CHAPTER I

ETHICAL PROBLEMS

"Kiṃ kusalaṃ, kiṃ akusalaṃ, kiṃ sāvajjam, kiṃ anavajjam, kiṃ sevitabbarp, kiṃ nasevitabbarp, kiṃ me kariyamānaṃ dīgharattam ahitāya dukkhāya assa, kiṃ vā pana me kariyamānaṃ dīgharattam hitāya sukhāya assa."¹

What is good, what is bad? What is right, what wrong? What ought I to do or not to do? What, when I have done it, will be for a long time for my sorrow...or my happiness?

Lakkhaṇa Sutta

Like many philosophers, the Buddha was driven to seek solution to this problem and the associated ethical question it arise of the kind of mention above. In our daily life, we behave a lot of actions physically, verbally or mentally. Among them, some actions are decided as good or right and bad or wrong.

However, why can we say some actions are good or bad and some are right or wrong? With which criteria are we making decision as good or bad and right or wrong? It can be difficult to say exactly what is good and what is bad because a man or a nation has different concepts. For example, ancient Indian philosophers Ajita kesakambala,² said, "Natthi


² His first name, Ajita, means the "unconquered," and the second, Kesakambali, implies "one who wears a robe of human hair." The latter indicates that he was a practitioner of austerities. He is a materialist who believed in the four elements -earth, water, fire and air, and soul-body identity. According to him, these existentialists recognized generosity (dāna), prayers (yīṭha), rituals (huta), the fruits of good and bad actions (kamma), this world (idha loka), the hereafter (para loka), the concept of mother and father, the belief in beings of spontaneous birth (i.e., gods, satta opapātika), and even the claims that the ascetics and Brahmans lived in harmony, were well behave, and knew this world as well as the next. Ajita denied all these. Hence, he was looked upon as a nihilist (natthikāvādin).
sugatadukkata'nam kammâna'phala'vippo - There is nothing the fruits of good and bad actions."

Also Pûraṇa Kassapa denied the accruing of merit or demerit on the basis of good or bad actions, respectively. According to him, taking life, stealing, unchastity, or lying do not bring about demerit.

"Pañamatipataptayato, adinnâm âdiyato, samdhim chindato, nillopâm harato, ekâgârika'm karoto, paripante tiṭṭhato, parâdâra'm gacchato, musâ bhanato, karoto na kariyati pâpa'm."

Pakuddha Kaccâyana, Materialists, maintained that killing human being is not matter of serious consequence, for all that is done is that a sword is inserted through lump of matter.

"Yopi tinhe na satth'na sísa'm chindati, na koci kîci jîvita voropeti, sattanna'mtveva kâyânamantare na satth'na vivaramanupatati."

Analytical philosophers from West seem to have like that view. Makkhali Gosâla, the leader of Ájivika, rejected the efficacy of human effort and free will. "Natthi hetu natthi paccayo sattâna'm samkilesâya,


4 Pûraṇa Kassapa's view is known as akiriyavâda, the doctrine of non-action, according to which, a soul is not involved in any action in any way, therefore moral rightness or wrongness of action does not affect the soul, i.e., the soul is not a moral agent and so not responsible for an action. In brief, he denies moral causation.


6 Pakudha Kaccâyana's moralism is different from both Ajita's and Pûraṇa's. The thrust of his argument is in the direction of denying a "person. His denial of self is not comparable to that of Ajita, who reduced the human to the five material elements. He speaks of seven substances: the four material elements, happiness (sukha), pain (dukkha) and the life principle (jîvo). His doctrine of soul is most striking and strange, which shocks the moralists.


8 Makkhali Gosâla, the leader of the band of wandering ascetic called Ájivikas, is philosophically the most sophisticated among these amoralists. He presented a carefully worked out theory of biological determinism. His view is criticized by all - Vedic, Jaina and Buddhist thinkers - because it fails to give a moral criterion to distinction between right and wrong action. But all these modified his theory of self-transformation as a theory of the development of a person. He believed that beings are conditioned by three factors only: fate (niyati), species (sangati) and self-nature (bhûva).
We have instrument to weigh something and ruler to measure distance. However, we don’t have instrument to weigh and measure regarding with human conducts. Therefore we may be hard to say what is good and bad about human behavior. But Buddhism is a response to what is fundamentally an ethical problem—the perennial problem of the best kind of life for man to lead. No set of ethical teaching, however extensive, can define in advance all the circumstances in which ethical problems can arise. Every age faces new problems, and there is quite specific guidance in Buddhist canonical sources, for instance, on the ethical dilemmas we face today as a result of the scientific and technological advances in the twenty-first century. No doubt responses to these issues could be deduced from the ancient teaching, but is must be said that the Buddhist tradition throughout its long history has shown quite initiative in developing and refining the tools of ethical analysis which might assist us in formulating such response.

There are two aspects to ethics: The first involves the ability to discern right from wrong, good from evil, and propriety from impropriety. The second involves the commitment to do what is right, good and proper. Ethics entails action; it is not just topic to mull or debate.

The Notion of Conduct (Sīla)\(^\text{10}\)

Now it is the time to analyze the nature and justification of Buddhist moral rules, which are technically called ‘Sīla’. The Pāli word ‘Sīla’ originally means simple conduct. But in the context of the Buddhist spiritual training

\(^{10}\) Sinoti bandhati cittametennatī sīlaṃ – i.e., morality controls mind. Sillyati sappūrtisehi hadayamametaṃ upanetavā dharetti sīlaṃ, which means sīla makes men and society peace and happy. Caturingabala. Abhidhanasuci, p. 568.
the term is used to signify only a specific type of conduct, i.e., good conduct. *Śīla* actually means both moral conduct (a body of habits governed by moral principles), and also moral virtue, (the interior quality, the regular observance of these principles). In the former sense *Śīla* is moral discipline in deed and word, beginning as the inhibition of immoral impulses seeking an outlet through body and speech and developing into the habitual confirmation to the principles of righteous conduct. But the full range of *Śīla* is not exhausted by mere outward behavioral control, for the term has in addition deeper, more psychological significance. In this second sense, *Śīla* is moral purity; the inner purification of character, which results from a life consistently, molded upon moral principles. This aspect of *Śīla* lays stress on the subjective, motivational side of action. It looks not towards the outward act itself, but toward the rectitude of mind from which good conduct springs.

Upon inspection *Śīla* reveals itself to be a two dimensional quality – It contains an external dimension consisting in purification of conduct, and an internal dimension consisting in purification of character. However, in Buddha’s teaching the dimensions – the internal and the external are not torn apart and consigned to separate, self-sufficient domains. They are recognized rather to be two facets of a single whole or complementary pole of a unified field, which mirror one another, implicate and influence one another. Actions performed by body and speech are not devoid of their spiritual essence, they are concrete revelation of the states of mind, which stand behind them as their acting source.

States of mind, in turn, do not remain closed in a purely mental isolation but come forward according to plan of circumstances from the fountain of consciousness where they arise, through the channels of body, speech and thought, out into the world of inter-personally significant events. Because of this mutual dependence of the two domains, moral conduct and purity of character are locked up with each other in a subtle and complex interrelationship. The fulfillment of the purification of virtue
requires that both aspects of Sila be realized: on the one side, behavior of body and speech must be brought into accord with the moral ideal; on the other, the mental disposition must be cleansed of its corruptions until it is impeccably pure. The former without the latter is insufficient; the latter without the former is impossible.

Between the two, the internal aspect is the more important from the standpoint of spiritual development, since bodily and verbal deeds acquire ethical significance primarily as expressions of a corresponding disposition of mind. In the sequence of spiritual training, however, it is moral discipline that comes first. For at the beginning of training, purification of character stands as an ideal which must be reached; it is not a reality with which one can start. Since beginningless time the consciousness-continuum has been corrupted by the unwholesome roots of greed, hatred and delusion; it is these defilements which have functioned as the source for the greatest number of our thoughts, the ground for our habits, and the springs for our actions and general orientation towards other people and the world as a whole. To uproot these defiling afflictions at a single stroke and reach the peak of spiritual perfection by a mere act of will is a nearly impossible task.

Because the inner and outer domains are mutually implicated, the one can become the means for producing deep and lasting changes in the other. Just as a state of mind expresses itself outwardly in an action-deed or speech- so too the avoidance and performance of certain actions can recoil upon the mind and alter the basic disposition of the mental life. If mental states dominated by greed and hatred can engender deeds of killing, stealing, lying, etc., then the abstinence on principle from killing, stealing and lying can engender a mental disposition towards kindliness, contentment, honesty and truthfulness. Thus, although Sila as moral purity may not be the starting point of spiritual training, conformity to righteous standards of conduct can make it an attainable end.
Different Kinds of Śīla

Cārītta Śīla and Vārītta Śīla

The fulfilling of the precepts such as parents’ duties, a teacher’s duties, a pupil’s duties, etc., enacted by the Buddha thus: “This should be practised” is called Cārītta Śīla. Not doing the evil actions which are prohibited by the Buddha thus: “This should not be done” is called Vārītta Śīla – Yam bhagavatā idam kattabban’ti paññattasikkhāpada pūranam, tām cārīttaṃ. Yam idam na kattabban’it paṭikkhittassa akaranam tām vārīttaṃ.11 Observing five moral precepts, eight moral precepts, etc., belong to vārītta Śīla (saddhāviriyasādhanam cārīttaṃ). Cārītta Śīla is accomplished by faith and effort whereas Vārītta Śīla is accomplished by faith (saddhāsādhanam vārīttaṃ).12

Cūla Śīla, Majjhima Śīla and Mahā Śīla13

In the Brāhma-jāla Sutta of Dīgha Nikāya, Śīla are classified into three sections, namely, Cūla Śīla (the small), Majjhima Śīla (the medium length) and Mahā Śīla (large or elaborate). The Cūla sīla section gives us an interesting list of morality putting away the killing of living things (pāñātipātāṃ pahāya), putting away of what has not been given (Adinnādānāṃ pahāya), putting away unchastity (Abrahmacariyāṃ pahāya), putting away lying words (Musāvādaṃ pahāya), putting away slander (Pisunāṃ vācaṃ pahāya), putting away rudeness (Pharusaṃ vācaṃ pahāya), putting away frivolous talk (saṃphapalāpaṃ pahāya). The Cūla sīla shows us aloof from causing injury to seeds or plants (Bījaṃ bhūtagāma samārambhā paṭīvirato) and so many moralities.

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The Majjhima sīla section throws light on various conditions of life. Here we are given an enumeration of the five varieties of plants and refers to the Buddha’s abstinence from the storage of food stuffs, store, to wit of foods, (anna sannidhiṃ), drinks (pāṇa sannidhiṃ), clothing (vattha sannidhiṃ), equipages (yāna sannidhiṃ), bedding (sayana sannidhiṃ), perfumes (gandha sannidhiṃ), and curry-stuffs (āmīsa sannidhiṃ).

