goals.

SOCIAL DISCRIMINATION

When we critically examine the factors that are detrimental to sustainable development, it is vividly clear that most of them depend on one major factor, which is anti-social, unlawful and unreasonable behaviour. The latter is none other than the unjust or unequal treatment in the field of social privileges and which is known as social discrimination. This anti-social attitude of people based on different social categories such as ethnicity, gender, marital status, race, disability, religion and so on leads them to consider some as superior and others are inferior causing many social problems. The worse aspect of this division into superiority and inferiority is the unequal distribution of social rights and privileges. Hunger, poverty, income inequality deficiencies in education, health services, and employment opportunities and many more social disadvantages are the result of discrimination. Irrespective of The UNO effort to remove different types of social discrimination, such discrimination persists in various fields in many part of the world. In some countries, there are, strangely, policies, laws, institutions, and traditions in place that serve to harden such deficiencies, inequalities, and discrimination.

In Buddhist education in ethics, a tremendous effort has been taken for the removal of this fundamental asymmetry from the

collective consciousness of the people. Buddhism asserts equality among the human beings as the basis of its ethical teachings. Identity or sameness of people has been demonstrated by Buddhist teachings in different ways. The true nature of beings shown in Buddhist theoretical teachings points emphatically to the fact that the circumstances of different species and beings are conditioned by the same causal factors. This conditionality which is characterized by impermanence (*anicca*), suffering (*dukkha*) and soullessness (*anatta*) is the essential characteristic shared by all without any distinction. This reveals that all men are equal in their origin. This is of course taken as the right view in Buddhism⁸ on the basis of which all the ethical norms are prescribed in Buddhist education in ethics. Buddhist teachings further acknowledge the common psychological characteristics of all beings, paying particular attention to human beings. While Buddhism accepts the identity of the individual, it advocates the existence of common characteristics in the psychological realm of human beings. These common characteristics are considered to be intrinsic to human beings from birth; and hence they are natural inclinations or tendencies (*anusaya*) in the mind. Among such natural inclinations, the desire for living (*jīvitukāmā*),⁹ desire not to be killed (*amaritukāmā*),¹⁰ desire for pleasure or happiness (*sukhakāmā*), and the desire to avoid pain or unhappiness (*dukkha-paṭikkūlā*)¹¹ can be considered as the internal driving forces or inborn instincts shared by all human beings, and which necessitates them to seek and have a communal life that surpasses external boundaries.

The criteria of Buddhist ethics is also formulated on the basis of the concept of happiness which is the common aim of all, as pointed out earlier. According to Ambalaṭṭhikā rāhulovāda-sutta in the Majjhima-nikāya, an action which leads to wellbeing of the doer, others and both parties is considered to be ethical and moral and

8. See. Saṃyutta nikāya, (1970) ii. P.16

9. “*sabbesaṃ jivitaṃ piyaṃ*” [Life is dear to all], Dhammapada, Verse 130.

10. “*sabbe tasanti danḍassa – sabbe bhāyanti maccuno*” [All are afraid of punishment and all are afraid of death], *ibid.*, Verse 129.

11. “*sukhakāmā hi manussa – dukkha paṭikkūlā*” [Human beings seek pleasure and averse pain], Majjhima nikāya (1961). i. p. 341. See also Saṃyutta nikāya, (1973). iv. p. 127 ff.

in turn, gives opposite result is unethical and immoral¹². Actions which give rise to happiness and wellbeing to all (doer, others and both) are necessarily those by means of which sustainability can be brought out. This indirectly implies that the sole aim of ethical teaching in Buddhism is nothing but sustainable development which brings out wellbeing and happiness to the multitude.

