

## Early Buddhist Ethics- Its Doctrine and Discipline

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**Abstract:** *Buddha in its entirety consists of the Dhamma and Vinaya. In other words, the Dhamma, or the doctrine, and the Vinaya, or the discipline make the whole of Buddhist ethics. The Dhamma deals with the ideals and principles, whereas the Vinaya deals with rules and circumstances in which these ideals and principles are practised and realised. Ethicization of human deed ( karma), mental, vocal and bodily is the primary concern of the Buddha and his followers, because only through it man can favourably regulate the moral causality, the world of action, rebirth-eschatology and soteriology. Buddhism disbelieves in the existence of creator God and delinks man from the control of any external agency like him in order to ensure man's dignity and autonomy. According to it, gods, men, and other sentient beings are the parts of the same karmically arranged six –tier destinies called 'wheel of life'. It recognizes the spiritual and ethical possibilities of each individual, independent of any divine, metaphysical, or external control. The philosophical basis of Buddha's ethical views is comprised of four noble truths. It also follows the middle path, it consists of the Noble eight fold path, which is a thorough moral programme. It is also equated with nirvana, which is the ultimate good. The purpose of this paper is to inform about the Buddhist moral teachings, some preliminary reflections in terms of ethical theory. In the Buddhist moral teachings, it makes reference to fundamental concepts such as dhamma and karma, the most important precepts and the key virtues Buddhist seek to cultivate. The main goal of Buddhist ethics is to reach freedom from suffering by coming to see the world as it actually is and abandoning the distorted projections that our thoughts and emotions create. When starting a Buddhist path, one agrees to follow rules of moral discipline that forbid various destructive actions, but once the mind has reached a very high degree of spiritual development, the rules are transcended and one acts spontaneously for the benefits of others.*

**Keywords:** *dhamma, vinaya, four noble truths, the middle path, karma, ethicization.*

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### I. Introduction

It is only with the Buddhist literature that we set our foot in the bright daylight of history of the Vedic and epic literature is dispelled to some extent by this light. Gotama Buddha was born about 480 B.C, and according to a reliable tradition he lived for 80 years. As a young man of 29 years he is said to have taken to the life of a wandering ascetic and thus began to seek the path of salvation. Thus the time between 525 B.C and 480 B.C might be considered as the period of that Indian religion which was destined to become one of the three great religions of the world.

The English term 'Buddhism' correctly indicates that the religion is characterised by a devotion to 'the Buddha', 'Buddhas' or 'Buddhahood', 'Buddha' is not, in fact, a proper name, but a descriptive title meaning 'Awakened one' or 'Enlightened one'.

Buddha's teaching depends today chiefly on the Tripitakas or the three baskets of teachings which are claimed to contain his views as reported by his most intimate disciples. These three canonical works are named Vinayapitaka, Suttapitaka and Abhidhammapitaka. Two major extent branches of Buddhism are generally recognized as: Theravada("The school of the elder") and Mahayana("the greater vehicle"). In Theravada Buddhism, the ultimate goal is the attainment of the sublime state of Nirvana, achieved by practising the noble eightfold path(also known as the middle way), thus escaping what is seen as a cycle of suffering and rebirth. Mahayana Buddhism instead aspires to Buddhahood via the bodhisattva path, a state wherein one remains in this cycle to help other beings reach awakening. Vajrayana, a body of teachings may be viewed as a third branch or merely a part of Mahayana.

Speeches like the famous sermon of Benares on the 'four noble truths' and the 'noble eightfold path' which again and again recur word for word in the same form not only in many places of the Pali-canon but also in Buddhist Sanskrit texts.

Among the early disciples of the disciples of the Buddha also there were certainly some excellent scholars and some of them might be the authors of a few of the speeches, sayings and poems found among our collections. And the Tipitaka is nothing but a large collection of such collections.

Vinayapitaka: the nucleus of Vinayapitaka is the Patimokkha, a list of transgressions against the rules of discipline of the order, together with the corresponding atonements. It is said that of a good monk that his life

is 'restrained' by the restraints of the Patimokkha. This code of rules was recited in the form of a confession formulary in solemn conclave of the monks, twice every month, on the new moon and the full-moon days.

Suttapitaka : Suttapitaka is the most reliable source for the Dhamma. The Suttapitaka consists of five Nikayas or "collections", namely: 1. Dighanikaya ,2. Majjhimanikaya ,3. Samyuttanikaya ,4. Anguttaranikaya ,5. Khuddakanikaya .

