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## Buddhist Ethics- As a Mirroring of Indian Knowledge System

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### Abstract:-

Buddhist ethics is an integral part of the Indian system of knowledge because it offers a unique look at the ethical values and principles that have influenced Indian culture and society. Buddhist ethics emphasize compassion, nonviolence and social responsibility, which are values that are deeply rooted in Indian culture and society. They have these values played a significant role in shaping Indian history and culture and continues to be relevant contemporary debates on issues such as social justice, environmental sustainability and human rights. Buddhist ethics is rooted in the sophisticated philosophical system that explores the nature of reality, suffering, and the path to liberation. This system profoundly impacted Indian philosophy and metaphysics, influencing thinkers and philosophers across different traditions. Buddhist literature such as the Tripitaka and Jataka stories have had a significant impact on Indian literature and storytelling traditions and inspired generations writers and artists. Buddhist art and architecture such as the Ajanta and Ellora caves have a profound impact on Indian art and architecture, influencing the development of various styles and techniques. Buddhist ethics is an important part of the Indian system of knowledge, offers a unique insight into the ethical values and principles that continue to shape Indian culture, philosophy, literature and art. This paper discusses why Buddhist ethics are important in the Indian knowledge system and what are the significant areas of this significant part Indian Knowledge System.

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**Keywords-** Ethics, Buddhist, Indian, Ancient India, Spiritual, significant, Teachings

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### Introduction-

Buddhism is a religion and philosophy that originated in ancient India about 2,500 years ago. It was founded by Siddhartha Gautama, also known as the Buddha, who lived from approximately 563 BC to 483 BC. Buddhism has since spread throughout the world and has become one of the major religions with more than 500 million followers worldwide. Buddhism is an integral part of the Indian knowledge system, which encompasses a diverse range of philosophical, spiritual, and practical teachings that have evolved over thousands of years in the Indian subcontinent. Buddhism is a major part of the Indian system of knowledge and its teachings continue to have a profound impact on Indian culture, philosophy, and spirituality to this day. The roots of Buddhism can be traced back to ancient India, where it emerged as a response to the prevailing spiritual and philosophical

traditions of the time. It was founded by Siddhartha Gautama, also known as the Buddha, who lived in India during the 5th century BC. Buddhism played a significant role in shaping India's knowledge system, especially in the areas of philosophy, ethics, and psychology. Buddha's teaching about the essence of reality, about nature suffering and the path to liberation has influenced many of the major philosophical schools of thought in India, including Vedanta, Jainism, and Yoga. Buddhism also contributed to this the development of Indian ethical systems, emphasizing the importance of compassion, non-violence and non-attachment in leading a virtuous life. The Buddhist concept of karma, which emphasizes the relationship between actions and their consequences, also significantly impacted Indian ethical thought. In addition, Buddhism plays a significant role in the development of Indian psychology, particularly around mindfulness.

Buddha's teachings on the cultivation of mindfulness, or *sati* in Pali, had a profound impact on this method Indian thinkers approach the study of the mind and the nature of consciousness.

### **History of Buddhism in the Indian Knowledge System:**

The history of Buddhism in the Indian knowledge system can be traced back to the 6th century BC when it was founded by Siddhartha Gautama, also known as the Buddha. That time, India was a complex and diverse civilization with a rich and varied intellectual and spiritual content tradition. Buddhism emerged as a response to the dominant religious and philosophical traditions of the time, including Brahmanism, Jainism, and other ascetic movements. The Buddha's teachings centered around the Four Noble Truths, which emphasized nature about suffering, its causes, and the path to freedom from suffering through the Eightfold Path. Over time, Buddhism became one of the major philosophical and religious traditions in India, with a significant impact on Indian culture and society. Buddhist teachings were incorporated into many aspects of Indian life, from art and literature to medicine and philosophy. During Mauryan Empire (322-185 BC), Buddhism enjoyed royal patronage under Emperor Ashoka, who spread the Buddha's teachings throughout his empire and beyond. This helped established Buddhism as a major religious and cultural force in India and led to the construction of many important Buddhist monuments such as the famous Stupa at Sanchi. However, the end Over time, Buddhism began to decline in India as other philosophical and religious traditions took over prominence. Rise of Hinduism, Decline of the Mauryan Empire and the Invasion of foreign powers all contributed to the decline of Buddhism in India. Buddhism remains today an important part of the Indian knowledge system with a significant impact on Indian culture, philosophy, and spirituality. The Buddha's teachings continue to inspire millions around the world and the legacy of Buddhism in India remains an important part the country's rich intellectual and spiritual heritage

