

BUDDHIST ECONOMICS: THE ROAD NOT TAKEN FOR RIGHT LIVING OF SUSTAINABILITY

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ABSTRACT

Industrialization changed the self-sufficient economies in the world to profit-maximizing modes of production. The people who have got used to satisfy their day-to-day needs got attracted to the classy and costly brands the manufacturers have produced and advertised. Irrespective of the religion all are expected to follow unwritten codes in their consumption patterns. But the times have changed so much that by 1899 even Thorstein Veblen had to discuss the conspicuous consumption the people were practicing. The Buddhist discourses point out the satisfaction of the self in all aspects of life. The insatiable nature drives man's sentiments to craving, greed, desire and finally to diverse selfish motives destroying himself and others.

The main research issue in this context was what would be the ultimate outcome of the insatiable nature of man's consumption patterns and what kind of ill-effects it could bring in future disrupting the life on earth. Therefore, the study aimed at identifying the Buddhist approach to responsible consumption. Then it tried to analyse the effects of irresponsible consumption and discussed how responsible consumption could foster sustainable development. Finally, the research wanted to suggest the need to control irresponsible consumption patterns prevalent in the contemporary society.

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The methodology used was a structured questionnaire on four hundred youth representing all the segments in the Sri Lankan society irrespective of their religious affiliation. A systematic sampling method was designed assuming that the sample would provide a better insight in to the understanding of respondents' views. The Youths were selected mainly that there is a generally held notion that they are the most vulnerable and the group that over consume in the society due to the influence of media.

The Buddhist approach to consumerism points out that there is no end to desire if it is not controlled. So Buddhist economics always propagate responsible consumption since it reduces all the conflicts one has with oneself and the outside world. It was found out that the effects of irresponsible consumption increase physical and mental illnesses, environmental degradation and rights-based living. Further it was identified that how responsible consumption could pave the way for sustainability through equality, justice and proper resource utilization. Finally, it was identified that a productive way could be suggested to maintain a harmony among production, consumption and preservation of different capitals that introduces a social and ecological friendly consumption pattern.

1. INTRODUCTION

Economic behaviour has been one of the integral aspects of human history. All the social groups in the world, irrespective of their geographical area, have been practicing some form of economic activities. In general, the traditional, self-sufficient economic activities got changed in to market-based, industrial economies. At present, the globe has been mainly experiencing the open economic system in which many of the countries have got networked. The early communities were highly satisfied with their day-to-day simple needs fulfilled and remained on minor scale, cottage industries and unsophisticated agricultural activities. With the passage of time, those have been replaced by mass scale producers, marketers and advertisers who introduced social stratification to even among the goods produced. As we pass from modern to postmodern or global era, no one is able to stop irresponsible production in a profit motivated, free trade economy and no one can expect all the producers to be responsible towards humanity.

Like the society has got stratified in to social classes the goods produced too have been made to cater to different classes since the level of affordability is unequal. The rich could afford costly goods whereas the poor are unable to behave so. From the pin to the aeroplane there are branded goods which are classy and costly. With this there emerged 'the culture ideology of consumerism' (Sklair, 2002) which came in to the existence due to two main factors. First, the electronic revolution changed the type of the good; its shape, quality of raw materials, design and finish to attract a wide range of customers. Second, the advertising with the help of transnational corporations propagated the image of such products and made symbols of affluence. So the people developed different types of ideologies in relation to western cultural values even for consumption.

Robinson and Harris (2000) who introduced the concept of 'transnational capitalist class' claimed that it has such enormous power in all the spheres in society, whether economic, political, social or cultural shaping consumption patterns. According to Sklair (2001) in transnational capitalist class there are four major players; corporate, state, technical and consumerist who are represented respectively by state officials, professionals, merchants and media. In 1899 Thorstein Veblen introduced the idea of 'conspicuous consumption' in which consumers tend to buy things even if they do not want those but just to show their wealth and social status. So the real needs and wants of the people have been replaced by their egoistical satisfaction. The Frankfurt School theorist Herbert Marcuse (1964) wrote on the ill-effects of modern industrial capitalism. In his text '*One-dimensional Man*' he spoke of how advertising enslaves man and overpowers his critical thinking capacity. So his real needs are forgotten and he becomes a slave of the false needs propagated by media.

