

UTILITY OF BUDDHIST EDUCATION IN THE ERA OF GLOBALIZATION

by Deepak Kumar*

In the present day human society is headed towards a doomsday primarily because it has undertaken, what from the Buddhist perspective may be called as a wrong path (*agatigamma*), to development. In order to understand the “Utility of Buddhist Education” in the era of globalization, it is imperative for us to discuss globalization in a brief way, and its Holistic impact on global society. Literally speaking globalization meaning is to make, connect and spread something Global or worldwide, otherwise taking into consideration the whole world without boundaries, in a simple way, Globalization means the establishment of relations of the economy with the world economies in regard to foreign investment, markets, trade, production and financial matters. Globalization may be defined as integrating and connecting the economy of a country with the economies of other countries under the terms and conditions of free-flow of import, export, capital and movement of persons across the border.

In the modern era, the Globalization has both positive and negative impacts. There are some positive impacts, that it paved the way for economic expansion, and it has accelerated the processes of information technology.

Our ancient saint had a very noble thought like-

“Sarve Bhabantu Sukhinam

*. Research Scholar at Department of Buddhist Studies, University of Delhi, Guest Lecturer at NCWEB (University of Delhi), India.

Sarve Santu Niramaya

Sarve Bhadrayani Pasyantu

Ma Kashit Dukho Ma Bhava Bhavat”

This is also an aspect of Globalization and prehistoric saints have many aspects that were so altruistic, that they thought equally benefit of everyone, but this noble idea could not spread at the large scale because those days, they did not have an advance information technology which we have in our command today. It was an invisible aspect of Dhamma at his time which has potential in today’s globalization; and every one could derive benefit from its revolutionary thoughts and philosophies.

Today we have economic globalization, and it also has some negative impact, that it gave birth to a culture of capitalism and consumerism in this world. A society which is dominated by consumerism and capitalism is greatly influenced by money and materialistic items, and there is little space for moral sentiments and social values. Moral sentiments are viewed as irrelevant to business and economy because market demands only money. Various marketing and management courses came into existence in post globalization for the function of this globalized system. It serves only the interest of one class i.e. the capitalist class, and the majority of the populations are sufferers.

Various management courses came into existence in the post globalization era, and our younger generation of learners got attracted towards these courses for the sake of employment and market oriented luxurious life, because such courses have great potential to create employment opportunities but hardly may be useful to build a worthy character of the youth and coming generations. The type of education imparted by such courses is a means to learn an art and business on how to make money and profit rather than building character. So, it is based on to have an aspect of life, rather than to be an aspect of life further it generates ignorance, arrogance, greed, selfishness and conflict among people in society. Today, our consumer society is characterized by this belief that owning and buying things is the primary means to happiness and thus, overconsumption is accepted as a way to self-

development, self-realization, self-contentment and prosperous life with joyfulness and happiness.

As once pointed out by Erich Fromm, “the profit oriented economic system is no longer determined by the question: what is good for human? But by the question: what is good for the growth of the marketing system?” In the real world, such society is based on the principles of egotism, selfishness, arrogance and greed. However, egotism, selfishness, arrogance and greed are neither innate in human nature nor are they fostered by it; as once Socrates said that human is neither good nor bad by nature. In fact, Nature of humans is rather the product of social circumstances and life experiences. Moreover, greed and peace preclude each other sometimes.

A consumer society found a way for more production of material goods and services, their increased overconsumption and cravings as the means for joy and happiness. It fostered a physical and mental environment in which life has become extremely unhealthy and sophisticated, this also responsible for various type of health hazards globally.

As once explained by Erich Schumacher, the author of “Small is Beautiful” that an attitude to life which seeks contentment and fulfillment in the single minded pursuit of wealth, capital and matter i.e.; materialism does not fit into this world, because it contains within itself no limiting principle only outrageous consequences. While the social environment in which it is placed, is strictly limited in nature, such an attitude, he points out, carries within itself the seeds of destruction. Materialistic attitude is a moral, ethical, spiritual and metaphysical monstrosity which “means conducting the economic affairs of a man as if people really did not matter at all. To get rid of these negative impacts, an entirely new system of thought based on attention to people instead of good is needed, which is not influenced by jealousy and hatred within people. It could be summed up in the phrase of “Production by the masses, rather than mass production”.

