
The Buddhist Ways to Develop Human Values as Depicted in the Theravāda Buddhist Scriptures

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Abstract

This paper examines the Buddhist methods for cultivating human values as depicted in the Theravāda Buddhist scriptures. Human values, which guide individuals in distinguishing right from wrong, are essential for personal growth and societal harmony. Unlike moral values, which are universal and unchanging, human values vary across individuals and contexts, influencing behaviors that contribute to the betterment of human life. Theravāda Buddhism emphasizes the development of human values through four key practices: Faith (Saddhā), Offering (Dāna), Morality (Sīla), and Meditation (Bhāvanā). These practices foster ethical living, harmonious social interactions, and spiritual growth, ultimately leading to a meaningful and valuable life. Faith serves as the foundation for spiritual practice, enabling individuals to trust in the Buddha's teachings and persevere through challenges. Offering, or generosity, cultivates kindness and detachment from material possessions, while morality provides a framework for ethical conduct through the observance of the Five Precepts. Meditation, on the other hand, develops mindfulness, concentration, and insight, helping individuals overcome mental defilements such as greed, hatred, and delusion. This paper explores how these Buddhist principles can be applied to modern society to promote human development and well-being. By integrating these practices into daily life, individuals can achieve greater inner peace, social harmony, and spiritual fulfillment. The teachings of the Buddha offer timeless wisdom for navigating the complexities of contemporary life, providing a path toward personal and collective transformation. Through an analysis of key

Buddhist texts and their practical applications, this paper highlights the relevance of Theravāda Buddhism in addressing the challenges of the modern world and fostering a more compassionate and ethical society.

Keywords: Buddhist Ways; Moral Development; Human values; Theravada Buddhist Scriptures

Introduction

The Buddha's teachings have inspired individuals practicing Buddhism to develop self-reliance, moral responsibility, tolerance, compassion, wisdom, and many other qualities that make life more meaningful to human development. Along with these qualities, an understanding of the true nature of things will enable the Buddhist to live in harmony with a changing world and to enjoy the highest level of happiness leading to a value of life. If all try to cultivate and control their minds, irrespective of creed, color, race, or sex, the world we live in can be transformed into a paradise where all can live in perfect peace and harmony. The Buddha never expected people to accept and adopt His teachings out of 'blind faith' and superstition. Instead, He encouraged a free spirit of questioning and contemplation leading to development of life. (Kiriwandeniya, 2018, 334). In Buddhist ways of value of life, people have to cultivate the eight factors that aim at promoting and perfecting the three essentials of Buddhist training and discipline: namely; 1. ethical conduct - *sīla*, 2. mental discipline - *samādhi*) and 3. wisdom - *paññā*. It will therefore be more helpful for a coherent and better understanding of the eight divisions of the path if we group them and explain them according to these three heads. It is a Path leading to the realization of Ultimate Reality, to complete freedom, happiness, and peace through moral, spiritual, and intellectual perfection. That is the aim of the Buddhist way of life. (Rahula, 1997, 8).

The Value of Human Life a Buddhist Perspective

The Buddha gave guidance to wealthy householders on how to maintain and boost their prosperity, and how to prevent riches. Wealth, however, does not create a full person or a harmonious society. All possession of riches can be increased by the desire of men. It is in the pursuit of amassing more riches and authority. However, this unrestrained craving leaves him unhappy and stifles his inner growth. It generates conflict and disharmony in culture

through the resentment of the underprivileged, who feel affected by the consequences of unbridled desire. Therefore, the Buddha follows his recommendation on material welfare under four basic circumstances for spiritual welfare and happiness in the future life. (Vasava, 2019, 1).

Cattārome, vyagghapajja, dhammā kulaputtassa sam-parā-ya-hitāya samvattanti sam-parā-ya-su-khāya. Katame cattāro? Saddhāsampadā, sīlasampadā, cāgasampadā, paññāsampadā. (A. IV. 108).

