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Relevancy of Buddhist Philosophy in Modern Society: A Glimpse

Bishnu Pada Sarkar

Research Scholar, Department of Philosophy,
Mansarovar Global University, Sehore, M.P., India.

ABSTRACT

Buddhist philosophy remains highly relevant in modern society, offering timeless wisdom for navigating individual and collective challenges. Its core principles like mindfulness, compassion, and interdependence resonate with contemporary concerns about mental health, social justice, and environmental sustainability. Buddhist values are based on the goal of conquering attachment, hatred, and illusion, which are said to be the main causes of suffering and the origins of unwholesome behavior. In addition to moral virtue, this effort encompasses the other facets of the Buddhist path, such as the development of insight and meditation. It affects societal and political ethics, interpersonal relationships, and individual behavior. In this article, the relevancy of buddhist philosophy in modern society: a glimpse has been discussed.

Keywords: *Buddhist, Philosophy, Modern, Society.*

INTRODUCTION

The Buddha, the dharma, and the sangha are the three treasures that Buddhists use to guide them in all branches of the religion. Buddhists have a wealth of resources for ethical reasoning because of these three jewels, particularly in the textual texts that convey the dharma. There are ethical materials in each of the three main sections of the Buddhist scriptural canon. The Abhidharma literature examines the psychology of morality, the Vinaya provides ordained Buddhists with moral and behavioral guidelines, and the Sutras offer moral lessons and ethical thought. Many Buddhist treatises and commentaries, in addition to canonical literature, incorporate ethical considerations. (Dibeltulo Concu, M., 2017).

RELEVANCY OF BUDDHIST PHILOSOPHY IN MODERN SOCIETY

There isn't a term in Buddhist canonical writings that is a straight translation of the English word ethics. Sila, which means "moral discipline," is the closest term. Along with prajna (knowledge) and samadhi (mental cultivation or concentration), sila is one of the three disciplines that make up the road to the cessation of suffering. Sila serves as the basis for samadhi and prajna in the path, which is frequently thought of as a three-fold training. Sila alludes to the general rules of moral conduct. The practices of right action, right speech, and right livelihood are all part of the noble eightfold path, or sila. The other practices in the route are supported by the application of moral discipline. The various

stages of sila correlate to "monkhood" (vinaya or patimokkha), "novice monkhood" (ten commandments), "basic morality" (five precepts), and "basic morality with asceticism." The five well-known moral commandments (panca-sila) of lay Buddhists—not killing, not stealing, not lying, not having inappropriate sex, and not using intoxicants—are most closely associated with sila. The concept of gradualist and voluntary moral expectations is part of the Buddhist tradition. Lay Buddhists can choose to follow the five commandments (or fewer in some Buddhist regions) or temporarily follow eight or ten; novices follow ten precepts, while ordained monks and nuns follow nearly two hundred.

For lay Buddhists, living a moral life is based on two things: the basic moral virtue of giving (dāna), which encourages people to help others without expecting anything in return, and the five permanent (or eight or ten temporary) precepts, which tell people how to behave. The Buddha's description of the Buddhist way of life goes beyond simply following the precepts. Additionally, the Buddha expects each person to carry out three tasks: bhavna, sila, and dana. The Buddha observed that greed, rage, and delusion overpower people. They hurt each other as well as themselves. It could be considered subhuman or inhumane. Buddha also acknowledged that the majority of people are capable of selfless, compassionate, and charitable deeds. The human mind has the capacity to focus and become clear. Furthermore, the Buddha had the rare insight that humans are capable of acquiring specialized knowledge through advanced mental training. He then, out of compassion, came up with three systematic trainings that support entire humanity, offer everyone a clear human mind, and build unique human knowledge or insight wisdom. The Pali language refers to these trainings as punnas (meritorious actions).

Giving or generosity (dana), which serves as the foundation for additional moral and spiritual development, is the main ethical behavior that a Buddhist learns to cultivate. Giving done for its own sake is better than giving for karmic reasons. Selfless giving reduces the false sense of self even further and brings the giver closer to wisdom. The main group that people give to is the monastic sangha or community, who live "homeless" and depend on the laity for food and shelter. This keeps them humble and from becoming distant from the laity. However, this mutually beneficial relationship is not one-sided since, although the laity give the sangha things like food, clothes, medicine, and monastic housing, the monks and nuns give back more through their example and teachings because the gift of dhamma surpasses all other gifts. Thus, these reciprocal acts of generosity constitute a fundamental aspect of the lay-monastic interaction.