The Mahā sīla portion in this sutta has a bearing upon certain popular sciences, arts and tactics mixed up with superstition. The list given includes āṅga or palmistry. It has also a bearing upon the knowledge of signs of bad and good, qualities in certain things of important and of the marks in them denoting the health or luck of their owners e.g. those of gems, sticks, garments swords, uju, etc.

**Morality as a Foundation**

Sīla describes as the ‘root of all success (sabbasāṃpattimūlamhi sīlamhi iti paññīto); and a stage which, when consolidated, will lead to Nibbāna. The Buddha said that morality is the foundation for all progress along with the noble eightfold path. In Milinda’s Questions, sīla is compared to a seed which will yield the fruit of the religious life: As seed, even though small, if sown in a fertile field, and receiving good rainfall, will yield abundant fruit, even so, morality (sīla) if practised by the yogin, the earnest student of yoga, will yield the whole fruit of the religious life, thus it should be rightly practised. Morality is the support of everything valuable, just as the earth is the support for the animate and inanimate and is the support for an elevated existence and liberation. Just as the Earth is the foundation for all kinds of activity so sīla is the foundation for the cultivation of all limbs of enlightenment. Bhikkhu Pesala mention sīla in his

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book ‘The Debate of king Milinda’ like that “Just, O king, as all forms of animal and plant life flourish with the earth as their support, so does the recluse, with virtue as the support, develop the five controlling faculties and so on.”

“Milinda’s Questions says that just as an archer plants his feet firmly on the ground before making a shot, so must the yogin plant his feet on the ground of sīla before losing the shaft of knowledge. Morality is frequently compared to the feet which make movement towards the destination possible.” Just as a man without feet cannot walk, so one who lives without the precepts cannot be reborn as a god in heaven. There is Myanmar saying, “if you don’t have water and shoes, you will be trouble in the summer. If you don’t have generosity and morality, you will be in hot water when you die.”

The Benefits of Morality

Sīla bears many benefits beginning with the clarity of the mind and non-remorse. Sīla has the clarity, serenity and peace of mind as its benefits; it has the potency of clarifying and refreshing the mind. In the Nikāyas the Buddha preached the benefits of Sīla as follows:

“(1)Idha gahapatayo sīlavā sīlasampanno appamādaññhikaraṇām mahantaṃ bhogakkhandham adhipacchati, (2)Kalyāṇo kīṭisado abbhuggacchati, (3)yadi khattiyaparisaṃ yadi bramaṇaparisaṃ yadi gahapatiparisaṃ yadi samaṇaparisaṃ visārado upasaṅkamati amaṅkubhūto, (4)asammūlho kālaṅkaroti, (5)kāyassa bhedā param maranā sugataṃ saggām lokām upapajjati.”

1. A virtuous person acquires much wealth owing to non-negligence and diligence.

2. His good fame spreads far and wide.

18 Damien Keown. The Nature of Buddhist Ethics, pp. 52-3.
3. He could enter an assembly of princes or Brahmans or householders or ascetics without fear or hesitation.
4. He dies unconfused or undeluded, that is, he dies with a clear mind taking a wholesome object.
5. After death, he will reappear in a happy destiny, in a heavenly world.

The Buddha preached a lot of Suttas in Nikāya regarding with the benefits of morality. I would like to mention one more Sutta. By bringing our conduct into harmony with the precepts, we can nourish the root of our spiritual endeavors, our virtue. And when virtue is made secure, the succeeding stages of the path unfold spontaneously through the law of the spiritual life, culminating at the crest in the perfection of knowledge and the serene azure of deliverance. As the Buddha says: “Sīlavato bhikkhave sīlasampannassa na cetanāya karaṇīyaṁ ‘avippaṭisāro me uppaṭāṭi’ti, dhammatā esā bhikkhave yaṁ sīlavato sīlasampannassa avippaṭisāro uppaṭāṭi.

Avippaṭisārassa bhikkhave na cetanāya karaṇīyaṁ ‘pamojjam me uppaṭāṭi’ti, dhammatā esā bhikkhave yaṁ avippaṭisārassa pamojjam jayati.

Pamojjam sā bhikkhave na cetanāya karaṇīyaṁ ‘pīti me uppaṭāṭi’ti, dhammatā esā bhikkhave yaṁ pamojjam sā uppaṭāṭi.

Pamojjam sā bhikkhave na cetanāya karaṇīyaṁ ‘kayo me passambhati’ti, dhammatā esā bhikkhave yaṁ pamojjam sā kayo passambhāti...etc...”20

For one who is virtuous, bhikkhus, endowed with virtue, no deliberate volition need be exerted: "Let freedom from remorse arise in me." This is the natural law, bhikkhus, that freedom from remorse arises in one who is virtuous, endowed with virtue.


1432
For one who is free from remorse, no deliberate volition need be exerted: "Let gladness arise in me." This is the natural law, bhikkhus, that gladness arises in one free from remorse.

For one who is gladdened, no deliberate volition need be exerted: "Let rapture arise in me." This is the natural law, bhikkhus, that rapture arises in one who is gladdened.

For one filled with rapture, no deliberate volition need be exerted: "Let my body become tranquil." This is the natural law, bhikkhus, that for one filled with rapture the body becomes tranquil.

For one tranquil in body, no deliberate volition need be exerted: "May I experience bliss." This is the natural law, bhikkhus, that one tranquil in body experiences bliss.

For one who is blissful, no deliberate volition need be exerted: "Let my mind become concentrated." This is the natural law, bhikkhus, that for one who is blissful the mind becomes concentrated.

For one who is concentrated, no deliberate volition need be exerted: "May I know and see things as they really are." This is the natural law, bhikkhus, that one who is concentrated knows and sees things as they really are.

For one knowing and seeing things as they really are, no deliberate volition need be exerted: "May I become disenchanted and dispassionate." This is the natural law, bhikkhus, that one knowing and seeing things as they really are becomes disenchanted and dispassionate.

For one who has become disenchanted and dispassionate, no deliberate volition need be exerted: "May I realize the knowledge and vision of deliverance." This is the natural law, bhikkhus, that one who is disenchanted and dispassionate realizes the knowledge and vision of deliverance...
Thus, bhikkhus, one stage flows into the succeeding stage, one stage comes to fulfillment in the succeeding stage, for crossing over from the hither shore to the beyond.

The disadvantages of broken and impure morality should be understood clearly in the opposite sense. The following is more fully expression for the danger of failure in Sīla. On account of impure morality, an unvirtuous person is displeasing to deities and human being, he is not admonished by his coresidents to lead the life of purity, he suffers when unvirtuousness is censured and feels remorseful when the virtuous are praised, he is as dull and ugly as hemp cloth owing to his unvirtuousness, contact with him is painful because those who fall in with his views are brought to long-lasting suffering in woeful abodes, he is worthless because he causes no great fruit to arise in those who offer him requisites, he is hard to purify as a cesspit many year old, he is like a long from a pyre for he is outside both recluseship and the lay state, though he claims to be a bhikkhu, he is not bhikkhu, so he is like a donkey-following a herd of cattle, he is always nervous and scared like a man who is everyone's enemy, he is as unfit to live as a dead carcass, though he may have the qualities of learning, he is unfit for the homage of his fellows as a charnel ground fire is unfit for the homage of Brahmans, he is incapable of reaching the distinction of attaining jhāna, magga and phala as a blind man is of seeing a visible object, he is hopeless for treading along the noble eightfold path and reaching its goal as a begger-body is of a kingdom, although he fancies he is happy, yet he suffers because he reaps suffering as mentioned in the discourse of the mass of fire.\(^{21}\)

**Notion of Stimulation (Cetanā)**

The medium which bridges the two dimensions of Sīla, facilitating the translation of outward behavior into inner purity, is stimulation or cetanā. Stimulation is a mental factor common to every occasion of experience, a

\(^{21}\) Visuddhimagga. P.T.S, p. 54.
universal concomitant of every act of consciousness. It is the factor which makes experience teleological, i.e., oriented to a goal, since its specific function is to direct its associated factors towards the attainment of a particular end. All action \((kamma)\), the Buddha teaches us, is in essence volition, for the act itself is from the ultimate standpoint a manifestation of volition through one of the three doors of action—body, speech or mind. In the \textit{Aṅguttara Nikāya} it has been said,

"\textit{Cetanāham, Bhikkave, kammaṃ vadāmi. Cetayitvā kammaṃ karoti, kāyena, vācā, manasā}—It is stimulation (volition), bhikkhus, that I call action. For having willed, one performs an action through body, speech, or mind."\textsuperscript{22} Commentator Buddhaghosa has also interpreted action as good and bad, right or wrong volition \((Kammaṃ nāma kusālakusāla cetanā)\).

There may be misunderstanding here. Since action is defined in terms of the mental element behind every action, it may seem that every action ought to be mental. But this is wrong. The Buddhists divide actions into \textit{cetanā} and \textit{cetayitavā} varieties. Of the two \textit{cetanā} is purely mental—It designates the intentional aspect of action. But \textit{cetayitavā} refers to physical or verbal actions, which originate out of the thinking that this action is to be done in this way. Thus viewed, \textit{cetayitavā} may be regarded as voluntary action proper. So Buddhist philosophy action does not mean merely voluntary action, but also the volition behind the action.

Stimulation determines an action as being of a definite sort, and thus imparts to action its moral significance. But since stimulation is invariably present in every state of consciousness, it is in its own nature without ethical distinctiveness. Stimulation acquires its distinctive ethical quality from certain other mental factors known as roots \((mūla)\), in association with which it always arises on occasions of active experience. Roots are of two morally determinate kinds: unwholesome \((akusala)\) and wholesome.

The unwholesome roots are greed, hatred and delusion; the wholesome roots are non-greed, non-hatred and non-delusion. These latter, though expressed negatively, signify not merely the absence of the defiling factors, but the presence of positive moral qualities as well; generosity, loving-kindness and wisdom, respectively.

When stimulation is driven by the unwholesome roots of greed, hatred and delusion, it breaks out through the doors of the body and speech in the form of evil deeds—as killing, stealing and fornication, as lying, slander, harsh speech and gossip. In this way the inner world of mental defilement darkens the outer world of spatio-temporal extension. Though the defiled trend of volitional movement is strong, it is not irrevocable. Unwholesome volition can be overcome by wholesome volition, and therefore the entire disposition of the mental life made subject to a reversal at its foundation. This redirecting of volition is initiated by voluntarily undertaking the observance of principles of conduct belonging to a righteous order, i.e. by willing to abstain from evil and to practice the good. Thus, when volition tending to break out as evil action is restrained and replaced by volition of the opposite kind, by the will to behave virtuously in word and deed, a process of reversal will have been started which, if followed through, can produce far-reaching alterations in the moral tone of character. For acts of volition do not spend their full force in their immediate exercise, but rebound upon the mental current which gave birth to them, re-orienting that current in the direction towards which they point as their own immanent tendency: the unwholesome volitions towards moral depravation, and the wholesome volitions towards moral purification.

