



## **MORALITY CAN NOT BE JUDGED BY ATTIRE**

There is a notable tendency to imitate fashions in the modern world.

Pursuing fashions does not debar anyone from a religious path. The chief female lay benefactor, *Visakha*, who lived in the Buddha's time, had a charming personality. As you probably know, she had worn priceless jewelry at that time.

As evident in the present society, she had also attended social functions at that time. She was always dressed elegantly. She was an icon among the 70 million people who lived at that time.

Some of her friends were non-Buddhists. On one occasion, she was invited to take part in games in a park. She accepted the invitation. Her friends did not follow Buddhist rituals on these occasions.

Whatever the function might be, *Visakha* maintained a firm mentality and beliefs. Her priority was to accomplish any task as a holy person.

There are lots of fashions and architectural designs in the world today. We can not reject them. Let's assume this way – There is an individual who dislikes fashions. He leads a simple life, resorting only to a simple dress. If he looks down upon others and their attire, could we consider this individual as a remarkable person?

It is not correct to say that fashions are not necessary. Similarly, we can not say that fashions are indispensable. One should choose the right occasion and the right fashion to go with it.

For instance, if a person is planning to attend a wedding, he or she should choose appropriate attire. Whatever the occasion may be, one needs to exercise restraint with regard to one's mental, verbal and physical actions.

Nevertheless, what has happened to the present society? Dress has become a criterion to judge an individual. For instance, if a person wears "white", he or she is considered to be religious. If a person wears flamboyant colours, he or she would not be religious. These are only misconceptions.

It is the outside world which introduced the traditions of changing into different attires according to different occasions. We can observe different dress codes for different social occasions. i. e. evening dresses, wedding suites, party dresses. We are mostly influenced by this type of dress codes presently. But our society always used to praise the human qualities, rather than a particular dress code.

Our society has now come to a point where an individual is only judged by particular attire, in accordance with the ideals we inherited from the outside world. It is very difficult to change this trend. When we try to change this trend, we become a group of individuals who criticizes fashions constantly. Then the people who wish to dress elegantly would be up in arms against us. Why should we get into an unnecessary clash over a dress? Of course, that should not happen over a dress.

Morality can never be judged by a dress. Morality means refraining from killing; refraining from stealing; refraining from sexual misconduct; refraining from lying; refraining from consuming alcoholic beverages and substances; refraining from spreading tales; refraining from gossiping and slandering.

Similarly, treating adults and teachers, honoring those who deserve honor also come under the category of morality. If, on the contrary, morality is determined by a particular dress, then the dress deserves all sorts of compliments and praise.

If an individual, who wishes to dress elegantly, is able to attach the same significance to his or her deeds, then this individual is in a position to enjoy the dress as well as the deeds.

An individual's attire is worthless if this individual is selfish, over-anxious, and envious of others' belongings. Genuine elegance of life is combined with qualitative progress.

Most people in the society conceal such weaknesses or make up their mind saying, "We are just worldlings; It is natural for us to make such mistakes" They do not understand the gravity of this statement. Identifying oneself as a worldling itself is something that one should fear more than anything else in this world. The reason is that being a worldling is an assured way of a rebirth in a lower realm.

A Buddha is always born in a society of sentient beings. When a Buddha expounds *dhamma* that would pave way for sentient beings to get out of their worldly status and become noble disciples.

This is the primary stage of liberation. Such a person, disciplined by the noble *dhamma*, begins to receive a certain protection. When this happens, the society is segregated into two categories. Sentient beings are on one side and the noble disciples are on the other side.

If you are aware that you are a worldling, it is not advisable to make up your mind, on the pretext that it is natural for a worldling to commit offences. What is important is to consider ways of getting out the worldly status. Listening to *dhamma* is also an important requirement for such worldlings. This is a form

of protection for them. *Dhamma* should be expounded to them at this stage. Unless pure *dhamma* is expounded at this stage, a worldling would invariably die as a worldling. He is deprived of the opportunity to become a noble disciple.

The Gautama Buddha taught distinctly that an admirable friend (*Kalyana Mitta*) should always present pure *dhamma*, as expounded by the Gautama Buddha with his omniscient knowledge. This *dhamma* is none other than the Four Noble Truths.