Since generosity is ingrained in Buddhist society, it is not only shown to the sangha but also to friends, family, coworkers, visitors, the homeless and impoverished, and animals. Buddhists in various nations show a strong concern for carrying out karmically beneficial deeds through acts of charity, such as supporting rituals during festivals, funerals, ordinations, or illnesses. Celebrating the gifts of others can also produce karmic fruitfulness, in addition to one's own offering. Because giving entails renunciation and non-attachment, it promotes both moral and spiritual development. In both the Mahayana and Theravada traditions, it is also the first of the ten Bodhisattva perfections.

The Buddhist observes the self-discipline of keeping specific precepts in order to build his or her ethical virtue, or sila, based on the development of dāna. Keeping any of these commandments is, in fact, viewed as a way to give the finest type of tremendous gifts to others so that they don't feel threatened by someone who upholds them. It is believed that practicing dāna and sila can prevent subhuman rebirths. People highly value self-control and moral constraint as ways to safeguard others and improve one's own personality.

The "five precepts," or more accurately, the "five virtues" (panca-silani), are the set of precepts that laypeople most frequently observe. From the Pali canon, their translated meanings are: I follow the training precept (sikkha-padam) to refrain from assaulting living beings; I follow the training precept to refrain from taking what is not given; I follow the training precept to refrain from misconduct involving sense pleasures; I follow the training precept to refrain from false speech; and I follow the training precept to refrain from using drugs or alcohol that present a risk of carelessness. (Raju, L.P., Gowda, G., 2014).

Each precept is referred to as a "training-precept," which is the same term used for a monastic code item. However, the Suttas leave the lay precepts very vague and non-specific, whereas the monastic code delves into considerable detail about rules for monks and nuns. Making them more specific has been left to later commentators and the guidance of the sangha in different cultures. Furthermore, the precepts are written in such a way because each person is in charge of their own fate and should be the only one to determine the type of life they want to lead.

The first precept, which is widely considered to be the most significant, is equivalent to the Hindu and Jain idea of ahiṃsa, or non-injury. The first principle prohibits the deliberate killing of any living being, whether human or otherwise. We demonstrate the spirit of this rule by eschewing violence against all living things, whether they are moving or stationary. He should not kill living things, instigate the death of others, or condone the killing of others. Without a stick or a sword, he refrains from attacking living things; he is meticulous, kind, and quivering for the sake of all living things. Given that all sentient beings undergo the same cycle of rebirths and different forms of suffering; it follows that the aim of this precept is not exclusive to humans. But killing or hurting a human is worse than killing an animal or killing a bigger or more advanced animal than a smaller one. Unless the agent accidentally kills a creature other than the intended one, in which case he or she is solely accountable, the first precept is breached, even if a being is killed by someone else who has been ordered to do so. We will discuss numerous behavioral consequences of the first principle, encompassing nature, war, abortion, suicide, and euthanasia, among others.

It is believed that the second precept forbids any theft. According to a similar rule for monks, if a monk steals enough to be prosecuted, he is totally destroyed in his monastic life. When an individual has unrestricted access to something without facing punishment or accountability, it becomes their property and warrants no theft. The value of the stolen item and the virtue of the victim are two factors that make theft seem worse.

The second principle covers fraud, cheating, forgery, and fraudulently denying that one owes someone money. According to the Upasaka-Sila Sūtra, it is violated when someone accepts a gift of two robes when they only need one, gives one monk what they promised another, or demands more money than is reasonable for a theft (see also tampering with an insurance claim).

It is recognized that not everyone feels capable or inclined to adhere to the Buddhist monastic ideal of celibacy, which states that the enlightened man should shun the uncelebrated life (abrahmacariyam) like a pit of flaming coals. However, he should not violate another person's wife if he is unable to lead a celibate life.

The third principle mostly concerns avoiding creating pain through one's sexual actions. The most obvious violation of this rule is adultery, or going with someone else's wife. This is considered wrong in part because it is a manifestation of greed and in part because it hurts other people. The line that follows illustrates the first of these: associating with prostitutes or other people's wives, rather than finding happiness with one's own wife, can lead to disastrous consequences.

The third precept extends beyond refraining from engaging in sexual relations with another person's spouse or partner. It is considered an offense for a male to have sexual relations with young girls who are not protected by a relative or with women who are engaged or who are still under the protection of a relative. Rape and incest are obviously violations of the principle. Depending on the woman's virtue in upholding the principle, a violation is severe.

