Conclusion

*Try not to become a man of success, but rather a man of value.*

*Albert Einstein*

In this work –"The Ethics of Early Buddhism: Its Relevance in the Present Day" I have attempted to formulate how Buddhist ethics contribute to human society as well as other society. Description of ethics and its relevance is based on what is considered the earliest teaching of Buddhist literature. The Teachings of the Buddha are known as *Tipitaka* – three baskets (*Vinaya, Suttanta*, *Pañcanikāya* – five collections, *Dīgha Nikāya, Majjhima Nikāya, Saṃyutta Nikāya, Aṅguttara Nikāya khuddaka Nikāya*, and *Abhidhamma*.)

In these days, we have to measure everything by utility –by how many pounds, shillings and pence it represents. What right has a person to ask that truth should be judged by the standard of utility or money? Suppose there is no utility, will it be less true? Utility is not the test of truth. Nevertheless, there is the highest utility in this. Happiness, we see, is what everyone is seeking for, but the majority seeks it in things which are evanescent and not real. No happiness was ever found in the senses. There never was a person who found happiness in the senses or in the enjoyment of the senses. Happiness is only found in the Spirit. Therefore the highest utility for mankind is to find this happiness in the spirit.

The expression ethics denotes a set of moral standards together with a code for conduct that determine the action of an individual in respect of others in a social framework. As regards Buddhist ethics, it is based on *Brāhma vihāra, mettā*–loving kindness, *karunā*–compassion, *muditā*–sympathetic joy and *upekkhā*–equanimity. To be precise it is in the observance of *Pañca Śīla* – five precepts and *Majjhimapatipadā* – the middle

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1 P. Pereira. Achieve Success and Happiness, p. 102.
path that the essence of Buddhist ethics lies. The middle path is a code of morality which paves the way for people to lead a noble and peaceful life. It is neither a metaphysical nor a ritualistic path; it is neither dogmatism nor skepticism; neither self-indulgence nor self-torture; neither eternalism nor nihilism; neither a law given by some divine authority nor a mere imagination of man. One who follows the middle path should find real peace and happiness. One should be able to lead a respectable life without being a slave to any form of belief, thus contribution to one’s peace and happiness by living in complete harmony with others and the environment.

It goes without saying that our social life, in modern age, has also been globalized enormously. The events occurring at one end of the world have impacts on the lives of people residing in other part of the world. It will, therefore, be in the fitness of things to ensure that our actions in the society are not allowed to be negative in nature as any wrong doing is likely to harm not only our immediate neighbors but denizens of globe as a whole. It is relevant to emphasize for the sake of welfare of the society and the units it is composed for the need for adherence to Buddha vacana which laid stress on the self discipline for the society and individuals.

In this connection the very important directions are contained in the Buddha’s Four Noble Truths and Noble Eight Folds Path. Right living ensures no harm is caused to anything irrespective of the fact whether it is animate or inanimate both from the physical and moral point of view. That is why there is no room for making compromise with activities that spell doom to the individual and the society. Certain business activities like sale of harmful commodities have to be stopped for the greater welfare of mankind. Buddhist concept of right understanding creates compassion for all kinds of live inclusive of the plant world. It cannot be dispute that Buddhist philosophy is founded on non-violence, renunciation, morality and self control. The urge to do something for other is a great virtue in human life. The spirit of renunciation emanates from the benevolent nature in man.
With the appearance of Buddha, Buddhism became one of the greatest religions of the world. The most salient feature of this religion lies, in its ethical aspect. Buddhist ethics are not only an analysis of moral concept or theory of right and wrong conduct, but also involve knowledge, understanding and moral practice. Besides it further involves a set of values, which every person is supposed to inculcate and express them with altruistic motive in his conduct as demanded by situation to the extent that he achieves excellence in their expression. His moral conduct, which constitutes ways of living, is nothing but the expressing of his dhamma and is the moral guide to his followers.

I have described the noble way of developing morality. This is the sure way to nobility, peace and happiness. It does harm to no one, either to oneself or to others. We can observe the results and the benefits immediately in this very life. So the ultimate goal in life for all persons should be the attainment of the eternal peace (Nibbāna) and the purpose of life in order to achieve. I believe that the very purpose of our life is to seek happiness. That is clear, whether one believes in religion or not, whether one believes in this religion or that religion, we all are seeking something better in life. Therefore I think the very motion of our life is towards happiness. Happiness can be achieved through training the mind.

