Dhamma as the Force to Guide an Ideal Society: A Study in Teachings of the Buddha

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Abstract

Nowadays, urgent need for digital era is how digital technology is affecting human life. It brings advantages in terms of matter. Besides, we also face difficult problems due to the wrong application of it. According to view of Buddhism taught that the return of the human reality separated from metaphysical ideals could keep us away from exacerbations of ideas and the dehumanizing automatisms of technology. Digital era must be perceived as a product of human ingenuity and its applicative potentialities and should not be seen as the domination of technology, but only as a stage of the developments in the technologies that must assist our life. To achieving the ideal society cannot be just economic, physical growth, instead that society is combined both materially and mentally.

To balance these two factors, Buddhism offers the method that the Dhamma as force to guide an ideal society. Dhamma is not only a matter of understanding but also a matter of practice. To apply in social life creating personal life and ideal society is the most important thing. The human being is not a mechanic, operational construction; on the contrary, he has a consciousness that mind is the focus of all activities from awareness to express of words and actions. So, he can opt for way of actions himself, which may prove, in the end, to be genuine or not, thanks to the success or due to the failure in the concrete reality.

The aim of this paper is to underline that the development the insight of highlight factors of Dhamma to combine the cultivation of individual inner peace with social actions in community.

Keywords: Meaning of Dhamma, construction, Dhammachakka symbol, understanding and practicing, social problems and characteristics of an ideal society.

Introduction

As we live in the period of technological modernization of the human being, this has opened pathways for meeting of various cultural values including religions, customs, socio-political, economy and the like. It is a result of scientific achievements and development in the field of information technology, but the develop society cannot only economic growth and material possessions rather; it would be combined of both material and spiritual. The urgent need for current

problems is how to apply Dhamma is affecting better human life.

According to S.N. Sharma, there are some characteristics of an ideal society as following which can help to present a fairly clear picture of the nature of society which the Buddha intended to create through his Dhamma. An ideal society that have to include the factors such as rational, equal, balanced, moral, progressive, altruistic society. The word 'Dhamma' is in been understood in various meanings. In one popular meaning, Dhamma as 'law', 'teachings', 'justice',

‘normal’, ‘truth’ and ‘good manners’, stands for customary law prescribed by religious and moral code. It is force for inner and outer controlling of all human beings. Thus *Dhamma* is the law and conscience keeper that governs right functions as management of relations between man and social development towards an ideal society.

This paper would attempt to relate the Teachings of the Buddha that ‘*Dhamma*’ as the way of life to be followed and social practice to develop the insight-factors of humanity, combine the cultivation of inner peace with social active to create the ideal society.

General Meaning about Dhamma – Terminology

The term is very often used in the plural number as (Pali) *dhammā*, or (Skt.) *dharmāḥ*, both in the *Suttas* and in the later works to mean the component elements of the universe, his elements into which the whole of existence could be analysed.¹ *Dhammā*/ *dharmāḥ* refers to the second Gem of the Three Gems of *Buddhism*; *Buddha*, *dharmā*, *sangha*. *Dhammā* word is defined as “the teachings of the Buddha”.

According to Gethin, Rupert explained *dhammā*/*dharmāḥ* by way of six basic meanings: (1) the ‘teaching’ of the Buddha; (2) ‘good conduct’ or ‘good behaviour’, in general, but also more specifically, the putting into practice of the good conduct prescribed by the Buddha’s teaching and constituting the Buddhist path, namely keeping ethical precepts (*sīla*), developing calm and concentration (*samatha*, *samādhi*, *jhāna*), and insight and knowledge (*vipassanā*, *pañña*, *vijjā*) through the practice of meditation; (3) the ‘truth’ realized by the practice of the Buddhist path; (4) any particular ‘nature’ or ‘quality’ that something possesses; (5) ‘Natural law or order’ fundamental and objective of the things that the Buddha realized; (6) a basic mental or physical ‘state’ or ‘thing’, a great deal of which, at least in the texts

of the *Abhidhamma*, clearly conceived of a certain meaning that constitutes the reality’ of the world.²

The *dhamma* in this paper wants to emphasize as the understanding and the method for application in life. It is not only all above meanings but also emphasizes the method of application. The way of life to be followed *dhamma* to develop the insight-factors of humanity, combine the cultivation of inner peace with active social compassion in mutually supportive and practice to achieve the Ideal Society.

Construction of Dhamma

The *Dhamma* word that was known as the earliest as the *Dhammacakkappavattana Sutta*. It is very important in the history of spreading Buddhism.

