



Morality and Its Values

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Abstract

Morality is basic teaching of the Buddha. Sila is discipline for happy life. There are five and eight sila for house holder that is call Upasak and Upasika and Vinaya for Monks and Nuns. Morality makes perfect personality as a human being. Sila is pure life. Sila is medicine of body and mind. Who are following sila, become a good person and free from suffering. Morality is very important for the every human being.

Introduction

Morality is base of happy and peaceful life. It is very important for the successful life with any problem. Everyone wants to live happy life but some time cannot be happy because of action is unwholesome. When do wholesome so result will be good and covert in happiness. Buddha teaches morality. He said that morality is dhamma and Dhamma is morality.

Morality (Sīla)

In the way of Buddhist practice, morality or moral discipline *sīla* is always regarded as the starting point, to name a few of instances: the set of advice of all the *Buddhas*, - work yet no evil; give yourselves to good; cleanse yet your hearts, so runs the Buddha' word.¹

The *pali* word for morality or moral discipline, *Sīla* which has three levels of meanings: (1) inner virtue, that is, endowment with such qualities as kindness, contentment, simplicity, truthfulness, patience, etc. (2) virtuous actions of body and speech which express those inner virtues outwardly; and (3) rules of conduct governing actions of body and speech designed to bring them in accord with the ethical ideals.²

Sīla has the characteristic of harmonizing our actions of body and speech. The harmony achieved by maintaining *Sīla* does not stop at the social level, but leads our actions into harmony with a higher law, the law of *kamma*, which is the law of action and

its fruit that reigns invisibly behind the entire world of sentient existence. The Buddha prescribed a set of precepts as guidelines to good conduct. The most basic set of precepts found in the Buddha's teaching is the Five Precepts (*pañca-Sīla*).

The Five Precepts are basic principles for lay Buddhists with regard to *Vāritta*. They are abstaining from killing, stealing, committing sexual misconduct, telling lies and taking intoxicants and drugs. If a person 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. By leading a pure life according to the Noble Eightfold Path, men can become noble themselves and their lives become more meaningful. Those who are spiritually advanced see nonsense at all in material possessions and worldly powers. Therefore, they renounce the worldly pleasures and observe the precepts in order to gain more peace and happiness.

Some people say that they are forbidden to do certain things just because their religion says so. But that is not the correct way for a mature person to follow as to what to do and what not to do. When we uphold all precepts, we should not think that we are observing them only for our benefit. If we stop killing and disturbing people, they can expect to live peacefully, because we do not create any fear in their mind. Similarly, if we do not rob, lie and swindle others, they can



have security, happiness and live peacefully. Thus, when Buddhists who are spiritually advanced observe the precepts, they are not concerned with any fear of punishment but they consider the danger of cruelty and suffering which they create towards others. By considering the danger of killing, stealing and so on. They refrain from all evil things. In this way, they give an opportunity to their mind to cultivate virtues such as loving kindness, compassion and sympathy. They observe all other Buddhist principles in the same manner. If every human being in this world could follow the Five Precepts which are the noble principles of moral conduct, how peaceful and happy we will all be.

Observance of precepts with earnest mind is certainly a meritorious deed. It brings great benefits to this life and the lives hereafter. These benefits are mentioned in the *Mahāparinibbānasutta* like this — One who is established well in virtue acquires great wealth and possessions. Secondly, he earns a great fame and reputation. Thirdly, in the midst of public assemblies, he is always assured and self-possessed. Fourthly when facing death, he is not free from any sort of anxiety, but is also blessed with calmness and equanimity and finally after death, he is reborn in the heavenly world.

Myanmar cultural and ethical values are grounded upon Theravāda Buddhism. Five Precepts, Thirty eight Blessings, *Lokaniti*, *SingālovādaSutta*, *BrahmavihāraMettā*, *Karunā*, *Muditā*, *Upekkhā*, *Lokapāladhammahiriand* *Otappaare* Myanmar cultural and moral standards. Furthermore, there are many moral rules taught by Myanmar scholars. In Myanmar society, it can be seen that each member obeys and preserves one's respective moral responsibilities. Among them, the observing of the Five Precepts are very important in Myanmar society.

Moral values are relative values that protect life and are respectful of the dual life value of self and others. The great moral values, such as truth, freedom and charity have one thing in common. When they are functioning

correctly, they are life protecting or life enhancing for all. Now modern society is caught in a big dilemma. They cannot live happily as society is so full of conflicts. Life, property and family become unsafe reigning everywhere. Menace of liquor and drug is threatening the whole society.

There are several problems happened in the society that needed solution. The Five Precepts presented by the Buddha peaceful and harmonious means and free from all kinds of conflicts and problems. As the conflicts and problems have grown in proportion, the Five Precepts are applicable to society more than even before.

Modern societies at present, the respect for human life are completely disregarded. There is no assurance that one could enjoy his private property. Family life and specially women are being beleaguered and sexually abused. Cheating, vilifying, bickering, and character assassination are common feature in modern societies. Drug menace, as top of alcoholic menace, is diverting the young and consequently the whole future of societies. In such context the Five Precepts are most relevant and meaningful. They are not totally eradicating the problem. Yet, they would help to bring about almost an awareness of the gravity of the situation.

