

BUDDHIST APPROACH AND HAPPINESS FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT



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ABSTRACT

The world's development has faced crises in all aspects: economics, social, and environment. This calls for a new paradigm for development. While conventional development model has led to individual and social conflicts, Buddhist approach to development can be applied for more peaceful, harmonious, and happy societies. The paper proposes the new concept of Buddhist Sustainable Development (BSD), which is human-centered sustainable development, driven by inner happiness. By applying Buddhist concepts, human beings can be happy with low rates of consumption and resource utilization as well as more compassion and loving kindness towards others and nature. This development direction contrasts to that of Western economic theories which promote self-centeredness, competition, consumption and accumulation, and consequently resource exploitation. This BSD concept, supported by a Buddhist system integrating *dhamma* into development provides a new pathway for sustainability, with right views for living and true happiness, moderation in consumption and life style, understanding the interdependence of all beings and nature, leading towards caring for nature for humanity's well-being. The paper also discusses why the existing conventional framework of sustainable development is ineffective and how BSD can be a solution to the world's development problems.

Keywords: happiness, sustainable development, Buddhist approach, Buddhist economics, human development

1. INTRODUCTION

World development has been guided by conventional economic framework aiming for economic prosperity. With the aim for economic wealth, there has been decreasing social and environmental wealth. Increasing inequality has taken place both within and between countries, and can make conflicts in societies. People have stress, tensions, low ethical concerns and poor emotional well-being. Environmental damages have substantial adverse effects on humans as witness by negative effects of climate changes, despite many movements for environment protection for sustainable development that becomes the post-MDGs' global agenda.

With sophisticated problems in world development today, the development framework needs a rethinking. After all, people need happiness and peaceful societies; therefore, development approach needs to be holistic, covering humans, social, environmental, and economic development. Human development need to also focus on inner-self, mind and wisdom, which can drive human and national development into the right direction. Particularly, global commitment starts in 2015 for Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) should not neglect inner happiness from mind and wisdom based.

The care for living with nature is likely to be driven from spiritual or inner happiness obtained by wisdom of knowing the interdependence of all kinds of livings and nature, as well as happiness from less use of resources or independent of materials. In this regard, Buddhist principle and practices, focusing on inner development well support holistically sustainable development. This study offers a new development paradigm focusing on inner happiness or spiritual human development as a critical factor to drive for sustainable development. The paper proposes a new concept of “Buddhist Sustainable Development” focusing on human development by inner happiness as a pathway towards wisdom and holistic sustainable development.

The paper explores happiness in Buddhism which may be different from what defined in Western theories or in general studies. Concept of happiness in Buddhism, particularly on inner happiness, leads to useful implications for development.

2. HAPPINESS IN BUDDHISM AND ITS IMPLICATIONS TO DEVELOPMENT

This section explains characteristics of happiness in Buddhism and the relation to human and social development. Details of each level of Buddhist happiness for human beings are explained. In addition, happiness used in Western concept is compared in order to know the differences which results in different implications to development.

2.1 Happiness in Buddhism

Happiness in Buddhism or called in Pali language as “sukha” has its own meaning which is more precise than the term “Happiness” used in Western happiness studies. *Sukha* is the opposite situation of *dukkha* or suffering; thus, to have “sukha” means to reduce “dukkha” (including physical pain and mental status that people do not want to experience). In Buddhism, there are different levels of “sukha” or happiness for human development that each individuals can be trained to achieve higher and neater happiness; therefore, happiness is not viewed as a static, but it is a dynamic process in human development. The development of happiness or sukha from a basic to higher levels can be seen as a process of reducing dukkha or suffering until it is completely gone at the highest level of sukha, which is *nibbānasukha*. This is the whole process of practicing dhamma.

To develop happiness progressively in Buddhism is the process of reducing suffering from the root cause by true understanding of natural interdependence with right views, clear and purified mind. To be happy, one has to understand how to deal correctly with suffering. The Four Noble Truths describe nature, cause, and how to eliminate suffering. The meanings and human duties to deal with each element of the Four Noble Truths are summarized in Table 1.

Table 1. The Four Noble Truths, the meanings, and duties to deal with

Each Noble Truth	Meanings	Duties to deal with it
1. <i>Dukkha</i>	Suffering, dissatisfaction	To comprehension of suffering. To know location of the problem
2. <i>Samudaya</i>	The cause or origin of dissatisfaction or suffering	To eradicate the cause of suffering. To diagnose of the origin
3. <i>Nirodha</i>	The cessation or extinction of suffering	To realize the cessation of suffering. To envision the solution
4. <i>Magga</i>	The path leading to the cessation of dissatisfaction or suffering	To follow the right path through actual practices

Therefore, human beings need to know about dissatisfaction or suffering, its causes, and how to follow the right path for cessation. When we have no dukkha or suffering, we have sukha or happiness. In practicing process, the more we can reduce dukkha, the higher sukha we can achieve.

2.2 Happiness ranks and classifications

In Buddhism, there are different kinds of classifications or levels of “sukha”. No matter how many levels it is classified, its range starts from the lowest level – kāmasukha – which is happiness from acquisition or meeting sensual pleasures, to the highest level – nirodha samāpattisukha – with total extinction of suffering. Kāmasukha is a kind of happiness, but it can also cause and increase dukkha or suffering. Therefore, it is not considered as real happiness. Different ranks or levels of happiness also reflect degrees of real happiness.

However, this lowest rank of happiness at physical or material level is required for basic needs to relief person’s physical sufferings. After the basic needs are fulfilled, that person should develop further to gain higher level of happiness. Excessive material accumulation driven by greed may not lead to the increase of happiness and never keep happiness sustainable. Instead, it may increase problems, resulting in suffering and reducing happiness.

This type of happiness depends on external pleasures to serve ones’ needs and may cause conflicts with others who also need them. People can get stress and tensions for that object dependent and their happiness can be faded down with higher desire and

pressure. Thus, this type of happiness needs to be watched out or monitored by one's own mind and managed with wisdom that understands the natural truth of changes and true happiness.

Buddhism encourages human beings to have happiness with less dependent from materials outside oneself. Happiness can be obtained from non-acquisition which is a mind and wisdom based. This is the higher level of happiness or inner happiness which can be generated inside human beings and independent to external factors. This level of happiness is considered as a neater type of happiness that human beings should be trained for and it should be the goal for complete human development.

The advance in developing oneself to gain happiness at higher level is the progress from practicing Dhamma, which can be achieved by continued practicing rightly. When people reach the true happiness with full wisdom, they are free from any attachment and will not move back to enjoy the lower level of happiness ¹

In other words, true happiness means realizing Dhamma, and reaching true happiness means reaching Dhamma. Buddhism teaches how to achieve a good and happy life by reaching the essence of Dhamma. Human beings have to understand what is a good life and genuine happiness. However, there are many steps to reach true happiness and many detailed classifications of happiness in various Dhamma books. However, to simplify the concept, this study follows the classification in Payutto (2011) which summarizes into 3 levels, from the lowest to the highest ones, as follows.

