

*Phra Medhidhammaporn*

# **BUDDHIST MORALITY**

**Phra Medhidhammaporn (Prayoon Mererk)**



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by Mahachulalongkornrajavidyalaya University  
in honour of  
**Phra Dhammapidok (Prayudh Payutto)**  
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## **BUDDHIST MORALITY**

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## Foreword

Venerable Phra Dhammapidok (Prayudh Payutto) is one of the most accomplished alumni of Mahachulalongkornrajvidyalaya University. While being a novice, he passed Pali IX, the highest level of Pali Studies, in 1961/2504. In that same year he received higher ordination under the sponsorship of King Bhumibol Adulyadej at *Wat Phra Kaew* (the Temple of the Emerald Buddha) with the Supreme Patriarch as preceptor. He obtained a Bachelor Degree in Buddhist Studies with first-class honours from Mahachulalongkornrajvidyalaya University in 1963/2506. His connection with this university was strengthened further when he served as full-time instructor at its Pali Pre-university school for two years. From 1964/2507 to 1974/2517 he received the position of Assistant to the Secretary-General and later became Deputy Secretary-General of Mahachulalongkornrajvidyalaya University. In appreciation of his great contribution to this

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institution and society, Mahachulalongkornrajvidyalaya University was the first university to confer Honorary Doctorate in Buddhist Studies on Phra Dhammapidok in 1982/2525.

Phra Dhammapidok's contribution to world community was internationally recognized when he was awarded the "1994 UNESCO Peace Prize for Peace Education" for his ongoing work to "*construct the defences of peace in the mind of the people.*"

On the occasion of Phra Dhammapidok's receipt of the award in Paris on December 20, 1994/2537, Mahachulalongkornrajvidyalaya University publishes the book *Buddhist Morality* for distribution in his honour. The university wishes to express its gratitude for the author's kind permission and for a generous donation of Mrs. P. Danothai, Mrs. S. Chainuvati, Prof. Dr. T & Mrs. V. Chainuvati and Mr. S. & Mrs. T Chainuvati which makes the publication possible.

**Phra Amaramethacharya**

Rector

Mahachulalongkornrajvidyalaya University

## Preface

This book is a collection of papers on Buddhism and Buddhist morality which have been presented at international conferences or seminars as follows.

1. The paper "*Prominent Facets of Buddhism*" was presented on November 26, 1994/2537 at the Buddhist Symposium of the 19th General Conference of the World Fellowship of Buddhists held in Bangkok.

2. The paper "*Buddhist Ethics of Leadership*" was presented on June 17, 1994/2537 at the Fourth International Conference on Ethics in the Public Service held in Stockholm, Sweden.

3. The paper "*Buddhism and Sustainable Development*" was presented on September 7, 1994/2537 at the Religious Leaders' Seminar held in connection with the United Nations International Conference on Population and Development in Cairo, Egypt.

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4. The paper "*Universal Morality of Buddhism*" was presented on October 29, 1993/2536 at the International Symposium held by the World Fellowship of Buddhists in Seoul, South Korea.

5. The paper "*Unity in Diversity*" was presented on October 25, 1990/2533 at the Buddhist Symposium of the 17th General Conference of the World Fellowship of Buddhist Youth held in Seoul, South Korea.

The author would like to acknowledge his gratitude to Mahachulalongkornrajvidyalaya University for publishing this work in honour of Venerable Phra Dhammapidok (Prayudh Payutto) who has been his source of inspiration.

*Phra Medhidhammaporn (Prayoon Mererk)*

*December 1994/2537*

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## Prominent Facets of Buddhism

*This paper was presented on November 26, 1994/2537 at the Buddhist Symposium of the 19th General Conference of the World Fellowship of Buddhists held in Bangkok.*

The term '*religion*' is derived from the Latin '*religare*,' which literally means '*relation*'<sup>1</sup>. The term is sometime used to refer to the relation between man and God. When used in this sense, the term '*religion*' fails to include Buddhism which does not believe in God. If we accept this theistic definition of religion, then Buddhism is not religion. The theistic definition, however, is not acceptable to most of scholars of religious studies. As the authors of *The Facts on File Dictionary of Religions* point out that definitions of religion as "human recognition of super human power" and as "belief in God" are often "*circular, prejudiced, or so general as to be useless.*" Now definitions of the term '*religion*' are generally modified to include both theistic and atheistic

religions. For example, the *Dictionary of Philosophy and Religion : Eastern and Western Thought* defines religion as an institution with a recognized body of communicants who gather together for a worship and accept a set of doctrines offering “*some means of relating the individual to what is taken to be the ultimate nature of reality.*” According to this definition, Buddhism is religion in the sense that it offers the Middle Path which relates the individual to the ultimate reality (*Paramatthasacca*), i. e. Nibbana. Buddhism, therefore, is religion in spite of its disbelief in man's relation to God.

### 1. Religion of Enlightenment.

Unlike most of major world religions, Buddhism denies the existence of God, the Creator of the world. In Tipitaka, the name of God is *Brahma*. He is described as “*the Mighty, the All-seeing, the Ruler, the Lord of all, the Maker, the Creator, the Chief of all, the Father of all.*”<sup>2</sup> In *Brahmajalasutta*, the Buddha rejects such a conception of God and says, “*the Tathagata, not grasping after that conception, is set free.*”<sup>3</sup> The Buddha says that the

world comes into existence in accordance with the law of Dependent Origination (*Paṭṭiccasamuppāda*) and the whole course of the universe is governed by the law. *“Wether Tathagatas arise or not, this order exists namely the fixed nature of phenomena, the regular pattern of phenomena or conditionality (Idappaccayata). This the Tathagata discovers and comprehends; having discovered and comprehended it, he points it out, teaches it...”*<sup>4</sup> However, the Buddha's rejection of the existence the Creator God does not lead him to deny the existence of popular gods or *devas*. He treats them as angels who are subject to the law of kamma.

In theistic religions the prophets' discovery of truths depends on God's revelation (*anussava*). The Buddha or 'Enlightened One' realizes the Four Noble Truths not by God's revelation, but by his own effort and wisdom. As it is said by the Buddha :*“Monks, there are these four Noble Truths. What four ? They are the Noble truths of Dukkha, the Cause of Dukkha, the Cessation of Dukkha, and the Path Leading to the Cessation of Dukkha. These are the four. By the fact of realizing the Four Noble Truths as they really*

*are, the Tathagata is called 'the Perfected One, the Enlightened One.'*"<sup>5</sup>

The enlightenment (*abhisambodhi*) does not lie beyond the reach of man. Every man has within himself the potentiality of becoming a Buddha, if he so wills it and resolves to complete the Ten Perfections (*Pāramī*) leading to Buddhahood. The Buddha encourages each person to aspire to realization of the Four Noble Truths and to work out his own emancipation. The Buddha discovers and shows the Path leading to Nibbana, and the individual must follow the Path himself. As the Buddha says: "*You yourselves should make an effort, for the Tathagatas only show the way. The meditative who walk along this path are released from the bonds of the Evil One.*"<sup>6</sup> In this respect, Buddhism can be characterized as a religion of humans, by humans, and for humans.

## 2. Religion of Wisdom.

Faith is the most important virtue for followers of theistic religions. In his book, *Why I am not a Christian*, Bertrand Russell discloses that he

is not a Christian because of two reasons; first, he does not believe in God and in immortality of the soul; and, secondly, he does not think that Jesus Christ is the best and wisest of man.<sup>7</sup>

Faith in the enlightenment of the Buddha (*Tathāgatābodhi-saddhā*) is the starting point in Buddhism. It is like the first stone in the line of stepping stones which man can walk on in order to cross a stream of suffering. As the Buddha says; “*By faith one crosses over the stream.*”<sup>8</sup> Faith (*saddhā*) is necessary but not sufficient for the realization of Nibbana; it is to be balanced with wisdom (*paññā*). Faith without wisdom is blind and misleading.<sup>9</sup>

The Buddha does not want his followers to have blind faith in him. He encourages them to obtain the balance (*samatā*) of faith and wisdom. In *Vīmaṅśaka-sutta*, for instance, the Buddha tells monks that his disciple should examine conduct of the Buddha himself, so that the disciple might be fully convinced of the true value of the teacher whom he follows.<sup>10</sup> That is why Madam David Neel, a French Buddhist scholar, writes : “*Among the great founders of religions, it was the Buddha alone, who encourage*

*d the spirit of investigation in his followers and warned them not to accept his teaching with blind faith."* <sup>11</sup>

That the Buddha allows freedom of enquiry to his disciples is indicated clearly in *Kesaputtīyasutta* in which the Buddha gives the following advice to the Kalama people:

*"Do not be led by reports, or tradition, or hearsay. Be not led by the authority of religious texts, nor by mere logic or inference, nor by considering appearances, nor by the agreement with a considered and approved theory, nor by seeming possibilities, nor by the idea: 'This is our teacher.' But, Kalamas, when you know for yourselves that certain things are unwholesome, wrong and bad, then give them up... And when you know for yourselves that certain things are wholesome and good, then accept them and follow them.."* <sup>12</sup>

To realize the truth, one has to rely on one's own effort and wisdom. Mere faith and dependence on external powers does not help much. In *Nibbutasutta*, Nibbana is qualified as *ehi-passika*,

inviting one to come and see with the eye of wisdom (*paññā-cakkhu*), not to come and believe.<sup>13</sup> When a person realizes Nibbana, he does not have to believe anyone. The perfected one or Arahant is a 'non-believer' (*assaddha*) because he no longer needs other persons to tell him what Nibbana is.<sup>14</sup> His faith disappears at the moment when perfect wisdom arises. Hence wisdom is the most important virtue in Buddhism. As it is said by the Buddha: "*Monks, of all Dhammas that conduce to Nibbana, the faculty of wisdom is reckoned chief, that is, for attaining Nibbana.*"<sup>15</sup>

### 3. Religion of Rationality.

Having regarded wisdom as the most important virtue, the Buddha teaches man to adopt a rational outlook of the world. He explains all phenomena of man and nature not by superstitious beliefs and dogmas but by rational application of the laws of causation. All things, both material and immaterial, are entirely subject to the law of nature (*niyāma*). Five Categories of natural law or *niyāma* are listed in *Sumaṅgalavilasīnī* as follows<sup>16</sup> :

1. *Kammaniyāma* is the law of kamma pertaining to human behaviour, that is the process of action and retribution of action. According to this law, action or *kamma* produces its effect or *vipāka*. A good action produces good effect and a bad action a bad effect.

2. *Utuniyāma* is the natural law concerned with physical objects such as change of temperature, seasons and other physical events.

3. *Bījaniyāma* is the natural law of heredity as in this statement :

*“According to the seed that's sown,  
So is the fruit you reap therefrom.”<sup>17</sup>*

4. *Cittaniyāma* is the psychological law pertaining to the work of mind, such as the functions of consciousness in the process of sensation and cognition.

5. *Dhammaniyāma* is the law of Dhamma governing the relationship and interdependence of all things, that is the law of Dependent Origination (*Paṭiccasamuppāda*). It is the most universal law that contains the first four *niyāmas*.

With this set of laws, the Buddha dismisses theistic determinism. The course of man's life is not determined by the will of God (*Issaranimmānāhetu*) but by the kamma he performs. Man's present condition is the result of his past action. The Buddha says: *“Owners of thier action are the living beings, heirs to their action, the action is their womb from which they are born, their action is their friend, their refuge.”*<sup>18</sup> Moreover, superstitious beliefs in various forms are discarded by the Buddha. As it is said:

*“Though washing himself regularly in sacred rivers like Bahuka and Gaya, the fool does not cleanse his bad action. What can these rivers do? They do not cleanse that hostile guilty man who performs bad action. For the pure, every day is auspicious and holy.”*<sup>19</sup>

*“The fool who always watch for lucky days will loose his benefit. The benefit is luck itself. What can mere stars do for him?”*<sup>20</sup>

It is worth mentioning here that the rationality facet of Buddhism leads it to be an ally of science. In its long history Buddhism has never had any quarrel with science or scientists. This is due to the

fact that Buddhism rejects the belief in God and superstition which are unacceptable to science. Moreover, both Buddhism and science share common interest in the law of nature; causality is their common ground.

Being aware of this compatibility between Buddhism and science, Albert Einstein, the great scientist of the twentieth century, says: "*The religion in the future will be a cosmic religion. It should transcend a personal God and avoid dogma and theology. Covering both the natural and the spiritual, it should be based on a religious sense arising from the experience of all things, natural and spiritual, as a meaningful unity. Buddhism answers this description.*" And he further says, "*If there is any religion that would cope with modern scientific needs it would be Buddhism.*" <sup>21</sup>

#### 4. Religion of Selflessness.

Of all the major religions of the world, Buddhism is the only religion that preaches the conception of selflessness or *anattā*. The doctrine of *anattā* first appeared in the Buddha's second sermon

called *Anattalakkhaṇasutta*. This doctrine is considered to be one of the main corner-stones upon which the edifice of the Buddha's teachings is built. It is a special teaching of the Buddha. As it is said in *Sammohavinodanī* : "*Whether the Buddhas arise in the world or not, the characteristics of impermanence (anicca) and suffering (dukkha) becomes known to man. But the characteristic of selflessness (anatta) will not be known to man unless the Buddhas arise in the world.*" <sup>22</sup> Hence Buddhism stands unique in the history of religion in denying the existence of the self.

