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Buddhist Happiness and Economics for Development and Work

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ABSTRACT

Development from Buddhist perspectives encourage compassion and wisdom. Unlike mainstream economics, Buddhist economics promote cooperation, sharing, harmony with other

people and nature, and real work useful for people and the society. With the middle-path way of life and middle-way economics, human beings can live with the right balance with happiness and real quality of life as well as moderate consumption. Happiness in Buddhism also promotes high quality of happiness at mind and wisdom levels beyond material well-being as a path for human development and sustainable happiness. Along the path to develop inner happiness, human beings would have good mind and gain more wisdom to understand natural laws, less selfish for themselves and helping others. This is a process of advancing human development. This Buddhist concept supporting real human development and social work should be promoted and integrated in real education, of which the formal system nowadays is unlikely to focus on spiritual part of education for happy life and work. The paper is therefore to discuss on the concepts of Buddhist happiness and economics supporting good life and good development as a whole, particularly relating to work, consumption and resources distribution. Thus, the concept leading to happy societies should be practiced and promoted in education.

1. Introduction

The world development today has many serious problems in human, social and environmental development. This calls for a new paradigm for development. While conventional development model has led to individual and social conflicts, Buddhist approach to development can be applied for more peaceful, harmonious, and happy societies.

The paper explores happiness in Buddhism which may be different from what defined in Western theories or in general studies. The concept of happiness in Buddhism, particularly on inner happiness, leading to useful implications for development is discussed. The paper also explains Buddhist economics in relation to work, consumption, and natural resources. Overall, to apply the Buddhist approach to development can improve development situation facing many crises.

2. Happiness in Buddhism

This section explains characteristics of happiness in Buddhism and the relation to human and social development. Ranking of happiness in Buddhism are explained.

Happiness in Buddhism or as called in the Pāli language, sukha, has its own meaning which is more precise than the term “happiness”, as used in the Western sense. Sukha is the opposite status of dukha, or suffering; thus, to have sukha means to reduce dukha (including physical pain and mental status that people do not want to experience). In Buddhism, there are different levels of sukha or happiness for human development; and each individual can be trained to achieve higher and greater or a more refined happiness; therefore, happiness is not viewed as a static but a dynamic process in human development. The development of happiness or sukha from a basic to higher level can be seen as a process of reducing dukkha or suffering until it is completely gone at the highest level of sukha, which is nibbānasukha . This can be called as a process of practicing dhamma.

To progressively develop happiness in Buddhism, people must engage in the process of reducing suffering, from the root cause, by truly understanding natural inter-dependence through right views with a clear and purified mind. To be happy, one has to understand how to deal correctly with suffering. The Four Noble Truths describe nature, cause, and how to eliminate suffering.

The meanings and human duties to deal with each element of the Four Noble Truths are summarized in Table 1.

Table 1. The Four Noble Truths, the meanings, and duties to deal with

Each Noble Truth	Meanings	Duties to deal with it
1. <i>Dukha</i>	Suffering, dissatisfaction	To comprehension of suffering. To know location of the problem
2. <i>Samudaya</i>	The cause or origin of dissatisfaction or suffering	To eradicate the cause of suffering. To diagnose of the origin
3. <i>Nirodha</i>	The cessation or extinction of suffering	To realize the cessation of suffering. To envision the solution
4. <i>Magga</i>	The path leading to the cessation of dissatisfaction or suffering	To follow the right path through actual practices

Therefore, human beings need to know about dissatisfaction or suffering, its causes, and how to follow the right path for cessation. When we have no dukkha or suffering, we have sukha or happiness. In practicing process, the more we can reduce dukkha, the higher sukha we can achieve.

2.1 Happiness Ranks and Classifications in Buddhism

In Buddhism, there are different kinds of classifications or levels of sukha. No matter how many classified levels, its range starts from the lowest level: kāmasukha- which is happiness from acquisition or meeting sensual pleasures, to the highest level nirodha samāpattisukha, the total extinction of suffering. Kāmasukha is a kind of happiness, but it can also cause and increase

dukkha or suffering; therefore, it is not considered as real happiness. Different ranks or levels of happiness also reflect degrees of real happiness.