Abhidhammapitaka : Abhidhammapitaka means "higher religion", or the "higher subtleties of religion".

Moreover, there is no canon and no Buddhist text prescribed from such an early time as the Pali canon committed to writing in the first century B.C, in which not a single word is mentioned of the great Buddhist king Asoka.<sup>1</sup>

Buddha has not only preached his new doctrine of the suffering and the end of the suffering but he has also founded a formal religious order; he has gathered around himself a community of disciples who lived a holy life as expected by the master according to strict rules, in order to attain the end of the suffering- the much admired Nirvana.

**Objective :** the objective of this paper is to know about the main goal of Buddhist ethics that is to reach freedom from suffering. And that the transformed and wholesome attitude of a person itself is the true foundation of morality which equally takes care of both the self and the others.

### **1. Ethics:**

Literally 'Ethics' means the science of customs or habits of men. Ethics is the science of rightness and wrongness of conduct. Conduct is purposive action, which involves choice and will. It is the expression of character which is a settled habit of will. Thus Ethics is the science of human character as expressed in right or wrong conduct.

It is the science of the supreme ideal of human life. Ethics may, therefore, be defined as the science of the Highest good. Mackenzie defines Ethics as "the study of what is right or good in human conduct" or the "science of the ideal involved in human life".

The first important conception of a moral order emerged in the background of this division of the universe into celestial and terrestrial spheres. This concept was referred to as *rta*. The initial inspiration for the formulation of the conception of *rta* was the observed physical order or the uniformity of nature.<sup>2</sup>

### **2. Buddhist Ethics:**

Buddhism sometimes is called an ethical religion as it does not discuss or depend on the existence of God (the supreme being with form and attributes), but instead believes in teaching of the Buddha. The scriptures of Buddhism in every language speak eloquently of virtues such as non-violence and compassion, and the Buddhists version of the 'Golden Rule' counsels us not to do anything to others as we would not like done to ourselves. Morality is woven into the fabric of Buddhist teachings and there is no major branch or school of Buddhism that fails to emphasize the importance of the moral life.

### **3. Foundations Of Buddhist Ethics:**

In ethics as in other matters, Buddhists have three key sources of inspiration and guidance: the 'three treasures' or 'three refuges', the Buddha, Dhamma and Sangha. The Buddha is the 'rediscoverer' and teacher of liberating truths and, the Dhamma is the teachings of the Buddhas, the path to the Buddhist goal, and the various levels of realizations of the goal. The Sangha is the 'community' of noble ones.

The ultimate foundation of Buddhists ethics is Dharma. Dharma is the notion of a universal law which governs both the physical and moral order of the universe. The Dharma, in the sense of teachings attributed to the Buddhas, is contained in voluminous texts preserved and studied by the monastic sangha. The advice and guidance that monks and nuns offer to the laity are based on these texts, on their own experience of practising the Buddhist path, and on the oral and written tradition from earliest generations of monastics and, sometime lay practitioners. As mentioned in dhammapada,verse 130-1.

### **4. Life is dear to all. Comparing others with oneself, one should neither kill nor cause to kill. Whoever, seeking his own happiness, harms...beings, he gets no happiness hereafter.**

**4.1- Dharma:** As it is being stated that Dharma is the ultimate foundation of Buddhists ethics. Dharma has many meanings, but the underlying notion is of a universal law which governs both the physical and moral order of the universe. A term that captures both its main senses, namely as the principle of order and regularity seen in the behaviour of natural phenomenon, and also the idea of a universal moral law whose requirements have been

revealed by enlightened beings such as the Buddha (Buddha claimed only to have discovered Dharma, not to have invented it).

Living in accordance with Dharma and implementing its requirements is thought to lead to happiness, fulfilment, and salvation, neglecting or transgressing it, is said to lead to endless suffering in the cycle of rebirth(samsara).

**4.2- Rebirth and Karma:** In Buddhism, one's present life is seen as one of a countless number of lives stretching back into the past, with no discernible beginning to the series. Such lives takes various forms. The Buddhist perspective on the cycle of rebirths is that it is not a pleasant affair, but that all unenlightened people are reborn whether they like it or not, and whether they believed in rebirth or not.

The process of life and rebirth is not seen to have any inherent purpose; for it was not designed and created by any being. Thus it is known as samsara, or 'wandering on' from life to life. Thus the only sensible aim, for one who understands samsara to some extent, is to strive, firstly, to avoid its more unpleasant realms, and ultimately to transcend it altogether, by attaining Nirvana, and to help others to do so.