The Buddha preaches the doctrine of *anattā* or selflessness in contrast to the *ātman* or self theories. The term *ātman* is used to signify the immortal soul of man as described in *Alagaddupamasutta* : "*This the world, this the self; after death I will become permanent, lasting, eternal, not liable to change. I will stand fast like unto the eternal.*"

<sup>23</sup>

The Buddha's reasons for denial of the self are based on his analysis of man. He analyzes man into five aggregates, namely corporeality, feeling,

perception, mental formations, and consciousness and states that none of them is the self. When the Buddha says that the five aggregates are not self, he does not mean to imply that there exists a self which transcends these aggregates. The transcendental self or soul does not exist because it cannot be found either inside or outside the five aggregates. That is why the Buddha raises this question: *“If, self and what belongs to self are not truly and really found, is it not a perfectly foolish doctrine to hold the following point of view, “This the world, this the self; after death I will become permanent, lasting, eternal, not liable to change. I will stand fast like unto the eternal?”* <sup>24</sup>

According to the Buddha, the self theory is a wrong view (*micchādiṭṭhi*) because it has no corresponding reality. What is worse is the fact that the idea of the self generates suffering. The self is considered as the manifestation of the strongest and subtlest form of grasping called *attavādupādāna*. The grasping of the self is the main cause of suffering. That is why the Buddha says: *“In brief, the five aggregates of grasping are suffering.”* <sup>25</sup> The main purpose of the

Buddha's denial of the self is to enable his disciples to shed the grasping of the self theory. In order to attain Nibbana, one has to get rid of the personality belief (*sakkāyadiṭṭhi*) and the conceit of 'I am (*asmimāna*)'. So long as grasping of the self in any forms persists, there can be no real emancipation.

The term '*śūnya*' is used as a synonym for *anatta*, for it is defined by the Buddha as "*empty of a self and anything belonging to a self.*"<sup>26</sup> In Mahayana Buddhism the conception of '*śūnyata*' was developed and made popular by Nagarjuna.

## 5. Religion of Balanced Development.

Buddhism preaches the middle way of development; it offers teachings which enable man to develop both body and mind. Ideal persons are those who achieve four kinds of developments, i.e. physical, social, mental and intellectual developments. They are stated as follows<sup>27</sup>:

1. Physical development (*Kāya-bhāvanā*) is the development of the body as well as its material or physical environment. It is to be realized by practising the Buddha's teachings which deal with

physical, economic, environmental aspects of life.

2. Social development (*Sīla-bhāvanā*) is the development of a good and friendly relationship with other people in order that desirable society with good social environment is established in the world. It is to be realized by observing precepts (*sīla*) and following the Buddha's teachings of social justice.

3. Mental development (*Citta-bhāvanā*) is the development of such good mental qualities as love, compassion, sympathetic joy, equanimity, mindfulness, and concentration. The practice of Concentration Meditation enables one to possess these mental qualities and purify the mind of all hindrances.

4. Intellectual development (*Paññā-bhāvanā*) is the development of wisdom or the faculty of knowing things as they really are. It is achieved through the practice of Insight Meditation.

It should be added here that Concentration Meditation (*Samatha-kammaṭṭhāna*), which produces calmness of mind, cannot be taken as a purely Buddhist meditation. It was known as *Yoga* and widely practised by ascetics and Brahmins at the Buddha's time. The Buddha, before his enlightenment, learned

how to practise it from Ālāra and Udaka and attained the highest stage of trance (*jhāna*). He was not satisfied with it because it did not give him complete emancipation. The Buddha later discovered a new method of intellectual development which enabled him to realize Nibbana. The method is called *Vipassanā-kammaṭṭhāna* or Insight Meditation. Its practice is concerned with strengthening and sharpening the faculty of Mindfulness (*sati*) so much that it helps one to see three characteristics of things, namely impermanence, suffering, and selflessness. Having realized the truth, one attains Nibbana.

*Vipassanā* Meditation, like the doctrine of *anatta*, is not found in other religions; it is original with the Buddha. Unlike Concentration Meditation which is to be practised fruitfully in solitude, *Vipassanā* Meditation can be practised in daily life while one is talking, teaching, walking or working. In *Mahāsatipaṭṭhānasutta*, the Buddha explains the method in details with statements like this: “*Again, a monk, when walking, knows that he is walking, when standing, knows that he is standing, when sitting, knows that he is sitting, when lying down,*

*knows that he is lying down. In whatever way his body is disposed, he knows that is how it is.*"<sup>28</sup> This method is 'popular' meditation because it is designed to be used by every person in every situation. At present it is known in the West as Buddhist meditation.

## 6. Religion of Democracy.

Dr. Ambedkar once said ; "*Buddhism was a democratic movement , which upheld democracy in religion, democracy in society, and democracy in politics.*"<sup>29</sup> Buddhism is taken to be the most suitable religion for democratic society because it places emphasis on three democratic principles, namely liberty, equality and fraternity.

First, the principle of liberty or freedom in Buddhism was mentioned earlier when we discussed freedom of thought, speech and enquiry. As Venerable Walpola Rahula comments : "*The freedom of thought allowed by the Buddha is unheard of elsewhere in the history of religions.*"<sup>30</sup> Promotion of freedom is necessary in Buddhism because its highest goal is *vimutti* or freedom from all bondage of life.

Secondly, the Buddha was the first teacher to raise a voice against caste system and preach social equality for all. Actually the caste system is based on the belief that *Brahma*, the Creator, creates men and makes them unequal from the moment of their birth. Having rejected the existence of the Creator, the Buddha declares that men are born equal and that they differ from each other because of their kamma or action. As the Buddha says in *Suttanipāta* : “*Not by birth does one become an outcast, not by birth does one become a brahmin. By one's action one becomes an outcast, by one's action one becomes a brahmin.*”<sup>31</sup> In addition to abolishing the caste system, the Buddha opposes the practice of discrimination against women. He tries to raise the status of women and bring them to realize their importance to society. On one occasion King Pasenadi visits the Buddha and grumbles because his queen has given birth to a daughter. The Buddha comforts and stimulates him, saying: “*A female child may prove even a better offspring than a male*”<sup>32</sup> And the Buddha's establishment of the Order of Bhikkhunis is certainly a blessing to women.

Thirdly, the principle of fraternity is clearly stated by the Buddha when he advises people to cultivate *mettā* or loving-kindness and to regard fellow beings as their relatives in one of their past lives. As it is said by the Buddha : *“Incalculable is the beginning of chain of rebirths (saṃsāra). The earliest point is not revealed of the chain of rebirths of beings cloaked in ignorance, tied by craving. It is not an easy thing to find a being who during this long chain of rebirths has not at one time been a mother, a father, a brother, a sister, a son, a daughter.”*<sup>33</sup>

The *Sangha* or Order of Bhikkhus is the Buddha's showcase of democratic society as it is built on the principles of liberty, equality and fraternity. The Buddha compares his *Sangha* with a mighty ocean in which great rivers from different directions fall and lose their identity and become one, for the Bhikkhus joining the Order from different castes and classes of society abandon their former names and take new religious names and feel one and the same with the Order.<sup>34</sup>

The Buddha did not appoint his successor before he passed away. He simply said : *“ Doctrine*

*and Discipline, Ānanda, which I have taught and enjoined you are to be your teacher when I am gone*"<sup>35</sup> And since then the Doctrine and Discipline as contained in the Tipitaka have been taken as the Buddhist constitution regulating the democratic rule within the Sangha.

## 7. Religion of Peace.

J. T. Sunderland once said : "*Buddhism has taught peace more strongly among its followers, more effectively, during all its history, than has any other great religious faith known to the world.*"<sup>36</sup> It is true that peace or *santi* is the main teaching of the Buddha. As it is said by the Buddha : "*There is no higher bliss than peace.*"<sup>37</sup> Here peace is a characteristic of Nibbana.

In Buddhism the concept of peace is extended to include both inner and outer peace. Inner peace (*ajjhata-santi*) is the peace of mind whereas outer peace (*bahiddha-santi*) is the peace of society. The former provides a firm foundation for the latter.<sup>38</sup> Unless there is peace of mind, there will be no peace of society. According to the Buddha,

man can promote both mental and social peace by controlling his greed, hatred and ignorance and at the same time developing wholesome qualities known as the four Divine Abidings (*Brahma-vihāra*), namely loving-kindness, compassion, sympathetic joy, and impartiality.<sup>39</sup>

The Buddha always instructs his followers to be true pacifists who live a non-violent life. Any Bhikku who uses violent means to solve conflicts is not a true follower of the Buddha. As the Buddha said: "*Though thieves and bandits were to cut limb by limb with a double-edged saw, even then one who defiles his mind (feels angry about it) is not the follower of my instructions.*"<sup>40</sup> The Buddha teaches his followers to meet anger with love and not with anger, and to conquer evil with good and not with evil.<sup>41</sup>

From what we have mentioned above, it is not difficult to understand why the Buddhists can live peacefully with followers of other religions. This is due to the fact that the Buddha teaches his followers to have religious tolerance and peaceful co-existence with followers of other

faith. The story in *Sīhasutta* is a good case in point. When Siha, a chief follower of the Niganthas (Jainism), declares himself a Buddhist, the Buddha accepts his adherence and allows him to give alms to the Niganthas who come to his house. These are the Buddha's words : "*Your family, Siha, has been as a well-spring to the Niganthas for a long time. Therefore, you might consider giving alms to the Niganthas who approach you.*"<sup>42</sup>

### Conclusion.

The conclusion that we can draw from the foregoing discussion is that Buddhism consists of various prominent facets, the list of which may never be completed. We intend to characterize Buddhism as the religion of enlightenment, wisdom, rationality, selflessness, balanced development, democracy, and peace. Of all these aspects, the last one is the most important for realizing the aims of the World Fellowship of Buddhists. Theravada and Mahayana schools are like two wings of a bird called Buddhism. The

bird can fly all over the world only when both the wings function properly in unison. If all the Buddhists from both Theravada and Mahayana schools are united, then they will succeed in applying the Buddha's messages to the present-day world.

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## Buddhist Ethics of Leadership

*This paper was presented on June 17, 1994/2537 at the Fourth International Conference on Ethics in the Public Service held in Stockholm, Sweden.*

*“Go ye forth, monks, for the benefit of the manyfolk, for the happiness of the manyfolk, out of compassion for the world, for the welfare, the benefit, the happiness of gods and men.”<sup>1</sup>*

Such was the Buddha's instruction given to the first batch of his sixty Arahants when he sent them out to their Dhamma mission. These words of the Buddha should be heeded by civil servants whose mission is to render services “*for the benefit of the manyfolk, for the happiness of the manyfolk, out of compassion for the world.*” To fulfill this mission, good and effective leadership is required for bringing vitality into the bureaucratic system of civil service. In this paper I will consider some ideas in general and applied ethics for the

development of leadership in civil service, confining myself to Buddhist ethics.

### General and Applied Ethics

In order to understand the significance of general ethics and applied professional ethics for the development of leadership in civil service, we have to answer the question as to what a profession is. By "profession" we mean an occupation whose members profess to have acquired special knowledge, by training or experience or both, so that they may advise or serve others in that special field.<sup>2</sup> In this sense, teachers, lawyers, artists, doctors and civil servants are regarded as professional persons because they have acquired some special skills and are capable of rendering service to people. As a member of the society, a professional person has to follow general rules of conduct prescribed by general ethics and, as a member of professional group, he has to adhere to the code of professional ethics of his particular occupation. Professional ethics is invented for professional persons to uphold their honour and reputation and to command respect among the general public.

It is worth noting here that general ethics, which has come down to us from the past, cannot provide a sufficient means of regulating behaviours of professional persons in modern urban and industrialized society. This is due to the fact that general ethics covers the field of man's personal and social behaviour in general and gives less attention to specific problems within professional circles. Therefore, professional ethics is to be developed in order to cope with problems in professional fields. Professional ethics is considered to be applied ethics as it makes an attempt to apply universal principles of general ethics to deal with ethical issues in some particular areas.

General ethics is partly different from professional ethics in the sense that the former prescribes fundamental moral principles for every person whereas the latter prescribes particular code of conduct to be followed by relevant members of professional groups. Although the fields of general ethics and professional ethics are fairly distinct, yet they overlap in many respects. The concept of *Pañcasīla* in Buddhism is a case in point.

In Buddhism the term *Pañcasīla* refers to the fundamental moral principle of all the lay Buddhists. According to the Buddhist tradition, a person is qualified to be called 'Buddhist' only when he or she outwardly professes his or her faith in the Triple Gem, i.e. the Buddha, the Dhamma and the Sangha, and formally undertakes to observe the *Pañcasīla*

The term '*Pañcasīla*,' usually translated into English as "Five Precepts," are stated as follows:

1. To abstain from killing any living being.
2. To abstain from taking what is not given.
3. To abstain from sexual misconduct.
4. To abstain from false speech.
5. To abstain from intoxicants causing carelessness.

In brief, the *Pañcasīla* consists of the abstention from killing, stealing, sexual misconduct, lying and taking intoxicants. Although the *Pañcasīla* is technically a Buddhist concept, it is universal in implications. It can be found in all ancient and modern morality. For example, *Pañcavrata* in Jainism and *Pañcayama* in Hinduism which deal with five principles of non-violence, truth, non-stealing, sexual continence

and non-possession are very similar to the *Pañcasīla*.<sup>3</sup> It also appears in the Ten Commandments upheld by the followers of Judaism, Christianity and Islam.<sup>4</sup> The *Pañcasīla*, therefore, signifies a universal principle of morality. As Kamala Jain said :

*“Every religious or social system has accepted it (Pañcasīla) as the basic code of conduct for all individuals, in relation either to his own self, or to the society of which he is a part. Whosoever neglects these basic principles, which are both social as well as spiritual, is considered pernicious to himself or to society, he is a sinner or a criminal.”*<sup>5</sup>

As the basic code of moral conduct, the *Pañcasīla* and its counterparts in other religions are designed to regulate conducts of all the members of the society. They represent basic moral principles to be followed even by professional persons. From this it follows that the *Pañcasīla* and its counterparts are primary requirements for any professional person to be regarded as a morally good individual. In this context, the *Pañcasīla* and its counterparts become one's personal ethics because they are concerned with regulating personal and social behaviours in general.

