

Buddhist Ethics Regarding Social Relationships : A Personalist And Systematic Perspective

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Abstract: *This article examines Buddhist ethics in social connections from both a personalist and systemic perspective. Buddhist morality, grounded in fundamental principles like Karma, dependent origination, and the Five Precepts, provides a comprehensive framework for individual and community welfare. The study emphasises ethical obligations within essential relationships: Parent-child, husband-wife, employer-employee, teacher-student, layperson-Sangha, and among family and friends. Utilising literature such as the Sunakkhatta Sutta and Four Embracing Virtues, it illustrates how ethical behaviour fosters peace, accountability, and compassion. Buddhist ethics include not only behavioural guidelines but a human-centric approach to achieving inner tranquility and societal equilibrium, providing significant perspectives for contemporary moral and cultural dilemmas.*

1. Introduction

Ethics has traditionally served as a fundamental spiritual basis for forming people's personalities and directing their social lives. However, many old ethical principles are in danger of disappearing due to globalisation and the widespread penetration of Western cultural tendencies, particularly among today's young, which might result in societal instability and human deterioration. In light of this, it is now imperative to restore orienting, durable ethical ideals. Buddhist ethics, which have a strong hold on Vietnamese history and culture, serve as the moral cornerstone of social life in addition to having religious importance. "Buddhist ethics is a way of life that leads to happiness and peace in this life and in the future," as Venerable Thich Minh Chau confirmed. True pleasure and lasting growth can only be achieved by acknowledging and implementing Buddhist ethical teachings in contemporary life.

The system of ethical values in Buddhism, as taught in Buddhist texts and the ideas of the Holy Monks, is the subject of the study. Of particular interest are the ethical precepts that are meant to change the inner self and improve the lives of both individuals and communal groups.

The significance of the findings is that, at a time when society is experiencing a crisis of values, learning, using, and applying Buddhist ethical ideas again not only helps to revive traditional cultural values but also gives individuals a moral compass for the modern period.

In an attempt to revive Buddhist ethics based on ideology and real-world application for contemporary living, the author selected the topic "**Buddhist Ethical Thought on Social Relations - A Humanistic and Systemic Perspective**" within the framework of Buddhist philosophy for the reasons mentioned above.

2. Ethical Concepts In Society And Buddhism

2.1. The concepts of Ethics

Every individual must understand the significance and goal of their past, present, and future actions in order to function in social situations. Relationships between people, families, and society constantly regulate such actions. These connections establish boundaries to protect the community's and society's interests. The power behind

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social progress is freely created by these laws. These are entirely voluntary guidelines and expectations for each person's behaviour in all social interactions. That is the morals of people in society, to put it another way.

"Rules based on the political regime to regulate the relationships between people, between individuals and society in order to ensure the economic regime and the social regime" ³ is one way to describe morality.

"Ethics forms a manifestation of social awareness, an amalgamation of regulations, principles, and societal norms, through which individuals deliberately modify their conduct to align with human interests, well-being, and social advancement in interpersonal and societal interactions" ⁴.

Ethics constitutes a framework of laws and societal standards designed to govern behaviour, guide human ³interactions with others, the society, nature, and oneself. These standards are discretionary, embodying a feeling of accountability and ethical principles in both personal and societal contexts.

2.2. The notion of Buddhist ethics.

Buddhism emerged to address the essential dilemmas of human existence, illuminating a profound path to elucidate suffering and its cessation. The Buddhist doctrinal system is profoundly humanistic and infused with the essence of liberation, articulating authentic moral principles. The Buddha once stated: "Bhikkhus, be individuals who inherit my Dharma, rather than those who inherit material possessions" ⁴.

"Buddhist ethics is the study of ethics from a Buddhist perspective. In other words, ethics is the study of ethics based on a Buddhist perspective" ⁵.

According to Most Ven. Thich Minh Chau, "Buddhist ethics is a way of life that leads to happiness and peace in this life and the next" ⁶. This is a significant departure from the ethical perspective of the world. An ethical lifestyle has enduring worth since it is based on the Buddha's empirical insight.

