

# PREMA MART: LEARNING FROM KAKKARAPATTA (A MARKET TOWN OF KOLIYANS) FOR BUILDING THE SUSTAINABLE ECONOMY

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by Kustiani\*

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## ABSTRACT

*Kakkarapatta is a name of market town of Koliyans. This town was visited by the Buddha as recorded in the Vyagghapajja or Dīghajānu Sutta of the Aṅguttara Nikāya.<sup>1</sup> Why did the Buddha ever visit a market town? It might be because incidentally He passed through the market town or it might be because His awareness that one factor for the welfare of the people was the economic factor that usually developed in the market. The second alternative answer might become true as it was evidenced by the fact that the Buddha in this market town gave the useful teaching, the teaching for the economic welfare as well as for the spiritual welfare.*

*In this sutta, the Buddha taught four conditions for the economic welfare namely the accomplishment of persistent effort (Uṭṭhānasampadā), the accomplishment of watchfulness (Ārakkhasampadā), good friendship (Kalyāṇamittatā), and balanced livelihood (Samajīvitā). These four teachings are called UAKS economic values in this article. The important*

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1. A.N. IV.281

thing from this sutta was that the Buddha did not only teach for the economic welfare, but also gave the teaching for the spiritual welfare namely *saddhāsampadā*, *silāsampadā*, *cāgasampadā*, and *paññāsampadā*.

The author and team, at the time being is doing a pilot project in mentoring Buddhist community to run a Buddhist Shop called Prema Mart (Loving Kindness Mart). It is a Buddhist shop concept operated in Central Java, Indonesia. This shop is not exclusively available only for Buddhists, but it is available for all people as well. As it is a cooperation shop where the members are the owners, the profit of this shop is for the shop itself and for the members. The important point is that, all members and people who work in running and managing this shop have to adopt the teaching so called UAKS economic values as stated in the *Vyagghapajja Sutta*. How does this shop attains the goal and how can it improve the economic as well as spiritual welfare of the members mutually, will be explored in this paper

Bringing down the teaching to really touch up the problem of the society is the main challenge in the modern time. The problems in the society are complex and their solutions are mysteries. The effort that can be done is therefore, applying the teaching to the modern problem contextually. Such effort becomes the main concern in this article, i.e. using the teaching of *Vyagghapajja Sutta* contextually to solve the modern economic problems in the Buddhist community especially in Central Java, Indonesia.

The moral teaching of the Buddha never expires although it is an old moral teaching. All the societal problems in the modern times have the same root cause as the societal problems during the time of the Buddha. The things are, the problems are taking different model and name from the societal problems during the Buddha's time. In regard to the economic problems, the teaching of the Buddha still has the values to solve and to relieve them. The problem is not in the teaching itself but, in the people who practice the teaching.

## 1. LEARNING FROM KAKKARAPATTA (A MARKET TOWN OF KOLIYANS)

Kakkarapatta was the name of market town of Koliyāns. Koliyā was one of the republican clans during the Buddha's time.<sup>2</sup> As

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2.DPPN

Republicans, Koliyā had two chief settlements at Rāmagāma and the other at Devadaha. Sakyan and Koliyān people had close relation as they were living nearby the River of Rohini. Even these two clans once had the fight regarding the River Rohini. Both sides claimed to be owner of the water of Rohini.<sup>3</sup> Several other townships of the Koliyans, that had once been visited by the Buddha or by His disciples were Uttara as the residence of the headman Pātaliya<sup>4</sup>; Sajjana residence of Suppavāsā<sup>5</sup>, Kakkarapatta<sup>6</sup>, and Haliddavasana as the residence of the ascetics Punna Koliyaputta and Seniya

Kakkarapatta town was visited by the Buddha as recorded in Vyagghapajja or Dīghajāṇu Sutta of the Aṅguttara Nikāya.<sup>7</sup> Why did the Buddha ever visit a market town? It might be because incidentally He passed through the market town or it might be because His awareness that one factor for the welfares of the people was the economic factor that usually developed in the market. The second alternative answer might become true as it was documented by the fact that the Buddha in this market town gave a useful teaching, the teaching for the economic welfare as well as for the spiritual welfare.

In order to deepen our study, it will be useful to read the Vyagghapajja Sutta carefully. In the opening of the discourse, a merchant of Koliya named Dīghajāṇu acknowledged to the Buddha about the reality of a life as householders. Dīghajāṇu says that:

*“We, Lord, are laymen who enjoy worldly pleasure. We lead a life encumbered by wife and children. We use sandalwood of Kasi. We deck ourselves with garlands, perfume and unguents. We use gold and silver.”* From this statement, we should notice that Dīghajāṇu really aware that the life as lay people is worldly pleasure (*gihī kāmabhogino*). However, he has hope to get the happiness in this life as well as in the next life. Therefore, he requested the Buddha to teach the Dhamma to get the happiness in this life and in the future life.”

