

The Buddhist Approach to Establish Peace through Five Precepts

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Abstract: *The Buddha is endowed with great compassion and wisdom. His advice to mankind is to be free from suffering and causing any inflict on any living being. Every being likes happiness and wellbeing (sukhakāmāni bhūtāni). In this world, the goal of Buddhism is peace. In Buddhist society said that Buddhism has been known as the most peaceful religion among world religions. There is no any war in history of the world shows that Buddhists have not cause any conflict with the name of Buddhism since of Buddhism had founded by Gotama Buddha who always taught non-violence and compassion to his follower and attended or disciples. Buddha expressed the PañcaSīla, five precepts for lay peoples which will prove beneficial for them to live peaceful, harmonious life in society and with an amicable way. The basic one for everybody is the Five Precepts, providing the foundation for societal relationships for good cooperation and not taking advantage of others, in order to maintain peace and happiness for the society. Therefore, five precepts is not only the foundation to peace for the individual but also for public society. The best way of practicing loving-kindness is the basic teaching in Buddhism. The prime source of destroyer of peace is mental action which spring from lobha (greed), Dosa (hatred), and Moha (delusion) which are the unwholesome. Before Buddha passing a way three months his disciple Ananda asked about who will become our teacher after you got parinibbana, the Buddha replied my Dhamma and Vinaya will become your teacher and successors which guide humanity to walk on the path of Nibbana.*

Keywords: Buddhist, Peace, Loving-kindness Conflict, Five Precepts, war

1. Introduction

Buddhism has many ethical principles. But the basic moral of Buddhism is the five precepts. The purpose is to eliminate crude passions that are expressed through thought, word and deed. Five precepts were structure by the Gotama Buddha in 6th century B.C for his followers to know what to do and what not to do. We believe that five precepts are very important principle of creating a special personality for oneself, being peace and community, family, country, society and all living beings. To establish peace, the Buddha taught to his follower to observe five precepts – abstaining from killing living beings, stealing, sexual misconduct, telling lie, and intoxicants - as a law of conduct in taming one's body, speech and mind. If one does not take life, it means a person protects life. Do not take what's not given, one protects the property of others. Do not engage in sexual misconduct, one protects his family from negative ill -will. Do not false speech, one builds trust and positive relationship with others people. Do not use intoxicants and drugs, one has a clarity of mind and is free from making wrong decisions and preventing wrong actions from harming others.. All human beings around the world reflect deeply on the cause of violence and how it can be removed from our live. Every conflicts, problems, wars are arising due to Lobha (agreed), Dosa (hatred), and Moha (delusion), those three unwholesome are called akusala in Buddhism. The five precepts form the essential for one's spiritual development as expounded in the Noble Eightfold path, which can be classified as ethical conduct Sila (morality), Sammadhi (concentration) and Panna (wisdom).

1) The Buddhist approach to establish peace through five precepts

Sīla consists of Right speech, Right Action and Right Livelihood. These three path factors are the basic for all good conduct, as well as the foundation of all Buddhist

training.¹ We must not think only do destructive war, chemical wars, atomic bombs which could wipe out humanity and other forms of life on the earth, but also of man's violence against plant life, against atmosphere in general too could cause irrecoverable damage. We can say the basic precepts in Buddhism, the five precepts to start with, is a good beginning for those who search for a way of avoiding war and creating peace in the world. Buddha expressed the *PañcaSīla*, five precepts for lay peoples which will prove beneficial for them to live peaceful, harmonious life in society and with an amicable way. The basic one for everybody is the Five Precepts, providing the foundation for societal relationships for good cooperation and not taking advantage of others, in order to maintain peace and happiness for the society.² The first precept in the *PañcaSīla* is abstinence from taking life or killing. Morning and evening, Buddhist s observe these precepts, to stop killing, stealing, sexual misconduct, taking alcohol, and telling lies. Anybody can understand that if one abstains or prevents from these vices; killing, stealing, sexual misconduct, addiction to alcohol and telling lies there will be peace of mind of the individual and, it the world is filled with such persons, there will be permanent peace.

The *SamyuttaNikāya*, the Buddha has been given a beautiful and most genuineness axion, "I will protect others, bhikkhus: Thus, should the establishments of mindfulness by practiced. Protecting oneself, bhikkhus, one protects others; protecting others, one protects oneself."³ Hence, when people are practicing the five precepts scrupulously able to protect oneself and others.