Four conditions, Vyagghapajja, conduce to a householder's weal and happiness in his future life. They are;

1. The accomplishment of confidence (**saddhā-sampadā**)
2. The accomplishment of virtue or morality (**sīla-sampadā**)
3. The accomplishment of charity or generosity (**cāga-sampadā**)
4. The accomplishment of wisdom or intelligence (**paññā-sampadā**)

When someone comes to this level, he should have a clear understanding about the Karmic law and the dependent origination which is the very important understanding that a person can gain in a Buddha's time. With the understanding of listening to what Buddha taught, someone who wishes to go forward for the wellbeing of future life and the sansaric journey can see the path he or she should practice. Here four conditions are kindly declared to follow by the blessed one. One's real success or happiness depends on how far he or she has achieved these qualities. These qualities are very useful for inner peace and liberation from suffering. (A. IV. 1196).

From above mentioned, four types of conditions of spiritual progress: 1. Faith (**Saddhā-Sampadā**), 2. Virtue (**Sila-Sampadā**), 3. Charity (**Cagā-Sampadā**), and 4. Wisdom (**Paññā-Sampadā**) also are very essential for human beings to be effective development of valuable life not only present life but also next existence.

Human Development Approach to Social Duties

Buddhism is a teaching of moderation. As in other things, the Buddhist teachings steer a middle course, in this case between the two extremes of blindly ignoring practical daily affairs and laying down a code of rigid and inflexible rules. The Buddhist teachings offer guidelines for behavior based on timeless truths the positive weal created by compassionate, wise relationships and aimed at the ultimate goal of spiritual freedom: living in the world and yet above it. The Buddhist teachings are a positive ethic: well-being, rather than power or

riches, is the aim; society is seen as a medium through which all people have equal opportunity to maximize self-development and well-being, and ethics are used to facilitate those ends. (P. A. Payutto, 1998, 5). The management ethics in the Sigālovada-sutta have been presented in the form of duty and obligation. Each member of a family has a definite role to play which has been defined in relation to other members of the family. Taking the householder as the key figure of the family the Buddha clarified the relationship between members of the family and the householder. The householder is the son in relation to his parents, husband in relation to wife, father in relation to his children and master in relation to his work people. In relation to teachers, the householder is a student (antevāsika). In relation to neighbors, he is a neighbor and friend (Mittā-maccā). In relation to religious teachers (Samaōa and Brāhmaōa) he is a devotee. For better management of life, one should perform his/her duties and obligations to parents, teachers, and children, wife, friends, neighbors, servants and religious teachers. Sigālovada-sutta presents some management principles with regard to family in the form of ethics. (Singh, 2012).

1. Parents and Children

According to the Singalovada sutta in Dīgha Nikāya, Buddha delivered the five social ethics or social duties for parents to development of life as the follows: 1) Cautioning and Protecting Them from Evil, 2) Nurturing and Training Them in Goodness, 3) Providing Them with an Education, 4) Seeing to It That They Obtain Suitable Spouses, and 5) Bequeathing the Inheritance to Them at The Proper Time.

In the Buddha's teachings from Singalovada sutta in Dīgha Nikāya, there are five social ethics or social duties of children to development of life as follows: 1) Having been raised by them, one looks after them in return, 2) One helps them in their business and work, 3) One continues the family line, 4) One conducts oneself as befits an heir, and 5) After their passing away, one makes offerings, dedicating the merit to them. In this way, parents and children in the eastern direction are covered, making it at peace and free from fear. (D. III. 467).

2. Husband and Wife

In the Buddhist Principle Relating to Development of Human Valuable Life, the Buddha advised of five ethics or duties for the husband who should fulfill towards his wife and five duties for the wife who should fulfill towards her husband leading to valuable life. There are

five social ethics as: 1) By treating her with respect, 2) By not showing her discourtesy, 3) By not being unfaithful to her, 4) By handing over authority to her, and 5. By providing her with adornments. (D. III. 467).

A wife has duties towards her husband. In the ideal world, both the husband and wife will fulfill their side of the bargain and in doing so, no danger will grow up in the relationship or for society at large there will be happiness and prosperity both for husband, wife and society at large. If the husband and wife fulfill their duties accordingly the Buddha's teachings, they will be good persons in their environment for development of both lives (Visuddha & Balachandran, 2014, p. 6). There are five social ethics as the follows: 1) She manages her work very well, 2) She is hospitable to those around her such as servants and Husband's relatives, 3) She is not unfaithful to him, 4. She looks after the household stores and property, and 5. She is skillful and diligent in all her duties. In these ways, husband and wife the western direction is covered, making it at peace and free from fear. (D.III. 467).