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3. J.V.412 ff; DA.II.672 ff

4. S.IV.340

5. A.II.62

6. A.IV.281

7. A. IV.281

Such awareness that is understood by Dīghajāṇu is important to be possessed by the Buddhists who live a life as lay people. They themselves have to be aware that happiness that should be obtained is happiness in this life as well as in the future life. Buddhists are not destined by the past kamma to have unhappy life in this life and to get happiness in the next future life only. Happiness in this life and in the next life is the right of those who struggle for it. Happiness is not a reward as it is a result of serious efforts.

## 2. ECONOMIC WELFARE AND SOCIAL WELFARE FOR LAY LIFE: INTERCONNECTEDNESS

One of the factors to gain happiness in this very life as lay people is by possessing wealth. By possessing wealth, lay people can fulfil their basic needs and secondary needs. By fulfilling their needs, lay people can feel happy. The Buddha himself was aware that working and earning wealth was important for lay people to run their lives. Therefore, the Buddha taught four teachings for lay people. These four teachings are namely: the accomplishment of persistent effort (*Uṭṭhānasampadā*), the accomplishment of watchfulness (*Ārakkhasampadā*), good friendship (*Kalyāṇamittatā*), and balanced livelihood (*Ṣamajīvitā*). These four teachings are called **UAKS economic values** in this article.

After reading the Vyagghapajja Sutta, UAKS economic values can be displayed in the table as follows:

Teaching	Economic Values
<i>Uṭṭhānasampadā</i>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Being skillful and hard working (<i>yadi sippaññatarena</i>)</li> <li>2. Applying proper ways and means (<i>vīmaṃsāya samannāgato</i>)</li> <li>3. Being able to carry out and allocate duties (<i>alaṃ kātuṃ alaṃ saṃvidhātuṃ</i>)</li> </ol>

<i>Ārakkhasampadā</i>	<p>Protecting the wealth (that is collected through the right way) in terms of:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Government or king: through actively paying the tax &amp; obeying government rules</li> <li>2. Thieves: making good finance and security management</li> <li>3. Fire and Water: applying insurance for the main wealth. In case of disaster, the wealth will have insurance</li> <li>4. Heirs: good recruitment system, including the heirs</li> </ol>
<i>Kalyāṇamittatā</i>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Associating and working with colleagues who possess good faith, morality, charity and wisdom</li> <li>2. Avoiding business partner who do not possess good faith, morality, charity and wisdom</li> </ol>
<i>Samajīvitā</i>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Living a balanced life; neither extravagant or miserly</li> <li>2. Maintaining a condition that the income will stand in excess of the expenses</li> </ol>

The AUSK economic values are very useful for running a life as lay people. However, there are still many Buddhists especially in Central Java, Indonesia, who live in scarcity. Seeing this reality, it can be said that there are two different aspects: good teaching of economic values in one hand and living with lack of prosperity in the other hand. There is a gap between the teaching and the reality of life in the society.

### 3. PREMA MART (A LOVINGKINDNESS MART)

#### 3.1A Pilot Project of Economic & Spiritual Welfare in Central Java, Indonesia

Seeing the gap between the moral of the teaching and the reality in the societal life, therefore the author and team, at the present is doing a pilot project in mentoring Buddhist community to run a Buddhist cooperation shop called Prema Mart. It is developed based on the ideas namely "gaining the economic profit as well as practicing the Buddhist teaching".

What is the meaning of Prema Mart? Prema is derived from Sanskrit word and its meaning is loving kindness. Prema Mart therefore is a concept of Loving Kindness Mart. Why is this shop called loving kindness mart? It is because the main purpose is not merely to get the profit but, it is mainly intended to empower the people. There are 3 main focuses of empowerment of this shop i.e. empowering the people to improve the productivity, marketing, and cutting off the local capitalism.

### 3.2 Improving the Productivity

The Buddha as already mentioned in the Maṅgala Sutta gave the teaching that having knowledge and good skills were the great blessings. However, sometimes Buddhist people still do not know how to develop their skill in obtaining a good income in their daily lives. Prema Mart, therefore, is trying to provide some trainings to develop and to improve the skill of Buddhists in many fields. With the help of Theravada Buddhist Women Organization (Wandani) in Central Java, some trainings are able to be held for Buddhists. For the time being, some products of Buddhists as the result of the trainings can be seen below<sup>8</sup>:



In doing the production process, the Prema Mart and Wandani always encourage Buddhist people to continuously maintain the quality. Maintaining the good quality of the product is part of

<sup>8</sup> (1) Batik in Buddhist motif; (2) making brown sugar; (3) coconut oil; (4) hand art from bamboo; (5) making bamboo plate



practicing the Dhamma in the daily life. The moral teachings of the Vyagghapajja Sutta that are emphasized in this process is to be skilful and to be hard working (*yadi sippaññatarena*) as well as applying proper ways and means (*vīmaṃsāya samannāgato*). The teaching to be skilful and to be hard working is practised by following all the steps in making a product, so that the result is a perfect product. Applying the teaching of proper ways and means is tested when people make foods as their products. They are encouraged to avoid toxic material in making food. The simple example: they are suggested to use the natural essence and colouring material rather than chemical materials.

