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A Society of Happiness: Following the Principle of Sadharanabhogidham

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Abstract

This article titled “A Society of Happiness: Following the Principle of Sadharanabhogidham” indicates the usage of Sadharanabhogidham principle for founding a society of happiness by introducing the concept of sharing any lawful gains with virtuous fellows. An example society as a model of this principle is a community of Bunniyom. The community has brought this principle to apply and successfully put into practice. Based on the concept and the power of their belief, 4 aspects of belief have been focused: 1) Buddha Dhamma; 2) religion; 3) confidence of the group; 4) deed and the fruit of deed (karma). These aspects result the characteristics of society with Sadharanabhogidham principle. At present the principle of Sadharanabhogidham has been applied in founding a society of happiness in many Buddhist organizations especially in forms of public welfare groups.

Keywords: Society, Happiness, Sadharanabhogidham, Public Welfare

Introduction

The word “society” refers to a group of people with 2 persons or more. They have been continuously living together for a long period of time in a particular place with specific territory. There has been order in interactions under the consistent way of life and custom. The community is fairly self-supporting of their own with crucial components of society i.e. group of humans as members who have interactions, respect the common rule and regulation, divide their duties, cooperate and mutually help each other. This basically results similar thought, faith, belief and value (Pakakrong, P., 2004). In living together in society, there are normally problems existing with conflicts that rather lead to suffering than happiness. Establishing the system, regulation, law or any enactment is only one of many principles in founding happiness in society.

Buddha Dhamma principle is believed to be remarkable with its system, regulation, enactment and practice. That is because it not only founds happiness for oneself but also results in founding society of happiness. Happiness in Buddhism can be divided into two aspects.

1. Happiness at the level of general human beings is called mundane happiness focusing on fulfilling desires or vital needs that basically related to materials and feeling as evidenced in Gihisukha in Buddha Dhamma on 4 aspects of house-life happiness of laymen or householders (Tipitaka, 1996):
1) Atthisukha: bliss of property ownership or happiness resulting from property gained from one’s physical, mental and intellectual effort and capacity.

2) Bhogasukha: bliss of enjoyment or enjoyment of wealth that founds utility for oneself or for others in society.

3) Ananasukha: bliss of debtless or happiness on account of freedom from debt.

4) Anavajjasukha: bliss of blamelessness or happiness on account of leading a faultless life in all actions of body, speech and mind.

2. Happiness or bliss above human ways of life: It is the bliss within one’s mind through practice with intellect or wisdom called Lokuttarasukha. This level of bliss can be reached through the principle of the Noble Paths as the guideline for personal practice for the highest merit. The Noble Eightfold Paths include (Tipitaka, 1996).

1) Sammaditthi (Right View) means attitude, understanding and knowledge arisen from wisdom towards the ultimate truth or enlightenment of the Four Noble Truths of suffering, cause of suffering, cessation of suffering, paths for ending suffering.

2) Sammasankappa (Right Thought) means right thinking in 3 aspects: Nekkhamma-vitakka or thought of being free from selfish desire; Abyapada-vitakka or thought of being free from hatred; and Avihimsa-vitakka or thought of non-violence.

3) Sammvaca (Right Speech) means right words in speaking and negotiating by abstaining from 4 types of speeches: false speech, ironical speech, abused speech and chatter speech.

4) Sammakammanta (Right Action) means right action in 3 aspects including abstention from killing, stealing and sexual misconduct.

5) Samm-ajiva (Right Livelihood) means right means of livelihood or abstention from illegal or immoral means of livelihood including 5 aspects: selling weapons for killing or destruction, selling animals for killing, selling alcoholic drinks, selling narcotics and selling poisonous medicine.

6) Sammavayama (Right Effort) means the right effort in 4 aspects including

   (1) Effort in being aware of not allowing unwholesome courses in one’s trait or habit
   (2) Effort in ridding of unwholesome courses in one’s trait
   (3) Effort in making merit in oneself
   (4) Effort in maintaining merit existing in oneself and not losing it.

7) Sammasati (Right Mindfulness) means reminding oneself or being conscious before acting, speaking and thinking. Reminding oneself of merit with pure mind and practicing in Sila (precepts), meditation and wisdom.
8) Sammasamadhi (Right Concentration) means having stable intention or volition in purifying one’s mind for ending suffering.