Everyone in this world wants peace, harmony and happiness. Nobody likes suffering. Buddhism has always accepted the truth that happiness is an essential part of ethics. Happiness gives significance to the practice of Dhamma and forms the ground or support for religious observance both on the level of Dhamma practice and the level of ethics in general. Therefore, all people should have suitable happiness in accordance with their standing in life. From the Buddhist view of happiness, which sees it divided into three levels —sensual happiness—kāmasukha, jhāna sukha—mental happiness and Nibbāna sukha—ultimate happiness—we see that the pursuit of happiness on the sensual level, or physical or material happiness, is not at odds with Buddhist ethics if we do not allow our minds to become
infatuated with it or attach fast to it, and our minds are free and ready to step up to higher levels of happiness.

Where do we look for happiness? The Buddha says, “Within you”. I say it has cessation of the world and the path leading to cessation of the world in this body along with its perception and thought – \( \text{imasmiryeva vyāmamatte kalevare sasaññami samanake lokañca paññapemi lokasamudayañca lokanirodhañca lokanirodhagāminiñca pañtipadanti} \).²

How do we look for happiness? All sentient beings love themselves most and are afraid to die. One can get happiness without oppressing others in this life and next life. \textit{Dhammapada} and \textit{Udana} stated regarding looking for happiness that he who seeks his own happiness by oppressing others who also desire to have happiness will not find happiness in his next existence – \( \text{sukhakāmāni bhūtāni yo daṇḍena vihiṁsati attano sukham} \) and he who seeks his own happiness by not oppressing others who also desire to have happiness will find happiness in his next existence – \( \text{sukhakāmāni bhūtāni yo daṇḍena vihiṁsati attano sukham} \).³ He how seeks his own happiness by inflicting pain on others, being entangled by bounds of enmity cannot be free from enmity – \( \text{paradukkhupadhanena attano sukham} \) and he who seeks his own happiness by inflicting pain on others, being entangled by bounds of enmity cannot be free from enmity – \( \text{paradukkhupadhanena attano sukham} \).⁴

Buddhism believes that the mind leads all kinds of actions – \( \text{mano pubbaṅgamā dhammā mano setṭhā mano mayā} \)⁵ and mind leads the world – \( \text{cittena niyati loko} \).⁶ That the human mind is the most powerful agent in the world has left us no doubt for it has created all arts and sciences, including all the inventions of science. Everything in the world, from

⁴ \text{Ibid, verse, 291.}
⁵ \text{Dhammapada, verse, 1.}
cottages to sky-scrapers, from small boats to space-ships, from telegraph to satellite-communication, from simple adding machines to super computers, is created and produced by the mind. The mind is the real creator in the whole universe. All our thoughts, our speeches and our actions are directed by our mind. But our mind seems to be not powerful. These is so because our mind is not concentrated but dispersed, not clear but defiled by ignorance, craving, anger and other defilements.

The mind is the ultimate source of all happiness and misery. For there to be happiness in the world, the mind of the individual must first be at peace and happy. Individual happiness is conductive to the happiness of the society, while the happiness of society means happiness to the nation. It is on the happiness of nations that the happiness of the world is built. Here I would like to mention dialogue the Buddha and Brahmana. What is that the mind takes recourse in? Mind takes recourse in mindfulness. What is that mindfulness takes recourse in? Mindfulness takes recourse in liberation. What is that liberation takes recourse in? Liberation takes recourse in Nibbāna.\(^7\) Dependent on mind and matter arise contact — nāmañca rūpañca paṭicca phasso.\(^8\) Contact gives rise to gladness and sadness —phassanidānaṁ sātaṁ asātaṁ.\(^9\) People are pleased when they feel pleasant feelings and displeased when they experience suffering. Human beings therefore love happiness and hate suffering. Thus human beings avoid the contact that leads to suffering and seek only contact that leads to happiness, and so they are self lovers. Since human beings love their own selves, and love happiness and hate suffering, they must free themselves from exploitation, because that gives them suffering, and find benefit, because that gives them happiness.

