CHAPTER THREE:

Gandhi On Fundamental Ethics Of Buddhism:

Gandhi viewed Buddhism as being part of Hinduism. He believes that Buddha is one of the great reformers of Hinduism. He admits of deriving a great deal of inspiration from the life of the Enlightened One, so much so that he was accused by some of his fellow Hindus of being a follower of Buddha and spreading Buddhistic teachings under the guise of Sanatana Hindu.\(^1\) Gandhi had the greatest respect for the Buddha and regarded him (the Buddha) as the greatest preachers of peace and regarded his teachings as the gospel of Love. To him, the essential part or the teaching of the Buddha forms an integral part of Hinduism. By his immense sacrifice, by his great renunciation and by the immaculate purity of his life, he left an indelible impression upon Hinduism, and Hinduism, Gandhi thinks, owes an eternal debt of gratitude to that great teacher.

Buddha was saturated with the best that was in Hinduism and he gave life to some of the teachings that were buried in the Vedas and which were overgrown with weeds. In other words, He made some of the words in the Vedas yield a meaning to which the men of his generation were utter strangers.\(^2\). Buddha never

\(^1\) M.K Gandhi, In search of the supreme, vol-III, compiled & Ed by V.B kher, Navajivan Trust,1961, PP- 124

\(^2\) Ibid, pp-294
rejected Hinduism but he broadened its base, by giving it a new life and a new interpretations. Gandhi wants to clear the confusion about the commonly believed notion about Buddha’s not believing in God. In his opinion, such a belief contradicts the very fact of Buddha’s teaching. This confusion, he believes, has arisen over his rejection of all the base things that passed in his generation under the name of God. He was against the belief that a being called ‘God’ was actuated by malice, that a being called ‘God’ required for his satisfaction the living blood of animals in order that he might be pleased, animals who were his own creation. He emphasized and redeclared the eternal and unalterable existence of the moral government of this universe. He said that Moral law was God Himself. God’s laws are eternal and unalterable and not separable from God Himself. It is an indispensable condition of His very perfection. Therefore Gandhi believes that Buddha has contributed to the humanity by restoring God to His eternal place and also, greater was his contribution to humanity and mankind in his regarding of all life even if it is so low.³

The Buddha has presented a rational religion, practical ethics, and a simple principles of life. Buddhism is essentially a religion of ethics without any God or divine metaphysical principle. Its a system based on moral, contemplative, and intellectual virtues. The regulative principle is always ethical. It recognises the spiritual and ethical possibilities of each individual, independent of any divine, metaphysical, or external control. The development of these possibilities in a person

in only through self-effort (Purusakara, attakara) which involves three pronged strategy-

1) Ethical purification and practices (Sila),

2) Contemplative attentiveness (Samadhi) to form an ethical attitude, and

3) Developing an immaculate wisdom (Panna) about the true nature of things.

The latter two help achieve excellence in the practices of the farmer i.e Morality(sila)

Buddhism redefines religion in ethical terms. In Buddhism, to be morally good means to be rational, virtuous, emotional, contemplative, enlightened, habitual, and altruistic. Or in other words, to be ethical is to be skilful. That is, the practice of virtue requires sincere practice of moral rules encouraged by moral ideals, experience, knowledge, mindfulness (satipatthana), perfect endeavour (Sammappadhana), psychic power (iddhipada), commanding the factors of enlightenment (bojjhanga), practice of the Noble Eightfold path, and habits of action, emotion, judgement. A bodhisattva is not merely a mechanical follower of moral rules (e.g. the five percepts), but has firm dispositions, habits of feeling and acting, and practical wisdom. Buddhism searches general moral principles in man himself, in his moral evolution, which is a human creation. For it, Morality is a practical and empirical enterprise, not a priorily derived from any metaphysical principle. For Buddha, only an enlightened person who is aware of the moral

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principles and has moral choices can be called a true moral agent. The message of this argument is that ethical principles determine even the will of God and so they override God or any other external agencies. According to Buddhism, the ethical principles are immanent in man and he is capable of discovering and developing them into action. The highest stage or goal is enlightenment (Sammasambodhi). Buddha says that man has to work out his own plan of development following the method enunciated above. The Buddhist ethics is rational and reflective. It allows the ethical agent to reflect on his conduct to find the underlying principles and reason. This makes him able to differentiate between a good and a bad action, appreciate or condemn a particular customary conduct, and choose the right kind of action. The centrality of ethics in Buddhism accepts the centrality of each human being and within him the centrality of mind which is the source of all values, virtues, and vices. Since man is a natural being who is endowed with cognitive, conative, and effective characters, the Buddhist ethics emphasizes the primary necessity of understanding his whole nature and so it analyzes his dispositions, will, motive, intention, and purpose, which together constitute his self and moral character.