Social scientists in the modern era were interested in studying man's economic behaviour in society and another concept they identified was the 'pleasure' created by consumer capitalism. Consumption was to make people happy in many respects. One of the ways is to do this is 'brand romance'. Certain people develop a kind of sentimental attachment towards certain brands since they

assist them to attain and maintain their social position. Campbell (1992) explains this psychological state in another perspective; 'romantic ethic', not the exact use of goods but longing to have those. The production firms always tend to retain consumers and customers on this and the consumer is never happy with what he has. In many cases the economic activities have got camouflaged. Hudson (2013) says that many economic activities have artificial attractiveness or even of invisibility of the ill effects.

2. RESEARCH ISSUE

Based on the background information mentioned above the researcher is interested in analysing what would be the outcome of irresponsible consumption the human kind practices by now. It is inevitable that the irresponsible consumption could affect human society from micro to macro scales bringing a series of damages to man, society and nature. Since sustainability tries to preserve the depleting resources for the future generations through responsible consumption it is advisable to begin practicing what the Buddhist philosophy indicates; 'mindful' or 'responsible consumption'. Even though there are goods available in the market, the person should have '*samma sati*' – the Right mindfulness. Anything done in a proper manner lead to sustainability. So there would be no question of sustainability in future through mindful consumption.

Research questions

In trying to investigate the selected context of this study the researcher decided to answer the following questions such as, what is sustainability, the features of sustainability, what is responsible consumption, what are the effects of irresponsible consumption, what is Buddhist Economics, how Buddhist economics promote responsible consumption and how Buddhist approaches to economics could be used to enrich responsible consumption.

Objectives

The objectives to be achieved in this study were as follows. First, the researcher wished to discuss the Buddhist approach to responsible consumption. Second, to analyse the effects of irresponsible consumption on human society. Third, to examine the

ways to control irresponsible consumption and finally, to explain how responsible consumption could foster sustainability in society.

Literature review

Throughout history religion had a direct relationship with economic activities. Whatever the activity the people engaged in that was conditioned by their culture; norms, values, attitudes, practices, rituals and beliefs. So economic activities too got thoroughly influenced by each culture. One of the leading historical research in religion and economy was '*The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*' by Max Weber (1904). For him the development of European capitalism was mainly based on the Protestant work ethic; 'the ascetic way of life'. Even though he studied Eastern religions those were criticized based on his lack of empirical knowledge on economies such as in India and China (1958, 1968). At the initial stage of European thinking it was believed that the Eastern religions like Buddhism, Hinduism and Confucianism could not have an influence on economic activities thus those economies were comparatively backward compared to the capitalist economies of Europe and USA. Since recently there is a resurgence of Buddhist ethics on economic activities.

In economics the mode of production rests on the raw materials, labour, land, machinery and finances. The market actors were investors, producers, distributors, suppliers, and consumers. In the globalized world there is a complex network binding all these in different degrees as the importance of each segment. Buddhism as a non-European religion has developed recently extremely influential in literature related to human behaviour [Loy, 1997: Essen 2010: Harvey, 2013]. It has been able to provide a new insight in to the existing consumption patterns through its philosophy. Currently the economic activities have become so inhuman that the raw materials have been over used. The quality of the goods has been overlooked against the profits. The health hazards due to the poor, unhealthy working conditions and the diseases caused by those low quality goods produced have been ignored. In this context the Lord Buddha's explanation of Right livelihood provides an alarming insight to the world in general.

