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The Concept of Ethics in Buddha Philosophy as Heterodox

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ABSTRACT

The universal Noble Eightfold Paths as ethical principle in Buddha philosophy. Nirvana is a state of mind or being in which one simultaneously realizes one's true identity, which is infinite and eternal, the illusory nature of the world, perfect bliss and equanimity. There is no separate existence of "God" who is the arbiter of ethical action and soul (flow of the mental states) also a stream of changeable consciousness in mainstream Buddhism. Rather, it is a common psycho-spiritual law that certain behaviors promote nirvana and abate suffering while others impede nirvana and bring about suffering. It is in these terms that an act or sequences of acts is usually deemed moral or immoral i.e., ethical or unethical. From an enlightened mind ethical behavior both leads to and runs. As ethics Lord Buddha advised to his disciples for abstinence from: (a) harming living beings, (b) taking things not freely given, (c) sexual misconduct, (d) false speech, and (e) intoxicating drinks and drugs causing heedlessness (knierim). These five virtues are the most vital and significant while there are up to ten precepts for lay practitioners and sometimes hundreds for ordained monks. These Noble Eightfold paths generally fall into three types. The first two tend toward nurturing of knowledge (jnana), the middle three toward ethical conduct, and the latter three toward psychological (manasik) development. Among the Noble Eightfold path Right Speech is abstinence from lying, deception, slander, and idle chatter. In a positive way, Buddha promotes speaking only when necessary, and with honesty, mindfulness, and loving kindness. Right action generally entails the first three points of the five precepts listed above. The emphasis is to behave so as not to harm any sentient being physically, emotionally, or spiritually. Right livelihood follows from right action in that one ought to make their living in a peaceful way. Buddha listed four occupations which ought to be avoided for their promotion or consonance of harmful behavior like (a) arms trading (2) dealing in living beings (3) meat production such as butchery, and (4) dealing in intoxicants and poisons.

Keywords- Ethics, Noble Eightfold, Nirvana, Precept, Right

The ultimate goal of man life is *nirvana*, the nature of which is contained in third noble truth of Goutam Buddha of his *chatvari arjya satyani*- 1) suffering (*dhukha*), 2) cause of suffering (*samudaya*), 3) cessation of suffering (*nirodha*) and 4) the way of cessation of suffering (*marga*). Goutam Buddha initiates with a note of realism in pointing out that suffering (*duhkha*) is universal. One suffers on account of one's ignorance about nature of things. The members who associate with Buddhism, both layman and mendicants, detect various ethical rules to overcome temptations. In Buddhist lifestyle the practice of chastity (*brahmacharya*), non- possession (*anupadana*) and non violence (*ahimsa*) are the three main rules. Among these the *brahmacharya* consists in being faithful to one's own spouse for the laity. It means absolute abstinence from sexual interaction for the mendicants. *Anupadana* for the mendicants means not to have any personal belongings other than those permitted in the *vinaya*. The *anupadana* means to live a simple lifestyle, to help the underprivileged, poor people and to earn as well as to protect wealth for the sake of community. The practice of *brahmacharya* and *anupadana* aims at the elimination of creating for sense gratification (*kamatrasna*). A yearning for an upcoming life (*bhavatrasna*) is universally prevalent of human beings. A happy person is desired for him thinking he will be happier there; an unhappy person also wishes it, for he believes he will have no suffering there. Attachment of the *jiva* for the world springs from our miscommunication that the objects of enjoyment are permanent. It comes from the chain of causation-*bhavacakra* i.e. the twelve links (*dvadasanidan*)-1) ignorance (*avidya*), -2) dispositions (*samskara*), -3) consciousness (*vijnana*), 4) mind-body organism (*namarupa*), 5) six organs of cognition (*sadayatana*), 6) sense of objects contact (*sparsa*), 7) sense-experience (*vedana*), 8) thirst for objects (*trishna*), 9) clinging to objects (*upadana*), 10) will to be born (*bhava*), 11) birth (*jati*) and 12) suffering (*jara-maraan*). When one comes to realize the impermanence or momentariness of things (*khanikatva*) passions give way to detachment and renunciation. Cravings lose their pungent hold the individual. *Nirvana* looms as the distinct possibility. Buddha did not content in indicating the possibility of *nirvana* but elaborated practical ways by which everyone, irrespective of caste, colour and creed can attain *nirvana*. *Narvana* is ideal it is called highest good, the *sumnum*

bonum. The state of *Nirvana* is too and profound for language. It can only be understood, by experiencing it by oneself. *Nirvana* is profound like an ocean, lofty like a mountain peak.¹ This *nirvana* is blowing out or cooling. "As a flame blown about by the violence of the wind goes out, can't be reckoned as existing, even so a Muni delivered from mind and body, disappears and cannot be reckoned as existing. For him no longer."²

