

A Study of Gharāvāsa-dhamma through *A Christmas Carol*

Nattapat Pattana¹

Received: January 25, 2021

Revised: March 3, 2021

Accepted: March 15, 2021

Abstract

The goal of this qualitative study was to examine the compatibility of moral concepts desirable for people of the West and morality of Buddhism, a non-theistic religion of the East; therefore, the objectives of this study were 1) to examine issues of morality reflected in *A Christmas Carol*, a classic literature written by Charles Dickens and 2) to compare the moral issues in this classic literature with those specified in *Gharāvāsa-dhamma*, a set of Buddhist doctrines. The analysis framework developed from the synthesis of *Gharāvāsa-dhamma* by a famous high-ranked Buddhist monk and a group of researchers, Phra Dhambhidok (P.A. Payutto) (2003) and Wongsritep, Thongpan, Wanichat, and Kaewketpong (2019), respectively, was relied upon. It was found that the moral issues found in *A Christmas Carol* are honesty, training one's self, perseverance, and liberality. These issues agree with all four principles in *Gharāvāsa-dhamma* namely *Sacca*, *Dama*, *Khanti*, and *Cāga*, respectively. Outstandingly, the moral issue highlighted in *A Christmas Carol* is liberality or *Cāga* in *Gharāvāsa-dhamma*. Without this moral principle, Ebenezer Scrooge, the main character becomes a stingy, ungenerous, and money-oriented old man. After he is warned and terrified by the ghost characters

¹ Department of Western Languages, Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, Burapha University

visiting him in one Christmas' Eve and showing him the good side of giving and sharing, he becomes a happy man and welcomed by the society. This agrees with essence of *Cāga in Gharāvāsa-dhamma* that that one without *Cāga* is miserly, money-oriented, selfish, and ungenerous, and it causes that individual to be unwanted by society he lives in.

Keywords: Gharāvāsa-dhamma, A Christmas Carol, Morality, Buddhist Teaching, Charles Dickens

Introduction

Buddhism to some people is a non-theistic religion while, to others, it is just a philosophy (Ray, 2001), but whether or not it is considered a religion is not as important as what is the moral concept at the core of the teaching of a wise man known as the Lord Buddha, the man believed to be the founder of this ethical school of thought. The *Dhamma* or the teaching of Lord Buddha is more interesting. In Buddhism, like other religions, an individual has to live his/her life in one of the two ways: to live as a priest or to live as a layman. For those who live their lives in priesthood, each of them has to be classified into a category: a *Bhikkhu* (a male Buddhist monk), a novice, a *Bhikkhuni* (a female monk), and a nun. Each category has different numbers of precepts he/she has to follow, but for those who do not live a category of priesthood life, or laypeople, there are also various precepts for them to follow. A group of doctrines specified for laypeople is called *Gharāvāsa-dhamma* 4 or four virtues for laypeople. This set of doctrines guides laypeople to live peaceful lives.

Gharāvāsa-dhamma has been applied into a great number of studies but almost all of the studies are conducted by applying this set of doctrines with society in reality, for example, *Virtues for lay people*

to practices towards goodness by Panyavachiro (2016), *Desirable householding guidelines in the integrated Buddhist perspective* by Sonphonngam (2017). *Gharāvāsa-dhamma: The formula for developing quality of life according to the Buddhist way* by Boonim and Janthasaro (2018), *Rule of a good household life and human developments* by Wongsritep, Thongpan, Wanichat, and Kaewketpong (2019) to name a few. In addition, two studies found examining *Gharāvāsa-dhamma* in written work are those by Takla (2015) which is entitled] *Gharāvāsa-dhamma in lanna scripts Paed Leaeng Ork Yord* and *A study of the Buddhist aphorisms for Myanmar householder from dhamma magazines published in 2012* by Kyin (2015). From this evidence, it can be seen that *Gharāvāsa-dhamma* is a set of Buddhist doctrines which can be applied into studying in a variety of sources. To prove the efficiency of *Gharāvāsa-dhamma* whether it can be applied into studying a novel from the West, the idea of applying this Buddhist doctrine into examining morality of the West was emerged, and it seems that conducting studies of this kind can be done in a possible way through literary works, and the works to be used must be those in which morality is outstandingly presented and must be the literature of all time. Therefore, a classic work named *A Christmas Carol* by Charles Dickens was selected.

