

Pañcasikkhāpada: Moral Practice for Family in Buddhism

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Abstract

The aims of the article are to explain *Pañcasikkhāpada* as the moral practice for family and to apply them in daily life to obtain the peace and happiness. It starts with the concept of *Pañcasikkhāpada* as the moral practice for family according to Buddhism and The essential practice of the five precepts for the members of family. Next, it is discussed the ways to apply in daily life by using the activities that concerned with human beings' life. The benefits of practice the precepts are peace and happiness of the members of family and passing on to society.

Keywords: Pañcasikkhāpada, moral practice, family, Buddhism

Introduction

Human beings need peace and happiness for oneself and other in daily life. They try in different way to live in peace and happiness. In Buddhism, Buddha did not deny that there is happiness in life, but he pointed out it does not last forever. Eventually everyone meets with some kind of suffering. He said: "There is happiness in life, happiness in friendship, happiness of a family, happiness in a healthy body and mind, but when one loses them, there is suffering." Buddhism is a way of life... It gives a true understanding about life... Which reminds you that every birth ends up in death.. And it teaches how to get a true understanding of all the sufferings in life...¹ So that its teaching is classified into 2 levels. There are level of lay people and level of ordained person. The 2 levels are different moral practices. The ordained persons have 8, 10, 227,311 precepts to practice. It depends on the kinds of ordination. Some practice 8 precepts. Other may practice more than that for the better benefit. But for the laypeople who carry the family on and on have five precepts

¹ Buddhism [Online] <http://www.thetoptens.com/best-religions/buddhism-145212.asp>
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to undertake for the sake of peace and happiness and to train the members of family to be good person for the society. There are five precepts known as *Pañcasikkhāpada*. The 2 aims of this work are to explain *Pañcasikkhāpada* as the moral practice for family and to apply them in daily life to obtain the peace and happiness.

The *sikkhāpada* refers to a set of disciplinary training rules, or precepts, regulating moral conduct. It is the basic practice which aims at eliminating crude passions that are expressed through deeds and speech. It also provides an indispensable basis for those who wish to cultivate their minds at a higher level. With certain basic moral codes, the power of mind can often be applied to the right or positive path. The precepts can be considered at two levels:

1. They enable men to live together in a community with mutual trust and respect; and:
2. They represent the starting points for the spiritual journey towards liberation.

The precepts are undertaken by someone voluntarily, especially when he realises the usefulness of adopting certain training rules for disciplining his body, speech and mind. Understanding, rather than fear or punishment, provides the reason for undertaking the precepts. A good Buddhist should remind himself to follow the five precepts, or the training rules, so as to refrain from:²

1. Killing living beings (*pānātipātā*)
2. Taking what is not given (*adinnadānā*)
3. Sexual misconduct (*kāmesu micchācārā*)
4. False speech (*musāvādā*)
5. Taking intoxicants or drugs which bring about heedlessness (*surāmerayamajjapamādaṭṭhānā*).

When a person observes the first precept of refraining from killing, he controls his hatred and cultivates loving-kindness (*mettā*) towards living beings. In the second precept, he controls his greed and cultivates renunciation or non-attachment. In the third, he controls sensual lust and cultivates contentment. In the fourth, he abstains from false speech and cultivates truthfulness. In the fifth, he abstains from unwholesome mental

² P.A. Payutto, **Dictionary of Buddhism**, (BKK, Mahachulalongkornrajavidyalaya, 1995). P 174-175.

dullness and develops mindfulness. He will come to realise that observance of the five precepts does not cause him to become withdrawn, self-critical and negative, but rather to become someone of a positive personality filled with love and care, as well as the other qualities that accrue to one who leads a moral life or Brahmachariya on Buddhism.

That the *pañcasīla* can easily be equated with the Brahmachariya can be seen from the following passage:

Then, monks, the partridge caused the monkey and the bull-elephant to undertake the five moral habits and himself followed the observance of the five moral habits. They, having lived courteous, deferential, polite to one another, at the breaking up of the body after dying arose in a happy bourn, a heaven world. This, monks, came to be known as the “Partridge Brahma-faring”.³

Here, the Tittirajātaka is referring back to a previous life of the Buddha, when he was still the Bodhisatta. This form of the Brahmachariya was upheld as the primary mode of desirable conduct that prevailed prior to the Buddha’s day. The ancient Indian tradition has regarded this simply as a good social norm, whereas the Buddha considered this to fall within the pale of his teaching and constitute a basic part of the Brahmachariya.

