

The Concept of Justice in Aristotle’s and Theravada Buddhist Ethics

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The word “justice” was often used by the Greeks in a broad way” to embrace all the good acts sanctioned by law and custom. Aristotle’s treatment of the virtues in the *Nicomachean Ethics* is directed towards this notion since virtuous actions are enjoined by law in best points; justice is broadly conceived in lawfulness. In Aristotle’s works (*Nicomachean Ethics, Politics and Rhetoric*) under the light of a peculiar scheme of causal relationship, a total consideration of subjects such as written law, equality, friendship, doctrine of mean is allowed for relating ultimately to justice.

The Buddhist disciplinary law also known by some as Buddhist ecclesiastical law is found in the section of *vinaya* (general sense discipline, and in the special sense of the law and constitution). It is a compendium of law, made for the monks and nuns, but there is no such law made for the benefit of the laity. *Dhamma* (doctrine of righteousness) and *vinaya* are significant for the Buddhist ideas about secular law. The conception of the “rule of righteousness” is extremely important for the Buddhist attitude to a conception of law. The first sermon has been called by the Buddha himself ‘the setting in to motion of the supreme wheel of law’, which cannot be turned back by any religious teacher, angel, God or anyone in the world. The concept of Kamma as a natural law in Buddhism is not different in principle from a law in the natural science.

Buddhist doctrine advocates seeking a permanent state of freedom or liberation, from samsara, a freedom from all bodily existence. Reincarnation must be transcended; the Buddhist refers to this as getting off the wheel – which represents the cyclic process of birth and death. Significantly, such experience for Buddhism is not of primary concern. The goal of Buddhism enlightenment, liberation or the attainment of Buddha hood – is not a temporary condition or experience; rather, temporariness of enlightenment. Samsara is causing suffering (*dukkha*), it is impermanent (*anicca*), as never to be what is was even a moment ago : and all persons, things or beings within it are totally without separate, individual self, devoid of any soul or substance (*anatta*). Our life on earth is a life of continual rounds of birth, old age, decay, death and rebirth and so on. But the soul of man, like he is body, must be cared for and health is to the body as liberation to spirit. This is the essential message of the four truths, and in the *Malunkyaputta sutta* we find the Buddha applying this teaching.

Key words: Justice, Buddha, Aristotle, virtues, Dhamma (Doctrine of righteousness)