



Historical analysis of applied and engaged Buddhism and its precepts in Indian sub-continent

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Abstract

The present paper is analyzing the relevance of teachings of Buddha in the present scenario. The teachings of Buddhism are century old but its relevance is still important. Buddha's teachings don't only help individual to attain inner peace but also give insight to resolve worldwide problem of which the whole world is struggling today. The application of teachings of Buddhism is called applied Buddhism and intrinsic connection to these teachings is called engaged Buddhism.

Keywords: applied Buddhism, engaged Buddhism

Introduction

Applied Buddhism." shares valuable information on Buddhist contributions to modern science, health and well being. As our concept of well being is directly related to our mental and spiritual health, Buddhist Meditational practices are given the prime importance for prevention of mental illnesses and recommended for incorporation in the regimen of regular psychotherapy and in primary and secondary school curriculum as a part of primordial prevention.

Without disrespecting the significance or religious rituals, the myths and beliefs and traditional local ceremonial practices related to Buddhism are however, carefully extracted and excluded from this domain of "Applied Buddhism". This is intentionally done in order to make the Buddhist ideas more acceptable to people belonging other religious realms and cultural backgrounds. The idea behind this is to enable people practice Buddhism without being converted into a Buddhist. One should understand that Buddhism is not just a religion, but a way of life. In order to incorporate Buddhist ideas in daily life, one need not give up his or her own religion. Just that one can remain spiritual without being religious, in the same way; one can practice Buddhist teachings without formally being a Buddhist.

Applied aspect of Buddhism: Integration of Buddhist Philosophy with Activities in Daily Life. Thus, the term "Applied Buddhism" explains how every person can relate Buddhist ideas into his or her daily life and in profession. The main focus of this new concept is to diffuse the teachings of the Buddha in every nook and corner of the society, so that all sentient beings, irrespective of their religion, culture and creed can benefit from it. In recent times, some of the new concepts that have evolved in Buddhism are Engaged Buddhism, Social Buddhism, Socially Engaged Buddhism and Green Buddhism. The term "Engaged Buddhism" to emphasize the intrinsic connection between authentic Buddhist meditation and social action. The most well-known center of discussion and action regarding engaged Buddhism in the West is the Buddhist Peace Fellowship. We offer the following brief bibliography of books about engaged Buddhism for those who are

interested in this topic. Buddhist Peace Fellowship (BPF), The "Tiep Hien" Buddhist Order (The Order of Interbeing) and the work of the Sakyannuni Buddhist Centre as examples of Non-Sectarian, Socially Engaged and Ecologically Responsible Buddhist Practice. The author believes that these kinds of organizations are likely to be of interest to those Western Buddhists for whom spiritual practice is inseparable from social action on humanitarian and environmental issues. The term "Socially Engaged Buddhism" refers to active involvement by Buddhists in society and its problems. Participants in this nascent movement seek to actualize Buddhism's traditional ideals of wisdom and compassion in today's world. Because Buddhism has been seen as passive, otherworldly, or escapist, an "engaged Buddhism" may initially appear to be a self-contradiction isn't one of the distinguishing features of Buddhism its focus on the solitary quest for enlightenment." The view taken by many engaged Buddhists is "that no enlightenment can be complete as long as others remain trapped in delusion" and that "genuine wisdom is manifested in compassionate action".

Furthermore, the engaged Buddhists who contributed to the recent work "The Path of Compassion: Writings on Socially Engaged Buddhism, found that in re-examining Buddhism's 2500-year-old heritage, "the principles and even some of the techniques of an engaged Buddhism have been latent in the tradition since the time of its founder. Qualities that were inhibited in pre-modern Asian settings, they argue, can be actualized through Buddhism exposure to the west, where ethical sensitivity social activation and egalitarian is more emphasized."

Everybody would like to see peace on this globe. Obviously there isn't any. In this century there has been a war somewhere practically all the time. Every country has an enormous defense system where a lot of energy, money and manpower is used. This defense system is turned into an attack system the minute anyone even makes the slightest friendly remark or seems to be moving towards an invasion of airspace or territorial waters. This is rationalized and justified with, 'We have to defend the border of our country in order to protect the

inhabitants'.

Disarmament is a hope and a prayer, but not a reality. And why? Because disarmament has to start in everyone's heart or wholesale disarmament will never happen. The defense and attack which happens on a large scale happens constantly with us personally. We're constantly defending our self-image. If somebody should look at us sideways or not appreciate or love us enough, or even blame us, that defense turns into attack. 'The rationale is that we have to defend this person, this country' which is 'me', in order to protect the inhabitant, 'self.' Because nearly every person in the world does that, all nations act accordingly. There is no hope that this will ever change unless: every single person changes. Therefore it is up to each of us to work for peace inside ourselves. That can happen if each ego is diminished somewhat, and ego only diminishes when we see with ruthless honesty what's going on.