1) The Level of Sensual Pleasures

Happiness from sensual pleasures is the lowest level of Buddhist happiness, obtaining from 5 senses: eye, ear, nose, tongue, and body; such as nice forms, pleasant noises, good smell, sweet taste, and comfortable touches. This is pleasures from enjoy these things at physical level. This sensual pleasures or *kāmasukha* is not real happiness because it may involve dissatisfaction and suffering (*dhukha*). Happiness at this level can be further divided into two categories: undeveloped and developed ones.

a) First, the undeveloped one from untrained mind, driven by *kilesa* (defilements) which is a troublesome desire.

¹P.A. Payutto (Phra Brahmagunabhorn), **Buddha Dhamma—Extended Edition**, 2012.

This type of desire is driven with the ignorance of the three signs of truth (impermanent, suffering, and non-existing) and can push people into trouble with un-satisfaction and unlimited wants. This type of desire may be called as “*taṇhā*” (craving and attachment). When the desire is not met, it can cause frustration due to attachment from being anticipated.

For this type of happiness, people search for materials and consumption to meet physically sensual pleasures. However, if all people have unlimited wants for themselves, this could result in conflicts in the society with limited resources as well as making themselves in suffering if their desires are not met.

b) Second, *kāmasukha* that is more developed and trained for.

It is acceptable that people can be happy with sensual pleasures, if they have wisdom and practices for living appropriately in the society. People can have materials and wealth, but they know how to develop their lives as well as others towards higher goals. In other words, material accumulations can be used to improve human development to benefit the society as a whole. Also, human sensual desires should limit and people must know what level is appropriate for themselves and well behave towards others. In the process of acquisition, of material wealth, one should not burden oneself as well as the others.

If people in the society have *sīla* (morality), *dāna* (generosity, sharing), and *paññā* (wisdom), the society can gain positively from material development. Therefore, Buddhism does not reject materials or physical development, if it is supervised by Dhamma.

After all, the happiness from sensual pleasure in materials depends on external factors outside oneself and people may face unfavorable conditions, which may lead to suffering. Therefore, people still need more development in terms of mind and wisdom based happiness in order to manage these sensual pleasures without suffering. As happiness at this level still involve suffering or it is temporary and unsustainable, there is a need for happiness at higher level through Dhamma practice.

2) The Level of Mind Development

This is happiness that can be generated from mind based, not from getting more materials or dependence with external factors. Happiness can be developed inside one's own mind. Therefore, this level of happiness is higher than the level of physical well-being which has to depend on other things outside oneself.

As indicated in Buddha Dhamma by Payutto “Development on the mind-level will allow the individual to have a mind that contains virtues like loving-kindness (*mettā*), compassion (*karuṇā*), faith (*saddhā*), gratitude (*kataññūkataveditā*) and so on. It is a mind with efficiency, strength, stability, diligence and patience, a mind that has mindfulness (*sati*) and knows its responsibilities, and so it is in good health because it is peaceful, relaxed, clear, fresh, joyful, and happy.”²

With loving-kindness (*mettā*) and compassion (*karuṇā*) in mind, we want other people to be happy. Therefore, we are happy to give, share, or help others, instead of taking advantage from them. People can be generous (*dāna*) towards others rather than selfishness, and that can generate happiness to the givers. Instead of being happy from acquisitions, individuals can be happy from giving away and less acquisition. In that case, individual happiness from mind development as well as societal happiness increase as the givers and the receivers are also happy together.

Mind development can bring in higher quality of mind characterized by power, clear, and peaceful. These are conditions for the establishment of various virtues and can be used for reflection, investigation, and contemplation through wisdom. This is the characteristic of mind having “*samādhi*” or concentration, which is especially required for high level of mind development.³

When mind is developed to higher level with higher quality, it leads the way for more wisdom. Even with the search for happiness on the level of sensual pleasures in material things, it will be in a positive direction – not aim for oneself, but for selflessness and more useful for others – bringing more peace and happiness of the society.

However, Buddha teachings encourage people to develop more than this happiness level because people still attach to Samadhi and its results; i.e., peaceful mind and clam. When *samādhi* has gone and people return to their original situation, they may feel suffering again. Even though people attach to goodness and good behavior, the attachment can result in dissatisfaction when things do not conform to the expectation. Therefore, happiness at this level is still temporarily. Thus, human beings need to develop more to the level that they can be happy sustainably without suffering.

²Payutto, P.A. (Phra Brahmagunabhorn) A brief Introduction to the Buddha-Dhamma, 2011), p. 10.

³*ibid.*, p. 11.

3) The Level of Liberation

Happiness at this level is characterized by wisdom or insight (*paññā*), with full understanding of natural changes from the three signs of truth: the impermanence, the state of suffering, and the non-existing (or selflessness). Realizing that it is not worth to attach with, human beings then have purified minds and free from any attachment. Therefore, they are completely free from suffering as they have insight to understand all natural laws, i.e., changes as well as causes and effects. This is the highest level of happiness and the individual who has progress to reach this level is completely awakened or enlightened with natural freshness and joyfulness.⁴ Nothing can cause suffering to that person whose wisdom is able to solve all problems wisely with the mind of emptiness and unattached. They will neutrally understand everything under the natural truth without suffering. Although the person can have happiness at sensual pleasures (level 1) and mind based (level 2), there would be no danger as that are supervised by wisdom and can positively be utilized for the benefits of others and the society.

This level is the ultimate goal of dhamma practice or happiness development to be called as *lokuttara* (beyond the world) level or *paramattha* (the highest level). Those who can achieve this level are noble individuals or called “Ariya”. That individual who has achieved the highest happiness do not want anything for oneself anymore; therefore, that one can fully work for others for the benefit of the society. Whatever the individual does is driven from “chanda” to do good things with selflessness, as well as pure and perfect compassion. Consequently, the society has received benefit fully from this type of highly developed person.

For ordinary people, the progress in happiness development beyond the first level of material dependent is encouraged. People should be able to be happy from mind development and wisdom based happiness, although they may not fully reach the highest level of ultimate happiness. Beyond material level to mind and wisdom bases of happiness is considered as inner happiness (generated from inside oneself).

Another Three Levels of Classifications

Alternatively, there is another shorten category of happiness classified into 3 levels in Buddha-Dhamma: Extended Edition as the followings.

⁴*ibid.*, p. 13.

- 1) Happiness from acquisition (driven by *tañhā*)
- 2) Happiness from inner-generation (driven by *chanda*)
- 3) Happiness that exists all time inside every human beings (driven by *paññā*)

1) The first type of happiness is sensual pleasures from material acquisition, which is the lowest level of happiness and unsustainable because this type of happiness depends on external factors which human beings have to search for. This type of happiness, driven by craving to meet unlimited desire for oneself, can cause troubles to the individual and society because it involves greed, anger, and illusion. To avoid conflicts with others, this happiness has to be controlled by *sīla* or morality.

2) The second one connected to mind development is a type of happiness that can be generated inside one's own mind, driven by good desire; for example, the desire to be useful for others (not for selfishness), the love to learn and develop oneself, to be happy to work for its own results (not for rewards), etc. It is a higher happiness level than the first one because this one is driven by a higher and good desire which is more developed or trained to be, not driven by *kilesa* (defilements) and not for personal benefit only. This type of desire is called *chanda* (good will, aspiration). People can have *chanda* to be good, to be knowlible, to be creative, to be useful, to give or share what they have with others, to help people out of suffering, to do good things, etc. When people have *chanda* to do good things and to be useful to others, it would benefit societal development and happiness. This type of happiness can be generated inside oneself and no need to search for external sensual pleasures.

