



**BUDDHIST ETHICAL AND ECONOMICAL
CONTRIBUTIONS TO HUMAN WELL-BEING: GLOBAL
CHALLENGES AND CRISES**

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Abstract:

"We know what justice is when we feel the wounds of injustice"- Aristotle
"Just as a candle cannot burn without fire, men cannot live without a spiritual life"

- Buddha

Buddhist Philosophy of ethics and economics is based on Sigalovada sutta or laymans code of discipline or gihi Vinaya and as well as the Four Noble Truths and one of the right Livelihood of the eightfold path, which is based on the insight of the Buddha that spiritual liberation is attained by avoiding extremes, whether by indulgence in worldly pleasures or severe asceticism, and treading namely 'the Middle Way'. It talks about the ideal middle path between the competing models of capitalism and socialism. These Systems have failed to contain the relentless destruction of the natural environment and the human community, thereby forcing and leading executives and planners to search for new solutions for planetary problems. It supports the conventional forces of a free market and competition without destroying either nature or human society. The vision of sustainable economics is meant to be more just and more ecologically sound on the basis of morality. The fundamental Buddhist insight of the inter-connectedness exists among all living things, Economics and Ethics are all inter-related. The emphasis is on the concept of freedom as understood in Buddhism in contrast to the Western concept of 'freedom'. In the West 'freedom' revolves around the rights of the individual i.e. freedom to do what one wishes. In Buddhism, 'freedom' means freedom from personal desires or attachments. Buddhist approach to economics requires an understanding that economics and moral and spiritual life are neither separated nor mutually exclusive. The previous Century has been ravaged by a materialistic, self-centered consumerism. The present century needs to focus on the quality and spirituality of life itself. Buddhism, which advocates the 'Middle Path', serves as an important resource to pursue an alternative to the extremes of capitalism and socialism, or pure self-interest and utter self-negation. The entire articles discuss on the benefits of oneself, peace and tolerance, and save the natural resources...etc.

Key Words: Economics, Code of Conduct, Well Being, Peace and Tolerance, Right Livelihood & Four Noble Truths...Etc.

Introduction:

Economics is social science dealing with social policies for social well being in order to set the mind of human behavior, social entities and institutions. As per the Buddhist principles, Buddhist ethics deals with value of human existence in the society in the right way by policies namely fairness, justice, equality, liberty, and fraternity. The concepts of Ethics and economics are touches all aspects of human life. The interconnections between economics, ethics and other aspects of human society have greater difficulty for grasping. Some of the ideas are offered as the contribution to greater understanding of the interconnections between ethics and economics for social purpose. For the purposeful well-being, the whole sphere of life is on debate: education, health and wealth, welfare, labor relation, social inequalities, global economic relation, human well-being...etc. These ethical policies are the cornerstone of human well being. Hence, there two concepts: ethics and economics methods are different but the purpose is one. The relation between economics and ethics is discussed by Aristotle and much of what is known as welfare economics or development economics or political economic is originated with the work of philosophers like Bentham, Mill and in more recent times with Adam Smith and Amartya Sen. Economists' secondary concern is human well-being, but Buddhist ethicist's primary concern is human well-being while using the tools of normative analysis to arrive at a moral theory or policy, by taking help of the social state and empirical data provided by economics¹.

Right Livelihood:

Right livelihood is one of the important components of the Noble Eightfold Path. Its importance lies in the fact that the work one does for living influences a person's thinking. The Buddha has named five types of occupations as unwholesome ways of earning a living. They are 1) Selling liquor or being connected with the production and sale of liquor 2) Sale of flesh or being connected with the raising and killing of animals 3) Poison (includes drugs) 4) Trading in living beings (includes slavery or for similar purposes) 5) Dangerous weapons.

In the 'Sigalovada Sutta' (which is also called the layman's code of discipline or gihi vinaya) as the premise for developing the right work ethic for the present century. In one passage of this Sutta, the Buddha

says "One should work like a bee to earn one's livelihood. Do not wait for others to help, nor depend on others foolishly". In the Sigalovada Sutta, the Buddha showed his concern for the material welfare and the spiritual development of his lay disciples. In the discourse to young Sigala, the Buddha explained the full range of duties owed by a layman to all those with whom he interacts. The Buddha also indicated how wealth has to be spent i.e. one portion for one's needs, which includes offerings to monks and charity, two portions on investment and the fourth portion to be kept for an emergency.