Many aspects of the eight-fold path are important in when discussing the sustainability driven economic culture. For example, Right understanding (*Samma ditthi*), Right thought (*Samma sankappa*), Right action (*Samma kammanta*), Right livelihood (*Samma ajiva*), Right effort (*Samma vayama*), Right mindfulness (*Samma sati*) and Right concentration (*Samma samadhi*) could be related to any of the economic actors in the society. Some are specifically related to the producers while some are for consumers, and some are there for both. Therefore, it could be noticed that the Buddhist philosophy on economy is based on these. If someone does anything correct, according to the conscience, having a proper conviction that would be a wholesome act. But the present economic activities do not show any of these aspects promoted by Buddhist philosophy. In summary, Buddhist economics try to preserve nature while fulfilling the needs of the people in an ethical manner.

Buddhist economic philosophy lays a solid foundation for all the good qualities of human beings. Accountability and transparency are key terms in this kind of life style. It enhances group cohesion and solidarity. Earlier the economic development was measured based on gross national income (GNI), gross domestic product (GDP) and per capita income (PCI). By now the world has understood the quantitative revolution has not paid rich dividends to humankind. Therefore, now the scholars are thinking of new strategies to regain the lost characteristics to make human lives better. In 1972 Bhutanese king introduced gross national happiness (GNH) and now most of the countries are interested in 'happiness index'. It is ironical that people first destroy what they have and then pursue what they have destroyed. Many countries could incorporate the spiritual values in to their economic activities to make the production process, work cultures and the consumption a productive, mindful and responsible one for society. This contrasts with the material wealth of industrial society to a more spiritual wealth of a traditional society.

The concept 'Buddhist Economics' was coined and introduced by E. F. Schumacher (1955) with his experiences in Burma. Later a large number of scholars of related disciplines became interested

in and by now many non-Buddhist societies too are interested in incorporating the value system in to economic activities. Buddhism never discourages economic activities but guide the people rely on ethical practices. The Sigalováda Sutta of Digha Nikáya informs the reader how to avoid evil ways of life and how a person could get himself in to trouble by squandering his wealth. Lord Buddha explained in *Vánijja Sutta* in Anguttara Nikáya (AN) the five businesses the lay people should not engaged in; those are wrong, unethical and immoral livelihoods.

“Monks, a lay follower should not engage in five types of business. Which five? Business in weapons, business in human beings, business in meat, business in intoxicants, and business in poison” (AN 5.177).

As the religious principles get incorporated into day-to-day lives many are interested in finding out how to live a comfortable life refrain from suffering. In Buddhism there are various ways to live happily. In Anguttara Nikaya (A. II. (69-70) Lord Buddha explains the four kinds of happiness one could enjoy in life. Happiness - ‘*Sukha*’ is to be achieved in many ways but it should come from the right action; *Samma kammanta*. ‘*Atthi sukha*’ is the happiness one derives when he or she owns wealth. Assets should not be obtained at the expense of the other peoples’ suffering. Even though one could live a comfortable life by doing so it is temporary. This is explained as ‘*Anavajja sukha*’. So any wealth should be obtained through right livelihood. Any one free from debt is called as ‘*Anana sukha*’. When we look at the present day world the capitalist economy has produced so many equipments the majority cannot buy. But to get the capitalist system continuing, the system itself has introduced various easy payment schemes. So people are always in debt to many financial institutions thus making their lives miserable in many ways. ‘*Bhoga sukha*’ convinces that one has to share what he or she has with the others around in the immediate environment. That may be among family, relatives, friends, the people at work place and in close proximity. In this way so many people can be happy in their day-to-day lives.

Ratthapala Sutta in Majjhima Nikaya and Verses 186 and 187 of Dhammapada mention the insatiable nature of man and how he or she becomes slavish to money or wealth.

