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BUDDHIST MORALITY AND PEOPLE

Tharthana

**Ph.D Research Scholar, Department of Buddhist Studies,
Acharya Nagarjuna University, Nagarjuna Nagar Guntur, AP, India.**

ABSTRACT :

To be peaceful to the world, to be a pure person in our society, to fly our mind, in our practicing, 'Morality' is important. If we want to live without worry, we have to practice to be pure morality. In this Article, you will see things that people should practice and avoid. The world can be peaceful and the people can be pure by practicing should practice and by avoiding should avoid.

KEY WORDS: *Morality, Caritta-Sila, Varitta-Sila and kinds of abstention..*



INTRODUCTION

The Dhamma taught by the Buddha shows us the correct path which leads to ultimate peace. This path can be classified into three stages. They are *Sīla* (morality), *Samādhi* (concentration) and *Paññā* (wisdom). Of these, the first stage is *Sīla*. Discipline, good conduct, virtue, precept and morality are synonymous with this word *Sīla*. This is foundation to lead a religious way of life. The meaning of the term '*Sīla*' is morality or discipline. It is divided into two sections. They are *Cāritta Sīla*- the duties that one should perform and *Vāritta Sīla* - abstinences from what is prohibited by the Buddha. To be an ideal person or virtuous person, one has to fulfil both *Cāritta Sīla* and *Vāritta Sīla*. Without fulfilling *Cāritta Sīla*, *Vāritta Sīla* won't be fulfilled completely. It is mentioned the scriptures as follow- "The one who neglects *Cāritta Sīla* is not perfect in *Vāritta Sīla*. With impurity of *Sīla*, the ignorant cannot focus one's mind."

"The unconcentrated mind could not see the truth. Not seeing the truth, there is no liberation of suffering".

By leading a pure life according to the noble Eightfold path, we become noble ourselves and our lives become more meaningful. Those who are spiritually advanced see nonsense at all in material possessions and worldly powers. Therefore, they renounce the worldly pleasures and observe the precepts in order to gain more peace and happiness.

Five precepts are the fundamental moral conduct for a layperson in Buddhism. Although there are many kinds of *Sīla* given by the lord Buddha, on the whole, it is of two kinds: *Cāritta Sīla*, fulfilling the moral codes prescribed by the Buddha and *Vāritta Sīla* refraining from immoral conducts prohibited by the Buddha.'

What is Cāritta Sīla? –

Cāritta Sīla means certain obligations that must be fulfilled. In Buddhist ethic certain moral obligations are incumbent on one such as: Paying respect, welcoming, making obeisance, showing reverence, attending on one's elders, who may be senior in age or in status and not behaving rudely before the *Bhikkhus*, teachers and parents. Every Buddhist lay person is to fulfill them. Such fulfillment

is called *Cāritta Sīla*. Further more, fulfilling the duties of parents, sons daughters, teachers, pupils, wives and husbands etc. shown in *Sīṅgalovāda Sutta* also mean *Cāritta Sīla*.

A person who is endowed with conviction (*Saddhā*) and effort (*Vīriya*) can follow the practice of *Cāritta Sīla*. Here, conviction means believing that one who practices *Cāritta Sīla* will enjoy its benefits because it is good practice. Effort means making a vigorous attempt to overcome laziness and to keep up the practice of moral conduct patiently. Only when a person can practice the moral conduct out of conviction and effort, can one be called a person who is fully endowed with *Cāritta Sīla*.

What is Vāritta Sīla? *Vāritta Sīla* means avoiding immoral conduct or demeritorious actions that the lord Buddha prohibited. Abstaining from immoral conducts and observing the five moral precepts constantly can lead one who follows it to *Nibbāna*. Whereas, committing evil conduct can truly lead one who commits it to *Apāya*-neither abode. Therefore, constant observance of the five precepts, etc. should be fulfilled through abstention (*Viratī*).

Three kinds of abstention-*Viratī* means abstaining from evils in deed and speech. In keeping the moral precepts well, *Viratī* plays an important role. *Viratī* is of three kinds.

(1) Abstention from three physical evil actions: telling falsehood, slandering harsh speech, idle talk not relating to livelihood is called *Micchāvācā Viratī*.

(2) Abstention from three physical evil actions: killing, stealing, committing sexual misconduct not relating to livelihood is called *Micchākammanta Viratī*.

(3) Abstention from three physical evil actions and four verbal evil actions mentioned above relating to livelihood is called *Micchājīva Viratī*.

