

GNH AND SOCIAL ENTERPRISE AN ALTERNATIVE APPROACH TOWARDS GLOBAL SUSTAINABLE BUSINESS MANAGEMENT IN 21ST CENTURY

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ABSTRACT

The philosophy in current business management is based on Capitalism. More and more evidence shows that profit-oriented Capitalism has become a global disaster. It is time to change the modes of thought. GNH and Social Enterprise would provide us an alternative approach on Global Business management. The author strongly believes that the integration of GNH and Social Enterprise could effectively resolve the contradiction and conflict between Capitalism and Communism.

GNH means Gross National Happiness. This idea created by previous King of Bhutan, His Majesty the King Jigme Singye Wangchuk. It is an opposite idea of GNP which is an index to measure the growth of a nation, based on the Gross National Products. In the measurement of GNP context, capitalist profit is the core value. As the result, excess consumption on all levels is the fundamental cause of problem like global warming which threatens our life.

In responding to the UNDV 2019 Yearly subtheme, “Buddhist Approach to Responsible Consumption and Sustainable

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Development”, the author has the intention to integrate the GNH ideal with the developing trend of “Social Enterprise” as an alternative approach towards Global Sustainable Business Management in 21st Century.

In this article, I shall share my observation in Thailand, Taiwan, Sri Lanka and China. Moreover, on how to make good use of the Middle Path model of “Social Enterprise” to carry out constructive Dana Paramita (The Perfection of Giving). In developing the social enterprise, we must combine the four concepts, with certain specific action plans.

1. FACING THREE BIG CHALLENGES GLOBALLY

1st is the big gap between the rich and poor caused by the Capitalism and Materialism. If we cannot proposed a structural change to resolved this issue, this world would not have genuine peace / real peace. The philosophy in current Western Business Management generally is based on Capitalism. More and more evidence shows that profit-oriented Capitalism has become a global disaster.

2nd serious challenge is the threat of new Fascism. Obviously last century human beings have had two World wars caused by the Fascism and so many innocent beings were killed. The world order was also disrupted. In the past 70 years we luckily had some world peace but in the recent years, a new form of Fascism has started again. The values of democracy, humanitarian and middle way path are seriously challenged. How to rebuilt the value of middle way path is the only way / the necessary path for us to resolve this threat.

3rd challenge is the environmental crisis. The only way to resolve this is mindful consumption. The five precepts (five mindfulness training) of Buddhism is not only very important for resolve this environment crisis but also the way to establish the global ethics to ensure the world peace.

2. GNH AND NEW WAY FORWARD

In the year 2001, being the Executive member of the World Fellowship of Buddhists, the author had a great honor to visit Thimphu and meet the King of Bhutan, His Majesty the King

Jigme Singye Wangchuk. During that meeting, a positive dialogue occurred. First time I learned the great idea of “GNH”. It was created by the King! The King explained to me that GNH means Gross National Happiness. It is an opposite idea of GNP which is an index to measure the growth of a nation, based on the Gross National Products. In the measurement of GNP context, capitalist profit is the core value. As the result, excess consumption on all levels is the fundamental cause of problems like global warming which threatens our life.

In 2007, the Third GNH International Conference organized in Bangkok, Thailand. I was invited to chair the first plenary meeting. Many high Ecological experts and activists from more than 20 countries attended this conference with great enthusiasm. The concept of GNH fully developed from an ideal dream into a much concreted and operative action principles. Four major dimensions with 132 indicators were recognized as criteria of GNH.

In addition, After the conference, the School of Well-Being was established at Chulalongkorn University in Bangkok, to serve as a base for promoting this idea. Since then, 2 activities well developed. One is summer school entitled “CURLS” to provide the comprehensive training on Right Livelihoods. Young Seeds speeded Southeast Asia widely. Meanwhile, MMSE-Mindful Markets and Organic Farming courses and movement go with the model of Social Enterprise.

3. “PARADIGMS SHIFTING” AND THE ECONOMIC SYSTEM REFORMING

GNH and Social Enterprise would provide us an alternative approach on Global Business management. The author strongly believes that the integration of GNH and Social Enterprise could effectively resolve the contradiction and conflict between capitalism and communism.

