CHAPTER FIVE
THE SOCIAL ETHICS IN BUDDHISM AND TAOISM

1. Social and Reciprocal Relationship in Buddhism and Taoism

1.1. Human Happiness and Social Stability

Buddhist teachings are designed to enable men and women to achieve fulfilment and satisfaction in this life through their own efforts, and to establish a social order for the welfare of all, that is, it advocates a way of life that ensures the creation of a healthy society. Buddhism also gives insight into the very nature of man and events. It makes available the means to develop a simple and practical discipline of life suited to one’s own temperament and conditions. It creates a steady growth of confidence (Saddhā), moral energy (Sīla), sensitivity (Suta), generosity (Cāga), and understanding (Paññā). These are the pillars of both the spiritual and of the family life.¹ Work, stability, generosity and joyfulness are the marks of such a life-style, and these are generated in a way that accommodates change and does not depend on superficial tastes; above all, such a bond is a shield against suffering. The basis of the Buddha’s teaching is that mindfulness on every thought, word and deed has significance both for one’s own welfare and for the welfare of others.²

The specific social teachings of Buddha are designed for moulding and transforming society. From the Buddhist viewpoint, society itself is an abstraction, a collective whole made up of individuals. The quality of the society reflects the quality of the individuals who compose it. If the individual members are corrupt, the society will be corrupt. If the

¹ Vuddhi Sutta (GS. V, pp.93-94).
² Aggikkhandhopama Sutta (GS. IV, p.98).
individuals are noble and pure, the society will be noble and pure. Since society merely reflects its individual members, the Buddha aimed at transforming society by giving individuals new standard of conduct, new ideals and patterns of behaviour which will elevate their and transform their conduct. Then changes in social order would follow as a matter of course.

The Buddha described the four compass directions as: east for parents, south for teachers, west for wife, and north for friends and colleagues, and the two vertical directions as: up for ascetics and down for Brahmins and the servants. He elaborated on how to respect and support them, and how in turn the Six will return the kindness and support. The six basic social relationships that the Buddha draws upon to fill out his metaphor are parents and children, teacher and pupils, husband and wife, friend and friend, employer and workers, lay follower and religious guides. Each is considered one of the six directions in relation to its counterpart. With his customary sense of systematic concision, the Buddha ascribes to each member of each pair five obligations with respect to his or her counterpart; when each member fulfils these obligations, the corresponding direction comes to be at peace and free from fear.³

The relationships of parents and child, teacher and student, husband and wife, friend and companion, employer and employee, the ordained and the layman are the very framework of society. In the family the values, skills and disciplines are required to fulfil our roles in society at large. All these relationships are developed by generosity, kind and gentle speech, a life of service and the warm, responsive quality of the mind. This is how self-development serves others. Let us appreciate that true freedom is found in the undying care and protection of the united

³ Singāla Sutta (LDB. p.467).
family and there need never be divorce or a breakdown of traditional morality. This practice of “worshipping the six directions,” as explained by the Buddha, presupposes that society is sustained by a network of interlocking relationships that bring coherence to the social order when its members fulfil their reciprocal duties and responsibilities in a spirit of kindness, sympathy, and good will. Thus, for Buddhism, the social stability and security necessary for human happiness and fulfilment are achieved, not through aggressive and potentially disruptive demands for “rights” posed by competing groups, but by the renunciation of self-interest and the development of a sincere, large-hearted concern for the welfare of others and the good of the greater whole.4

Society grows through a network of relationships which are mutually interdependent. Every relationship is a whole-hearted commitment to support and to cherish. The world is a society of beings who depend utterly upon one another. We can grow neither materially nor spiritually unless we are committed to one another. The function of all social bonds is to provide a life-path both as a realistic discipline and as an opportunity for fulfilment, which guides and rewards at every stage from birth to death. In this strong web of relationships, marriage plays a central part. Society is a complex unit consisting of individuals each having a specific relationship with one another. Each person has a special place within the order of things. Each has a set of duties to perform and the well-being of society depends on how each individual member functions in it. One essential requirement for a happy society is that the individuals constituting the society must have tranquillity of mind. This tranquillity of mind arises from purity of thought, word and action, which means the observance of an ethical lifestyle based on the five precepts.

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As human beings we are unique in our ability to see the difference between good and bad. We have the capacity to make moral choices and thereby to influence the pattern of our own lives and that of others. This influence is exerted through our thoughts, speech and actions. If we are able to develop an inner purity and strength, then we have the basis on which we can give, in all our relationships, what is needed by others. It is we who can create a harmonious and safe society.

1.2. Man, Nature and Social Harmony

Throughout its history, Taoism has always had a strong utopian vision in which humans, nature, and heaven coexist in peace and harmony. Tao-Te-Ching proposed a utopian vision of society based on the notion of a wise and noble ruler whose strength of moral character inspired moral behaviour throughout the country. Lǎo Zǐ described the ideal country as one which was small, with a small population that avoided technological advances in preference for simple living, and was self-contained, uninterested in nearby other small countries. One constant component has been an emphasis on individual self-cultivation as a means of maintaining social harmony. For the individual, one’s relationship with nature begins at home, not only within one’s immediate surroundings, but within one’s own body.

Taoism views social actions and perceptions as regulated by the interaction of three systems at the universal, interpersonal, and intrapersonal levels. Each of the systems consists of an opposite and corresponding pair. First, the operation of the highest system involves the antithesis and harmony between “Tao” and “Te.” Traditionally, the term

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5 小國寡民!...鄰國相望，不相往來。(TTC. Chapter.80).
“Tao” is viewed as synonymous with the “path” or the “way,” and the term “Te” is defined as “virtue” or “integrity.” The more appropriate meaning of Tao is the “alternatives,” which refer to the eternal, ultimate reality, or all alternative relations or patterns governing the operation of the universe and people’s interaction with nature and with one another.

Understanding the universal system has three implications for comprehending social actions: (1) Everything in the universe, including people’s cognition and actions, is constantly involved in changing and developmental processes, interacting with one another. (2) Different actions result from the actor’s different amounts of Te, or the understanding of the alternatives in the situation, because people’s choices of actions or perceptions in the world are fettered by their knowledge of Tao that regulates the nature and people. (3) An individual can learn and develop Te only when he or she is exposed to Tao, because only Tao, which manifests as more inclusive and alternative ways of perceiving the self, others and situations, can teach the person the meanings of Te. An individual who intends to change others’ actions or perceptions must understand Tao, or comprehend how Tao operates in the universe, including all alternative factors (social, natural, external, psychological, etc.) that interact with the others, to obtain real freedom and consonance in the interaction.

Second, an individual’s actions and perceptions in an interpersonal situation are also governed by the interpersonal system, which consists of the self and the others who are similar or dissimilar in following or defying the Taoist principles during an interaction, “Knowing the others is wisdom, knowing the self is enlightenment.” The Taoist concept of similarity, however, suggests that the extent to which people are similar

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6 道乃久 (TTC. Chapter.16).
7 知人者智, 自知者明。（TTC. Chapter.33).
or dissimilar in complying with or spurning the Taoist precepts will affect the types of relationship they may have. Because one side’s interpersonal behaviour that is carried out toward the other depends upon the target’s reactions to be realized, the continuation of interpersonal interactions or conflicts relies on the participants’ validation of each other’s actions or perceptions. According to Taoism, a person in a conflict situation may minimize the dissension by using alternatives that can transcend or invalidate the perceptions or expectations of the opponent who exacerbates the situation. For example, people should apply calm to subdue the obstreperous and utilize stillness to overcome heat.\(^8\)

The Taoist thoughts suggest that there are three possible relations between two interacting people. (1) When both sides understand and follow Tao in their interactions, they will engender a harmonious relationship, with mutual attraction and reward, because both validate each other’s Tao-following actions. (2) When both sides deviate from Tao and use similar methods in their perception and interaction, they also validate each other’s violations. Interpersonal tensions and mutual animosity will stem from this type of confirmation. (3) When the self tries to reach harmony with the other while the other attempts to intensify a confrontation, the self may diminish the interpersonal friction by following the Taoist principles, because the person who understands Tao is the one who has more alternatives or choices in perception and interaction than the person who disobeys Tao. Lǎo Zǐ says: “Approach the universe with Tao, and evil will have no power; not that evil is not puissant, but its power will be harmless to people.”\(^9\)

Third, the effects of the universal and interpersonal systems on an individual’s actions and perceptions are also mediated by the

\(^8\) 靜勝熱。 (TTC. Chapter.45).

