

THE IMPORTANCE OF VIRIYA FOR PERSONAL AND SOCIAL ADVANCEMENT: AN INVESTIGATIVE STUDY

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The main objective of this paper is to show how Buddhism recognizes and values human effort in the achievement of personal and social progress both material and spiritual. Prior to the emergence of Buddhism, some religious leaders like *Makkhaligosāla* in India had expressed his fundamental doctrinal position, stating thus: “*There is no self-power or other-power, there is no power in humans, no strength or force, no vigour or exertion*”. Prof. K.N. Jayatilleke in his *Early Buddhist Theory of Knowledge* described *Makkhaligosāla* as a determinist, and the author adequately discussed deterministic theories that constitute one of the main doctrines of the *Ājīvikas*. According to the *Makkhali*'s doctrinal statement mentioned above, it is very clear that he neglected the value of human effort. However, after Buddhism came into existence, many people in India came to realize that effort (*Viriya*) plays a very significant part in the achievement of secular and religious goals. It is quite evident that no one succeeds without effort. In the *Dasabala-sutta* of *Samyutta-nikāya*, the *Buddha* said that the highest stage is attained through many strengths, energies and exertions. The *Suvāra-sutta* also gives further information on how effort is very important for all living beings to achieve happiness. Moreover, the *Buddha* repeatedly encouraged his disciples to make right effort based on mindfulness so as to bring about an end to all suffering, saying “O Monks! Strive on with diligence! (*Appamādena Sampādettha*)”. In another place, he said, “*Vāyametheva puriso* - true men are always industrious; *Na nibbindeyya paṇḍito* - the wise are never indolent”. It is also said that “*Viriyaṇaṇaṇa kim nāma kammam na sījhati* - to a person with *Viriya*, nothing is impossible”. Furthermore, the *Buddha* urged his followers to intensely make an effort in order that the spiritual goals are accomplished. His own effort at renunciation is explained thus: “Willingly, let only my skin, sinews, and bones remain, and let the flesh and blood dry up on my body, but my energy shall not be released as long as I have not attained what can be attained by manly strength, manly energy, and manly persistence”. The study focuses on the *Theravāda Pāli* Canonical literature including the views of recent scholars in the field of Buddhism. In order to collect data, analytical and critical approaches are used. In addition, the comparative method is also employed where necessary. It is hoped that the findings of the study would enhance knowledge in the field, and provide practical benefits to the pursuits of both the secular and the religious.

Keywords: Viriya, Personal Growth, Human Effort