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**RIGHT LIVELIHOOD (*SAMMĀ ĀJĪVA*) AS AN ALTERNATIVE MEANS FOR ECONOMIC  
INEQUALITY AS DEPICTED IN EARLY BUDDHISM.**

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**Abstract**

The main objective of this paper is to illustrate the importance of Right Livelihood (*sammā ājīva*) in Buddhism as a means of replacement for today's economic inequality. Today, economic crisis has become one of the most troubling social issues in the modern world. Due to economic crisis, crimes, misconduct, social stress, environmental pollution, ethnical wars are prevalent all over the world. The Buddhist doctrines concern about the practical issues of suffering like the socio-economical problems in the world. The Buddha obviously realized that it was very difficult to lead a spiritual way of life without basic human needs such as food, cloth, shelter and medicine. The Buddha, as a peerless economist, gave a number of practical exemplified teachings, contributing the stable economic development. Earning is the necessary part in every human being. From the Buddhist perspective, it should be based on Right Livelihood (*sammā ājīva*). Buddhism maintains that mal-distribution of goods and services is likely to create economic inequalities, resulting in the division of the world into rich and poor, the haves or have-nots. This has been created a great economic pressure in society. The rulers are expected to alleviate poverty by making planned gifts of money to put people on their feet and enable them to make a start in life on their own as Buddhism concerns. The Buddha speaks of managing wealth which earned with earnest and hard from acceptable ways where no violating the social procedure is one of the crucial segments to get best use of it. The Buddhist discourses are of the opinion of the importance of rightly gained wealth and its utilization. The *suttas* like *Singālaka*, *Chakkavattisīhanāda*, *Kūṭadanta*, *Viyaggapajja*, *Ujjaya*, *Pattakamma*, *Ina*, *Kula*, *Addhammika*, *Dhanñjāni*, *Rāsiya*, *Vanijjā*, *Anana* are expected to be used in this connection.

**Keywords:** Buddhism, Economics, Extremes Inequality, Right Livelihood

**Introduction**

Economic inequality has many manifestations. Mal-distribution of goods and services is likely to create economic inequalities, resulting in the division of the world into rich and poor, the haves or have-nots. This has been created social tension for a long time up to date. From a Buddhist perspective, what is most striking factor for this issue is the psychological springs of human. The Buddha primarily comprehends that the person who is led by the unwholesome roots, namely, greed, hatred, and delusion, will totally be ruined in this life and life after. The place where the absence of the above unwholesome traits is the most striking place to live for people. Mostly people are motivated by these three.

**Research Problem**

Those who understand that Buddhism is interested only in lofty ideals, high moral and philosophical thought, and that it ignores the social and economic welfare of people are wrong. Buddhism is a rich religion in its social philosophy. It provides answers for all the collapses in every corner of society both internal and external. Not as a religion but as a way of life, Buddhism offers valuable teachings which would help the followers to obtain results immediately. The research problem relies on how Right Livelihood (*sammā ājīva*) in Buddhism could be used as an alternative means for economic inequality.

## Research Methodology

The researcher attempts to survey literature relevant to this study namely, the primary Buddhist sources, the relevant monographs, scholarly articles and books written on the field.

## Discussion

Economics found in the Buddhist teachings includes practical ideals which lead to happiness in the present and the future. Buddhism accepts that clothing, food, shelters and medicine are as basic needs of human life. Therefore, earning becomes as necessary part of every human being. From the Buddhist perspective, it should be based on 'Right Livelihood' (*sammā ājīva*). According to Buddhism, the Noble Eightfold Path is a recommended process in order to attain both worldly and spiritual aspirations. All eight elements of the Path begin with the word *sammā* which means right, proper, as it ought to be and best. Its opposite side is *micchā*. In this context, the fifth element or Right Livelihood is tremendously important to proper economic sustainability as recommended in Buddhism. Right Livelihood (*sammā ājīva*), the direct way to achieve spiritual goals is mentioned in many early Buddhist texts as such as the *Dhammacakkappavattanasutta*. The *Mahācattārīsakasutta* of the *Majjhimanikāya* defines it as follows:

And what is right livelihood? Right livelihood, I tell you, is of two sorts: There is right livelihood with effluents, siding with merit, resulting in acquisitions; there is right livelihood that is noble, without effluents, transcendent, a factor of the path.