“Householder, if you’d do as I say, you would have this heap of gold and silver loaded on carts and hauled away to be dumped midstream in the river Ganges. Why is that? This [wealth] will be the cause of your sorrow, lamentation, pain, distress and despair” (MN 82, PTS: M ii 54)

‘Not by a shower of coins can sensual desires be satiated; sensual desires give little pleasure and are fraught with evil consequences (dukkha)’. (Verse 186)

‘Knowing this, the wise man, who is the disciple of the Buddha, does not find delight even in the pleasures of the devas, but rejoices in the cessation of craving (i.e., Nibbana)’. (Verse 187)

The Buddhist philosophy not only discusses how one should earn but how to spend also. As you earn money in a mindful and responsible manner one should know how to manage his money in spending sensibly. In Sigalovada Sutta of Digha Nikaya (III 180) Lord Buddha advises how to spend money in a responsible manner. The wealth accumulated in the correct manner should be divided in to four portions. The first part is for one’s own needs and wants. The second and third parts are to invest on businesses and the final one for the times he needs. All these examples and many others in several places of Buddhist literature prove that Buddhist philosophy had been insisting that money should be earned in an ethical way and the consumption too should be done in a responsible way.

Methodology

The collection of data for the study was done using a structured questionnaire due to cost-effective nature. Within a short period of time the researcher could collect a large number of responses. The responses are high in validity, reliability, generalizability and objectivity. Classification, analysis and the presentation of results are easy. Further the structured questionnaires could provide invaluable information about personal ideas, attitudes, beliefs, behaviours and experiences (Turner, 2006, p. 509). Four hundred youths from state and private tertiary educational institutes were selected using a systematic sampling method because there are a lot of students in the tertiary educational institutes in both sectors.

A systematic sampling method was designed assuming that the sample would provide a better insight in to the understanding of respondents' views. The Youths were selected mainly that there is a generally held notion that they are the most vulnerable and the group that over consume in the society due to the influence of media. In the structured questionnaire there were five questions to identify the basic demographic factors. After that to find out the responses for the objectives of the study there were twenty questions. Nagypál et al (2015) too has conducted a similar study using a sample of Hungarian University undergraduates to study how they interpret and select products based on sustainable consumption. Youth are the ones who are normally driven by the influence of advertising and product differentiation. The responses would explain their level of awareness and the behaviour in relation to such awareness.

3. DISCUSSION

The term sustainable development appeared in the scholarly discussions and literature since 1992. The Agenda 21 published in the Rio Summit (UNEP, 2010) took a clear view in sustainable consumption and production at the global level. Wang et al (2014) describe sustainable consumption as 'meeting needs, enhancing the quality of life, improving resource efficiency, increasing the use of renewable energy sources, minimizing waste, taking a life cycle perspective and taking into account the equity dimension' (p. 154). Valkó (2003) mentions that sustainable consumption should be studied under two main objectives. The first is to minimize the consumption of goods only to when and where necessary, alter the habits of the consumers and introduce positive changes to consumption patterns. The second objective should be to establish a permanent value system that would strengthen sustainability. Both these objectives unequivocally bear a testimony to the Buddhist practices advocated.

Akenji (2014) proposes a framework that constitute; attitude, facilitator and infrastructure, in explaining how sustainable consumption is to be mainstreamed. This highlights three elements – stakeholders having the right attitude, facilitators enabling the actions to reflect those attitudes and the development of suitable

infrastructure. Whatever the strategy adopted the most important aspect is the behavior of the consumer. Different scholars have used different concepts to explain the factors that influence the consumer's behavior. In Kotler's Model of Consumer Behaviour (Kotler and Dubois, 2003, p. 761) the main elements of consumer behavior are 'marketing stimuli', 'buyer's decision making process' and 'buyer's responses'. Further the characteristics pertaining to the buyer could be classified and identified under the elements of 'Cultural', 'Social', 'Personal' and 'Psychological' (*ibid*).

