

Exposition on Hiri and Ottappa's Advantages

Ven. Suman Raja Bajracharya*

Suan Sunandha Rajabhat University, Bangkok, Thailand

Received: 12/07/2021

Revised: 05/08/2021

Accepted: 15/09/2021

Corresponding Author Email: Email: sumanjyoti@hotmail.com*

Cite: Bajracharya, S. R. (2021). Exposition on Hiri and Ottappa's Advantages. *Journal of Dhamma for Life*, 27(3), 17-23.

Abstract

The article has an objective to present the exposition on Hiri and Ottappa's advantages. The study found Hiri and Ottappa are a set of related Buddhist teachings that emphasize moral dread, fear of the consequences of wrongdoing and Hiri, an innate sense of shame over moral transgression. Because we are aware that unhealthy mental states are blemishes on our character, the feeling of shame motivates us to overcome them. Hiri and Ottappa are seen as having good, moral, and knowledgeable motivations.

Keyword: Exposition; Hiri; Ottappa

1. Introduction

The Buddhist faith did not spread beyond the boundaries of the region. The main purpose of expansion of the community gradually involved different interpretation the teaching of the Buddha. The interpretation of the word of the Buddha led to the formation of the different sects and school (Department of Religion Affairs, 1995: 44). Since King Asoka provided to send nine different places for the missionary of Buddhism, Buddhism spread around the world. Before that, Buddhism had adapted to stand around India. In the 6th century BC, India witness the origin and grown of Buddhism with subsequently begun one of the greatest international religion. India was divided into sixteen political divisions are technically known as "Solasa Mahajanapada" in the Buddhist literature

(Department of Religion Affairs, 1994a: 213). The people gradually lost their faiths in the efficient vedic ritual. The goal of human life is to attain permanent happiness and the mind of people is naturally directive to think eternal. In the Buddhist and others texts, there are non-Buddhist teachers below are given the names of these six teachers and doctrinal views they had.

1. Exposition of the Advantage of Being Applied to Moral

The teaching of the Buddha is a doctrine of liberation that provides us with the tools for cutting through the fetters that keep us bound to this world of suffering, the round of repeated births. Although the quest for liberation by practice of the Dhamma depends on individual effort, this quest necessarily takes place within a social environment and is thus subject to all the influences, helpful or harmful, impose upon as by that environment. The Buddhist training unfolds in the three stages of morality, concentration and wisdom, each the foundation for the other: purified moral conduct facilitates the attainment of purified concentration, and the concentrated mind facilitates the attainment of liberation wisdom.

The basis of the entire Buddhist training is thus purified conduct, and firm adherence to the code of training rules one has undertaken- the five precepts in the case of a lay Buddhist- is the necessary means for safeguarding the purity of one's conduct. Living as we do in an era when we are provoked through every available channel to deviate from the norms of rectitude, and when social unrest, economic hardships, and political conflict further fuel volatile emotions, the need for extra protection becomes especially imperative: protection for oneself, protection for the world. The Buddha points to two mental qualities as the underlying safeguards of morality, thus as the protectors of both the individual and society as a whole. These two qualities are called in Pali hiri and ottappa.

Hiri is an innate sense of shame over moral transgression; ottappa is moral dread, fear of the results of wrong doing. The Buddha calls these two states the bright guardians

of the world (Sukkalokapala). He gives them this designation because as long as these two states prevail in people's hearts the moral standards of the world remain intact, while when their influence wanes the human world falls into unabashed promiscuity and violence, becoming almost indistinguishable from the animal realm (Department of Religious Affairs, 1994b: 41). While moral shame and fear of wrongdoing are united in the common task of protecting the mind from moral defilement, they differ in their individual characteristics and modes of operation.

Moral degradation, the sense of shame, has an internal reference: it is rooted in self-respect and induces us to shrink from wrong doing out of a feeling of personal honor. Moral dread, fear of wrong doing, has an external orientation. It is the voice of conscience that warns us of the dire consequences of moral transgression: blame and punishment by others, the painful kammic results of evil deeds, the impediments to our desire for liberation from suffering. Acariya Buddhaghosa illustrates the difference between the two with the simile of an iron smeared with excrement at one end and heated to a glow at the other end: moral degradation is like one's disgust at grabbing the rod in the place where it is smeared with excrement, moral dread is like one's fear of grabbing it in the place where it is red hot.

In the present day world, with its secularization of all values, such notions as shame and fear of wrong are bound to appear antiquated, relics from a puritanical past when superstition and dogma manacled our rights to uninhibited self-expression. Yet the Buddha's stress on the importance of moral degradation and dread was based on a deep insight into the different potentialities of human nature. He saw that the path to deliverance is a struggle against the current, and that if we are to unfold the mind's capacities for wisdom, purity and peace, then we need to keep the powder keg of the defilements under the watchful eyes of diligent sentinels.

2. The liberation

The project of self-cultivation, which the Buddha proclaims as the means to liberation from suffering, requires that we keep a critical watch of the movements of our minds, both on occasions when they motivate bodily and verbal deeds and when they remain inwardly absorbed with their own preoccupations. To exercise such scrutiny is an aspect of heedfulness (*appamada*) (Department of Religious Affairs, 1994c: 153-156), with the Buddha states is the path to the deathless. In the practice of self-examination, the sense of shame and fear of wrongdoing plays a crucial role. The sense of shame spurs us to overcome unwholesome mental states because we recognize that such states are blemishes on our character. They detract from the inward loftiness of character to be fashioned by the practice of Dhamma, the stature of the *ariyans* of noble ones, who shine resplendent like lotus flowers upon the lake of the world. Fear of wrongdoing bids us to retreat from morally risky thoughts and actions because we recognize that such deeds are seeds with the potency to yield fruits, fruits that inevitably will be bitter. The Buddha asserts that whatever evil arises springs from a lake of shame and fear of wrong, while all virtuous deeds spring from the sense of shame and fear of wrong.