Like every moral system, Buddhist moral system also has certain moral rules, which are normative in nature and guided by Universalizable moral ideals. The Buddhist moral principles and moral ideals, which aims at the highest good, provides foundation to the moral rules. Their justification lies in the central moral principles of Buddhism, namely, Universal Compassion (Karuna). Their practice leads one to achieve the highest goods, i.e, Peace and Happiness, which are the highest ideals. Like any other ethical system, Buddhist ethics also aims at happiness (sukha) as the highest human good which includes ultimate freedom (nibbana) and
peace. It can be achieved only through moral action, as we can see in Dhammapada verse 118:

Should a person perform a meritorious action, he should do it again and again; he should find pleasure therein: blissful is the accumulation of merit. The term nibbana is highly enigmatic, but the general trend throughout Buddhism interpret it in ethical terms. It is considered to be a state of ultimate freedom, happiness, peace and altruistic activities of love and compassion. The methodology is to adhere to the normative morality (sila) which develops sympathetic rapport with others and removes hostilities between the self and the other. Its advantage is that, it helps develop the right view (sammaditthi) about the nature of things and also about the psycho-physical nature of human existence. Further, our cognitive and intellectual enquiry into them makes us understand the true nature of things and helps us develop a right view about the world, which influences our ethical thinking.

THE MEANING OF TRUTH IN BUDDHISM

According to Buddha, man’s life or man’s becoming is rare difficult to get. He never sees life as useless or worthless or meaningless as some philosophers claimed to him. But he enhances human progress; he talked to set up ethical perfect life in the core of man’s life, because man can understand the noble truth which is final goal of him. Buddha believes that man has latent potentiality to attain the highest happiness and truth if he will strive on with mindfulness sufficiently. No

man can achieve the emancipation or purification without personal striving. In other words, no one can help others to reach his or her salvation, liberation or moksha, but only by himself. Indeed, the essence of human life is only complete with morality, concentration and knowledge or wisdom. Buddha realized that the best of truths are the four noble truths among the truths. But the Buddha was only guide, discovered to know about these truths which are understood himself. The noble truths which Buddha discovered, were not only invented to purify mind with thinking, metaphysics and imaginary ideas, but also unfold with self-experience. Buddha holds that the road to spiritual development is open to all in every condition of life, low or high, saint or sinner, king or beggar, or rich or needy who would care to turn a new leaf and seek perfection in this world which is bankrupt of character, darkness of truth and empty of peace.

Buddha, before he attained Enlightenment, renounced his family and royal household amidst comfort and prosperity, because he realized the universality of sorrow. He wandered forth to search for Truth and peace from one place to another. Here truth means sacca in Pali, Satya in Sanskrit which denotes an undeniable aspect as a real truth. The Buddha expounded definitely these four truths which are associated with the human being as a basis of his teaching. His teaching is inward looking rather than outward looking. "whether the Buddha arises or not in this present world, these truths will always exist which is the Buddha who reveals them to the deluded world. Nobody can change these real truths with time, space and personality because they are Ultimate Truths. The Buddha did not depend upon
anyone for his realisation for these four noble truths. Some Buddhist scholars said that these noble truths are called as the heart of Buddhism”⁶. These truths are never change, they are always existent in these world. After Buddha attained Enlightened he delivered his first discourse to a group of five ascetics who had been his disciples before and who had been closely associated with him for six years. This discourse is called ‘Founding of wisdom’ or ‘Establishment of wisdom’, or ‘Turning of the wheel of Truth’. This first discourse can be analyze into three ways, thus: One is to avoid the two extremes; Second is to follow the middle path, and the last one is to penetrate the four noble truths; this is the essence of this discourse. The two extremes are self indulgence and self mortification. The Buddha remark that the former is continuous attachment to sensual pleasures and as base, vulgar, worldly, ignoble, and profitless, but the most important is the self indulgence which retards the spiritual progress for mass. And then the last one can cause painful, ignoble and profitless. This self mortification only multiplies suffering instead of demising it, and it also causes weak of the intellect.

Buddhism has its own collection of both monastic (monks and nuns) and lay disciple codes of moral conduct. The most essential and popular disciplines for all the Buddhists (both monastic and lay persons) involve five precepts. Or in other words, in Buddhism we find the Five precepts or Panca sila which is consider as their basic codes of conduct. The Dhammapada mentions the Silas relating to all Five Precepts explicitly in verses 246 and 247:

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“He who destroys life, tells lies, takes what is not given, commits adultery, and is addicted to intoxicating drinks, digs in his own roots even in this very life”. The Five Precepts are:

1. Abstention from killing (Panatipata),

2. Abstention from taking what does not belong to or what is not given to one (adinnadana),

3. Abstention from illegitimate sexual relation (kamesuminicchacara),

4. Abstention from telling lies (musavada) and

5. Abstention from intoxicants (sure-meraya-majja-pamadatthana).

From the above moral rules, we see that the First precept commands prohibition of taking life, which is the most serious violation of a moral rule. This is the fundamental ethical principle of Buddhism, and all the other precepts are elaboration of this. This precept applies to all living beings not just humans. All

beings have a right to their lives and that right should be respected. It is not killing or cause to destroy or causing harm to other living beings. Living being implies anything that has life, from insects up to and including man. It is an existential negation of ‘other’, and so the whole moral and social system. Buddhism teaches that one of the most important qualities we should have as human beings is respect for life. Consequently, it is seen as morally reprehensible to kill another being. The general approach by Buddhists is to avoid killing or harming any living thing. The Buddhist perspective is that all beings feel pain and suffering, and value their individual existence. Consequently, just as we would not want to inflict pain and suffering on ourselves, so too we should not inflict pain and suffering on others. It's a simple approach. On top of this empathy with others, the Buddha also warns that harming other beings will have karmic consequences: Whoever seeking his own happiness, harms with rod pleasure-loving beings gets no happiness hereafter. Killing animals, even for food, is also something the Buddha urged his followers not to do. For example, He discouraged hunting as an occupation. This does not mean that Buddhists are all necessarily vegetarian. The Buddha allowed his monks to eat meat as long as the animal had not been specifically killed for them.

