

The Scientific Buddhism to Improve Human's Well-Being

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Abstract: This academic article has the purposes to demonstrate and explain about Buddhism as religious of science and the application of science based on Buddhism to improve human's well-being. The authors studied and collected the data from Buddhist scriptures, texts, and related document about Buddhism and Science to improve human's well-being, and analyzed by content analysis. The interface between Buddhism and science is the major issue. Scientific method is the answers of natural questions starting from what we understand as the smallest object to largest one by using five steps. It could be summarized into two steps namely rational of mathematic and senses. For Buddhism, Buddhist Philosophy is also interested in two main problems of human namely the problems related to human being directly, or it may be related between human and other human. Buddhist philosophy asserts that it is our minds that contribute most significantly to our own suffering and that the mind can be deconstructed and reconstructed to give the individual a more stable sense of peace, happiness, and equanimity. Also, Buddhism can be seen to have relevance to the commonly defined dimensions of human's well-being. The four noble truths and the noble eightfold path relate well with sustainability led to well-being. The first and the second of noble truth explain about causes of suffering and unsustainability whereas the third and the last of the four noble truth explain about the effect or the way of achieving well-being. Wellbeing is stressed in Buddhism supposed to be driven by ethical motivation that seeks to cause no harm to individual and group, to create no agitation in society.

Keywords: Buddhism, Human, Scientific, Well-Being

1. Introduction

Buddhism is a religion which does not believe in the existence of God or a supernatural creator. The Buddha himself was opposed to the discussion of such subjects. The Buddha in his last message advised his disciples to take refuge in own self. The Buddha in Kalama Sutra asked his disciples to have a rationalistic outlook and not to believe in anything without verification. Buddhism is not a religion in that sense, but it is a way of life. The true spirit of Buddhism is of rationalism and free thinking. That is influenced the intellectuals of the world. Buddhism is more a code of conduct than a religion. The Buddha has stated the Sila (Buddhist Precepts) on the basis of which people can live their life in peace and happiness. As long as man exists in this world the value of an honest and virtuous life cannot be diminished. Also, the Buddhist scriptures are filled with advice from the Buddha regarding environmental values and they are applicable to monastic and lay lifestyle. Buddhism is based on love and compassion, in other words with loving kindness. The Buddha asked his disciples to scatter all around for the good and happiness. In the present 21st century, the teachings of the Buddha still continue to inspire Buddhists and non-Buddhists in their effort to make the world a better place to live in. The increasing influence and relevance of Buddhism in its various forms in the global society of the 21st century have given rise to a vibrant and evolving movement, particularly in the West, loosely called Socially Engaged Buddhism or the Fourth Yāna with its roots in traditional Buddhist countries like Sri Lanka and Thailand [1]. From a Buddhist perspective, the mind is the forerunner and source of everything in existence, and Buddhism is best described as an ethico-psychological system rather than a religion in the conventional sense of the word [2]. Buddhism has a special role to play in the modern world because unlike many other religious traditions, Buddhism uniquely propounds the concept of independence which accords closely with the fundamental notions of modern science. Buddhism can be termed of three main categories - philosophy, science and religion. The religious part involves principles and practices that are of concern to Buddhism alone, but the Buddhist philosophy of interdependence as well as the Buddha science of mind and human emotions are of great benefit to everyone [3]. As Buddhism becomes more influential in the West, many practitioners, academics and activists look to Buddhism for answers to two of the most urgent and crucial issues of our time to protect the planet and eradicate discrimination.

Buddhism, environmentalism, the ecological movement and feminism have been the subject of much interdisciplinary work. Buddhist philosophy, ethics and its system of meditation have found common ground with the movements known as Eco-Buddhism and Deep Ecology with the core acknowledgement of the interrelatedness of all beings and their intrinsic value for the health and survival of the planet and all its inhabitants [4]. In general,

Buddhism is a way of finding peace within oneself. It is a religion that helps the human beings to find the happiness and contentment.

2. The Relevance Of Buddhism And Science.

The interface between Buddhism and science is the major issue. Scientific method is the answers of natural questions starting from what we understand as the smallest object to largest one by using five steps. It could be summarized into two steps namely rational of mathematic and senses. For Buddhism, Buddhist Philosophy is also interested in two main problems of human namely the problems related to human being directly, or it may be related between human and other human. Buddhist philosophy asserts that it is our minds that contribute most significantly to our own suffering and that the mind can be deconstructed and reconstructed to give the individual a more stable sense of peace, happiness, and equanimity. Science and religion both seek the truth of things and life. While science reveals physical truth, Buddhism offers spiritual truth. Buddhism aims at resolving the problem of human existence. Science aims to increase our understanding on things. But now science also studies mental aspects of human life and meditation has increasingly gained interested in the modern science world. The highest purpose of Buddhist practice is to enlighten and end suffering. Although some may achieve it, but one needs to practice until perfect it to truly understand the essence of the path to enlightenment. Science has limits, and scientific theories are always changing. Change in knowledge is inevitable as new observations, new technology or applications of technology emerge. The Buddha's teaching of anatta, or no-self to illustrate the transitivity of identity, is still proven true globally. Some teachings even get clearer. The Buddha also said that all things depend on one another. The world lives in us, and we live in the world. Whatever affects one, affects all. Our negative change can have impacts like falling dominoes. Humanity's carelessness towards the environment will inevitably affect the human race. This is the foundation of Buddhism: the Law of Cause and Effect. The Buddha encouraged people to think and investigate the truth. You believe nothing until you have experienced it. Buddhism does not demand blind faith[5].