Another negative aspect of globalization in this world is that developed nations, mostly through multinational companies and

global financial and regulatory organizations, continue to exploit and harness the sources of developing nations, one of the biggest flaw of the current globalizing market and consumer system is that it encourages and promotes competition rather than cooperation. It paved the way for greed and selfishness in society where by the personal success of a person is valued more highly than his social responsibility. Political leaders and business leaders often take self-serving decisions rather than serving humanity. Moreover, “the general public is so self-centered and selfishly concerned their private, personal affairs that they pay little attention to all that transform the personal realm in the world. As a result of that when they get power and get an opportunity to enter into political and bureaucracy engaged themselves in all type of corruption and scams.

Another flaw of the current globalizing consumer system is this, that it is widening the gap and building an invisible wall between rich and poor people. In this world, everyone does not have an equal opportunity to access resources. It serves the interest of only one class the capitalist class of the system.

In our globalized world, consumerism has so much impact on our modern life that our ecology and biodiversity is adversely affected by it. Human and ecology are interdependent. They can protect and destroy each other; if the relationship between both of them is smooth and happy, both will grow and flourish. But if the relationship is strained, both will be adversely affected and will have long lasting impact on each other. That is because two are deeply interrelated, interconnected and interdependent. As a human thinks, so he/she becomes. This is true for humans, but as human thinks and acts, so does ecology becomes in near future.

As mentioned above, consumer society generates greed, Buddha referred to this; as immoral roots are responsible for the destruction of fauna and flora on this planet, which turn into the genesis of pollution on mother earth. Pollution of human minds is coming out as a result of hazardous impact on our environment. Buddha describes it as there is only one reason for all bad consequences and that is ‘desire’.

It appears from above writing that this globalizing profit-oriented

system is responsible for generating greed, competition and hatred among people in this beautiful and loveable society. There is no place for this kind of education which imparted thoroughly our values and morality; such system has no place for character building. It may be helpful for mental growth rather than character build-up. In such an adverse circumstance, humanity is threatened by consumerism. The hope that by the passionate and single-minded pursuit of wealth, without dwelling our head in spiritual and moral questions, 'we could establish peace on earth with every living creature' is an unrealistic, unscientific and irrational hope for the future.

In the light of this globalizing profit oriented system, utility of Buddhist education has to be examined in a profound way for a higher purpose of establishing peace and order in the world. Our species of more than seven billion humans on this planet can learn so much from twenty five hundred old human's philosophy; to cure all sorrow, illness, misery of this world.

As mentioned above, greed is the main characteristic feature of the profit-driven globalizing world. The question arises about the origin of this, since greed originates in our mind, it is born in our mindset. Buddha was a great psychologist and he read the human brain and discovered that our mind is influenced by two types of mulas; one is kusala and another one is Aukusala Mulas. Buddha explained that 'Lobha', 'Dosa' and 'Moha' are the three roots of evil in human mind. Their opposites are the roots of good. "Lobha", from Lubh, to cling or attach itself may be rendered by 'attachment' or 'clinging'. it is synonymous with 'greed'. Craving is also used as an equivalent of 'Lobha'. In the case of some desirable objects, human is attached or cling to something which he desires, and in the case of an undesirable object, ordinarily there is opposite of it.

In this context, let us reflect on why we attach ourselves to some object or entity of it; is because of our "Moha" for the object. 'Moha' word is derived from much to delude; It is delusion, stupidity and bewilderment. It is Moha that clouds an object and blinds the vision of a human; we do not understand the real nature and different dimensions of this world.

Buddha said in many of his conversations with his disciple

Ananda, that everything is impermanent, which is the cause of suffering and misery. In philosophy, diametrically opposing to the above three roots are the roots of “Kusala”. ‘Alobha, Adosa and Amoha’; all three indicates the absence of certain evil conditions, but also signify the presence of certain; Adosa does not simply mean non-attachment, but also sacrificing and generosity. Adosa does not simply mean non-anger or non-hatred, but also good will and good heartedness, or benevolence, or loving kindness and compassion (*metta*). Amoha does not merely mean non-delusion, but also wisdom or knowledge or clarity of views (*nana or panna*). Three immoral roots bring darkness in one life and removal of all these bring light in one’s life. Every great religion of this world teaches that one should not be greedy and one should walk on right path. But usually people do not follow this and indulge themselves in immoral aspect of life, if they get an opportunity to do wrong acts in their life.

