

# The Utility of Buddhism for Better Secular & Spiritual Life

**Gamage Kasun Chamara**

Bachelor of Arts Special (Special in Buddhist Studies) and Follow a Master of Philosophy Degree in Buddhist Studies  
University of Peradeniya, Peradeniya, Sri Lanka

**Abstract:** *We all know that Buddhism is a great religion that heals the mind. It is essential to look at Buddhism with a positive outlook. It can be applied to the well-being of spiritual life as well as to the success of worldly life. It is important to achieve personal development through a new range of thinking in a philosophy based on the mind, and the Buddha has emphasized that the value of the religion should be known as a goldsmith examining the nature of gold in a stone. Since Buddhism is a universal religion that emphasizes world religion, any human problem that the world faces spiritually can be solved through careful and good research. As soon as a religion exists, it is the responsibility of the researcher to extract the intangible knowledge necessary for solving problems as it is evident. (Pachchattamvedithabovinnuhiti) This problem is also the same. A complete positive spirituality is the foundation (Base Point) for a good life in the two worlds. The person is guided by the mind to fulfill human needs. The basic energy of encouragement needed to reach spiritual and secular goals, that is called as motivational energy, as well as the qualities and skills necessary for life success, should be mentally aroused. It is also something that needs to be practiced systematically. This is a brief explanation of the guidance we can get from Buddhism for that.*

**Keywords:** Motivation, Secular Buddhism, Spiritual Life, Success

## I. INTRODUCTION

### Better life's development progress from Buddhism (Personal Life)

The story of the Kosala king in the Dhammapada is considered a beautiful Dharma verse as follows,

"Arogya paramalabha - santutti paramam dhanam  
Vissasaparamanati - Nibbanam paramamsukham"

"Health is the greatest gain - contentment is the greatest wealth - wisdom is the greatest destination - Nibbana is the greatest happiness"

All of us would like to have a beautiful life with full of happiness. As above mentioned, health is called the greatest gain. What is needed to better health of the body and mind, A concentrated mind is needed, as well as better action and speech, are important for the health of the body and mind, and for living happily. It is important to study mental skills that affect mental well-being as well as the goal of success.

"Manōpubbanga ma dhammā - manosettāmanomayā  
Manasā chepasannāna - bhāsativākarotivā..."<sup>1</sup>

Let us identify how the motivational concepts that direct individual life to a developed aspect are also included in Buddhism through a psychological background.

Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs This can be identified even according to Abraham Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs.

- The need for self-realization
- The need for self-esteem
- The need for love
- The need for security
- The need for knowledge

<sup>1</sup>KhuddhakāNikāyaI. (BJT, 1956), 26.

Buddhism emphasizes the importance of basic needs here by appreciating simple living. The Sigalovada (Sigalaka Sutta)<sup>1</sup> has emphasized the importance of this need by giving instructions for duties, responsibilities and social progress. Also, we all want recognition (social recognition) to better and active life progress. Furthermore, the development of such attitudes and skills is important for a strong foundation of active social progress. According to that sutta, the factors that cause personal prejudice, such as lateness and laziness should remove and should develop good attitudes and skills such as loving kindness and awareness of different kind of peoples in society. In the Sigalovada Sutta, different kinds of psychological aspects can be identified through "Sadisa Namaskara" (Representative social units from six directions) and other teachings. The proper fulfillment of the social duties and responsibilities system helps maintain the better functioning of society, from the primary family sector to the institutional sector. Let's take a good example by that context, Parents are the basic role models for their children, and it is important for them to engage their children in good deeds from a younger age. Also, the teacher introducing his students to friends is a good recognition received by the student.

In that context, living a Balanced life (Budget and expenses equally), Six behaviors that lead to the downfall of a person (Associating with bad friends, addictions, laziness), the four causes of evil action not suitable for life with wealth. Some see Buddhism as an all-pessimistic religion. That all-pessimistic view exists only in individual thinking. R essential in the basic spiritual research method of Buddhism. (Samma ditthi) It is the basic factor necessary for the survival of worldly life. A person without right view misunderstands the world. Even if one gets immediate progress through unrighteousness, that progress is not temporary or a progress that brings ultimate happiness. (Samma ajiva) Right thoughts with non-violence, non-attachment, and non-violence, which are necessary for the noble eightfold path, are the basic essence of ethics. With constant thoughts, a good person achieves progress naturally and easily. Today, good work with good attention to work (Samma kammanta) is always important for the success of life. The person who goes to success in it should be the person who goes from darkness to light, from light to light. (Tamo jyotiparayana, jyothijyotiparayana)