3) The third one is the happiness be with everybody and all the time, if our minds are detached from all defilements. Completely purified minds are full with happiness, which can exist all the time in anyone. This can happen when one insightfully realizes all facts in life and completely free from suffering. People who enjoy this type of happiness are full with *chanda* to be good and useful for others. They are totally devoted to work and help all human beings and the world as they need nothing for themselves.

The difference of the above two desires (in 1 and 2) is that: the first one (*tañhā*) leads to negative consequences for the society and development, but the second one (*chanda*) results in positive impacts. Dhamma teachings promote people to work with good desire or *chanda* instead of wrong desire driven by defilement. People who have practiced Dhamma progressively can increase happiness from *chada* progressively. With pure *chanda*, people would not suffer from any kind of work. That is why human beings have to be trained for higher level of happiness.

Until the Dhamma practitioner continuously progress to reach the ultimate level of happiness (*nibbāna*) with full insight and free from any attachment, that person will have inner happiness all the time. Nothing can make them suffering as they fully understand all natural laws. This is the highest level of happiness that, in fact, exists inside everyone who can enjoy it all the time, but cannot be so due to ignorance. However, through practicing Dhamma, insight (*vijjā*) will replace ignorance (*avijjā*) and that person would be rewarded by happiness that exists inside everyone which can be enjoyed all the time, therefore, no need to search for happiness from outside. With selflessness, they also have full *chanda* or good desire to work for the benefit of others and the society. Happiness are the second to third levels are considered as inner happiness that Buddhist teachings encourage everyone to be trained and developed as the process of human development.

2.3 Western Happiness and Economic Concept, in Comparison to Buddhist Concept

Before comparing the difference between Buddhist happiness and the Western one, this section provides some background of development in the West related to economics and its implications on happiness.

Happiness has long been recognized as a life goal of human beings. Ancient western concept also covers spiritual element and the feeling of containment. Western philosophers like Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle considered happiness as a path for wisdom and morality to attain good life through living and actions. Thus, traditional Western and Eastern philosophies seem to have similar ideas on happiness and the goal of life; i.e., happiness at high level of wisdom/ morality and good life.

Aristotle's *eudaimonia*, translated as happiness, is the ultimate aim of human thought and action. In addition, happiness includes self-sufficiency and virtues. To develop ethics necessary for happiness, there are steps for righteous actions, often done under the influence of teachers to allow the development of the right habits, which in turn allow the development of good character. Thus, path to happiness requires coaching.

Western philosophy since Aristotelianism has focused on virtue ethics as one strategy to raise happiness in society and share some fundamental precepts as Buddha's and both emphasized that more material possessions do not lead to happier lives.⁵ Both regarded hedonism and greed as threats to social stability. Both believed that the tensions between the individual and the community could be moderated through an ethic of virtue, in which individuals live their lives in accordance with the dictates of human nature and social realities. And both believed that the "right path" (for Buddha) and "virtue" (for Aristotle) require training, education, practice, and cultivation of the mind.⁶ This is a direction for the right kind of life.

Another similarity between Aristotle and Buddhist concept is the differentiation of natural needs (or real needs) with unnatural wants (which is unlimited and should not be met), as noted in Puntasen (2001). Regrettably, economists after then have neglected this crucial point that has definite impacts on human, global, and sustainable development.

However, the path or approach to achieve good life of the two philosophies are not exactly the same. For example, Buddhism believes in self-practicing (through practicing mindfulness/ meditation) which can reach the highest goal of self-enlightenment, which goes beyond moral level. To move along this right path, ethics or virtues will emerge automatically on the way but not as the ultimate goal. This is beyond the idea of returning to "virtue ethics" as a strategy to promote happiness in the society as noted in Sach (2013). Buddhist philosophy focuses on wisdom from understanding the ultimate truths of nature independently as the most important goal and process in achieving absolute happiness.

Over centuries, these ancient Western values with realizing the importance of happiness and good life have been replaced by modern economics' influences on material consumption. In fact, eighteen-century economists used to consider people's happiness in the concept of utility with its implications to policies for societal welfare. Initiating from Jerame Bentham's Utilitarianism principle, utility includes people happiness as indicated by Bentham:

⁵Sustainable Society Foundation, **A Sustainable Human Development Index in the Post 2015 Era**, March 26, 2013. <http://www.ssfindex.com/a-sustainable-human-development-index-in-the-post-2015-era/>

⁶*ibid.*, p. 84.

Utility is meant that property in any object, whereby it tends to produce benefit, advantage, pleasure, good, or happiness" and also "[prevents] the happening of mischief, pain, evil, or unhappiness to the party who's interest is considered.⁷ (and society should aim to maximize the total utility of individuals, aiming for "the greatest happiness for the greatest number of people").

This is the Greatest Happiness Principle that clearly considers happiness and pleasures in individual utility and suggests the society to maximize total social utility using 'the greatest happiness for the greatest number of people' principle. Therefore, government should act or choose to implement policy that can generate the total sum of greatest net happiness of the people in the society. This principle considers fairness by using equal weigh for every person. Happiness comes from 4 sources; namely, physical, political, moral, and spiritual. Although this concept defines happiness from various sources including abstract ones, this principle does not classify happiness into different ranks or levels. As net happiness was defined as a sum up of net pleasures and pain, higher values of happiness such as virtues and wisdom seem to be neglected. Thus, this concept seems to relate to the lower rank of happiness in Buddhism and not encourage human to move towards higher levels of happiness.

This concept of happiness was later developed by philosopher and economist John Stuart Mill's Utilitariansim that explains happiness in more details including classification and quality. His concept of happiness differentiates levels of happiness by quality, which is different from Bentham's that gives equal weight for all forms of pleasures (which results in tendency to search for happiness from materials or simple pleasures). Mill considers happiness from moral and wisdom (higher form of pleasure) to be superior than happiness from physical level (lower form of pleasures). People who have chances to experience both levels of happiness would prefer the higher one which is neater with higher quality. Those who prefer simple or lower pleasures may due to the fact that they have never experienced higher pleasures. Mill did not agree with those who emphasized in hedonism. Instead, he weighted more value for intellectual and moral aspects. In addition, people should have freedom to choose their own paths or actions and policy makers should consider people's subjective aspects/ feelings.

⁷J. Bentham, **Introduction to the Principles of Morals and Legislation**, London, 1789.