Just as unwholesome volitions invariably arise in association with the unwholesome roots—with greed, hatred and delusion—so do wholesome volitions inevitably bring along with them as their concomitants the wholesome roots of non-greed, non-hatred and non-delusion. Since opposite qualities cannot co-exist, the replacement of unwholesome
Volition by wholesome volition at the same time means the transposition of the unwholesome and the wholesome roots. Continuance occurrence of the wholesome roots perfume the mental stream with such good qualities, as generosity, loving-kindness, wisdom; and these gather cumulative effect, and the whole personality of the individual gets changed.

According to Abhidhammatthasaṅgaha, stimulation (cetanā) is that mental factor (cetasika) which marshals the consciousness (citta) and other mental factors (cetasikas) that arise together with it.\(^{23}\) We act physically, verbally and mentally because of motivation of volition. It is clear that volition which motivates unwholesome leads to evil actions and good mind leads to good behaviors. We should guard our mind and mind associate with good and evil. The Buddha, therefore, said in Aṅguttara Nikāya:

\[\text{"Ye keci bhikkhave dhammā akusalā akusalabāgiyā akusalapakkhikā, sabbe te manopubbaṅgamā, mano tesaṃ dhammānaṃ pathamaṃ upuṣjati, avadēva akusalā dhammāti -- Bhikkhus, the mind is foremost for all demeritorious thoughts; they are born in the mind first and invariably become demerit.}\]

\[\text{On the other hand, Bhikkhus, the mind is foremost for all meritorious thoughts they are first born in the mind and invariably become merit -- Ye keci bhikkhave dhammā kusalā kusalabāgiyā kusalapakkhikā, sabbe te manopubbaṅgamā, mano tesaṃ dhammānaṃ pathamaṃ upuṣjati, avadēva kusalā dhammāti.}\]

\[\text{"Citte gahapati arakkhite kāyakammaṃpi arakkhitaṃ hotī, vacīkammaṃpi arakkhitaṃ hotī, manokammaṃpi arakkhitaṃ hotī. Tassa arakkhitakāyakkammantassa, arakkhitavacīkammantassa, arakkhitamanokammantassa kāyakammaṃpi avassutaṃ hotī, cavīkammaṃpi hotī, manokammaṃpi avassutaṃ hotī. Tass}\]

\(^{23}\) Ashin Janakāhvamsa. Abhidhamma in Daily Life, p. 120.

When the mind is not protected, bodily actions are not protected, so also verbal and mental actions. When bodily, verbal and mental actions are not protected, bodily actions leak, verbal actions leak and mental actions leak when bodily, verbal and mental actions leak, bodily actions stink, verbal actions stink and mental actions stink. To one with stinking bodily, verbal and mental actions, there is no auspicious death.

“Citte gahapati byāpanne kāyakkammaṃpi byāpannam hoti, vačikammaṃpi byāpannam hoti, manokammaṃpi byāpannam hoti. Tassa byāpannakāyakammantassa, byāpannavacikammantassa, byāpannamanokammantassa na bhaddakaṃ maraṇaṃ hoti na bhaddikā kālakariyā. Seyathāpi gahapati kūtaγāre ducchanne kūtaṃpi byāpannam hoti, gopānasiyopi byāpannā honti, bhittipī byāpannā hoti.”

When the mind is troubled, bodily actions are troubled, so also verbal and mental actions. When bodily, verbal and mental actions are troubled, there is no auspicious death. In a gabled house that is not well thatched the gable is troubled, the beam supporting the framework of the roof is troubled, the walls are troubled. In the same manner, when the mind is troubled ... re ... there is no auspicious death. When the mind is not troubled bodily actions are not troubled, so also verbal and mental actions. When bodily, verbal and mental actions are not troubled, there is an auspicious death.

Though volition or cetanā is the primary instrument of change, the will in itself is indeterminate, and requires specific guidelines to direct its energy towards the actualization of the good. A mere "good will," from the Buddhist standpoint, is altogether inadequate, for despite the nobility of

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the intention, as long as the intelligence of the agent is clouded with the dust of delusion, the possibility always lies open that laudable motives might express themselves in foolish or even destructive courses of action. This has been the case often enough in the past, and still stands as the perennial bugbear of the ethical generalist. According to the Buddhist outlook, goodness of will must be translated into concrete courses of action. It must be regulated by specific principles of right conduct, principles which, though flexible in their application, possess normative validity independently of any historical culture or existing scheme of values, entirely by virtue of their relation to a universal law of moral retribution and their place in the timeless path of practice leading to deliverance from suffering and the *samsaric* round.

**Kant’s Good Will**

Some ethicality considers that good and right action depends on volition of agent. One of them, Immanuel Kant\(^27\) holds that good will is the only good. He says, “There is nothing in the world that can be called good without qualification, expect a good will”. It is good without condition. It is the only jewel that shines by its own light. The good will is the only absolutely good. A will is good, not because of its effects, but in itself and for itself. An action is moral if its motive is moral, if it is promoted by a

\(^27\) Immanuel Kant (1724-1804), German philosopher and founder of critical philosophy, was a little man, physically frail, whose life was an undeviating routine of meals, daily walks, lectures, hours of reflection, and writing. He seldom ventured beyond the city of his birth, Königsberg, and never went outside the province, East Prussia, Germany. Yet in his thinking, he was a giant. His thoughts and writings brought a far-reaching revolution in modern philosophy. He was influenced by the pietism of his mother, but he lived in an age of skepticism and read the works of skeptics like Voltaire and Hume; consequently his problem became: What can we know? What is the nature and what are the limits of human knowledge? Kant spent most of his life investigating the knowing process and studying the relation among the logical processes of thought, the external world, and the reality of things. Since his time, philosophers have had to consider and reckon with his arguments. Although Kant’s minor writings are many and encompass a variety of topics, his major works are his three critiques: *Critique of Pure Reason* (1781), which discusses reason and the knowing process, on which he worked for fifteen years and which startled the philosophic world; *Critique of Practical Reason* (1788), which sets forth his moral philosophy; and *Critique of Judgment* (1790), which supplements the earlier critiques and depicts nature as purposive in its laws.
consciousness of duty. Wealth and talents are not unconditionally good. They can be abused by a bad will. They are good when they are used by good will. Their goodness depends upon a good will. But a good will is an unconditional good, which is independent of other condition. It is the good direction of the will, but not towards any particular good-knowledge, beauty or happiness. Good will is good in itself, not with reference to any external acts. It is the rational will. It is the will that follows the categorical imperative. It should not be actuated by an inclination, feeling or desire for an end or consequence. It should be prompted by pure respect for the Moral law.\(^{28}\)

According to Kant, every action with good will being right, it is not necessary to look at effect because a person actually does not make effect. It comes out automatically after doing an action. The most important thing is good will when a man makes behavior. If bad result happens the person is not responsible for it, even though he does with good will. If an individual acts from a good motive, the act is good regardless of the consequences. Kant did not say that consequences are not to be considered or that they are unimportant; he did say that the moral quality of the act is not determined by the consequences.

Here we should note that we must be careful to distinguish will from mere wish. “The road to hell, it is said, is paved with good intentions.” A good will is not merely a good intention, in the sense in which we distinguish an intention from a fully formed purpose, but a determined effort to produce a good result—though it may be an effort that has still to wait for its appropriate opportunity of issuing in over action. Such an effort is, from moral point view, supremely good, even if, from some unforeseen contingencies, the good result is not itself achieve. A good wish is merely

\(^{28}\) King, King’s Ethics. p. 63.
the consciousness that the attainment of a certain end would give satisfaction: a good will is the identification of oneself with that end.\(^\text{29}\)

**The View of Teleology\(^\text{30}\)**

Some Western thinkers do not regard effect as important thing and they regard good will as important thing. Some totally ignore good will and consider effect. According to them, it must measure good or bad and right or wrong with result. It is not important that whether a person behave an action with good will or not. Only effect is important. They consider that action is right when a good result come out. If not, the action is wrong. Theories of this type are called *teleological* because they look at what happens (or will happen) following an action which has a moral dimension—what the outcome (or end – which is where ‘telos’ comes from) is or will be. Typically, one’s actions may then be good if the outcome is desirable. Of course, predicting what will happen if we take a particular course of action is not all that the theories are about. They are ethical in that they prescribe what sorts of consequences are good—ones we ought to do; and what sorts are bad—ones we ought not to do.

**Moral Relativism**

Moral relativists say that if you look at different cultures or different periods in history you'll find that they have different moral rules. Therefore it makes sense to say that "good" refers to the things that a particular group of people approve of.

Moral relativists think that that's just fine, and dispute the idea that there are some objective and discoverable 'super-rules' that all cultures ought to obey. They believe that relativism respects the diversity of human


\(^{30}\) (Greek, telos, end) The study of the ends or purpose of things. The idea that there is such a thing as the end or purpose of life is prominent in the Aristotelian view of nature (and ethics) and then in the Christian tradition.
societies and responds to the different circumstances surrounding human acts.

The position that rejects ethical absolutism and the appeal to any external authority is ethical relativism—the view that there are no fixed moral values. Some people, having rejected the older authorities, have discovered no new ones that they believe have any objective validity. Many people also have been influenced by the findings of anthropologists, sociologists, and psychologists concerning the great diversity of moral practices and codes found among the cultures of the world.

Human views of what is right and wrong vary over time and from place to place. Morals, ethical relativists assert, come from the *mores*, the folkways that have grown up and are considered the right ways. The ethical relativists claim that there are no standards accepted by all people everywhere and that custom can make anything appear right. They do not merely say that what some people *think* is right in one place or at one time is *thought* to be wrong by some other people in another time or at another place; they claim that what *is* right at one time or place *is* wrong at another time or place (or even at the same time and place, if judgments differ) because there are no objective or universal standards.

Why people disagree with moral relativism:

- Many of us feel that moral rules have more to them than the general agreement of a group of people - that morality is more than a supercharged form of etiquette
- Many of us think we can be good without conforming to all the rules of society
- Moral relativism has a problem with arguing against the majority view: if most people in a society agree with particular rules, that's the end of the matter. Many of the improvements in the world have come about because people opposed the prevailing ethical view -
moral relativists are forced to regard such people as behaving "badly"

- Any choice of social grouping as the foundation of ethics is bound to be arbitrary
- Moral relativism doesn't provide any way to deal with moral differences between societies.  

**Moral Absolutism**

Some people think there are such universal rules that apply to everyone. This sort of thinking is called moral absolutism. Moral absolutism argues that there are some moral rules that are always true, that these rules can be discovered and that these rules apply to everyone. Immoral acts—acts that break these moral rules—are wrong in themselves, regardless of the circumstances or the consequences of those acts. Absolutism takes a universal view of humanity—there is one set of rules for everyone—which enables the drafting of universal rules—such as the Declaration of Human Rights. Religious views of ethics tend to be absolutist.

Why people disagree with moral absolutism:

- Many of us feel that the consequences of an act or the circumstances surrounding it are relevant to whether that act is good or bad
- Absolutism doesn't fit with respect for diversity and tradition.