\(^9\) 以道莅天下! 其鬼 不神; 非其鬼 不神, 其神 不傷人 (TTC. Chapter.60).
intrapersonal system, which consists of two opposite mental forces within the person. Because Taoism views people as a microcosm or small universe that is a part of, and the correspondence of, the large universe, the antithesis and unity of Yīn and Yáng and their alternation in the universe also operate within a person. According to Lǎo Zǐ, all the pairs of opposites, such as shrink and expand, weak and strong, fall and rise, and receiving and giving, can be seen as the two possible aspects of each object. The intrapersonal system, which consists of the tendency toward Tao and the tendency to deviate from Tao, regulates social interaction in the following two ways: (1) Any attempt to change social behaviour and perceptions depends upon not only various external forces and variables, but also the internal forces of the target person, who actively interprets and responds to the situation. (2) Within the person two internal forces exist. It is possible to alter social actions and perceptions because each entity must internally contain the possibilities for it to develop in the two directions before external forces can have any influences on the entity. A change in the direction congruous with Tao depends upon the individuals’ awareness of the discrepancy between their actions or perceptions and the Taoist standards they accept.

Although conflicts among people and between people and nature generally result from people’s deviation from Tao, Lǎo Zǐ also identifies several tangible reasons for interpersonal discord. First, the disharmony may originate from the ignorance of the precept “Reversal is the movement of Tao,”\(^\text{10}\) which maintains that when things develop to extremes, they will evolve in the opposite directions. Those who do not know when to stop or who attempt to alter the movement of Tao will encounter in troubles.\(^\text{11}\) Second, people who believe that they can subdue

\(^\text{10}\) 反者道之動, (TTC. Chapter.40).
\(^\text{11}\) 知足不辱, 知止不殆: (TTC. Chapter.44).
others by being belligerent, violent, angry, and supercilious may temporarily repress conflicts, but they cannot create interpersonal harmonies, because violence and intimidation, which are contradictory to Tao, can only perpetuate conflicts and tensions.\textsuperscript{12} Third, individuals who are hard, stiff, unbending, and are unaware of alternatives will inevitably put themselves in predicaments of conflict.\textsuperscript{13}

To maintain the peace and harmoniousness of a society that consists of people, every people, must at first keep to the inward harmoniousness and the peace of mind, and pursue a healthy way of life. Man has both the material and spiritual life, and he must find the balance between the two so as to achieve self-fulfilment, self-appreciation and well-being. A Taoist can adjust himself and find the equilibrium in their mind, no matter what circumstance happens to him—in the case of lacking in material wealth, he will still be fearless and enterprising, making an unyielding effort to overcome all obstacles and realize high ideal. In case of being rich and advantaged, he will nevertheless keep simple and industrious, and go ahead for a better and more harmonious life, rather than indulging himself with cakes and ale, or living in luxury and banality. If people can likewise listen carefully to what the Taoist preach by “respecting Tao and prizing Virtue”\textsuperscript{14} and “contenting with one’s lot”, and makes a practice of being simple rather than luxurious, they will free from money-worship, fame and gain, and devote themselves to intellectual development and spiritual life. In this way, social morals at large will be greatly improved, and a harmonious society will be in progress.

\textsuperscript{12} 不道早已! (TTC. Chapter.30).
\textsuperscript{13} 故堅強者 死之徒. (TTC. Chapter.76).
\textsuperscript{14} 尊道 而貴德。 (TTC. Chapte.51).
Harmony is central to Taoism. The Taoist universe is ordered—harmonious—so that “alternating forces and phases” shape “rhythms of life.” Harmony pervades the cosmos, which is union, integration, and synthesis, rather than exclusivity, individuality, and separation. Humans sometimes make the mistake of getting caught up in their individual lives, like a wave tearing across the ocean. Taoism discourages such a shortsighted lifestyle, instead encouraging a life harmonious, mindful that our short existence is part of a great and ongoing transformation. Shallow, human disharmony stems from the error of neglecting, or forgetting, our deeper, shared unity with the larger world. In contrast, harmony is envisioned as reaching the depths of quietude on the ocean floor. However much we might behave like an independent wave, we are the ocean, the Great Unity, along with the rest of nature, which functions in harmony. Spiritual advancement requires people to know and act on this understanding. It is our duty to live “for the fulfilment of the health and harmony of all living things.” Harmony is the Chinese ideal.\(^\text{15}\)

Therefore, it is very important for people to understand thoroughly what one’s life imports and how his lot matters, and then not to seek things, which is unnecessary to his life or unobtainable by his lot. Only if one keeps quietness and cleanness, and minimizes the thought of self and makes his desires few, can he reflect imperturbably upon what the worth of life is, preserve good psychological condition, maintain a harmony between material and spiritual life, and make his life ample and peaceful. When he establishes at heart a strong belief in harmoniousness and peacefulness, he is likely to keep and promote social harmoniousness. From this perspective, an individual’s body is also the body of the world. The world inside one’s body, the world on earth, and the world of the

heavenly realms are all interconnected. What happens in one affects the others, and one can affect change in one by acting in another. Thus the purpose of existence, for everyone, is to improve oneself physically, mentally, emotionally, spiritually for the benefit of all.

2. Personal and Community Ethics in Buddhism and Taoism

2.1. Ethics of Individuals and Inter-relationships

A society grows through a network of relationships which are mutually inter-twined and inter-dependent. Every relationship is a whole-hearted commitment to support and to protect others in a group or community. The good of self and others is seen as inter-twined. The Buddha says; “by protecting oneself one protects others; by protecting others, one protects oneself. By practice, by development, by cultivation of the establishment of mindfulness one protects oneself and others. By tolerance, by nonviolence, by loving-kindness, by sympathy one protects others and oneself.”

Man is born into society, brought up in society and he continues to live in society until his death. Man acquires his human nature or humane qualities from living in society and maintains relations through communication with the other members who constitute society. No man on earth can develop his personality without the help of any kind of human society. The impact society makes on an individual is so strong that it should be considered as the most fundamental and important factor which builds the character of an individual. A child from his birth is under social influence, because he learns from others, firstly from parents.

16 Sedaka Sutta (CDB. II, p.1648)
and then from teachers and others. When he is grown up to be a man, he develops communication with others weaving a network of relationship with others. He is caught up in the web of obligations and commitments to his fellow beings called society. There is no society without humans and no humans without society. This interdependence of society and man is persisting not only for the sake of mutual survival but also for the fulfilment of higher ideals related to both man and society. In the interaction between man and society, society dominates man channelling him on the proper path, instructing him on values, rights, duties, manners and behavioural patterns and many more and directs him to live a meaningful and purposeful life. On the other hand, man also contributes his share to society as an active member of it by way of continuing his social heritage or reshaping it ideologically.