There are many other areas of study where similarities with Buddhism could be found. For instance, the congruence between modern philosophy and Buddhism is undoubtedly more profound than the interface between Buddhism and modern science because Buddhism, other than being a 'religion' in its common usage, is a philosophy in itself [6][7]. In scientific and technological developed global society, there are many amenities, for easy living and pleasure, people are both physically and mentally not satisfied and do not have a feeling of security. When the mind is satisfied that the person is free of physical danger, the mind produces an experience of safety. It is obvious that research is an activity, and a human activity for that matter, and for that it is increasingly clear that many lessons could be drawn from Buddha's teachings for research and research methodology. For example, The Four Noble Truths (Dhammacakkappavattanasutta in Sutta-pitaka) constitute a framework for science, investigation and particularly problem solving: Dukkha as problem identification, Samudaya as causal investigation, Nirodha as possible or required solutions and Magga as recommendations or pathways for desired solutions. The other two methodological components identified and discussed in this investigation are the importance of independent observation (Kalamasutta) and dialectical causality or dependent origination/arising (Paticcasamuppada)[8]. Buddhism is a psycho-ethical tradition which is manifested mainly in two paths as a process of thought of gradual pacification (Pariyatti) and a way of practical application in life (Patipatti).

3. The Scientific Method Of Buddhism To Enhance Human's Well-Being.

Scientists are increasingly using Buddhist wisdom for insight into several research topics and to illuminate the human condition. When psychologists use Buddhist concepts in their work, for example, they find their patients are less inclined to exhibit prejudice against people outside their social and religious group. And scientists have used the harmonic principles built into Buddhist "singing" bowls to design more efficient solar panels. Both disciplines share an empirical approach. Buddhists are trained to be skeptics, and to only accept a proposition after examining evidence. The following words are attributed to the Buddha: just as a goldsmith would test his gold by burning, cutting, and rubbing it, so must you examine my words and accept them, not merely out of reverence for me[9]. Buddhist philosophy asserts that it is our minds that contribute most significantly to our own suffering and that the mind can be deconstructed and reconstructed to give the individual a more stable sense of peace, happiness, and equanimity.

The Buddha found that our desire for pleasant experiences and our aversion to unpleasant experiences gives rise to suffering. Because there are so many factors in life that are out of our control, and because everything is constantly changing, trying to hold onto pleasant things and experiences while pushing away unpleasant ones makes us unhappy because it is a battle we cannot win. This habit of attachment and aversion is present from moment to moment, arising through our sense, including the thoughts in our minds. The Buddha found liberation from suffering by relinquishing his desires and aversions. He taught that such a state does not negate

the existence of personal preferences; one still has likes and dislikes, but one's happiness is not dependent on them. Thought unfolds the nature of reality, eradicates the ignorance and resents admonition for visualization of truth face to face. The only problem is the suffering of mankind. The solution is the attainment of a state of bliss and the path is the tri-stepped way, passing from one point to another. It is *Dukha* (suffering); the latter is *Nibbana* (Nirvana) and the path, the *Magga*. Non-violence (*ahimsa*) is one of the main teachings of the Buddha. Nonviolent attitude towards all living beings, which is the first precept in Buddhism, is based upon the principle of mutual attraction and rightness common to all nature.

The interdependence of the mind and body and the impact of emotions and thoughts on health and well-being were well known to ancient Buddhists. Buddhism speaks of the power of the mind and how we could control many functions of our bodies with our minds. According to Buddhist thinking, when dealing with illness and health, the mind, emotions and body must be dealt with in an integrated manner. Buddhism is emphatic on the inseparable connection between the mind and body – the complex interactions that take place between thoughts, body, and the outside world. The World Health Organization defines well-being as a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity. The Buddhist understanding of well-being is similar with its emphasis on the balanced interaction between the mind and body as well as between life and its environment. Illness tends to arise when this delicate equilibrium is upset. Buddhist theory and practice aim to restore and strengthen this balance. In the East, Buddhism has impacted the field of health and medicine for many years. In Buddhist sutras and ancient Buddhist chronicles, there are countless references to and discussion on health and medicine, and how the mind and emotions affect ones behavior and ultimately ones' health. Buddhist spirituality is founded on loving-kindness and compassion towards all living beings. According to Buddhism, to be active and healthy, one needs to live a spiritual life. Spirituality with meditation as an essential element of daily life, has a direct impact on the overall health of people. Science and Buddhism really share is the goal of understanding the nature of reality. Science uses that scientific method and a lot of technology – it starts from the outside and probes the nature of reality. Buddhism uses the human mind, reformed through meditation, starting from the inside, looking at the same questions. While modern medicine tends to address the ailing part of the body in isolation from the rest, treating it alone, the Buddhist understanding of health sees disease as a reflection of the total somatic system, or life itself, and seeks to cure it through a fundamental reorientation of a person's life-style and outlook. Physical aspects of life are inseparable from the emotional, mental and spiritual aspects. The optimal condition of health is one achieved when mind and body are functioning well and interacting together as one. Central of the Buddhist approach to health and healing is its emphasis on spiritual strength and an overriding sense of purpose in life based on compassionate action for others. Although modern medical science has made great strides, it has not necessarily furthered the cause of human happiness.