The Noble Eightfold Paths is the practice leading to the ultimate happiness or bliss in Buddhism. This happiness is categorized in Buddhism as the bliss to liberate oneself from the cycle of suffering. In other words, the paths eventually lead to enlightenment.

The happiness in both levels have great effect in society specially the level of Lokuttarasukha. There are, thus, many new Buddhist organizations bringing these principles of founding happiness into practice that results blissful societies. The groups that apply Buddha Dhamma principle into practice in Thailand are also outstanding and the most successful group called themselves “Chum-chon Bunniyom” (Asoktrakul, R., 2006) (Meritocratic Community) or Asoka Group titled by Samana Bodhirak (Rakphong, R., 2018) who is a spiritual leader with the principle of founding society of happiness by living a simple life with utmost self-reliance, minimizing desires, strictly observing at least the five precepts, being vegetarians, sacrifice, generosity, share and mutual help. The important Buddha Dhamma principle used is Sadhananabhogidham in founding society of happiness.

Main Concept of Sadhananabhogidham

The concept of Sadhananabhogidham exists in Sutta-pitaka, Majjhimanikaya, Upparipannas with the 6 principles of Saraniyadhamma, (Phra Dhammapitaka (P.A. Payutto), 2003), Dhamma section on virtues for fraternal living. The main concept is sharing: sharing legitimate gains, whether large or small amount, to be commonly utilized. This action is called Sadhananabhogidham focusing on sharing and distributing the surplus to others. This principle is different from Dana (charity) because Sadhananabhogidham is not rooted from Metta (loving kindness) but from sufficiency and sharing the surplus without selfishness but aiming at public interest (Buddhathat Bhikkhu, 1994).

Sadhananabhogidham shares what one gains in 2 types including (Inphum, A., 1994).

1. Amisadana (Material Gift): sharing basic needs and materials including rice, water, medicine, possessions, body organs, blood, eyeball and even the most important one i.e. life. This sharing is not only for humans but also animals.

2. Dhammadana (Gift of Truth or Spiritual Gift): sharing arts, sciences, virtues, useful knowhow for living to escape from suffering but lead to happiness, understanding life and purification of oneself. This is a sharing of knowhow that can be divided into 2 types:

   1) Sharing knowhow in worldly arts and sciences for right livelihood with happiness. In Buddhism, this is called sharing treasures (Aunghasamanidhi) that secures life to be safe, peaceful and healthy.
2) Sharing arts and sciences in Dhamma i.e. sharing the content of Buddha Dhamma which is the truth of life leading to happiness, growth, enlightenment, purity and peace. Furthermore, this includes sharing opportunity for others to reform oneself to secure their life.

Chumchon Bunniyom (Meritocratic Community) or Asoka Group holds the principle of Sadharanabhogidham specially in mutual help and sharing benefits from the surplus of what one gains with the principle of sufficiency or Bhojane-mattannuta or moderation in eating and consuming that leads to simple and happy life. With the concept of sufficiency, the surplus of what one produce is shared with others with the principle of Sadharanabhogi that founds the society of happiness. The appeared effects resulted from the basic and powerful customary belief in 4 principles includes (Saengsuriyachan, T., 2010).

1) Power of belief in Dhamma or holding the Teaching of Buddha as the direction of practice in developing personal attributes in 3 aspects including: being mindfully above all cravings (Lokuttara), knowingly understand all the causes of desires of worldly passion (Lokavidu) and supporting others (Lokanukampaya)

2) Power of belief in religion: believing that religions develop humans to be good, knowledgeable, capable and ethical that leads society to have common happiness. It is a means of being benefactors in founding the society of happiness.

3) Power of belief in group and group process: with a common course of living, participation in doing activities, making decision and regulating common rules of living in the community. The power of Chumchon Bunniyom has founded a society of sharing, mutually helping and non-exploiting each other. The social tradition of “Sadharanabhogi” exists.

