

BUDDHIST APPROACH TO EDUCATION AND SUSTAINABLE CONSUMPTION

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ABSTRACT

Minerals natural resources and food are very important global issues, here try an attempt to closely like with few areas of global learning: minerals water bodies natural resources and food production have a major impact on climate change, wastage of the resources have further environmental impacts and access to them is a major development issue. Presently population is increasing continuously and the challenge of how to fulfill the need of this increased population in an unpredictable climate becomes ever more critical. Nobody wants to understand the demand of nature we are continuously consuming the resources and wasting too. There is a need to educate everyone. And it can be done through Buddhist approach. This kind of education is based on the three Buddhist principles of learning: Sila, Samadhi and Panna. Sila signifies moral conduct in any person and after this stage second is mind training with the practice of it awakened mind acts better and after this wisdom arise. With wisdom nobody can harm anyone. In this holistic approach the principles are practiced simultaneously and can be applied to any dimensions, including personal, family, society and communal levels, to cultivate responsive sustainable living practices for the learners.

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Sustainable consumption has been raised and discussed since last two decades, but still it did not reach on its maturity. Sustainable consumption is an integral part of sustainable development and was incepted in Oslo symposium in 1994. This symposium terms justifiable consumption as the use of goods and services that respond to basic needs and bring a good quality of life, whereas minimizing the usage of natural resources, toxic materials and emissions of waste and pollutants over the life cycle, so it could be save for upcoming group. This definition emphasizes on the quality of life rather than materialistic outlook. There is another aspect of sustainable consumption is that it enhances the quality of life by offering practical approaches to gain a resources efficient and it minimizes the use of natural resources toxic materials and pollutants over the life cycle.¹ Many scholars has explain in very well manner such as sustainable consumption can be referred as the rationalization of lifestyle practices, which helps the consumption more efficient shapes it based on the logic of instrumental rationality.² “Sustainable consumption is the act that focuses on proper utilization of resources in order to meet the need of individuals while taking care of the natural resources in order to avoiding jeopardizing the need of the future generation.”³ “Sustainable consumption takes into consideration of the impact of consumption on environment. It requires environmentally friendly consumer choices that are both widely available and affordable.”⁴ All these definition advocates for careful consumption pattern and efficient use of goods and services.

In short, it can be said that the sustainable consumption practice cannot be possible only by its behavioral aspect, it also requires positive intension and commitment of individuals. In present time Buddha’s teaching are much more relevant when impacts of

1. Farzana Quoquab & Jihad Mohammad, *Managing Sustainable Consumption: Is It a Problem or Panacea?* Switzerland: Springer International Publishing, 2017.

2. K. Hobson, *Competing discourses of sustainable consumption: Does the ‘rationalisation of lifestyles’ make sense?* Environment Politics Journal, 2002.

3. D. Southerton, Chappells H, B. Van Vliet, *Sustainable Consumption: The implications of changing infrastructures of provision*, Cheltenham, 2004.

4. Kersty Hobson, *Environmental Justice: An Anthropocentric Social Justice Critique of How, Where and Why Environmental Goods and Bads Are Distributed*, Environmental Politics Journal vol. 13, 2004.

humankind on earth as well as for their personal lives. The reason of all is the unsustainable development and due to unclear mind. There is need to clear the vision of everyone so they consume things is right way. This right way can comes through the teaching of Buddha in leading the life along with the Noble Eightfold Path and with the awakened mind through Buddhist mindfulness. “The Buddhist vision towards the ‘true reality’ of the self as something deeply conditioned, interdependent and embedded within the social lives and natural surroundings. This view has gained currency in science and also regarded as converging with the perceptual theories wherein perception is clearly understood-not only as a cerebral event but as directly and reciprocally interchange between organism and its world.”⁵ This is define by developments in neuroscience in which understandings of human thinking, derived from research at the activity level of mind and are found to be similar to Buddhist theory of cause and effect.⁶ The unsustainable consumption become the cause of unstainable development and result comes out with unhealthy lifestyles and environmental degradation. “The biodiversity loss has got an accelerated momentum in – post globalization era in developing countries where we can see ‘use and throw’ kind of culture of consumerism, brand-wars etc is mindlessly spreading in the world.”⁷ With the awaken mind one can lead the simple life through Buddhist teachings. Mindfulness make them alert and compassionate. All these things will bring sustainable outlook in all spheres of our lives. This is also emphasized according Buddhist perspective that there is nothing wrong with economic progress or wealth ethically and lawfully earned by following Buddhist teachings unless it stimulates attachment and insatiable greed. Greed is the cause of all problems. So, the practice of Buddhist teaching helps to eradicate suffering, ill mind and also awaken our mind. The survival of future generation is required all over the world. Buddhism has offer a lot with awaken though to sustainable development in the context of its place of origin as

5. Subhash Donde, *Buddhist Perspective on Environmental Conservation and Sustainable Development*, Mumbai: National Conference on Sustainable Society and Environment, 2014.

6. Zainal Sanusi, *The Benefits of Buddhism towards Sustainable Society*, Bangkok: International conference on Management, Economic and Social Science, 2011.