This novel was written by Charles Dickens in 1843. It is a fantasy showing atmosphere of Christmas celebration in London. It illustrates a moment in history during Victorian time which is a period of time people had to devote their lives to hard work for earning their living. Wealth seemed to be the goal of life (Broich, 2016). It is a classic work which has been published and translated into a great number of versions. It has also been adapted for stage plays, films and animations for many times. In 2019, it was also adapted by Knight to be produced by the BBC

and FX (Sulcas, 2019). These can guarantee the recognizable qualifications and reputation of *A Christmas Carol* and make it suitable for this study.

A Christmas Carol is a story of a mean and selfish old man named Ebenezer Scrooge. He lives an unhappy life by himself in London and he hates Christmas time. One Christmas Eve, when his worker asks him for some charity for Christmas celebration, he refuses to give the charity. He also rebuffs his nephew's invitation to celebrate Christmas time. That night, one ghost of his old business partner, Jacob Marley, visits him to remind him of the evil of greed. Then, three ghosts of Christmas including The Ghost of Christmas Past, The Ghost of Christmas Present and The Ghost of Christmas Yet To Come visit him and take him to see Scrooge's life in different periods of time. The Ghost of Christmas Past takes Scrooge back to his past to see unhappy childhood and disappointment in love. The Ghost of Christmas Present takes Scrooge to see the happiness his clerk's family is having. Scrooge can clearly see that their lives are happier than his even they are not as wealthy as he is. The ghost also takes him to see Fred, Scrooge's nephew, whose invitation is rebuffed by Scrooge. Scrooge can see that Fred and his family are celebrating Christmas Eve happily. The last ghost, The Ghost of Christmas Yet To Come, takes him to the future to see his lonely death. All these travels terrify Scrooge very much. When he wakes up on the next day which is the Christmas Day, he transforms himself and he becomes new Scrooge who is kind to everyone and enjoys Christmas with people around him.

Through its imaginatively created spirit or ghost characters, fantasy content and easy-to-follow storyline bringing the main character, Scrooge, to his past and to the future, *A Christmas Carol* teaches the readers many aspects of life in its themes, and one of its main themes is morality.

Although it is not purely didactic, the readers can learn the value of living and transcendental happiness which is not depended absolutely on wealth.

As mentioned earlier that a theme of *A Christmas Carol*, as known by people in literature field and literary critiques, is morality. It is interesting to compare the moral concepts of the Western world portrayed in this classic work to that of the Eastern hemisphere. From review of literature, there is only one work conducted by Keeling (2011) found. His work comparatively explains Buddhist belief in *A Christmas Carol*. This work, entitled *A Buddhist Carol*, mainly describes Buddhist concept of *Karma* found in the story especially through Scrooge's behaviors and their consequences. To consolidate the compatibility of Buddhist principle of living a happy secular life, this study is conducted with a goal to emphasize the applicability of Buddhist teaching into examining a western novel and value of literature. To achieve its goal, this study is conducted with two objectives: to examine issues of morality reflected in *A Christmas Carol* and to compare the moral issues in this classic literature with those specified in *Gharāvāsa-dhamma*. The content for this study are from two parts: 1) dialogues of the main character, Scrooge, and the ghost characters and 2) narratives of Scrooge's thoughts and behaviors and other characters' thoughts and reactions to Scrooge. Only texts reflecting moral issues are examined. Braun and Clarke's thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006) is relied upon for data collection and analysis. Four principles of *Gharāvāsa-dhamma* including *Sacca*, *Dama*, *Khanti*, and *Cāga* are used for the data analysis framework.

