

BUDDHIST PERSPECTIVE ON MINDFUL LEADERSHIP FOR STRENGTHENING PEACE

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ABSTRACT

The challenges of strengthening peace requires to seriously rethink the means in which social and political organizations are conceived, governed, and systematically managed with specific reference to the norms, values and strong beliefs that inspire leaders and organizations activities or behaviours. Accepting that the mindfulness can play a significant role to strengthening sustainable peace in societies as well as in to leaders and organizations activities or behaviours, the present paper explores the association between mindfulness and sustainable peace and identifies the mindful leadership as a key bridging concept. The present paper searched and highlights the need and role of Mindful leadership for sustainable peace. Accordingly, choosing the Buddhist perspective, the paper presents the notion of Mindful leadership as accepted by Buddhism, Buddhist leaders and the contribution of Buddhism for sustainable peace in societies. In this way, the article sketches the core of the Mindful leadership for sustainable peace. Relevant implication indicate that mindfulness – based leadership program for leaders could help creating the appropriate environment for embedding sustainable peace in the leaders' behaviours hence in forming effective and energetic strategies for sustainable peace in society.

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INTRODUCTION

The world is constantly changing, everything is not permanent and it is impossible to make a permanent relationship with anything (Buddhadasa Bhikku, 1998). Buddhism focuses on detachment, compassion and goodwill towards other being (Niffenegger et al., 2006). Buddha has very clearly addressed the concept of leadership more than 2500 years ago. Buddhism has its own unique leadership theories and practices which has evolved over period of time. Buddha has preached many theories of leadership in his 45 years of Buddhahood. There was a well developed leadership system for Sangha community. Buddha himself was a visionary leader and has been recognized as one of the greatest leader of all time.

LEADERSHIP

Researches on leadership indicates that the concept of leadership is ambiguous, culturally constructed, situational, changeable, and system based. There is no agreement on what the meaning of this word is. A number of theoretical assumptions have been advanced in Western countries with diverse research methodologies and instrument which may decrease the ability to make judgment of the outcome of the research. Jayasaro Bhikku (2005) argued that Buddhism influences the idea of leadership.

Buddhist model of leadership has deeply influenced its leaders. Ten duties– charity, moral character, sacrifice for peoples’ welfare, integrity, kindness, austerity, freedom from all ill will non violence, patience, non opposition to the will of people. According to Buddhism, a leader should have ten qualities–Dana, Sila, Pariccaga, Ajjava, Maddava, Tapa, Akkodha, Avihimsa, Khanti, Avirodhana.

The leader was expected to possess three qualities – Compassion, Strength and Knowledge. There are many leadership qualities mentioned by Buddha like initial power, self development, hostility and an accomplishment of life. Leaders must always learn and update themselves with creativity and innovation: otherwise, they cannot survive well within challenging world.

Leadership is not merely a position; it is an influence which requires good relationship between the leader and followers.

Relationship with people is the foundation of leadership. In Buddhism there are four grounds for the bonds of fellowship known as SanghaVatthu. They create a sense of togetherness, love with in group. The four grounds are generosity, endearing speech, beneficent conduct and impartiality. These are the four means of sustaining a favorable relationship. Buddhism always lays great emphasis on moral and spiritual character for happy peaceful and contented society.

The definition which is most useful is that of Hakala (2008). He describes leadership as the ability to get others to willingly follow. He proposed nine qualities: integrity, dedication, magnanimity, humility, openness, creativity, fairness, assertiveness, and a sense of humor. One transformative strategy in leadership is mindfulness. Buddha's teaching on peace is directly related to the leadership arena. This is intended to promote both material and standard of the rulers. Peace is entirely in the leaders' hand of each particular group, good leaders are respected to serve their subordinate with appropriate treatments as follows:

1. By allocating work according to strength of follower
2. By providing them with food and wages
3. By attending to their medical and health needs
4. By sharing special delicacies with them
5. By letting of work at right time

PEACE

The fundamental goal of Buddhism is peace around the world. The first step is –understanding the causality of peace. Peaceful mind leads to peaceful speech and peaceful actions. If a person simply decide to become peaceful in all their interaction then he should all be enjoying a culture of peace. It is not easy. It requires effort, resolve, patience, cooperation and practice. We can change our minds, views we can become more peaceful and a consequence, we can help to engender (strengthen) peace in the world because there is no path to peace: peace is the path.

Buddhist teachings provides the great peaceful strategy for

one to be a great leader who will be capable of strengthening world peace through the cultivation of positive feelings such as love, friendship, loyalty, courage, good humor, enthusiasm, peace, serenity, patience, trust, tolerance, prudence and responsibility, deeply in the human heart. Mahaghosananda said—a peaceful heart makes a peaceful person, a peaceful person eventually makes a peaceful and sustainable world.