Despite being negative in connotation, each one of these rules serves a positive purpose and prepares a conducive atmosphere for cultivation of positive virtues. At the agents level, it creates a disposition in him not to cause evil to the other by not threatening his life. In taking this precept, a Buddhist recognises his relationship with all living things, a relationship so close that the harming of any living creatures is inevitably the harming of himself. The precept applies to all creatures irrespective of size. It does not exclude the killing of animals for the Vedic sacrifices (yajna).
A Buddhist does not sacrifice living beings for worship or food, but sacrifices instead his own selfish motives.

The second precept of good conduct advises a Buddhist to abstain from taking things that are not given. This precept goes further than mere stealing. One should avoid taking anything unless one can be sure that it is intended that it is for you. Lay devotees should lead an honest life according to the right livelihood. Any sort of thieving, even at the risk of one's life was denounced by the Buddha. In short, any scheme, intrigue or device, whether adopted in the sale of a house, horses, cattle or any other commodities, constitutes a violation of the precepts of adinnadana, of the injunction to abstain from taking anything without the consent of the owner. The second precepts is therefore an injunction against any forms of dishonest dealing. Adinna "that which is not given," and adana, "taking", the immoral volition to take others' belongings is known as the immoral act of stealing. Five factors constitute the immoral act of stealing, namely: other's property, awareness of the fact that it is others' property that is being taken; the immoral volition of stealing; the employment of a device to steal; and the act of removing the property. Whatever device is employed, so long as the others' belonging are taken without the consent of the owner, it is the path of retributive kamma that is committed.

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9 Ibid, pp-72
The Buddha also encourages respect for other's belongings and property. Instead of appropriating what is not given, the Buddha urges his followers to practise generosity and to share what one has with others. Dana or giving is a quality highly regarded in Buddhism.

The third Precept is abstention from illegitimate sexual relation. This precept is often mistranslated or misinterpreted as relating only to sexual misconduct but it covers any overindulgence in any sensual pleasure such as gluttony as well as misconduct of a sexual nature. The Precept signifies abstinence from all indulgences in the five sensuous objects. Kamesu micchacara is therefore, wrong or evil conduct with regard to the five sensual organs. The basic moral guideline with sexual activity is that if it brings harm to oneself and/or others then it is to be avoided. In partnerships and marriage, the Buddha encourages mutual respect and fidelity. Though the highest conduct of life has so often been taken to be religious celibacy, still the bulk of the world's population has always been unwilling or unable to adopt it. The man who solemnly undertakes to observe the third precept of right conduct should therefore purify the source from which actions flow, namely, his thoughts. The person who inciting others to dwell on evil is entirely to be condemned, for by dwelling in thought on, for example lustful behaviour, sex become a demon that drives man to his utter ruin. To sum up the third precept, it may be said that indulgence in unlawful sexual conduct is productive of much evil to the person concerned and to the whole of society.
Those in whom sexual thoughts arise should learn to control them by the practise of mindfulness. Among the evil consequences resulting from unlawful sexual intercourse are the following; suffering in an unhappy state for a long period and when re-born as a man by virtue of merits acquired in a previous existence the birth would occur in a lower form of mankind. Such a person has many enemies, would be dislike by the people, would be destitute, and would be full of anger and rage. Therefore, to achieve complete observance of the precept, one must desist from the five forms of self-indulgence, both directly and indirectly\textsuperscript{10}

The Fourth Precept of good conduct concerns abstention from falsehood or abstention from telling lies. This covers the act of telling an untruth, the concealing of the truth in such a manner as to convince another person than an untruth is a truth, the use of exaggerated language. In Short, everything that is in any sense a departure from a reliable sober statement of fact. As avoiding lying and deceiving, this precept covers slander as well as speech which is not beneficial to the welfare of others. Buddha advocate always to speak the truth. The Buddha fully understood the importance of speech, its potential for effecting good or ill. He compared speech to a treasure' which should uttered at the right moment and be moderate and full of sense. He urged his followers to always speak the truth, and to avoid deception and falsehood. Moreover, the speaker of truth inspires confidence in others who come to know that they may rely implicitly on his words. Conversely it is disadvantageous to associate with habitual speakers of untruth and the results of

\textsuperscript{10} Ibid, pp-7
Lying can bring considerable harm. The habit of speaking the truth depends on the habit of thinking accurately. If one is accustomed to speaking and thinking with precision, one has sufficient clarity of vision not to feel anger and not to pass over an occasion on which another person is in need of gift. If one wishes to rise above the human state, then the cultivation of thinking and speaking truly is the means par excellence. It is in fact the foundation of Buddhism.