In responding to the UNDV 2019 Yearly subtheme, *“Buddhist Approach to Responsible Consumption and Sustainable Development”*, the author has the intention to integrate the GNH ideal with the developing trend of “Social Enterprise” as an alternative approach towards Global Sustainable Business Management in 21st Century.

Principally, the common understanding on social enterprise were defined as:

“The social enterprise is ethical, innovative and sustainable way of Business. It’s primary energy is out of a special social or environmental mission, in hoping to create a systemic change on the world economic development. The growth of social enterprise would help to fill the void between traditional approaches which previously have only focused singularly on creating either social impact or financial returns.”

In this article, I shall share my observation in Asian countries and regions Namely Sri Lanka, Taiwan, and Thailand.

The Savodaya movement in Sri Lanka is a pioneering paradigm in Asia. The Tzu Chi Foundation and LeeZen Organic Group in Taiwan also show us a great success in a multiple performance.

Four wonderful paradigms in Thailand.

“Pathom asoke community”, a semi-social enterprise that follows a model that is very similar to a communism society. No one has their own property. They share everything with other members. Both the ordained sangha and the lay people follow strictly the Buddhist precepts. It is also a very good example.

Ashram Wongsanit, a eco village as well as Eco and leadership training center.

Rongsarai villages, this cooperative made out of 9 villages. It was a very successful model. These villages become very wealthy.

Sampran Riverside resort. Because of their belief in Buddhism, they transform the company into a social enterprise and become very successful.

One more special example is Hua-xi Village in Mainland China. It is hard to imagine that under the communist system, a village can have the efficiency and the wealth of capitalism.

4. HOLISTIC IDEA AND ACTIONS

It contains six categories of business model, including Organic business, Community enterprise, Eco tourism, Environment and

Recycling, Handicap/Disable support and Publishers/Media. Essentially, I would like to emphasize that all of these categories of business model shall follow the concept of “Protecting the Dharma in a Dharma Oriented Way”. Moreover, on how to make good use of the Middles Path model of “Social Enterprise” to carry out constructive Dana Paramita (The Perfection of Giving).

Once we go forward from 20th century into the 21st century, our civilization shall focus its effort on “Paradigms shifting”. If the core global issue of the 20th century was the Contradiction between Capitalism and Communism, then the biggest challenge of the 21st century is to seek an alternative compatibility models which resolve the confrontation between these two ideologies and social structure.

In developing the social enterprise, the following four concepts and certain specific action plans should work together. The four concepts are:

i. Originating from symbiosis - sustainable development - body and earth cannot be separated.

ii. The vision of global happiness should be recognized as essential part of Human rights. Some Buddhists often misunderstood that Dhuka (Sufferings) is the fundamental teaching of Lord Buddha, therefore pursuing Happiness is illusion or evil. Actually, what Buddha taught is to remind us that we might get enlightened by the stimulation of Dhuka, while the purpose being a Buddhist is to transform our life from suffering to happiness physically and spiritually through the practice of eightfold right path.

iii. Global ethics: contentment, simple life

iv. Transforming the six levels of life.

5. SIX ACTION PLANS SUGGESTED

The major six action plans offered by the author are:

First, comprehensively promoting the holistic-life culture of mindfulness and right livelihood; and accelerating in networking global network of NGOs & NPOs. At the same time, establishing global ethics standards to promote simpler life, to counter our

current production and consumption patterns, as they are wasting too many resources, and is causing extinction of ecological species.

Second, making good use of new social media, highlighting new paradigms, and deepening the consensus of global symbiosis.

Third, establishing a strategic alliance, an educational base with complementary and pragmatic training of young seed teachers.

Fourth, Promoting the Global Happiness Forum as the entry point of grassroots movement on happiness. The Gross National Happiness could serve as an alternative indicator of social and economic development, which can help us on reflecting how to end the structural violence of the global polarization between the rich and the poor formed by capitalism, and to legislate and prevent the potential unemployment boom potentially caused by AI and Industry 4.0.

Fifth, reengineering good heart movement inspired by Dana Paramita (The Perfection of Giving)

Sixth, Buddhism n a variety of different forms of social enterprise platforms.