### **Scriptural Evidence:**

There are many Buddhist texts in which Buddhist ethics are mentioned. Here are some of the most important ones:

1. **Dhammapada:** The Dhammapada is a collection of verses by the Buddha discourses that cover a wide range of topics, including Buddhist ethics. It is considered one of the most important texts in the Theravada tradition of Buddhism.
2. **Vinaya Pitaka:** Vinaya Pitaka is one of the three main divisions of Pali. The canon, which is the primary scripture of the Theravada tradition. Contains rules and guidelines for the behavior of monks and emphasizes the importance of ethical behavior and self-discipline.
3. **Sutta Pitaka:** The Sutta Pitaka is another major division of the Pali Canon and contains an extensive collection of discourses attributed to the Buddha. Many of them the discourses deal with ethical questions such as the importance of the Five Precepts and practicing the four brahmaviharas (loving-kindness, compassion, compassionate joy, and serenity).
4. **Abhidharma Pitaka:** The Abhidharma Pitaka is the third major division of Pali Canon and contains a detailed analysis of Buddhist doctrine and psychology. It includes discussions of ethical concepts such as karma, rebirth, and the Eightfold Path.
5. **Mahayana Sutras:** The Mahayana Sutras are a collection of texts that form the foundation of Mahayana Buddhism, one of the two main branches of Buddhism. Many of them the sutras emphasize the importance of compassion, wisdom, and the bodhisattva ideal.
6. **Lotus Sutra:** The Lotus Sutra is one of the most important Mahayana sutras and emphasizes the concept of skilled means or using different teaching methods for individuals at different levels of spiritual development. It also emphasizes the bodhisattva ideal and the importance of ethical behavior. Buddhist scriptures in which Buddhist ethics are mentioned are very useful for establishing a connection with heritage and history. There are many other texts and teachings in Buddhist traditions that deal with ethical issues and provide guidance for ethical behavior.

### **Buddhist philosophy v/s Indian Vedic philosophy**

Both Vedic and Buddhist ethics emphasize the importance of ethical

behavior, morality principles and virtuous conduct in life. He believes in good moral behavior and virtuous actions lead to a peaceful and happy life. In both Vedic and Buddhist ethics, the concept is dharma is central. Dharma is the path of righteousness, duty and virtuous conduct should follow in life. Vedic ethics emphasize the performance of religious rituals and duties, while Buddhist ethics focuses on the cultivation of wisdom, compassion, and practice. The Eightfold Path. Vedic ethics support the idea of duty and obligation to one's family, society and the universe, while Buddhist ethics emphasize the importance of the individual responsibility for one's actions and the attainment of enlightenment. Vedic philosophy it emphasizes the existence of a supreme being or God, while Buddhism does not the existence of a supreme being or creator. Vedic ethics includes the caste system which assigns social status and duties based on birth, while Buddhism rejects the caste system and advocates for equality among all people. Vedic ethics upholds the concept of karma, which is the law of cause and effect while Buddhist ethics emphasize the concept of dependent origination which means that everything in the world is interconnected and interdependent. although there are some similarities between Vedic and Buddhist ethics, they are also significant here differences in their philosophical foundations and ethical teachings. There are some significant differences between the philosophical foundations and the ethical teachings of Vedic philosophy and Buddhist Philosophy in the Indian Knowledge System.

1. **Nature of ultimate reality:** In Vedic philosophy, ultimate reality is described as Brahman, the divine entity that pervades the universe. Buddhist on the other hand philosophy denies the existence of a permanent self or soul and describes the ultimate reality as emptiness or shunyata.
2. **Role of Karma:** In Vedic philosophy, karma is understood as the attainment of higher states of existence or liberation from the cycle of birth and death. In contrast, Buddhist philosophy sees karma as a binding force that perpetuates the cycle of suffering and defends the cessation of karma to attain liberation.
3. **Attaining Liberation:** Vedic philosophy advocates various paths, including the path of knowledge (jnana yoga) and the

path of devotion (bhakti yoga) to achieve exemption. Buddhist philosophy, on the other hand, emphasizes the Noble Eightfold. The Path is a means of attaining liberation from suffering.