¹ Bhikkhu Moneyya, 2006, P. 15

² Sauwalak Kittipapas, 2016, P. 61

³ Bhikkhu Bodhi, 2000, P. 1648

To control the mind, it is necessary to abstain from doing evil and to do merit. It is necessary to purify the mind, too. Thus, the Dhammapada says:

Not to do any evil, to cultivate good, to purify one's mind, this is the teaching of the Buddhas.⁴

Through these five precepts step by step we can discuss because there are many kinds of ethical and moral values. The five precepts do not essentially make an individual Buddhist. They are the basic ethics observing by Buddhist in day to day life. Some people believe that these are the basic ethical foundation of Buddhism but this is not the final script our ultimate goal of Buddhism. The basic fundamentals of Buddhism are deeper and philosophical than this. And also, the Buddha described the benefit of morality into the *ĀṅguttaraNikāya*, "Ānanda asked the Buddha, what is the purpose and benefit of wholesome virtuous behavior? The Buddha's answer was following.

Ānanda, the purpose and benefit of wholesome virtuous behavior is non-regret, the purpose and benefit of non-regret is joy, the purpose and benefit of joy is rapture, tranquility, pleasure, concentration; concentration has seeing things as they really are; seeing things as they really are has disenchantment and dispassion; disenchantment and dispassion have knowing and seeing as their object and profit or the purpose and benefit of dispassion is the knowledge and vision of liberation.⁵

And through observing these precepts anybody can start the way to the ultimate reality and deeper philosophical stages of Buddhism. Here the benefit of morality, the Buddha said that

"Bhikkhus, for a virtuous person, for one whose behavior is virtuous, non-regret possesses its proximate cause."⁶

And this is the better begging path of the way of lie. Observance of five precepts in everyday promotes the individual peace as well as the social peace. Five precepts are the stepping stones to walk on the path of peace.

2) Do not take life

I undertake to observe the precept to abstain from taking the life or injure the life of living beings.⁷ Taking the life of living creatures is prohibited, as well as injuring, harming, maiming, and torturing. Everyone loves their own life and you are no one to take it away from other. Just like you like your life, all others do too. So, live and let live. Do not get involved in any kind of violent activities to harm other's life. Ven. Soma Thera & Piyadassi Thera said that in their book "One abstains from killing other beings because one knows how dear life is to oneself; so infers that it must be the same for others. All happiness of men in this world depends on their lives."⁸ In the *SamyuttaNikāya*, the Buddha said that "Bhikkhus, one possessing three qualities is deposited in heaven as if brought there. What three?

1) One abstains from the destruction of life oneself

- 2) Encourages others to abstain from the destruction of life
- 3) Approves of abstaining from the destruction of life.⁹

The Buddha never encourage killing living beings, but Sri Lanka Chronical of *Mahāvamsa* said that the arahants in *Piyangudipa* knowing *Duṭṭhagāmani's* remorse sent a group of eight holy monks to comfort him; when *Duṭṭhagāmani* confessed that he had slaughtered million, what they said to *Duṭṭhagāmani* to eliminate his remorse is highly problematic: From this deed arise no hindrance in the way to heaven. Only one and a half human beings haven been a slain here by thee, O lord of men. The one had come unto the (three) refuges, the other had taken on himself the five precepts. This passage in the *Mahāvamsa* seems to suggest that certain forms of violence such as killings during war can be allowed in certain circumstance such as in the case of threats to the survival of Buddhism in Sri Lanka during the time of *Duṭṭhagāmani*.¹⁰ Actually, in *Rajjasutta*¹¹ of the *SamyuttaNikāya*, Buddha was alone in seclusion, a reflection arose in his mind thus: "is it possible to exercise rulership righteously: without killing and without instigating others to kill." Sutta said that the Buddha himself never kill any beings.

This precept has a message for human beings to protect the lives of all living beings including animals. This is the very good quotation in to the *SamyuttaNikāya*, here is the Buddha mentioned to *Mallikā* "Hence one who loves himself should not harm others"¹². This precept inculcates virtues like loving-kindness and compassion in the minds of the person. Through practice of this precept in life human beings can learn to respect not only their lives but the lives of all living beings. The preaching and practice of this precept we can avoid war and all kinds of violence or conflict. The humanity which is afflicted nowadays with the problem terrorism all over the world can get relief by the strict observance of this precept. Buddha has condemned all killing, whether it is for pastime, or for sacrifice, or in warfare. But he has also taught that he who wages war in a righteous cause after having exhausted all means of preserving peace is not blameworthy. Buddhism supports the war for just cause but it also teaches not to nourish the feelings of hatred and revenge for enemies. Nowhere does the Buddha approve of that idleness which would not defend against wickedness by right methods. But Buddhism abhors militarism which represses all sympathetic feelings, develops the cruel side of human nature, and commends hatred of enemies and revengefulness as the highest virtues. On the other hand, it instills long suffering, forgiveness and loving kindness which show not only goodness of heart but also deep wisdom. Actually, the Buddha said that "by abstaining from the destruction of life, he himself in turn enjoys immeasurable freedom from fear, enmity and affliction"¹³ due to observing the first of five precepts everybody may live peaceful life.