Opportunity and Consideration:

The present century witnesses dramatic changes in moral attitudes. Equality seems to be different. The change in attitude to inequality- especially the principle that all humans are equal and seek to apply their principle to particular cases. Another issue requires us to think about the principles of equality as affirmative action. Some philosophers have argued that the principle of equality requires that when allocating jobs, we should favour members of disadvantaged people. Others have contended that the same principle of equality rules out any discrimination on racial grounds, whether for or against the worst-off members of society. When we assert that all human beings are equal hence there is need for an inquiry into the ethical foundation of the principle of equality². As per Buddha and Ambedkar, all human beings are equal irrespective of any race. The plain fact is that humans differ, and the differences apply to so many characteristics of human beings. John Rawls suggests that the property of moral personality is a property that virtually all human beings possess, and all humans who possess their property possess it equally. Rawls maintains that moral personality is the basis of human equality. This view derives from his contract approach to beneficial agreement, example, "Don't hit me and I want hit you"³. This is capable of appreciation, which is not hit; this is within the sphere of ethics. Moral personality is the matter of degree. Some people are highly sensitive to issues of justice and ethics and others have limited awareness of such principles. The moral personality does not provide a satisfactory basis for the principle that all humans are equal. The sense of justice, intelligence, depth of feelings or anything else would entitle us to treat her or him as less than equal. Humans differ as individuals and not as race. Equality is a basic ethical principle⁴, not an assertion of fact. The principles of equality provide us the equal consideration of interests. The essence of the principle of equal consideration of interests is that we give equal weight in our moral deliberation to the like interests of all those affected by our actions. This means that if only A and B would be affected by a possible act, and if A stands to lose more than B stands to gain, it is better not to act⁵.

In most societies, large differences in income and social status are commonly thought to be all-right, as long as they were brought into being under conditions, of equal opportunity. There is no injustice in A earning Rs. 10,000/- and B earning Rs. 5,000/-, as long as B had his chance to be where A is today. The difference in income is due to the fact that A is a professor whereas B is a policeman because their race and school background and result are different. On this view, is a kind of race in which it is fitting that the winners should get the prize, as long as all get an equal start? The equal start represents equality of opportunity and this, some say, is as far as equality should go.

Genuine equality of opportunity requires us to ensure that schools give the same advantages to everyone. Making schools equal would be difficult enough, but it is the easiest of the tasks that await a thorough going proponent of equal opportunity. Equality of opportunity is not an attractive ideal. It rewards the lucky, who inherit those abilities that allow them to pursue interesting and ulceration careers.

Fairness Welfare:

Generally agreed on standards of fairness by which price and wages could be set, there would perhaps not be a problem⁶. Increases and decreases in prices and wages could be managed uniformly and equitably in order to avoid poor, rich, high and low. Full employment would pose no problems and it would be an unmixed blessing. But there is no such agreed standard that's why these debates are taking place everywhere. Socio-economic problems spread over the globe. Hence the debates regarding equality and justice and inequality and injustice are relevant. The concept of fairness in wages and prices has yet another reference point, at least in the minds of consumers and workers. People tend to measure what is fair and what is not fair as per the view on the basis of period and situation. It is very difficult to the businessman to make abrupt, large-scale increase in prices without disrupting markets and losing business in the process. Even if the law of supply and demand indicates that such increases could be made. When a given market has grown accustomed to a particular range of prices, major changes have to be introduced artfully. This is why it is difficult to introduce major changes in the relationships of compensation provided for different jobs. Those who catch up or more ahead as a result of such changes will accept them all right, but others will regard them as unfair. All the members of the society should observe some observation on fairness⁷.

- ✓ Market, centralized planning and continuity with previous custom. Centralized planning does well to respect broad areas of freedom in economic life and making real are of market principles. There is some truth in the view that the market can allocate goods and services rationally in accordance with the actual wishes of buyers and sellers. At the same time the community does well to respect some continuity in the customary structure of the price and relationships – at least up to a point.