3. Buddhist Ethical Thought.

Buddhist moral thought is a practical framework of principles, evolved from basic to advanced levels following a distinct, methodical, and empirical pathway. Buddhist ethics transcends mere abstraction or instruction; it is founded on inner transformation, aiming ultimately to terminate suffering and attain Nirvana—a state of complete tranquility, devoid of defilements and afflictions. Buddhist ethics, in contrast to numerous ethical frameworks derived from theological mandates or social ethics, is founded on the principles of causality and impermanence, stemming from an accurate understanding of reality (*dukkha* - suffering), which guides practitioners towards a transformative path to alleviate all mental afflictions. This ethical essence transcends mere benevolence; it aims for ultimate emancipation for oneself and others by eradicating ignorance and desire, the two foundational elements that perpetuate the cycle of life and mortality.

Besides the objective of emancipation, Buddhist ethics serves as the foundation for fostering a harmonious connection between the person and the community, as well as between the body, mind, and the external environment. The dynamics among parents and children, instructors and students, monarchs and subjects, etc., are established within the parameters of the six harmonies, six rules, five precepts, ten virtuous actions, and humane ethical standards. The doctrines found in sutras such as the *Sunakkhatta sutta*, *Anguttara Nikāya*, and *Dīgha Nikāya* have fostered an inter-personal ethics that is neither selfish nor possessive, but rather focused on the collective welfare and inner purity. Despite the myriad of ethical systems developed by humanity, including those of Confucius, Lao Tzu, Aristotle, Marxist-Leninist ethics, and Ho Chi Minh's ethical ideas, Buddhist ethics demonstrates remarkable superiority in sustained application and transformative profundity. Buddhist ethics, after over 2,500 years, remains relevant and has flourished in several nations. In Vietnam, Buddhist ethical theory has integrated into national life, forming an integral aspect of cultural identity.

³ Venerable Thich Phuoc Dat, *Buddhist ethics*, instructional resources, 2009.

⁴ MN.I, *Middle Length Discourses*, Most Ven. Thich Minh Chau (trans), Religion Publications, 2003, p. 33.

⁵ Thich Giac Hoang, *Buddhist Ethics*, teaching materials, 2012.

⁶ Most Ven. Thich Minh Chau, "Buddhist Ethics", Vietnam Institute of Buddhist Studies, 1995, p. 32.

This illustrates the fundamental importance of Buddhist ethics in maintaining virtuous traditions, governing society, and fostering holistic human development. "Buddhist ethics constitutes a lifestyle that fosters happiness and tranquilly in both this life and the hereafter," as the Reverend Thich Minh Chau famously said.⁷

So what is the core principle that creates the enduring power of Buddhist ethics? In the Tripitaka, this idea can be condensed into a short but profound teaching: "Do not do evil, do good, keep the mind pure - this is the teaching of the Buddhas".⁸

The Buddha derived the standards of ethical conduct from a basic idea, which are essential for individuals and society alike. Buddhist ethics, characterised by pragmatism, atheism, and non-dogmatism, do not confine individuals to rigid structures; instead, they promote a life of inner freedom, societal duty, and personal tranquilly.

4. Fundamental ethical tenets of Buddhism.

A vast, intellectual Tripitaka treasure. Thus, we can analyse the doctrine's theory, rationale, or practice. Thus, Buddhism may help people live morally and behave well in relationships. No matter the aspect, Buddhism positively affects people's hearts. No dogma or oppression. However, Buddhist ethics emphasise reasoning and actual application. Enable humans to practise autonomy in all parts of life. It might be a persuasive scientific theory, personal rationality, or a practical life that everyone can utilise to exemplify the ideas.

4.1. The basic ideas of ethics in theory.

4.1.1. Ethical concepts grounded upon the law of causality.

The link between cause and effect in life is reflected in the inevitability of the law of cause and effect. There will always be a matching result if there is a cause, like in the case of "only studying can one learn to read and write, and beating a drum will make a sound"⁹. It is clear from this concept that doing good will lead to good things, while doing bad will lead to misery.

Physically, the four elements' bodies are the product of the nurturing environment and the parents' essence; in other words, the circumstances and the parents are the cause, and the adult kid is the outcome. The cycle of cause and effect never stops¹⁰.