In the dhammapada the Buddha said that the importance of life to all beings "All tremble at violence; all fear death.

⁴ K. Sri Dhammananda, 1988, P.388

⁵ Bhikkhu Bodhi, 2012, P. 1554

⁶ Ibid, P. 1556

⁷ Pāṇātipātāveramnisikkhāpdaṃsamādhiyāmi

⁸ SoMaTher&Piyadassi Thera, 2008, P. 220

⁹ Bhikkhu Bodhi, 2012 P. 375

¹⁰ Ven. Deegalle Mahinda, 2000, Pp. 48-49

¹¹ Bhikkhu Bodhi, 2000, P.209

¹² Ibid., P. 171

¹³ Bhikkhu Bodhi, 2012, P. 1174

Putting oneself in the place of another, one should not kill nor cause another to kill".¹⁴ When a person observes the five precepts of not killing, he controls his hatred and cultivates loving-kindness.

3) Do not take what's not given

I undertake to observe the precept to abstain from taking things not given.¹⁵ This precept simply emphasizes on staying away from the practice of stealing. If something does not belong to you or is not given to you, it is not yours and you do not have the right to use it without permission. The sutta said that one possessing these three qualities is deposited in heaven as if brought there, (1) One takes what is not given oneself, (2) encourages others to take what is not given, and (3) approves of taking what is not given...¹⁶ For the *Bhikkhu and Bhikkhuni*, the Buddha laid down the second *Pārājika* because if any one break down this rule, he/she lose the monkhood and nun hood life. He controls his greed and cultivates his renunciation or non-attachment. Therefore, this second precept is very important for everyone.

4) Do not engage in sexual misconduct

I undertake to observe the precept to abstain from wrong conduct in sexual pleasures.¹⁷ This precept can be arguable and different cultures describe it differently. And this is anybody cannot argue, as an unethical or unsuitable fact for any type of society. The sexual misconduct causes the incidents like rape, adultery and other abnormal sexual behavior. The advice of Buddha is for keeping the mutual trust between husband and wife intact. The problems of prostitution, rape and extra-marital relations which eventually lead to murder and dishonesty of the people can be checked through the observance of this precept. And at the same sutta as I mentioned above the Buddha gives three things one possessing these three qualities is deposited in hell and heaven as if brought there. If one observes these precepts would get peace or happiness. "(1) one abstains from sexual misconduct oneself, (2) encourages others to abstain from sexual misconduct, and (3) approves of abstaining from sexual misconduct."¹⁸ However, this precept is an advice to avoid unethical sexual relationships and nurture an attitude aimed towards gender equality.

5) Do not false speech

Avoid lying, if you lie, you will not only harm the other person but also harm your own self. Actually, this precept commands one to restrain from all kinds evil speech such as false speech, divisive, harsh speech, idle chatter.¹⁹ *Ambalaṭṭhikārahulovāda sutta of the MajjhimaNikāya*, On one occasion, the Buddha admonished his son, Venerable *Rahula* thus: "When one is not ashamed to tell a deliberate lie, there is no evil that one would not do. Therefore, *Rāhula*, you should train thus: I will not utter a falsehood even as a joke"²⁰ and "speak not harshly to anyone, for those thus spoken to might retort. Indeed, angry speech hurts, and

retaliation may overtake you". *Mahākammavibhaṅga Sutta* expressed that some person abstains from false speech. On the dissolution of the body, after death, he reappears in a happy destination, even in the heavenly world.²¹ When we talk to others, human beings, we should use nice words (*Piyavacana*) and restrain from telling lies, slander, speaking harshly, and useless talk. We have to be kind and generous towards weak or the faulty. Then automatically friendly environment will exist. "What Buddhist believes" in this book author says;

"A harsh word can wound more deeply than weapons, whereas a gentle word can change the heart and the mind of the most hardened criminal".²²

Indeed, evil speech cause many trouble and disharmony in society. A good person should restrain from them by using truthful words, constructive and sensible word. Diplomatic talk is an art of speech and skillful means to help solve many problems concerning human relationships. However., *Vacīsucarita (Sucarita) Sutta* of the *ĀṅguttaraNikāya*, Buddha deliver for kinds of verbal good conduct. They are truthful speech, non-divisive speech, gentle speech, and judicious speech.²³ Everyone should be observing that four verbal good conduct. People should abstains from false speech and cultivates truthfulness. Without speaking in false speech there is easy to attain peace.

