**Buddhism and Suicide**

In this paper, I want to talk about what Buddhism thinks of suicide. We’ve talked about this in class and it stuck with me because it's such a difficult topic that can have heavily opposing opinions. From what I’ve learned, Buddhist teachings generally say suicide is wrong, so I’ll talk a bit about why this is before sharing my own views about it, and where I agree and disagree. Then I’ll try to build an argument towards this discussion based on what a true Buddhist would say.

First, Buddhist views on suicide are shaped a lot by their beliefs in karma and rebirth. The idea is that if someone ends their life, they aren’t actually escaping suffering, they’re just pushing it forward into the next life. The emotional state someone dies in, like fear, despair, or anger can affect their next rebirth. So from that perspective, suicide could actually make things worse instead of better. You’re not cutting off pain, you’re just carrying it with you into another life.

There’s also the First Precept in Buddhism, which says not to kill. That includes yourself. Life is seen as valuable because it's a chance to work toward enlightenment, Nirvana, which is a kind of deep peace and freedom from suffering. Suicide is seen as throwing away that opportunity. Even in tough times, Buddhists will encourage people to face the suffering of life and work through it with traditional methods such as meditation.

Another part of Buddhist thinking that matters here is the idea of the "two truths." There’s the regular, everyday way we see things, and then there’s a deeper truth that says none of those things really exist in a permanent way. Even the idea of a “self” isn’t solid. From that perspective, suicide doesn’t make sense because it’s based on the belief that there is a self, and that self is suffering. Instead of trying to end that suffering by ending life, the Buddhist path is about seeing through it and understanding it more clearly.

That said, I don’t completely agree with the Buddhist view. I think suicide is heartbreaking, but I don’t believe it’s always wrong. There are cases, like with people who are terminally ill and in constant pain, where choosing to die might be understandable. In that case someone may not be angry or selfish, rather they just want to relieve the agony.

I also think the idea that all suffering can be worked through doesn’t always match real life. Sometimes, things are just too overwhelming. It’s not that someone doesn’t want to get better, they might just not be able to. Saying people should always push through, no matter what, can feel unfair. And if someone is in that deep of a hole, it doesn’t mean they’re weak or giving up too soon. It just means they’re human.

Still, I think Buddhism allows for more flexibility in its ideas. For example, Buddhism puts a lot of importance on intention so if someone is acting out of calm reflection and a desire to stop suffering, maybe that changes the moral weight of suicide. Compassion is another big Buddhist value, so maybe in some very rare situations suicide could be seen as a compassionate choice instead of a desperate one.

Even still I know there are problems with that line of thinking. One issue is that it’s really hard to tell if someone is clear minded, or if they’re in a dark place mentally and need help. It could also be bad by simply saying suicide is okay in some cases and might make it seem like a more acceptable option in general, which could be harmful. A Buddhist would probably say there’s always a better path, one that involves patience, not to mention how they’d still point out how I haven’t addressed karma consequences or rebirth.

To wrap it up, the Buddhist view sees suicide as something that increases suffering and shuts down the chance for spiritual growth. From an outward perspective this makes plenty of sense given all of the people who would suffer from the suicide of someone close to them. I also believe that in a few extreme situations, suicide might be the most rational choice someone can make. While I have some differences with the Buddhist view I still greatly appreciate it for what we can learn from studying it.