However, the *Pañcasīla* is not sufficient means of controlling members of professional groups. Codes of professional ethics have to be invented to cover activities and problems peculiar to professions. For example, advertising oneself is prohibited by professional ethics for doctors though it is not forbidden by the *Pañcasīla*. In other words, the *Pañcasīla* is within the scope of general ethics dealing with personal relationships in general. It provides a foundation upon which professional ethics is established.

Professional ethics, therefore, is concerned with standards of moral behaviour for professional persons in their professional relationships with those served, with colleagues, with employers, with other individuals or professions, and with the community and society as a whole. It embodies standards of moral behaviour governing individual conduct which is associated with one's status and identity as a professional person.

## Leadership in Civil Service

In dealing with ethics of leadership in civil service we are concerned with both general and professional ethics. As is mentioned earlier, for being a good member of the society, a civil servant has to conform to standards of moral behaviour prescribed by general ethics and, for being a good civil servant, he or she has to adhere to codes of professional ethics. In addition, leaders at all levels in civil service have the extra set of values and moral principles to follow so that they can become good and effective leaders.

The term '*civil service*' refers to all the government departments that administer the affairs of a country and all the non-elected officials who work in them. A system for administering large organizations like civil service is called *bureaucracy* consisting of a specific structure of authority and a clearly defined set of rules and procedures. Being a bureaucratic system, civil service is criticized for generating red tape, indecisiveness and excessive paperwork. Robert Merton, in *Social Theory and*

*Social Structure*, notes that in a bureaucracy the rules and procedures created to achieve certain ends may become ends in themselves; bureaucratic training may produce civil servants who are unable to act outside the procedural rules they have learned.<sup>6</sup> When they function within a bureaucratic organization, it is quite easy for them to fall into the 'I am just following the rules' syndrome. This syndrome is detrimental to emergence of leadership in civil service. That is why Wright Mills describes a person who is co-opted and controlled by his bureaucratic organization as "*the cheerful robot.*"<sup>7</sup>

John Gardner defines leadership as "*a process of persuasion or example by which an individual or leadership team induces a group to pursue objectives held by the leader or shared by the leader and his or her followers.*"<sup>8</sup>

It is understandable that there are fewer spontaneous leaderlike actions in bureaucratic settings than one might expect in less highly structured organizations. This is because of the fact that the bureaucratic system contains the excessively long chain of command. Decisions are slowed and

adventurous moves are blocked by too many screening points. Hierarchy and procedural rules tend to diminish the likelihood of leaderlike actions at all levels of bureaucratic organization. But, as we know, the formal bureaucratic structure has only a limited capacity to suppress the informal exercise of leadership.

In democratic society, leadership should be dispersed or distributed throughout all segments of bureaucratic organization. There is no possibility that centralized authority can solve all the problems in the bureaucratic system. Government officials at all levels should be prepared to take leaderlike initiative and share leadership tasks, using their local knowledge to solve problems at their levels. Without that, the government organization becomes inert, rigid, unimaginative, and totally unequipped to deal with a swiftly changing situation. The campaign for civil servants at all levels to share leadership tasks will definitely bring vitality into civil service. Vitality at middle and lower levels of leadership can produce greater vitality in the higher levels of leadership. By sharing more leadership tasks in this way, civil

servants have more channels to release their energy in a constructive way and cease to be “the cheerful robots.” Woodrow Wilson said, “*I believe in democracy because it releases the energy of every human being.*”<sup>9</sup>

### Motives for Moral Action

One way of encouraging civil servants at all levels to take leaderlike initiative and share leadership tasks is to add guidelines for leadership into their professional ethics. For example, in the *Code of Professional Ethics for Civil Servants* laid down by Civil Service Commission of Thailand, there are the following guidelines for leadership in civil service:

*“A civil servant shall act responsibly in carrying out his duties, and shall cooperate and assist colleagues through the contribution of ideas, through joining in the work, and through helping to solve problems, as well as through proposing improvements in work procedures for work under one's responsibility.*

*A civil servant in a supervisory position over others shall show interest in the performance, morale,*

*motivation, and welfare of his subordinates, and shall superintend them in a righteous and equitable manner.”<sup>10</sup>*

No doubt this professional code of conduct has provided guidelines for being good and efficient leaders in civil service. A relevant question which arises here is how to make civil servants comply with their code of professional ethics. Our answer is that there are three motives which lead men to obey moral rules of their society:

1) Desire for self-interest (*Tanḥā*): A person follows his code of moral conduct, even if it is inconvenient to do so, because he has a desire for some rewards or because he wants to avoid punishment. Society enforces its code of rules by giving advantages to those who fulfill their moral obligations, and inventing such sanctions as disapproval, social ostracism, retaliation, and the penalties of the law for those who violate the ethical rules. Moreover, a desire for happiness in heaven and a fear of fire in hell fall within this kind of motive. Those who follow the rules because of desire for self-interest tend to break the rules whenever

they do not foresee the chance of getting benefits or the possibility of being caught and punished. Desire, therefore, does not provide a firm foundation for moral behaviour.

2) Belief in the source of rules (*Saddhā*) : Most men have been taught to obey the rules of society since their childhood. Sometimes they habitually obey the rules for no reasons other than the fact that they are told to do so. Very often respect for rules is created by belief or faith in the author of the rules. Men tend to obey the rules which come from a source that they recognize as authoritative or sacred. One of the reasons why a Buddhist observes Five Precepts is that they are prescribed by the Buddha. In like manner, a Christian follows the Ten Commandments because God is believed to be their source. Belief or faith, however, is not a reliable foundation of moral behavior. This is due to the fact that there are a lot of temptations that cause us to disobey the rules of conduct. Having temptations in our minds, we have to follow the rules with much difficulty and constraint.

3) Virtues (*Guṇa-dhamma*) : The term *virtue*

is defined as a good mental quality held to be of great moral value.<sup>11</sup> Virtues like love, compassion, wisdom, courage and so on lead men to perform virtuous actions willingly. For example, we give alms to the poor out of sympathy for them. Virtues provide a stable foundation for moral behaviour. It is, therefore, easier for a virtuous man to follow moral rules of conduct. In Buddhism, the observance the Five Precepts, which command one to abstain from killing, stealing, sexual misconduct, lying, and taking intoxicants, is to be supported and facilitated by the cultivation of Five Virtues (*Pañcadhamma*), i. e. loving-kindness and compassion, generosity, contentment with one's own spouse, truthfulness, and temperance respectively.<sup>12</sup> In other words, a man endowed with the Five Virtues can observe the Five Precepts without much difficulty and constraint.

It is possible that the first two motives may lead a civil servant to follow the code of conduct for leadership as prescribed by his professional ethics. Moral behaviour arising out of such motives is conditional and temporary. For morally good action to become a habit, it must stem from an intention

full of virtues. The Buddha defines action or *Kamma* by intention or will (*Cetanā*): “*Intention, monks, is what I call action. Having intended, one performs action by body, speech or mind.*”<sup>13</sup> If intention is associated with virtues, then a mind is wholesome and gives rise to morally good actions. As it is said by the Buddha:

*“Mind is the forerunner of all things, mind is their chief, and they are mind-made. If one speaks or acts with a good mind, then happiness follows him, even as his own shadow that never leaves him.”*<sup>14</sup>

The Buddha's saying reminds us of the following maxim: “*Sow a thought, reap an action; sow an action, reap a habit; sow a habit, reap a character; sow a character, reap a destiny.*”<sup>15</sup>

What follows from the foregoing discussion is that the Buddhist adopts an “inside-out” approach to personal development. The “inside-out” method requires us to start first within the mind which is the most *inside* part of oneself. From a Buddhist viewpoint, a person does not become a leader just because his actions comply with

ethical code of leadership once or twice. There is no short-cut to good and efficient leadership. It is possible that someone may appear to be a good and efficient leader by pretending to be sincere, considerate, and so on. However, he is not regarded as a good and efficient leader because his manipulation has nothing to do with virtues. For anyone to be a good and efficient leader, he or she has to cultivate virtues of leadership within the mind and thereby perform leadership tasks virtuously and continuously so that his or her repetitive actions can form a morally good habit or skill. It is interesting to note that the English term *Ethics* is derived from the Greek term *Ethos*, meaning habit.<sup>16</sup>

### Leadership Skills

Moral habit is the crystallization of virtues and skills. Virtues refer to one's knowledge of *what to do* and motive or *will to do*. Skills, on the other hand, refer to one's knowledge of *how to do* and the ability that enables one to perform leadership tasks.

For any person to be qualified for assuming

a leadership position, he or she has to develop three skills of leadership as follows :<sup>17</sup>

1) Vision (*Cakkhumā*) is the ability to see *what* is really important in a given situation and *how* things might be different in the future. A visionary leader can set priority and choose the goal to be achieved by his team. A man without vision is not ready to play a leading role in the organization. As Woodrow Wilson has said : "*No man that does not see visions will ever realize any high hope or undertake any high enterprise.*"<sup>18</sup> J. F. Klarke cites vision as the ability that differentiates a statesman from a politician, saying; "*A politician thinks of the next election; a statesman, of the next generation.*"<sup>19</sup> Vision is to be sharpened by a conceptual skill.

2) Task Competence (*Vidhūro*) is a leader's knowledge of how to perform a task at hand. It is the same as a technical skill. Columbus, a visionary man, said of himself with considerable modesty; "*The Lord hath blessed me abundantly with a knowledge of marine affairs.*"<sup>20</sup> Obviously the technical knowledge required varies at different levels of leadership. The lowest level must have intimate

knowledge of the task at hand. Top-level leaders cannot have competence in every field, but they must have general knowledge of the whole system over which he presides, its mission and environment.

3) Confidence Inspiration (*Nissaya-sampanno*) is the ability to inspire confidence and persuade others to do something. It is a human relation skill. At the heart of a skill in dealing with people lies the ability of influencing people. A leader must know how to induce people to pursue objectives held by the leader or shared by the leader and his or her team.

Among the three skills, the first and third skills, i. e. Vision and Confidence Inspiration, are necessary for top-level leaders whereas the second and third skills, i. e. Task Competence and Confidence Inspiration, are necessary for low-level leaders. However, all the skills are equally important for leaders of middle-level.

### Leadership Styles

Leaders come with many styles and have diverse qualities. The styles of leadership are summarized into three groups as follows:<sup>21</sup>

1) Self-centered Leadership (*Attādhīpateyya*)

: The leader is authoritarian who wants to control and influence other people's thoughts and actions rather than letting them choose and decide things themselves. His main concern is accomplishing the task as he defines it. His concern for people is minimal. Work is arranged in such a way as to eliminate the need for subordinates to think. When people do as they are pushed by the boss, results can be achieved without wasting time to solve conflicts. Disagreements and conflicts are immediately suppressed. The leader of this self-centered style has high opinion of himself (*Atimāna*) and ends up being a dictator in his office. As Lord Action once said: "*Power tends to corrupt, and absolute power corrupts absolutely.*"<sup>22</sup>

2) People-oriented Leadership (*Lokā-dhipateyya*): It is a laissez-faire style of a tender-hearted leader who wants to be loved and admired by his subordinates. His main concern is to get people's acceptance and approval. He has little concern for getting a job done. If he is elected to chair a meeting, and there is a conflict among the participants, he hardly exercises the power to solve the conflict. Working

under the supervision of such a leader, subordinates are likely to fight among themselves.

3) **Dhamma-oriented Leadership** (*Dhammā-dhipateyya*): It is a style of a leader who makes Dhamma predominant in performing his leadership tasks. Here the term *Dhamma* means norm or principle and virtue.<sup>23</sup> Thus a Dhamma-oriented leader is a virtuous person who knows the principle and acts in conformity with the principle. He has a high concern for both production and people. When there is a conflict among his subordinates, he exercises the power in open and honest way to solve the conflict. He follows this instruction in the *Tīpitaka*: “*Blame the blameworthy and praise the praiseworthy.*”<sup>24</sup> Having no Dhamma as his principle, a leader can do anything, depending on his emotion, situation or self-interest. His action is unpredictable and unreliable and his style of function is either authoritarian or laissez-faire.

The Buddha describes the Dhamma-oriented leadership in these words:

*“Herein, monk, the great leader (rāja), the Dhamma man, relies just on Dhamma, honours Dhamma, reveres Dhamma, esteems Dhamma; with Dhamma as his*

*standard, with Dhamma as his principle, with Dhamma as his dominance, he provides a protection to people under his leadership in a righteous way.”* <sup>25</sup>

Moreover, the Dhamma-oriented leadership is reflected in the following sayings of Lao Tzu :

*“The reason why the River and the Sea are able to be king of the hundred valleys is that they excel in taking the lower position. Hence they are able to be king of the hundred valleys. Therefore, desiring to rule over people, one must in one words humble oneself before them; and, desiring to lead people, one must, in one’s person, follow behind them. Therefore the sage takes his place over the people yet is no burden; takes his place ahead of the people yet causes no obstruction. That is why the empire supports him joyfully and never tires of doing so.”* <sup>26</sup>

Among the three styles of leadership, the self-centered leadership does not welcome initiatives taken by subordinates; it is rather difficult for a civil servant to develop his or her leadership skills under the autocratic boss. The people-oriented leadership is too weak to get a job done; it is the worst style of leadership. The best leadership style is the third

one, i.e. the Dhamma-oriented leadership which combines the concern for production with the concern for people. Working under a Dhamma-oriented leader, a civil servant has great opportunity to develop his or her leadership skills. Thus the Dhamma-oriented leadership is the most suitable style in civil service of the democratic society where dispersed leadership is very much needed.