3. Teachers and Pupils

According to Singālovāda sutta in Dhīganikāya, the Buddha preached to a young man named singāla. The Buddha explained social ethics to be a relationship between teacher and pupil to development of life leading human valuable life. So, there are five social ethics for the teacher: 1) They discipline him so that he is well-disciplined, 2) They teach him so that he is well-taught and learned, 3) They ensure that he is learned in every art and learning, 4) They introduce him to friends and companions, and 5) They provide him with safety in every quarter. The development of a happy and successful relationship between a pupil and a teacher can be achieved by a kind and gentle approach on the part of the teacher exercising patience, tolerance, and understanding.

The Buddha preached to a young man named singāla. The Buddha explained the five social ethics of pupils to develop their life who is following to practice those five social ethics as the follows: 1) By rising (in salutation), 2) By waiting upon them, 3) By eagerness to listen to learn, 4) By personal service, and 5) By learning the arts and professions. In this way, teachers and pupils in the southern direction is covered, making it at peace and free from fear. (D. III. 467).

4. Clansman and Friends

From the Singālovāda sutta in Dhīganikāya, the Buddha preached to a young man named Singāla. The Buddha explained the five social ethics of a clansman towards his friend to development of life: 1) A clansman must be generosity towards his friends, 2) A clansman must be kind words towards his friends, 3) A clansman must help them, and acting for their welfare, 4) A clansman must be sincere and impartiality to them, and 5. A clansman must be sincere to them. (D. III. 467).

A good friend maintains the same respect and cordiality either in success or in failure. A good friend is also one who rejoices at the success of his companion whilst offering sympathy in times of adversity. A good friend is a social asset who should be nurtured and cultivated for mutual well-being and benefit of both parties. (Dhammananda, 2005, p. 8). A good friend has to fulfill five social ethics towards clansman to be developed in life: 1) A good friend must be protected from him when he is heedless, 2) A good friend must be protected from his property when he is heedless, 3) A good friend must become a refuge when he is in danger, 4) A good friend does not forsake him in his troubles, and 5) A good friend must show consideration for his family. In these ways, clansmen and friends in the northern direction is covered, making it at peace and free from fear. (D. III. 467).

5. Employer and Employee

This enables the two segments to maintain their functional differences but develop harmonious relations that greatly contribute to enhancing mutual understanding, and trust, and consequently increase output and production. The Buddhist position is that the employer should be virtuous and humanitarian in his attitude. The commentary on the Sutta gives interesting details regarding how employers should deal with employees. (Dion Peoples, 2008, p. 11). There are the ways of social ethics for masters towards employees as follows: 1) By assigning they work according to their ability, 2) By supplying them with food and wages, 3) By tending to them in sickness, 4) By sharing with them any delicacies, and 5) By granting they leave at times. Also, The Buddha delivered social ethics of employees towards employers in the Singālovāda sutta. Social ethics are very essential relationships between employees and employers that live harmonious for development of life as follows: 1) They rise before him, 2) They go to sleep after him, 3) They take only what is given, 4) They perform their duties

well, and 5. They uphold his good name and fame. In these ways, develop employer and employee the nadir is covered, making it at peace and free from fear. (D. III. 468).

6. Layman and Buddhist monks

Buddha taught a young man the five social ethics of Layman towards bhikkhu sangha or Buddhist monks leading to development of life as follows: 1) By physical acts of loving kindness, 2) By words of loving kindness, 3) By thoughts of loving kindness, 4) By keeping the house open to them, and 5) By providing them with material needs. According to Singālovāda sutta in the Dighanikāya, the Buddha taught how to maintain their laypeople with social ethics to be development of their disciples leading to a voluble life in their surroundings with social development of human beings. Therefore, Bhikkhu sangha has to cultivate their social ethics towards their laypeople as follows: 1) They restrain him from evil, 2) They exhort him to do well, 3) They, with a good mind, show him compassion, 4) They let him hear what he has not heard before, 5) They clarify what he has heard, and 6) They show him the way to heaven. In these ways, for Laypeople and monks, the zenith is covered, making it at peace and free from fear. (D. III. 468).