### **Economic and Social Life Philosophy**

In Buddhism, the emphasis on work and effort is as follows:

- To achieve progress that has not yet been attained
- To maintain and protect the progress already achieved
- To avoid mistakes
- To cultivate and enhance the good that has been accomplished

Those teachings very close to four right efforts (Sammappadhana) in Eightfold path.<sup>1</sup>

Strong determination and kindness are essential virtues for making progress in life, fulfilling duties, and engaging in social responsibilities effectively. Such qualities should be cultivated gradually through consistent practice, as practice is a key tool for developing the necessary mindset. To navigate the ups and downs of life, it is important to live with equanimity. The life of a Bodhisattva serves as a great example of this. Those who have cultivated these virtues provide sincere service to society without wavering.

The Buddhism emphasizes the importance of work for personal advancement (Shramabhimana, Samma Vayama). Additionally, in the spiritual context, a person who is spiritually stagnant is compared to a dead body (Pamadomacchunopadam).

Also, the Buddhism offers a unique philosophy and an unparalleled way of life. Failing to achieve worldly progress while striving for a transcendental state is also considered a shortcoming. In Buddhism, there are mentioned about reasons and development methods for both a person's development and decline. The Mangala Sutta, Parabhava Sutta, Vasala Sutta, Vyagghapajja Sutta\*, and Sigalovada Sutta specifically address aspects of personal life.

<sup>1</sup>Dīgha Nikāya III (BJT, 1956), 288.

<sup>1</sup>Samyutta Nikāya V. (BJT, 1956), 270.

\* See more info at Sutta pitaka Khuddhakā Nikāya and Aṅguttara Nikāya

According to the Parabhava Sutta, if a person is constantly addicted to sleep, spends his days talking, lacks strength, lazy and is often angry, he is degraded.

He is degraded when he looks down on others because of race, wealth, tribe, or pride, and when he wastes the wealth, he gets by getting involved in women and gambling. It is also unfit to be the head of the household of someone who spends his wealth unnecessarily.

Furthermore, the four gates of destruction of wealth mentioned in the Vyagghapajja Sutta are: addictions, infatuation with gambling, and association with sinful friends like that.

Additionally, we can identify, three factors are pointed out that cause the business of a merchant in the Anguttara sect to fail in economic development.

- A merchant thinking about his business in the morning
- A merchant not thinking about his business in the afternoon
- A merchant not thinking about his business in the evening<sup>1</sup>

There are three things that start to deteriorate if one is engaged in any other activity or occupation.

In the Singalovada Sutta, people who give up industrial activities, saying that it is very stable, that it is very hot, and that it is now very evening, are mentioned as an industrial establishment. All these things will lead to one being careless about the work that is to be done.

There are three things that reasoning to deteriorate if one is engaged occupation or any other activity.

In the Singalovada Sutta, it is mentioned that people who abandon industrial activities, citing reasons such as it being too stable, too hot, or too late in the evening, are described as deactivated persons. All these behaviors lead to negligence in completing the necessary work.

Regarding the factors that contribute to a person's development, the Mangala Sutta highlights the importance of associating with scholars, avoiding the company of the unwise, living in a suitable environment, maintaining a clear mind, refraining from sinful acts, practicing mindfulness, patience, and cleanliness, among other virtues. Right effort (Samma vayama) plays a crucial role, as the success or failure of one's job or life situation depends on it.

In the Anguttara Nikaya, (ArambhaVatthu) outlines how a person should spend their labor:

Thinking about the work ahead and addressing tasks that need immediate attention.

- Identifying and addressing tasks missed during work hours.
- Completing necessary tasks while traveling.
- Reviewing and finishing missed tasks upon returning from a trip.
- Working energetically even when food intake has been insufficient.
- Utilizing energy to work before becoming weak after eating.
- Completing essential tasks when slightly unwell, before the illness worsens.
- Paying attention to missed tasks and addressing them upon recovery from illness.<sup>1</sup>

It is important to focus on the present moment. Buddhism emphasizes that one should avoid regretting the past and refrain from unnecessary daydreaming about the future. Time should be managed properly; if we spend our time daydreaming without taking action, it becomes meaningless. It is said that daydreaming aimlessly, both day and night, without focusing on meaningful goals, it's like an anthill being set on fire.

