

ETHICS AND CULTURE (HUM 103)

BUDDHIST ETHICS

LECTURE BY RIAZ P KHAN





The words “Bu-dhe” and “Sa-kya-mu-ni (Sage of Shakyas)” on Ashoka’s Lumbini pillar inscription (c. 250 BCE)

- ❖ The Buddha (“Awakened One”) lived between 5th–4th century BCE
- ❖ His name is Siddhartha and clan name is Gotama (in Pali) or Gautama (in Sanskrit)
- ❖ Also known as Sakyamuni (Sage of the Shakyas)
- ❖ Born into the Shakya clan in Lumbini (in present-day Nepal)
- ❖ Philosopher, spiritual teacher, religious leader
- ❖ Revered as the founder of the world religion of Buddhism

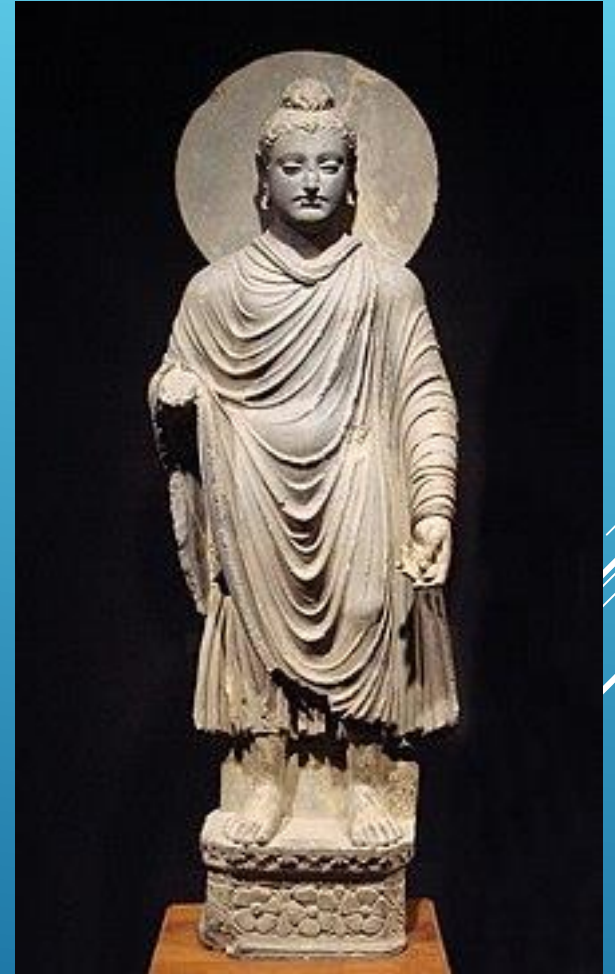


Buddhadharma/Buddhaśāsana (“Buddhism”)

- ❖ World’s fourth-largest religion
- ❖ Over 520 million (7% of global population)

Three Major Branches

- ❖ Theravāda (Pali: "The School of the Elders")
 - ❖ Sri Lanka, Thailand, Laos, Cambodia, Vietnam
- ❖ Mahāyāna (Sanskrit: "The Great Vehicle")
 - ❖ China, Japan, Korea
- ❖ Vajrayana (Tantric Buddhism)
 - ❖ Tibet, Nepal, Mongolia, Central Asia



Standing Buddha statue
1st-2nd century CE



Morality is washed all round with wisdom, and wisdom is washed all round with morality. Wherever there is morality, there is wisdom and wherever there is wisdom there is morality. From the observing of the moralities comes wisdom and from observing of wisdom comes morality. Morality and wisdom together reveal the height of the world. (The Buddha)

Ethics and Wisdom

- ❖ Centrality of volitional (or voluntary) actions
 - ❖ According to moral law of causation (*karma*), our actions determine our destiny
 - ❖ Classical Buddhist conception of *karma*: Doctrine of successive births
 - ❖ Contemporary interpretations of *karma* in present life
- ❖ Ethics as ‘parent’ of wisdom
 - ❖ Volition actions lead to the discipline of the mind
 - ❖ Path to insight, enlightenment



Four Noble Truths – ‘*dukkha*’ and its ending

❖ The Noble Truth of Sorrow

- ❖ Birth to death, every aspect of our lives that is tied to our individuality inevitably involves suffering

❖ The Noble Truth of the Arising of Sorrow

- ❖ We suffer because we desire or crave things: pleasure, life, power... not satisfied... more suffering

