

Buddhist Ethics and End-of-Life Care Decisions: A Critical Study

*Nasiruddin Biswas

Assistant Teacher, Kanibamani Primary School, West Bengal Board of Primary Education

ABSTRACT

Buddhism is an otherworldly convention established in India around 500 BCE by Prince Siddhartha Gautama, later to become Gautama Buddha. Most Buddhist conventions share a typical moral code for lay supporters, while ascetic codes will in general differ by area and custom. Buddhism has filled in the United States in the previous 50 years. Outsiders come following long customs. American believers are more varied. The primary Buddhist statute denying damage to living things, the righteousness of empathy, and the objective of a serene passing give direction to moral dynamic in regards to organ gift, retaining and pulling out life-supporting treatment, intentional end of eating, doctor help in kicking the bucket, and killing. Ideas and perspectives from three Buddhist conventions and perspectives on expert professionals are introduced. Case models represent a portion of the distinctions inside Buddhism. Proposals for social specialists are given.

Keywords: *bioethics, Buddhism, ethical decision making, end-of-life care, medical social work.*

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* Author's Correspondence

Nasiruddin Biswas

Assistant Teacher, Kanibamani Primary School, West Bengal Board of Primary Education

✉ [n.biswas01\[at\]gmail\[dot\]com](mailto:n.biswas01[at]gmail[dot]com)

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The normal moral standards of Buddhism were explained by Gautama Buddha. They incorporate the Five Precepts and three of the eight focuses on the Noble Eightfold way to illumination. These objectives are not to be interpreted as rules as in the Judeo-Christian convention, however more as rules for accomplishing illumination. Illumination, or Nirvana in Sanskrit, is a perspective or being in which one all the while understands one's actual character, the fanciful idea of the world, and amazing rapture and serenity. In standard Buddhism there is no different 'God' who is the adjudicator or referee of moral activity. Or maybe, it is an overall psycho-otherworldly 'law' that specific practices advance edification and subside enduring while others hinder illumination and achieve languishing. It is in these terms that a demonstration or arrangement of acts is for the most part considered moral or exploitative. Moral conduct the two prompts and moves from an edified psyche. In the Five Precepts Buddha exhorts forbearance from; (1) hurting living creatures, (2) taking things not uninhibitedly given, (3) sexual offense, (4) bogus discourse, and (5) inebriating beverages and medications causing remissness. While there are up to ten statutes for lay professionals and now and then hundreds for appointed priests, these five are the most essential and significant. Buddhism created in Asian nations that had not encountered the Age of Enlightenment of eighteenth century Europe and the ascent of science. As of late Buddhist researchers have tended to these inquiries and with respect to end-of-life care questions, one has put it gruffly that, "Buddhism is a third-world phenomenon and several hundred years out of date" (Keown, 2001, p. 7).

The quintessence of Buddhism is that the Buddha's experience of illumination is accessible to any individual who is eager to seek after the preparation and practice. He encouraged that all creatures experience the ceaseless pattern of resurrections (samsara) and the anguish (dukkha) that results. The type of resurrection an individual encounters is impacted by karma, the regular outcome of their activities. The condition of an individual's psyche at the hour of death and the karmic merit they have acquired will decide the kind of resurrection they will insight. After the Buddha arrived at the condition of awakens (nirvana), he started to share his lessons (dharma) on the most proficient method to arrive at nirvana and achieve independence from samsara. As he voyaged, he framed a local area of devotees (sangha) in every one of the territories where he instructed. The sangha was initially a local area of priests and nuns which advanced to incorporate laypeople to offer help for all professionals. Buddha's proclaiming accentuated consciousness of

and groundwork for death as a core value for activities that will advance positive karma. Be that as it may, a great many people are very terrified of death, and an emphasis on death is extremely testing to the normal individual.

...people creatures are the solitary creatures who need to live with the information that they will one day pass on, and have consistently discovered this vision of elimination hard to examine. (Armstrong, 2001, p. 4)

The Buddhist act of thinking about death and the root of the body is intended to lead the professional to an encounter of appall with the body and its craving for connection to things and individuals. When arriving at the acknowledgment of the worthlessness of looking for these connections, the specialist can all the more effectively spurn them and face passing with no connection forever.

Such a view doesn't negate the conviction that a resurrection as an individual is very lucky for it is just as a person that one may accomplish edification. Regardless of whether an individual isn't completely illuminated, an adequate objective of life is to be renewed as a more edified individual with more prominent capacity to achieve nirvana. Choices about occasions in life including those toward the finish of life will affect the legitimacy achieved at death. Settling on moral decisions will be significant in this cycle. A trouble for Buddhists today is that there is certifiably not an orderly introduction of moral standards whereupon they can base their choices about clinical issues since they couldn't have been predicted when Buddhism created. Moral direction is given to some degree by Buddhist sacred writings which list five statutes which apply to all, different statutes which can be acknowledged willfully on siestas or during times of study or retreat, and still others which apply to priests. The main statute is regard forever or non-hurting (ahimsa). It denies the slaughtering of living things and is the main statute with respect to end-of-life care. Life is a fundamental decent in Buddhism and its conservation is significant, for it is just when in human structure that one can openly pick ethically great activities to improve chances for a higher resurrection hence carrying one closer to nirvana and the finish of misery.