The emergence of the holistic and psychosomatic movements testifies to the need for something deeper in understanding the human being. In recent years focused scientific studies have revealed the decisive influence of people's states of mind, emotions, attitudes and beliefs on how they get sick and how they stay well. Upsets or shocks to the mind such as divorce, death of a loved one, have direct bearing on the biochemistry of the immune system. Similarly, wear and tear on the mind such as boredom, self-obsession, sense of not being in control, alienation, wears down the physical systems of the body. For example, the study on Pioneer in Modern Scientific Research on Buddhist Meditation Dr. Herbert Benson, Professor of Medicine at Harvard Medical School was a pioneer in modern scientific research on meditation. He says that he gives a biological explanation of meditation, which has been practiced in the East for thousands of years. In the 1970's, he published "The Relaxation Response" where he showed how meditation could increase concentration and counteract the harmful effects of stress. He founded the Mind -Body Medical Institute and argued that meditators counteracted the stress-induced fight-or-flight response and achieved a calmer, happier state[10].

Dr. Richard Davidson, Director of the Laboratory for Affective Neuroscience at the University of Wisconsin at Madison is the founder of the Mind and Life Institute which is dedicated to creating a powerful working collaboration and research partnership between modern science and Buddhism – the world's two most powerful traditions for understanding the nature of reality and investigating the mind. Its purpose is firstly, to promote the creation of a contemplative, compassionate, and rigorous experimental and experiential science of the mind which could guide and inform medicine, neuroscience, psychology, education and human development. Secondly, to contribute to the epistemological revolution which is taking place through modern physics as well as philosophy, in order to extend our understanding of knowledge to one that integrates the diverse dimensions of our world. Buddhism has refined meditation methods in order to probe the nature of mind, using the mind itself as the instrument of investigation. Only in recent years, the scientists in fields such as psychology, cognitive science, neuroscience and medical science have begun to show interest in this vast field of Buddhist knowledge. Today, biobehavioral scientists in increasing numbers are extending their methods and expanding their conceptual frameworks realizing the complementary nature of the two approaches. Studies show that meditation is boosting the

immune system and helps to reduce stress. Ten million American adults practice meditation regularly, twice as many as a decade ago. Meditation classes are very popular among mainstream Americans. Meditation is being recommended by more and more physicians and other health-care professionals as a way to prevent, slow or at least control pain of chronic diseases like heart conditions, AIDS, cancer and infertility. Meditation techniques are helpful in reducing stress, promoting positive attitudes, decreasing symptoms and improving quality of life for persons with life-threatening illness, such as cancer and HIV/AIDS. In addition, meditation can prevent disease, such as cardiovascular disease by helping individuals change adverse lifestyle behaviors[11].

4. Conclusion

Buddhism can be seen to have relevance to the commonly defined dimensions of sustainability and well-being. The four noble truths and the noble eightfold path connect well with sustainability and well-being. The first and the second of noble truth explain about causes of suffering and unsustainability whereas the third and the last of the four noble truth explain about the effect or the way of achieving sustainability. The explanation of suffering and causes of suffering enable one to realize that unsustainability is caused through excessive greed or craving. An over-reliance on economic growth, mentality can endanger large-scale production and exploitation of natural resources including non-renewable resources and the creation of economic and social problems. This highlights an economic growth pursued without paying attention to planetary limits. The cessation of suffering identifies that unsustainability could be overcome by addressing its cause which is not overly relying on an economic growth mentality and being concerned about mindfulness, virtue practices, tolerance, contentedness, loving-kindness, etc. can be used as measures of satisfaction with spiritual practices. The main expected outcome of the spiritual practices is to fulfill the desire for happiness. There are two components of happiness; physical and mental, with the mental experience or the inner force playing a more powerful role. Mahayana Buddhism happiness springs from an altruistic or compassionate mind. Since human minds are often agitated by afflictive emotions, the results frequently are negative actions, which in turn cause suffering. The essence of Buddhism, therefore, is to tame, transform, and conquer the human mind, for it is the root of everything – it is the creator of happiness and suffering[12]. Buddhism is a state of lasting, unconditional happiness known as enlightenment to bring us to this state, Buddhism points us to lasting values in this impermanent world, and gives us valuable information about how things really are. Through understanding the law of cause and effect, using practical tools like meditation to gain insight and develop compassion and wisdom..

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