6) Do not use intoxicants and drugs

I undertake to observe the rule of abstinence from intoxicants which cause a careless frame of mind.²⁴ The commentary gives a list of five kinds of alcohol, but now in the age of science, there are many kinds of drugs and stimulants that are to be avoided by the wise. When one has been influenced by alcohol, he would violate all other precepts. He would behave foolishly, and lose all human dignity. He cannot protect himself, his properties, and his family. When he is addicted to alcohol or drugs, he damages his physical and psychological system. He causes worry and suffering for his family and beloved ones; he impairs his properties as well as his moral conduct.

Again, for the peaceful atmosphere alcoholics and drug addicts are obstacles because, they cannot restrain from ten unwholesome actions. After drinking alcohol, one can resort to any kind of unwholesome action because he cannot think what is good and bad, or right or wrong.²⁵

Thus, the five precepts are the basic moral laws for the well beings of individuals, as well as for the peace and welfare of community and society. In many suttas, we see the statement; "He restrains from killing, put aside the cudgel and sword; full of kindness and compassion, he lives for the welfare and happiness of all living beings." Every precept has two aspect: negative and positive. Negative approach emphasizes on abstinence in order to keep one pure, avoid blameworthy acts, so that one is saved from censure, and

¹⁴Dhammapada 129

¹⁵Adinnādanāveramṇisikkhāpdaṃsamādiyāmi

¹⁶Bhikkhu Bodhi, 2012, P. 375

¹⁷Kāmesumicchācārāveramṇisikkhāpdaṃsamādiyāmi

¹⁸Bhikkhu Bodhi, 2012, P. 375

¹⁹ Bhikkhu Bodhi, 2012, P.520

²⁰ Bhikkhu Ñānamoli and Bhikkhu Bodhi, 2009, P. 524

²¹ Ibid, P 1060

²² K.SriDhammananda, 2008, P. 82

²³ Bhikkhu Bodhi, 2012, P. 520

²⁴ Surāmerayamajjapamādatṭānāveramaṇisikkhāpadamādiyāmi

²⁵ DN, Sigāla sutta, (PTS) 182, Eng. Tran. Iii. 186

punishments. The positive side is compassion and respect for other beings; one observes precepts in order to maintain peace safety for society.

These are the basic facts of Buddhism which should be followed by anyone who wants peace and happiness in life. Not following these rules is also the main cause of violence on the earth. If all the human beings understand and believe in those rules then there will be a very beautiful world with peace. In any religious view unnecessary killing of any living beings and not just humans are not recommended but these days there are many people who kill many innocent beings in the name of their religion. It only leads to more violence and violence of different kinds.

We can understand on the other hand the five precepts clearly and then anybody can understand why we need these precepts? What is the significance of those? It is a follow;

- 1) Avoid killing - respect for life
- 2) Avoid stealing - respect for others' property
- 3) Avoid sexual misconduct - respect for our pure nature
- 4) Avoid telling lies - respect for honesty
- 5) Avoid intoxicants - respect for a clear mind

These are the essential interpretations about the five precepts or the basic ethical guidance of Buddhism. The importance of this is not only for Buddhist but also for the whole society.

According to *DīghaNikāya* the Buddha expressed five benefits of observing precepts or morality. Buddha said that five advantages of one of good morality and of success in morality.²⁶ What are they?

- 1) In the first place, through careful attention to his affairs he gains much wealth.
- 2) In the second place, he gets a good reputation for morality and good conduct.
- 3) In third place, whatever assembly he approaches, whether of *khattiyas*, *Brahmins*, householders or ascetics, he does so with confidence and assurance.
- 4) In the fourth place, he dies unconfused.
- 5) In the fifth place, after death, he arises in a happy state, a heavenly world.

These are the five advantages to one of good morality, and of success in morality.