Buddhists offer assurance to four experts in testing an assessment on an issue. The four are: (a) what is written in sacred text, (b) what might be in congruity with sacred text, (c) the custom of analysis, and (d) a sincere belief dependent on investigation of the other three. The Theravada custom whereupon bases his conversation follows the conventional writings and the initial two specialists most intently. The Mahayana custom depends more on editorial, specifically that by Santideva, and will consider inspiration dependent on sympathy and more scope for genuine belief. In all cases, when an expert depends on sincere belief, a reasonable psyche liberated from bias is required so the choice depends on able methods (upaya). The demonstration should be attempted with the most flawless aims of aiding another. This job of genuine belief is imperative to remember whether somebody is thinking about a choice that would abuse exacting translation of a statute. Social specialists can help that individual sort through their interests about such an infringement which may incorporate the karmic results to both the patient and a relative, who is settling on a choice that has the potential for alleviating enduring and advancing a tranquil demise, however may hurry passing.

These moral standards capacity to manage a Buddhist toward the significant objective of setting up an ethical character worked by carrying on morally. The nature of character results from karma acquired by past conduct. The Buddhist viewpoint sees, ...morality as part of a spiritual path which largely consists of cultivating a more wholesome character by undermining moral/spiritual defilements and cultivating counteractive virtues. ...This entails that what one does, and how and why one does it, is of great import: for one's actions both express and shape one's character, and contribute to one's destiny. (Harvey, 2011, p. 58)

However, it is not the karmic merit which determines the goodness of an action. From the Buddhist point of view, actions can be good or bad in and of themselves, and

...an act is seen to have unpleasant karmic results because it is wrong; it is not seen as 'wrong' because it happens to produce bad karmic results. (Harvey, 2011, p. 59)

Further advancement of character will develop mindfulness with respect to the aim of an activity, which for Buddhists is nearly as significant as the activity itself. Scope is given and less terrible karma is amassed if an individual's aims for an activity are acceptable. On account of contrasts in conventions and neighborhood customs, Buddhists will vary in the amount they accentuate the karma procured from explicit choices made toward the finish of life. Such choices in regards to organ gift, retaining or pulling out life-supporting treatment, for example, counterfeit nourishment and hydration and mechanical ventilation, doctor help in biting the dust and willful extermination all hold the potential for making positive or negative karma. Buddhists from the Theravada convention will be bound to follow the statutes in a real sense, while those from the Mahayana and Tibetan customs will underline empathy and be more indulgent if a choice neutralizes a guideline.

Keown underlines the need to decide the purpose of death prior to deciding the morals of choices about giving organs. He calls attention to that passing should be not quite the same as the “significant condition of daze known as ‘accomplishment of end’” (Keown, 2001, p. 146), which was achieved by the Buddha and can likewise be accomplished by others. In end most typical physiological capacities become suspended and there is an appearance of death. It very well may be revived upon the individual raising cognizance from the condition of suspension. It is the existence workforce that isolates demise from discontinuance and in death, the existence personnel is stifled. The statute against executing disallows one from assaulting the existence staff. Keown doesn’t explicitly state if Buddhism acknowledges a presentation of cerebrum demise. He does, notwithstanding, raise question about the unwavering quality of the testing method to decide whether there is a finished loss of mind work which incorporates the cerebrum stem. Meyer contends that human existence is praised by Buddhists as interesting in giving one the chance of achieving nirvana and accordingly, human existence can be managed the cost of a meaning of death that may not be as per how passing is characterized for creatures. Accordingly, he accepts that recognizing that the individual can bite the dust through cerebral demise before the cerebrum stem passes on is suitable and “is best as per Buddhist sacred writing”. (Meyer, 2005, p. 17) Meyer seems to go past sacred text to remember educated assessment for this end.

We can’t know without a doubt what's going on in the brain of an individual in an oblivious state; however it appears to be savvy to consider that progressing tube taking care of in such an individual that is near death may just draw out the perishing cycle. From a Buddhist perspective proceeded with tube taking care of and mechanical ventilation may have the impact of keeping the individual from entering the following period of their life and the chance to encounter the product of their karma in their next resurrection. Eliminating life-supporting treatment from an individual who has been supported on them is a troublesome choice, yet it might have some authenticity for Buddhists on the off chance that it is finished with empathy to diminish languishing. The choice to restore an individual to a characteristic cycle of kicking the bucket after previously starting a daily existence supporting treatment would be upheld by certain Buddhists. Some Western bioethicists trust it is smarter to start treatment, for example, mechanical ventilation with any desire for recuperation as opposed to retain a treatment out of dread of eliminating it later. After a huge time for testing of treatment without recuperation, such a treatment might be viewed as hindering an unavoidable passing or dragging out the perishing cycle.

