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**FREEDOM AND RESPONSIBILITY IN THE MIRROR OF
BUDDHIST ETHICS**

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Abstract

This article is devoted to an urgent problem, since mercy is recognized as the main value, without the approval and development of which it is impossible to imagine the further progress of society. In our time, society, more than ever, feels the need for humane treatment not only in the relation man - man, but also in the relation man - nature, man - environment. Mercy as a phenomenon is widely discussed in the scientific community, but it still remains complex for perception as a socio-philosophical phenomenon. Difficulties begin from the moment the phenomenon itself is defined and interpreted. Does mercy have biological roots, or is it just a social phenomenon? Is it possible to develop this quality in a person? Can mercy be considered free and responsible behavior? These questions remain open in the scientific community. When considering charity as a harbinger of modern social institutions, the following conclusion is important for us: the desire for mutual assistance is immanently inherent in man. Over time, these value orientations have become, in one form or another, the postulates of all world religions. And religious institutions act not only as preachers of help those in need, but they themselves often provide it. Hence the second conclusion: religion with its postulates of helping one's neighbor has determined many of the current forms of social support. Thus, over time, religious norms become a way of life, a part of culture, traditions, public morality and behavior for individual nations and peoples.

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1. Introduction

Traditionally Buddhism is considered as one of the three world religions (along with Christianity and Islam). Being the most ancient of them, Buddhism had a huge impact on the life of the East, but in Europe until the middle of the 19th century, little was known about it. But what was known was perceived ambiguously. For some, Buddhism was associated with a system of dogmas, largely borrowed from Brahmanism and combined with elements of magic and belief in the immortality of the soul (Vallee-Poussin, 1898); for others, Buddhism represented the discovery of the basis of the world, which is not spoken of in Christianity.

Ethics is the most important component of Buddhism. It was in Buddhism that moral assessment was first extended not only to the actions themselves, but also to their internal motives, which makes Buddhism consonant with Christianity. Not only evil deeds, but also evil thoughts worsen karma and entail unfortunate rebirths, separating from nirvana. Moreover, moral relations apply here not only to a person, but also to all living beings, who are steps in the goal of life incarnations. Hence, the desire follows, at all costs, not to harm anything living, non-resistance to evil by violence. The most important position of the Buddhist doctrine is the idea of identity between being and suffering, therefore, it is no accident that mercy, love, compassion are fundamental concepts in the psychology of Buddhism. According to the idea of rebirth, after the death of a living being, his new birth takes place with new sufferings. The form of a new rebirth is determined by karma, which represents the sum of all the actions and thoughts of the being in all previous reincarnations. According to the law of karma, any actions, words, intentions and thoughts of a person have a positive or negative moral meaning. Although everything in a given life of a person is determined by his karma, he has a certain freedom of choice in his actions, thoughts, words, and actions. This partial freedom is the path to salvation. A responsible and moral life improves karma. Thus, Buddhism is characterized by the idea of a person's reliance on their own efforts to achieve salvation, as well as the idea of the equality of people (Rosenberg, 1991).

First of all, it should probably be clarified what ethics is, and, in particular, what is the difference between social ethics and personal ethics. Ethics is the doctrine of morality, morality, in other words, when applied to life, ethics is a set of norms of behaviour. Social ethics is a morality that unites any social group striving for a stable existence, a set of “unwritten laws” that govern relationships between people in society (Elsbernd, 2005).

An important ethical commandment in Buddhism is generosity in charity. Monks were forbidden to work, they had to live by charity. In this regard, the generosity of the laity was seen as a righteous act. The main principle in realizing a sense of mercy and compassion in Buddhism is focus on a specific result, active compassion in real time and under real conditions. Among the perfections that help to attain nirvana, “sila” occupies an important place (Lysenko, 2003). The difference between “sila”, morality, and “dana,” mercy, is the difference between passive and active virtue. Sheela is the observance of rules such as non-violence; dana requires active self-sacrifice and help to those in need.

It is impossible to please the passions of human existence in any form: either trying to satisfy them, or in the form of suppressing them. Even the flow of gold coins, according to Buddhism, is not able to make a person happy, since one will get more, the other will get less, the rich and the poor will remain, as well

as the desire to be richer than others will remain (Nydahl & Aronoff, 1991). At the same time, according to Buddhists, there is nothing in the world worth striving for, because if you achieve this, then it is always not enough, and dissatisfaction with the world or yourself remains - harmony of being is not achieved.