7. *Ibid.*

well as all over the world.⁸ The great example of this is Thailand, in Thailand sustainable practice in educational and architectural fields appear to be in their infancy. This is great example that shows the possibility of responding to sustainability concept via culturally sensitive education.⁹ This practice is based on the three Buddhist principles of Sikkha:

- Sila (Moral conduct)
- Samadhi (Mind training)
- Panna (Wisdom development)¹⁰

The Buddhist school approach is an entirely localized approach towards national culture and religion. This holistic approach has characteristics that tie humanity to nurturing their environs, it can be considered more ecologically friendly by way of comparison. Ideas of education in the Buddhist approach Sikkha meaning education, is the Buddhist principle of learning. In Buddhism, education conveys the practice of a way of living, so the principle of Buddhist teaching is to practice self-development through living well. Sila – The moral conduct that promotes peaceful existence, this the practice of self-regulation that controls our speech and behavior; Samadhi Sikkha – the study of the mind and subsequent training that promotes self-awareness and self-evolution to activate goal-setting and Panna Sikkha – It is an analysis and study of the interconnection and law of cause and effect.¹¹

Buddhist provides a logic to resolve the tension between ingrained economic system imperatives and the changes actually required for achieving environmental sustainability.¹² “The Four Noble Truths (Buddhist teachings) helps to understand the right vision of problem and also suggest the way to resolve it. The First Noble Truth (Dukka) and Second Noble Truth (Rise of Dukka)

8. *Ibid.*

9. Sant Chansomsak and Brenda Vale, *The Buddhist approach to education: An alternative approach for sustainable education*, Asia Pacific Journal of Education, vol. 28, 2008.

10. *Ibid.*

11. *Ibid.*

12. Peter Daniels, *Buddhism and the transformation to sustainable economics*, Society and Economy, vol. 29, 2007.

provides the basis for understanding the root causes that have shot mankind into a trajectory that is not just unsustainable, but is providing ineffective in improving welfare beyond basic materialistic things. The Third Noble Truth and Fourth Noble Truth establish the 'response' in the form of individual psychological, behavioral and institutional changes that could direct personal and socio-economic change towards sustainability."¹³ Sustainability is all about ensuring the conditions for acceptable welfare levels of all people. All these conditions demands maintenance of various forms of capital. Capital is define in the sense of the resources ready to provide the materials and services for human welfare. There are some forms of capital need to be maintained for sustainable development. These are:-

- Economic sustainability
- Environmental sustainability
- Social sustainability

Economic sustainability – Manufactured capital used to provide transformed natural material means of satisfying needs.

Environmental sustainability – Natural capital for direct services from nature.

Social sustainability – Social capital, social networks and institutions to support the other forms of sustainability.¹⁴

“The notion of social capital considers that faith, trust, social relations, community and belonging are all vital for well-being. However, in the “three pillars” approach, social capital’s supporting role for economic and environmental sustainability tends to be stressed rather than an objective in its own right with its intrinsic notions of socio-psychological states and subjective well-being.¹⁵ In the First Noble Truth ‘Suffering’ or Dukkha is seen to be a reality of human. Rather than bodily pain, Dukkha is rightly conceived as “Pervasive dissatisfaction.” It does not reject that

13. *Ibid.*

14. Ted Munn., *Encyclopedia of Global Environmental Change*, New York: John Wiley & Sons, 2002.

15. D.A. Munro., *Sustainability: Rhetoric or reality?*, Switzerland: IUCN, 1994.

there are many positive experiences in life involving pleasure and happiness. Thus, it can be posited that the totality of life is imperfect with dissatisfaction and suffering due to the impermanent nature of all and the subsequent inevitable loss of the sources of those conditions from which we tend to draw happiness.¹⁶ The suffering we experience derived from the craving for worldly phenomena that we cling to in the belief that they are our reliable sources of happiness. We experience suffering because these phenomena change and we constantly crave and seek to attach to some other foundations of happiness.¹⁷ In Buddhism, the first form of desire is the happiness from the senses (Kama Tanha). This covers a wide range of consumption such as food, sexual activity and mostly joy from material accumulation. All these sensual pleasures experience leads to the craving for more. Another form of desire feeling of wanting (Bhava Tanha). All this typical depends upon raising one's perceived importance or apparent career and other worldly success in the eyes of others, but it also include a longing for control and influence upon others. This form of desire is connected with Kama Tanha and Sense-based talents are key determinants of status, respect and control.¹⁸ The Third Noble Truth explains the premise that clinging and attachment will not provide long term satisfaction, in fact they are posited as the major cause of our suffering. Our desire itself is not considered as the root cause of suffering, the cause of suffering is the grasping onto desire. With the reflective life experience, People can learn the futility of this habit and have a real impetus for reprogramming their dominant but incorrect theory of happiness. There is way out of suffering, which is cease attachment and clinging.¹⁹ The Fourth Noble Truth explains that how the Eight Fold Path or Middle Path can remove our sufferings. This is the practice of right understanding, right aspirations, right

16. Mark Epstein, *Open to Desire: The Truth about What the Buddha Taught*, New York: Penguin Group, 2006.

17. Colin Ash., *Happiness and Economic: A Buddhist Perspective*, UK: University of Reading 2008.

18. S. Yamamoto, *Mahayana Buddhism and Environmental Ethics: From the Perspective of the Consciousness – Only Doctrine*, Journal of Oriental Studies, 2001.

