

# The Applied Buddhist Five Precepts (Panca Sila) in Khmer Society

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## Abstract

The objective of this academic article aims to present the importance of applying the Buddhist five precepts in Khmer Society, and the paper will cover the main three points 1) How to apply the Buddhist five precepts in accordance with the Cambodian society context, 2) Analysis of benefit of practice of five precepts in society, 3) And how to get new concepts from applied Buddhist five precepts. Therefore, this short article will present how important the five precepts are, for the sake of peaceful co-existence in Khmer society in the present day.

**Keywords:** Buddhist Ethics; Five Precepts

## Introduction

Generally, the term “*Śīla*” (in Sanskrit) or *sīla* (in Pāli), those terms refers to “behavioral discipline”, “morality”, “virtue” or “ethics” of human being activities in their daily life in their action-based approach. According to his book “Treasure of The Dhamma”, Ven. Dr. K. Sri Dhammananda, gave the definition of “*Śīla*” (p.93) as follows:

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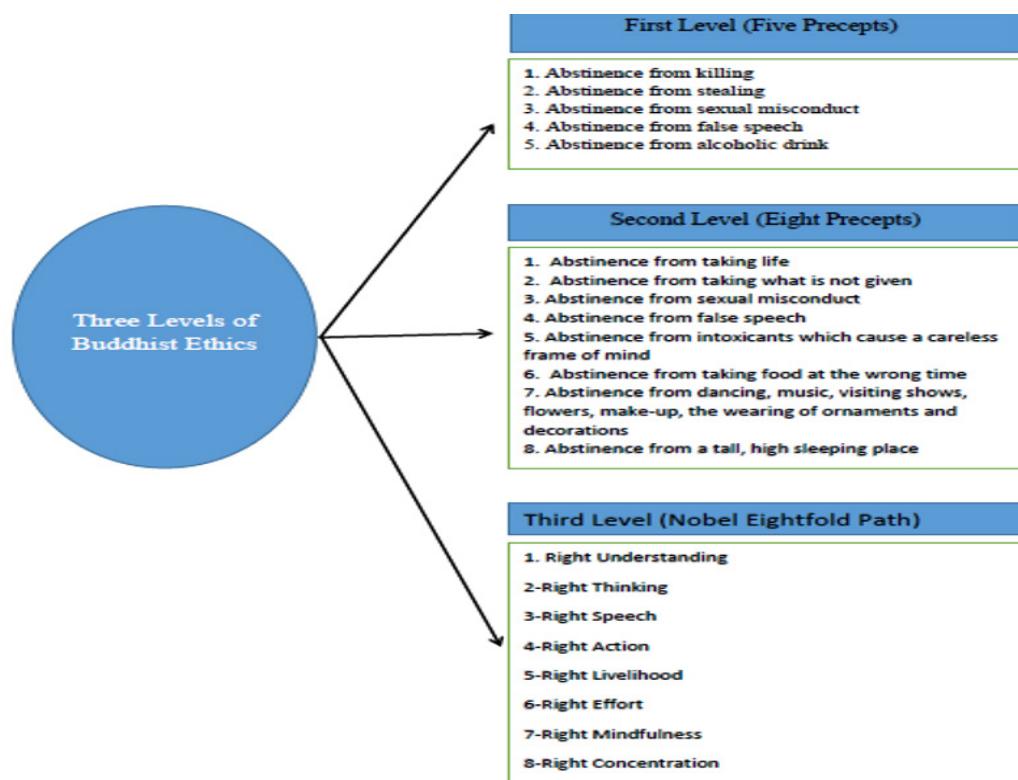
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“Morality” or “Virtue”, is a state of mind and intention Cetana manifested in speech or bodily actions. It is the foundation of the Buddhist practice, the first of the three kinds of Training (Sikkha) in morality, concentration, and wisdom. Buddhist morality goes beyond mere avoidance of evil tendencies in a person’s mind.

So, in terms of this definition of precept, it means that the moral practice, starting from internal abstention (mind) to outward refers to behavior conducting or showing off, seen by outsiders through activities, behavior, world-based connectivity both social norms and political norms.

The term “Sila + Dharma”> Sila Dhamma, therefore, is divided into two parts  
1) “Sila” refers to morality, abstinence from evil, goodness, and good deeds, and  
2) “Dhamma” refers to advice, elements, theories, and instincts. Morality, therefore, identifies any advice that leads to doing only good deeds, good deeds, or any advice that leads people to abstain from evil deeds or unfortunate deeds.

