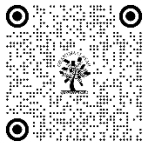


VEDAS AND BUDDHISM: THE HEART OF ANCIENT ETHICAL SYSTEMS

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DOI

[10.29121/shodhkosh.v5.i5.2024.3261](https://doi.org/10.29121/shodhkosh.v5.i5.2024.3261)

Funding: This research received no specific grant from any funding agency in the public, commercial, or not-for-profit sectors.

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ABSTRACT

The Vedic ethics are grounded in ideas such as Satya and Rta. In the Vedas and later sutras, the term Satya (सत्य) loses its original meaning and becomes an ethical concept of truthfulness, which is considered a vital virtue. To be accurate to and consistent with reality means to act, speak, and think in such a way. The three pillars of ancient Indian ethics—metaphysical, sociological, and psychological—are found in the Vedas. The metaphysical foundation of Vedic ethics is Rta. Ashrama Dharma is the psychological foundation of Vedic ethics, while Varna Dharma is its sociological foundation. Buddha defined ethics as a set of rules that imitates an innate, natural state characterized by harmony, composure, and self-control and is essentially driven by nonviolence or the desire to avoid harming. It has been defined as morality, skilful conduct, uprightness and precept, and virtue.

Keywords: Vedas, Ethics, Education, Values,

1. INTRODUCTION

Philology claims that Ethos, which means character in Latin, is where the word ethics originates. Hence, ethics can be defined as the study of human behavior, character, and habits. The term moral philosophy is another term for ethics. The Latin word "mores," which denotes custom or practice, is the source of the English word moral. In this sense, the science of custom or practice is what ethics literally means. The science of human behavior is called ethics. Behavior and habits are connected to the enduring traits of human nature. A character can be seen in conduct. Ethics is, therefore, the science of habit or character. It assesses human behavior, morality, and free will and debates whether or not these things are appropriate.

Ethics is "the study of what is right or good in conduct," according to Mackenzie's definition. According to this definition, ethics is recognized as the study of both good and right. However, good and right are not the same thing. The Latin term "rectus," which is where the word "right" originates, signifies "straight" or "according to law." Consequently, moral behavior will align with the law. The word "good" is derived from the German word "gut," which means that which serves the highest good. Here, "good" means something that contributes to or serves the greater good. It is generally assumed that goodness is an end in itself rather than a means to a goal.

From the Formalist perspective, moral laws are ends in and of themselves. They are not the means to an alternative goal. Kant established the notion of duty and acknowledged that the only good is goodwill. "Nothing in the world, or even out of it, can be called the only good without qualification, except goodwill," he declares. For Kant, goodwill is good in and of itself. Its goodness is not predicated on the outcome. Moral law says that a will is goodwill. Formalists contend that

morality is self-evident. The conscience is intrinsic and naturally picks up the distinction between right and wrong. All countries have ethical laws. They are straightforward and categorical in nature.¹

In the description of ethics in Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary, it is defined as follows: Ethics, as a noun, refers to the moral principles that govern or impact an individual's behavior. It can be specifically applied to professional, business, or medical contexts, such as the creation of a set of ethical guidelines. He started to scrutinize the morality of his role. (2) A framework of ethical principles or guidelines for conduct. The Protestant ethic, also known as a strongly defined work ethic, is a branch of philosophy that focuses on moral principles. Ethical (adjective) pertains to beliefs and principles regarding what is morally right and wrong. It involves matters such as standards and questions related to ethics, such as the ethical dilemmas surrounding human embryo research. (2) Ethically sound or permissible. Is it morally acceptable to endorse cigarettes through advertising? Ethical investment (*investing money in businesses that are considered morally acceptable*)² In English--Pāli Dictionary, it is stated that Ethic (s) a, n. (1) —*ñāṭisatha*. At. (2) *ācāra* *vidi*. *Guṇadhamma*, al, a. 1. *ñativisaya*, 2. *sīlayatta*. Ally, adv. *guṇadhammavasena*.³

2. RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN ETHICS AND RELIGION

Dharma is the term in Sanskrit that refers to the moral order of the universe. When considering the interaction between ethics and religion, there are three potential viewpoints: ethics & religion are interdependent, ethics precedes religion, or religion precedes ethics. The universal human elements are found in the moral codes of all religions. It forbids, among other things, lying, stealing, adultery, murder, injury, slander, gambling, and intoxication. There is an emphasis on self-control and moderation. The general mindset is one of denial and escape, with inclinations toward quietism, resignation, and acceptance of the status quo. Since it is not thought necessary to change the world, evil is easily tolerated. Nonetheless, there are contemporary reform movements and attacks on all religious systems.⁴

3. ETHICS IN BUDDHISM

After attaining enlightenment, the Gautama Buddha, the founder of Buddhism in the 6th century B.C., spent 45 years seeking the Truth and teaching the Dhammas to everyone, including Devas and Brahmas. Buddhist ethics are based on his teachings that everything in life is subject to change (Anicca) and that nothing is permanent, not even our own bodies (Anatta). Fundamentally, ethics is the study of morality or the framework within which moral judgments are made by individuals. For the majority of religious people, this starts with realizing what the world really is and how to live in it properly.