And what is the right livelihood with effluents, siding with merit, resulting in acquisitions? There is the case where a disciple of the noble ones abandons wrong livelihood and maintains his life with right livelihood. This is the right livelihood with effluents, siding with merit, resulting in acquisitions.

And what is the right livelihood that is noble, without effluents, transcendent, a factor of the path? The abstaining, desisting, abstinence, avoidance of wrong livelihood in one developing the noble path whose mind is noble, whose mind is without effluents, who is fully possessed of the noble path.

The early canonical scriptures mention Right Livelihood as avoiding and abstaining from wrong livelihood. This can be further explained as living from begging, but not accepting everything and not possessing more than is strictly necessary. For lay Buddhists, this requires that the livelihood avoid causing suffering to sentient beings by cheating them, or harming or killing them in any way. The *Vanijjāsutta* asserts clearly on the five trades that should be avoided by a Buddhist. Unrighteous ways of earning money is totally prohibited in Buddhism. They are as follows:

1. Trade of weapons,
2. Trade of animals,
3. Trade of fleshes,
4. Trade of drugs and
5. Trade of alcoholic drinks and poison. <sup>1</sup>

Buddhism strongly admires human potential to achieve human aspirations in this very life and the advancement of the spiritual objectives. E. F. Schumacher believes that the primary concern of Buddhist economic philosophy is based on Right Livelihood. He further says:

The ownership and the consumption of goods is a means to an end, and Buddhist economics is the systematic study of how to attain given ends with the minimum means. <sup>2</sup>

Simplicity and non-violence are obviously closely related. The optimal pattern of consumption, producing a high degree of human satisfaction by means of a relative low rate of consumption,

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<sup>1</sup> The Anguttaranikāya III, The *Vanijjāsutta*, p. 338

<sup>2</sup> Schumacher, E. F., *Small is Beautiful* p. 42

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allows people to live without great pressure and strain and to fulfill the primary injunction of Buddhist teaching: 'Cease to do evil; and try to do good'." <sup>3</sup>

Classical Economist, Adam Smith presented a comprehensive analysis of economic trend based on the notion of free markets, and actions guided by individual self interests in a capitalism environment. Human desires are unlimited as the science of economics asserts. Buddhism also suggests that there is no limit to craving of human beings and craving is an insatiable phenomenon.<sup>4</sup> Any economic system which stimulated those excessive, unjustifiable and harmful desires is unacceptable from the Buddhist economy. In accordance with the Buddhist teachings, it precisely emphasizes that production is not for profits but for the common usage. Proper consumption of wealth never causes for weakening economic life. (*bhogā sammā paribuñjīyamānā paribhogam gacchanti no parikkhayam*)

The Buddhist discourses aim at creating sustainable development where the man and the whole ecosystem can survive together. Buddhism sets up inter-connectedness between the man and the environment. Buddhism speaks of people-friendly economic system.

### **The Role of the State**

Buddhism asserts that any existing government should be responsible for economic inequality. The problem begins when the king or ruler does not give property to the needy - that is, when the state neglects its responsibility to maintain distributive justice. It further runs that mal-distribution of goods and services is likely to create economic inequalities, resulting in the division of the world into rich and poor, the haves or have-nots. According to the *Cakkavattisihanādasutta*, social breakdowns cannot be separated from broader questions about the justice or injustice of the social order. The solution to poverty-induced crime is not to punish severely but to provide for people's basic needs. The state is the key role to eradicate such discriminations such as poverty and so on. The true ruler gets as much as possible steps to eradicate poverty and so called lacks of the society. Buddhism emphasizes that the ruler should have an alert mind to overcome social dreadful conditions where his officials should be far-sighted ones. Many solutions have been crystallized by the Buddha to overcome poverty in any territory. The Buddhist solutions of eradication of poverty are clearly illustrated in the *Cakkavattisihanādasutta* and the *Kūṭadantasutta* of the *Dīghanikāya*. As pointed out in the *Cakkavattisihanādasutta*, the main consequences of mal-distribution of resources are the major causes for poverty: Mal-distribution of goods and services is likely to create economic inequalities, resulting in the division of the world into rich and poor, the haves or have-nots. As part of the state policy, the rulers are expected to alleviate poverty by making planned gifts of money to put people on their feet and enable them to make a start in life on their own.<sup>5</sup> Poverty is presented as a root cause of immoral behavior such as theft, violence, falsehood, and so on. <sup>6</sup>