The inter-relationship of man and society is accepted in Buddhism. Hence social ethics in Buddhism is for the welfare of both man and society. The Five Precepts (Pañcasīla), the Four Sublime Abodes (Cattāro Brahmavihārā), the Four Ways of Showing Favour (Cattāri Saṅgaha Vatthūni) and the Ten Wholesome Deeds (Dasa Kusalakammapatha) vindicate Buddhism’s social concern taking the individual as an integral part of it. Therefore Buddhist ethics become meaningful only in the context of society. Sublime Abodes are: Loving Kindness (Mettā), Compassion (Karuṇā), Altruistic or Sympathetic Joy (Muditā) and Equanimity (Uppekkhā). These mental attitudes are to be developed in relation to others in society. In the same way, the Four Ways of Showing Favour, namely by liberality (Dāna), kindly speech (Piyavācā), beneficial actions (Atthacariyā) and impartiality (Samānattatā) are to be practised for the sake of others. These four ways are just like the linchpin of

17 Tevijja Sutta (LDB. I. p.194).
18 Saṅgaha Sutta (GS. II. p.36).
moving car. If these ways are lacking, mother who bore and father who begat would not receive the honour and respect which are their due.¹⁹

The Five Precepts, too, ensure one’s social position as a constituent part of society. The Ten Wholesome Deeds are discussed in relation to one’s conduct of body, word and mind. Abstention from killing (Pāṇātipāṭā veramaṇī), taking what is not given (Adinnādānā veramaṇī) and sexual misconduct (Kāmesumicchācārā veramaṇī) are good conduct through body or kāyasucarita. Abstention from false speech (Musāvādā veramaṇī), slanderous speech (Pisuṇāya vācāya veramaṇī), harsh speech (Pharusāya vācāya veramaṇī) and vain talk (Saṃphappalāpā veramaṇī) are good conduct through speech or vacīsucarita. Non-covetousness (Anabhijjhā), Non-ill-will (Abyāpāda) and Right view (Sammādiṭṭhi) are good conduct through mind or Manosucarita.

The last three wholesome actions belong to the mind. Mind, according to Buddhist ethics, is the most important one. Speech and deed, whether wholesome or unwholesome, have their roots in the mind. It is the mind that is expressed in speech and deed. Therefore, good or evil results of speech and deed depend solely on the mind. In this regard, the Buddha says:

“Mind is the forerunner of all states, mind is chief, mind-made are they. If one speaks or acts with wicked mind, then suffering follows one, even as the wheel follows the hoof of the draught-ox.

Mind is the forerunner of all states, mind is chief, mind-made are they. If one speaks or acts with pure mind, then happiness follows one, even as the shadow that never leaves him”.²⁰

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¹⁹ Saṅgaha Sutta (GS. II, p.36).
²⁰ Dh. verse.1 & 2, Acharya Buddharakkhita (tr.), p.3.
Right view is a factor to be developed and put into practice in relation to society for the good and happiness of oneself and society. Therefore, the social implication of this factor is quite clear from the fact that renunciation of personal enjoyment, giving up of thoughts of ill will and abstinence from violence have to be practised while one lives in society. Hence, when he develops and practises the right kind of thoughts free from evil thoughts harmful to other beings, it is needless to say that society is benefited by his moral conduct. Positively, when he develops love, goodwill and amity, his attitude towards fellow human beings falls into proper focus and he contributes in his personal capacity to the course of welfare of society.

According to the Buddha, whatsoever person behaves righteously with body, speech and mind during the morning, a happy morning will be his. Whatsoever person behaves righteously with body, speech and mind at noon, a happy noontide will be his. Whatsoever person behaves righteously with body, speech and mind during the evening, a happy evening will be his. On such a day, right actions with body, speech and mind, and noble aspirations too, bring beneficial gain to him who practices them; happy is he who reaps such benefits; he will be growing in the Buddha’s doctrine.\(^\text{21}\)

It is quite clear that these ethical standards laid down in Buddhism are expressive and relevant only in the framework of social living. Social ethics in Buddhism is practicable in relation to society. These ethical practices bind individual and society together. In other words, ethical and moral behaviour prescribed in these factors becomes meaningful in the context of society.

\(^{21}\) Pubbagha Sutta (GS. V, p.272).
2.2. Ethics of Humanity and Universe

Taoist ethics focus on the creation of harmony within the community and the larger universe. The common view of Taoism is that it encourages people to live with detachment and calm, resting in non-action and smiling at the vicissitudes of the world. Most people assume that Taoists are separate from the human community, not antisocial or asocial but rather supra-social and often simply different. Taoists neither criticize society nor support it by working for social change, but go along with the flow of the cosmos as it moves through them.

Contrary to this common view, Taoists through the ages have developed various forms of community and proposed numerous sets of behavioural guidelines and texts on ethical considerations. Religious Taoist rules cover both ethics, i.e., the personal values of the individual, and morality, i.e., the communal norms and social values of the organization. They range from basic moral rules against killing, stealing, lying, and sexual misconduct through suggestions for altruistic thinking and models of social interaction to behavioural details on how to bow, eat, and wash, as well as to the unfolding of universal ethics that teach people to think like the Tao itself. Taoist realization is based on how one lives one’s life in interaction with the community—family, religious group, monastery, state, and cosmos. Ethics and morality, as well as the creation of community, emerge as central in the Taoist religion. In this regard Taoism does not stand alone. Rules and community structures play an important role in all religious traditions. They are often placed at the very foundation of religious aspiration and practice, formulating the proper way of conducting oneself in daily life and in relation to others, prohibiting destructive and disruptive behaviours, while encouraging practitioners to develop a positive and
helpful outlook toward themselves and the world. Only on this basis of essentially moral conduct and a functioning human community can true inner cultivation grow and can higher levels of spirituality be attained.

Taoism emphasis on ethical guidelines requisite to serious attainment and its support of three fundamentally different types of community: lay organizations, monastic institutions, and the closed communities of millenarian or utopian groups. It is unique in that its rules are highly varied and specific not only to these communities as they change over time but also to different levels of ordination and types of rituals.\textsuperscript{22} The ethical goal for the individual is to imitate the Tao; when this happens all social conflict will vanish. The key concept in Taoist ethics is that of non-action. The best way to proceed in this investigation is to examine a selection of relevant passages from Tao Te Ching and then attempt to extract from these the essence of Taoist ethical theory.

The sage, who represents the Taoist ethical ideal, is to adopt the policy of non-action, not doing anything, by which is meant not doing anything intentionally or with deliberation. Whatever is to happen must be allowed to occur naturally. The Sage conveys his instructions by not speaking, which paradoxically expresses allowing nature to take its course, or to behave according to instinct. Therefore, the sage manages affairs without doing anything, and conveys his instructions without the use of speech.\textsuperscript{23} Taoist should keep in mind the greater harmony and benefit of the cosmos at large, avoiding all activities that would create disturbance among recluses, families, villages, country, and state. The goal of the religious Taoist life, however, much centred on the individual or in whatever kind of community, never wavered from the universal vision of Great Peace. The harmony of Heaven and Earth was always at

\textsuperscript{22} CC. p.1.
\textsuperscript{23} TTC. Chapter-2.
the core of all communal and religious Taoist activity and still is to the present day.24

Taoism appeals everyone to foster benevolence, to do good work and accumulate merits, to assist his generation and be helpful and kind to others. In Tao Te Ching, Lǎo Zǐ says: “The Tao of heaven is like drawing a bow. Lower that which is high. Raise that which is low. Reduce that which is excessive. Add to that which is insufficient. The Tao of Heaven is to take from those who have too much and give to those who do not have enough.”25 That is to say, the rich should feel obligated to help the poor, and prevent the economic polarization of society or making the poor even poorer. This also means that everyone is provided with proper chances to make a living and become rich. People from different groups or different class are not differentiated between the superior and the inferior, or between the noble and the base. So it is completely possible for them to live in harmony, to exist and develop corporately, to communicate with one another, and to promote appreciation of each other.

3. Ethical Responsibilities in Buddhism and Taoism

3.1. Protection of Six Directions (Cha Disāpaṭicchādi)

The Buddhist prescriptions for living built around loving-kindness, compassion and generosity pertain to individual as well as social conduct and are well documented in the texts. For example, the “Discourse on the

25 天之道 - 其猶張弓與？高者抑之，下者舉之；有餘者損之，不足者補之。天之道：損有餘，而補不足。（TTC. Chapter.77).
Admonition to Siṅgāla” contains a broad spectrum of social relations governing relations between different categories of persons, e.g. parent and children, teachers, and pupils, marital relations of husband and wife, friendships relations and the laity and clergy. All of these recognize mutual responsibilities and recognize above all that pursuit of individual happiness and welfare is inextricably linked with the welfare of others.