The Fifth precept concerns the abstention from intoxicating drugs and fermented intoxicating liquour. The basic objection to alcoholic drinks and such drugs lies in the fact that they distort the mental vision. Such understanding of mental states is an essential part of the Buddhist teachings. In such case it is not possible to preserve the vigilance and alertness that Buddhist should continuously practise. A great deal of Buddhist practice is about keeping the mind clear and aware. Alcoholic drinks and recreational drugs cloud the mind and impair judgement. Consequently, the Buddha encouraged his followers to abstain. Whatever temporary pleasure one may think to derive from the indulgence there can be no source of satisfaction either to him or to his companions, in experiencing a waning control of his mind. It should be firmly stated that the use of hallucinogenic drugs for the purpose of attaining allegedly “higher” meditative states is highly dangerous and a contravention of the fifth precept.

But what purposes do these precepts serve? Essentially they promote harmony between ourselves and others and are therefore socially cohesive. They also prevent further suffering for ourselves and others. Unwholesome actions bring

\[11\text{ Ibid, pp-78}\]
suffering to ourselves and/or others. For example, individuals with a drug problem bring suffering not only to themselves but to their families too. Conversely, wholesome actions bring happiness to oneself and/or others. Underpinning Buddhism's moral code are two qualities that should inform all our actions. These are compassion (karuna) and loving kindness (metta). If these are our guiding principles in life, it makes it much less likely that we will break any of the Precepts. It is important to realise that mere abstention from causing evil to others has two positive consequences; firstly, it cleanses the agent of evil tendencies, which is a necessary condition for developing positive ones in him. Secondly it removes hostility between him and the other, who in addition feels secure and enjoys peace. Its practise is a tremendous contribution to the peace, security, and solidarity of the society if everybody avoids causing evil to others. Violation of moral rules on the contrary would be universally disastrous. A person is still considered moral even if he promotes his own good but at the same time does not harm the interest of others. However, a comprehensive moral system as a public system demands positive moral actions also, so that one becomes instrumental in promoting other's good as well. An ideal moral agent like a bodhisattva or a saint sacrifices his own interest in order to promote other's good. In either case, an agent's moral conduct leads him to self-realisation as a true being, which is becoming a perfect moral being. According to Buddhism, one is a perfect being only when one conducts himself in a perfectly moral way. Where as it is a fact that one is required to always follow the moral rules, i.e., refraining from causing evil to others, one is not supposed to be always promoting other's good as it is impossible except for saints and moral fanatics to do so. Thus, the Buddhist moral rules are purely ethical and so universalizable and
impartial in nature. The Buddhist ethics is not only universally applicable, but also acceptable to all rational and impartial persons.

The heart of Buddha’s teaching lies in the four noble Truths as we have mentioned above. These Four Noble Truth and the Noble Eightfold Path form the core of Buddhist teachings. These teachings are known to contain the essence of the Buddhist path, regardless of the tradition one follows. Any person by conscious constant effort could realize through the Noble path an enlightened unselfish desireless ethical life of universal love and compassion. They contain in a nutshell the philosophy and the morality of Buddhism. The Four noble Truths are:

1. Dukkha
2. Samudaya, the arising or origin of dukkha
3. Nirodha, the cessation of dukkha
4. Magga, the way leading to the cessation of dukkha.

The first truth is that misery, that is to say pain, and suffering (duhkham), is associated with all stages and conditions of conscious life. According to the Buddha, whatever life we lead, it has the nature of some aspect of suffering. Even if we consider ourselves happy for a while, this happiness is transitory by nature. This mean that at best, we can only find temporary happiness and pleasure in life. It is interpreted to mean that life according to Buddhism is nothing but suffering and pain. It is because of this translation and interpretation that many people have been
misled into regarding Buddhism as pessimistic. Buddhism is neither pessimistic nor optimistic. It is realistic for it takes a realistic view of life and of the world. It looks at things objectively (Yathabhutam). It does not falsely lull you into living in a fool’s paradise, nor does it frighten and agonise you with all kinds of imaginary fears and sins. Buddhism tells us exactly and objectively what we are and what the world around us is and shows us the way to perfect freedom, peace, tranquillity and happiness. 

The term dukkha as the first noble Truth, which represents the Buddha’s view of life and the world, has a deeper philosophical meaning and connotes enormously wider senses. It is admitted that the term dukkha in the first noble Truth contains the ordinary meaning of ‘suffering’, but in addition it also includes deeper ideas such as ‘imperfection’, ‘impermanence’, ‘emptiness’, ‘insubstantiality’. Therefore, it is difficult to find one word to embrace the whole conception of the term dukkha as the first noble Truth. Buddha does not deny happiness in life when he says there is suffering. On the contrary, he admits different forms of happiness, both material and spiritual for laymen as well as for monks. The Buddha was realistic and objective. He says that with regard to life and enjoyment of sense-pleasures, one should clearly understand three things:

1. Attraction or enjoyment (assada)

2. Evil consequence or danger or unsatisfactoriness (adinava), and

3. Freedom or liberation (nissarana).

According to Buddha, when we see a pleasant, charming and beautiful person, we feel attracted to that person. We enjoy seeing that person again and again.

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and from this we derive pleasures and satisfaction from that person. But according to him, this enjoyment is not permanent, just as that person and all his or her attractions are not permanent. When the situation changes, when we cannot see that person, we become sad and we become unreasonable, unbalanced and even behave foolishly. This is the evil, unsatisfactory and dangerous side of the picture. Now in the third situation, if we have no attachment to that person, if we are completely detached, then that is freedom, Liberation (nissarana). All these three things are true with regard to all enjoyments in life. Thus Buddha holds that we must take account of the pleasures of life as well as of its pains and sorrows, and also of freedom from them in order to understand life completely and objectively. Only then true liberation is possible.