- ✓ Governmental income and price policy can set brand parameters within wages; and prices can fluctuate.
- ✓ The government cannot directly determine wages and prices without too great a distortion of market forces; government can itself redistribute wealth more equitably.

In the modern economical society one obvious point of attack on the problem of poverty is to try to ensure that everybody has enough money. The question of what kind of social welfare benefits should be provided by government has vexed societies since the beginning of the industrial revolution. The welfare benefits are too high and that they should represent a social stigma in order to make them less attractive as a substitute for gainful employment. George Gilder states bluntly that there are no such things as a good method of artificial income maintenance⁸. Gilder's belief is that, in order to succeed, the poor wants to come out from the poverty. Charles Murry's view that welfare programme developed to served to increase, not decrease the poverty. Murry argues that welfare program have served as a powerful disincentive to work and that they have undermined, not supported the families of poor people. Demoralized young people have accepted the notion that society is responsible for their plight and that serious educational achievement and work effort are irrelevant to their future. The pattern of welfare benefits often makes it more advantageous for young unemployed to remain unemployed and poor are to stay poor. Murry's views are supported by an impressive array of data drawn from thirty years with poverty, social welfare programs, unemployment, and education.⁹ His conclusion is that social welfare programs should be drastically reduced and de-federalized and that serious educational reform should be undertaken, including development on carefully ensuring that children have the opportunity to participate in educational programs for which they are qualified by virtue of admission examination. Murry advocates the abolition of all affirmative action policies as morally wrong and damaging to the very groups supposed to benefit from there. The amount of welfare money that has actually gone to poor people and payment should evidence stronger family life and work commitments-which they do not. Some societies failed to see the positive families and employment records of countries which much more generous welfare provisions then the other countries like U.S¹⁰ To eradicate poverty or poor the government is providing various benefits or help to the needy people but function of welfare is not up to the expectation and poor are not benefited as the government desires. The administrators are not doing well. Their mind set should change towards global problem challenges and crises. I want to point out that particular segments of the poverty population -such as demoralized the youth mind. Special and highly creative forms of treatment in the minds of agents are highly required and they should be aware of fairness and equality that was explained in Buddhist dhamma. A social policy that place higher priority on the acceptance of people than it does on what can begotten out of them will address the need more directly. Milton Friedman who does not advocate very generous level of support, recognizes that society must meet at least the policy maker who supports some forms of guaranteed minimum income includes.

The basic strategy should be informed by grace and the desire to incorporate all people into the life of the community; it should not be distorted by crude and often misguided- moralizing about poor people. Basic security in the conditions of one's existence is necessary if one is to be able to function in the society. It may be desirable to maintain some relationship between income and work. All members of society can count the basic security, increased income and other material benefits may and developed as added incentives to work.¹¹

Buddhist Ethics and Economical Contributions:

There are three key phrases that underlie the model of Buddhist Ethics and Economics. They are:

- ✓ An economics that benefits oneself and others 2) an economics of tolerance and peace 3) an economics that can save the Human kind.¹²

Benefits Oneself and Others:

Adam Smith is regarded as one of the greatest philosophers as well as economist to developed his theory of free enterprise based on the concept of 'self-benefit'. This led to people being more concerned with enriching themselves and disregarding the interests of others. At the international level, during Adam Smith's day, major colonial powers such as England, Netherlands, France, Portugal and Spain developed their economies from the resources taken from other poorer regions, without an adequate resulting benefit accruing to the colonies.¹³ In contrast, the earlier Buddhist societies such as India during the time of the Buddha or Japan during the time of Prince Shotoku (574 - 622 AD) existed with a radically different social approach for the development of social life and peace in the challenges society where many crises are very much present. In Japanese society where the density of population was high, human relations were tightly interwoven, and Japanese people were encouraged to pay great attention to how other people thought or reacted on the importance of that crises society. In the Japanese world of business, earning the trust of others and entering into mutually beneficial transactions have always been given the best priority. Such conduct was the result of deep-seated Buddhist influence.¹⁴

