

AN ANALYSIS OF BUDDHIST ETHICS IN SYNSHAI LITERATURE

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Abstract

The purposes of the study were 1) to study the problems of ethics and well-related practice in Synshai Literature, 2) to study the Buddhist ethics in Synshai Literature, and 3) to analyze the considerable standard and ethical objectives of Synshai Literature. This study was a documentary research in which the data collection was by studying the Palm-leaf manuscripts 2016 of Synshai Literature of Khonkaen Synshai Literature transcribed by Mr. Bunkirt Phimvaramethakul and colleagues, and secondary data was by other Synshai manuscripts. The research method was logical consider and analysis, synthesis of all data for new knowledge, and used Descriptive Analysis to present the research result.

The research results were found that an ethical problem in Synshai literature involved with stealing, getting married with many wives, using black magic, and committing adultery. Well-related practice among people was divided into two levels: a domestic level and a relative level. To describe such an ethical problem depended upon Buddhist ethics which was Buddhist knowledge dealt with desirable behavior or manners that people should follow under the standard of Five Precepts. A morality of precept or Dhamma of precept and Buddhist morality consisted of suffering, sexual craving, and previous action under the moral standard of Ten Virtues of the King, and Eightfold Noble Path. The Buddhist doctrine for national management under the standard of ethics stated to the desirable and undesirable ethics.

The standard of ethics consideration was divided into two types: 1) the standard relating to Buddhism, i.e. an intention or a purpose to make things wholesome or unwholesome according to moral laws, and 2) the associated standard or the inferior standard which was dealt with conscience principle, what is good or bad, knowing what should behave, and expe-

rienced persons' resolution referring to a brainy person in governing the expression of people in community. The purpose of action in Synshai Literature was to close the gap between a person and associated people and be adorable of a mother, a father, a son and a daughter, and so on.

Keywords: Buddhist Ethics, Synshai Literature, Well-related Practice, considerable standard, ethical objectives

Introduction

Literature was the legacy since the ancient time and was the reflection of social background in each era; so it illustrated to the new generation in gaining several knowledge, such as tradition, culture, way of live, and ideology. There were various kinds of literature, i.e. Buddhist literature, historical literature, and so on. Nevertheless, the scheme of literature were mostly adapted by storytelling: ancient stories, Jataka stories, or folk tell. Therefore, literature was the completed works built up very queerly in writing whether or not in oral telling (Suthiwong Phonphaiboon, 1982: rational). In Esan region, most of literature were from Jataka in which it was found that palm-leaf book was a noble literature, for example, Four Champa Trees, Tao Kam Ka Dam (Tawat Punnotok, 1979: 26). One of the important famous literature in Lan Xang and Esan region was Sang Synshai. According to the valuable characteristic of lofty literature which was the effects of the capability of arts and Esan ancestors' composition indicated the way of live and conscience of Sang Synshai, it could generate many uses: to read in funeral, to preach for Buddhists, to perform in Morlum (Esan local performance), and shadow puppet. Sang Synshai was noble in language using; content and literary style were valuable in the arts of literature. In addition, it was worth in knowledge to perform in Esan community up until now, for instance, in political science, aesthetics, tradition, culture, and so on (Chinda Duangjai, 1963: preface).

According to Sang Synshai, it was known that it was the representative of all Esan literatures because it was written with long story and was famous extensively. In this regard, it was inscribed as written literature of the poem, which was mostly written as long story (Jarawan Dhammawat, 1978: 18). Moreover, Sang Synshai had been called many names: Sinlapa Shai, Sin Saiya, or Synsai. The composer of Synshai put the plot and characters very suitable, especially the leading actors based on the Buddhist Jataka that let Bodhisattva born as Synshai to perform meritorious acts

with various beneficial contents (Theeraphon Namwong, 2014: A).

The extension of Synshai Literature appeared in palm-leaf book was several in the Northeastern: Morlum, shadow puppet, temple wall painting. At present, Synshai Literature was spread in United States of America published name as Sinxay Renaissance of Lao-Thai Epic Hero (Whittlesrey and Baythong Sayouwin Whittlesrey, 2015).

