



THE QUALITIES OF HUMAN BEING

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There is a saying used to speak by Myanmar people is “educated person and good person”. So, we can categorize the person in three group: 1. Educated and bad person, 2. Good and uneducated person, and educated and good person. If we want to develop in life, we then need to be educated person ourselves or need to find educated person. You can see that everything great in the world is made by those person. If you want to live in life safely and in dignity, you then must be a good and moral person or must find that person. But to be a peaceful, happy and wealthy life, we must be or find educated and good or moral person. Because those who are educated but not moral is more dangerous than those bad persons who are not educated as well as those who are good in moral but not educated also cannot do to develop in life.

So what qualities do we need to have to be educated and good moral person? Or honorable man? To get the answers for this question, we need to look at the conversation between the Buddha and Brahmin and householder of Campā, named Soṇadaṇḍa. “While the Buddha, accompanying by his great multitude and five hundred following monks, dwelt on the bank of Gaggarā Lake in Campa. Brahmins and householders of campa in vast numbers were heading to the Buddha. Just then, the Brahmin Sonadanda went up to top terrace of his house for his midday rest. Brahman Sonadanda, seeing those groups of Brahmins and householders heading to Gaggara's lotus-pond, asked his steward the reason.

After knowing the reason, he wishes to join them. So, asked his steward to inform those Brahmins and householders that "Please wait, gentlemen, the Brahmin Sonadanda will

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come to see the ascetic Gotama." Soon after his steward left with his message to convey them, some Brahmans about five hundred in number from various provinces were in Campa for some business came to him, hearing that Sonadanda intended to visit the ascetic Gotama and they, saying in various way, try to discourage him going to the Buddha.

They said "Sir, you should not do so, because if you approaches ascetic Gotama, the glory and reputation of Gotama will increase, and the glory and reputation of you will decrease, The Reverend Sonadanda, you are well-born on both the mother's and the father's side, of pure descent to the seventh generation, unbroken, of irreproachable birth, and therefore you should not go to the ascetic Gotama, but rather the ascetic Gotama should come to you."

And another Brahmin furthermore said "The Reverend Sonadanda, you are possessed of great wealth and resources...you are a scholar, versed in the mantras, accomplished in the Three Vedas, a skilled expounder of the rules and rituals, the lore of sounds and meanings and, fifthly, oral tradition - an expounder, fully versed in natural philosophy and the marks of a Great Man, so it is no reasonable that such you going to ascetic Gotama, but rather the ascetic Gotama should come to you."

And they, one after another, continue saying their opinions as follow: "The Reverend Sonadanda is handsome, good-looking, pleasing, of the most beautiful complexion, in form and countenance like Brahma, of no mean appearance. He is virtuous, of increasing virtue, endowed with increasing virtue. He is well-spoken, of pleasing address, polite, of pure and clear enunciation, speaking to the point. He is the teacher's teacher of many, teaching the mantras to three hundred youths, and many young men come from different districts and regions seeking to learn the mantras in his presence, desirous to learn them from him".

"He is aged, grown old, venerable, advanced in years, long past his youth, whereas the ascetic Gotama is youthful and newly gone forth as a wanderer. The Reverend Sonadanda is esteemed, made much of, honored, revered, worshipped by King Seniya Bimbisara and by the Brahmin Pokkharasati. He lives at Campa, a populous place, full of grass, timber, water and corn, which has been given to him by King Seniya Bimbisara of Magadha as a royal gift, and with royal powers. This being so, it is not proper that he should visit the ascetic Gotama, but rather the ascetic Gotama should visit him".

