

# Zen Perspective on Perfect Life

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**Abstract:** *People have been always in pursuit 'Perfection' since the beginning of mankind and 'Perfection' is known as the core value to build a perfect personality of moral doers. In ethics, the perfect personality can achieve the 'Perfection' only. However, leading an honest and earnest life is an easy task for amoral person, but for moral person it is difficult to lead such life. Here, in the paper, an effort is made to discuss the Perfection along with a detailed account to attain it. The paper will conclude by advancing our own position regarding this issue.*

**Keywords:** *Perfection, Zen, Eightfold Path, Bliss, Happiness.*

## Introduction

People have been always in pursuit 'Perfection' since the beginning of mankind and 'Perfection' is known as the core value to build a perfect personality of moral doers. In ethics, the perfect personality can achieve the 'Perfection' only. However, leading an honest and earnest life is an easy task for amoral person, but for moral person it is difficult to lead such life. Here, in the paper, an effort is made to discuss the Perfection along with a detailed account to attain it. The paper will conclude by advancing our own position regarding this issue. To attain the aims of the paper, the paper is divided into following elaborations;

1. The Essence of Perfectionism.
2. Perfectionism in Zen Philosophy.
3. Detailing of the path to attain Perfectionism.

## The essence of Perfectionism:

What ought we to do? The ethics and moral philosophy moves around the question and the views are being different from personality to personality. But, the question remained the same. It's because the perfect majority is not founded yet in favour of answer. It's interesting to discuss here that ethics has developed to answer the question as the answer differ; a new kind of normative theory emerges such as deontologism, the consequentialism; the first theory says that moral worth of an action locates in it righteousness and the second one, says that moral worth of an action locates in it results. In ethics as well as in humanities 'Personality' plays an important role, thus, there is special need to understand the word 'Personality'.

*Personality* is a total sum of Conative, Cognitive and Affective aspects.

1. **Cognitive:** This aspect of personality is related to the cognition i. e. knowledge related to the beliefs and actions.
2. **Affective:** This aspect of personality is related to the free will; it means it prepares the subject emotively.
3. **Conative:** This aspect of personality is actual factor to act on the ground when a personality is prepared from cognition and affection.

By the above discussion, conclusively, it can be said that Perfect personality is the personality where all the aspects personality works together. So, the works of a perfect personality will be in order, which leads to Perfection. That's why, in Moral Philosophy, Perfection is a state of completeness and flawlessness. To be perfect is the most desirable goal of human life. Everyone is here seeking for perfection in one's life. So, it has become a big issue to know what perfection is. For consideration here some question can be raised concern to the issue of perfection: does perfection exist? If yes, then what are the characteristics of a perfect personality? When life of a person can be considered as a perfect life? How can one achieve a perfect life or what is the way/s to achieve a perfect life?

In philosophy there are various notions of perfection. In aesthetics, perfection is viewed as a requisite for beauty and high art. In ethics and value theory, perfection is the persistence of will in obtaining the optimal quality of spiritual, mental, physical, and material being. The neo- Aristotelian Thomas Hurka describes perfectionism as follows:

*This moral theory starts from an account of the good life, or intrinsically desirable life. And it characterizes this life in a distinctive way. Certain properties, it says, constitute human nature or are definitive of humanity-they make humans human. The good life, it then says, develops these properties to a high degree or realizes what is central to human nature. Different versions of the theory may disagree about what the relevant properties are and so disagree about the content of life the good life. But they share the foundational idea that what is good, ultimately, is the development of human nature.*

The perfectionist does not believe that one can attain a perfect life or state of living. Rather, a perfectionist practices steadfast perseverance in obtaining the best possible life or state of living. But, in modern society most of people are so much indulges in obtaining more worldly pleasure that they neglect the importance of mental and transcendental need of human. So, the disorientation of personality can be seen easily in today's humans' life and this is the cause of increasing predicaments, like depression on, anxiety, loneliness and so on, in life-world of modern man. According to the modern pattern of human life and its aftermaths Zen seems more relevant to dilute the personality imbalance and insolvency. So that, one can attains a perfect life.

## Perfectionism in Zen Philosophy

Zen is a sect of Mahayana Buddhism. Buddhism is the philosophy which was founded by the Indian prince Siddhartha Gautama, the first Buddha, presumably in the fifth century BCE. The Zen branch descends from the semi-legendary figure Bodhidharma, heir of a line of Indian patriarchs starting from the first Buddha. He left India for China in the late four century CE and started a new line of Chinese patriarchs. "Patriarchs" is the name given to the six semi-legendary founders of Zen which are *Bodhidharma, Dazu Huik,*

*Sengcan, Dayi Daoxin, Daman Hongren, Yuquan Shenxiu*. In China country Zen Buddhism was highly influenced by Taoism. It was introduced in Japan sometime around the twelfth century.