However, this lowest rank of happiness at the physical or material level is required for basic needs to relieve a person's physical sufferings. After the basic needs are fulfilled, that person should develop further to gain higher level of happiness. Excessive material accumulation driven by greed may not lead to the increase of happiness and will never keep happiness sustainable. Instead, it may increase problems, resulting in suffering and reducing happiness.

This type of happiness depends on external pleasures to serve one's needs and may cause conflict with others who also need them. People can get stress and tension for that object that they depend upon and their happiness can fade away with higher desire and pressure. Thus, this type of happiness needs to be watched out for or monitored by one's own mind and managed with wisdom that understands the natural truth of change and true happiness.

Buddhism encourages human beings to have happiness with less dependence from materials outside oneself. Happiness can be obtained from non-acquisition which is mind and wisdom based. This is the higher level of happiness or inner happiness which can be generated inside human beings and independent of external factors. This level of happiness is considered as a neater type of happiness that human beings should be trained for and it should be the goal for human development.

The advancement in developing oneself to gain happiness at higher level is the progress from practicing dhamma, which can be achieved by continued practicing rightly. When people reach the true happiness with full wisdom, they are free from any attachment and will not move back to enjoy the lower level of happiness (P. A. Payutto, 2012).

In other words, true happiness means realizing dhamma, and reaching true happiness means reaching dhamma . Buddhism teaches how to achieve a good and happy life by reaching the essence of dhamma. Human beings have to understand what is a good life and genuine happiness. However, there are many steps to reach true happiness and many detailed classifications of happiness in various dhamma books . However, to simplify the concept, this study follows the classification in Payutto (2011) which summarizes this into three levels, from the lowest to the highest, as follows:

2.1.1 The Level of Sensual Pleasures

Happiness from sensual pleasures is the lowest level of Buddhist happiness, obtained from the five senses: eye, ear, nose, tongue, and body; such as nice forms, pleasant noises, good smell, sweet taste, and comfortable touches. This is pleasure from enjoying these things at the physical level. This sensual pleasures or *kāmasukha* is not real happiness because it may involve dissatisfaction and suffering (*dukkha*).

Kāmasukha itself can be further divided into two categories: undeveloped and developed:

a) First, the undeveloped one from the untrained mind, driven by *kilesa*(defilements) is troublesome desire. This type of desire is driven by ignorance of the three signs of truth (impermanent, suffering, and non-existing) and can push people into trouble with un-satisfaction and unlimited wants. This type of desire may be called *taṇhā* (craving and attachment). When the desire is not met, it can cause frustration due to attachment from anticipation. For this type of happiness, people search for materials and consumption to meet physical sensual pleasures. However, if all people have unlimited wants for themselves, this could result in conflicts in the society with limited resources as well as making themselves suffer if their desires are not met.

b) Second, *kāmasukha* that is more developed from training. It is acceptable that people can be happy with sensual pleasures, if they have wisdom and practice for living appropriately in society. People can have materials and wealth, but they know how to develop their lives as well as others towards higher goals. In other words, material accumulations can be used to improve human development to benefit the society as a whole. Also, humans should limit sensual desires and people must know what level is appropriate for themselves and behave well towards others. In the process of acquisition of material wealth, one should not burden oneself, as well as any others.

If people in society have *sīla* (morality), *dāna* (generosity, sharing), and *paññā* (wisdom), society can gain positively from material development. Therefore, Buddhism does not reject materials or physical development, if it is supervised by *dhamma*.

After all, the happiness from sensual pleasure in materials depends on external factors outside oneself and people may face unfavorable conditions, which may lead to suffering. Therefore, people still need more development in terms of mind and wisdom based happiness in order to manage these sensual pleasures without suffering. As happiness at this level still involves

suffering or it is temporary and unsustainable, there is a need for happiness at higher levels through dhamma practice.

2.1.2 The Level of Mind Development

This is happiness that can be generated from the mind, not from getting more materials or dependence with external factors. Happiness can be developed inside one's own mind. Therefore, this level of happiness is higher than the level of physical well-being which has to depend on other things outside oneself.