In terms of spirituality, the Buddha taught: "The mind creates all things, whether they are good or bad in the body, speech, and mind, like the various species in the ocean"¹¹. As a result, previous ideas and deeds shape present temperament, which in turn shapes future thoughts and deeds.

There are both simultaneous and non-simultaneous causes and effects, current retribution, rebirth retribution, and future retribution, as well as cause and effect of the internal and exterior worlds, psychology, and physics. In the spiritual realm, cause and effect is intricate and complicated. The idea of cause and effect is not only a concept to Buddhists; it is also a moral precept and a matter of personal accountability. "Humans are the masters of their karma, the heirs of their karma,"¹² the Buddha stated. Since blessings are the cornerstone of enduring tranquilly, all subsequent activities must be focused on kindness¹³.

⁷ Most Ven. Thich Minh Chau, "*Buddhist Ethics*", on Buddha's birthday, Buddhist calendar, 2535, p.03.

⁸ Bikkhuyana Sects, "True Doctrine - The Monastic Code of the Bikkhuyana Sect", Religious Published, Hanoi, 2004, P.210.

⁹ The Mendicant Order, *The Truth of the Mendicant Law*, Religious Publishing House, Hanoi, 2004, p. 210. Most Venerable Thich Minh Chau, Most Venerable Thich Thien An, Most Venerable Thich Chon Tri, Most Venerable Thich Duc Tam, "*Buddhism, Buddhist Philosoph*", License No. 27, Department of Culture, Sports and Tourism of Ho Chi Minh City, 1992, p. 164.

¹⁰ Ibid,

¹¹ Most Venerable Thich Hoan Quan, *The Five Buddhist Sutras (The Ten Good Deeds Sutra)*, Religious Publications, Ho Chi Minh City, 2005, p. 25.

¹² Anguttara Nikaya II, Most Venerable Thich Minh Chau, Van Hanh Buddhist Institute, 1982, p. 101.

¹³ Basic Buddhist Studies. Volume. I, Giac Ngo Newspaper, Ho Chi Minh City, Religious Published, 2006, p. 125.

Even while doing evil may profit you right away, it will cause you to suffer for a long time. On the contrary, genuine happiness derives from doing good, even if it means making sacrifices. All living things are closely related to one another, according to the reincarnation idea, as the Buddha confirmed when he said, "All living beings in the past were my parents, wife, children, relatives...."¹⁴.

4.1.2. Ethical issues regarding the notion of Dependent Origination.

The Buddhist doctrine of Dependent Origination states that causes and conditions generate everything. Thus, causes and conditions encompass the interaction between oneself and others or between others and oneself because "This exists, this arises, then that exists, that arises; this does not exist, this ceases, then that does not exist, that ceases..."¹⁶. We are a community of people living together with relationships and obligations in this interdependent planet. Thus, satisfying our selfish desires by injuring others is indirectly harming ourselves, and helping others is indirectly benefiting ourselves.

4.1.3. Ethical Principles Grounded on the Doctrine of Nature (Tathatā/True Suchness).

Buddhism is founded on the Doctrine of Nature, which posits a moral truth: We and others are same in our desires; hence, what we seek is also sought by others, and what we reject is likewise rejected by others. In the Samyutta Nikaya, the Buddha instructed: "Buddhist lay followers should contemplate as follows: I desire to live, wish to avoid death, seek happiness, and aim to evade suffering; if someone were to attempt to deprive me of my desire to live, to avoid death, to evade suffering, and my very life, would I find happiness in that?" However, if I extinguish another individual's will to live, to experience happiness, and to evade suffering, would that person attain happiness? If I neither like nor detest something, others may feel the same; thus, why should I impose my indifference on them? In this mindset, I refrain from killing, encourage others to adhere to the principle of non-killing, and consistently commend those who abstain from killing (this applies equally to theft, sexual misbehaviour, deceit, harsh language, gossip, and duplicity). We not only deduce from the human perspective but also extensively cultivate the principle of equality within the Doctrine of Nature. Buddhist moral philosophy all living organisms share a common need for existence, activity, and happiness.