The researcher had gathered five books of Synshai which were 1) Sang Synshai, the excellent literature of Laos by Tao Pangkham, the composer of Sisattanak and transcribed by Sila Werawong, 2) the exquisite of Synshai Derm Book, the masterpiece of Tao Pangkham, synthesized by Mr. Thongdam Moon-Armart, 3) Sang Sinlapa Shai, Esan excellent work, by Tao Pangkham, arranged by Mun Chongrean, 4) Sang Synshai, composed by reechar Phinthing published for 200 years of Ubon City Commemoration, and 5) Sang Sinlapa Saiya, composed by Phra Ariyanuwat (Aree Khemmajari and Sowit Bamrunghak, 2015: 73-86). Every literary style was in accordance with Buddhist teaching because Synshai Literature was known as Buddhist literature that stated to the regulation, i.e. brother must take care of both sister and brother as if being parents and help each other like the message “Phraya Kussarat has appointed his sister, Nang Sumontha, to govern a half city. He loves her as if she is his eyes and gives her two nurses” (Mun Chingrean: 4).”

As mentioned message, it was conformed to the ethics called duty: the duty as parents, relatives, couple, son and daughter, and commander and followers (Wasin Intarasara; 2006: 17). If it was mentioned according to Buddhist principle, it was called Buddhist ethics; so it would be the regulation of ethics, which Buddha had been preached to be the standard of human behavior stated from basic, intermediate, and supreme level in order that human being could live the live valuably as much as he/she could perform: being perfect and knowledgeable person with worth happiness. In addition, the Buddha divided Buddhist ethics into three levels: basic, intermediate, and supreme.

According to Synshai Literature, the researcher had studied for many years; so the researcher could comprehend and know the behaviors of each characters in terms of well-social interaction, i.e. Phraya Kussarat’s behavior to his sister, Nang Sumontha, grandchild’s behavior to Aunt Sumontha, or even Yak Kummaphan’s behavior to Nang Sumontha,

in terms of ethical problem, i.e. in case that Phraya Kussarat drove out Nang Loon to the jungle with Synshai since being child, in case that six rulers deceived Synshai and pushed him down to the valley, and in case that Yak Kummaphan kidnapped Nang Sumontha be his wife. In this respect, it made the researcher would like to bring Buddhist ethics to synthesize through action, behavior, acting, habit, and ethical problem of Synshai actors. Thus, the researcher put the title as “An Analysis of Buddhist Ethics in Synshai Literature.” The research also expected to see the local wisdom appeared in Synshai by organizing the content and concluding the important point to comprehend easily and to be able to apply in the real practice that could resolve the ethical problem at present.

Objectives

To study the problems of ethics and well-related practice in Synshai Literature,

To study the Buddhist ethics in Synshai Literature

To analyze the considerable standard and ethical objectives of Synshai Literature

Method

The research was Documentary Research emphasized on studying, analyzing, transcribing, and synthesizing the data from related documents of Synshai. It could be divided into eleven procedures as follows:

1. Surveying the documents and books that were copied, transcribed, composed, and arranged entitle Sang Synshai, Sang Sinlapa Shai, Sin Saiya, and Synsha,

2. Collecting the documents and books mentioned above,

3. Choosing both primary Synshai books by Ajarn Boonkert and Napaphorn Phimworamethakun and colleagues (Palm-leaf book of Khonkaen) and all secondary documents of Ajarn Mun Chongrean, transcribed by Preechar Phinthong,

4. Reading and studying all documents, especially the one which was composed by Bunkert Phimworamethakun and colleagues and Mun

Chongrean and Preechar Phinthong,

5. Translating primary documents by inviting Professor Suphat Boriboon, retired teacher and experts in Synshai Literature from Savathee Village, the village of Synshai by temple wall painting, to correct the interpretation as well as compare the literary style of Asst. Prof. Songwut Siwilai,

6. Analyzing issues and contents following the table of content,

7. Writing issues and contents following the table of content,

8. Ways of writing research work with interpreting, analyzing, and synthesizing,

9. Ways of presenting and organizing the orders of contents; the researcher presented by carrying principally the chosen issues in the study, citing the translations, showing the exchanging idioms, and comparing copied idiom to exchanging idioms by ordering small Thai alphabets on the left hand side and exchanging Thai alphabets in contrast according to the reader,

10. Writing orderly as in the table of content by considering and getting approved by the experts of Buddhist Research Institute, Mahachulalongkornrajavidyalaya University, main campus,

11. Analyzing and synthesizing all contents as new knowledge and foundation for affirming and applying the research results to the next research on and on.