One can grow the state of perfection become, an *artha* through right conduct (*shila*), connection (*samadhi*) and knowledge (*prajna*). The constitute three jewels (*triratna*) of Buddhist ethics. The eight fold path (*astangika marga*) enjoined by Buddha is the middle patha (*madhyapantha*). It avoids the extreme of sensory indulgence and self mortification. They are, right view (*samyag distri*), right resolve (*samyag samkalpa*), right speech (*samyag vak*) right conduct (*samyag kanmanta*), right livelihood (*samyag ajiva*), right effort (*samyag vyayama*), right mindfulness (*samyag smriti*) and right conversation (*samyag samadhi*). Right view is cultivated through proper understanding of the four noble truths (*Catvari arjya satyani*), namely: (a) suffering is universal (*sarvam dukham*), (b) there is cause of suffering. It is explained by the theory of dependent origination (*pratitya samutpada*) which dwells at length on the nature of life cycle (*bhavachakra*), (c) Cessation of suffering (*niravan*) and (d) practical ways of attaining it (*astangika marga*). Right thought consists in keeping the mind immune to depredation of emotions, passion and unholy ideations. Right speech urges one to refrain from lie, slander, gossip, harsh and filthy speech. Right action consists in observance of five fundamental canons of conduct (*panchasil*) namely; practice of compassion, charity, self control, honesty, restraint in thought and action. Right livelihood underlines the right means of livelihood.

It discourages accumulation of wealth beyond necessity and forbids one from earning livelihood in unjust ways, viz.: Through trading in arms, intoxicating drinks, meat, poison etc. Right effort means, primarily four things i.e., eliminating evil which has already taken possession of oneself, preventing further evil, promoting goodness which is already within and engaging oneself in greater good. Besides, one has to cultivate the ten sterling ethical virtues (*dasaparamitas*) i.e., cultivation of wisdom, non attachment, truthfulness, moral rectitude, generosity, determination, compassion, patience, dynamism and equanimity, right mindfulness urges the individual to see things from the right perspective and watchful so that the erroneous thoughts and undesirable feelings do not take possession of oneself. The fact of impermanence should remain uppermost in one's mind as it facilitates one to rise above the passionate cravings and attachment for the world. Right concentration means, the practice of directing the mind to the ultimate goal, by withdrawing it from the mundane alignments.

Concentration is attained in four stages. In the first stage, mind transcends emotions and passions. In the second stage, reasoning (one of the vital functions of the mind) becomes recessive. In the third stage, there is absolute tranquility and one experience happiness which takes to the subsequent stage where there is neither pleasure nor pain. It is characterized by complete indifference (*upeksanava*). So, there is complete dissolution of the ego. The thought and utterance of threefold submission constitute the core of Buddhist ethics. There are *Buddham saranam gacchami*, *Dharma saranam gacchami* and *sangham saranam gacchami*. Buddha is the ultimate ideal as his embodies dharma in the thought and action. *Dharma* is the ultimate truth, the knowledge of which liberated one from the cycle of birth and death. *Sangha* points to the need of organized effort which facilitates one's effort to attain *nirvana*. To be reborn here or elsewhere in order to enjoy more happiness is a form of desire. A lot of people do excellent deeds to gain a cheerful life here or hereafter. Buddhism, while welcoming the concept of good deeds, warns that one should not long for, for every longing is a bond of suffering. The longing for worldly pleasures and possession is not very different from longing for similar things in heaven. Both are remediable by practicing chastity and non possession.