Buddhism regards the perishing cycle and endeavors to keep up life past what is conceivable are not empowered. Keown recognizes that,

...the inevitability of death is a central element in Buddhist teachings...To seek to prolong life beyond its natural span by recourse to ever-more elaborate technology when no cure or recovery is in sight is a denial of the reality of human mortality and would be seen by Buddhism to be arising from delusion (*moha*) and excessive detachment (*trnsna*). (Keown, 2005, p. 113)

Rinpoche expresses concern that, there is a danger that life- sustaining treatment that merely prolongs the dying process may only kindle unnecessary grasping, anger, and frustration in the dying person. This would be very counterproductive in helping that person achieve a peaceful death. Keown (2001) addresses with emphasis withdrawal of mechanical ventilation,

What is prohibited by Buddhist precepts is the deliberate attempt to destroy life: it does not follow that there is a duty to go to extreme lengths to preserve life at all costs. There is no obligation, for example, to connect patients to life-support machines simply to keep them alive. (Keown, 2001, p. 167)

Many social workers in these facilities are already experienced in helping families make these decisions. Rather than ask a Buddhist family about the formal traditions of Theravada or Mahayana, it will be more productive for a social worker to explore the importance they place on a peaceful death. It would also be important to assess the strength of their beliefs in karma and their views on preparation for rebirth and how a decision to withhold or withdraw life-sustaining treatment would impact them. It would also be helpful to ask about their thoughts about the role compassion plays in how they make decisions regarding illness in their family. This review demonstrates the diversity of opinion on ethics within the Buddhist community. There is scripture from various traditions in Buddhism that provides some guidance. However, there is no central authority that speaks for all Buddhists, nor a codified ethics upon which monks or laity can base an opinion.

Having no real “oughts,” Buddhist ethics has levels of practice suiting different levels of commitment, rather than one set of obligations ...The key basis for ethical action is the reflection that it is inappropriate to inflict on other beings what you yourself find unpleasant. (Harvey, 1990, pp. 196–197)

At the point when a Buddhist is persuaded by empathy, great karma merit amasses and care for the wiped out and biting the dust become part of the indication of the personality of a Buddhist. A piece of this character is additionally a craving to keep the statute against ending the everyday routine of any experiencing thing and to assert life all in all. A stirred character additionally gives direction in settling on finish of life care choices.

Indeed, even with direction, dynamic can be troublesome. Barnhart says that ethical lament might be available regardless of whether we settle on the correct choice on the grounds that there can be other excellent explanations behind settling on an alternate decision. Buddhism appears to get this and Barnhart proceeds to state that Buddhism is less about 'how to act' inquiries than it is about 'what to think often about' questions. Acting to fulfill ourselves would not be good, yet acting benevolently would more probable lead to moral activity. There is potential for care and empathy to join to coordinate able methods. Well meaning goals can alleviate infringement of statutes in the event that one demonstration with more thought for others than for oneself. The three models that follow show how a few Buddhists have battled with settling on finish-of-life care choices while being aware of ahimsa, the rule of not hurting others.

End-of-life choices are horrifying for some individuals, and particularly the individuals who have little information on current medication and the scope of decisions for care until they are confronted with the choice to acknowledge or deny a treatment. Not exclusively should individuals settle on a choice dependent on potential results and dangers weighed against benefits, they should likewise choose if it is the moral and good activity. Buddhists, regardless of an obviously clear statute against executing, have some adaptability in dynamic if their aims are unadulterated and their heart is humane. Expectation assumes a particularly enormous job in Buddhist morals that Schlieter remarks that it very well may be viewed as 'intentionist morals'. Aim is an arranging step that envisions a result. Social laborers can move toward a patient and family with a conversation zeroed in on encouraging them picture the result they might want to have as a reason for dynamic. By working in reverse from their objective, patients and relatives will have a guide for treatment choices. Experience with this viewpoint may give Buddhists information on their choices. Maybe interestingly, settler families ought to be reminded that they have options. Social specialists can regard and support this cycle for an assortment of families paying little mind to their experience. Buddhism can show social specialists to be modest despite death, fair with their own convictions, and caring when working with relatives who should settle on extremely troublesome choices. With a merciful methodology a social specialist can acknowledge the choices of the family without judgment and give the consideration as best the individual can to lessen the enduring experienced with the patient and family.

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