

Abstaining From Killing (*Pāṇātipātā*) and World Peace

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Abstract

There is no doubt that rules, regulations, disciplines and ethics play an essential role in interpersonal relations. A society where there is rule of law is very likely to be peaceful and it can ensure its progress. In other words, a society where people abide by the law and rules is not only peaceful but also prosperous. Accordingly, all the countries in the world and all the nationalities enact their own rules and laws depending on their religious belief and traditions. Rules, regulations and ethics are called 'sīla' in *Pāḷi* literature. 'Sīla' or precept is a basic requirement for Buddhists. There are three types of *sīla* in Buddhism. They are the five precepts, the eight precepts and the ten precepts. Among these three types, every Buddhist is supposed to observe the basic five precepts. All the Buddhists must always observe the five precepts. The first precept to be observed is abstaining from killing the living beings (*pāṇātipātā*). Abstaining from *pāṇātipātā* or killing the living beings is the key factor for peace of the world. The Buddha pointed out that the world would be peaceful when people abstained from killing. This fact will be presented in this research paper by quoting the *Pāḷi* texts and some *Jātakas* from *Dhamma* preached by the Buddha himself. By doing so, this paper will present the advantages of abstaining from killing living beings and the disadvantages of breaching this precept i.e. killing living beings.

Keywords: abstaining from killing, world peace, abstaining, advantages, disadvantages

INTRODUCTION

The first precept in the five moral precepts that everyone must observe to build a peaceful world is abstaining from killing living beings. To observe this precept, one must say "*pāṇātipātā veramaṇi sikkhāpadaṃ samādiyāmi*", which means that "I will observe the precept of abstaining from killing." As the Buddhists believe in the *kamma* and its consequence, they almost always observe this precept in the fear of untimely death or short life span. Moreover, they also believe that they will be definitely ill-treated or tortured because of their serious crimes in the present life. The Buddha pointed out this fact in *Cūlakammavibhaṅga Sutta*. The people who commit that crime or violate this precept will certainly face the danger in their lives. Today, the world is increasingly becoming unsafe and insecure due to the wars between countries and other types of massacre caused by different types of violence arising from racial and ethnic conflict and diversity of cultures and customs. It is evident that the world in the present time is not as peaceful as before. The Buddha pointed out that killing each other or taking revenge on one another would increasingly speed up the hatred and enmity between the two people or the two parties. *Kāḷayakkhinīvattu* from *Dhammapada* was preached by the Buddha himself. The Buddha said,

"*Na hi verenaverāni, sammantīdha kudācanaṃ.*

Averena ca sammanti, Esadhammo sanantano" *ti.*

This *gathā* means that the enemies will not disappear by taking revenge on the one who first attacks or who first does harm on the other. Revenge on one another will lead to a vicious cycle. Only when there is no revenge between the two parties, there will be a cease of danger and harm leading to peace. The Buddha mentioned that it was the nature's truth that taking no

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revenge would lead to peace. Likewise, killing is a type of violence or attack intentionally done by one due to his/ her anger or hatred. Such a cruel thing or a serious crime can occur when a person becomes too greedy or too angry or too ignorant. In other words, one may have probably lost all his rationality at the moment he/she starts killing the other one. In fact, this act of killing the other one including another human or an animal or a bird, etc. is called *pāṇātipāta kamma* in *Pāḷi* literature. So, abstaining from killing is an important precept to build a peaceful society. In this research paper, the importance of this fact will be presented with some evidence given in the Buddhist literature.

Pāṇātipāta

‘*Pāṇātipāta*’ means killing the living beings. Killing means making a human or an animal die although his/ her/ its life span and *kammic* force has not expired yet. A human being or an animal dies through intervention of a destructive force i.e. one’s death caused by the use of weapons or by torture. The *Pāḷi* Myanmar Dictionary (*Abidan*) defines ‘*pāṇātipāta*’ as killing the other or taking the life of a human or an animal.

The characteristics of (*Pāṇātipāta*) killing

Although *pāṇātipāta* means killing another human or killing an animal, *pāṇātipāta kamma* or murder is committed if the action is completed in the following characteristics:

- (i) the victim is a human or an animal (living being),
- (ii) the offender/ killer knows that he/ she/ it is a living being,
- (iii) the motive (intention) to kill explicitly exists in the killer’s mind,
- (iv) the killer attempts to kill the victim and
- (v) the victim dies due to the attempt of the killer.

If an action is completed the five characteristics mentioned above, *pāṇātipāta kamma* is done. In other words, if an action is completed all five characteristics, it is known as killing. If any characteristic is absent in an action, it cannot be called killing or murder.