One should worship these six directions said the Buddha. The word “worship” (Namaseyya) is very significant as one worships something sacred, something worthy of honour and respect. These six family and social groups mentioned above are treated in Buddhism as sacred, worthy of respect and worship. But how is one to “worship” them? The Buddha said that one could ‘worship’ them only by performing one’s duties towards them. These duties are explained in his discourse to Siṅgāla.

3.1.1. Ethical treatment between Parents and Children

Parents are sacred to their children. The Buddha says: “Parents are called Brahma.” The term Brahma denotes the highest and most sacred conception in Indian thought, and in it the Buddha includes parents. Mother and father should be seen as like teachers of old (Pubbacariyā) as they are worthy of offerings and help on account of their compassionately bringing up their children and introducing them to the world. So in good Buddhist families at the present time children literally “worship” their parents every day, morning and evening. They have to perform certain duties towards their parents according to the “noble discipline”. They (1) should look after their parents in their old age; (2) should do whatever they have to do on their behalf; (3) should maintain the honour of the

26 Siṅgāla Sutta (LDB. pp.466-8).
28 Ibid.
family and continue the family tradition; (4) should protect the wealth earned by their parents; and (5) perform their funeral rites after their death.\footnote{Singāla Sutta (LDB. p.467).}

Parents, in their turn, have certain responsibilities towards their children: (1) they should keep their children away from evil courses; (2) should engage them in good and profitable activities; (3) should give them a good education; (4) should marry them into good families; and (5) should hand over the property to them in due course.\footnote{Singāla Sutta (LDB. p.467).} The Siṅgālovāda Sutta affirms that parents only win the honour and respect of children by their kindly help to them. While the law of Kamma ensures that children get the parents they deserve and parents get the children they deserve, it is said that the only way that a child can repay the debt of gratitude owed to his or her parents for caring for him or her in pregnancy and childhood is by getting them to develop or deepen a commitment to Buddhism and a virtuous life.\footnote{Peter Harvey, An Introduction to Buddhist Ethics: Foundations, Values and Issues, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000, p.98.} Respect and support for parents is also emphasized in the Maṅgala Sutta:

\begin{quote}
Aid for mother and father,
And support for wife and children,
Work that is free from upset:
This is a supreme blessing.\footnote{Maṅgala Sutta (GD. II, p.29).}
\end{quote}

\section*{3.1.2. Ethical treatment between Teacher and Taught}

In this relation a pupil (1) should be diligent; (2) should attend to the teacher’s needs if any; (3) should respect and be obedient to the teacher: (4) should service the teacher; (5) should study earnestly. And
the teacher, in his turn, (1) should train and shape his pupil properly; (2) should teach him well; (3) should give him a thorough grounding in all skills; (4) should introduce him to his friends; (5) and should try to procure him security or employment when his education is over.\textsuperscript{33}

A teacher is expected to do his utmost in imparting his knowledge to his pupil, as the pupil depends solely on the capability of a teacher. The teacher is expected to be clear and lucid in his explanation so that he can be easily understood by the pupil. Apart from imparting knowledge, the teacher is also expected to guide the pupil is his behaviour morally and ethically. The student has a debt of gratitude towards his teachers because they gave birth to the possibility of a professional life or openness to the world of art and craft. The teacher accepts to guide the student and advise him through the path of science, presenting the lessons and nurturing his steps in the best of his ability. It is an individual and committed relationship. The student is committed to loyalty and honour towards his teacher, praising his name, as much as the teacher is committed to train and guide him as much as he can.

The student is free to search around for the teacher and he finds suitable to his expectations, but once committed he gives himself wholeheartedly to the learning process. This wholeheartedness is exemplified by the eagerness to learn as one of the duties of the student. Consciousness of the traditional model shall foster the student to deepen into and protect the lineage of teaching. The development of a happy and successful relationship between a pupil and a teacher can be achieved by a kind and gentle approach on the part of the teacher exercising patience, tolerance and understanding.

\textsuperscript{33} Siṅgāla Sutta (LDB. p.467).
3.1.3. Ethical treatment between Husband and Wife

Love between husband and wife is considered almost religious or sacred. It is called Sadāra Brahmacariya 34 “sacred family life”. Here, too, the significance of the term Brahma should be noted and the highest respect is given to this relationship. Wives and husbands should be faithful, respectful and devoted to each other. This is the way of long-life living. 35 They have certain duties towards each other. The husband (1) should always love his wife; (2) should honour and respect to her; (3) should be faithful to her; (4) should secure her position and comfort; and (5) should please her by presenting her with clothing and jewellery. The wife, in her turn, (1) should supervise and look after household affairs; (2) should entertain guests, visitors, friends, relatives and employees; (3) should love and be faithful to her husband; (4) should protect his earnings; (5) should be clever and energetic in all activities. 36

This advice, given over twenty five centuries ago, stands good for today. Knowing the psychology of the man who tends to consider himself superior, the Buddha made a remarkable change and uplifted the status of a woman by a simple suggestion that a husband should honour and respect the wife. The suggestion that a husband should be to his wife, would mean that a husband should fulfil and maintain his marital obligations to his wife, thus sustaining the confidence in the marital relationship in every sense of the word. The husband, being a bread-winner, would invariably stay away from home, hence he should entrust the domestic or household duties to the wife who should be considered as the home economic-administrator. The provision of befitting ornaments to the wife should be symbolic of the husband’s love, care and attention showered on the wife. This symbolic gesture has gone on from time

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34 Sadārasantoso brahmacariyanti vutto (DA.I. p.161).
35 Mahādharmapāla Jātaka (J. IV, p.34).
36 Singāla Sutta (LDB. p.467).
immemorial. It will be observed that in accordance with the list of duties a wife is expected to perform to meet the needs of a husband, a wife should not be treated as merely a natural or feminine gift to her husband, but should be treated as a partner of equal standing in a delightful relationship that should be nurtured reciprocally by both parties in a spirit of sincere loyalty, gentleness and devoted dedication to one another.\(^{37}\)

Marriage plays a very important part in this strong web of relationships of giving support and protection. A good marriage should grow and develop gradually from understanding and not impulse, from true loyalty and not just sheer indulgence. The institution of marriage provides a fine basis for the development of culture, a delightful association of two individuals to be nurtured and to be free from loneliness, deprivation and fear. In marriage, each partner develops a complimentary role, giving strength and moral courage to one another, each manifesting a supportive and appreciative recognition of the other’s skills. There must be no thought of either man or woman being superior—each is complimentary to the other, a partnership of equality, exuding gentleness, generosity, calm and dedication.

### 3.1.4. Ethical treatment between Friends

To friends and companions one (1) should be hospitable and charitable; (2) should speak pleasantly and agreeably; (3) should look after their welfare; (4) should be on equal terms with one another; (5) should not quarrel among themselves. In return, friends and companions (1) should look after when he is inattentive; and (2) should look after his property when he is inattentive; (3) should be a refugee when he is afraid;

\(^{37}\) Mahādhammapāla Jātaka (J. IV, p.34).
(4) should not forsake when he is in trouble; and (5) should show concern for his new generations.\(^\text{38}\)

On the subject of friends and associates, the Buddha, in his wisdom, has also advised his followers to be selective and discriminating in that one should not be found to be associating with undesirable elements that might lead a person to deviate from the proper path taught by the Buddha. Knowing the frailties and weaknesses of human nature, the Buddha realised that there are good and bad elements in a human society and that if we are to remain good Buddhists we should avoid bad company. By being in bad company would mean associating with habitual drunkards and drug addicts, adulterers, gamblers, cheats, people of ill-repute and people who resort to violence on the slightest pretext. Just like rotten an apple that would contaminate the good ones, the rotten apple should be isolated before it begins to do any damage.