Related to *Sīla*, in one sutta of the *Majjhima Sutta*, a young boy named *Subha* approached the Buddha asked him questions. "Master *Gotama*, what is the cause and condition why human beings are seen to be inferior and superior? For people are seen to be short-lived and long-lived, sickly and healthy, ugly and beautiful, uninfluential and influential, poor and wealthy, low-born and high-born, stupid and wise." The Buddha reply to him, student, some man and woman kills living beings and is murderous, bloody-handed, given to blows and violence, merciless to living beings. Because of these actions he or she short-lived, sickly, ugly, poor, etc., but student, some man or woman, abandoning the killing of living beings, abstains from killing living beings; with rod and weapon laid aside, gentle and kindly, he abides

compassionate to all living beings. Due to these actions he or she long-lived, healthy, beautiful, influential, wealthy etc.,²⁷

Therefore, *Sīla* is very important for society who need peaceful life. One of virtue is always mindful and completely aware. After death he is free from all confused thinking and is calm and composed. A person who observes the five precepts of virtue is a wholesome and pleasant neighbor. If anyone can protect these five precepts definitely, he does not violate the social harmony and causes to build a harmonious society.

7) Loving-kindness and peace

Buddhism believe that *mettā* lovingkindness is the best weapon to defeat anger, hatred and resentment. Lovingkindness meditation is well known as a therapeutic tool to cure psychological disorders and difficult behaviors caused by hatred. *Mettā* is the opposite of hatred. Before it destroys other, anger will destroy oneself first. One should cultivate lovingkindness to eradicate hatred, because *Dosa* (hatred) is the root of conflict, war, dispute and argument. It can be appeased by love. When lovingkindness is developed in the mind, hatred can be reduced. Lovingkindness is the best remedy or medicine for those who are angry with peoples. By developing loving-kindness, one's mind is clam, tranquil, and joyful.

There is the way teaching of Buddhism that I believe can make the world come peacefully: Buddha taught that due to anger, hatred and delusion most of the problems arising in this world are caused by own thoughts and that we can train our thought or minds for a more positive result. Because every positive and negative action arises from our mind by choosing positive and rejecting negative thought, we can purify our mind. "not to do any evil, to cultivate good, to purify one's mind". Therefore, where mind is purified, there is no dreadful action in the world. Venerable K. Sri Dhammananda said in to his book "in order to practice loving-kindness, one must first practise the noble principle of non-violence and must always be ready to overcome selfishness and to show the correct path to others."²⁸

The *Metta Sutta* described about loving-kindness for all beings should be treated with maternal affection likewise in the matter how a mother treats her only. The term *Mettā* is referred to a mother's loves for her only child. Just as a mother would protect her son, her only son, with her own life, so one should develop toward all beings a state of mind without boundaries.²⁹ Let his thoughts of boundless love permeate the whole world-above, below and across, without restriction, free of hate free of enmity. And to maintain peace we must practice "Brahmavihāra" the practice of the highest life the four sublime state is said to consists in the cultivation of compassionate feeling towards all beings. Buddhism aims at creating a peaceful society in the sense of the attainment of inner peace and finding the way to peace.

²⁷ Bhikkhu Ñāṇamoli and Bhikkhu Bodhi, 2009, PP. 1053-1054

²⁸ K. Sri Dhammananda, 1998, P. 166

²⁹ Bhikkhu Bodhi, 2017, P. 180

²⁶ Maurice Walshe, 2012. P. 236

2. Conclusion

To conclude, the Buddha approach to peace in society, in order to avoid conflicts and war Buddha suggests correct ethical behavior etc., five precepts and observance of other teaching of Dhamma. The Buddha's perspective is about respect for life and the prohibition against taking life. Not only the life of human but also all the life of creatures. So, if people end killing, the world will definitely be at peace. It is an important principle borrowed from Buddhism is that of ahimsa or non-violence, which provides absolute rejection of direct violence. Not only human beings but also animals do not like violence; every one fear violence because they fear death and destruction of life and property. Never take things without permission, do not sexual misconduct or rap, do not tell a lie, and do not use drug. Therefore, statements that the five precepts are "the minimum duties of a householder" or "the moral code of Buddhism. Every war and conflict or problem arise due to the political needs of individuals or groups. The Buddha had introduced five precepts and many principles to prevent war. These five precepts are the foundation of people to develop peaceful life. And the practice of the five precepts can bring peace to all. The peacemaker within can only contribute to the implementation of peace throughout the world. May all beings be happy and healthy, may all beings in their hearts be happy.

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