The Western obsession with 'self-benefit' and indifference to the rights of non-European people has been well analyzed by former Indian diplomat K. M. Panikkar in his ground breaking book '*Asia and Western Domination - A Survey of the Vasco De Gama Epoch of Asian History 1498 - 1945*', published in 1953. Panikkar

says that western colonial powers were reluctant to recognize that doctrines of international law applied outside Europe or that European nations had any moral obligations when dealing with Asian people.¹⁵ For example, when Britain insisted on the opium trade against the laws of China in the 19th Century, there was a prohibition by law on opium smoking in England. In countries under direct British occupation (examples - India, Ceylon and Burma,) though there were equal rights established by law, which we call Buddhist Dhamma, there was considerable reservation in enforcing the law against Europeans.¹⁶ Maurice Collis, a British magistrate in Burma, gives a rare candid account in his book *'Trials in Burma'* (1938) about the pressures brought upon him by the members of the Colonial Government and the British expatriate community, to be partial towards Europeans in his judgments. Panikkar avers that this doctrine of different rights (which made a mockery of the concept of the Rule of Law) persisted to the very end of western colonial domination and was a prime cause of Europe's ultimate failure in Asia.¹⁷

Tolerance and Peace:

The Indian Emperor Asoka established the world's first welfare state in the third century BC upon embracing Buddhism. He renounced the idea of conquest by the sword. In contrast to the western concept of 'Rule of Law', Asoka embarked upon a 'policy of piety or rule of righteousness'. The basic assumption of this policy of piety was that the ruler who serves as a moral model would be more effective than one who rules purely by strict law enforcement.¹⁸ The right method of governing is not only by legislation and law enforcement, but also by promoting the moral education of the people as the Buddhist eightfold path suggests. Asoka began by issuing edicts concerning the ideas and practices of dharma, dealing with universal law and social order. Realizing that poverty eroded the social fabric, one of his first acts was to fund social welfare and other public projects. Asoka's ideals involved promoting policies for the benefit of everyone in society, treating all his subjects as if they were his children and protecting religion what I means to say is that the right path. He built hospitals, animal welfare shelters and enforced a ban on owning slaves and killing. He gave recognition to animal rights in a number of his rock edicts and accepted state responsibility for the protection of animals. Animal sacrifice was forbidden by law.¹⁹

An important aspect of Asoka's economics of peace was tolerance. In one of his rock edicts, Asoka calls for religious freedom and tolerance, and declares that by respecting someone else's religion, one brings credit to one's own religion.²⁰ I would like to say that the idea of religious tolerance emerged only in the West in 1689 with the publication of John Locke's book *'A Letter Concerning Toleration'*. In Buddhist perspective, politics can be summed up by the Sanskrit word *4 cakravartin* '(the wheel turner), which means a king or political ruler who protects his people and the Buddhist teachings. Asoka was the prototype of this ruler whose political ideas were to inspire a countless number of other Asian Emperors and rulers. One enthusiastic follower of Asoka in Japan was Prince Shotoku (574-622 AD),²¹ an ardent believer in Buddhism. Shotoku appeals neither to self-evident truths nor to some divine right of kings as the basis of law. Instead he begins pragmatically by stating that if society is to work efficiently for the good of all, then people must restrain factionalism and learn to work together. Buddha emphasizes this and placed on resolving differences by appeals to harmony and common good.²²

Saving Human Beings from the Crises:

There is need to criticize the practice of industrial societies indulging in a policy of take-and-take from nature of the society, despite economics being fundamentally about exchange or give-and-take. We can identify a passage in the Bible (Genesis 1: 27 - 28) as a possible root cause of the western attitude towards nature. This passage declares: "So God created man in his own image, in the image created by him, male and female created he them. And God blessed them, and God said unto them, "Be fruitful and multiply, and replenish the earth and subdue it, and have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that moved upon the earth".²³ Some have interpreted this passage literally, as one giving divine sanction to domination of the nature of the society for the benefit of only human beings and disregarding the interests of both plants and other living creatures of this world.²⁴ In contrast, Buddhist sacred texts are much more humble and always emphasize the need to live in harmony with nature and peacefully co-exist with other living creatures, as the ideal and noble way. In the Buddhist worldview, humans rather being masters of this earth, simply make up one tiny element in a vast cosmos. In the Buddhist Economics that which proposes, the earth rather than human beings will be placed at the center of our worldview as the Buddhist Nirvana.²⁵