Even though the international organizations have taken a keen interest on sustainable consumption it is tragic that majority of the general public do not have a concrete idea of what is happening. Without their knowledge they contribute to irresponsible consumption patterns. O'Rourke (2005) states that consumers are "more environmentally and socially aware today", although, "they still do not generally consume with concern" (p. 116). Since the advent of globalization the consumption patterns have changed in an unprecedented manner. Jonkuté and Jugris (2014) are in the opinion that the consumer patterns are based on demography, access to global trade, technological sophistication and innovations. Gilg et al. (2005) also conclude that the causes for the patterns of consumption are 'environmental and social values, socio-demographic variables and psychological factors' (p. 482).

The twelfth goal of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development aims at ensuring sustainable and responsible consumption and production patterns. Oslo Symposium (1994) defined sustainable consumption and production as:

'The use of services and related products, which respond to basic needs and bring a better quality of life while minimizing the use of natural resources and toxic materials as well as the emissions of waste and pollutants over the life cycle of the service or product so as not to jeopardise the needs of further generations'. (UNEP 2010, p. 12)

Based on this, there are numerous targets to achieve. Managing the natural resources efficiently and responsible disposal of toxic waste and pollutants are prime targets. Simultaneously it was decided to encourage all the parties to reuse, recycle and reproduce

to minimize the damages done to the environment and the expenses in all processes of production and consumption. It has been noted that the developing countries in the world have been contributing for these ill-effects knowingly or unknowingly. While the amount of global food waste is significant, there are a large number of people who do not even meet the basic food requirements daily. While taking necessary steps to reduce global food waste the authorities have to think of ways to channel to reduce hunger and malnutrition by distributing food to the regions that need most. Food scarcity as a contemporary global issue could be countered by improving food security. So it has been understood that to promote the quality of life at the global level, the entire system of production and consumption should be changed.

Since the times of Western imperialism, the West had a great impact of the production and the consumption of the non-Western regions too. Globalization has been an extension of the same social, economic and political process. Leslie Sklair (2002, 2009, 2010) extensively portrayed the relationship between economy and culture in relation to consumption in the globalized era. As Sklair (2009) mentions there is a significant difference between the 'basic [true] and false needs (p. 528). Consumers have not been able to identify what are the actual needs that satisfy their life. Chernus (1993) mentions how irrational and illogical man is when pursuing these false needs. According to him, 'False needs are unnecessary needs.... To meet false needs we repress our genuine needs and the real needs of others. We perform unneeded labour, miss opportunities to enjoy life, and deprive others of their basic needs' (p.1). The role of the transnational corporations has been to control and manipulate global production and consumption. Sklair (2010) explained his concept the culture-ideology of consumerism as 'a set of beliefs and values, integral but not exclusive to the system of capitalist globalization, intended to make people believe that human worth is best ensured and happiness is best achieved in terms of our consumption and possessions' (p. 136). As the term itself denotes the idea is that there is a culture or subculture gets developed in relation to consumption patterns. The dominance of the global capitalist economy could be seen in many ways and this is only one such instance.

Throughout the world, irrespective of the geographical region, people suffer due to many reasons. The lop-sided development in all fields have introduced a lot of ill-effects to the individuals, society and nature. One of the paths the people could practice to move out of these ill-effects is the practice of Buddhist philosophy. Buddhist philosophy advocates how to utilize all the resources in a sensible (responsible) way without getting into extremes. For that people need to control their desires, in other words, senses. But what has happened is, Man has become blind to the long-term ill-effects when enjoying the short-term benefits. As experienced in life the most important thing is the making of choices or decisions. When making choices or decisions people have to act responsibly. The Thai government's 'Sufficiency Economy Philosophy' (SEP) is a very good example how a country could achieve prosperity in successive stages. It is based on the middle path advocated by Buddhism to achieve sustainable development by integrating the three dimensions; physical, social and spiritual. Rather than blindly following the Western theories the Thai government wanted its people to start in a simple but practical way to achieve self-sufficiency first before moving in to more advanced stages.