### Four Virtues of Leadership

For any person to be a Dhamma-oriented leader, he or she has to cultivate four essential virtues in the mind. These virtues are called *Bala*, meaning power, because they give inner strength and will power to a leader who cultivates them. The four virtues are described as follows:<sup>27</sup>

1) Wisdom Power (*Paññā-bala*): Here *Paññā* refers to one's capacity of knowing and seeing things as they really are (*yathābhūta*). It is a full comprehension or understanding of the principle and the true nature of oneself, others and circumstances. Wisdom is necessary for good planning, effective problem solving, the design of strategies, the setting of

priorities and rational judgement. In decision making, wisdom enables one to combine hard and questionable data and analyze them to arrive at a conclusion which turns out to be correct. Wisdom also gives rise to the capacity to appraise the potentialities of people and, consequently, put a right man on the right job.

To develop wisdom, one must learn how to purify one's attention of defilements such as pride and prejudice. There are two kinds of attention; wise attention (*Yoniso-manasikāra*) and unwise attention (*Ayoniso-manasikāra*). Since unwise attention is tainted by defilements, it produces perversions (*Vipallāsa*) of perception, thought, and view.<sup>26</sup> It is only by means of wise attention that one sees the true nature of things. For developing wise attention, one has to practise meditation. The meditation practice aims at cleansing the mind of all prejudices and distractions, and cultivating such virtues as concentration, mindfulness, diligence, truthfulness, leading finally to the attainment of perfect wisdom.

2) Effort Power (*Viriya-bala*): The term *Viriya* literally means "a state of strong man."<sup>29</sup> It refers to energy, determination, perseverance, and will

power. Effort power is one of the essential virtues of leadership. A great leader usually has a high energy level or physical durability, perseverance, and strong determination to move people to action. This power enables a leader to take initiative in appropriate situations, and to take full responsibility of decision making.

There are four stages where a leader has to exercise his Effort Power:

(1) He makes the effort to avoid the arising of problems that have not yet arisen (*Samvara-padhāna*);

(2) He makes the effort to solve the problems that have already arisen (*Pahāna-padhāna*);

(3) He makes the effort to produce good things that have not yet arisen (*Bhāvanā-padhanā*);

(4) He makes the effort to maintain the good things that have already arisen and not to let them disappear, but to bring them to growth and full development (*Anurakkhaṇā-padhāna*).<sup>30</sup>

Effort Power is to be supported by a kind of wise attention generally known as positive thinking (*Uppādaka-manasikāra*). Meditation practice is also

required for cultivating the wise attention.

3) Faultlessness Power (*Anavajja-bala*). It is the ability to perform one's duties honestly, fairly and faultlessly, without abusing power and seeking for personal gain. That is to say that a leader has to hold moral principles and adhere to his professional ethics. Faultlessness is achieved by a person who has self-control and self-discipline. Self-conquest is the most difficult task for a leader to accomplish. Thus the Buddha said: "*He who conquers many thousand men in the battle is not the noblest victor. But he who conquers himself is indeed the noblest victor.*"<sup>31</sup> Faultlessness is regarded as a 'power' because it enables a leader to command subordinates' respect for his integrity. Hence it is easier for an honest leader to implant honesty into the minds of his followers. In the field of moral education, actions speak louder than words. As the Buddha said:

*"If the bull who leads a herd of cows crossing a river goes straight, then all the cows go straight because the leader's course is straight. So among men, if he who is reckoned as the best lives righteously, then others do so too. The whole kingdom*

*dwells in happiness if the king lives righteously.*"<sup>32</sup>

Faultlessness Power is to be strengthened by practising a meditation method which develops mindfulness. The Buddha regards mindfulness (*Sati*) as the startingpoint of moral practice (*Sīla*). As it is said: "*When mindfulness and clear comprehension are present, moral shame and fear arise. When moral shame and fear are present, self-control arises. When self-control is present, moral practice arises.*"<sup>33</sup>

4) Kindliness Power (*Saṅgaha-bala*). The term *Saṅgaha* is rendered into English as "*kindly disposition, kindness, sympathy, friendliness, help, assistance, protection, favour.*"<sup>34</sup> Having kindness in his mind, a leader behaves in a gentle, caring and helpful way towards his subordinates and other people. It is a power of human relation without which the leader cannot have faithful followers. There are four ways of showing kindness to other people;

(1) Giving material gifts and advice to them (*Dāna*);

(2) Uttering kind words to communicate ideas and feeling with them (*Piyavacā*);

(3) Performing beneficial action and

rendering services to them (*Atthacariyā*);

(4) Giving them equal treatment and behaving oneself properly in all circumstances (*Samānattatā*).<sup>35</sup>

These four ways of showing kindness should be included in the code of professional ethics for civil servants. They enable civil servants to establish good professional relationships with those served, with colleagues, and with other individuals or professions. Moreover, the four ways of showing kindness are viewed as foundation stones of all kinds of human relationships. As it is said by the Buddha :

*“Charity, kind words, and doing a good turn  
And treating all alike as each deserves :  
These bonds of sympathy are in the world  
Just like the linchpin of a moving car.  
Now if these bonds are lacking, mother who bore  
And father who begat should not receive  
The honour and respect ( which are their due).  
But since the wise rightly regard these bonds,  
They win to greatness and are worthy  
praise.”*<sup>36</sup>

Kindliness Power is to be strengthened by practising a meditation method called 'unbounded states of mind (*Appamaññā*).' This method is also known as *Brahmavihāra*, literally translated as 'abidings of the Great Ones.' It consists of four virtues in the leader's mind<sup>37</sup>:

(1) *Mettā* means a feeling of boundless love for all living creatures; it is the desire to make others happy, as opposed to hatred or the desire to make others suffer. The development of loving-kindness enables a leader to purify the mind of anger and hatred. Besides, loving-kindness is accompanied by an active benevolence, a will to sacrifice and contribute one's own well-being and happiness for the sake of other people.

(2) *Karuṇā* means compassion towards those in distress who need our help; it is the desire to free those who suffer from their sufferings, as opposed to illwill or the desire to harm others. The development of compassion enables a leader to purify the mind of illwill and to decrease selfishness, and on the other hand, to try to remove the troubles and difficulties of others.

(3) *Muditā* means sympathetic joy or rejoicing with those who are fortunate or successful, as opposed to a feeling of envy or jealousy. The development of sympathetic joy enables a leader to learn how to sincerely appreciate the success and prosperity of his subordinates and to share their happiness. It also gives rise to the sense of altruism and subdues a latent feeling of grudge against people in superior positions.

(4) *Upekkhā* means impartiality towards others; it is a balanced state of mind. The development of impartiality enables a leader to give a just and fair treatment to his subordinates and other people. When the leader of impartial spirit blames or praises his subordinates, he does so in accordance with the principle of Dhamma without prejudices based on either favour, hatred, misunderstanding or fear.<sup>36</sup>

### Concluding Remarks

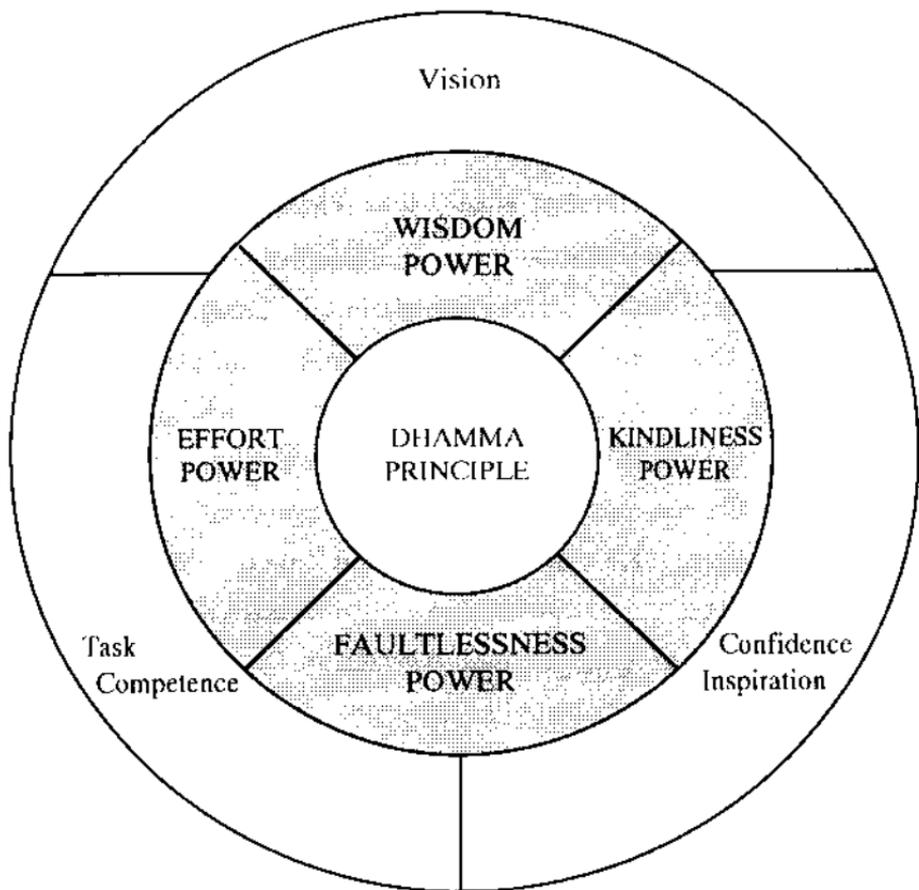
The conclusion to be drawn from the foregoing discussions is that the Dhamma-oriented leadership (*Dhammādhīpateyya*) is the

most suitable style in civil service of the democratic society because it encourages civil servants at all levels to take leaderlike initiative and share leadership tasks. For a civil servant to be a Dhamma-oriented leader, he or she has to develop three leadership skills and cultivate four essential virtues in the mind. The three skills---Vision, Task Competence and Confidence Inspiration---correspond to conceptual skill, technical skill and human relation skill respectively. The four virtues of *Bala* or power consist of Wisdom, Effort, Faultlessness and Kindness may be compared with four Cardinal Virtues, i. e. Wisdom, Courage, Self-control and Justice propounded by Plato and Aristotle in Greek philosophy.<sup>39</sup> Besides, the four *Bala* Virtues in Buddhism may be likened to three Cardinal Virtues, i. e. Wisdom, Courage, and Love in Confucianism.<sup>40</sup>

It is necessary to emphasize here that the above-mentioned four *Bala* Virtues ---Wisdom Power, Effort Power, Faultlessness Power and Kindness Power --- are interdependent and must be

developed together. Absence of any one of them may diminish the perfection of leadership. For example, wisdom and effort must come together. In the field of leadership, wisdom without effort is futile, and effort without wisdom is rash or foolhardy. A combination of both wisdom and effort gives rise to an effective leadership. However, effectiveness alone is not enough. Adolf Hitler, for instance, was effective. According to John Gardner, *"Hitler had some qualities that would be counted as strengths in any leader, good or bad---his sheer force of personality, his extraordinary steadiness of purposes over the years, and his genius for organizing and mobilizing. But those strengths were turned to evil ends."*<sup>41</sup> Judged by any moral standards, Hitler was not a morally good leader. Before the invasion of Poland he said to his generals, *"Close your heart to pity. Act brutally."*<sup>42</sup> What follows from this is that effectiveness without morality may create the dangerous leadership. That is why Faultlessness Power cannot be discarded by an aspirant to leadership. A combination of wisdom, effort and faultlessness gives rise to good and

effective leadership which has high ability to get a job done. It may have only a high concern for production. By cultivating the Kindliness Power of mind, a leader has a high concern for people. When these four *Bala* Virtues are harmonized, they make a good and effective leader who shows his concern for both production and people. The presence of such a leader in civil service will definitely bring vitality, effectiveness and development into the bureaucratic system.



**The Interrelationship between Virtues and Skills  
of the Dhamma-oriented Leadership**

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# Buddhism and Sustainable Development

*This paper was presented on September 7, 1994/2537 at the Religious Leaders' Seminar held in connection with the United Nations International Conference on Population and Development in Cairo, Egypt.*

I am really pleased to have an opportunity to interact with religious leaders in the seminar held in connection with the United Nations International Conference on Population and Development here in Cairo. What brings all of us to this historic Conference is our awareness of interrelationship between population growth and sustainable development.

## Population and Sustainable Development

The real meaning of sustainable development is 'wholesome' and 'complete' development. It is development in all sectors, in all areas and at all

stages. For development to be sustainable, a balance needs to be achieved and maintained among three systems: man, science and technology, and nature. In an article in the UNESCO *Future Scan* bulletin, Professor El-Kassas wrote, "*man needs to devise less wasteful and less polluting technologies that are energy efficient and that involve the recycling of materials to ensure an ecologically sound location of industrial centers and human settlements.*" But excess population is the main deterrent to this sustainable development. Population growth should be slowed down in order to reach a balance between natural resources and human needs.

The growth of world population is at an all-time high in absolute numbers, with current increments exceeding 90 million persons annually. The UN figures reveal that, unless checked, the world population at current rates will grow from around 5.6 billion people this year to 7.92 billion in 2015, then to 12.5 billion in 2050.<sup>1</sup> The rapid population growth in the world becomes a matter of great concern for those responsible for development policy in many nations. Increasing populations press on the

environment and its resources, take away from the capital available for new investment especially in children, and crowd cities with unemployed people of poor health. Obviously, these consequences of the rapid population increase must be the concern not only of constituted political authorities, but also of both secular and religious non-governmental organizations.

Thus all concerted efforts must be made to slow down the rapid population growth. So far the family planning policy has been regarded by member countries of the UN to be the most effective way to deal with the problem in hand. Unfortunately, the family planning programs which recommend artificial birth control are not acceptable to some religious organizations. It is undeniable fact that religious leaders have different opinions over many elements connected with population control.

### Christianity and Birth Control

As we know, the pope and his Roman Catholic Church forbid the use of modern contraception, voluntary sterilization and condoms, and permit only

periodic abstinence as a method of birth control.<sup>2</sup>They oppose birth control on the ground that human life is a sacred gift of God and it is against the 'will of God' to prevent it from coming into existence. They complicate the situation by insisting that sexual relations are essentially immoral unless their prime object is to beget children. In 1968, the Vatican issued a papal encyclical on *Humanae Vitae*, banning birth control.