However, happiness or subjective well-being was later excluded from the utility concept of neoclassical economists. As Sach mentioned:

Later on, though, economists dropped almost entirely Bentham's faith in measuring happiness. In the jargon of economics, utility became an "ordinal" measure, incommensurate across individuals, rather than a "cardinal" measure that could be compared and added across individuals. Utility theory came to be used as an explanation for consumer behavior rather than for individual or social well-being.⁸

Thus, in mainstream economics since the mid-19th century onwards, individual utility is assumed to only base on concrete choices of bundle of market goods or services, without subjective aspects which is difficult to be quantified and compared among individuals. Emphasizing on mathematical methods, happiness, especially spiritual well-being, was not included in theoretical utility function. As Sach noted that mainstream economics lost interest in the state of mind of individuals, virtue and happiness, as well as to the question of "whether the increase in consumption truly raise individual well-being".⁹ Utility is a function of the individual's consumption of market commodities rather than of social relations, virtues, state of mind, well-being of others, and other non-market conditions. Therefore, utility function explains consumer behavior rather than individual and social well-being. As noted in Layard,¹⁰ economic model of human nature is far too limited – it has to be combined with knowledge from the other social sciences.

Then, individual and national well-beings have been represented only by economic factors. The conceptual problem in explain human well-being in today economic theories and development paradigm may due to the fact that conventional economics have dropped the concept of happiness or subjective well-being in individual utility function which represents people happiness only from choices of goods or economic factors, not to mention problematic assumptions such as human behaviors are rationale for self-interests and have unlimited wants for consumption. That conceptual change has accepted individual self-center behavior and has guided development targets and policies for economic

⁸Sach, *op.cit.*, p. 89.

⁹Sach, *op.cit.*, p. 90.

¹⁰Richard Layard, **Happiness: Lessons from a New Science**, (New York : The Penguin Press, 2005), p. 145.

achievement while neglecting human mind and spiritual development, allowing human beings to achieve economic goals without responsible for environment and humanity. The conventional economic idea that serves rapid industrialization since the industrial revolution aims to achieve economic prosperity which has been misused to represent national and individual well-being. Also, the utility concept with consumption bundles implies that the more consumption, the higher utility (representing well-being/happiness). This is obviously a “wrong view” in Buddhism.

However, present happiness economists have adopted and promoted Bentham's utility concept of the greatest happiness for theoretical research and policy development. It seems that happiness economics can explain human behavior better than conventional economics. Happiness studies, discussions, and researches considering subjective well-being of individuals have been remarkably increased and happiness becomes a popular subject among academics and development organizations during the last decade. Particularly, Easterlin paradox (Easterlin, 1973), showing that the increase in national income overtime had not increased subjective well-being or happiness of people in the nation, has drawn interests of economists to question “why” and conduct empirical studies with different case-studies and results. Currently, there have been various national and international surveys covering factors affecting happiness from physical and emotional points of views and researches have utilized those data for analysis of their happiness domains.

While current happiness surveys may cover spiritual wellbeing as one element in their happiness domains (composing of various psychological and economic factors in the same rank), spiritual aspect is not the special focus (unlike Buddhism which give higher rank for inner happiness and guide direction to be free from suffering). While happiness economics today explain the unsustainable happiness from theories of social comparison, adaptation and aspiration, they do not suggest how to exit from this problem.

Social Comparison

Western happiness theories explain the effect of social comparison that people's happiness is influenced by relative terms rather than absolute terms. Relative income, status, and position in comparison with peer groups is more influential to people's satisfaction than actual income or actual acquisition. For example, individual's gain in income would bring in greater happiness, if that income gain is greater than that of other people in their reference group. Research results in many countries find effects of social comparison in life and job satisfaction.

There are status races driven by the desire to keep up with other people. The inequality in socio-economic status has negative effect to people' happiness in the society due to social comparison. With social comparison in minds, people compete to surpass each other to get more money and consumption in positional goods. This may result in the drop in social and family relationship as well as increased stress and tension, leading to the drop in happiness of individuals and the society. On the other hands, for people who feel satisfy with what they have or feel self-sufficiency, their happiness can be maintained or more than those who do not feel satisfy with what they have. This behavior relates to the teaching for self-contentment in Buddhism.

The effect of social comparison to happiness reflects mind-based influence on happiness. Perceptions in social comparison affect people' happiness more than actual statuses. For example, if they do not feel poorer than others among their peers, they will not perceive themselves as "poor" regardless of their income level and status. In other words, if they feel that they are poorer than their peers, they may feel unhappy of their relative perceived "poor" status, regardless of how much income they have. That is why the feeling of self-contentment: to be happy with what they have can increase happiness. Happiness researches also indicate that uneven development with widened gaps of income and social status does not support the development of societal happiness. Although a few who gain relatively higher income may be happier, the net happiness from a lot of poorer persons would be less.

With the theory of diminishing marginal return of happiness to income, giving a certain income share to the rich would produce less happiness than giving the same amount to the poor. Therefore, resource allocation to relief people's hardship and poverty is encouraged. This implication together with the greatest happiness principle, counting every citizen's happiness equally, supports more equal income distribution or equal society. In other words, it is pro-poor and pro-equality development.

Adaptation and Aspiration

In addition to social comparison, there is also a negative effect from adaptation and aspiration. To gain a certain level of income or an amount of consumption can have only transitory effects in happiness. Many Western researches report a short term gain in happiness from the increase in income, and the only way to achieve ever increasing

happiness is to continually rising income.¹¹ Similar to consumption, their satisfaction with new materials may be only temporarily as their happiness fades down after a while when they already adapted to them. For example, people may feel happy when they get a new model of car, telephone, clothes, etc., but after a while, their happiness with those materials have faded away as they would need a new one or a new model again. They used to be happy with a certain level of income, but now that salary or income level cannot make them happy anymore as they need higher one for more materials and a more comfortable life. They continue to want new products and have higher aspiration for goods, income, and status all the time. This in line with Western theories that accepts human-beings' unlimited wants and unsustainable nature of happiness, "Once you have a certain new experience, you need to keep on having more of it if you want to sustain your happiness ... If adaptation is complete, only continual new stimuli can raise your well-being."¹² This behavior can easily cause suffering (i.e., from the inability to fulfill expectations, pressures and stress, conflicts with others, etc). In Buddhism, this desire is driven by tanha and not considered as real happiness.

How can their well-being or happiness sustain with the constant escalation of wants? That would be impossible. Only sustainable happiness concept in Buddhism is the right path to get rid of these problems from acquisition, adaptation and aspiration.

That is why Buddhism teaches for moderation, not too much relies on external materials and others, the middle way to live the life, the feeling of contentment and appreciation with what one has, which in line with Thailand's 'Sufficiency Economy' concept can solve these behavioral problems.

Theory of Human Needs

In addition, Western theory of human needs by Maslow, as shown in Figure 1, explains human actions by motivation to achieve certain needs from fulfilling basic needs to more advanced needs. The pyramid of needs starts from the first/ bottom level of basic physiological needs including the need for food, water, sleep and warmth. Once these lower-level needs have been met, people can move on to the next level of needs, which are for safety and security. As people progress up the pyramid, needs become increasingly psychological and social. Then, they need for love, friendship, and intimacy; to further

¹¹ Clark et. al, 2006.

¹² Layard 2005, p. 48.

up the pyramid, they need for personal esteem and feeling of accomplishment, and finally the self-actualization. This is a process of personal development.

