

PRACTICING SILA (VIRTUE) IN DAILY LIFE: A PANACEA FOR PEACEFUL LIFE

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Introduction:

Every individual in the planet is experiencing six types of experiences and three types of feelings. They are six sense based experiences such as sight, hearing, smelling, tasting and touching ones. The three types of feelings are pleasant, unpleasant and neutral feelings. Day in and day out, he or she experiences these experiences and feelings according to his/her past *kamma* and the present life *kamma*. No harm will cause to any person if he or she has not harmed anybody. Human being in the sensory world or human world is made up of five *khandhas* (aggregates). They are material, feelings/sensations, perceptions formations and consciousness. In other words, human being is a mentality and materiality process.

Every person undergoes gladness or sadness or neutral feelings moment to moment. Bhagawan Buddha revealed that all *panca khandhas* are formed, conditioned and created. Human being consists of 81 elements - such as one *citta*, 52 *sankharas*, 28 *rupa*. The Nibbana is unformed, unconditioned, uncreated and unworldly experience. Nibbana guarantees freedom, peace and security. Man is caught in eight worldly conditions which are dichotomies or opposites such as gain and loss, honor and dishonor, fame and defame, happiness and suffering. Daily life in the stressful, competitive and rat-race world, human beings, majority in number are not aware of four noble truths and the noble eight fold paths, which are distinct and definite panacea to cure ills of human world and to release the beings from the clutches of *mara* (passions), *asavas* (cankers)

and *anusayas* (proclivities).

Any amount of material possessions cannot equate with spiritual journey on the path of walking towards liberations through renunciation, detachment and restrains (*samvara*). No wealth, no wife, no son, no relatives can save an individual rather than a well trained mind by practicing morality, concentration and wisdom.

The majority of the people in the world do not know the three universal characteristics of *Anicca* (impermanence), *Dukkha* (un-satisfactoriness due to lack of wisdom) and *Anatta* (not self). Therefore, they are caught in the wheel of samsara (wheel of repeated births and deaths) - *sansarati iti samsara* (going round and round in the wheel of samsara). Many people are under distorted thinking and that proliferates the thoughts (*Papanca and Mannana*). This is because of *vipallasa* (perversions) such as considering impermanence as permanent, suffering as happiness, non-self as self, impure as pure (beautiful) (A.IV.19- *Ledi Sayadaw, Manual of Insight*). Hence, there is suffering day in and day out. For all the above problems, Buddhas, *Sila*, *Samadhi* and *Panna* is the panacea in the modern unrest world.

Statement of the Problem:

The essence of the Buddha's teaching can be summed up in two principles - the Four Noble Truths and the Noble Eightfold path. The former embraces the side of doctrine and foremost response it elicits is understanding; the latter comprises the side of discipline and the pre-requisite is practice. These two are called *Dhamma Vinaya*, the doctrine and discipline: in short, the Dhamma. The last noble truth is the truth of the way - the noble eightfold path, while the first factor of the noble eightfold path is "right view" that is understanding the Four Noble Truths. In this way, the two principles penetrate and include one, the formula of the four noble truths containing the eightfold path and the noble eightfold path containing the four truths (Ven Bhikkhu Bodi 1999). To follow the noble eightfold path is a matter of practice rather than intellectual knowledge but to apply the path correctly, it has to be properly understood. In fact, right understanding of the path is itself a part of the practice.

More than 200 centuries is the world, seven hundred crores population and seamlessly, a variety of complex human personalities, attitudes, behaviors, value system, belief system, socio -

cultural background, religious, economic, academic, physical, psychological, emotional and other backgrounds. The world is filled with saints and sinners, beauty and ugly, healthy and ill - health, rich and poor, urban and rural, literates and illiterates, men and women.

Human beings are undergoing transitory, pleasant experiences and a lot of suffering. They are searching and searching eternal happiness whether they succeed certainly not. One gains a lot, just to lose at the end. Suffering is the corner stone of Buddha's teaching. Un-satisfactoriness is running through our lives, the lives of all but the enlightened one. This *Dukkha* erupts into open as sorrow, grief, disappointment or despair, fear and frustrations. The real satisfaction seems somehow always out of reach, just beyond the next horizon. In the end, one has to die, give-up his or her identity built over whole life, leave behind everything and everyone we love.

