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THE FIVE PRECEPTS OF BUDDHISM

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ABSTRACT:

The five precepts or five rules of coaching are the most significant system of morality for Buddhist lay peoples. They represent the essential code of ethics to be undertaken by lay followers of Buddhism. The precepts are unit commitments to abstain from killing living beings, stealing, sexual misconduct, lying, and intoxication.

KEYWORDS: *Morality and its consequences.*

INTRODUCTION :

The Dhamma taught by the Buddha shows us the correct path that leads to ultimate peace. We can be classifying this path into three stages. They are *Sīla* (morality), *Samādhi* (concentration) and *Paññā* (wisdom). They are three cornerstones of Buddhism, which lead us to ultimate peace. I can be fulfilled them over many lifetimes with great effort.

Of these, the first stage is *Sīla*. Discipline, good conduct, virtue, precept, and morality are synonymous with this word *Sīla*. This is the foundation to lead a religious way of life. If we build a house without laying a proper foundation, it will be very unstable. Modern man had learned how important it is to live in *Sīla*.

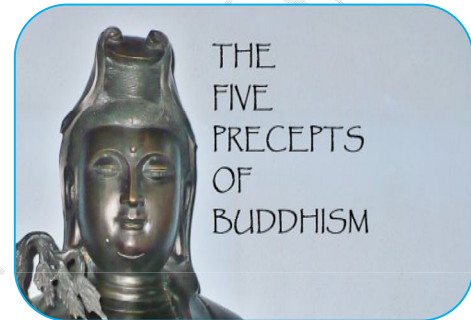
We must learn how to live as

harmless and gentle human beings. In simple language, we must know how to live without disturbing the peace and goodwill of others. It means respecting the right of others to live in peace and harmony. A good Buddhist has a deep respect and concern for the well-being of every other being. This is *Sīla*. This essay is a study of five precepts, which can lead a person to a noble life in peace and harmony.

FIVE PRECEPTS (PAÑCA SĪLA)

The five precepts prescribed in the *Pāli* canon for every lay Buddhist are:

- (1) Abstaining from killing a living being
- (2) Abstaining from taking what I do not give
- (3) Abstaining from sexual misconduct
- (4) Abstaining from telling lies



- (5) Abstaining from taking intoxicants.

The first Precept

The first of the five Precepts is to not kill a living being. The killing of any living being with intention means a breach of the first precept of non-killing. By observing the first precept of non-killing, we save the lives of one, two, three and other countless beings. *Sīla* ensures the safety of all living beings and augments the flourishing of *Metta*, *karunā*, and *Muditā* towards all living beings. Thus, the world will become a more auspicious and enjoyable abode where all sentient beings will live happily ever after.

Some people are killing living beings. The worst thing is that people are fighting and killing each other, waging civil wars, regional wars and world wars

where many people die, some become handicapped, some homeless. In some countries people kill each other claiming “ethnic cleansing”. It creates these unpleasant things by people who ignore the first precept of abstaining from killing living beings.

Motivated by anger and hatred, they kill. They should control their anger to keep this precept by cultivating loving-kindness and compassion. They should reflect on the universal law of *Kamma*, the law of action and reaction. According to this law, if one kills others, we will kill him in this life or the next life. If he abstains from killing, he will have advantages such as being healthy and having longevity.

The story illustrating the consequence of killing living beings.

Once, a housewife went to the market to buy meat to feast a special guest. As she couldn't get meat from anyplace, she killed a touch sheep that was bred in her house. It thrilled the guest and her husband with the meat. However, once she died, they forget her into hell wherever she had to suffer for a protracted time.

After that, she was born as an animal as many times as the number of hairs on the little sheep she had killed. In each animal life, they killed her being cut at the throat as she had killed the insufficient sheep.

The Second Precept

The second Precept is *Adinnādāna Virati*. It means abstaining from taking what I do not give. Taking other's things without asking for permission of the owner and taking other's properties by force or by cheating or by trick or by trading with false weight, false measuring basket, or false scale or adulteration are *Adinnādāna kamma*.

If everyone observes this precept, we could keep our house open and unlocked. We wouldn't need the police for our security. Some people violate it, and we live under heavy security forces. Reflecting on world history in the nineteenth century, some powerful countries colonized other countries. Their policy was obviously against this precept. The colonial countries lived unhappily under imperial countries because they had lost their country, their culture, their civil rights, and their nationality. They did not have freedom and were oppressed.