**Yathābhūta Vāda (Realism)**

Moral realism is based on the idea that there are real objective moral facts or truths in the universe. Moral statements provide factual information about those truths. We can find whether Buddhism is moral relativism or Moral absolutism or moral realism in the Discourse to Prince

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Abhaya (Abhayarājakumāra Sutta).\textsuperscript{33} Prince Abhaya, probably a follower of Jainism, urged by the Jaina leader Mahāvīra himself, went to debate the Buddha armed with a double-edged question (ubhatokotikām pāñham). Has the Buddha ever made a statement that would be disliked by and unpleasant to someone? (Ṭā sā vācā pāresañ appiyā amanāpā). Were the Buddha to respond in the positive, then he would be told that he was not different from an ordinary person (Puthujjanena nānākaranaṃ). Were the Buddha to respond in the negative, then he would be reminded that he had indeed declared that Devadatta was doomed to a sorrowful way, to hell, would remain confined for an eon, and was incurable (Devadatto byākato apāyiko Devadatto nerayiko Devadatto kappaṭho atekiccho). Devadatta was certainly angry and displeased at these words (Ṭāya vācāya devadatto kupito ahosi anattamano). According to Mahāvīra, the Buddha would not be able to satisfactorily solve this puzzle. The question here is, Should one be unconditionally pleasant or unpleasant to others? Translating this into the language of penal laws, should one be pleasant to an evildoer and ignore his or her evil actions, or should one be unpleasant by imposing the most severe punishment, for no one likes punishment.

The Buddha had a surprise for Prince Abhaya, He referred to an innocent little baby boy lying on its back on Prince Abhaya’s knees. The Buddha asked Prince Abhaya if this baby, through the prince’s carelessness or that of his nurse, were to put a stick or a stone in his mouth, what would he do? Prince Abhaya’s reply was that he would try to get the object out. If he failed the first time, he would take hold of the baby’s head with the left hand and, crooking a finger, would get the object out with the right hand, even though it was covered with blood. When questioned by the Buddha as to why he should do so, Prince Abhaya’s response was that he had compassion for the boy.

The Buddha then referred to six types of statements distinguished in terms of their truth value, utility and emotive impact.

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(Abūtaṃ atacchaṃ anatthasaṃhitam, sā ca paresaṃ appiyā amanapā. Bhutaṃ tacchaṃ anatthasaṃhitam, sā ca paresaṃ appiyā amanapā. Bhutaṃ tacchaṃ atthasaṃhitam, sā ca paresaṃ appiyā amanapā. Abhutaṃ atacchaṃ anatthasaṃhitam, sa ca paresaṃ piyā manapā Bhutaṃ tacchaṃ anatthasaṃhitam, sa ca paresaṃ piyā manapā Bhutaṃ tacchaṃ atthasaṃhitam, sa ca paresaṃ piyā manapā)

The Buddha would only utter statements three and six, and that depending upon the appropriate time (kālaṅkū), not unconditionally. This means that pleasantness or unpleasantness is not criteria in determining whether an action of body or speech is right or wrong. Its truth value and usefulness, as well as the appropriateness of the time, are. Thus, if the Buddha were to say (or do) something unpleasant to another, he would do so as long as his statement (or action) was true, useful, and timely. This is because he had compassion for the beings.

Concluding the discourse, the Buddha attributed his compassion to his understanding of the nature of the causal process (dhammadhātu), which makes him treat each situation (ṭhāna) carefully, evaluating the conditions involved. This is an outright rejection of the belief in absolute and unconditional laws in favor of a concern for the human to whom punishments are meted out.

We need a lot to realize circumstances (kālaṅkū, ṭhāna) truly in order to behave a good and right action. If we don’t have ability to know

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circumstances really, we can’t perform a good bodily action as well as verbal action. According to Buddha, without examine, just as taking hot food makes mouth hot, so also doing an action without studying with knowledge makes doer hot—\textit{asamekkhitakammantaṁ, turitābhinīpātinaṁ, sāni kammāni tappenti, uṇhāṁvajjhohitaṁ mukhe}.\textsuperscript{35} That is why one should behave everything considering circumstance, time and space.

According to Buddhist Philosophy, volition always deals with knowledge. The action that behaves with volition, without wisdom, is not a good and right action. When a person does an action it is necessary to have good and right effect as well as to have good will. According to Buddhist literature, the action that behaves wrong method and volition, cannot be good and right action. A person must think about and analyze circumstance whether it can be effect or not, it has good will or not and it be right or not. If wrong view leads to action, wrong action can be. If right view leads to action, right action can occur. \textit{Samyutta Nikāya} said about this as follows:

\begin{quote}
\textquotedblleft \textit{avijjā bhikkhave, pubbaṅgamā, akusalānaṁ dhammānaṁ samāpattiya, anvadeva ahirikamā anottappam. Avijjāgatassa bhikkhave aviddasuṇo micchādiṭṭhi pahoti, micchādiṭṭhissa micchāsāṅkappo pahoti, micchāsāṅkappassa micchāvācā pahoti, micchāvācassa micchākammanto pahoti, micchākammantassa micchājjivo pahoti, micchājjivassa micchāvāyamo pahoti, micchāvāyamassa micchāsati pahoti, micchāsattissa micchāsamādhi pahoti.}\textsuperscript{36}
\end{quote}

Monks, ignorance precedes demerit, followed by lack of shame and remorse. Monks, to the ignorant not seeing one, wrong view arises. To one with wrong view wrong thoughts arise, to one with wrong thoughts wrong speech, to one with wrong speech wrong action, to one with wrong action wrong livelihood, to one with wrong livelihood wrong endeavor, to one

with wrong endeavor wrong establishment of mindfulness and to one with wrong establishment of mindfulness wrong concentration arises.

“vijjā bhikkhave, pubbaṅgāmā, kusalānaṃ dhammānaṃ samāpattiya, anvadeva hirottappamā. vijjāgatassa bhikkhave viddasuno sammādiṭṭhi pahoti, sammādiṭṭhissa sammāsāṅkappo pahoti, sammāsāṅkappassa sammāvācā pahoti, sammāvācassa sammākammanto pahoti, sammākammantasssa sammājīvо pahoti, sammājīvassa sammāvāyamo pahoti, sammāvāyamassa sammāsati pahoti, sammāsatiissa sammāsamādhi pahoti”37

Monks, knowledge precedes merit, followed by shame and remorse. Monks, to the knowing, seeing one, right view arises. To one with right view right thoughts arise, to one with right thoughts right speech, to one with right speech right action, to one with right action right livelihood, to one with right livelihood right endeavor, to one with right endeavor right establishment of mindfulness and to one with right establishment of mindfulness right concentration arises.

A good will issues in good action, and, conversely, there can be no good action without a good will. But an action which in itself is good may lead, through the interference of other circumstance, to a bad result; and a bad action may lead to a good result. The morality of action depends on the motive from which we act. What constitutes the goodness of an action is the goodness of the intention, but a good intention, though it produces a good action, need not produces a good result.

Dispositions are of various types, the most popular among them relating to the body (kāya), speech (vācā), and mind (mano).38 As such, they are associated with the three types of action (kamma)-bodily, verbal, and mental. Even though it is stated that the dispositions process the five

constituents of the human personality and give them their identity, the Discourse to Bhûmiya Sutta\textsuperscript{39} states that bodily, verbal, and mental actions generate (abhisankaroti) bodily, verbal, and mental dispositions, respectively. This again underscores the fact that the dispositions are not autonomous. Most students of the Buddhism are aware of the popular statement of the Buddha: “Monks, I say that volition is action” (Cetanāham, Bhikkave, kammaṁ vadāmi).\textsuperscript{40} The term Cetanā, which is translated as volition, is derived from the verb cinteti, meaning “thinks” hence the Buddha’s statement that follows: “Having thought, one performs an action through the body, speech and mind” (Cetayitvā kammaṁ karoti, kāyena, vācā, manasa). In the Discourse to Bhumija we have the term sañcetanā (instead of cetanā) which is analogous to sañkhāra, and it is argued that when a body exists, because of a volition associated with the body (kāya sañcetana-hetu) there arise subjective happiness and suffering. This is repeated with regard to speech and mind.

Here we have an interesting psychological explanation: coordinating thought or volition (sañcetanā) is the spring of action, and action generates disposition. Together they explain several complicated issues relating to moral philosophy debated in the modern world. For example, on the one hand, there are those who insist that a person is responsible for any voluntary or conscious action. They are the upholders of free will. On the other hand, there are those who argue that a person could not have acted differently because of that person’s upbringing, background, or the society. They are determinists who deny free will. The Discourse to Bhûmiya represents the Buddhist solution to this dilemma, and it works as follow. Volition is the most important factor in the determining whether a person is responsible or not for an action. If an action is accompanied by volition, a person is held responsible; if not, that person is not held responsible. However, there could be a situation where a person might act with no


volition immediately evident but could still be held responsible. The dispositions come to play at this point. While volition may be an immediate act of deciding, dispositions represent the gradually built up character involved in decision making. According to the Discourse to Bhūmija, such character building can be conditioned by ignorance on the part of oneself or by the presence of another person, that is, by a role model. It can take place knowingly (saṃpajāna) or unknowingly (asampsajāna).

Moral Concepts

Ethics is the science of morality of conduct. It deals with rightness and wrongness of actions. It deals with moral good and evil. It deals with merit and demerit of moral agents doing right and wrong actions. It deals with rights, duties and virtues of persons in society. It deals with freedom and responsibility of persons. It deals with these fundamental moral concepts involved in moral consciousness. The notion of right and good are the most fundamental of all moral concepts.

‘Right’ and ‘wrong’ apply to voluntary actions and habitual actions which are results of repeated voluntary actions. The term ‘right’ comes from the Latin word rectus. It means ‘straight’ or ‘according to rule’. When action conforms to a moral rule or law of conduct, it is said to be right. The term ‘wrong’ is connected with the verb ‘wrong’. A wrong action implies a twist of a rule of conduct. It violates a law of conduct. ‘Right’ and ‘wrong’ are inconceivable apart from the concept of ‘good’. Every law or rule presupposed and end which is realized by it. The end which is realized by law is called the good. The notion of right and wrong are connected with the moral laws which are subservient to Highest Good.

The ‘right’ is a means to the realization of the good. An action is right if it tends to bring about what is good. An action is wrong if it tends to bring what is evil. The conception of right is subordinate to the conception of good. The right is subservient to the good. The good is an end which a person ought to realize in order to realize his deeper self. It is an end which
satisfies his rational nature. It fulfills the demands of his sentient nature in conformity with the higher law of reason. It satisfies his total self-sentient as well as rational. The concept of right is derived from that of a moral law or law of duty. A moral law is not a law of nature. It is not a statement of what always happens. A moral law is that which ought to be. The right is the fundamental category of jural ethics. The good is the fundamental category of teleological ethics. The notions of 'right' and 'good' are fundamental in morality.