According to above mention, those who practice or cultivate Buddhist social ethics or social duties to develop human life: 1) Parents' social ethics towards their children, and Children's social ethics towards their parents, 2) Husband's social ethics towards his wife, and Wife's social ethics towards her husband, 3) Teachers' social ethics towards their pupils or students, and Pupils' social ethics towards their teachers, 4) Clansman social ethics towards friends, and Friends' social ethics towards their clansman, and 5) Master's social ethics towards their employees, and Employees' social ethics towards their employers to development of human beings leading to valuable life. Social Ethics of actions are thus both an important part of the Buddhist path and an important aspect of the results said to flow from that path, and interpretation of Buddhist ethics must find room for the crucial role of intention leading to valuable life of human beings who are following to practice and cultivate social ethics or social duties foundation to develop human valuable life.

The Ways of Living with Present Buddhist Values of Human Life

Buddhism is a spiritual tradition that offers a wealth of teachings and practices for living a meaningful and fulfilling life. In this section, we will explore some key Buddhist principles and practices for living a life to the fullest, including cultivating inner peace, practicing

gratitude, connecting with nature, and embracing change. By incorporating these principles into our daily lives, we can find greater joy, peace, and fulfillment and develop a deeper sense of purpose and meaning. (Fuyu, 2023, 1-17).

1. The Ways to Live Human Value with Faith (Saddhā)

Saddhā is the access to the path and its goal, embracing in some way the whole process, so proving to be, just like paññā, a transcendent quality. The difference between ‘preliminary faith’ and ‘awakened faith’ is probably to be found in the level of understanding. The first kind of faith is a glimpse into the Four Noble Truths and it is necessarily sustained by the presence of the Buddha, the latter is the full realization of them. Therefore, the fact that saddhā appears at the beginning of the liberating process does not imply that it is a tool to be put aside after its application. On the contrary, it is a quality to be cultivated, because it is intrinsically precious. (Giustarini, 2006, 167). The Buddha said Faith is the beginning of all good things, no matter what we encounter in life, it is faith that enables us to try again, to trust again, and to love again. Even in times of immense suffering, it is faith that enables us to relate to the present moment in such a way that we can go on, can move forward, instead of becoming lost in resignation or despair. Faith links our present-day experience, whether wonderful or terrible, to the underlying pulse of life itself. A capacity for this type of faith is inherent in every human being. (Salzberg, 2003, 5).

2. The Ways to Live Human Value with Offering (Dāna)

Buddhist teachings emphasize that how we give is as important as what we give- we should give with respect, happiness, and joy. When we are practicing generosity, and it does not bring happiness and joy, we should pay close attention to our motivations for giving, and perhaps even re-evaluate whether to give at all. The freedom of the Buddha is the freedom from all forms of clinging, and the most obvious antidote to clinging is letting go. Because giving certainly involves letting go, it develops our capacity to relinquish clinging. However, the practice of giving entails much more than letting go. It also develops qualities of heart such as generosity, kindness, compassion, and warmth. Thus, giving leads us to the heart of Buddhist practice, while helping our practice to be well-rounded and heartfelt. (Fronsdal, 2024, 5-10).

3. The Ways to Live Human Value with Morality (Sīla)

Morality in Buddhism is essentially practical in that it is only a means leading to the final goal of ultimate happiness. The five precepts as a disciplinary code enable laymen to

live a virtuous and noble life without renouncing worldly life. In Buddhism, the quality of any act depends on the intention of the person who commits it. If a person acts out of greed, hatred, and delusion his action is considered to be unwholesome. Therefore, in the practice of the five precepts underlying intention with which one practices it would be important. The objective of Buddhist morality (sila) is to eliminate crude passions that are expressed through thought, word, and deed. It is by these three means a person's morality is measured. Therefore, as Buddhists, we are expected to examine regularly whether or not what we think, do, and say causes harm to ourselves and others. This is known as training in virtue (sila sikkhā). The three factors of the noble eightfold path form the Buddhist code of conduct (Sila). They are right speech, right action, and right livelihood. Observance of the five precepts is considered the stepping stone for cultivating higher virtues and mental development living with value life. (Chandradasa, 2023, 3-16).

