The Model of Sukha Community According to Buddhist Peaceful Means

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Abstract

This research explores the Model of Sukha Community through Buddhist peaceful means, focusing on three objectives: 1) to analyze the concepts and theories of sukha (happiness) within communities, 2) to examine Buddhist peaceful methods for fostering happiness, and 3) to develop and propose a practical model for community well-being inspired by Buddhist teachings. The study employs a qualitative methodology, integrating documentary analysis, in-depth interviews, and focus group discussions.

The findings reveal that the Sukha Community Model is a structured framework rooted in Buddhist principles, particularly the Saraniya-dhamma, designed to foster communal harmony and enduring happiness. The model comprises five core elements: Serenity, Understanding, Kindness, Harmony, and Alignment. These elements represent a holistic approach that integrates mindfulness, ethical living, and interpersonal compassion to address societal challenges. By combining traditional Buddhist teachings with modern approaches, the model provides practical methods for cultivating mutual respect, reducing conflicts, and enhancing social cohesion.

The Sukha Community Model offers actionable strategies, such as promoting loving-kindness (metta), compassion (karuna), and shared ethical values, which are essential for transforming societal suffering into collective well-being. This synthesis of ancient wisdom and contemporary practices makes the model a valuable tool for creating thriving communities where individuals and groups experience interconnectedness and happiness. Through its emphasis on inner peace, moral integrity, and communal support, the Sukha Community Model demonstrates the enduring relevance of Buddhist teachings in building sustainable and harmonious societies.

Keywords: Model of Sukha; Sukha Community; Buddhist Peaceful Means; Building Happiness

Introduction

The concept of Sukha (happiness) holds a pivotal role within Buddhist doctrine, wherein it is perceived as an all-encompassing state of well-being that transcends simple materialistic or sensory gratifications. Grounded in ethical behavior, mindfulness, and wisdom, Sukha functions as both an individual aspiration and a communal objective. Nevertheless, modern societies frequently encounter difficulties in converting this profound comprehension into actionable practices. Rather, the quest for happiness is often diminished to fleeting pleasures, the accumulation of material wealth, or ephemeral objectives, significantly diverging from the enduring and transformative Sukha envisaged within Buddhist philosophy (Payutto, 2018). Such superficial methodologies fail to confront deeper, systemic issues of discontent, culminating in societal disintegration and a deficiency of genuine well-being.

The dissonance between traditional Buddhist teachings and contemporary interpretations of happiness has contributed to several challenges. Firstly, communities often lack a nuanced understanding of Sukha as framed in foundational Buddhist texts, such as the Tipiṭaka and the works of later Buddhist scholars. For instance, the Dhammapada underscores the idea that happiness arises from the cultivation of inner virtues, such as mindfulness and detachment from craving (Byrom, 2010). Secondly, while certain communities incorporate Buddhist practices like meditation or ethical conduct, these efforts are frequently fragmented and lack a cohesive framework that addresses the interconnectedness of individual and collective well-being (Sangasumana, 2019). Moreover, these obstacles underscore significant deficiencies in both the theoretical and practical comprehension of Sukha. Although Buddhist scriptures such as the Dhammapada and Suttanipāta offer rich conceptual frameworks, their applicability to contemporary communal environments remains insufficiently explored (Harvey, 2013; Gethin, 2008). Furthermore, modern interpretations frequently disregard the communal dimensions of happiness, redirecting focus predominantly toward individual well-being. This oversight diminishes the potential for collective harmony and sustainable happiness, which are essential to the Buddhist paradigm of peaceful means (Piyasīlo, 1995).

Complicating the matter further is the disjointed adoption of Buddhist practices. Methods such as mindfulness are often devoid of their ethical and spiritual underpinnings when applied in secular contexts, resulting in diminished effectiveness (Grossman & Van Dam, 2011). This reductionist perspective fails to harness the full transformative capacity of Buddhist peaceful means, which encompass not only mindfulness but also generosity (dāna), ethical conduct (sīla), and wisdom (paññā). As a result, communities are deprived of comprehensive

strategies to cultivate Sukha in manners that are culturally attuned, sustainable, and congruent with Buddhist principles.