MORAL SENSE

The most important finding particularly, in the field of ethics that Buddhism has made is the Right View which involves the notion of equality and its corollary - impartiality which are in opposition to all sorts of social discrimination and on which all the ethical virtues find their foothold. Equality implies the impartiality in other words natural justice. In the impartial state of mind there is no place of arising craving aversion and illusion which are the unwholesome root causes of immoral activities¹³. On the other hand, in the absence of unwholesome root causes there remain wholesome root causes namely non-greed, non-aversion and non-illusion which give rise to moral activities¹⁴. This impartiality in Buddhism is identified as the Dhamma¹⁵ which involves the natural justice in Buddhism. The view on equality and impartiality which are going in line with each other is undoubtedly, none other than the Right View which is the first component factor of Buddhist Noble Eightfold Path which leads to perfection. Without the right view in our journey to find the sustainability in the world we would be unguided and misled. Hence, the introduction of right view is a revolution in the field of ethics made by Buddhism.

The Buddha enumerates that there is no single factor so responsible for the suffering of living beings as wrong view, and no factor so potent in promoting the good of living beings as right view.¹⁶ Referring to this, Prof. Karunadasa holds that “This is the rationale for Buddhism’s emphasis on the importance and relevance

12. See. Majjhima nikāya, (1979) i. P. 414.

13. Aṅguttara nikāya, (1976), iii. P. 188

14. Ibid.

15. *Chandā dosā bhayā mohā - yo dhamma nānuwattati - apūراتi tassa yaso - kāla pakkheva candimā*, Dīgha nikāya, (1975) iii. P. 180.

16. Ibid. p. 16.

of the right view for the practice of the moral life. A system of morality, if it is to be oriented towards the right direction, should be based on a correct view of reality, on a proper understanding of our world of experience¹⁷”.

Buddhist education in ethics is not merely a teaching process. It is not aiming at an intellectual discussion. It is really a process of socialization of ethical values and virtues recognized by Buddhism. It involves both learning and practice of what is learnt. Hence, Buddhist education of ethics tries it best to provide more comprehensive knowledge about the necessary factors relating to ethical field, such as nature of the living beings, nature of our world of experience, significance of moral behaviour, criticism of immoral conducts, ethical standards, prescribed moral virtues and so on. Buddhist texts are full of information of those necessary factors. This knowledge is quite enough to provide an appropriate cognitive and conceptual background for the people to practice spontaneously, the required ethical precepts for the wellbeing and happiness of mankind. Regarding the global sustainability, the most appreciable step in Buddhist education in ethics is the attempt taken to facilitate people for their spontaneous involvement in the ethical path with altruistic spirit.

We mentioned that the right view provides the conceptual framework which can motivate a person for intentional ethical activities. The right view in the ethical context can be identified with the moral sense or moral conscience in modern ethical terminology since both refer to the same function; that is the self-understanding of the full implication of morality. In the *Sammā ditṭhi sutta* of *Majjhima nikāya* Ven. Sāriputta accepts right view as the understanding of the moral life in the following way: “When, friends, a noble disciple understands the unwholesome, the root of the unwholesome, the wholesome, and the root of the wholesome, in that way he is one of right view, whose view is straight, who has perfect confidence in the Dhamma, and has arrived at this true Dhamma¹⁸”.

17. Karunadasa, Y. (2001) p.1.

18. “Sammaditthi Sutta: The Discourse of Right View” (MN), translated from Pali by Ñanamoli Thera & Bhikkhu Bodhi. 1998. *Access to insight (BCBS)*, 30 Novem-

It is impossible to think that people earnestly hold on to their moral responsibilities and obligations without a self-understanding of the nature and value of morality for the reason that people are naturally inclined to egocentric desires. According to Buddhism morality should be preceded by understanding (right view).¹⁹ The theistic framework founded on “divine commandments” introduced by most of the world religion seems to be unsuccessful as it does not give rise to a volitional intention in the mind of the people. Commenting on the religious authority of morality, Albert Einstein is of the view that: “A man’s ethical behavior should be based effectually on sympathy, education, and social ties and needs; no religious basis is necessary. Man would indeed be in a poor way if he had to be restrained by fear of punishment and hope of reward after death.”²⁰ Buddhist ethical teaching which disregards theistic elements relies on self understanding as morality always goes with knowledge. A mutual relation between morality and wisdom is established in Buddhism by the proposition that “wisdom is cleansed by conduct and conduct is cleansed by wisdom - where there is virtue there is wisdom and where there is wisdom there is virtue”²¹ Further, The Buddha advised the Kālāmā-s to understand what ought to be done and what ought not to be done by own conviction. Following is the Buddha’s advice:

“When you yourself know: ‘These things are bad, blamable, censured by the wise; undertaken and observed, these things lead to harm and ill, abandon them. And When you yourself know: ‘These things are good, blameless, praised by the wise, undertaken and observed; these things lead to benefit and happiness, enter on and abide in them”²²”.

ber 2013. <http://www.accesstoinight.org/tipitaka/mn/mn.009.ntbb.html> [Accessed 12 January 2019].

19. Majjhima nikāya, (1977). iii p.71.

20. Einstein Quotes on Ethics and Morality, Albert Einstein: *Ethics Based on Sympathy, Education, Social Ties, Needs*. <https://www.thoughtco.com/einstein-quotes-on-ethics-and-morality-249859> [Accessed 12 January 2019].

21. Dīgha nikāya. (1975). i, p.156.

22. “Kālāma Sutta: To the Kālāmās” (AN 3.65), translated from the Pali by Thanissaro Bhikkhu, 1994.

Access to Insight (Legacy Edition), 30 November 2013, <http://www.accesstoinight.org/tipitaka/an/an03/an03.065.than.html> [Accessed 12 January 2019]

Concerning knowledge and awareness in moral conduct, Prof. Karunadasa observes: “All moral cultivation, in Buddhism’s view, should be based on knowledge and constantly accompanied by awareness. “Just as one washes hand with hand or foot with foot”, so runs the illustration, “both knowledge and conduct should help each other”. [DN. II. 89] This means that a person who is cultivating moral qualities should be fully aware of what he is doing and of the different levels of moral purification that he has attained to”²³.

Though Right View or moral sense remains in the potential form within man himself, it requires ongoing nourishment. According to Mahā Vedalla sutta, there are two sources for the arising of right view, namely voice of others (*parato ghoso*) and wise reflection (*yoniso mansikāro*).²⁴ The voice of others refers to the moral education. One can arouse one’s right view even using one’s own wise or critical reflection over the real nature of man and the world. The method of wise reflection depends on personal capacity. But it should be accepted that majority of people do not have such a capacity. Hence, they need the other method, namely voice of others that is moral education.

OBJECTIVE OF BUDDHIST MORAL EDUCATION

The main objective of Buddhist education in ethics is to encourage people to follow the moral life by means of promoting their moral sense or right view. Ethical education in Buddhism expects to reach this objective on an individual basis rather than the social basis. There is a prevailing view among the modern scholars that Buddhist morality is individualistic as it focuses only on one’s own moral well-being for one’s own emancipation’ In this regard, the Buddhist answer is that when the individual is ethically sound, society also invariably comes to that position. Society is a group of people. When each member personally becomes aware of moral virtues, entire group of members becomes morally good. On the other hand, if one does not develop moral qualities one would not be able to help others to become morally good. That is why the Buddha advised as follows: “One should first establish oneself in

23. Karunadasa, Y. (2001) p.12.

24. Majjhima nikāya. (1979). i. p. 292.

what is proper. Then only one should advise others. In that case the wise man should not be blamed²⁵". This is further attested by the Buddha saying to a monk called Cunda as given below:

"It is not possible, Cunda, that one who is himself not restrained, not disciplined and not quenched [as to his passions], should make others restrained and disciplined, should make them attain to the full quenching [of passions]. But it is possible, Cunda, that one who is himself restrained, disciplined and fully quenched [as to his passions] should make others restrained and disciplined, should make them attain to the full quenching [of passions]. It is not possible, Cunda, for one who is stuck in the mud to pull out who is (also) stuck in the mud. But, Cunda, it is possible for one who is not stuck in the mud to pull out another who is stuck in the mud"²⁶.