Conclusion

The study of Synshai Literature helped the researcher in answering the questions according to the objectives. One of the objectives was focused on studying the ethical problems in Synshai Literature: the result was that the problem was according to the morality of Buddhism, which was about action or behavior of the physical term. So it caused the irritation that made people lived their lives hardily. Such a problem was expected to bring Pāṇātipāta: doing harm, destroy, or killing, of which Tenfold Akusalakammapha (way of bad action) to erase bad things. When mentioning the ethical problem in Synshai, there were three situations: kidnap-

ping Nang Sumontha by Yak Kummaphan, asking for seven daughters of Nanthasetthi to be the queens by Phraya Kussarat, and copulating with Nang Keangkham by Synshai. Furthermore, there also were three well-related practices in Synshai Literature: living thing, supernatural, and social relation, i.e. black magic and astrology. In this research, the researcher focused on the relation of living thing that was human live with the following behaviors. 1) Domestic level, there were in cases that Phraya Kussarat commanded to follow back Nang Sumontha to Peng Chan City, and Nang Loon taught her child in living carefully and being conscious of a woman. 2) Relative level, there were in cases that Sang Thong informed Synshai, his brother, to wait for him outside Anorat City when he went for detecting all about Yak Kummaphan, and Aunt Sumontha tenderly embraced her nephew, Synshai, because he was descended the same as hers.

The second objective was focused on studying the ethics in Synshai Literature. It was found that Buddhist ethics was the knowledge system of Buddhism dealt with desirable action or behavior based on Six Charitas (intrinsic nature of a person) of which the important principle of Buddhism. It was because Charita was about the roam of human mind: it was human had done things by the mind. Buddhist ethics in Synshai Literature were the principle under three patterns in following. 1) Moral pattern explained by Five Precepts, i.e. Nang Loon hoped to get meritorious child with her pregnancy and she, herself, prayed so that she had Sang Thong and Synshai, 2) Dasarājadhamma (Tenfold code of the king), i.e. Synshai gave a sermon to Yak Kummaphan and nagas and mentioned Tana and Silā. And 3) Desirable ethics, i.e. Yak Kummaphan showed his love to Nang Sumontha by finding her foods and making her body fragrant with a small mountain among his castle; bad ethics, Yak Kummaphan kidnapped Nang Sumontha to be his wife and he was killed then.

In analyzing the considerable standard and ethical objectives of Synshai Literature, it was found that this study was in accordance with Buddhist ethics that was the intention in Karma with Kusala and Puñña instead of focusing only on good things, and with Akusala and Pāpa instead of focusing only on bad things to do well. The goal of ethics in Synshai was emphasized on action to show the behavior to each other that was doing good things among human being. There were three levels of behavior: 1) individual level, i.e. Synshai taught Yak Kummaphan in doing right things, 2) domestic level, i.e. Phraya Kussarat organized his three daugh-

ters to get married with three men and gave them the important metropolis to be under his governance, and 3) relative level, members who were descended the same lineage (Pāli: *Ñātisālohita*), i.e. Synshai behaved to Sidachan's grandchild, daughter of Yak Kummaphan and Nang Sumontha, in going down to the nether land of naga so that Sidachan could see her mother again, Nang Sumontha, as her expectation.

Recommendations

According to the research results, the researcher had gained the issues very clearly. Furthermore, there were also three things of analyzing the behavior based on Buddhism for the next research in the following: 1) to study Buddhist principles under the moralities and ethics to see wider, 2) to study the comparison between Synshai Literature and current ethical problems, and 3) to study the synthesis of ethical goal in Synshai Literature towards child improvement in current Thai society.

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