But even death, the *Buddha* teaches, does not bring us to the end of *Dukkha*, for the life process does not stop with death. When life ends in one place, with one body, the "mental continuum", the individual stream of consciousness springs up again elsewhere with a new body as its physical support. Thus, the cycle goes on over and over - birth, ageing and death driven by the thirst for more existence. The Buddha calls it as the round of rebirths – called samsara "the wandering".

Cutting off the causes of Suffering:

To free ourselves from suffering completely we have to eliminate the causes of suffering by their roots. To eliminate ignorance, we need wisdom but how is wisdom to be acquired? The Buddha says wisdom can be cultivated. It comes into being through a set of conditions. These conditions are actually mental factors, components of consciousness, which fit together into a systematic structure that can be called a path in the word's essential meaning. A course way for movement leading to a goal, the end of suffering and the path leading to it is the noble eightfold path with its eight factors: right view, right intention, right speech, right action, right livelihood, right effort, right mindfulness and right concentration. Buddha calls this path - middle way (*Majjhima Patipada*).

Research Questions:

- Does sufferings exist in an individual?
- What are the causes for suffering in one's daily life?
- What are the causes for un-satisfaction of human beings?
- Can we cut off the root of sufferings? If so? how?
- Whether practicing *pancasila* is the foundation for building concentration and attaining wisdom by an individual?
- Whether practicing of morality protects one from danger? Daily & continually?
- By practicing *pancasila* can we create a good inter - personal relations and harmony in the society?
- How practicing *pancasila* by one and all creates a peaceful society?
- Whether *pancasila* constitute the right speech, right action and right livelihood?
- Can we reduce the intensity of greed, hatred and delusion by the practice of *pancasila*.

These and other research issues necessitated the present research paper.

Objectives of the Study

1. To identify and review the effect the *panca - sila* (five precepts) practiced by lay persons in daily life: and
2. To analyse the impact of *panca - sila* practice on lay person's individual and group behavior in the society.

Scope of the Study:

The scope of the present study includes the glimpses of *Dhamma – Vinaya*, - the doctrine and discipline of Bhagawan Buddha. The Four Noble truths and the Noble Eightfold path, morality components such as Right Speech, Right Action and Right Livelihood, the three universal characteristics – *Anicca, Dukkha and Anatta* and also *Vipallasa*, day to day living and sufferings of individuals, impact of maintaining Buddhist morality, inter-personal relations of lay practitioners of five precepts and the like. The geographical scope of the study is Bangalore, India.

Review of Literature:

The extensive review of literature has been undertaken critically to examine the impact of practicing *panca - sila* by individuals in different parts of the world. Right Speech, Right Action and Right Livelihood constitute *Silakkhanda*, the division of moral discipline: the other two are *samadhi* and *panna*.

Bikkhu Bodhi (1999) observed that the practice of *panca - sila* restrains immoral actions and promote good conduct, their ultimate purpose is not so much ethical as spiritual. The author states that Right Speech, Right Action and Right Livelihood are not prescribed merely as guides to action, but primarily as aids to mental purification. As a necessary measure for human well-being, ethics has its own justification in the Buddha's teaching and its importance cannot be under rated. *panca - sila* practice is the foundation for the entire path, essential for the success of the other trainings. The Abhidhamma equates *sila* with the mental factors of abstinence (*viratiyo*) - an equation which makes it clear that what is really being cultivated through the observance of moral precepts is the mind. Thus, while the training in *sila* brings the "public" benefit of inhibiting socially detrimental actions it entails the personal benefit of mental purification, preventing the defilements from dictating to us what lines of conduct we should follow as explained by *Ven. Bhikkhu Bodhi*.

Kate Lila wheeler and Sayadaw U Pandita (2015) in their articles indicated the fact that people who look basic morality are disgusting. No matter how expensive their jewelry or clothing may be, they are unattractive and offensive. It is as if they smell bad. In contrast, *sila* is like a fragrance or an ornament. "*sila* makes the wearer beautiful". *Sila* also prevent us from falling into lower realms of existence, whereas people who do not sustain basic morality are bound for states of misery, devoid of happiness is daily life. One can think of harmful deeds as poisonous food that will lead to deadly consequences. Therefore, *sila* is good to rely on throughout our life.

