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The Act of Taking Intoxicant from Buddhist Perspective

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Abstract: Today's world is infested with many evil deeds. This paper is presented with the aim of studying why there are numerous evil deeds. Of the various kinds of evil deeds, some evil deeds are committed on account of using intoxicating drinks and drugs because even a soft minded person does not hesitate to commit evil deeds such as telling lies, stealing other's property, killing life, etc. when the mile person become intoxicated with alcohol and drug. In compiling this paper the excerpts from Pāli, Aṭṭhakathā, Ṭīkā and Ganthantara Texts are presented by comparing with the present conditions. In such a presentation, the significance of drinking intoxicants in committing evil deeds is presented by studying from Buddhist perspective with the descriptive method. Although drinking intoxicants is not included in the ten kinds of evil deeds, it is one of the main causes of evil deeds.

Keywords: intoxicant, drugs, alcohol, drinking

Introduction

Every person, who obtains the human existence, has each duty in order to be the calm and peaceful world. Needless to say, two duties: performing to be good for oneself as well as performing to be good in one's surrounding must be performed by everyone. Just performing for oneself is not enough to be a dutiful person. It is necessarily to perform for the sake of one's environment too. If one carries out for the welfare of oneself and others, he will be a dutiful person. In performing for the welfare of others, essentially one must be good. Only when he himself is good, he can perform for others' goodness. In trying to be a good person, only if one observes five precepts, can be a good person. Of the five precepts, using intoxicating drinks and drugs (*surāmeraya kamma*) is the most significant. It is because one, who breaks the precept of abstaining from using intoxicating drinks and drugs, is able to break other four precepts such as abstaining from killing any living beings and so on, then demolishes all morality (*sīla*)¹. In accordance with the said "enormous misdeeds made by a

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¹ *Paññā*.258.

drinker”, it is not able to separate from a drinker and misdeeds; these are indivisible. Misdeeds done by a drinker are mostly crimes. Everyone, who wants to perform for the sake of oneself as well as for the sake of others, therefore should observe the precept of abstaining from using intoxicating drinks and drugs caused to do the immoral actions (*ducarita*) easily as well as try to encourage others to observe this precept. In this way, he can fulfill conscientiously his duty as much as he can. With a good wish not to increase the immoral deeds, this dissertation is come out leading to see vividly the problems of using intoxicating drinks and drugs. In this dissertation, the nature of intoxicated drinks, the faults of drinkers and the disadvantages of using intoxicated drinks will be presented.

1. The Meaning of the Word “*Surāmerayamajjappamādaṭṭhāna*”

The compound word “*surāmerayamajjappamādaṭṭhāna*” can be divided into three parts: *surā* – intoxicating liquor, *meraya* – fermented liquor, *majjappamādaṭṭhāna* – the cause of heedlessness.¹ In other way, *surā* – being brave, alerting (liquor), *meraya* – being fermented (alcohol) and *majja* – being heedless (other drinks and drugs exception of liquor and alcohol). Intoxicating liquor (*surā*) causes the mind of drinkers to be courage and alert. Five kinds of intoxicating liquor are as follows: the liquor made of rice powder, the liquor made from cooked rice, the liquor made of snacks, the liquor made of yeast powder and the liquor made of myrobalan etc.² These five kinds of intoxicating liquor are made in the ancient. In making them, the liquors and the alcoholic solid made by various ways in order to be courage and brave mind are also included in the intoxicating liquor.

Fermented liquor (*meraya*) causes the mind of drinkers to be intoxicated and lethargic. These are also five kinds³ as follows: the fermented liquor made of flowers, the fermented liquor made of fruits, the fermented liquor made of honey, the fermented liquor made of sugar canes, molasses and sugar, and the fermented liquor made of three kinds of fruit – eastern gooseberry, myrobalan, and species of gooseberry-like. In making these five kinds of fermented liquor, these included things are put into a pot, mixed with water and kept for many days. The difference between the intoxicating liquor and the fermented liquor is fermenting for a few days and fermenting for many days.

Besides these five kinds of intoxicating liquor and fermented liquor, opium, cannabis, fermentative liquor, intoxicating preparation of fermented glutinous rice, beer, fermented

¹ Ratana.224.

² Vin II.146; DA III.127; VibhA,365.

³ SA III.334.

drink made from toddy sap, hemp and heroin are named “*majja*” because of the cause of heedlessness.

