

Buddhist Perspective on Economical Preservation

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Introduction

It is evident from the Buddhist teaching that earning of the wealth should be righteous and the way of protecting what the person has earned. In the *Vyagghapajjasutta* of *Anguttaranikāya*¹, in related to the accomplishment of watchfulness, the Buddha mentions as follows;

*Here, a clansman sets up protection and guard over the wealth he has acquired by initiative and energy. Amassed by the strength of his arms, earned by sweat of his brow, righteous wealth righteous gained, thinking; 'How can I prevent kings and thieves from taking it, fire from burning it, floods from sweeping it off, and displeasing heirs from taking it? This is called accomplishment in protection*².

It is clearly pointed out in above quotation; the earned wealth with a great effort should be spent with well management and should be protected properly. Economical prosperous of a person means the prosperous of his family life. The prosperous should be continued. Well managed economic status of a family exactly supporting to the continuity of happy and prosperous family life. When a family experience poverty due to any condition the family unity and other factors, like love, sharing, caring, etc also will disappear beside. There is a parable among the people as follows;

When the poverty enters to a house from the front door, the love among the family members will run away from the back door.

¹ A. iv. 281-289

² Bhikkhu Bodhi, *The Numerical Discourses of the Buddha, A Translation of the Āṅguttara Nikāya*, (Boston: Wisdom Publication, 2012), p1194

There are many possibilities for vanishing the properties and wealth. In the *Sigālovādasutta*, the Buddha has mentioned six ways of wasting one's property.³ Therefore we could pay much attention to protect what have been earned. Concerning above issue the Buddha has given four instructions to balancing the economy.

1. Should be reproduced what has spent (*Naṭṭhaṃ gavessanti*)
2. What could be renovated should renovate on time (*Jiṇṇaṃ paṭisaṅkharoti*)
3. Should be well moderated in using (*Parimita pānabhojanā*). When well moderated in using it comes to be a happiness (*bhogasukha*)
4. An intellectual one, a righteous one, no matter male or female should be the in charge of family (*sīlavantaṃ itthiṃ vā purisaṃ vā ādhipacce ṭhapeti*)⁴ Ethical importance of the preservation of economy has proof within this.

Buddhism pays much attention to preserved life style. Sustainable lifestyle (*Samajīvakatā*)⁵ is the Buddhist way of living with right economic preservation. Understanding and controlling economy has seen as a need of modern society even by the modern scholars.⁶ The main issue in the modern society's economic crisis is unawareness of balancing the economy. People don't know how to spend their earning in accordance with their income.

³ D. iii. 183 'Which are the six ways of wasting one's substance that he does not follow? Addiction to strong drink and sloth producing drugs...haunting the street at unfitting times...attending in fairs...being addicted to gambling...keeping bad company...habitual idleness is one, Murish Walshe, the Long Discourses of the Buddha, (Kandy: BPS, 1996), 462

⁴ Yāni kānici bhikkhave kulāni bhogesu mahantataṃ pattāni ciratṭhitikāni bhavanti sabbāni tāni catūhi ṭhānehi, etesaṃ vā aññatarena. Katamehi catūhi? Naṭṭhaṃ gavesanti, jiṇṇaṃ paṭisaṅkharonti, parimitapānabhojanā honti, sīlavantaṃ itthiṃ vā purisaṃ vā ādhipacce ṭhapenti. Kulasutta A. ii. 249

⁵ Here, a clansman knows his income and expenditures and leads a balance life, neither too extravagant nor too frugal; 'In this way my income will exceed my expenditures rather than the reverse. Just as an appraiser or his apprentices, holding up a scale, knows: By so much it has dipped down, by so much it has gone up,' so a clansman knows his income and expenditures' Bhikkhu Bodhi, Op-chit, 1195

⁶ Lloyd Field, Business and the Buddha, DOING WELL by DOING GOOD, (Boston: Wisdom Publication, 2007), p. 110

Most of the time people seek the temporary happiness and spend their money more than their income. A careful use of the resources available was taught during the time of the Buddha. It is important not to exceed the expenditure over the income. The resources should be protected as if eating Wood apple. Although when plucking wood apple the small ones and the unripe once all fall down but only the best are selected for eating. The rest goes wasted. Waste usage of the properties in modern society seems like above. Those who earn little but spending time as they earn a lot compare to the one who eats wood apple. And those who earn a lot but don't even spend as enough to maintain their daily life are compared to the ones who pass away just like dogs and goats.⁷