By cultivating within ourselves the qualities of moral shame and fear of wrongdoing we not only accelerate our own progress along the path to deliverance, but also contribute our shame toward the protection of the world. Given the intricate interconnections that hold between all living forms, to make the sense of shame and fear of wrong the guardians of our own minds is to make ourselves guardians of the world. As the roots of morality, these two qualities sustain the entire efficacy of the Buddha's liberating path; as the safeguards of personal decency, they at the same time preserve the dignity of the human race.

3. Hiri-Ottappa

The Buddhist word for conscience is *hiri-ottappa* (Pali) or *hiriapatrapya* (Sanskrit). *Hiri* and *apatrapya* are considered healthy, wholesome, and skillful motivations. The absence of them is said to be the chief attribute of the *icchantika*; those who have severed

their wholesome roots. The Buddha referred to hiri-ottappa as the bright guardians of the world, the sukka lokapala. Neither hiri nor apatrapya is readily translatable into English. There are no cognates that would carry the same meaning. In other word, any English synonyms are derived from different roots, used with a different idem. To be clear, hiri translates as conscience, hiri is a warm, sincere, heart-felt, and healthy motive. It is not the same as dosa, hatred or kukkucca which are unwholesome mental state. As such, it is also not the same as the hung up western style self-loathing known as “guilt-tripping”. This is much like the distinction between authentic karuna, compassion and the scornful or self-righteous sense of the word pity.

While all of this might be useful to consider before one makes any more unskillful decisions in the future, the Buddha also discusses what to do about unskillful things that one might have done in the past. Unfortunately, one is unable to undo past unskillful actions, but fortunately, there are ways in which to lessen the inevitable harmful results can be hard to understand. One that reaches far beyond this present life, that same complexity allows for the possibility of limiting the consequence of past unskillful actions. The first step is to at least observe the five precepts, which are to;

- (1) Refrain from harming living beings,
- (2) Refrain from taking what is not given,
- (3) Refrain from committing sexual misconduct,
- (4) Refrain from telling falsehoods, and
- (5) Refrain from taking drugs and alcohol that lead to carelessness.

This help to prevent further damage from being done, and to contract the foundation for the rest of one’s practice. The next steps are to abandon wrong view and develop expensive mind states of goodwill, compassion, appreciation and equanimity (Department of Religious Affairs, 1994d: 43). The development of good-will, compassion, appreciation and equanimity is so powerful that it can take us from being restricted, small-hearted and dwelling in suffering to being unrestricted, largehearted and dwelling with

immeasurable concentration –a state of mind that is only possible with the absences of hostility and ill will. The Buddha also described four assurances that can be experienced in the present by those people who, filled with doubt, cultivate and develop such purified states of mind. If there is a world after death, if there are results of skillful and unskillful actions that are done. Then one can be assured that they will reappear in a good destination after death. If there is no world after death, if there are no results of skillful and unskillful actions, then here in the present one can be assured that they will live safely, free from hatred and malice. If evil results befall one who commits evil action, then one who does not entertain evil thoughts towards another can be assured that they will not experience ill action, then one can be assured that they are safe in any case (Morris and Hardy, 1932: 65).

Ultimately, those emotional feelings of shame or guilt that are associated with the results of our skillful action can be looked upon as catalysts to overcoming the results of our unskillful actions if they are seen with the proper insight. When we become remorseful by realizing that what we have done was not right, perhaps become we are told by a wise person that such actions are blameworthy; we will also realize that what we have done cannot be undone. These feeling, if they are not properly understood, have the potential to become debilitating. However, when due to those feelings we abandon the taking of life, taking what is not given, committing sexual misconduct, telling falsehoods, and taking drugs and alcohol now and in the future, we can be said to have abandoned those evil deeds, those unskillful actions, to have overcome them. Even more so, when we abandon those unskillful actions now and in the future, as well as cultivate, develop and then pervade all four-directions with good will, consequences of our past unskillful actions will count for next to nothing. In this way, the advantages of applying moral degradation and dread are well explained with the teaching of the Buddha. The most important thing is to be free from the suffering of the past actions.

4. References

Department of Religious Affairs. (1994a). Abhidhammatthasaṅgaha Pāḷi, Chatṭhasaṅgāyanā-version. Yangon, Myanmar.

Department of Religious Affairs. (1994b). Majjhima Nikāya Pāḷi, Chatṭhasaṅgāyanā-version. Yangon, Myanmar.

Department of Religious Affairs. (1994c). Dhammapada Pāḷi, Chatṭhasaṅgāyanā-version. Yangon, Myanmar.

Department of Religious Affairs. (1994d). Sanyutta Nikāya Pāḷi, Chatṭhasaṅgāyanā-version. Yangon, Myanmar.

Department of Religious Affairs. (1959). Suttanipāṭa and its Aṭṭhakathā, Ed by the Sixth Buddhist Council, Yangon, Myanmar.

Morris and E. Hardy, ed. (1900). Aṅguttaranikāya, 5 Vols., London, PTS, 1885-1900; tr. F. L. Woodward and E. M. Hare, The Book of the Gradual Sayings, 5 Vols., PTS, London, 1932- 1936.