Eric M Rogers (1984) in his research paper states that *Sila* (Pali) is usually rendered into English as "Behavioral discipline", morality or ethics. It is often translated as "Precept". It is an action that is an intentional effort. It is one of three practices (*Sila-Samadhi-Panna*) and the second *Parami*. It refers to moral purity of thought, word and deed. The four conditions of *Sila* are chastity, calmness, quiet and extinguishment that is no longer being susceptible to perturbation

by the passions. *Sila* refers to overall principles of ethical behavior. It is a training in order to live a better life in which one is happy, without worries and can meditate well.

Isa Gucciardi Ph.D (2013) - pointed out in her article that it is important that counseling and healing practitioners have an approach to ethics that is more profound than a set of rules. The Buddhist Eight Fold path is one such approach. She says that “when the driving force of our actions is wholesome, our actions will tend automatically to contribute to others well-being. The more this is our habitual state, the less likely we are to react badly when provoked. Buddhist philosophy provides support in helping the individual to understand what motivates his actions.

Buddhism is an educational system which provides a technology for understanding the mind, and the nature of the reality in which we, as human being exist.

Thomas kierman (2000) elucidates the importance of engaging with the practice of ethical engagement, eightfold path prescribes: The eight aspects of the path are not to be understood as a sequence of single steps instead they are highly inter-dependent principles that have to be seen in relationship with each other. For example, ethical conduct is viewed as a guideline to moral discipline (*Sila*). This aspect is not self- sufficient, it is however, essential, because mental purification can only be achieved through the cultivation of ethical conduct.

Research Gap

Practicing *Sila* (morality) is very important in one's day to day life as it provides protection and peace to the individuals, who maintain it at all times. One can achieve inner calmness as the practice of *panca-sila* avoids physical and verbal excuses. Five-Precepts taught by Buddha purifies the bodily and vocal actions and serve as the fulcrum for the next level of the path practice-*Samadhi and Panna* (wisdom) for purifying the mind.

Many research articles on *Dana, Sila, Samadhi and Panna* are available indicating their essence for psychological and ethical conduct of individuals in different parts of the world. However, the present article aimed knowing the impact of five-precepts on lay persons. Understanding of body, mind and the thought processes. The inner purification and inter-actions with other individuals in the family, work life, and in the society are taken into consideration, that is to say, the persons who are practicing five-precepts, how they are leading their day to day life. The laity

who are attached to Mahabodhi Loka Santhi Buddha Vihara, Gandhingar, Dhamma Dhuta Buddha Vihara located in Narasipura and Vipassana meditation centers in bangaluru were consulted to know the impact of practicing *Panca-Sila* in day to day life on the parameters such as stress, anxiety, anger, jealousy, aversion, loving kindness, inter-personal relations, social and economic transactions and the like.

Thus, the study geographical area is Bangalore and the contents of the articles are mustard from lay persons, who are practicing Panca-Sila and ordinarily residing in Bangalore. There exists a research gap in that the context of 21st century is different from yesteryears as one can find socio-economic and political legal changes in the given uphill environment, how Panca-Sila practice acts as solution (panacea) for individual, family and societal ills. Hence, the present article.

METHODOLOGY

The researchers used descriptive, exploratory and conceptual research methods for the present article. The population for the study was the lay persons who are practicing five precepts ranging from 3 years and above in Bangalore. Some of whom have also undergone a minimum 10-day residential vipassana courses. The satipatthana practitioners were also included to know about the effects of practicing *panca-sila* and their understanding of right speech, right action and right livelihood (*silakandha*). The sila practitioners' anxiety, stress level, physical, emotional and mental health data have been elicited through the semi-structured questionnaire and personal interviewing of the respondents in Bengaluru, India.

Limitations of the Study:

- It is more of the conceptual study. It also explores the relationship between many variables with semi-structured questionnaire and personal interview of the candidates. Hence, the results are an attempt to move from subjectivity towards objectivity.
- It is qualitative study and therefore measurement is difficult. The finding are approximation.
- The research output is the by-product of the practice of five precepts as given by Bhagawan Buddha by the lay persons.

- The study is confined to the geographical area of Bangalore.

