

## Practice of Moral (*Sīla Sikkhā*) and A Peaceful Society

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### Abstract

Nowadays, there have been many conflicts and troubles in societies. *Sīla Sikkhā* (Practice of Moral) is the best way to resolve the conflicts in a society and to observe it for the peaceful existences at the present and in the future. This paper aims to mention that people need to train themselves to practise morals in order to make their society peaceful. The practice of morals (one of the three practices of moral uprightness) is explained in this paper in accordance with the dictionaries *aṭṭhakathā*, *ṭikā* and treatises. Then the main causes of conflicts in a society were examined. The findings highlight that *Sīla Sikkhā* is the most significant feature to be observed. It can reduce conflicts in society so that people can live in an atmosphere of peace and tranquility. It is hoped that this paper makes the readers aware of the importance and benefits of *Sīla Sikkhās* and observe it firmly.

**Keywords:** *Sīla Sikkhās*, morals, to practise, uprightness, observe

### INTRODUCTION

*Sīla Sikkhā* (practice of moral) is one of the three practices of moral uprightness. According to “A Dictionary of Buddhist Terms”, there are three types of practice everybody must observe. They are

- (1) Morals as the main practice (*Adhisīla sikkhā*): being aware of the deed and something said
- (2) Consciousness as the main practice (*Adhicitta sikkhā*): practicing religious meditation such as the object of intense mental consideration
- (3) Knowledge as the main practice (*Adhipaññā sikkhā*): viewing the three characteristics of existence i.e. *anicca*: impermanency; *dukkha*: suffering; and *anatta*: non-self. They are known as *Sīla* (moral), *Samādhi* (fairness of mind or attitude) and *Paññā* (knowledge).

They are also called eight ways to *Nibbāna*. *Sīla Sikkhā* (moral as the main practice) means right way of saying things (*Sammāvācā*), doing what is right or proper (*Sammākammanta*) and right way of living (*Sammājīva*). *Samādhi Sikkhā* (consciousness as the main practice) refers to exertion in the right direction (*Sammāvāyama*), right attention (*Sammāsati*) and right abstraction of the mind (*Sammāsamādhi*). *Paññā Sikkhā* (knowledge as the main practice) consists of right way of reviewing things (*Sammādiṭṭhi*) and right way of thinking (*Sammāsaṅkappa*). If the one is fully endowed with these three practices, he will attain the *Nibbāna*. However, it is difficult for ordinary human beings to have all these three practices together at the same time.

In *Visuddhimagga aṭṭhakathā*, it is learned that “*sīla* is the goodness of the beginning of *sāsanā*, *samādhi* is the goodness of the middle of *sāsanā* and *paññā* is the goodness of the end of *sāsanā*.” It implies that *Sīla* must be practised first, secondly *Samādhi* and thirdly *Paññā*. Thus, ‘moral as the main practice’ is fundamental to three practices. By adhering to it, one can have peaceful lives before *Nibbāna* while being caught in a vicious circle. Only after being fully endowed with it, the rest two can be continued to practice.

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Therefore, it has been stated in this paper that ‘morals as the main practice’ is the important rule of conduct in a human society. If one manages to keep control of his deeds and words, he and his environment will be safe and then a peaceful society will appear.

### Practice of moral (*Sīla Sikkhā*)

*Sīla* is a *Pāli* term, defined as ‘a good practice’. It refers to ‘keeping something well or performing something properly’. ‘Keeping something well’ can be interpreted as observing deed and something said. In “A Dictionary of Buddhist term”, *sīla* is defined as observing deed and something said in order not to be violated. It is said in *pārājikaatthakathā verinjakaṇṭa* that ‘*Vīriyapādehi sīlapathaviyaṃ patitṭhāya saddhāhatthena*’; diligence (*vīriya*) is similar to the leg, moral (*sīla*) to the ground and generosity (*saddhā*) to the arm.

Moreover, if there is no ground, there is nothing to depend on it. Similarly, if one does not observe *sīla*, he has no deeds to support him. In *milindapañha mahāvagga sīlalakkhanāpañha*, it is mentioned that “*Sīla* is something on which all meritorious deeds depend”. “*Sīla* is something on which *Bodhipakkhiyadhamma*: factors associated with enlightenment depends”. The following factors are associated with the attainment of enlightenment:

*Indriya* (factors), *Bala* (power), *Bojjaṅga* (factors of enlightenment), *Magga* (constituents of the path), *Satipathāna* (methods of steadfast mindfulness), *Sammāpathāna* (supreme efforts), *Iddhipāda* (bases of psychic potency), *Jāna* (intense concentration of mind), *Samādhi* (fairness of mind or attitude) and *Samāpatti* (attainment stage of meditation).

