

# Social Tranquility and Happiness: A Study on Theravada Buddhism

Ratna Rani Das

## Abstract

Buddhism is a religious of peace and harmony, The Buddha was the founder of Buddhism. This religion is known as the religion for enlightened people. Peace, happiness, social justice, compassion, integrity, mutual understands, trust, tolerance, and wisdom are the mind attributes of Buddha. These attributes are significant for bringing happiness, peace and tranquility in the society. This paper explores the concept of happiness and tranquility in the light of Buddha. It focuses on the necessity of following moral code of conduct and to follow four sublime states to bring peace in the society. This research paper also highlighted loving-kindness, compassion and sympathy to bring peace in the society for ensuring happiness for sustainable society.



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## 1. Introduction

In Buddhism joy is one of the prerequisites for obtaining enlightenment. In this regard, Buddhists are famous in the globe as the happiest people. These are due to practices of moral values of Buddhism in every sphere of lives. Buddhism and happiness are closely interrelated. The teachings of Buddha are to end this suffering of people of all caste and creed. Buddha taught to gain wisdom so that one can realize the causes of sufferings, its root and find to resolve the problem. There is a casual law in case of happiness in Buddhism.



**Source:** The Connected Discourses of the Buddha: Bodhi (2000)

## 2. Objective

The objects of this paper are; to discuss about moral values for bringing happiness in Buddhism, to briefly describe five precept of Buddhism for bringing tranquility for society and to describe four sublime states and noble eight paths for peaceful society.

## 3. Literature review

Sharma (2014) discussed the concept of peace to bring social quality for establishing a good society. It is important for every citizen's well-being, individual development and improve economic condition. At present in the global society, Buddhism has been a vibrant to eradicate discrimination in the society and among women. In the socio-cultural context

Buddhism has been very promising for ensuring equality in the society (Sirimanne, 2016). Kim (2012) in a paper explained the relationship in the context of ideology, religion and philosophy. Moreover, outlook towards Buddhism and for the Buddhist world have been analyzed to build a sustainable society. Human mind can be suffered for different reasons which make hindrance to inner peace. At the same time he said that freedom and justice are equally important for mental peace (Tanabe, 2016). According to Chaudhry (2015) the goal of Buddhism is to practice spiritualizing, compassion, non-violence and social harmony. These factors fosters' social tranquility and bring long lasting peace. In order to achieve these goals one has to work for the welfare of marginalized people, for poor and disable people. Kumari (2014) discussed gender in equality in Thai society and highlighted the role of Buddhism to eradicate discrimination in the society.

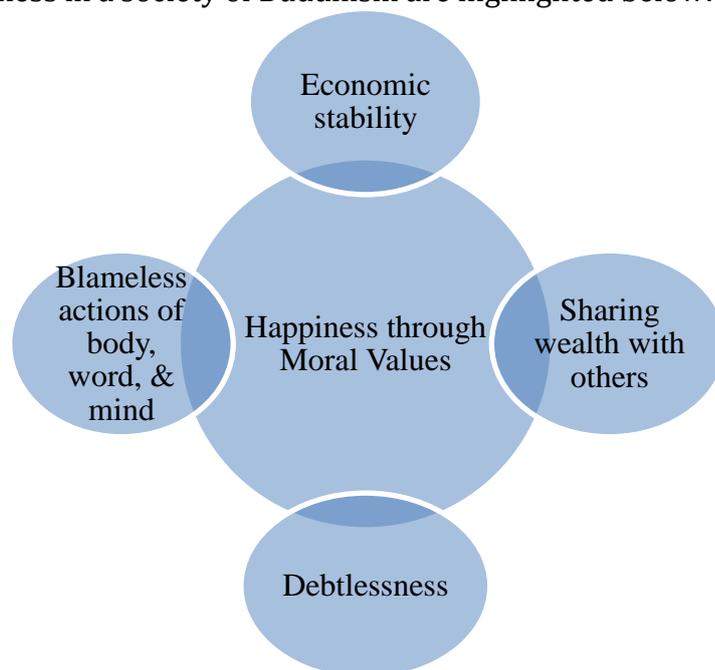
#### 4. Research Methodology

Basically, this research is qualitative in nature. This research is conducted based on secondary data. For collecting secondary data many books and book chapters have been utilized intensively.

#### 5. Findings and Discussion

##### 5.1. Moral Values for bringing Happiness

Moral values are very important for creating happiness in a society. Values are part of the society where every living creature learns about it from surrounding environment. However, the Buddhist moral values mainly based on four human principles. These principles significantly contribute for bringing harmony in a society. Moreover, the four principles for ensuring happiness in a society of Buddhism are highlighted below:



Source: Happiness through Moral Values: Gnanarama (1996)

Happiness is found inside human itself. To be happy one should not disturb others or kill others. In this aspect in *Dhammapada* it has been stated that "All tremble at punishment and all fear death. Therefore having compared unto oneself one should not kill nor should cause to kill" (Buddharakkhita, 1986). Again it is also commented in the *Dhammapada* that 'Hatred is never pacified by hatred. Hatred is only pacified by friendliness. This is an internal law' (Buddharakkhita, 1986).