It is clear that Buddhist beliefs affect how the Buddha lived his life. The main problem here is Dukkha, which happens when we are unhappy with the world and always want something. People are unhappy because they want things all the time and find that even when they get them, they don't really satisfy them. The Buddha wrote The Four Noble Truths to explain the problem of why suffering happens and how to end it. The most important things in modern man's intellectual life are the rationality standards set by modern science and the materialist view that goes along with it. Many modern intellectuals who have been affected by these things have turned away from metaphysics, dogmatic religion, and many traditional morals. Without a doubt, scientific rationality has led to huge progress in the real world. However, it can't be said that people in the modern world are happier, feel safer, and don't worry that other people will hurt their interests without a good reason. There are a lot of armed conflicts in the world today. In many parts of the world, we see horrible moral crimes like terrorism, violating human rights, racial and other forms of discrimination, and violence against innocent people all the time. Poverty and being without money are common.

According to Buddhist ideas, progress in science and technology has not in any way lessened the bad things that make people act badly, like greed, hatred, and delusion. It is impossible to imagine peace, harmony, happiness, and contentment in society until these causes of bad behavior are drastically cut down or kept within reasonable limits. Buddhism is important to modern society because it offers a philosophical middle ground that accepts the rules of scientific reason while rejecting both the extreme materialist view of modern science and the dogmatic fundamentalist beliefs of traditional religion. There is no way for modern science to tell us what is morally right or wrong, good or bad.

¹Harsha Rastogi, "King's Ethics", 1684, Nai Sarak, Delhi-110006, 2003, p. 3.

²AS Hornby, "Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary", sixth edition, Printed in India by Indira Printers, New Delhi, 2000, p. 427.

³AP Buddhadatta Mahathera, "English-Pali Dictionary", New Delhi, 1997, p.179.

⁴Ibid., p. 15.

It's not likely that social interactions between humans will be very different from those between brutes when people don't care about such things and don't want to live a morally good life. People want to live well, which is one of the most important things that sets human life apart from animal life. They look for meaning in their lives and try to reach moral ideals and goals that make sense. In this way, Buddhist morality has a lot to teach modern man. One way to see Buddhism is as a path to moral perfection. The whole path is made up of steps that get you cleaner morally.

4. RELIGIOUS AND CULTURAL TRADITIONS OF ANCIENT PERIOD OF INDIA

During India's ancient times, there were two separate religious and cultural groups. Before the Aryans came, there was a custom of the Munis and Sramanas, who were wandering ascetics, yogis, and people who were holy and connected to water. They believed in *samsara*, which means that the world is basically not good enough and that giving up everything is the only way to find true happiness. In their teachings, they also talked about Karma (action), an immortal soul, and Mukti (liberation).

The strictest Arian religion was called Brahmanism, and it was led by priests known as Brahmins. The writings they left behind are called the Vedas and the Upanishads. These books explain their philosophy and ideas.⁵ The Vedas, which are made up of four books, were the first written works by the Aryans. The word "Veda" means "knowledge," and the Vedas are the most important religious text in Hinduism. They are called "Sruti," which means "what the rishis" (seers) heard or saw." The four collections of the most holy hymns and mantras are called the Rig, Sama, Yajur, and Atharva Vedas. It is hard to say when they were written down because they were spoken for approximately 1,000 years before they were written down. Newer types of Vedas are the Upanishads, which are mystical talks; the Aranyakas, which are texts for religious hermits that were written in the forest; and the Brahmanas, which are manuals for rituals and prayer.⁶

5. VEDAS OF BRAHMANISM

There are four groups of the Brahmanas' Vedas. They are called the Rig, the Sama, the Yajur, and the Atharva. The Aranyakas, or forest texts for religious hermits, are more recent types of Vedas. They include manuals for rituals and prayer, as well as the Vedas. Here's how you should understand these Vedas:

(1) RIG VEDA

The Rig Vedas' hymns are regarded as their most significant and ancient sections. During the Great Bharata War, they were composed between 1500 and 900 BC. There are ten mandalas, or circles, with more than a thousand hymns. The oldest ones are in the second through seventh circles, and the newest ones are in the tenth. Hinduism says that even the Vedas were shaped differently during the recent dark age of Kaliyuga when they were changed from much longer and more ancient divine revelations. They are regarded as the best source of information available because they are the only writings from this era of Indian history. Between the mysterious Upanishads and the age-old hymns, the moral lessons appear to have improved.

