

The Value of Life in Myanmar Theravada Buddhist Thought

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Introduction

It is said that there are four main questions concerning life. They are:

1. What is life?
2. What is the cause or origin of life?
3. What is the meaning of life?
4. What is the value of life?

The first question mainly concerns with the characteristic of human life. The answer for this question is that which characteristic and quality are involved in human life. The second question chiefly regards with the cause or the origin of human life. Regarding this, there are some alternative questions such as 'How did life get here'? 'Why are we here'? 'How did life start'? etc.

The third question is very clear that it investigates the meaning of human life. The last question is also clear that it is searching for the value and purpose of human life. It is making assessment of the value and purpose of life in various philosophical systems. This paper mainly concerns with the last question.

Many ordinary men may think that the value and purpose of life lies in the concept of fame, status, power, wealth etc. However, most philosophers never regard fame, status, power, wealth as the true value and purpose of life. Instead, they advocates happiness, harmony, knowledge etc are the true value of life.

If we look at the history of Western philosophy, diversity of values and purposes of life can be seen. For example, some thinkers regarded the harmonious life as good and valuable. For some philosophical systems, happiness or pleasure is the only good and valuable. For some, God is the source of all goods. However, for some the only 'man' is the center of all values etc.

The first purpose of this paper is to show the diverse values and purposes of life in the ancient Greek philosophy. The second one is to focus on the idea of value of life instilled in Myanmar Theravada Buddhist culture. The research question is rather simple that 'Are there any idea of the value of life in Myanmar Society? If yes, what are they? In connection with this question, there is another question that 'Which kinds of goodness are instilled in Myanmar Theravada Buddhist culture?' The methods to be used in this paper are the Descriptive Method and the Evaluative Method. In the conclusion, by evaluating and making assessment on the ancient Greek value of life, it can be said that ancient Greek value of life are good ,and hence acceptable since they regarded the value of life as the concept of mental pleasure, reason ,harmony, knowledge, etc. Likewise, concerning the value of life, the ideas in

Myanmar culture based on Theravada Buddhist thought are acceptable since it has moral, spiritual and intellectual goodness.

The Concept of Good and its Relation to the Value of Life in the Ancient Greek Philosophy

Before I go directly to the ideas in the ancient Greek, it is necessary to explain first the relation between the concept of good and the concept of value of life. It can be said that if someone has a good life, then her or his life is valuable. In other words, if someone's life is good, then she or he has valuable life. That is why Socrates said that: '...a life which is always inquiring and trying to discover what is good is the best kind of life, the only life worth living'.¹

Actually, the concept of good and the concept of value are related to each other. Studying the concept of value without the concept of good is cooking without salt. That is why Gonsalave said in his Fagothey's Right and Reason that: 'There is no agreement on the definition of value than there is on the definition of good.'²

Thus, in order to be a good life, it is necessary to know what the good is. In the history of the Western philosophy, some thinkers regarded happiness or pleasure as good. Thus for them in order to be a good life, it is necessary to get happiness or pleasure.

Similarly, for some, a good life must be harmonious with its opposites. Some philosophers like Kant, hold that 'good will' is the key to the good life. However, for some religious thinkers, the source of the good life is God. The followings are the views concerning the concept of good and its relation to the value and purpose of life in the ancient Greek philosophy.

The good life as harmony

The Greek philosophy can be divided into two categories: Ionian or Cosmological tradition and Socratic or Humanistic tradition. Thinkers from the first tradition especially emphasized on nature and they were interested in reality of the external world. The second one mainly focused on man and his problems. However, it can be said that thinkers from both traditions were somehow interested in discussing the value and purpose of life.

Regarding the value of life, those who especially emphasized on nature had discussed in terms of natural principle. However, those who mainly focused on man and his problems, discussed within the context of knowledge, moral, ethics, reason etc. Nonetheless, in the early Greek philosophy, it can be seen that a good life must be happy and rational. Moreover, it must be harmonious.

Firstly, it can be seen the idea that a good life must be harmonious. Probably, Heraclitus was a pioneer of this view. He believed that good and evil are two notes in harmony. For him, all things are changing into their opposites. For example, ice, which is hard, changed into water which is soft. According to

him, the combination of opposites resulted in a whole in which there is harmony. For him, musical harmony results from combination of low and high notes. Therefore, in the universe harmony results from the combination of opposites good and evil.

