

SOME ETHICAL VALUES IN BUDDHIST PHILOSOPHY

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ABSTRACT

Buddhism was a great movement of thought in ancient India. Appearing in the 6th century BC, Buddhism quickly became popular and became a state religion in India, then promulgated and spread to neighboring countries and regions. Through the ups and downs of history, Buddhism has currently become a major world religion and has strongly influenced the spiritual and cultural life of many Eastern peoples. With the aim to liberate people from all suffering by living a virtuous life, Buddhism has quickly won the hearts and beliefs of the working masses. It has become a symbol of compassion and charity in the traditional ethics of Asian peoples. One can call Buddhism a religion of compassion, a sublime philosophical system, and a humanistic ethics because the ethical values of Buddhism stem from great compassion and have positive effects on social ethics and people.

Key Words: Ethics, Buddhism, human liberation.

1. INTRODUCTION

Buddhism is a religion of human stature in terms of its classics and ideology. With the ideal of humanity and charity, Buddhism is considered a religion which is rich in love and peace-loving. The entire teachings of Buddhism has the main purpose of talking about suffering, the causes of suffering and the way and means to get rid of suffering, including the ethical system. Buddhist ethics with noble humanistic ethical standards about human life play an important role in social life with an infinite number of equal and superior relations. Especially, in current society, when the market economy develops with its characteristics, it has made many people rush to the money spiral and forget about the ethical codes of conduct. Buddhism with its ethical frameworks can be seen as a clear mirror of human values for each person to look into and realize the true value of my very short life in this world.

2. CONTENTS

The ethical values in Buddhist philosophy can be summarized in some of the following contents:

2.1. Advocating for a good and healthy lifestyle

In human life, anyone wants to have a happy life and never wants to suffer, and accordingly, everyone wants to become a good person who have a good heart and a healthy lifestyle. However, everything is a unity of opposites. In every human being, there is always both good and bad. In every human action, there is both good and bad. As a human being, it is inevitable to make mistakes. The problem is that after we make mistakes (doing bad things), whether we know shame, know how to turn to good and towards the good, know how to correct those mistakes. Because, according to the Buddha's words, human life "is a sea of suffering". Whether happy or miserable, there are cycles that people never get out of: working, living day after day, year after year, and

therefore they are always miserable, also longing to find happiness. For them, happiness is something very luxurious, very flashy and always in opposition to the present life. When they think that happiness is still far away, we must try hard to find it, have to achieve it so that the present life is no longer unhappy, they are easy to become losers and when they fail, they think that it is fate. Therefore, they let go of their lives, let life slide down the wrong path and they are no longer ashamed of what they have done. When people are no longer ashamed, their hearts are filled with greed, hatred, anger and delusion. When they gain, they are happy, when they lose, they are sad. Separation is painful, closeness is happiness. Anyone compliments, you will be happy; anyone criticizes, you will be sad. If you like it, you will be happy, if you don't, you will be angry. Therefore, when faced with the adversity, someone use all possible tricks to do any evil, and this is considered the root cause of all social evils. They don't know that, in life, happiness often begins, exists in very small things, even it is right next to us.

Buddhism always affirms that human's possibilities are endless. If people have the will to strive; themselves as well as their circumstances can be improved in the direction of progress, if they really want to make attempt. Buddhist ethics emphasizes that in order to free people from suffering or if people want to be liberated and peaceful, they must first decide for themselves, which means, they must practice Morality, Concentration, and Wisdom by themselves and not someone else or a certain god who gives. In many dharma, Buddha teaches about this, especially in the Pali Canon, the Buddha teaches: "Hey monks, light your own torch to go, be your own island of refuge" (Doan, 1997). The purpose of Buddhist ethics is for people and to free people from suffering, that is, to make people peaceful and liberated. In the whole of the teachings of Buddhism, it is mainly aimed at the goodness of man. In the Lotus Sutra - the supreme sutra in Mahayana Buddhist thought, which is the King of the sutras preached by the Buddha at the end of his life before he passed away - the Buddha said: "Because of the great cause of fate: Opening, Showing, Enlightenment, Entering Buddha's knowledge for sentient beings, I appear in this life". In the Nykaya Sutta, the Buddha declares, "Monks!..., throughout my life I have preached the Dharma (from the past until now I have only spoken of suffering and cessation of suffering)" (Pham, 1991).