As indicated in P.A. Payutto (2011, p.10) "Development on the mind-level will allow the individual to have a mind that contains virtues like loving-kindness (*mettā*), compassion (*karuṇā*), faith (*saddhā*), gratitude (*kataññūkataveditā*) and so on. It is a mind with efficiency, strength, stability, diligence and patience, a mind that has mindfulness (*sati*) and knows its responsibilities, and so it is in good health because it is peaceful, relaxed, clear, fresh, joyful, and happy."

With loving-kindness (*mettā*) and compassion (*karuṇā*) in mind, we want other people to be happy. Therefore, we are happy to give, share, or help others, instead of taking advantage of them. People can be generous (*dāna*) towards others rather than be selfishness, and this can generate happiness within the givers. Instead of being happy from acquisitions, individuals can be happy from giving away and acquiring less. In that case, individual happiness from mind development, as well as societal happiness, increases as the givers and the receivers are also happy together.

Mind development can bring in a higher quality mind characterized by power, clarity, and peace. These are conditions for the establishment of various virtues and can be used for reflection, investigation, and contemplation through wisdom. This is the characteristic of a mind having *samādhi*" or concentration, which is especially required for high level mind development (*ibid*, p.11). When mind is developed to higher levels with higher quality, it leads the way for more wisdom.

However, Buddhist teachings encourage people to develop more than happiness at mind level because people still have attachments. For example, they may attach to *samādhi* and its results; i.e, peaceful mind and clam, or some goodness/ good expectation. When *samādhi* has gone and

people return to their normal situation, they may feel suffering again. Even though people attach to goodness and good behavior, the attachment can result in dissatisfaction or suffering when things do not conform to the expectation. Therefore, happiness at this level is still temporarily. Thus, human beings need to develop more to the level that they can be happy sustainably without suffering.

2.1.3 The Level of Liberation

Happiness at this level is characterized by wisdom or insight (paññā), with full understanding of natural changes from the three signs of truth: the impermanence, the state of suffering, and the non-existing (or selflessness). Realizing that it is not worth to attach with, human beings then have purified minds and free from any attachment. Therefore, they are completely free from suffering as they have insight to understand all natural laws, i.e., changes as well as causes and effects. This is the highest level of happiness and the individual who has progress to reach this level is completely awakened or enlightened with natural freshness and joyfulness (ibid. p.13). Nothing can cause suffering to that person whose wisdom is able to solve all problems wisely with the mind of emptiness and unattached. They will neutrally understand everything under the natural truth without suffering.

This level is the ultimate goal of dhamma practice or happiness development to be called as lokuttara (beyond the world) level or paramattha (the highest level). Those who can achieve this level are noble individuals or called “Ariya” (starting from Sotāpanna up to Arahant who can have genuine happiness at lokuttara level). That individual who has achieved the highest happiness do not want anything for oneself anymore; therefore, that one can fully work for others for the benefit of the society. Whatever the individual does is driven from chanda to do good things with selflessness, as well as pure and perfect compassion. Consequently, the society has received benefit fully from this type of highly developed person.

Although the person can have happiness at sensual pleasures (level 1) and mind based (level 2), there would be no danger as that are supervised by wisdom and can positively be utilized for the benefits of others and the society. Even with the search for happiness on the level of sensual pleasures in material things, it will be positive: not aimed at oneself, but for selflessness and is more useful for others – bringing more peace and happiness to society.

For ordinary people, the progress in happiness development beyond the first level of material dependent is encouraged. People should be able to be happy from mind development and wisdom based happiness, although they may not fully reach the highest level of ultimate happiness. Beyond material level to mind and wisdom bases of happiness is considered as inner happiness (generated from inside oneself).

Another three level of classifications

Alternatively, there is another shorten category of happiness classified into 3 levels in Buddha-Dhamma: Extended Edition (2012: 1099) as the followings.