Based on the fact that globalization speeds knowledge development and indirectly allows knowledge integration to happen in more various

aspects, this study also follows the trend by proposing a way to integrate knowledge from different parts of the world. The classic moral concepts implied in the story of classic literature of the western world, *A Christmas Carol*, are therefore examined by the application of the eastern moral principles, *Gharāvāsa-dhamma*. The findings can provide an example of application of Buddhist principle into examining moral thought implied in a novel from the West. Moreover, it may lead to better understanding of some points of moral standard shared by different parts of the world; so that, the readers can see what moral value Dickens recognized as important for the society in his time. In addition, the readers can see some adjoining points of morality of the East and the West by reading *A Christmas Carol*.

Review of Literature

Gharāvāsa-dhamma is the combination of two terms “*Gharāvāsa*” (meaning individuals who live in secular world, laymen and householders) and “*Dhamma*” (which means rightfulness, goodness, virtue, and regulation) (Office of the Royal Society, 2011).; therefore, *Gharāvāsa-dhamma*, as its name, is the regulation for laypeople (Thankaew, 1999).

Gharāvāsa-dhamma or four virtues for a good household life consists of *Sacca*, *Dama*, *Khanti*, and *Cāga*. To clarify it in details, explanation given by Phra Dhambhidok (P.A. Payutto) (2003) and Wongsritep et al. (2019) is relied upon as follows.

1. *Sacca*

Sacca refers to truth or honesty in one’s mind, in one’s speaking and in one’s behavior. This doctrine develops trustworthiness among people, makes a person to become sincere which leads to responsibility one must have for his/her words and actions. People with

Sacca are respectful for others. In contrast, those who lack of *Sacca* are irresponsible, unable to complete tasks, and having no true friends. Lacking of *Sacca* can bring about conflict at workplace, in companionship, and even in family.

2. *Dama*

Dama refers to taming and training one's self through intellectual ability. This doctrine enables an individual to be reasonable, control his/her action, behave carefully, get along well with others, and most importantly correct and improve him-/herself; hence, those who possesses *Dama* are open-minded, resilient, self-controlled, prudential, sociable, and intelligent. Meanwhile, those who are lacking of *Dama* become delusive, indulgent, ignorant, and egocentric.

3. *Khanti*

Khanti refers to tolerance, forbearance, and perseverance. One who possesses *Khanti* is hardworking, mentally strong, and resolute. These attributes facilitate an individual to pass difficult times in life, overlook others' dissatisfactory behavior and suppress resentment, temperance and thought of revenge. Moreover, people with *Khanti* are able to assuage evil desire. In contrast, people who lack of *Khanti* are discourage, impatient, and hot-tempered. They are not desirable by others, difficult or even incapable to achieve life's goals, and tend to react to stimulants in negative ways.

4. *Cāga*

Cāga refers to sacrifice, liberality and generosity. People with *Cāga* know how to earn their living and how to give and share. They are benevolent, sympathetic, and utilitarian. They provide sufficient help to others in the degree that they can. They share their belongings, knowledge, and happiness with others. They sacrifice themselves helping

others who are inferior than they are. Without *Cāga*, an individual is miserly, money-oriented, selfish, and ungenerous; therefore, it is hard for this kind of people to get help and sympathy from others.

To make the above explanation easier to follow, the four principles of *Gharāvāsa-dhamma*, attributes of people with those principles in *Gharāvāsa-dhamma* and unfavorable characteristics of people who lack of those principles *Gharāvāsa-dhamma* are shown in Table 1.

Table 1 *Gharāvāsa-dhamma*, attributes of people with *Gharāvāsa-dhamma* and unfavorable characteristics of people who lack *Gharāvāsa-dhamma*

| <i>Gharāvāsa-dhamma</i> | Characteristics of people with <i>Gharāvāsa-dhamma</i> | Characteristics of people without <i>Gharāvāsa-dhamma</i> |
|--|--|---|
| <i>Sacca</i> (truth; honesty) | Being trustworthy, sincere, and responsible for his/her words and actions | Being irresponsible and unable to complete tasks |
| <i>Dama</i> (taming; training one's self) | Being open-minded, resilient, self-controlled, prudential, sociable, and intelligent | Being delusive, indulgent, ignorant, and egocentric |
| <i>Khanti</i> (tolerance; forbearance; perseverance) | Being hardworking, mentally strong, resolute, overlooking others' dissatisfactory behavior, suppressing resentment, temperance and thought of revenge, and able to assuage evil desire | Being discourage, impatient, and hot-tempered |
| <i>Cāga</i> (sacrifice; liberality; generosity) | Being benevolent, sympathetic, sharing, sacrificing one's self and utilitarian | Being miserly, money-oriented, selfish, and ungenerous |