Thus, the good life for man is that life lived in harmony with the universal reason, the law which pervades all things. Man should seek to understand this harmony in the universe and to fit into it so that his actions are in accord with the principle governing the whole universe.³

Similarly, stoics said that man's highest good lays in acting in harmony with the universe. Man for stoics, is part of the universe, with a definite function to perform for the complete development of the whole universe. Here stoics believed that reason is the ruling power of the universe. That is why, the good man for them is that: 'The good man is one lives so that fits into the scheme of nature, obeys its laws, and is determined in all he does by reason which is part of the universal reason.'⁴

Moreover, stoics affirmed that if we have a good life, we must have happiness in our life. The following is the concept of good and its relation to happiness.

Thus, man must know the laws of the universe. If he knows the good, knows his place in the scheme of things, knows what is expected of him by nature, he will be good. And the result of such living is happiness. Happiness is not to be sought after nor is it to be gained by itself. We do good, live a virtuous and happiness inevitably follows.⁵

In addition, concerning this, Democritus also discussed about the concept of harmony. Nevertheless, it can be seen in the early Greek Philosophy, a good life and its relation to harmony. In other words, harmonious life is regarded as good, and hence it is valuable.

Happiness as the good life

It is natural that man always wants happiness or pleasure. Thus, man usually seeks it as possible as he can. Many thinkers, throughout the history of Philosophy, took into account that happiness as the goal or purpose of life. These thinkers seem to think life without any happiness is not a good one. Actually, a good life should have a certain form of happiness. In life, if there is no any happiness or pleasure, there cannot be a good life. Consequently, the unhappy condition cannot lead a valuable life.

Some early Greek thinkers also accept the idea that a good life should have happiness. For them, the goal or purpose of life is happiness or pleasure. Such idea can especially be found in Democritus and the Epicureans. Even, Plato and Aristotle did not seem to deny this idea.

In the ancient Greek philosophy, Democritus holds happiness or pleasure as the goal or purpose of life. That is why Frost put in his *Basic Teachings of the Great Philosophers* that-

Democritus, the leading figure of the Greek Atomists, taught that the goal of life is happiness. At all times man should seek happiness. For him, happiness was an inner condition or state of tranquility, which depended upon harmony of the soul. He taught that one should not depend for happiness upon things of the world since these come and go and a lack of them causes unhappiness. Rather, happiness should be a state of the inner man, a balance of life, an attitude which combines reflection and reason.⁶

In addition, concerning this, the Epicureans in the early Greek, were regarded as the most outstanding thinkers: 'Epicurus taught that the goal of all human activity is pleasure, that happiness is the supreme good for all'.⁷

However, he reminded that there must be careful in choosing the happiness. For Epicurus, some immediate pleasures eventually result in pain and suffering. Moreover, he pointed out that mental pleasure is better than physical pleasure. For him, desire is not real pleasure, since he regarded the idea that freedom from the pain of desire is good. Frost writes:

For Epicurus, mental pleasures are better than physical pleasures, and it is wise to choose pleasures of the intellectual life...he pointed out, that we obtain pleasure by satisfying desires or by being free from desires. Therefore, we should seek to get rid of desires by satisfying them completely. This brings freedom from pain, the pain of desire, and is therefore good.⁸

Actually, the idea concerning happiness or pleasure of Epicurus is very great, since he emphasized on the points of mental pleasure. Moreover, he also focused on the points of pleasure of the intellectual life. His idea 'pleasure of the intellectual life' is, to great extent, acceptable, since it seems to depict a true picture of the happiness.

The good life as knowledge, reason and intellect

Socrates, Plato and Aristotle, the three famous classical philosophers also did not forget in discussing about the good and its relation to the value and purpose of life. However unlike the previous thinkers, these philosophers discussed about that in terms of knowledge, reason and intellect etc. Firstly, Socrates who said that 'Virtue is knowledge, knowledge is virtue' is interested in search for living a good life. According to Socrates, to be a good life or to be a virtuous life, someone must have the knowledge of what is good. 'For Socrates, being virtuous is a purely intellectual matter; it simply involves knowing what is good for human being.'⁹

Then, Socrates regarded knowledge as the highest good. That is why Frost said that:

It was Socrates' firm belief that there must be a basic principle of right and wrong, a measure which would apply far beyond the beliefs of any one individual. Thus, he asked time and again: What is the good? What is the highest good by which all else in the universe is measured? And his answer was that knowledge is the highest good.¹⁰

Secondly, Plato also discussed the goal or purpose of life in connection with his ontology.