6. HOW TO START IN A PRACTICAL WAY?

Non-duality of the body and the earth: The “earth” is the “body”, and the “body” is the “earth”. If we do not treat our earth kindly, we are also unkind towards ourselves. Hence we should follow the principle of non-violence towards the nature. Be aligned with nature: Human practices should be in tune with nature’s rhythms and patterns. Be founded upon Buddhist precepts: Not killing and not taking intoxicants are, at deeper levels, reverence for life and mindful consumption.

Actions

Mindful Consumption. Lord Buddha’s simple way of life encourages us to be more aware of our consumption habits. Here are some examples:

No consumption of intoxicants, as reflected in the 5th precept of not taking what is intoxicating to our body.

Consuming locally what has been freshly produced. Other than

reducing the carbon footprint of what we use/eat, we should also eat what are produced of that season because it is aligned with the needs of our body. A lot of times it is our greed and not our need that makes us consume unseasonal food.

Green consumption. Consumption that is ecologically beneficial to both the earth and ourselves.

Production

Organic farming. Our health is closely connected with our environment. Intelligent farming practices allows nature to take care of its own problems, e.g. tea plantations - avoid using pesticides if they allowed nature to grow “weeds” which the “pests” feed on.

Care for our land. Healthy land is the basis for healthy food, which is then the basis for our health.

Integrated Lifestyles

Green buildings. Eco-villages.

Balanced development of the cities and rural farmland.

Medicine: Natural and holistic therapies, which includes the proper use of food, aromatherapy etc, in line with the biological rhythms.

Holistic Diet Camps. Introduce the use of natural enzymes to cleanse our digestive systems, and the natural and complete intake of food.

Change our measurements of progress at a governmental level.

Switch from the Gross National Product, GNP, to Gross National Happiness, GNH, as a better measure of progress.

Fashion.

Hygiene and waste processing systems.

Energy management.

Recycling of resources.

Actually, several dimensions of consideration should be taken such as

How to protect the Dharma in a Dharmic way?

How to utilize the wealth to support the Dharma?

How to avoid abusing the name of Dharma to collect money?

More and more, GNH has developed into different areas after 40 years of effort. What we need to do now is to promote the philosophy of GNH through different education efforts, such as through the summer camps or the monastic education. United Nations have passed 17 index of happiness in 2030. As the executive council member, I would like to share that World Buddhist University organized a very successful forum in Bangkok last December. We have integrated the Vinaya (precept), Yana (meditation, and Prajna (Wisdom) and eight fold of right path with these 17 indexes in this forum. This kind of dialogue and integration is very helpful for interfaith dialogue. This meeting has invited excellent scholars and leaders from over 20 countries.

In 20th century the biggest challenge is the conflict between the Communism and the Capitalism. We found a new trend after the middle of 20th century. Capitalists paid more and more aware of their responsibility in social welfare. In communist communities, we also found efforts in how to adopt the new model management that is rational and non-violent. The internal adaption of these two systems have shown the common quest in giving up extremisms and come to the middle way. Social enterprise comes from this common quest.

I think there are four aspects that we have to pay attention to when we work on social enterprise.

1st aspect is that it is a social justice that is achieved through a social system that distribute resource fairly and not by force.

Secondly social enterprise is promoted by the realization of their social responsibilities of the capitalists.

Thirdly social enterprise is not forbidding companies to make profits. It stresses on the importance of allowing their employees to share the profit. It also emphasizes the importance of not harming the environment because of their business, such as organic farming, etc. Fourthly, one of the most important spirit of social enterprise

is its emphasis on the cultivation of humanity. In my paper I will present 8 successful paradigms.

7. EMPOWERING OUR THREEFOLD FOUNDATIONS

GNH and Social enterprise cannot be realized by itself. It has to have core philosophy.

One is Bodhicita. You may expressed in a modern way like Metta and Karuna Practices. Animal protection, all sentient beings are equal and therefore we should respect them as our fellow beings. Proper animal liberation: Such practices are an expression of the Buddhist compassion for all beings, but needs to be augmented with indepth knowledge of the suitability of releasing specific animals into certain environments.

Set up schools and research institutes to develop the theoretical basis and practical applications of the Buddhist approach to environmental protection. Strengthen educational efforts. Promote spiritual education based on Buddhist core values, and to bring about the natural decrease of material desires.

The second is the realization of Mandala.

The third is strong commitment the core value of life.

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* *Due to this paper is presented in English, papers and books in original Mandarin Chinese are not listed in this bibliography.*

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