The Rig Veda primarily comprises hymns that extol the Aryan deities for their assistance in achieving victory in battles and acquiring wealth from the Dasas residing in the region. The Aryans effectively utilized their superior weaponry and combat expertise to overcome the agricultural and tribal communities of the declining Harappan civilization. The Rig Veda discusses assemblies, which likely comprised the most skilled warriors. They potentially exerted influence over the kings and the tribal priests, known as *purohitas*. The deities they revered bore a resemblance to the gods of the Indo-European pantheon. Indra, known for his immense power, was responsible for the destruction of ninety forts. Agni, the deity associated with fire and regarded as a divine emissary, enjoyed widespread popularity. The deities Varuna and Mitra, associated with the nocturnal and diurnal skies, respectively, have been connected to "the Greek deity Uranos and

⁵The "word *Upanisad* comes from *upa ni sad*, 'sitting down near.' It means 'sitting down near' the teacher to receive instruction. It gradually came to mean what we receive from the teacher, at sort of secret doctrine or *rahasyam*. Sometimes it is made to mean what enables us to destroy error, and approach truth. Samkara, in his introduction to Taittiriya Upanisad, says: 'Knowledge of Brahman is called Upanisad because in the case of those who devote themselves to it, the bonds of conception, birth decay, etc., become *unloosed*, or because it destroys them altogether, or because it leads the pupil very near to Brahman, or because therein the highest God is seated.' See *Indian Philosophy*, 1996, pp. 137-138.

⁶M. Mioner-Williams, "*Buddhism*", Munshiram Manoharlal Publishing, New Delhi, 1995, pp. 2-3.

the Persian deity Mithras. Dyaus, a lesser-discussed deity, has been associated with the Greek god Zeus. Surya, the deity associated with the sun, is the offspring of Dyaus and serves as the visual representation of Varuna. His twin sons, the Asvins, who represent his rays, pull him" along on a chariot as he soars through the sky. Ushas, the dawn, is either his daughter or wife. Rudra shaped the Maruts, the storm gods. One of the rare native gods that the Aryans adopted might be Rudra. As with the Avesta in Iran, the Rig Veda talks about 33 gods.⁷

(2) SAMA VEDA

The Rig Veda is the source of the music or melodies for the chants used in sacrificial ceremonies. Its written verses are mostly connected to deities like Indra, Agni, or Soma and are mostly taken from the eighth and ninth books of the Rig Veda. These are believed to be the origins of Indian music, and they likely contributed to the creation of magnificent art as a means of justifying the sacrifices made by the priests for the benefit of those who assisted them. The musicians learned from the *Sama Veda*, which was also used as a hymn book for religious ceremonies. Sama chants were not used for animal sacrifices, but they were used a lot in agricultural ceremonies and soma ceremonies, which involved bringing a plant from the mountains that made people drunk and hallucinogenic to the middle part of India. By this juncture, the priests had acquired expertise in various aspects of the sacrificial rituals, and the number of skilled musicians and singers was steadily increasing. "Strophe, antistrophe, and epode are components of the Greek chorus that were employed in vocal performance.

(3) YAJUR VEDA

The Yajur Veda follows many of the *hymns* of the *Rig Veda*, but it is more different from the original text when it comes to the ritual formulas that priests use during sacrifices. This is what yaja means. It tells you how to build altars for ceremonies and sacrifices" at the new and full moons. The Yajur Veda is divided into two groups or *samhitas*: White and Black. The Black samhita is less clear about what it means.

During the ceremonies, animals were killed and cut up before their meat was"eaten. As a thank you for the different gods, soma juice is poured, and toasts are made.. The members of the clergy tried to stay above the warrior caste by calling Soma "king of the Brahmins." The king walked in various directions to show that he was in charge, and water from different rivers was sprinkled on him to show how big his kingdom was. The priest of the royal family blessed the king. The king then gave his son, who was named Prince, some water and ritually attacked a family member's cattle to show that they had a history of winning. It was taken and split into three pieces: one for the priest, one for the drunks, and one for the rightfulowner. A dice game was played for fun, and the king had a chance to win. After that, the king rode out in his chariot, and everyone worshipped him like he was God. Ceremonies were often held to honour farmers, and chariot races were likely a big hit at some of them. The Purusha⁸ (person) sacrifice symbolized human sacrifice, which may refer back to the time when hunting and pastoral people did not allow their enemies to live because of the shortage of food. But in an agricultural society, more people were needed to work, and there was often extra food. 184 professional trades and guilds were recognized by the Purusha sacrifice.⁹

(4) ATHARVA VEDA

It is considerably "longer than the *Sama and Yajur Vedas*, and only a sixth of it comes from the Rig Vedas. It's mostly spells and incantations that do magic. Ethics usually draw the line between prayer and magic, as well as between white magic and black magic. There are bheshajani that use herbs to heal and cure fever, leprosy, jaundice, dropsy, as well as other illnesses. The Aryans didn't trust doctors and medicine, most likely because the natives knew more about them than they did. There were also more positive spells for things like having a baby, falling in love, having children, being fertile, etc.