The solution to this endemic epidemic looming over us is that, how to create real consciousness, so that people will genuinely avoid immoral quests like “Lobha”, “Moha”, and “Dosa”. For that purpose, Buddha prescribes the technique of Meditation. By practicing it we learn to look within and not to be worried about outer world. By the practicing of this meditation, anyone can understand that when everything is impermanent why to run after it, why to hanker after it. This consciousness can be created through Vipassana.

For the practice of Vipassana, Buddha describes the five precepts (i). Abstain from killing (*Ahimsa*); (ii). Abstain from stealing (*Asteya*); (iii). Abstain from telling lies (*Satya*); (iv). Abstain from committing adultery (*Brahmcharya*); (v). Abstain from taking intoxicants (*Suramryi*). By practicing these five precepts of Buddha, defilements like aversion, greed, sensuality, ego etc. in human minds can be rooted out; which one may become purist in character. Buddha taught the eight fold path to the world for transforming people within. Most important part of Buddha’s education is Sila. Sila comes under eight-fold path (*Aṭṭhaṅgika Magga*) by encompassing wisdom (*Paññā*), morality (*Sila*), and meditation (*Samādhi*). In eight fold paths, we can truly offer a path leading to sustainable development in world as prescribes by

Buddha; eight fold path described as right view (*Sammā Ditṭhi*) and right thought (*Sammā-saṅkappa*) constitute wisdom; right-speech (*Sammā Vācā*); Right-conduct (*Sammā Kammanta*); and right livelihood (*Sammā Ajiva*) constitute morality; Right-effort (*Sammā Vāyāma*); Right-Mindfulness (*Sammā-sati*) and right concentration (*Sammā-samādhi*) from the practice of meditation: by following this path wisdom, morality and meditation one can grow inwardly in any human and follow a life of enlightened simplicity. By following this path humans can aim a harmonious living (*dhammacariya sammacariya*) and compassion (*karuna*) with the desire to remove what is detrimental and harmful to others feelings and their unhappiness. This would form the basis of the best example of the well-adjusted and balanced person, who would seek inner peace (*Ajjhattasanti*) and inward joy. By applying and exercising a degree of restraint, limiting his/her need, and avoiding being greedy (*Usuka*) for materialistic objects, because one can never become worthy of respect if one is envious, selfish, and fraudulent (*Issukī maccharī saṭhe*) in his nature and character. So, Buddhist education talks about wisdom and morality in its new dimension of life. Both cannot be separated from each other—” Sila paridhotam Panna; Panna paridhotam silam; Silam Tattha Panna; Yattha panna tattha silam; Silavato Panna pannavato silam.”

In other way, wisdom is purified by morality and morality is purified by wisdom. The education propounded by Buddha has a great potential to create an ideal society, and may be extremely useful for building up character. This should be the purpose of education. If we educate ourselves in the Buddha way of Sila, Samadhi and Panna then there will be spiritual awakening within us. There will be transformation of self for the greater good of everyone. We will be ever mindful with these learning and not say, do or act anything without assessing its advantages and disadvantages from the moral point of view for everyone. Buddhist education, very precisely, means establishing oneself on Sila to attain concentration of mind and to develop Panna that purifies and liberates the human mind and soul.

Development of Sila, Samadhi and Panna is the salient and core essence of Buddhist education. A man who observes moral

precepts will not work under craving and aversion or other bad desires and thus will not steal and kill or any other bad deeds in any condition. He will not even think of hurting any creature in his mind. He will develop compassion for every living being on earth. When such a person develops higher concentration of mind he sees things as they are not as he wants to see/suppose/imagine/predict them. In other words he realizes the impermanent and changing nature of all things in every dimension of life. So, he comes to the only one last conclusion that if the things he wants/desires/fights/ craves for are so impermanent and unstable then why want/desire/ fight/crave for them. This is a great realization once in a lifetime as enlightenment, which goes a long way in reducing his craving for material objects and ultimately rooting it out. What greater advantage of any education can be than this kind of realization?

Gurudeva Rabindra Nath Tagore gives us a description. He says that some kind of realism has to find a place in our educational system. Mahatma Gandhi has rightly said that intellectual development without developing values and Sanskara is very bad and dangerous because we will not develop our noble qualities without a developed, dedicated, disciplined value system, only because we may create Frankenstein and thus take the world near a catastrophe. So, Buddhist education has great potential to establish ideal (*moral, ethical, sensible*) society and may be useful in building up characters of coming generations. It talks about purification of mind and addresses the root cause of this problem in human life.