Whilst advising his followers to shun evil company, the Buddha also indicated the type of people whom we should cultivate as friends. The classic saying “A friend in need is a friend indeed” describes aptly the qualification of a good friend. A good friend is one who maintains the same respect and cordiality either in success or in failure. A good friend is also one who rejoices at the success of his companion whilst offering sympathy in times of adversity. A good friend is a social asset who should be nurtured and cultivated for mutual well-being and benefit of both parties. The drunkards and people who are prone to unseemly sexual behaviour, has already been touched upon. Gambling has apparently been in vogue for a long time, hence the advice by the Buddha, to steer away from this particular evil. Fortunes, which have taken years accumulate and save, have been lost at casinos and gambling dens. Apart

\(^{38}\) Siṅgāla Sutta (LDB. pp.467-8).
from the drug menace, gambling can be classed as one of the serious evils that should be avoided if one values one’s integrity in a family or society.

3.1.5. Ethical treatment between Employer and Employee

The master or the employer has several obligations towards his servant or his employee (1) work should be assigned according to ability and capacity; (2) adequate wages should be paid; (3) medical needs should be provided; (4) occasional donations or bonuses should be granted; and (5) should let employers off work at the right time. The servant or employee, in his turn, (1) should be diligent; (2) should not be lazy; (3) should be honest, obedient and take only what they are given; (4) he should be earnest in his work; and (5) should bear employer’s good repute.39

According to these ways, the employers and employees should adopt in their mutual dealings. This enables the two segments to maintain their functional differences but develop harmonious relations that greatly contribute to enhance mutual understanding, trust, and consequently increase output and production. The Buddhist position is that the employer should be virtuous and humanitarian in his attitudes. The commentary to the Sutta gives interesting details regarding how the employers should deal with employees. It says that an employer should be careful in assigning work to employees. Work should be assigned according to the age and physical-state of the workers. Thus, young children should not be entrusted with work that should be done by the elders; the employer should be considerate in assigning work to elderly employees. An employer should consider the employee’s gender, abstaining from assigning women any type of work normally performed by men, and vice-versa.

The commentary says that the needs of the employee should be taken into account when fixing the salaries and other emoluments. The scheme of promotion on efficiency and productivity is also suggested in the commentary. Payments of bonuses, inducements, etc., are cited as part of the duties of a good employer. Exploitation of labour is completely denounced. It is emphasized that the granting of leave, arrangement of proper work-shifts, and the releasing of workers at fixed times should be strictly observed. Besides, the employers are strongly reminded that they are duty-bound to provide medical care to their employee when they are sick. Reciprocal duties of the employees are also emphasized.

3.1.6. Ethical treatment between Priests and Laity

In the relation between the religious (Samaṇa and Brahmanas) and the laity, lay people (1) should have loving-kindness in action towards the religious; (2) in speech; (3) in thought; (4) should keep open house for them; (5) should provide material support to the religious. In return, the religious (1) should restrain lay people from evil; (2) should encourage lay people to do good; (3) should be benevolently compassionate towards lay people; (4) should teach lay people what they have not heard; (5) should make their learning clear; and (6) should point out the way of higher living (Sagga).40

Such a relationship is developed not through force or compulsion, but through a spirit of common understanding and loving-kindness. This is a disciplined and practical way of life which has sustained Buddhism for so many centuries. This practical way of life has been nurtured through the noble teachings of the Buddha and through the tranquillity of

40 Siṅgāla Sutta (LDB. p.468).
the mind arising from purity of word, action and thought. It should be sustained for many more centuries to come.

3.2. The Way of Filial Piety (Xiàodào, 孝道)

The concept of Xiào (filial piety) in Chinese culture has a long history. The concern with procreation and ancestor worship reaches deep into the ancient Chinese past. The earliest meaning of Xiao seems to be connected with “providing food offerings to one’s ancestors.” Later, it already “encompassed service to both living parents and ancestors.” And “while the general meaning of Xiào as selfless devotion to the welfare of one’s elders remained constant over time, the particulars of Xiào—the concrete actions recognized as embodying it and to whom it was addressed—were often subject to change.”41 The family emerges as the organizing principle of society, and the resultant ethics of filial piety becomes a defining feature of Chinese identity.

As is well known, the term “Xiào” (filial piety) appears only twice in Tao-Te-Ching. First, Lǎo Zǐ states:

When the Great Dao declines,
There are benevolence and rightness.
When knowledge and wisdom emerge,
There are great achievements.
When the six family relationships are not in harmony,
There are filial piety (Xiào) and compassion.42

Second, Lǎo Zǐ says:

Abandon sagacity and discard wisdom;
Then the people will benefit a hundredfold.

42 大道廢有仁義; 慧智出 有大偽。六親 不和 有孝慈; (TTC. Chapter.18).
Abandon benevolence and discard rightness;
Then the people will return to filial piety (Xiào) and compassion.\(^{43}\)

In these instances, the Lǎo Zī offers two assessments of Xiào. Whereas in Chapter 18 it views Xiào as a secondary virtue, in Chapter 19 it gives a higher value to filial piety as compared with benevolence and rightness.\(^{44}\) Filial piety is universal and inborn, intrinsic to the natural order and completely effortless. Lǎo Zī affirms the value of the “filial piety” of the people as something that is opposite to what comes out of artificial human effort and planning. Lǎo Zī also affirms the value of filial piety as part of human natural endowment and it might be the first to advocate filial piety as a value based on its being part of human nature. Lǎo Zī considers this kind of filial piety to be a part of the pristine virtue of the Taoist world, a world in which the people are naturally filial and compassionate. Thus, Taoist philosophy, based on the Lǎo Zī rejects Xiào as artificial and affirms it as genuine and natural. It expresses meaning and practice of filial piety in ancient Chinese society.

### 3.2.1. Ethical Treatment to Ancestor and Spirit

Taoism values life from its inception. The Taoist appreciation of life is not only reflected in its quest for longevity and the protection of life but also in the respect paid to the origin of life. Because of a common attitude of gratitude toward the origin of one’s life, Taoism emphasises the spiritual practices of filial piety and ancestor worship. Due to concern for the afterlife of parents and ancestors, complicated funeral rituals have been developed. Taoism teaches people to respect and to be grateful for their own origin and Taoism demands appreciation and gratitude toward

\(^{43}\) 绝圣 棄智, 民利百倍; 绝仁 棄義, 民復孝慈; (TTC. Chapter.19).

all of nature as well as filial piety. The spiritual practice of Taoism is ancestor worship. Filial piety and ancestor worship are actually two sides of the same coin. If one should display gratitude toward ancestors, considering that parents are the closest ancestors, one should display gratitude toward parents as well. From another viewpoint, if one should revere parents as the people who gave life to oneself, considering that ancestors are one’s parents from generations in the past, ancestors must surely be revered.45

The concept of filial piety in the context of ethical development tends to focus on the relationship between the present generation and its ancestors and descendants. Ancestors were commonly seen as potential obstacles to the religious attainment of Taoists, mainly because their sins were visited upon their descendants and thus obstructed the latter’s salvation. It meant that all misdeeds and negativity of the ancestors did not die with them but, unless expiated in some way or another, remained to haunt the descendants for generations.46 Taoists extend this care to forms that are invisible. All of the special days in the Taoist calendar are days for humans to contact and take care of spirits, including deities and ancestors. The Ghost Month, which culminates on the fifteenth day of the seventh month of the lunar calendar, is a time for Taoists to take care of all ghosts, since ghosts are merely another form of existence and are part of the natural world that human beings inhabit. The “birthdays” of different deities also create opportunities for humans to build relationships with nonhumans. Even though Taoists consider deities to be a superior form of being far more powerful than humans, humans can still express their care and build a rapport with the deities by preparing feasts

for them. As a matter of fact, Taoist practitioners try to communicate with and express their care and gratitude for the spiritual world at least twice a month. On the first and the fifteenth days of every month, Taoists regularly make offerings to deities, ancestors, and other spirits.47 “Abridged Codes for the Taoist Community” allows offerings to the family dead, but only five times each year.48