The economy is not built in a short time. It takes long to build a stabilized economy. Gradual development of economy seems appreciated by the Buddha that based on moral values. The Buddha says; *the wise man trained and disciplined – shines out like a beacon-fire*

*He gathers wealth just as the bee – gathers honey, and it grows
Like an ant-hill higher yet – with wealth so gained the layman can
Devote it to his people's good.*⁸

Balancing economy is needed to maintain the balance of life. Buddha has given instruction as how one could practice in his own wealth. Wealth should be divided into four portions.⁹

*He should divide his wealth in four
One part he may enjoy at will
Two parts he should put to work
The fourth part he should set beside
As reserve in times of need*¹⁰

There are many reasons for the economy to fall down as mentioned above. The source of strength at a time of economic depletion will be the wealth saved for such situations. Therefore savings are important for emergency situations. If one is concerned about the economic stability,

⁷ Bhikkhu Bodhi, Op-chit, 1195

⁸ Maurice Walshe, Op-chit, 466

⁹ D.iii. 189

¹⁰ Maurice Walshe, Op-chit, 466

the development of a family and the development of a society are imminent. The advise given by the Buddha is not adhered to then the decline in the economy is cannot be stopped. There are eight reasons mentioned by The Buddha why a family's economy will fall down.¹¹

1. If the government takes over the property of that family
2. If they are robbed
3. If they are burnt in a fire
4. If they are destroyed by water or floods
5. If the savings cannot be withdrawn due to that financial institution facing problems
6. After investing on a project employing the wrong people to handle the job and thereby loosing the productivity
7. A member of the family who use the family s wealth in the wrong way and spend lavishly
8. Succumbing to uncertainty

When thinking of economic protection one must have an idea of disaster management. Knowing the repercussions of a natural disaster early may allow that person to adjust his earnings and savings accordingly. Therefore economics' protection means a careful investment and careful management of the invested and protects the balance between the two. This practice leads for the sustainable economic development.

The importance of careful management is mentioned in the *Pañca-satikakkhandhaka* of *Cullavagapāli*. Once King Udena got to know that through the people, Ven Ananda Thero received 500 upper garments from the general public as a donation. King Udena asked Ven. Ananda Thero what he is going to do with that and Ven. Ananda Thero replied: "He said from the Upper garments he would sew robes for the monks and will be distributed to those monks who has old robes and torn robes and will use the old robes of the monks to make bed sheets, and will use the old bed sheets will sew pillow cases and from the old pillow cases and from will make floor carpets to clean legs and the old carpets will be used to

¹¹ S. iv. 323-25

strengthen the clay used to build rooms for the monks. Impressed with the answer of Ven. Ananda Thero, King Udena offered him 500 more upper garments as he was sure that Ven. Ananda Thero was using them in the right direction.¹² It is evident from above that the using resource without wasting is the Buddhist practice of preservation properties.

The Buddhist teachings of earning and using the resources

Concerning the house life, it is essential to have sustained economic within a family to maintain family matters without a trouble. Therefore in Buddhism, production, distribution and the consuming were all combined in the economic teachings. Buddhism itself accepts the developed economy under the path of right livelihood (*sammā ājīva*). In the *Ṇasutta* of *Aṅguttaranikāya*¹³ mentions; the poverty is a suffering for those who spend life with sensuality. It is also evident in many other places in the Buddha's teachings that well balanced economy brings happiness to one who dwells in family life.¹⁴ There are four types of happiness that related to this very life as follows;¹⁵

1. The happiness of ownership
2. The happiness of enjoyment
3. The happiness of freedom from debt
4. The happiness of blamelessness

The poverty is a suffering to those who seek the happiness in this very life. Importance was given in the Buddhist teachings for the management of the economy in the lines of the modern day financial management. The present day Financial Management systems must have taken advise from these early teachings.

¹² Vin. i. 15-16

¹³ A. iii. 352

¹⁴ A. ii. 69-70

¹⁵ Cattārimāni gahapati sukhāni adhigamanīyāni gihinā kāmabhoginā kālena kālaṃ samayena samayaṃ upādāya. Katamāni cattāri? Atthisukhaṃ bhogasukhaṃ anaṇasukhaṃ anavajjasukhaṃ. Ibid

1. Production – to earn in the right way without hurting anyone
2. Consuming – achieving self-satisfaction
3. Distributing - distributing the wealth for the needy
4. Consumer calendar: To use what is received in a careful manner