Independent and Dependent Variables of the Study:

Table – 1
Independent and Dependent Variable

Independent Variables (<i>Sila Khandha</i>)	Dependent Variables (Peaceful Life)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Right Speech ❖ Right Action ❖ Right Livelihood 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Calmness ❖ Reduced Fear ❖ Reduced Anxiety and Stress ❖ Increased Physical Health ❖ Increased Emotional Health ❖ Better Inter-personal Relations ❖ Better Understanding of the World

Results and Discussions:

The Noble Eightfold Path is the way to the cessation of suffering, the fourth part of the four noble truths. In order to fully understand the noble truths and investigate whether they were in fact true, the Buddha recommended that a certain path be followed which consists of:



The Eight-Spoked Dhamma Chakka

The Eight-Spokes represent the Noble-Eightfold Path of Buddhism



Footprint of the Buddha with Dhamma Cakka and Tiratna, 1st Century CE, Gandhara.

Table – 2: The Noble-Eightfold Path

01	Right View	The right way to think about life is to see the world through the eyes of the Buddha - with wisdom and compassion.
02	Right Thought	We are what we think. Clear and kind thoughts build good and strong characters
03	Right Speech	By speaking kind and helpful words, we are respected and trusted by everyone.
04	Right Conduct	No matter what we say, others know us from the way we behave. Before we criticize others, we should first see what we do ourselves.
05	Right Livelihood	Choosing a occupation, avocation and profession that does not hurt others. The Buddha said – “Do not earn your living by harming others. Do not seek happiness by making others unhappy”.
06	Right Effort	A value based worthwhile life means doing our best at all times and having goodwill toward others. This also means not wasting effort on things that harm ourselves and others.
07	Right Mindfulness	Being aware of our thoughts, words and deeds.
08	Right Concentration	Concentration on one thought or object at a time. This enables us to be quiet and attain true peace of mind.

Practicing the Noble Eightfold Path is similar to cultivating a garden. In Buddhism one cultivates one's wisdom. The mind is the ground and the thoughts are seeds. Deeds are ways one cares for the garden. Our faults are weeds. Pulling them out is like weeding a garden. The harvest is real and lasting happiness. (Venerable Dalai Lama, 2019)

All religions have some basic rules that define what is good conduct and what kind of conduct should be avoided. In Buddhism, it is “Avoid all evils and cultivate good” (DhP. V.183). The most important rules are the *Panca-sila* (Five Precepts) as given by Buddha.

Table -3: Panca-sila (The Five Precepts)

1. Not to kill 2. Not to steal 3. No sexual misconduct 4. Not to lie 5. No intoxicants	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Respect for life • Respect for others' property • Respect for our pure nature • Respect for honesty • Respect for a clear mind
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The observance of sila leads to harmony at several levels – social, psychological, kammic and contemplative. At the social level the principles of sila help to establish harmonious interpersonal relations, converging the mass of differently constituted members of society with their own private interests and goals into a cohesive social order in which conflict is either eliminated and reduced. At the psychological level, the practice of sila brings harmony to the mind in the day-to-day living, protection from the inner split caused by guilt and remorse over moral transgressions.

At the kammic level, the observance of sila ensures harmony with the cosmic law of kamma, hence positive results in the course of future movement through the round of repeated birth and death. And at the contemplative level, sila helps to establish the preliminary purification of mind to be completed in a deeper and more thorough way, by the development of *samadhi* and insight (*Vipassana*).

The parameters of moral training are usually worded negatively, in terms of abstinence. But there is more to sila than refraining from what is wrong. Each principle embedded in the precepts has two dimensions, both vital to the training as a whole. One is abstinence from the unwholesome (*Varitta*) and the other commitment to wholesome (*Caritta*). The Buddha stresses on the aspect of avoidance, because abstinence from the unwholesome is sufficient in itself, to establish the steps of practice in proper sequence.

Summary of Findings

The conceptual and explanatory study with five precepts as independent variables and purifying the mind at preliminary level through body and vocal actions of individuals as dependent variables, the impact in the form of findings are:

- ❖ We are makers of our own future, we create our own welfare or misery as well as our own liberation through following the Noble Eightfold Path consisting of *sila*, *samadhi* and *panya*. Practicing *panca-sila* is the forerunner on the path of liberation as expressed by the respondents *panca-sila* practitioners.
- ❖ When we generate negativity, we become miserable. When we come out of negativity, we start experiencing peace, and we start helping other because we are being helped ourselves.