According to Buddhism, striving to achieve goals with good intentions is not wrong. However, if we become attached to desires, dwell on them, and experience setbacks in our daily activities and spiritual practice, it becomes an addiction that harms our lives. Buddhism emphasizes the value of effort in achieving various good goals. Therefore, once we achieve something or attain success, it is more important to continue making gradual progress without becoming attached to what we have already accomplished.

It is also important to study the Singalaka Sutta thoroughly, as it presents a significant social and economic philosophy of Buddhism. This sutta offers essential insights on wealth generation, wealth management, and wealth dissipation, all contributing to effective wealth management. It emphasizes leading a satisfied life through productive and mindful

<sup>1</sup> *ĀṅuttaraNikāya*III(BJT, 1956), 219.

<sup>1</sup> *ĀṅuttaraNikāya*VIII(BJT, 1956), 337.

wealth consumption. Furthermore, it highlights that avoiding extreme consumption practices, such as "Udumbarakhadhika" (Extreme consumption) and "Ajadhumarika" (Greedy consumption), It is crucial to avoid these factors for personal development.

“Utthanaviriyadhigatehi - bahabalaparichitehi  
sedavakkhittehi - dhammike hi dhamma lokahehi”<sup>1</sup>

It teaches us that we should make gradual progress by being as diligent as a wasp (Bambarassevaviriyato, vammikovupachiyiti). Be cautious of enemies who disguise themselves as friends. Associate only with good friends for the sake of progress, and avoid addictions that destroy wealth, such as gambling. These addictions can silently ruin your wealth. Eliminate laziness and be considerate of the society around you as you progress. Add more value to your progress. (Pancha Bali) Be the true owner and winner of your own progress, embracing the four types of happiness: material happiness, pleasure, and intangible happiness.

In addition to these teachings, the Jataka stories and Buddhist literature are a treasure trove of character examples that offer a fresh perspective on life.

One should cultivate the necessary motivation for a good journey in life on their own. Buddhism provides the essential guidance for this.

Among the worldly virtues valued in a lotus-like life, the qualities of unwavering patience and the courage to move forward with good intentions are important and powerful strengths. This means facing situations of gain, loss, fame, disgrace, praise, happiness, and sorrow with equanimity, as these qualities are crucial for progress in both worlds.

Let's discuss another important fact for better life,

The independence and self-reliance of individuals are emphasized in many sutta sermons, such as the Maha Parinibbana Sutta, the Kalama Sutta, the Vimansaka Sutta, the Sakka Namassana Sutta, and the Kakachupama Sutta, among others. Personal freedom is crucial for achieving the goals of both worldly and otherworldly life.

The Sakka Namassana Sutta is important in this regard.

“Ye GahatthaPunnyakaraSilavantoUpasaka - Dhammana Darang PosentiTeNamassamiMataliti”<sup>1</sup>

Also, Dhammapada verses,

"AttahīAttanano Natho - Kohi Natho Parosiya - AttanavaSudantena - NathānLabhātiDullabhām"\*

"I only have my own support, there isn't any support from others. One must attain the very rare purity by oneself."

The Kalama Sutta<sup>2</sup> of the Anguttara Nikaya is very important in this regard.

1. Ma anussavāvena: - Should not be accepted just because it has been heard and known for a long time
2. Ma paramāpāraya: - Should not be accepted just because it has been passed down from generation to generation
3. Ma ithikīrayā: - should not accept just what you hear.
4. Ma pitakasampādaṇa: - Should not be accepted just because it is mentioned in a book
5. Ma takkahetu: - Should not be accepted just because it is consistent with logic
6. Ma nayāhetu: - Should not be accepted just because it is consistent with theory
7. Ma arakaparivīthakkena: - Should not be accepted just because it is consistent with one's own idea
8. Ma ditthīnījhānakhattiya: - Should not be accepted just because it is consistent with one's own view
9. Ma babba-rūpaṃkaya: - A statement made by a respected person should not be accepted.
10. Ma samanogaruhoti: - Should not be accepted just because he respects, should not be accepted just because it is stated by monks

Also, Adhipathaya Sutta<sup>1</sup> of the Tika Nipata of the Anguttara Nikaya are very important.

\* Attadhipathaya: - Agreeing with one's conscience

\* Dhammadhipathaya: - Agreeing with the Dhamma that one respects and believes

<sup>1</sup> *ĀṅuttaraNikāya IV* (BJT, 1956), 128.

<sup>1</sup> *SamyuttaNikāya I*. (BJT, 1956), 418.

