

Youth and Morality

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Abstract

For the development of peaceful human society, the moral development is particularly needed just as the material development. But nowadays as material development given primary importance, the morality of the majority of the people is clearly seen in decline. Similarly the peace in the human society is decreasing. The youths who are to become the leaders of the future need to be replete with morality and strong-willed. There are many literatures that give guidance on morality. Evil conducts (*ducarita*) and good conducts (*sucarita*) described in *Pāḷi* and commentary are to be avoided and abided are drawn out from these texts and presented in this paper. By abiding by these admonitions the youths can become polite and clever persons who are responsibility-conscious and responsibility-minded. This paper is intended for the development of well-qualified leaders who are needed in the building up of a peaceful human society.

Key words: youth, morality, development

Introduction

There are three periods in one's life. The first period is the beginning of the life; during this period one has to establish one's own body and mind to develop. The second period is the time in which one should make effort to do good for one's neighbours and the whole nation. The third period is the time of maturity for one who must lead the public and must be mature through one's own experience.

In the first period one has actually to learn the matters of the body, spirit and education. Youths in this period should have the love of their own nation; to love, enjoy and evaluate their own culture and customs.

Myanmar has very loveable customs as their hearts are full of the Buddha's exhortations for a long time. They pay due respect to the monks as well as to the aged laity and have kindness for their people; these qualities are very rare in the world.

Youths of today should emulate the ancestors to be good generation; they have to follow the Buddha's exhortations to maintain the good traditions and to be good themselves. The Buddha's exhortations may enhance youths develop in all aspects.

This paper presents, for youth to develop, the morality and ethics including wrong conducts as well as good conducts, five precepts, humanities, to be avoided and abided are drawn out from these texts and presented. And to make youths virtuous minded, the four noble sublime livings will briefly be presented.

Ways for Youths to Develop

To be good in morale is the most important thing in an existence of human being; so each and every one should have good character. Especially the new generation should possess good character as they are the leader of the future, and strive to develop themselves in all aspects i.e. morality, education, and economics, etc. They must cultivate the steadfast mind. Thus, the ways and means for youths to develop and to prosper is to be endowed with good character and high spirits.

Good Character

To be endowed with good character one must follow "Dos" and avoid "Don'ts". For one "dos" are three aspects of bodily moral conduct, for aspects of good speech, and three

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aspects of moral thinking: the three aspects of moral conduct are refraining from killing, refraining from taking what is not given, and abstaining from sensual misconduct; the four aspects of good speech are abstaining from telling untruth, abstaining from backbiting, abstaining from telling harsh speech, and abstaining from frivolous talk; the three aspects of moral thinking are not being covetous, not being malicious, and not being orthodox.¹ Observing the above-mentioned conduct is avoiding the evil conduct. One should earn an honest livelihood through good morality. For this reason, the new generation must observe five precepts to cultivate their morality. The five precepts are abstaining from killing, taking what is not given, sensual misconduct, telling untruth, and taking intoxicants.² Abstaining from killing, taking what is not given, and committing sensual misconduct are bodily good deeds; abstaining from telling untruth is good speech. Nowadays, youths generally take narcotic drugs that are worse than alcohol. Consequently, they have lost their latent mentality and morality. So, all the youths much actually abstain from taking any type of intoxicant.

Moreover, the Buddha has instructed blessings (good practices) for youths to be polite. Those that included in the blessings, which are the prosperous and beneficial ways, are to dissociate from fools, to associate with the wise, to honour those worthy of honour, to support the parents, to help the relatives, to have vast learning, to talk pleasant speech, to refrain from evil physically as well as verbally and mentally, to listen the wise's talk, to be patient with each other, etc. If one follows the practice of Blessings, one will prosper at anywhere and anytime.

The Buddha has abundantly delivered many guidance or instructions for the new generations to be endowed with good morality. One of such instructions is *Sīṅgālovāda Sutta* (discourse concerning *Sīṅgāla*) which is a discourse describing secular duties and obligations for all without distinction of class or age. In this discourse, those that described are causes to ruin wealth, disadvantages of taking intoxicants, of indulging in music and concerts, of gambling, of going about at night, of laziness, and of association with foolish companions. Moreover, there expressed are mutual obligations of parents and children, of teacher and pupil, of wise and husband, of employee and employer, of laity and the Order, and between friends.³ So it may be noted that the youths should understand and follow these instructions since young.