### 3.3 Improving the Marketing Skills

After having good and qualified products, the next step is promoting and selling the products. Prema Mart is one of the solutions to help Buddhist people to sell and to promote their products. In Prema Mart shop, Buddhist people can sell their products. The selling system in Prema Mart is done by offline and online shopping system. Offline shop is by putting the product in the shops and the shopkeepers will sell it to the people who come to the shop.

Apart from that, Prema Mart is also following the new trend in selling product i.e. through online shop. All Buddhist people can take photographs of their products which then send them to Prema Mart together with the information about the price and the specification of products. After that, Prema Mart's manager of the online shop is promoting the photograph of the products to the people through facebook, whatsapp and instagram. It is called pre order system in Indonesian online shop. When people are interested to buy, the manager of online shop will contact the producer to make and send it to the buyer. So far, these two kinds of system are helpful although improvements are still needed.

### 3.4 Cutting the Local Capitalism

In the villages in Central Java, people who have low income are entrapped in an economic system called "ijon". Ijon is a name for a trading system in which people are taking some money and other necessities from the shops without paying money. People will pay whatever they already take from the shop by giving some harvests

from their field to the shop such as coffee, ginger, turmeric, coconut, avocado, etc. As the result, the shop will buy the harvests from the people with the low price. The people who are getting low price cannot do anything and just accept their situation because they already have a loan to the shop. This practice has happened for long period of time and in this article is called “local capitalism”. This system has to be cut off to make people get their best price during the harvest season.

Seeing this situation, Prema Mart is intended to help people to avoid the “Ijon system” in fulfilling their daily necessities. People are encouraged to produce goods and products to be sold in Prema Mart to fulfil their daily needs. They are educated not to always depend to the loan from the local shop. By doing so, when they have harvest, they can sell it with good price because they do not have any loan to the shops.

### 3.5 The Working System of Prema Mart

Prema Mart is a cooperation shop in which the members are the owners. It means that the Buddhist who become the members of Prema Mart is also the owners. As the owners, they will have their share of the profit of the shop. Prema Mart is already having a handbook as a guidance to run the shop. In this handbook, it is already decided by all the members and managers that the profit of the shops is divided into 6 sections as follows:

Prema Mart .....	20 %
Members .....	20 %
Capital.....	20 %
Managers.....	30 %
Social activities .....	5 %
Savings.....	5 %

The meeting of the members is the holders of the highest supremacy in a cooperation. In Prema Mart, the meeting of the members is held once a year, in January. In January, all managers and the members will sit together in a meeting to discuss and decide the share of profit of Prema Mart.



Prema Mart not only works in making profit but also focuses in organizing trainings for the members. So far, trainings that had been done by Prema Mart were business management training, and accounting training. By organizing these two trainings, managers as well as the members can improve their skill and as the result they can manage Prema Mart as well as their business in their houses well. Business management and accounting skill are very important because these two can provide valid finance and accounting report. Moreover, Prema Mart is a cooperation and the owners are many, therefore, the valid report of finance and accounting is very important. Deciding the share of profits, arranging the next business steps and making another policies are depend on this report.

### 3.6 A Market for Spiritual Welfare

Prema Mart is not merely a place to buy and to sell products. Prema Mart is also having the duty to develop the spiritual welfare of the members and the managers. All people who work and associate in the running and managing this shop have to adopt the teaching so called UAKS economic values as stated in the Vyagghapajja Sutta. When they are doing the business, they have to work based on the principle of *uṭṭhānasampadā*, *ārakkhasampadā*, *kalyānamittatā*, *samajīvitā* or UAKS economic values. In addition, in every thought, speech and action have to be used as media to improve the quality of faith (*saddha*), morality (*sīla*), charity (*cagga*) and wisdom (*paññā*).

In attaining the above mentioned purposes, all people who associate with Prema Mart are encouraged as much as possible to engage with the Buddhist activities of the monasteries. Recently, the members of Prema Mart are encouraged to join to One Day Mindfulness program held by Indonesian Theravada Saṅgha in Kenteng village to develop faith and wisdom. When Prema Mart makes an event such as cooking class, everybody is encouraged to donate for lunch as well as for paying the fee of the tutor. This is done to train the charity of the members of Prema Mart. Morality as the basis in running Prema Mart is always developed in every action.

However, all the dreams in developing Prema Mart as loving kindness mart, as a centre for learning and growing together are not an easy tasks. They will be easy and come true if all managers,

members, and stakeholders work hand in hand seriously. Hopefully this pilot project can answer the challenge in the modern time, can bridge up the gap between the ideal of the religious teaching and the real problems in the society.

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