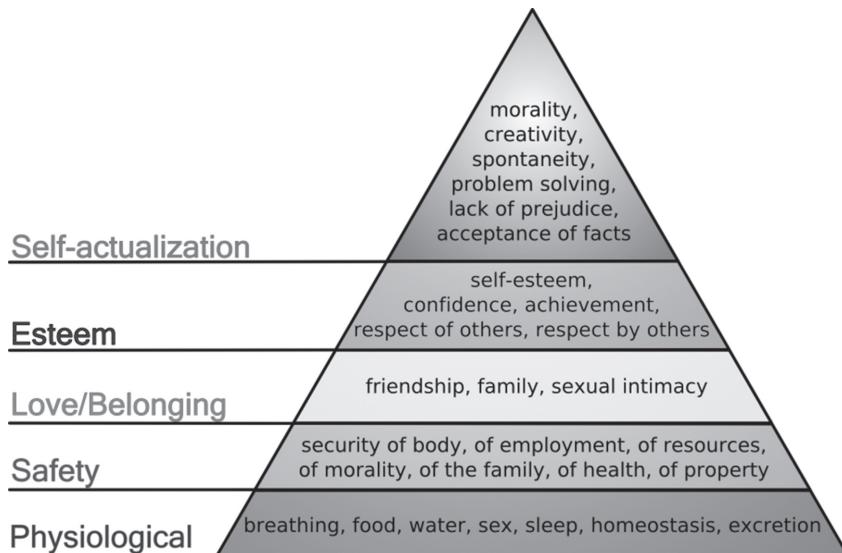


Figure 1. Maslow's hierarchy of human needs

Source: http://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/6/60/Maslow's_Hierarchy_of_Needs.svg

Through this process of human development, the low level starts from the needs from physical, the safe surroundings, the needs from social (i.e., social relation, admire, respectful), to moral need at the top level of the pyramid. Apart from the highest level, self-actualization which is the only level that human beings can create and meet the needs by themselves, other levels of needs all depend on other external factors such as acquisition, surroundings, social expectations, etc.

Compared to Buddhist happiness ranks, Maslow's hierarchy of needs for personal development has some similarity in realizing the importance of physically basic needs such as food and water as indicated in the bottom level, and the top of pyramid relating wisdom such as problem solving, lack of prejudice and acceptance of facts. However, Buddhism place greater important for higher or inner happiness which is internal or less dependent from external and others, while Maslow's prioritizes the first level of needs as the most

importance to be fulfilled before being able to develop to higher ranks which still depend on external factors (i.e, love, acceptance, respects and expectations from others). Also, they may be different in considering quality and quantity aspects. Buddhist happiness may give more weight for quality aspects such as quality of mind (purified, calm, and clear) to obtain wisdom which is internal process. With inner happiness in Buddhism, external needs beyond basic needs are not necessary. Buddhism places importance to happiness from liberalization that one can achieve independently, not external dependence.

Happiness development in Buddhism is also considered as a process of human development. However, in the process, physical well-being from basic needs is required; i.e., to be free from hunger and poverty as a 'necessary condition' for further human development. Therefore, the first level of Buddhist happiness may go along with the first need in Maslow's hierarchy. Moreover, after those basic material needs are met, human beings should be trained for moving up to higher levels of inner happiness. This is another step of an effort for human development, which has not been considered in today happiness research and development.

In Buddhism, happiness has to be defined in different levels and happiness at higher levels is much more encouraged (in other words, the weight of the higher levels of happiness is more than that of the lower one). This may be similar to traditional concept by John Stuart Mill that defines and gives more value for higher forms of happiness (from moral and wisdom) than the lower form of happiness (from physical pleasures), though there may be some differentiation between the two concepts. However, current Western happiness concept has not developed from Mill's concept and mostly refers to pleasures which are considered as the lowest type of happiness in Buddhism.

The difference in happiness concept in Buddhism and that of Western theories can also be illustrated in Figure 2. Buddhist happiness aims for completely free from suffering at the highest level, while happiness in Western theories still attaches to the first or the lowest level involving a lot of suffering. Buddhist happiness has been enhanced when it moves up to higher level of inner happiness with less and less suffering.

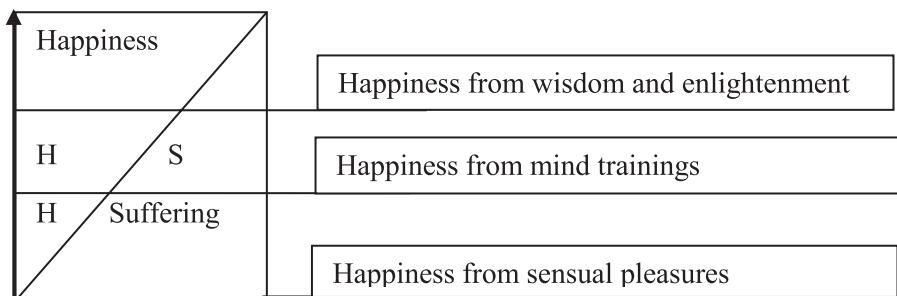


Figure 2. Degree of happiness and suffering at different happiness levels. Inner Happiness

The bottommost level is happiness from sensual pleasures which involves a lot of suffering, so it can not generate much true happiness. The middle level represents the mind based level which involve more happiness generated by oneself. Suffering is reversely dropped with the degree of increased inner happiness. That is why people should aim for higher level of happiness. When inner happiness can be increased to the highest level, there would be no room for suffering left.

Western happiness studies such as those of positive psychology also consider inner happiness from mind level (but unlikely to cover wisdom level of understanding natural truths). Positive psychologists believe in positive thinking and state of mind that influences individual's happiness, which also requires trainings. Practicing meditation is growing popular in the Western world.

In sum, present happiness economists somehow have adopted tools to research and measure happiness by applying happiness concept of Jerame Bentham's the greatest happiness of the greatest numbers and mostly refer happiness to sensual pleasures. Psychologists and economists have measured happiness or subjective well-being with questions regard to life satisfaction. Their happiness domains in questions may include some happiness factors at both physical and mind level, but they are given equal value (or same weight) for the total sum of happiness or life satisfaction score. In other words, happiness is seen as a combination of various influences from the same level/ dimension. In contrast, happiness in Buddhism are ranked in different levels.



Figure 3: Comparison of various happiness domains in the same rank in Western concept and different steps and kinds of happiness in Buddhism

Current happiness studies mostly done through Western concept explain happiness as influenced by various domains; such as, from materials, health, family & social relationship, mind and spirituality, etc. in the same level of equal importance. Buddhist concept of happiness distinguish the higher and lower forms of happiness and encourage people to move from the lower to the higher levels which is more important. However, this encouragement in Buddhism is not meant to force to all people to accept and practice; it accepts that different individuals have different levels of human development. However, ones should try their bests.

2.4. How these Conceptual Difference in Happiness lead to Different Development Implications?

As earlier explained, there are different levels of happiness in Buddhism, of which higher levels are far beyond materials or feeling of satisfaction mentioned in Western happiness theories which mostly relate to sensual pleasures that can bring conflicts and tensions among people. Happiness in Buddhism is more dynamic as it can move up from low to higher levels such as from physical to mind and wisdom levels. Being less want for one selves and less dependent on materials, higher or inner happiness can lead to more societal happiness with peace and sustainable development. The key implication is that people can be happy with less consumption and acquisition, so no need to acceler-

ate consumption following the consumption led-growth model which has been against sustainable development path.