Anyone who delves too deep in to the SEP could understand how much it is related to Buddhism. The three principles are as follows. The first principle asserts the importance of moderation in protecting the planning and implementation from internal and external threats. Secondly, knowledge should be applied reasonably through wisdom and prudence. Finally, the community should develop self-immunity against the negative external impacts. All the three key words, 'moderation', 'reasonableness' and 'self-immunity' are explained extensively in Buddhist philosophy. Daniels (2007) mentions that this type of economic activities and behaviours are beneficial to all the segments of society from micro to macro level.

4. FINDINGS

The Sample consists of 126 (31.5 per cent) males and 274 (68.5 per cent) females. Normally in Sri Lanka, the tertiary education system comprises of more females. The age group was between 20

to 27 years of age. The researcher wanted to target this age group because they are the ones who would bring this knowledge to the next generation. While 248 students (62 per cent) represented the public sector, 152 (38 per cent) represented the private sector. This is due to the fact that there are more students in public sector tertiary educational institutes. There were 252 respondents (63 per cent) represented Buddhism and 103 (25.75 per cent), 11 (2.75 per cent) and 34 (8.5 per cent) represented Christianity/Catholicism, Hinduism and Islam respectively. The ethnic categories Sinhalese and Tamil Christians or Roman Catholics have contributed largely to the sample in this respect. There were 212 (53 per cent) students who represented the Arts stream subjects while 108 (27 per cent) and 80 (20 per cent) respectively represented the commerce and science streams. In Sri Lankan tertiary educational institutes there are more students studying in Arts stream and respectively lesser in Commerce and Science streams.

As the first objective of the research study the researcher wished to find out the knowledge of the respondents on the Buddhist approach to responsible consumption. Most of them were unaware (67 per cent) that there is a term or concept called 'Buddhist Economics'. Still a significant number (58 per cent) knew that the Lord Buddha had explained the proper way to earn and spend but a poor percentage (22) knew in which discourse those were explained. Another remarkable percentage (77) did not know that Buddhism has advocated the mindful or responsible consumption in many places of its discourses. Further the sample knew that four noble truths (81 per cent), the middle path (80 per cent) and the eight-fold path (76 per cent) discuss the importance of responsible consumption but how it should be practiced was unclear.

In analyzing the second objective, the effects of irresponsible consumption on human society, the following findings were received. The sample in this research responded that they are aware of the concepts and terms 'green', 'sustainable' and 'eco-friendly' (78 per cent) but only 22 per cent knew or heard about 'responsible consumption'. Most of them (83 per cent) expressed that they should protect the environment and the same percentage admitted that they did not know how to contribute as an individual. Ninety-one

per cent acknowledged that each individual is responsible for what one consumes and 74 per cent said that they think of sustainability when buying goods. Another great majority (94 per cent) claimed that individuals are responsible for careful use of products and disposal of waste material. Another remarkable percentage (88) agreed that they should reuse, recycle and reproduce but the same category expressed that their knowledge to do those is very poor.

Another significant aspect of the responses was that 48 per cent did not know the negative impacts the use of goods has on environment. Ninety-five per cent admitted that they buy products without knowing the impacts those have on environment. The need (89 per cent) and the price or affordability (87 per cent) are the two main determinants in making a decision to purchase a product. Product quality (74 per cent) and durability (61 per cent) were subsequent determinants. Advertising is the main and most influential medium (98 per cent) that shapes the decision making process of purchasing. Other than advertisements they believe in leaflets (72 per cent), user manuals (67 per cent) without questioning the authenticity. Further 48 per cent replied that there is no way of verifying the specifications given in the product description.