One important feature in Taoism concerns the salvation of one’s parents and ancestors. This is significant because religious Taoism, with its emphasis on immortality, is often perceived to be chiefly concerned with individual salvation. The earlier Taoist emphasis on the pursuit of individual immortality is complemented by concerns with the afterlife, including rebirth and salvation for one’s ancestors. On this basis, rituals for the well-being of ancestors became an important part of religious Taoist practice. This suited perfectly the traditional Chinese concern for ancestor worship. The emphasis on loyalty and filial piety as a condition for appointment and promotion in the after-world and the concern with salvation for one’s ancestors are considered as Taoist’s own contributions in which the concept of filial piety plays a decisive role.49

Ancestor worship is a religious practice based on the belief that deceased family members have a continued existence, that the spirits of deceased ancestors will look after the family, take an interest in the affairs of the world, and possess the ability to influence the fortune of the living. Unity of the group is reinforced through ancestor veneration, offering of various kinds help to keep the ancestors happy in the spiritual world, who, in return, will bless the family. Family is viewed as a closely united group of living and dead relatives. A simple ancestor memorial

might include the burning of incense and a libation, or ritual pouring, of wine at the family altar as well as prayers in which family members share the events of the day with their ancestor and ask the ancestor’s blessing. Ancestor worshipping is not asking for favours, but to fulfil one’s filial duties. The act is a way to respect honour and look after ancestors in their afterlives guaranteeing the ancestors’ well-being and positive disposition towards the living, as well as possibly seeking the ancestors’ wisdom, guidance or assistance for their living descendants. One has to pay respect and homage to the ancestors, honour the deeds and memories of the deceased, since the ancestors are the ones having brought the descendants into the world, nourished them and having prepared the conditions under which the descendants grew up, hence ancestor veneration is a pay back of spiritual debts. Being an important aspect of the Chinese culture, the social or non-religious function of ancestor worship is to cultivate kinship values like filial piety, family loyalty, and continuity of the family lineage.  

3.2.2. Ethical Treatment to Family

Taoist movements not only saw family relationships on the ancestral plane, but also placed a strong value on intergenerational integrity in this life. In the Taoist text, “Nǚqīng’s Statutes against Demons,”51 it is stated that lack of filial piety, resulting from bad family relations, will cause the subtraction of 180 days from one’s life expectancy. Irresolute behaviour and disrespect toward one’s own and others’ families, moreover, will bring the loss of 3,000 days and bad fortune for one’s descendants for seven generations. It also says:

51 女青鬼律, Nǚ qīng guǐ lǜ (DZ.790).
Do not live in a separate dwelling from your father or son or otherwise allow your family to scatter. Such violation will cause the subtraction of 22 days.

Do not go against the orders of your parents and wander about in the four directions. Do not establish yourself as a man of perfect energy and claim you had harmonized it all by yourself. Such violation will cause the subtraction of 320 days.

The notion that bad moral behaviour has a direct impact on one’s life expectancy stems from the belief that the celestial administration monitors people’s deeds and adds or subtracts days of life accordingly. Again, filial piety is seen not only as a virtue in present relationships but as behaviour with cosmic consequences for one’s own life and that of others.

Rules that honour and preserve family harmony are also found in “The Great Precepts of Self-Observation,”\textsuperscript{52} that outlines a total of 300 integrated Taoist precepts and guidelines for advanced practice. Its first section on community rules, emphasizes that Taoists should not live separate from their families or form a party on their basis. They must not encourage others to leave home, plot against their elders or parents, or generally behave in an unfilial manner.

The very same precepts appear also in “the Precepts of Middle Ultimate,”\textsuperscript{53} which generally placed a greater emphasis on filial piety, making it the first of the elementary ten precepts:

“Do not be disloyal or unfilial, without benevolence or good faith. Always exhaust your allegiance to your lord and family, be sincere in your relation to the myriad beings.”

\textsuperscript{52} 視身大戒, Guān shēn dà jiè (DZ.1364).

\textsuperscript{53} 初真戒, Chū zhēn jiè (DZ.180).
While this strong emphasis on filial piety as a religious rule dates, there is a clear sense that good relationships with one’s family members are necessary for the advancement and salvation of religious followers. Most typically, lack of filial piety is understood as producing action that will cause Taoists to suffer hell, bad rebirth, loneliness, and the inability to attain immortality. The clearest formulation of this view is found in “the Twelve Highest Precepts with Explanation.”\(^{54}\) It says:

The Eleventh Precept: Do not fail in Filial Piety.

The Heavenly Worthy said: Among the students of the Tao, anyone who has received the precepts of the perfected must not lack in filial piety, be disobedient in his heart, or go against the wishes of his or her parents. Never fail to give them your proper respect and love, never turn your back upon your ancestors and kin. Never fail to think of them with loving care and gratitude, nor fail to develop proper feelings of shame.

People who fail in filial piety may expect six kinds of retribution:

1. They will be punished by the laws of the state.
2. They will be excluded from the community of sentient beings.
3. They will fall into hell and suffer from the ten kinds of torture.
4. They will be born as owls and the like, living in constant battle with their kin.
5. They will, even if born on the human plane, be burdened by past karma which ensures that they will suffer ever more vexations in personal relationships.
6. They will roam about hither and thither all alone, and the thunder of heaven will descend upon them and kill them.\(^{55}\)

\(^{54}\) 十二上品勸戒, Shí’èr shàngpǐn quàn jiè (DZ.182).
\(^{55}\) 十二上品勸戒, Shí’èr shàngpǐn quàn jiè (DZ.182).
The retribution for lack of filial piety in the form of both earthly and heavenly justice and through punishment in the hells and by bad rebirth is further expanded in “the Scripture on Repaying Parents’ Kindness, Revealed by the Highest Lord Lǎo,”\textsuperscript{56} Lord Lǎo gave a sermon, which focuses on the hardships that parents, especially mothers, undergo in carrying and raising their children. He concludes by offering a vision of hell, where unfilial children are punished, and of heaven, where filial offspring enjoy the pleasures of the celestial halls.

While Taoists placed a certain emphasis on the need to honour one’s parents in this life, the more dominant tendency was to see parental care in the larger context of religious attainment and retribution. If a person could not even feel compassion for the people who gave up so much to raise him, it is impossible to develop the universal ethics necessary for the higher realization of the Tao.

4. Ethical View of Politics in Buddhism and Taoism

4.1. Rule of Kingship (Rājadhamma)

The world’s politic is globally concerned today. Though politics developed as a science and human knowledge has dramatically developed, the world is not in total harmony, the well-being of most is hard to claim, and there is no relative sense of calmness. Instead there is still much war, economic exploitation and misery in the world. The Buddha clearly understood that governance is very much responsible for both the well-being and misery in a particular country. The Buddhist political thought is concerned with a type of spiritual politics.

\textsuperscript{56} 太上老君說報父母恩重經, Tāi shàng lǎo jūn shuō bào fùmǔ ěn zhòng jīng (DZ.662).
Buddhist literature makes mention of the ideal of the rulers and their righteous ruling. In Cakkavatti Sutta there are ten noble principles of Cakkavatti referred to:

1. To establish security of own household according to Dhamma
2. To ensure security of army according to Dhamma
3. To ensure security of crowned kings and vassals
4. To ensure security of Brahmins and households
5. To ensure security of town and country folks
6. To ensure security of ascetics and Brahmins
7. To ensure security of birds and beasts
8. To let no crime in the country
9. To distribute financial aids to the poor
10. To go to ascetics and Brahmas and inquire do’s and don’ts.\(^{57}\)

These ten principles reveal that spirituality, prosperity and protection are the basic aspects of Buddhist political thought. When fulfilling these necessities, the speciality of Buddhism is to emphasize the spirituality over kingship. Dhamma is a very broad concept in Buddhism and according to Cakkavatti Sutta, it is stated that the king should govern depending on Dhamma, honouring it, revering it, cherishing it, doing homage to it and venerating it, having the Dhamma as banner, acknowledging the Dhamma as master.\(^{58}\) Dhamma in this case carries meaning through the given ten principles and Buddhism has presented a concept of an ideal state to the world.