*Visuddhimagga* said ‘*Sīlena apāyasama tikkamanupāyo hoti*’. It means that by observing *sīla* well, one can escape from the four nether worlds: hell, animals, celestial being reincarnated as a ghost, ghou, goblin, etc. and a being from one of the four lower worlds. In this way, the benefits of observing *sīla* can be seen in *pāli* literature.

‘*Sikkhā*’ practice is called ‘အကျင့်’ in Myanmar language. As stated in *Visuddhimagga atthakathā*, “*Sīlena adhisīlasikkhā pakāsītā hoti, samādhinā adhicittasikkhā, paññāya adhipaññāsikkhā*”, a set of *sīla* can be called morals as the main practice (being aware of a deed and something said). ‘*Kaṃ*’ comes from *Pāli* ‘*Kamma*’. It means ‘action’. It can be divided into three –actions done physically (deed), verbally (something said), and mentally (in the mind). Being aware of the first two is observing ‘*Sīla Sikkhā*’. If physical action and verbal action are good, they are good deeds, and if not, they are evil deeds.

Three out of eight ways to *Nibbāna*: (a) right way of saying things (*Sammāvācā*), (b) doing what is right or proper (*Sammākamnata*) and (c) right way of living (*Sammāājīva*) are called *viratīmaggas*. ‘*Viratī*’ means that “although one has a chance of committing evil deeds, he avoids doing them.”

#### (a) Right way of saying things (*Sammāvācā magga*)

It is the very first one of three *viratīmaggas*. It is said ‘*Sammāvadanti etāyātisammāvācā, sammāsundarā pasatṭhāvācā sammāvācā*’. One has the opportunity of telling lies or persuading somebody, yet he tries to avoid doing so. Moreover, words concerned with cause and effect and words which are good and praiseworthy are *sammāvācā*.

*Sammāvācā* has three types: *Kathāsammāvācā*— saying words which are true and beneficial for listeners

*Cetanāsammāvācā*—saying honest words and

*Viratīsammāvācā*—avoiding committing four misdeeds which

are done verbally.

Four misdeeds done verbally must be avoided. They are,

- (1) *Musāvādāveramani*— the avoidance of telling lies
- (2) *Pisunavācāveramani*— the avoidance of making mischief
- (3) *Pharusavācāveramani*— the avoidance of uttering rough, violent or abusive words
- (4) *Samphappalāpāveramani*— the avoidance of saying trivial words

If one can stay away from these four misdeeds, he is said to be endowed with ‘right way of saying things’ (*Sammāvācā magga*).

(b) Doing what is right or proper (*Sammākamanta magga*)

It means performing properly is good intention. It is defined as “*Sammākariyate etāyāti sammākammaṃ, kammayeva sammākamantaṃ*” *etāya*: with that good intention, *sammā*: properly, *kariyate*: should be performed, *ititasmā*: thus, *sammākammaṃ*: is called *sammakamma*, *sammākammayeva*: *sammākammasaddā* itself is *sammākamanta*. In other words, deed which is flawless, good and commendable is *sammākamanta*.

There are three main types of *sammākamanta*:

*Kariyāsammākamanta*— the behavior of someone who does a good deed

*Cetanāsammākamanta* — good intention to do a good deed and

*Viratīsammākamanta* — avoiding committing three misdeeds which are done physically.

Among them, *Viratīsammākamanta* is the most important. Here three misdeeds done physically must be avoided. They are killing one’s life, stealing others’ properties and committing adultery.

(c) Right way of living (*Sammāājīva magga*)

It is defined as follows: ‘*Sammāājīvanti etecetanāti sammāājīvo*’ *etena*: by way of it, *sammā*-well, *ājīvanti*: make a living, *ititasmā*: due to the ability to make a good living, *sammāājīvo*: is called *sammāājīva*. *Sammāājīva* is avoiding committing misdeeds physically and verbally and the right way of living in good intention. In other words, *Sammāājīva* is not the way of living by doing misdeeds but it is beneficial for *samsara* and praiseworthy.

