

HOW TO BUILD UP A MINDFUL LEADERSHIP FOR A SUSTAINABLE SOCIETY FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF THE BODHISATTVA IDEAL

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ABSTRACT

The Buddhist perspective of leadership is widely addressed matter in the Buddhist cannon. The Buddha exemplifies himself the greatness of the leadership by forming a big organization of Sangha and He had been positioning this leadership for forty-five years. In Jātaka stories have mentioned that He was steady and mindful leader ever in the position of Bodhisattva. Further, the mindfulness is to be practice to keep a right leadership in an organization, country and so on. The current world is demanding such a great leadership for the sustainable world, it follows that built up a mindful leadership for a sustainable society will require in the future. The leadership of the future implies a shift from the current way of thinking to a broader, more complex leadership mindset recognizing interdependency as central business principle while serving the needs of multiple stakeholders. This new model can form on the perspective of Bodhisattva ideal which is said to be a model leadership. This paper will explore to what degree the Buddhist model of the Bodhisattva, who sets out to develop his mind toward wisdom, altruism, generosity, patience, selflessness, loving-kindness, compassion, equalities and could provide an inspiration to develop the new leadership in model society.

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1. INTRODUCTION

In a world of perpetual change and very competitive environment, there are a need to make managerial and leadership thinking evolving. Human civilization has always faced the challenge of adapting to change. Changes in market, shifting political alliances, financial collapses, uncertain energy sources and natural disasters have always been part of the landscape that people have had to wrestle with. The lack of a spiritual dimension of moral and ethical in leadership, which frames the development of moral value – from business, politics to family and education have become a key factor contributing to negative consequences caused by unethical leaders. With the world today, it has less time for us and less time for reflection. Therefore, demands are increasing while budgets are shrinking and our organizations do not typically emphasize renewal. Lyn Hopper (2010) explained ‘instead of encouraging the practices of mind, body, heart and behavior that support renewal, our organizations unknowingly reward behaviors designed to deplete rather than replenish our resources, leading to dissonant, the opposite of resonant, leadership.’

Most of us have ‘monkey mind’ most of the time, because our thoughts are like monkeys, always leaping from tree to tree, chattering wildly and distracting us from what we are doing. In this life, there is a new normal for library leaders, managers and staff, we need to balance of managing our attention in modern environment of excessive distraction and information overload is critical to our health and happiness. Mindfulness can increase our flexibility, productively, innovation, leadership ability and satisfaction.

2. MINDFULNESS

The concept of “mindfulness” is defined as that of ‘mindfulness is the energy of being aware and aware to the present moment. It is the continuous practice of touching life deeply in every moment of daily life. To be mindful is to be truly alive, present and at one with those around you and with what you are doing. We bring our body and mind into harmony while we wash the dishes, drive the car or take our morning shower’ (Thich 2014). Mindfulness is not only to help person to focus attention but also it is opening possibilities

and leading to better decision making. ‘... Mindfulness is a habitual state of mind in which old schemas are continually re-examined and redefined ... mindfulness includes openness to multiple points of view and a focus on process rather than outcome’ (Charles Schwenk 2009). In other words, mindfulness as a technique that being employed to successfully reduce stress and promote healing and most conspicuously. Further describes that ‘mindfulness is basically just a particular way of paying attention. It is a way of looking deeply into oneself in the spirit of self-inquiry and self-understanding’ (Kabat, Zinn 1990, p.12). According to the Buddhism, *Satī* is one of the seven factors of enlightenment. “Correct” or “right” mindfulness (Pali: *sammā-sati*, Sanskrit *samyak-smṛti*) is the seventh element of the Noble Eightfold Path. Mindfulness is an antidote to delusion and is considered as a “mental powers” (Pali: *bala*) which contributes to the attainment of *Nirvāṇa*. This faculty becomes a power in particular when it is coupled with clear comprehension of whatever is taking place. *Nirvāṇa* is a state of being in which greed, hatred and delusion (Pali: *moha*) have been overcome and abandoned, and are absent from the mind (Wikipedia, viewed January 27 2019).