The 3-level of Buddhist Ethics in Briefing is as follows:



## The Buddhist Five Precepts Become a Basic Social Value

The Cambodian constitution in 1993 promulgated that Buddhism is the national religion, which means that the state is responsible for protecting its state religion, and why the Cambodian constitution regard Buddhism as a state religion, since ancient times Cambodia always practiced both Brahmanism and Buddhism, so why almost Cambodian people, around more than 90 percent were Buddhists. In Khmer concepts always think that Buddhist ethics will help improve society through daily practice in accordance with Buddhist ethics, leading to a civilized society.

Based on historical background, the Khmer society had strictly practiced the Buddha's teachings in their daily activities and also brought the Buddhist ethical principle to shape its own cultural perspectives such as how to respect each other, especially from young to old and from locals to higher status. It reflected that the Buddhist ethical principle was nationwide practiced by Cambodian people from ancient times to the present day. This paper found that the Buddhist ethical guidelines became a pillar of social value, in which for the sake of national unity in a Buddhism-based approach to both daily life and political platforms.

In the Buddha's teaching, On the other hand, the five precepts are the most important mechanism to living happily in this worldly state because the five precepts are likely a pillar to sustain daily life and balance between humanity and the environment to avoid unwholesome actions toward wholesome actions living under protection from cultivating the Buddhist five precepts in human's heart.

## The Applied Five Precepts (Panca Sila)

The Buddhism-based approaches in five moral precepts are namely:

- 1) no killing of human life until living beings
- 2) no stealing from others' property without their allowing
- 3) no sexual misconduct or doing wrong tradition to its culture
- 4) no lying to other leading to destroy their benefit, avoiding false speech as well
- 5) and no intoxication or avoiding from alcoholic usage.

Significantly, Buddhist scholars state that most people in the world, including Cambodia today, do not seem to be interested in the value of virtuous conduct, especially the Five Precepts (Panca Sila). This is the reason why people in those countries or societies have experienced crisis, conflict, violence, murder, jealousy, and endless cursing.

The most desirable human life is peace, both physically and mentally. The principle of Buddhism states that people can build peace only if they practice or keep the five precepts consistently because these five precepts are a law that is completely related to the daily life of human beings.

If people in each society really do pay much attention to the practice of the five precepts from early childhood onwards, it will become a peaceful society at any time in terms of putting Buddhist precepts into practice in daily life. Also, the conduct of life will always face crisis, misery, and lack of peace in society, family, work, or society.

**In Summary, as below the applied five precepts (Panca Sila):**

Five Precepts (Panca Sila)	Put into practices	Benefit to Society
1) - <i>Pāṇātipātā veramaṇī sikkhāpadam samādiyāmi.</i>	To educate the individual to be compassionate, not to harass each other or to cut off the life of each other, even small animals do not bother to lose their lives.	- Longevity - Cultivate Loving-Kindness - Become a harmonious society - Toward national unity - Cultivate non-violence among people