4. **Concept of morality:** Vedic philosophy emphasizes dharma or duty, understood as a set of moral and ethical principles that guide human behavior. Buddhist philosophy, on the other hand, it emphasizes the concept of the Four Noble Truths and the Eightfold. A path that provides a framework for understanding the nature of suffering and the journey to stop it.
5. **Role of Self:** Vedic philosophy emphasizes the importance of the self which is seen as a fundamental part of human identity. In contrast, Buddhist philosophy denies the existence of a permanent self and views the self as a temporary construct in the making due to various causes and conditions. while both Vedic and Buddhist philosophies share some common ethical teachings, they have different philosophical foundations and differ in approach to morality, liberation and the nature of reality. There are some similarities between Indian Vedic philosophy and Buddhist philosophy about ethics in life. Both emphasize the importance of nonviolence, compassion, and self-control. The concept of karma is also central to both philosophies, suggesting that a person's actions have consequences that can affect their future life. Both also emphasize the importance of mindfulness and meditation as tools for self-improvement and enlightenment. However, there are also differences in their approach to ethics such as the Vedic emphasis on duty and a social hierarchy that is not so prominent in Buddhist philosophy.

#### **Buddhist Ethics:**

Buddhist ethics are the moral principles and values that guide the behavior and action of followers of Buddhism. These ethical principles are based on the teachings of the Buddha and they are meant to promote spiritual growth, compassion and the reduction of suffering for the self and more. Here are some of the key Buddhist ethical principles:

**The Five Principles:** These are guidelines for ethical behavior that include abstinence

killing, stealing, sexual misconduct, lying and drug use.

**The Eightfold Path:** This is a set of eight principles that guide followers to the right understanding, right intention, right speech, right action, right livelihood, right effort, right mindfulness and proper concentration.

**Compassion:** Buddhists are encouraged to develop compassion for all living beings and act with kindness and understanding towards others.

**Non-attachment:** Buddhism teaches non-attachment to material and worldly possessions and desires lead to suffering and encourages followers to cultivate non-attachment and detachment from these things.

**Mindfulness:** This is the practice of being aware of your thoughts, feelings and surroundings in the present moment, without judgment or distraction.

**Interconnectedness:** Buddhism emphasizes the interconnectedness of all living beings and encourages its followers to act in ways that promote the well-being of others and the planet. Buddhist ethics focuses on promoting ethical behavior, compassion and mindfulness in order to cultivate spiritual growth and alleviate suffering for oneself and others.

#### **Buddhist Ethics Today- Need of the Hour:**

Today's young people face many challenges and pressures, including social media, peer pressure, academic stress and the pressures of living in an uncertain and rapidly changing environment world. Buddhist ethics can provide young people with valuable advice and support to manage these challenges and strive to lead a full and meaningful life. Buddhist ethics can provide young people with valuable tools and guidance for coping with the challenges of the modern age promoting personal growth and well-being and contributing to the greater good of society.

#### **Some reasons why young people can benefit from Buddhist ethics are:**

**Promoting Mindfulness:** Mindfulness practice can help young people become more aware of their thoughts, feelings and actions and develop greater self-awareness and self-control.

**Cultivating Compassion:** Young people can benefit from learning how to develop compassion for yourself and others and to act

with kindness and understanding towards those around you them.

**Encouraging non-attachment:** Buddhist ethics teach non-attachment to material possessions and worldly desires to lead to suffering and encourage young people to develop non-attachment and detachment from these things.

**Providing a moral compass:** Buddhist ethics provide a clear set of moral principles and values that can help young people make ethical decisions and cope with the challenges of modern times life.

**Cultivating Inner Peace:** By Cultivating Mindfulness, Compassion, and Detachment, Youth people can find greater inner peace and contentment, even in the midst of difficult circumstances.

#### **Individual Qualities and Buddhist Ethics:**

Buddhism teaches that the ultimate goal of human life is to achieve inner peace and happiness and provides a range of tools and teachings to help individuals achieve this goal. Buddhism provides a holistic and practical approach to achieving happiness and inner peace through cultivating mindfulness, compassion, non-attachment and wisdom. By applying this learning and practice in their daily lives, individuals can experience greater happiness, satisfaction and well-being.