**Criteria of Good and Bad**

We normally use the words “good or bad” “right” or “wrong” to denote classes of acts and sometimes the specific acts of human beings. Thus, what we mean when we say that, “murder is wrong” is that the class of acts, which are classified as “murder”, are “wrong.” But sometimes we may say that his action in the specific situation in which he was placed was “right.” We do not use these words to denote the acts of animals though, perhaps, the acts of some animals in rare situations may seem to us to be “right” or “wrong,” as the case may be.

Even with regard to human beings, we do not consider all their acts as being “right” or “wrong.” When a person eats bread instead of buns for his morning meal, when what he eats makes no difference to him or others, we do not consider this act of his “right” or “wrong.” We deem it to be “morally neutral” along with many of his actions, including reflex actions. Likewise, some of his actions may be partially right and partially wrong and therefore of a “mixed” character. So a man’s actions may be classified as being morally right (kusala), morally wrong (akusala), morally neutral (avyākata). Within Buddhism, the most usual way of referring to a good
action is to describe it as *kusala*—wholesome.\(^{41}\) A bad action is *akusala*—unwholesome.

I propose to examine the nature and the characteristics of these acts, which are designated "right" or "wrong." What makes right acts right and wrong acts wrong? What is the measure or what are the criteria, which enable us to recognise and distinguish right acts from wrong? The criteria for deciding what action is "unwholesome" and what is "wholesome" are of three kinds.

The first type of criterion concerns motivation. The three possible motivating "roots" of "unwholesome" action are: "*Lobho akusalamūlaṃ, doso akusalamūlaṃ, moho akusalamūlaṃ*"

(1) Greed, which covers a range of states from mild longing up to full-blown lust, avarice, fame-seeking and dogmatic clinging to ideas;

(2) Hatred, which covers mild irritation through to burning resentment and wrath; and

(3) delusion, the veiling of truth from oneself, as in dull, foggy states of mind through to specious doubt on moral and spiritual matters, distorting the truth, and turning away from the truth.

The opposites of these are the three "roots" of wholesome action: "*alobho kusalamūlaṃ, adoso kusalamūlaṃ, amoho kusalamūlaṃ*"\(^{42}\)

(1) Non-greed, covering states from small generous impulses through to a strong urge for renunciation of worldly pleasures;

(2) Non-hatred, covering friendliness through to forbearance in the face of great provocation, and deep loving kindness and compassion for all beings; and

(3) Non-delusion, covering clarity of mind through to the deepest insight into reality.

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\(^{41}\) *Abhidhāna*, verse, 803. *Kusala* involves a healthy state of mind—stable, pure, unencumbered, ready-to-act, calm and contented—or "skilful" in producing an uplifting mental state and spiritual progress in the doer.

While phrased negatively, these three are nevertheless seen as positive states. The importance of seeing the harmfulness of the unwholesome roots and the benefit of the wholesome ones is emphasized in a number of texts. The three roots of the unwholesome are seen as intertwined. Greed and hatred are grounded in delusion, and greed may lead to hatred. It is said that greed is a lesser fault, but fades slowly, hatred is a great fault, but fades quickly, and delusion is a great fault and fades slowly —Rāgo kho āvuso appasāvajjo dandhavirāgi, doso mahāsāvajjo khippavirāgi, moho mahāsāvajjo dandhavirāgi.\(^{43}\)

This gives a clear indication of Buddhist values, especially the need to develop wisdom —analytically directed intuitive insight—so as to overcome delusion. It is also said that common motives for evil deeds are partiality, enmity, stupidity and fear —chandāgati, dosagati, mohagati, bhāyagati,\(^{44}\) and that greed, hatred and delusion can each lead a person to abusing others with the thought ‘I am powerful.’ “Yadāpi luddho lobhena abhibūto, duttho dosena abhibūto, mūlho mohena abhibuūto, pariyādinacitto parassa asatā dukkhaṃ uppādayati balavamhi balattho etipii”\(^{45}\) So, the first criterion of good and bad is in term of morally motivated intention.

The second type of criterion for what actions are unwholesome or wholesome concerns the anticipatable direct effect of the action in terms of causing suffering or happiness. This is shown by a passage where the Buddha advises that one should reflect before, during and after any action of body, speech or thought, to consider whether it might conduce to the harm of oneself, others or both, such that it is unwholesome and results in dukkha. If one sees that it will so result, one should desist from the action. If one sees that the action conduces to the harm of neither oneself nor


others, nor both, it can be seen to be wholesome, with a happy result –
Idam me kayakammaṃ nevattabyābādhāyapi saṃvatteya, na parabyābādhāyapi saṃvatteya, na ubhyabyābādhāyapi saṃvatteya, kusalam idam kayakammaṃ sukhudyayam sukhavipākaṃ. The "harm" to
oneself which is relevant here is spiritual harm, or material harm if this
arises from self-hatred (e.g. by harsh asceticism): an act which benefits
others at the expense of material harm to oneself is certainly not
unwholesome. Harm to oneself is also seen to arise as an immediate result
of unwholesome action: "One who is thus caught up, whose mind is thus
infected, in the evil, unwholesome states born of greed... of hatred...of
delusion, experiences suffering, stress, agitation and anxiety in this present
life – evaruupo bhikkhave puggalo lobhajehi, dosajehi, mohajehi pāpakehi
akusalehi dhamme abhibūto, pariyādinnacitto diṭṭhe ceva dhamme
dukkham vaharati savighatam saupāyāsām saparijāham." The third type of criterion for what is wholesome or unwholesome
builds on the second. It concerns an action's contribution to spiritual
development, culminating in Nibbāna. Thus it is said that unwholesome
conduct is that which causes injury that is, having dukkha as fruit, due to
leading to the torment of oneself, others or both, and conducing to the
arising of further unwholesome states and the diminution of wholesome
ones: that is, having unhealthy effects on the psyche –Kāyasamāsāro
dukkHAVIPĀKo. Kāyasamāsāro attabyābādhāyapi saṃvatattati, parabyābādhāyapi saṃvatattati, ubhyabyābādhāyapi saṃvatattati. Tassa
akusalā dhammā abivadaghanti. Kusala dhammā parihāyanti. Wholesome
actions are of the opposite kind. Moreover, "wrong directed thought", for
example, is said not only to conduce to the harm of self and other but to be
"destructive of intuitive wisdom, associated with distress, not conducive to

*Nibbāna*, while "right thought" has the opposite effect – *upanno kho me ayaṁ kāmaṁ kāmavitakko*. So *sa kho attabyābādhāyapi samvattati, parabyābādhāyapi samvattati, ubhyabyābādhāyapi samvattati*. *Paññānirodhiko vighātapakkhiko anibbānasanvattaniko.*

Overall, one can say that an "unwholesome" action is one that arises from greed, hatred or delusion (or a combination of these), leads to immediate suffering in others and/or oneself and thus to further karmic suffering for oneself in the future, and contributes to more unwholesome states arising and to liberating wisdom being weakened. "Wholesome" actions have the opposite characteristics. They arise from a state of mind which is virtuous, as judged by the action's motive and the agent's knowledge of likely harm or benefit, its contribution to the improvement of the character of the person who does it, and thus its assistance in moving a person along the path to Nirvana. Thus, in the Buddhist the good and right of actions requires not only the morally motivated intention but also analytical knowledge in order to produce the right method of actions and desirable consequences both for the agent and others.

Using the above criteria, one list of what is "unwholesome" specifies: (i) onslaught on living beings—(*panātipāto*), (ii) taking what is not given—(*adinnādānam*), (iii) sensual misconduct—*kāmumicchācāro*, (iv) lying speech—*musāvādo*, (v) back-biting speech—*pisunā vācā*, (vi) harsh speech—*pharusa vācā*, (vii) empty gossip—*samphapplāpo*, (viii) covetousness—*abhijjhā*, (ix) ill-will—*byāpāda*, and (x) wrong view—*micchādiṭṭhi*—particularly the view that one should not be held responsible for ones actions, that actions matter. That is, the first three actions belong to the wrong action of body; the second four are performed by the wrong action of speech and the last three are planned by the wrong action of mind.

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What is wholesome is restraint (*verāmaṇī*) from each of these. Such unwholesome actions are said to be "of unwholesome will (*akusala-sañcetanika*), yielding *dukkha*, ripening in *dukkha*. Of these actions, only those relating to body and speech would normally be seen as coming under the purview of the English words "morality" or "ethics"; indeed the Pāli word *sīla*, or "moral virtue", has a similar range. That which is "wholesome" or "unwholesome", then, goes beyond purely moral considerations to include states of mind, which may have no direct effect on other people. All the factors of the Eightfold Path, for example, are seen as "wholesome".

So one of the main criteria of a good and right action concerns the question as to whether it constitutes the right means towards the realisation of the ultimate good. The ultimate good for each individual is the attainment of *Nibbāna*, a state of highest happiness, moral perfection, supreme realisation, utter freedom and perfect mental health.

**Moral Judgment**

Moral judgment is a judgment of value as distinguished from a judgment of fact. A judgment of fact is a judgment of what is. A judgment of value is a judgment of what ought to be. The former is a descriptive judgment, while the latter is an appreciative or critical judgment. Moral judgment is the mental act of discerning and pronouncing a particular action to be right or wrong. Moral judgment is not a judgment about an action, but a judgment upon an action with reference to the moral ideal. It compares an action with the moral standard and pronounces it to be right or wrong. Moral judgment is a judgment of value as distinguished from a judgment of fact. It does not consider the nature of an action but its moral value, rightness or wrongness. It judges what our actions ought to be.

The moral quality of an action is recognized in this way. When we perceive a voluntary action, we compare it with the moral standard, and thus judge whether the action is in conformity with it or not. In other

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words, moral judgment involves the application of a standard to a particular action. Thus it is clear that moral judgment is inferential in nature, involving the application of a standard to a particular action. But we must not suppose that our ordinary moral judgment always involve explicit reasoning or inference. The element or reasoning is implicit in most cases of moral judgments. It is only in complex and doubtful cases or in reflective examination that the whole process becomes explicit. In such cases the moral standard is explicitly held before the mind and applied to the cases under consideration.

Judge an Act By its Motives or its Consequences?

Moral judgments are not passed upon all kind of actions but only upon conduct. But conduct has two aspects: it is will and it is action; it involves an internal factor and an external factor. There is controversy between Hedonists and Intuitionists. The Hedonists maintain that the rightness or wrongness of action depends on the consequences, while the Intuitionists maintain that it depends upon the motive. “If motives are good or bad”, says Bentham, “it is on account of their effects.” Bentham and J.S.Mill, who are Hedonists, take the term ‘motive’ in the sense of springs of action. Feelings of pleasure and pain are the springs of action. The Hedonists use the word ‘motive’ in a wrong sense. The idea of the end is the real motive because it induces the self to act.

On the other hand, Kant says, “The effect of our actions cannot give them moral worth.” “There is nothing in the world, or even out of it, that can be called good without qualification, except a good will.” The moral quality of an action is determined by the good will that motives it and not upon its consequence. Kant is rationalist. Butler says, “The rightness or wrongness of an act depends very much upon the motive for which it is done.”