19. Dalai Lama., *The Four Noble Truths: Fundamental of Buddhist Teachings*, London: Thorsons, 1997.

speech, right action, right livelihood, right effort, right mindfulness and right concentration.²⁰ The eight features have a natural flow from wisdom to moral obligation to mental regulation but they are presented as mutually reinforcing goals rather than a necessary linear order. When panna derives from Buddhist cosmology or clarification about the nature of universe and also from knowledge and observe outcome. The result came in the form of self-realization and intelligence which offers the transformative sympathetic and will for release from suffering. The systematic behavioral aspects that make up the Sila (Morality) set within the Middle Path (Eight Fold Path) relate more to external activity while concentration (Samadhi) are the internal activity.

We discussed briefly that how Buddhist teachings can change our external behave with the discipline on our internal activities. Buddhist Inspire Sustainable Economy (BISE) is oriented towards producing high levels of well-being for its vast society. Here, the main point of concerning consumption is that the existing nature and levels of consumption are not maximizing long term welfare for societies. In it selections about what we seek and pursue from life and the environment should accurately imitates the impact of these choices on our long term well-being. This is not purely clear but, from the Buddhist fundamental problem is that people with lack information about the appropriate to a sustained stage of fulfilment. People frequent experience that needs based on external phenomena does not bring lasting fulfilment but they usually do not learn the lesson that suffering cannot be overcome from acquisitive or clinging to the substances of actuality. If the preferences are targeted at long term satisfaction about this condition, which can be described in the economic vernacular as a divergence between right and true preferences. These true preferences are the set of ranked choices that represent those that really lead to satisfaction.²¹

In short, the inherent unsustainability of existing economics, Buddhism can be seen as a way to provide a series of necessary

20. Sangharakshita, *The Buddha's Noble Eightfold Path (Buddhist Wisdom for Today)*, UK: Windhorse Publications, 2007.

21. J.F. Tomer. *Good habits and bad habits: A new age socio-economic model of preference formation*, Journal of Socio-Economics, 1996.

changes in consumption patterns. These proposals draw upon essential notions of interpretation of effect and Karma, the Karmic law and a prevailing theme is the need to minimize intervention and a prevailing theme is the need to minimize intervention and disruption upon the wider social, ethical and natural realms.²²

Some features of Buddhist-inspired sustainable economy (BISE):-

- Modify the level and nature of consumption.
- Qualitative changes in consumptions.
- Is to identify accurate measures of human well-being.

“One major change in production aspects for BISE would be the consumer sovereignty effect of an automatic shift towards the production of minimum intervention goods and services as a response to changes in the nature and level of demand as outlined in the previous section.”²³ The no-harm philosophy of Buddhism is consistent with technology change that reduces the societal metabolism and underpins ecological modernization towards greater eco-efficiency and sustainable production and consumption.²⁴

Buddhist inspired sustainable economy (BISE) expanded role of socially productive organizations that produce “compassion goods”, economic output that minimizes environmental disturbance and is pervaded by the positive spillover effects in the society.²⁵ In the support of the informational needs of many of the production and consumption changes, sustainable expansion towards appropriate education and human capital development would be compulsory for the skills and knowledge to understand and minimize economic disturbance through three realms such as economic, psychological and spiritual knowledge. Few crucial areas of change would involve the humanistic transformation of work, the understanding and re-allocation of time so as to enhance life satisfaction and the profound

22. J.F. Tomer, *Beyond the Rationality of Economic Man towards the True Rationality of Man*, 2002.

23. *Ibid.*

24. Peter L Daniels, *Buddhist economics and the environment: Material flow analysis and the moderation of society's metabolism*, International Journal of Social Economics, 2003.

25. *Ibid.*

incorporation of Buddhist principle of compassion and practice of tolerance in international trade and relations.²⁶

In short Buddhism can help to provide a logical and ethical base which required for creating sustainable economics. There can still be vital economics that consume minimum intervention output based on Ahimsa (Non-violence) and Karuna (Compassion), in accordance with the Four Noble Truths and Middle Path.²⁷

Concluding it can be seen that Buddhism can helped to overcome the theory – practice divide and promote change towards sustainable economics. The institutional example of the Buddhist teachings, example from the laity, education and contact with society highlighting the relevance of Buddhist teaching in mitigating the conflict and adversity of a host global perspective such as environmental, social and economic problems. Now it is clear that Buddhist perspective can change the vision of every one in each sector of life. Buddhism can increase related ethical base by which sustainable behavior and balance social system, continue and beneficial for future.

26. *Ibid.*

27. J. Elkington, *Towards the sustainable corporation: Win-win-win business strategies for sustainable development*, California Management Review, 1994.

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