3. LEADERSHIP

Leadership perhaps not a single designated person, but it is one who steps into the space to encourage adaptability, optimal resource utilization and goal fulfillment. In wikipedia.org defined: ‘Leadership is both a research area and a practical skill encompassing the ability of an individual or organization to “lead” or guide other individuals, teams, or entire organizations. Specialist literature debates various viewpoints, contrasting Eastern and Western approaches to leadership, and also leadership as ‘a process of social influence in which a person can enlist the aid and support of others in the accomplishment of a common task’ (viewed December 1 2018, wikipedia.org). In another way, leadership is about mapping out where you need to go to “win” as a team or an organization; and it is dynamic, exciting, and inspiring. It is mentions that the Buddhist leadership performs always in term of sympathy and compassion towards the humankind.

A leader should have a vision and a mission, the most essential ingredient in leadership, according to modern leadership thinkers. A vision is a clear picture of the future. It defines what one wants to become or achieve as a goal. The Buddha's vision was very clearly stated from the time He was just a Bodhi-aspirant. As implied in his aspiration made at the feet of the Buddha Dīpankara, He wanted to become himself enlightened, get free from life-death continuum and make others also enlightened and free. He made it a reality after a long and arduous journey through Samsāra. Despite much hardships and setbacks the Buddha never veered from his course but persevered until He achieved his goal, the Enlightenment. Guided by His vision He made an inclusive mission of helping everyone in the universe to live a happier life. His mission was stated to Mara, the evil one, when He responded to His invitation to an early Parinibbana Sutta. He stated that He wanted to create a four-fold following, comprising of laymen, laywomen, monks and nuns, who, having learned the Dhamma and Vinaya well, practice it, teach it and respond critically to any distortion of the message. It was a mission based on universal love and wisdom.

The Buddhist concept of leadership as it is exemplified in the life of the Buddha has many unique features in addition to the usual leadership qualities that social-psychologists enlist today. The most important was that the Buddha never gave the impression to his followers that He was imposing leadership on them. He wanted to maintain that there was the possibility to His followers to attain the same heights and become His equals. The role He wanted to play was that of a kind teacher who showed the way for excellence which was not an impossible goal for the followers (Wijebandara 2016).

4. MINDFUL LEADERSHIP

According to Buddhism, mindfulness is the foundation skill for effective leadership. Mindful leadership is 'intentionally balancing movement and staying still with authenticity and perspective of the whole towards the outer boundaries of effectiveness and success' (Luann Drolc 2017). There are various demands and definitions on mindful leadership and Janice Marturano states that we need leaders who not only understand themselves but who are not afraid

to be open- hearted and who have the strength of character to make ethical choices. The problems we see all around us are not insurmountable, but they do require a new kind of leadership. As you continue to practice, and find more and more ways to actually be here for your life, you are also likely to encounter more and different ways to influence the lives of others. It is obvious that the leadership is always making influence towards every corner of society and therefore, a mindful leadership is essential part of any leadership respectively. The Buddhism urges in the Cakkavatti Sihanada Sutta that the leadership should be endowed with five characteristics. There are as follow:

- i. Atthannu (able discriminate good from bad)
- ii. Dhammannu (knows righteousness)
- iii. Mattannu (knows the limit of punishment etc.)
- iv. Kalannu (Knows suitable time for court work, pleasure and tour)
- v. Parisannu (Knows his assembly; as to what type of people are they).