In Buddhist sermons, special attention is paid to the problem of good. Virtues are divided into three main categories: body, speech and mind. The most important virtues of the body are moral purity and a merciful attitude towards the poor, the poor, the suffering. The universal form of this virtue is the giving of charity. It should be noted that the Buddha himself, preaching his doctrine, used alms. Such an example is given in the Diamond Sutra: "When the hour of the morning meal approached, Lord Buddha and his followers put on street clothes and, taking their begging bowls, went to the capital of Shravasti, passing from door to door, silently holding out the bowls. After returning to the Jetavana grove, they took off their street clothes, washed their feet, had their morning meal and, leaving their bowls until the next day, settled around the Blessed One" (Chodron, 2012, p. 54).

According to Buddhist beliefs, truthfulness and politeness are the virtues of speech. This also includes the ability of a person with the help of the right words to stop enmity, to reconcile people and nations. "A well-spoken word from a person who does not follow it is as sterile as a beautiful flower with a pleasant colour, but devoid of fragrance" (Dhammapada, 1960, p. 16).

The manifestations of the virtue of consciousness are moderation in everything, understanding the importance of a compassionate attitude, faith in the truth of religious knowledge.

Ethics became the foundation of Buddhism, the basis of all its ideas and related norms of behaviour. Only a person who has developed concepts of morality and strictly observes moral norms in everyday life can comprehend Buddhist knowledge.

2. Problem Statement

So Buddhism is forming a new ethical system. Ethical issues, one way or another, are dealt with by any religion, especially carefully if it replaces the old teaching, developing a kind of alternative, as happened with Buddhism. Ethical issues, one way or another, are dealt with by any religion, especially carefully if it replaces the old teaching, developing a kind of alternative, as happened with Buddhism. First, Buddhism is inseparable from the Indian mentality and, in particular, retains, for example, the doctrine of reincarnation; secondly, Buddhism is forced to form its ethical system practically out of nothing, since in Brahmanism this area occupied a subordinate, almost irrelevant position. Thus, Buddhism creates a new ethical system that formally retains many features of the Hindu, but is completely different in essence (Nadeeva, 2019a).

Since the idea of reincarnation (reincarnation) is directly related to the theory of no harm, it is understandable why Buddhism emphasizes the need to have compassion for all living beings. Buddhists emphasize the importance of harmony and point out that ecological balance should be extended to the entire natural world. They view the need for balance in nature as an ethical priority.

Although the moral teachings of Buddhism are largely similar to the ethical code of other religions, it is based on another. Buddhists do not regard their principles as commandments of the Supreme Being, to which one should obey. Rather, they are directions on how to follow the path of spiritual growth and achieve perfection. Therefore, Buddhists try to understand how this or that rule should be used in a particular

situation, and do not obey them blindly. Thus, it is usually believed that lying is wrong, but in certain circumstances it may be justified - for example, when it comes to saving a human life (Kochetov, 1983).

The four exalted states of mind - brahmavihara - are the four qualities of the heart, which, when developed to perfection, raise a person to the highest spiritual level (Buddhism. Four Noble Truths, 1999). This is metta, karuna, mudita, upekkha. The first of the four brahmaviharas is maitri (pali - metta), or love. The Sanskrit word maitri is derived from mitra - friend. According to Buddhist texts, maitri is the love that a person feels towards a close and dear friend. Metta indicates the quality of the mind, which has the goal of achieving happiness for others. The direct consequences of metta are: virtue, freedom from irritability and agitation, peace within us and in relations with the world around us. For this one should develop metta for all living beings. Metta should not be confused with sensual and selective love, although metta has much in common with a mother's love for her only child.

Although the Buddhist virtue metta expresses a state of mind rather than an incentive to charitable work, the texts often assert the ineffectiveness of faith that does not lead to meritorious deeds. We can recall, for example, the meeting of Buddha and a sick monk: the teacher, while touring monasteries and visiting monks in cells, found one of them, sick with dysentery, who had fallen from his bed and was lying in his excrement. With his own hands, the Buddha washed the sick man's head and legs, laid him comfortably in bed, and instructed his community to take care of the sick. Despite the fact that this teaching was intended primarily for the monastic community, it had an unconditional impact on Ashoka, who founded free hospitals and made sure that the monks studied medicine and treated not only their fellows, but also the laity.

