

Buddhist Approach to Social Problems

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Introduction

Social problems are prevalent everywhere. A social problem is defined as any condition or behaviour that has negative consequences for large numbers of people and that is generally recognized as a condition or behaviour that needs to be addressed. On the other hand, Conflict is confrontation, between people situation and states. Conflict arises for the power, position and supremacy. Today, in this world of unlimited wants yet limited resources, global economies have been based on profitability which have immanently actuated self-greediness and egoistic tendencies among people. And as a result, socio-economic imbalances have been inevitable in societies and problems such as poverty, corruption, theft, robbery and among others have also been inescapable. Moreover, religions have failed to guide people to lead a life that prospers in all aspects. Many religions also have created extremists groups who have involved in so many activities which sometimes no human can ever think of doing.

Result of Social Conflict is always devastative. The result will be multidimensional for most is mistrust among individuals. Society consists of very groups, individuals and conflict among themselves result into mistrust among them. Coexistence is basic structure of society, Power, Position, Social Conflict, Imbalance, Poverty, Religion, Supremacy, Greed, and cohesiveness in term of ideas, faith, goal, and pave away for development in terms of trade economy, cultural cohesive and environmental sustainability. However, conflicts in society don't make a smooth way to achieve goals of humanity. Moreover, whenever the conflict arises out of violent mean then every parameter of the development in society comes to an end. It affects politically, economically, culturally and environmentally to the society.

A society based on the Buddhist teachings however, recognizes that one should aim at promoting the good of the greater unit to which one belongs, and as a minimum one must not look for one's own satisfaction in ways that may cause harm to others. Thus, in Buddhist approach to social development, the primary

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criterion governing policy formulation must be the well-being of members of the society as a whole. Throughout The Noble Eight-fold Path, Buddhism emphasizes the importance and the *Sammā*, Right, Proper, which is based on the motto of happiness and welfare of the whole society.

Purpose

The purpose of this paper is to discuss the practical application of the Teachings of the Buddha for the prevention of Social Problems that are available in the present society. Many problems in the present society keep happening repeatedly and the teachings of the Buddha is of great relevance for overcoming such problems.

Methodology

Information for this research has been collected from the primary Buddhist resources and the relevant books and articles written on this topic and other reading materials.

Findings/ Discussion

When we discuss Buddhist perspective on social problems, Buddhist Teachings directs us to examine the roots of problems, Four Noble Truths, the fundamental teaching of the Buddha, reveals the truth of *dukkha*, root of *dukkha*, cessation of *dukkha* and the path leading to cessation. The first truth "affirms that the law of *dukkha* is applicable to the human condition'. The Buddha describes the *dukkha* in the *Samyuttanikāya* as follows:

“Now this, monks, is the Noble Truth of *dukkha*: Birth is *dukkha*, aging is *dukkha*, death is *dukkha*; sorrow, lamentation, pain, grief & despair are *dukkha*; association with the unbeloved is *dukkha*; separation from the loved is *dukkha*; not getting what is wanted is *dukkha*. In short, the five clinging aggregates are *dukkha*.”

From the above definition, this *dukkha* is applicable to all human conditions and it is personal *dukkha*. But when social problems are taken into account, the personal *dukkha* cannot be separated from personal *dukkha* as " there is an inter-relationship between the *dukkha* that manifests in us as individual, which support and co-creates the collective problems of our societies, and conversely, how the structures in society that manifest these collective problems impinge us in so many ways, therefore contributing to the personal or inner *dukkha* that torments us.

Buddha's teaching is more relevant than any other approach towards the prevention of social problems and conflict resolution. Buddhist teaching of Four Noble Truth, problem of social conflict, causes of social conflict, solution of Social Conflict and the way towards social conflict resolution can be achieved.

With the Four Noble Truth problem is clearly understood and cause of problem is eradicated. With the eradication of cause of problems the solution is experienced and witnessed. The experienced and witnessed solution is practised and followed. That way too is a prevention of conflicts.

Solution of Social conflict based on the Theory of Dependent Origination, *paṭiccasamuppāda* can also be utilized to understand the interconnectedness of cause and effect of such problems. The circle of causes of social conflict and effect of Social conflict should be abolished. Social conflict can be resolved on the following way.

First, the cause/s of social conflict should be understood. The social conflicts cause due to ignorance, of understanding self, social structure and social survival ethics. Once the cause and effect is understood, remedies must be provided in order not to allow same thing to happen in the future too. Then it is the prevention of conflicts happening again.

Second, To resolve social conflict, first, to understand the Social Conflict “Cause and Effect Theory” based on Buddha’s theory of Dependent Origination.

Third, cause of Social conflict is through right action and abolishing ignorance is the prime aim of Buddhist. Also developing interfaith dialogue is also very important. Buddhist teachings lay great stress on self realization. Five precepts is targetted at the good conduct of followers. It starts with self and moves towards further.

Buddhist approach towards conflict resolution is completely different from the theories of modern society. Its first starts with “self” and extended to the society and to the World.

Social conflict Problem Causes Solution Way to solution Elimination of greed is most important and most practical approach to resolve social conflict. Minimum desire will give maximum satisfaction which gives happiness; in the mean time it will also give sustainability to sustainable development and to attained ultimate pinnacle of freedom of humanity. And also it always becomes early prevention of conflicts and it doesn’t allow same things to happen again and again because it understands the danger, *dīnava* of them and always looks for an escape, *Nissaraṇa* of problems.

Conclusion

Buddhist teachings, rather than a religion has always been regarded as a very practical way of living. It always sees and takes a very straightforward look at our human condition that the Buddha taught was based on his own observation of the way things are. The Buddha himself was compared to a lotus that bloomed that

was not soiled by mud and water. Therefore, a conclusion can be made there that with the teachings of the Buddha a practical approach can be adopted to prevent conflicts happening over and over again by understanding its nature, its danger. Buddhist teachings always suggest the escape of all problems by understanding their consequences properly.

Keywords: Social Conflict, Four Noble Truths, Paṭiccasamuppāda, Self Realization, Freedom

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