Moreover, the Buddha has expounded that the young *Licchavī* princes who were fierce, rough and haughty had become polite and prosperous as they had observed the good practice. While the Buddha was staying in *Mahāvana* in *Vesālī*, the young *Licchavī* princes who were fierce, rough and haughty approached the Buddha and made their obeisance. Then, a famous leader of *Licchavī*, named *Mahānāma*, joyously proclaimed, “They young *Licchavī* princes are going to prosper, the young *Licchavī* princes are going to prosper”. The Buddha heard. On that occasion, the Buddha has expounded five factors whereby anyone may certainly expect to prosper and not to decline. These five factors are (1) providing and taking care of parents, (2) protecting and looking after the family and relatives, (3) protecting and looking after the colleagues, (4) respecting and honouring parents' traditions, and (5) revering and venerating the virtuous persons.⁴ That is why youths of today, emulating the young *Licchavī* princes, should strive to cultivate themselves to be endowed with good morality and to become polite ones.

¹ M I. 354.

² Khu. 1.

³ D III. 147-156.

⁴ A II. 66-68.

Advantages of Observing Good Morality

There can be read an account in the *Garudhamma Jātaka* that the country has developed in all aspects harmoniously and peacefully as the people had practice morals by emulating their chieftains who really observed morals. The case was as follows. The king of Kuru was in the habit of always observing five precepts earnestly; his country was of good weather and highly prospered. Kuru's neighbouring country, named *Kaliṅga* was of bad weather and the whole country was suffering from famine as all including the rulers were lack of morals. The people of *Kaliṅga* thought that Kuru was of good weather because there was *Maṅgala* elephant in Kuru. So they borrowed the *Maṅgala* elephant and brought it to their country to gain good weather, but in vain. Then they repaid the elephant and asked for *Garudhamma* from the king of Kuru. The Kuru king had once shot the arrows into all directions; one of those beings in the lake; and he considered that his morality might be unclean. So he said to ask for *Garudhamma* from his mother whose morality would be more purified than his. But the king's mother suspected her morality and instructed to ask for *Garudhamma* from her daughter-in-law, the Queen; the queen also thought her morality was unclean as she was once enamoured of the viceroy, her brother-in-law; so she advised to ask for the *Garudhamma* from the viceroy. The viceroy also had suspicion of his own morality and suggested to ask for it from the king's chaplain. Similarly, the chaplain advised to ask for it from the surveyor. The surveyor has doubted about his morality and said to ask for it from the charioteer. The charioteer had once driven the horse at full gallop so that it might drop with fatigue and he doubted his morality; so he said to ask for it from the banker (the rich person). Once again, the banker also had suspicious of his morality as he had once plucked a handful of grain before he did not pay it for the king; so he advised to ask for it from the measurer of the paddy who, however, had doubted his morality because he had once lost the tally as the rain fell while he was on his task. So he said to ask for it from the door-keeper. The door-keeper also had suspicion for hid morality as he had spoken wrongly to the brother and sister on the ground of uncertainty. He advised to ask for the *Garudhamma* from a prostitute who, however, denied paying the *Garudhamma* as she thought her morality unclean although she had tried to cleanse it to her best, But the *Kaliṅga* messengers were satisfied with what they heard, and they brought back the *Garudhamma* of Kuru to their country. Then all the people including the rulers observed the five precepts, consequently their country gained the good weather and they escaped from dangers and prospered.⁵

Above-mentioned examples give lesson that when the upper class observes the precepts properly and all the people follow their way; so they gain firm morality and the whole country obtain welfare.

It may be noted that if the middle and lower, not upper, classes observe the *Dhamma*, they themselves and all their related ones may enjoy welfare and happiness. In the *Mahādhammapāla Jātaka*, the Buddha has explained that observing the good moral conduct could offer the result of not being dead in youth, but a long life. The story was as follows. A village in *Kāsi* was called *Dhammapāla* (*Dhamma*-keeper) as all the villagers were in the habit of keeping the *Dhamma*. As a result of their keeping the *Dhamma*, they never died in their youth. Once a son of *Disāpamokkha*, the eminent teacher, was dead in his youth; then one of the teacher's pupils said that at his village, the *Dhammapāla* village, no one died in youth. Hearing this, the teacher went to the *Dhammapāla* village to enquire the matter, He found that the *Dhammapāla* villagers never died in their youth as they always observed earnestly the good moralities such as giving alms, practicing the precepts, obtaining from telling untruth, not doing any evil, following the elders' advice, etc.⁶ This story gives the lesson that the *Dhamma*

⁵ Ja I. 81; Ja A II. 330.

⁶ Ja I. 214; Ja A VI. 49.

protects those who observe the *Dhamma*; if one observes the *Dhamma* well, one can obtain peace and happiness in this very life.