By addressing these significant deficiencies, this study endeavors to furnish a framework for fostering happiness that is congruent with Buddhist principles, thereby contributing to expansive discussions on sustainable well-being and community advancement. The study will concentrate on several critical domains to tackle the issue and will employ a mixed-methods approach, integrating qualitative interviews and case studies with quantitative surveys to amass comprehensive data from a variety of communities. Through this multifaceted methodology, the study aspires to develop actionable models that communities can implement to enhance their collective happiness by proposing practical, evidence-based recommendations that resonate with Buddhist teachings, thereby assisting communities in attaining sustainable happiness and well-being

Research Objectives

1. To study the concepts and theories of sukha (happiness) in community.

2. To study the Buddhist peaceful means for promoting and building sukha (happiness) in the community.

3. To develop and present the models of building sukha (happiness) in community according to Buddhist peaceful means.

Literature Review

This literature review examines diverse perspectives on happiness, emphasizing Buddhist teachings and their integration with modern methodologies. It explores key texts that inform three objectives: understanding the concept of happiness, Buddhist peaceful means for fostering happiness, and developing a practical model for happiness in communities.

1. Concepts and Theories of Happiness

The Dhammacakkappavattana Sutta, as discussed by Mahasi Sayadaw (1998), provides profound insights into the Middle Path, the Noble Eightfold Path, and the Four Noble Truths. This foundational text emphasizes that suffering is intrinsic to life, manifested in forms such as aging, death, and unfulfilled desires. It highlights that the five aggregates, that lead to attachment, are themselves forms of suffering. The Sutta also contrasts real and false happiness, offering a comprehensive framework to understand the pervasive nature of suffering and the path to transcend it.

In Happiness and The Art of Being, James (2012) explores how happiness is inherently tied to the well-being of others. It posits that true happiness is intrinsic, rather than dependent

on external circumstances. James emphasizes that love and happiness are deeply interconnected, revealing that our pursuit of happiness often reflects our inner nature. This perspective complements the Buddhist view by highlighting the relational aspects of happiness.

Shakya (2019) identifies four key sources of happiness in Buddhist practice: health, contentment, trust, and peace. These elements form the foundation of a fulfilling life, aligning with the Middle Way's emphasis on balance and mindfulness. By practicing these principles, individuals can attain a harmonious and happy life, underscoring the relevance of traditional Buddhist teachings in modern contexts.

Bok (2010) in Exploring Happiness takes a cross-disciplinary approach, connecting ancient philosophical traditions with contemporary social science to understand the nature of happiness. Bok's work resonates with the Buddhist perspective by underscoring the importance of ethical living and reflective practices in fostering well-being.

2. Buddhist Peaceful Means for Fostering Happiness

Buddhist peaceful means, particularly Saraniya-dhamma, play a critical role in fostering happiness within communities. Bhaddanta Nandamalabhivamsa (2010), in The Path of Happiness, underscores the significance of ethics (Sila), meditation (Samadhi), and wisdom (Pañña) in achieving happiness. These practices enable individuals to cultivate inner peace and develop clarity, laying the foundation for communal harmony. The text also provides practical insights into the gradual development of mindfulness and wisdom, key elements for building happiness.

Buddhadasa Bhikkhu (2014), in Happiness & Hunger, differentiates between two levels of happiness: lower happiness, derived from satisfying desires, and higher happiness, achieved through the absence of desire. This work emphasizes overcoming cravings as a means to attain true and lasting happiness, offering a practical guide for integrating Buddhist peaceful means into everyday life.

Studies on mindfulness practices, such as those by Kabat-Zinn (2003), demonstrate how meditative techniques rooted in Buddhism can alleviate stress and foster emotional resilience. These methods align with Saraniya-dhamma's emphasis on mental cultivation and ethical conduct, offering a structured approach to promoting harmony and well-being in communities.

3. Developing a Model for Happiness in Communities

Modern self-help literature complements Buddhist teachings by providing actionable strategies for mindset transformation and interpersonal harmony. In Zen and the Art of

Happiness, Prentiss (2006) advocates for a positive outlook, illustrating how eliminating negativity can lead to personal transformation and clarity. This perspective aligns with Buddhist principles by emphasizing the importance of mental states in achieving happiness.