One of the main reasons for issuing this papal encyclical is to assert the significance of the principle of Papal Infallibility adopted by participants of the Vatican Council I in 1870. This principle maintains that the pope, being the highest authority in the Roman Catholic Church, can do no wrong in the Bible interpretation and moral judgment. From this it follows that since the popes in the past did forbid the practice of contraception, to permit such a practice would imply that the popes' edicts in this matter were wrong and the principle of Papal Infallibility would crumble. To preserve the principle, the Vatican issued the papal encyclical on *Humanae Vitae*, banning contraception. The Vatican's position is stated clearly in the following statements of the encyclical :

*“If it should be declared that contraception is not evil in itself, then we should have to concede frankly that the Holy Spirit had been on the side of the Protestant churches in 1930 (when the encyclical Casti Connubii was promulgated), in 1951 (Pius XII’s address to the midwives), and in 1958 (the address delivered before the Society of Hematologists in the year the pope died). It should likewise have to be admitted that for a half a century the Spirit failed to protect Pius XI, Pius XII, and a large part of the Catholic hierarchy from a very serious error.*

*This would mean that the leaders of the Church, acting with extreme imprudence, had condemned thousands of innocent human acts, forbidding, under pain of eternal damnation, a practice which would now be sanctioned. The fact can neither be denied nor ignored that these same acts would now be declared licit on the grounds of principles cited by the Protestants, which popes and bishops have either condemned or at least not approved.”*

Protestant churches, unlike the Roman Catholic Church, permit the use of artificial birth control.

They have a conviction that men and women are both created in God's image and have free will to make choices in all areas of life, including their sexuality and birth control. Today, the mainstream of Protestant churches endorses contraception as a means of family planning. In 1973, the World Council of Churches, which comprises of 324 churches world-wide, published a report called "Population Policy, Social Justice and the Quality of Life," which states that "*the majority of Protestant churches have come to hold that the couple is free to use the gifts of science to limit procreation, provided the methods are mutually acceptable, injurious to neither spouse, nor to life.*" The report points to the role of the Christian churches in helping to promote 'the acceptance and practice' of responsible parenthood by both husbands and wives, involving the right of parents to 'the means of family planning acceptable to them on conscience.'

### Islam and Birth Control

In Islam there are also both proponents and opponents of family planning. Often progressive

Muslims who support family planning say that the Qur'an is silent on the issue of family planning and they take this silence to be a sign of affirmation rather than negation. For instance, Fazlur Rahman has pointed out that *“in the verses of the Holy Qur'an one finds nothing which gainsays the view that we should control our population, for a time, to remedy our present situation.”* For progressive Muslims the use of contraception is permissible for the reason that the Prophet Muhammad did not forbid the practice of 'azl' (coitus interruptus). As the Prophet said; *“You may practise it, but if God has predetermined for a child to be born, it will be born.”*<sup>3</sup>

On the contrary, conservative Muslims who oppose family planning insist that the Qur'an is not silent on the subject. They refer to the following verses to support their view that procreation is a blessing from God :

*“O people ! fear your Lord who has created you from a single soul and from it created its mate and from these He raised up many men and women.*

*And God has given you mates of your own kind and has given you, through your mates, children*

*and children's children, and has provided for you sustenance out of the good things of life."* <sup>4</sup>

Like the Catholic Church, conservative Muslims oppose birth control because they consider it to be against the will of God.

It should be added here that the Hindus and the Confucians tend to oppose birth control on their religious grounds. Whereas the Hindus believe that their happiness in the future life depends on having sons to perform the prescribed sacrifices after their death, the Confucians hold that the family must be perpetuated in order to honour the ancestors.

### Buddhism and Birth Control

The Buddhists have no reasons to oppose birth control. Any methods of birth control which do not involve killing are acceptable to the Buddhists. They are allowed to use any of the old or modern methods of contraception. In birth control what is done is to prevent the birth of an existence. No sin is committed in such an act of prevention. If there is no killing involved, then there is no bad action (*kamma*). As the Buddhists do not believe in God or the Creator, they

are not concerned with the will of God. Besides, the Buddha did not encourage his followers to 'go forth and multiply,' as he once said: "*Birth is always subject to suffering.*"<sup>5</sup> That the Buddha is in favour of birth control is clear from the fact that he instructs monks to live the life of celibacy and persuades his lay followers to avoid sexual intercourse by observing eight precepts on Buddhist holy days. Thus it is better for the Buddhists to bring about birth control by self-restraint, rather than by the use of contraceptives. What worries the devout Buddhists is the possibility that artificial methods of birth control, if used indiscriminately, will weaken the sense of moral responsibility that regulates the relations of the sexes, and encourages *Kāma-rāga* (lust for sensual pleasure) by removing the hazards that accompany sexual relations outside of marriage.

### Buddhism and Abortion

Family planning which recommends artificial birth control is acceptable to the Buddhists insofar as its methods do not include abortion. If one takes any intentional action to have an abortion, this action is

morally wrong because it involves taking away or destroying a life. Therefore, abortion is not acceptable to the Buddhists as it is against their fundamental precept which enjoins them to abstain from killing.

Here, it may be of interest to mention that most world religions forbid abortion. The position of the Catholic Church is far from being ambiguous after we hear Pope John Paul II speak out against abortion. And the Protestants share the same view with the Catholics. However, major Schools of Law in Islam hold two opposing views on abortion. The first is that abortion is totally forbidden. This view is held by the Maliki School and the Ja'fari School. The second view is that abortion is permissible within four months of pregnancy before the 'ensoulment' of the foetus. This view is held by the Hanafi School, the Shafi'i School, the Hanbali School, and the Zaydi School, though there are differences in opinion amongst individual jurists of these Schools regarding the time of 'ensoulment.'<sup>6</sup>

The Schools of Law in Islam hold different views on abortion because they give different answers to this question: "When does human life begin?" To

this question the Buddhists give a definite answer that human life begins at the moment of conception (*patisandhi-khana*). In *Mahatanhasankhayasutta* the Buddha mentioned three conditions of conception as follows:

*"If, monks, there is here a coitus of the parents and it is the mother's season and the Gandhabba is present, it is on the conjunction of these three things that there is conception."* <sup>7</sup>

The above statement means that the birth of a human being begins at the moment of conception which is the conjunction of the three conditions;

- (1) a coitus of the parents,
- (2) the woman's generative capability,
- (3) the presence of the *Gandhabba*.

For the conception to occur, the three conditions must be present at the same time. If any one of them is lacking, the conception cannot take place.

The Buddhist's position is similar to that of modern science which tells us that a human life begins at fertilisation; "*Human development is a continuous process that begins when an ovum from a female is fertilised by a sperm from a male.*" <sup>8</sup>

However, their similarity ends here. The Buddhists depart from scientific view when they maintain that at the very moment of the sperm's entry into the ovum the third factor, i.e. *Gandhabba*, enters the fertilised ovum which is called embryo. What is the *Gandhabba* ? The Commentary explains *Gandhabba* as the being who is coming to the womb.<sup>9</sup> This *Gandhabba* is nothing but rebirth-consciousness (*paṭisandhi-viññāṇa*) which enters the womb at the very moment of fertilisation. This explanation is justified by what the Buddha said to Ananda in the *Mahanidanasutta* ;

*"I have said that consciousness is the cause of name and form. Now in what way that is so, Ananda, is to be understood after this manner. Were consciousness not to enter the mother's womb, would name and form become consolidated ?"*

*"It would not, lord,"* replied Ananda.<sup>10</sup>

Thus a human life begins at the moment of conception. In other words, it begins at the moment of conjunction of the three conditions, namely, an ovum, a sperm and consciousness. That is why the term *human being* is defined in the Vinaya-pitaka as follows :

*"Human being means : from the mind's first arising, from the time of consciousness becoming first manifest in a mother's womb until the time of death, here meanwhile he is called a human being."*<sup>11</sup>

What follows from the foregoing discussion is that for the Buddhists performing abortion even at the moment of conception is tantamount to killing a human being. The Buddhists, therefore, are prohibited from performing abortion at any stages of pregnancy. The Buddhists, along with followers of other religions, would accept the UN Programme of Action which reads: *"In no case should abortion be promoted as a method of family planning."*

The term *family planning* is generally understood in the sense of birth control. As it is said in the UN Programme of Action; *"The aim of family planning programmes must be to enable couples and individuals to decide freely and responsibly the number and spacing of their children and to have the information and means to do so and to ensure informed choices and make available a range of safe and effective fertility regulation methods."*<sup>12</sup> For family planning to be generally accepted and implemented

by all secular and religious organizations, the term *family planning* should be used in a broader sense; that is to say, it should aim not only at helping couples and individuals to choose the number, spacing and timing of birth of their children but also at assisting them to perform other activities necessary for family development such as providing health-care, good education and training to children.

### Buddhism and Development

The most important task to be accomplished in the desirable family planning programmes is to facilitate the qualitative growth of population and slow down its quantitative increase. Quality of population must precede its quantity. For sustainable development to have a solid basis, it is necessary to capitalise on the human elements. Men are regarded as agents of change for development; they are the first things to be developed in order to become competent participants in development programmes.

In the Buddhist's programmes of human development, ideal persons are those who achieve

four kinds of developments, i.e. physical, social, mental and intellectual developments as follows :<sup>13</sup>

1. Physical development (*Kāya-bhāvanā*) is the development of the body as well as the material world or physical environment. This development enables man to obtain the basic needs of life, the requisites of food, clothing, shelter and health-care, and to have a beneficial natural environment.

2. Social development (*Sīla-bhāvanā*) is the development of a good and friendly relationship with other people, community, society or social environment. It is to be realized by observing at least Five Precepts.

3. Emotional development (*Citta-bhāvanā*) is the development of such good mental qualities as love, compassion, sympathetic joy, equanimity, mindfulness, concentration, mental strength and perfect mental health, consisting of mental peacefulness and happiness. The practice of concentration meditation enables one to possess these mental qualities and purify the mind of all defilements and mental illness.

4. Intellectual development (*Paññā-bhāvanā*) is the development of and through knowledge and

wisdom. This kind of development includes the high capacity of perceiving and learning, free thinking and judgement, and the knowledge of all things as they really are. The intellectual development is achieved through the practice of insight meditation.

These four aspects of developments are viewed as the goal of human development in the Buddhist framework. Man, therefore, is to be developed physically, socially, emotionally and intellectually. For the family planning policy to be more effective and fruitful in its implementation, it must aim not only at birth control but also at the full-fledged development of family members.

### Buddhism and Family Planning

The programmes of qualitative family planning are laid down by the Buddha in the *Mangalasutta* as follows:

*“Aid for mother and for father,  
And support for wife and children,  
A livelihood that brings no conflict:  
This is the highest blessing.”<sup>14</sup>*

What follows from the above statement is that family planning should deal with the establishment of good relationship between parents and children, between husband and wife, and the source of income of the family.

1) Relationship between parents and children.

With regard to the relationship between parents and children, the Buddha says that parents should enable their children to reach physical, social, mental and intellectual developments by means of good education and spiritual training. The roles of parents in this connection are prescribed by the Buddha as follows:

- 1) Parents prevent their son or daughter from doing evil.
- 2) They encourage him or her to do good.
- 3) They provide him or her with good education in arts and sciences;
- 4) They arrange for his or her marriage to a suitable spouse.
- 5) They hand over inheritance to him or her in due time.<sup>15</sup>

If parents fail to take a good care of thier children, then they should not receive honour and respect which are due to good parents.<sup>16</sup>

It is worth mentioning here that the Buddha advises parents to avoid acting discriminately against their daughter and tells them to be aware of her true value. In *Dhitisutta* there is a story of King Pasenadi who visits the Buddha and grumbles because his Queen, Mallika, has given birth to a daughter. And the Buddha says these words to the King : “A daughter may prove even better than a son. For she may grow up wise and virtuous, and become a faithful wife who respects her mother-in-law.”<sup>17</sup>

Children who have been brought up and developed by their parents should support them in return in five ways:

- 1) Having been supported by them, their son or daughter supports them in his or her turn.
- 2) He or she does their work for them.
- 3) He or she keeps up the honour and the traditions of their family.
- 4) He or she makes himself worthy of his or her heritage.
- 5) He makes offerings, dedicating merit to them after their death.<sup>18</sup>

## 2) Relationship between husband and wife.

In *Sigālovādasutta* the Buddha gives an advice on how to improve relationship between husband and wife. Men and women are viewed as equal partners who take joint responsibilities for their social and family roles. The Buddha supports the empowerment of women and the improvement of their social status by advising a husband to serve his wife in five ways;

- 1) by honouring her.
- 2) by being courteous to her.
- 3) by being faithful to her.
- 4) by handing over authority to her.
- 5) by providing her with ornaments and gifts.<sup>19</sup>

His wife, thus served, shows her love for him in five ways :

- 1) The household affairs are to be well managed.
- 2) She should be hospitable and helpful to friends and relatives of both hers and his.
- 3) She should be faithful to him.
- 4) She should take care of the goods he brings home.