Since people have different characteristics, the causes of killing are different. Some people kill the other one for lust or craving while some do it for anger and for ignorance. So, the main causes of killing the others are greed (*Rāga*), anger (*dosa*) and ignorance (*moha*).

There are eight persons who tend to kill the other one in the human world. They are:

- (i) with the driving force of *Rāga* (lust), a passionate person kills another one,
- (ii) with the driving force of fury (anger), a furious/ angry person kills another one,
- (iii) having no knowledge about the bad consequences of such a crime or with the driving force of ignorance (*moha*), an ignorant person kills another one,
- (iv) with the driving force of conceit (*māna*), a conceited (arrogant) person kills another one,
- (v) with the driving force of greed (*lobha*), a greedy person kills another one,
- (vi) with the purpose of making a living, a poor person kills another one,
- (vii) with the folly of making fun, a foolish person kills another one,
- (viii) with the aim of exercising the autocratic power to punish the criminals, the king executed the human beings.

Disadvantages of killing the living beings (*pāṇātipāta*)

The result of a good deed or a bad deed will always follow the one who does it. A person who performs either a meritorious deed or an evil deed will have to either enjoy the advantages of a good deed or face the ill luck and fall as the bad consequence of an evil deed. The one who performs the action is bound either to enjoy or suffer according to the type of the action he/ she has done.

He has to reap what he has sowed. Killing is a serious crime in terms of the sensual world and it is a grave offence in terms of the supramundane (*lokuttarā*) world. Therefore, all the *ariyās* such as the Buddha and the *arahats* admonished the laypeople to abstain from killing.

The consequences that the people who kill the others will be afflicted are as follows:

- (i) being reborn with handicapped eyes, ears, nose, legs and hands etc.,
- (ii) numerous kinds of diseases and ailments,
- (iii) physical weakness,
- (iv) fear for danger,
- (v) anxiety,
- (vi) being persecuted,
- (vii) being killed,
- (viii) loss of attendants,
- (ix) lack of briskness and
- (x) short lifespan.

The evil deed of killing will bring about censure torture and imprisonment to one who commits murder in the present life. Moreover, he will be reborn at the four lower worlds after death. These facts can be known through the evidence in the world and through the teaching of the Buddha. Some evidence can be found in the Pāli literature.

Disadvantages of performing (*pāṇātipāta kamma*) killing described in *Dhammapada Aṭṭhakathā*.

In the time of *Gotama* Buddha, there was a monk named *Pūtigatta Tissa* whose body was full of lumps and bulbous sores: some of them are as large as gooseberry fruits while some are as large as bale fruits. The lumps pressed the bones very much so that they broke. The whole body was smeared with blood and pus but he could not clean them as he was suffering from a great pain. No one came to him to care about his sores because of the foul smell of his body. He became helpless and he had to suffer in agony. He had to suffer very badly because of the evil deed he did in one of his former rebirths. In one existence before he became a monk, he was a bird hunter. In that life, he sold both alive and dead birds. He both killed some birds and kept some birds alive. If some birds to be sold are dead, he did not want to have any dead birds left without being bought. This was because such remaining dead birds might get rotten and he might lose profit. Therefore, he thought of the ways how to keep them alive until the customers came to him to buy the dead birds for their meat. He came up with an idea to break their legs and wings so that they could not fly away. So, he broke the wings and crushed the legs by beating them up. For these cruel deeds and killing birds, he had to suffer from a great pain just as he had made to the birds. That *akusala kamma* brought ill luck and fell on him.

Likewise, there are many other stories which indicate the disadvantages of *pāṇātipāta kamma*. It was learnt that in one of many former rebirths of the Venerable *Arahat Moggalāna*, he was reborn as a virtuous man who cared for his blind parents. He took care of them and supported them. Being unhappy for their son to work very hard for them, they arranged a marriage for him. Being unwilling to look after the blind in-laws, the daughter-in-law slandered her husband many times. At first, he did not believe his wife's slandering but later she managed to persuade him to accept her words and her cunning plot. Having been deceived by his wicked wife, the man took his blind parents on the bullock-cart and headed towards a wood where he could abandon them. In the middle of the wood, the man shouted threatening harsh words as if the dacoits were approaching them and threatening their lives. Being unable to see, the parents thought that the dacoits were really threatening their lives as they only heard the voice. They said, "my son, please leave them here. We are too old to live but you are still young. So, flee away. Hurry up! Let us be victims of the dacoits. Run away." The foolish man beat them up violently and making the harsh and cruel voice of the dacoits until they died. After the parents died, he left their dead bodies in the wood and returned home. For this evil deed and grave offence of killing the parents, the man was reborn at the *niyara* (hell) in many world cycles. After he had finished his terms from the hell, he was reborn as a human being. But, he was cruelly killed for one hundred existences (lives) for his *pāṇātipāta kamma*. He was beaten up to death for one hundred lives. Even in the last rebirth, he could not escape from evil consequences of evil deeds in one of his former births. Despite being an arahat and the chief disciple of the Buddha, he realized *parinibbanna* after being beaten up to death by the five hundred thieves.

