



Thematic Exposure on Monastic Life and Society with Special Reference to Buddhist Ethics

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ABSTRACT

Buddhist ethics, since its inception, has been intellectual and reflective, in contrast to conventional ethics. In Buddhism, ethics recognizes the importance of each person and the mind as the source of all values, virtues, and vices. In Buddhist tradition, Acariya denotes a teacher or mentor of a hermit. The Buddhist scriptures utilize the term to denote a teacher or moral instruction. It is nearly synonymous with Upajjhaya. Upajjhaya denotes a spiritual instructor or mentor and master. He oversees that a novice adheres to the Patimokha regulations and fulfils his monastic responsibilities and obligations without error. Moreover, the Mahavagga delineates two kinds of Upajjhaya: one who administers preliminary admission, known as Pabbajja, and the one who confers full ordination, referred to as Upasampada. Buddhist principles of non-violence, love, compassion, and goodwill are fundamental to human existence. By nurturing such emotions within ourselves, we attain a condition of perpetual contentment and perceive the entire cosmos as our familial entity. The poems addressing hatred and its mitigation hold particular importance. Anger breeds more anger, and hatred breeds more hatred, creating an endless cycle of conflict and strife. In this article, thematic exposure on monastic life and society with special reference to buddhist ethics has been discussed.

Keywords: *Monastic Life, Society, Buddhist Ethics.*

Introduction

The monastic order, known as Sangha, was established by the Buddha himself, who, upon reaching enlightenment, commenced his heroic missionary endeavors with the straightforward exhortation, 'Ehi bhikkhu.' Shortly, the devoted disciples of the Buddha presented a substantial number of individuals for inclusion in the Sangha.

An individual aspiring to join the Sangha is referred to as a novice or samanera. He must be at least eight years old and have obtained parental consent for his departure from this planet. He cannot receive Upasampada or ordination till he reaches the age of twenty. The main goal of creating monastic discipline was to give people the chance to follow the path to eternal happiness through self-control and cleanliness. [1]

Buddhist ethics seeks self-purification. This approach not only enables individual perfection but also improves society as a whole. The Buddha's ethical teachings aim to promote both bodily and spiritual development in individuals. Technically, we refer to this process as the cleansing of an individual's awareness. Buddhist ethics has three stages: Sila, Samadhi, and Panna. It commences with ethical instruction and establishes a moral foundation in the psyche, thus fostering an environment of societal peace. The Buddhist ethical code mandates adherence to specific moral principles for the welfare of humanity. By adhering to fundamental principles of moral and ethical conduct, an individual can coexist peacefully, cheerfully, and joyfully, fostering mutual trust and respect. The study aims to comprehend the significance and applicability of the Buddha's teachings in our social lives.

Thematic Exposure on Buddhist Ethics and Monastic Life

The initial ritual of initiation into the Buddhist Saṅgha is referred to as Pabbajja, or renunciation of worldly life. An individual initially seeks admittance into the Saṅgha by relinquishing worldly existence, regardless of whether they are a layperson, a wandering ascetic, or another type of individual. We refer to someone who enters the priesthood as a Pabbajita.

A layman under twenty years of age seeking admittance into the Saṅgha approaches his chosen Vihara or monastery, donning yellow robes and a shorn head, and presents himself before an elder monk for initiation. The senior monk thereafter adorns him with yellow robes and instructs him to recite the oath of the Three Refuges thrice, signifying his commitment to take shelter in the Buddha, the Dhamma, and the Saṅgha. The senior monk then imparts to him the Dasasila (Ten Precepts), as previously mentioned. [2]

Moreover, he must provide every conceivable assistance to his instructor. He must consistently show respect to all monks and refrain from uttering any disparaging remarks about the Buddha, Dhamma, and Saṅgha, as well as from subscribing to any erroneous beliefs.

After the ritual is over, the novice is given to two senior monks (upajjhaya) to be taught by. They teach him the Dhamma, which means doctrine, and Vinaya, which means discipline. We refer to the former as acariya. Both teachers prepare him until he is suitable for higher ordination (upasampada).

After finishing the novitiate phase, a samanera, or novice, goes through a second ordination called Upasampada. This usually happens after the age of twenty and makes them a full monk, or Bhikkhu, and a full member of the order.