**Karma:** The movement of beings between rebirths is not seen as a haphazard process, but as ordered and governed by the law of karma. Karma literally means 'action', and the principle of the 'law of karma' is that beings are reborn according to the nature and quality of their actions. Past actions are said to 'welcome' one in a future life a persons being awakened by kinsmen, so that:

'deeds are one's own... beings are heir to deeds, deeds are matrix, deeds are kin, deeds are arbiters. Deeds divide beings that is to say by lowness and excellence'. M.III.203)

The doctrine of karma is concerned with the ethical implications of Dharma, in particular those relating to the consequence of moral behaviour. Living an ethical life is variously said to lead to wealth, through diligence; a good reputation; joyful recollection of moral purity; self- confidence in all types of company, without fear of reproach or punishment, easier progress in meditation, dying without anxiety, and rebirth in a heaven world.

Karma is often likened to seed, and the two words for a karmic result, vipaka and phala, respectively mean 'ripening' and 'fruit'. An action is thus like a seed which will sooner or later, as part of a natural maturation process, result in certain fruits arising to the doer of the action.

Karmic actions are moral actions, and the Buddha defined karma by reference to moral choices and the acts consequent upon them. It is stated;

'It is intention(cetana), o monks, that I call karma; having willed one acts through body, speech, or mind' ( A.iii.415).

Karma can be either good or bad. Buddhists speak of good karma as 'merit'(punya), and much effort is expended in acquiring it (its opposite, bad karma, is known as papa).

#### **4.3- Ethical Principles of Buddhism:**

As, it is been stated that the ultimate foundation for Buddhist ethics is Dharma. In his first sermon, the Buddha was said to have 'turned the wheel of the Dharma' and given doctrinal expression to the truth about how things are in reality. It was in this discourse that the Buddha set out the Four noble truths, the last of which is the Noble eight fold path, which leads to Nirvana. The path has three divisions- Morality(sila), Meditation(Samadhi), and Insight(prajna).

##### **The Four noble truths:**

- Dukha – all existence is suffering.
- Samudaya – suffering is caused by craving.
- Nirodha – suffering can have an end.
- Marga – the way to the end of suffering is the noble eight fold path.
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##### **The constituents of the path are:**

- 1) Right view.
- 2) Right conception.
- 3) Right speech.
- 4) Right action.
- 5) Right livelihood.
- 6) Right effort.
- 7) Right mindfulness.
- 8) Right concentration.

Two important characteristics of the eightfold path are that it is the middle of the moral life as a middle way. The eight fold path is thus the middle part of the noble life. However, it is known as the middle way (majjhima patipada) between two extremes, 'a life of indulgence in the pleasure of sense and indulgence in self-mortification'.

The four noble truths are not facts of human existence and the defining framework of entire Buddhism, but also the source of the Buddhist ethical principles and postulates. The insights into these four truths, the knowledge of the thing as it is, non-substantiality of the soul, autonomy of the moral agent, psychologically transformable nature of human being by self effort, and its emotional constitution are important postulates of the Buddhist ethics. In Buddhism, human being is not a metaphysical being, but a cognitive, psychological, and above all an ethical being par excellence.

From the perspective of the Four noble truths, ethics is not for its own sake, but is an essential ingredient on the path to the final goal. This is well expressed in a passage which explains that 'purity of virtue' leads onward to 'purity of mind' this to 'purity of view', and this, through various stages of increasing spiritual insight, to 'utter Nirvana without attachment', 'unshakeable freedom of mind'. (M.i.149-50).

## **5. Classification of Buddhist morality:**

To live is to act, and our actions can have either harmful or beneficial consequences for oneself and others. The primary ethical activity which a Buddhist learns to develop is giving or generosity, dana, which forms a basis for further moral and spiritual development. Buddhist ethics is concerned with the principles and practices that help one to act in ways that help rather than harm.

The key focus of giving is the monastic sangha, or community; whose homeless way of life depends for its material support on the laity, to encourage their humility and to ensure that they do not become isolated from the laity. This supportive relationship is not a one-sided one, however, for while the laity provide the sangha with such items as alms-food, robes, medicine, and monasteries to live in, the monks and nuns, by their teachings. Such acts of mutual giving thus form a key feature of the lay-monastic relationship.

