



## **Ethical Values of Pañcasīla in Buddhism and its Impact on Human Beings**

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### **ABSTRACT:**

The purpose of this research was Ethical Values of Pañcasīla in Buddhism. The researcher has focused on entomology of Pañcasīla in Buddhism. The research focuses on historical depictions of Pañcasīla in canonical, commentary and sub-commentary of Theravada Buddhist texts. Furthermore, the focus of this thesis is to investigate how Pañcasīla is beneficial to the societies in these days.

The research worker discusses the outlook on Theravada Buddhist ethics, the ethics of the Buddhists' peace through Pañcasīla, the positive implications of the precepts, ethics for monks, duties of a monk when entering a monastery, the application of the Buddha's ethics, Buddha's ethics and the new global society, Buddhism for human being in society, economic ethics in Theravada Buddhism, the Buddhist way of life for householders, economic and moral values, Lay economic ethics, the monastic economy, Buddhism and politics, economic ethics for rulers, the justice of economic distribution, the Ethics- the way of the ultimate goal (Nibhāna), the nature of modern life, and understanding the nature of life.

Besides, the research worker discusses the five precepts that are abstaining from killing a living being, abstaining from taking what is not given, abstaining from sexual misconduct, abstaining from telling lies and abstaining from taking intoxicants prescribed in the Pāli canon for every lay Buddhist.

Besides, the research worker discusses the benefit of the five precepts such as if someone observes these noble precepts, he not only leads religious way of life but also renders a better service to others by allowing them to live peacefully.

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**Keywords:** Buddhism, Pañcasīla, Ethical Values, and Society.

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### **Introduction:**

According to philology, the word ethics is derived from the Latin *Ethos*, which means character. In this way, ethics is the science of character, habits of activity or conduct of human beings. Ethics is also called Moral Philosophy. The word moral is a derivative for the Latin word '*mores*', meaning convention or practice. In this way ethics literally means the science of convention or practice. Ethics is the science of human conduct. Habits and behavior are related to the permanent characteristics of human character. Conduct is the mirror of character. Thus ethics is the science of character or habit. It evaluates human habits, character and voluntary determination and discusses their propriety or otherwise Pañcasīla.

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### **Philosophy of Buddhism:**

Four noble truths as preached by Buddha are that the life is full of suffering (Duhkha), that there is a cause of this suffering (Duhkha-samudaya), it is possible to stop suffering (Duhkha-nirodha), and there is a way to extinguish suffering (Duhkha-nirodha-marga). Eight fold Path (astangika-marga) as advocated by Buddha as a way to extinguish the sufferings are right views, right resolve/aspiration, right speech, right action/conduct, right livelihood, right effort right mindfulness and right concentration.

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**Four Noble Truths:**

The Four Noble Truths comprise the essence of Buddha's teachings, though they leave much left unexplained. They are the truth of suffering, the truth of the cause of suffering, the truth of the end of suffering, and the truth of the path that leads to the end of suffering.

**Noble Eight Fold Path:**

*Ariya atthaṅgika magga.*

The Eightfold Path consists of eight practices: right view, right resolve, right speech, right conduct, right livelihood, right effort, right mindfulness, and right Samadhi ('meditative absorption or union'; alternatively, equanimous meditative awareness).

**The Ethics of the Buddhism:**

Essentially, according to Buddhist teachings, the ethical and moral principles are governed by examining whether a certain action, whether connected to body or speech is likely to be harmful to one's self or to others and thereby avoiding any actions which are likely to be harmful. In Buddhism, there is much talk of a skilled mind. A mind that is skillful avoids actions that are likely to cause suffering or remorse. Moral conduct for Buddhists differs according to whether it applies to the laity or to the Sangha or clergy. A lay Buddhist should cultivate good conduct by training in what are known as the Pañcasīla "Five Precepts". These are not like, say, the Ten Commandments, which, if broken, entail punishment by God. The five precepts are training rules, which, if one were to break any of them, one should be aware of the breach and examine how such a breach may be avoided in the future. The resultant of an action (often referred to as Karma) depends on the intention more than the action itself. It entails less feelings of guilt than its Judeo-Christian counterpart.

Buddhism places a great emphasis on 'mind' and it is mental anguish such as remorse, anxiety, guilt etc. which is to be avoided in order to cultivate a calm and peaceful mind. The life of the Buddhist layman is, or should be, regulated by the Five Precepts. These constitute the minimal requirements for ethical day to- day living, to be of benefit both to the individual and to the community. All efforts towards higher spiritual achievement must begin with Virtue (Sīla), for without Virtue, Mental Concentration (Samādhi) and Wisdom (Paññā) are not attainable. And without the self-discipline that Sīla inculcates, civilized life is not possible. Aside from these obvious truths, the five principles of moral conduct were laid down by the Buddha, the supreme Physician, for another reason also. They are to serve as a prophylactic against unwholesome Karma and the misery those results from it: they are the basic rules of mental and spiritual hygiene. Observance of the Precepts is a form of insurance against the risk of rebirth in states of greater suffering, a danger which is always present unless strenuous efforts are made to overcome the Taints (Āsava) and Defilements (Kilesa).