The Upasampada ceremony required the presence of the Order (Saṅgha) and all monks' participation. The ordination may only be granted by a Saṅgha including at least ten knowledgeable and competent elders, each with a minimum of ten years of standing. One senior must formally present the novice to the president of the Saṅgha with a resolution. After that, either the president or another member of the Saṅgha gives the candidate the above preliminary instructions. They are then asked a series of questions to see if they are eligible based on certain criteria, such as not having certain diseases, debts, royal service, or parental consent, among others. The candidate is inquired whether he has attained the age of twenty and possesses the necessary attributes of a hermit, such as robes and an alms bowl, which have been previously arranged and stored. [3]

He is thereafter inquired about his name and the names of his chosen Upajjhaya (preceptor). Having established these facts, the instructor instructs him to proceed. The candidate must 'modify his top robe to cover one shoulder,' bow his head to the feet of Bhikkhus, assume a squatting position, raise his joined hands, and respectfully state, three times, 'I request for Upasampada.'

A member of the Sangha, excluding the instructor, formally calls thrice Natti-Catuttha, signifying that those in agreement should remain silent while those in disagreement should now express their discontent.

If everyone in the room stays quiet, the moderator assumes that consent has been given. He then goes over with the candidate again the main rules that govern his behavior, including what he can eat, wear, live in, get better if he gets sick, and the crimes that will get him kicked out of the monastic order. We declare that we must uphold these ordinances until the end of our lives.

When an individual departing from secular life chooses to embrace monasticism as a hermit, they must first undergo the process of ordination, technically referred to as Pabbajja. Through the execution of this rite, he attains the status of a samanera or novice. Henceforth, he must reside in the monastic community with his fellow monks. His most important duty is to follow the ten basic moral rules, called dasasikkhapadani. Adhering to this principal obligation is crucial for a recluse to lead a virtuous life. Following successful completion of the initial phase, a recluse is expected to advance to further steps under the guidance of an acariya and an upajjhaya. [4]

The Mahavagga and Vissuddhimagga talk about five types of Acariya: Pabbajjacariya is the one who gives samanera the three refuges and ten precepts; Upasampadacariya is the ordination instructor; Nissayacariya is the teacher from whom one gets dependencies; Upasacariya is the instructor who teaches doctrines; and Ovadacariya is the mentor who gives advice.

An individual aspiring for ordination was mandated to shave his hair and moustaches, don yellow robes, assume a seated position, pay homage to the monk, and subsequently recite the tisarāṇa formula with hands clasped. Subsequently, when the utterance or mere tisarāṇa proved inadequate, the Natti-catuttha-kamma system was implemented. The procedure requires an entrant to sit on his legs and request ordination using a specified formula in the presence of at least ten fully ordained monks. The minimum age for entry is fifteen years for Pabbajja and twenty years for Upasampada. He must be introduced to the senior monks by his upajjhaya or acariya. The Upajjhaya, or Acariya, proclaims twice his determination to attain full ordination as a monk. Afterwards, they grant ordination without any opposition. When a novice is ordained, he is told about the four Nissayas he must follow: living off of alms, wearing clothes made from rags, sleeping under trees, and using urine and other dirty substances as medicine. Later, they relaxed these rules. After the Pabbajja ceremony, a samanera has to follow the 10 commandments. However, a monk doesn't have to follow the four Parajikas and other rules of the Patimokkha until after Upasampada. It is imperative to note that individuals afflicted with Kutham (leprosy), Gaṇḍo (boils), Kilaso (dry leprosy), Soso (consumption), and Apamaro (fits) were deemed unfit or ineligible for entry. A Rajabhato (man in royal service), Dhajabaddho (declared thief), Karabhedako-coro (jail-breaker), Likhito coro

(proclaimed robber), Kasatho katadandakammo (scourged offender), Lakkanahato (branded thief), Inayiko (debtor), Dasa (slave), and someone who harmed a nun, caused a split, shed the Buddha's blood, cut off hands or feet, or joined the Sangha without permission were not allowed to be a monk. Moreover, an individual from any non-Buddhist order could be accepted alone after completing a four-month probationary period and demonstrating appropriate conduct during this time. However, there were occasional exceptions to this rule.

