

Sustainable Development for Future Generation in Context with Buddhonomics

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ABSTRACT

This research paper attempts to give an exclusive approach of Buddhonomics in context with United Nation Millennium Development Goal (UNMDG), bring together balanced and sustainable model of growth policy for present and future generation. Right from beginning of the civilization, mankind engaged in fighting to get basic need for survival that is food, shelter and cloths. As advancement of human civilization and innovation of new technology, basic need for survival expanded to a greater undefined limit. Apart from food, shelter, cloths, now education, health, right and liberty are coming under basic need. Buddhonomics itself a sustainable growth model governed by Buddha's principles that more concerned about equality, social justice and empowerment. Instead of Growth centric economic policies determine by DGP (Gross Domestic Product) as a welfare indicator, Buddhonomics implement and determined by happiness and sustainability. UN Millennium development goals initiated by United Nation on the recommendation of Brahimi committee states that, every individual has the right to dignity, freedom, equality, a basic standard of living that includes freedom from hunger and violence and encourages, tolerance and solidarity, basically a Buddhonomics objective having numbers of subjective areas. Today humans not more than commodities. Around 3 billion population of the world are living in DAD syndrome (Dollar a Day). Profit driven growth ignores human and ecological values. Growth is nothing but the desire, when luxury become necessity, desire growth leads to more growth. In the name of growth, we are blindly consuming our natural resource that altering face of the earth. Our hunger for selfish greed created number of social and economic problems. And now democratic process indulges in saving humanity from imminent disaster. Today our biggest challenge is sustainable growth. Desire of selfish growth and ignorance of human and ecological values is "Dukkha".

Buddhonomics is a strategy that gives emphasis on balancing economy and ecology for sustainable development and concerned about sustainability for future generation. Buddhonomics give importance to satisfaction that is inner happiness and peace and narrowing desire that gives sustainability not only inter-generational but inter-generational development.

Keywords: Buddhonomics; UNMDG; Sustainable Development; Future Generation; Satisfaction

Introduction with Purpose

This paper tries to give an exclusive approach of Buddhonomics in context with United Nation Millennium Development Goal (UNMDG), bring together balanced and sustainable model of growth policy for present and future generation. Today humans are not more than commodities, around 3 billion population of the world are living in DAD syndrome (Dollar a Day). Profit driven growth ignores human and ecological values. Growth is nothing but the desire, when luxury become necessity, desire growth leads to more growth. Then today biggest challenge is sustainable growth. Desire of selfish growth and ignorance of human and ecological values is 'Dukkha'. Buddhonomics is a strategy that gives emphasis on balancing economy and ecology for sustainable development and concerned about sustainability for future generation. Buddhonomics give importance to satisfaction that is inner happiness and peace and narrowing desire that gives sustainability not only intra-generational but inter-generational development.

Research Methodologies & Approaches

This paper divided into two parts. First part examines the cause and effect of the profit centric growth model of development and achieve as mention in the United Nation Millennium goal. Ignorance leads to biggest challenges like climate change, poverty, malnutrition that become major problem for survival of the humanity. Second part of this paper will examine Buddhonomics growth model and there implication to enhance to achieve UN Millennium goal. Buddhonomics based on Buddha's 'Middle Path' is sustainable development that is objective and by achieving UN Millennium goal is a broader subjective development. This paper also argues that the multicultural dimensions of globalization uplift standard of living of the people but in the same time it forget sustainability of the civilization. The focuses throughout in this paper is on sustainable development model of Buddhonomics for achieving United Nation Millennium Development Goal (UNMDG) and how principle of Buddhonomics helps in eliminate poverty, malnutrition. We can get sustainability by achieving eight UN goals.

Discussion

1 Buddhist Economics

Buddhist Economics is a practical approach to economics. The term "Buddhist Economics" was first proposed by British economist E. F. Schumacher in 1955 in his book Small is Beautiful, published in 1966. Buddha's principles of economics focus on 'Right Livelihood' based on eight fold paths. Economics mainly focus on growth and creation of wealth. Contemporary economists give emphasis on Gross National Product as a human welfare indicator. For growth, they ignore all human values and ecology.

