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STUDY OF SOCIAL, RELIGIOUS AND ECONOMIC CONDITION ACCORDING TO BUDDIST LITERATURE

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Abstract: Buddhism is based on the teachings of Siddhartha Gautama, who came to be called the Buddha or "enlightened one". Gautama was born into a wealthy family near the border of modern India and Nepal in 563 BC. Confronted by the reality of ageing, sickness and death, he left his rich home at 29, and spent seven years travelling India as an ascetic. Substituting meditation for physical self-punishment, he was sitting under a fig-tree (bodhi tree) when he had his first three enlightened revelations.

The Buddhist literature was in the primary stage, oral literature. As per history, spiritual influence and personal example apart, the teaching of Buddha was communicated entirely by oral means. Though in which language he spoke is not known, it would appear that he rejected the more 'classical' Sanskrit in favour of the vernacular, especially the dialects of Kosala and Magadha.

Keyword: Social, Religious, Economic, Buddhist Literature.

INTRODUCTION:

As per the history of Buddhism, the Dharma having been orally taught, there intervened between the Parinirvana of Lord Buddha and the committing of his teaching to writing a period of oral transmission lasting two or three centuries in the case of some scriptures, and much longer in the case of others. Then the fact that the monks had been authorized to learn and teach Lord Buddha's message in their own dialects meant that the Dharma was from the beginning extant in a number of linguistic forms, so that, when finally it did come to be written down, this was done not in one language only but in many. Thus, it is said, the Canon of the Mahasanghikas was in Prakrit, that of the Sthaviravadins in Paisaci, that of the Pudgalavadins in Apabhramsa, and that of the Sarvastivadins in Sanskrit.

Therefore, when Buddhism spread outside India it came about that the Scriptures were translated into the several languages, such as, Chinese, Tibetan, Uighur, and so on. When the oral tradition was reduced to writing, the mnemonic devices employed by the Buddha and his disciples for the transmission of the Dharma were responsible for giving the Scriptures as literary documents certain distinctive characteristics. With the exception of the Pali Canon, the actual writing down of which took place in Ceylon, and certain Mahayana sutras that may have been composed in Central Asia or even in China, the canonical literature of Buddhism is of exclusively Indian origin. Where, when, and in what circumstances the thousands of individual texts of which it consists were first committed to writing is in most cases unknown. All that can be affirmed with certainty is that the canonical literature came into existence over a period of roughly a thousand years, from the first to the tenth century of the Christian era. During the

period of oral tradition the complete words of the Buddha were referred to as the Tripitaka, the three 'baskets' or collections of the Buddha's words. These three are the Vinaya Pitaka, the Sutra Pitaka, and the Abhidhamma Pitaka. Together with the Tantras they make up the four chief divisions of the canonical writings. Shortly after the death of Lord Buddha, a Council was set up around 477 BC at Rajagriha. A second Council was held at Vaishali in 377 BC to canonize the Buddhist sacred books. In the third Council about 241 BC held at Pataliputra the books were canonized. The early-canonized books, the Tripitakas, form the canonized books of Hinayana or Theravadi schools.

SOCIAL TO BUDDIST

Gautama did not envisage himself as establishing a religion. Buddhists have no belief in higher deities, but propose a path towards freedom from suffering, or individual enlightenment, through deep reflection on the nature of existence. This focus on self-redemption makes it qualitatively quite different from other belief systems which base themselves around concepts of divine mercy or grace.

Buddhism was initially disruptive to social structures by drawing men away from their social obligations, it soon became a productive contributor to local communities. A Buddhist monastery provided its community with religious rituals, spiritual guidance, places of worship, and a means of earning merit. Buddhist laypersons sometimes formed social clubs that arranged pilgrimages, met to chant or copy sutras, or carried out projects for the benefit of others.

Buddhism became known as a source of practical benefits for its followers. This practice grew from the texts and stories about the bodhisattvas, who provided spiritual

rescue but were also said to be able to protect people from dangers such as fires or floods. One might visit a monastery to ask for healing for a loved one, for help finding a marriage partner or a job, to insure the birth of a healthy child or grandchild, or to ask for success in examinations or a myriad other things that would benefit one's life.