To enhance the efficiency of any institution or organization and to instill a sense of discipline, morality, and responsibility, it is essential to establish standards that provide members with a clear understanding of the organization's objectives. Rules and guidelines that were made by the Buddha to keep his followers in line were similar to those used today in many organizations and institutions. The Buddha made these rules and guidelines flexible so they could be used in different situations. The main goal of these rules was to help people become more self-disciplined, stop doing bad things, and clean themselves up so they could reach nibbana, which means "ultimate purity." [5]

The Buddha consistently emphasizes to his followers that the essence of the monastic precepts lies in their spirit. On the other hand, the regulations aim to ensure a fulfilling life. The guidelines established by the Buddha serve not just as expressions of ethical norms but also emphasize the virtues he intends for his followers to cultivate. The rules aren't just about following the law; they work with the ideas and examples set up by the Buddha to teach people how to behave in a complete way, with one part making up for the weaknesses of the other. Patimokkha is a compendium of transgressions, chiefly of liturgical formulas that regulate the behavior of Bhikkhus and Bhikkhunis.

Numerous researchers have endeavored to elucidate the etymological significance of this phrase; nevertheless, their efforts largely remain theoretical. Rhys Davids and Oldenberg, however, trace the origin of Patimokkha to Prati muc, interpreted as disburdening or liberation. Sukumar Dutta says that the word Patimokkha means "bond," which means it refers to the outside union that was created to turn the Sakyaputtiya Sāmaṇas sect into an order. Patimokkha encompasses both monks and nuns, leading to its bifurcation into Bhikkhu Patimokkha and Bhikkhuni Patimokkha.

There are 311 rules in the Bhikkhuni Patimokkha, divided into similar categories. The third category, Aniyata, deals with how Bhikkhus should behave. Note that the last group of the Bhikkhu Patimokkha, Adhikaraṇasamatha, which has seven principles, has been taken out because it has to do with legal disputes instead of crimes. Furthermore, some scholars do not include Aniyata in this broader grouping because they believe it is still not clear whether the sins in this grouping are Parajika, Sanghadisesa, or Pacittiya sins.

Putting aside the debate, it is important to note that the rules that Buddha first set up in the Vinaya are called mulapannatti, which means "the root of regulation," and the rules that came after them are called sikkhapadas, which means "the rule of discipline."

The Mahapadanasutta first mentioned Patimokkha, followed by the commentary on the Dhammapada. The Patimokkha rules must be read out loud every Poṣadha day. I. B. Horner says that this served two purposes: it helped the monks and nuns remember the rules, and it gave everyone in the monastic community a chance to admit any mistakes they made while the rules were being read.

The punitive system rests on two fundamental concepts. The primary objective of the training is the cultivation of intellect. Consequently, the elements of intention and perception frequently ascertain whether a specific action constitutes a violation of a rule. For example, unintentionally killing an insect or animal differs significantly from doing so deliberately, and so the former may not constitute a violation of killing regulations. Moreover, there are certain regulations where intention is irrelevant; for instance, if a monk consumes intoxicants, he cannot claim unintentionality as an excuse. The method of breaking down each crime into parts like efforts, object, perception, and intention shows how following the rules directly leads to better focus and judgment. The second principle pertains to the offender's standing within the community. [6]

The Patimokkha, which comprises the fundamental regulations for the Buddhist Order, is organized according to the severity of transgressions, ranging from major to small. Consequently, upon transgression of the four most egregious regulations of the Parajika, a monk is permanently ejected from the Saṅgha. He forfeits his status as a Bhikkhu automatically. He must either return to secular life as a layman or revert to the status of a samanera (a novice), despite the impossibility of becoming ordained again.

The perpetrator of any of these four Parajikas is culpable for the most serious offense. If he violates the next most severe category of regulations, Sanghadisesa, he will face a six-day probationary period. During this time, he will forfeit his seniority, be deemed untrustworthy to venture alone without the accompaniment of four other monks of established standing, and must confess his transgression daily to every monk residing in or visiting the monastery. Upon completion of his probation, a convocation of no fewer than twenty monks must be assembled to restore him to his former standing. The initial five of the thirteen rules pertain to minor sexual offenses, such as inappropriate touching of a woman, engaging in sexy conversation, or facilitating a romantic connection between a man and a woman. The next two are about building kuni (huts) and viharas (monasteries) to stop monks from asking normal people for too many building materials and from building in places that could hurt living things. The final six criteria pertain to infractions articulated by statements that incite division, defamation, or intentional conflict.