Shakya's (2019) identification of health, contentment, trust, and peace as core components of happiness serves as a foundation for developing a structured happiness model. These elements resonate with contemporary approaches to well-being, such as the integration of mindfulness and compassion in fostering social harmony.

Building on these foundations, studies like Lyubomirsky (2007) in The How of Happiness reveal practical ways to increase happiness through activities such as gratitude, kindness, and self-reflection. These insights complement Buddhist teachings, bridging ancient wisdom with modern psychology to develop actionable models for happiness in communities.

Conceptual Framework

This study defines the research conceptual framework based on the concept or theory together with the details in Figure 1.
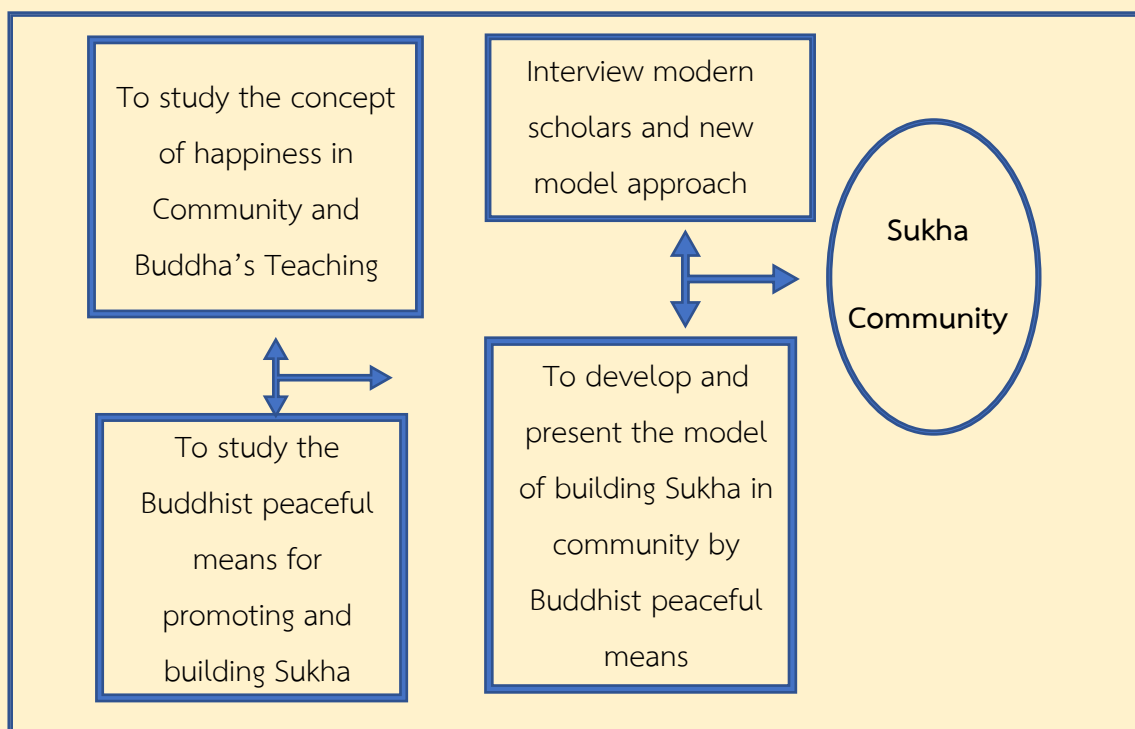

Figure 1 Conceptual Framework

Research Methodology

The research methodology of this dissertation-based article is documentary and in-depth interviews and focus group discussion. The key informants who were interviewed are

the people who have a good knowledge of Buddhism and have experience in the teaching of Buddhism in the community. These included the Buddhist scholars from IBSC and MCU who are Buddhist universities, the Theravada monk and lay scholar, and Mahayana monk scholar. They gave their consent before being interviewed, but their names shall be kept confidential and will not be given in this article. The research methodology can be divided into three stages as follows:

1. The study will focus on issues related to a happy community using Documentary Study and In-depth Interviews. Data will be sourced from various materials like textbooks, articles, and interviews with key informants. Instruments such as note papers and voice recorders will be used for data collection and analysis.