- I. Happiness from acquisition (driven by taṇhā)
- II. Happiness from inner-generation (driven by chanda)
- III. Happiness that exists all time inside every human beings (driven by paññā)

The difference among the three categories are characterized in the followings:

I) The first type of happiness is sensual pleasures from material acquisition, which is the lowest level of happiness and unsustainable because this type of happiness depends on external factors which human beings have to search for. This type of happiness, driven by taṇhā or craving to meet unlimited desire for oneself, can cause troubles to the individual and society because it involves greed, anger, and illusion. To avoid conflicts with others, this happiness has to be controlled by sīla or morality.

II) The second one connected to mind development is a type of happiness that can be generated inside one's own mind, driven by good desire; for example, the desire to be useful for others (not for selfishness), the love to learn and develop oneself, to be happy to work for its own results (not for rewards), etc. It is a higher happiness level than the first one because this one is driven by a higher and good desire which is more developed or trained to be, not driven by kilesa (defilements) and not for personal benefit only. This type of desire is called chanda (good will, aspiration). People can have chanda to be good, to be knowligible, to be creative, to be useful, to give or share what they have with others, to help people out of suffering, to do good things, etc. When people have chanda to do good things and to be useful to others, it would benefit societal development and happiness. This type of happiness can be generated inside oneself and there is no need to search for external sensual pleasures.

III) The third one is happiness with everybody and all the time, if our minds are detached from all defilements. Completely purified minds are filled with happiness, which can exist all the time in anyone. This can happen when one insightfully realizes all facts in life and completely free from suffering. People who enjoy this type of happiness are full with chanda to be good and useful for others. They are totally devoted to work and help all human beings and the world as they need nothing for themselves.

The difference of the above two desires (in *I* and *II*) is that: the first one (taṇhā) leads to negative consequences for the society and development, but the second one (chanda) results in positive impacts. Dhamma teachings promote people to work with good desire or chada instead of wrong desire driven by defilement or taṇhā. People who have practiced dhamma progressively can increase happiness from chada progressively. With pure chanda, people would not suffer from any kind of work. That is why human beings have to be trained for higher level of happiness .

Until the Dhamma practitioner continuously progress to reach the ultimate level of happiness (nibbāṇa) with full insight and free from any attachment, that person will have inner happiness all the time. Nothing can make them suffering as they fully understand all natural laws. This is the highest level of happiness that, in fact, exists inside everyone who can enjoy it all the time, but cannot be so due to ignorance. However, through practicing Dhamma, insight (vijjā) will replace ignorance (avijjā) and that person would be rewarded by happiness that exists inside everyone which can be enjoyed all the time, therefore, no need to search for happiness from outside. With selflessness, they also have full chanda or good desire to work for the benefit of others and the society. Happiness from the second to third levels are considered as inner happiness that Buddhist teachings encourage everyone to be trained and developed as the process of human development.

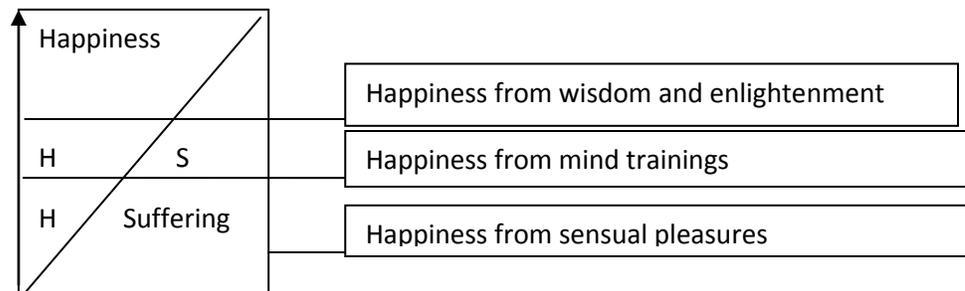
3. Buddhist Happiness for Development

Following Buddhist concept discussed in section 2, happiness concept for development proposed in this paper simply categorized into three main levels of physical, mind and wisdom levels. While physical level is the lowest, human beings should try to develop their happiness into higher levels of mind and wisdom which considered as inner happiness. Happiness development in Buddhism aims for completely free from suffering at the highest level, while happiness in

Western theories still attaches to the first or the lowest level involving a lot of suffering. Buddhist happiness would be enhanced when it moves up to higher level of inner happiness with less and less suffering.