Research Method

This research employed Braun and Clarke's thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006) which is an approach in a qualitative study. The main aim of this study is to examine the compatibility of moral issues portrayed in *A Christmas Carol* by Charles Dickens. The six steps of thematic analysis include

1) Familiarizing with the data

The story was read throughout and content related to moral issues was learned.

2) Generating initial codes

The codes were assigned to different characters, their dialogues, and narratives describing their thoughts and actions. The data to be encoded were collected from dialogues of the main character, Scrooge, and the ghost characters and narratives of Scrooge's thoughts and behaviors and other characters' thoughts and reactions to Scrooge. Only texts reflecting moral issues are examined.

3) Searching for themes

Those encoded statements were excerpted and categorized based on the 4 principles of *Gharāvāsa-dhamma*.

4) Reviewing themes

The categorized excerpts were re-examined to assure the correct categorization and to search for other additional moral points.

5) Defining themes

The themes were defined based on the definition and name of the 4 principles of *Gharāvāsa-dhamma*. After this process, the data gained were moral issues found in *A Christmas Carol*; then, the data of each issue were analyzed based on the four virtues as specified in the *Gharāvāsa-dhamma* set of principles to obtain their compatibility.

6) Writing

All the content from the analysis was written in accordance with research writing method.

Results

Regarding the two objectives of this study, to examine issues of morality reflected in *A Christmas Carol* and to compare the moral issues in this classic literature with those specified in *Gharāvāsa-dhamma*, the followings are the results of the study.

To serve the first research objective, the exploration of the story of *A Christmas Carol* showed a number of moral values including generosity, empathy, gratitude, tolerance and self-training.

Among these moral issues, generosity and empathy which lead to sharing are the two most obvious ones. An example showing these moral concepts is when The Ghost of Christmas Past takes Scrooge back into his past when he apprentices with Mr. Fezziwig. Scrooge and his partner named Dick are kindly treated. In one Christmas Eve, Mr. Fezziwig allows Scrooge and Dick to leave from work and celebrate Christmas with him and his guests. This reminds the readers of Scrooge's unkind action to his present clerk named Bob Cratchit (Dickens, 2008, pp. 44-48). Another event is when Scrooge asks The Ghost of Christmas Present about peculiar flavour the ghost sprinkle from his torch onto the food for people who celebrate Christmas. The ghost answers Scrooge that it sprinkles the flavour to the poor most because the poor need it most (Dickens, 2008, p. 66). This shows that one who is able to help others should help them when he/she can. Also, the help should be given to those who need it in accordance with the priority of need; so that, the help given will be the most beneficial.

For gratitude, this moral concept is presented through Bob Cratchit, Scrooge's clerk, and his family. On Christmas Eve that the whole story takes place, The Ghost of Christmas Present takes Scrooge to see people who are celebrating Christmas. One of the people the ghost brings him to observe is Bob together with his family. In the very end of the economical dinner, Bob stands up and blesses "*Mr. Scrooge! I'll give you Mr. Scrooge, the Founder of the Feast! ... I wish I had him here. I'd give him a piece of my mind to feast upon, and I hope he'd have a good appetite for it.*" (Dickens, 2008, p. 75). Bob says this to show his gratitude to Scrooge, thinking that he can celebrate this Christmas because the wage he gains from his work for Scrooge. Again, this reminds Scrooge of kindness he has been given by Mr. Fezziwig when he was a young man. Therefore, gratitude is another moral value found in *A Christmas Carol*.