The doctrine of dependent origination provides a theoretical foundation for peace. We should not be contest with our inner peace of mind but should broaden our horizons and extend our endeavors to include peace of the global human community as well as peace with the natural world, through truly sustainable and harmonious co existence. This approach offer important common ground with other traditions.

Peace lies at the nexus of significant interdependence among diverse physiological, psychological, social, cultural, economic, and political realities (Hershock, 2006). To live in peace should be understood as involving both personal fulfillment and social wellbeing, the psychological and spiritual quality of life, and objective living conditions. Durable and sustainable peace is to be understood as an integration of outer peace and inner peace. It means a holistic peace where in physiological needs of all are secured, structural and institutional justices are addressed, and people develop and enact multiple functions of mind to have possible views of others and become creative in transforming non violent dispute in to an opportunity to promote an interdependent and interpenetrating relationship. Individual's inner transformation and increasing those with contemplative skills are important to sustainable peace.

Sustainable peace include to:

1. Being creating environment that foster a wide trend to mainstream sustainable peace as a goal of leadership.
2. Inspire people to being taking initiative to develop innovative approaches to fulfill that goal.
3. Develop friendship, mutual understanding and

interconnected learning as a basis for greater harmony in pursuit of sustainable peace.

4. Create an environment in which all feel welcomed to explore and express their authentic selves in relation to peace practice.

5. Experiment with activities that people might do regularly in educational spaces to advance bridge-building, exchange perspectives, sharing knowledge, wisdom for peace practice.

MINDFULNESS

Mindfulness has been utilized for thousands of years as part of Buddhism. New innovations have become an interest in mindful leadership (Carroll, 2007; Sinclair, 2007). While there is an increasing body of research demonstrating the link between mindfulness and leadership behaviour (Ryan et al., 2007; Giommi et al., 2010; Lazar et al., 2011; Searle, 2013) core values and thoughts in Buddhism have been the primary inspiration for leadership as the source of glorious and peace loving life principle. Strengthening peace is the common goal of humanity which explicitly signifies the truth of co-existence, i.e. each person inspires one another. A leader has the ability to inspire and mobilize the efforts of a group in the service of common goal.

Mindfulness having ancient roots, is an emerging concept in many professions and spheres of social life. However mindfulness or sati in Buddhism can connote many plausible meaning. Thus the concept is not easily defined and the definitions provided in the literature easily confuse the reader. The phenomenon is of great interest to various disciplines, each of which has its own theoretical and methodological approaches, different authors use different terms in describing this phenomenon. Mindfulness is the most influential teaching of Buddhism. Buddha encouraged four foundations of mindfulness; contemplation of body, feeling, states of mind and phenomena.

Thich Nhat Hanh wrote five books in the mindfulness essential series including: How to sit (Hanh, 2014 a), How to relax (Hanh,

2015 b), How to walk (Hanh, 2015 b), How to love (Hanh, 2015 c), and How to Eat (Hanh, 2014 b).

Mindfulness is being aware with a clear focus of attention on moment-to moment experiences in the here and now (Sisk & Kane, 2017). Mindfulness is the basic human ability to be fully present, aware of where we are and what we are doing, and not overly reactive or overwhelmed by what is going on around us. It can be cultivated through proven techniques, particularly seated, walking, Standing and moving meditation. Mindfulness is a concept that can be viewed in several ways: a mental training technique. Interest in mindfulness is moving into areas beyond medicine, Healthcare, psychology, neuroscience, to program on child birth and parenting education, business, athletics and professional sports, the legal profession, criminal justice and politics (Boyce, 2010; Gelles, 2012; Wickelgren, 2012). Mindfulness may expand a leaders' perception and lead to authenticity. Langer (2014) argues that mindfulness is attunement to today's demand to avoid tomorrow's difficulties. Mindfulness offers leaders a path to address challenges and adversity in a non-judgmental, non-threatening way. It enables leaders to be fully present, aware of themselves and their impact on other people and sensitive to their reaction to difficult situations. Leaders who are mindful tend to be more effective in understanding and relating to others and motivating them toward peaceful situations.

Mindfulness research is rapidly growing (AMRA, 2016). There are a number of current studies on mindful leadership. George (2010, 2012) argues that practice of mindful leadership teaches leaders to pay attention to the present moment, recognizing their feelings and emotions and keeping them under control. Langer (2011) looked dynamic quality of mindfulness toward leadership. He mentioned three aspects- alertness, active self reappraisal and attentiveness to the use of language. Goleman (2002) highlighted emotional component of leadership such as self awareness, self management, social awareness and relationship management. Thus an integrated approach can lead to embed sustainable peace.