The Buddha discussed the importance and the prerequisites of a good government. He showed how the country could become corrupt,

\(^{57}\) *Cakkavatti Sutta* (LDB. p.397).
\(^{58}\) *Cakkavatti Sutta* (LDB. pp.396-7).
degenerate and unhappy when the head of the government becomes corrupt and unjust. He spoke against corruption and how government should act based on humanitarian principles. The Buddha once said: ‘When the ruler of a country is just and good, the ministers become just and good, when the ministers are just and good, the higher officials become just and good, when the higher officials are just and good, the rank and file become just and good, when the rank and file become just and good, the people become just and good.'\textsuperscript{59} The Buddha said that immorality and crime, such as theft, falsehood, violence, hatred, cruelty, could arise from poverty. Kings and governments may try to suppress crime through punishment, but it is futile to eradicate crimes through force.\textsuperscript{60}

The Buddha suggested economic development instead of force to reduce crime. The government should use the country’s resources to improve the economic conditions of the country. It could embark on agricultural and rural development; provide financial support to those who undertake an enterprise and business; provide adequate wages for workers to maintain a decent life with human dignity.\textsuperscript{61} If a man, who is unfit, incompetent, immoral, improper, unable and unworthy of kingship, has enthroned himself a king or a ruler with great authority, he is subject to a variety of punishment by the people, because, being unfit and unworthy, he has placed himself unrighteously in the seat of sovereignty. The ruler, like others who violate and transgress moral codes and basic rules of all social laws of mankind, is equally subject to punishment; and moreover, to be censured is the ruler who conducts himself as a robber of the public.

\textsuperscript{59} \textit{Adhammika Sutta} (GS. II, pp.84-85).
\textsuperscript{60} \textit{Cakkavatti Sutta} (LDB. pp.398-400).
\textsuperscript{61} \textit{Kūṭadanta Sutta} (LDB. p.135).
The Buddha gave ten rules for good government, known as Dasa Rāja Dhamma. These ten rules can be applied even today by any government which wishes to rule the country peacefully. According to these rules a ruler must:

1. Be liberal and avoid selfishness (Dāna),
2. Maintain a high moral character (Sīla),
3. Be prepared to sacrifice his own pleasure for the well-being the subjects (Pariccāga),
4. Be honest and maintain absolute integrity (Ajjava),
5. Be kind and gentle (Maddava),
6. Lead a simple life for the subjects to emulate (Tapa),
7. Be free from hatred of any kind (Akkoda),
8. Exercise non-violence (Avihimsa),
9. Practise patience (kantī), and
10. Respect public opinion to promote peace and harmony (Avirodhana).\(^{62}\)

Regarding the behaviour of rulers, it is understood that a good ruler should act impartially and should not be biased and discriminate between one particular group of subjects against another. A good ruler should not harbour any form of hatred against any of his subjects. A good ruler should show no fear whatsoever in the enforcement of the law, if it is justifiable. A good ruler must possess a clear understanding of the law to be enforced. It should not be enforced just because the ruler has the authority to enforce the law. It must be done in a reasonable manner and with common sense.\(^{63}\)

The king always improves himself and carefully examines his own conduct in deeds, words and thoughts, trying to discover and listen to

\(^{62}\) Mahāhamsa Jātaka (J. V, p.200).

public opinion as to whether or not he had been guilty of any faults and mistakes in ruling the kingdom. If it is found that he rules unrighteously, the public will complain that they are ruined by the wicked ruler with unjust treatment, punishment, taxation, or other oppressions including corruption of any kind, and they will react against him in one way or another. On the contrary, if he rules righteously they will bless him: “Long live His Majesty!” In order to reach the level of the peace and prosperity of the state, The Buddha propounded seven principles named as “Aparihāniya Dhamma.”

1. To gather harmoniously and to disperse in the same way
2. To work out accepted decisions and not to work out unaccepted decisions
3. To pay respect to views of elders and to traditions
4. To respect of the right of women
5. To be respectful to the sacred places
6. To protect religious personal
7. To fully discuss on issues of government and government acts.

The Buddha said that if these seven principles are preserved then only progress is expected and there will be no downfall of the state.

The Buddha posited a social contract theory of monarchy. In ancient days, he said, people saw the need for some form of government and so they elected from amongst themselves a person who they thought would be best able to rule them. The Buddha gives the name as Mahāsammata in support of his idea to mean ‘elected by the majority.’

Agañña Sutta contains valuable lessons that teach that the people must be the source of political power. In the beginning, a suitable person

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64 Sārandada Sutta (GS. IV, pp.10-11).
65 Aggañña Sutta (LDB. p.413).
was appointed in order to punish social misbehaviours generated as a result of material inequality. It was a judicial power granted in that case and was not an authoritative power. The idea of righteous governing came into being only when the body of governance expanded. When it was expanded and the idea of righteous ruling was developed, the word ‘Rāja’ came into being. The word ‘Rāja’ from the Buddhist point of view goes with righteous ruling. Buddhism teaches that the government is not merely the body that rules civil society but rather it is the authority that brings on righteousness. In Agañña Sutta it is stated that there are three important points in Buddhist politics: (1) The spring of the political power is the public, (2) The purpose of good governance is to eliminate inequality (3) The duty of king is righteous ruling.  

Thus, according to the Buddhist theory, kings derived their legitimacy from general consent, i.e. from the people they ruled. It followed from this that a king retained his right to rule only for so long as his subjects benefited from it. Such ideas were far too ahead of their time and there is little evidence that they were ever applied. However, the Buddha’s teaching of good governance had some influence in making kings more humane. The Buddha’s Dhamma is not directed at the creation of new political institutions and establishing political arrangements. Basically, it seeks to approach the problems of society by reforming the individuals constituting that society and by suggesting some general principles through which the society can be guided towards greater humanism, improved welfare of its members, and more equitable sharing of resources.  

At one time, when the Buddha was alone, it occurred to him “Could it be possible to bring about good governance without killing and

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66 Agañña Sutta (LDB. p.413).
without instigating others to kill, without confiscating and without instigating others to confiscate, without sorrowing and without causing sorrow?\(^68\) This signifies the Buddha’s concern with the politics of the time. The Buddhist approach to political power is the moralization and the responsible use of public power. The Buddha preached non-violence and peace as a universal message. He did not approve of violence or the destruction of life, and declared that there is no such thing as a “just” war. He taught: “The victor breeds hatred, the defeated lives in misery. He who renounces both victory and defeat is happy and peaceful.”\(^69\)

Inasmuch as he was concerned with sentient beings suffering in life, it was not possible for him to disregard the politics making the most serious impact on civil society. Moreover, the Buddha was not without understanding of the fact that it is more difficult for people to concentrate on the spiritual aspect of life when they are suffering the grinding oppression of an unjust society. While Buddhism today has certainly not given up on offering wise counsel for a better system of governance, it is still not appropriate for Buddhism to engage in direct involvement in such a wholly secular field of civil society. This is important because up to that time Buddhism has only played the role of a wise and compassionate advisor.

4.2. The Way of Governance (Zhídào, 治道)

China has been a political power since ancient times; as such, it has created, contributed, gained, and lost a great deal in the political field. The ancient Chinese made notable political achievements and had more influence on politics than on any other field. Over thousands of years, the

\(^{68}\) Rajja Sutta (CDB. p.209).
\(^{69}\) Dh. verse.201.
Chinese have formed their own political philosophy, political ethics, political faith, political culture, conceptual talent, and a talent-training system, as well as an extensive and well-organized political structure. In short, they have formed an oriental political culture with Chinese characteristics.