We have to understand the place of Buddhist ethics in economic life. Ethics is often presented and understood too narrowly. Majority of the people think of ethics only as a faintly distasteful catalog of do's and don'ts. It is certainly true that every society has moral rules to govern behavior, and the analysis of such standards is part of the work of ethics.²⁶ Ethics is finally based on conceptions of good and what is required to actualize good in human existence. Ethics can help us understand the good and clarify the things that can be done in the real world to enhance the possibilities. Ethics is concerned about ends and means to ends. Ethics can also help us to see the relationship between the ultimate sources of good. Economical life involves a host of such lesser goods. Ethics can best serve economics by clarifying how these economic values are related to the ultimate good.²⁷

There is philosophical distinction between intrinsic and instrumental values. An intrinsic value is something that is good in and for itself. It requires no further justification. An instrumental value is something that is good because it contributes to the fulfillment of an intrinsic value. It is an instrument helping us to gain something that is simply good in itself.²⁸ Friendship is an intrinsic value. Friends help each other in an instrumental way, but a real friendship is not primarily to be used, it is something to be enjoyed and appreciated in and of itself. Food, clothing, shelter, transportation, medicine and many other things are mostly useful because they help us to gain other things namely, education, employment and other security things. Not that instrumental value is unimportant. Some intrinsic goods simply cannot be gained without the right instrument. Instrumental values can be absolutely vital to the realization of intrinsic values, so they are to be taken seriously. But they are means to ends, not ends in themselves.²⁹

Moral life is radically personal, for it does have to do with our basic attitudes and decisions and the actions we choose to take or not to take. Moral life almost enters in terms of the development of character, the cultivation of virtues growth as a moral being mean well-being. Moral life is also profoundly social, both in the origin and cultivation of moral values themselves and in the actions, policies, and institutions developed to realize them.³⁰ Moral individuals that means who manifest all the traditional virtues of character, Right livelihood, and loving disposition can act socially in such a way that evil triumphs and injustice prevails. In the economic life it is a fact that everybody is involved in the moral life in judging and deciding and acting. Ethics can help clarify the factual dimensions of economic life. But ethical and economical life needs to be humbler about their contributions. Both are servants, not masters, of the process.³¹

In the modern trend, we can all agree that economic life is very important as well as ethical life. Much economic life is concerned about intangible goods that can, however, be limited either naturally or artificially. Economic goods also include service rendered. The most abundant goods can become economic under some circumstance, with substantial efforts being required to ensure that the quantity and quality continue to be adequate to supply the wants of people.³² The work of sales persons, and a host of others are not tangible objects, but they are goods in limited supply and sought by others. Both production and distribution are included in the definition of economic life. The process are making, developing, distributing goods and services, the system of allocating those goods and services. The fact that goods and service are scarce means that some way has to be found to decide who gets what. The whole intricate design of monetary exchange, accompanied by no small amount of conflict and controversy, has evolved as central economic life. These are the most rudimentary things that can be said about economic life. Goods and services without which we would perish, along with most of the other things needed to enrich and ennoble –as well as degrade humanity.³³ Much of life still must revolve around what to do with and about economic goods and services. Economic is too important to the human enterprise to leave in the hands of economists alone. Plainly speaking economists have a very significant contribution to make human life rich and prosperous.