Rapid changing world economy and hunger for growth dominates every household of the society. Growth, mainly self growth, is the main motive for all. From beginning of the civilization till today many economic systems have emerged and our main goal has always been development. Profit is often the ultimate target. Today humans are not more than commodities. In the contemporary economy we lost our wisdom. The United Nations and the countries of the world are now concerned about rapid climate change and they focus on appropriate use of natural resource through working on sustainable development programs. In September 2000, world leaders adopted United Nations Millennium Declaration. Recently in October 2011, the UN adopted Bhutan's 'Gross National Happiness Index' proposal. The main difference between western economics and Buddhist economics is that the former aims at maximum profit and the latter maximum satisfaction. Buddha's teaching of 'Middle Path' gives us more than what it means. In my research, Buddha's Middle Path will be a primary tool in investigating sustainable development in context with Buddhist Economics. Taking into consideration, the business cycle, i. e. 'Boom & Burst' growth model, which leads to economic crisis. The crisis gives 'Dukkha'. Buddha said that for households, poverty is suffering. It's time, we should think of not only Intra-generational, but also Inter-generational equality.

Buddhist economics thought is not available presented in one discourse as a separate coherent theory. One has to glean through numerous discourses and collect material pertaining to economics, and then weave these into a system consistent with the spirit of the Buddhist doctrine (Dhamma). The Buddha has already provided us with a practical test in order to verify whether a teaching falls in line with his doctrine or not.¹ The definition of the term, economy, is the management of household, the administration of the material resources of an individual, community or country.² The definition given to economics is the science of household management.³ As Buddhism is a religion that emphasizes emancipation from Samsāric existence, the Buddha did not want to talk very much about secular affairs. Therefore, we do not find much emphasis laid on the systematic financial management as it's a secular affair. Nevertheless, there are some discourses delivered by the Buddha to lay people in the form of ethics with regard to the management of household, earnings, expenditure and other secular affairs.⁴

¹ Nandasena. Ratnapala, Op. Cit., p. 97.

² Chambers' Twentieth Century Dictionary, p. 396.

³ Ibid., p. 396.

⁴ Kottegoda Warnasuriya, His Lai Journal of Humanistic Buddhism, (ed.) A. W. P. Guruge, University of West, Rosemead, Los Angeles Country, California, USA, vol. 7, p. 158.

It's often said that Buddhism is devoid of a substantial economic theory. Such a view arises because of the erroneous belief that Buddhism is a religion more otherworldly in its nature than being concerned with the day-to-day mundane problems of the present world we live in. The Buddha states that the righteous life first leads in this world and will eventually lead to a happy life in the next world (Dhammacāri sukham seti asmin loke paramhi ca). The emphasis in Buddhism is always on the good and virtuous life in this world, and not that of the other world. Even Nibbāna, the final enlightenment desired by a Buddhist could be attained in this very world itself.⁵

In one discourse of the Dīgha Nikāya i. e. Sigālovāda Sutta, the Buddha taught to young man Sigāla, we come across a simple verse, which concisely contains the essential features of Buddhist economic thinking.⁶ According to this verse, an individual is expected to divide what he earns (i. e., resources) into four equal shares. The first share or portion is to be spent on his basic needs such as food, clothing etc. The two next shares or portions should be spent on fruitful or meaningful activities such as agriculture or trade. The last portion or share is to be saved in order to meet any exigency such as an unexpected illness or external danger (i. e., flood, fire, robbers, danger from Kings etc.): “One portion let him spend and taste the fruit. His business to conduct let him take two, portion four let him reserve, and hard. So, there will be wherewithal in times of need.”⁷ This simple verse needs careful interpretation beyond what it openly conveys in its face value. In this verse, indicators of economic development or prosperity of an individual, group or a state is found. The basic economic policy of a state is also outlined. Unless the verse is analyzed carefully, keeping the spirit of Buddha's teachings in mind, it is not easy to unravel the above-implied meanings.

Buddhist economics can be seen as answering some of the questions, which are being asked, from both the East and the West. By reintroducing ethical elements into western economics, it provides a broader discussion of all the economics: supply and demand, monetary, micro and macroeconomics, credit, rates of interest, modeling and global forecasting. Its theory still can be set out in the terminology standard to economics and business administration. Historically, synthesizing socialism (or Marxism) and Buddhism, a Buddhist economics has made a “western toolbox” more available to those responsible actually for creating the socio-economic/political milieu in the ‘new’ twentieth century countries. Whether allowing socialists to use Buddhism or Buddhists to use socialism, as in Burma, it gave governments a way to build their countries with

⁵ Nandasena. Ratnapala, Op. Cit., p. 97.

