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**SEMANTIC FRAMING OF BUDDHISM RELIGIOUS APPROACH**  
**TO THE PROBLEM OF MORAL DEVELOPMENT**

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**Abstract**

The economic processes taking place in the society create the conditions for human development as well as the conditions for the development of an immoral lifestyle, completely changing the scale of his or her spiritual values. In our opinion, this is an inevitable consequence of transformation of the model of social and economic development. However, this is not the only reason for praising individualism and selfish lifestyles. The problem seems to be rooted in a lack of spiritual education. With reference to this problem, it is interesting to address to Buddhism as a philosophical and religious system, including the system of moral values that can help solve the vital problems of a person in the modern world. Modern Buddhism differs significantly from its ancient counterpart; however, many of its positive factors, especially moral principles, remain significant, in particular, those that cultivate kindness in people encouraging them to strive for the highest humanistic values, help to maintain and develop moral values and a highly moral lifestyle based on selfless love for humanity. Humanism reveals its inner moral nature assuming respect for the individual. Buddhist culture has a special ability to unite a person internally and provide spiritual integrity. Buddhism became a religion that deeply influenced the spiritual life of many Eurasian peoples. It is easy to see that there are many common issues between Buddhist ethics and national ethical standards. It is one of the powerful factors that have determined the integration of religions with the traditional beliefs.

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## **1. Introduction**

Morality is real; however, it remains vital only in the case when there is an infinitely higher perspective no matter in what hypostasis a person appears – individual or generic. In practice of life, Buddhist humanism reveals its inner nature with the logical absolute inevitability, which presupposes respect for the individual, his or her rights and freedom.

Buddhist culture has a special ability to internally unite people, give them spiritual integrity. It is the wholeness of instinct, soul and spiritual law. It is found wherever a religion like Buddhism retains its spiritual dignity. The distinctive virtues of a person are generosity, truthfulness, patience, and compassion. When a person develops and masters these qualities, he or she lives in harmony with his or her conscience and in peace with his or her fellows.

The gradual development of understanding of the humanistic essence of the Buddha's Teachings is essential and necessary in the life of every person. This can explain the increased interest of growing number of people in Buddhism and in the Three Jewels of existence.

## **2. Problem Statement**

Modern social and economic processes create certain conditions for human development, but they also cause negative consequences in his or her moral lifestyle, completely changing the scale of spiritual values. In our opinion, this is an inevitable consequence of the transformation of the model of social and economic development. However, this is not the only reason for the praise of individualism and selfish lifestyles. The problem, apparently, is rooted in the absence of spiritual education, moral and ethical development of personality. The growing globalization forces us to comprehend them in the context of a changing world order, new contradictions and challenges of our time, in particular, in the context of opposition to global social processes.

## **3. Research Questions**

Buddhism is a religion that has deeply influenced the spiritual life of many Eurasian peoples. It can be easily seen that there are many common issues between Buddhist ethics and national ethical standards. It was one of the powerful factors that determined the integration of religions with traditional beliefs. The system of ideological attitudes of Buddhism represents a set of views, assessments, ideas about the world, the variety of phenomena of the believer, his or her destiny, norms of behavior, relations with other people and with society as a whole (Androsov, 2000).

In Buddhism, despite the denial of any substantiality of being, the spiritual is born as transcendental, that is, nirvana, the highest goal of personal development. Buddhism makes extensive use of the apophatic method, which can also be found in the Christian tradition. The concept of nirvana has the same characteristics. From the understanding of the spiritual, the corresponding ethics arise, and the contemplation of something lying beyond the bounds, dispassion, detachment, and the ideal of holiness arises. It should be noted that the fact, significant for many Eastern spiritual traditions, that Buddhism almost merges philosophical and religious revelation (relating to Logos and relating to Theos), especially

in relation to the concept of nirvana. Therefore, it is difficult to attribute this teaching only to religion or only to philosophy. As a result of spiritual knowledge, the consciousness is made free from any content available to it as well as from the tyranny of affinity, emotions, chaotic thoughts, etc. (Osho, 2011). In Eastern spiritual traditions, transcending is carried out through meditation and personal purification.

Nirvana represents the achievement of maximum perfection by a person, a complete projection of his or her essence, the attainment of true meaning of life and the achievement of all potential possibilities. This is the spiritual ideal when the alienation of a person from his or her own essence is eliminated (Dalai Lama, 2015). In Eastern ethics in general, and in Buddhism in particular, the concepts of good and evil have a relative value. The attitude towards human life is manifested not only in relations with people and society, but also depends on the Universe and the Cosmos. Thus, the comprehension of good, in its essence, presupposes the achievement of harmony of both the body and the soul with the Universe. The desire to preserve life is the driving force behind all actions in the Universe. Therefore, happiness can be achieved only in a state of harmony with the rationality of the Universe, associated with such spiritual values as Bodhi and enlightenment. It can be said that the ideal of Buddhist teaching is three manifestations of the one true nature, i.e. kindness, beauty and truth. They represent the spiritual archetype of Eastern culture, this is the immanent basis of Eastern ethics in general and Buddhism in particular (Oldenburg et al., 2010). Buddhism affirms mercy, cares for the human soul, and teaches advances in social science, education, and humanities research as a means of escaping suffering.