Problems and Solutions:

For any discipline there should be a problem either economical problems or ethical problems doesn't matter. Where there is a problem there is a solution also. The problem-solving approach is especially important in the economic background of the countries. One stands with the problems at hand and addresses it with an eye toward actually solving it. I do not wish to denigrate economic pragmatism. The world could surely stand more of it as it wrestles with truly overwhelming problems. My society is in poverty that is a problem for me because I value the society and want to preserve it. To solve poverty we try to do several things to solve the problem. Find out the cause of the poverty; understand the relation between public and administrator. Identify the poor and rich.³⁴ Try to know the equality among the poor and rich or distribution of help. Justify the performance of the administrator, show the right direction to program well in economical and socially. Give the equal opportunity to all as the fundamental right of human being. Bring the issue into administrator notice. Teaching them to solve equally all. Etc are the fundamental ethical teaching of Buddhism. True enough, we agree that these and many such problems involve commonly accepted values, and the step from this to economic problems of all kinds should be fairly obvious. But what is a problem to one person may not be a problem to somebody else. Indeed, one person's problem may even be somebody else's solution. Such an opposition of problems and solution is not characteristic of every human situation.³⁵ Sometimes communities recognize common problems and address them in a united way. Economic life is not reducible to a series of problems that are experienced in common by all of us and that can be solved if we only bend our common will and creative intelligence to the task. A great deal depends on how we define our problems in value terms, not just factual or technical terms.

Human Well-Being:

Justice, equality and fairness are the applied issues of morality we people are arguing socio-economical and political questioning frequently appeals are made to justice, equality and fairness. As per Buddhist principles for examples, wages, prices, policies, difference poor and rich. If we do not know what just and fair means we would not know what would settle in the crisis society. Then we are unable to sort out the moral

problems of the society then it is very difficult to speak about ethics and economics. As Sen said we are trying to do well by knowing these concepts and applying in our daily life.

Utilitarian theory gave a rule the greatest happiness for the greatest number to arrive at justice, counting each person's happiness equally. Sorry to informed that utilitarian neglected to develop the concept of justice while developing their moral theory. But Kant made the foundation of his moral theory. Injustice can never be morally justified in any moral theory. Justice according to Kant demands that each person enjoy the fullest possible liberty compatible with a like liberty for all. One can never interfere with individual liberty. The value gives human beings dignity.

The concept of justice is inseparable from equality and it is a widespread belief that justice and self-interest can and do conflict. Plato said that justice is rendering everyone his due. Aristotle made a distinction between distributive justice and retributive justice. Retributive justice consists in fixing of penalties and rewards for bad and good action and opposites between the possible recipients. John Rawls said that everybody has equal right to the basic liberties unless and unequal distribution of any social value is to the advantage of everyone. The social justice treating similar similarly and dissimilar dissimilarly also is based on the foundation of equality. Different treatment and unequal distributive is very much needed for justice. Example, in a society with different individuals, different performance, different needs, giving a car to everyone would neither be equal treatment nor justice. Some inequalities are built in the concept of justice Rawls does just different principle; examples: criminals have to treat differently, reservation policy people are treated differently, but only for the sake of providing justice. Let us specifically discuss on issue related concept of justice and equality basically from moral philosophers point of view.³⁶ As per Kant view man alone was a creative of rational moral choice and found special dignity. On the other hand hedonistic utilitarianism of Bentham too much relied upon the notion of "Happiness" as the ultimate ground of morality and it potentially leads to injustice. Utilitarian assumed that morality should be based on actual desires of human beings which should be stopped as per Buddhist. Kant's moral vision like John Rawls who takes justice as fairness and develop welfare state. Kant said that justice is the cornerstone of human dignity and self-respect. Yet the policy of justice is very much different.

Conclusion:

John Rawls said social arrangement and fair agreement are justice. And Rawls agree that each person have to have an equal right to the most extensive basic liberty compatible with similar liberties for others. Social and economic inequalities can be arranged so that they are both the reasonably expected to be everyone's advantage, and attached to position and officer open to all. In order to accept and apply these then there will be chance to establish the global peace. Though much of the postulates, we have been developed in a Buddhist context, the contents of this article nevertheless provide food for thought to anyone wishing to adopt an innovative approach to ethics and economics.³⁷ However the greatest appeal of this highly readable articles lies in the elaborate development of Schumacher's profound insight that there is another way of approaching economics, based on the ideas taught in the East 2500 years ago, particularly of the fundamental interconnectedness of people and nature. It is upon this premise that the world can shift from a throw-away culture to a more sustainable civilization. This work also throws a challenge to meet the present crises to governments in Buddhist countries to develop a Buddhist economic vision as a part of national planning, as we move towards a new millennium.

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