In this particular *sutta*, Buddhism introduces the concept of Wheel Turning Monarch (*rājācakkavatti*) with regard to the good governance. Buddhism introduces for good governance the concept of the Wheel Turning Monarch consisting with the just and righteous principles (*rājā cakkavattī dhammiko dhammarājā*). Respecting and giving priority to social justice and order are the main duties of a ruler as emphasized by this *sutta*. Ruling a country according to their own whim, resulting in disastrous consequences to the stability of the country. In this context, the Buddha points out that one of the major failures is neglecting the poor. Buddhist thought points out that poverty and the gap between haves and have-nots in society cause for social unrest and breakdown of morality.

The *Kūṭadantasutta* points out that instead of punishment, in order to eradicate crime, the economic condition of the people should be improved by the state: Grain and other facilities for agriculture should be provided for farmers and cultivators, Capital should be provided for traders and those whose

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<sup>3</sup> Ibid, p. 43

<sup>4</sup> *ūno loko attitto taṇhā dāso*- The Majjhimanikāya I, The *Raṭṭhapālasutta*.

<sup>5</sup> The *Dīghanikāya* III, p. 110

<sup>6</sup> *iti kho bhikkhave adhanānam dhane anuppadiyamāne dālddiyam vepullamagamāsi... dālddiye vepullam gate adinnādānam ...sattham... pānātipāto... musāvādo....* Ibid, p. 116

employed, and For the state servicers should be provided enough salary and food and more and more job opportunities should be created. <sup>7</sup>

When people are thus provided for with opportunities for earning a sufficient income, they will be contented; will have no fear or anxiety, and consequently the country will be peaceful and free from crime. It is also the responsibility of the state to some extent to open avenue of employment and correctly put people in places where they would make their best, there being no square pegs in round holes or vice versa. They are to be employed, each according to his ability and competence.<sup>8</sup> The state should provide these facilities to people and then there are possibilities in order to eradicate poverty in a country. In the *Kūṭadantasutta*, the Buddha has explained that imposing extra taxes in a period of an economic hardship is counterproductive and what is necessary is to keep all the people engaged in some craft or employment by government subsidies and assistance so that when people are busy with their respective activities they will not harass the country and also government revenue will increase with the picking up the economy. This words, is the full employment, one of the major objectives of government economic planning. Another principle matter of this *sutta* is that economic prosperity and peace in a country depend on its potential to create employment opportunities where the Buddha explained that the state should employ its citizens only on merits without any help. Unemployment is one of the major factors for poverty in a country. The *Kūṭadantasutta* has shown the Buddhist concept of economic development.

### Eradication of Hunger

The Buddha dealt with the importance of satisfying the basic needs of human beings too, among which food and clothing were treated as the most important things. According to the Buddhist texts, they say, almost with distressing pain of mind, that the food and clothing of such people who are in utter poverty is obtained with utmost difficulty.<sup>9</sup> It is at poverty level that these, namely food and clothing are obtained with utmost difficulty. Poverty and hunger go hand in hand. That is why poverty or the absence of such means of existence makes a man unhappy in society, both in relation to himself and in relation to the community in which he lives. Hunger is considered as the most serious illness, (*jigacchā paramā rogā*) or burning fire; (*natthi khudā samā aggī*) it is so acute that there is no pain equal to it (*khudā samā natthi narassa aññam*).<sup>10</sup> Buddhism certainly does not attribute poverty and hunger solely to *Kamma* done in the previous life (*Pubbekatahetuvāda*). It has viewed these problems from an ethno-social perspective in that it prescribes proper distribution of wealth and resources for the benefit of all. Once, the Buddha had a poor, hungry herdsman was fed up and comforted, before elucidating *Dhamma* to him, as he would have had the mental status capable of absorbing *Dhamma* while he was hungry.<sup>11</sup> In order to get rid of hunger among the people, Buddhist teachings point out not only of the energetic production of wealth and the consequent increase of buying power but also recommended the industries production of food through diligently handled agriculture. In the *Therīgāthā Pāli*, *Therī Patācārā* observes this commendable hunger-eliminating process through agricultural production in this manner. With ploughs ploughing their fields, the seeds they sow on the land. To feed their wives and children, the men thus earn their wealth.<sup>12</sup>

