

An Analysis of Applied Buddhist Metaphysics in Societal Context

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Abstract

The objective of this academic article aims to present, an analysis of Applied Buddhist Metaphysics in Society, is 1) what does Buddhist metaphysics mean for society and its source 2) how to get benefit from applied Buddhist metaphysics in the societal context 3) and an analysis of Buddhist metaphysics in framework of critical thinking.

Keywords: Buddhist Metaphysics, Noble Truths

Introduction

In order for understanding about the Buddhist metaphysics, so it could be understood about the meaning of metaphysics first and how it to dealing with the life and society. Generally, this concept will cover and response to reality and being of nature, because of the metaphysics is a part of philosophy branch that explores the fundamental nature of being and the world, aiming to answer the questions "what is there?" and "what is it like?"

Looking back to Buddhism has various metaphysics such as the theory of noble truths, dependent origination, and cause and effect as well, but in this article will discuss and covering on the theory of the fourth noble truths to apply in society and daily life of human beings meanwhile the word today is still facing many obstacles could not reach human aims to get goal oriented approach, so how the Buddhist metaphysics contribute to help society and what it will affect human life in accordance with the Buddha's teaching.

On the other hand, the metaphysical view of life, the concept of non-attachment is an integral part of a whole scheme of concepts constituting the Indian view of the world. (Agrawal, 1982 : 6), and sometimes, the Buddha's teaching, the *Dhamma*, is presented in the *Sutta-Pitaka* of the Pali Canon as a path to the solution of the fundamental problem of human existence, namely, *dukkha*, customarily translated as "suffering" or "unsatisfactoriness". (Ronkin, 2005 : 1)

The historical Buddha is often argued to have been uninterested in the nature of reality, but his teachings suggest otherwise. He believed that everything is interrelated, the phenomenal

world follows natural laws, and the ordinary appearance of things is an illusion. (វត្តខទិរាម - គគីរ ឃុំ ព្រែកអាដី ស្រុកក្រូចឆ្មារ ខេត្តត្បូងឃ្មុំ, 2018) Buddhism is often viewed as a philosophical inquiry into existence itself, not necessarily supernatural things. However, the argument is that the Buddha was practical and focused on helping people be free from suffering, so he wouldn't have been interested in metaphysics. Many schools of Buddhism are built upon metaphysical foundations, raising questions about who is right. (O'Brien, 2019)

The Buddha, Otherwise, believed that ignorance, hate, and greed are the root causes of suffering. To liberate from suffering, he taught the practice of the Eightfold Path, which focuses on wisdom, or seeing things as they are. This insight is crucial as our perceptions are often clouded by our biases and cultural conditioning. Enlightenment, breaking through delusional perceptions, is the means of liberation from suffering. (O'Brien, 2019)

The Buddha discouraged people from speculating, forming opinions, or accepting doctrines based on blind faith. Instead, through practice of the Path, concentration, and ethical conduct, one can directly perceive the nature of reality. The poison arrow story illustrates that receiving "the answer" is not the same as perceiving the answer oneself. Instead, the Buddha advised practicing disenchantment, dispassion, cessation, calming, direct knowledge, self-awakening, and unbinding. (O'Brien, 2019)

In this regards, Buddhism is a philosophy of life expounded by Gautama Buddha, and the Buddha was not a god and the philosophy of Buddhism does not entail any theistic world view. Also, the teaching of the Buddha are aimed solely at liberating sentient beings from the suffering. (Saisuta, 2012 : 1 - 5)

The Source of Buddhist Metaphysics

What is the source of the Buddhist metaphysics, generally view, now looking at the Buddhism is often referred to as the philosophy of the 'middle way,' urging its followers to avoid extremes in their quest for enlightenment. Buddhism is a form of 'atheistic spirituality,' a religion without a god, attempting to steer a middle way between the theistic spirituality of the Hindu Vedanta tradition and the atheistic materialism of the Samkhya and Lokayata philosophies. However, due to its focus on the mind, denial of a self, and extreme idealist tendencies within the Buddhist tradition, it is unlikely that Buddhism as a spiritual tradition ever took the middle way doctrinally. (Morris, 2021)

Relation to the Buddhist philosophical worldview is a mixture of four distinct metaphysical systems: common-sense realism, theistic spirituality (a religious metaphysic), phenomenism, and mystical idealism (or esotericism). With the development of Mahayana Buddhism, the subjective idealism inherent in phenomenism was taken to a further extreme, advocating a metaphysic of mystical or absolute idealism. (Morris, 2021)

Significantly, Mystical idealism describes the 'real' world experienced in a state of enlightenment (nirvana) as empty or void (sunyata), as 'mind only', or as pure or foundational consciousness (alaya vijnana) without form.