Upholding the first three precepts, related to bodily activities, is similar to the "right action," a component of the eight-fold path. The fourth precept is similar to "right speech" because, although it only explicitly refers to refraining from false speech, it is commonly understood to include refraining from other types of "wrong speech," which might lead to mental anguish or other types of suffering for oneself or others. Given unwholesome mental behaviors like covetousness, malevolence, and incorrect viewpoints, among others, this reading makes sense.

The fourth precept, which states that a person who has no shame at purposeful lying is capable of any wicked behavior, is typically regarded as the second most significant one (after the first precept). Lying to create a rift within the sangha is the most serious violation of any precept. However, there is also the belief that an assertion of truth, such as the solemn declaration of a moral or spiritual truth or the honest admission of a weakness, can spare the speaker or another person from harm.

Of course, even the truth can be detrimental if it is revealed at the wrong moment, so if giving it causes wholesome mental states to decline and unwholesome ones to increase in the person to whom it is given, it should be suppressed. Accordingly, it is said that well-spoken, blameless speech is delivered at the appropriate moment, in line with the truth, and with gentleness, purpose, and friendliness. However, this does not imply that one should never say anything that the hearer would find offensive. The Buddha only said what was true and good for the soul when the time was right, even if others disagreed.

Although it is not included in the list of path factors for "right action" or "right speech," this precept may serve as a tool for "right mindfulness." Intoxication impairs mental clarity and calmness, makes it easier to try to hide rather than confront life's hardships, and increases the likelihood of breaking all other rules. Breaking the fifth rule, according to Buddha, results in six dangers: wasting money, increasing arguments, being ill, losing one's reputation, exposing oneself indecently, and losing one's wisdom. Intoxicating liquor use has a negative impact on memory. Additionally, it creates a barrier to the positive path, diminishing all wonderful attributes, both ordinary and extraordinary.

Although a small amount of alcohol is allowed as an element in a medication, it is illegal to consume even as much alcohol as a blade of grass, according to a monastic rule whose language is strikingly similar to the fifth lay precept. However, while some people try to abstain from all intoxicating or mind-altering substances, unless they are used for legitimate medical reasons, others view intoxication and not just a small drink as a violation of the fifth lay precept; still others view drinking as a violation of the precept but still take a drink.

Laypeople may adopt a set of eight commandments as an expansion of the standard five. These extend beyond only ethical considerations of what is or may be morally repugnant, including self-discipline techniques that lessen exciting sensory inputs that disrupt focus and serenity and foster non-attachment. One big difference between the eight and five commandments is that the third one comes with an oath to stay away from all sexual activity, which is seen as abrahmacariya, or unchaste behavior, and is not part of the holy life. Following the customary fifth precept, which states that I must refrain from eating during unseasonable times, refrain from watching dancing, listening to vocal and instrumental music, and attending shows, refrain from wearing garlands, perfumes, and other adornments, and refrain from using high or large beds (or seats), I must also follow three additional precepts.

The ten precepts are an expansion of the eight precepts. These are identical to the eight, with the exception that the seventh is divided into two sections and includes an agreement to refrain from accepting gold and silver. Despite the seemingly minor difference, its practical significance lies in the long-term observance of the ten precepts. As with monks, the extra precept prohibits the actual handling of money. (Marlatt, G.A., 2002).

The most important one, bhavna or meditation, comes last and is the one to which someone will be getting ready to go right away following this. The term "bhavna" refers to mental training. According to its etymology, the term itself denotes development—a greater advancement of the mind. This idea that everything starts in the mind was first expressed by the Buddha. As battles start in men's minds, so too must the fortifications of peace be built in men's minds, according to the preamble of the organization he represents constitution. Man's greatest treasure is a pure mind, a trained mind, a well-developed mind, a mind that can be controlled at will, a mind that stays alert, keeps evolving, and discovers within itself the secret of life, the problems of life, and the reality of life instead of moving on to topics that encourage tension and boredom.