52 J. Sinha. A Manual of Ethics, p. 44.
When there is a harmony between the inner motive and the outer consequence, both are objects of moral judgments. Motive and consequence are not really opposed to each other. The motive is the inner idea of the outer consequence as foreseen and desired. The consequence is the outer manifestation of the inner motive. The motive or idea of the end aimed at is undoubtedly the object of moral judgment. The consequence also is the object of moral judgment in so far as it realizes the inner motive.

But sometimes it is found that the motive is good, but the consequence turns out to be bad. For example, a skillful surgeon performs an operation most carefully in order to cure a patient; but in spite of his efforts the patient dies. The consequence, here, is bad, the motive is good. The action of the surgeon cannot be regarded as bad, because his motive is good. Again, sometimes the motive is bad; the consequence turns out to be good. The morality of an action depends on the motive from which we act. If I fling five Rupee coin to a beggar with intention to break his head and he picks it up and buys victuals with it the physical effect is good, but, with respect to me, the action is very wrong. Here, evidently the action is wrong because the motive is bad. Thus, when there is conflict between the inner motive and the outer consequence, the moral quality of an action is determined by the inner motive and not by the consequence.

According to the Buddha, it is the motive and intention, which ought to be a primary consideration in determining the rightness or wrongness of an action. But this is only a necessary condition and not a sufficient condition. Mere good intentions are not enough. The act must be performed as well before we can say whether a right action has been done. Besides, for the action to be a skilful (kusala) action, the act itself must be appropriate. Consider the case where a layman, who with the best of intentions gives his friend in an emergency a dose of medicine, which turns out to be poisonous because he gave the wrong dosage. Here he acted with the best of intentions and motives but did not do a totally skilful (kusala) act.
So in considering the skilfulness or rightness of an action one has to take into account not only the motive and intention but the nature of the act, the manner in which it was carried out, its consequences, the people it affected etc. Here is Dhammapada’s saying, “Pāṇimhi ce vaṇo nāssa, hareyya pāṇinā visaṃ, nābbaṇāṃ visamanveti, natiṃ pāpaṃ akubbato” – if there is no wound on the hand, one may handle poison; poison does not affect one who has no wound; there can be no evil for one who has no evil intention.\(^{53}\) The motive and intention are, therefore, only a necessary condition in evaluating the rightness or wrongness of an action but there are other factors as well to be taken into account. Predominant among these other factors is the tendency on the part of these right actions to bring about the ultimate good of the individual as well as of society.

Moral Evaluation of Action

From the Buddhist perspective no action by itself can be regarded as good or bad, right or wrong. Morality always is a means to an end. Lower action leads to happiness either in this life or in the afterlife. But higher actions are means to the cessation of rebirth. In short, an action can be regarded as good which leads a man to happiness and an action can be regarded as bad which leads him to suffering.

While describing wrong action it has been said in the Dhammapada: that action never is good for which a man has to repent and has to bear the fruits with tears in eyes.\(^{54}\) A good action, on the other hand, is one for which no one has to repent, and whose results one can enjoy with a delighted spirit.\(^{55}\) But from this if we conclude that the Buddhist judges the morality of an action simply on the basis of consequences that would be

\(^{53}\) Dhammapada, verse, 124.
\(^{54}\) Ibid. Verses, 15-17.
\(^{55}\) Ibid. Verses, 16-18.
They never believed in the mechanical account of action, but
consider it primarily as psychological—our volition is expressed in our action. Accordingly they lay stress on the purity of action. An unintentional act, whatever productive it may be, cannot lead to rightness or wrongness. On the contrary when an action is done with pure intention in mind, even if the consequence might cause suffering to someone, cannot be called immoral.

For example when parents hurt their child with the thinking of their good, they cannot be regarded as doing anything bad. In this respect, the Buddhist analysis is different from the Jaina analysis. For the Jaina every action is material, so every action irrespective of the good or bad intention of the agent enwraps the soul. But for Buddha, the case is different. Buddha laid down another practical criterion to guide an individual with regard to his action towards others. In the Dhammapada, said, putting oneself in another’s place, one should not beat or kill others—attānam upamāṁ katvā, na haneya na ghātaye. One should act liken others to oneself. Thus acting there would be no room for selfish motives. Acting on the analogy of one’s self, one would naturally refrain from indulging in such acts as might give rise to pain to others.

A Universal Criterion of Moral Judgment

Ethics is a normative science determining norms, ideals and standards for man’s behaviour. It examines how man ought to behave. While the views of individual philosophers on the subject can be found in different philosophical systems, religious teachings on the subject as expounded by the founders of the religions, commented and supplemented by subsequent commentators, are found in the religions of the world.

According to Buddhism an action may be wholesome (kusala) unwholesome (akusala) or indeterminate (avyākata). Wholesome and unwholesome actions are ethically significant while indeterminate actions

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56 Ibid. Verses, 129.130
are kammically neutral. The first two kinds in respect of kammic retribution are known as meritorious (puñña) and demeritorious (pāpa) respectively. Unlike theistic religions, in Buddhism, the moral values of these actions are judged purely on empirical grounds leaving aside any kind of supernatural intervention whatsoever.

Primarily, an action can be motivated by either the unwholesome foots of evil: greed (lobha), malice (dosa) and delusion (moha) or by the wholesome roots of good: non-greed (alobha), non-malice (adosa) and non-delusion (amoha). The karmic potentiality lies in the fact of motivation that drives the person to act in that particular manner. Since achieving the end by any means does not justify that particular means according to Buddhism, to classify an action as wholesome, righteous means have to be adopted in performing that action. Assuredly the action must be directed towards one's own good and that of others. For this purpose, several criteria have been prescribed in the Buddhist scriptures.

The Ambalaṭṭhikarāhulovāda Sutta of the Majjhima Nikāya provides us with a moral criterion of universal application. The Buddha addressing the Venerable Rāhulā, says that if any action is not beneficial to oneself, not beneficial to others, and not beneficial to both oneself and others, that is an unwholesome action that should be avoided. On the other hand, if an action is beneficial to oneself, beneficial to others and beneficial to both oneself and others, that is wholesome action that is to be practiced. The Buddha further advises him to reflect on the pros and cons of an action before it is performed. I would like to quote the Sutta as follows:

"The Buddha asked his son, Rāhulā, what is the purpose of a mirror?" Venerable sir, it is for the purpose of reflection. Rāhulā in the same manner reflecting you should do bodily actions, reflecting you should do verbal actions, reflecting you should do mental actions —Taṃ kim maññasi rāhulu. Kimatthiyo ādāsoti. Paccavekkhanattho bhante. Evameva kho rāhulā paccavekkhitvā paccavekkhitvā kāyenā kammaṁ kattbbam. 
“Rāhulā, when a desire arises to do some bodily action, you should reflect. Doing this bodily action, will I be troubled, will others be troubled, and will both be troubled. Is this bodily action demerit? Is it unpleasant? When reflecting if you know. This bodily action will bring trouble to me, to others and to both It is demerit, it is unpleasant. If possible you should not do it. Rāhulā, when, reflecting, if you know. This bodily action I desire to do, will not bring me, trouble, others trouble, nor trouble to either. It's merit and brings pleasantness. Rāhulā, you should do such bodily actions.”

“Even while doing that bodily action, you should reflect. Does this bodily action give me trouble, give others trouble or does it give trouble to either? Is it demerit? Is it unpleasant? Rāhulā, when reflecting if you know this bodily action is unpleasant, give up such bodily actions. If you know, this bodily action does not give me, others or either, trouble. It is merit, and it brings pleasantness, then follow up that bodily action.”

“Rāhulā, having done such actions too you should reflect. Did this bodily action cause me, others, or either, trouble? Was it demerit? Did it arouse unpleasantness? When reflecting if you know, this bodily action caused me and others, trouble, it isn't merit, aroused unpleasantness. Then you should declare it to the Teacher or a wise co-associate in the holy life, manifest it and make amends for future restraint. Rāhula, when reflecting, if you know, this bodily action did not cause me, others or either trouble. It was merit and pleasant. Then you should abide delighted pursuing such things of merit day and night.”

(Yādeva tvam rāhulā kāyena kammaṁ kattukamo ahosi. Tādeva te kāyakammaṁ paccavekkhitabbaṁ yaṁ nu kho ahaṁ idaṁ kāyena kammaṁ kattukamo. idaṁ me kāyakammaṁ attabyābādhāyapi saṁvatteya, parabyābādhāyapi saṁvatteya, ubhyabyābādhāyapi

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Another Pāli text relevant for our discussion of the early Buddhist criterion of morality can be found in Majjhima Nikāya, within the Bāhitika Sutta. There the king Pasenadi of Kosala asks the monk Ānanda whether or not the Buddha performs actions censured by wise recluses and Brahmins. The king asks what action is censured by the wise, Ānanda replies that unwholesome action, which is further explained in subsequent questions as action that is blamable, action that brings affliction, action with painful results, and action that “leads to one’s own affliction, or to the affliction of others, or to the affliction of both, and on account of which unwholesome states increase and wholesome states diminishes. Such bodily... verbal... mental behavior is censured by wise recluses and Brahmins”. The dialogue between Ānanda and the king Kosalla go like this:

Ānanda, what kind of bodily behavior is hostile to recluses, Brahmins and the wise?

Oh! Great king bodily behavior that is demerit.

Venerable sir, what kind of bodily behavior is demerit?

Great king, bodily behavior that is faulty.

Venerable sir, what kind of bodily behavior is faulty?

Great king, bodily behavior that is troublesome.

Venerable sir, what kind of bodily behavior is troublesome?

Great king those with unpleasant results.

Venerable sir, what kind of bodily behavior has unpleasant results?

Great king, bodily behavior that is hurtful to oneself, hurtful to others and hurtful to both and on account of which demerit increases and merit decreases. Such bodily behavior is hurtful to oneself, to others and to both. Venerable sir, does the Blessed One approve the dispelling of all demerits?'

Great king the Thus Blessed One has dispelled all demerit, is endowed with merit.

The Sutta continues verbal behavior and mental behavior in the same way above mention.


The opposite are like that: Sir Āṇanda, what kind of bodily behavior is well disposed to recluses, Brahmins and the wise?'

Great king bodily behavior that is merit.'

Venerable sir, what kind of bodily behavior is merit?'

Great king, bodily behavior that is faultless.'

Venerable sir, what kind of bodily behavior is faultless?'

Great king, bodily behavior that is not troublesome.'

Venerable sir, what kind of bodily behavior is not troublesome?'

Great king those with pleasant results.'

Venerable sir, what kind of bodily behavior has pleasant results?'

Great king, bodily behavior that is not hurtful to oneself, to others and to both and on account of which, demerit decreases and merit increases. Such
bodily behavior is not hurtful to oneself, to others and to both. Venerable sir, does the Blessed One approve the acquiring of all merit? Great king the Thus Gone One has dispelled all demerit, is endowed with merit.


