

A Study of the Application of *Attasammāpanidhi Maṅgala* in Daily Life from the Ethical Point of View

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Abstract

The purpose of this research paper is to present how to live everyday life peacefully by the principle of *Attasammāpanidhi Maṅgala*, which helps deal with difficult situations and social problems such as frictions, disagreements and conflicts. This paper is to explain why *Attasammāpanidhi Maṅgala* is necessary for individuals to make their conducts ethically good for society. *Attasammāpanidhi Maṅgala* is one of the Thirty-eight Blessings in *Maṅgala Sutta*. The *Maṅgala Sutta* is both an ethical and religious guide. By practising this *Maṅgala* helps to balance self-interest and social well being, and in turn, helps to live harmoniously in the society, reducing disagreements and conflicts. The descriptive method, evaluative method and reciprocity principle are used in this research. In everyday life which is full of worries and misunderstandings, it is basically important for oneself to be able to find the right path to live by moral principle. Since one's ultimate goal is to live harmoniously in the society, understanding *Attasammāpanidhi Maṅgala* is a valued virtue that one should abide by.

Keywords: *Attasammāpanidhi Maṅgala*, Blessings, principle, virtue

Introduction

The *Maṅgala Sutta* is one of the most widely known Buddha's discourses. The *Maṅgala Sutta* brings happiness to all, both in the mundane and religious spheres. If one actually observes *Maṅgala Sutta*, he or she will achieve what is morally, ethically good in his or her present life. Observing *Maṅgala Sutta* makes an individual ethical, social and self-reliant. One who is ethical, social and self-reliant will be able to preserve the distinctive features of Myanmar Theravada Buddhist culture as well as other cultures.

Thirty-eight Blessings in the *Maṅgala Sutta* can be conceived from the perspectives of eleven moral codes, eight moral principles, five worldly values, four social values and ten religious values. *Attasammāpanidhi Maṅgala* is one of the eight moral principles. The concept of *Attasammāpanidhi Maṅgala* refers not only to an individual's right understanding of what is ethical and social but also a practical guide to what should be done in daily life.

And also, ethics lay down the principle of how man should behave to lead a good life. Indeed, man is a rational and social animal. So, he cannot live alone. As he lives in society, his actions are bound to others'. Actions and their consequent reactions in society create a situation in which judgments of being good or bad, right or wrong, proper or improper, just or unjust are involved in all spheres of human activities.

The aim of ethics is to enable us to distinguish between what is right and what is wrong. If ethics as discipline is occupied with the problem of the ideal of human conduct, man will come up with what ought to act. Human nature is a complex constitution of reason, will, emotion, instinct, impulses and bias. In order to resolve the ethical problems which occur in society, the principle of

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Attasammāpanidhi Maṅgala, which is one of the Thirty-eight Blessings, can be applied in everyday life.

Literature Review

Attasammāpanidhi Maṅgala really means setting oneself on the right course and making serious effort. *Attasammāpanidhi Maṅgala* is briefly noted as follows:

Attasammāpanidhi means one must decide on a proper objective in life and set oneself on the right path leading to it. The emphasis is on “one’s own self: one should try to direct oneself to the desired goal by the efforts one makes. This encourages self-confidence and discourages dependence upon the grace of gods or men. Many people pass their lives in the wrong course, engaged in evil practices of the body, speech and mind. Those who live such a life should cherish right desires and open a new and wholesome direction for their lives. Others, who already consider themselves to have a wholesome way of living, should review their situation from time to time not only to avoid lapses but also to progress further in the right direction. The unvirtuous person establishes himself in virtue (the five precepts for instance); the faithless person establishes himself in excellent faith, the avaricious person establishes himself in generosity.¹

Most Myanmar people accepted Theravada Buddhist scriptures as a reliable testimony. These scriptures briefly noted to do good deeds, not to do evil deeds and to purify the mind. In these scriptures, the evil deeds, which are committed bodily, verbally and mentally and the evil thoughts which take place in the mind are mentioned. In this earthly life, evil speech could destroy the co-existence and peaceful relationship of human beings and one’s business could be destroyed. It would also make people agitate, and bring trials and tribulations among groups. And one should not use evil ways to get one’s goal. By refraining oneself from making evil speech, peaceful life and harmonious living could be established.

The writer, Nandar Thein Zan, who said as follows:

“Taking care of oneself” can be more beneficial for oneself and others. It means that a successful display made by the two acrobats can always be seen and heard in one’s life. If one is lack of this *Maṅgala*, one might lose the wealth or the property that one has already possessed.²

Aim

This paper is intended to present that social activities or social conduct can be based on the cooperation of individuals who are ethically good. And, consequences of social conduct can be evaluated both ethically and socially. To perform such a conduct, an individual needs to make himself ethically good first under the guidance of *Attasammāpanidhi Maṅgala* as it has been explained.

Materials and Methods

The data used in the present research are collected mainly from “*Noteworthy Remarks on Right Speech*” (1990) written by Nandar Thein Zan, “*Thirty-eight Blessings*” (2009) written by U Than Htut, “*Abhidhamma in Daily Life*” (1999) written by Ashin Janakābhivamsa, “*A Guide to the Maṅgala Sutta*” (2006) written by Daw Mya Tin and “*A Manual of Abhidhamma*” (1975) written

¹ Dr.R.L.Soni. (Trans). (2006) “Life’s Highest Blessings: The MahaMangalaSutta”.

² 2. NandarThein Zan. (1990) “Noteworthy Remarks on Right Speech”

(မှန်သောစကားကိုဆိုခြင်းနှင့်ပက်သက်သောမှတ်ချက်များ)

by Narada Thera. This is an analytical study of *Attasammāpanidhi Maṅgala*. It is explained by using the descriptive and evaluative methods.