This process of limited demand by consumers (with higher level of happiness) is missed in Western development concept which is the belief that the higher consumption implies the higher well-being. Particularly, the widely used global definition of sustainable development considers meeting the needs of present and future generations only (without due consideration of unlimited desires of human beings).

Happiness in Buddhism is not necessary come from meeting individuals' needs, but it can come from no need from the higher development of human mind and wisdom inside each individual or the inner happiness. However, happiness at physical or acquisition level is acceptable in the case that it is supervised by good mind and to be used for advancing human development. For example, when one see that the acquisition is not a real happiness, which can be changed under the natural law and can cause suffering; one would understand that these materials are not real essence in life. With fully understand what really matters in a good life and true happiness, they would not attach to any cause of suffering and have achieved complete liberalization.

Also, with good mind full of loving kindness and compassion, one would be happy by helping others or sharing benefits instead of taking advantages from others. Happiness from sensual pleasures can be used for further human development, loving kindness and compassion to all living things and nature. The world would have less conflicts and there is no need to compete or struggle or destroy others and nature for self-interests. This kind of happiness development would lead to sustainable path of development. Therefore, this type of inner-human focus of happiness development is essential for effectively sustainable development.

Current Western happiness usually refers to happiness in sensual pleasures which is still involve various forms of suffering and short-live happiness. In contrast, Buddhist happiness more focuses on inner happiness which is greater and more sustainable pattern as it is usually accompanied by less suffering. People can be happy from a clam mind, natural appreciation, positive thinking, being generous, helping others, compassion and loving kindness, not attachment to one self, working with good aspiration (*chanda*) and having good quality, etc. Instead of being happy from acquisitions, individuals and the society as a whole can be happy from giving and less acquisition as well as mind development.

Although Western theories also refer those mind characteristics in positive psychology, some aspects of mind development may not be much focused as in Buddhism.

Mind development is a process in dhamma practice which can be trained in many ways, i.e., by meditation, or observing the mind with mindfulness. Suffering at mind level can be release when people have higher quality of mind development and can observe the mind with its changing nature, then realizing the impermanent and getting rid of attachments.

So far, Western happiness economics and researches seem to consider happiness from the same level and dimension; it explains the unsustainable pattern in happiness with theories of aspiration, adaptation, and social comparison, but provides no guidance on how to solve or be free from the causes that can generate suffering. While Buddhism explains these phenomenon from levels of human development from ordinary people who still have suffering caused by craving or *kilesa* (defilements) within each human mind, it offers clear guidance how to get rid or to be free from these problems with insight which can be obtained by moving up ladders of happiness development (in other words, advancing in dhamma practice). Buddhist philosophy which explains the levels of happiness as a process of human development provides way out from problems by acknowledging the fact that our mind has been controlled by *tanha* or *kilesa* and trying to free our mind from such control. Only sustainable happiness from emancipation in Buddhism can actually help liberate a person from all unnecessary desire.

3. DHAMMA PRACTICES DIRECTING TO INNER HAPPINESS

The development for inner happiness is the process of practicing and realizing Dhamma. According to Buddha's Dhamma, key living principle for human beings to be happy and away from suffering is the right living guidance or Noble Eightfold Path, which are: right view/understanding, right thought, right livelihood, right effort, right speech, right action, right concentration and right mindfulness. Thus, the Noble Eightfold Path is the combination of Dhamma at *paññā* (wisdom), *sīla* (morality), and *saṃādhi* (concentration) levels, covering all core principles in Buddhist teachings. Therefore, it is the Noble Path for achieving the highest goal of happiness or enlightenment.

In addition, there are some basic principles to develop inner happiness. For example, the training in goodness – which are *dāna* (generosity), *sīla* (morality) and *bhāvanā* (development) that help people and societies achieving higher levels of happiness. These three elements are important for mind training for inner happiness. *Dāna* can make people happy from being generous, giving, devoting to others, instead of taking from others. *Sīla* can supervise people to have morality, good behavior, kindness and

compassion to each other. In addition, the most important one – *bhāvanā* – is to practice and a development path to cultivate wisdom of each individual. This can be practiced through the four foundations of mindfulness (*Satipaṭṭhāna* 4).

The core principle of four foundations of mindfulness is to know what happens as it is, only feel or observe it neutrally without mixing on any illusion, anger, or craving. With mindfulness stick to the four foundations either: body, feelings, mind conditions, or Dhamma from what happen, the practitioner would have clam, clear, and purify minds as well as insights from seeing natural laws of life and nature. Continued mindfulness lead to full awakening and happiness as our mind has no chance to attach to any defilement. These above four paths of mindfulness practices ending with selflessness and non-attachment can lead to higher development of inner happiness and help cut suffering from defilements that normally interferes body and mind. With full awakening along the path, there would be no room for suffering as the mind is occupied by right mindfulness. They would gain knowledge from pure awareness.

This is how to practice for happier life. The mindfulness that sticks to each of these four foundations may not be completely separated as people can switch the observation to mind, then body, feelings or ideas, depending what happens in that present moment to be observed. The practice will increase inner happiness until achieving the highest level of happiness completely free from all suffering. This is the greatest happiness with full awakening.

4. BUDDHIST TEACHINGS FOR SOCIETAL HAPPINESS AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

Buddhist teachings for societal happiness and sustainable development consists of dhamma for human beings, social, economic and environmental systems that support individuals in the society to live in the right path of sustainable happiness and development.

4.1 Dhamma for increasing happiness in societies

To manage the society to increase societal happiness requires the understanding of each type of happiness, of what types of dhamma can supervise, and how to move up ladders of happiness development.

As ordinary people may attach to the low rank or physical level of happiness which is sensual pleasures from materials, people have to behave in a way that not to increase suffering to themselves and others. Unless people are supervised by dhamma, this type of happiness can cause a lot of problem to individuals and the society. That is why current Western concept of happiness cannot solve current development problems and cannot lead to sustainable path of development, as dhamma is missed in their concepts.

Without well-trained mind, human desires will not end and lead to more and more consumption. If everybody in the society also wants more and more consumption and accumulation, it can cause conflict to others who also want it as well as conflict to natural resources. How can limited resources of the earth be used for unlimited wants of human beings?

The society would have less problems if people can have mind level of happiness, which can be generated from inner spirit, not from material acquisition for themselves. One can be happy from goodness, kindness towards others, or helping others to be happy. This is mind-based happiness from being useful for the society or seeing others to be happy. Therefore, instead of taking advantage or accumulate materials for themselves, they are happy to share it to others or allocated to the needy of the society. Natural resources can be saved from less wants. The societal happiness as a whole would be increased.

Therefore, dhamma is a key to promote peace and societal happiness. For example, *sīla* has role to prevent conflicts at low level of happiness, *dāna* to be generous for mind based happiness, and *paññā* (insight) to have right view which are supportive for the highest level of happiness. People can have happiness from giving or making others to be happy rather than taking.

In fact, there are many sets of dhamma as foundations for mind based happiness. One of dhamma teachings for social behaviors (towards other human beings and animals) is *brahmavihāra* 4, consists of *mettā* (loving kindness), *karuṇā* (compassion), *muditā* (sympathetic joy), *upekkhā* (neutrality). With these characteristics, human beings would be kind to others and would lessen conflicts in the society, resulting in increasing societal happiness.