Their discouragement concerned with going to Buddha is endless. Brahmin Sonadanda then said to them the glory of the Buddha and convinced them why they should go and visit Samana Gautamas follow: "all brethren, wait, listen to me please, friends, the
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venerable Gotama is also truly well born on both sides, of pure descent through the mother and the father back through seven generations, with no slur put upon him, and no reproach in respect of birth, has gone forth into the religious life, giving up the great clan of his relations, has gone forth into the religious life, giving up much money and gold, treasure both buried and above the ground, has gone forth from the household life into the homeless state while he was still a young man, without a grey hair on his head, in the beauty of his early manhood, cut off his hair and beard, and donned the yellow robes, and went out from the household life into the homeless state though his father and mother were unwilling, and wept, their cheeks being wet with tears, and the SamanaGotama is, also truly handsome, pleasant to look upon, inspiring trust, gifted with great beauty of complexion, fair in color, fine in presence, stately to behold, virtuous with the virtue of the Arahats, good and virtuous, gifted with goodness and virtue,

Friends, furthermore, the SamanaGotama is honoured, held of weight, esteemed, and venerated and revered alike by SeniyaBimbisâra, the king of Magadhâ, by Pasenadi the king of Kosala, and by Pokkharasâdi the Brahmin etc....,

Friends, let's look at from the social point of view, now SamanaGotama has now arrived at Kampâ and is staying on the shores of the Gaggarâ Lake, But all Samanas and Brahmans who come into our village borders are our guests. And guests we ought to esteem and honour, to venerate and revere. And as he is now so come, he ought to be so treated, as a guest, all friends what do you think that I should visit Samana Gautama or he should visit me? In fact, these are only so far as I know but not all his glory, his excellence is beyond measure”.

And when he had thus spoken, those Brahmans said to him: "The reverend Sonadanda, if SamanaGotama is such as wise person as you declared, it would be fitting for a believing clansman to go with a bag (for the provisions for the journey) on his back. They then all go to call on the SamanaGotama together.

When arriving at Gaggara pond, Sonadanda worried about the question and answer thinking: "if I cannot put question in proper and right way nor answer I give to SamanGotama is satisfying so, the company might despise me, saying: "Sonadanda is a fool, he has no sense, even he cannot put a proper question to the SamanaGotama nor he is able to satisfy the SamanaGotama by his explanation of the problem put " "And if they do so, all my reputation would decrease; and with my reputation my incomings would grow less, for what we have to enjoy, that depends on our reputation." He was going to turn back without meeting Buddha,
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but on the other hand, if he do so, his company might despise him saying: "Foolish is this Sonadanda and inexpert, though obstinate with pride, he is so afraid that he dare not call on the SamanaGotama." So, how can he turn back after having come so far?" But if they did so, my reputation would decrease; and with my reputation my incomings would grow less". He is in dilemma.

However, he approached the Buddha and exchanged courtesies with him, and sat down to one side. Some of the Brahmins and householders made obeisance to the Lord, some exchanged courtesies with him, some saluted him with joined palms, some announced their names and clan, and some sat down to one side in silence.

So Sonadanda took his seat thinking as before set out and he added to himself: "oh! If the ascetic Gotama would ask me a question only from my own field of the Three Vedas! Then I could give him an answer that would satisfy him!" And the Buddha knowing or reading his mind, thought: "This Sonadanda is afflicted in his heart. It would be better question to him from his own field as a teacher of the Three Vedas!" So he said to Sonadanda: "By how many qualities do Brahmins recognize a Brahmin? How would one declare truthfully and without falling into falsehood: "I am a Brahmin?"

Then Sonadanda thought: "Now what I wanted, hoped for, desired and longed for has happened... Now I can give him an answer that will satisfy him."

Straightening up, and looking around the assembly, he said: "Reverend Gotama, there are five such qualities... What are they? A Brahmin is well-born on both the mother's and father's side, of pure descent to the seventh generation... he is a scholar versed in the mantras... he is handsome, pleasing... he is virtuous... he is learned and wise. These are the five qualities of a true Brahmin."

"Well done, but Brahmin, if one of these qualities were omitted, could not one be recognized as a true Brahmin, being possessed of four of these qualities?"