The Four Noble Truths is a part of the Buddhist metaphysics, which include the existence of suffering, its origination, cessation, and a path to cessation. The first claim, which is the realization that everything is of the nature of suffering, is the most profound and challenging. The Buddha argues that there are causes and conditions for the arising of suffering, and that if the origination of suffering depends on causes, future suffering can be prevented by bringing about the cessation of those causes.

The Buddha's teachings also suggests a set of techniques for cessation. Moreover, the Buddha's analysis of the origins of suffering suggests that ignorance about the three characteristics of sentient existence—suffering, impermanence, and non-self—will lead to appropriation, which in turn leads to attachments in the form of desire and aversion, strengthening ignorance about the true nature of sentient existence. This leads to future rebirth and instances of old age, disease, and death in a potentially unending cycle. The key to escape from this cycle lies in realizing the truth about sentient existence, which is characterized by suffering, impermanence, and non-self.

However, this realization is not easily achieved, as acts of appropriation have already made desire, aversion, and ignorance deeply entrenched habits of mind. To replace these habits, the Buddha suggests various forms of training, such as meditation, which enhances observational abilities and knowledge acquired through philosophical rationality. (Siderits, 2021)

How to Apply Buddhist Metaphysics

What the Buddhist metaphysics shown is the Four Noble Truths are the foundational tenets of Buddhism, which emphasize the nature of suffering and its causes. They were the realization of Buddha's enlightenment and serve as the basis for his teachings. The Four Noble Truths include life is suffering, craving is the cause, the end of suffering comes with craving, and there is a path to non-attachment. The path is the Eightfold Path, which guides one on the road to non-attachment and spiritual discipline. The eight precepts include right view, intention, speech, action, livelihood, effort, mindfulness, and concentration.

Recognizing these truths and following the Eightfold Path can lead to release from craving and attachment, liberating oneself from the cycle of suffering through rebirth and death. (Mark, 2021) On the other hand, The Middle Path, an Eightfold Path, aims to end suffering by practicing Right Speech, Action, Livelihood, Effort, Mindfulness, Concentration, Attitude, and View, focusing on Good Conduct, Mental Development, and Wisdom that can apply in the real situation in the name of human being who living in this world.

The three main schools today are Theravada Buddhism, Mahayana Buddhism, and Vajrayana Buddhism. All three schools differ in their interpretation of Buddha's vision and application, with Vajrayana focusing on cessation and recognizing the first two truths. Both schools believe in pursuing lasting values and true reality, leaving illusion and craving behind, and embracing non-attachment to a world that remains constant (Mark, 2021)

Again, looking at more detail how the Buddhist metaphysics show us to bring to practice in real society and real life that facing in social chaos, starting from various problems (Dukkha) are happening all the corner of human life.

In summary, the Buddhism has shown the formula or the best way to apply in real world, it's so-called “**the Four Noble truths**” or “**Absolute Truth of the Dhamma**”. (Dhammananda, 1994 : 54), for instance, and similar like the Buddha has found the best medicine to cure all disease (suffering) of human beings are facing now in our mind and our world today. (Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy, 2024)

The four noble truths (ariyasacca, *Sanskrit āryasatya*) are a common framework to explain early Buddhism's teachings. The word sacca means both truth and reality, and ariya refers to the ideal type of person the Buddhist path is supposed to generate. These four noble truths are primarily four realities whose contemplation leads to sainthood or the state of the noble ones (ariya). Each noble truth requires a particular practice from the disciple, and each requires a particular practice.

The first noble truth, the reality of suffering, assigns the disciple the practice of cultivating understanding through reflection, analytical meditation, and direct experience. This understanding involves understanding the nature of suffering and different types of suffering and happiness within *samsāra*. The Buddha of the *Pāli Nikāyas* taught the existence of different types of happiness and the reality of nirvana, the highest happiness.