Pañcasikkhāpada is the very least moral restraint through body and speech. The very purpose of religion is to control yourself, not to criticise others. Rather, we must criticise ourselves. How much am I doing about my anger? About my attachment, about my hatred, about my pride, my jealousy? These are the things which we must check in daily life.⁴ They should be observed by family members in order to create a sustainable peace in the family. Creative activities in the daily life of a family practising the *pañcasikkhāpada* might include:

1. Donating food to animals together.
2. Donating necessary things to poor children together.
3. Visiting and donating necessary things to persons infected with HIV together.
4. Giving a kindly talk to one another at every joint activity, such as breakfast and diner.

³ I. B. Horner, *Vin. V*, Tr., (Oxford: PTS, 1992), pp.226-227.

⁴ Tenzin Gyatso, 14th Dalai Lama, **List of Quotes on life, Buddhism and peace**, [Online] <http://www.katinkahesselink.net/tibet/dalai-lama-quotes.html> [January 6, 2016]

5. Making the resolution to refrain from drinking, smoking and so on.

6. *Appamaññā* or the Brahmavihāras refers to the four mental attributes of a family member who is sublime. They can play a constructive role where other members of a family are concerned. The four are⁵:

(i) Loving-kindness, good-will and a wish to help family members attain benefits and happiness.

(ii) Compassion, the desire to help other members of the family escape from their hardships and miseries.

(iii) Appreciative gladness, one responding with gladness when seeing a family member doing good deeds, or achieving success or advancement.

(iv) Equanimity, passively looking on when a family member is able to take responsibility for oneself.

The Buddhist ways of radiating loving-kindness for practising to one's own self and all beings:

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| <i>Ahaṃ sukhito homi:</i> | May I be happy. |
| <i>Niddukkho homi:</i> | May I lack suffering. |
| <i>Avero homi:</i> | May I lack enmity. |
| <i>Abyāpajjho homi;</i> | May I lack malevolence. |
| <i>Anigho homi:</i> | May I lack disturbance. |
| <i>Sukhī attānam pariharāmi:</i> | May I protect my own happiness. |
| <i>Sabbe sattā:</i> | Whatever beings they are, |
| <i>Sukhita hontu:</i> | May they be happy. |
| <i>Niddukkā hontu:</i> | May lack suffering. |
| <i>Averā hontu:</i> | May they lack enmity. |
| <i>Abyāpajjhā hontu:</i> | May they lack malevolence. |

⁵ Phra Dhammapidok (P.A.Payutto). **A Constitution for Living**, Bangkok: Mahachulalongkornrajavidyalaya University, 1998. P 20.

Anighā hontu: May they lack disturbance.

Sukhī attānam pariharantu: May they protect their happiness.⁶

A family practising the *appamaññā* might include:

(i) Chanting, meditating and radiating loving-kindness together before going to bed.

(ii) Sharing money and providing proper support and education together.

(iii) Coming together to show appreciative gladness when someone succeeds in doing good.

If you want others to be happy, practice compassion. If you want to be happy, practice compassion. Human happiness and human satisfaction must ultimately come from within oneself. It is wrong to expect some final satisfaction to come from money or from a computer⁷

Conclusion

Pañcasikkhāpada is the principle to control the physical and verbal action of the family's members in the right way to create peace and happiness of oneself and other. The peace and happiness result from practice *Pañcasikkhāpada* are the sustainable for family. The members in family live happily together in a community with mutual trust and respect. *Pañcasikkhāpada* is refraining from 1) Killing living beings 2) Taking what is not given 3) Sexual misconduct 4) False speech 5) Taking intoxicants or drugs which bring about heedlessness.

The way to apply *Pañcasikkhāpada* for family through creative activities in the daily life of a family might include: 1) Donating food to animals together 2) Donating necessary things to poor children together 3) Visiting and donating necessary things to persons infected with HIV together 4) Giving a kindly talk to one another at every joint activity, such as breakfast and dinner 5) Making the resolution to refrain from drinking, smoking and so on and 6) Practice *Appamaññā* or the *Brahmavihāras* The four are: (i) Loving-kindness (ii) Compassion (iii) Appreciative gladness (iv) Equanimity. The effective activities of moral

⁶ Officers of IBMC, **Chanting handbook**. (BKK: The International Buddhist Meditation Center of Mahachulalongkornrajavidyalaya University, 2006),

⁷ Tenzin Gyatso, 14th Dalai Lama, **List of Quotes on life, Buddhism and peace**, [Online] <http://www.katinkahesselink.net/tibet/dalai-lama-quotes.html> [January 6, 2016]

practice for family will work when all family puts them in to practice.

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