Through these words are included that men plough their fields and sow seed therein to raise a harvest to feed their families and build up their economy. Thus, Buddhist teachings are always encouraged well management of distribution of food. Insight with regard to the equitable distribution of food, cautioning against misappropriation and hoarding of food by unscrupulous individuals is also very

<sup>7</sup> *tena hi bhvam ye bhoto rañño vijite ussahanti kasigorakkho tesam bījabhattam anuppadetu... ussahanti vanijjāya tesam pābhitam anuppadetu...ussahanti rājaporise tesam bhattavetanam pakappetu...* The *Dīghanikāya I*, The *Kūṭadantasutta*, p. 262

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid*, p. 262

<sup>9</sup> *dālīdde ...karisena ghānasaccado labhati-* The *Anguttaranikāya III*, p. 385

<sup>10</sup> The *Dhammapada*, 203 verse, p. 76

<sup>11</sup> The *Dhammapadaṭṭha kathā-* Annantara Upāsaka Vatthu, Sukha Vaggo

<sup>12</sup> *Nangalehi kasam khetam bījāni pavapam chamā,*

*puttadārāni posentā dhanam vindanti mānavā-* The *Therīgāthā Pāli-* Patācārā *Therīgāthā*, p. 32

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much reflected in the *Aggñāsutta*. Eradication of hunger can totally be brought to an end through proper understanding of management of food. This is one of the Buddhist approach to eliminate hunger in society.

### **Use of Drugs**

One of the main factors that is retarding sustainable development economic growth and the increase in poverty at the grass roots level continues to be the use of drugs mainly alcohol and cigarettes. Although we are planning for a prosperous environment around the man, trend in liquor production, which is very disconnecting. The cost burden to a country because of the consumption of alcohol due to ill health, violence, accidents, loss of productivity has made alcohol the number one factor in the burden of disease. Consumption of the alcohol and tobacco are being increased day by day all over the world. The expenditure on alcohol and tobacco in a single year cannot be measured by dollars. The *Singālakasutta* emphasizes the six evil consequences in addiction to intoxicants and alcoholic drinks.<sup>13</sup>

1. Loss of wealth,
2. Increase of quarrels,
3. Susceptibility to disease,
4. Earning an evil reputation,
5. Shameless exposure of body,
6. Weakening of intellect.

In the *Vanijāsutta*, the Buddha speaks of five prohibited trades in which one (A Buddhist) should never earn money engaging those things. One of them is *majjavānijā* (Trade of drugs and alcoholic drinks).<sup>14</sup>

### **Proper Consumption of Wealth**

In the *Viyaggapajjasutta*, it is to be noted that in every case, whether it is for the production of wealth or for the correct and fruitful utilization of wealth, the efficiency and diligence of the person concerned is of primarily importance. The Buddha showed righteous way in this *sutta* as proficient, diligent, prudent, and competent and expertise in management.

### **Attainment of Energy (*Uṭṭhānasamapadā*)**

Being vigilant is exceedingly esteemed by the Buddha in many a detail. As the Buddha states that he who is vigorous, bears the burden and does what is applying enjoys wealth.<sup>15</sup> The Buddha discusses about the importance of attainment of vigilance or energy extensively in his teachings. Even in this context, the Buddha advises him proper earning ways and means to carry out wealth. Herein, the Buddha gives priority for righteousness of wealth. A career person ought to be resourceful, professional, skillful, diligent and persistent in the pursuit of economic wealth. It is whatever activity a householder earns his living by, farming, trading, rearing cattle, archery, service under the king, or any other kind of craft -at that he becomes skilful and is not lazy.<sup>16</sup> In this manner, the Buddha accentuates he who organizes his energetic strength for the accomplishment of best of result in this life.