4.2. Fundamental principles of morals in application.

As members of a social group, we are born into various relationships: parents, children, siblings, spouses and wives, instructors and students, friends, masters and servants, etc. Practically, the Buddha established the ethical standards needed to live a happy and tranquil existence in today's society. From this perspective, we may observe the Buddha's ethical views on our obligations and responsibilities:

4.2.1. Familial ethics.

The family, as a fundamental unit of society, contributes to societal peace and happiness when it is harmonious and content. Consequently, each individual, as a family member, must fulfil certain tasks and duties that are designated for performance, encompassing a variety of obligations. Fulfilling these tasks and duties renders us moral individuals inside our family. In the Sunakkhatta Sutta (P), the Buddha instructed lay individuals to adhere to ethical guidelines concerning their responsibilities towards family members as follows:

4.2.1.1. Child morality towards parents must contain 5 elements, (Responsibilities of a Filial Child)

- a) Demonstrate profound regard and concern for parents, ensuring their comfort is adjusted to the ambient temperature for optimal relaxation.
- b) Rise early to attend to domestic responsibilities and make meals that cater to their preferences.
- c) Assume arduous responsibilities to alleviate the pressures of ageing parents.
- d) Consistently acknowledge their care and reciprocate their compassion while they are still living.

¹⁴ Most Venerable Thich Minh Chau (trans), Samyutta Nikaya (Volume II), Religious Published, Hanoi, 2003, pp. 325–329. ¹⁶ Thich Quang Do, Nguyen Thanh Xuan, *Theravada Buddhist Thought Theory*, Religious Publications, Hanoi, 2005, p. 96

e) When parents are unwell, offer diligent care, be at their side, and pursue appropriate medical treatment without reluctance or concern about expenses.¹⁵

4.2.1.2. Parental ethics with children encompass five fundamental responsibilities.

- a) Instruct youngsters to eschew malevolence and embrace virtue to cultivate moral character.
- b) Encourage them to engage with the sagacious.
- c) Advise them to maintain diligence in their academic pursuits.
- d) Arrange marriage at the suitable moment.
- e) Engage them in household tasks to foster familial contentment”¹⁶.

4.2.1.3. Five Ethical Obligations of a Wife Towards Her spouse.

- a) Uphold respect, love, and foster harmony with her spouse.
- b) Attend to the household and await the opportunity to enjoy meals with him.
- c) Exhibit loyalty and faithfulness.
- d) React composedly to his anger and acknowledge good advice.
- e) Ensure the residence is secured before retiring for the night once he has fallen asleep.¹⁹

4.2.1.4. Five Ethical Obligations of a Husband Towards His Wife

- a) Welcome her heartily at her departure or arrival.
- b) Adhere to consistent meal schedules and refrain from excessive demands.
- c) Permit her to oversee household requirements and personal belongings within the family's financial constraints.
- d) Delegate domestic tasks to her.
- e) Maintain fidelity and refrain from behaviours that incite envy or grief.”¹⁷

4.2.1.5. Ethics concerning familial property.

Each individual, as a member of the family, must be accountable for the family's property, avoiding negligence that might result in loss or excessive waste. The Buddha's teachings in the Sunakkhatta Sutta (P) are as follows:

- a) Karma that inflicts damage and does not inflict harm on property.

The Buddha's instructions to Sīṅgālaka: A wealthy individual or the offspring of a wealthy individual who possesses knowledge:

Refrain from the four vices: homicide, theft, sexual impropriety, and deceit.

Does not perpetrate faults due to: avarice, wrath, trepidation, illusion.

Refrain from the six bad habits that obliterate prosperity: 1) Alcohol use, 2) Betting, 3) Debauchery, 4) Appreciating music, 5) Associating with undesirable individuals, 6) Indolence.

Subsequently, he will achieve:

An excellent current existence, lauded by the sagacious.

A tranquil future, revitalised in a kind domain.

Honour like the full moon, increasing in luminosity each day”¹⁸.

- b) Select those deemed suitable and unsuitable for the custody of the property.

Four Factors Influencing Family Decline or Prosperity – The Teachings of the Buddha: Monks, any household possessing substantial wealth that cannot be sustained over time is attributable to these four factors, or one of them:

Failing to reclaim what has been forfeited.

¹⁵ Most Venerable Thich Thien Hoa, *Popular Buddhism*, Volume. I, Ho Chi Minh Buddhist University (published), Culture and Information Publications, 1992, p. 215.