In the Comment on “the Foundation of All Good Qualities” (Tsongkhapa) it is said that Buddha Shakyamuni, the great spiritual friend of all beings in the Universe, became the highest treasure of precious, incomprehensible knowledge and superiority (Dalai Lama, 2008).

All the valuable teachings of the Buddha were included in the teachings of Lamrim (Stages of the Path), i.e. teachings on the stages of the path of enlightenment. The Stages of the Path teaching is derived from the Sutras of the Cultivation of Wisdom. Much cognitive and positive is contained in this Teaching. Buddha is manifested in twelve actions, among which there are three turns of the Wheel of Dharma, that is, his Teachings.

The first turn of the Wheel of the Doctrine is known as the Teaching of the Four Noble Truths, which became the basis of the Buddha’s conclusions. These four truths are as follows: the Truth about suffering, the Truth about the source of suffering, the Truth about the possibility of ending suffering, and the Truth about the path that leads to this ending.

Having expounded the Four Noble Truths as the basis for achieving liberation, the Buddha then elaborated on the thirty-seven factors of the path to enlightenment, which show how to apply the principles of the Four Noble Truths in the daily spiritual life of a practitioner. They provide a basic understanding of why we are in a cycle of suffering, what Nirvana is and how to achieve it.

The thirty-seven aspects of the path to enlightenment form the core of the practical application of the Buddha’s teachings on the four noble truths (writes the 14th Dalai Lama in *The Heart Sutra: Teaching on Prajnaparamita*) and therefore primarily belong to the Pali tradition of Buddhism. This part of teaching, which can be called the very foundation of Buddhism, constitutes the First Turning of the Wheel of Dharma (Dalai Lama, 2008).

During the second turn of the wheel of Dharma on the Mountain of Kites, the Buddha presented his teachings in the form of sutras about wisdom, i.e. collections of sutras known as Prajnaparamita (perfect wisdom). These sutras deal mainly with the topic of emptiness and transcendental states associated with the comprehension of emptiness. The second turn should be seen as the disclosure of the concepts and themes that Buddha identified in the First turn of the wheel of Dharma.

The Buddha clarified the four noble truths and taught the correct attainment of the manifest. The second turn of the Wheel of the Teaching clarified the essence of the Void, or the absence of inherent existence, and is known as the “middle wheel of insignificance” (Dalai Lama, 1996).

A correct understanding of emptiness (lack of self-being) is a key success factor in removing obscuration. In the doctrines of various Tibetan schools, the distinctions are made between two types of lack of identity (in relation to personality and phenomena). The term personality refers to our “self” with the help of which we identify ourselves. The concept of “appearances” refers mainly to the mental and physical aggregates of personality, but also includes all other external objects, realizing that the stable comprehension of personality is a great success, but this is not enough to achieve complete salvation (Dalai Lama 2008).

The moral and humanistic essence of Buddhism is to reverse the states known as negative (affective) emotions (Thich, 2001). There are eighty-four thousand aspects of these sorrows, which are grouped into four groups of twenty-one thousand each. These groups correspond respectively to desire, hate and joining all together. By neutralizing their influence, Buddha taught eighty-four thousand aspects of teaching.

Buddhist Pancha Shila, characterizing Buddhism as “the absolute of moral values”, is the Five Moral Norms (do not kill, do not lie, do not commit adultery, do not steal, do not drink), which Buddhism of all directions suggests to everyone in their daily life as the main moral law (as cited in Geshe, 2013).

In the teachings of Buddhism, the key emphasis is placed on the moral values of the human race. His Holiness the 14th Dalai Lama writes in his book *The World of Tibetan Buddhism: a Review of its Philosophy and Practice* that the main basis for moral observance is abstaining from ten unseemly actions, three of which relate to the body, four to speech and three to thoughts.

Compliance with moral principles (that is, protecting our “doors”: body, speech and mind from unseemly actions), which are the basis of a moral lifestyle, regulated by some precepts, and called the discipline of personal relief, or pratimoksha, helps us to be attentive in our actions and conscious (His Holiness the Dalai Lama, 2001). Morality or Sheela elevates not only the practicing layman, but also a receptive social structure. “Morality is the foundation of the Buddhist path” (Dalai Lama, 2016).

The Dharma teachings do the groundwork for Buddhist culture as the “absolute of moral values” of all Buddhist philosophical theory and practice, thereby setting guidelines on the personal Path to Enlightenment and moral self-improvement.