Viratī in three actions:

There are three practical aspects of each three kinds of *Viratī* mentioned above. They are;

(a) *Sampatta viratī*

(b) *Samādāna viratī*

(c) *Samuccheda viratī*.

Samādāna Viratī means undertaking to observe five or eight or nine moral precepts before the Buddha image or a *Bhikkhu* or elders and refraining from doing evil actions. For example, if a person gets a chance to kill an animal but spares it because he or she has taken the precept of abstention from killing, it is called *Samādāna Viratī*. It also means that a person has made up one's mind not to do any evil before he or she actually encounters evil and refrains from doing evil actions.

Once, there was a layman who, after taking precepts from a *Bhikkhu*, went to the fields to search for his lost cow. While he was ascending a hillock, a big python entwined his legs. As he was about to kill the snake with his sword, he remembered he had taken *Sīla* (precepts) from his teacher and thought "I shall accept death if need be; I shall not take other's life. Breaching of moral precepts resembles destroying the *Dhamma* and it is best for me to give up my life." So he did not harm the snake and dropped his sword. Then, he reflected on the moral precepts he was observing. Due to the power of *Sīla*, the snake let him free and went away.

Like that lay person, every one should keep the moral precepts at the risk of one's life and give up one's life instead of breaching one's moral precepts. There is no question about giving away one's property and dignity for the sake of keeping one's morality. The invisible good results always exist behind every relinquishment.

Sampatta viratī means instantaneously refraining from committing evil actions when one is confronted with the cause and the object for committing evil actions.

Once in *Sri Lanka*, a youth named *Cakkana* was tending to his sick mother whose physician recommended the fresh meat of a rabbit as a cure. So the youth went into the forest in search of a rabbit. He caught a small one in a paddy field. When he was about to kill it, he suddenly felt pity for the timid or frightened animal and set it free. When he was back home, he told his sick mother the incident

and then made a solemn utterance; “Ever since I came to know what was right and what was wrong, I had never taken the life of any living being with a will to do so.”

Due to this solemn truth, his mother recovered from her ailment as if the illness was removed and thrown away from her. In this incident, the youth had not observed any Sila beforehand. But at the time he caught the rabbit, instant compassion made him refrain from killing. This is a case of *Sampatta Viratī*.

The abstention that is associated with *Maggacitta* (Path consciousness) is called *Samuccheda Viratī*, because when *Magga-citta* is attained, the abstention at that moment is for the sake of total cutting off of moral defilements.

When a poisonous tree together with its roots was ground into powder and burnt to ashes, it will no longer produce any fruits. In the same way, Noble persons (*Ariyas*) are free from immoral actions all times because they have eradicated all defilements through *Samuccheda pahāna*. Even a stream-winner (*sotāpanna*) needs not specially observe the five precepts in this life as well as in his next existence. The moral precepts have already been established in him for ever.

CONCLUSION: -

Lay Buddhist morality embodies in the five precepts. It may be considered at two levels. First, it enables men to live together in civilized communities with mutual trust and respect. Second, it is the starting point for the spiritual journey towards liberation. Unlike other religious commandments, Buddhist precepts are accepted voluntarily by the person himself with understanding the usefulness of adopting some training rules for disciplining his body and speech. The precepts are basic practice in Buddhism. They are guidelines for human beings to follow on 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 are also indispensable basis for people who wish 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 contentment in the third precept. In 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 the observance of the five precepts does not cause him to be self-critical and negative, but to earn great fame and reputation. The scent of the virtue excels all scents and the reputation of the virtuous ones wafts 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 of 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 to be moral actions within its contexts. These codes are often linked to the society’s interests and its code of law. These man-made codes are flexible and amended from time to time to suit changing circumstances. This man-made standard cannot serve as a reliable guide to some principles of morality which can be applied universally. By contrast, Buddhist morality is not the invention of human mind. It is based on the universal law of cause and effect.

The precepts based on the universal law of cause and effect should be observed by every one for happiness in this world and the next also, it is like a daily meal which has to be had. If one does not take it, he will die. Likewise one who neglects the five precepts will lose his noble human life and go to woeful states. Although there are many precepts, we can easily keep the five precepts through sympathy treating others as we would like to be treated by them. If we love all living beings unconditionally, we have already kept them. Therefore, we should cultivate loving-kindness towards all living beings in order to observe the five precepts.

May all beings be virtuous and attain Nibbana!

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