According to the law of nature, retaliation exists in everything. One cannot always defeat the other one. If one happens to defeat the other one, there will be someone else who will defeat the former. If one happens to ill-treat or persecute another one, the former will also have to be ill-treated or persecuted by someone else. The principle of relation was preached by the Buddha in the *gathā*:

“*hantā labhati hantāraṃ, jetāraṃ labhate jayaṃ.*

akko sakoca akkosaṃ, rosetāranca rosako.”

This *gathā* means that “the one who tends to persecute and kill another one is bound to be persecuted and killed by someone else (the third party). Likewise, the one who tends to bully the other one will be bullied by another one. The one who tends to use obscene abusive language to criticize others will be also subject to the use of abusive language by another one. The one who tends to deprive the other one of enjoying good things will be deprived of doing the same.” According to this *desanā* (religious discourse), it is learnt that if one happens to persecute and kill another one, he is sure to be persecuted and killed. This is the principle of retaliation.

Another story that highlights the retaliation was the story of *Aṅgulimāla*. In the life time of *Gotama Buddha*, there was a murderer called *Aṅgulimāla* in *sāvatti*. In fact, his real name was *Ahiṃsaka*. *Ahiṃsaka* was the son of *Bhramin Bhaggava*, the chaplain of the king *Kosala* and female *Bhramin mandānī*. When he came of age, he wanted to *Taxila* to receive education under the guidance and training of the professor (*Disāpāmokkha*). *Ahiṃsaka* became the professor's favourite as he was not only brilliant but also hard working. Moreover, he offered his service willingly to help his professor in his routines. So other students became jealous of *Ahiṃsaka* and they made rumours about the relationship between *Ahiṃsaka* and the professor's wife. They made up a story that *Ahiṃsaka* was committing adultery with the professor's wife. Although the professor did not believe their slandering words first, in the course of time, he began to suspect *Ahiṃsaka's* integrity. Therefore, he thought of a wicked

plan to harm *Ahiṃsaka*. In fact, such a professor or teacher should be condemned for his gullibility and thoughtlessness due to his passion for his wife. The professor said to *Ahiṃsaka*, “I’ll teach you an extraordinary skill. But it cannot be taught easily because it is very special. Only when you get one thousand index fingers from the right hands of one thousand people for sacrificial offering, you will be taught that skill.” When he heard these words, *Ahiṃsaka* left Taxila bringing along necessary weapons such as, swords, spears bows and arrows with him to get one thousand index fingers. He stayed at the edge of the wood to catch whoever came near it. After having caught the victims, he killed them and cut off the index fingers from their right hands. He threaded the index fingers of humans with a piece of string and hung them at a tree. But when the crows came and ate them, thus he lost all of them. Therefore, he threaded the index fingers with a piece of string and they were slung over his shoulder as if a garland of flowers. For this reason, he was called *Aṅgulimāla*. At last, the Buddha successfully tamed him and admonished him. So, he became a monk in the holy order of *Sṃgha*. But, whenever he went on his daily alms round in the mornings, the people who saw him threw stones, sticks, and spears at him. His head got wounded and he came to the Buddha with the bleeding head, ripped out robes and a broken alms bowl. The Buddha said to him, “*Bhikkhu*, you must tolerate the attacks of the people. You will have to accept the result of a *kusalakamma* you did in the past. You had been reborn at *niyara* (hell) for thousands of years to recompense your evil deed. Now, you have to be afflicted the bad consequence of your evil deed.”

In the story of *Aṅgulimāla*, although he became a *bhikkhu*, he never managed to get any alms food as the people had negative attitude towards him for his cruel actions in the past. Some people threw stones, sticks and spears at him and his head was badly wounded. Others came into their houses and shut the door so that he could not come to them for receiving alms food. He got into trouble because he never received a cup of rice porridge or a ladle of rice as alms food. *Therā Aṅgulimāla* had to go hungry for his evil deed of killing the people cruelly even after he became an *arahat*. So, *pāṇātipāta* or killing the others will cause ill luck and bad consequences for the one who did this evil action.