4. The Ways to Live Human Value with Meditation (Bhāvanā)

Meditation helps us live with an appreciation of the power and preciousness of our human life. Meditation practice and all contemplative practices can be described as cultivating depth and sacredness in our everyday lives, preparing, and simplifying our lives to get more done and more of the right things done, with the least amount of resistance or unnecessary effort. It helps us know something and at the same time, let go of knowing with each breath. Through meditation practice, we can see and cultivate the qualities of leadership as the ordinary act of being present, of working to meet goals and intentions, and as a sacred act of presence, of service, of meeting people and challenges beyond the limitations of fears and our self-centered concerns. As a mindfulness teacher and leader, I practice and teach meditation and leadership as core activities for this human life. Meditation is the way to calm one's mind according to Buddha's teachings. Not only it is a one-pointedness of mind, but also it is a way to control oneself and to concentrate the mind, and it is the way to purify the mind from unwholesome thoughts such as greed, hatred, ignorance, selfishness, desire, and so on. Therefore, Buddhist meditation is the best way to overcome and eradicate all mental defilements or impurities of mind living with human values life. (Lesser, 2019, 11-20).

Buddhist Ways to Develop Moral Behaviors Towards Human Value

The root causes of suffering that lead to bad behaviors or characters, whether it is in the existential sense applicable to the present life, or to the possible lives in repeated births of the future as admitted in the Buddhist doctrine, are identified as greed (lobha), hatred (dosa) and delusion (moha). The basis for the moral evaluation of human behaviour in Buddhism rests primarily on the tendency of certain states of mind and the behaviour causally springing from those states to incur suffering for the individual concerned as well as the society with which individuals interact, these three states of mind are designated as akusalamūla, the roots of whatever is unethical. They are also considered as the underlying causes of all unethical actions that find expression in the thinking processes as well as verbal and physical behaviour of humans. As long as these roots persist, they give rise to the suffering of the individual while at the same time the interactions resulting from the conduct of such individuals in the wider social context give rise to numerous social problems that produce suffering which in turn permeate into every level of social living. (Premasiri, 2020, 2).

All living beings are owners of their actions (kamma), heirs of their actions (kammadāyada); they originate from their actions (kammayoni), are related to their actions (kammabandhu), have their actions as their refuge (kammapatissarana). It is action (kamma) that distinguishes beings as inferior and superior. (M. I. 135). Kamma is one of the important spiritual laws that govern our life experiences through principles of cause and effect, action and reaction, total cosmic justice, and personal responsibility. Kamma is a law in itself that operates in its field without the intervention of an external independent ruling agency. The Law of Kamma acts in the following manner. (Chakraborty, 2014, 193).

1. All immoral actions of life give immoral results. There are ten immoral actions, namely: bodily action of killing, stealing, sexual misconduct; verbal action of lying, slandering, harsh speech, frivolous chatter; mental action of greed, ill-will, and delusion.

2. All moral actions of life give moral results. Abstention of the ten immoral actions listed above constitutes moral action. In addition, there are also ten bases of meritorious action, namely: charity, morality, mind culture, reverence, service, transference of merits, rejoicing in others' merits, teaching the Dhamma, listening to the Dhamma, and forming right views.

3. A person does moral or immoral actions in life and he gets moral or immoral results. It is not possible for one person to perform moral or immoral actions in life and another person to receive the moral or immoral results.

4. In judging each moral or immoral action of life, we consider these four fields of kamma namely: (1) as one's act, (2) as instigating another, (3) as consenting to another's instigation, and (4) as commending the act. (S. I. 227).

Moral emotions represent a key element of our human moral apparatus, influencing the link between moral standards and moral behavior. Moral standards represent an individual's knowledge and internalization of moral norms and conventions. People's moral standards are dictated in part by universal moral laws. Living a moral, constructive life is defined by a weighted sum of countless individual, morally relevant behaviors enacted day in and day out (plus an occasional particularly self-defining moment). However, as imperfect human beings, our behavior does not always bear a one-to-one correspondence to our moral standards leading to our values of moral life. (Tangney, et al., 2007, pp. 347-347).