For tolerance, two obvious events highlight this moral principle. The first one is when Scrooge refuses to give his clerk a day off the next day it is Christmas Day. Bob, the clerk, instead of reacting against or defying Scrooge's refusal, promises to come to work for Scrooge (Dickens, 2008, p. 13) Bob's action prevents him from Scrooge's negative reaction and it also saves his job for him to earn his living. The second event underlining tolerance is the words of Fred, Scrooge's nephew, which shows that he has an intention to keep inviting Scrooge to spend time with him and his family every Christmas (Dickens, 2008, p. 83). From the above examples, it seems that tolerance is an attribute which all workers should have because it helps all workers to maintain their jobs and it facilitates the success of all tasks being pursued.

The last moral concept found in *A Christmas Carol* is self-training. This happens to Scrooge himself after he has learned some lessons

about negative effect of greed from Marley's ghost. Then, he meets The Ghost of Christmas Present. With desire to learn more lessons, he admits to the ghost saying that "*Spirit conduct me where you will. I went forth last night on compulsion, and I learnt a lesson which is working now. Tonight, if you have aught to teach me, let me profit by it.*" (Dickens, 2008, p. 61). This reveals that Scrooge does not want to be like Marley but he wants to make a change to his life. He wants to have a happy life which is far away from greed. Not just this event, but throughout the story, Scrooge gradually changes his mind and transforms himself to be new Scrooge who is generous and empathetic. At the end of the story, he goes to donate his money for charity to the gentleman who has come to his office and asks for donation from him at the beginning of the story. Also, he brings a turkey for Bob's family and he becomes a friendly man to everyone (Dickens, 2008, pp. 116-125). From the above examples of self-training, it can be assumed that this moral value helps transform Scrooge obviously. He becomes a sociable and kind man who is welcomed by the society.

As a result, it can be concluded that the moral values reflected through the story of *A Christmas Carol* are various. They are generosity, empathy, gratitude, tolerance and self-training. This means that Dickens wanted to highlight these moral values which may or may not be required by the society at the time when *A Christmas Carol* was composed. However, they altogether help promote charity mind which everyone should have.

To serve the second research objective, the comparison of the morality in *A Christmas Carol* to Buddhist *Gharāvāsa-dhamma* reveals that the morality reflected in the story of *A Christmas Carol* is all included in *Gharāvāsa-dhamma*; in other words, all moral principles in

Buddhist *Gharāvāsa-dhamma*—*Sacca* (honesty), *Dama* (training one's self), *Khanti* (tolerance), and *Cāga* (generosity)—can be found in *A Christmas Carol* inclusively. *Sacca* (generosity)—can be found in *A Christmas Carol* inclusively. *Sacca* is reflected through three characters including Scrooge, Fred (Scrooge's nephew), and Bob (Scrooge's clerk) because they feel pity on Scrooge and want to see Scrooge happy. This can be proven from Fred's promise "I mean to give him the same chance every year, whether he likes it or not, for I pity him." This statement shows Fred's pity on Scrooge and compassion to see him happy, so he intends to invite Scrooge to spend Christmas time with him every year (Dickens, 2008, p. 83). For Bob, he not only feels pity on Scrooge but he sees Scrooge as his boss who pays him wage for him to earn his living and to support his family. Therefore, Bob shows his gratitude to Scrooge by promising to come to work for Scrooge on Christmas Day (Dickens, 2008, p. 13), calling him The Founder of the Feast and blessing him while he is celebrating his Christmas Eve (Dickens, 2008, p. 75). Scrooge will not be able to experience these events if Fred and Bob do not *Sacca*. Also, he will not be able to see that even he is unkind to them, they still have compassion for him. Scrooge possesses *Dama*. This is proved from his transformation after passing a series of events shown by the ghosts. Without *Dama*, he will not change himself to be a better man. For *Khanti*, although this principle is not reflected through Scrooge, it can be seen from Scrooge's nephew and clerk. These two characters are patient with Scrooge's ungenerous actions. In return, they show goodwill for Scrooge. Without *Khanti* in these two characters, Scrooge will be left alone and he is not transformed to be a kind man.