The happiness from wisdom level can be generated by *bhāvanā* i.e., mindfulness, meditation. This is to understand natural truths and can be free from any causes of suffering.

With detailed classification of happiness types and steps towards the ultimate goal, these are the dynamism of happiness in Buddhism, of which high levels are far beyond materials or satisfaction that exist in Western happiness theories. Happiness in Buddhism is encouraged to move up from low to highest levels - from physical to mind and wisdom levels. Being less want for own selves and less dependent on materials, higher happiness can lead to the whole societal happiness and sustainable development.¹³

These are the Buddhist way for sustainable happiness and development. The higher mind development human being can achieve, the less need to exploit or do harm to others and nature. Therefore, human being can cooperated, support each other and increase synergy for the whole society. This is the most efficient economics using the least natural resource or can increase resources,¹⁴ while people are full with wisdom and real happiness.

Therefore, right view is essential for social development. As an important starting point of the Noble Eightfold Path, right view consequently leads to right thought, action, effort, livelihood, speech, .etc. If we have a wrong view or attach to a certain type of view without open mind, that would be a main obstacle to get to know the truth, and can lead to wrong intentions, wrong actions, wrong speeches, wrong livelihood, wrong efforts, wrong concentration and wrong mindfulness. If we can eliminate wrong views, we can detach defilements such as anger, greed, etc. Thus, right view is the origin to determine good life due to perceptions of life and following actions. Human beings have to practice for right views to understand the truths of life and to value wisdom instead of craving. When individuals make decision with wisdom and freedom, they would not cause problems to themselves and others. Right view will lead to “right” life goal.

In contrast, wrong views towards life and nature have caused problems to others and unsustainable development. Wrong views, for example, are: viewing human being be separated from nature, human beings disaggregated by groups (instead of common nature), happiness can mainly be obtained from materials. Human beings have destroyed nature and others due to wrong views towards life and nature and use technology in wrong ways. Wrong views lead to wrong living and life goal. We need to have right view to realize the interdependence of all things and natural truths. If we appreciate nature, our behavior

¹³P.A. Payutto, **Perfect Life** (in Thai), (Bangkok: Pimsuay Printing, 1995); Kittiprapas, 2010a, 2010b, 2012.

¹⁴Apichai Puntasen, **Buddhist Economics** (in Thai), (Bangkok: Ammarin Printing, 2001), p. 333.

towards nature would be different.

Therefore, with dhamma principles, people can generate inner happiness for themselves and benefit others as well as less destroy natural resources. Happy people will spread their happiness to others, so happiness is contagious. Thus, if individuals' inner happiness increase, societal happiness will increase automatically.

4.2 Buddhist Socio-economic System and Environmental Sustainability

4.2.1. Buddhist Economics

Socioeconomic system supporting dhamma practice and inner happiness discussed above should be in line with Buddhist economics.

Buddhist economics with middle-way of life concept may be called as “middle-way economics,” as indicated by Payutto.¹⁵ Its equilibrium is the point that human satisfaction meets true well-being (real need), bringing in the ‘right amount’ (of consumption). It is the point that people can satisfy with meeting the right demand for quality of life, which is moderation. The ‘right amount’ also means not harming others (referring to all in eco-systems).

For Buddhist economics, conceptual framework regarding work, consumption, production, trade, as well as relationship to nature would be different from those in Western conventional economics. It also leads to different implications to poverty and distribution of resources.

4.2.1.1. Concept of Work

In Buddhist economics, work is a part of life that people can be happy by working with chanda (good desire) and can make happily working environment. Buddhist economics focus on workers, rather than products of workers. Work is an important part of life for everyone to nourish and develop human value in conditions with human dignity and freedom.

Therefore, for the purpose of work, Buddhist economics seem to concern people more than goods as well as creativity more than consumption. It is a human -center view, not product-center view. Buddhism encourages people to work in order to develop them-

¹⁵ P.A. Payutto, **Buddhist Economics**, 2nd ed., (Bangkok: Buddhist University Press, 1992), p. 39.

selves and the society. Work is a process of human development as workers can apply many dhamma principles while working. Therefore, working can bring in happiness from work satisfaction, self-development, and usefulness to others/ society. The more people have inner happiness, the more they work for the usefulness of others and society, not for self. This is contrast to Western economic concept as work in Buddhism is not a pressure or has to do only for exchange money, but people have willingness and can enjoy working all the time. It brings in satisfaction and true happiness.

Work is human duty and people can work any time and any where since they are happy to do it as a part of life. People can also choose to do creative job, regardless of return, that can bring in pleasure and satisfaction. In Buddhism, real reward from work (with chanda- desire for goodness and well-being) is the work results (by itself) which beneficial to the worker and others, not measured in terms of money.

Thus, Buddhist system promotes real work (with desire to improve quality of life) and to do good things for others. Thus, real work is not the same as being employed and work by office hours, as referred in modern economics. The Buddhist concept of work is broader covering spiritual wellbeing and good human relation.

4.2.1.2. Consumption, production, and trade system

Buddhist economics can apply for consumption, production, and trade systems. With promoting simplicity and non-violence, pattern of consumption and production can be modest. A high degree of human satisfaction can be obtained by low rate of consumption and modest use of resources.

In Buddhism, consumption has purposes for real benefits from consumption (which may be considered as “real consumption”, different from “unlimited wants” of the unnecessary). Real consumption is for relieving suffering and served as basic needs for higher mind and wisdom development; whereas, production requires wisdom as main input or factor of production. As pointed out by Puntasen, production theory of Buddhist economics focuses on wisdom as a mode of production and this system may be called as “wisdomism” instead of capitalism from Western theories.¹⁶ This is to maintain the highest goal of maximizing happiness (in Buddhism) by minimizing harmfulness to ourselves and others. Only with wisdom in consumption and production, this goal can be achieved.

¹⁶Puntasen, *op.cit.*, p. 436.

For example, to know what is the “right amount” or appropriate level of consumption requires wisdom.

Appropriate consumption in Buddhism is efficient because it has purposes following life goal ladder; namely, immediate usefulness for basic physical and social needs, intermediate usefulness for mind, morality and quality of life, and the ultimate usefulness for inner freedom (from any attachment). Therefore, these usefulness are purposes of consumption; whereas, consumption that leads to suffering or over used of resources is not efficient consumption for the middle way of life which consume for real need. Utility theory in Buddhist economics should mean utilization for the greatest usefulness.¹⁷

Trade in Buddhist economic system should encourage more human relationship. Trading transaction should be done in a shorter distance or closer community, as noted by Schumacher.¹⁸ This makes sense to the concept of Buddhist sustainable development as local community trade use less energy in transportation and preservation of products (i.e., food and fresh products); whereas, long chain in trade transaction system involves high costs. However, this may allow some exceptions, in the case that the local community needs some products that the local cannot produce or produce in higher cost than trade. However, the market system should not encourage larger and more powerful company from outside to take over local resources for productions or destroy local trade systems. Local community production and retails in trade system would also increase care of producers to sell quality goods to consumers as both parties know each other personally, allowing for responsibility or concern for any harmful that may cause (i.e., from toxic, dishonest). In the society knowing who is who in the whole system, social interaction and response can be easily affect people in the society. People are afraid of doing wrong things due to social actions, not only because of controlled laws and regulations which can be escaped if people lack of morality and responsibility. Local producers tend to be more responsible to quality of life of their neighbors and community members, increasing in social responsibility in production. In addition, as local people’ feelings attach to local resources, they tend to preserve their environment and natural resources.