❖ The Noble Truth of the Stopping of Sorrow

- ❖ Release from suffering can be gained only by putting an end to our craving

❖ The Noble Truth of the Way to the Stopping of Sorrow

- ❖ Craving can be ended by following the Noble Eightfold Path



The Buddha teaching
The Four Noble Truths
(Sanskrit manuscript)



Eightfold Path to the Cessation of Suffering

To follow the Eightfold Path, cultivate

- ❖ Right Understanding
- ❖ Right Thought
- ❖ Right Speech
- ❖ Right Conduct
- ❖ Right Livelihood
- ❖ Right Effort
- ❖ Right Mindfulness
- ❖ Right Concentration



THE NOBLE EIGHTFOLD PATH



The Division of Wisdom

- 1.) Right Understanding
- 2.) Right Thought

The Division of Ethical Conduct

- 3.) Right Speech
- 4.) Right Action
- 5.) Right Livelihood

The Division of Mental Discipline

- 6.) Right Effort
- 7.) Right Mindfulness
- 8.) Right Concentration

Cease to do evil

– The Path of Wisdom (1-2)

Learn to do good

– The Path of Ethical Conduct (3-5)

Purify your own mind

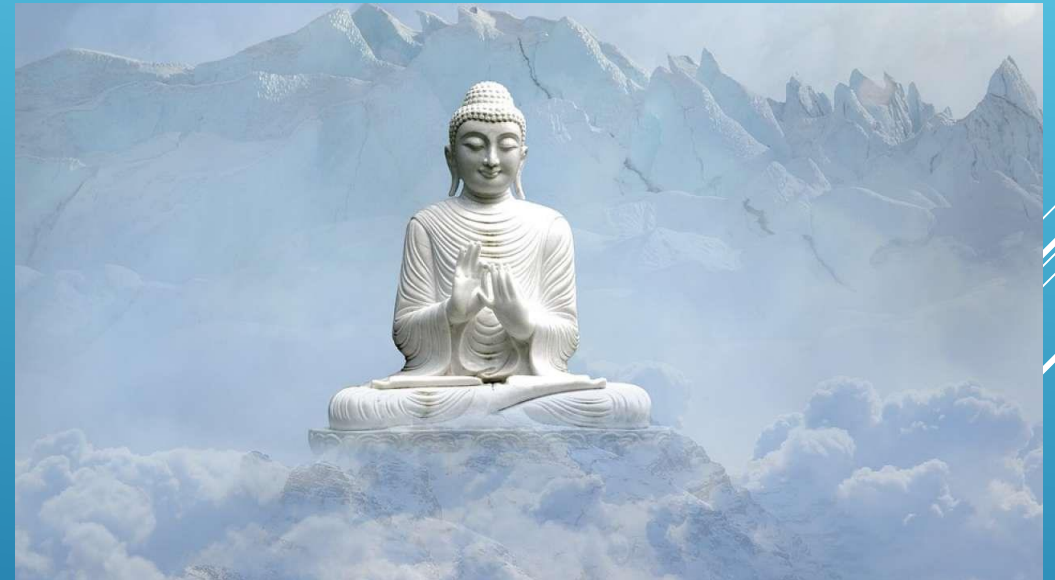
– The Path of Mental Discipline (6-8)



The Five Precepts – *Cease to do Evil*

Cultivation of Wisdom and Discernment:

- ❖ *Refrain from harming living beings*
- ❖ *Refrain from taking what is not given*
- ❖ *Refrain from misuse of the sense*
- ❖ *Refrain from wrong speech*
- ❖ *Refrain from clouding the mind*



Ethical Conduct – *Learn to do Good*

- ❖ “Wholesome” states or “Virtues” – “things to be encouraged”
 - ❖ *Dana* – giving
 - ❖ Gradual development of the will to give whenever need arises
 - ❖ *Metta* – ‘loving kindness’
 - ❖ Develop the state of mind where wellbeing and sorrows of others as important as my own
 - ❖ *Transference of Merit*
 - ❖ To learn to will that the benefits of our good actions return not to us alone but to all humanity



Buddhist Ethics: Concluding remarks

- ❖ Diversity of schools, traditions, rituals, tantras, and esoterism
- ❖ The precepts of Buddhist morality as invitations and not proscriptions
- ❖ Buddhist Ethics founded on a metaphysical outlook
- ❖ Emphasis on the Individual and on breaking down barriers between self and others
- ❖ Encourages practitioners to delve into their own experiences, and to be open to the universe and to humanity at large