Heartfelt feelings of compassion and loving kindness are valued in a Buddhist's ethical development since they are the result of generosity, help strengthen virtue, and undermine the attachment to "I." Compassion (karuna) and lovingkindness (metta) are the first two of four characteristics, which also include equanimity (upekkha) and empathic or appreciative delight (mudita). When developed to a high-level during meditation, these are known as the immeasurable or divine abidings (brahma-viharas). This is due to the belief that they imbue the mind with limitlessness, akin to the affectionate Brahma gods. Since all sentient creatures share the same preferences for happiness and pain, lovingkindness is the goal for true happiness for all of them. We should distinguish it from sentimentality and use it as a remedy for fear and hatred. Compassion, which is the opposite of cruelty and should be differentiated from grief, is the desire for beings to be free from suffering and to feel for them. Empathic joy, which is different from wild merriment, is delighted at the happiness of others and their positive fortune. It is the antidote to envy and dissatisfaction. Equanimity, which arises from realizing that people suffer and are joyful in accordance with their own karma, is the ability to remain calm and even-minded in the face of life's ups and downs, both one's own and those of others. While it differs from indifference, it stands in stark contrast to both aversion and approbation. Additionally, it guarantees impartiality toward all beings, ensuring that everyone experiences love, generosity, etc., on an equal basis. (Kumar, S., 2021).

As a guide, the Buddha had displayed certain basic flaws that one should attempt to stay away from. The second factor contributing to the majority of people's issues is their hostility or hatred against others. Sila is one of the remedies for this second source of all the problems. By adhering to sila, one controls—or rather, eradicates—the source of animosity. One person who was well aware of the numerous consequences of hatred was the Buddha. He has witnessed hatred causing individuals to destroy themselves. Because of this, he could clearly state that hatred never goes away and that more hate is worse. According to the Buddha, the only way to end the hatred is for someone to stop it from growing until it reaches a point when people burn themselves in their mutual hatred. This cycle of hatred would never end if one side—or even better, both parties—did not attempt to overcome hatred with friendship and hatred with non-hatred. The complete philosophy of Buddhism's noble conduct serves as one basis for handling it. Because leading a moral life involves combating the second source of weakness, which is hatred, Buddhism has a fascinating and timeless teaching on lovingkindness. The Buddha did not interpret Buddhism's core value, lovingkindness, which forms the basis of Buddhist theory, as a straightforward ethical precept. In order to understand magnificent life, he had examined the principle of lovingkindness. Words like "conquer anger by lovingkindness," "conquer evil by good," "conquer the stingy by giving," and "conquer the lie by truth" emphasize the importance of lovingkindness.

Metta, or lovingkindness, is one of Buddhism's most significant teachings. We call lovingkindness the kind of love that is always mild and gentle. It is giving and compassionate rather than self-centred. It just looks out for one's loved ones' well-being. We should also treat all sentient beings with lovingkindness. It is the mild route for those individuals and creatures seen as social outcasts.

Then comes compassion, or karuna. Developing compassion is easier. When someone is in need of assistance or is in difficulty, one's heart automatically rises to their aid. Another facet of lovingkindness is the tendency to jump to someone's aid out of sympathy for the person who is in pain.

The third aspect of mudita, known as empathetic joy or sharing in others' happiness, is more challenging to practice and calls for a tremendous deal of love and suffering. It involves erasing all thoughts of jealousy and envy and allowing one to enjoy the happiness of others, including one's neighbour and even one's adversary.

The fourth component of lovingkindness, complete equanimity, or upekkha, comes last. There are no superiors or inferiors, no friends or enemies. One is completely enmeshed in a sort of unity with all beings, all things, and all situations; there are no distinctions between any two people. Therefore, there is no room for rivalry, hostility, or competition once a person is able to live a life where all four of these qualities guide their behavior.

While social and political ethics for the general public are not disregarded, Buddhist teachings focus more on behavioral standards for ordained sangha members. The Buddha explains the importance of respectful and mutually supporting relationships between parents and children, students and teachers, husbands and wives, friends and associates, employers and employees, and householders and renunciants in the Sigalovada-Sutta (advice to Sigala), which is one of the best visions for social relationships. Similar to how the Vinaya books establish the framework for a peaceful monastic community, this text lays forth the principles for a peaceful lay community.

Buddhism does not overlook the realm of lay interpersonal and social interactions, even while it places a strong emphasis on a more complex monastic discipline, moral restraint and appropriate living, and a personal lay ethic of giving. However, since the lay community was so sensitive to shifting conditions in location and time, the monks did not view it as a topic suitable for set regulations. Discourses to the laity typically do not take the form of disciplinary rules. As a result, only a few fundamental guidelines and precepts were established to serve as a foundation for individuals to develop more detailed codes according to their unique situations. While we can articulate some key tenets of Buddhist social ethics, the practical application of these principles varies greatly among cultures.