A number of studies suggest that compassion, values and beliefs can lead to sustainable behaviour and leadership. Less attention, instead has been paid to mindfulness in the field of sustainable

peace (Ericson et al., 2014; Rinne et al., 2013; and Fabbrizzi et al., 2016). To cover this gap, by adopting systems perspective the present study presents Buddhist perspective on mindful leadership for strengthening peace in social environment. The study sketch the mindful leadership for sustainability/strengthening peace.

MINDFUL LEADERSHIP

Mindful leadership aims to develop self aware and compassionate leaders by combining western thought with Eastern wisdom about mind, developed many years ago it is a secular idea that enables people to sustain effective leadership throughout their lifetime. It enable them to be fully present, aware of themselves and their impact on other people and focused on achieving sustainable peace. Self aware leaders should learn to accept their weaknesses, failures, as they appreciate their strength and successes. Leaders who develop self awareness and self compassion are better able to cope with high level of pressure. They maintain the capacity to empower their follower to perform at a very high level even under very difficult circumstances. Mindful leadership happens by gained shared awareness through the personal support group. Mindful leadership will help the young new generation to strengthen sustainable peace in their leadership and to build sustainable environment known for harmony. The aim of mindful leadership is to create more harmonious and peaceful world for all to live in.

Jon Kabat-Zinn (2015) defines mindfulness as moment-to-moment, non judgmental awareness, cultivated by paying attention in specific way, that is, in the present moment, and as non-reactively, as non-judgmentally, and as open heartedly as possible. In other words, to be mindful means being fully aware in the here and now, without judging the current moment or situation by perceiving what truly is without prejudice about people, things and the current situation, moment-to-moment implies that every moment is a new moment and every moment differ from the other. It is noteworthy that the present moment is the only one that exists since the past is gone and the future is yet to come (Guillen & Fontrodona, 2018). It also means to be completely aware of external stimuli, events or object that happens to be around a person. It also includes internal processes or states such as emotions, perceptions,

sensations and cognitions (Reb, Narayanan, Chaturvedi, 2014). According to Jon Kabat-Zinn (2015 b), mindfulness can happen in two ways, either an intuitional basis (deliberate mindfulness) or on a spontaneous basis (effortless mindfulness). He argues that mindfulness has to be improved by practice for most people, even if it is a inborn trait of mind. This improvement can achieve through meditation, compassion. He added that the ancient Buddhist practice is relevant today (Jon Kabat-Zinn, 2005). Mindful leaders inspire others by using clear communication (Gonzalez, 2012). Leaders should have 4c that is- concentration, clarity, creativity, compassion. Mindfulness is being aware of what is happening with in and around us with clear focus on our attention on moment-to-moment experience in the here and now (Sisk & Kane, 2017).

Gonzalez (2012) defines Mindful leaders as being present, aware, calm, focused, clear, equanimous, positive, compassionate and impeccable. These traits are similar and related to Jon Kabat-Zinn's definition. Consequently a Mindful leader develops leadership excellence with four qualities, namely, concentration, clarity, creativity and compassion for well being of others. Ultimately, this leadership presence will influence the people around a person and potentially the whole world.

Jon Kabat-Zinn (2015) argues that mindfulness is about love, peace and loving life or peaceful life. When we cultivate this love it gives us clarity and compassion for life and our actions happens in accordance with that. All sense of interconnectedness came out of the act of paying attention. Leaders are people who make things happen, to me, to be a Mindful leader means to connect with, and live from, a deeper sense of peace and purpose.

IMPACT OF MINDFUL LEADERSHIP

Although the positive impacts of mindfulness has been researched extensively, the connection and the impact of mindful leadership on strengthening peaceful environment in school premises has only been examined by a limited number of studies and require additional more-in-depth, and long term studies. Moreover, the impact of mindfulness programs offered in various different setting need to be evaluated more extensively.

Several mindful based programs have been developed to help and develop mindfulness in students and teachers for sustainable peaceful environment in schools. CARE and TLS program developed by Jennings (2015), learning to breath developed by Broderick (2013). Mind up developed by Hawn Foundation, KYSIS program developed by Kripalu School are the most relevant programs to help children and teachers. These programs support the need to develop the leadership of students and to implement mindfulness strategies to help them and learn to live mindful for sustainable peace.

Mindfulness is a powerful tool for leaders engaging in the challenge of Sustainable peace. Mindful leadership can be the path to sustainable peace by giving soundness to the leader vision and decision making capabilities. Mindful leaders could support social and economic organization in creating the appropriate context to promote sustainable peace (Caputo et al., 2016). There is a need for more research about sustainable peace that acknowledges positive interconnections, spirituality and mindful leadership in particular, recognizing that the micro and macro, are always interrelated.

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