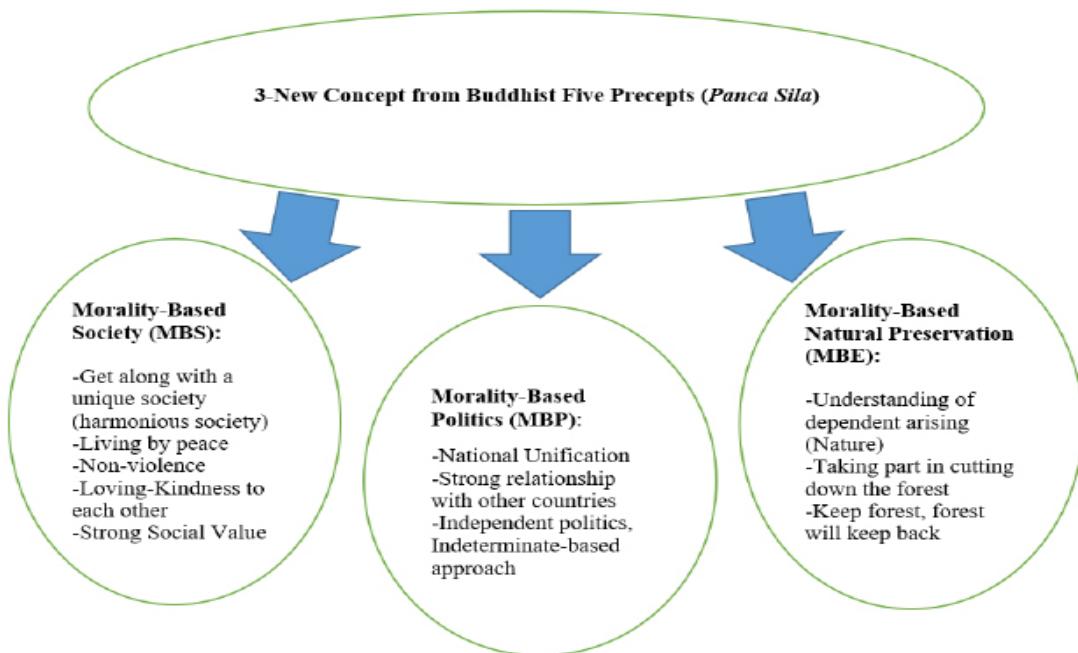
<p>2) - <i>Adinnādānā veramaṇī sikkhāpadaṁ samādiyāmi.</i></p>	<p>To educate people not to harass or rob one another, no matter how much or how little wealth there is, because normally everyone first gets any property that belongs to them, and each one strives to exert all kinds of intellectual labor.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Be honest in society</li> <li>-Cultivate the culture of sharing among people in one society</li> <li>-Living in peace without losing any properties</li> </ul>
<p>3) - <i>Kāmesumicchācāra veramaṇī sikkhāpadaṁ samādiyāmi.</i></p>	<p>The education of the virtues of each person who has a higher covenant than animals or has an understanding of their actions, what is wrong, what is right, etc. Do not physically abuse others, including their wives, children, husbands, and wives.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Create royalty each other among spouses or partners</li> <li>-Reducing disease from multiple partners</li> <li>-Faith in living by calmness</li> <li>-Living dignity</li> </ul>

<p>4) - <i>Musāvādā veramañī sikkhāpadaṁ samādiyāmi.</i></p>	<p>To educate people to keep the right words or the right words without lying, inciting, fruiting, slandering others, or saying nonsense. Redemption is useless and so on.</p>	<p>-Keep in touch by true speech without fraud or blackmail in any mean -Social stability in terms of politicians telling the truth to their own people, making a trustworthy society</p>
<p>5) - <i>Surāmerayamajapamādaṭṭhānā veramañī sikkhāpadaṁ samādiyāmi.</i></p>	<p>To educate people about the sufferings of alcohol and drug abuse. There are many dangers to human life and health caused by alcohol and drugs. However, consumers, retailers, and leaders at all levels still underestimate the problem.</p>	<p>-Good memory -without domestic violence -Working in society smoothly -Be good health for people who live in society -Reducing more expenses for health treatment as well -Slow down social problems caused by drug/alcoholic abuse</p>

### New Concepts gained from practicing the Five Precepts

After practicing the five precepts strictly, it will gain fruitful results and new value concepts as well that see directly. The precepts are the so-called ancient Dhamma state which covers like an umbrella to protect from sunlight or rain from the sky safely if the holders have held it by clear comprehension or consciousness.

After practicing the Buddhist five precepts, gained new concepts as below:



### Conclusion

The Buddhist five precepts are a universal law or universal principles/truth that can be applied to both Buddhist countries and non-Buddhist countries as well because the principle of human rights to respond correctly to the Buddhist five precepts that the Buddha declared for more than 25 centuries ago, that why these principles get significant value in the world condition without limitation until now and future. The theory of the Buddhist approach, mentions that if someone wants to live happily in the present, they could practice in accordance with the five morality of Buddhism, and no longer will it reach their aims in respectively.

The World today has risen on many sufferings such as internal war, geopolitics, and challenges from superpowers at present, and those subject matter, caused by hatred, greed, and delusion, and these causes of unwholesome actions will lead this World to plunge into crisis without getting a taste of freedom or internal peace. Therefore, this is why the world needs to practice of Buddhist five precepts in order to get rid of evil happening now all corners of the world.

In this regard, Cambodia is a part of the world where it has the treasure of Dhamma, especially the five precepts to practice. Moreover, this country brought the principle into its own constitution, posed as Buddhism is the state religion.

In terms of the practice of the five precepts in daily life, it would be more useful to shape the society in peaceful co-existence under the leadership of the Buddhist five precepts. Moreover, the persons who practice the precepts will make people dignified, honorable, and superior in all kinds of good deeds, and responsible and responsible for all work.

Last but not least, furthermore, the five precepts will offer a good understanding and knowledge of how to tolerate any pressure of workload and become a noble person who can help others in conformity and good solidarity in this world that is full of suffering.

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