Every human being born into this world has in his character an accumulation of unwholesome tendencies from the Greed, Hatred and Delusion (Lobha, Dosa, Moha) of the past mixed with good ones, for if he were free from the craving, antagonisms and ignorance that accompany the illusion of selfhood he would not have been reborn in this or any other sphere.

He has to maintain a constant vigilance against these harmful qualities, whose greatest menace is directed towards himself. Virtue does not develop automatically; it calls for diligent cultivation, sustained by self-analysis and unwearying self-discipline. In the KāmāvacaraBhūmi, the realm of sense-desires, there is a natural bias towards self-gratification. It takes many forms, some of them highly deceptive so that we are often victims of the disease to a greater extent than we realize. For this reason it has to be resisted, not spasmodically but all the time, as gravity must be resisted when climbing uphill. Descent is easy and rapid, but ascent is always toilsome and slow. We do not lack reminders of the inexorable nature of cause and effect, the universal law, for we see evidence of it everywhere. All around us people are suffering the results of their unwholesome Karma of the past. They expiate it in disease, poverty, deformity, mental deficiency, frustration of their efforts and countless other kinds of misfortunes. There is no truth more obvious than that Dukkha predominates in life, heavily outweighing man's gleams of momentary and fragile happiness. The happiest man cannot say when misfortune will strike him, or what form it will take; and neither wealth, position nor skill can avail to ward it off. Yet men, even though they have been taught the moral law by a Supreme Buddha, still recklessly pursue their willful ends, as though intoxicated—which indeed they are. They are intoxicated by craving for sense pleasures and by the mental defilements which, like a poison in the blood-stream, driving them madly on, oblivious of danger. Just as flies swarm round a jar of honey, crawling to their doom over the bodies of other flies already caught in the alluring trap of death, so men disregard the warning signs given by the suffering of others they see all about them, and are drawn into the same trap by their craving for sense-gratification and the evil courses into which it too often leads them. Like the flies, they see their fellows suffering for their folly, yet they go on to the same end, regardless of the inevitable result.

And just as the flies crawl over the struggling bodies of other flies already trapped, so men themselves often go to their doom trampling on the prostrate bodies of their fellow men. This is the grim picture the world presents; a fit subject for compassion. We may look in vain for any evidence of a merciful deity in this amoral wilderness; its creator is ignorance, and its ruler, desire. If it were not for *Sīla*, the pitiless jungle law would prevail everywhere.

The Five Precepts of the layman, as distinct from the augmented Eight and Ten Precepts to be observed on Uposatha Days, are meant to be followed by Buddhists at all times, the object being to establish a habit formation of virtuous and restrained conduct, in opposition to the unwholesome tendencies of greed, hatred and delusion that form a part of human nature and the ego-assertive instinct. Thus they serve a dual purpose, being at once a barrier to unwholesome mental impulses and deeds, protecting one who observes them from generating bad *Karma* for which he would have to suffer in future, and a necessary purification to make clear the way for Wisdom-insight and ultimate liberation from the round of births and deaths.

From this it naturally follows that the regular observance of the Five Precepts is more beneficial than the occasional observance of the Eight or Ten Uposatha Day vows. The extra precepts added to make up the eight or ten are not ethical rules but vows of a mildly ascetic nature whose purpose is to subdue the senses and strengthen the will. In daily life it is the moral principles involved in the Five Precepts which, colouring all our associations with other people, go to build up a consistently moral character. More sustained effort is required to keep the Five Precepts all the time than to keep eight or ten on special occasions. It is a mistake to assume, as some people seem to do, that the strict

observance of Uposatha Day vows will compensate for a life that is spent, on the whole, in disregard of the five basic precepts. Ideally, both should be observed; but if a choice is to be made it should be in favour of the more difficult task, that of following the rules of disciplined conduct at all times and in all circumstances.

The Buddhist tradition acknowledges that life is complex and throws up many difficulties, and it does not suggest that there is a single course of action that will be right in all circumstances. Indeed, rather than speaking of actions being right or wrong, Buddhism speaks of the being skilful (*kusala*) or unskillful (*akusala*).

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## Conclusion:

In conclusion, Gautama Buddha, the founder of Buddhism, lived in Northern India in the 6th century B.C. He was not a God. Nor was he a prophet of any God either. As a Man, He searched for the Truth. He ended his life as a Man. He delivered His Dhammas to all people as well as Devas and Bahamas for forty-five years.

The Buddha's teaching that everything in life changes (*Anicca*) and that nothing is permanent, not even anything in us (*Anatta*), is the starting point for Buddhist ethics. Ethics is basically a study of what it means to live morally, or the study of the basis on which people make their decisions about moral issues. For most religious people this begins by understanding the true nature of the world and how to live responsibly in it. Buddhist ethics is clearly dependent on Buddhist beliefs. The key issue here is the problem of *Dukkha* which arises through dissatisfaction with the world and our constant desires. Dissatisfaction occurs because people constantly crave (desire) for things and that such things, when gained, are unable to truly satisfy them. The problem of why suffering arises and how it can be overcome is explained by the Buddha in The Four Noble Truths.

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