

Criteria for evaluating good and bad

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In a monopoly of philosophical definitions about the ethics of good versus bad, Buddhist teachings present a unique perspective through the terms of kusala-akusala and puṇṇa-pāpa. These teachings interpret good and bad from a fundamental ethical standpoint. Further, kusala-akusala is a unique teaching of Buddhist philosophy that paves the way beyond puṇṇa-pāpa. All good and bad actions are preceded by mental functions. In Buddhist philosophy, the intention of an individual who is responsible for his own actions is a critical factor in determining what is good and bad. The Buddha has elucidated several criteria for evaluating good and bad actions. For instance, in the Kālāma-sutta of the Anguttara-nikāya, the Buddha asked the Kālāma-s to put aside everything that teachers had told them and presented clear criteria with which they could evaluate good and bad according to their conscience. In the Ambalaññhikārahulovāda –sutta and the Bāhitika-sutta of the Majjhima-nikāya, the Buddha has presented a cognitively unique criterion for evaluating good and bad. All the Buddhist criteria expounded by the Buddha are centred on humanity and they can be accepted by all religions and people all over the world as a universal set of ethics. Such criteria need to be the template upon which all ethical decisions are made so that individuals can be confident that such decisions are founded on a deep and sound philosophical framework that is consistent and has stood the test of time. The purpose of this paper is to evaluate the criteria used for evaluating concepts of good versus bad using the ethical framework of Buddhist teachings.