The Sigalovada-Sutta, which the Emperor Asoka and Buddhaghosa referred to as the Vinaya, or code of discipline (often referring to the monastic code), is a significant work. Here, the Buddha encounters Sigala, who is fulfilling his father's final request by worshiping the six directions. The Buddha advises him that treating six different kinds of people with appropriate behavior is a better method to fulfill the instructions. He first educates Sigala on how a layman should behave in general before describing these suitable activities. 56 One should uphold the rules and refrain from acting out of fear, ignorance, animosity, or bias. The Buddha then explains how to preserve the six directions in order to create healthy social relationships. Buddha places the layperson at the centre of a web of

connections, including those between parents and children, teachers and students, husbands and wives, friends and relatives, masters and servants, and others. He offers advice on how to make sure that these interactions are mutually beneficial. Without treating people with respect, a person in these interactions has no right to demand particular behavior from others. (Karunaratne, A.H.G.K., 2019).

Buddhism places a high importance on societal cohesiveness and peace. A peaceful community with self-disciplined, self-sufficient individuals will foster personal development. In order to encourage, reinforce, and disseminate positive traits, this technique frequently emphasizes the value of surrounding oneself with positive individuals. In terms of social equality, the Buddha criticized Brahmanical assertions that certain people were born superior or inferior, which were connected to the four ostensibly divinely created social classes known as the Varnas of the so-called caste system. According to his teachings, one does not automatically become a Brahmin or an outcast. A person might become a Brahmin or an outcast depending on their actions.

Numerous sources present a standard that a Buddhist monarch should adhere to in order to guarantee a society that is tranquil, harmonious, and impoverishment-free. The obligation of subjects to their ruler is not discussed, but Buddhism has traditionally discouraged rebellions because of its emphasis on non-violence, respect for elders, women, religion, holy men and women, concord, and collaborative decision-making. Buddha believed that social ideals, or modified versions of them, were so important that they guaranteed the monastic sangha's prosperity. (Heim, M., 2019).

The concept of human rights, which are fundamental, unalienable rights to specific treatment, naturally arises when thinking about politics. People typically mention these rights when they perceive a government or quasi-government mistreating its people. The straightforward social contract concept of monarchy found in the Agganna Sutta is an excellent place to start when thinking about this from a Buddhist perspective. When we say someone has a right, we obligate others to treat them in a specific manner. The borrower has the responsibility if the right is limited by contract and transactions, such as the right to have a loan returned by a borrower.

A lender has an abstract right to have their loan repaid by the borrower unless they renounce it, but the state can force them to do so. Human rights can be beneficial, like having access to a quality education, or negative, like being free from something like arbitrary arrest. Abuse negates the first type of rights, whereas neglect negates the second. Buddhism's emphasis on non-harming makes it strong in this area. Buddhism places a little less emphasis on the right to positive benefits, viewing them as something that other people should choose to contribute to rather than as entitlements.

It is difficult to focus the mind and acquire higher knowledge without Sila as a foundation. We will become aware of how harmful and unpleasant the inclinations of greed, rage, and delusion are as we work on controlling our behavior. Dana weakens these tendencies. But the Buddha provides a third type of meritorious practice to purify and elevate our thoughts completely. This is mental progress, or bhavna. We will discover that our minds become clear and pure if we practice attention. We believe that a person with a clear human mentality can focus effectively. The foundation of attention

can develop wisdom, or unique human understanding. Sila is the medium of wisdom and focus, and Dāna is the basis for it. However, sila is unquestionably the most significant of the three punnas since it safeguards both the individual's world and the wider universe.

CONCLUSION

One's own introspection can validate the moral lessons found in the Bible. The Buddha frequently uses the narrative of the Kalamas from the Sutra to illustrate his emphasis on introspection. In this story, the Buddha warns the Kalamas not to accept teachings from any source—whether it be tradition, a reputable teacher, or another—without first verifying them with their own experiences. He enables them to realize for themselves that delusions, hatred, and greed are immoral, while the reverse of these traits are moral. Not wanting to be greedy, angry, or deluded is seen as the basis of good behavior, so these are the main ideas of Buddhism. On the other hand, wanting to be greedy, angry, or deluded is seen as the basis of bad behavior, and getting rid of them completely. They are like kindness and compassion, generosity and not being attached, and wisdom, which means being able to see clearly what life is all about and not being fooled or confused. This is true even when they show up negatively.

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