2. Other Drugs apart from Liquor

The intoxicating drugs apart from liquor are the drugs that cause numbness of the brain nerves or intoxicate or cause harm to the body of the drug users. In addition the drug users become addicted to the drug with both mind and body and the users become unable to withstand without taking the drug. The following are the drugs which are included in the list of narcotic drugs.

(1) Opiate Type - Substances produced from poppy and opium and potent medicines that cause intoxication and lethargy like opium-like medicines are, for examples, opium, morphine, heroin, codeine, methadone, and pethidine.

(2) Cocaine Type - Substance that is produced from cocaine plant is, for example, cocaine.

(3) Synthetic Narcotics Type - Synthetic narcotics that are produced by compounding chemicals are the medicines that are effective like pethidine and morphine which were discovered by two German chemists forty years ago. For example methadone, normethadone, etc. Although it was advertised that the medicine would not produce addiction when this medicine was first permitted to sell, it causes addiction in practice.

(4) Cannabis Type - There are many kinds of cannabis that are produced from cannabis plant. They are called by various names. They are hashish, the seeds of cannabis obtained from the top part of female cannabis plant, liquid cannabis, marijuana and ganja. The intoxicating potency that is contained in cannabis is called T.H.C. (Tetrahydro Cannabinol). It causes intoxication according to the quantity of T.H.C. Liquid cannabis is the most dreadful cannabis as it contains up to 60% T.H.C.

If one is addicted to the drugs mentioned above, they cause intoxication and lethargy. Intoxication or lethargy in turn causes forgetfulness of wholesome deeds. If medicines such as inciting pills, stimulants, sedatives and sleeping pills are used more than prescribed amount, they all are intoxicants.

3. Different Styles of Using Alcohol

Intoxicating drinks and fermented liquor are used with different purpose as follows:

1. using the medicine inclusive of alcohol
2. using alcohol alone as medicine
3. using for sensual enjoyment

4. using for courage oneself to commit immoral action¹.

Drinking alcohol appropriately is a kind of nutriment. One gram of alcohol can give seven calories for the body. That is why it is used in the cold countries for getting warm. If it is used appropriately, it will be supportive for coming out of the digestive liquid from the stomach. As per *Utubhojanasaṅgaha* text, intoxicating drinks (surā) makes a man fat and good in urination and defecation; thus using it alone as a medicine is not guilty. However, it is the improper use even as a medicine for those, who are not good health and who strictly observes the precepts. Using of those, who want to enjoy the taste of it, is just partaking misuse of sense. Using of those, who want to courage himself to commit immoral actions, is the biggest fault. Using other narcotic drugs should be taken in the same faults of using alcohol.

4. The Factors of Taking Intoxicant

Abstaining from taking intoxicating drinks and drugs is the precept should be observed always (*nicca sīla*) by every person. In observing this precept, one's morality is broken or not should be judged by the following four factors.² These are:

- (i) being intoxicated drinks or liquor,
- (ii) having desire for drinking the intoxicated drinks or liquor,
- (iii) making effort to drink the intoxicated drinks or liquor, and
- (iv) taking the intoxicated drinks or liquor. If one fulfills these four factors, the precept is demolished.

5. Different Views Concerning the Decision to be taken as a Course of Action or not in Using Intoxicating Drinks and Liquor

In using intoxicating drinks and liquor, different views concerning the decision to be taken as a way of action or not can be seen in some *Pāḷi* texts, commentaries (*aṭṭhakathā*), sub-commentaries (*ṭīkā*) and other literary composition (*ganthantara*).

Corresponding to the concept of the believers in kamma and its result (*kammavādī*), who believe breaking the precepts is immoral actions, in the *Aṅguttaranikāya*³, it is expressed that one committed five kinds of action such as killing any living being, stealing other's properties etc., will be sent to the hell, animal world and hungry ghost world. At least, when he was born in the human world after his death, he will be mad. In the *Khuddakanikāya*

¹ A III.78.

² Khu A.21; It A.221.