"Oh! Reverend Gotama, It is possible. We could leave out appearance, for what does that matter? If a Brahmin had the other four qualities he could be recognized as a true Brahmin."

The Buddha likewise asked one question after another one up to the last two-Sila (virtue) and Paññā(wisdom). Sonadanda also answered each question asked by the Buddha: "it is possible, we could leave out the mantras, If he had the other three qualities," "We could leave out birth, If a Brahmin is virtuous, of increasing virtue... and if he is learned and wise, then he can be recognized as a true Brahmin and truthfully claim to be so."

At this the Brahmins said to Sonadanda: "Don't say that, Sonadanda don't say it! The Reverend Sonadanda is decrying appearance, the mantras and birth, he is actually adopting the ascetic Gotama's own words!"

Then the Lord said to the Brahmins: "If you think the Brahmin Sonadanda is not concentrating on his task, is using wrong words, is lacking in wisdom, and is not fit to converse with the ascetic Gotama, then let him cease, and you talk to me. But if you think he is learned, speaks properly, is wise and fit to converse with the ascetic Gotama, then you cease and let him speak."

Then Sonadanda said to the Lord: "Let that be, Reverend Gotama, and be silent. I will answer in this matter." To the Brahmins he said: "Do not say the Reverend Sonadanda is decrying appearance...and adopting the ascetic Gotama's own words! I do not decry appearance, mantras, or birth." Sonadanda said: "Gentlemen, do you see my nephew Angaka was sitting in the assembly?" "Yes, Sir."

"Angaka is handsome, good-looking, pleasing, of supremely fair complexion, in form and countenance like Brahma, of no mean appearance, and there is none in this assembly his equal except the ascetic Gotama. He is a scholar...I was his mantra-teacher. He is well-born on both sides...I know his parents. But if Angaka were to take life, take what is not given, commit adultery, tell lies and drink strong drinks. Then could he be called as a Brahmin? What would good looks, mantras, or birth profit him? Asked by Sonadanda. Everyone were silent. They had no word to reply to him. And he said "it is because a Brahmin is virtuous...because he is wise...on account of these two points that he can truthfully declare: "I am a Brahmin."

The Buddha asked Sonadanda anymore: "But, Brahmin, if one were to omit one of these two points, could one truthfully declare: "I am a Brahmin?" "No, Reverend Gotama. For wisdom is purified by morality, and morality is purified by wisdom: where one is, the other is, the moral man has wisdom and the wise man has morality, and the combination of morality and wisdom is called the highest thing in the world. Just as one hand washes the other, or one foot the other, so wisdom is purified by morality and this combination is called the highest thing in the world."(Dignikāya, Silakkhandavagga, SonadandaSutta)¹

We should, whatever Mundane or secular world or supra-mundane world, act and perform in middle way (MajjimaPtipadā) to live and maintain harmonious and peaceful life. While some educated persons use to say "this is doing business, not opening meditation

center”, the other moral persons use to say “our stomach will be full when we do like this, There will be grass on our tongue, we will never do like this”. Both speeches are extreme.

As mention in the Sonadanda, we, without having the quality of wisdom and morality, cannot be noble persons and educated good moral persons, whatever degrees we have, whatever figures we are and whatever races you came from. We, basing on these wisdom and morality, should act, perform and try to get degrees, to increase our fame of races and to be handsome, good looking and beautiful persons. Then our lives will be peaceful and perfect like a beautiful picture with a good background. Everyone has their respective, individual and unique beauty, dignity, pride, honour and noble. But we, with mindfulness and concentration, needtry to maintain and protect our wisdom and morality which is the most honorable and noblest among them from exchanging with wealth, possession hierarchy and degree.

After listening to Dhamma from the Buddha, Sonadanda and his followers converted to Buddhism in front of the Buddha. I wish that you all would try to be educated moral persons honorable man holding and standing on wisdom and morality.

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