¹⁷ Puntasen, *op.cit.*, p. 479.

¹⁸ E. F. Schumacher, **Small is Beautiful: Economics as if People Mattered**, Chapter 4: Buddhist Economics, (Harper & Row Publisher, 1975), p. 62.

That is why Buddhist system with simplicity makes sense. Buddhist's middle way of life also eases life for less pressures and conflicts. People can live happily in moderation with less consumption than that in modern economics which assume persons who consume more are happier. Buddhist economics place higher value to human relation than only goods and consumption. Also, Buddhist concepts of not killing and not taking intoxicants reverence for life and mindful consumption also stress on quality of consumption for improving quality of life. With less consumption (limited to only needs for well-being) and less utilizing resource of production, human beings should be able to release to do more useful things which is real value of work and enhance human wellbeing.

4.2.1.3 Poverty and Distribution

Buddhism considers poverty is suffering and obstacle for higher development. As noted in Payutto (1992, 4) once Buddha said “when people are overwhelmed, and in pain through suffering, they are incapable of understanding Dhamma” and stressed that “hunger is the most sever of all illnesses and that conditioned phenomena provide the basis for the most ingrain suffering”.

Therefore, Buddhism realizes the importance of basic physical needs, and eradication of poverty is the priority before human beings can be developed further. Thus, it is clear that Buddhist economics does not object physical well-being and economic development as they are means towards higher life goal of happiness from liberalization.

Sustainable development relates to equitable distribution of goods and resources. If more goods/ services and resources can be allocated to the poor to obtain basic needs, the poor would have no need to invade new land or resources. On the other hand, if resources are unequally distributed and those who lack of basic needs received unfair distribution, this would increase the tendency for environment deterioration and worsen environmental situation. Therefore, equitable society without poverty in basic needs support sustainable development. Buddhist system supports the fair allocation of resource because it focuses on selflessness, generosity, giving, and compassion. Resources should be widely allocated to the needy.

Therefore, promoting inner happiness (with less wants) leads to efficient consumption for real needs, utilized less resources only for purposes of usefulness for themselves and others, efficient work and widen allocation of resources to the disadvantaged. People should equally receive basic needs (or get out of poverty) to allow them to advance their human development.

4.2.2. The Relationship with Natural Resources

Buddhism emphasizes the importance of natural resources, which is essential for human well-being. Buddhism focuses on the relationship of human and nature advocates for harmonious and peaceful co-existence between human being and the natural world, as well as direct to the relief and less self-center. Human beings have to avoid violence towards nature and be aligned with nature.

Then, the design for right socioeconomic system has to realize the interconnected of human beings, nature and the society. These three aspects have to harmonize and support each other. Any action or activity should not be harmful to others in social and eco-system. Technology has to support the harmonization of these three aspects, not conflict or harmful to any aspect. It has to use in such a way that promote real well-being and sustainable development. With the middle way of life, consumption and production can be modest with low utilization of resources. More energy and resource saved can be utilized for social development. With love, care and gratitude to nature, human beings would have less conflict with nature and economic well-being would no longer be a natural trade-off.

5. LOOKING FORWARD: THE NEW CONCEPT OF BUDDHIST SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

The paper proposes the new Buddhist Sustainable Development concept that starts from inner spirit of human beings as a driving force to a larger social system. Overall, this system requires inner and outer components of humans. While center on inner happiness, good supporting system is also required with right views towards work, employment, consumption, production and relationship with others and natural resources.

This type of development focuses on inner happiness, developed along the path towards highest life's goal of liberalization as well as appropriate systems allowing middle-way of life and middle-way economy. The relationship of human, social, economic, and environment in this system can use less quantity and increase quality of natural resources. This is a pathway towards real sustainable development.

Therefore, this new concept of development encourages people to realize real value of products/ materials using or consuming for improving quality of life only, not for defilements that never stop wanting. When the desires of these 2 types have conflicts, we should go for the first type for improving quality of life. Human cannot live without the first type of physical needs for survival, but can live happily without the second type

of materials which is luxury. With inner happiness in mind, the second type of wants is not necessary. The limited desire to only for standard quality of life (real need), would reduce the overwhelm use or consume in luxury items and mindful to consume what really good for life. Human beings would have less wants for physical/ materialistic and less consumption, leading to less production and less intervene natural resources.

This requires simplicity in life. With less selfishness and accumulation, people should have more time to do useful things, cooperate with people, and helping each other. People in the society should equally receive benefits from the development.

Human behaviors would be driven by wisdom, rather than by self-interests and unlimited wants as assumed in Western economic theory. This spiritual focus is missed in the mainstream sustainable development concept which cannot solve current global problems. Therefore, right views towards life goal (with inner freedom/ happiness) is a firm foundation for right behavior to others and nature, leading to sustainable path of development.

Based on Buddhist philosophy, wisdom and mindfulness should be the key to drive the new direction of development. Human beings would have higher quality spiritually. We have to move toward caring and sustainable society by deep understanding of relationship of all beings under the law of nature. Human needs to learn to appreciate nature that enrich our well-being and human relationship should be under the culture of loving kindness and cooperation. Societies would have more equality, just, respect, free from poverty with good human behavior and relationship.

Therefore, inner happiness is the starting point of all changes. As mentioned by Payutto “All such changes must begin in the mind. They can only be achieved by the mind that enjoys inner peace, freedom, and happiness. If we are to establish peace on this planet, we must develop inner peace by freeing ourselves from craving, lust for power and all contentious views.”¹⁹

Buddhist sustainable development focus on human development with right views towards life and nature; human beings can live happily with moderate consumption, cooperation and harmony, as well as equitable resource distribution. Being less want and less dependent on materials, higher or inner happiness can lead to the whole societal

¹⁹ P.A. Payutto, **Peace through Freedom and Happiness**, fourth reprinted, (Nakhon Pathom: Wat Yannawejksakawan Bangkok, 2013).

happiness with peace and sustainable development. This is the human spiritual focus that is missing in Western sustainable development concept that consider sustainable development from meeting the needs of present and future generations only, as indicated in the widely used definition below:

“Development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.”²⁰

Instead, this paper suggests holistic approach for human spiritual development as a foundation for sustainable happiness for all and sustainable development. Therefore, an additional key element to existing economic, social, environment elements of conventional sustainable development concept is “human development by Dhamma.” As a result, this paper purposed the new concept of “Buddhist sustainable development” briefly as

Buddhist sustainable development driven from human spiritual development that human are developed to be happy from moderate needs or less attach to unnecessary desire/ materials, leading to real consumption / less resource utilization as well as compassion to others and nature resulting in living in harmony and peace.

²⁰ **The World Commission on Environment and Development’s** (the Brundtland Commission) **Report**, Our Common Future, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987).

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