Monasteries also served social needs by determining auspicious dates for weddings, telling fortunes, and, in some cases, providing political clout or mediating between locals and the government. In addition to sponsoring festivals, they also sometimes held large vegetarian feasts to which all the locals were invited, paying a donation only if they were able.

Monasteries sometimes served as inns, offering beds and meals for travelers. Some provided social services such as schools, orphanages, health care facilities, food and shelter for the homeless, facilities for the elderly, and even animal rescue. Occasionally they carried out public works projects, such as building roads and bridges, digging wells and planting trees along travel routes, deepening river channels, or creating reservoirs to provide communities with fresh water.

RELIGIOUS TO BUDDHIST

Buddhism is the fourth largest religion in the world. The Buddhists refer to the teachings of Gautama Buddha, who in the 5th Century BC, was born in Lumbini, Kapilvastu, west Nepal, born from Queen Mayadhevi. A Buddhist takes refuge in the Buddha, the Dharma (his teachings) and Sangha (the Buddhist community). The goal of Buddhist practice is to attain enlightenment.

Being brought into China 2,000 years ago, it was gradually widely accepted by most Chinese people and developed into three sections, namely the Han, Tibetan and Southern Buddhism. Buddhism not only brought a different religion, but also brought a different culture. It influences the local culture on three main aspects: literature, art and ideology. Many famous poems have ideas from Buddhism and many Buddhist stone statues can be found, which show its huge influence. It also promotes the countries' intercultural communications with foreign countries. In Tang Dynasty (618 - 907), Jianzhen traveled to Japan to spread Buddhism as well as Chinese culture. Xuanzang, who traveled to India to learn Buddhist doctrines, brought a plenty information on the language of the countries he had been to.

Now, Buddhism has developed into the most important religion in the country. The latest survey shows that 31% of the people who do not believe in this religion have participated in some Buddhist activities and about 17 million people have already become converts. Now more of those followers come from different walks of life such as the intellectuals, business elites and the common people. Recently, there is a new report, The Chinese Luxury Consumer White Paper 2012, jointly published by the Industrial Bank and Hurun Report, which shows that 39% of the intellectuals and businessmen have faith in Buddhism. Not only the number of the followers is increasing, and the education of Buddhism obtains more attention from the society. Under the Buddhist Association of China, 34

different levels of Buddhist academies as well as almost 50 magazines can be found. Now in mainland China, there are about 13 thousand temples and 180 thousand monks and nuns.

The Unity of All Religions

Enlightenment is the center of all religions. The unity of all religions is an important goal towards building a happy world. The communication between religions is important, even when it's sometimes difficult.

Buddhist: It is obvious that not all religions teach the same. Buddha taught that God and the soul don't exist. Hinduism alleges the opposite.

1. There is only one truth. There is only one highest reality. We can call this Nirvana, Brahman, Universe, Allah or God.
2. I have experienced that there is such a thing as reincarnation. I have seen my earlier life.
3. Modern near-death research has shown that humans have souls that can think and observe independently of the body.
4. There are many clairvoyants who can see into the beyond.
5. Buddha saw his earlier lives once he became enlightened.
6. The Buddhist teachings only make sense when we consider the reality of rebirth. Why should you work towards enlightenment through the centuries when so few reach the goal? Most people would squander their lives if they couldn't take the fruit of their striving into the next life. A Yogi resumes his practice from life to life until he has reached the goal of enlightenment. In this way, all spiritual people reach their goal at some point.
7. Buddha had simply emphasized his teachings on the dissolving of the self. For that reason, he especially emphasized emptiness (the non-self, anatta). In Hinduism, fulfillment is emphasized (lots of energy, love, peace, happiness). In enlightenment there is emptiness (nothingness) and unity (fulfillment) at the same time.
8. The earlier lives reveal themselves only after a certain point along the way.
9. There is a lot of confusion among the religions of the world. I am of the opinion that all fully enlightened masters like Buddha, Jesus, Laozi and Patanjali saw things the same way, they simply expressed them differently.
10. I am for freedom of faith and opinion. I allow for the plurality of opinions and religion. I accept Atheists. I can deal with the idea of an atheistic Buddhism. I wish that all people work together for a world of love, peace and happiness.