2. A documentary study will examine happiness in Buddhist Scriptures concerning psychical and mental happiness. Data will be gathered from Tipitaka, commentaries, and other relevant sources for analysis.

3. The research will analyze the findings from the previous objectives through a Documentary Study, In-depth Interview, and Focus Group Discussion to propose a process for happiness in the community for sustainable happiness in the community. Source materials will remain the same, but the final results will be further examined in the Focus Group Discussion.

Research Results

Objective 1: Exploring Sukha (Happiness) in Buddhist Teachings

In Buddhist teachings, Sukha, or happiness, is intricately tied to inner peace and wisdom. The concept transcends individual experiences, encompassing communal well-being founded on ethical conduct, compassion, and mindfulness. According to Buddhist scriptures, communal happiness is achieved by practicing these values, which foster harmonious relationships and mutual respect. The Buddha's teachings emphasize that suffering—both individual and collective—arises from ignorance, craving, and aversion. These negative states manifest in societal contexts as social strife, inequality, and injustice, contributing to communal suffering. For instance, the Cakkavatti Sihanada Sutta (Dīgha Nikāya 26) illustrates how moral decline and neglect of ethical values lead to societal decay (Walshe, 1995).

Buddhist scriptures propose methods to alleviate communal suffering through the cultivation of metta (loving-kindness) and karuna (compassion). The Sigālovāda Sutta (D iii 180), underscores mutual respect and ethical behavior within social relationships as fundamental to a harmonious society (Walshe, 1995). These practices have transformative potential,

reducing conflicts and promoting social justice. The Mahāvagga of the Vinaya Piṭaka outlines rules for monastic communities, such as shared resources, dialogue-based conflict resolution, and collective well-being, which serve as models for lay communities as well (Bhikkhu Bodhi, 2005).

Engaged Buddhism extends these teachings to modern social issues, emphasizing mindfulness, compassion, and non-violence as tools for social change (Hanh, 1987). This approach aligns with the Dhammapada's guidance on right action and right livelihood, encouraging active participation in creating a just and peaceful society (Byrom, 2010). Engaged Buddhism addresses structural and systemic issues, fostering communities grounded in ethical values and mutual aid.

Buddhist texts delineate various types of happiness, categorized into 13 pairs in the Sukha Vagga of the Aṅguttara Nikāya (A i 80). These include distinctions like the happiness of a layperson (gihi-sukha) versus that of renunciation (pabbajja-sukha), and sensual happiness (kāma-sukha) versus renunciative happiness (nekkhamma-sukha). Superior forms of happiness, such as mental happiness (cetasika-sukha) and equanimity-based happiness (upekkhā-sukha), are emphasized over material and sensory pleasures (Bodhi, 2012).

Four specific types of happiness offer additional insights into well-being: Ananya sukha (freedom from debt), Atthi sukha (joy of possessing wealth), Bhoga sukha (happiness from enjoying possessions), and Anavajjasukha (happiness from ethical conduct). Of these, Anavajjasukha is considered superior due to its foundation in moral integrity and mental purity (Bodhi, 2012). Together, these frameworks guide individuals and communities toward a balanced, fulfilling life that integrates material and spiritual well-being.

Objective 2: Buddhist peaceful means for fostering sukha (happiness) in the community focus on practices like six conditions for conciliation (Cha Saraniya, Dhamma); lovingkindness through the body, lovingkindness through speech, lovingkindness through the mind, unreserved generosity, compatibility in moral virtues, compatible view, noble and liberating, ending suffering to create a harmonious and supportive environment (A iii 289). Central to this approach is the development of both wholesome desire and virtuous behavior. In Buddhism, desire can be classified as wholesome (chanda) or unwholesome (tanha). Wholesome desire includes virtues such as loving-kindness (metta) and compassion (karuna), which enhance communal well-being and reduce selfish impulses (Payutto, 2018). This shift in focus from self-centered to other-oriented desires promotes a supportive community atmosphere where individual happiness and collective harmony are intertwined.