#### **Here are some ways Buddhism has helped mankind live a happy life:**

- 1. Mindfulness:** One of the key teachings of Buddhism is the practice of mindfulness, which includes being present and aware of one's thoughts, feelings and surroundings in the present moment. By practicing mindfulness, individuals can learn to cultivate greater awareness, reduce stress and anxiety, and find greater satisfaction in everyday life.
- 2. Compassion:** Buddhism places great emphasis on compassion and empathy for others and encourages individuals to act with kindness and understanding towards all living beings. By cultivating compassion, individuals can grow stronger relationships with others and experience greater feelings of connection and happiness.
- 3. Non-attachment:** Buddhism teaches that attachment to material possessions worldly desires lead to suffering and encourage the individual to cultivate non-

attachment and detachment from these things. By letting go of attachment, individuals they can experience greater freedom and satisfaction in their lives.

4. **Wisdom:** Buddhism teaches that wisdom and insight are essential to the attainment of happiness and inner peace and provides a number of teachings and practices that help individuals develop greater wisdom and understanding. By cultivating wisdom, individuals can gain a deeper understanding of themselves and the world around them and find greater meaning and purpose in your life

**Promoting mindfulness can have several benefits for individuals, including:**

**Reducing stress and anxiety:** Mindfulness can help individuals become more aware of their thoughts, feelings and physical sensations and develop greater self-awareness and self-regulation. By cultivating mindfulness, individuals can learn this manage stress and anxiety more effectively and find greater peace and tranquility in their everyday lives.

1. **Improving focus and concentration:** Mindfulness can help individuals improve their focus and concentration by training the mind to stay present and engaged with it task at hand. This can be especially useful for students, professionals and anyone who needs to perform complex or demanding tasks.
2. **Improving relationships:** Mindfulness can help individuals become more present and attentive in their interactions with others and cultivate greater empathy, compassion and understanding. By practicing mindfulness in their relationships, individuals can improve communication, reduce conflict, and promote greater connection and intimacy.
3. **Enhancing Well-Being:** Mindfulness has been shown to have a number of positive effects on mental and physical health, including reducing symptoms of depression, anxiety, and chronic pain and improvements in immune function, sleep quality, and overall well-being. Promoting mindfulness can help individuals live more fully and effectively present moment, cultivate greater awareness and self-regulation, and experience greater well-being and satisfaction in their lives

**Cultivating compassion can have a number of benefits for individuals, including:**

**Improving Relationships:** When we cultivate compassion, we become more understanding and empathetic towards others, which can lead to stronger and more fulfilling relationships. We are more likely to listen carefully, express kindness, and provide support to the people around us. This leads to greater social feelings connectedness and happiness.

1. **Improving well-being:** Cultivating compassion can improve our own well-being reducing feelings of isolation and loneliness, reducing stress levels and supporting positive emotions such as joy, gratitude and contentment. This in turn can lead to greater resilience to challenges and greater overall life satisfaction.
2. **Reduction of negative emotions:** Compassion is often contrasted with negative emotions such as anger, resentment and jealousy. When we cultivate compassion, we become more patient, understanding and accepting of self and others, which can reduce these negative emotions and promote greater inner peace.
3. **Improved physical health:** Studies have shown that cultivating compassion can lead to improve physical health, including lowering blood pressure and reducing heart risk disease. This is likely due to the stress-reducing effects of compassion it can have a positive effect on our physical health. Cultivating compassion can help us live a happier and more fulfilling life by promoting positive emotions, strengthening relationships, reducing negative emotions and improving physical health. According to by practicing compassion towards ourselves and others we can create a more harmonious and peaceful world for us and for those around us

**Encouraging non-attachment can add to our happiness in the following ways:**

**Reduction of Suffering:** The Buddhist belief is that attachment to things, people and circumstances can lead to suffering. By practicing non-attachment we are able to liberate ourselves from the pain and discomfort that can occur when we are too attached to them something. Non-attachment allows us to let go of our expectations, which

can alleviate feelings of disappointment and frustration.