The Buddha and his eminent disciples always encourage men to face the facts of life without depending on imaginary concepts, and to accept the truth wherever it maybe. The Buddha wants us to be free from all miseries, he reminds again and again to live in this world heedfully, but not to live heedlessly. Although the Buddha gave more attention to spiritual development, he never neglected man’s worldly progress. His teachings give some sound and practical advice on how to work properly without wasting valuable time and effort, and on how to act wisely for the progress of mankind. He said that man should fulfil his duties towards himself to improve his life, his family, relatives, friends, community, country and the whole world.

The second noble Truth is that of the arising or origin of dukkha. The most popular and well-known definition of the second noble Truth runs as follows: It is this ‘thirst’, desire, greed, craving, manifesting itself in various ways that gives rise
to all forms of suffering and the continuity of beings. This desire, ‘thirst’ can produce re-existence and re-becoming. Here the term ‘thirst’ includes not only desire for, and attachment to, sense pleasures, wealth and power, but also desire for, and attachment to, ideas and ideals, views, opinions, theories, conceptions and beliefs. Again, the terms ‘thirst’, ‘volition’, ‘mental volition’, and ‘karma’, all denotes the same thing: they denote the desire, the will to be, to exist, to re-exist, to become more and more, to grow more and more to accumulate more and more. This is consider to be the cause of the arising of dukkha. The fact that the cause of the arising of dukkha is within dukkha itself, and not outside, is the most important and essential points in the Buddha’s teaching. Thus dukkha (Five Aggregates) \(^{13}\), has within itself the nature of its own arising, and also within itself the nature of its own cessation. According to Buddha this is the greatest force and the greatest energy in the world and this force does not stop with the non-functioning of the body, which is death; but it continues manifesting itself in another form, producing re-existence which is called rebirth.

According to Buddha’s analysis, all the troubles and strife in the world, from little personal quarrels in families to great wars between nations and countries, arise out of this selfish ‘thirst’. From this point of view, all economic, political and social problems are rooted in this selfish ‘thirst’. Great statesmen who try to settle

\(^{13}\) the first is the Aggregate of Matter, the second, Aggregate of sensations, third, Aggregate of Perceptions, fourth, Aggregate of Mental Formations and fifth the Aggregate of consciousness. What we call life, to Buddha, is the combination of the five Aggregates, a combination of physical and mental energies.
international disputes and talk of war and peace only in economic and political terms touch the superficialities, and never go deep into the real root of the problem. In other words, the second noble Truth can also be explained as that the cause of misery (dukkha sammudayo) is trishna, the grasping desire to live for selfish enjoyment. Sensations (vedana), begotten by the surrounding world, create the illusion of a separate self. This illusory self manifests its activity in a cleaving to things for selfish enjoyment which entangles man in pain and suffering. Pleasures is the deceitful siren which lures man to pain.\textsuperscript{14} It states that all our sufferings are rooted in the craving. There is never any surplus of sense pleasures since the craving is greedy. We have to understand that ignorance and craving as the two roots for turning this cycle. The craving produces rebirth, accompanied by passionate clinging. Human life starts with ignorance on the real truth. Because of ignorance, we get the life which is full of sufferings. If there remains the roots of suffering ( ignorance and craving) which are not yet eradicated by the path of knowledge, this suffering of rebirth will arise time and again successively. This craving is a powerful mental force latent in all beings. It is the chief causes of all miseries of life. The world is always in lack of something and ever hungry and it can never be satisfied. The world is enslaved to thirst. This craving makes beings cling to all forms of life. Therefore right understanding of the first noble Truth leads to the eradication of craving. Buddha holds that if one avoids

\textsuperscript{14} P. Lakshmi Narasu, The essence of Buddhism, Bharatiya publishing house, 1976, pp-128).
the worldly desire which is grasped with five sense objects in this world, one can conquer the craving. To conquer that craving, one needs to practice finding out the false of worldly pleasures and will need to contemplate or control our mind on the pleasurable object and then one must adjust one’s mind with equanimity. As long as there is this ‘thirst’ to be and to become, the cycle of continuity (samsara) goes on. It can stop only when its driving force, this ‘thirst’, is cut off through wisdom which sees Reality, Truth, Nirvana.

The third noble Truth is the Cessation of Dukkha (Nirodha). The third noble Truth is that, there is emancipation, liberation, freedom from suffering, from the continuity of dukkha. This is called the Noble Truth of the Cessation of dukkha, which is Nibbana, more popularly known in its Sanskrit form of Nirvana. This is the most positive message of Buddhism: although suffering is always present in cyclic existence, we can end this cycle of problems and pain, and enter Nirvana, which is a state beyond all suffering. The reasoning behind this Third Noble Truth is the fact that suffering and the causes of suffering are dependent on the state of our own mind, so if we can change our own mind, we can also eliminate suffering. The reasons we do actions that cause ourselves and others harm come from our delusions. When we possess the proper wisdom (conventional and ultimate), we can rid ourselves of delusions, and thus of all our problems and suffering. When this process is complete, we can leave cyclic existence and enjoy the state of Nirvana, free of problems.