A bhikkhu who violates one or more of these thirteen regulations must be expelled from the Saṅgha and may be permitted to re-enter if his apatti is rescinded at a special assembly attended by no fewer than twenty bhikkhus.

The subsequent three levels of regulations, namely Nissaggiya Pacittiya, Pacittiya, and Paṭidesaniya, require a straightforward confession to a fellow monk. The Nissaggiya Pacittiya delineates thirty regulations designed to mitigate excessive avarice among bhikkhus about material possessions. Of the thirty regulations, sixteen pertain to robes; five to rugs; three to gold and silver; two to bowls; one to medicine; and one to the illicit acquisition of benefits from the entire Order.

The Pacittiya comprises ninety-two regulations primarily addressing deceit, abusive language, defamation, inappropriate interactions with women, the destruction of any life form, including flora, and further rules governing monastic life. Moreover, the Paṭidesaniya demonstrates the bhikkhus' concern for ensuring that the laity does not experience pain as a result of alms-giving practices.

The last two tiers of regulations do not specify a particular sanction. The Sekhiya regulations, comprising seventy-five guidelines, largely address etiquette, asserting that adherence to them is essential. We categorize the regulations into four distinct groups. The initial set of twenty-six regulations pertains to proper conduct and behavior in urban and rural settings. The subsequent set of thirty regulations pertains to courteous conduct during the acceptance of alms and the consumption of meals. Those who are disrespectful cannot be taught the Dhamma according to the third set of sixteen rules. The fourth set of three rules covers inappropriate ways to deal with nature's demands and expectations.

Thematic Exposure on Buddhist Ethics and Society

Humans are inherently integral to the natural world. In this natural realm, he constructs a social environment for the advancement and betterment of humanity. Aristotle aptly posits that deities and animals do not necessitate society, as humans are inherently political beings. A person who is not a citizen of any state, if their isolation is natural rather than accidental, resembles either a superhuman or a primitive entity, standing alone like a blemish on a backgammon board. A devoted and loyal follower ought to treat all beings with kindness and compassion, uphold honesty, regulate wants, speak truthfully, and lead a sober and virtuous life. [7]

The Buddha's ethical concept is evidently practical and pertinent for the average individual. The Buddha's teachings convey a message to diligently pursue a virtuous life, fostering peace, harmony, and mutual respect. While the ultimate objective of Buddhism is to achieve nibbana, it is realistically unattainable for everyone to reach that exalted state. Even the Buddha himself was unable to guide all individuals toward nibbana. Notwithstanding this fact, he consistently attended to the general populace and expounded several concepts, some of which, as previously said, pertain to the secular realm for the benefit of worldly individuals. If used correctly in daily life, the Buddha's teachings can enable an ordinary individual to resolve numerous challenges and transform this world into a more joyful environment for future generations.

Buddhism is a moral religion that doesn't believe in a god or divine metaphysical principle. It is based on moral, intellectual, and meditative principles and is a way to find salvation. The significance of its ethical mission is seen in its pronounced focus on the transformation and ethnicization of human consciousness, including all of humanity and all of cosmology. This framework, whether concerning egoistic or personal nibbana or individual purification, such as the attainment of Arhathood in early Buddhism or the selflessness of the Bodhisattva in later Buddhism, consistently adheres to an ethical regulative principle. A person can only develop these abilities, which have effects on their own life and on the lives of others, through self-initiative and a three-step process called Sila, Samadhi, and Panna. The latter two facilitate the attainment of perfection in the former's practice. Consequently, it is a progression from ethics to ethics via ethics.

As a natural being with cognitive and emotional traits, Buddhist ethics stresses how important it is to understand the whole of human nature. It analyzes his disposition, will, motive, intention, and purpose, which collectively form his self and moral character. According to Buddhism, these psychological elements influence his knowledge, reasoning, and behavior.