Figure 2. Degree of happiness and suffering at different happiness levels.

Inner Happiness



The bottom level is happiness from sensual pleasures which involves a lot of suffering, so it can not generate much true happiness. The middle level represents the mind based level which involve more happiness generated by oneself. Suffering is reversely dropped with the degree of increased inner happiness. That is why people should aim for higher level of happiness. When inner happiness can be increased to the highest level, there would be no room for suffering left.

Current Western happiness usually refers to happiness in sensual pleasures which is still involve various forms of suffering and short-live happiness. In contrast, Buddhist happiness more focuses on inner happiness which is greater and more sustainable pattern as it is usually accompanied by less suffering. People can be happy from a clam mind, natural appreciation, positive thinking, being generous, helping others, compassion and loving kindness, not attachment to one self, working with good aspiration (chanda) and having good quality, etc. Instead of being happy from acquisitions, individuals and the society as a whole can be happy from giving and less acquisition as well as mind development.

As ordinary people normally understand or experience happiness at physical level, a clear distinction of real needs and unlimited wants in this type of happiness is needed. Happiness at this physical level is disaggregated into 2 types: a) the one which is necessary (real need) and b) the one which is not necessary (unlimited wants).

a) The level that is necessary for basic physical well-being for human beings to develop their potentials. Material consumptions are in limits and would not cause problems with others and nature. This type of happiness is acceptable in Buddhist happiness.

b) The level that beyond basic physical well-being and involve luxurious good and livings. People may like to consume many unnecessary things for over comfortable life or for social values/ status. People may continue to have unlimited wants and over accumulations. This type of happiness is not encouraged in Buddhism which considers real value of consumption. To search for this level of happiness can make people in trouble and suffer when they are not able to get what they want, not to mention conflicts with others. This is why this type of happiness is not real and unsustainable.

Only happiness in type a) is accepted. People need basic needs from materials for livings, namely, housing, clothes, food, drugs, etc. but no need for over luxurious for truly physical well-being. However, basic physical well-being concept may vary depend on period or stage of development and culture. In the modern world, in addition to those basic needs for survivals, it seems to be necessary to have some facilities for education and for advancing human development such as communication and learning equipment as well as supporting factors for practicing dhamma. Basic needs for quality living requires sufficient nutritious food, safety shelter with good/ clean environment (with water and sanitation as well as basic utilities), accessing to drugs and medical care, physical protection, plus foundation for well-being , i.e., basic access for education/ knowledge and communications, access to opportunities/ social inclusion, etc. However, some human development's supporting facilities should be used for the objective of education or utilization for human well-being rather than for luxury or fashion. Buddhist teachings focus on realizing real values of consumption for its real purpose of human well-being, not fake values of it which may results in over-luxury or over-comfortable. With middle way of life and moderation, people can consume materials in an appropriate level and know their limits. People should have wisdoms to know what level of consumption is appropriate to their situations (i.e, income, work, family) and not cause trouble to them by searching and wanting too much. As a result, appropriate or right amount would not cause suffering for themselves and others. This concept of physical well-being would make significant contribution to development.

This concept of limit to only real needs is a critical difference from happiness in Western theories of which people can search more and more consumption with illusion and greed. Western theories do not separate happiness into type a) and type b). Most of human wants are unnecessary or over luxury, but they still want more and more (under the assumption of conventional economics that human beings have ‘unlimited wants’) for sensual pleasures. No doubt that massive natural resources have been utilized for ‘unnecessary wants’.

When considering happiness from material and wealth by mixing both types, people may search for happiness type b) and find that happiness is only temporarily (and may involve troubles and suffering in order to obtain it) and need more consumption to maintain their happiness. This behavior is not encouraged in Buddhism which promotes only the happiness type a) which is needed for basic physical well-being and human development. People who practice dhamma may be able to change their happiness from materials from type b) to type a). This direction would support sustainable development path.