Though it has the individualist outlook, it also holds its peculiar characteristics. Buddhist education in ethics is designed for the individual in a way that it can cover the whole world community. Another notable feature is that it is not confined only to any particular age limit of the individuals. It runs throughout the whole life period starting from the early childhood. This system of education is introduced by the Buddha in the discourse to Sigālaka in the Dīgha nikāya. The main objective in this system of education in ethics is to enhance and cultivate the ethical sense in the mind of the individual.

ROLE OF PARENTS IN MORAL EDUCATION

The responsibility of promoting an ethical sense goes to the parents in every family of the whole community at the age of early childhood, to the teachers at the age of schooling period and to good friends (*kalyāna-mittā*) and to religious priestly class in the rest of the life of the individual. There is no doubt that the benefit of this system of education goes to every citizen of the whole world.

Other than natural causes, all other causes which bring about

25. Dhammapada. Verse 158.

26. Majjhima nikāya (1979). i. p.40; See also for the translation "Sallekha Sutta: The Discourse on Effacement" (MN 8), Translated from the Pali by Nyanaponika Thera, 1998. Access to Insight (*BCBS Edition*), 30 November 2013, <http://www.access-to-insight.org/tipitaka/mn/mn.008.nypo.html> [Accessed 16 January 2019]

unhappiness, suffering and unrest in the lives of people emerge from mental, verbal or bodily behavior of human beings. Therefore, happiness, peace and wellbeing of society depend entirely on the behavior of people. Human behavior is led by the minds of people²⁷. It is the Buddhist view that all good and bad activities of people find their ultimate source in the function of the conscious mind. Hence, if the mind is cultivated in a way that does not give rise to harmful ideas, there is no doubt that the wellbeing of people can be expected.²⁸

In this regard, the larger share of responsibility falls on the shoulders of parents. There is no one in the world who is not a son or a daughter of a family. If parents look after their children in accordance with their responsibility towards children, there is little possibility of any harm arising to others. Among the duties of parents, the first and second duties shown in the discourse to Sigāla are involved with mental discipline of the children (*pāpā nivārenti, kalyāṇe nivesenti*). It is natural that people who have mental discipline would do no intentional harm to others. The mind of a child is tender, undefiled and unsophisticated, and becomes more complex with experiences from the environment in which the child is brought up.²⁹ Thus, parents have a duty to inculcate suitable ways of living with fellow-beings into the minds of children. The lifestyle of children mostly depends on the nature of the guidance parents impart to them in their early childhood. That is the reason why Buddhism considers parents as the early teachers of the children (*pubbācariyā*).³⁰

Among the first and second duties shown in the *Sigālovādasutta*, reference is paramount to the parents' duty of preparing a solid foundation on which the child's personality is designed in

27. Saṃyutta nikāya (1973), i, p.40.

28. "*cittam dantaṃ sukhāvaham*" [Tamed mind brings happiness] Dhammapada, Verse 35.

29. Compare with the statement in the Aṅguttara-nikāya that "his mind, monks, is luminous, but it is defiled by extraneous defilements" ("*Pabhassaramidaṃ bhikkhave cittaṃ. Tañc kho āgantukehi upakkiliṭṭhehi upakkiliṭṭham*"), Aṅguttara nikāya (1961), i, p.1.

30. "*brahmāti mātāpitaro pubbācariyāti vuccare*", [Parents are said to be Brahmā (the highest God) and the early teachers], Ibid. p.132.

a way that enables them to maintain good conduct, constructive both to themselves and to others. The mind of the child is said to be an “absorbent mind”: “The child learns by unconsciously taking in everything around him and absorbing his environment through his very act of living. He does this easily and naturally, without thought or choice”.³¹ If parents provide their children with a suitable family environment in accordance with superior moral values and exemplary behavior, their children will naturally tend to imbibe such healthy behavior patterns. As P. Donohue Shortridge along with Dr. Silvana Ouattricchi observes:

“A child’s wise parents realize that he does indeed have a mental life, and therefore, will provide soft, low light, immediate and prolonged contact with the mother and a reassuring place for the baby so that the transition into the world is smooth and inviting rather than traumatic”.³²

In addition to bringing up children (*āpādakā*) and taking care of them (*posakā*), parents have to educate them and smoothen their way into the world (*lokassa dassatārā*).³³ From that obligation and expected quality of parenting, Buddhism expects that parents will inculcate in their children the way one should behave in society. They must train children to become distanced from doing all kinds of evil things such as killing, stealing, cheating, lying, dishonesty, revenge and so on. Furthermore, parents must guide and help their children to become interested in good qualities such as kindness, obedience, courage, honesty, simplicity, friendly attitude to the environment and other manifestations of virtue. The first and second duties represent the responsibility of parents for building up the psychological basis their children need and on which they can develop their own constructive personality.

TEACHERS’ RESPONSIBILITY TOWARDS CHILDREN

Teachers are considered in Buddhist ethical teaching as another

31. Montessori, Maria. (1967) p. 19. <http://www.pdonohueshortridge.com/children/absorbent.html> [Accessed 16 January 2019]

32. Ibid. pp. 24-25. See also <http://www.pdonohueshortridge.com/children/absorbent.html> [Accessed 16 January 2019].

33. Aṅguttara nikāya (1961) i. p. 151.

important source for motivating moral sense in the mind of children. While parents are considered to be those who have the responsibility of cultivating moral consciousness of their children in their early childhood, teachers are also assigned to play an important role in this respect during the course of formal and professional education of the children. According to the *Sigālovāda sutta*, the foremost duty of teachers towards their students is to train them in the best discipline (*suvinītam vinenti*).³⁴

Even according to the modern definition of the term, education involves intellectual, moral and social instruction.³⁵ This does not necessarily imply that moral instruction should be a subject in the study program. Instead, teachers should have to follow their educational methods so that students acquire knowledge of the subjects taught in order to implement the essential lessons in their activities honestly, justly and sincerely for the wellbeing of both themselves and others without adhering to selfish motivations.

Students should receive education which leads them to a disciplined life. This is stressed by the famous motto “*Vidyā dadāti vinayam*” (knowledge imparts discipline).³⁶ On the other hand, teachers should themselves set an example to students in respect of their moral behavior. In a real sense, teachers through their own behavior, must be a hero to students, so that students could emulate them, respect them and perhaps follow the path of the teacher’s life carrier. According to Buddhism, the most important qualification of the teacher is that they “should establish [themselves] in what is proper”.³⁷ This signifies the importance that the teacher leads an exemplary life. There is no doubt that the role of the teacher, both in teaching and in exemplary behavior, immensely influences the minds of pupils to establish their moral consciousness which can lead them to a righteous life.

GOOD FRIENDS

In Buddhist ethics education, another party to which the

34. Ibid.

35. Mbali Mkhonto, (2010) p. 25.

36. *The Hitopadesha: An Ancient, Fabled Classic* (2007), Verse 6.

37. *Dhammapada*, Verse 158.

duty of the enhancement of moral sense has been assigned is the good friends. Association with good friends is highly esteemed by Buddhism, and association with bad friends is extremely condemned.³⁸ Buddhists believe that as far as good friends are conducive to promote one's moral life, so far as bad friends are dangerous for one's moral life. The Buddha has well-understood the danger of bad friends for one's moral purity, Hence, the Buddha's advice was that "bad friends should be avoided from afar as paths of peril (*ārakā parivajjeyya maggaṃ paṭibhayaṃ yathā*).³⁹

Duties of the good friends have been assigned in the discourse to Sigala in the following way" (i) he restrains one from doing evil, (ii) he encourages one to do good, (iii) he informs one of what is unknown to oneself, iv) he points out the path to heaven.].⁴⁰ This shows us how good friends are concerned with the ethical character of their companions. Consequently, there is no need to emphasize that the aforesaid qualities attached to the friend who gives good counsel are quite conducive to enhancing the moral sense of their companions.