Now it is time to talk about unhappiness. How does unhappiness arise in human being? The Dhammapada said, “Indeed we live very happily,

\(^8\) Suttanlpata, verse, 879.
\(^9\) Ibid, verse, 877.
free from anger among those who are angry—susukhaṁ vata jīvāma verinesu averino.”¹⁰ “Indeed we live very happily in good health amongst the ailing—susukhaṁ vata jīvāma ātutesu anāturā.”¹¹ “Indeed we live happily not striving for sensual pleasures among those who strive for them—susukhaṁ vata jīvāma ussukesu anussyākā.”¹² “Indeed we live happily without any anxiety like Abhassara brahma—susukhaṁ vata jīvāma yesaṁ no natthi kiñcanaṁ.”¹³

So the path to happiness is also the path to mental stability, serenity, awareness, integration and purity of mind. The Buddha classified diseases as bodily (kāyika) and mental (cetasika) and it is said that while we have bodily diseases from time to time, mental illness is almost continual until arahattaship is attained so that only the saint or a person with a Nibbānic mind can be said to have a perfectly healthy mind.

The basis of all systems, social or political, rests upon the goodness of men. No nation is great or good because Parliament enacts this or that, but because its men are great and good. People often work for the same ends but fail to recognise the fact. One must admit that law, government, politics are phases not final in any way. There is a goal beyond them where law is not needed. All masters teach the same thing. Christ saw that the basis is not law, that morality and purity are the only strength.

All masters ask to take up ethics and do good for society. Treat others as you would like to be treated. This golden rule is endorsed by all religious teachers. Yet, people have often disregarded the fact that life is dear to every living being, and as testimony to this callousness in human behaviour we can turn to the history of mankind which is filled with massacres, bloodshed and torture. Life is precious to all living beings. All

¹⁰ Dhammapada, verse, 197.
¹¹ Ibid. verse, 198.
¹² Ibid. verse, 199.
¹³ Ibid. verse, 200. Here Natthi Kiñcanaṁ mean without greed, ill will and ignorance—rāga, dosa and moha.
beings shrink with fear at the mere thought of being deprived of their lives. As we do not wish for death, other beings also do not wish for it. As we are frightened at the mere thought of death, so are other beings. Therefore, we should not kill nor cause to kill any living being, however small or insignificant. We must open up the storehouse of virtue within us to feel for those who are less fortunate than ourselves and try to help them.

There is an old saying that every man has his price, but the pity is that this price is often so small – so many are so willing to sell so much for so little. We are prepared to admit that the value of honesty, character and religion is rapidly declining. That is all the more reason for us to do something about it. We have our price too. Our goods and our services can be purchased with Rupees, Dollars or Kyats but our honesty, our good name, our faith and our religion –these are not for sale. Therefore, Albert Einstein said, “Try not to become a man of success, but rather a man of value.”14 There are four persons in the world. They are:

i. One seeks neither his own good nor others’ – nevattahitāya paṭipanno no parahitāya,
ii. One seeks the good of others not his own – parahitāya paṭipanno no attahitāya,
iii. One seeks his own good not others’ – attahitāya paṭipanno no parahitāya, and
iv. One seeks his own good as well as the good of others – attahitāya ceva paṭipanno parahitāya ca.

Among them, the first person is compared to a log of wood from a cremation, burning on both ends with the middle soiled, is neither taken to villages as firewood, nor even in the forest. The second person is better than the first and more exalted. The third person is the best of the first and the second person and most exalted. The fourth person is the most valuable one. These four persons are evident in the world.15

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14 P. Pereira. Achieve Success and Happiness, p. 102.
Are you a blind man or one eye man or two eyes man? How would you characterize yourself? Pause to reflect. I think you characterize yourself “Two eyes man”. Are you sure you are two eyes man? Read following passage then decide what you are:

1. A person who does not know interest of oneself and others is a blind man – parahitaṃ attahitaṇca ajānanto andho.
2. A person who knows only his interest is an eye man – attahitameva jānanto ekakakkhu.
3. A person who knows one’s own and others’ interest is two eyes man – ubhayaṭṭhaṃ jānanto dvīkkhu.\(^{16}\)