1. The Way to Practice Moral Bodily Behaviors

All people in society need are firmly goodness, happiness, and virtuous behavior. Regarding Buddhism, all of the needs can exactly be activated by the Buddhist moral behaviors. People have to practice how to prevent evil conduct such as bad bodily action, etc. that people can live their lives together with others in society peacefully and happily. (Nataraju et al., 2017, p. 194). Those who seek the way of Enlightenment must always bear in mind the necessity of constantly keeping their body, speech, and mind pure. To keep the body pure, one must not kill any living creature, one must not steal or commit adultery. To keep speech pure one must not lie, abuse, deceive, or indulge in idle talk. To keep the mind pure, one must remove all greed, anger, and false judgment. If the mind becomes impure, for sure, one's deeds will be impure; if the deeds are impure, there will be suffering. So it is of the greatest importance that the mind and the body be kept pure. There are three types of moral bodily behaviors to be purity of body such as avoidance of killing any living beings, avoidance of stealing others' properties, and avoidance of sexual misconduct leading to moral bodily behaviors as follows. (Kyokai, 2005, p. 123).

2. The Way to Practice of Moral Verbal Behaviors

Moral verbal behavior is very important to us and very powerful. It can be breaking or safe lives, making enemies or making friends, starting a war, or creating peace. Buddhism

explains moral speech as follows: 1. To avoid false speech, especially not to tell deliberate lies and not to speak deceitfully, 2. To avoid slanderous speech, 3. To avoid harsh words that offend or hurt others, and 4. To avoid idle talk; instead of this positively, to tell the truth, to speak in a friendly, warm, and gentle way, and to talk only when necessary. (Ven. Mokesh Barua, 2019, 570). Verbal behaviors of communication, according to the Buddhist view of things, is a social practice that underlines commonalities of usage, consensus, and mutuality. At the same time, verbal communication is understood within a moral space that imparts a sense of gravitas to the communicative event. Let me quote from the Buddhist text the discourse on wholesome speech in addressing a group of monks. The Buddha said Speech has four characteristics is speech well spoken, blameless, and not censured by the wise; namely, the speech of a monk who speaks only what is wholesome and not what is unwholesome, who speaks only what is worthy and not what is unworthy, who speaks only what is pleasant and not what is unpleasant, who speaks only what is truthful and not what is untruthful. Speech characterized by these factors is well-spoken, not ill-spoken, blameless, and not censured by the wise. (Dissanayake, 2006, p. 231).

3. The Way to Practice Moral Mental Behaviors

Buddhist philosophy posits that the mind arises in dependence on the body, a concept that can be interpreted as a form of Buddhist materialism. However, this should not be conflated with scientific materialism, which reduces the mind to the brain and asserts matter as the fundamental entity or property. Unlike scientific materialism, Buddhist materialism is a phenomenological framework that rejects the notion of mind and matter as entities with inherent substance or essential natures (Cho, 2014, p. 422). The Buddha taught that the mind is the source of all mental states, and these states are shaped by the mind itself. Furthermore, the mind is considered the origin of all virtues and qualities. To cultivate these virtues, one must discipline the mind, as it is the key to transforming the nature of our experiences (Fundamentals of Buddhism. (n.d.).

Moral mental behavior stems from the mind, which can fluctuate between positive and negative states—sometimes good, sometimes bad; sometimes happy, sometimes sad; sometimes noble, and sometimes wicked. Buddhist teachings identify three primary types of moral mental behavior: (1) the avoidance of covetousness, which involves refraining from planning to unlawfully acquire others' property; (2) the cultivation of goodwill, which entails avoiding harmful intentions toward others' lives and property; and (3) the development of

right view, which involves understanding and believing in the law of kamma (karma) and its consequences. These mental behaviors are essential for ethical living and spiritual growth, as they align the mind with virtuous intentions and actions, ultimately leading to personal and societal well-being (Fundamentals of Buddhism. (n.d.).

The Development of Human Values in Theravāda Buddhism and Its Relevance to Modern Society

The Theravāda Buddhist Scriptures provide profound insights into the cultivation of human values, emphasizing the importance of moral conduct, mental discipline, and ethical living. These teachings are not only relevant to spiritual liberation but also offer practical guidance for fostering harmony and well-being in modern society. By understanding the meaning of life and cultivating a positive attitude toward oneself and others, individuals can achieve happiness and peace in both this life and the hereafter. This essay explores the Buddhist ways of developing human values as depicted in Theravāda teachings, their relationship to modern societal development, and their alignment with previous studies and philosophies.