People also violate this moral precept because of their extreme greed which motivates them to corrupt acts. They should try to control greed to keep the precept of abstaining from stealing. To control greed, they should reflect on the disadvantages of stealing as mentioned in the Buddhist scriptures.

The story illustrates the consequences of stealing other's properties.

Once upon a time, four women in *Rājagaha* amassed riches through the malpractice of shortchanging and adulteration in selling their goods. They died in their prime of life and became *Petas* (ghost), miserable being, outside the city. At night they entered the city looking for scattered food remnants or saliva or phlegm spat out by human beings.

As they went along one street after another, they came to their former houses and saw their husbands enjoying with new wives. They felt so painful that they cried out. “We are suffering miserably for having assembled wealth unlawfully whereas our husbands are enjoying to their heart's content with their new wives.”

The Third Precept

The third precept is abstaining from committing misconduct in sexual relations. A man having sex with a woman other than his wife, or a woman having sex with other men other than her husband is sexual misconduct, *Kāmesumicchācāraa* heinous crime.

This precept is very effective in making a perfect family life. If the husband and wife are faithful to each other without committing sexual misconduct, their marriage will be solid and happy. Otherwise, they will have a family feud. This precept seems weak in big cities because we often hear news of sex scandals from televisions and newspapers. People are living in danger of rapists. Extreme sexual desire causes violating the precept of abstaining from committing sexual misconduct.

To control this desire, one should contemplate on the thirty-two parts of the body. He has to contemplate like this; This body has hairs of the body hairs of the head, nail, teeth, skin, flesh, sinews, bones, marrow, kidneys, heart, liver, diaphragm, spleen, lungs, intestines, bowels, stomach, excrement, brain, bile, phlegm, pus, blood, sweat, fat, tears, grease, spittle, nasal mucus, oil of the joints, and urine.

The story illustrates the consequences of committing adultery.

Anandā, the younger brother of the Lord *Gotama* Buddha fulfilled ten perfections for a hundred thousand worlds. In one in all his lives during this world, he became a fashionable goldsmith's son. In this life, he related to dangerous companions and committed free love many times. When he died; they cast him into *Roruva* Hell where he was tortured for many years. After that, he was born as a monkey who had its venereal bitten off as shortly because it was born.

After that life, he was born as a goat and then as a calf which was castrated when they grew up. In the next existence, he regained human life but was born as a sexual pervert. After that, he attained celestial existences as female deities for five lives with the support of wholesome *Kamma*, but he did not attain male hood because of unwholesome *Kamma* of committing adultery. Then he was born as patrician *Ruca* within the human realm. Only after that, he regains manhood.

The fourth Precept

The fourth precept is abstaining from telling lies, cheating or deceiving. Telling what is not true by a gesture or by words with malicious intent is committing the fourth precept. Many people speak untruths, more or less, so it is said that lying is common. Telling a lie degrades one's moral value because he is not a trustworthy person. People do not want to associate and work with him. Being kept away by people, he will live a lonely life.

Besides, everyone should know self-cheating which is more dangerous than cheating others because we would be a hypocrite. A hypocrite won't achieve in practice of morality and spirituality. That's why a mediator should practice meditation honestly and report and discuss honestly his experience with his teachers. Hatred and greed are the causes of telling a lie, some people never tell the truth to those whom they hate and dislike: some deceive their rival businessmen or politician.

The story illustrates the consequences of falsehood.

In the time of *Kassapa* Buddha, in *Kimila*, there lived a male lay-devotee who was a stream-winner. He did the meritorious deed of planting trees, building bridges and monasteries, etc., with his five hundred followers were of the same view. This group lay-devotees went to the Buddha's monastery frequently to listen to the Dhamma. Their wives additionally visited the religious residence sometimes to concentrate to the Dhamma and to form offerings.

One day, some drunkards saw them and were attracted by them. They argued among themselves who could destroy the morality of those women. One of them said that he could do so. This man tried to seduce the wife of the leader of the lay devotees and finally succeeded. The drunk who lost the bet enlightened the leader of the lay devotees regarding the matter.