- 5) She should be skilful and industrious in all her duties.<sup>20</sup>

### Sangha and Development

As is mentioned above, the Buddhists do not oppose birth control. That is why the family planning programme, operated since 1974 by a private, nonprofit organization in Thailand, has met with no resistance from the Sangha and Buddhist organizations. On the contrary, it gains support from both monks and laymen so much that it becomes one of the success stories in the field of family planning. Statistical data show that total fertility rates in Thailand have been reduced from 6.2 % in 1960 to 3.5 % in 1975, and to 1.3 % in 1992.<sup>21</sup>

Buddhist monks in Thailand have played significant roles in promoting and operating programmes for rural development such as 'Dhamma Land and Golden Land.' In this connection, monks have campaigned for people to work together in order to satisfy the 'Eight Basic Needs' of life as proposed by the National Economic and Social Development Board. They consist of good food, shelter, health-care

education, plentiful good product, family safety, a two-child family, participation in development programmes, and spiritual training.<sup>22</sup>

These 'Eight Basic Needs' of life represent some Buddhist values which are usually included in programmes of family planning and rural development. For these basic needs to be satisfied, one has to achieve physical, social, emotional and intellectual development. Monks, therefore, act as spiritual guides who lead people to the stage of full-fledged development. Monks play active roles in helping develop people in return of the latter's services and donations. This means that monks and laymen are interdependent. Laymen provide material support for monks and receive spiritual guidance and training from them. In acting as spiritual guides of the society, monks are said to follow the following instruction of the Buddha:

*"Monks, brahmins and householders are most helpful to you, since they support you with robe, food, lodging, and medicines. You also, monks, are most helpful for brahmins and householders, since you teach them dhamma that is lovely at the beginning, lovely in the middle, and lovely in the end....Thus,*

*monks, this religious life is lived in mutual dependence, for ferrying across the river of suffering, for the complete cessation of suffering.”* <sup>23</sup>

### Concluding Remarks

Human beings are alpha and omega of sustainable development. It is the development of humans, by humans and for humans. All kinds of development must begin with physical, social, emotional, and intellectual development of human beings. And fully developed men and women can become active agents of change for sustainable development. The rapid growth of population makes it very difficult to provide men and women with equal opportunity to reach their full-fledged development. Thus the population increase must be checked by operating effectively the qualitative family planning which aims not only at the prevention of conception but also at the full-fledged development of a newborn member of the family.

To ensure sustainable development, we have to invent development programmes that check population growth in order to reach a balance

between natural resources and human needs. We must act together now before all natural resources are consumed and destroyed. We have to keep in mind this well known saying: "*We have not only inherited this planet from our ancestors, but have also borrowed it from future generations.*"

Programmes for sustainable development cannot be effectively implemented unless men and women of religion stop opposing the use of modern methods of birth control and give support to qualitative family planning. Before changing the world, religious leaders should first change their way of thinking. Among men and women of various religions, the Buddhists are spared the difficulty in adopting qualitative family planning as a part of sustainable development programmes. Moreover, they find a large parts of the Buddha's teachings which can be taken as guidelines for family planning and sustainable development. Even monks play very significant role in changing people's attitudes toward qualitative family planning and complete development. "*We shall require a substantially new manner of thinking if mankind is to survive,*" said Albert Einstein.<sup>24</sup> We have to adopt

a new way of thinking if we really want to solve man-made problems resulting from unchecked population growth. As the Buddha says in the *Dhammapada* :

*“ Whatever harm an enemy may do to an enemy,  
Or a hater to a hater,  
An ill-directed mind  
Can do one far greater harm.  
What neither mother nor father,  
Nor any other relative can do,  
A well-directed mind  
Can do to him a far greater good.”*<sup>25</sup>

## Notes

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2. The United Nations, *Draft Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development*, 1994, p. 44.
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15. D. III. 189.
16. A. II. 32, 248.
17. S. I. 86.
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## Universal Morality of Buddhism

*This paper was presented on October 29, 1993/2536 at the international symposium held by the World Fellowship of Buddhists in Seoul, South Korea.*

Members of the World Fellowship of Buddhists who assembled in Seoul at the 17th General Conference in October 1990 made the following Declaration : *"We shall uphold the Pañcasīla of our Great Teacher, Lord Buddha, for the upliftment and progress of Buddhism contributing our theme to the peace and harmony of the world."*<sup>1</sup> This Declaration is based on their firm conviction that if the *Pancasila* is sincerely practised in daily life, all mankind will experience happiness and world peace will reign on earth. When everyone observes the *Pañcasīla*, our world will be secure in peace.

The term 'peace (*santi*)' has both negative and positive meanings. In its negative sense, peace is an absence of war or conflict and 'structural violences' such as social injustice, violations of human rights, etc. In its positive sense, peace means a presence of unity, harmony, freedom and justice. Peace, whether it be personal, communal, national or global one, can be cultivated by the observance of the *Pañcasīla*, a code of conduct necessary and sufficient for promoting and maintaining peace.

### Universal Morality

The term '*Pañcasīla*' is usually translated into English as "five precepts", consisting of the abstention from killing, stealing, sexual misconduct, lying and taking intoxicants. Although the *Pañcasīla* is technically a Buddhist concept, it is universal in implications. It can be found in all ancient and modern morality. For example, *Pañcavrata* in Jainism and *Pañcayama* in Hinduism which deal with five principles of non-violence, truth, non-stealing, sexual continence and non-possession are very similar to the *Pañcasīla*.<sup>2</sup> It also

appears in the Ten Commandments upheld by the followers of Judaism, Christianity and Islam. The following commandments remind us of the *Pañcasīla*;

*"You shall not murder.*

*You shall not commit adultery.*

*You shall not steal.*

*You shall not bear false witness against your neighbour.*

*You shall not covet your neighbour's house: you shall not covet your neighbour's wife or his male or female slave, or his ox or his ass, or anything that is your neighbour's."*<sup>3</sup>

Suffice it to say that the *Pañcasīla* signifies a universal principle of morality. As Kamala Jain has pointed out:

*"Every religious or social system has accepted it (Pañcasīla) as the basic code of conduct for all individuals, in relation either to his own self, or to the society of which he is a part. Whosoever neglects these basic principles, which are both social as well as spiritual, is considered pernicious to himself or to society, he is a sinner or a criminal."*<sup>4</sup>

As the basic code of moral conduct, the *Pañcasīla* is designed to regulate human conduct so that human beings can live together peacefully in civilized communities with trust and respect. Thus, peace will no doubt be prevalent in the world if the *Pañcasīla* is observed in daily life by everyone.

### Five Precepts

In Buddhism the term '*Pañcasīla*' in general refers to the fundamental moral principle of laity. According to the Buddhist tradition, a person is suitable to be called a Buddhist only when he outwardly professes his faith in the Triple Gem, i.e. the Buddha, the Dhamma and the Sangha, and formally undertakes to observe the *Pañcasīla* or Five Precepts.

The Five Precepts binding on all the Buddhists may be considered in two aspects. First, like basic moral principles in other religious systems, the Five Precepts enable men to live together peacefully in civilized communities for mutual protection, solidarity and economic prosperity. Second, they are the starting-point for the spiritual journey towards Nibbana or the cessation of

suffering. In the second aspect, the Five Precepts are included in the Training in Morality (*Sīlasikkhā*) which is essential prerequisite for the other two Trainings, i.e. the Training in Concentration and the Training in Wisdom. A Buddhist who has completed the threefold Training (*Sikkhā*) attains Nibbana. As the Buddha said:

*“Being endowed with morality (sīla), concentration brings high fruit and blessing. Being endowed with concentration, wisdom brings high fruit and blessing. Being endowed with wisdom, the mind becomes freed from all cankers.”*<sup>5</sup>

The Five Precepts are stated as follows:

1. *Pāṇatipāta veramaṇī:*  
To abstain from killing any living being.
2. *Adinnādānā veramaṇī:*  
To abstain from taking what is not given.
3. *Kāmesu micchācārā veramaṇī:*  
To abstain from sexual misconduct.
4. *Musāvādā veramaṇī:*  
To abstain from false speech.
5. *Surāmerayamajjapamādatṭhānā veramaṇī:*  
To abstain from intoxicants causing carelessness.

### The First Precept

In observing the first precept, the Buddhist undertakes to abstain from killing, causing to kill, or sanctioning the destruction of a living being. "Living being (*paṇa*)" implies anything that has life, from a tiny insect up to man. This precept applies to all creatures. It forbids the killing of man as well as animal.

The act of the killing can be performed in six ways, which have been mentioned in the Commentary as follows:<sup>6</sup>

- (1) killing with one's own hands;
- (2) causing another to kill by giving an order;
- (3) killing at a distance by shooting with an arrow or a gun, throwing a grenade, pelting with stones, etc.;
- (4) killing by digging trenches, and entrapping a being;
- (5) killing by mantras or occult sciences (*vijjā*);
- (6) killing by magical or psychic powers (*iddhi*).

Besides, there are five conditions which constitute the immoral act of killing. They are enumerated as follows;<sup>7</sup>

- (1) the fact or presence of a living being, man or animal;
- (2) the knowledge that the being is a living being;
- (3) the intention or resolution to kill;
- (4) the act of killing by appropriate method;
- (5) the actual death following the act of killing.

When any one of the five conditions is absent, the act of killing is not complete although death should follow the act. The performer of such an act does not violate the first precept. The act of killing is considered to be a transgression of the precept only when all of these five conditions are present.

The extent of moral guilt in killing depends on the size and mental qualities of a victim and the circumstances under which the act of killing is performed. The karmic results of killing an insect and killing a man vary in proportion to the size and virtues of the two. Therefore, patricide, matricide and the kill-

ing of an Arahant are considered to be grave offence because the victims here are the killer's benefactors or persons endowed with the highest mental development. The distinction is drawn between the guilt or evil to a lesser degree (*appasāvajja*) and to a greater degree (*mahāsāvajja*).

In order to observe the first precept, one has to take heed of the following injunction in the Suttanipāta:<sup>8</sup>

*“Laying aside violence in respect of all beings, both those which are still and those which move, in the world, he should not kill a living creature, nor cause to kill, nor allow other to kill.”*

At this point, it should be clarified that the precept is not, as it may appear from the negative expressions such as ‘not to kill’, something negative. And it does not consist in the mere non-committing of evil actions. It is, quite on the contrary, the clearly conscious and intentional restraint based on the simultaneous arising of a noble state of intention or will (*cetanā*).

Intention is a psychic force which finds expression in three ways: by thought, by speech, and by bodily action. Since speech and bodily action both have their

origin in the mind, it is the mental intention which constitutes Kamma or action. The Buddha, therefore, defines action by intention. He said thus: *"Intention, monks, is what I call action. Having intended, one performs the action by body, speech or mind."*<sup>9</sup>

A person whose intention is motivated by unwholesome intentions like hatred (*dosa*) tends to perform bodily and verbal actions which transgress the precept. To be successful in the observance of the first precept, he has to purify his intention by developing and cultivating loving-kindness (*mettā*) and compassion (*karuṇā*) in his mind. Once the intention is motivated by loving-kindness and compassion, it naturally manifests itself in right action and right speech which are in conformity with the precept. That is why morality or precept (*sīla*) is described in the *Visuddhimagga* as follows: *"What is precept? Such states as the intention of one who abstains from life-taking and so forth, or of one who fulfils his set duties."*<sup>10</sup>

Suffice it to say that the observance of the first precept of abstaining from killing is facilitated by the

intention full of loving-kindness and compassion. Without these two virtues in the mind, one would find it difficult to observe the precept. Thus the practice of loving-kindness and compassion should accompany the observance of the precept.

*Mettā* or loving-kindness means a feeling of boundless love for all living creatures; it is free from hatred and ill-will. Thus the development of loving-kindness enables man to purify the mind of anger and hatred. Besides, loving-kindness is accompanied by an active benevolence, a will to sacrifice and contribute one's own well-being and happiness for the sake of fellow beings.

*Mettā* should be developed first of all towards oneself by mentally repeating the following formula in Pali or in one's own tongue:

*"Aham'averō homi* (may I be free from enmity);  
*Abbyāpajjho homi* (may I be free from illwill);  
*Sukhī attānam pariharāmi* (may I keep myself happy)."<sup>11</sup>

Having developed loving-kindness for oneself time and again, one then extends the wish to

other beings' welfare by mentally repeating the following statements:

*"May all beings be free from enmity, illwill, and distress and keep themselves happy."*

With the mind full of loving-kindness for all beings, one gets rid of hatred which is the main cause of killing. That is to follow this injunction of the Buddha:

*"Let a man overcome anger by loving-kindness;*

*Let him overcome evil by good;*

*Let him overcome the miser by liberality;*

*Let him overcome the liar by truth."*<sup>12</sup>

Besides loving-kindness, *Karunā* is another virtue necessary for the observance of the first precept. *Karuna* means compassion or sympathy towards other beings. It is aroused by seeing someone in distress. The desire for violence automatically subsides in this state of mind.

To develop compassion, one has to direct one's attention towards other's suffering. On seeing anyone pitiable, deformed, in extreme suffering, in poor condition or uttering moans of pain, one should cause compassion to arise by saying: "This being has fallen into

suffering. May he be free from such suffering." To establish oneself on the path of compassion, one should recollect the Buddha's quality of compassion. The Buddha is known as the Great Compassionate One (*Mahākāruṇiko*) because of great compassion that moves him to share his bliss of liberation with others; the idea of preaching the Dhamma to liberate others is based on his great compassion. In Mahayana tradition, compassion is considered to be the essential quality of the Bodhisattva.

Compassion is a mental quality by which non-violence (*ahimsā*) can be actualized in practice; it gives rise to the will to abstain from violent action against other beings. It is not possible for a person of compassion to kill or torture other beings.