For him, goodness is tied up with his theory of the nature of the universe. The world of sense, he taught, is unreal, fleeting, changing. This is evil. The real world of pure, unchanging ideas is the world of good. Man can know this real world only through his reason. Therefore, reason is the highest good for man. The end or goal of life is release of the soul from the body so that it can contemplate the true world of ideas.¹¹

In addition, Plato also accepts that a good life must have harmony between reason and feeling. Thus, Frost said that

Plato also taught, reason is only a part of man. He also has feelings, desires, and appetites. Therefore, a good life is one in which all these factors are realized in perfect harmony, in which reason rules and the feelings and desires obey. The goal of human life is a rational attitude toward the feelings and desires.¹²

Thirdly, Aristotle regarded that self-realization is the highest good for everyone's living. The following is a discussion concerning this by Frost.

What, he asked, is the highest good, the good for which all else is done? He reached an answer to this question by pointing out that the aim of everything in the universe is to realize itself to the fullest. Each thing is different from all others. It has certain talents, abilities. Thus, it is good when it has realized these talents and abilities to the fullest. Thus, self-realization is for, Aristotle the highest good, the goal of all else, that is done.¹³

Thus, it can be said that, for Aristotle the highest good of man is the complete realization of his reason. In addition, he introduced the way to obey for the good man. It is nothing, but **the golden mean**. For him the good man is one who lives a life in accord with this golden mean. That is, he does not go to the extremes in action but balances one extreme over against another.

According to Aristotle if someone has the highest good or the complete realization of his reason, then his life must be happy or pleasurable. That is why Frost said that:

Therefore, the highest good of man is the complete realization of his reason. This, Aristotle believed, brings happiness. Pleasure accompanies the full realization of man's reason; it is a natural result of such realization.¹⁴

The Concept of Value of Life in Myanmar Theravada Buddhist Culture.

Buddhism never interest in search for the origin of man. It always interest in search of the cause or origin of man's suffering. Although Buddhism does not interest in the origin of man, it rather emphasized on the value and purpose of life. Such idea can be found in so many Theravada Buddhist texts. The following are some stages to the value of life with special reference to the 'Doctrine of the Essence in Life' by Ashin Nānissara who is regarded as the famous Myanmar Theravada Buddhist scholars.

Stages to the value of life by Ashin Nānissara

Dana as the Essence of Wealth

Many people want to be wealthy persons because if we were rich, then we can fulfill the basic needs: food, clothing and shelter. Moreover, if they were wealthy persons then they can do whatever they like. This means, in order to achieve something which good or bad, wealth or richness can be used as a mean. Thus, richness or wealth is, to great extent, important in daily life, since it can fulfill mostly mans' needs. That is why some regarded the present wealth is the goal of life. For Ashin Nānissara such kind of idea is called worldly bliss or worldly *Nibbana*.

However, it should be analyzed whether the idea that wealth or richness is the true goal of life or not. Actually, wealth or richness cannot be a true goal of life because of its nature. The wealth or properties of one's own can lose at any time or at any point, since it is surrounded by various enemies. Here the enemy refers, for Myanmar Theravada Buddhist thought, to the five enemies: water, fire, rulers, thieves or dacoits and incorrigible children.

Thus, wealth or possessions cannot be regarded as the true value of life. However, man can obtain a certain form of value of life through the wealth or possessions. It is nothing but making the act of *Dāna* (giving or charity). One can make the meaningful activities by using or applying the wealth or possessions of his own. In other words, if he has wealth or possession, then he should make the benefit for the others such as donation or charity.

For Myanmar Theravada Buddhist thought, donation is regarded as a true essence or value of wealth or properties. Thus, in *Jatakaathakatha*, it can be seen these lines.