ECONOMIC TO BUDDHIST

Buddhist Economics is a spiritual approach to Economics. It examines the psychology of the human mind and the anxiety, aspirations and emotions that direct economic activity. Its understanding aims to clear the confusion between what is truly harmful and beneficial in Economics and ultimately tries to make human beings ethically mature. It tries to find a middle way between a purely mundane society and an immobile conventional society.

It says that truly rational decisions can only be made when we understand what creates irrationality. When people understand what constitutes desire, they realize that all the

wealth in the world cannot satisfy it. When people understand the universality of fear, they become more compassionate to all beings. Thus, this spiritual approach to Economics doesn't rely on theories and models but on the essential forces of acumen, empathy and restraint.

The Buddhist point of view intends at giving work a trinal function: to give man a chance to utilize and develop his aptitude; to enable him to overcome his self-aggrandizement by engaging with other people in common tasks; and to bring forward the goods and services needed for a better existence.

From the perspective of a Buddhist, Economics and other streams of knowledge cannot be separated. Economics is a single component of a combined effort to fix the problems of humanity and Buddhist Economics works with it to reach a common goal of societal, individual and environmental sufficiency.

"Right Livelihood" is one of the requirements of the Buddha's Noble Eightfold Path. It is clear, therefore, that there must be such a thing as Buddhist economics. Buddhist countries have often stated that they wish to remain faithful to their heritage. So Burma: "The New Burma sees no conflict between religious values and economic progress. Spiritual health and material well-being are not enemies: they are natural allies." Or: "We can blend successfully the religious and spiritual values of our heritage with the benefits of modern technology." Or: "We Burmans have a sacred duty to conform both our dreams and our acts to our faith. This we shall ever do."

All the same, such countries invariably assume that they can model their economic development plans in accordance with modern economics, and they call upon modern economists from so-called advanced countries to advise them, to formulate the policies to be pursued, and to construct the grand design for development, the Five-Year Plan or whatever it may be called. No one seems to think that a Buddhist way of life would call for Buddhist economics, just as the modern materialist way of life has brought forth modern economics.

Economists themselves, like most specialists, normally suffer from a kind of metaphysical blindness, assuming that theirs is a science of absolute and invariable truths, without any presuppositions. Some go as far as to claim that economic laws are as free from "metaphysics" or "values" as the law of gravitation. We need not, however, get involved in arguments of methodology. Instead, let us take some fundamentals and see what they look like when viewed by a modern economist and a Buddhist economist.

The very start of Buddhist economic planning would be a planning for full employment, and the primary purpose of this would in fact be employment for everyone who needs an "outside" job: it would not be the maximisation of employment nor the maximisation of production. Women, on the whole, do not need an "outside" job, and the large-scale employment of women in offices or factories would be considered a sign of serious economic failure. In particular, to let mothers of young children work in factories while the children run wild would be as uneconomic in the eyes of a Buddhist economist as the employment of a skilled worker as a soldier in the eyes of a modern economist.

CONCLUSION:

Today's Buddhist monasteries come in many shapes and sizes. They may be identified with families, neighborhoods, villages, cities, or nations. They offer many of the same services and opportunities, both sacred and secular, that monasteries have offered historically. The Buddhist monastic complex of buildings, statues, open landscapes, and ritual spaces is a place where people gather in communal celebration with others, and it is often the social center of a community.

From the point of view of Buddhist economics, therefore, production from local resources for local needs is the most rational way of economic life, while dependence on imports from afar and the consequent need to produce for export to unknown and distant peoples is highly uneconomic and justifiable only in exceptional cases and on a small scale.

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