**'conquer anger by non-anger, conquer evil by good, conquer the stingy by giving, conquer the liar by truth'. Dhammapada 223.**

### **5.1 – Precepts:**

On a basis of developing dana, the Buddhist goes on to develop his or her ethical virtue, or sila, by observing the self-discipline of keeping certain precepts. Indeed, keeping any of these precepts is itself seen as a form of giving- the best kind. Moral restraint and self control are much emphasized as means of protecting others and purifying one's own character.

**Irrigators lead waters,  
Fletchers bend the shafts,  
Carpenters bend the wood,  
The wise control themselves. (Dhp.80).**

### **Five Precepts:**

The simplest compendium of the Buddhist morality is the five precepts:

- 1) Do not kill,
- 2) Do not steal,
- 3) Do not commit adultery
- 4) Do not tell a lie, and
- 5) Do not take intoxicating liquors. This is the most widely known list of precepts in Buddhism, comparable in influence to the ten commandments of Christianity. The Five Precepts are undertaken as voluntary commitments in the ceremony of 'going for refuge' when a person becomes a Buddhist.

The five precepts are generally given in the following forms:

- 1) Abstinence from destruction of life.
  - 2) Abstinence from taking what is not given.
  - 3) Abstinence from sexual immorality.
  - 4) Abstinence from speaking falsely. And
  - 5) Abstinence from drinking spirituous, strong, and maddening liquors, which is the cause of sloth.
1. The first precept corresponds to the Hindu and Jain concept of Ahimsa, 'non-injury', and is generally regarded as the most important one. 'Non-injury' is the distinguishing mark of Dharma. No living being therefore should be killed intentionally. With this human idea, the Buddha taught never to destroy the life of any creatures, however minute it may be. Monk's used to filter water so that microbes may not be

swallowed while drinking water. The monk ought not go out about during the rainy season, because in trampling down the grass which grows especially in that season he may destroy its life, and because he may kill small animals which also especially grow and crawl about on the roads during that season.

2. In the second precept stealing and theft in its wide sense will include not only that of material objects in connection with which it is ordinarily explained, but that of immaterial ones. There are hundreds of other forms of it, for instance, the infringement of others rights, unasked interference with others business.
3. The third precept relates primarily to the avoidance of causing suffering by one's sexual behaviour. Adultery –'going with the wife of another'(A.I.189) is the most straight forwarded breach of this precept. Nagarjuna says: ' the pleasure of husband and wife is to be two bodies but one flesh, to take away one, who another loves and destroy, this deep sentiment is a crime'.
4. The first three precepts relate to physical actions and keeping them is equivalent to the 'right actions' factor of the Eight fold path. The fourth precept is equivalent to the 'right speech', for while the precept specifically refers only to avoiding false speech, it is generally seen to entail avoiding other forms of 'wrong speech', which cause mental turmoil or other forms of suffering in oneself or other. Lying is to be avoided not only because it often harms others, but because it goes against the Buddhist value of seeking the truth, seeing things 'as they really are'. The more people deceive others, the more they are likely to deceive themselves, thus their delusion and spiritual ignorance increase.
5. The fifth and the last of the five precept means that taking any intoxicating liquors is the cause of torpidity or sluggishness. It causes mental sluggishness and relaxation as well as physical torpidity. Buddhism teaches us to concentrate our minds as a means of culture. Drinking liquors, which causes mental sluggishness and relaxation, can never be consistent with this doctrine.

**The Buddha says that breaking the fifth precept leads to six dangers:**

'present waste of money, increased quarrelling, liability to sickness, loss of good name, indecent exposure of one's person, and weakening of one's wisdom'. (D.III.182-3).

The five precepts are the compendium of Buddhist virtue. They are called 'the treasure of virtue'. The perfect observance of them is said to be success in morality.

**Taking extra precepts: eight precepts:**

The five precepts are incumbent upon all the Buddhist laymen, who ought to observe them through life, so long as they do not give up professing the Buddhist faith. As an extension of the usual five precepts, a set of eight precepts may be taken by lay people. The difference between the eight and five precepts is firstly that the third precept is replaced by an undertaking to avoid 'unchaste conduct' or 'conduct not of the holy life', that is, sexual activity of any kind. Three more precepts are undertaken after the usual fifth one:

6. Abstinence from eating at forbidden times.
7. Abstinence from dancing, singing, playing music, and seeing shows, and
8. Abstinence from adoring and beautifying the person by the use of garlands, perfumes, and from using a high or a large couch or seat.