³ A III.78.

aṭṭhakathā, it is said that the result of breaking five precepts such as killing others etc., will convey to sending to the woeful states (*apāyaduggati*). In the *Sammohavinodanī aṭṭhakathā*¹, five kinds of immoral volition (*akusala cetanā*) are ways of action (*kamma*), *kamma* is the way leading to the woeful abodes; on seeing that said, it should be assumed that drinking alcohol is an immoral action (*akusala kamma*). The Most Venerable Ledi Sayadaw² also said that just as jealousy (*issā*), envy (*macchariya*), doubt (*vicikicchā*) are not included in the ten kinds of immoral action though, these impure minds cause to be conceived in the woeful abodes, thus these impure minds are put into the ten kinds of immoral action appropriately, likewise, using intoxicating drinks and liquor cause to be conceived in the woeful abodes, thus this immoral action are put into the ten kinds of immoral action appropriately. For the mentioned above, even though no crime is committed after using intoxicating drinks and liquor, for this action able to send to the woeful states, using intoxicating drinks and liquor is taken as a way of action.

Corresponding to the concept of the believers, who believe breaking the precepts is not immoral actions, they said the words in the *Aṅguttaranikāya* mention only to be obtainable to the woeful states by drinking alcohol; it should not be assumed that reaching the hell etc., is the result of drinking alcohol just for good health; it should be assumed that reaching the hell etc., is the result of committing misdeeds one did after drinking alcohol. Venerable *Janakābhivamsa*³ also explains that it is certain that just drinking alcohol cannot be the way of immoral action (*akusalakamma*). In accordance with his point of view, if there is the way of immoral action, certainly the result of conceiving in the woeful states will be obtained as the ability of producing (*janaka satti*); now it is not definitely right; some people's drinking alcohol cannot give the result of conceiving in the woeful states, but others' drinking alcohol give the result of conceiving in the woeful states.

The action of using intoxicating drinks and drugs is not directly included in the ten kinds of immoral action but the main cause of committing immoral actions. It is because even for one with soft and gentle mind as soon as he drinks alcohol, he is never reluctant to kill, speak a lie, speak a harsh speech, commit sexual misconduct, rob and steal too. He does not hesitate to do any misdeed by means of intoxicating drinks. That is why, the action of using

¹ Sh A.366.

² Sīlavi.126.

³ Ratana.225-6.

intoxicating drinks and drugs is seemed to be taken as the way of action in the most of religious texts.

6. The Faults of the Drinkers

In *Singālovāda sutta*¹, six kinds of fault of a drinker taught by the Buddha are described as follows:

1. losing properties,
2. making quarreled,
3. getting the disease of being hung-over,
4. being bad reputation,
5. being shameless, and
6. being weak intellect. These six kinds of fault are the faults definitely encountered for a drinker in this very life and after death, he will be sent to the four woeful states.

7. Disadvantages from the Behind of Using Intoxicating Drinks and Drugs

In the world today, there is no country, which encounters the danger of facing various kinds of problems dealt with using intoxicating drinks and drugs. Car accidents, injuring in the work-site, increasing the minus degree of health condition such as harming the limbs and mental problems, and boosting crimes are interconnected with using intoxicating drinks and drugs in one way or another. Other narcotic drugs such as heroin, hemp and cocaine are traded world widely by the greedy men. The World Health Organization (WHO), the International Narcotic Drugs Controlling Board (INCB) and the government of countries including the United States of America (USA) have counteracted in harmony in this present, yet the great number of the narcotic addicts are still rising. The consequence of illegal buying and selling of narcotic drugs is the harm from a man, his family, his relatives up to his country and the entire world.

Drinking alcohol and ruining wealth are always in pairs. As per the said “the words of a drinker are unbelievable”, no body believe a drinker’s speech and dissociate from him as a good friend. No society will treat him well; as a result, he will not gain any success in business for he is isolated from other people. For that reason, the Buddha preached five causes to ruin wealth inclusive of using intoxicating drinks and drugs². He educated that for one, who uses intoxicating drinks and drugs, the unarisen wealth cannot be occurred and the arisen wealth can be ruined.

¹ DA III.148.

² DA III.148.

Alcohol makes health to spoil. It is right that alcohol can be used as a medicine, but its side effects are much more than the benefit. Drinking alcohol causes the disease of impotency, swell of stomach, swell of liver, kidneys and lungs, coughing with blood and insanity. Furthermore, alcohol causes increasing the disease one has already had¹.