'Pancannam veranam sadharanabavena

Nissarassa imassa dhanasa danam nama saro' meaning 'the true essence of these essenceless, meaningless riches and possessions which are always closely interrelated with the five destructive elements is nothing but charity'.¹⁵

This may be true. Actually, wealth or properties usually can be gained through various striving or various suffering. For Ashin Nānissara, since it is always associated with various sufferings, it (wealth or properties) cannot be a true essence or value of life. Thus, for him, no one can grant that wealth or possession will be forever in the hand of someone. Hence, man should make the act of *Dāna* as far as he can, since *Dāna* is one of the basic moral goodness as well as a form of value in life.

Sila as the Essence of Living or Life

The second stage of moral goodness is *sila* or morality. Before the concept of *sila*, I would like to explain the idea that a healthy life is bliss. Some may think that the only healthy life is valuable. It is true that healthy life is good, because if one is healthy, then he can do what he likes. That is why, it can be seen in the *Dhammapada* that *Arogya parama laba*, meaning 'of all the gains in this world to be free for sickness is pre-eminent'.¹⁶ In other words, it is also regarded as the idea that healthy life is a supreme bliss.

However, it can be seen in *Jatakaathakatha* that the true essence of these essenceless, meaningless living or life which are always associated with various diseases is nothing but *Sila* or morality.

For Myanmar Theravada Buddhist thought the only healthy life is not enough to be a good and valuable life. Preserving *Sila* is necessary to be a good life. The word *Sila*, for Buddhism, means morality or discipline. It is also means precepts. For Myanmar Theravada Buddhist thought, living without *Sila* is worthless living. Concerning this, it can be seen the saying of Buddha in *Sankkasamanera Vatthu* in the *Dhammapada*.

*'Bhikkhus, if you rob or steal and commit all sorts of evil deeds, your life would be useless, even if you were to live a hundred years. Living a virtuous life even for a single day is much better than a hundred years of a life depravity.*¹⁷

Living without *sila* may lead to bad results. Ashin Nānissara express that five bad results in his 'Doctrine of the Essence in Life'. For Ashin Nānissara,

A person who is lucky enough to live to be more than a hundred years old but who had done many misdeeds is no longer lucky when he has to face the following unavoidable facts of life.

1. His name is always received with scorn and contempt
2. He is always forgetful and consequently his progress life is either retarded or ceases altogether.

3. When he has to face a crowd he is either downcast or afraid of the crowd
4. When close to death he is either confused or cried out for help.
5. After death can never be reborn a happy abode.¹⁸

That is why Ashin Nānissara concerning *Sila* concluded that 'the true value in life lies in the observation of good moral conduct.'¹⁹

Viriya as a Source of Value

In order to be a good and valuable one, it must necessary to have *Dana* and *Sila*. However, to be more effective, what the other new concept to add is *Viriya*. It is also a Pali word (ဝီရိယ, in Myanmar) meaning effort or energy, diligence, industry. It also means the spirit of the brave one. Here the concept of bravery means daring to the good and right things but not refers to bad and wrong thing.

So many Buddhist scholars never neglect the role of *Viriya* in life. Rather it is regarded as an essence of life. According to Ashin Nānissara, although a person has *Sila*, if he has no industry or diligence, then his or her morality cannot be in the higher stage. For him it is not easy to gain a higher stage with the morality of such a lazy man. Concerning this, Ashin Nānissara expressed that:

A person might be of very good moral character but he spends his time indulging in such useless activities as excessive drinking, eating and sleeping, his moral character can never be of top quality. To strengthen our moral character we must be diligent. So diligence, therefore, is one form of essence of life.²⁰

Therefore, in order to get a higher stage of life, it is necessary to cap *Viriya* on the concept of morality. The opposite of *Viriya* or industry is being lazy. There is no something special in the life of a lazy man who has no striving or *Viriya*. Such idea can be seen in *Lokaniti* that 'there is no skill in a lazy person. There is no property in an unskillful person. There is no wealth and pleasure in those who has no friend. There is no good deed in poor person. Finally there is no *Nibbana* in those who has no good deed.'

This clearly shows that there is nothing in the hand of such a lazy man. Thus, in order to be a better life it is necessary to have *Viriya*. In other words, the life of a lazy man is worthless. Such idea can also be seen in verse No-112 of the *Dhammapada* that 'Better than a hundred years in the life of a person who is idle and inactive, is a day in the life the one who makes a zealous and strenuous effort.'²¹

Samadhi as a Value of Life

I have presented *Dāna*, *Sila* and *Viriya* as the essences and values of life in the Theravada Buddhist culture. Actually, *Dana* and *Sila* are mainly regarded with moral goodness and *Viriya* with spiritual goodness. To be a better life it is necessary to add the next concept called *Samadhi*. The term *Samadhi*

is a Pali word meaning fixity of mind or one pointedness of mind on a single object. It is also known simply concentration. It is mainly concerned with mental or spiritual goodness.