⁶ D. III. 180-193

⁷ Ibid., p. 180-193.

skillful means.⁸ The main use, then, of Buddhist economics is educational. It can be helpful in planning for the future and coexist with many types of system and society. Buddhist economics recognizes existing human values that are appropriate and influential in our changing economic and social environment.⁹

2 Buddhist Point of View to Formulate Economic Planning and UN Millennium Goal

There are five principles that Buddhist teaching lays down as necessary to be formulated as economic policy in a state, which practices Buddhist economics. Such a state cannot openly or clandestinely encourage or deal in five areas or types of economic activities. These are:

- I. The production and sale of arms and ammunition's (armaments).
- II. The production of poison
- III. The production, distribution and sale of alcohol and dangerous drugs
- IV. Rearing of animals for the purpose of killing them
- V. Sale of flesh¹⁰

The Buddhist economic theory looks at life from a holistic point of view. While surviving the material production, the relationship of such material produce to non-material aspects of life is underscored. Development of an individual is related to a family; a family to a group; a group to a state or a nation; a state to other states. All human beings are thus the focus of development. One does not forget even animals, birds, fish as well as trees and plants.¹¹ These are bound to human beings so closely that in an attempt to initiate economic production if are forgets or ignores it these that would result in disastrous consequences in the future.

Economic production and the Buddhist economic teach us that economics activities center on human beings. Then it has to look at man in relation to the economic activity initiated by him. Is this economic activity for the purpose of increasing one's own material possessions at the expense of other people? An economic act has to be weighed together with other acts and undertaken only when it does not:

- Exploit others;
- Increase additional wants while depriving some others of their basic needs;
- Does not fall within the five areas stated earlier;

⁸ Ananda W. P. Guruge, Op. Cit. pp. 82-83.

⁹ Ibid., p. 83.

¹⁰ Nandasena. Ratnapala, Op. Cit., pp. 99-100.

¹¹ D. III. 61.

- Would not lead to undue waste or the creation of bad balance in material resources available or disturb the ecological balance.¹²

In the Buddhist teachings, the mind is the forerunner of everything, and as such, even when physical labor is involved, it's the mind that is foremost: "Mind foreruns (all evil and all good) conditions; Mind is chief, mind-made are they."¹³ In such a sense, one becomes satisfied with whatever work he selects, and as such, an alienation does not set in. The principle of alienation is referred to when people who are frightened, seek refuge in trees, mountains, outside agents or forces. The simple creations of the people begin to hold sway over them with the passage of time. No satisfaction is derived in labor engaged in. Ignorance of reality is the root cause of such alienation. Proper education or means of providing correct information is emphasized here.¹⁴

In one discourse of the Dīgha Nikāya, the duty of an employee is laid down, primarily with the purpose of narrowing-down any available opportunities for alienation to arise. The employees are to be accorded work in proportion to their strength; food and payment according to their age and merit; when they are sick, they should be provided with proper medical care and excused from work. The employer is expected to share with them whatever delicacies were available to him. Sufficient leisure and recreation should be provided to them. In return, the employee applies himself diligently to the work, concentrating his moral and physical strength to do his best. He also should attempt to improve his skills and knowledge in order to perform his role better.¹⁵

Contentment is a cardinal point in Buddhist life. It's referred to as the greatest wealth.¹⁶ Very often contentment is wrongly interpreted to mean that it signifies the acceptance of fate, and thus the status quo. According to this interpretation, the motivation to better himself in a human being is lost. The Buddhist meaning of contentment is far from such an interpretation given to it. This contentment in a Buddhist sense does not mean that an individual should always be satisfied with what he receives and never attempt to improve or better himself. There is nothing that the Buddha emphasized to both monks and laymen as much as 'heedfulness' and 'vigilance'. This was so in the case of Buddha's own character. The resolution he made not to get up from his seat at the foot of the Bodhi tree until he was unable to attain final enlightenment illustrates the importance paid to 'heedfulness'.

¹² Nandasena. Ratnapala, Op. Cit., p. 101.

¹³ Dh. 1.

¹⁴ Nandasena. Ratnapala, Op. Cit., pp. 112-113.

¹⁵ D. III. 180-193.

¹⁶ Dh. 204.