(5) ARANYAKAS

Vedic literature is composed of two sections. The Karmakanda, which deals with sacrifices, is composed of the Brahmanas of the four Samhitas (Rig, Sama, Yajur, and Atharva). The Aranyakas and the Upanishads make up the knowledge-focused Jnanakanda. The Brahmanas were topped with the Aranyakas and Upanishads. The Aitareya, Kausitaki, and Taittiriya are the names of the three Aranyakas that preceded and succeeded the Brahmanas. The Rig Veda is connected to the first two, and the Yajur Veda is connected to the last. The Aranyakas are referred to as "forest

⁷Wendy Doniger O'Flaherty, *"The Rig Veda"*, Penguin Books, New Delhi, 1994.

⁸Purusa means "man", "person" and also 'spirit', "world-spirit".

⁹Bhattacharji, Sukumari, *"Literature in the Vedic Age"*, Vol. 2, p. 109.

texts" because their teachers, the ascetics, studied spiritual teachings in the forest. As a result, the sacrifices made in towns became less significant. They appeared in between the Upanishads and the Brahmanas. Along with the first philosophical speculations and discussions that emerged from the Upanishads, they still contain some hymns from the Vedas, talk about rituals and magic, and have boring lists of formulas. Living in luxury was more difficult for the sages than for the Brahmins, who worked in towns and catered to the nobility and other wealthy people. Prana is praised for being the breath's life force and for being the glue that holds the soul together. In that order, prana is present in people, plants, and animals. A person is eternal because of their soul, or atman, not because of their body. Hell is still feared, but by practising austerity (*Tapas*)¹⁰ to gain knowledge, individuals hope to be born into a better world after death or be liberated from rebirth. Viragya, or non-attachment, likewise purifies the body and defeats death. According to Vedic philosophy, the individual who knew or was within was referred to as the soul (Atman), and the essence of a person was called Brahman. The people who looked after the community's spiritual treasures were known as Brahnavadins, which means "those who talk about Brahman." In front of his father, a son asked, "What is supreme?". The father replied, "Truth, *tapas*, self-control, charity, *dharma* (duty), and progeny."¹¹

6. CONCLUSION

The Brahmana are the religious books, and the Vedas are one of them. Both books were seen as holy. The Brahmanas are, in fact, part of the Vedas. They went with each other and shared the name Sruti. There were four main ideas that made up the Brahmanic Philosophy.

1. The first thesis held that the Vedas should not be questioned because they are not only holy but also infallible.
2. The second thesis of Brahmanic philosophy held that only proper performance of Vedic sacrifices, observance of religious rites and ceremonies, and offering of gifts to Brahmins could lead to salvation of the soul or escape from transmigration. The Brahmins had a theory about an ideal society in addition to an ideal religion based on the teachings of the Vedas.
3. This ideal society, which is the third thesis, is *Chaturvarna*. It is ingrained in the Vedas, and just as the Vedas are unquestionable and infallible, so too is Chaturvarna as a social structure unquestionable and binding.

The Buddha's teachings on ethics set the goal of moral perfection as the highest ideal. When the bad psychological causes of human behaviour, like greed, hatred, and delusion, are wiped out, there is moral perfection. People call them "unwholesome roots" (*Akusalamula*) because they make people want to do bad things like ending life, hurting or killing other living things, stealing other people's things, engaging in sexual misconduct and enjoying sensual pleasures without permission, speaking lies, being rude, being malicious, and spreading slander, and so on.

Buddhism agrees that people have a good reason for telling the difference between what is morally right and wrong and what is good and bad. Buddhist teachings say that the only way to find a good reason for making moral decisions is to look at human experience, not any metaphysical reality. The situations in which people are happy, and content and the situations in which they are miserable are usually the same. The facts about those situations are directly connected to our moral life. They can only be found by observing and experiencing things. Being moral means taking the moral point of view into account in your daily life. Being moral means not causing yourself or others pain and making other people's pain better. If people pay attention to what it's like to be human, they won't lose faith in how important morality is. To care about morality is to care about what is good and bad for people, their happiness and unhappiness, their health and well-being.

CONFLICT OF INTERESTS

None.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

None.

¹⁰Tapas "may here have its original meaning of "heat" (some "creative heat" analogous to the heat by which the broodhen produces life from the egg) or it may mean the 'fervour' of austerity; or, as Deussen thinks, both meanings may be implied" in the word.

¹¹ Mautice Winternitz, "*The Vedas in A History of Indian Literature*", (VI), Delhi, 1996, pp. 47-157.

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