The reasoning so far is simple enough, when we are ill, we go to a doctor. He knows what is wrong and prescribes medicines and gives us advice,
which we need to take and follow up to get well again. Likewise, when a spiritual
teacher prescribes us a practice and the development of wisdom to end our
suffering, we still need to follow the instructions, otherwise there will be no effect.
That leads us to the last Noble Truth of the Path of the 'medicine'.

To eliminate dukkha completely one has to eliminate the main root of
dukkha, which is 'thirst' as we discussed earlier. Therefore Nirvana is also known
by the term Tanhakkhaya, 'Extinction of thirst'. Nirvana is the complete cessation
of that very 'thirst', giving it up, renouncing it, emancipation from it, detachment
from it. Or in other words, Calming of all conditioned things, giving up of all
defilements, extinction of 'thirst', detachment, cessation. When a man attains
Nirvana, he does not cling to anything in the world, he is not anxious, he is
completely calmed within. When he experiences a pleasant, unpleasant or neutral
sensation, he knows that it is impermanent, that it does not bind him, that it is not
experienced with passion. Whatever maybe the sensation, he experiences it without
being bound to it. He knows that all those sensations will be pacified with the
dissolution of the body. The realization of this Truth, i.e., to see things as they are
(yathabhutam) without illusion or ignorance (avijja), is the extinction of craving

15 Walpola sri Rahula, what the Buddha Taught, First published by The Gordan Fraser Gallery
‘thirst’, and the cessation of dukkha is Nirvana. Nibbana is Truth. It is beyond cause and effect. Truth is not a result nor an effect. Truth IS, Nirvana IS.\(^\text{16}\) The only thing one can do is to see it, to realize it. There is a path leading to the realization of Nirvana which we will discuss below. According to Buddha, Nirvana can be realized in this very life; it is not necessary to wait till you die to attain it. One who has realized the Truth, Nirvana, is the happiest being in the world. He is free from all ‘complexes’ and obsessions, the worries and troubles that torment others. His mental health is perfect. But however, we shall never understand it if we engage in vain intellectual pastime in highly speculative discussions regarding Nirvana or Ultimate Truth or Reality. For Nirvana is beyond logic and reasoning. Nirvana is to be realized by the wise within themselves. If we follow the path patiently and with diligence, train and purify ourselves earnestly, and attain the necessary spiritual development, we may one day realize it within ourselves, without taxing ourselves with puzzling and high sounding words.

The Fourth Noble Truth is that of the way leading to the Cessation of Dukkha. This is known as the ‘Middle path’ because it avoids two extremes: one extreme is the search for happiness through the pleasures of the senses, which is low, common for all, unprofitable and unworthy. The other extreme is the search for happiness through self-mortification in different styles or forms or norms of asceticism. The Buddha, having found extremes to be useless, avoided them and he discovered the new path through his own experience. This is the middle path which

\(^{16}\) Walpola Sri Rahula, what the Buddha taught, The Gordon Fraser Gallery Ltd, 1959, pp-40
gives clear vision and knowledge that leads to real happiness, calm, Insight, Enlightenement, Nirvana, and this Middle path is generally referred to as the Eightfold Noble Path (Ariya-Atthangika-magga) because it is composed of eight categories or divisions. The Fourth great Truth is that the Noble Eightfold Path is the means by which man can get rid of all selfish cravings and attain perfect freedom from suffering, He who has fathomed the Dharma will necessarily walk in the right path, and to him salvation is assured.\(^{17}\)

The eight categories are as under:

1. Right Understanding (Samma ditthi),
2. Right Thought (Samma sankappa),
3. Right Speech (Samma vaca),
4. Right Action (Samma Kammanta),
5. Right Livelihood (Samma ajiva),
6. Right Effort (Samma vayama),
7. Right Mindfulness (Samma sati),
8. Right Concentration (Samma Samadhi).

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\(^{17}\) P.Laxshmi Narasu, The essence of Buddhism, Bharatiya publishing house, 1976, pp-128
The essence of all the Buddha's teachings lies in the Noble Eightfold Path. These eight factors aim at promoting and perfecting the three essentials of Buddhist training and discipline: namely: (a) Ethical Conduct (Sila), (b) Mental Discipline (Samadhi) and (c) Wisdom (Panna). Ethical Conduct (Sila) is built on the vast conception of universal love and compassion for all living beings on which the Buddha's teaching is based. According to Buddhism for a man to be perfect there are two qualities that he should develop equally: Compassion (Karuna) on the one side, and Wisdom (Panna) on the other. Here, Compassion represents love, charity, kindness, tolerance and such noble qualities on the emotional side, or qualities of the heart, while Wisdom stand for the intellectual side or the qualities of the mind. Therefore, to be perfect, one has to develop both equally. If one develops only the emotional neglecting the intellectual, one may become a good-hearted fool; while to develop only the intellectual side neglecting the emotional may turn one into a hard-hearted intellect without feeling for others. Therefore both are equally important. That is the aim of the Buddhist way of life. In it, wisdom and Compassion are inseparably linked together.

Three factors of the Noble Eightfold path, namely; Right speech, Right Action, and Right Livelihood, are included in Ethical Conduct (Sila), based on love and Compassion.