Apart from, there are directions to practice the mindfulness in Buddhism, they are the four foundations: the contemplation of the body, feelings, mind, and the mind objects. ‘What is the four? Here, Bhikkhus, a Bhikkhu abides contemplating the body as a body, ardent, fully aware, and mindful, having put away covetousness and grief for the world. He abides contemplating feelings as feelings, ardent, full aware, and mindful, having put away covetousness and grief for the world. He abides contemplating mind as mind, ardent, fully aware, and mindful, having put away covetousness and grief for the world. He abides contemplating mind objects as mind objects, ardent, fully aware, and mindful, having put away covetousness and grief for the world’ (Bhikkhu Nanamoli & Bhikkhu Bodhi 1995, p. 145). In other word, mindfulness as we use the term was taught by the Buddha, it is a way of solving the problem of human suffering. That same approach to mindfulness is also practiced today as a specific methodology for transforming the mind in the wide variety of secular contexts such as medicine, clinical, psychology, law, etc. ‘with mindfulness, we are aware of what is going on in our bodies,

our feelings, our minds, and the world and we avoid doing harm to ourselves and others.' Then he continued that 'mindfulness protects us, our families, and our society, and ensures a safe and happy present and a safe and happy future. Precepts are the most concrete expression of the practice of mindfulness' (Thich 2007, p. 2). One who practices the five mindfulness is to cultivate the insight of knowledge, or right view, which can remove all discrimination, intolerance, anger, fear, and despair.

In addition, Lord Buddha taught us to do meditation to improve mindfulness. Because 'meditation is intended to purify the mind... It brings the mind to a state of tranquility and awareness, a state of concentration and insight' (Gunaratana, B & Gunaratana, H 2011, p. 8). And according to Dalai Lama, 'qualities of the human spirit—such as love and compassion, patience, tolerance, forgiveness, contentment, a sense of responsibility, a sense of harmony—which bring happiness to both self and other' (Xuan 2014, p. 32).

5. THE MINDFUL LEADERSHIP FEATURES FROM THE CHARACTERS OF THE BUDDHA AND BODHISATTVA

The Buddha is said to be an ideal leader who ever exemplifies the high qualities of the leadership and those qualities are being practiced in the series of life circle as the Bodhisattva. The excellent characteristics of leadership of Bodhisattva character had been clearly depicted in Jātaka stories. Wijebandara (2016) points out that the Buddha wanted the leadership to be felt in a subtle and non-inflicting manner. He quotes from the Parinirvana Sutta, the Buddha's respond to Ananda's request on 'saying something' on (the future of) the Sangha. The Buddha, having understood that the request of Ananda meant an appointment of a future leader, said: 'Ananda, it never occurred to me that the monks are dependent on me or I am governing the Sangha. Whatever teachings I have given them and the rules of discipline I have instituted may become their leader.' This should not be taken as an excuse made to avoid a leadership struggle since the Buddha had made this stand even prior to this. When he addressed the first sixty Arahants before sending them to the world at large He said: 'I am freed from all shackles, human and divine; you also have freed yourself from all shackles, human and divine.' This shows

that the Buddha wanted to treat the followers who had attained the goal as His equals. Where the difference wanted to be shown He chose the narrowest, stating that he was *Maggakkhayī* (the one who gave road directions) while the followers were *Magganuga* (who trod the path). Thus, he instills confidence in the follower convincing that He has respectable recognition from the master. This, in effect, helps to develop appreciation and love towards the master in the minds of the followers. Wijebandara (2016) further explains, on the other hand, this shows another leadership quality that the Buddha exemplifies; humility. It is, according to modern social thinkers, an effective leadership quality. Modest and humble leader can address the followers in friendlier way. Friendliness is considered a great quality in the Buddhist ethics and there were times that the Buddha called himself as a sympathetic and friendly teacher (*Anukampakenahitesina*). The monks could approach the Buddha any time; it was convenient for both parties and discusses their problems or experiences. There mentions about four qualities on leadership in Mahāyāna scriptures, as follows:

- The mind as object of science
- The mind can be transformed
- Methodology for mind transformation with social impact (Bodhisattva warrior ship)
- Historic example of Buddhist leaders' (Tideman 2012, p. 3)

Accordingly, Bodhisattva character is said to be an ideal and perfect in the context of leadership. Six perfections and the four supplementary Pāramitās (in Mahāyāna) and the ten perfections (in Theravāda) of the Bodhisattva path—generosity, ethics, effort, patience and concentration are equally important for leadership. The Bodhisattva is a unique concept in both Mahāyāna and Theravāda that has been evolving in the course of time. The word “Bodhisattva” means in Sanskrit “*enlightening being*”. The Bodhisattva (Pāli: *Bodhisatta*) represents a sentient being who is destined to be a Buddha in the future. And the Bodhisattva ideal lays special emphasis on compassion, generosity, loving kindness, patience, ethics, and wisdom as essential to the Buddhist path. “The perfections are unanimously accepted by both traditions in