Therefore, it can be concluded that the moral values in *A Christmas Carol* are complying with all of the four principles in Buddhist *Gharāvāsa-dhamma* although they are from different origins. *A Christmas Carol* is from the West while the *Gharāvāsa-dhamma* is from the East. Consequently, it can be claimed that the *Gharāvāsa-dhamma* can be used to explain the moral essence in *A Christmas Carol*.

In summary, morality reflected through the story of this classic literary work is focusing on generosity which is accidentally complying with Buddhist's *Cāga*. This moral value leads to good result for Scrooge and its effects are enormous for other characters. Without generosity, Scrooge is unwanted by society and this denial intensifies his unhappy feeling and negative thought toward the society. After passing through the night of change and transforming himself, Scrooge becomes a happy man who is welcomed by people around him. He realizes that he cannot bring anything with him after he dies. Only good deeds can be left behind for people to think of him. In addition, the Buddhist moral set called *Gharāvāsa-dhamma* can be found in this classic literary work through dialogues of the characters and narratives of the characters' actions. Therefore, morality in *A Christmas Carol* and Buddhist *Gharāvāsa-dhamma* share similarities in both practice and consequences.

Discussion

From analytically re-reading *A Christmas Carol* together with the result of this study, it was found that Ebenezer Scrooge, the main character, is presented as a mean-spirited old man whose only goal in life is to be wealthy. Because of this money-oriented mind, he lacks of generosity which seems to be the origin of his pessimistic thoughts and unkind personality. This is interestingly related to the point that the

moral value presented clearly through the story of *A Christmas Carol* is generosity and charity and this is directly related to *Cāga* in Buddhist *Gharāvāsa-dhamma*. Sharing is the moral value Dickens highlighted. This may be because of the social condition during Victorian period, in which *A Christmas Carol* was composed, that it was the time of industrialization in England (Broich, 2016).

Since Dickens was born in 1812 and *A Christmas Carol* was firstly published in 1843 (Collins, 2020), it is a possibility that the introduction of money-oriented viewpoint may be from Charles Dickens's anti-social idea towards the society he was living in during social revolution in Victorian era in England (1837-1901) in which people were seeking for their fortune in big cities and manufacturing centers. As Broich (2016) stated that in this period of time child labor was reported in the British society. People from the countryside moved to cities of manufacturing centers. There were a lot of poor people working as laborers who were seen as commodities in these cities. With a large gap between the rich and the poor and a society where kindness is rare, generosity and benevolence were two importance moral qualifications needed by the society. Therefore, at the beginning of the story, Scrooge is presented to be immoral.

From the beginning of the story until almost the end of the story, Scrooge is obviously presented an old man who lack of two moral principles in *Gharāvāsa-dhamma* namely *Cāga* (sacrifice, liberality and generosity) and *Khanti* (tolerance, forbearance, and perseverance). Without *Cāga*, Scrooge is mean and selfish, and because of his mean spirit and selfishness he is unwanted by society. This is in agreement with what Boonim and Janthasaro (2018); Panyavachiro (2016); Pemasilo, Suriyo, Thammasaro, and Jongla-iad (2018) have stated that an individual

who has low degree or lacks of *Cāga* tends to have the idea of “I-first” and cares no one else. He does not sacrifice himself for other’s benefits. He is stingy. He may be considered industrious, but what is on the top of his head is to collect as much money as he can. He does not spend his money even for something necessary for his living. With all these negative personalities, he is not respectful and unwanted by others. However, after Scrooge has passed a series of visits by Marley’s ghost and three Ghosts of Christmas within just one night, Scrooge transforms himself to become new Scrooge. He has gradually become a kind and empathetic man. This can be implied that, in fact, Scrooge is not a mean-spirited from his soul but there must be something causing him to be ungenerous. Again, the reason possibly being blamed for Dickens to present Scrooge as an unkind and money-oriented is Dickens’s opinion expressing the harsh time of social revolution in Victorian period in England.