Another bad consequence of killing others is infertility. However wealthy married couple may be, they cannot enjoy the happy family life if they have no child. So, parents want to have their own children. However, one cannot have his/her own child as he/she killed the other people or animals in the past life.

Long ago, Prince *Bodhi* was pious and he always took refuge in the three precious gems i.e. the Buddha, the *dhamma* and *saṃgha*. Yet, he did not have any child of his own. So, he asked the Buddha why it was so. The Buddha told him about his past life. Once, many people travelled across the ocean by boat. As the boat broke in the middle of the ocean, it sank and the people were helpless. Some lost their lives while others survived. A married couple in the boat managed to get a plank and they swam across the ocean by holding it. They reached to a certain island where a very large number of birds inhabited. As there was nothing to eat, the married couple either killed small birds for meat or baked the bird eggs for food. That married couple were then reborn Prince Bodhi and his consort. For their cruel act of killing birds in one of their former rebirths, they had no child in their present life. The Buddha explained their factor to them.

The miseries that one who kills others is bound to suffer

If one kills the other one, the former will be killed by someone else. This can be called reciprocity or *kamma niyāma*. According to the following story, it is learnt that *kamma niyāma* is very strange.

Once there was a male disciple in a village near *sāvatti* city. The disciple and his wife had two sons who were not only good looking but also virtuous. Being very proud of her two sons, the wife did not respect her husband. She was so arrogant about her sons that she treated her husband with contempt. In the course of time, the husband was no longer able to tolerate with her haughtiness. So, he got married with another woman and soon she became pregnant. The first wife planned the abortion of the lesser wife with the help of a medical practitioner. The husband and the relatives of the lesser wife became suspicious of the first wife. When they asked her, she told lies. As they did not believe her words, they made her swear the truth of her words. “So she swore that “If I tell lies, may I have to give birth to seven sons once in the morning and once at night and may I be swarmed with flies due to the foul smell from my body.” After her death, she was reborn in the ghost world for her evil deed. She wandered about nearby a village. As she was a ghost who had nothing to eat, she had killed the embryo from mother’s womb and ate them for her survival. Every day, she ate her own sons for her food. One day, many monks came to *sāvatti* city to worship the Buddha. They staged a night near the village where the female ghost dwelled. The female ghost made herself seen to the monks. When the monks asked her why she got into trouble, the female ghost told them that she got birth to seven sons at dawn. Being very hungry, she had to kill and eat them. Likewise, she gave birth to seven sons again at dusk. When she was so hungry again, then she had to eat her seven sons for food. As she was afflicted by such miseries, she was always starving. This was because of her evil deeds. In the past life, she told them that when she was a human being, she was haughty and treated her husband with no respect for having strong and smart sons. So, he got married with another woman. When the lesser wife became pregnant, she tried to cause her miscarriage. For this reason, she had to suffer great miseries in the ghost world.

In the story mentioned above, it is evident that the result of an evil deed (*akusalakamma*) will always follow the one who did and it will bring about the same harmful actions to him/ her. Therefore the Buddha said “Of all the four *Namakkhandās*, consciousness (*citta*) is the leader and pioneer of all. Everything is caused by consciousness. If one behaves badly to another one i.e. says malicious words, unkind words, and aggressive words etc. and does harm to another one because of his bad-temper, the result of his action i.e. the same evil deed he has done will always follow him just as the wheel of the cart will always follow the bullocks that draw the cart.”

According to the evidence found in the stories of the Buddhist literature, it can be learnt that killing or taking the life of a living being including animals will bring about various kinds of miseries only. The virtuous one praises those who abstain from killing. The Buddha himself said, “If one wants to live in a happy life with wealth and good health, he must not kill or torture the living beings including animals. One who neither kills nor tortures another living being can enjoy the happy life both in this present life and in the future life after death.”

The advantages of abstaining from killing (*pāṇātipāta*)

If one abstains from killing (*pāṇātipāta*), he will be endowed with the following things:

- (i) well-formed physical appearance,
- (ii) having good build and height,
- (iii) briskness in manner,
- (iv) having level soles,
- (v) being amiable (pleasant, friendly and easy to like),
- (vi) tender skin,

- (vii) cleanliness,
- (viii) courage,
- (ix) physical strength,
- (x) reliability,
- (xi) being admired by many people,
- (xii) innocence,
- (xiii) having indestructible friends,
- (xiv) having supple body movements (without any stiff and rigid muscles),
- (xv) having indestructible physical body (by the attempts of others),
- (xvi) never facing death caused by the attempts of others (never being killed by others),
- (xvii) having a large number of attendants,
- (xviii) good looks,
- (xix) well-built figure,
- (xx) absence of diseases and ailments,
- (xxi) no anxiety,
- (xxii) no separation from the beloved ones and
- (xxiii) longevity (having long life-span).