Central to Buddhist teachings is the practice of the Four Noble Truths and the Noble Eightfold Path, which provide a framework for ethical living and spiritual growth. These teachings emphasize moderation, steering a middle path between extreme asceticism and indulgence. As Phra Brahmaganabhorn (P.A. Payutto) explains, cultivating Dhamma (the teachings of the Buddha) helps individuals understand the purpose of life and develop compassion, wisdom, and moral integrity (Payutto, 1994). This approach fosters a balanced lifestyle, promoting well-being over material wealth or power. In modern society, these principles can guide individuals toward ethical decision-making, self-development, and harmonious relationships.

Buddhism also emphasizes the importance of moral behavior in thought, speech, and action. According to Dhammananda (2002), the goal of Buddhist practice is liberation from suffering and the fetters that bind individuals to cyclic existence. This liberation is achieved through self-discipline and ethical conduct, not through virtue signaling or comparing oneself to others. By practicing moral bodily, verbal, and mental behaviors, individuals can cultivate

human values such as honesty, compassion, and integrity. These values are essential for creating a just and harmonious society.

The relevance of Buddhist ethics to modern societal development is further highlighted by the concept of Buddhist ethical economics, as discussed by Phra Brahmaganabhorn. This approach seeks to balance material and spiritual development by integrating moral principles into economic activities. By adhering to ethical standards, individuals in various professions—whether as officers, businesspersons, bankers, or farmers—can contribute to a positive social ethos (Payutto, 1994). This perspective aligns with Jonathan C. Gold's (2015) assertion that the moral significance of our actions directly influences our experiences and future outcomes. Traditional Buddhist teachings on karma and rebirth reinforce the idea that ethical behavior leads to positive results, both in this life and in future existences.

Theravāda Buddhist teachings on human values provide timeless wisdom for personal and societal development. By cultivating moral behavior, understanding the interconnectedness of actions and consequences, and striving for spiritual liberation, individuals can contribute to a more ethical and harmonious world. These teachings resonate with modern philosophies and studies, offering practical solutions to contemporary challenges.

Conclusion

The Buddhist ways of developing human values, as outlined in the Theravāda scriptures, provide a comprehensive framework for personal and societal well-being. By cultivating faith, generosity, morality, and meditation, individuals can lead meaningful lives and contribute to a harmonious society. These practices are not only essential for personal development but also for fostering positive social interactions and ethical living in the modern world. Faith (Saddhā) serves as the foundation for spiritual growth, enabling individuals to trust in the Buddha's teachings and persevere through life's challenges. It is through faith that one gains the confidence to follow the path of righteousness and achieve inner peace. Offering (Dāna), or generosity, cultivates kindness and compassion, helping individuals overcome attachment to material possessions and develop a sense of interconnectedness with others. By practicing generosity, individuals contribute to the well-being of their communities and create a culture of giving and mutual support.

Morality (Sīla), as embodied in the Five Precepts, provides a practical framework for ethical living. By abstaining from harmful actions such as killing, stealing, and false speech, individuals cultivate virtues that benefit both themselves and society. Morality is not merely a set of rules but a way of life that promotes harmony, trust, and respect in all relationships. Meditation (Bhāvanā) is a key practice for developing mindfulness, concentration, and insight. Through meditation, individuals learn to live in the present moment, cultivate inner peace, and overcome mental defilements such as greed, hatred, and delusion. Meditation also enhances self-awareness and emotional regulation, enabling individuals to respond to life's challenges with wisdom and compassion.

The teachings of the Buddha offer timeless wisdom for navigating the complexities of contemporary life. In a world marked by rapid change, social fragmentation, and ethical dilemmas, the Buddhist path provides a way to cultivate inner stability, social harmony, and spiritual fulfillment. By integrating the practices of faith, generosity, morality, and meditation into daily life, individuals can transform their own lives and contribute to the well-being of society as a whole. The relevance of Theravāda Buddhism in the modern world lies in its emphasis on personal responsibility, ethical conduct, and the cultivation of inner peace. These principles are not confined to any particular culture or historical period but are universally applicable, offering guidance for individuals seeking to live meaningful and fulfilling lives. In conclusion, the Buddhist ways of developing human values provide a path toward personal and collective transformation, fostering a more compassionate, ethical, and harmonious world.

Abbreviations for Pali Texts

- A. IV : Aṅguttaranikāya
- D. III : Dīghanikāya
- M. I : Majjhimanikāya
- S. I : Saṃyuttanikāya

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