The connotation of the *Dhamma* in this context, too appears to be then same as that referred to in the *Dhammacakkappavattana Sutta*, where it is briefly referred to as the Four Noble Truths which, in terms of the threefold (*tiparivaṭṭa*: thrice turned) view point of 1. Fact, 2. Goal and 3. Achievement, gives the doctrine comprehended by the Buddha and its exposition by him a twelvefold manifestation.³

The *Dhammacakkappavattana Sutta*⁴ is a Buddhist text that is considered to be a record of the first teaching given by the Buddha after he attained enlightenment. The main theme of this *sutta* is the Four Noble Truths, which are central Buddhist teachings that provide a unified theme, or conceptual framework, for all Buddhist thought. This discourse also introduces Buddhist concepts of the middle path, impermanence, and dependent origination. When the wheel of *dhamma* was rolled by the Buddha, the Devas on the earth cried out.: “*At Vārāṇasī, in the Deer Park at Isipatana, the incomparable wheel of Dhamma has been set rolling by the Blessed One* -

² (Gethin, Rupert, 2004, Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass), pp. 93 - 94.

³ Encyclopedia of Buddhism, Vol IV, p. 471.

⁴ The Book of The Discipline (Vinaya-Pitaka), Volume IV (Mahavagga), translated by I. B. Horner

¹ Encyclopedia of Buddhism, Vol IV, p. 454.

and it can't be stopped by any Samana or Brahmin or deva or Māra or Brahma or anyone whomsoever in the world.” This section of the *Sutta* describes the effect of proof the Buddha's turning of the wheel of truth in the world. The text simply states that various divine beings, or devas hear the teaching and start proclaiming it to each other.

According to the teachings of the Four Noble Truths, want to be free before have to find out where you are bound (The truth of suffering and the cause of suffering). Once you have found the cause of the tied up (The end of suffering and the path leading to the end of suffering), you can find a way to open and free yourself. In other word, Unhappiness and misery are the Truth of suffering (The truth of suffering), Self-attachment and private property-attachment are (the cause of suffering), the liberation of Self-attachment and private property-attachment are liberation (The end of suffering), The method (*Dhamma*) are the path to free from Self-attachment and private property (the path leading to the end of suffering). The according to this structure, the whole of the *Dhamma* of the Buddha has built on the basis of the Four Noble Truths.

The force of Dhamma express through Dhammacakka symbol

Dhammacakka (skt. *Dharmacakra*); literally the wheel of the doctrine, i.e. the doctrine as comprehended by the Buddha on his gaining enlightenment and the doctrine as taught by him subsequently.

The word *Dhammacakka* is a word consist of two words compound the *Dhamma* with the *Cakka*. The word *Dhamma* means the teachings of the Buddha and *Cakka* means wheel. So, the word *Dhamma-Cakka* means the Wheel of Law of the Buddha. The word *Dhamma-Cakka* has intimately contacted with *Dhammacakkappavattana Sutta* name given to the first discourse of the Buddha, It is recorded in the Pali tradition of the *Mahavagga* and the symbols of the *Dhammacakka* was built by King Asoka.

“The earliest Buddhist monuments that have the Dhamma-cakka symbols are the Asokan Pillars. Of these the most important one is from Sarnath, the fragments of which are preserved in an archaeological museum”.⁵ And *Dhammacakka* symbol is also one of symbol is chosen on the Indian flag.

The association of the concept of the wheel with the doctrine or the Truth which the Buddha discovered ... is to be traced back to the Buddha himself. For soon after his enlightenment or attainment of Buddhahood, and after some persuasion that he should make known to the world the truth he had discovered the Buddha decides to go to *Bāranāsī* (*Benares*) to preach the doctrine to the five ascetics...who had been his erstwhile colleagues while he was searching for a state of peace for mankind...This is the first time that this idiom is used to refer to the preaching of the doctrine and it is used by the Buddha himself at the very beginning of his ministry. The forward or progressive revolving movement of the wheel (Pali: *pavattana* or Skt. *pravartana*) is indicative of advance and extension. It is in this same sense that a *Cakkavatti* or a Universal Monarch calls upon his wheel-treasure (*cakkaratana*) to start rolling...This conquering wheel of the Universal Monarch which conquers territories for him in all directions is not to be confused with the peace-conferring *dharma* wheel of the Fully Enlightened One which is set rolling to proclaim to the world the Truth he had discovered.⁶

The Feature of the Ideal Society

To achieve the Ideal Society before have to build patter of Ideal Society. According to Buddhism, the kind of society which Buddhists would regard as being in harmony with *Dharma* has at least four essential features, as Edward Conze shown:⁷

1. First of all, Buddhism is clearly for peace and against violence. Nonviolence (*ahimsā*) was what attracted Emperor Aśoka to Buddhism,

⁵ (T. B. Karunaratne, 2008), p. 10.