In the East, maitri or friendship is a very strong and positive emotion, which is usually defined as an exciting desire for happiness and well-being for another person, and not only in the material sense, but also in the spiritual sense. Again and again in Buddhist literature and in Buddhist teachings, a person is encouraged to develop this feeling experienced for the closest and dearest, in relation to all living beings. This feeling is summed up in the expression sabbe satta sukhi hontu - "May all beings be happy!" - this is the sincere, heartfelt wish of all Buddhists. If we really feel it with our heart, that is, we do not just think about the feeling, but also experience it, and then we have maitri.

To practice benevolence, one must be free from selfishness. Most of the love in this world is centered on oneself, that is, it is love aimed at oneself or seeking one's own benefit. Buddha teaches another love. Buddha argued that it is necessary to learn the practice of selfless love, which will allow you to maintain real peace and at the same time will give you the opportunity to work to achieve your own salvation. This is called altruistic love, where the one who loves is not determined. Like suicide killing at the physical level, selfishness kills spiritual progress. In Buddhism, benevolence is not emotional or selfish. It is a feeling that comes from a purified mind after the destruction of hatred, envy, cruelty, hostility and anger. The Buddha teaches that benevolence (mettā) is the most effective way to maintain a purity of mind and purify an atmosphere polluted with thoughts.

Another virtue in Buddhism is "karuna", compassion, which comes from the recognition that all living beings are connected with each other, since everyone is in samsara (the circle of rebirth) and everyone wants to get out of it. The act of one person is of global importance to the whole world. Therefore, all social problems are actually solved thanks to the transformed inner world of a person. Since everything is

interdependent, in fact, everyone is equal, and any help to another is a gift as an equal. It especially improves karma by helping the most disadvantaged, sick with infectious diseases, providing food and shelter in the cold season.

Wealth is not material, but social - it makes it possible for the rich to provide protection to the poor, remembering their initial equality and the unity of human destiny. In countries of the Theravada tradition (Myanmar, Thailand, Cambodia), society is built on a patron-client relationship, when every rich Buddhist feels obliged to help specific people and groups, and every poor person and every oppressed social group knows whom to turn to (Indian Culture and Buddhism, 2007).

The third brahmavihara is mudita (Skt. and Pali), or joy. It is the happiness that we experience when we see that others are happy. Joy is a typically Buddhist emotion. If you are not joyful and not happy, at least sometimes, you are hardly a Buddhist.

The fourth brahmavihara is called upeksha (pali - upekkha) - serenity, or, more simply, peace. Upeksha indicates a calm, steady and stable state of mind. It is especially evident when faced with unhappiness and failure. Regular reflection on actions (karma) and their results (vipaka) destroys bias and selectivity, leading to the realization that everyone is the owner and heir of their actions. Thus, an understanding arises of what is good and what is bad, what is beneficial and what is not good, and ultimately our actions will become controlled, leading to good.

3. Research Questions

During the study, the following tasks were set:

- 3.1. To study the historiography of the issue of mercy and charity in world religions.
- 3.2. To explore the history of the emergence, formation and spread of charity in Buddhism.
- 3.3. To identify the historical situation against which the ethical doctrine of Buddhism was formed.
- 3.4. To identify the features of the formation of the concept of mercy in Buddhism.
- 3.5. To consider those aspects of Buddhist ethics that influenced the formation of the concept of mercy.
- 3.6. To define the phenomenon of mercy in Buddhism as a manifestation of free and responsible human behaviour.

4. Purpose of the Study

Today the phenomenon of mercy is analyzed by scientists - representatives of various areas of industry knowledge: cultural studies, sociology, psychology, pedagogy, psychiatry. This article aims to consider religion as a common means of legitimizing and maintaining social order. The importance of knowledge and observance of moral and ethical standards is postulated in all world religions. They are the necessary basis for the moral growth and development of the individual, regulate ethical norms in society, keep a person from purely materialistic pragmatism. All three world religions - Christianity, Buddhism and Islam - have much in common in their genesis. According to Christian teaching, mercy is unconditional personal love, obedience, a feeling of unity with the "world", the uniqueness of one's own existence. Mercy

in Islam has two directions: divine, which is associated with patronage, protection and help to all things, and human mercy, which makes you follow the commandments of God.

A different angle of mercy is presented in Buddhism. Values are contained in the person himself and do not depend on wealth, nobility and even gods. Such spheres of a person's spiritual being as morality and religion seem to many people to be inseparable. If religion is presented as a kind of fusion of ethical, sensual, aesthetic and intellectual principles, then the ethical principle will undoubtedly prevail in it. The tradition of religious charity dates back, perhaps, to the very times when charity appeared as such. In the sacred texts of all religions, deeds of mercy have a special place.