The second noble truth, the reality of the origin of suffering, calls for the practice of renunciation to all mental states that generate suffering for oneself and others. The term *taṇhā* in the *Pāli Nikāyas* designates always a harmful type of desire that leads to repeated existence, delight and lust, and delights here and there. The most common translation of *taṇhā* nowadays is craving, which refers more specifically to intense, obsessive, and addictive desires.

The third noble truth in Buddhism is the cessation of suffering, which is often expressed through terms like peace, higher knowledge, and the abandonment of grasping. Nirvana, which means blowing out or extinguishing, is the most popular term for this cessation. It is a mental event that extinguishes the fires of craving, aversion, and delusion. The *Pāli Nikāyas* aim to provide a systematic explanation of the arising and cessation of suffering, rather than describing it. The goal of Buddhism is not to believe that suffering arises and ceases like the Buddha says, but to realize that the Buddha's teachings about suffering and its cessation are the case.

The fourth noble truth is the development of the eightfold ennobling path, which can be understood as eight mental factors cultivated by ennobled disciples at the moment of liberation or as different parts of the entire Buddhist path. The eight parts of the Buddhist path are divided into three kinds of training: training in wisdom, ethical training, and concentration.

The Buddha discovered that Suffering, which is caused by desire, could be put to an end by following the noble eightfold path. (Dhammananda, 1989 : 30)

New Knowledge

After study more detail on the Buddhist metaphysics, found a new knowledge that can be applied, and receive the new knowledge in real life in order to resolve the problem of ours, especially starting from internal matter, causing from the unwholesome action or mental defilement. As below in a briefing for the Buddhist metaphysics that talking about the best way to resolve the matter of life, called the four noble truths have summarized into two dealing-based approaches following.

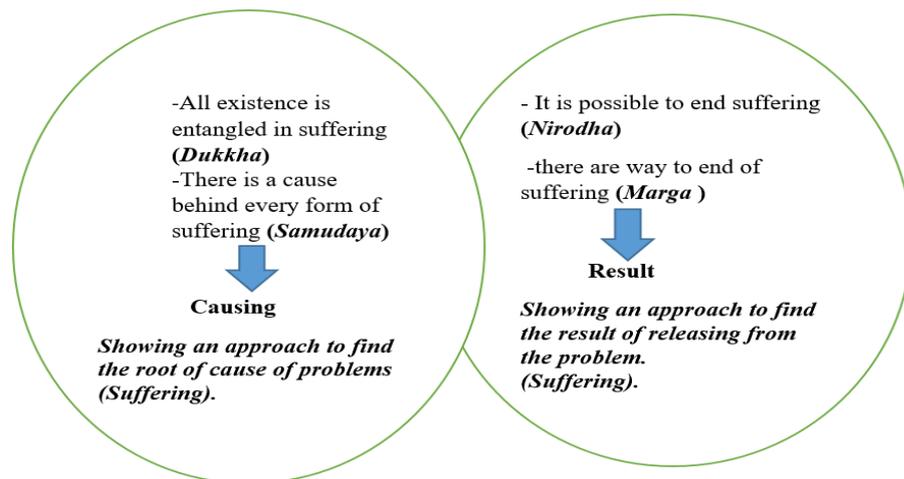


Figure 1 New knowledge from application on Buddhist metaphysics

Conclusion

In conclusion, the Buddha's teachings emphasize the importance of insight, not just releasing suffering. By practicing the Eightfold Path, individuals can directly perceive the nature of reality and liberate themselves from delusion.

Buddhism, On the other hand, on action involves neutral good deeds, with karma being a natural law rather than a court law. Intentional karma in Buddhism gives real consequences, as it has power within the self and always works in the body. Karma is the visionary or architect of everything in the world.

Significantly, the Noble One's karma is not meritorious or unfortunate, but his/her actions are meritorious and powerful, leading the world towards peace, tranquility, and safety. His/her actions are usually meritorious and powerful, leading the world to achieve benefits without any more duties as a consequence.

Again, the principle of Buddhism shown that there is no one who rewards or curses sin, and happiness and sorrow are the result of one's own deeds. All the Buddhists have a conscience, determined to avoid evil physically, verbally, and mentally, as it is clear that evil is a bad result. They are determined to fulfill virtue, as good deeds help save oneself for happiness in this world and the next, and bring oneself closer to the liberation of "suffering." in this worldly state through the theory of profoundly Buddhist metaphysics that can be applied in real societal contextual meaning.

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