Thus the main theme of the Buddha's instruction for the youths to establish firm morality is not to do any evil and to cultivate good conduct. If one follows the Buddha's instructions, one can surely become a successful and prosperous person at the present time, and a respectable one in the future.

Firm Attitude

The Buddha's exhortations make everyone's attitude firm. The firm attitude means the mind which is devoid of evil or sin. The mind which is overwhelmed by greed, ill-will and ignorance is unclean and not firm. The Buddha has usually exhorted to control the mind. If one can abandon the attitude that may make the mind dirty, anxious, weak, and defiled by canker, one's mind will be purified and steadfast. In the world, all is led by mind; it is described in the *Samyutta Nikāya*⁷ as, "Mind leads the world; mind attracts the world; all living beings that are following will of the mind are the followers of one thing called mind". So, if good minds are leading, good attitude, good action and good advantage will arise; if bad or evil minds are leading, bad attitude, bad action and bad advantage will arise.

Fundamentally, one must be sincere and honest without ill-will to the others; one must have benevolent attitude towards others. So the new generation should, to make their attitude firm, observe the four noble sublime states such as loving-kindness (*mettā*), compassion (*karuṇā*), sympathetic joy (*muditā*), and equanimity (*upekkhā*).

Loving-kindness (*Mettā*)

The first and foremost of the four noble sublime states is loving-kindness (*mettā*). The synonym of *mettā* is *pema* (love, affection, kindness, pleasure). So there are three types of *mettā*, viz. attaching love (*taṇhāpema*), affection relating to the house (*gehassitapema*), and friendly loving-kindness (*mettāpema*). Out of them, *mettāpema* is one that is benevolent love; it is *mettāpema* that can make, in the world, enmity cease, dispel ill-will, purify one's mind and those of others; this is explained in the *Dhammapada* as, "Hatreds never cease through hatred in this world; through love alone they cease."⁸ Similarly, the *Aṅguttara Nikāya* describes, "One must develop loving-kindness to dispel the immoral deed of anger".⁹

If there may not arise the mutual loving-kindness amongst men, living beings, and countries, there will often be committed murder or homo cide, fighting or battles, thefts of robbery, cheating or deceiving, tyrannizing, insulting, and violating; and then the world will not develop. So, it is really necessary that all human beings must cultivate loving-kindness in their minds; those who are full of living-kindness will certainly effort to observe the fundamental principles of duties. Then they will be endowed with moralities. Essentials of loving-kindness never depress anyone, but are kind to all living beings and tolerant to all; they make one sacrifice himself, make one sympathize, make all unity. That is why all the human beings should develop loving-kindness in their minds.

Compassion (*Karuṇā*)

Karuṇā (compassion) is a type of mercy. *Karuṇā* is defined as that which makes the hearts of the good quiver when others are subjects to suffering. Its chief characteristic is the wish to remove the sufferings of others.¹⁰ Moreover, the Buddha has advised, "As if when you

⁷ Sam I. 36.

⁸ Khu I. 14.

⁹ A II. 388.

¹⁰ Abhi A I. 237.

see anyone who is suffering or in a bad state, you are compassionate, so you much be compassionate on all living beings.¹¹

One much be compassionate not only on the suffering being but also on those who hold wrong views, wrong belief, and have wrong practice. So it is the good-natured persons' obligation to help, with great compassion, those who are wrong in action, in speaking, in thought and in lack of doing merit, and from all walks of life. If the new generation has such good-nature, it may be said that their minds are firm and steadfast. The youths much strive to cultivate steadfast mind to prosper themselves and the whole nation.

Sympathetic Joy (*Muditā*)

Muditā is rejoicing at another's good fortune, the cause to rejoice it, the nature of rejoicing it. So being joyous at other's prosperity, or having happy attitude on other's prosperity is called 'nurturing *muditā*'. If one has *muditā* attitude, he or she will not be envious. One can nurture *muditā* if he or she has right consideration about other's wealth and success. So abandoning the unpleasant attitude towards other's prosperity may be called 'nurturing *muditā*'.¹²

Fundamentally, to nurture *muditā*, one need to cultivate good-natured attitude, and to observe virtue or morality; then he or she will be joyous to meet the other who is better than oneself. If one has not the right intention and meritorious attitude, he or she may be envious of other's wealth and success. The Buddha has expounded that envy is the cause of enmity and misery.¹³

Moreover, envy conduces to "*abhijjhā*" (covetousness) by thinking about other's property to incline to oneself and wishing to become one's own. Covetousness may arise through ignorance.¹⁴ When one has strong envy and covetousness in one's mind, he or she will commit the wicked and evil deeds; and then he or she will suffer in this world and hereafter.