In answering how to control the irresponsible consumption in society the respondents had mentioned the following ideas. All the respondents agreed that the society should be educated fully. The first preference was to start this awareness programmes at school level, then the secondary educational institutes, tertiary educational institutes, work places and finally, the community organisations. The sources they mentioned were the television, newspapers, radio, social media campaigns and street drama. Further, all the respondents in the sample mentioned that it is important to educate the producers. But when they were answering the question in relation to the producers most of them (69 per cent) said that they are unable to think any strategy of educating them on responsible production. In answering how to improve sustainable consumption the respondents were of the view that the consumers should be educated on product quality (89 per cent), its environmental impact (76 per cent) and the actual need to use it (67 per cent). The relationship between the producer and the consumer too was

identified as important (87 per cent). Most of them believed that the harm of the products is limited to its chemicals (83 per cent), lack of durability (79 per cent) and health effects (77 per cent).

In trying to find answers for the fourth objective the respondents were of the opinion that sustainability is the most discussed topic in this century. All of them agreed that responsible consumption would foster sustainability. The majority considered it is the responsibility of the government (94 per cent) to promote responsible consumption rather than individual (83 per cent). The most preferred solution the respondents marked was to use natural resources in a traditional way (93 per cent) in production process rather than getting in to the modern technology (81 per cent) to reduce harm on nature, man and society. Further they wanted the society to develop a normative framework for responsible consumption. Individuals adapting a rational behaviour (96 per cent), being sensitive to harmful effects of the products (91 per cent) and being sensible in selecting products in relation to actual needs (89 per cent) were the three main response selections in promoting responsible consumption.

5. CONCLUSION

In conclusion the researcher has found out that there is an enormous gap between the knowledge and practice of the respondents. The sample is the next generation who would be responsible in making decisions in all the spheres. But the lack of knowledge of what they do and having low alternatives to counter the problems they are going to face would be a serious concern. Even though there is a willingness to act, the lack of knowledge or awareness has become critical. The relevant authorities should take an action to promote responsible consumption by reducing this 'knowledge – action gap' which will be pivotal in changing the behaviour of the people. In practicing Buddhist philosophy also, we identify the similar issue. People need to be ethical and moral but in their practice (action) that desire is absent.

Even though the governments are responsible it would be difficult to take actions regarding production processes of their own country and limit the in-flow of foreign goods for consumption. If they

restrict their own firms, lack of employment, quality goods and the technology would restrict competing with the rest of the world. The urban-rural disparity and the level of education may be two other factors which could not have been addressed in this study. According to the findings of the Consumer Awareness Survey on Sustainable Consumption done in Sri Lanka (2018) also there is a desire to act but the lack of knowledge has been the critical issue. Kopnina (2011) too found out that there is a positive relationship between the social class and the awareness of responsible consumption among Hungarian University students. Even though people are conscious about the ill-effects of irresponsible consumption they have not been environmentally conscious, responsible consumers.

Yamamoto (2003) proposes a solution for this – ‘Buddhist-inspired sustainable economies’ (p. 157). He says the greatest weakness of the individual is ‘kâma tanhá’ (p. 159), his craving to satisfy the sensual pleasures. It relates to ‘bhava tanhá’ (p. 160), his desire to satisfy his ego and social status. It is understood that all should live happily but how that happiness is achieved has not been realized. Yamamoto (2003) proposes the three spheres that should work together to bring this happiness; individual level, social level and the level of natural world.

The author wishes to suggest a tri-partite structure through which the happiness of consumption could be achieved fully in relation to the Buddhist Philosophy. The sustainability through ‘responsible consumption’ would rest on the proper combination of the three ‘capitals’; natural, human and moral capital. Natural capital refers to the resources we utilize in the production process. The human capital is the labour we use in producing goods. The producers have to be responsible in using natural and human capital in this stage. The moral or ethical capital is the normative framework of the consumers. If all the stages are worked out in relation to Buddhist Philosophy the physical structures, human structures and the institutional structures of the society would be establishing a responsible behaviour for consumption which lead to sustainability.

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