¹⁶ Ibid, P. 216. ¹⁹ Ibid, P.216.

¹⁷ Ibid, P.217.

¹⁸ Dīrgha Āgama Sutra (*Sīṅgālaka Chapter*), Most Ven. Thich Tue Si (Trans.), Vietnam Institute of Buddhist Studies published, 1999, p.588.

Neglecting to restore or reinforce what has been compromised.

Overindulgence in consumption.

Appointing unethical individuals (regardless of gender) to significant roles.

Conversely, families that experience sustained wealth accumulation and preservation might attribute this to one or more of the following four factors:

Initiatives to reclaim what has been forfeited.

Understanding how to restore what has been compromised.

Moderation in consumption.

Appointing good individuals to significant roles¹⁹.

c) Profession for livelihood: Buddha asserts that to establish a stable economic foundation, one must first select a legitimate profession for sustenance; otherwise, an insatiable avarice for wealth may result in criminal conduct, as articulated in the Agama Sutra, Sīṅgālaka chapter: "first choose the technique and then earn money."

d) A daily economic divide. In the Thien Sanh Sutra, the Buddha advised dividing everyday economics into four parts: Our money goes to food and drink, farming, saving for emergencies, and the family fund. The Buddha deliberately and passionately taught this logical division of labour to all who had the chance to talk to him. He accepted every response, even the slightest, provided it helped him now and everyone in the future. He responded all.

e) As per the Saṃyukta Āgama, Volume 4 The Four Comprehensive Conditions for Current Happiness. When a young Brahmin enquired of the Buddha regarding the attainment of joy in the present life, the Buddha elucidated that one must satisfy the following four conditions:

Upāya-sampadā - Attain Competence and Resources: Obtain appropriate education and skills for a legitimate vocation.

Ārakkha-sampadā- Comprehensive Safeguarding : Protect and judiciously administer familial wealth and resources.

Kalyāṇa-mittatā-sampadā - Engage with Virtuous Companions : Cultivate relationships with ethical and sagacious peers to acquire both moral principles and practical wisdom.

Sama-jīvikatā-sampadā- Achieve Right Livelihood: Pursue an ethical livelihood, sustain a balanced financial flow, and eschew both parsimony and excess.

4.2.1.6. Ethical Behaviour in Familial Relationships - Five Fundamental Principles:

- a) When relatives behave inappropriately, provide considerate and empathetic counsel to rectify their actions.
- b) During periods of illness or adversity, provide them with both monetary and emotional assistance.
- c) Maintain confidentiality on personal and private topics; refrain from revealing their secrets.
- d) Conduct regular visits and promote virtuous conduct; address disputes with peace, without animosity.
- e) Affluent individuals ought to assist their less fortunate kin, promoting mutual stability and caring."²⁰

4.2.1.7. The ethical responsibilities of an employer towards domestic helpers encompass five principles:

- a) Consider the helper's essential requirements—nourishment, comfort, and well-being—prior to delegating jobs, guaranteeing they possess the energy and motivation to perform.
- b) Should the assistant be unwell, administer appropriate care, medication, and rest to facilitate recovery.
- c) Upon the occurrence of errors, ascertain whether they were inadvertent or purposeful; react with equity—exhibiting patience for unintended mistakes and firmness tempered with respect for intentional ones.
- d) Do not seek to appropriate or retain their legitimately acquired personal income.
- e) Distribute rewards equitably, allocating remuneration in accordance with each individual's contribution.²¹

4.2.1.8. The ethical responsibilities of a housekeeper towards the owner encompass five aspects:

- a) Rise early each morning; do not await the owner's summons.
- b) Understand your responsibilities thoroughly and execute them consistently, without any reminders.

¹⁹ Anguttara Nikaya , Vol .II, Most Ven. Thich Minh Chau (trans), Religious Publications- Hanoi, 2003, p.292.

²⁰ Ibid, p.218.

²¹ Ibid, P.218.