Economic development presupposes careful economic planning Buddhist economics refer to such planning at the individual family level, and at national state level. The Buddha gave four principles of economic practice for finding happiness in the present lifetime. They are:

- I. Diligent acquisition (Utthana Sampadā)
- II. Careful Conservation (Ārakkha Sampadā)
- III. Having virtuous friends (Kalyāña Sampadā)
- IV. Living within your means (Sama Jīvikatā)¹⁷

Diligent acquisition means skillfulness in the acquisition of wealth. Diligent acquisition refers to the habits of a person who works hard for his living, in contrast to those who are too lazy to make the effort. It's also refers to the patience needed for people to work together as a team and the wisdom to recognize the work left undone-being able to perform, organize and administer the work as required. The most important feature of this first stage of the economic process can be summarized as acquiring wealth in an ethical way. As Buddhists we would say that taking advantage of others economically, in whatever form, is unethical acquisition of wealth. Particular forms of livelihood that the Buddha advised us to avoid in this respect are the five sorts of unwholesome livelihood mentioned below.¹⁸

The Buddhist economic theory is indeed not value-free. It postulates happiness and contentment or well-being for the great majority of the people. An economic act is also a volitional economic acts (Kammās) the result in pleasant consequences both in the present and in future lives. Kamma is one force in our life, which conditions our existence: “Man is conditioned by heredity (Bīja Niyāma), by his physical, social and ideological environment (Salāyatana Paccayā Phasso etc.), by his psychological past (Citta Niyāma) including his karmic heritage (Kamma Niyāma). But he is not determined by anyone or all of them”.¹⁹ Kamma, as much as the other four factors could determine your birth in a poor or rich family. Nevertheless, it does not mean that by virtue of this alone you are destined to be poor or rich always. It's your present action, your industry and application that matters. That is why in Buddhism heedfulness is always emphasized. The crux of economic development is embedded in this principle: “Be heedful, strive own with diligence.”²⁰

E. F. Schumacher points out that Buddhist economics must be very different from the economics of modern materialism, since the Buddhist sees the essence of civilization not in a multiplication of wants but in the purification of human character. Character, at the same time, is

¹⁷ A. IV. 281-285.

¹⁸ A. III. 207.

¹⁹ K. N. Jayatilleke, *The Message of the Buddha*, London: 1974, p. 146.

²⁰ Nandasena. Ratnapala, *Op. Cit.*, p. 102.

formed primarily by a man's work. In addition, work, properly conducted in conditions of human dignity and freedom, bless those who do it and equally their products.

According to E. F. Schumacher, 'Right Livelihood' is one of the requirements of the Buddha's Noble Eightfold Path and that 'it was clear, therefore, that there must be a thing as a Buddhist economics,' he took up some fundamentals to see 'what they look like when viewed by a modern economist and Buddhist economist'. Schumacher was conscious that there were people in Buddhist countries, 'who care nothing for religious and spiritual values of their heritage and ardently desire to embrace materialism of modern economics at the fastest possible speed.' He expected them to 'dismiss Buddhist economics as nothing better than a nostalgic dream' and 'consider whether the path of economic development outlined in modern economics is likely to lead them to places they really want to be.' As ill effects of 'modernization' without regard to religious and spiritual values. E. F. Schumacher as well as his supporters for the most part dealt with their general impressions of Buddhism rather than the actual teachings of the Buddha. Three Buddhist concepts have had a significant impact on them and, in order of emphasis given to them, they are:

- The world-view, which encompasses all sentient beings as interdependent and inter-related and the resulting emphasis on loving kindness and Caring for all;
- The fifth aspect of the Noble Eightfold Path pertaining to Right Living or Livelihood (though taken literally and in a wider general sense than in the manner defined in Buddhist scriptures);
- The Middle Way avoiding extremes of luxury and asceticism²¹

Then concept of Buddhist economics, based on Buddhist ethics, relates to individual behavior and motivation relevant to small-scale enterprises as the cases they discuss exemplify.

3 Buddhist Conception of Sustainable Development According to the UN Millennium Goal

The Pāli term for management is Samvidhāna. In the Vyaggapajja Sutta of the Anguttara Nikāya the world, Samvidhātum, is used in the sense of economic management. It's an infinitive of the verb Samvidhahati which means manages well or systematically. It's preceded by 'Alam Kātum' (Capable of doing). Other words very closely related to Samvidhātum are Dakkho (Clever and Efficient) and Anālaso (Diligent). All these words are used in Pāli texts in the sense of management.²² The Pāli term for profession or livelihood Kammanthāna or Kammanta, which

²¹ Ananda W. P. Guruge, Op. Cit., p. 86.

²² D. III, 190.

literally means industry.²³ Moreover, in the context of Noble Eightfold Path, Ājīva (Sammājīva) is used in the sense of profession or livelihood.