It can be said that, Buddhist ethics is a ethical system in separation from life. Buddhist ethical values are more inward, reflective values than dealing with external relationships. Therefore, Buddhism maximizes personal autonomy in the practice of moral rules. The judgment of morality is karma. It adjusts each person's morality according to the law of cause and effect. More specifically, Buddhism is a religion with atheistic tendencies. It does not recognize the creation of a supernatural being. All moral and ethical values take place in the human world, not dominated by any force. This is the advantage of Buddhism over other religions.

The Buddha's words, although spoken more than 2500 years ago, have still had great and practical value for all of us. The author believes that if we really live according to the Buddha's teachings, whether we stay at home or have renunciation, our lives will reduce a lot of unhappiness and suffering, and will be more peaceful, more useful to ourselves, family and society. Because it is an ethical, good-inclined lifestyle that ensures happiness, peace, and health for oneself and for others, for this life and for the next generation. With a healthy, good-inclined lifestyle following the Buddha's teachings, we will gradually and surely reach the goal of enlightenment and liberation, even though we still have to go through many incarnations.

2.2. Encouraging the altruism, equality and tolerance

In life, many people often think that the great man must have revenge if someone hurt him, because a gentleman must have a clear understanding in gratitude and hatred. However, in Buddhist teachings, people are encouraged to extend compassion, live tolerance, and altruism. Because only living altruistically with compassion and wishing for everyone to live in peace, joy and happiness, can people get rid of obstacles and suffering. During his lifetime, the Buddha taught that: “to return evil for evil, the more evils piled up; to return good for evil, then evil dissipates” (Nguyen, 2010). At first glance, “to return good for evil” may seem paradoxical, but it is the attitude that sages behave to neutralize the most effective animosity. On the other hand, living altruistically will bring true happiness to each person, simply because altruism surpasses all others. The desire to practice altruism is to help others, to care for the peace of others, to serve them, also to help yourself, to serve yourself, to give yourself the opportunity to make more friends. Therefore, when someone opposes us, we must first find out what causes that person's displeasure. If it's really our fault, we should admit it and accept it. If it's just because the two sides have some misunderstanding, why they do not find gentle words so that the two sides sympathize with each other. And if the other party is jealous and aggressive, the only way is to spread compassion to them; and maybe it is through compassion, selflessness that one day we can turn an enemy into a good friend. If we learn many beautiful things from close friends, why do we not learn some valuable lessons from our enemies? Because not everyone who is hostile to us is a bad person, or lacks some respectable qualities. Often because of the “self”, many people have the misconception that: “*those who are good to us are good people, those who are bad to us are bad people*”, so it is subjective and biased, the truth is often the opposite. Why don't we think that the reason people hate us is because we are bad to self-reflect and correct ourselves?

There is a thinker who very rightly said that: “*If you look at the bad side, everyone has a bad side, if you look at the good side, everyone has a good side*” (Hoang, 1999). Therefore, when people live without tolerance and altruism, we only come into contact with the bad side of people, whereas if we live altruistically with compassion, we will come into contact with the good sides of people. According to La Cordaire: “*If you are happy for a moment, take revenge; but if you want to be happy forever, please forgive*” (Thich, 2006). That is *selflessness*.