"The fourteen precepts of the Tiep Hien Order are a unique expression of traditional Buddhist morality coming to terms with contemporary issues. These precepts were not developed by secluded monks attempting to update the traditional Buddhist Precepts. Rather, they were forged in the crucible of war and devastation that was the daily experience for many Southeast Asians during the past several decades.

They are as follows: The First Precept.: Do not be idolatrous about or bound to any doctrine, theory, or ideology, even Buddhist ones. All systems of thought are guiding means: they are not absolute truth.

The Second Precept: Do not think the knowledge you presently possess is changeless, absolute truth. Avoid being narrow-minded and bound to present views. Learn and practice non-attachment from views in order to be open to receive others' viewpoints. Truth is found in life and not merely in conceptual knowledge. Be ready to learn throughout your entire life and to observe reality in yourself and in the world at all times.

The Third Precept: Do not force others, including children, by any means whatsoever, to adopt your views, whether by authority, threat, money, propaganda or even education. However, through compassionate dialogue, help others renounce fanaticism and narrowness.

The Fourth Precept: Do not avoid contact with suffering or close your eyes before suffering. Do not lose awareness of the existence of suffering in the life of those who suffer. Find ways to be with those who are suffering by all means, including personal contact and visits, images, sounds. By such means, awaken yourself and others to the reality of suffering in the world.

The Fifth Precept: Do not accumulate wealth while millions are hungry. Do not take as the aim of your life fame, profit, wealth or sensual pleasure. Live simply and share time, energy and material resources with those who are in need.

The Sixth Precept: Do not maintain anger or hatred. As soon as anger and hatred arise, practice the meditation on compassion in order to deeply understand the persons who have caused anger and hatred. Learn to look at other beings with the eyes of compassion. -

The Seventh Precept: Do not lose yourself in dispersion and in your surroundings. Learn to practice breathing in order to regain composure of the body and mind, to practice mind fullness and to develop concentration and understanding.

The Eighth Precept: Do not utter words which can create discord and cause the community to break. Make every effort to reconcile and resolve all conflicts, however small.

The Ninth Precept: Do not say untrue things for the sake of personal interest or to impress people. Do not utter words that cause division and hatred. Do not spread news that you do not know to be certain. Do not criticize or condemn things that you are not sure of. Always speak truth fully and constructively. Have the courage to speak out about situations of injustice, even when doing so may threaten your own safety. C.

The Tenth Precept: Do not use the Buddhist community for personal gain or profit, or transform your community into a political party. A religious community, however, should take a clear stand against oppression and injustice and should strive to change the situation without engaging in partisan conflicts.

The Eleventh Precept: Do not live with a vocation which is harmful to humans and nature. Do not invest in companies that deprive others of their chance to live. Select a vocation which helps realize your ideal of compassion.

The Twelfth Precept: Do not kill. Do not let others kill. Find whatever means possible to protect life and to prevent war.

The Thirteenth Precept: Possess nothing that should belong to others. Respect the property of others, but prevent others from enriching themselves from human suffering or the suffering of other beings.

The Fourteenth Precept: Do not mistreat your body. Learn to handle it with respect. Do not look on your body as only an instrument. Preserve vital energies (sexual, breath, spirit) for the realization of the Way. Sexual expression should not happen without love and commitment. In sexual relationships, be aware of future suffering that may be caused. Top reserve the happiness of others, respect the rights and commitments of others. Be fully aware of the responsibility of bringing new lives into the world. Meditate on the world into which you are bringing new beings.

In a recent conversation with Venerable Thich Quang Ba, he emphasized the inherent!), "engaged" nature of Buddhism and the fact that "engaged Buddhism" is not a recent innovation. Supporting this view he made the following observations: Firstly, the place of "inter dependence "in Buddhist philosophy predisposes Buddhism to social engagement. Secondly, in the Buddha's lifetime, very few Bikkhus asked for or were granted permission to live solitary lives of practice. His followers were deeply engaged in work at the village level. Thirdly, we are constantly being engaged by life. It is extremely difficult to be disengaged from life and hence it is really how we engage life as Buddhists which matters. Fourthly, the Golden Ages of Buddhism in India, China and Vietnam provide significant examples of socially engaged Buddhism. Thich Quang Ba is pleased that Thich Hanh has coined and popularized the term "socially engaged Buddhism" in his writings. He also agrees that it may provide an emphasis in practice which is appealing to Westerners but counsels them to see it not as a new form of Buddhism but as Buddhism with a particular emphasis.

It is this emphasis which may have particular appeal to Western practitioners who are not so much interested in the traditional life in and around the Temple as they are with individual meditation practice and the humanitarian and environmental issues of the day. Let us conclude with the

words of the world's most renowned socially engaged Buddhist, Tenzin Gyatso, the XIVth Dalai Lama; "Each of us has the responsibility for all mankind. It is time for us to think of the people as true brothers and sisters and to be concerned with their welfare, with lessening their suffering. Even if you cannot sacrifice your own benefit entirely, you should not forget the concerns of others. We should think more about the future and the benefit of all mankind.

References

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