More importantly, Buddhism encourages people to enjoy higher level of happiness, which can be generated inside or inner happiness from mind and wisdom based. Therefore, in addition to train people to change their happiness behavior from physical type b) to type a), people should be able to move up the ladder of happiness development into level 2 and 3.

Inner happiness or happiness at levels 2) mind and 3) wisdom may be neglected from general theories and policy plans influenced by conventional development concept, but it is the focus of happiness in Buddhism. While happiness is normally considered from having something to meet one’s needs in general development approach, happiness in Buddhism can be obtained from not having (things) or leaving (self). This is happiness at higher level which is far beyond satisfaction that exists in Western happiness theories.

The dynamism of happiness from low to high levels also reflects the dynamism of personal development that is far beyond Western human development concept. Different levels of happiness in Buddhism reflect the difference in levels of human development. As human beings are different in terms of development and wisdom, they can enjoy the level of happiness at the level of their development. Ordinary people may enjoy the lowest level of happiness of sensual pleasures and have never experienced higher levels of happiness. In order to enjoy their own inner happiness, human beings need to be trained and practiced. When individuals are developed to achieve inner happiness, the benefits will be with both themselves and the society.

The development will be geared for all mankind, not for only some individuals. The world would be more peaceful. P.A. Payutto (2011) indicates that the development of happiness is the development of dhamma, human beings, and the world. Thus, human beings need to learn how to develop themselves for gaining inner happiness. If Buddhist concept of happiness is applied for development, the world development would be a better place with preferable situation. For example, being less want for own selves and less dependent on materials, inner happiness can lead to the whole societal happiness and sustainable development (Payutto, 1995); Kittiprapas, 2010a, 2010b, 2012). People can be happier with less resources utilization.

Following happiness in Buddhism, human behavior would be kind towards others and the nature with the understanding that human-being is a part of interconnected nature at large. This view and relationship lay a foundation as a Buddhist system for economics, human and social development as well as relationship with nature, as explained in the following sections.

4. Buddhist Economics for Work and Development

Concerning socioeconomic system supporting dhamma practice and inner happiness, it should be in line with Buddhist economics which follows the noble eightfold path. This paper promotes right views as the starting point and central to right livings and so on. However, other noble paths are also considerably important.

Payutto (1992) indicates that economics is a means to enhance human development, which goes along with the path of developing inner happiness. In this perspective, economics is a means to support further human development and inner happiness.

4.1. Concept of Work

There are different concepts and implications to life, work, and social development between Buddhist economics and modern economics. For example, in Buddhist economics, work is a part of life that people can be happy by working with chanda as well as make a happily working environment; whereas, in modern economics, work is something that people have to scarify for earning and bring in suffering (i.e., from lack of compassion, stress, pressure, conflicts, competition, and trading-off family life and leisure time as well as health). With different views

and goals, Buddhist economics focus on workers, rather than products from workers. Work is an important part of life for everyone to nourish and develop human value in conditions with human dignity and freedom.

Therefore, for the purpose of work, Buddhist economics concern people more than goods and creativity more than consumption. It is a human -center view, not product-center view. Buddhism encourages people to work to develop themselves and the society. Work is also a process of human development. As Buddhadasa Bhikkhu stressed, “working is practicing dhamma”; thus, work is also a human’s duty. Workers can apply many dhamma principles while working. Working can bring in happiness from work satisfaction, self-development, and usefulness to others/ society. The more people have inner happiness, the more they work for the usefulness of others and the society, not for one’s self. This concept is contrast to Western economics one that work is dissatisfaction (but have to do for exchanging with money) and worker is viewed as “labor” rather than human being. Work in Buddhism is not a pressure or has to do only to exchange for money, but people can be willing and enjoy working all the time. It is a human duty that can bring in satisfaction and true happiness. It is not necessary to work by office hours, but people can work anytime and anywhere since they are happy to do as a part of life. It is not necessary to be an “outside” and paid job, but it can be an “in-house” and or at home work. There are many valuable in-house work such as taking care of children to be developed with full potentials, cleaning while purifying minds, etc. People can also choose to do creative job, regardless of return, that can bring in pleasure and satisfaction.