According to Mahavagga(Vin.I.101), there was a custom among a certain religious sect in the Magadha country, to keep three days holy, the eight, fourteenth, and fifteenth of every half lunar month. The Buddha told his disciples to recite the Patimokkha or 'collection of precepts prescribed for the monk' on these occasions.

In the southern Buddhist countries, even today o monks assemble on the fourteenth or fifteenth day of every half lunar month and recite the collection of precepts, as their brethren did in ancient times. This is called Uposatha. The Buddhist laymen on their part keep all the three days or one day of every half lunar month holy, and observe these eight precepts through day and night on each occasion. This observance makes the Buddhist layman more religious life than in observing the five precepts only. He is partly leading a monks life.

**Ten precepts:**

All this precepts are included among the ten precepts which are prescribed for the samanera or novice. These are the same as the eight except that the seventh is split into its two parts, and there is the addition of an undertaking to 'abstain from accepting gold and silver'. They are:

- Abstinence from singing, dancing, playing music or attending entertainment programs.
- Abstinence from wearing perfumes, cosmetics and garland.
- Abstinence from sitting on high chairs and sleeping on luxurious soft beds.
- Abstinence from accepting gold and silver.

The extra precept precludes the actual handling of money, as in the case of monks. The samanera or novice, who has to observe the ten precepts as long as he remains a novice, comes next to the monk.

**Ten good actions:**

Another set of precepts similar to the ten precepts is the ten good paths of action( *dasa- kusala-karmapatha*). They are:

1. Charity.
2. Morality/taking precepts.
3. Mental cultivation/meditation.
4. Reverence or respect.
5. Transference of merit.
6. Services in helping others.
7. Rejoicing in the merits of others.
8. Preaching and teaching dharma.
9. Listening to the dharma.
10. Straightening one's own views.

**The Monastic Disciplinary code:**

A term often found paired with Dharma is *vinaya*. In early sources, the compound 'Dharma-vinaya'(doctrine and discipline) is used to denote the whole body of Buddhist teachings and practice. The purpose of the *vinaya* is to regulate in detail life within the community of monks and nuns and also their relationship with the laity. The Buddhist monastic order (*sangha*) existed within a broad community of wandering teachers and students known as *sramanas*. *Sangha* life is regulated by the *Vinaya*, meaning 'that by which one is led out (from suffering)'. In its final form the text is divided into three sections, the first of which contains the set of rules for monks and nuns known as the *Pratimoksa*. The *Pratimoksa* code has qualities which make it akin to a legal code. The rules are arranged in categories according to degrees of gravity. It embraces not only moral questions, such as lying and stealing, but also matters of dress, etiquette, and the general deportment of monks and nuns.

The *pratimoksa* for monks contains the following eight classes of offence:

1. *Parajika* dharmas: offences requiring expulsion from the *sangha*. These *parajikas* are 4 in numbers.
2. *Sanghavasesa* dharmas: offences involving temporary exclusion from the *sangha* while undergoing a probationary period. These are 13 in numbers.
3. *Aniyata* dharmas: undetermined cases in which the offender, when observed by a trustworthy female lay follower, may be charged under one of several categories of offences. These are 2 in numbers.
4. *Naihsargika –payantika* dharmas: offences requiring forfeiture and expiation. These are 30 in numbers.
5. *Payantika* dharmas: offences requiring simple expiation. These are 92 in numbers.
6. *Pratidesaniya* dharmas: offences that should be confessed. These are 4 in numbers.
7. *Saiksa* dharmas: rules concerning etiquette. These rules are 75 in numbers.
8. *Adhikarana- samatha* dharmas: legalistic procedures to be used in settling disputes.

The nuns text contains only seven categories, the third being excluded. The total number of rules cited varies in the texts of the different Buddhist schools, ranging from 218 to 263 for the monks and from 279 to 380 for the nuns.

**6. Key Buddhist Virtues.**

The precepts is an important aspect of moral practice but there is an internal dimension to ethics which is also important. Buddhist teachings place great emphasis on the cultivation of good qualities known as virtues. And Buddhist morality as a whole may be likened to a coin with two faces; on one side are the precepts and on the other the virtues. Those people who risk their lives for others, who tell the truth and refuse to compromise on basic principles, on who act unselfishly and put the interests of others before their own, are rightly regarded as heroes and worthy of respect and admiration.