Buddhism believes that everyone is the same, that is, everyone is equal, so they should love each other, have tolerance and look at each other with sympathetic eyes. With compassion and love for all species, Buddhism broke down the inhuman barrier between people and people, and between people and things. When mentioning Christian equality, Friedrich Engels understood very deeply: “Christianity knows only one equality for all - equality of original sin; an equality that is completely consistent with its character as the religion of the slaves and the oppressed. Besides this equality, Christians only recognized equality with God's chosen people, but that equality was only mentioned in the early days of Christianity” (Nguyen, 2002).

Buddhism recognizes the equal rights between people and people. This is the voice of the majority of the working masses in ancient India. It protests against the harsh caste system of that time. That is not only reflected in the teachings but also in the soul of the Buddha, a man who gave up wealth and fame, a rich and regal life, in order to look for a way to save mankind from misfortune and danger, and bring happiness to them.

2.3. Promoting the spirit of solidarity, mutual love

The life of Sakyamuni Buddha was an ethical example of a noble life based on the spirit of solidarity and mutual love. This comforts people to overcome all suffering. The Buddha is the one who enlightened the truth and brought the truth to enlightenment for others to bring the cause of full enlightenment, who helped the forgotten poor, who added nobility to the lives of the deluded and cleansed the depraved lives of the criminals. On the other hand, the teachings of Buddhism also refer to the love between people and people, and consider it as the source of the spirit of mutual love and solidarity. Because a very simple reason is that everyone loves compassion and doesn't like jealousy and hatred. Humanity needs love to survive. People need help, rely on each other to survive. Men or women, no matter how talented they are, if left alone, they cannot live on their own. In any circumstances, whether you are rich or poor, whether you are young and healthy or old and sick, people have to live on the help of others. I think not only humans but even animals have to live together like that. All the external scenery, from the tiny speck of dust to the huge earth we live in; from rivers, seas to mountains, forests and fields; from the clouds in the sky to the flowers in the garden, there is a correlation and interdependence with each other. Without reciprocity, and causal relationship, then things would not be able to arise or exist. Therefore, people need to rely on each other to survive. When we live responsibly with our actions, we will create happiness not only for ourselves but also for others living around us. According to the spirit of Buddhism, "Practicing the virtues of tolerance, forgiveness and opening our hearts to others, we immediately feel pure and peaceful. This also helps us to eradicate all worries, insecurities and afflictions. It will give us a mental strength and confidence to overcome difficulties and unsatisfactory things we often encounter in life" (Mai, 2006).

2.4. Appreciating the family relationship, the gratitude for the birth and upbringing of parents, grandparents and ancestors

It can be said that the Buddha and the Bodhisattvas and Saints are examples of filial piety for us to study today. As human beings, they all have roots and origins, they all have fathers and mothers. Parents are the one who gave birth to us. They spend a lifetime working hard to raise us to be human. From young boys and girls, fathers and mothers have become old men, old women with gray hair, wrinkled skin, hunched back, sunken cheeks. All are for their children. However, not all children in this world are grateful to their parents. According to the Buddha's words, "Monks!..., there are too few sentient beings who are filial to their parents, but too many sentient beings who do not respect their parents. (Vietnam Buddhist Sangha, 2006). In today's full material and spiritual life, more than ever, each person needs to be aware of the religion of filial piety, spends time with parents to convalesce in old age to partially compensate for their hardships in life. We must take care of our parents from material to spirit so that they can be happy and peaceful, live happily and peacefully. Moreover, the best happiness for parents as taught by the Buddha is to guide parents on the path of doing good things, abandoning evil, building trust, following the Dharma, and attaining liberation from suffering and death.

2.5. Always pay attention to the things we should do and don't

During his lifetime, Shakyamuni Buddha gave precepts with the aim of helping people in general and disciples in particular to avoid doing evils; do not act and speak evil, so that your body and speech are pure and kind, do not harm yourself and do not harm others, such as:

No killing: This is the first and basic precept of Buddhism. No killing is not killing live animals, first of all not killing people. This is the concept of life that directs people to stay away

from evil, do many good things, and love life. If you keep this precept, there will be no slaughter, no death, no suffering... At the time, the Buddhist idea of not killing and those close to Buddhism was to fight against the ritual killing, killing sacrifices to the gods of the Brahmin sect as well as the cruel wars at that time.