It is true that no one can reach the summit in his or her works without concentration. According to Ashin Nanissara, if we go to the journey of life without concentration, it is sailing a ship without steering or helm. If man strives to gain something without concentration, then he cannot reach the summit in his works. This means man should put concentration in his striving. Regarding this, Ashin Nānissara's idea is that:

A person may delight in parting with his possessions may have diligence and go along with his strict observation of moral code. However, if his mind is always wandering and uncollected he would be like a ship without its rudders or whose rudders have been broken and the ship has been sent out to sea, regardless.²²

For Myanmar Theravada Buddhist thought, living without *Samādhi* is also worthless. Thus it can also be seen in verse No-111 of the *Dhammapada* that:

Better than a hundred years in the life of ignorant person, who has no control over his senses, is a day in the life of a wise man who cultivates tranquility and Insight Development Practice.²³

Pannā as the Highest Value of Life

Panna is, in the Theravada Buddhist Culture, regarded as the highest of all values. The term *Panna* is Pali word meaning knowledge, wisdom; insight, reasoning power, understanding, etc. However, concerning the value of life, two kinds of *Panna* can be seen in the *Dhammapada*. The first is *Duppanna* in Pali meaning analytical wisdom and the second one in *Udayabaya Panna* meaning insight wisdom.

The first kind of wisdom or *Panna* can be seen in the verse no 111 of the *Dhammapada* and the second in 113.

Analytical wisdom, for Buddhism, is knowing and understanding what the concept of *Nāma* and *Rupa* or the five aggregates are. In other words, it can distinguish the mind and the body. However, such kind of *Pannā* or wisdom can be gained through *Vipassanā* practice. Thus for Ashin Nānissara 'What we mean by analytical wisdom is deep insight into the realm of *Vipassana* Meditation'.²⁴

The insight wisdom or *Udayabaya Nana* is realizing the true nature of *Nāma* and *Rupa*. It also means understanding or knowing the true nature of impermanence of mind and body.

Insight wisdom can enlighten you about your misconceived notion that your body is your own. In reality, you have no way to control your body which is only the conciliation of *nāma* or the mind and *rupa*, the corporeal insight into the true nature

of the body will enable you to abandon your wrong ideas about it. Insight wisdom will also dispel two other ideas and they are the extreme notions we have about the end of life.

One idea says that is nothing after death and encourage one to do whatever one likes wholesome or unwholesome. This idea is known as *Ucchedaditthi* in Pali.

The second misconception is the opposite of *Ucchedaditthi* and claims that your 'soul' is permanent and retains the same ideality in subsequent incarnations. This idea is known as *Sassata daditthi*...²⁵

Moreover, in Buddhism there is a concept called *Bhāvanā* in Pali which means Meditation, contemplation, mental training, mental development. The term *Bhāvanā* is always associated with *Pannā* or wisdom. Thus, some scholars regarded *Bhāvanā* as insight knowledge. Actually, if someone practices the *Vipassanā Bhāvanā* or *Vipassanā* meditation successfully, then he or she will gain the insight knowledge or *Pannā*.

According to Myanmar Theravada Buddhist thought, man is nothing but the aggregates of the five *khandha*. In addition, these *khandha* is actually essenceless in character. For Myanmar Theravada Buddhist thought, to be a good and valuable life, it is necessary to practice *Bhavanā*. That is why, it can be seen in *Jatakaathakatha* that

*'Aniccadisabavehi Abhinapatipilanatta,
'Nissarassa imassa Kayassa, Bhavanan nama saro'* ²⁶

The meaning is that there is no substance or essence in the human body which is always harassed and threatened by its organic nature of impermanence. Thus, the only essence in such useless body is nothing but *Pannā* or insight wisdom or *Bhavanā*.