RELIGIOUS CLERGYMEN

Religious Clergymen belonging to any religion are duty bound to enhance the moral sense of their devotees. As they represent their respective religions, it is their duty to show the good path to the followers in accordance with their own religion. Anyhow, it is the Buddhist view that they should restrain them from evil (*Pāpā nivārenti*), persuade them to do good, (*kalyāṇe nivesenti*), love them with a kind heart (*kalyāṇena manasā anukāṃpanti*), make them hear what he has not heard (*assutaṃ sāventi*), clarify what they have already heard (*sutaṃ pariyodapenti*), and point out the path to a heavenly state (*saggaṃ maggaṃ ācikkhanti*).⁴¹

38. "na bhaje pāpake mitte –na bhaje purisādhamo, bhajethe mitte kalyāṇe bhajetha purisuttamo"], Dhammapada Verse 78. [One may not associate with bad friends nor with those who are ignoble. One may associate with the good friends and with those who are noble]

39. Dīgha nikāya (1976) iii p. 180. See also "Sigalovada Sutta: The Discourse to Sigala. The Layperson's Code of Discipline" (DN 31); Translated from the Pali by Narada Thera 1996 <http://www.accesstosight.org/tipitaka/dn/dn.31.0.nara.html>. [Accessed 15 January 2019]

40. "Sigālovāda Sutta. Idib.

41. Ibid.

All the duties assigned to clergymen are no doubt relating to moral education. It is the tradition of most of the religions in the world that religious functions are held regularly in particular days. Clergymen can get the opportunity to address the devotees gathered there. If they fulfil their duties earnestly towards the devotees, there is no doubt that large crowd of world population would get commendable benefit for the global sustainability.

So far we have discussed those who are assigned the responsibilities of motivating others' moral sense in order to establish moral qualities in them. If each group of people referred to above (i.e., parents, teachers, good friends and religious men) properly and honestly perform his duty, there is little doubt that all members of society belonging to all age groups necessarily would understand the value of moral life to their own mental as well as material wellbeing, and also that of others. Such a society whose members are well aware of the benefit of moral life, and hence are motivated in that direction to cultivate moral qualities in their life - while giving up immoral qualities - inevitably would contribute to the ideal society to which Buddhism is looking forward.

ETHICS FOR THE RULING ELITES

It is obvious that global sustainability is an outcome of diverse factors driving corporate bodies. Altruistic effort and activities of individuals made collectively or singly alone would not be sufficient to bring out it. Most important and crucial factor for the sustainability is ruling elites or the rulers of the countries without whose sincere cooperation sustainability would be a mere dream. The power of facilitating social needs of people has been vested on the rulers or ruling parties by the people. In modern societies, the political authority has developed into a position of assuming responsibility for almost the entire mechanism of handling all kinds of social welfare activities and security at both individual and national levels under its jurisdiction. If their decisions for the state activities are not led by the democratic principles based on natural justice, no one can expect peaceful and happy co-existence of people. Buddhism is well aware of this fact and hence, it does not forget its instructions even towards the rulers of people for making them real leaders in the fullest sense of the term.

According to the definition given by Buddhism, the ruler (*Rājā*) is the one who makes people happy with noble policies (*dhammena pare raññijētīti rājā*⁴²). The term *dhamma* used in the definition has a special significance in this context. Though Dhamma conveys different meaning in different contexts, it means social justice in social aspect. Social justice is defined as “an underlying principle for peaceful and prosperous coexistence within and among nations⁴³.” Justice mostly conveys the meaning of the principle of impartiality. According to Sigālovada-sutta, Dhamma is identified with impartiality.⁴⁴

What is interested here is that Buddhism constantly tries its best to keep rulers in the Dhamma, in other words in natural justice e.g. impartiality which should be the principle running behind administrative activities of the rulers that paves the way for sustainability of their societies. The manner how the impartiality of the rulers is emphasized in Buddhism is exemplified in Buddhist aspiration that may the King be impartial or righteous (*rājā bhavatu dhammiko*⁴⁵) Adhammika-sutta enumerates that the entire society gets degenerated in every aspect, when the ruler becomes injustice.⁴⁶ Buddhist ethical injunction for the rulers is that justice (Dhamma) should prevail throughout the country without giving space or permission to injustice (*mā ca te tāta vijite adhammakāro pavattittha*⁴⁷)