That is why one must really be joyous when he or she meets the other superior than oneself. Then his or her mind will not be overwhelmed by mischievous attitudes such as ill-will to destroy other's prosperity, jealousy, avarice, and cheating; thus he or she will be out of danger and gains the true happiness. So the new generation must cultivate *muditā* in youth, thence they will obtain firm and steadfast minds.

Equanimity (*Upekkhā*)

Upekkhā means equanimity. They are two types of *Upekkhā*: *Brahmavihāra upekkhā* and *Pāramīupekkhā*; the first is living as a Brahma,¹⁵ the second is living impartially to both sides till the deeds are completely fulfilled. And then, *Brahmavihāra Upekkhā* implies living without any attachment or detachment or bias towards the rich or the poor, towards the beloved or unloved, but impartially or equally. The property of a living being is its own volitional action. One can gain neither happiness nor misery by any other's will; one cannot escape from them by means of any other's wish. Its approximate cause is seeing that one's own action is one's property.¹⁶ So abandoning love or hatred or human beings as well as all living beings, one must unconcernedly look on all matters arisen; thus one should live in a way of equanimity. And then he or she will gain peace and happiness.

Anyone can adorn the world to be beautiful and splendid by means of living noble sublime abodes: loving-kindness, compassion, sympathetic joy, and equanimity. If those

¹¹ Abhi II. 286.

¹² Abhi A I. 237-238.

¹³ D II. 220.

¹⁴ Abhi A I. 144-145.

¹⁵ Abhi A VI. 259.

¹⁶ Abhi A I. 238.

Dhammas take place in the hearts of the youths and all people, all living beings much be obtain real peace as well as happiness and prosper in all aspects.

The Buddha has exhorted all to live by means of noble sublime abodes to gain firm and steadfast mind; He also advises to dispel defilements of mind. Mental defilements which can destroy firm attitude or steadfast attitude are (1) *Abhijjhā* (Covetousness), (2) *Visamalobha* (Unjust desire), (3) *Byāpāda* (Malevolence), (4) *Kodha* (Anger), (5) *Upanāha* (Enmity), (6) *Makkha* (Concealing one's vices), (7) *Palāsa* (Vying with one another), (8) *Issā*(envy), (9) *Macchhariya* (Avarice), (10) *Māyā* (Deceit), (11) *Sātheya* (Treachery), (12) *Thambha*(Insensibility), (13) *Sārambha* (Clamour), (14) *Māna* (Pride), (15) *Atimāna* (Vanity), (16) *Mada* (False pride), and (17) *Pamāda* (Heedlessness).¹⁷ Avoiding those mental defilements, the youths should culture clean and firm attitude.

Conclusion

Human life is a priceless treasure. And it is rare to obtain. While one is living a priceless and rare life, he or she should try to gain proper profit from the invaluable life, Nowadays, the majority of the youths dispel the etiquette (social duties). Without the etiquette, the world may ruin. It is ruin of *Maṅgala* practices that is the cause of becoming a world; thus to protect the world, at first, they have to prepare themselves by following the Buddha's advice for development of their morale. Their morale can become steadfast through abstaining from ten sorts of evil, simultaneously performing ten sorts of good deeds. And then, if they do social duties altogether, they themselves as well as their environment-quarter, village, town, and country will develop and prosper. To gain high spirit is as important as morality. So to obtain firm attitude and high spirit, they should be endowed with the four noble sublime livings and the four roads of power: (1) *Chanda* (Strong will to do well), (2) *Vīriya* (Brave effort), (3) *Citta* (Steadfast mind i.e. firm attitude), and (4) *Vīmaṃsa* (Investigation).¹⁸ If one may nurture these four roads of power in one's own mind, he or she can succeed in any case. It is important to be sincere and honest in the worlds; the sincere and honest person will be respected.

If one gains good morale, one's spirit also become excellent in all aspects. The Buddha's teachings are not only theory but also applications of practice. If one actually practices them, one will surely gain advantages. So this paper presents the Buddha's instructions for the youths to follow them and consequently to develop in all aspects: education, health, and economics, so on.

Acknowledgements

I express my gratitude to Rector Dr Aye Kyaw, Pro-rector Dr Khin Ma Ma Tin and Dr Myint Zu Min of Yadanabon University for their permission to submit this article. I am grateful to Dr Htwe Yee, Professor and Head, Oriental Studies Department, Yandanabon University for their encouragement and her suggestions in preparing this research paper.

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¹⁷ M I. 43; M A I. 170.

¹⁸ Abhi II. 232.

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