Behavioral development through Buddhist teachings emphasizes the importance of ethical conduct and the cultivation of virtues. Practicing the right behavior, as outlined in the Buddha's teachings, involves aligning one's actions with moral precepts and developing mindfulness. The cultivation of loving-kindness through physical actions, speech, and mental intentions fosters a compassionate community (Bodhi, B. (2005). The Buddha's guidance on maintaining the right conduct in relationships—such as respecting parents, supporting teachers, and caring for friends—helps prevent social discord and promotes collective happiness.

The development of virtue and view is crucial for a community's happiness. Virtue, or Sila, is cultivated through generosity and ethical living, which foster a supportive and interconnected society (Harvey, P. 2000). A noble view, grounded in understanding impermanence and non-self, guides individuals toward wisdom and compassion. By integrating these practices into daily life, communities can create environments where mutual respect and collective well-being thrive, leading to lasting happiness for all members.

The Buddhist framework for happiness emphasizes ethical governance, personal development, and communal harmony. The concept of Dhammabhipala (Rahula, 2007), or good governance, underscores the importance of leadership guided by moral and ethical principles. The Ten Duties of the King adapted for modern governance, include qualities like integrity, nonviolence, and kindness. These principles advocate for a leadership style rooted in righteousness and compassion, aiming to foster peace and justice in society. The Buddha's teachings and actions, such as mediating conflicts between tribes, illustrate the application of these values to resolve disputes and promote societal well-being.

Central to personal happiness are the Four Bhavanas: Sila Bhavana (morality), Kaya Bhavana (physical health), Citta Bhavana (mental development), and Panna Bhavana (wisdom) (DN 16, Mahaparinibbana Sutta). These practices offer a holistic approach to cultivating a balanced life. Sila Bhavana focuses on ethical behavior, Kaya Bhavana on maintaining physical health, Citta Bhavana on mental clarity, and Panna Bhavana on achieving wisdom through understanding reality (Rahula, 1974). Integrating these elements leads to a harmonious and fulfilling life, enhancing personal and collective well-being.

In community building, the Four Sangahavatthus—Dana (giving), Piyavaca (amicable speech), Atthacariya (helpful action), and Samanattata (participation)—serve as foundational practices for fostering social harmony. Dana promotes generosity, Piyavaca encourages kind communication, Atthacariya involves supportive actions, and Samanattata highlights the

importance of active participation. By embracing these principles, communities can build a supportive and inclusive environment, enhancing overall happiness and social cohesion.

Objective 3: The Sukha Model for Community Happiness

The Sukha model, grounded in Buddhist principles, fosters community happiness through five elements: Serenity, Understanding, Kindness, Harmony, and Alignment. This model integrates practices such as mindfulness, ethical living, and communal support to enhance individual and collective well-being.

Serenity is cultivated through mindfulness and meditation. Establishing tranquil spaces and helping accessible mindfulness programs reduce stress and foster emotional regulation (Hanh, 1987). Understanding enhances empathy and compassion, resolving conflicts through negotiation and principles of mental and spiritual development (Hanh, 1999).

Kindness forms the cornerstone of this model. Practices like loving-kindness meditation and non-violent communication nurture communal bonds and resolve conflicts (Hanh, 1999). Harmony is achieved through ethical conduct, mutual respect, and resource sharing, as highlighted by the Five Precepts and teachings on harmonious living (Gyatso, 1998).

Alignment involves harmonizing individual actions with communal values. By engaging in the Noble Eightfold Path and educational initiatives, communities address the root causes of suffering and promote sustainable practices (Hanh, 1999). This comprehensive framework fosters interconnected, compassionate, and happy societies where individuals thrive collectively.