How strongly Buddhism emphasises the importance of rulers being just is well illustrated in the Cakkavatti-sīhanāda-sutta as follows:

“Depending on the Dhamma (*dhammanīyeva nissāya*), honoring the Dhamma (*dhamman sakkaronto*), revering the

42. Dīgha nikāya, (1976). iii. P. 93.

43. World Day of Social Justice, 20 February, United Nations, <http://www.un.org/en/events/socialjusticeday> [Accessed 20 January 2019]

44. Compare. “*Chandā dosā bhayā mohā yo dhammam nātivattati*.” Sigālovada-sutta. Dīgha nikāya iii. p.180.

45. Mahā jayamangala gāthā, *The Great Book of Protection & other Recitals*, Publication of the Sasana Abhiwurdhi Wardhana Society, Buddhist Maha Vihara, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, 2012 p. 174.

46. Adhammika sutta; Aṅguttara nikāya (PTS) Vol. II, p. 73 ff.

47. *Cakkavatti sīhanāda-sutta*, Dīgha nikāya, iii. p.61.

Dhamma (*dhammaṃ garukaronto*), cherishing the Dhamma (*dhammaṃ mānento*) doing homage to the Dhamma (*dhammaṃ pūjento*), having the Dhamma as badge (*dhamma-dhajo*), having the Dhamma as banner (*dhamma-ketu*) acknowledging the Dhamma as master (*dhammādhīpateyyo*⁴⁸). This implies that the entire force of driving the rulers in their administrative activities is nothing but the justice.

Storytelling is one of the effective methods employed in Buddhist ethics education for the implantation of ethical virtues in the lives of people. Virtuous ways of life are embedded in the Jātaka stories related to the former lives of the Buddha. Most of such stories talk about very important ten qualities in the name of *dasa rāja dhamma* which should be followed by the rulers. They are enumerated as generosity (*dāna*), restraint (*sīla*), liberality (*pariccāga*), strait forwardness (*ajjava*), gentleness (*maddava*), simplicity (*tapa*), non-anger (*akkodha*), non-violence (*avihiṃsā*), patience (*khanti*) and amity (*avirodhatā*). If the rulers are endowed with these ethical virtues, sustainability would not be a difficult task.

The four factors which bring about social integrity through mutual harmony, unity, peace and happiness are also recommended in Buddhist ethical teaching specifically for the leaders of the communities. As the *Hatthaka Ālavakasāṅgaha vatthu sutta* implies⁴⁹, four bases of treatment towards others (*catusāṅgahavatthu*) are highly relevant to a ruler for they are four ways of being of service to human being namely, Charity (*dana*), Pleasant Speech (*Peyyavajja*), Altruism (*attha-cariyā*) and Equality (*samānattatā*). Introducing these qualities, the Buddha compared them with the linchpin of a moving vehicle (*ete kho saṅgahā loke rathassāṇhva yāyato*⁵⁰) which stressed that how much they are important for the wellbeing of people.

The unique characteristic of Buddhist education in ethics is that the latter encompasses all the aspects that are responsible for

48. op. cit., p. 134.

49. Hatthaka Ālavaka, a follower of the Buddha, practiced four bases of treatments as a method for bringing unity and happiness to his large crowd. See: Hatthaka Ālavaka saṅgahavatthu sutta; Aṅguttara-nikāya (1961) i. pp.136-137.

50. Aṅguttara-nikāya ii. p.32.

working towards the common wellbeing and happiness of people irrespective of any kind of social discrimination. It takes into its account all kinds of people whether they are civilians or ruling elites in guiding them toward ethical perfection. It is the Buddhist view that ethical earnestness of the people is the basis on which the sustainability can be brought out at the global scale.

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