Zen believes in Buddhist teachings which can be summed up in Four Noble Truths: *Dukkha, Samudaya, Nirodha, Nirodh Marga*. Zen aims at perfection at a personhood by direct intuition through sitting meditation, called **Zazen**. The word Zen is a deformation of the Sanskrit 'Dhyana', meaning 'meditation'. Zen aims at achieving a state of mind named '**Satori**' (Enlightenment). If described very loosely, enlightenment is the liberation from the material world and its dualism. It implies oneness with the universe and abolishment of mental barriers separating the Enlightenment from all other things.

Zen believes there is nothing like 'Perfection' because it believes in changes. But according to Zen when a person achieves above described enlightenment he or she lives in a state of happiness and then his or her life become a possible best life. Here happiness is not merely worldly pleasure; it is bliss which one experiences after the abolishment of worldly dualism. To achieve Enlightenment Zen follows eightfold path which is basically given in early Buddhism. The path to the enlightenment is known as the '**Path of Zen**'. It is the cure of suffering and way to get happiness or bliss. Even though it is not called a Path they are not to be followed one after another but together as a practical guide for living your life in accordance with the Zen Philosophy.

**Detailing of the path to attain Perfectionism:** the Lord Buddha has talked about four noble truths which are as follows:

- 1) There is suffering.
- 2) There is cause of suffering.
- 3) There is cessation of suffering.
- 4) There is the path of the cessation of suffering.

Buddha says that there should be no doubt about the existence of the suffering but there is a proper way to get freedom from the sufferings. In the same way Zen has also discussed the path to get liberation from the sufferings. The path is the same in Buddhist philosophy and in Zen philosophy. The 'Path of Zen' is as follows:

**Right View:** Understand the self and the world; be aware of your own actions and the reasons behind them. Know the Four Noble Truths and see the world as it really is. It is realization that everything (even the self) changes and that clinging to the idea of a permanent self is an illusion and gives rise to unhappiness

**Right Intention:** Be sure about what controls actions. Are they for the good of all or just yourself? Resist to acting upon feelings of desire, prejudice or aggression.

**Right speech:** Remember that words are not 'just words'. Words can make or break lives. You must be careful with the things you say. Don't tell deliberate lies or speak deceitfully. Avoid using harsh words that offend or hurt others. Speak friendly and only if you have something positive to contribute.

#### **Right Action**

This one is simple: Don't do wrong! It is to keep away from harming or even killing people or animals. Do not steal or (sexually) misuse others.

#### **Right Livelihood**

Live an honest life by doing a job that will help mankind instead of being harmful or just for the purpose of getting rich.

#### **Right Effort**

Effort is the driving force for the other aspects of the Eightfold Path of Zen. Without the right effort nothing can be accomplished. It means to refrain from helping or starting things that can cause harm. And to actively help where good can be done.

#### **Right Mindfulness**

Mind fullness is the ability to have a look at you from a distance. Observe your body, feelings and mind without attraction or diversion keep an open mind in the present, quiet and alert. Focus on present events. Do not judge or interpret.

#### **Right Concentration**

The way to reach complete concentration in Zen is through Zazen. But this is only the exercise to learn how to achieve one-pointedness of mind. It is something that one must try to maintain in everything he or she does or says.

Zen believes that faith without practice lacks strength so they emphasizes on practicing eightfold path regularly.

#### **Conclusion**

It is interesting to discuss here, there is a general agreement on the answer both ordinary people and educated people the good is the thing that provides happiness but they may differ on the question that what constitutes happiness? The happiness of ordinary people lies in their wealth and prosperity and spiritually elevated person would define the happiness as Aristotle's *Eudemonia* or some people will say it's a *bliss*. Like Buddhism Zen also believes that the ultimate goal in life is to get ride from suffering and to achieve happiness. Thus, according to Zen life of a person is possible perfect life when its fill with happiness or bliss. Here happiness is neither a material pleasure nor something divine. It comes after vanishing of dualist vision by practicing Zazen and this is the achievement of enlightenment. To achieve such life Zen has given 'Eightfold Path of Zen'. It is more practical for modern pattern of humans' life. Because there is no rituals and restrictions to practices these all. Thus, we find that Zen can be more suitable philosophy to practice in order to get a good life in modern era.

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