Do not steal: Not taking things that belong to others when they do not give to you; not taking for yourself things that do not belong to you. If people do not keep this precept, people are easily manipulated by greed, leading to negative behaviors, which are harmful to human morality. Given this precept, Buddhism wants to educate people to live honestly, to create trust and happiness for everyone, every home, and society is peaceful and happy.

No adultery: It means, not practice sex, lewdness which are contrary to morality. You must prevent and limit low desires. With the theory of the third precept, Buddhism aims to direct people to a healthy, clear and progressive lifestyle that has the effect of developing a comprehensive human personality.

Do not lie: It is words that must be honest. People must not speak falsely, must not speak harsh, divisive and meaningless words or in other words, must not have abusive speech, boast and false words.

+ Don't drink alcohol

Not only Buddhism but many other religions also teach believers not to drink alcohol. Presently, the teachings of Buddhism are not limited to just not drinking, but also include not taking drugs. Alcohol and drugs only make people lose their clear nature, do not control their own actions, leading to many harmful consequences, and when people are drunk, they will lower their dignity before others.

From the above analysis, it can be affirmed that, through Buddhist ethical values, we find many profound educational ideological contents. The educational goal of Buddhism is that people are enlightened, people have the ability to liberate themselves to achieve happiness. Buddhist ethics always remind people to be aware of their words, to master their actions to reduce the suffering of evil karma, in which Precepts are the path of a pure lifestyle leading to liberation. To go to the ultimate goal is nothing more than to practice and respect the precepts to have a completely pure, peaceful, happy life in this life and here. Therefore, in summary, the universality of Buddhist ethics has two basic values: humanity and practical value, that is, to practice that humanity. Besides, it must be seen that Buddhism is a religion, so its illusory nature is inevitable. It is considered an atheistic religion in that it does not acknowledge the soul and the Theocracy, but in the Buddhist world-view and life-view, the mystical idealist elements have been still mentioned frequently. That leads to the impracticality of Buddhism in real life. Buddhism calls for compassion and charity, but it is unthinkable to just call out in general in a society with oppression and exploitation. Buddhism gives people faith in the prospect of being liberated through cultivating the mind and body to reach the realm of "Nirvana" - which is not real. Therefore, the thought of liberating people from suffering is illusory. In addition to the meaning of educating people towards a noble life, beyond ordinary material desires, it destroys the vitality and actions of people, discourages people from improving their material lives and developing science and technology... Through its teachings, Buddhism does not direct people's ideals and goals into reality to build morality and real people, but rather builds a person with no ambition, no will to struggle, creates a mentality of contentment with reality, patience, and resignation to fate. In essence, Buddhism advises people to accept the world, not to reform the world. However, these limitations are also easy to accept because it was born in the context of a backward society. However, with the "reasonable kernels"

of good qualities, the mind cultivation, compassion... Buddhism deserves to be a great doctrine of mankind.

3. CONCLUSION

From the basis of the doctrinal system, Buddhism builds an ethical system that is the relationship between precepts, concentration, and wisdom to lead to enlightenment and liberation, in which precepts have a fundamental role for liberation. Buddhist ethics is mainly in the Precepts, which include many standards and categories that are closely intertwined with the model of liberation. Buddhism has built a complete ethical system from perception, theory to practice and applied it to build a way of life - and it has indeed become a way of life in people's daily life. Buddhism has built an ethical model that is a person of compassion, equanimity, selflessness, altruism..., and stands firmly on two legs of compassion and wisdom. After more than 25 centuries of existence and development, Buddhist ethical thought (with both positive and negative sides as above) have still pervaded and had a great influence on the spiritual life of people around the world.

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