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Buddhist Principles of Governance and Their Relevance to Modern Political Systems

Nipan Chakma

University of Kelaniya, Sri Lanka

Abstract

This study aims to critically evaluate the extent to which early Buddhist ethical principles can provide practical insights for strengthening contemporary governance structures. Contemporary political institutions across the world continue to face significant issues including corruption, abuse of power, social inequality, declining public trust, and the erosion of ethical leadership. In this context, Buddhist political thought offers an alternative normative framework grounded in moral responsibility, compassionate leadership, and social welfare.

The study investigates key principles of governance found in early Buddhist teachings, with particular emphasis on the Dasa Raja Dharma (Ten Duties of a Righteous Ruler), the concept of ethical kingship, and the relationship between moral conduct and social stability as reflected in selected Pali canonical sources. Through textual analysis and interpretive examination, the research explores how Buddhist teachings conceptualize governance as a moral responsibility aimed at promoting justice, harmony, and collective well-being rather than political domination or personal gain.

This paper further analyzes the applicability of Buddhist governance principles to contemporary democratic and administrative systems. It argues that values such as generosity, non-violence, integrity, self-restraint, impartiality, and accountability provide a meaningful ethical foundation for addressing modern political crises. The study ultimately argues that Buddhist governance ethics offer valuable conceptual resources for reimagining political responsibility in contemporary global society.

Keywords: Buddhist Governance; Ethical Leadership; Dasa Raja Dharma; Political Philosophy;
Modern Political Systems