### **Attainment of Watchfulness (*Ārakkhasamapadā*)**

Unquestionably, what is justly acquired by right means and ways that is must be preserved to sustain a good family life. In this characteristic, the Buddha highlights wealth earned with enormous sweats ought to be protected from loss, destruction or depletion. Herein, a person who earned wealth in dynamic means must be aware of to care enough not to get wasted unnecessarily. It is whatever wealth

<sup>13</sup> The *Singālakasutta*, p. 292

<sup>14</sup> The *Anguttaranikāya* III, The *Vanijāsutta*, p. 338

<sup>15</sup> *Patirūpakārī dhuravā-uṭṭhātā vindate dhanam*. The *Suttanipāta*, The *Ālavakasutta*, verse 189, p. 58

<sup>16</sup> *Katamā ca vyaggapajja, uṭṭhānasamapadā: idha vyaggapajja kulaputto yena kammaṭṭhānena jīvikam kappeti, yadi kasiyā yadi vanijjāy yadi gorakkhena yadi issatthena yadi rājaporisena yadi sippaññatarena. Tattha dakkho hoti analaso tattrūpāyā vīmaṃsāya samannāgato alam kātuṃ alam samvidhātuṃ* -The *Ānguttaranikāya* V, The *Vyaggapajjasutta*, p. 236

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a householder owns, had by effort, strength of arm, by exertions, justly acquired by right means. He also guards and takes care of it so that kings would not seize it, thieves would not steal it, fire would not burn it, water would not carry it away, nor ill-disposed heirs remove it.<sup>17</sup> Further, it is mentioned in this sutta, four sources of destruction of wealth. They are called as ‘woeful states’ (*apāyamukhāni*).

1. Debauchery
2. Drunkenness
3. Gambling
4. Friendship, companionship and intimacy with evil-doers.<sup>18</sup>

Due to falling into these sources, even milliners, bilinear, and trilinear ruin their wealth and as a result of it their family life would be totally destroyed. Story of *Mahadhana* merchant is a famous Buddhist story in this regard. Even the *Parābhavasutta* includes these factors in the same ground.<sup>19</sup> According to the *Singālakasutta*, it mentions about the six doors to woe as follows:

1. Addiction to drugs and alcoholic drinks,
2. Frequenting the streets at unseemly hours,
3. Haunting fairs,
4. gambling,
5. Associating with evil friends,
6. Idealness.<sup>20</sup>

So far the Buddha crystallizes the awful influence of these four destructive ways of wealth by means of a parable as follows: “just as in the case of a great tank with four inlets and outlets, if a man should close the inlets and open the outlets and there should be no enough rainfall, decrease of water is to be expected in that tank, and not an increase; even so there are four sources for the destruction of amassed wealth—debauchery, drunkenness, gambling, and friendship, companionship and intimacy with evil-doers.”<sup>21</sup>

Contrast to above four destructive sources, the Buddha points out these four sources for the increase of amassed wealth by dint of a simile in this manner. “just as in the case of a great tank with four inlets and outlets, if a man were to open the inlets and close the outlets and there should also be sufficient rainfall, an increase of water is certainly to be expected in that tank, and not a decrease; even so these four conditions are the sources of increase of amassed wealth.<sup>22</sup> Abstaining from these four is meant by the accomplishment of alertness where conduces to prosperous well-being and happiness are in this very life. Abstinence of four sources of destruction is unswervingly conducive for the increase of wealth. Those are called as ‘*Āyamukhāni*’ in the *sutta*.<sup>23</sup>

<sup>17</sup> *Katamā ca vyaggapajja, ārakkhasampadā : idha vyaggapajja, kulaputtassa bhogā honti, uṭṭhānaviriyādhigatā bāhābalaparicitā sedāvakkhittā dhammikā dhammaladdhā, te ārakkhena guttiyā sampādeti, kinti me ime bhoge neva rājāno hareyyuṃ na corā hareyyuṃ na aggi daheyya na udakam vaheyya na appiyā dāyādā hareyyunti*-Ibid, p. 236

<sup>18</sup> *evam samuppannānam vyaggapajja bhogānam cattāri apāyamukhāni honti: itthidhutto hoti surādhutto akkhadhutto pāpamitto pāpasahāyo pāpasampavāṃko*- Ibid, p. 238

<sup>19</sup> *Itthidhutto surādhutto-akkhadhutto ca yo naro laddham laddham vināseti- tam parābhavato mukham*-The Suttanipāta, The *Parābhavasutta*, verse 106, p. 34