Morality does not exhaust its significance in its contribution to human happiness here and now, but it has a much more decisive influence on the development of personal destiny. This level begins with the recognition that, for reflexive thinking, the human situation requires a more satisfying ethical context than simple appeals to altruism can provide (Paul, 1981). On the one hand, our innate sense of moral justice requires that good be compensated by happiness and evil by suffering; on the other hand, our typical

experience shows that virtuous people face difficulties and sorrows and completely bad people ride the waves of fortune. Moral intuition tells us that if there is any distant value for righteousness, the imbalance must somehow be corrected. The visible order does not provide an obvious solution, but the Buddha's teaching reveals the factor necessary to justify our question of moral justice in an impersonal universal law that dominates all intelligent existence of the Universe. This is the law of kamma, the action and its result, which guarantees that a morally determined action does not disappear, but ultimately meets due retribution, i.e. good with happiness and evil with suffering (Wangyal, 2013).

Anyone who has learned the moral and ethical truths of Buddhism is the happiest being in the world. He or she is free from all insecurities and obsessions, worries and troubles that torment others. The mental health is perfect. He or she does not repent of the past and does not think about the future. He or she lives in the present. Therefore, such person values things and enjoys them in the purest sense, without self-projection. He or she is joyful, enjoys life, his/her abilities are satisfied, he or she is free from anxiety, he or she is calm and peaceful. Since he or she is free from selfish desires, hatred, ignorance, vanity, pride and all such "defilements", he or she is pure and gentle, full of universal love, compassion, kindness, understanding and tolerance. His or her service to others is the purest because he or she does not think of him or herself. He or she receives nothing, accumulates nothing, because he or she is free from the illusion of the Self and the "thirst" for thing-becoming (Usalko et al., 2019).

The essence of a person is not in a given natural feature, but in the ability to go beyond what is given. His essence is opposite from what unites him with the rest of the world (what unites is the universal inertia), but it brings him out of this world, separates him from it. Nature "cares" about life as such, for which it "sacrifices" species and genera.

The primacy of "suffering" requires that a person lives in any situation (if he or she strives for humanity, and does not bring his or her level of life to the inert materiality) and philosophically looking at its circumstances, overcoming all hardships, he or she apprehends the ineffable good of being. Life is the initial given of "suffering" and not the harmony of intended happiness either lost or coming. This is what awaits a person and such is his life.

#### **4. Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of the article is to identify the semantic framework and state the philosophical and religious approach of Buddhism to solving the problem of the moral and ethical development of personality.

#### **5. Research Methods**

When choosing the methodology (methodological approaches) of cognition of Buddhist teachings, one proceeds from the goals set in the article with the obligatory consideration of the very nature of Buddhism.

The scientific approach based on the dialectical vision of the worldview and moral cultures of Buddhism makes it possible to reveal the essence and significance of the inner spiritual world of the

individual in modern conditions of globalization in an internal contradictory integrity, in connection with the basic realities of modern society.

## 6. Findings

Buddhism is not a socially reformatory teaching; its moral, ethical, doctrinal and psychological ideas are aimed at condemning mental or physical suffering for any being. Thus, the key concepts here are non-violence (ahimsa), loving-kindness (metta) and compassion (karuna).

Comprehension of good, in its essence, presupposes the achievement of harmony of body and soul with the Universe. The desire to preserve life is the driving force behind all actions in the universe.

Buddhism is an important methodological basis in understanding the social and moral as well as ethical foundations of Eastern civilizations (Strong, 1974).

The system of ideological attitudes of Buddhism represents a set of views, moral assessments, beliefs of believers about the world, the variety of phenomena of the believer himself, his purpose, norms of behavior, relations with other people and with society as a whole.

Buddhist religion has become an essential and defining means of self-identification of ethnic groups. Buddhism played a huge role in the preservation of ethnocultural identity.

## 7. Conclusion

Morality is real; however, it remains vital only in the case when there is an infinitely higher perspective no matter in what hypostasis a person appears – individual or generic. In practice of life, humanism reveals its inner nature with the logical absolute inevitability. It presupposes respect for the individual and his or her rights and freedoms.

Buddhist culture has a special ability to internally unite a person, to give him spiritual integrity. It is the wholeness of instinct, soul and spirit. And it is present wherever religion retains its spiritual dignity.

The gradual development of understanding of the humanistic essence of the Buddha's Teachings is essential and necessary in the life of every person. This can explain an increased interest of big number of people in world Buddhism, and their appeal to the Temple and the Three Jewels (Buddha, Dharma, Sangha).

The reason for this can be understood from the lines of one of the prayers, which reflects the deep inner essence of Buddhist humanism together with other prayers:

May all my deeds benefit all living!

May all living things get rid of suffering and its causes!

May everyone live in peace and prosperity!

Let passions and feelings not lead everyone living off the true path! (Dalai Lama, 2008)

In this regard, one should recall the Russian philosopher Ilyin (1993), who noted that a modern person must see and make sure that his or her fate depends on what he himself radiates into the world, and moreover in all spheres of life. He or she must make sure that it is about the spiritual purification, about the revitalization and creative elimination of his/her heart (Ilyin, 1993).

For this to happen fundamental changes must take place regarding the consciousness, outlook of a person, his or her way of life. Both cultural and moral values have to be refocused. Buddhism, in our opinion, in its philosophical and religious quality, contributes to the ascent of the individual to a higher level of social and civilizational development.

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