As shown in the result of the study, *Upadana* (suffering from attachment) and Rule of *Karma* (consequence of one’s action) were also found from the story of *A Christmas Carol*. When Scrooge realizes that he cannot bring anything with him when he dies after seeing his charwoman, his laundress, and the undertaker’s assistant taking his valuables and belongings to sell, and insulting him for his stinginess and ungenerosity (Dickens, 2008, pp. 98-99). This is also agreeing with the principle of *Upadana* in Buddhist teaching (Phra Dhambhidok (P.A. Payutto), 2003). For the Rule of *Karma*, Scrooge’s words given to The Ghost of Christmas Yet To Come that “Men’s courses will foreshadow certain ends, to which, if persevered in, they must lead, But if the courses be departed from, the ends will change” (Dickens, 2008 p. 113) clearly Buddhist Rule of *Karma*. According to Merriam-Webster Online

Dictionary (2021), *Karma* means “the force generated by a person’s actions to perpetuate transmigration and in its ethical consequences to determine the nature of the person’s next existence”; in other words, what one does is what one gains (Phra Dhambhidok (P.A. Payutto), 2003). As *Karuna*, or compassion to see others happy, a part of *Brahmavihārā* 4 or Four Sublime States of Mind is also found in *A Christmas Carol* through Fred’s promise “I mean to give him (Uncle Scrooge) the same chance every year, whether he likes it or not, for I pity him.” (Dickens, 2008, p. 83). This can be counted as another moral value included in Buddhism. From all of the morality found in this classic work, it can be claimed that *A Christmas Carol* shows moral values which coincide with Buddhist doctrines in many aspects.

Apart from the agreement between morality in *A Christmas Carol* and Buddhist *Gharāvāsa-dhamma*, other Buddhist beliefs are also found in *A Christmas Carol*. One is *Upadana* or suffering caused by attachment to one’s self and belongings. The second concept is Rule of *Karma*, one gains what one has done. For the expression of detachment, it can be seen from the situation when Scrooge is taken into his own funeral in the future by The Ghost of Christmas Yet To Come. He sees his charwoman, his laundress, and the undertaker’s assistant who come to his house and take his valuables and belongings to sell. They also insult Scrooge for his stingy and immoral personalities. After seeing these people’s actions, he realizes that he cannot bring anything with him when he dies. Only good deeds can be left behind (Dickens, 2008, pp. 98-99). The third Buddhist moral concept found in *A Christmas Carol* is *Karuna*, or compassion to see others happy, which is a part of *Brahmavihārā* 4 or Four Sublime States of Mind. From Fred’s promise “I mean to give him the same chance every year, whether he likes it or not, for I pity him.”,

it shows Fred's pity on Scrooge and compassion to see him happy, so he intends to invite Scrooge to spend Christmas time with him every year (Dickens, 2008, p. 83).

From the above discussion, it can be conceptualized that the western moral values reflected through the story of *A Christmas Carol* can be explained by various doctrines in Buddhist teaching. This agrees with the result of a work by Keeling (2011) which stated that *A Christmas Carol* reflects Buddhist principles and belief in the consequence of action or *Karma* clearly, and this is the reason why Keeling named his article *A Buddhist Carol*. From this point, it can be seen clearly that morality is universal. No matter what religion one believes in or what attitude towards religion one has, morality is an important element driving society to peace and a better place to live in. It helps uplift one's mind to be kind and empathetic. When people are kind to each other and empathize each other, they share goodwill and realize the value of life.

Recommendations

Recommendation in general

Although *A Christmas Carol* is a classic novel which people who are not in the field of literature may think of it as a piece of entertaining work which is good for passing time, the readers can learn many aspects of life and living through its story. Moral lessons from its story which, no matter how long time has passed, is still wanted by society. Charles Dickens had interwoven morality into the story wisely and pinpoint it as the main theme for readers to see the value of life rather than money. It is true that money is a tool for buying things but not happiness. Hence, reading this novel can help the readers to see the truth of life in

the world of materialism where people spend their lifetime seeking for “objects”. In addition, the story line of *A Christmas Carol* is easy to follow and appropriate for people of all ages. People can learn the British social condition of Victorian era through the story and evergreen moral lessons. Therefore, *A Christmas Carol* is a recommended literary work teachers should assign their students to read; also, the parents who would like to implant morality to their children should spend some time encouraging their children to carefully read it and, if possible, explaining the values of morality to their children.