- c) Exercise caution, safeguard the proprietor's assets, and prevent harm.
- d) Honour the owner, bid them farewell upon departure, and greet them at their return with courteous and amiable demeanour.
- e) Refrain from disparaging or criticising the owner in the presence of outsiders.²²

4.2.2. Social ethics.

Society serves as a vast arena for the expression of our corporate ties, collaborations, educational interactions, friendships, and social endeavours. An environment to assess the moral character of individuals in a comprehensive manner inside our daily lives. The social element related to the teachings of the Buddha can be categorised into fundamental moral ties.

4.2.2.1. Five ethical standards govern the connection between students and instructors.

- a) Honour your teacher as you would your own parent.
- b) Comply with your instructor's directives.
- c) Assist your instructor throughout challenging situations.
- d) Engage in rigorous study to satisfy your instructor.
- e) Upon completing your studies, it is advisable to frequently contact your teacher to express thanks for their instruction and to acknowledge their skill and integrity"²³.

4.2.2.2. Five Ethical Responsibilities of an Educator Towards Learners

- a) Instruct with diligence and commitment.
- b) Endeavour to assist pupils in advancing their knowledge and character.
- c) Highlight essential concepts to facilitate profound and enduring comprehension.
- d) Articulate intricate concepts with clarity and revisit them to prevent misunderstanding.
- e) Exhibit compassion, genuinely aspiring for pupils to exceed the instructor."²⁴

4.2.2.3. The ethical relationship between lay practitioners and the Sangha, or spiritual companions, encompasses five principles:

- a) Exhibit sincerity and respect for monks and good associates.
- b) Obey the teachings of wise mentors and follow the right path.
- c) Attend to Dharma discourses with focus, contemplate profoundly, and implement the teachings correctly.
- d) Request elucidation on nuanced or ambiguous elements of the Dharma.
- e) Request fundamental practices such as meditation or mindfulness from educators, and pledge to engage in them attentively and regularly"²⁸.

4.2.2.4. Social ethics via the essence of (S)catvāri-saṃgrahavastūni the Four Comprehensive Bodhisattva Virtues.

In communal existence, every person bears the obligation to enhance societal welfare - this constitutes the pragmatic manifestation of ethics. The Buddha asserted that, to unify and foster happiness among the society, no approach is as noble and successful as the S: catvāri-saṃgrahavastūni. In the Samyutta Nikaya (No. 26), he asserted: If there exists any approach capable of conquering and subduing the populace, it is encompassed within the fourfold assembly: Dāna- Almsgiving : the act of sharing both monetary and spiritual resources. Piyavācā- Loving speech : kind and supportive language.

Atthacariyā -Beneficial acts : performing advantageous deeds for others.

Samānattatā - Collaboration : sharing, cohabiting, and existing in peace.

²² Ibid, P.219.

²³ Ibid, P.220.

²⁴ Ibid, P.201. ²⁸ Ibid, P.201.

This is a perennial social ethical ideal that has been, is, and will perpetually serve as the foundation for constructing a cohesive, advanced, and contented community.”²⁵

4.2.3. Political ethics : In ideological terms, practice and execution yield benefits fostering a comprehensive moral character in social existence and facilitating the journey towards freedom from sorrow and distress. The Buddha did not promote political engagement; nevertheless, out of compassion and concern for national peace, he also expressed a willingness to impart teachings on political stability.

4.2.3.1. The seven political precepts of the Buddha.

“King Ajatasattu, who murdered his father, dispatched his minister Vassakara to investigate the king's strategy for initiating warfare against the prosperous Vajjian Republic”²⁶. When the monarch of Magadha sought to subjugate the Vajjian people, the Buddha delineated seven prerequisites for a nation's prosperity, which, if upheld by the Vajjians, would prevent their decline: The Seven Conditions for the Ascendancy and Decline of a Nation According to Buddhist Doctrine

- 1) Possess the ability to converse and consolidate, frequently assemble in substantial groups.
- 2) Exist and operate in a spirit of concord, evolve collectively.
- 3) Honour established laws; refrain from making arbitrary modifications.
- 4) Honour elders and heed accurate instruction.
- 5) Safeguard women; prevent coercion and violations against them.
- 6) Safeguard convictions, honour sanctuaries, and uphold customary practices.
- 7) Advocate for the Saints, uphold and safeguard the Arahants.

Upon receiving the Buddha's teachings, the esteemed minister Vassakara recognised that if the Vajjians upheld these principles, their nation would be robust and unconquerable.