Buddhist economics also supports full employment with different motivation and rewards. People have motivation to work by chanda and being happy as a reward. As indicated in Payutto (1992), immediate rewards from work is our knowledge/skill development and satisfaction, which help improving our quality of life. People can be happy by working under the condition of chanda. This type of work is encouraged. But if one expects high pay or promotion as a condition from work when the outcome does not meet such expectation, one would suffer from the work. This type of expectation is not encouraged in Buddhism as it is not the real reward to improve the quality of life and it can cause suffering. In Buddhism, real reward from work (with chanda) is results from work itself which can bring satisfaction to the worker himself and others. Thus, Buddhist system promotes real work (with desire to improve quality of life) and to do good things for others. Real work is not the same as being employed and work by office hours,

as referred in modern economics. The Buddhist concept of work is broader covering spiritual wellbeing and good human relation.

With less consumption (limited to only needs for well-being) and less utilizing resource of production, human beings should be able to be released from unnecessary work to do more useful things which are real value of work. Thus, real work that is useful for all can increase in the Buddhist system.

4.2 Consumption and Production

In Buddhism, consumption is meant to relieve us from suffering (i.e., from starving and provide sufficient nourishment to continue our lives) as well as provide basic needs for higher mind and wisdom development. Consumption in Buddhism focuses on usefulness or real value (rather than market value). There are 3 levels of usefulness from consumption; which are: immediate usefulness (i.e., for meeting physical needs), intermediate usefulness (i.e, enhancing quality of life & mind for higher personal development, and to be useful for others), and ultimate usefulness (i.e., for wisdom level of development to be free from suffering).

As noted in Puntasen (2014), “consumption does not help to enjoy life. In fact, consumption is also a production process to sustain a healthy life, consisting of healthy body and a healthy mind. A healthy mind must only come from rigorous training of the mind, the same way as physical exercise is appropriate for a healthy body. Such training actually requires appropriate consumption which implies less rather than more consumption. As for an appropriate consumption by itself, the goal is to consider useful aspects of things to be consumed and they should be consumed moderately. This is optimal for a healthy life”.

In Buddhist economics, consumption is to optimize consumption efficiency (not maximize utility as in mainstream economics); whereas, production requires wisdom as main input or most important factor of production. As pointed out in Puntasen (2001: 436), production theory of Buddhist economics focuses on wisdom as a mode of production and this system may be called as “wisdomism” instead of capitalism from Western theories. This is to maintain the highest goal of maximizing happiness (in Buddhism) by minimizing harmfulness to ourselves and others. Only with wisdom (paññā) in both consumption and production, this goal can be achieved.

Paññā can divert production process away from destruction of resources and the environment. If paññā is in full control of the utilization of energy and other natural resources, it will result in more use of renewable resources and energy and as little use as possible of non-renewable ones. The negative impact on natural resources and the environment will also be minimized. This important function for paññā that link consumption and production for real happiness is missing from mainstream economics Puntasen (2001).

In Buddhist economics, although private profit is not the ultimate aim of production unit or business, there have been many successful cases of applications of Buddhist economic approach to practical business management, which bring in positive effects (as mentioned in Prayukvong, 2010).

4.3 Poverty and Distribution of Resources

Buddhist economics promotes poverty eradication and inequality reduction in order to advance human development for higher life goal. It realizes that basic need is important to be fulfilled for all human beings to be developed with full potentials for higher human development (including understanding dhamma and higher happiness). By recognizing that all living animals have suffering, Buddhist concept emphasizes compassion to other lives and promote sharing or distribution of resources to help those in need to be free from suffering physically and mentally.

Buddhism considers poverty is a suffering, clearly stated by the Buddha. As noted in Payutto (1992: 4), once Buddha said;

when people are overwhelmed, and in pain through suffering, they are incapable of understanding dhamma” and stressed that “hunger is the most severe of all illnesses and that conditioned phenomena provide the basis for the most ingrain suffering”.