And the latter asked his wife whether she had committed adultery. She lied that what he had heard was not true. As her husband did not believe her, she pointed to a black dog nearby and swore: "If I have committed adultery with another man, may I this black dog may ingest. If I have committed adultery with another man by this black dog within the next life." Still, the husband did not believe her and he inquired her companions. Although her companions knew the reality, they additionally swore. "We don't recognize if this can be no true, could we become her slaves?"

When they died, they all became miserable beings near the lake *Kanna Munda* in the *Himavanta* forest. Because of their meritorious deeds in their past lives, they enjoyed the celestial luxury very grand golden mansion within the daytime.

But at night a black dog ate the leader of the group. Her five hundred companions also became her servants as they had sworn in the lie in their past lives. Though they might fancy the luxurious of

Devas, they did not get married. They felt lonely and boring for being excluding men. Falsehood is the greatest demeritorious deed, while truthfulness is the most beneficial meritorious deed!

The fifth Precept

The fifth precept is abstaining from taking intoxicants. Everyone should observe this precept because if we break it, we would violate other precepts too. We have found many criminals who committed drug-related crimes in the world. Drug addicts dare to kill, rape, or lie, and they are socially and morally unacceptable people. Because of them, there is no peaceful environment.

Being addictive substances, we should not even try to test the drugs. We can see many patients who are suffering from drug abuse. We, therefore avoid using drugs and drinks to be healthy mentally and physically. According to the Buddhist scriptures, the alcoholic or drug addict, having a mental weakness, cannot distinguish right from wrong, he is careless, does not express gratitude to those who gave him help, is a shameless and fearless in doing evil, dares to do any evil, and is afflicted with mental illness.

People with a temperament of ignorance and delusion enjoy using drugs. To avoid the suffering of their lives, some of them drink alcohol to be drunk, some use cocaine or heroin to dream a fantasy world. To be free from the situation of drug use, one has to control and subdue ignorance and replace it with wisdom. He should practice mindfulness meditation regularly for increasing wisdom, which leads him on the right path.

The story illustrating the consequences of indulging in intoxicants.

Once, the *Bodhisatta* was born in a wealthy family possessing eighty crores of silver coins. He performed the veritable deeds of giving charity and keeping smart morality. When he died, he was reborn as *Sakka*, the king of Devas, in *Tāvatiṃsā*. His son lost the wealth left behind by him indulgence in intoxicants.

When the son had used up the forty crores of silver coins, he dug up the forty crores buried underground. He built a liquor house and led an easy life associating with drunkards and indulging in intoxicants. When he was drunk, he let acrobat and dancers entertain them and presented one thousand silver coins to each. Soon he had spent all the money and was reduced to a poor beggar. Finally, he died miserably.

CONCLUSION

The precepts are basic practices in Buddhism. They are guidelines for human beings to follow on the right path to future security, happiness, and welfare. The purpose is to eliminate rude passions that are expressed through thought, word, and deed. The precepts also are an important basis for folks that would like to cultivate their minds.

When a person observes the precept of not killing, he controls his hatred and cultivates loving-kindness. In the second precept, he controls his greed and cultivates non-attachment. He controls sensual lust and cultivates his happiness within the third precept. Within the fourth precept, he abstains from false speech and cultivates truthfulness. He abstains from unwholesome mental excitement and develops mindfulness through the fifth precept. When a person follows the precepts through faith, he will realize that observing the five precepts does not cause him to be self-critical and negative, but to earn great fame and reputation. The scent of virtue excels all scents and the reputation of the virtuous one's warts in all directions. Therefore, the Buddha says;

“There are the scents of Sandalwood, rhododendron, lotus, and jasmine, but the scent of virtue surpasses all scents”.

“The scents of rhododendron and sandalwood are very faint: but the scent of the virtuous is the strongest; it spreads even to the abodes of the Devas”.

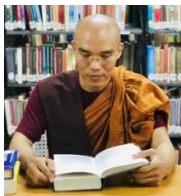
Every country has its codes, which are considered being moral actions within its contexts. They often link these codes of society's interests and its code of law. These unreal codes are unit versatile and amended from time to time to suit dynamic circumstances. This man-made standard cannot serve

as a reliable guide to some principles of morality that can be applied universally. Buddhist morality is not the invention of the human mind. They base it on the universal law of cause and effect. Therefore, we should cultivate loving-kindness towards all living beings to observe the five precepts.

May all beings be virtuous and attain *Nibbāna*!

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