\* Dhammapada, Attavagga, 4th stanza.

<sup>2</sup> *ĀṅuttaraNikāya III* (BJT, 1956), 339.

<sup>1</sup> *ĀṅuttaraNikāya III* (BJT, 1956), 269.

\* Lokadhipathaya: - Agreeing with the society in which one lives

It is emphasized that one should accept a fact if it aligns with their own ideas, Dhamma, and the society in which they live. The individual recognizes the necessary life habits for the development of both their worldly life and society. A clear understanding of what is good is important. This is valuable advice for developing the communication skills essential for personal growth.

The Atthākara Sutta<sup>2</sup> mentions "Arambadhathu", (beginning an action), "AtthiNikkamadhathu" (continuing that action), "Atthiparakkamadhathu" (moving forward after overcoming obstacles), "Atthithamadhathu" (remaining steadfast), "Atthitithidhathu" (working hard), "Atthiupakkamadhathu" (Strategically) for the achievement of success.

Furthurmore, the factors that contribute to the growth of one's fame are:

"Utthānavatosatimato - suchikammassanissammakarino

Sannatassaca dhamma jīvino - appamattassayasobhivadhati"\*

"The fame of a person who possesses standing strength, is mindful of themselves, acts with inquiry, lives a settled and righteous life, and is not lazy, increases."

Buddhism explains that the journey of samsara occurs due to the accumulation of karma (Physical, verbal, and mental actions) accumulated by a being. In this regard, intention plays a central role in the analysis of karma. (Chetanāhambhikkhuvākammāṃvadami) While Buddhism presents this concept in a subtly intricate manner, it is important to emphasize that everything does not happen because of karma. It highlights the significance of the world's dharmas and thoughts, such as the supreme law, the law of seeds, the law of action, the law of dhamma, and the law of mind, for the existence of the world. From this, it can be understood that karma does not have complete power over the existence of the world.

The division of the world peoples into four parts is also very important in this context.

\* Kammaphalupajivī (those who live only by the fruits of karma)

\* Utthānaphalupajivī (those who live only by the fruits of effort)

\* Kammamutthānaphalupajivī (those who live by the fruits of both karma and effort)

\* Nevakammaphalupajivī Nevautthānaphalupajivī (those who live without the fruits of karma or effort)<sup>1</sup>

Karma is classified according to the time of its fruition and the method of its fruition. In this way, it is possible to identify how the negative effects of karma can be suppressed by positive effects. (Like ahoṣi karma)

Buddhist karma analysis teaches that a person can change the previous karmic energy, delay the fruition of karma, or cancel it, depending on what he does from the moment of birth. During samsara, beings also attain purification or degradation with their own causes. (Sahetusappacchaya) The dharma of paticchasaṃuppāda is also contained in the karmic energy.

The Dhamma texts that state, "Mano pubbangama dhamma mano setthamanomaya" (Dhammapada) and "Manassa vāussannanthamanusha" (AnguttaraNikaya Attakatha), clearly show how the greatness of man is revealed in the greatness of the mind.

In Buddhism there isn't talk about everything is subject to the previous karma, the five environmental rules of law are clarified that: Uthu Niyama (impact on the environment due to seasonal changes), Bija Niyama (botanical reasons), Kamma Niyama (karmic reasons), Dhamma Niyama (reasons related to worldly dharmas), and Chitta Niyama (reasons based on thoughts).

Some people can set aside the problems they face in the present and develop a positive attitude toward the future activities of their life based on the concept of karma, with the expectation of a better life. In this way, they view the success of their worldly life with hope and approach the afterlife with optimism, drawing on the experiences they encounter in the present. This is a very important form of self-psychotherapy in a certain sense. There are many aspects through which one can view life with optimism, as mentioned earlier. This serves as a psychotherapeutic cognitive behavioral therapy for the mind, such as building a rational belief system about oneself.

<sup>2</sup> *ĀṅguttaraNikāya VI* (BJT, 1956), 94.

\* *Dhammapada, Appamāda Vaggaya*, verse 223.

<sup>1</sup> *ĀṅguttaraNikāya IV* (BJT, 1956), 260.

Philosophy of life in Jataka stories, literary incidents

Life motivational philosophy that can be revealed through Jataka stories and literary events. The Jataka story Book was originally written during the reign of Parakramabahu II, who was the local king of the twelfth dynasty.

In addition to the Paramita virtues with 547 topics, it contains stories such as sermons, advice, bad habits, human social, cultural, economic and various contexts.