The Buddha had seen the disadvantages of the users of intoxicating drinks and drugs will be suffered in this present life and their future consequences will be floated in the rounds of rebirths (*samsāra*) since 2500 years ago. Because of seeing that, the Buddha seriously condemned using intoxicating drinks and drugs. Besides, the Buddha made prohibition to use intoxicating drinks and drugs to monks and laities. On the other way, the Buddha praised that abstaining from using intoxicating drinks and drugs as an auspiciousness². The Buddha preached various kinds of bad consequence of using intoxicating drinks and drugs in proper time.

8. Taking Intoxicating and Crime

The threatening of several problems is encountered in the world today. World citizens have been facing various problems such as contending nuclear, conflict of military affairs, Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome (AIDS), cracking the layer of ozone and climate changes. In competition with those problems, also there is a danger able to destroy the world. It is the danger of using intoxicating drinks and drugs. In the world, the numbers of users in taking intoxicating drinks and drugs are gradually boosted. So long as boosting the numbers of users in taking intoxicating drinks and drugs, the dominance of law and prosperousness of human world become progressively decreased. The immoral actions are also steadily in abundance.

A drinker acts rudely like mad without remembering the virtue of the triple gem, parents and teachers by means of alcohol meanwhile he was intoxicating. At that moment, he shamelessly performs ill manner from using abusive language up to quarreling and easily committing various kinds of immoral deeds, therefore rather than having friends, he has enemies³. Intoxicating drinks and drugs has the nature of making a user to be devoid of mindfulness and comprehension (*satisampajañña*). One devoid of mindfulness and comprehension cannot observe morality to be perfect. Doubtlessly he will violate misdeeds and foolish manners. The cases such as car accidents, stealing, robbing and terrorizing have

¹ D&TM.55.

² Vin II.146; D II.155

³ JA II. 277.

been increasing because of the users of intoxicating drinks and drugs. In accordance with the survey, it is found that in using intoxicating drinks and drugs, 50% of crimes are committed while using intoxicating drinks and drugs (or) while those things are overpowering the users¹.

To sum up, if a rich man drinks alcohol, he will be a unwise rich man; if a king drinks, he will be a bad king; if a servant drinks, he will not be a good servant; if a farmer or a worker, he will be foolish one. That is why, whatever one drinks alcohol for his likeness or for his courage himself to commit the evil, he should be called the stupid one or the sinner.

Discussion

When viewed from the social aspect, the use of drugs such as intoxicating liquor produces many consequences. When a drunkard is not in harmony with human environment, he is found to be an outcast. One becomes unwanted by the parents and the teachers who are the closest, disliked by one's wife, and at least disrespected by one's children. Although a drunkard is associated due to exigencies such as the accounts of social relation, education, economy, etc., he will not receive goodwill and friendship.

When viewed from economical aspect, the use of drugs and intoxicants is found to degenerate not only morality but also economy. A person who drinks liquor excessively will not be associated by the social environment with special attention. A person who cannot get on well with social environment will not be successful in business. Nowadays, there are liquors which are worth lakhs. If a person craves for the momentary sense of taste he is bound to be in utter economic ruin.

When viewed from the aspect of hygiene, one who drinks liquor excessively can be afflicted with the following diseases. One who drinks liquor can be afflicted with paralysis, swelling of stomach, enlargement of liver, enlargement of kidneys, pneumonia, tuberculosis and dementia. The children of the persons who drink liquor excessively can be afflicted with diseases. In children's lunatic asylum, the drunkard's children are found to be afflicted with disease about 41 out of 100. Excessive drinking of liquor worsens the diseases that have already been afflicted. As the persons who are addicted to liquor do not desire to eat foods, they tend to suffer from gastritis, swelling of small intestines, vomiting and loosening of bowels.

When viewed from the aspect of morality, as the liquor has the nature of shaking the inner sanctum in the stream of consciousness and lack of mindfulness, the person who lacks mindfulness is incapable of observing the prestige and morality securely.

¹ Nara.75.

Regarding the use of liquor and drugs, some persons consider that the use of drugs such as liquors, intoxicants makes the users accomplish unwholesome actions by lying, sexual misconduct and killing other's life. Some consider that the use of drugs such as liquor, intoxicants, etc. does not accomplish unwholesome actions. It accomplishes unwholesome actions if it is followed by misconduct. Some persons consider that the use of drugs such as liquor is craving for tactile sensual pleasures. The liquor is the craving for gustatory pleasure. Just as the action of tactile sensual pleasure is worthy of blame, the use of drugs such as liquor is also worthy of blame. It is an evil conduct. As drinking liquor as a medicine is truly necessary, drinking liquor is not for enjoying the special taste. Therefore it is considered to be not worthy of blame.