4) Power of belief in the results of deeds as the means for self-reliance: an effort in changing behavior to do merit deeds following the Teaching of Buddha. Merit deeds have been continuously committed by practicing oneself focusing on observing precepts (Sila)

**Founding Society of Happiness with the Principle of Sadharanabhogidham**

A part of founding society of happiness with the principle of Sadharanabhogidham is from the application for using in social development and promoting organizations specially Buddhist organizations in Thailand. By focusing on Sadharanabhogi, society of sharing, mutually supporting between the different economic classes has been founded. It is the atmosphere of mutual help without exploitation. The first priority in founding society with Sadharanabhogi is the power of belief that explicitly existed in Chumchon Bunniyom while Samana Bhdhirak ordained at Asokaram Temple in November 1970 that was the beginning of Chumchon-Chao-Asoka with the belief in observing precepts (Sila), consuming less, focusing on “Bun” (merit) or “Bunniyom” in order to develop to be secured and stable. The community group, thus, includes laymen and priests that have a common
living in a specific location. Chumchon Bunniyom has extended its 24 branches throughout the country Sudfungfun Group, 2005). From the example above, the success of society strongly relies on attributes of the people in the society with the power of faith that build 11 characteristics of the social group as the following (Samana Bodhirak, 2007).

1) Though, they are against the flow of capitalism, they are not the enemy of capitalism but applying Sadharanabhogi in daily living of the people aiming to the happiness, peace and right behavior. The people do more sacrifices, less struggles and conflicts because they do not compete for material things like capitalism.

2) They are ethical and entering into the condition of being above desires (Lokuttaradham). That means the well practiced mind in limiting cravings, relieving from desires, ending lust with their right view (Sammaditthi).

3) They practice themselves to do difficult things with a strong will in ridding of desires while founding good things for themselves and peaceful society.

4) They are not imaginary. All stages are chronologically practiced. They believe in only what is possible to be practiced with empirical results.

5) They can reach the truth (Saccadham). For humans and society, truth is the living that is right, valuable and possible to end suffering

6) Benefit is the giving and sacrifice. Giving leads to happiness. Honest sacrifice for others without expectation of any return is ethical. Commercial is only for releasing others from suffering.

7) Empowering people with ethics and end of suffering is the principal success needs to be done. This is much better than the total benefit of materials, accumulations, prestige or the fruits of happiness of general laymen (Lokiyasukh)

8) Behavioral and spiritual development and change following the Teaching of Buddha basically by abstaining from causes of ruins (Apayamukha) and observing the Five Precepts in order to control life out of problems or harmful causes.

9) Fertility is not personal but communal in the center of community. Income from work and production are communal with common benefit that can be called Sadharanabhogi.

10) It must be able to be proved as in scientific approach. Other people are invited to prove with limitless period of time.

11) It leads to freedom, fraternity, peace, capacity and integration. Rights and liberty means liberation from passion, fear and confinement. Fraternity means the condition of siblings that mutually supportive and interdependent. Peace means the condition of feeling concerned of each other without suspicion, scrambling or fighting. Capability means the capacity to create physical, mental, emotional, intellectual and social growth. Integration means the holistic appropriate combination of freedom, fraternity, peace, and capability.

At present, introduction of Sadharanabhogi to found a society of happiness has been newly applied by many Buddhist organizations that can be put as examples
as the following: Non-profit healthcare center, public welfare center for human resource development: the orphanage, the disadvantaged, the homeless, the drug addicted women and teenagers including vocational provision, animal welfare centers etc. It is obvious that if Sadharanabhogi is not available, it is hard to found a society of happiness.

Conclusion

Society of happiness following the principle of Sadharanabhogidham holds a Dhamma principle in Saraniyadhamma 6 existing in Sutta-pitaka, Majhima-nikaya, Upparipannas with the Dhamma principle of living together with happiness. The happiness in Buddhism is divided into 2 levels of Lokiyasukh and Lokuttarasukh. Society of happiness can be founded by various perspectives of theories. However, there is an outstanding perspective in Buddhism on building a society of happiness by introducing Sadharanabhogi to found a society of sharing the surplus of what one needs with others by putting the surplus into the communal center. Chumchon Bunniyom groups or can be called Asoka Group has brought the principle of Sadharanabhogi to apply in their community with fruitful outcome based on the concepts of 4 beliefs including: 1) Power of belief in Buddha Dhamma; 2) Power of belief in religion; 3) Power of belief of the group; 4) Power of belief in the deed and its fruits. At present the principle of Sadharanabhogi has been introduced in founding a society of happiness. It has also been applied by many new Buddhist organizations in forms of public welfare groups. However, if it is well observed, Buddha Dhamma also includes various principles supporting and leading a society of happiness such as Gharavasa-dhamma 4, Mangala 38, Sangahavatthu 4, Iddhipada 4, Brahmavihara 4, Ariyamagga 8 etc.

References


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