<sup>20</sup> *katamāni cha bhogānam apāyamukhāni na sevati? surāmerayamajjapamādaṭṭhānuyogo kho gahapatiputta bhogānamapāyamukham. Vikālavisikhācariyānuyogo...samajjābhicaraanam...jūtappamādaṭṭhānuyogo...pāpa mittānuyogo...ālassānuyogo...*The Dīghanikāya III, The *Singālakasutta*, p. 292

<sup>21</sup> Ibid, p. 238

<sup>22</sup> Ibid, p. 240

<sup>23</sup> *evam samuppannānam vyaggapajja, bhogānam cattāri āyamukhāni honti....* The *Vyaggapajjasutta*, p. 240

### Association with Good Friendship (*Kalyāṇamittatā*)

This is the third characteristic for the increase of wealth of rich householders. Constructive and good people bring person happiness. Association of good friends is greatly useful to the increase of wealth. In the Buddhist teaching, good companionship is highly admired by the Buddha. Good friends must be educated and capable to discern what is good and bad. Such people's advices are needed to increase of wealth. The man who gets such people's advices, his wealth grows up like an ant-hill.<sup>24</sup> The *Singālakasutta* clearly explains the importance of good friendship in details. Buddhism is aware of social groups particularly groups of friends. It categorizes various kinds of friends based on good and bad. Taking into consideration the stories of *Mahadhana* Merchant and *Chullasetthi*, friend's role can actually be realized. There is no any place for bad association of friends in Buddhism. Bad friendship straightly involves degradation qualities of the humanity. To realize the Buddhist final goal, *Nibbāna*, is essentially needed the standards of good friendship. The *Vyagghapajjasutta* states the following values in good companionship.

One ought to be associated with only good friends or associates. It lies in this manner. In whatever village or market town a householder lives, he associates, converses, engages in discussions with householders or householders' sons, whether young and highly cultured or old and highly cultured, full of fit faith (*saddhā*), virtue (*sīla*), charity (*cāga*), and wisdom (*paññā*). He acts according to the faith of the faithful, the virtue of the virtuous, the charity of the charitable, and the wisdom of the wise.<sup>25</sup>

### A Balanced Life (*Samajivikatā*)

Moderation in consumption is encouraged in the system of Buddhist economy. For householders, the advice of the Buddha is the balance of the income and expenditure. Household life should be a pleasing one. To lead such life, the necessity of a balanced life is emphasized. Buddhism discourages both over consumption and stinginess. In the Buddhist family, contentment is a key point (*santutthi paramaṃ dhanam*). The Buddhist family life should be an economical one. In the *Vyagghapajjasutta*, it is mentioned thus. One's income and expenditure ought to be managed prudently. A householder is to know his income and expenses and leads a balanced life, neither extravagant nor miserly, knowing that thus his income will stand in excess of his expenses, but not his expenses in excess of his income.<sup>26</sup> The Buddha points out in the *Parābhavasutta* that to have much wealth and sufficient gold and food, but to enjoy one's luxuries alone, this is a cause of one's down fall<sup>27</sup> in this very life. There is no any place for such selfish attitudes in the Buddhist teachings. Buddhism recognizes it as one of the defeating fact. The Buddha clarifies that householder should have a clear knowledge of his income and expenses. There should be limitations in family life. The Buddha draws attention how to lead a balanced life without falling into these extremes.

- 1.A person having small earnings and lives on a grand scale uses up his wealth as a 'Fig-tree glutton'. (*udumbarakhādika* means the person who eat wood-apple by shaking the branches by shaking a branch both ripped and not ripped fall down but only ripen can be eaten and others to be thrown out )<sup>28</sup>

<sup>24</sup> *Bhogā sannicayaṃ yanti vammiko vūpacīyati*- The *Singālakasutta*, p. 302

<sup>25</sup> *Katamā ca vyagghapajja, kalyāṇamittatā: idha vyagghapajja, kulaputto yasmim gāme vā nigame vā pativasati. Tattha ye te honti gahapati vā gahapatiputto vā daharā vā vuddhasīlino vuddhā vā vuddhasīlā saddhāsampannā sīlasampannā cāgasampannā paññāsampannā tehi saddhim santiṭṭhati sallapati sākaccham samāpajjati. Yathā rūpānam saddhāsampannānam saddhāsampadam anusikkhati... sīlasampannānam sīlasampadam anusikkhati... cāgasampannānam cāgasampadam anusikkhati... paññāsampannānam paññāsampadam anusikkhati. ayam vuccati vyagghapajja, kalyāṇamittatā*- The *Vyagghapajjasutta*, p. 236