In truth the use of drugs such as intoxicating liquors is committing an offence that is regarded by people to be guilty. In using these things, it is not based on wholesome consciousness. Mostly it is unwholesome consciousness that is based on craving for gustatory pleasure. It is drinking with unwholesome volition before an act of charity to pluck up courage. Therefore the use of drugs such as intoxicating liquor is included as one of the causes for commitment of misdeeds easily. In addition, drinking liquor has detrimental effects on social relation, economy and health of the drug users. In order to prevent the detrimental effects growing of drug plants and production, transportation, and distribution of drugs must be cleared from the sources.

When the hindering, prevention and clearing of the use of drugs are analytically studied, the main factors are found to be as follows:-

- (1) Termination of growing and production of drug plants,
- (2) Growing of other cash crops in the place of drug plants,
- (3) Prohibition by Law, taking action and passing punishment to persons who are involved in production, transportation, distribution and dealing of drugs,
- (4) Educating the public the dangers and detrimental effects of drug abuse,
- (5) Improvement of human environment after analyzing basic factors of drug abuses,
- (6) Rehabilitation after medical treatment of the drug addicts.

Therefore in order to be replete from all sides such as social relation, economy, health, etc. the danger of drugs must be unitedly defended and eradicated by all citizens.

Conclusion

In this paper, the nature of intoxicating drinks and drugs, the faults of the drinker and narcotic users and the disadvantages behind from using intoxicating drinks and drugs are already mentioned above. However, the faults of using intoxicating drinks and drugs are emphasized,

the benefits of avoiding them are excluded in the above description. The reason is that escaping from the available faults by using intoxicating drinks and drugs can be simply guessed as the advantages of refraining from using intoxicating drinks and drugs. The mind of ordinary people (*puthujjana*) is usually tending to the immoral deeds. In line with that said, as people extremely enjoy using intoxicating drinks and drugs, which is the misuse of senses – sensual enjoyment in taste (*rasa kāma*) and sensual enjoyment in touch (*phoṭṭhabba kāma*), certainly the entire human society will be covered with evils. So long as covering evils, the whole world will be no peace; individually one and one's environment will be no peace too. With the aim to be peaceful world, after observing the ill nature of using intoxicating drinks and drugs, the Lord Buddha pinpointed that peacefulness of the world will be benefitted by avoiding intoxicating drinks and drugs. Corresponding to the Buddha's direction, only when keeping away from using intoxicating drinks and drugs from an individual to each human society, a country's economics, social affairs, politics and high ethics, which are the aspiration of human beings, are able to develop effectively and living standards are also able to progress and to be still. On seeing those good results, everyone should be abide by the precept of abstaining from using intoxicating drinks and drugs (*surāmerayamajjapamādaṭṭhāna veramaṇi sikkhā*) laid down by the Buddha. One should follow, therefore, that precept strictly for the obtainment of non-violence in one's life, one's family and one's state. This study will be contributory to the observation of morality in a country's economy, social relation and politics.

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Abbreviations

A III	Aṭṭhaka Navaka Dasaka Nipāta Pāli, (Aṅguttara Nikāya)
DA II	Mahāvagga Aṭṭhakathā (Dīgha Nikāya)
DA III	Pāthika Vagga Aṭṭhakathā (Dīgha Nikāya)
D&TM	Drug and Traditional Medicine
It A	Itivuttaka Aṭṭhakathā
JA II	Jātaka Aṭṭhakathā (Dutiyo bhāgo)
Khu A	Khuddakapāṭha Aṭṭhakathā
Nara	Narasāgara

Paññā	Paññāvīmaṃsana Kathā
Ratana	The Honor of Ratana
SA III	Salāyatanavagga Mahāvagga Saṃyutta Aṭṭhakathā (Tatiyo bhāgo)
ShA	Sammohavinodanī Aṭṭhakathā
Sīlavi	Sīlaviniccaya
Vin II	Pācittiya Pāli (Vinaya Piṭaka)
VibhA	Sammohavinodanī Aṭṭhakathā

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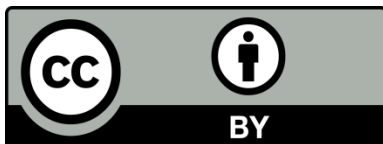
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