The Sukha model offers a comprehensive approach to community happiness by integrating serenity, understanding, kindness, harmony, and alignment. By fostering these principles, communities can create environments where individuals support each other in their spiritual and emotional growth, leading to a more connected, compassionate, and happy society.
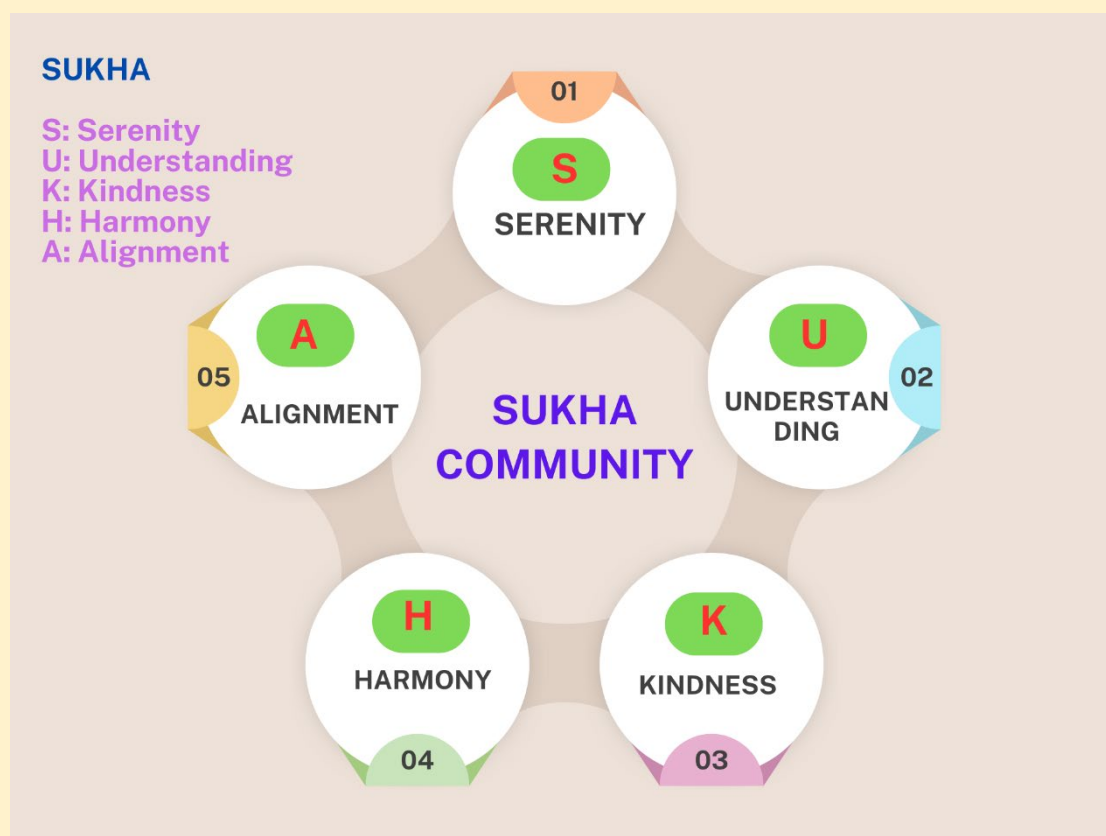
Figure 2: SUKHA Model for building happiness in the community.

Discussion

The findings of this study align with existing literature and emphasize the profound role of happiness in fostering cohesive and thriving communities. Moreover, expands our understanding of sukha (happiness) as an individual and communal phenomenon deeply rooted in Buddhist teachings. Sukha, or happiness, is foundational to both individual and communal well-being. Buddhist teachings emphasize the integration of inner peace, ethical living, and virtues like loving-kindness (metta) and compassion (karuna) to build harmonious societies. The study confirms the work of Ricard (2015), who describes happiness as a skill cultivated through mindfulness and ethical behavior, emphasizing the relational aspect of well-being within communities.

Buddhist peaceful means, especially the Saraniya-dhamma, are pivotal in establishing harmony and sukha within communities. The Sigalovada Sutta emphasizes relational ethics in social interactions, while the Cakkavatti Sihanada Sutta stresses the ethical obligations of leaders in promoting happiness (Harvey, 2013). These teachings resonate with studies such as Yeshey et al. (2024), which demonstrate the impact of Buddhist ethics in mitigating conflicts and fostering mutual respect. Additionally, contemporary research highlights the application of Engaged Buddhism in addressing societal issues, including social justice and environmental

challenges (King, 2021). This study extends these findings by demonstrating how Buddhist practices like mindfulness meditation and merit-making ceremonies build trust, reduce societal tensions, and cultivate harmony. New insights from Ramkissoon (2023) show that fostering social quality of life through community collaboration aligns with Buddhist peaceful means, highlighting their enduring relevance in modern contexts.