The subsequent phase of Buddhism in this context involves the transformation and cultivation of the ego for comprehensive ethical conduct. Buddhism criticizes the illogical parts of both non-Vedic and Vedic moral theories. It also stresses the need for strict devotion to sila, which starts out as normal but later turns into something more profound. It not only mitigates vices but also diminishes the conflict between the self and others. We employ the practice of contemplative meditation to cultivate moral habits. This fosters the integration of self-awareness and universal harmony. The process continues, advancing our understanding of the true nature of things. The ethical spiritual path concludes only when, out of compassion akin to the Buddha, the practitioner re-engages with the realm of action to alleviate suffering and promote happiness for all humanity. Consequently, Buddhist ethics culminates in altruism. [8]

Buddhist ethics, devoid of the notion of an ultimate authority such as God, emphasizes self-purification. In Buddhism, divinity represents a phase in the ethical evolution of humanity, which remains susceptible to error. The paramount objective in Buddhism is the realization of enlightenment. In the absence of any divine intervention, the Buddha asserts that one must strive for personal redemption by adhering to the aforementioned methods. According to the Buddha, blind faith in God's purpose may entail perilous moral consequences. In Buddhism, moral goodness encompasses rationality, virtue, emotional awareness, enlightenment, contemplation, and compassion.

The principle that guided the Buddha's endeavor to alleviate human suffering embodies his concept of Just Social Order. Although the Buddha's principal focus was on moral and spiritual development, he also placed significant emphasis on societal issues. In a general context, Just Social Order refers to various actions aimed at benefiting humanity. These encompass straightforward individual practices of right livelihood, both inside and beyond various forms of community development, as well as through political endeavors aimed at societal improvement. Buddhism is a pragmatic doctrine that begins with specific fundamental assertions regarding our perception of the world and our actions within it. It instructs that transcending this world replete with misery is achievable. The catalyst for such transcendence is what we refer to as wisdom. The extensive body of Buddhist literature lacks elements of revelation and authority. Rather, it employs ethics and meditation, philosophy and science, and art and poetry to illuminate a path to this wisdom. Unlike secular texts, Buddhist literature on social issues makes clear suggestions that connect to this wisdom but are still up for debate based on our shared experiences. [9]

The Buddha's notion of Just Social Order is evident throughout his missionary period, where he emphasized the construction of social justice and peace through his teachings and talks. Early Buddhists significantly focused on establishing social conditions conducive to the individual development of Buddhist principles, as evidenced by the Buddha's lectures in the Dighanikaya. Emperor Asoka established a notable welfare state in subsequent periods.

The Buddha's numerous teachings convey the concept of social concern. One possessing intelligence and profound wisdom refrains from inflicting harm on themselves, others, or both simultaneously. He considers his own welfare, the well-being of others, the welfare of both, and the welfare of the

entire planet. By demonstrating insight and profound wisdom, one safeguards oneself and, in turn, safeguards others; by safeguarding others, one ultimately safeguards oneself. Moreover, the Buddha's advocacy for women's liberation to attain higher spiritual realms, as well as his compassion for animals and nature, is profoundly evident in the Pali texts.

Furthermore, as documented in the Assalayanasutta, the Buddha has discredited the assertion that spiritual accomplishments are exclusive to the Brāhmaṇas. The enlightened teacher indicated that individuals from all four Varṇas are qualified to achieve the highest level of spirituality. To uphold social equality, he has permitted universal access to the Buddhist Sangha.

The extensive history of Buddhism attests to its significant role in human society. The doctrines of Buddhism had a beneficial impact, leading numerous emperors and governments in the past to prioritize the well-being of the populace. By honestly considering and implementing the Buddhist teachings of Pancasila, Brahmavihara, and the Noble Eightfold Path, the aspiration for an ideal and prosperous society may be realized.