There was a story which indicated the advantages of abstaining from killing. Once there were two brothers, the name of *Cūḷa Cakkana* and *Mahā Cakkana*, living in Ceylon. One day, their mother got a certain disease that would be healed by eating the meat of a rabbit. The physician told them that she needed to eat the meat of a rabbit to cure the disease. The elder brother asked the younger one to catch the rabbit. So, the younger brother went into the forest and set a snare to catch the rabbit. Having caught in the snare, the little rabbit shouted helplessly and fright-fully as it knew it was going to die. Seeing the frightful little rabbit, *Cūḷa Cakka* felt a great pity on it and he also felt sympathetic and compassionate for it. He thought that the little rabbit had to be killed to save the mother's life, but it was uncertain whether her diseases could be cured or not and that the little animal would be certainly separated from its family and friends if it was killed. Thus he set the rabbit free from the snare and spared its life.

Having arrived at home, he recounted his elder brother what had happened and what he did. So, he was scolded by his elder brother. But, the younger brother applied massage to his mother and made a vow. "I will say the true words. I have never killed a living being. I knew the importance of survival for every living being. May my mother's disease and ailment disappear promptly and may she get well because of my true words." At that instant, the mother recovered from the disease and got well again. This story tells us that the mother got speedy recovery and she was well again due to her younger son's true words and abstaining from killing the others.

Another story indicates both the advantages of abstaining from killing and the disadvantages of killing.

Venerable *Thera Nārada* met a *Peta* who suffered during the day time as it was being tortured and killed but it led a palatial life accompanied by youthful and glamorous *devās* and *devīs* at night. So he asked that *Peta* why he possessed such a life and what kind of *kamma* he

did in the former rebirth. The *Peta*, told the *therā* that he was a cruel hunter in *Rājagaha* in his former rebirth. He was very fond of persecuting and killing the prey including birds. He never controlled his verbal actions and physical actions. But he had a virtuous friend who had strong conviction (*saddha*) in the three precious gems i.e. the Buddha, the *dhamma* and the *samgha*. He continued to tell the *therā* that his virtuous friend prohibited him from hunting the animals. The friend said to him, “Don’t hunt the animals any longer. Stop performing the evil deeds which will lead you to be reborn in a bad destination. If you want to be reborn in a good destination after death, please abstain from killing the animals.” Although the friend tried to persuade him to give up the job of a hunter, he was too stupid to follow his good advice. Again, the friend tried to prohibit him from killing the animals at night. Owing to his friend’s prohibition, the hunter killed the prey in the daytime only and he stopped killing them at night. Consequently, when the hunter died, he was reborn as the demon world. He was tortured and eaten by the hell dogs in the daytime and but he enjoyed the celestial pleasure at night.

According to the stories mentioned above, abstaining from killing is advantageous for all people. If all the people abstain from taking the life of others, not only the human world but also the entire animate world or *satta loka* will be peaceful and pleasant. Naturally, everyone wants to enjoy the sensual pleasures of the mundane world (*lokiya*) without fear and anxiety. Accordingly, those who want to enjoy peace should abstain from the evil deed of killing the others.

CONCLUSION

Modern people are increasingly becoming more and more aggressive with almost no sympathy to others. Therefore, many more murders, violence and massacre can be seen and heard all over the world. Even a son may cruelly kill either his father or mother. Such cases have never been heard of before in human history. Nowadays there are more frequent murders of man. Slaughter is caused by uncontrollable passion (*Rāga*), greed (*lobha*) and anger (*dosa*) of the modern people who have to struggle under the stressful situations of the current world. The main reason for this may be their failure to observe the moral obligations, especially their failure to abstain from killing. There will be a long way to reach the peace provided by the people who perform *pāṇātipāta kammā*. We have read news about genocides in some places of the world. Wars break out based on various reasons such as invasion of another country to explore new settlements, over exploitation of the natural resources and other kinds of conflicts. Wars and skirmishes all over the world are taking heavy tolls on the human world; many lives are lost, innocent people are displaced, so children are deprived of receiving education and families are kept separate. Moreover, the people can seek no livelihood in such areas and they are always in fear of the shortage of food as well as being harmed. If so, their lives will never be peaceful and meaningful. From this point of view, all the people should appreciate peace and condemn wars and terrorism. In doing so, they should abstain from killing. In short, abstaining from killing i.e. abstaining from *pāṇātipāta kammā* seems to be the most useful solution to the problem of lack of peace. We expect a peaceful world through observing the five basic precepts especially the first one of abstaining from killing the living beings.

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