Criteria are spelled out to identify, in as objective a way as possible, which action-intentions should be recognize as morally unwholesome or wholesome. The Buddha’s advice for reflection on the pros and cons of an action in the discourses are applicable to all humans despite the differences of caste, creed, race or colour.

Kamma

Among the various reasons we become involved in discussions of human action, there seem to be two very important ones. First, there is an interest in the consequences of action, mostly because we like to know whether an action will lead to happiness or suffering. Second, there is a need to determine who or what is responsible for the action and this involves us in the examination of sources or motives of action. These two issues are therefore present in various forms in the theories of action. Thus, in the Buddhist context, the term kamma, while signifying an individual

action, is also used to refer to the doctrine of *kamma* involving a relation between action and consequence.

The Buddha's discourses refer to four types of theories presented by his predecessors and contemporaries. First, an action is performed by oneself and, as such, the consequence, whether good or bad, are also reaped solely by oneself. This is the early *Brahmanical* theory, with its *atma*-metaphysic (i.e., the one that prevailed before the appearance of the idea in the *Bhagavad-Gita* that in the final analysis a human is only an instrument [*nimitta*] of God).

Second is the view that one person acts and another experience the consequence. This seems like the theory presented by the biological determinists, who denied the efficacy of human action but maintained that all beings experience happiness and suffering as a result of biological evolution, a process that is external to the beings.

Third is a combination of the first two views, which is the theory, adopted by the Jainas. It combined the metaphysics of the first two and, as a result, turned out to be the most deterministic theory of *kamma*. Fourth is a theory that rejected the previous theories and argued that everything in the world, including happiness and suffering, is accidental.

None of these theories was compatible with what the Buddha realized to be the nature of existence, or becoming. In his own formulation of the theory of action he had to accommodate many issues that were compatible with his insight and understanding. For example, there could not be absolute certainty regarding the connection between action and consequence, but that did not mean they are totally unrelated. The relationship had to be conditional because not two situations in which an action is performed are identical. The concept of a self was important, but such a self could not be eternal and immutable. External factors would play a role, but even they are not the sole determinants.

The most philosophical account of the doctrine of *kamma* in Buddhism is found in the Greater Discourse on the Analysis of Action
(Mahākammavibhīṅga Sutta). Here the Buddha refers to four kinds of persons:

1. One who has performed evil actions and is reborn in an evil state, in hell —Edhānanda ekacco puggalo pānātipāti hoti. Adinnadādayi hoti kāmesumicchācārī hoti. Musāvādī hoti. So kāyassa bhedā paraṃ marañā apāyaṃ duggatiṃ vinipātaṁ nirayaṃ upapajjati.

2. One who has performed evil actions and is reborn an evil state, in heaven —Edhānanda ekacco puggalo pānātipāti hoti. Adinnadādayi hoti kāmesumicchācārī hoti. Musāvādī hoti. So kāyassa bhedā paraṃ marañā suggatiṃ saggam lokaṃ upapajjati.

3. One who has performed good actions and is reborn in a good state, in heaven —Edhānanda ekacco puggalo pānātipātā pativirato. Adinnadādā pativirato. kāmesumicchācārā pativirato. Musāvādā pativirato. So kāyassa bhedā paraṃ marañā suggatiṃ saggam lokaṃ upapajjati.

4. One who has performed good actions and is reborn in a evil state, in hell —Edhānanda ekacco puggalo pānātipātā pativirato. Adinnadādā pativirato. kāmesumicchācārā pativirato. Musāvādā pativirato. So kāyassa bhedā paraṃ marañā apāyaṃ duggatiṃ vinipātaṁ nirayaṃ upapajjati.  

At first glance, this admission of the possibility of examples of two and four may appear to invalidate the doctrine of kamma. However, the higher forms of knowledge when perceiving examples one and three asserted deterministic theories about kamma by universalizing a relation

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between action and consequence. Similarly, by universalizing the absence of a relation between action and consequence in examples of two and four, some arrived at theories of indeterminism. Buddha's criticism here is twofold. First, after observing examples one and three or two and four, it is inappropriate to reach the conclusion that this is the case with regard to all (sabba). A dogmatic adherence to any one set of observation, saying, "This alone is true; everything else is false" (idameva saccam, mogha maññam) is not epistemologically justified. Second, if someone has performed evil actions here and now (idha) and is reborn in heaven, there is no need to immediately come to the conclusion that the doctrine of kamma is invalid. For it is possible that the person had performed good actions in the past or at the moment of death in this life, cultivated right views. In other words, to arrive at a deterministic theory that an evildoer is destined to be reborn in the hell, it is necessary for us to have an absolutely perfect record of that person's behavior from the time of birth, if not before birth, until the moment of death. Such retrieval of information is not available even to the higher form of knowledge such as clairvoyance, except omniscience, which the Buddha disclaimed. It is also possible that the consequence of evil actions may be reaped here in this life itself (diṭṭhe va dhamme) without having to wait for a future life. This latter qualification was of great significance, for it allows room for a person who has done evil in the past to attain enlightenment and freedom in this very life.

The story of Anāgulimāla, the murder, is the best illustration of this idea. A discourse included in the Aṅguttara Nikāya represents further commentary on this issue. Here, the Buddha says that if a person were to maintain that "Just as a person does a deed, so does that person experience its consequences," then the living of the noble life would be rendered meaningless, for there would be no opportunity for the complete elimination of suffering (i.e., the attainment of nibbāna). But if one accepts the theory that "just as this person does a deed whose consequences is to be determined in a certain way [lit., "a deed whose consequences would be

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experienced in a certain way;], so does that person experience its consequences,” then the noble life will be meaningful and there will be an opportunity for the complete elimination of suffering. The distinction drawn here is as follows: In the first case, there is complete determinism between action and consequence; in the second, the recognition of the circumstances in which the action is committed, and so on, makes the effect conditional upon the circumstances. This is illustrated by an apt metaphor. If a person threw a grain of salt into a small cup of water, the water in that cup would become salty and undrinkable because of that salt. If a person were to throw a similar grain of salt into the river Ganges, because of the great mass of water therein, the water would not become salty and undrinkable. Similarly, some trifling evil action of a person may lead him to hell. But a similar trifling evil action committed by another person may bring consequences experienced in this very life—consequence, indeed, that may be barely noticeable. Here we find two people performing similar actions but reaping consequences in different ways. Thus, the same discourse states


Edha ekacco puggalo bhāvitakāyo hoti bhāvitasīlo bhāvitacitto bhāvitapañño aparitto mahatto appamanāvihāri. Evarūpassa bhikkhavae puggalassa tādisaṁyeva appamattakaṁ pāpakammaṁ kataṁ diṭṭhadhammavedaniyam hoti. Nānupi khāyati kim bahudeva.”

A certain person has not properly cultivated his body, behavior, thought and intelligence, is inferior and insignificant and his life is short and miserable; of such a person.... Even a trifling evil action done leads him to be hell. In the case of a person who has proper culture of the body, behavior, thought and intelligence, who is superior and not insignificant,

and who is endowed with long life, the consequences of a similar evil action are to be experienced in this very life, and sometimes may not appear at all.

Thus, the consequence of an action is not determined solely by the action itself, but also by many other factors, such as the nature of the person who is responsible for the action and the circumstances under which it is done. This again is an application of the Buddha’s conception of dependent arising, or conditionality, to the explanation of human action.

Rebirth of the Human Personality

The Buddhist doctrine of rebirth, or the survival of the human personality, has generated much controversy among modern scholars. For the Buddhist scholar interested in interpreting the doctrine in the light of what he or she believes to be critical modern philosophy, the idea of rebirth is no more than an ancient Indian philosophical relic either let alone by the Buddha because it was supposed to do no harm or brought into the Buddhist fold by his later disciples. It was not the least compatible with the Buddha’s conception of no-self or nonsubstantiality. For the traditional Buddhist scholar rebirth is an absolutely inevitable occurrence until a person attains enlightenment and freedom.

It is important to note that the Buddha has recognition of certain forms of higher knowledge that are the products of deep meditative contemplations, especially retrocognition and clairvoyance. According to the discourses, retrocognition, which provides information about one’s own survival, is simply a sharpened memory of certain events, situation, or associations of the past. The Buddha himself claimed that he remembered some of his past lives, and three specific ones are described in great detail.64 Such memories have been reported by those who did not practice yoga, especially by children during the early stages of their lives before

their attention become focused on the present. Clairvoyance, or the knowledge of the survival of others, does not involve memory. Hence, it has to deal with the moment of its occurrence. The description of this knowledge is therefore always given in the present tense. For example, it is said that the clairvoyant “see beings ceasing and arising –dibbena cakkhunā visiddhena atikkantamanusakena satte passati cavamane upapajjamane.” It is compared to the perception of someone who, standing in a high-rise, sees people leaving one house and entering another.

Occasions on which the Buddha appeared at the scenes of the death of two his disciples, Godhika and Vakkali, are reported, and on both occasions he observed that they passed away without being reborn. Those who are brought up in the traditions that accept only the “one-life-after-death” theory are generally not inquisitive about where their loved ones would be after death. That one life is common to all. However, in the traditions that recognize rebirth, people are very much interested in finding out how their kith and kin fare after death. When the Buddha visited a place called Nādika, Ānanda, probably goaded by the people of Nādika, questioned the Buddha about the fate of the Nādikans who had died. The Buddha’s response was that what happens to a person depends upon that person’s character. The Buddha then presented them with what he called the “mirror of morals” (dhammādāsa) so that a person, without having to harass the Buddha with such questions, could look at oneself and predict

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67 Veneral Vakkali was living unpleasantly in a potter’s house, gravely ill and diseased in Rajagaha. After listening to dhamma –anatta desana, from the Buddha, he also take his life. Then the Buddha told his disciples that Vakkali has had extinction, his consciousness is unestablished. Ibid. (Khandhasamyutta) Vakkali Sutta. P.T.S, vol –III, p. 119. Myanmar edition, pp. 97-101.
about oneself (attanā va attanam vyākareyya) where one would go after death.68

If there were an easy solution to the problem of rebirth, it would be accepting a permanent and eternal self, as did the Brahmanical tradition. The Buddha rejected that solution. His alternative explanation of rebirth is couched in the language of dependent arising, hence his statement that at least three conditions have to be fulfilled for a human to come into existence:

1. The coitus of the parents – Mātāpitaro ca sannipatitā honti.
2. The mother being in the proper season – Mātā ca utunī hoti.
3. The presence of a being-to-be (gandhabba) – Gandhabbo ca paccupatthito hoti.

Thus, if three factors conduce, conception takes place – Ēvaṁ tīṇṇam sannipatā gabbhassavakkanti hoti.69

Out of three factors, the first factor being in agreement with the practical experience of the western doctors needs no special explanation. Regarding second factor, no exact date for ovulation is mentioned. It is generally stated that there must be regular menstrual periods, because ovulation takes place only after menstrual period. There is no ovulation before puberty and after menopause. These findings of medical science tally with the Buddhist Tests. Moreover, ordinary persons cannot know the ovulation period. The western doctor’s knowledge also seemed not longer than 300 years.