The two types of *Sammāājīva* are:

*Viriyasammāājīva*— simple living such as ploughing, cultivating and commerce

*Viratīsammāājīva*— the avoidance of committing evil deeds and saying evil words

*Viriyasammāājīva* can also be studied in **four groups**.

(1) *Ducaritta micchājīvaviratī*— wrong living by snuggling arms, animal, opium, liquor, poison

and so on

(2) *Anesana micchājīvaviratī*— acquiring something which should not be acquire

(3) *Kuhanādi micchājīvaviratī*— attempting improperly to get bribe

(4) *Tiracchānavijjā micchājīvaviratī*— practice to the opposite way of *Nibbāna*

Briefly, three ways to *Nibbāna* mentioned above: *sammāvācā* (right way of saying things), *sammākamanta* (doing what is right or proper), and *sammāājīva* (right way of living)

are three *sīla sikkhās*. *Sammāvācā* is something done verbally, *sammākammanta* is something done physically and *sammājīva* is something done both verbally and physically. By observing them, one can live in peaceful and pleasant surroundings.

### Society

Man is not an animal who lives alone. He lives in a society or a team or a group. Various kinds of team or group of men are as follows:

- (1) Social Group
- (2) Natural Group
- (3) Geographical Group and
- (4) Work Group

The main reason for a conflict between teams or groups in a society is due to greed, anger and ignorance. The better way to make conflict become less is for each and individual in that community to observe *Sīla Sikkhā* (practice of morals) properly.

#### (a) Greed (*Lobha*)

In *Pāli Myanmar Dictionary*, greed is defined as “want, desire, longing, craving”.

“Greed is dirt of mind; false friend of mind; enemy of mind; murderer of mind; opposite of mind. It makes something useless. It makes one agitated. It appears in one’s inner mind and it remains unknown.”

In addition, concerning greed, *Mahagandaryone Sayadawgyi* said, “The more you want, the more you suffer. The less you want, the less you suffer. No want, no suffering.” There will be something one does not need. However, because of craving; he thinks he needs it, and thus longs for it. If he does not get it, he is worried. Due to his efforts to get it, the properties he has owned become lost and leads to a loose life. In short, greed is the cause of poverty. Therefore, in order not to be so greedy for something, in order not to deviate from his goal, one must control himself by practicing *Sīla Sikkhā*. If he fails to do so, inordinate greed can ruin his life and he will give trouble to his surroundings.

#### (b) Anger (*Dosa*)

In “A Dictionary of Buddhist Terms”, “anger” is defined as irritation, destruction and sin. The Buddha told the king *Kosala* that anger is one of the three things that can destroy the world.

The following is the effect of anger stated in *Dhammapada Pāli*: “anger is serious. There is nothing which is as sinful as anger. Being bewitched by an ogre, being hypnotized by a boa constrictor, being attacked by a crocodile and so on can catch only a body. However, the spell of one’s anger can catch everything. Nothing can be compared with anger which can put a spell on somebody.”

In brief, anger is the most destructive force. Because of you or others, one might be angry. Thus everybody must observe *Sīla Sikkhā* in order to control of his anger.

#### (c) Ignorance (*Moha*)

Ignorance does not know the truth in a daze. The definition of ‘Ignorance’ can be seen in *Pāli Tipidan* as confusion; unawareness; foolishness; symbol of blindness in knowledge; observing improper practice.

In *Āṅguttara Pāḷi*, it is mentioned that ignorance is serious. Only those who observe three *Sīla Sikkhā* to remove ignorance. Without removing it, one cannot reach the fourth and final stage in the eightfold path to *Nibbāna* and cannot be the *ariya* of the first stage. It is also expressed that a person who is ignorant does not truly know the benefit himself.

Briefly, escape or truth is covered with something so that it cannot be seen truly. That's the nature of ignorance. Due to ignorance, one is unable to distinguish between right and wrong. He might commit misdeeds. Thus, the person must get rid of the darkness of ignorance by observing *Sīla Sikkhā*.

As mentioned above, greed, anger and ignorance are the primary causes of the conflict between groups or societies. Because of these reasons, terrible incidents, obscene events between mother and son, brother and sister, father and daughter and so on, shameless way of speaking and wearing dress which cause to be ignorant, and the society full of conflict will not be peaceful at all. For these reasons, observing *Sīla Sikkhā* is a must for individual member of the society.