On the one hand, assistance to those who need it is a prescription or a direct demand in various religions and religious communities. On the other hand, charity and mercy for a believer are a deeply personal action, personal service, which is not limited to prescriptions and public community-religious demands. Qualities such as mutual assistance, the desire to help each other have always been inherent in civilized human society. Of course, in different periods they were carried out by different means, did not concern all strata of the population and were evaluated in different ways by society and its various institutions. At first, it was about the natural impulse of the soul: to help his neighbour; for only in mutual assistance could a person survive. In every state, the nature of the support provided to the "poor and the poor" bears the imprint of national culture, established traditions, the level of economic development and many other factors.

Each country and each society has a list of actions that are considered moral in the existing social context. What actions are included in this list is often related to the interests of society and its legal system. An act is considered correct if it does not violate the law and does not violate public or personal interests. The rules on this list are usually flexible and are amended from time to time to keep up with changing conditions. While important to society, these standards cannot provide reliable guidance to the absolute principles of morality that apply everywhere and always.

In contrast, Buddhist rules of conduct are not a product of the human mind. They are not based on intra-community ethics, which then gave way to modern humanistic rules. Buddhist morality is based on the universal law of cause and effect (karma) and considers good and bad deeds in terms of how they affect the person and those around him. An act that benefits oneself cannot be considered good, but at the same time brings physical and mental suffering to another being.

At the heart of Buddhist ethics is the knowledge of the law of karma, which states that there is no accidental punishment or accidental gifts of fate. Any event is a causal consequence of a previously committed act (Kornienko, 2013). A follower of Buddha in no case should pay with evil for evil, for this is not destroyed and only enmity and suffering increase. You can't even protect others from violence, avenge injustice, and punish murder. A follower of Buddha should calmly but patiently and dispassionately treat evil, avoiding only participation in it. Suffice it to say that Buddhists strictly observe the principle of ahimsa. And not only ahimsa, but also the principle of not causing evil and even not resisting evil by violence has become one of the leading ethical tenets of Buddhism. Moreover, moral norms are formulated not in the form of prohibitions, but in the form of calls for voluntary refusal. This has a deep psychological meaning, since any restriction is perceived by a person more easily if it is imposed independently and voluntarily, and not as a result of pressure and threats.

By helping people and other living beings, Buddhists improve their karma. This path forms a special type of culture of mental activity, a special attitude towards the world, the main consequence of which is tolerance, not causing harm to the environment. Reflection, personal choice, characteristic of post-axial cultures, make it possible to form in Buddhism, a special type of cultural orientations of a personality, organically included in the world order and supporting it by its mental activity.

The law of karma with an orientation towards introspection of the individual seeking salvation turned out to be closely related to the essentially altruistic ethics. Saving himself, a person must show sincere concern for others - both near and far, including all living things in general: only in this way can he improve his karma or achieve nirvana. It is no accident that the sacred principle of ahimsa came to the fore in Buddhism (Albedil, 2013). Following the path of higher ethics, a person cannot be a fatalist: too much here depends on himself. While actively forming the foundation of their own salvation, everyone at the same time actively contributes to the common fund of benevolent relationship and mutual understanding, which in turn contributes to the stability of the social structure.

5. Research Methods

The article is written at the intersection of sciences: philosophy, religious studies, cultural studies, psychology, history, ethics and is based on a holistic systemic approach to the problem of the moral values of world religions, identifying the characteristics of mercy and love in the social doctrine of Buddhism. The leading approach to the study of this problem is the use of the classical comparative historical method, including synchronous and diachronist analysis. The methodology of culturological analysis is of a complex nature and includes a cultural-historical analysis, a comparative-descriptive method. The article also uses general scientific and culturological methods and approaches.

6. Findings

Buddhist ethics is a system of moral precepts of Buddhism. Buddhism can be classified under the category of "ethical religions", since the Buddhist tradition has generated a rich discourse in the field of morality and righteous, proper behavior. At the same time, Buddhist ethics cannot be understood in isolation from the main goal of Buddhism - the final liberation from attachment to this world, going beyond it, and therefore beyond the dualism of good and evil in its "this-worldly", worldly understanding. The ethical system that regulates behavior in this world ultimately does not have an independent meaning, it is subordinated to the ideal of nirvana, which determines the content of ethics, but also, in a sense, denies it. The central concept of the Buddhist ethical system itself is karma - a volitional, deliberate action that generates ethically positive or negative consequences, which are manifested either in this or in the subsequent birth of the person who committed these actions. Karma can be understood as the totality of a person's actions, a certain sum of his merits (punnya), which determines his next birth at a higher or lower level in the world hierarchy of beings, including heaven and hell. In essence, the entire cycle of the world, samsara, is set in motion by myriads of volitional karmic actions.

