

ETHICAL VALUES: AS DEPICTED IN THE *LANKĀVATĀRASŪTRA*

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Ethics and morality are more relevant today. In the past, many ancient literatures advocated about the ethical values. In this context *Lankāvatārasūtra*, a buddhistmahayanic text is also important.

The *Lankāvatārasūtra*, characterizing the apogee of the Mahāyana Buddhism, serves as a repository of two plethora of ethical teachings to be practiced by laity and the monks. It is on the account of these crucial ethical doctrines that this text has enormous contemporary relevance.

It's in this context that *Lankāvatārasūtra* dedicated its one chapter i.e. eight to meat-eating, known as *Māmsabhaksanaparivārh*. There is no meat to be regarded as pure in three ways, not premeditated, not asked for, and not impelled, therefore, refrain from eating meat. According to it, the Buddha evidently, dislikes the idea of being thought of as the one who has permitted meat eating among his followers. Indeed, he has elsewhere given rules as to eating and not eating of meat; ten rules for avoiding and three rules for accepting it. But in the *Lankāvatārasūtra* as well as in the *Hastikāksya*, *Mahāmegha*, *Nirvāna*, and *Angulimālikasūtras*, meat-eating is absolutely forbidden. Not only in the past but in the future and now, all my

followers are to shun animal food no matter how it has been prepared.

Moral values

The moral life is generally distinguished from the good life, a distinction that pertains in the nature as well as their quality. As far as the nature is concerned, the good life is founded on human emotion and disposition, while moral life has its roots in the ultimately objective moral law, often associated with the divine, either as its guardian or as its author. For this very reason, the moral life is assumed to override the good life. This distinction also determines their qualitative difference. The moral life constitutes permanent and eternal happiness bearing the stamp of spirituality and sacredness. In contrast, the good life is one of temporary enjoyment and happiness associated with the sensory experiences of human beings, and is therefore materialistic and profane. The Buddha seems to have realized that if the moral life meant conforming to an absolute moral law that can override the good life, it could bring harm to human life.

The Buddha's renunciation of the conception of an absolute moral law and recognition of the validity of concrete or contextual moral conceptions may leave the impression that he justified a form of moral

relativism. The path to moral perfection constitutes the fourth noble truth and is generally described as the noble eightfold path, which consists of :

- a. Right view (*Sammāditthi*)
- b. Right conception (*Sammāsankappa*)
- c. Right speech (*Sammāvācā*)
- d. Right action (*Sammākammanta*)
- e. Right livelihood (*Sammāājīva*)
- f. Right effort (*Sammāvāyāma*)
- g. Right mindfulness (*sammā sati*)
- h. Right Concentration (*Sammāsamādhi*)

Ethical Conduct

The ethical ideal of the Mahāyāna is the bodhisattva, as distinct from the *arhat* of the Hinayāna. Bodhisattva literally means "one whose essence is perfect knowledge". But historically it means "one who is on the way to the attainment of perfect knowledge, a future Buddha". The term was first used for Gautama Buddha during the period of his search for liberation. It therefore, came to mean "a Buddha

designate" or a man destined to become a Buddha in this or in some future life. When once nirvāna is attained, all earthly relations come to an end. The Hinayāna ideal of complete absorption, or *arhattva*, the lonely journey on the trackless path of eternity; this isolated bliss is, according to Mahāyāna, the temptation of the Māra.

Human existence is an *evil* and *mukti* is freedom from being. Later systems of thoughts accept it. *Nyāya* counted birth (*janma*) and activity (*pravrtti*) among evils. Both good and evil are undesirable since they involve rebirth. One returns to the world to enjoy the reward or undergo the punishment. To be born is simply to die. To be happy is not to be born. As a matter of fact, these ethical doctrines serve as a powerful aid to compel the reverence of mankind, give ease to many troubled minds, gladden many simple hearts, and answer to many innocent prayers.