### **Practice of Moral (*Sīla Sikkhā*) and Society**

It will be stated that the occurrence of misdeeds is due to greed (*Loba*), anger (*Dosa*) and ignorance (*Moha*) and by observing three *Sīla Sikkhā* (the three practice of moral uprightness), misdeeds can disappear.

#### (a) Verbal action and greed, anger and ignorance

Four misdeeds committed verbally are mainly observed as verbal action.

*Musavāda* means a lie. Lies are told to destroy the welfare of others, to put blames on others by bearing false witness in court. Lies and the false statements made in a court of law make the sufferer angry. When such anger cannot be controlled, he remains in ignorance and could hardly distinguish right from wrong and might commit misdeeds.

*Pisunavācā* indicates malicious speech; slander. It breaks up the friendship of two friends and makes them disunited. It stimulates to detach a group from others. It makes mischief to be more inclined to you. Owing to your strong desire, you yourself are laden with anxiety first. Moreover, those who are incited make your words become angry, and they might commit misdeeds. Thus, everyone must try to avoid making mischief.

*Pharusavācā* denotes rough, violent or abusive language to suffer pain in one's heart. Nowadays, in social network, people are swearing each other and saying rude words. Actually, they are committing '*Pharasavācā*'. As one is told rudely, he gets angry and ignorant. He does not see what is right and what is wrong and then commits murder. Hence, the saying goes "There is no venom of the tongue".

*Samphappalāpa* implies that idle talk means all kinds of utterances which lack benefit, essence and true facts, saying useless words is just a waste of time for a speaker as well as a listener. It is not the virtuous action, and it arouses ignorance.

Therefore, observing "right way of saying things" makes you and others free from greed, anger and ignorance, and there will be fewer conflicts in the society.

#### (b) Physical action and greed, anger and ignorance

Physical action consists of doing what is right or proper. In doing physical action, three misdeeds done physically are the most significant.

In the dictionary, it is said that ‘*pāṇātipāta*’ is killing one’s life or taking one’s life. There are five characteristics and six kinds of instigation in killing others. If the one kills the other, killing is accomplished.

Five characteristics of killing one’s life are (1) being an animal, (2) knowing that it is an animal, (3) having desire to kill, (4) making an effort to kill and (5) that effort causes the death of the animal.

Six kinds of instigation are (1) killing by yourself, (2) asking someone to kill others, (3) killing with weapons such as bow, (4) killing by burying one in a hole, (5) killing by occult powers such as ‘*အင်းခိုင်း*’ (a cabbalistic square or sign composed of mystic figures and characters in a grid, believed to have power for a desired result), (6) killing by your power.

Killing one’s life is the utmost torture that living beings have to suffer. Ill-treating someone to be injured is also a kind of torture. Mostly, people commit murder due to their greed, anger and ignorance. In order not to do so, they must practice *Sīla* (moral).

*Adinnādāna* in the dictionary means “taking things without giving by the owner; taking things without letting the owner know; stealing”. “Taking things” is used in different sense as follows:

- (1) stealing secretly with greed
- (2) armed-robbery
- (3) stick-up
- (4) robbery
- (5) without permission, using properties owned by the state, the public, government offices for self-interest
- (6) buying and selling in a dishonest way, i.e., using the things for measurement (basket, weight-scales, weight and so on) to make them bigger or smaller in size, or more or less in weight. All these things are “*Adinnādāna*”: stealing or theft.

*Kāmesumicchācāra* is committing adultery. It is defined in the dictionary in the following way.

- (1) Excessive indulgence in sensuality which is considered as obnoxious,
- (2) Committing adultery, i.e., a sex between a married person and somebody who is not their husband or wife or a woman who is looked after by her parents and relatives.

Because of such affairs, social offences are increasing, and finally the society will become dirty. Thus, to be a society of great value, *Kāmesumicchācāra* must not be committed. Observing not to commit three deeds done physically is observing ‘doing what is right or wrong’.

In ‘right way of living’, both physical action and verbal action are included. In some business, trade is accomplished not only by physical action. One has to talk about the qualities of his products. It is said that *sammāājīva* is something done physically and verbally together. *Sammāājīva* is made up of two words. *Sammā* means right and *ājīva* means way of living. Therefore, *Sammāājīva* is right way of living. It has two types: *Micchājīva* (wrong living) and *Sammājīva* (right living). Today, most people are earning their livings in a wrong way as they are in ignorance.