Also, there is an example of Buddha providing food for a hunger before providing dhamma (*Ibid*). Therefore, Buddhism realizes the importance of basic physical needs to relieve physical suffering. Poverty reflects the inadequate to meet one’s basic need; therefore, eradication of poverty is a priority before human beings can be advanced with further development.

It is a common misunderstanding that Buddhism is not interested in socioeconomic situation and welfare. In fact, it accepts the necessity of basic materials that allows humans to achieve mental

and wisdom advancement, although it does not encourage people to attach to material accumulations.

Sustainable development relates to equitable distribution of goods and resources. If more goods/ services and resources can be allocated to the poor to obtain basic needs, the poor would be more developed and have no need to invade new land or resources. On the other hand, if resources are unequally distributed and those who lack of basic needs received unfair distribution, this would increase the tendency for environment deterioration and worsen environmental situation as well as conflicts in the society. This world is unlikely to be in the sustainable development path with only 20% of the world's population consumes over 70% of its material resources, and owns over 80% of its wealth. With such high inequality, material consumptions and resources utilizations are drastically high as the extremely high income class tends to consume highly materialistic.

Therefore, an equitable society without poverty in basic needs is in line with sustainable development. Buddhist system supports the fair allocation of resources because it focuses on moderation, selflessness, generosity/ sharing, and compassion. With the understanding that all individuals are born with suffering, their physiological needs need to be met equally to relieve their physical suffering. Therefore, the application in Buddhist concept would be a solution to poverty reduction and social equality as well as sustainable development.

4.4. Relationship with Nature

Buddhism emphasizes the importance of natural resources, which is essential source for human well-being. Buddhism focusing on the relationship of human and nature advocates harmonious and peaceful co-existence between human being and the natural world, and directs us to less self-center which has made us unconcern others and nature.

As mentioned in Payutto (2013), effective sustainable development needs right views towards life and nature. For mutual supports of living things and earth, Buddhism teaches that:

- 1) Human beings are part of interconnected natural system of causes and effects. Therefore, they need to harmonize for the benefits of wellbeing of all.
- 2) All beings (human and animals) are friends under the same natural laws. All lives want to be happy and escape from suffering similarly. Therefore, they should have loving-kindness and

compassion for all without being divided as separate groups or hate and do harmful to other lives, but having cooperation and harmony instead.

3) Happiness with liberation from inside brings in the best and perfect life. This is because inner happiness or inner freedom can bring in physical and social freedom. In addition to happiness free from deprivation of basic needs, human beings need higher level of happiness generated from mind and wisdom development. Whenever individuals achieve inner happiness with freedom, they would benefit others and nature.

These are 3 main right views for life. The last one is the most important, which is the core of this paper. When one pursues inner happiness, one will have no conflict with other lives and nature leading to social benefits for all. Therefore, Buddhist concept of development not only realizes the importance of natural resources but the whole natural system at large.

Thus, it is essential that human beings have to avoid violence towards nature and be aligned with nature. Human practices should be tuned with nature's patterns or be kind to the earth. Therefore, in Buddhist system, producers and consumers have to deal with nature with great care, responsibility and accountability. Human beings should not dominate nature for convenience. This is different from modern economics which under value natural resources and over exploit it.

5. Looking forward

The concept of Buddhist happiness and Buddhist economics should be promoted in real life and education, of which the formal system seems to neglect the focus on happy life and happy society. This Buddhist concept should be integrated in education for life or life skill for happy living. Modern educated people mostly learn only Western concept of development without real understanding of Buddhist approach to development. Therefore, it would be valuable to promote the concept of Buddhist happiness and economics for broader groups with deeper understanding. The concept need to be promoted in any form of education (formal and informal) at all levels: individual, society, organization, nation, and international levels. Buddhist education should be integrated in more courses, activities or field works, and any form in communication and informal education. In addition, networking of Buddhist educational institutions should be

encouraged and strengthened. It is essential to raise public awareness of this approach for happy life skill, and education would become education for life.

By implementing Buddhist concept in education to make people more aware and benefit of it, development and human problems would become less and the relations among humans and also with nature would be better. This Buddhist approach is a direction for peaceful, harmonious, happy and caring societies.

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