In Tao-Te-Ching, Lǎo Zǐ states different levels of government. At the highest level, the ideal rulers are the ones who are so good at what they do that they can achieve their objectives quickly, silently and effectively. They do not glory in their achievements, so the people are not even aware that such rulers exist. At the next level down, rulers’ benevolent actions can be seen, so that people are aware of them. The people feel close to such rulers and they give much praise for the benevolent, positive rule. At the next level down, rulers resort to intimidation and heavy-handed policies. People fear such rulers. At the next level down, rulers are incompetent or seek to deceive the people through trickery. People despise such rulers. They insult the leadership and rise up in opposition.\textsuperscript{70} If such rulers cannot have sufficient trust the people, then the people have no trust in them. The ideal way is to govern in an unhurried, easy manner where rulers greatly value their words. This means they do more and talk less. Because things are done this way, without anyone being aware of all the work that go into governing, when important tasks are completed and major issues are settled, the people all say that they did it themselves, and that it was naturally so.

Lǎo Zǐ maintains that inaction is the proper function of government. He is concerned with realizing peace and socio-political order. He wants to allow each individual as much freedom as possible. It follows that a Taoist ruler will not use coercion or permits others to use it against peaceful people. The government must not assert its will against

\textsuperscript{70} 太上下知有之！其次親而譽之，其次畏之，其次侮之。 (TTC. Chapter.17).
individuals to exploit, dominate, or interfere with them. Although rulers possess weapons, it is preferable that they are not used.\textsuperscript{71} It is apparent that Lǎo Zǐ views politics within a larger ethical context. Ruling a country and using the military are two sides of the coin, and two different approaches are required. Using clever tactics to surprise and confuse the enemy is extremely advantageous in that victory can be quickly achieved with minimal loss of troops. Ruling a country is just the opposite. Ruler would not want to use clever tactics to surprise and confuse the people. Instead, ruler wants to treat them with straightforward honesty, and communicate in a way that is clear and easy to understand. The ruler who meddles always ends up with poor results. Therefore, wise rulers refrain from interference. They do not try to change people as it is an impossible and thankless task. Instead, they let nature take its course. Their role is to provide gentle guidance.

Lǎo Zǐ says that a good ruler is inconspicuous, humble, and demands nothing. Lǎo Zǐ contends that codified rules and laws result in a society that is more difficult to care for. The more ordinances and laws, the more robbers and thieves there will be. When the state takes no action the people of themselves will be transformed. When the government engages in no activity the people will prosper.\textsuperscript{72} It is obvious that Lǎo Zǐ viewed the state as a likely oppressor of the individual. He thought that any truth in government abides in non-action and in weakness. The state should not be an organization of functionaries. Lǎo Zǐ thus opposed a multitude of laws and thought that the state should and could control by means of non-interference. He observed that the fulfilment of others and

\textsuperscript{71} 以正治國，以奇用兵，以無事取天下。(TTC. Chapter.57).
\textsuperscript{72} 天下多忌諱而民彌貧。民多利器，國家滋昏！人多伎巧，奇物泫起！人多伎巧，奇物泫起！故聖人云：我無為，而民自化。我好靜，而民自正。我無事，而民自富。我無欲，而民自樸。(TTC. Chapter.57).
of things results not from the prominence of a ruler’s virtues but from the withdrawal of self.

Lǎo Zǐ disapproves of aggressive measures such as war, cruel punishment and heavy taxation which express a ruler’s own desire for power and wealth. He cautions the ruler not to be oppressive with military strength. War is evil, brings suffering, and is a most assertive use of the will. Wars involve conflicts of wills usually for wealth, power or fame. To practice peace is to practice the Tao. He recommends the restraint of judges and observes that the internal violence of the state is embodied in cruel punishments. Lǎo Zǐ did not value competition and observed that exploitation or oppression of citizens by a ruler is a type of wilful action or competition. He explains that peaceful actions do not require moral justification, but that coercive actions do require moral justification. Lǎo Zǐ lived during a militant period and wanted to avoid constant feudal warfare and other conflicts.

With respect to taxation, Lǎo Zǐ says that the people starve because the ruler eats too much tax grain. Rulers thus prosper at the expense of the masses. When people are hungry and their basic survival needs are in question. It is because the ruler overzealously imposes ever increasing taxes, leaving very little for them to sustain themselves. As a result, the people starve. When people are difficult to control and they are openly rebellious and refuse to obey orders. It is because the ruler constantly meddles in their livelihood with more and more restrictive rules. In reaction, the people become defiant against authority.73

When people disregard death and they no longer care if they live or die. It is because the ruler pursues an extravagant lifestyle, indulging in ever more luxuries while the people suffer hardship. Seeing this, the

73 民之饑，以其上食稅之多，是以饑。民之難治，以其上之有為，是以難治。(TTC. Chapter.75).
people brave death to rise against the ruler.\textsuperscript{74} Therefore, we can see from the above that a ruler who does not obsessively focus on the good life would be much better than the ruler who values the mindless pursuit of luxurious living. Under such a wise ruler, the people do not starve and their basic needs are met. They are not difficult to govern and they gladly follow wise leadership. They have no reckless disregard for death and their own lives are worth living.

From the perspective of Taoist sages, the ideal way to govern is one that rules without excessive interference in people’s lives. A government that follows this does not put a spotlight on itself, but the peace and freedom it provides allow the people to live the simple and honest life. The opposite to this would be a government that is severe, one that scrutinizes the people’s every move. Such a government may appear to be very capable and brutally effective, but because it burdens the people with restrictions and intrudes upon their privacy, it creates an environment where people are forced to become ever more evasive, resorting to trickery to hide their activities. A ruler may think it’s a good thing to be able to spy on people, without realizing that this leads to ever more complications and alienation. What seems like a good idea can turn into a disaster and vice versa.\textsuperscript{75}

The sage kings of ancient China were masterful in applying the Tao. They did not use it to make people cleverer and more knowledgeable. Instead, they used it to guide people toward simplicity. These sages understood very well that cleverness and knowledge would bring with them greater desires, deceit, and devious tricks. This would lead to complexities and chaos, thus making things difficult not only for them, but also for the people. They came to the conclusion long ago that

\textsuperscript{74} 民之輕死，以其求生之厚，是以輕死。夫唯無以生為者，是賢於 貴生。（TTC. Chapter.75）
\textsuperscript{75} 其政 悶悶，其民淳淳。其政 察察，其民 脫。 (TTC. Chapter.58)
using guile, manipulation, and contrivance to govern would do great harm to the country. On the other hand, not using these tricks and guiding the people toward simplicity would lead to benefits for all, and would therefore be a great blessing to the country as a whole.\textsuperscript{76}

Lǎo Zī said that the fall from the Tao is caused by government and society having lost the truth. The fall from the Tao stems from desire, intention, and self-striving. The use of free will can interfere with Tao. People, including rulers, should therefore avoid determined action and strong will. A person should be passive and not try to change anything. A sage would move and live naturally and would be empty of pretence and free from desires. He would not attempt to help life along or make a display of himself. A sage would claim moral ignorance, would understand the reversibility of things in the world, and would endeavour to create a peaceful atmosphere. On the issue of governing the country and ruling the people, Lǎo Zī proposed to “do things by doing nothing, educate by saying nothing,” using the Tao of nature to govern the people. In the eyes of Lǎo Zī, society also evolved naturally. What an emperor should understand was that “the utmost virtue is to do nothing, while everything is done,”\textsuperscript{77} which means that to approve of morality and not do something by force, is the way to accomplish all things that ought to be done well.

On the surface, Taoism talks about the principles of how to be an emperor and how to govern the country, but actually it is a guiding cultivation. Cultivators on different levels will have different understandings of Taoism. From another angle, the principle of Taoism at an ordinary person’s level will have the effect of guiding an emperor to govern the country, however it is all about cultivation. Lǎo Zī did not say

\textsuperscript{76} 故以智治國，國之賊。不以智治國，國之福。（TTC. Chapter.65）.

\textsuperscript{77} 上德無為而無以為；（TTC. Chapter.38）.
it for the purpose of “playing politics” with ordinary people. Therefore how much a cultivator can understand of Taoism is how high he can reach beyond the realm of our ordinary society. Furthermore, a cultivator will not be attached to the power and politics of ordinary society.