When sentient beings have access to the *dhamma*, they are able to perceive a noble vision. They are able to integrate the tenants of *dhamma* into their lives, provided, they are knowledgeable enough to understand and think in accordance with the *dhamma*. Then these sentient beings, who are attached to futile desires and mere satisfaction, tend to think in a way that would reinforce their understanding. This would result in a thought process which would lead them to the **reality of life**. At this stage, an ordinary worldling would no longer be a worldling. He would be a noble disciple. Ill-effects of the worldly life would cease to affect him any longer.

How can we favor a person who was born into this world as rare human being? That is to save him from the worldly life and guide him on the noble path. We can not accomplish this task by donating food, houses etc. Even with the donation of a palace, a worldling can not be converted to a noble person.

What is the most serious danger confronted by human beings? It is the life deviated from the **reality**. As a result, one may encounter another danger. That is the risk of committing five heinous crimes (*anantariya kamma*) at any moment. Similarly, one may run the risk of being converted to another faith. Only the noble *dhamma* can save a person from these dangers.

Therefore, I want to reiterate that if you are sympathetic towards the society, then your responsibility should be to provide opportunities for ordinary human beings to hear *dhamma*, proclaimed by the *Gautama Buddha*.

Noble doctrine is a unique thing. We see a lot of inventions in the world today. Many people contribute to these inventions by way of intelligence. These people are identified as scientists. Intelligence means understanding. There is a category of people who are involved in various explorations in order to seek knowledge. They make their inventions available to the society, subject to ownership such as patents. Then this knowledge becomes a common thing in the society. This type of knowledge would undergo a change with the introduction of the next invention. Therefore, such knowledge exists within a framework of constant change.

Present world utilizes only the worldly knowledge. Individuals make use of computers, vehicles, information technology. But these technological advances are not in a position to help individuals perceive the **reality of life**. This type of knowledge is incapable of converting a worldly being into a noble being. Only the noble philosophy is capable of doing that.

The future Buddha, (*Bodhisattva*) having accomplished the ten perfections, was living mindfully in the *Thusitha* Heaven. The Brahma and the other *Devas* invited the future Buddha to be reborn in the human realm. That was the most appropriate time for a birth of a Buddha. So *Devas* appealed, “Sir, it is the right time for you to comprehend the truth and save sentient beings from the clutches of suffering and rebirth”

At this invitation, the future Buddha (*Bodhisattva*) got conceived in Queen *Mahamaya's* womb. From the day of the conception, the *Four Chief Devas* provided protection to the *Future Buddha*.

Just after the birth, the *Bodhisattva* took four steps and proclaimed, “I am a Superior Being; I am the world-honored one. This is my last birth”

When the *Bodhisattva* was a three year old child, he was able to rise to the air with the power gained by practicing the meditation on Mindful Breathing. When he reached 29 years of age, he possessed an amazing knowledge of **life**. “What am I searching? Is it worthwhile looking for something that is subject to change, while I myself being an entity subject to constant change???”

He further pondered, “Should I embrace something that is subject to sickness, when I am such a being myself? Should I desire something that is subject to death, while I am subject to death?”

This thought process made him lose interest in his youthful life. The three misconceptions mentioned above lead beings to “shortsightedness”. The Awakened One abandoned these three misconceptions and renounced his life as a householder.

The Awakened One led a luxurious life as a layman. We have heard about palaces named *Ramya, Suramya and Subha*. Despite his luxurious life at those palaces, he was able to perceive the world from a completely different perspective. This is how a great path was opened for immense spiritual development. However, neither the research nor the inventions can bring about such spiritual development.

The Awakened One’s scope of research was only his own inner mentality. This way, the Awakened One found a way to transcend all physical, mental suffering and lamentation of all sentient beings.

The Eightfold Path is the outcome of his research. The Awakened One, not only found the path, but also he mastered the Eightfold Path.

Therefore, the *Dhamma* can not be confined to a particular set of ideals or a dogma.

**It is the only methodology for all human beings to transcend suffering forever.**



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