To summarize the above stages, there are the three main activities. They are *Dāna*, *Sila* and *Bhāvanā*. In other words, all moral and spiritual values are included in these three concepts. So, to sum up, to be a good and valuable life, it must have these three activities, because for Myanmar Theravada Buddhist thought, *Dāna*, *Sila* and *Bhāvanā* are commonly regarded as the true value of life in character.

Seven Properties of the Good Person as the Value of Life

It is already known that Myanmar Theravada Buddhist Thought never interest in search for origin of human life and the end of human life as well. Rather it especially focuses on suffering of present human life, the cause of such suffering, the caseation of such sufferings and the way to get caseation of suffering. Since people in Myanmar Theravada Buddhist culture accept the idea that life is full of suffering, they always try to get the real freedom or happiness through the ways to the caseation of

suffering. Consequently, a person who is trying to get the real freedom and happiness through such the particular ways can be called a good person and his or her life is valuable.

Concerning the value of life in Myanmar Theravada Buddhist thought, one of the important ideas is seven properties of the good person. If a person gets such kind of seven qualities of virtuous, then she or he is regarded as a good person. And her or his life is definitely valuable since the concept of good and the concept of value is related to each other. That is why the seven properties of a good person is a criteria that can judge whether a person is good or not and his or her life is valuable or not as well.

Seven properties of the good person are-

1. *Saddhā* (confidence)
2. *Sīla* (morality)
3. *Suta* (knowledge)
4. *Cāga* (generosity)
5. *Pāṇṇa* (wisdom)
6. *Hiri* (shame of sinning or moral shame),
7. *Ottapa* (fear of sinning or moral dread). To sum up, Myanmar Theravada Buddhist value of life lies on the concepts of *Sīla*, *Samārdhi* and *Pāṇṇa*

Among these seven factors some concept are already explained in the previous portion, as stages to the value of life by Ashin Nānissara. More specifically, no. 2. *Sīla* is explained in the previous portion, *Sīla* as the Essence of Living or Life and no. 5 *Pāṇṇā*, as the Highest Value of Life. No 4 *Cāga* is very synonymous with *Dana* which is expressed as the Essence of Wealth. No. 3 *Suta* is also included in *Pāṇṇā*. So, in this place the first one *Saddhā* (confidence) and the last two of *Hiri* (shame of sinning or moral shame) and *Ottapa* (fear of sinning or moral dread) will be explained.

The concept of Saddhā

The Pali term *Saddhā* means faith or confidence. It is not blind faith. It is a kind of reasoned and rooted in understanding. In other words, the word *saddhā* simply means confidence based on knowledge. That is why Nyanatiloka defined *Saddhā* in his Buddhist Dictionary that:

"Faith, Confidence. A Buddhist is said to have faith if "he believes in the Perfect one's (the Buddhas') Enlightenment" or in the three jewels, by taking his refuge to them. His faith, however, should be "reasoned and rooted in understanding"..."²⁷

In other words, *Saddhā* is also called confidence balanced with wisdom and understanding. And it is a firm conviction based on reason and experience. That is the reason why Nyanatiloka added that:

The 'Faculty of Faith' should be balanced with that of wisdom. It is said 'a monk who has understanding, establishes his faith in accordance with that understanding'.

Through wisdom and understanding, faith becomes an inner certainty and firm conviction based on one's own experience.²⁸

Saddhā is sometimes called the seed of all wholesome state because it is the first and foremost thing to overcome the difficulties that someone faces with.

The Concept of Hiri

The Pali term *Hiri* means 'Being Ashamed of immorality; moral shame'. It also means modesty which connotes hesitation in doing evil acts through shame of being known to do them.

The Concept of Ottapa

The Pali term *Ottapa* means 'Fear of doing evil; moral dread'. It also means discretion which connotes hesitation in doing evil deeds through fear of self-accusation, of accusation by others, or of punishment in spheres of misery.

Actually, the words *Hiri* and *Ottapa* are usually used together. They are the two combination words or a twin principles of the guardian of the world since it is regarded as *Hiri* and *Ottapa* protect the world. That is why Nyanatiloka writes as follows.