Some businessmen are greedy for their welfare and their families. They do not empathize with others, and they earn their living by drug trafficking, liquor and narcotic drugs

selling because of strong desire. They can persuade one to commit misdeeds. They can destroy virtuous affairs, social affairs, health, economy and matrimonial affairs. Having these destructive characteristics, misdeeds are increasing in number and conflicts happen to be faced.

People are, in addition, earning money for their sake by using evil ways such as using dye in consumer goods, and trafficking in person. In consequence of seeking self-interest, there is much suffering in the society: the spread of disease, the ruin of lives of the youth who do not come of age and the whole society is feeling worried about them.

Therefore, to be fair for both sides, anyone must live in accordance with *Sīla Sikkhā*: right way of saying things; doing what is right or proper; right way of living. By observing physical action and verbal action, greed, anger and ignorance will be less and conflicts will be fewer, and a peaceful society can be built.

### CONCLUSION

To sum up, practice of morals is included in three practices of moral uprightness. These three are mentioned in different terms: morals, consciousness and knowledge; moral as the main practice, consciousness as the main practice and knowledge as the main practice. They can be studied as eight ways to *Nibbāna*. Morals as the main practice covers right way of saying things, doing what is right or proper, and right way of living. Consciousness as the main practice involves exertion in the right direction, right attention and right abstraction of the mind. Right way of viewing things and right way of thinking are under knowledge as the main practice. As mentioned earlier, *Sīla Sikkhā* is the primary stage among three practices of moral uprightness. When it is observed securely, present life, present society and even the next existences will be peaceful.

By searching for wealth, people are motivated by greed. When they face hardship, they feel angry. One's greed and anger make him fail to pay attention. He is indecisive, unemotional and dominated by ignorance. At superficial level, he looks steady and indifferent. In reality, ignorance is not merit, but demerit. Hence, it is stated in 'A Dictionary of Buddhist Terms' that three main reasons for hardship are greed, anger and ignorance. They exist in the heart of an individual. They lead people to poverty and conflicts in a society.

Every day, people are moving in a particular section of a society, doing things physically and verbally. Good deed contributes to the good of somebody or something and misdeed contributes to the evil of somebody or something. To be filled with good deeds, the observation of practice of moral is a must. By doing so, greed, anger and ignorance will be reduced to a lesser degree in human beings, or people might become free from them. It is believed that such people could rid the world of the forces of evil, and all can live peacefully.

### Acknowledgements

I would like to express my gratitude to Dr Theingi Shwe (Rector, Hinthada University), Dr Yee Yee Than (Pro-Rector, Hinthada University) and Dr Cho Kyi Than (Pro-Rector, Hinthada University), for their kind permission to carry out this research. My sincerest gratitude goes to Dr Soe Mya Hla Thu Zar, Professor and Head, and Dr Myint Myint Than, Professor, Department of Oriental Studies, Hinthada University, for helping me in my research work.

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ဇနကာဘိဝံသ၊ အရှင်၊ (၁၉၅၇)၊ သင်္ဂြိုဟ်ဘာသာဋီကာ။ ဗုဒ္ဓသာသနာအဖွဲ့။

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ဟုတ်စိန်ဦး။ (၁၉၅၄)၊ ပါဠိမြန်မာအဘိဓာန်။ နိုင်ငံတော်အစိုးရ စာပုံနှိပ်ထုတ်ဝေရေးနှင့်စာရေးကိရိယာဌာန၊ ရန်ကုန်။  
မြတ်ကျော်၊ စံလွင်။ ဦး။ (၂၀၀၂)၊ မြတ်ဗုဒ္ဓပါဝစနအဘိဓာန်၊ ဥက္ကာကျော်ပုံနှိပ်တိုက်။ ရန်ကုန်။

#### **Other Text**

မြန်မာနိုင်ငံအထွေထွေအုပ်ချုပ်ရေးဝန်ထမ်းဟောင်းများအသင်း။ (၂၀၁၉)၊ အုပ်ချုပ်ရေး  
အတွေးအမြင်၊ ထွန်းသစ္စာပုံနှိပ်တိုက်၊ ရန်ကုန်။