According to the *Rāsiyasutta* of *Samyuttanikāya*¹⁶, a person who works on the economy should be appreciated and that person is intelligent and supported. In the teachings of the Buddha if a person earns without hurting anyone, there is no objection to it but will support that person. Without depending on an economy growth based on the past merits or the good things one has done in previous births, it is advised to prepare a proper plan to show the economy should be planned out for the future. Hard work is the main reason to earning. One has to master the work he does, should not be lazy and waste time, should look for more productive ways to improve what he does and look for a better productivity. The main reason for the wealth is to fulfill the daily needs in life and to have a comfortable way of life. To think that one has a wealth is self-satisfaction. Using that wealth and leading a better life is a great satisfaction.¹⁷ While earning a person becomes important and when consuming should concern about the society, too. Instead of remain with one person; the wealth should be caused to wander within the society.

The wealth that is not earned or the improving the wealth earned should be within a reasonable framework.¹⁸ According to the *Pattakamma Sutta*¹⁹, there are four ways of classifying the wealth. On the other hand these four

¹⁶ S. iv. 234

¹⁷ The one enjoying sensual pleasure who seeks wealth lawfully, without violence, and makes himself happy and pleasure, and shares it and does meritorious deeds, and who uses that wealth without being tied to it, uninfatuated with it, not blindly absorbed in it, seeing the danger in it, understanding the escape, he may be praised in four grounds, On what four grounds may he be praise? He seeks wealth lawfully, without violence...he makes himself happy and pleased...he shares it and does meritorious deeds...he uses that wealth without being tied to it, uninfatuated with it, not blindly absorbed in it, seeing the danger in it, understanding the escape. Bhikkhu Bodhi, Op-chit, 1356

¹⁸ A.iii. 22

¹⁹ A. ii. 66-69

classification mean how one could rejoice oneself with righteous earning while rejoicing others. Buddhist perspective of wealth does not just focus on individual happiness but the happiness of many. The four ways are as follows;²⁰

1. The welfare of yourself, parents, family, workers, friends
2. Facing the loss of wealth for social reasons or natural disaster
3. When a relative of neighbor passes away, help them with the expenses involved to attend the rituals
4. Provide comforts for the Brahmins or religious affairs

If the wealth is spent for these, it becomes an investment. Wealth is provided to the place it is needed most. It is called the justify usage of the wealth. The main purpose of the wealth is to satisfy the person who earns the wealth. Thereafter the comforts of the parents must be taken care of. The third is the family with children and their comforts and the workers who work for you. Their social values should not be forgotten. Thereafter the comforts of the friends should be look upon.

Wealth can be destroyed by any reason in a short time. Those who earn must remember that it takes only a few moments to lose wealth. Those who earn should be aware of this. It can be a natural disaster, fire or water or taken over by the government. It can be robbed. One who earns must have a relationship with the society apart from the family. One has to spend his wealth for a needy relation or a stranger that comes to your house. There should be arms given to bring merit to those members of the family who had passed away. The Buddha elaborated on how people should feel about their wealth and guided them toward gaining the proper advantages from

²⁰ Here, householder, with wealth acquired...makes himself happy and pleased and properly maintains himself in happiness...makes his parents happy and pleased.... makes his wife and children, his slaves, workers, and servants happy and pleased...

with wealth acquired...makes provisions against the losses that might arise from fire, floods, kings, thieves, or displeasing hires....

with wealth acquired...makes the five oblations: to relatives, guests, ancestors, the king, and the deities....

with wealth acquired...establishes an uplifting offering of alms, an offering that is heavenly, resulting in happiness...Bhikkhu Bodhi, *Op-chit*, 451

their wealth. He stressed that wealth is a clear source of happiness for laypersons. To achieve that happiness, however, they must earn wealth the right way and use it in the most effective way. Money or wealth is neither to keep nor to use solely for one's own sensory satisfaction; it is to make oneself and others happy and satisfied. While using wealth for oneself, one should be aware of the right measure of sensory satisfaction. Prosperity, according to the Buddha, is the reward when following these recommended guidelines.

Conclusion

Buddhist term 'samajīvikam' has extensive meaning which useful to apply even now a day. The life spending with balanced economy brings the happiness to the person in this very life. One who expects happiness in this very life should lead his/her life in accordance with income. Income and living expenses should be balanced. If one spends more than the income, probably there is an issue that leads life's misery. Neither expenses should excess the income nor should income excess the expenses. While having enough wealth, if one spends a misery life or while having no enough wealth if one spends an extra ordinary life or luxurious life both do not accept by Buddhism. Aim of preservation of economy in Buddhism means balancing life style without facing any troubles.

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