⁶ Encyclopedia of Buddhism, Vol. IV, pp. 470 – 471.

⁷ (Prof. F. Chenet, 2011), op. cit., pp. 16 – 17.

and it became a great source of inspiration for his reign. In India, between the years 300 B. C. to 400 A. D., there has been remarkable progress towards moderation and nonviolence. The Buddhists abolished animal sacrifices and made these ferocious warriors quite at peace. To suppress these misdemeanors, Buddhism does not rely much on persecution but rather on convincing people that they are low-class behaviors and about imprisoning them with people of the lower class. But in society there is a certain amount. In this way, the entire society will be lifted up. And, as a result, the rights of others should be respected, and Humans should be humble co-exist with others.

2. Now, the prosperity of society depends on a strong economic foundation. Material prosperity is not at all a bad thing, but frugality is desirable because greed is evil. One should not accumulate because generosity is a great virtue, and material happiness is completely unimportant of spiritual happiness like rising from a good life, beautiful and flawless. Assets are the basic evils from which there are many others, but it seems that in today's conditions it is a necessary one. Hence it must be respected.

3. Buddhism clearly favors stable societies over “progress”. From Aśoka’s decrees, we see that everything reinforces respect for the seemingly desirable tradition (*purāṇa*) seemed to him, and among the “provisions of the Dharma” (*Dharma-niyāma*) of he, honoring ārya, the obedience of parents, elders (*vṛddha*) and teachers (*guru*), is quite prominent.

4. Buddhism also prefers a religion over a secular society. The latter seems to be both undesirable and impossible. It is undesirable because it does not allow centers of spiritual life to function, and because surplus wealth is spent on weapons and the consumption of industrial goods rather than for religious purposes. Nor could it because, among other things, it had to become so dull it couldn’t last. According to Dr. S.N. Sharma⁸, an ideal society that have to include the factors such as rational, equal, balanced, moral,

progressive, altruistic society. In brief, the feature of the ideal society should be formed by the motto of *Dhamma*: morality – compassion – wisdom. Without Dharma there is no ecology; the delicate, self-regulating and self-maintained balance of energetic cycles cannot be preserved.

Solving social Problems by Construction of Dhamma

As in the above of the article mentioned construction of *Dhamma*. According to the teachings of the Four Noble Truths, want to be free before have to find out where you are bound (The truth of suffering and the cause of suffering). Once you have found the cause of the tied up (The end of suffering and the path leading to the end of suffering).

In the same way, to solve the social problems before we have to find out the cause of it. According to Buddhism all the problems must have a cause that leads to noxious problems or ideal society is the root of the mind. It is said that mind is the source of all things, therefore, want to learn the *Dhamma* to practice before to find out the mind. The origin of all things comes from the mind, all the *Dharmas*, there is no one *Dharma* left the mind that exists.

Mind that introduces the individual to the most important scientific problems of man, how to understand mind and behavior in life, lead to a better the life. The origin of all phenomena comes from mind, does not have a phenomenon that exists outside mind. So, if you understand the concern with mind. Then all things are available in the mind. For example large tree whose branches are full, leaf, flower, fruit, etc., but all them from a root, if the root of tree is cut tree, leaves be would die. Likewise, if we do not know the origin of the mind that apply wrong ways and methods to practice, like a person cooks sand that hope become the rice. For example, as the king was invaded by invaders, soldiers beaten, the soldiers need to know the whereabouts of the enemy. If a monarch was invaded without knowing the whereabouts of the enemy, how to fight the enemy. If you do not fight the enemy, then you will win, otherwise it will be defeated. If

⁸ (S.N. Sharma, 1996), pp. 69 – 70.

you do not understand the mind lead to wrong thought like cooking sand that hope become the rice is impossible. And the twelfth-century Vietnamese Zen master Thuong Chieu (“Always Shining”) said, “*When we understand how our mind works, the practice becomes easy.*”⁹

The establishment of the Ideal Society, according to Buddhism rests on the *Dhamma* to which social organization can successfully set up a psycho-spiritual, moral and legal protective structure against the energies of misconduct in whatever forms they take. During the last years, man has made amazing progress to master science and technology. However, people has failed to master himself. The rising wave of violence throughout the world is due to complete erosion of human values from our conduct. The value of science and technology is wonderful. Because, science and technology really increased by human ability, it brought lot of things much easier wonderful but technology cannot produce compassion, happiness. Therefore, science and technology is much depended on how to use them, after all we are the controller of technology. If we become slave of technology then it is not good. Hence, if we want to evolve beyond the present state of confusion in world affairs, it is necessary to evolve a new understanding of the Dharma as the force for ideal society.