The class stratification of Indian culture during the time of Buddha significantly influenced the emergence of his religion. Diverse factions divided the civilization at that time. The numerically inferior group was controlling and manipulating the significantly larger groups. The Buddha recognized this truth and opposed the adverse conditions. This action of the Buddha proved advantageous for the populace, prompting their support for him. The Buddha's second significant action was his unwavering support for the Vratyas. The Vratyas were the progeny of heterogamous and hypogamies unions. The discoveries referenced in the Atharvaveda position this new sub-varṇa elegantly subsequent to the four varṇas. It is crucial to note that the Buddha was the sole individual who advocated for the Vratyas, and in response, they aligned themselves with him. This approach led the Buddha to announce that the establishment of the Sangha permitted access for all individuals, regardless of caste, creed, or family background. Numerous references indicate that individuals of low caste occupy high positions within the Sangha. He believed that our karma should be the sole determinant of our social status in society. Undoubtedly, for the Buddha, the Brāhmaṇa was paramount; however, his interpretation of 'Brāhmaṇa' was fundamentally distinct.

The topic of abortion has emerged as the most contentious and polarizing moral problem in contemporary society. Over the past few decades, arguments and reasoning both in favor of and against have been articulated by individuals from diverse segments of society, ranging from religious fundamentalists to radical feminists. The term 'abortion' can be precisely defined as the intentional cessation of a pregnancy through the destruction of the fetus. A fetus denotes an unborn kid throughout all phases of its development. Nevertheless, anytime abortion is discussed, the prevailing belief is that the authority over life and death resides with Nature, sometimes referred to as a supernatural power that governs the entire cosmos. No one should possess the right to take the life of another, especially that of those who have yet to enter the world, namely, those who remain in the womb of their mother.

Socially, we regard such acts as wicked, but, when examined through the lens of medical science, it may become necessary to terminate a pregnancy owing to complications. However, this does not imply that medical science endorses the practice of abortion. The severity of the sin is evident both socially and medically in relation to the fetus.

The youth aspire to a society devoid of poverty, unemployment, inequality, and human exploitation—a world free from discrimination based on race, color, language, and gender—and a world abundant in creative challenges and opportunities to overcome them. When youth deviate from morality, their character, thoughts, and deeds degrade, bringing shame to their families and communities. The narrative of the cousin brothers Kauravas and Paṇḍavas, as illustrated in the epic Mahabharata, serves as a poignant depiction of the extensive bloodshed of countless innocents. [10]

It is a source of pride that our country currently possesses the largest youth population globally. The global community is seeing India as a reservoir of technical talent. The youth's significant role in contemporary society makes them a vital source of talent. It has minimized its significance in the realm of politics. It can play a crucial role in the eradication of terrorism, and it can identify several other issues while possessing the capacity to address them.

Conclusion

The administration of monastic life was undoubtedly a formidable undertaking. The Vinaya Piṭaka contains allusions regarding the appointment of officials. The language distinctly delineates the administrative framework and the responsibilities assigned to certain individuals for specific tasks.

With the Sangha's permission, a recluse is only given duties after showing that they have all five qualities: they can't be swayed by bias, hatred, ignorance, or fear, and they know what is right to accept. This individual receives robes and other offerings from donors visiting the monastery. Furthermore, an abbot possesses the ability to oversee both the religious and secular matters of monastic life.

Education is a systematic endeavor to acquire knowledge of essential human ideas. The primary concept of education is to cultivate moral and spiritual values in pupils to facilitate the advancement of civilization. Education begins at home and continues throughout schools, colleges, universities, and similar institutions. Education is crucial for enhancing an individual's value system and applying it practically for societal improvement. The family system in India has a longstanding heritage of providing value education, originating from the ancient Gurukula system. Nevertheless, contemporary competitions and lifestyle changes have made it challenging for parents to instill pertinent morals in their children. Consequently, there is a necessity for institutions and a model plan that may provide value education to knowledge seekers. Undoubtedly, basic education is crucial in shaping a student's life; nonetheless, the job of higher institutions becomes imperative in finalizing an individual's identity. Prior to advancing, let us examine the concept of 'education.' Culture encompasses the attributes of a specific group of individuals, characterized by elements such as language, religion, cuisine, and social practices. A society manifests its culture through its art, literature, attire, customs, and traditions. Diverse cultures inhabit various regions of the world; hence, before proceeding, let us examine the numerous types of cultural groups present globally. Buddhism encompasses and recognizes diverse cultural perspectives. The primary focus is that culture may facilitate spiritual liberation. Meditation allows us to understand it as a form of mental cultivation, which is evident in the diverse disciplines of arts, science or dhamma.

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