Seeking good for both oneself and others is considered the highest value. The concept of seeking good according to Buddhism lies in leading to happiness both for oneself and for others. Thus the Buddhist idea of seeking good refers to a harmonizing of the interests of the individual and society. Truly value person has one thing in common. They use resources – wisdom, sympathy, power, energy, knowledge – for the good and benefit of mankind. They understand that it is not possible to do the highest good to themselves without doing it to others as well. The Buddha said that one should first establish oneself in what is proper, and then instruct others. Such a wise person will not become remorseful – Attānameva paṭhamam paṭirūpe nevesaye atṭañnamusāseyya na kilisseyya paṇḍito.\(^{17}\) Buddhism admits that one should produce one’s own interest first, because if everyone could bring about his or her own interest, the result would also interest others and society as a whole. When each person is self reliant, he or she does not burden others, and is also capable of helping others. It is important to note that about this matter. The Buddha said, “It is not possible for the person who is sinking himself in the mud to pull out another person who is sinking in the mud. It is possible for the person who

\(^{17}\) Dhammapada, verse, 158.
is not sinking himself in the mud to pull out another person who is sinking in the mud."\textsuperscript{18}

The valuable person does not think to oppress himself, to oppress others or oppress either. He thinks with compassion towards all the worlds. A human being who is worthy of respect, should be one who has the attributes of fear –\textit{hiri}\textsuperscript{19} and shame –\textit{ottappa}\textsuperscript{20}, who is kind, compassionate and sympathetic to others, who is afraid to cause harm to others but is ever prepared to lend a helping hand when in need. These are ordinary human values which we should all cherish and uphold. We should develop our human qualities and not violate them. By being of service to others, we develop great virtues which are inherent in us. By being of service to others, we show a spirit of understanding, kindness, compassion, honesty, simplicity, gentleness, humility and contentment. These are worthy human values which we should be proud to acquire.

It is true that the world today is riddle with racial, political, religious, communal and ideological differences. To solve these complex problems, people must exercise the spirit of benevolence and tolerance toward each other. This noble method inculcates ethical-moral co-operation for the universal good. Humanity must realise that the spiritual development is more important than material development for human happiness. Truth, service, charity and love must be practised if his world is to be turned into a better place for us to live in.

Tolerance is an important virtue in the Buddhist moral code. We should cultivate tolerance; it helps us to avoid problems. It also helps us to

\textsuperscript{19} To feel a shame to do evil is \textit{hiri}. \textit{Hiri} is evident in those who value their honour and dignity. "I belong to a good family. So I should not indulge in unwholesome deeds, nor earn wrong living. We are old and ought to be mature and wise. If we commit evil we will come into shameful situations." This is an example of \textit{hiri}.
\textsuperscript{20} Fear to do evil is \textit{ottappa}. \textit{Ottappa} is evident in those who respect their parents, teachers, friends and relatives. If I do evil, my parents, friends, relatives and teachers will be blamed because of me. Therefore I will not do any evil. I will avoid misdeeds. This is a fine example of \textit{ottappa}.
understand other people’s troubles, to avoid giving destructive criticism and to realise that even the finest human being is not infallible. A spiritually enlightened person is likely to be more tolerant than others. In our daily life, there is much that we have to endure. We have to bear all kinds of pain, both physically and mentally. We have to face worries, frustrations, depressions and all types of imaginary fears. It is useful to know how to put up with this pain because many physical disorders are brought about by wrong habits of thought, unhealthy mental attitudes and unnecessary anxieties. Under such circumstances, it will be useful to practise patience. Patience is mentioned as one of the exemplary characteristics of a religious man, along with sincerity, swiftness in understanding and tenderness.

Buddhism offers humanity a simple moderate lifestyle giving up both extremes of self-deprivation and self-indulgence. Satisfaction of basic needs, reduction wants to the minimum, frugality and contentment are its important characteristics. The Buddhist way of dealing with problems – social, environment, and politic and economic, is not prescriptive but therapeutic. Every individual has to order their life according to moral principles, exercise self-control in the enjoyment of the senses, perform and duties in various social roles, and behave always with wisdom and self-awareness in all activities. It is only when each person adopts a simple moderate lifestyle that humanity as a whole will stop polluting the environment. This seems to be the only way of overcoming the present crisis of ecology and the problem of alienation. Giving simple suggestion within everyone’s means for solving the problems that are constantly hunting us is the important and significant contribution of Buddhism to the present society.