1. **Greater freedom:** When we are attached to something, we can feel trapped or restricted. Non-attachment can free us from the limitations that attachment brings, allowing us to experience greater freedom and flexibility in our lives. This can lead to a sense of liberation and expansiveness that can contribute to our happiness.
2. **Increased Mindfulness:** When we are not attached to things or people, we are able to be more present and mindful in our daily lives. We are not preoccupied with thoughts of the past or the future or with the fear of losing something to which we are attached. This can help us cultivate a greater awareness and appreciation of the present moment, that can contribute to our overall happiness.
3. **Greater gratitude:** When we are not attached to things, we can be more grateful for what we have at the moment. We are not always looking for the next thing to fulfill us, but rather we appreciate what is in front of us. This can lead to a greater sense of satisfaction and satisfaction in our lives. Encouraging non-attachment can contribute to our happiness, reduced suffering, increased freedom, enhanced mindfulness and greater support and gratitude. By letting go of our attachments, we are able to experience greater feeling of peace and contentment in our lives.

**Providing a moral compass can help young people to stay happy in several ways:**

**Promoting personal values:** A moral compass helps young people develop strengths, a sense of personal values that can guide their decisions and help them stay true to themselves. This can lead to greater self-esteem and confidence that they are important factors for overall happiness.

1. **Building strong relationships:** A moral compass can help young people to form more deeply and more meaningful relationships with others because it provides a framework for mutual respect, empathy and understanding. This can lead to greater social connectedness and a sense of belonging, which are important sources of happiness.
2. **Improved decision-making:** A moral compass provides a clear framework for

decision-making decisions that can reduce feelings of indecision and uncertainty. This can help young people to make decisions that are consistent with their values and goals, which can lead to greater feelings of fulfillment and purpose.

3. **Promoting social responsibility:** The moral compass encourages young people to think outside of self-interest and consider the impact of their actions on others and the world around them. This can lead to a greater sense of social responsibility and a desire to make a positive difference in the world, which can contribute to overall luck. Providing a moral compass can help young people stay happy, promoting personal values, building strong relationships, strengthening decision-making, and promoting social responsibility. By providing young people with a clear and consistent moral framework, we can help them navigate the complexities of life with greater confidence and purpose.

**Fostering inner peace can have several benefits for overall well-being, including:**

**Stress reduction:** When we can cultivate a sense of inner peace, we are able to do better manage stress and anxiety. Inner peace allows us to remain calm and focused, facing challenging situations that can reduce feelings of overwhelm and powerlessness.

1. **Improving mental health:** Inner peace can also improve our mental health by reducing symptoms of depression and anxiety and increasing feelings of well-being and satisfaction. When we are at peace with ourselves and our circumstances, we are more likely to experience positive emotions and a greater sense of purpose and meaning in life.
2. **Improved physical health:** Studies have shown that inner peace can have positive effects on physical health, including lowering blood pressure, improving sleep quality, and strengthening the immune system. This is likely due to the stress-reducing effects of inner peace, which can positively affect our physical well-being.
3. **Improved Relationships:** Inner peace can also improve our relationships with others by promoting greater empathy, compassion and understanding. When we

are calm with ourselves we are better able to connect with others on a deeper level, which can lead to fulfilling and satisfying relationships. Cultivating inner peace can have a significant effect on our overall well-being by reducing stress, improving mental and physical health and strengthening relationships. Through the cultivation of inner peace practices such as meditation, mindfulness, and self-reflection can be experienced greater happiness, fulfillment and satisfaction in our lives.

#### **Buddhist Ethics in Everyday Life:**

There are many ways in which Buddhist ethics can be applied in everyday life so that individuals can cultivate greater inner peace, happiness and well-being while contributing to a more compassionate and harmonious world.

**Compassion:** Practicing compassion for all living beings is a fundamental aspect of Buddhist ethics. This can be demonstrated in everyday life by showing kindness and empathy for others, generosity with time and resources, and active work to reduce suffering in the world.

**Non-violence:** Another important aspect of Buddhist ethics is non-violence. It can be demonstrated in daily life by refraining from harming oneself and others is avoided aggressive or confrontational behavior and promoting peace and harmony in all relationships.

**Mindfulness:** Mindfulness is a key part of Buddhist ethics and involves being fully present and aware in the moment. This can be practiced in everyday life by paying attention to one's thoughts, emotions and physical sensations and developing a greater sense of awareness and insight into one's own experience.