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid*, p. 236

<sup>27</sup> *Pahūtavitto puriso sahirañño sabhojano,*

*Eko bhūjati sādhuṇi tam parābhavato mukham*-The *Parābhavasutta*, verse 102, p. 34

<sup>28</sup> The Commentary to the *Vyagghapajja Sutta*, The *Manorathapūraṇi* explains the term *udumbarakhādika* thus. '*udumbarakhādikaṃti yathā udumbarāni khādītukāmena pakkhe udumbararukkhe calite ekappahārena eva bahūni phalāni patanti. So khādītubbauttakāni khādītva itarāni bahutarāni pahāya*

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2.A person having a great income and lives stingily without spending even for bare necessities, will die like a starveling (*ajjaddhumārikam*- According to the commentary, the *Manorathapuraṇi*, uses the term *anāthamaraṇam* in this regard), helpless and neglected.

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According to the theory of *udumbarakhādika*, it is very clear that unnecessary wastage of wealth ruins the economy in the house hold life. Some rich householders like *Adinnapubbaka* never uses his wealth even his own happiness. Greedy persons do not spend wealth properly. This starveling theory (*ajjaddhumārikam*) is also denied by the Buddha. Therefore one who abstains from both these two extremes is a man for all seasons. How to lead a balanced life in the Buddhist family life? In this connection, the *Singālakasutta* can be taken as a classic example. The Buddha explains beautifully about the economic mind based on production, consumption, investment, and saving. One gathers wealth little by little as bees collect honey (*bambarasseva irīyato*). Such accumulated wealth should be divided into four parts, one portion for day-to-day expenses, two portions for investment, and the balance to be kept as a precaution against contingencies.<sup>30</sup> Savings depends, among other things, on the level of income, distribution and expenditure patterns and saving habits.

According to the Buddha, wealth should be used for oneself and others (happiness of oneself and others). For the Buddha, wealth what is earned in proper ways should be used for the following utilizations. A balanced life can be listed into the following nine reasons.

1. For one's own expenditure such as Food, clothing, and shelter
2. For attending to parents, wives, children and servants
3. For the use of illness and such other emergencies
4. For charitable purposes
5. For treating relatives
6. For treating guests and visitors
7. For giving alms in memory of the Departed
8. For meritorious acts to offer merit to deities
9. For payments of taxes for the state<sup>31</sup>

The ultimate objective of Buddhism is spiritual goal, the attainment of *Nibbāna*. The material comfort and enjoyment should be based on Right Livelihood (*Sammā ājīva*) where as the material progress is highly evaluated. For rich house holders, the Buddha instructs to lead a spiritual life. Buddhism seeks the facts for both the material comfort and the spiritual progress.

For the Buddha, three types of persons can be found in this world. They are the blind (*andha*), the one-eyed (*ekacakkhu*), and the two-eyed (*dvicakkhu*).<sup>32</sup> Amongst them one who develop the material and moral aspects simultaneously (*dvicakkhu*), he would be the two-eyed person. The two-eyed person who possesses both material and spiritual progress is the personal ethical ideal of an individual in the Buddhist perspective. What are the conditions of spiritual progress, according to the *sutta*? Factors for the spiritual development of rich house holders are examined briefly in this context.

Further the Buddha mentions that if people resort to use wealth exclusively for their personal satisfaction without sharing, such a society makes way for the creation of hatred, ill will, jealousy, and commotion. As the *Pattakamasutta* affirms that the Buddha explained the wealth which has to be acquired by energetic striving, amassed by strength of arm and won by sweat. He gifts his wealth for the well being of society. He makes the parents, wife and children, servants and workmen, friends and

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*gacchati. evaṃ evaṃ yo āyato vayaṃ bahutaram katvā vippakiranto bhoge paribhuñjata so udumbarakhādikam evāyaṃ kulaputto bhoge khādātī vuccati'.*