✳ The quality of courage

Bhojajaniya Jataka (23rd Jataka)

This story tells of the Bodhisattva Sendhava (considered a Gandharva-strong horse) who, despite being disabled, went to the frontlines and won the war. The horse destroyed six enemy forts using the strength of the horse, but the horse died from the pain of its wounds. The Buddha preached this story to a monk who was weak in courage, and this Jataka tale teaches the value of dedication as an important virtue.

Maha Kapi Jataka (401st Jataka)

When the Bodhisattva lived with a leader of eighty thousand monkeys, there was a delicious mango tree nearby. A very delicious mango fell into the river and was collected by people and given to King.

At that time, the king of Benares and his army were searching for the large mango tree. When they attempted to attack the monkeys, the bodhisattva monkey jumped into another tree and picked a vine. However, the branches were not long enough, and to bridge the gap, the Bodhisattva grabbed a heavy branch floating in the river, allowing the monkeys to cross over on his back. This story is known for demonstrating the paramita of heroism.

✳ Bravery

Pakchayudha Jataka (55th Jataka Story)

The value of bravery is highlighted in this Jataka story. It tells how the Bodhisattva, as the Panchayudha Prince, studied under Disapamok and, on his return to his country, passed through a forest where a dangerous demon named Silesaloma lived. When he encountered the demon, he used five weapons against him, but they all stuck to the demon's fur. Then, when he struck the demon with his hands, feet, and head, his entire body became stuck to the demon's fur.

The prince boldly declared, "If you eat me, I will cut your stomach open and kill you with the Vajrayudha inside me." Frightened by this, the demon recognized the prince's bravery, shook his body, and released him.

This story teaches that bravery, when combined with the right wisdom, makes it easier to overcome obstacles and achieve one's tasks and goals.

✳ The quality of determination

The quality of determination and the quality of strength are often linked together.

In Bhuridatta jataka (543 jathaka), The main goal of the Naga king Bhuridatta was to maintain virtue, no matter how much torture and harm it caused to his life.

✳ Advice for progress and success

Giving advice is a major theme in the Jataka stories.

Chullasetthi Jataka (4th Jataka Story)

During the reign of King Brahmadata of Baranasi, there was a Bodhisattva named Chullasetthi, known for his great wisdom. One day, while traveling along a road, he noticed a dead rat and sold it to the owner of a starving dog. With that money, he bought a horse, which he then traded for further profit. Gradually, he prospered and eventually became a millionaire through ship trading. He generously gave half of his wealth to those who had helped him along the way.

Impressed by his wisdom and generosity, a man from that country gave his daughter in marriage to Chullasetthi and entrusted him with his property.

Nakkhatta Jataka (49th Jataka Story)

During the reign of King Brahmadata of Benares, a prince from a city family was to marry a princess from a provincial family, and he asked an astrologer for a date to see her auspicious signs. However, when the astrologer, angry at not

knowing the date of the wedding, told him that the date was not suitable for the wedding, the city family did not go to the princess's house on the appointed day. The unhappy princess's party gave their daughter to someone else, and the next day, when the The prince's party went to the princess's house and found out that she had married, they began to quarrel. Then a wise man who came there said: "What is the use of a astrologic?" "Isn't it auspicious to receive the princess?" he said. The townspeople returned without receiving the princess. The best time, the opportunity, to do something is the moment you think of doing it.

Mahajanaka Jataka (539th Jataka story)

This is a story about how the Bodhisattva, while on a trading trip, did not give up on life when his ship was about to sink, smeared ghee all over his body, ate sakura, and swam in the ocean for 7 days, saving his life with divine help. It is a story of wisdom and effort.

## II. CONCLUSION

It is clear from studying such facts that Buddhism is a religion with an optimistic attitude towards individual life. The Sigalovada Sutta uniquely analyzes the comprehensive philosophy of life in Buddhism from a psychological perspective. It also emphasizes the importance of subtle mental needs for personal development. Properly fulfilling one's duties, responsibilities, and accountability as a human being leads to both personal and social development. When examining Buddhism as a philosophy for life success, sharp intelligence, restraint, and focused attention are considered essential. The teachings emphasize that the value of the Dharma should be understood as a goldsmith evaluates the worth of gold. Individuals are encouraged to adapt their existing lives to align with Buddhist principles for personal growth. This process reflects the understanding gained through intelligence. Accordingly, achieving spiritual advancement through worldly life becomes a natural outcome rather than a surprising one

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