**Non-attachment:** Buddhist ethics also emphasize the importance of non-attachment, or letting go of attachment to material possessions, status, and other external factors. This can be practiced in everyday life by cultivating a sense of contentment and gratitude for what one already has and by focusing on inner values and qualities rather than external achievements or possessions.

**Honesty:** Honesty is another important aspect of Buddhist ethics and involves being truthful and transparent in all interactions with others. This can be demonstrated in daily life by avoiding deception or dishonesty

and trying to always speak and act with integrity and authenticity. The Buddha preached Buddhist ethics to his disciples in various ways including formal discourses, informal conversations and personal examples. He used different methods of teaching his students Buddhist ethics and tailoring his approach to their individual needs and capacities. His teachings emphasized the importance of personal experience and self-exploration and encouraged his disciples to develop their own insights and understanding.

#### **Principles of Buddhist ethics:**

Here are some ways the Buddha taught Buddhist ethics:

**Discourses:** The Buddha gave many discourses or discourses in which he explained the principles of Buddhist ethics. These teachings covered a wide range of topics including The Four Noble Truths, the Noble Eightfold Path, the Five Precepts, and the Six Perfections. The orations were usually given in a formal setting, such as an assembly of monks or laymen.

**Example:** The Buddha also taught through his own example. He lived simple and ascetically lifestyle, giving up worldly possessions and pleasures to pursue spiritual realization. He modeled the ethical principles he taught, such as compassion, nonviolence, and nonattachment, in his behavior and interactions with others.

**Personal instructions:** The Buddha also gave personal instructions to his disciples and adapted their learning to their individual needs and abilities. He often answered their questions, provide advice on specific issues and offer encouragement and support in their practice.

**Debate and Discussion:** The Buddha also engaged in debate and discussion with his disciples, encouraging them to question his teachings and examine the principles of Buddhist ethics themselves. This approach helped to develop and deepen their critical thinking skills and understanding of learning. Throughout history, there have been many scholars, monks and practitioners they contributed to the development and refinement of Buddhist ethics, and their teachings continue to inspire and guide practitioners today. Many important names are associated with it.

**Buddhist ethics in the scriptures, including:**

**Buddha:** He is considered to be the founder of Buddhism, also known as Siddhartha Gautama the highest authority in Buddhist ethics. His teachings on the Four Noble Truths, Eightfold Path and other ethical principles form the basis of Buddhist ethics.

**Bodhisattvas:** Bodhisattvas are beings who have attained enlightenment but choose to remain in the world to help others achieve liberation. They are often considered examples of Buddhism ethics, embodying qualities such as compassion, wisdom and selflessness.

**Nagarjuna:** Nagarjuna was a philosopher and scholar who lived in India in the second century CE. He is known for his contributions to Buddhist ethics, especially in the Middle Way that emphasizes finding a balanced approach between extremes.

**Santideva:** Santideva was an eighth-century Indian Buddhist monk and scholar who is best known for his work, the *Bodhicaryavatara*, which is a guide on the Bodhisattva's path. The text emphasizes the importance of compassion, ethical behavior, and the cultivation of wisdom.

**Dogen:** Dogen was a Japanese Zen master who lived in the thirteenth century. His teaching about ethics, he emphasized the importance of mindfulness, non-attachment and compassion. He is particularly noted for his emphasis on the practice of *zazen*, or sitting meditation.

#### **Conclusion:-**

Buddhist Ethics offers a unique view of current global challenges with an emphasis on the interconnectedness of all beings and the importance of living a balanced, compassionate and responsible life. These values have important implications for sustainable, just and peaceful development society in the 21st century. Buddhist ethics emphasize the interconnectedness of all beings and the importance of living in harmony with nature. This perspective becomes increasingly relevant as the world grapples with issues of climate change, pollution and resource depletion. Buddhist ethics emphasize the importance of compassion, empathy and social responsibility. These values have important implications for current debates around issues such as income inequality, human rights and discrimination. Buddhist ethics they emphasize the importance of a balanced and healthy life, both for personal well-being

and for the benefit of society. This perspective becomes increasingly relevant in context the increasing number of chronic diseases, mental health problems and stress-related disorders. And finally, Buddhist ethics emphasize the importance of nonviolence, conflict resolution, and reciprocity understanding. These values have important implications for current debates issues such as terrorism, war and global governance.

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