The human longing for the satisfaction of desire, here and hereafter, is very strong. On account of dissatisfaction and frustration in life, sometimes one wishes not only to destroy oneself but other also. This is also a type of longing for annihilation (*vibhavatrasana*). It is believed in the Buddhist that someone can remove it through practising non-violence (*ahimsa*). For a Buddhist both the self-destruction and the destruction of others are two forms of the same idea that is, violence. On the foundation of these principles, a Buddhist builds himself up and his society, causing them to develop ultimately into an order of universal community. In this society he lives a life free from suffering caused by narrow outlook on life which is determined by the ideas of nation, tribe, religion, caste or colour.

At the time of initiation, a lay member of the Buddhist community learns five precepts, viz: 1) abstinence from taking life, 2) abstinence from theft, 3) abstinence from adultery, 4) abstinence from telling lies, 5) abstinence from taking intoxication. There are called the 'five precepts'. The first precept is inculcates the virtue of non violence, the precept teaches non possession and the third prescribes chastity. The last two precepts stress the speaking of truth, and abstinence from intoxicants respectively and help the practice of the first three rules, the Dhammapada says:

Yo paanam atipaateti, musaavadam ca bhaasati
Loke adinnam aadivati ,paradaadam ca gacchati
Suraa meraya paanam ca yo naro anuyunjati
*Idh, evam eso lokasmin moolam khanati attano*³

"Whoever in the world takes life, speaks untruth, take that is not given to him, and commits adultery and a man who is addicted to intoxicating drinks, digs up his own roots in this very world (Gaathaas, 246-247)". A mendicant number of Buddhism is initiated with ten precepts, viz.: 1) abstinence from taking life, 2) abstinence from theft, 3) abstinence from sexual intercourse in any form, 4) abstinence from telling lies, 5) abstinence from taking intoxicating things, 6) abstinence from eating at the wrong hour, 7)

¹ Milinda Panha

² Sanyal, J., Guide to Indian Philosophy, Sribhumi, kolkatta, 2017, p.95

³ Dhammapada

abstinence from enjoying vulgar shows such as dancing, singing and instructional music,8) abstinence from using unguents and ornaments,9) abstinence from sleeping on a high luxurious bed,10); abstinence from taking money.

The mendicant in Buddhism is an embodiment of chastity, non violence and non possession; hence he is adorable. A mere caste-Brahmin of the Buddhists and everyone may attain this *Brahmanhood* by purifying himself. Thus Buddhism opens the door for all people to obtain the true *brahmanic* condition. "Him I do not call a Brahmin" declares lord Buddha, " Who is born from the womb of a mother. He may be addressed as sir,if he is well to do.He who is free from any possession and is not grasping free from any possession and is not grasping him I call a Brahmin." The first five precepts of a mendicant member of Buddhism and all of the five precepts of Buddhist layman are called five hold integrity (*panchasila*). There are other six precepts to complete the Buddhist code of morality,viz.,1) abstinence from slander,2) abstinence from impolite speech, 3) abstinence from taking senselessly,4) abstinence from covetousness,5) abstinence from malevolence,6) abstinence from false views. These six rules together with the first four rules of Buddhist layman and mendicants are called tenfold (*desasila*) They are found in Hinduism too.

In the list of *dasasila* the first three refer to physical actions, the next four to verbal actions, and the last three to mental actions. Besides, there are other actions too. Before performing any action, physical, verbal or mental, one has to be careful and must think of the result. An action is good, if it leads to happiness and results in happiness. It is bad, if it leads to suffering and results in suffering. To consider every act in this manner before its performance is the way that leads to non violence towards oneself and others. The ethical ideology of Buddhism mainly consists in the practice of non-violence inaction: physical, verbal and mental.

A lip homage to non violence is not unknown. Lord Buddha Dev, therefore, has advised in the *chakkavattisihadasutta* that a king should rule with justice and remove poverty to eradicate theft and violence. In the *kutadantasutta* he prohibited the killing of animals for sacrificial purposes. Killing in any form and for any purpose is against the teaching of the Buddha ethical ideology. In Buddhism believes that individual and collective form of people who are not in line with non violence are held be dangerous. In this strife torn world in of today where nations are completing with one another in military armament like Russia and Ukraine, the gospel of love and compassion taught by Buddha beings light and hope to the distressed mankind.

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