It cannot be denied that ideal and harmonious society cannot be built in adverse economic circumstances because poverty is a major cause of crime in society. So, it appears in the Kudadanta Sutta that Buddha convinced the various monarch of his time that adequate capital should be provided to farmers and mercantile community of his time, so that they could carry out their farming and business; which will help in developing the structure and prosperity of state.

Wealth too is responsible for too many ills and diseases around world. Excess wealth too may be director of wrong things and evil acts. What Buddha advocates that 'right means of livelihood', means of livelihood should be based on right and correct means. The Buddha did not neglect man's economic aspect. Although, he did

not glorify poverty but what he wanted was to renounce the greed for wealth. He also wanted people to earn wealth by honest means for his family and society and for helping other creatures on planet.

Such teachings are a great means to establish a balance between spirituality and materialism. Buddha taught to humanity that every entity of this world is impermanent. But one's action is important, for which he will be punished or reward in this birth and next birth both.

*“Idha socati pecca socati
papakari ubbhayatha socati,
so socati so vihannati
disva kammakilithanamattaho”*

– (Dhammapada, Yamakavagga, Verse 15)

Grieves here (in this world) grieves after death; in both cases the wrongdoer grieves. He grieves; he is grieved having seen his own evil Kamma.

*“Idha modati, pecca modati
katapunno ubhyatha modati
so modati so pamodati
disva kammavisuddhimattaha”*

– (Dhammapada, Yamakavagga, Verse 16)

Rejoices here (in this world) rejoices after death in both cases the well doer rejoices He rejoices, he is happy having seen his own virtuous karma.

As far as ecology and environment is concerned, from a Buddhist point of view, a new relation must be established between people and mother nature; one of smooth cooperation not of exploitation or domination in any way by any means. The most storngest driving force of such an economy would be to make distinct on between states of utmost misery (*daḷiddatā*). There would be a balance between materials excess and deprivation with time, i.e. avoidance to both mindless materialism and needless poverty leading to a balanced approach to living that harmonize both inner and outer development of human beings.

The essence of a happy society lies not in the multiplication

of desires but in downsizing of these desires. It seems very unbuddhistic to consider goods as more important than people and consumptions as more important than creative activity; both choices are inhumane in its nature. Such an aim was made explicit and committed in the Green Buddhist Declaration, prepared by members of the international Buddhist community for discussion at the World Fellowship of Buddhism in Colombo; they discussed that available world resources and the living ecosystem cannot support all peoples at the level of the consumption of the advantaged nations at this rapid pace, efforts towards global equity must be coupled with efforts towards voluntary simplicity, in one's individual life-style and through democratically-determined policies through world leaders. The economic structures which encourage consumerist greed and alienation must be transformed into very spiritualistic and nature friendly harmonious structures. Unless, we don't make a dramatic shift in our every dimension of thinking and living patterns, we will soon produce a world of monumental misery and destruction by our own deeds. In this rapid change of globalization, our environment is at stake; life of million creatures is in doldrums; basic needs not fulfilled; glaciers on melting age; and after all these truths, humans are not realizing the needs of the time, still fighting for their petty selfish reasons.

Buddhist view is very clear in these circumstances; if people start sensitizing themselves with the great cause for humanity and every living creature on this planet, and to the fact of the interconnectedness and interdependence of all living beings, including humans, and resources. But the present system believes that fulfillment of the material needs of humankind will lead to peace and happiness, may be this is a mistaken view. Only an animal is content if its physiological needs-hunger, thirst and sexual needs are fulfilled. From Buddhist perspective, an ideal society would follow the motto of happiness and welfare of maximum number of people (*Bahujanhitaya Bahujansukhaya*).

In short, Buddhism discouraged possessions of any materialistic object. It paved way for higher purpose of happiness and welfare of maximum number of people in world as it encourages restraint, simplicity, conferment and contentment; which is viewed in

Buddhism as the best wealth (*Samtutthiparama dhanam*). The best wealth of any living human being on this planet is the mental condition of himself, as someone is satisfied with what he/she has or the position in which he/she finds himself (*Samthssamano itaritareva*).

The paper had demonstrated, the utility of Buddhist education, in the context of Globalization whereas former has a potentiality to make a balance between spirituality and materialism and later is useful to create material prosperity for welfare of human race, and hence no place for spiritual aspect of life thus its ignores spirituality.

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