The lengthy lists of virtues that appear in Buddhist commentarial literature are extrapolated from a key cluster of three 'cardinal virtues', non- greed(*araga*), non-hatred( *advesa*), and non- delusion(*amoha*). These are the opposite of the three 'roots of evil' or 'three poisons' namely greed, hatred and delusion, which are depicted at the centre of the *bhavacakra* or wheel of life. From the three core or cardinal virtues many others spring. They are:

- **Self- restraint:** self restraint or self control is, in many religions taught as virtuous conduct. Self –restraint occupies an important position among Buddhist virtues. Self –restraint as taught by Buddhism has a wider sense than simply 'observing the mean with regard to pleasure. It implies all the Buddhist virtues; in one sense it is the starting point of Buddhist self- culture or purification, and at the same time it is the middle and end of it; and training in it must continue throughout a man's whole life. to begin with the six sense-

organs, they are usually regarded as the 'doors' through which evils may intrude into the human mind; and therefore guarding and protecting them are everywhere commanded as praiseworthy conduct. To control one's own sense- organs and to prevent them from running their natural course forms an important part of Buddhist culture. The main object of restraint, however, is the mind. If the mind is restrained well, the five other sense- organs and the two other forms of action will be restrained by themselves. This is why so much stress is laid upon its restraint.

- **Generosity (dana):** Dana literally means 'giving', and denotes the virtue of generosity. Dana or generosity is the most important virtue recognized in Buddhism for the lay peoples, since monks and nuns possess nothing, they are entirely dependent upon the laity for support. In economic terms, dana is a virtue which is of particular importance to the laity, since the laity provides everything the sangha needs, including food, clothing, medicine and the land and buildings. Just as the laity provides everything to the monks, in the same way in return monks provide dharma teachings to the laity, and the gift of dharma is said to be the highest of all gifts. At all levels of society between family members, friends and even strangers, generosity is widely practised in Buddhist countries and seen as an indication of spiritual development.
- **Ahimsa :** ahimsa is a term meaning compassion and not to injure. Ahimsa is one of the cardinal virtues and an important tenet of three religions( Jainism, Hinduism, Buddhism). Ahimsa is a multidimensional concept, inspired by the premise that all living beings is to hurt the spark of the divine spiritual energy: therefore to hurt another being is to hurt oneself. Due to its association with ahimsa, Buddhism is generally perceived as non- violent and peace loving religion. These placed greater emphasis on concern(daya) and sympathy(anukampa) for living creatures, based on the realization that others dislike pain and death as much as oneself. As a reaction to their criticism, animal sacrifices began to be replaced by symbolic offerings such as fruit, vegetables and milk. It involves, for example, treating all living creatures with kindness and respect born out of a concern for their well being.
- **Compassion :** compassion is a virtue that is highly valued in all schools of Buddhism, but in particular by the Mahayana. Compassion is certainly not absent in early Buddhism, where it is found as the second of the four Brahma-viharas, the 'divine abidings' or 'sublime states'. These are four dispositions cultivated especially through the practise of meditation. The four are loving- kindness, compassion, sympathetic, and equanimity. Thus the practice of compassion is not absent from the early path, although it would be fair to say it received much greater emphasis in the Mahayana.

## II. Conclusion

Indian ethics being evolutionary in nature of morality, concept of morality has undergone revision from time to time. However, the supreme role of authority is nowhere denied in the Indian scheme of moral life, and morality always refers here both to social and personal obligations. Authority has the basis for deciding what is moral and what is immoral and morality refers not only to the social obligations but also to obligations related to one's own self. The moral code of the people is an indicator of their social and spiritual ways of life. the true essence of human life is to live amidst worldly joy and sorrows. Ethics is primarily concerned with the moral issues of the world. True religion lays stress on moral virtues. People are required to discharge their duties according to the moral code of ethics. A true knowledge of ethics would be attained if one practices and imbibes these moral values.

Buddhist values are rooted in the project of overcoming greed, attachment, hatred, and delusion, which are seen as the roots of unwholesome actions and the key causes of suffering. thus ethics of Buddhism is summed up in the purification of the heart, in keeping oneself unspotted even though living in the world; and from this eternal root must sprout such things of god as love, a heart of compassion, the virtue of generosity, humbleness of mind, long suffering, for bearing one other, forgiving one other, and freedom from all evils. It is said that there were eighty- four thousand virtues of perfection practised by all Bodhisattvas, but they are no more than so many leaves and branches growing from the one stem of pure heartedness.

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