Right Speech means abstention from telling lies, from backbiting and slander and talk that may bring about hatred, enmity, disunity and disharmony among individuals or groups of people. It means abstention from harsh, rude, impolite, malicious and abusive language, and it also means abstention from idle, useless and foolish babble and gossip. When one abstains from these forms of
wrong and harmful speech one naturally has to speak the truth, has to use words that are friendly and benevolent, pleasant, and gentle, meaningful and useful. One should not speak carelessly: speech should be at the right time and place. If one cannot say something useful, one should keep noble silence.

"Guard against evil speech, control your speech. Giving up evil speech, cultivate good speech"^8

Right Action aims at promoting moral, honourable and peaceful conduct. Right speech must be followed by right action. This means not killing, minimizing the amount of pain we inflict on other beings, not stealing i.e., not taking what is not given, and not committing sexual misconduct, which in the context of our daily life can be most basically understood as not causing suffering to others out of greed or desire for pleasant sensations and that we should help others to lead a peaceful and honourable life in the right way.

Right Livelihood means that one should abstain from making one’s living through a profession that brings harm to others, such as trading in arms and lethal weapons, intoxicating drinks, poisons, killing animals, cheating etc., and should live by a profession which is honourable, blameless and innocent of harm to others. Buddha advocates and preaches non-violence (just as Hinduism ,according to Gandhi, regards Non-violence or Ahimsa the highest ideal) and peace as its universal message, and does not approve of any kind of violence or destruction of life. Those who think that Buddhism is interested only in lofty ideals, high moral

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and philosophical thought, and that it ignores the social and economic welfare of people are wrong. For Buddha was interested in the happiness of man. To him happiness was not possible without leading a pure life based on moral and spiritual principles. But he holds that leading such a life was hard in unfavourable material and social conditions. Buddha does not consider material welfare as an end in itself. It is only a means to an end- a higher and nobler end. Buddha advised lay people how important it is to improve their economic condition. But this does not mean that he approved of hoarding wealth with desire and attachment, which is against his fundamental teaching, nor did he approve of each and every way of earning one’s livelihood. As I have mentioned earlier there are certain trades like the production and sale of armaments which he condemns as evil means of livelihood. From the above one could clearly see that the Buddha considered economic welfare as requisite for human happiness, but he did not recognize progress as real and true, if it was only material, devoid of a spiritual and moral foundation. While encouraging material progress, Buddha always lays great stress on the development of the moral and spiritual character for a happy, peaceful and contented society.

Below are some of the verses from Buddha’s Dhammapada, which comprises the ethical conduct in Buddhism:

Hatred never cease through hatred in this world; through love alone they cease.

This is an eternal law. Or Never by hatred is hatred appeased, but it is appeased by
kindness. This is an eternal truth.\textsuperscript{19}

Conquer anger by love, evil by good; conquer the miser with liberality, and the liar with truth\textsuperscript{20}

Self-conquest is indeed, far greater than the conquest of all other folk; neither a god, nor a angel, nor Mara, nor Brahma, can win back the victory of such a person who is self-subdued and ever lives in restraint\textsuperscript{21}

By oneself, indeed, is evil done; by oneself is one defiled. By oneself is evil undone; by oneself, indeed, is one purified. Purity and impurity depend on oneself. No one purifies another \textsuperscript{22}

Not to do any evil, to cultivate good, to purify one’s mind - this is the Teaching of the Buddhas.\textsuperscript{23}

\begin{itemize}
\item[\textsuperscript{19}] The Dhammapada by K.Sri Dhammananda, chap-I,5. Pp-45).
\item[\textsuperscript{20}] Ibid, chap-XVII.223.p-441
\item[\textsuperscript{21}] Ibid,chap-VIII,104-105,pp-227
\item[\textsuperscript{22}] ibid,chap-XII.165,pp-342)
\item[\textsuperscript{23}] bid,chap-XIV.183,pp-388
\end{itemize}
Thus these three above factors, viz, Right Speech, Right Action and Right Livelihood, of the Eightfold Path constitute Ethical Conduct. It should be realized that the Buddhist ethical and moral conduct aims at promoting a happy and harmonious life both for the individual and for society. This moral conduct is considered as the indispensable foundation for all higher spiritual attainments. No spiritual development is possible without this moral basis.

The other next three factors of Eightfold Path, namely; Right Effort, Right Mindfulness (or Attentiveness) and Right Concentration, comes under Mental Discipline.

Right Effort is the energetic will (a) to prevent evil and unwholesome states of mind from arising, and (b) to get rid of such evil and unwholesome states that have already arisen within a man, and also (c) to produce, to cause to arise, good and wholesome states of mind not yet arisen and (d) to develop and bring to perfection the good and wholesome states of mind already present in a man. Unless we make the effort, nothing will happen. According to Buddha, the effort is the root of all achievement, the foundation of all attainment. For example, if we want to reach to the summit of the mountain, just sitting at the bottom thinking about it, nothing is going to happen. The actual climbing of the mountain, the taking of one step after another, that the summit is reached. It is real effort. On the other hand, the energy has to be balanced. Being very tense and anxious is a great hindrance. Energy has to be balanced with tranquillity. In our practice we have to be persistent and perseverant, but with a relaxed and balanced mind, making the effort without force. By our making the right effort the path will unfold or open purely. We have to walk the path with energetic will to solve the problems of our daily life.
Right Mindfulness or Attentiveness is to be diligently aware, mindful and attentive with regard to the activities of the body, sensations or feelings, the activities of the mind and ideas, thoughts, conceptions and things. One should be clearly aware of all forms of feelings and sensations, pleasant, unpleasant and neutral, of how they appear and disappear within oneself. Concerning the activities of mind, one should be aware whether one's mind is lustful or not, given to hatred or not, deluded or not, distracted or concentrated, etc. In this way, one should be aware of all movements of mind, how they arise and disappear. As regard ideas, thoughts, conceptions and things, one should know their nature, how they appear and disappear, how they are developed, how they are suppressed, and destroyed and so on. Buddha has advise us to control our mind and guard our thoughts because a guarded mind brings happiness. As we see in Dhammapada III.35-36:

1. *The mind is difficult to control; swiftly and lightly, it moves and lands wherever it pleases. It is good to tame the mind, for a well-tamed mind brings happiness.*

2. *The mind is very difficult to perceive, very delicate and subtle; it moves and lands wherever it pleases. The wise one should guard his mind, for a guarded mind brings happiness.*

The third and the last factor of Mental Discipline is Right Concentration leading to the four stages of Dhyana, generally called trance or recueillement. In the first stage, passionate desires and certain unwholesome thoughts like sensuous lust,

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*K. Sri Dhammananda, The Dhammapaday, chap-III,35-36, pp-100-101*
ill-will, languor, worry, restlessness, and sceptical doubt are discarded, and feelings of joy and happiness are maintained, along with certain mental activities. In the second stage, all intellectual activities are suppressed, tranquillity and one-pointedness of mind developed, and the feelings of joy and happiness are still retained. In the third stage, the feeling of joy, which is an active sensation, also disappears, while the disposition of happiness still remains in addition to mindful equanimity. In the fourth stage of dhyana, all sensations, even of happiness and unhappiness, of joy and sorrow, disappear, only pure equanimity and awareness remaining. Thus the harmless and fruitful concentration may be practiced by any person, irrespective of religious beliefs. However, it should be clearly borne in mind that whatever the form of Meditation may be, the essential thing is Mindfulness which means awareness, attention and observation.

Thus the mind is trained and disciplined and developed through Right Effort, Right Mindfulness, and Right Concentration.

The remaining two factors, namely, Right Thought and Right Understanding go to constitute Wisdom. Right Thought denotes avoiding covetousness, the wish to harm others and wrong views. Right Thought also denotes the thoughts of selfless renunciation or detachment, thoughts of love and thoughts of non-violence, which are extended to all beings. True Wisdom is endowed with these noble qualities, and that all thoughts of selfish desire, ill-will, hatred and violence are the result of a lack of wisdom – in all spheres of life whether individual, social, or political.

Right Understanding is the understanding of things as they are, and it is the Four Noble Truths that explain things as they really are. Therefore, Right
Understanding is ultimately reduced to the understanding of the Four Noble Truths. This understanding, Buddha believed, is the highest wisdom which sees the Ultimate Reality. According to Buddhism, there are two sorts of Understanding. What we generally call Understanding is knowledge, an accumulated memory, and intellectual grasping of a subject according to certain given data. This is called ‘knowing accordingly’. The other type of Real deep Understanding is called ‘penetration’. It is seeing a thing in its true nature, without name and label. This penetration is possible only when the mind is free from all impurities and is fully developed through meditation. Therefore it should be noted here that when we mentioned Right Understanding as one of the eight categories or divisions of Eightfold Path, we are referring to the latter type of Understanding, i.e., the Real deep Understanding or ‘penetration’.

From these above account of the Path, one may see that it is a way of life to be followed, practised and developed by each individual irrespective of religions, race, caste, creed, etc., if one wishes to attain Peace and happiness. However, a mere knowledge of the Path however complete, will not do. Our function is to follow it and keep to it. It is self-discipline in body, word and mind, self-development and self-purification. It is a Path leading to the realization of Ultimate Reality, to complete freedom, happiness and peace through moral, spiritual and intellectual perfection. According to Buddhism, this Fourth Noble Truth is the most important because this is only way to attain the ultimate goal of Nibbana. There is no other way to go the final destination. The Buddha plainly stated that “the best of paths is the Eightfold Noble Path, the best of truths is the Four Noble truths, the best of
states (dhamma) is non-attachment, and the best of bipeds is the Seeing one.”

To sum up as the essential point, it may be noted that the Path consists of three main things, such as Morality, Concentration and Knowledge harmoniously cultivated. Knowledge and Morality are thought inseparable, because Morality depends on the Knowledge of what is good, about which all philosophers would agree, but also because perfection of knowledge is regarded as impossible without morality, perfect control of passions and prejudice. The Buddha said that virtue and wisdom purify each other, they are not inseparable.

Lastly it may be conclude here that the Buddha is quoted as having said that the beings are Karmadayada i.e., they have with themselves the inheritance of the subha (good) virtuous or asubha (non-virtuous, sinful) or aninjya (moderate) actions. The Buddha and his followers thus, made it obligatory for the adherants of the Buddhist order to follow a moral code, which leads to the realisation of Nirvana and also causes rebirth in favourable conditions. Thus it may be concluded that the Buddhist had a moral or ethical code, which was and is regarded as a pre-requisiteof the realisation of last goal of life, i.e., the final Beautitude or Nirvana.