The Sukha Community Model presents a structured framework rooted in Buddhist principles. Its five elements—Serenity, Understanding, Kindness, Harmony, and Alignment (SUKHA)—offer a comprehensive approach to community happiness. This model aligns with findings by Ramkissoon (2023), which emphasize the importance of social harmony and quality of life in promoting sustainable development. Further, the model reflects recent studies on community well-being, such as those by Venkatraja (2023), which stress the integration of ethical values and mindfulness in achieving sustainable happiness. By bridging traditional Buddhist teachings with modern methodologies, the Sukha Community Model provides actionable strategies for fostering happiness, including shared values, compassion-driven initiatives, and mindfulness-based interventions. The model's emphasis on inclusivity and adaptability ensures its relevance across diverse cultural and societal contexts.

The study's findings contribute to a growing discourse on the cultural and contextual relevance of Buddhist teachings. Insights from Helliwell et al. (2023) on global happiness highlight the role of trust, compassion, and shared values—principles deeply embedded in Buddhist teachings—as determinants of well-being. Similarly, research by Brown and Ryan (2003) underscores the transformative potential of mindfulness in enhancing individual and communal happiness, supporting the principles outlined in this study. Moreover, this study builds on the conceptual framework of Gross National Happiness (GNH) as practiced in Bhutan (See, 2022), emphasizing the alignment of Buddhist values with contemporary measures of societal well-being. The integration of Saraniya-dhamma in fostering ethical behavior and communal happiness is a key contribution, bridging traditional Buddhist wisdom with modern understandings of social cohesion.

In summary, this study deepens the understanding of sukha by integrating traditional Buddhist teachings with modern methodologies. The Sukha Community Model offers a robust framework for fostering happiness and well-being, addressing contemporary social challenges. Through the promotion of ethical behavior, mindfulness, and communal harmony, this research advances the discourse on creating resilient and harmonious communities rooted in Buddhist wisdom.

Knowledge from Research

The research highlights a structured approach to happiness in the community. The general process of building happiness involves realizing and overcoming suffering, practicing threefold training (tisikkha): Sila, Samadhi, and Panna to mitigate the effects of bad behaviors, aiming for escape from suffering through the six conditions for conciliation, and applying essential Dhamma principles such as tolerance, mindfulness, attentiveness, and equanimity. Additionally, building happiness in Buddhism emphasizes the cultivation of loving-kindness (metta), compassion (karuna), sympathetic joy (mudita), and equanimity (upekkha). Practicing generosity, morality, and mental cultivation are also crucial.