All actions are built on a scale of "virtues" or "sins" according to the principle of conformity or non-conformity with the Buddhist Way of Liberation. The main, root sins that bind to the endless wheel of birth

and death (samsara) are greed (lobha), hatred (dosa) and delusion (moha); all other forms of unrighteous behavior ultimately boil down to these three. “Who doesn't get up when it's time to get up; who is full of laziness, despite youth and strength; those who have suppressed determination and thoughts, are careless and lazy and will not find the path to wisdom” (Dhammapada, 1960, p. 23). Efforts to overcome these "roots" are the Path of virtue; the final separation from them is nirvana, the highest goal of Buddhism. The idea of the Path to Nirvana also includes a more positive, detailed exposition of Buddhist ethics. The path includes three components: wisdom (panna, prajna), morality (sila) and concentration (samadhi). The second component can be expanded into an ethical system, and the concept of “shila” is usually translated as “morality” or “morality”. The concept of “shila” includes three elements of the Path: correct speech, correct actions, and correct lifestyle. In all three cases, the common motive is the rejection of greed, hatred and illusions in words and deeds, the rejection of a way of life, one way or another, harming the surrounding creatures or associated with violation of ethical rules. “Whoever destroys life and utters lies, grabs what is not given to him in this world, and goes to the wife of another, a person who indulges in drunkenness - undermines his root here in this world” (Dhammapada, 1960, p. 37).

Lay Buddhists take the minimum number of vows that contribute to the accumulation of good karma, they, in fact, contain the foundations of Buddhist morality. Sometimes these vows are called Buddhist commandments, although the concept of “commandments” as such does not exist in Buddhism. These include the following vows: nonviolence, i.e. not causing harm to living beings (ahimsa); refusal of lies, slander, perjury, abuse, spreading rumors and gossip; not appropriating what belongs to another; refusal of sexual promiscuity; refusal to drink alcohol. However, monks and nuns have much more vows (several hundred), and they are called not only to improve karma, but to lead to complete liberation from it. Although these general rules apply to all Buddhists, monks and laymen, the difference between monastic and secular ethics is enormous.

With regard to monks, the five main rules are interpreted in a much stricter spirit: for example, the rule of non-killing certainly applies to all living beings, while for a layman it is, first of all, homicide; the rule of sensual excesses is interpreted as a prohibition on any sexual relations, while for the laity it is basically just adultery. In addition, there are dozens and even hundreds of rules for monastic discipline that are added to the main five rules (for example, avoiding gold and silver, refusing solid food in the afternoon, etc.). In Indian philosophy, knowledge and morality are considered inseparable from each other, perfect knowledge is impossible without morality (Nadeeva, 2019b). That is why the Buddha's teachings are aimed not so much at explaining numerous philosophical issues, but at achieving the highest level of morality.

7. Conclusion

A characteristic feature of the Indo-Buddhist cultural tradition is that the underlying Buddhism is not a religion in the proper sense of the word. It represents an established religious-philosophical, ideological complex that performs not only religious functions, but is a mentality, a way of thinking of the Indo-Buddhist East. The concept of religion is essentially identical here with the concepts of philosophy, worldview, and mentality. Ethics became the foundation of Buddhism, the basis of all its ideas and related norms of behaviour. Only a person who possesses developed concepts of morality and strictly observes moral norms in everyday life can comprehend Buddhist knowledge. The highest goal in Buddhism is to

achieve nirvana - complete peace in which real Knowledge comes. To achieve nirvana, strict guidelines and ethical prohibitions must be followed. In Buddhism, where ignorance is considered the cause of all troubles, knowledge is inseparable from morality. The entire path to nirvana is through moral development. One of the main steps Buddhists took in reorganizing society was to try to erase caste differences among Indians. It is known that the division into castes was much deeper and more rigid than the European classes. In Buddhism, anyone, regardless of birth and social status, can and should strive for mercy and the education of their morality and have the same chances of salvation.

The study of the religious and philosophical prerequisites for the formation of the concepts of mercy and justice, which are key in social service, made it possible to conclude that since ancient times, mankind has been thinking about these problems, and has tried to translate its vision of a just society into a practical plane by means of a certain motivated charitable activities. With the emergence and development of religious and philosophical systems, the concepts of freedom and responsibility, justice and mercy receive their religious and philosophical justification.

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