The scope is to find out better solution in context with Buddhist economics for sustainable development that is important for not only present generation, but for future generation. To find Middle Path in three stage of economics:

- I. Acquisition of Wealth
- II. Conservation of Wealth
- III. Employment of Wealth

Sustainable development through Buddha's teaching of 'Right Livelihood' and concept will elaborate by balancing way:

It's a widespread notion that though religion is good for spiritual development, it's a hindrance for material development. Nevertheless, countries faithful to Buddhism reject the idea that there is an incompatibility between Buddhist teaching and modern economics. Burma says that they do not see any clash between Buddhist values and its economic development.²⁴ It's true to certain extent that religions, which advocate non-violence, are against vocations like selling and producing weapons, killing animals for meat, producing and selling liquor and so forth. The Buddhist ethical philosophy is designed for both spiritual as well as material development.

Cultivation of restraint (Sayama) and self-control are key factors of Buddhist philosophy of management. One should be wise and strategic in managing household, income and expenditure. At least the householder should have the common sense to know the perils of economic deterioration. Over-infatuation and addiction to bad habits are hindrances to economic development and management. In the management of minority and family matters, one should be aware of certain bad habits that may create chaos and disorder regarding the management of one's economy. The Sigālovāda Sutta mentions six ways of dissipating one's income and wealth if the householder is addicted to any of the following vices: addiction to intoxicating drinks, frequenting the streets at untimely hours, haunting fairs, being infatuated by gambling, association with evil companions and the habit of idleness.²⁵ There are six dangers of drinking: the loss of wealth, loss of self-control, susceptibility to sickness, receipt of ill reputation, loss of sense of shame and impairment of intelligence.

The Buddha said that it's a bad habit to waste time in frequenting streets at ultimately hours. This may create the problems of security of oneself, wife, children and wealth. Moreover, there is a risk of suspicion and implication in criminal cases. Such a habit would bring unhappiness,

²³ A. IV, 281.

²⁴ E. F. Schumacher, Op. Cit., p. 53.

²⁵ D. III, 182.

insecurity and bad reports. Addicted to shows and musical events are considered a bad habit as one has to spend his wealth as well as precious time. According to the commentary, not only this habit will interrupt seriously one's employment. Further, his wealth and property are not secured.²⁶ Addiction to gambling (Jutapamādatthānānuyoga) is considered as a serious social and economic evil. The Buddha pointed out that gambling destroys one's wealth and property very fast.²⁷ Gambler is hated by the loser when he wins. At the loss of wealth, he mourns. His words are not trusted and his friends and relatives despise him. People do not like to give a woman to such a person in marriage because of his gambling habit.

The problem of association with bad friends and companions is another channel of dissipating wealth. If the companions are gamblers, cheaters, drunkards, the householder is in deep trouble. Bad influence of peers can destroy not only what the householder has already earned and also his whole career.²⁸ The habit of being lazy is another peril for one's success as well as management. The Buddha very clearly expounded the advantages and disadvantages of being diligent and lazy. Man who is addicted to laziness cannot generate income. In the Vyaggapajja Sutta of the Anguttara Nikāya, the Buddha praised the usefulness of balancing one's income and expenditure. One of the principles of economic management in Buddhism is Samajīvikatā (Evenness of income and expenditure).²⁹ According to this sutta one's expenditure should not exceed his income. If somebody's expenditure is more than his income, he cannot balance his budget. Whatever he earns is exhausted. He is unable to manage his household. Such a person is always having a deficit and running into debts. This situation was well exemplified by the Buddha in a simile. This is very similar to a pond that has four openings, which are kept open; the pond cannot hold its water anymore.³⁰ The person who spends all what he earns is not wise and he is ignorant regarding the management of his income. According to the Buddha, such persons are like fig-tree gluttons.

Conclusion

In the final analysis, however, Buddhist economic activities and economic values never seemed to play a direct role in the development of a more modern type of capitalism. This is partly due to the inherently conservative and ameliorator tendencies in Buddhist theories of political and

²⁶ DA. P. 964.

²⁷ D. III, 184.

²⁸ Kottegoda Warnasuriya, Op. Cit., p. 167.

²⁹ A. IV, 281.

³⁰ A. VI, 284.

social change and to the strong emphasis on giving to the Samgha Dhāna as the best ‘investment’ an individual could make for their future. In terms of issues of economic equality and distributive justice on the other hand, Buddhist teachings were generally less interested in changing the current distribution of wealth than in cultivating the proper attitudes toward wealth, which were defined as those of giving and non-attachment. It is in the light of both immediate experience and long term prospects that the study of Buddhist economics could be recommended even to those who believe that economic growth is more important than any spiritual or religious values. For it is not a question of choosing between ‘modern growth’ and ‘traditional stagnation’. It is a question of finding the right path of development, the Middle Way between materialist heedlessness and traditionalist immobility, in short, of finding ‘Right Livelihood’.

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