Theravāda and Mahāyāna but as to the number of perfection there is a deference of opinion. However, Pāramitās or Perfections are to be practised by Bodhisattva who is inspired becoming Buddha in the future. According to the commentary on the Cariyā-piṭaka, Pāramitās are those virtues which are cultivated by a heart filled with compassion, guided by reason, utterly indifferent to worldly gain, and unsullied by error and all feelings of self-conceit' (NaradaThera 1940, p. 5).

As mentioned above, there are fixed ten Perfections in Theravāda tradition: Dāna, Sīla, Nekkhamma, Paññā, Viriya, Khanti, Sacca, Adhiṭṭhāna, Mettā, and Upekkhā. These ten Perfections are categorized into three sections, called Pāramitā, Upa-Pāramitā and Paramattha Pāramitā. Totally, thirty Pāramitās and the meaning of Dāna Pāramitā is giving materials, giving body parts is called Dāna Upa-Pāramitā and sacrifice of life is called Paramattha Pāramitā. The rest of Pāramitās are similarly divided into three sections each and the total is thus thirty in number. There are six chief Pāramitās and four supplementary Pāramitās in recognized in Mahāyāna. There are as follows,

- i. Dāna (giving, generosity, liberality)
- ii. Sīla (virtuous conduct, morality, righteousness)
- iii. Kṣānti (forbearance, patience)
- iv. Vīrya (energy)
- v. Dhyāna (rapt musing)
- vi. Prajñā (wisdom)

The four supplementary Pāramitās are the following

- i. UpāyaorUpāya-kausālya (skillfulness in the choice or adaptation of means for conversion or succour)
- ii. Praṇidhāna (aspiration or resolution)
- iii. Bala (strength, power)
- iv. Jñāna (knowledge)

Theravāda texts describe how to practice Perfections through the Bodhisattva character. There was no limit to the occasions on which he fulfilled the Perfection and it is obvious in the first Perfection Dāna, Bodhisattva is ready to give every thing in order to fulfil the

Dāna Pāramitā. It is mentioned in the Jātaka Pāli as follows:

‘When I saw one coming for food, I offered my own self, there is no one like me in giving, and such is my Perfection of Giving’ (*Jātaka Pāli*). Bodhisattva’s great intention in giving is depicted in many Jātaka stories. Dāna Pāramitā made a great influence on the Buddhist society in making them generous and many Buddhist ceremonies in Sri Lanka begin with Dāna. It is observed that the Dāna is an inseparable aspect in Buddhist religious life in Sri Lanka. It is clearly inherited from the Bodhisattva ideal. A close instance is Vesak festival in Sri Lanka. On that day, people give food and many things free irrespective of caste, creed or color of recipient and it is mentioned in Jātaka stories that Bodhisattva is maintaining a free dining hall in the city for poor people. The mindful leader is always dedicating his life for the well being of human kinds and the Bodhisattva character urges to adhere those high qualities in leading any organization.

Āryaśūra ascribes eleven virtues to the Bodhisattva character, ‘generosity, mercy, self-control, ardour, forbearance, fortitude, humility, modesty, conscientiousness, politeness and purity’. There is another classification in the Sukhāvati-vyūha Sūtra about the virtue of Bodhisattva. They are unselfishness, purity, love of equality and peace, fortitude, equanimity, friendliness, tenderness of disposition, honesty, love, joyfulness activity, forbearance, patience, composure, serenity, self-control, and complete freedom from avarice, arrogance and envy (Dayal 1970, p. 206).