Achieved Ideal Society by Practicing Dhamma

In the digital era, most people are influenced by the boon of scientific technology, and believe that the way of human life is to develop and utilize it. Having discovered the laws of the natural world, modern science and technology have misused them, and freely manipulated the world of nature in order to obtain material wealth. As a consequence of putting spirituality aside, man has become a threat to the existence of other beings. All serious problems in society are created because of man’s ignorance and illegitimate desires; people inflict pain on others to gain their own happiness or satisfaction. But true happiness comes only from wholesome

mind, which must be achieved through cultivating altruism, love and compassion and through eliminating anger, selfishness and greed. The *Dhamma* (method) of mental cultivation is the key factor to inter-faith harmony and to reducing terrorism have joined hands towards community building, inspiring people of different castes and classes to work together. The Buddha’s policy of peace, self-sacrifice, kindness and charity applied also successful through ages such as Asoka in India, Trần Nhân Tông in Vietnam, and Tang Dynasty in China... Tolerance is the special characteristic of universal love. Asoka was greatly influenced by Buddha’s teaching and he succeeded to establish harmonious society in conquest by Righteousness and ultimately win peace and tranquility for India that time. The basic aims and objectives of mental cultivation of Buddhism are to soften and fill the hearts of people with compassion.

These *Dhamma* provide strong and sound foundation for controlled and disciplined human life. When people follow that then one will think for others. So the Buddha’s moral teaching, these precepts help to stop civil unrest struggle for power among political parties, racial prejudices, narrow selfish motives, different religious sects, economic status, fame and war between nations.

Dr. Benjamin Rowland said, the *Sarnath* Column can be understood, so not only is the honor of the Buddha's teaching symbolized by the crown wheel, but also through the cosmic implications of the entire pillar. As a symbol of the cosmic expansion of the power of the Buddha’s law is represented by the sun dominating all space and all time, and a symbol of the universal expansion of imperialism. Mauryan through the *Dharma*. The entire structure then is a translation of long-standing Indian and Asian cosmology into essentially foreign-sourced and devoted artistic terms, like all Asoka monuments, for the glory of Buddhism and royalty.¹⁰

Finally it can be said that if we practice to cultivate positive psychological aspects, then we

⁹ (Thich, 2002), op. cit., p. 4.

¹⁰ (T. B. Karunaratne, 2008), op. cit., p. 10.

can be able to establish a tension free peaceful society. But we should remember one thing that we have to practice all these Buddhist ethics honestly and completely.

Conclusion

Dhamma is the integrity, of society as a whole that social rules and legal dispositions are devised to prevent or repress noxious social behaviors. The main purpose of the wheel of *Dhamma* had been set rolling, as the Buddha commences his spiritual training, is to study and analyses his own mind, to observe its inner nature and how it works; and how good and bad ethical states arise therefrom. That is why in Buddhism so much emphasis is laid on the psychological aspect of ethics. The motive of Buddhism is not just a scientific evidence having bearing on living, but the ultimate desire to cultivate the good mind, avoiding all evil psychological states.¹¹

According to Buddhism, Ideal Society is not merely the absence of war, weariness, conflict, disturbance, and suffering but also a positive feeling of contentment, pleasure and happiness, the development of a good heart, love, compassion, joy, equanimity and so on. And These Buddhist doctrines have a great role to play in reminding us of our humanity.

Understanding the law of *Dhamma* and the practice is bound to bring satisfaction, happiness, progress and peace in life, being the vital force in the lives these nations were enabled to live peacefully, with mutual goodwill toward, friendship with and appreciative understanding of each other verily a great traditional contribution to the well-being of human family. changing bad psychologies status certainly help safe living in this world which is otherwise riddle with instability and uncertainties in the sphere of peace. When mental factors are cultivated it is a great force for harmony in the world. Understanding the meaning of *Dhamma* can help man to create a harmonious life not only in the human world, but it can also give an effective solution in re-establishing a harmonious life between man and his environment. If the

mental cultivation can be applied in the modern world, it can make people aware of the true meaning and lead to the attainment of happiness.

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¹¹ (O.H. De. A), pp. 2-3.