It is not money in daily life which brings happiness and contentment in the heart. One will feel so content even if there is no money, because Dhamma is there as felt by the respondents under the study.

- ❖ A balanced mind is necessary to balance the unbalanced minds of others. Avoid any vocal or physical action that harm others and disturb their peace and harmony. As far as morality in daily living is concerned, the respondent lay persons felt that observing precepts with a pure mind enabled them to reduce anxiety, stress, greed and other negativities, instead promoted happiness and joy. This is because all vocal and physical actions originate in the mind. Therefore, the respondents expressed that if we purify the mind, our actions will become pure and wholesome.
- ❖ The respondents opined that the very instant one breaks sila one starts feeling miserable. By generating defilements such as anger, greed, animosity and delusion, the people lose the peace, balance and harmony as expressed by the respondents under the study.
- ❖ The person at whom the defilement is directed is harmed only later. But the first victim is oneself. By experiencing this reality one realizes the necessity to come out of every defilement of the mind. One starts maintaining perfect sila for one's own benefit, to come out of misery, say the respondents.

Suggestions:

- ❖ The basis on any healthy harmonious society is always the healthy and harmonious individuals who populate it. Only if each individual has a pure, peaceful mind can we expect peace in the society.
- ❖ We now realize nearly all the difficulties that we have had to face were due to our own projections. Practice of five precepts and meditation will pave the path for us to live and grow spiritually, physically, mentally and morally both within and outside the walls of confinement.
- ❖ For all that science has achieved in the field of materialism, are the people of the world happy?. They may find sensual pleasures off and on, but in their heart of hearts, they are not happy when they realize what has happened, what is happening and what may happen next, why? This is because, while man has mastery over matter, he is still lacking the mastery over his mind, therefore the first step is the practice of five precepts to liberate himself finally from

the mind.

- ❖ A lot of people in the sample geographical area are unaware of Dhamma and the five precepts and therefore, they are chasing material possessions and sense gratifications. It is suggested to the government and NGOs to sensitize the people from all walks of life about the Dhamma and Precepts. Since, Dhamma is non-sectarian, and non-religious one.
- ❖ Government should make its employees, students to test for themselves the five precepts in daily lives and thereby one gets experiential learning (*Kalamasutta*)
- ❖ All the family member in the sample geographical area is suggested to undertake panca-sila for happy family and society, to promote concord, peace and harmony in the society.
- ❖ Modern youths should be trained on moral precepts as personality development training to change their behaviors for positivity in the cities and in the rural part of Bengaluru and elsewhere.

Conclusion:

It becomes clear that the Buddha's teaching is not for intellectual entertainment but for the direct experience because this alone can free one from the ingrained habit pattern of reacting with craving and aversion. For one who is practicing sila (Morality) is a true follower of the teachings of all the Buddhas. With the development of purity and the power of the mind backed by the insight into the ultimate truth of nature, one might be able to do a lot of things in the right direction for the benefit of mankind. Right speech, right action and right livelihood represent generally the code of morality as initially pronounced by the Buddha in his very first sermon at Saranath. The *Panca-sila* are therefore, intended to control actions and words and to serve as a foundation for *samadhi*.

Followers for every religion accept the principle of morality, but only at the intellectual and devotional level. At the actual level, it is very difficult to live a wholesome life of morality, unless one works hard to control and purify the mind through *sila*(Morality), *samadhi*(Concentration) and *pannya*(Wisdom).

The non-sectarian scientific teachings of Buddha spreading on a mass scale are concrete, practical method to achieve social integrity. This is because, as one progressively experiences

the teaching of the Buddha, it becomes impossible to believe in differences of caste, community, sect, gender, social status and the like.

May the true teachings of the enlightened one including five precepts spread in every nook and corner of the world. May more and more humanity make use of this invaluable teaching and make use of this invaluable human life to come out of all miseries, all suffering, all ignorance, and develop the wisdom that comes only from purifying the mind and experiencing peace within. That experiential wisdom and peace within each individual is what can bring more peace in society and peace among nations.

May all beings be Happy! Be Peaceful! Be Liberated!

Bhavatu Sabba Mangalam

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