What follows from the foregoing discussion is that loving-kindness (*mettā*) and compassion (*karuṇā*) are two virtues necessary and essential for observing the first precept. The positive side of non-killing is the development of loving-kindness and compassion which are psychological basis of non-violence. Motivated by these two mental qualities, man's intention is purified of hatred and, as a consequence,

his desire for violence subsides and he automatically observes the first precept of abstaining from killing living beings. As it is said by the Buddha:

*"There, someone avoids the killing of living beings, and abstains from it. Without stick and sword, he lives scrupulous, full of loving-kindness and anxious for the welfare of all living beings."*<sup>13</sup>

### The Second Precept

The second precept of *adinnādāna* deals with the abstention from taking another's property that is not given. It is prescribed by the Buddha as follows: *"There, someone avoids taking what is not given, and abstains from it. He does not take by theft any property of another in village or jungle that is not given to him."*<sup>14</sup>

The Commentary defines *adinnādāna* as *"the taking, with the intention of stealing, of an object belonging to another person, which can be used by him as he desires without being censured or punished."*<sup>15</sup> The object stolen may be anything material and in a wide sense may include even immaterial things such as the infringement of another's rights, unasked interference

with another's business, waste of time by an employee, neglect of duty, or evasion of responsibility.<sup>16</sup>

The act of stealing can be performed in various ways. One can do it by one's own hands or cause another to steal by giving an order. Magic or psychic power and mantras can be used. One may cheat another out of something that rightly belongs to him; a trader may use false weights and measures or a false balance; a robber may use physical force. Whatever the method used or whatever the object taken, as far as it is done with the intention to steal, it constitutes a violation of the second precept.

For the act of stealing to be complete and for it to be the transgression of the precept, five conditions should be present. They are as follows;<sup>17</sup>

- (1) the fact that the object taken is another's;
- (2) the knowledge that it is another's;
- (3) the intention to steal;
- (4) the use of some method or the exertion of effort;
- (5) the actual taking of the object.

The extent of moral guilt and karmic results of the offences depends on the value of the object and

virtues of its owner. The gravity of the offences increases with the value of the object stolen and, to steal from a more virtuous person is a greater offence than to steal from a person of less virtue.<sup>18</sup>

The act of stealing stems from the intention motivated by greed (*lobha*). In order to facilitate the observance of the second precept, one has to develop the quality of generosity (*cāga*) in the mind so that one's greed subsides and stops causing of the violation of the second precept. Thus the positive side of the precept of non-stealing is the development of generosity which is its psychological basis.

Generosity or *cāga* is described as a morally good quality which makes one well disposed towards giving away one's possessions to others, or sharing them with others. In this sense generosity is connected with a wholesome quality called non-greed (*alobha*). Compared to *dāna* (giving), *cāga* (generosity) looks more fundamental than the former. *Dāna* is one among the many aspects of generosity.<sup>19</sup>

Generosity, in its practical application, refers to constant practice of giving and sharing. The Buddha

explains the nature of the person who practises generosity as follows:

*“He is one whose mind is free from the taint of selfishness, who is freely generous, open-handed and pure-handed, who delights in giving, expects to be sought and always looks for opportunities to give.”*<sup>20</sup>

The practice of generosity enables one to be free from selfishness which is rooted in greed (*lobha*); and, to be free from it also amounts to being released from greed to some extent. As greed is the root cause of the act of stealing, the practice of generosity which brings greed under control can facilitate the abstention from stealing. The practice of generosity, therefore, should accompany the observance of the second precept.

### The Third Precept

The third precept of good conduct is concerned with the abstention from *kāmesu micchācāra* usually translated as ‘sexual misconduct.’ This precept as prescribed for the laity is not a complete prohibition of sexual intercourse; it allows the fulfilment of sexual desire in a limited form in a sense of restricting one’s

sexual act only to one's own spouse by abstaining from immoral sexual acts and adultery.

In the *Sāleyyaka-sutta*, the Buddha states that there are eleven classes of women to whom the observance of the precept applies. They are as follows:

1. *Mātu-rakkhitā*. A woman under the protection of her mother.

2. *Pitu-rakkhitā*. A woman under the protection of her father.

3. *Mātāpitu-rakkhitā*. A woman under the protection of her mother and father.

4. *Bhātu-rakkhitā*. A woman under the protection of her brothers.

5. *Bhagini-rakkhitā*. A woman under the protection of her sisters.

6. *Ñāti-rakkhitā*. A woman under the protection of her relatives.

7. *Gotta-rakkhitā*. A woman under the protection of her family.

8. *Dhamma-rakkhitā*. A woman under the protection of her religious companions.

9. *Sassamikā*. A married woman.

10. *Saparidaṇḍā*. A woman chosen by the king to

be his queen, or the wife of some exalted man.

11. *Mālāguḷa-parikkhittā*. A woman adored with the garlands of betrothal.<sup>21</sup>

A man who has sexual intercourse with any one of these protected women commits sexual misconduct and thereby transgresses the third precept. The extent of moral guilt resulting from the transgression depends on virtues of the protected women. Therefore, the offence of sexual misconduct committed with a more virtuous woman is greater than that committed with a less virtuous woman. If the woman concerned are equal in virtues, then the gravity of the offence depends on the intensity of intention and the exertion of effort. That is why the offence of rape is considered to be greater than that of consented sexual intercourse.

In its practical application, the third precept prescribes not only to abstain from sexual misconduct, but also to have a contentment with one's own spouse (*sadārasantosa*). Thus contentment is regarded as a virtue necessary for the observance of the third precept. The quality of contentment gives rise to faithfulness and sexual restraint. With such a contentment in the mind, one would find it easier to avoid seeking

sexual satisfaction outside marriage. In the absence of such a contentment, sexual misconduct may arise. As it is said by the Buddha: "*One who is not content with his own wife and visits the prostitutes or the wife of another is sure to have his downfall.*"<sup>22</sup>

Hence the development of sexual restraint and a contentment with one's own spouse should accompany the observance of the third precept.

### The Fourth Precept

The fourth precept of good conduct deals with the abstention from *musāvāda* usually translated as 'false speech' or 'lying'. This covers the act of telling an untrue story, the use of exaggerated language and everything that is a departure from a true statement. The Commentary describes *musāvāda* as follows:

*"Lying is applied to the effort of the body and speech, on the part of one who is deceitful, to destroy the benefit of others, the intention setting up the bodily and verbal effort to deceive other."*<sup>23</sup>

This description indicates that the act of lying can be performed by either bodily gesture or written and spoken languages. For the act of lying to be complete

and the transgression of the precept to arise, four conditions should be present. They are enumerated as follows:

- (1) the untruth itself;
- (2) the intention to deceive;
- (3) the exertion of bodily or verbal effort in deceiving;
- (4) others understand the message.

When others understand what is said, no matter they believe it or not, the act of lying is complete and the fourth precept is violated. The extent of moral guilt in the case of the transgression depends on the amount of the benefit destroyed by the act of lying and virtues of the deceived person. The gravity of the moral guilt increases in proportion to the greatness of the benefit destroyed by the act of lying. Moreover, telling lies to a more virtuous person produces a greater offence than telling lies to a less virtuous person.

The fourth precept, therefore, prescribes the abstention from telling lies to others in all the circumstances. As the Buddha said:

*“There, someone avoids lying, and abstains from it. He speaks the truth, is devoted to the truth, reliable, worthy of confidence, not a deceiver of man.*

*Being at a meeting, or amongst people, in the midst of his relatives, or in a society, or in the king's court and called upon and asked as witness, to tell what he knows, he answers, if he knows nothing: "I know nothing", and if he knows, he answers: "I know";... Thus he never knowingly speaks a lie, either for the sake of his own benefit, or for the sake of another person's benefit, or for any benefit whatsoever." 24*

It is clear from the above-mentioned statements that, with regard to telling lies, the Buddha is uncompromising. His only injunction is : Speak the truth with discretion, but always be truthful; the truth must be disclosed for the benefit of others even when it may not be liked. That the Buddha always upholds truthfulness is confirmed by his own utterances as follows:

*"Whatever speech the Tathagata knows to be not fact, not true, not connected with the benefit, and that is not liked by others, disagreeable to them, that speech the Tathagata does not utter.*

*Whatever speech the Tathagata knows to be fact, true, connected with the benefit, but not liked by others, disagreeable to them, the Tathagata is aware of the right time for delivering that speech.*

*Whatever speech the Tathagata knows to be fact, true, connected with the benefit, and liked by others, agreeable to them, the Tathagata is aware of the right time for delivering that speech.*"<sup>25</sup>

### The Fifth Precept

The fifth and last precept of good conduct deals with the abstention from the taking of intoxicants causing carelessness. It is prescribed by the Buddha as follows: "*The householder who delights in the Dhamma should not indulge in intoxicating drinks, nor cause to drink, nor allow others to drink, knowing that it has intoxication as its end.*"<sup>26</sup>

This precept enjoins one to abstain from not only taking intoxicants or drinking liquors but also taking drugs. All forms of drug abuse are prohibited because they are implied by the term '*majja*', meaning 'anything that causes intoxication'.<sup>27</sup> In this sense, even the use of hallucinogenic drugs is a contravention of the fifth precept. The reasons for prohibition of intoxicating drinks and drugs lie in the fact that intoxication causes carelessness and becomes the basis of evil deeds. In other words, intoxication

leads one to commit various crimes and violate other precepts. As it is said by the Buddha:

*“Because of intoxication fools commit evil deeds, and make other intoxicated people also commit them. One should avoid this basis of demerit, intoxication, folly, beloved of fools.”*<sup>28</sup>

The Commentary states that, for the act of drinking liquors or taking drugs to be complete and for the contravention of the fifth precept to arise, four conditions should be present. They are:

- (1) any kind of intoxicants, such as liquor;
- (2) the intention to take it;
- (3) the exertion of effort;
- (4) the actual taking of the intoxicants.<sup>29</sup>

In the completion of these four conditions, the fifth precept is transgressed. The transgression produces a grave offence in every circumstance with no exception.<sup>30</sup> This is due to the fact that the taking of intoxicants and drug abuse are 'causes of carelessness'. Buddhism places a high value on carefulness (*appamāda*). As the Buddha said in the *Dhammapada*:

*“Carefulness is the way to the Deathless;  
Carelessness is the way to death.  
The careful do not die;  
The careless are like unto the dead.”* <sup>31</sup>

Here carefulness (*appamāda*) is used as a synonym of 'mindfulness(*sati*)'. Therefore, mindfulness is regarded as a virtue necessary for the observance of the fifth precept. It is a good quality to be developed in the mind so that it facilitates the practice of the abstention from taking intoxicants. If a person places a high value on mindfulness, it will be difficult for him to destroy it by drinking liquors or taking drugs.

The indulgence in intoxicating drinks and drugs is one of the six causes of ruin. Their dangers are stated in the *Sigālovāda-sutta* as follows:

*“There are, young householder, these six dangers through the being addicted to intoxicants;*

- (1) actual loss of wealth,*
- (2) increase of quarrels,*
- (3) susceptibility to disease,*
- (4) source of disgrace,*
- (5) indecent exposure,*
- (6) impaired intelligence.”* <sup>32</sup>

## Conclusion

What follows from the foregoing discussion is that the Five Precepts, being a fundamental code of moral conduct binding upon all the Buddhists, determine good characteristics of a true Buddhist. They are recommended for anybody calling himself a Buddhist. The observance of the Five Precepts enable us to decide a good Buddhist from a bad one. As it is said by the Buddha:

*“Whoever murders living beings,  
Is speaking words that are not true,  
Take what does not belong to him,  
Seduces wives of other men,  
And drinks intoxicating drinks,  
To which he ever strongly clings:  
A man who does not shun these evils,  
Has no morality indeed;  
And when his body once dissolves,  
That fool will fall to deepest hell.  
Who does not harm to anyone,  
Does never utter any lie,  
Does not seduce his neighbour's wife,*

*Does never wish in all his life  
To drink intoxicating drinks:  
A man, who shuns these evils five,  
He's rightly called a virtuous man;  
And when his body once dissolves,  
This wise man rises heaven-ward.*"<sup>33</sup>

In *Mahapārinibbānasutta*, the Buddha says that a person who always observes the Five Precepts is certain to get five good results:

- (1) great wealth,
- (2) good reputation,
- (3) self-confidence,
- (4) untroubled death, and
- (5) a happy state after death.<sup>34</sup>

No doubt the Five Precepts bring good results to both individuals and society. They can help people to create a civilized world where they can live together in peace, harmony and economic prosperity.

The Five Precepts, preached to the world by the Buddha twenty-five centuries ago, are never out of date. We find them very much relevant to the present circumstance of the world. Most of the world problems

such as wars, national conflicts, terrorism, corruption, destruction of the environment, the spread of AIDS, and drug abuse would have been solved if the Five Precepts had been upheld and sincerely practised in daily life by everyone. In order that the Five Precepts are observed throughout the world, such world organizations as the United Nations and the World Fellowship of Buddhists should persuade and encourage their member nations to uphold the spirit of the *Pañcasīla* and secure its implementation. If the essence the Five Precepts is upheld by people of all religious and social systems, then the era of peace and prosperity will be ushered in the world; and, consequently, we will be able to understand and appreciate this utterance of the Buddha;

*"Natthi santiparami sukhami*

*There is no higher bliss than peace."*<sup>35</sup>

## Notes

1. *WFB / WFBY Seoul Conference Report 1990*, p.99.
2. Kamala Jain, *The Concept of Pancasila in Indian Thought*, Parshvanath Vidyashram Reasearch Institute, Varanasi, 1983, p. 240.
3. *Exodus* 20 : 1-14.
4. Kamala Jain, op.cit. p. 240.
5. A. IV.1.
6. *Dhammasamgani*. p. 129.
7. Ibid.
8. Snp. p. 69.
9. A. III. 415.
10. *Visuddhimagga*. I. 6.
11. *Visuddhimagga*. I. 296.
12. Dhp. verse 223.
13. M. I. 287.
14. M. I. 287.
15. D. I. 71.
16. Tachibana, S., *The Ethics of Buddhism*, p. 58.
17. *Paramatthajotika*, Mahachula Buddhist University, p. 22.
18. Ibid. p. 20.
19. A. III. 287.
20. S. V. 395.

21. M. I. 287.
22. S. p. 19.
23. DhA. p. 130.
24. A. X. 176.
25. M. I. 395.
26. Snp. p. 69.
27. *Paramatthajotika*, p. 18.
28. Snp. p. 69-70.
29. *Paramatthajotika*, p. 22.
30. Ibid. p. 20.
31. Dhp. verse 21.
32. D. III. 182.
33. A. V. 174.
34. D. II. 86.
35. Dhp. verse 202.