'Moral Shame and Moral Dread' are associated with all karmically wholesome. To be ashamed of what one ought to be ashamed, to be ashamed of performing evil and unwholesome things: this is called moral shame. To be in dread of what one ought to be in dread, to be in dread of performing evil and unwholesome things; this is called moral dread. "Two lucid things, O monks, protect the world: moral shame and moral dread. If these two things were not protect the world, then one would respect neither one's mother, nor one's mother's sister, nor one's brother's wife nor one's teacher's wife".²⁹

In Myanmar Theravada Buddhist culture, the concept of *Hiri* and *Ottapa* take the prime role. It is one of the most important concepts among the people. Most of Myanmar people regard having *Hiri-ottapa* is more important than their living since a Myanmar saying goes that "Man makes himself not by living but by sense of shame".

Actually, *Hiri – Ottapa* is essential for every society. It is a moral virtue for man as well. If there is no such moral virtue of *Hiri – Ottapa* a society would lead to moral, spiritual and intellectual disorder in chaos. That is the reason why *Hiri – Ottapa* is regarded as '*Lokapala Dhamma*' meaning the guardian of the world.

Therefore, according to Myanmar Theravada Buddhist thought, the above mentioned seven things, *Saddhā* (confidence), *Sila* (morality), *Suta* (knowledge), *Cāga* (generosity), *Pāṇṇa* (wisdom), *Hiri* (shame of sinning or moral shame), *Ottapa* (fear of sinning or moral dread) are called 'properties of the

virtuous person'. If someone gains these seven qualities she or he is a good person or a virtuous person and consequently her or his life is valuable.

Conclusion

The concept of values of life in the ancient Greek philosophy is expressed briefly. We have also known the relation between the concept of good and value of life. And to summarize the value of life in the ancient Greek philosophy, at least three categories can be seen. They are:

1. Harmony as good and its relation to valuable life
2. Happiness or pleasure as good and its relation to valuable life.
3. Knowledge, reason, wisdom as good and its relation to the value of life.

By making careful analysis the above mentioned categories, it can be said that the ancient Greek value of life are good, and hence they are acceptable since it has to certain extent moral, spiritual and intellectual goodness.

Similarly, such kinds of moral, spiritual and intellectual goodness can be seen in Myanmar Theravada Buddhist culture. If we look at the stages to the value of life by Ashin Nānissara , it is clear that the concept of *Dāna* and *Sila* are definitely moral goodness. The concept of *Viriya* and *Samādhi* may be called spiritual goodness. *Panna* is surely intellectual.

Likewise, if we make careful analysis on the seven properties of good person, such kinds of goodness will be seen again. For example, The concept of *Sila*, *Caga*, *Hiri* and *ottapa* are definitely moral virtuous. *Saddha* may be concerned Spiritual goodness and *Pannāis*, as already expressed, intellectual. In the seven properties of the virtuous person, therefore, moral, spiritual and intellectual goodness are involved.

One thing to be considered is that Myanmar Theravada Buddhist thought firmly held the concept of *Nibbana* (cessation of suffering) is the supreme bliss. The way to get the supreme bliss, *Nibbana* has eight things. To summarize those eight things, three things can be deduced such as *Sila*, *Samadhi* and *Pannā*. Therefore, *Sila*, *Samadhi* and *Pannā* regarded as the most virtuous.

However, in our daily life of Myanmar Theravada Buddhist Culture, alternative virtuous also exist called *Dana*, *Sila* and *Bhavanā*. It is operational practices in daily life of Myanmar Theravada Buddhist culture.

The other important thing to be considered is the roots of good in Myanmar Theravada Buddhist thought. The roots of good are three. They are *Alobha*, *Adosa* and *Amoha*. *Aloba* is opposed to *Lobha*(greed) . This is a positive virtue involving active altruism like *Dana* (charity). *Adosa* is opposed to *Dosa*(anger,hated). It is synonymous with *Metta*, loving Kindness. *Amoha* is opposed to

Moha(ignorance). It is concerned with knowledge and wisdom. *Alobha* is the cause of generosity, *Adosa* of morality and *Amoha* of Meditation. Here the important concept to be considered is nothing but *Metta* meaning loving kindness, good will, benevolence.

In conclusion, the ideas of value of life instilled in Myanmar Theravada Buddhist culture are *Dana*, *silā* and *Bhavana* which are based on the concept of *Metta*. In alternative way, it is *Silā*, *Samadhi* and *Panna* based on the concept of *Metta*. To sum up, it can be concluded that moral, spiritual and intellectual goodness are involved in the concept of value of life in the Myanmar Theravada Buddhist thought.

Notes

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