<sup>29</sup> Ibid, p. 238

<sup>30</sup> *Ekena bhoge bhuñjeiyya dvīhi kammam payojaye*

*Catutthañca nidhāpeiyya āpadāsu bhavissatī*-The *Singālakasutta*, p. 302

<sup>31</sup> The *Aṅguttaranikāya* II, (PTS), p. 65

<sup>32</sup> *andham ca ekacakkhum ca ārakā parivajjaye,*

*Dvi cakkhu pana sevetha-seṭṭho purisapuggalo*-The *Aṅguttara Nikāya* I, The *Andhūpamasutta*, p.238



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comrades happy...to relatives, to guests, to departed ones, to kings, to deities.<sup>33</sup> In the *Vepullasutta* of the *Anguttaranikāya*, the Buddha has discussed business management as well. A successful businessman is full of these qualities. A shopkeeper has to be shrewd (*cakkhuma*), supremely capable (*vidura*), and inspires confidence (*nissayasampanno*).<sup>34</sup> Even in the *Dhanañjānisutta*, the Buddha recommends five activities on which wealth should be spent. Righteously earned wealth should be used for: Self happiness, happiness of others, self-defense, taxes and other state dues, and merit.<sup>35</sup>

### **Highest Qualities of Wealth**

Self-interest economic always generates widespread poverty. Competition filled with *Brahmavihāra* or the four divine abodes (*mettā*, *karunā*, *muditā*, and *upekkhā*) concepts will not produce such unholy outcomes, because all are conscious of the impact of their actions on others. The competition modern economic theory is based on private profit maximization hence; the owner gets the lion's share making the majority poor. Explaining the Achievement of Generosity (*cāgasampadā*) to the millionaire, the Buddha outlines the ways utilizing one's wealth profitably, not for one's own benefit, but for others' benefit as well.<sup>36</sup> It is mentioned that in the Buddhist literature as the very first Perfection that should be fulfilled by every Buddhist which in search of the ultimate goal of Buddhism. Buddhism suggests a world-centric ethic towards world instead of ego-centric ethic. It covers the following three grounds:

1. We must overcome exploitative greed with global generosity, helpfulness, and co-operation.
2. We must replace hatred and revenge with a policy of kindness, tolerance, and forgiveness, and
3. We must recognize that our world is an interdependent, interwoven whole such that irresponsible behaviour anywhere has potentially harmful repercussions everywhere. These guidelines, drawn from the Buddha's teaching, can constitute the nucleus of a global ethic to which all the world's great spiritual traditions could easily subscribe.<sup>37</sup>

### **Conclusion**

From the Buddhist perspective, any economic system should be evaluated in the sense of people-friendly economic policies which should be based on Right Livelihood (*sammā ājīva*). Buddhism completely denies the voice of self-interest in human engaging activities. It primarily concerns about world-centric attitude that gives main concern to the well-being of all. Buddhism recognizes the importance of the fulfillment of the minimum material needs to spend a decent living. Right distribution of resources is mainly resulted for eradication of poverty at grass-root level. If people have no enough money or other so called facilities in connection with aspiration of their basic needs of life, they will engage in wrong ways to accomplish their requirements. So far there is no any place for economic imbalance in Buddhism at any cost. Therefore, it is clear that how the Buddhist economics much concerns about sharing and caring of wealth that is based on right livelihood (*sammājīva*).

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<sup>33</sup> *puna ca para gahapati ariyasāvako utthānaviriyādhigatehi bhogehi bāhābalaparicitehi sedāvakkhittehi dhammikehi dhammaladdhehi. pañcabalī ... ñātibalim, atthiblim, pubbapetabalim, rājabalim, devatābalim-* The *Anguttaranikāya* III, The *Pattakammasutta*, p. 128

<sup>34</sup> The *Anguttaranikāya* I, The *Vepullasutta- Bhogādhigamasutta*, p. 452

<sup>35</sup> The *Majjhimanikāya* II, The *Dhanañjānisutta*, pp. 680-698

<sup>36</sup> The *Anguttaranikāya*, The *Ujjayasutta*, p. 246

<sup>37</sup> Bhikkhu Bodhi, *The Buddha and His Message* (Past Present, & Future), Address given on the occasion of the United Nations celebration of Vesak, 2000, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Sri Lanka in collaboration with the Buddhist Publication Society, Kandy, Sri Lanka, 2003, p. 18



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