4.2.3.2. Ten Virtues of a Monarch In accordance with the Teachings of Buddha

The monarch wields the authority over life and death; if he is devoid of morals, the populace will endure suffering. If the monarch embodies compassion and fairness, it is a boon for all citizens. Buddha identified eight ethical virtues that a sovereign should possess:

1. Truthfulness and tolerance.
2. Heed the guidance and counsel of his ministers.
3. Extend grace and disseminate joy among individuals.
4. Impose taxes in accordance with the statutes, equitably and judiciously.
5. Conduct oneself with integrity and moderation in emotional affairs.
6. Avoid alcohol dependency to maintain mental clarity.
7. Maintain a respectable and serious demeanour; refrain from humour and jesting.
8. Render impartial judgements, avoiding favouritism towards the influential.
9. Foster amicable relations with the ministries, eschewing conflict and rivalry.
10. Prioritise your health and maintain physical strength to govern the nation effectively for an extended period.²⁷

4.2.4. The Ethics of a Lay Follower : Taking refuge in the Three Jewels and abiding by the Five Precepts form the foundation of the Buddhist's morality towards the Buddha. A Buddhist seeking to become a lay disciple must seek solace in the Three Jewels:

*Turning to the Buddha for solace (Buddham-saranam -gacchami): Relying on the Buddha, who is compassionate and completely enlightened, to help sentient beings break free from illusion.

²⁵ Samyutta Nikaya, No. 26, Thich Duc Thang (Trans) - Thich Tue Si (editor), Vietnam Institute of Buddhist Studies published 1991, p.85.

²⁶ NARADA MAHA THERA, *Buddha and Buddhism*, Pham Kim Khanh (Trans), Buddhist University of Ho Chi Minh City, 2001, p.240.

²⁷ Samyutta Nikaya Agama, Venerable Thich Thanh Tu (Trans.) - Venerable Thich Thien Sieu (editor), Vietnam Institute of Buddhist Studies published, 1991.

*Taking shelter in the Dharma (Dhammam -saranam -gacchami): The true Dharma is where one must seek refuge in order to escape the cycle of birth and death.

*Seeking sanctuary in the Sangha (Sangham saranam gacchami): Honouring and seeking sanctuary in the Sangha, who are the real practitioners, leading virtuous, harmonious, and pure lives.”²⁸ Buddhists must concurrently practise and adhere to the Five Precepts about refuge.

1. Refrain from taking life.
2. Refrain from theft.
3. Refrain from committing adultery.
4. Refrain from deceit.
5. Avoid consuming alcohol.

These fundamental moral principles assist adherents in establishing a stable family and fostering a healthy community. Nevertheless, the Buddha extended his teachings beyond instructing individuals to cultivate goodness in their daily lives. His primary objective was to unveil the wisdom of enlightenment for sentient creatures. According to the sutra: “The Buddhas manifest in the universe for a significant purpose: to enable sentient beings to awaken and comprehend the Buddha's wisdom.”²⁹

5. Conclusion

Buddhist ethics offers a complete ethical framework grounded in practice, accountability, and interpersonal relationships within society. This represents not only the Buddha's individual experience but also the culmination of innumerable lifetimes of endeavour, aimed at terminating suffering and attaining Nirvana. Buddhism asserts, through the principles of Cause and Effect, Dependent Origination, and Reason, that individuals are the architects of their karma, and that ethical conduct is essential for achieving enduring happiness in the present and future. In the backdrop of contemporary society's immersion in materialism and a pragmatic lifestyle, it is imperative to re-establish and promote Buddhist ethics to reconcile economic progress with the preservation of human values. Neglecting ethics will precipitate a societal crisis and result in a loss of direction. Consequently, ethics is not only the essence of human existence but also the cornerstone of a thriving and harmonious community. The promotion of Buddhist ethics education in schools, families, and communities is essential for developing a contemporary ethical framework that fosters a better society.

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²⁸ Bikkhuyana Sect, *Chanting Rituals*, Religion Publications - Hanoi, 2003, p.12.

²⁹ Saddharma Puṇḍarīka Sūtra, Thich Nhat Quang, General Publishing House - Ho Chi Minh City, 2008, p.15.

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