It is claimed that Bodhisattva should abide by those high qualities. According to the Mahāyāna list of virtue, Śīla is regarded as the means of leading others to Enlightenment, and not for the pleasure of heaven. As mentioned in Jātaka stories, conscientiousness or shame (*hiri*) and fear of social censure (*ottappa*) are the controlling principles of Bodhisattva Śīla and a Bodhisattva feels shame, if he is not energetic in the cultivation of Pāramitā. The Bodhisattva ideal in Mahāyāna is directly leading ordinary people to make more righteous in the society.

Both traditions have given ample examples in the cultivation of good by practising perfection in accordance with the Bodhisattva

ideal. The sphere of Bodhisattva character in the Jātaka stories serves to influence people to practise the values and norms to create a righteous society. Almost in all the Jātaka stories, the Bodhisattva does good to others by exhorting them to practice virtue and it is obvious that the Jātaka stories are not evoking people to attain Nibbāna, but initiate them to fulfill worldly interests through virtuous activity of various kind. The Bodhisattva persuades others to think of their eternal happiness after death and exemplify how to live happily and perfectly with a serene mind. He met various kinds of misguided outsiders and heretics and he advises them to do good and be virtuous in the society. The duties of a Bodhisattva is to confer the blessing of faith on the unbelievers, give virtue to the wicked, wisdom to the foolish and charitable heart to those who are selfish and niggardly. The Bodhisattva character in the Jātaka stories set an example to develop qualities for the well-being of society from ancient times.

The Buddhist concept of leadership could be crystallized from the way the Buddha provided training opportunities for His followers. He believed that the juniors should respect and learn from the seniors. There were eighty senior monks that the Buddha had identified as specialists in various fields. Their personal integrity and attainments were such that he reminded the others that there was much for them to learn from such senior monks. Once, the Buddha extolled Sariputta and Moggallana as the measures of ideal behavior. This again shows another leadership quality implied in Buddhism. The leaders should train others also for leadership. They must see their talents, appreciate and encourage them and introduce to others too. When enlisting the duties of teachers the Buddha said a good teacher introduces his students to his colleagues. There were occasions that the Buddha deputized capable senior followers to undertake the responsibility of training junior disciples and observed their activities (Wijebandara 2016). The Bodhisattva character is a blue print for the current leaders of the world and it exemplifies how to govern a country with the compassion of human beings and the ecosystem. The mindful leader who recommended by the Buddhism loves not only human but nature also and it is the way to build a sustainable society.

6. CONCLUSION

We are living in an “attention economy” in which the ability to manage our attention and the quality of our attention is key to our success as leaders. Hence, in any situation of place, leaders need to have some qualities that are focused, mindful, conscious choices, sense of control, prioritized, engaged, creative, aware, blessed, compassion, resilience, wellness, honesty, innovation, less stress...from a leadership perspective, there is a lot of potential to be developed, and even just a small increase in time could have a significant improvement in many aspects of leadership. It is including productivity, leadership, effectiveness, employee satisfaction, teamwork, and any else that would benefit from more focused attention.

Mindfulness may expand a leader's perceptions and lead to authenticity. ‘When we recognize the quality of our feelings and emotions and come to see clearly the results of our actions, we discover that our very lack of awareness has contributed to our problems... By working on ourselves, by coming to know ourselves better and then by sharing our growing strength with others, we create a base of support that helps to make our lives, and the world, a better place to be’ (Tulke 1994).

Benefits of mindfulness at work: better task performance, decreased multitasking, enhanced work life balance, creativity and innovation, increased problem solving, fewer sick days, better decision making, increased job satisfaction, enhanced focus, ethical decision making, increased retention. This kind of fine leadership built on trust, love and understanding demands a high degree of personal integrity. Leaders should be morally integral, compassionate and must have a clear vision and mission. They should not abuse their leadership for self-glorification or personal gain. They have to be good communicators and be able to represent the group as persons able to talk for the group (Wijebandara 2016). A leader with integrity can be trusted and will be admired for adhering to strong values. Credible leaders practice what they teach. They do what they say and say what they do. According to the Buddhist thought, mindful leadership should be inherited a high degree of moral integrity to build a sustainable society.

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