### 5.2. *The Five precepts of Buddhism for Tranquility in a Society*

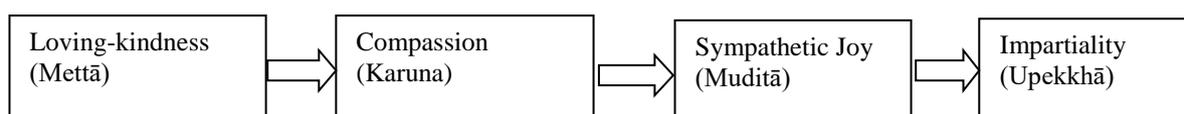
There are some basic fundamental principles for ensuring peace in a society. This concept is given in the society for all human being by Buddha. By following these principles a society can be built as harmonious state. According to Dhammananda (1993), "Precepts are accepted voluntarily by the person himself, especially when he realizes the usefulness of adopting some training rules for disciplining his body, speech, and mind". This concept can play a significant role for establishing peace, harmony, and tranquility in the society at great extend. These five precepts are i) not killing living creatures, ii) not taking anything without permission, iii) not conducting sexual misconduct, iv) not talking false speech, and v) not taking intoxicants like drugs (Nyanatiloka, 1996). To develop a good society respects should be given to these precepts.

A prominent Professor of Dhaka University mentioned: 'Buddha's five precepts are not only for Buddhist followers, it is also a true instrument for all to make an idle human rights oriented society in the world' (Barua, 2000). Moreover, the five moral precepts are not only for Buddhist followers but also for all religion, cast, and race. The followers of these disciplines are honored in every society, community and state.

In Buddhism these five precepts are known as virtues for establishing peace in the society. These are also known as treasure (Bodhi, 2012), and directions for self-control (Edmond, 1949).

### 5.3. *Four Sublime States (Brahmavihara) for Tranquility of Society*

People prefer to live without fear, anxiety, and worry of a society. The views of Buddhist philosophy are remarkable to lead a state of peace and harmony. To ensure these condition four sublime states could contribute largely for bringing tranquility of the society. According to Narada (1972) "The four sublime virtues are illimitable. They are so called because they find no barrier or limit and should be extended towards all beings without exception". The four sublime states consist of loving-kindness, compassion, sympathetic joy, and impartiality. The four teachings are elucidated below:



Loving-kindness (Mettā) refers to universal love for all creatures. The ruler should govern his subjects with true love to all beings unconditionally. Like a mother protects her child risking her lives with affection, all creatures should be loved boundlessly (Mahastvir, 2007). In addition Buddha uttered this boundless compassion (Karuna) should be cultivated towards all living beings without any distinction. All living creatures possess to get opportunity of compassion suffering from miseries and hardships. The ruler needs to govern subjects with true compassion to reduce suffering for all living beings. For cultivating and developing the virtue of compassion one needs to express loving-kindness as possible (Ñanamoli, 1997). Moreover, a truly compassionate person not only serves for himself but also serves for others. An example can be cited on compassion in the story of Vyaghri Jataka the Bodhisatta sacrificed his life for saving a tigress and her cubs (Narada, 1972). Sympathetic Joy (Muditā) refers to having cheerful mood of a person when hearing the success and happiness of others (Ñanamoli, 1997). Love, affection, pity, and sympathy are major characteristics of mudita. The ruler should practice loving-kindness, pity, and sympathy for establishing social peace of a society. Moreover, sympathetic joy means to become happy even in case of success of

enemies. Impartiality, the most important forth sublime of Buddhism is impartiality (Upekkhā). It should be practiced every stage of life for developing tranquil society. This features represent not to avoid good things even be happy in case of adverse situation (Nanamoli, 1997). For building a nice and comfortable society for all living animals these four virtues are inevitable. However, loving-kindness embraces all living creatures, compassion embraces suffering, sympathy embraces all sort of prosperity, and impartiality embraces the good and bad, the pleasant and unpleasant, and the love and unloved. In Buddhism all these virtues are practiced for the development of prosperous society.

#### 5.4. *The Necessity of the Eightfold Path for Peaceful Society*

The word peace is very closely related to Buddhism. Buddha always uttered the ways for his subjects how to lead a happy and prosperous lives. These issues also make a great impact of creating a sound society. This virtue provides a road map to attain those particular goals and objectives. These objectives are to ensure peace and wonderful environment of the society. For a peaceful environment the eightfold path is prerequisite for all living creatures. The eightfold path means eight ways/principles which lead a person to live in a society in a peaceful way. The eight fold paths are namely: Right Understanding, Right Thoughts, Right Speech, Right Action, Right Livelihood, Right Efforts, Right Mindfulness and Right Concentration. (Silabdra, 2007) A short discussion of eightfold path is given bellow.

**Right understanding:** It means to the truth of sufferings, the truth of the causes of sufferings, the truth of the end of the sufferings, and the truth of the path leading to the end of sufferings (Mahastavie, 1956). In other word, right understanding also means that one understands the nature of what are wholesome activities and unwholesome activities and how they may be performed with the body, speech and mind (Dhammananda, 1993).