The first two conditions are not controversial, while the third is. The third factor ‘A being-to-be is on the ready’ does not mean that it must be present during the sexual union of the parents. Actually it is meant that its death from the past existence must be during the fertility period of the

mother. In scrutinizing the arising of the being-to-be, it is not feasible that it arises either in spermatozoon or ovum. Because it shall mean it’s dependent arising in father or mother respectively.

So it should be noted in accordance with the Silakkhandha Pali, “Mātā pettika saṁbhovo – arise dependent on sperm and blood”\(^{70}\) that the being-to-be arise in zygote-fertilized ovum with the spermatozoon. In this Pali, ‘Mother’s blood’ is to be taken as ovum. That fertility period is specifically stated by commentary as follows:

Suddhe vatthumhi mātāpitūsu ekavāraṁ sannipati tesu yāva sattdivasāni khetameva hoti – when the womb is cleansed of menstrual blood, single sexual union of the parents produce seven days fertility period –potential for conception.\(^{71}\)

Gandhabba is a metaphorical of consciousness (viññāna) at the moment of death craving for survival (bhavataṇhā), hence the Buddha’s statement that if consciousness were not to enter the mother’s womb, the psychophysical personality or the living organism formed therein would not reach maturity – viññāṇaṁ mātukucchisaṁṁ na okkamissatha api nukho nāmarūpaṁ mātukucchisaṁṁ samuccissatha, no hetāṁ bhante.\(^{72}\) The idea that the human mind, or consciousness, at the time of its first flickering even before actual birth is a tabula rasa is not accepted by the Buddha. The reason is that the consciousness and the psychophysical personality (nāma rūpa) formed in the mother’s womb are interdependent.\(^{73}\) Apart from the findings of the most advanced research in neuroscience, which seem to support the idea that consciousness at this stage is not a tabula rasa, there are influential philosophers of the modern world who would admit that there is a possibility that one may pick up the memory of a dead person and maintain some continuity in the personality.

It is generally believed that rebirth means an uninterrupted continuity of the entire personality from the previous life. If that were to

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happen, the human community would be faced with a rather incredible and awkward situation where human beings would be returning life after life to claim the properties they left behind in their previous lives. Preservation of the entire personality is what everyone dreams of, whether they believe in rebirth or in one life after death. What is surprising is that both philosophers and non-philosophers are willing to accept memory as an important criterion for personal identity, even though some of the more sophisticated empiricists would insist upon the physical body as the only criterion. It is difficult to see how a physical personality that has not remained unchanged can be the sole criterion for absolute identity.

But what about memory? Does a memory that a person may have, say, of an event or of himself or herself provide justification for the belief in a permanent identity? The memory is not independent of the event or the person of that particular time, and both these would have changed considerably. The recognition of a memory trait independent of everything else associated with it gives the false impression of an unchanging identity. The memories themselves, along with the psychophysical frame within which they occur, are in a state of flux, and that flux is, to use the Buddha's language, "dependently arisen".

For the Buddha it may be one single memory associated with the context, a minute element out of a lifetime of experience, that can continue. That memory can then mold the new personality. There is no guarantee that all these conditions will be met. Thus, the early discourses do not maintain that every person who dies is sure to reborn. All that is asserted is that past cases of survival have been observed and it may occur in the future as well. This is how the theory of survival is accommodated under the theory of conditionality.

The Buddha was not unaware that unless a person develops the higher forms of knowledge such as retrocognition or clairvoyance, which enable a person to remember incidents of the past and perceive the survival of other beings, it would not be easy to convince oneself of the
validity of the doctrines of kamma and rebirth. Hence, they could not be used as arguments for convincing the ordinary people of the need to follow a moral life. In the absence of a strong imperative based upon either a moral Absolute or the belief in a Supreme Being or power whose omnipotence could induce the people to a moral life, in the absence of commandments of any sort but only advice to refrain from evil and to cultivate the good life, it would not be easy to encourage and urge ordinary people to adopt a moral life.

The doctrine of *kamma* and rebirth as outlined above will not satisfy the moral skeptic. Arguably, these conceptions as propounded by the Buddha are too weak to encourage the adoption of the moral life. Realizing this, the Buddha was ready with another argument. Working through theory of five destinies, the Buddha brought human life to the center of the stage. Placing human life in that context, the Buddha was now able to argue for its rarity. He emphasized this idea throughout the discourses, but one discourse stands out.

Obtaining birth as a human is rare and more difficult than the success on the part of a sea turtle, blind in one eye, to get its head through the hole of a single-hole yoke floating back and forth on the surface of the ocean, in order to get a glimpse of the open sky. Human life, in spite of its impermanence, unsatisfactoriness, and nonsubstantiality, is a precious opportunity not to be wasted away—*Seyyathāpī bhikkave puriso mahāsamudde ekacchiggālam yuge pakkhipeyya. Tatrapissa kāṇo kaccapho. So vassasatassa vassasatassa accayena sakīṁ sakīṁ ummujjeyya. Tam kim maññatha. Bhikkhave. Api nu kho kāṇo kaccapho vassasatassa vassasatassa accayena sakīṁ sakīṁ ummujjanto amusamiṁ ekacchiggle yuge āvāṁ paveseyyāṭi? “khippataram kho so bhikkhave kāṇo kaccapho vassasatassa vassasatassa accayena sakīṁ sakīṁ ummujjanto amusamiṁ*

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54 Five destine (Pañca-gati): (i) Deva (the gods), (ii) Manussa (the humans), (iii) Niraya (the various hells), (iv) Tiracchānayoni (the animal kingdom) and (v) Peta (the departed spirits). Majjhima Nikāya. Mahanīdāna Sutta. P.T.S, vol I, p. 73. Myanmar edition, p. 106.
ekacchigge yuge gīvaṁ paveseyyā. natevāhaṁ bhikkhave sakīṁ vinipātagatena bālena manussatthāṁ vadāmi.⁷⁵

Hard is the gain of human life; hard is the life of mortals; hard is the hearing of the good teaching and hard is the arising of enlightened ones — Kiccho manussapaṭṭilābho, kicchaṁ maccāna jīvitaṁ, kicchaṁ saddhammassavanaṁ, Kiccho buddhānamuppādo.⁷⁶

The Buddha’s advice is to not let a moment pass by without achieving what can be achieved. Having gained such an opportunity, and being possessed of intelligence and abilities that surpass even those of the gods, it would be the highest folly not to strive for the happiness and welfare of oneself and others. Early Buddhist ethics considers mental action as more important than bodily and verbal action: “I describe mental action as more reprehensible for the performance of evil action, for the perpetration of evil action, and not so much bodily action and verbal action —tannāṁ kammanāṁ evaṁ paṭīvibhittānaṁ evaṁ paṭivīṣṭhānaṁ manokammaṁ mahāsāvajjataraṁ paññāpemi pāpassa kammassa kariyāya, pāpassa kammassa pavisītiyā, no tathā kāyakammaṁ, no tathā vacīkammaṁ.” ⁷⁷

Dhammapada Atṭhakathā said, “Mind is the most dominant, and it is the cause of the other three mental phenomena, namely, Feeling (vedanā), Perception (sañña) and Mental Formation (saṅkhāra). These three have mind or consciousness (viññāna) as their forerunner, because although they arise simultaneously with Mind they cannot arise if Mind does not arise.”⁷⁸ Dhammapada verse one and two said about the Mind. They state as follow:

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⁷⁶ Dhammapada, verse, 182.


“Manopubbaṅgamā dhammā, manoseṭṭhā manomayā, manasā ce paduṭṭhena, bhāsati vā karoti vā, tato nam dukkhamanveti, cakkaṁva vahato padam. Manopubbaṅgamā dhammā, manoseṭṭhā manomayā, manasā ce pasannena, bhāsati vā karoti vā, tato nam sukkhanveti, chāyāva anpāyini”\(^79\)

All mental phenomena have mind as their forerunner; they have mind as their chief; they are mind made. If one speaks or acts with an evil mind, ‘dukkha’ (suffering) follows him just as the wheel follows the hoof-print of the ox that draws the cart. On the other hand if speaks or acts with pure mind, happiness (sukha) follows him like a shadow that never leaves him.

Similarly, early Buddhism equates intention (cetanā) and karma which does not mean that only intention or motivation constitutes moral actions, but rather that without intention actions do not generate karma. That is, intention is the basic requirement for speaking about moral actions within Buddhism. This primacy of the mind and intention in early and classical Buddhism seems to indicate that the mental states behind actions are the most important factor to determine the goodness of actions.

However, this primacy of mental action and intention does not mean that within early Buddhist ethics the consequences or the content of actions are irrelevant for determining the goodness of actions. Early Buddhist ethics, however, tend to integrate in its criteria of goodness the three factors: motivation and content of actions (wholesomeness, blamelessness) and their consequences (harmless and happy results for oneself and others).

From Buddhist point of view, I have already discussed criteria of what is wholesome action and unwholesome action; what is good or right and what is bad or wrong. All actions that have their roots in greed, hatred and delusion are demeritorious or unskillful or bad. They are called Akusala

\(^79\) Dhammapada, verses, 1-2.
Kamma. All those action which are rooted in generosity, love and wisdom, are meritorious—Kusala Kamma.

When we make effort to develop the world, we need same view and practice. If so, our direction will be same. There is positive and negative force in the world. The former is called Dhamma and the later is called Adhamma. Therefore Dhamma and Adhamma are totally opposed to each other in the world. Thus, the world is the battle of Dhamma and Adhamma. In fact, everyone and every being want their life to be serenity or peace. To be peace of life, the world needs to be stable and to overcome Adhamma in the battle of the world.

In positive force (Dhamma), five precepts, (I will discuss this in the next chapter.) are the basis. If people practice the five precepts, the world is sereneness and their life as well. Even though people understand the theory, they can’t follow it. They want to practise the precepts but negative force (Adhamma) overwhelms them to break the rules. Therefore, if you really wish your life and the world to be peace and stable, you should always watch the Adhamma not to overcome Dhamma with mindfulness.

Briefly regarding the question of what is good or right, Dhamma (positive force or justice) is good and right. Regarding with what is bad or wrong, Adhamma (negative force or unjustice) is bad and wrong. You must do Dhamma to overcome Adhamma in the world. The criteria of good and bad apply to whether the actions are of thought, word or deed.

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80 Buddhist Dhamma and Adhamma is difference from Jain Dharma and Adharma. Chatterjee said in his An Introduction to Indian Philosophy, "Dharma and Adharma are the conditions of movement and rest. As conditions of motion and rest, both are passive and not active. But later this saying "Dharma and Adharma are used here in these technical senses, and not in their ordinary moral sense (i.e merit and demerit)" differs from Buddhist Dhamma and Adhamma slightly. (Satishchandra Chatterjee. An Introduction to Indian Philosophy, p. 97.)