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**A Critical Study of 'Puñña' (Merit) in Early
Buddhism.**

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ABSTRACT

A Critical Study of 'Puñña' (Merit) in Early Buddhism.

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4. Summary :

Buddhism is a moral philosophy. A very special terminology has been employed to elucidate the relevant concepts which appear in the Suttapitaka. In there terminology, the wards Kussala (wholesome), Akusala (unwholesome) Puñña (merit) and Pāpa (demerit) devoted special comment among those words Puñña (merit) and papa (demerit) are linked with per Buddhist philosophical tradition nevertheless those terms appear in Buddhist teaching to convey a different meaning. They are very significant both philosophically and practically.

The Kusala Kamma (wholesome action) should be developed until a person is the ultimate gall of Buddhism. The concept Puñña (merit) has been used to explain position that someone acquire after his death .In contrast opposite Puñña (which is Pāpa) has been used to depict the sorrowful position of the person after his death.

According to above description Kusala (Wholesome) and Puñña (merit) are, conceptually deferent from each other. As a result of accumulation of merit or demerit a person is able to have his birth in heaven or in hell. Without accumulating merit or demerit but practicing Kusala Kamma(wholesome action), a person will be able to reach to the ultimate gall of Buddhism (which is Nibbana).This marked difference has been noted in early Buddhism but at the period of commentary it has not been considered. Consequently Kusala (Wholesome) and Pāpa (merit) have been accepted as terms which denote the same action.

The main purpose of this theses is the study of moral action as explained in early Buddhism. Paying special attention to those concept Kusala (wholesome) and Puñña which appeared in Buddhist canonical literature. There for this study conduct as a critical study of Puñña (merit) concept of early Buddhism.

Almost all contemporary Buddhist, all over the world without any hesitation consider the Tripitaka of Thervadaha tradition as the primary souse of studying early Buddhist concept. The suttha pitaka, out of tripitaka, is treated as main souse of studding early Buddhist concept. Accordingly the present study is based upon the discourses in the

Suttapitaka. Nevertheless, the attention has been paid to the post canonical literature to elaborate relevant Buddhist concept. The present study contains seven chapters.

The first chapter is devoted for this discussion of the Kamma concept. There is an obvious inter relationship between the Puñña (merit) concept and Sansara, Kamma and rebirth. The Puñña (merit) concept, in early Buddhism is not comprehensible without proper knowledge of Kamma concept. So this historical background of Puñña (merit) concept has been discussed in first chapter.

Chapter 2, contains a comparative study of Puñña (merit) and Kusala (wholesome) act of early Buddhism. Parallely the conceptual difference in those concept have been discussed and evaluated.

Chapter 3, contains a discussion on the process of turning concept of Kusala (wholesome) act and the Puñña (merit) in to a single concept and underling reasons for such as development, have been given.

Chapter 4 has two parts. Part I contains physiological foundation of Puñña (merit) and Its influence on rebirth. This has been discussed on the base of early Buddhist Sutta.

Part II of chapter 4 contains an opinion of social scientists. They assure, the accumulation of Puñña (merit) is not recognized in early Buddhism, but the discuses in early Buddhism do not totally reject the idea of accumulating Puñña (merit). It is based upon the clarification of differences in between individuals.

Chapter 5 carries a discussion of the social relevance of Buddhism. Further in explains comprehensively the validity of three Puññakirya. The reason for such an exercise in the rejection of Buddhist teaching by social scientists. They say those teachings are a social and lack of influence on social developments. It seems their assumption is not well founded.

Chapter 6 contains a discussion on later developments of Buddhist customs. As a result of the merit concept of Early Buddhism, Paththidana and Anumodana came into existence in later Buddhism and those concepts evolved gradually. The Buddhist who live with worldly

aims accumulate Puñña (merits) rather than developing Kusala (wholesome) actions. As a result of Puñña (merit) concept of early Buddhist teaching had been developed a during period of time.

Chapter 7 contains the conclusion which is the summary of the critical study on the concept of merit.