Recommendation for further studies

To recommend the students or researchers in the field of literature, this study is just an example of using only one set of Buddhist moral principles in study literature. There are much more moral concepts and doctrines which may be able to apply into examining *A Christmas Carol* or other literary works. As aforementioned, this study is a model for applying moral principles of the Eastern world into examining morality reflected through a classic literature of the West to examine the compatibility of the two hemispheres. This study also shows that religious belief is not limited to be used for studying level of morality or virtue in human in reality as seen in general. Religious belief or principles can be used in a larger area. In addition, there are other aspects of morality and different subject matters in this story which can be recognized by people in the field of literature or other fields. Therefore, anybody who are interested in conducting research works through moral principles, religious belief, or literature is a way to view the world and another way to search for new knowledge to broaden aesthetic value of life.

References

- Boonim, D., & Janthasaro, S. (2018). Gharāvāsa-dhamma: The formula for developing quality of life according to the Buddhist way. *Nakhon Lampang Buddhist Coll's Journal*, 7(2), 338-352.
- Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2006). Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, 3, 77-101.
- Broich, J. (2016). *The real reason Charles Dickens wrote A Christmas Carol*. Retrieved from <https://time.com/4597964/history-charles-dickens-christmas-carol/>
- Collins, P. (2020). *Charles Dickens*. Retrieved from <https://www.britannica.com/biography/Charles-Dickens-British-novelist>
- Dickens, C. (2008). *A Christmas carol*. London: Puffin Classics.
- Keeling, P. M. (2011). A Buddhist carol. *Buddhist-Christian Studies*, 31, 25-29. doi:10.1353/bcs.2011.0009
- Kyin, A. (2015). A study of the Buddhist aphorisms for Myanmar householder from dhamma magazines published in 2012. *Journal of Humanities Faculty of Humanities Naresuan University*, 12(1). 97-110.
- Merriam-Webster, Incorporated. (2021). *Merriam-Webster online dictionary*. Retrieved from <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/karma>
- Office of the Royal Society. (2011). *On-line dictionary*. Retrieved from <https://dictionary.orst.go.th/>
- Panyavachiro, K. (2016). Virtues for lay people to practices towards goodness. *Academic Journal of Mahamakut Buddhist University Roi Et Campus*, 5(2), 263-271.
- Pemasilo, Y., Suriyo, S., Thammasaro, S., & Jongla-iad, P. (2018). An integration of gharavasa-dhamma (virtues for a good household life) with Thai family practice in Thailand 4.0. *Journal of Social Science and Buddhistic Anthropology*, 3(2), 44-62.

- Phra Dhambhidok (P. A. Payutto). (2003). *Dictionary of Buddhism vocabulary*. Bangkok: Mahachulalongkornrajavidyalaya Printing House.
- Ray, R. (2001). *Religion without god*. Retrieved from <https://www.lionsroar.com/religion-without-god/>
- Sonphonngam, M. (2017). Desirable householding guidelines in the integrated Buddhist perspective. *Journal of Graduate Studies Review*, 13(3), 324-334.
- Sulcas, R. (2019). A new 'Christmas Carol' explores the roots of Scrooge's scorn. Retrieved from <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/12/13/arts/a-christmas-carol-scrooge-fx.html>
- Takla, R. (2015). Gharāvāsa-dhamma in lanna scripts Paed Leaeng Ork Yord. *Panidhana Journal*, 11(2), 104-117.
- Thankaew, B. (1999). *The truth of the life*. Bangkok: O.S. Printing House.
- Wongsritep, P., Thongpan, S., Wanichat, T., & Kaewketpong, P. (2019). Rule of a good household life and human developments. *Dhammathas Academic Journal*, 19(3), 265-273.