If practiced with its effort they will certainly bring about beneficial result. But this Five Precepts has to be put into effect, in its positive aspect, too. So while abstaining from them, one should cultivate compassion, charity, chastity, the habit of speaking well about other and speaking the truth and be mindful not to fall victims to intoxication. With members trained, in this manner, the society will certainly turn out to be a better place to live in, a place that would provide a congenial environment for both secular and spiritual development.

The Situation of Moral Values in Myanmar

Man's most admirable thing is the possession of the good trait or good character or moral whereas man's most evil character is the possession of the bad trait



or bad character or immoral. A person who has good moral will be loved and respected by the most people though he is not rich man. A person who has bad character will not be loved and respected by the most people though he possesses wealth. Just as the foundation is very important in a house, morality is also indispensable attribute to be a good and cultured one.

As most Myanmar people are Buddhists, they believe in the law of *kamma*, *saṃsāra*, and *nibbāna*. Furthermore they also believe that throughout *samsarā* if one does good deeds, he will get good result and if one does bad deeds, he will get bad result. They also believe that the ultimate goal of life is *nibbāna*, the cessation of suffering.³ As a cart equipped with a wheel without linchpin cannot reach the goal, a person who fails to preserve his moral responsibilities cannot realize *nibbāna*. In other words, as linchpin is indispensable part of the wheel, similarly, morality is indispensable part of human beings.

Burmese⁴ have been described as dignified, kind, gentle, generous, frank, poised, friendly, individualistic, patient, child-like, carefree, open, and informal. They have also been described gossipy, superstitious, secretive, paranoid, boastful and arrogant.⁵

The former President of USA, Edger Alon Hoover once said that the Burmese were the only genuinely happy people in all of Asia. Also, a guidebook from the 1950s described the people of Burma as generous, gay, friendly and good-humored.⁶ Because food has traditionally been plentiful and easy to obtain year round, it has been said, Burmese have traditionally not worried about tomorrow, saving and making preparations to avoid a future problem, and sometimes lack a sense of respecting the property of others. Some foreigners have been surprised to find locals stealing fruit from their trees or cutting their flowers to sell as hair ornaments. But at the same time working and a strong work ethic is very important to the Burmese.

The Burmese are very friendly and hospitable. Westerners are often invited in people's homes and called brother or sister. Even though they have nothing local people often don't let rich tourists pay for meals and drinks.

Young people and children are expected to obey their parents and elder siblings and freedom of expression is not widely practiced at home. Older people always play a big role in decisions for younger people, rightly and wrongly. In fact, acceptance of difference is not commonly practiced in society at large. People rarely value different opinions and comments either at home or at workplace and a sense of compromise is seldom valued.⁷

Myanmar people are very grateful to their benefactors. It can be seen in Myanmar history obviously. In Myanmar there are many proverbs concerning ingratitude. The followings are some of them: Taking the shade of the tree and breaking off the branches. Sleeps on the leather and eats the edges. If one has been stayed under the shade of a tree one should not break the branches of that tree. If one has been stayed in others' house one should not insult them, if one do so; one will be regarded as a dog that is sleeping on the leather and eating the edges. As one has received the benefits from them, they are regarded as benefactors. So, one should not do anything which can damage them. Myanmar people accept that one should have a grateful mind.

The Five Precepts (*PañcaSīla*)

The meaning of the term precept or *sīla* is 'morality' or 'discipline'. It is divided into two sections. They are *cārittaSīla* - the duties that one should perform, and *vārittaSīla* abstinences from what is prohibited by the Buddha. Performing the obligatory duties towards parents, children, husband, wife, teachers, pupils, friends, monks and so on as mentioned in detail in *Singālovādasutta* is fulfillment of *cārittaSīla*. Apart from this, observing Five Precepts, eight precepts, ten precepts whatever precepts and other disciplinary rules is fulfillment of *vāritta sīla*.



To be an ideal person or virtuous person, one has to fulfill both *vāritta sī'a* and *cārittasīla*. Without fulfilling *cārittasīla*, *vāritta sī'a* won't be fulfilled completely. It is mentioned the scriptures as follow:

1. *Vattaṃ aparipurento
sīlaṃ nāparipūrati.
Asuddhasīloduppañño
cittakaggaṃ navindati.*
2. *Vikkhittacittonekaggo
sammādhammaṃ napassati.
Apassamānosaddhamma
Dukkānaparimuccati*⁸.

The one who neglects *cāritta sī'a* is not perfect in *vārittaSīla*. With impurity of *Sīla*, the ignorant cannot focus one's mind. The concentrated mind could not see the truth. Not seeing the truth, there is no liberation of suffering.

There are five precepts, which are basic principles for lay Buddhists with regard to *vāritta*. They are abstaining from killing, stealing, committing sexual misconduct, telling lies and taking intoxicants and drugs. 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. By leading a pure life according to the noble Eightfold path, we become noble we and our lives become more meaningful. Those who are spiritually advanced see nonsense at all in material possessions and worldly powers. Therefore, they renounce the worldly pleasures and observe the precepts in order to gain more peace happiness.

Conclusion

Morality is play important role in the human life. Morality is important for House holder and monks and nuns. Morality is the stage beginning with volition present in one who abstains from killing living things, and so on. (*vārittaSīla*) or in one who fulfills the practice of the duties (*cārittaSīla*). In *VinayaCulavagga*, the *Buddha* stated that if a person practices only abstinence part which is not to treat to others in a way that he does not like other people to treat to him

(*vārittaSīla*) then he is not a fully morality man (*aparipuritaSīla*).

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