Ultimately, the six conditions for conciliation (cha saraniya, dhamma) serve as the foundation for happiness in the community integrating lovingkindness through the body, lovingkindness through speech, lovingkindness through the mind, unreserved generosity, compatibility in moral virtues, compatible view, noble and liberating, ending suffering. These principles address the cessation of suffering and the fulfillment of happiness and provide a comprehensive framework for achieving a balanced, healthy, and meaningful life according to Buddhist teachings.
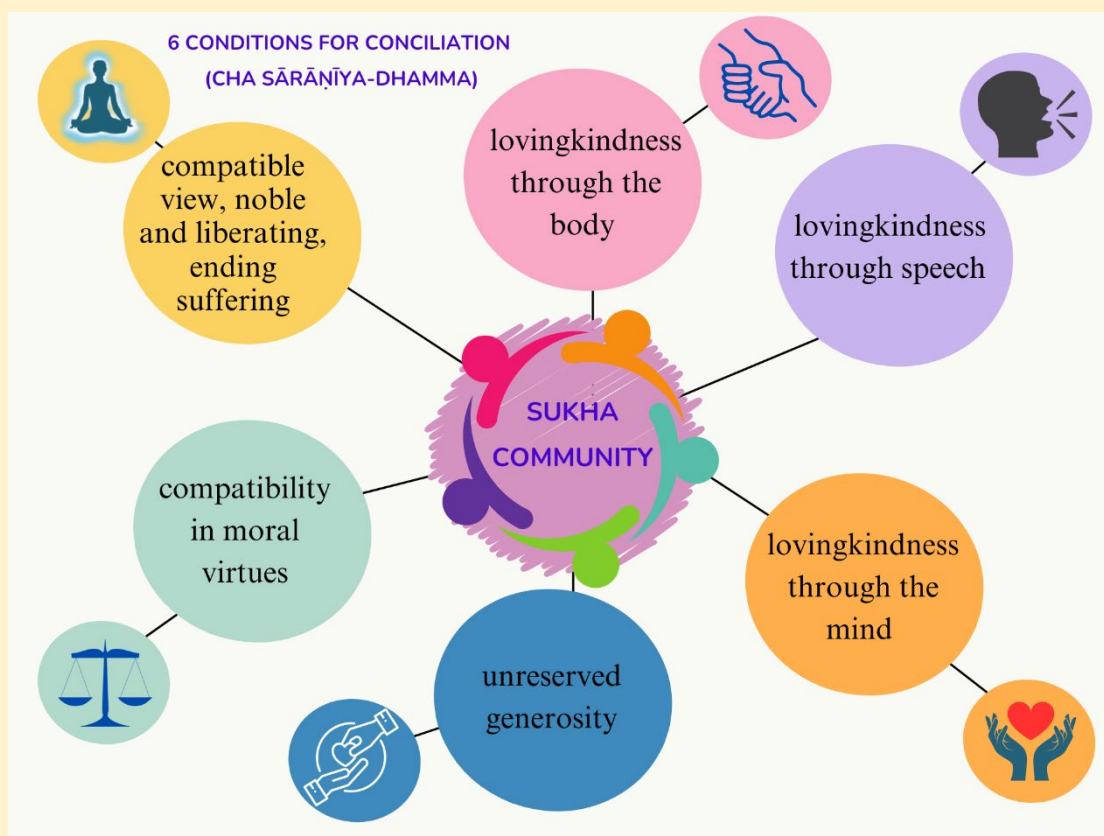

Figure 3: The six conditions for conciliation (cha saraniya, dhamma)

Conclusion

In conclusion, the Sukha Community Model demonstrates how Buddhist peaceful means can serve as a powerful tool for fostering happiness and harmony in both individual and collective dimensions. Rooted in Saraniya-dhamma, the model emphasizes ethical conduct, mutual respect, and compassion as foundational elements for addressing contemporary social challenges. Integrating Buddhist teachings with modern practices offers a holistic framework for transforming societal suffering into collective well-being.

This approach recognizes happiness as multifaceted, encompassing physical, mental, and spiritual dimensions. It aligns with the Buddha's teachings on ethical living, mindfulness, and right livelihood, as emphasized in scriptures such as the Sigalovada Sutta and Cakkavatti Sihanada Sutta. By fostering virtues like loving-kindness (metta) and compassion (karuna), the Sukha Community Model cultivates environments conducive to both personal fulfillment and communal harmony.

Furthermore, this study highlights the relevance of Engaged Buddhism in addressing contemporary issues, from social justice to environmental sustainability, affirming the adaptability of Buddhist principles in diverse contexts. The model's five pillars—Serenity, Understanding, Kindness, Harmony, and Alignment—create a structured pathway for building resilient communities where individuals thrive in interconnectedness. This research reinforces the enduring value of Buddhist peaceful means as a timeless, practical approach to creating a just, compassionate, and happy society.

Suggestions

1: Sukha and Community Well-being: The concept of Sukha in Buddhism, emphasizing inner peace, wisdom, and ethical conduct, can foster harmonious and just communities. Applying these principles in diverse cultural contexts can help reduce social strife and inequality. Future research should explore integrating Buddhist principles into contemporary education systems to nurture ethical and compassionate leaders.

2: Practical Methods for Social Justice: Buddhist scriptures suggest practical methods like metta (loving-kindness) and karuna (compassion) to alleviate communal suffering and promote social justice. These methods can be adapted to modern social structures for effective conflict resolution and community support. Future research should examine their application in conflict zones and areas of social unrest.

3: Sukha Model and Community Resilience: The Sukha model, based on Buddhist principles, provides a framework for enhancing community happiness through serenity,

understanding, and kindness. Integrating this model into community planning can create supportive environments where individuals thrive. Future research should investigate the long-term effects of this model on resilience and well-being, especially in urban settings.

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