## Unity in Diversity

*This paper was presented on October 25, 1990/2533 at the Buddhist Symposium of the 17th General Conference of the World Fellowship of Buddhist Youth held in Seoul, South Korea.*

The issue of identity of the Buddhists becomes the focal point of consideration in this paper because the concept of identity is related to that of unity and solidarity. It would be easier for the Buddhists throughout the world to unite in their attempts to promote world peace if they feel that they are among like-minded Buddhists who share the same ideal and ideas. The identity of the Buddhists is not likely to be easily established because of the fact that among the Buddhists themselves there are many denominations. How can we justify our belief that those who profess Theravada,

Mahayana or Vajrayana Buddhism are all Buddhists? What are their common characteristics which enable us to call all of them 'Buddhists' ? If these questions are answered properly, then the problem of the identity of the Buddhists is solved.

### Identity of Buddhism

Buddhism has so far persisted for more than 2,500 years and has undergone various changes. Through its long history of development, Buddhism has been divided into several sects which were gradually integrated into two main schools, i.e. the Theravada and the Mahayana school. Although there are some differences in their external practices such as rituals and ceremonies, both Theravada and Mahayana equally deserve the label 'Buddhism' and followers of the two traditions are called 'Buddhists.' This is because the main teachings of the Buddha are still preached and practised in both the schools. Germs of principal teachings in Mahayana are found in the Pali Tipitaka. As Sir Charles Eliot said : *"These ideas (of Mahayana) are all to be found*

*in the Nikayas, sometimes as mere seeds, sometimes as well-grown plants."*

The following are the main teachings maintained by both Theravada and Mahayana:<sup>1</sup>

1. Non-existence of a Creator God.
2. The belief in the Triple Gem, i.e. the Buddha, the Dhamma and the Sangha.
3. Three Characteristics of impermanence (*Anicca*), suffering (*Dukkha*) and selflessness (*Anatta*).
4. Dependent Origination (*Paticcasamuppāda*).
5. Karma and rebirth.
6. The Four Noble Truths, viz.,
  - 6.1 Suffering.
  - 6.2 Cause of Suffering.
  - 6.3 Cessation of Suffering or Nibbana.
  - 6.4 Path leading to Nibbana or the Noble Eightfold Path.

These basic teachings are regarded as common features which mark the identity between Theravada and Mahayana Buddhism. Having shared these main teachings of the Buddha, Theravada and Mahayana represent two faces of one the same coin called 'Buddhism.' The followers of the two traditions are equally

entitled to be called 'Buddhists' because they share the above-mentioned basic teachings of the Buddha. Their external appearances may look different but their internal qualities are the same. It is unity in diversity.

## Buddhist Identity

Having discovered the common features for identifying the Buddhists of both Theravada and Mahayana traditions, we use the same criterion to establish the identity of the Buddhists. There is no difference between young and old generations of the Buddhists insofar as spiritual development is concerned. A young Buddhist who realizes the truth is better than an old Buddhist who sees no truth. As the Buddha says:

*"Though one should live a hundred years  
Without morality and concentration,  
Yet, better is a single day's life  
Of one who is moral and meditative."*<sup>2</sup>

What criterion can we use to differentiate a Buddhist from a non-Buddhist? We find an answer of this question in *Dighajānūsutta*<sup>3</sup> which the Buddha preached to a young man named Dighajānu.

Dighajanu visits the Buddha and says: "*Venerable sir, we are ordinary laymen, leading a family life with wife and children. Would the Blessed One teach us some doctrines which will be conducive to our advantage and happiness in the present and the future.*"

The Buddha tells him that there are four conditions which are conducive to advantage and happiness of a young man (*kulaputta*) in the present. What four ?

1. He should be skilled, efficient, earnest and energetic in whatever profession he is engaged, and he should know it well (*Uṭṭhānasampadā*).

2. He should protect his income, which he has thus earned righteously, with the sweat of his brow (*Ārakkhasampadā*).

3. He should have good friends who are faithful, learned, virtuous, liberal and intelligent, who will help him along the right path away from evil (*Kalyāṇamittatā*).

4. He should spend reasonably, in proportion to his income, neither too much nor too little, i.e. he should not hoard wealth avariciously nor should he be extravagant, in other words, he should live within his means (*Samajivitā*).

Then the Buddha expounds the four virtues conducive to a young man's advantage and happiness in the future as follows :

- 1) Achievement in Faith (*Saddhāsampadā*);
- 2) Achievement in Morality (*Sīlasampadā*);
- 3) Achievement in Generosity (*Cāgasampadā*);
- 4) Achievement in Wisdom (*Paññāsampadā*).

It should be noted here that the first group of four conditions conducive to young man's happiness in the present is common practice which is applicable to the Buddhists and non-Buddhists. The second group consists of four virtues, i.e. faith, morality, generosity and wisdom which are distinct virtues for the Buddhists only. Any person who has these four virtues is qualified to be called a Buddhist. Hence, the four virtues are the Buddhists' distinct mental qualities which enable us to differentiate them from non-Buddhists.

## Four Virtues

Now we shall look into the details of the four virtues of the Buddhists.

- 1) Faith (*Saddhā*).

Faith is the first step on the road of becoming a

Buddhist. To be a Buddhist, one has to outwardly profess one's faith in the Triple Gem by uttering the following statements in Pali :

*Buddham saraṇam gacchāmi.*

*Dhammam saraṇam gacchāmi.*

*Sangham saraṇam gacchāmi.*

I take my refuge in the Buddha.

I take my refuge in the Dhamma.

I take my refuge in the Sangha.

It was recorded in the *Mahavagga* that Yasa's father was the first lay disciple who professed his faith in the Triple Gem by uttering these words:

*"I take my refuge in the Buddha, the Dhamma and the Sangha. Let the Blessed One accept me as a lay disciple (upāsaka) gone for refuge from this day onwards for as long as life lasts."*<sup>4</sup>

The Buddhists in Thailand have performed *Buddhamāmakā* ceremony since the reign of King Chulalongkorn, taking an example from Yasa's father. To perform the ceremony which is presided over by a monk, a person has to openly profess his faith in the Triple Gem in order to be officially installed in Buddhism and consequently become a Buddhist (*Buddhamāmakā*).

Thus, faith in the Triple Gem consolidated by confidence in the Buddha's enlightenment is really essential to anybody calling himself a Buddhist. If a person does not believe in the Buddha's enlightenment, we do not think that he can properly call himself a Buddhist. Faith is very necessary even in Mahayana Buddhism. A person cannot take Bodhisattava vows to become a Buddha unless he has inspiration for Buddhahood aroused by the belief in the Buddha's enlightenment.

The Buddhist's faith in the Triple Gem is different from unquestioned obedience to the Creator God. It is not blind faith because it is to be "*reasoned and rooted in understanding (ākāravatī saddhā dassanamūlikā)*."<sup>5</sup> In Buddhism faith is not in conflict with the spirit of enquiry, and doubt about dubitable things is admitted and enquiry into them is encouraged<sup>6</sup>. Faith, therefore, should be balanced with wisdom. Through wisdom and understanding, faith becomes an inner certainty and firm conviction based on one's own experience.

## 2. Morality (*Sīla*).

Morality is another preliminary condition for being a good Buddhist. After taking refuge in the Triple

Gem, the Buddhist goes on taking a vow to observe Five Precepts (*Pañcasīla*), viz.,

1. Abstinence from taking life;
2. Abstinence from taking what is not given to one;
3. Abstinence from sexual misconduct;
4. Abstinence from telling lies;
5. Abstinence from the state of indolence arising from the use of intoxicants.

Morality is the foundation of the whole Buddhist practice, and therewith the first of three kinds of Training (*Sikkhā*), i.e. morality (*Sīla*), concentration (*Samādhi*) and wisdom (*Paññā*). As the Buddha says:

*“Great are the fruit and advantage of concentration which is developed by morality. Great are fruit and advantage of wisdom which is developed by concentration.”*<sup>7</sup>

### 3. Generosity (*Cāga*).

Generosity is another characteristic of a true Buddhist. Having been endowed with faith and morality, a Buddhist is ready to help other beings; he is generous. As it is said; *“He who is endowed with morality and faith excels all stingy people in generosity.”*<sup>8</sup>

Generosity as a virtue in the mind of a good Buddhist is described by the Buddha as follows :

*“And what is achievement in generosity? Herein a young man of family dwells at home with heart purged of avarice, given over to charity, open-handed, delighting in giving, yoke-mate to asking, and he finds joy in almsgiving.”<sup>9</sup>*

#### 4. Wisdom (*Paññā*).

Wisdom is regarded as the foremost virtue in Buddhism. Life of the wise is said to be the best<sup>10</sup>. It is through wisdom that one realizes the truth and attains Nibbana which is the *Summum Bonum* of Buddhism. Wisdom and Right View (*sammādiṭṭhi*) are synonymous. In order to cultivate wisdom, the Buddhist has to get rid of wrong views (*micchādiṭṭhi*) which are antithetic to right views. The Buddhist should free his mind from wrong views described in *Sāmaññaphalasutta* as follows:

*“There is no consequence of almsgiving, sacrifice or offering. A good or bad action (kamma) produces no result. This world does not exist, nor do other worlds. There is no mother, no father, (all good or evil done to them producing no result). There is no rebirth of beings after death. In this world, there are no recluses or*

*brahmins, established in the Noble Path and accomplished in good practice, who through direct knowledge acquired by their own efforts can expound on this world and other worlds.*

*A human being is built up of the four elements... Both fool and wise alike are annihilated and destroyed after death and dissolution of their bodies. Nothing exists after death."*<sup>11</sup>

In order to get rid of these wrong views, the Buddhist has to purify his mind by practising meditation. There are two kinds of meditation, namely, Concentration Meditation (*Samatha*) and Insight Meditation (*Vipassanā*).

Concentration is the unwavering state of mind which is continuously engaged in a single object. In the state of concentration, the mind is freed from five hindrances, namely sensual desire, illwill, sloth and torpor, distractions and remorse, and doubts. The elimination of hindrances sets the mind in concentration and this in turn makes it possible for gaining knowledge and insight. Hence it is said that *concentration is the cause of knowing and seeing things as they are*<sup>12</sup>. In this sense, concentration is not the ultimate goal of meditation. It is

a path leading to *Vipassanā*. Concentration is not purely Buddhist method for it forms part of almost all Indian religious practices. In the Upanisadic literature, concentration is known as Yoga. For the Upanisadic thinkers, Yoga is a method which renders *ātman* accessible to us. Concentration consists of different degrees, the highest of which is a mystic state and it is in this state that an intuition of *ātman* arises.

The Buddha, before his enlightenment, studied Yoga under two teachers, Ālāra and Udaka, and attained the highest mystic state; but he was not satisfied with it for it did not lead to complete emancipation. The Buddha later discovered a new method which helped him to attain Nibbana. The method is called *Vipassanā Bhāvanā* or Insight Meditation. It is a phenomenological analysis of physical and mental phenomena; that is, a reflection (*anupassanā*) upon body, feelings, consciousness, and other mental properties.<sup>13</sup> By means of *Vipassanā*, one sees the three characteristics of things, namely impermanence, suffering and selflessness. As a result, one attains Nibbana. "*He sees by perfect wisdom as it really is. His mind, not grasping, is detached from taints. He is liberated.*"<sup>14</sup>

## Conclusion

Theravada and Mahayana are equally entitled to be labelled as "Buddhism" because they share some basic teachings of the Buddha. The Buddhists in the two traditions are identified by referring to a set of four virtues, namely (1) faith in the Triple Gem, (2) morally good behaviour resulting from observing at least five precepts, (3) willingness to help other people, and (4) insight into the true nature of things through the practice of *Samatha* and *Vipassanā* Meditation.

All the Buddhists aim at the same goal, i.e. Nibbana. Their important task is to follow the path leading to spiritual development and to spread the Buddha's teachings throughout the world. This is in conformity with the Buddha's expectation of his disciples expressed in these words :

*"...Bhikkhus and Bhikkhunis, and lay-disciples of either sex shall have become true hearers, wise and well trained, ready and learned, carrying the doctrinal books in their memory, masters of the lesser corollaries that follow from the larger doctrine, correct in life, walking according to the precepts until they, having*

*thus themselves learned the doctrine, shall be able to tell others of it, preach it, make it known, establish it, open it, minutely explain it and make it clear until they, when others start vain doctrine easy to be refuted by the truth, shall be able in refuting it, to spread the truth abroad.”<sup>15</sup>*

## Notes

1. B.L.Susuki, *Mahayana Buddhism*, George Allen & Unwin, London, 1981, P. 34; K.S. Dhammananda, *What Buddhists Believe*, Buddhist Missionary Society, Kuala Lumpur, 1987, p. 600.
2. Dhp. 110.
3. A. IV. 15.
4. Vin. IV. 15.
5. M. I. 47.
6. A. III. 65.
7. D. II. 81.
8. A. III.
9. A. IV. 283.
10. S. I. 214.
11. M. I. 55.
12. S. II. 30.
13. D. Sutta no. 22.
14. S. XXII. 45.
15. D. II. 104.

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Phra Medhidhammaporn (Prayoon Mererk) of Wat Prayuravongsavas graduated with the highest degree in Pali Studies (Pali 9) when he was a novice. His Majesty the King sponsored his higher ordination at the Temple of the Emerald Buddha in the Grand Palace. Phra Medhidhammaporn obtained his B.A. in Philosophy from Mahachulalongkornrajvidyalaya University, Bangkok, and Diploma in French, M.A., M.Phil. and Ph.D. in Philosophy from Delhi University. He is a former Dean of Graduate School, Mahachulalongkornrajvidyalaya University.

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