**Right thought:** Right thought means to control mental and physical desire, to avoid anger and to eradicate hatred. It is very important and essential in a society to become harmless, benevolent and selfless and practice compassion and showing kindness to others.

**Right speech:** Another significant paths among the eightfold is right speech. It represents respect to the truth and respect for the well-being of others. Such activities could be ensured by avoiding lying, slander and avoiding harsh speech and avoiding idle/rootless talk(Sharma, 2011).

**Right action:** It involves respect for properly, respect for life and respects for any types of relationships. Furthermore it represents to abstain from killing living beings to abstain from stealing and abstain from misconduct(Horner, 1954-59).

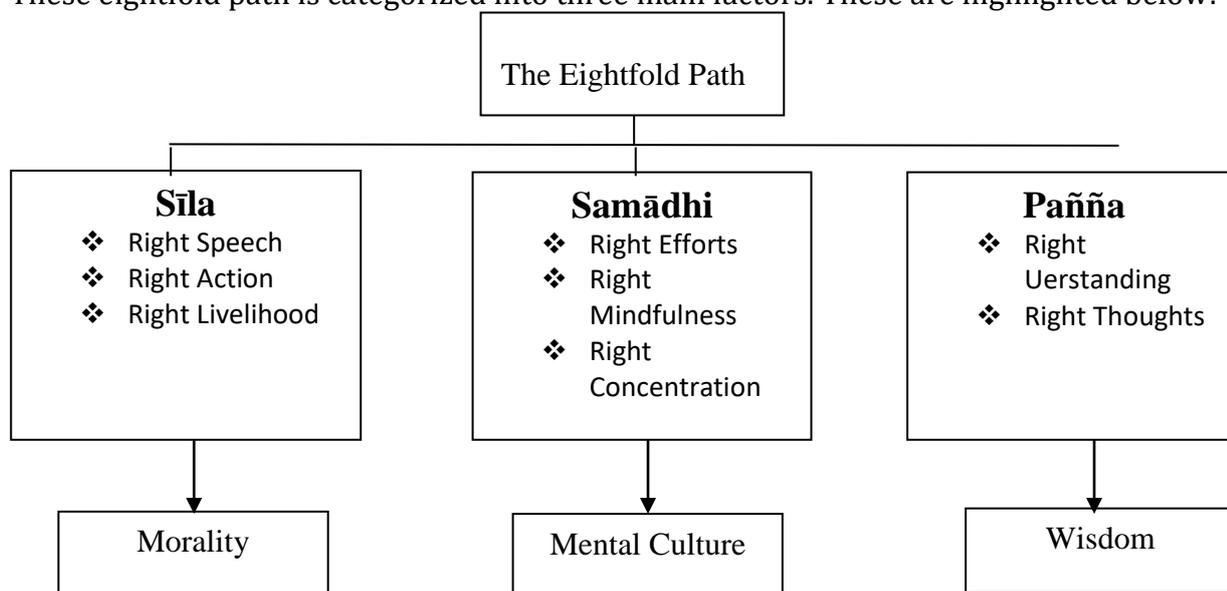
**Right Livelihood:** Right Livelihood represents the ways of earning in the society. One should earn by following moral principle and in a honest way. That's why; trading in weapons, trading in human beings, trading in drugs and drinks, trading in meat and trading in Poisson are strictly prohibited in Buddhism (Bhikkhu,2008).

**Right effort:** Right effort means to eliminate unwholesome mental states and firmly establish and increase wholesome thinking as a part of mind (Dhammananda, 1993).

**Right mindfulness:** In Buddhism right mindfulness is practiced widely. It is important to kill mental sufferings. Right mindfulness can be achieved by eliminating feelings, greed, anger, and mental desire.

**Right concentration:** Right concentration leads to physical and mental comfort, well-being, calm, joy and tranquility. Moreover, it turns the mind into an instrument capable to see things as they are, and help the mind to wisdom.

These eightfold path is categorized into three main factors. These are highlighted below:



**Source:** What Buddhist Believe: Dhammananda, 1993

Form the diagram of eightfold path it represents that Sīla (morality or moral conduct) leads to moral conduct; Samadi (Mental culture or Concentration of mind) leads to quiet attitude of mind, and Paññā (wisdom) leads to attain true knowledge. These elucidated teachings of Buddhism are necessary to lead a peaceful life in a society.

## 6. Conclusion

The main message of Buddha is to bring peace in the society. This concept is very useful in the present day context where war and collision are seen at various states of the world. From this perspective the teaching of Buddhism can contribute significantly. Buddhism teaches universal love, affection, compassion, impartiality, pity, moral conducts, moral values, truthfulness, good deeds, good governance, honesty, right speech, right tasks, and right thoughts etc. For the harmonious society moral codes of conduct are important. The moral principles will help a person to live in a honest way and earn honesty. Thus honest human being cannot do harmful task for others life properly and livings. That's why; the five precepts, noble eight fold paths are significant and contribute to nations buildings.

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