Findings and Discussion

According to the data collected, if one avoids committing something verbally, he/she will be free from harm and it will be beneficial to others. The society in which the living beings are dwelling, human beings have distinctions that they are different from other living beings. Among these distinctions, man could memorize so many things. By language, man could communicate his thoughts and feelings to the other people and contribute his thoughts to future generation.

By observing the precept of right speech, man could establish a peaceful community, national unity and can exchange knowledge with others. Right speech could change one's life to be better. However, speech could bring not only much benefit but also mischief. The following is the example case study that supports this *Maṅgala*.

Once, there were two famous acrobats who could display striking features. While displaying their shows, the trainee had stood up on the trainer's shoulder, the two of them were controlling with each other and then they could display very exciting plot from the top of the bamboo pole. One day, both of them did a plan that would be more exciting than former shows. While the trainer controlled the bamboo pole, the trainee must play with dagger and javelin at the top of the bamboo pole. So, this plan was very dangerous to display for them. As planned, the time for life threatening show had come.

The trainee did preparation but he was so worried in the display. While he was displaying plot at the top of the bamboo pole, if the trainer made a mistake by giving wrong command, the trainee would drop to the ground. Actually, if he dropped to the ground, both of them would encounter a very dangerous condition. Without thinking about this, he had thought of only his danger. The trainee told his trainer not to give wrong command at this time. However, the trainer said peacefully to his follower "You have to take care of yourself. Do your best. For me, I will be careful about my command. And, I will do my best." "Taking care of oneself and one's task will be more beneficial to oneself and the other person," replied the trainer. According to his words, the trainer surprisingly controlled the bamboo pole and his disciple also did his task the best.

He followed his trainer's advice and then he bravely climbed up to the top of the bamboo pole. When he arrived at the top, he could display his best. He also did his activity the best. By taking care of oneself and doing what one should do, the trainer and the trainee were able to perform the miraculous show that was different from former shows successfully. This case study is the best example of *Attasammāpanidhi Maṅgala*: the two characters in the story benefitted each other because they maintained their actions and speech on the right path.

Understanding *Attasammāpanidhi Maṅgala* and living by this practice is one of the most important factors which contributes to reducing conflicts in one's mind as well as in one's surrounding. If each and individual is able to induce oneself to have a control over one's conduct, speech and mentality, then the whole society will be able to live harmoniously, with the minimum of frictions or conflicts. The concept of *Attasammāpanidhi Maṅgala* can be concluded not only

from the perspective of morality but also from the social standpoint. In the western theory of sociology, individual is regarded as the basic unit.

In this paper, I presented how to live our everyday life with *Attasammāpanidhi Maṅgala* which is extracted from the thirty-eight *Maṅgalas*. It is fully noted that all the *Maṅgalas* are suited to the well-beings of our Myanmar society. The main essence of *Attasammāpanidhi Maṅgala* is maintaining one’s mind and body on the right path. In order to live harmoniously with everyone every day in the society, one needs to keep one’s mind and body on the right way in order either to avoid or resolve social problems such as frictions, disagreements and conflicts. A comprehensive example has been given above in order to prove that living by this *Attasammāpanidhi Maṅgala* is fruitful. I hope if each and every one in our society can practise this *Maṅgala*, we can all overcome different kinds of social problems and lead to a more peaceful society in the world.

Conclusion

In Theravada Myanmar culture, there are many ethical principles. Although this paper focuses on application of *Attasammāpanidhi Maṅgala* in daily life, other ethical principles that are suitable for the expected society cannot be left behind. This paper does not contend that *Attasammāpanidhi Maṅgala* is the most important or the most fundamental. In fact, human beings who are motivated by greed, anger and delusion also need to understand other moral principles such as the Law of *Kamma*, *Majjimapatipadā*, *Brahmavihāra Dhamma* and so on.

Social conduct or practice is based on individual’s ethical knowledge and practice because as far as an individual regards himself as a member of society and not as an individual himself who cares only for the self, his conduct needs to be in line with what is morally and socially acceptable to be able to contribute towards social progress to some degree. Moreover, the *Attasammāpanidhi Maṅgala* helps to instill awareness in people that in society one cannot pursue self-interest alone, and thus there must be a well-balanced relationship between the individual and society.

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နေကတိဝံသ၊အရှင်(၂၀၀၆)၊"ကိုယ်ကျင့်အတိစေ့စွာ"၊အမရပူရမြို့၊ နယူးဘားမား အေဘိဆက်ဝိဇ္ဇာကတိပုံနှိပ်တိုက်။

နေကတိဝံသ၊အရှင်(၂၀၀၆)၊ "ဗုဒ္ဓဘာသာလင်္ကာ"၊ အမရပူရမြို့၊ နယူးဘားမား အေဘိဆက်ဝိဇ္ဇာကတိပုံနှိပ်တိုက်။

နန္ဒာသိန်းစံ၊ (၁၉၉၀)၊ "ဗုဒ္ဓသောဏောကံဆိုခြင်းနှင့်ပတ်သက်သောမှတ်ချက်များ"၊ ရန်ကုန်မြို့၊ လှိုင်းသစ်စာပေ။

သန်းထွတ်ဦး၊ (ပါမောက္ခ-ငြိမ်း၊ ပညာရေးတက္ကသိုလ်)၊ (၂၀၀၉)။ ဥပစာမင်္ဂလာ ရန်ကုန်မြို့၊ ကောင်းသန့်စာပေ။

<http://www.accesstoinight.org/lib/authors/soni/whee/254.html>.lastmodified: (March 23, 2012.)