



THE WAY TO HAPPINESS

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Abstract

The article aims to reflect the mindsets that open to the world of learning through the Buddhist pathway that helps sustain social peace by introducing the Samma Sika learning process in Thai society. It enables learners to develop the right views in proceeding virtuous life and encounter any conflict problems in this assumed world with mindfulness, tolerance, and appreciation of inner peace. The authors proposed the five golden rules as the ladder of learning and the goal of peace education: (1) observing the Five Precepts with three principles of supplementation, encouragement, and accentuation; (2) learning to be a provider by instillation on giving and sharing, the use of speech, doing benefit, and avoiding overbearing; (3) learning to nurturing the breath of love, i.e. love oneself and share the love to others by means of vipassana bhavana and chanting; (4) modifying life toward sufficiency; and (5) learning to let go and forgive.

Keywords: Peace, Happiness

Introduction

Peace according to the Buddhism, a golden phrase given by the Phra Brahmagunabhorn (P.A.Payutto, 1995, p.4) in the book “Education for Peace” The words were raised here as the starting point to encourage readers to think along: What is the true meaning of education?, In what way does it involve with the world peace building?, and Whether or not has education in Thai society today actually achieved its goal? According to Buddhadasa (2006, p.14), the



word “education” was defined as “something that provides progresses in the proper way so that human can achieve at best in every single step of their own development”, with its extended implication that progresses in the proper way means the knowledge offering only advantages over disadvantages for human to acquire best gains. The word “best” relies on one’s own wisdom to gradually learn what is best in life until one could penetrate the best of Buddhism, that is, no birth, no death. To reach this point, human requires evolution through learning from birth to death. As an ideologist in the Western world, Jean Jacques Rousseau defined education as developing a person to fit a changing opportunity and changing environment, to make use of a person’s capability. Similarly, John Friedrich Herbart referred to education as making a citizen whose conduct is good and his habits are fine. According to John Dewey, education is not a preparation for life, it is growth, it is a social process, it brings experience to life (Voranch Toontakij. 2016).

It can be seen that true education for a wise man is not an education for a livelihood or for one’s interests regardless of damage of others or environment, but true education is intended to develop a human being to learn and live the life that grows with merits in both the knowledge and conduct, as a well-informed person who creates for the world benefits and conducts virtues as human, i.e. the noble-minded.

However, it is found in education today that despite higher level of education and increased literacy rate as a result of compulsory education, it fails to lead people in our society to experience happiness or peace of mind. As the Buddhadasa (2006, pp.2-5), put it, “the more learning, the more ignorance; the more learning, the more uncomprehending; the more learning, the more drug addicting; the more learning, the more lusting; the more learning, the more disrespect to learning institutions as benefactor; the more learning, the more disrespect to sacred institutions; the more learning, the more allurements; and the more learning, the more mistaking the wrong for right”. These statements reflect the fact of violence problems in Thai society such as adolescent drug abuse, increased rates of divorce, unstable family institution due to less recognition of filial piety, use of alcohol that pose health hazard and social difficulties, environmental degradation, polluted environment, etc. It may be that education in the present day is seemed not directed toward its real purposes, rather, it serves the greed and desire that induces exploitation and acquired legitimation for one’s self or group-interests. Such desire, conceit, and dogma have led human to play a range of undesirable roles which result in the lack of

peace, and hence the word of peace or the state of peace in Thai society became more obscure.

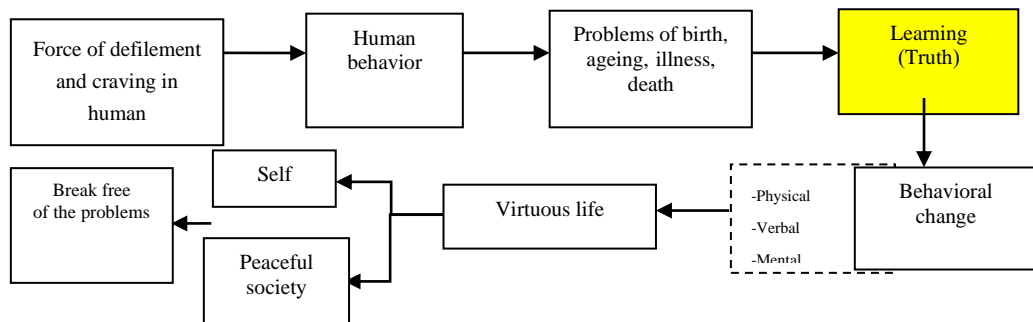
The authors put it in this way because we agree to the Venerable Phra Phra Brahmaganabhorn (P.A.Payutto, 1995, p.4) in that peace is not merely the absence of wars or hostilities or fights as in general meaning, but the word “peace” derived from a combination of 2 Pali words, “santi (peace)” and “pava (“state” in Thai language). Taken together, santipap means a state of peace referring to tranquility, a synonym for nirvana, as in the Buddha’s words Peace is the highest bliss, and Nirvana is the ultimate happiness; peace is nirvana. Therefore, peace in the Buddhism sense is to attain nirvana. If the society understands peace in this point, the society will be without oppression. It will become a desirable society, a society with genuine peace because people attain a peace of mind and a call for human rights is unnecessary as its members learn to respect and wish well toward one another. It might be seen as an idealistic society out of reach if in deprivation of effective vehicle. This vehicle is known in the practice of Buddhism as Sikkha which refers to study, perception, disciplines, a set of training in 3 aspects including 1) adhisila-sikkha: training in higher morality; 2) ashicitta-sikkha: training in higher mentality; and 3) adhipanna-sikkha: training in higher wisdom, which are all named as the threefold training. Sikkha is meant for living a virtuous life by observing the Noble Eightfold Path. According to the Buddha’s words “The Noble Eightfold Path as virtuous to discard boredom, lust, to extinct, to attain tranquility, highest knowledge, enlightenment, and nirvana, all incorporated into the threefold training (MA.168/159) which comprises sila including samma-vaca (right speech), samma-kammanta (right action) , samma-ajiva (right livelihood) , samadhi including samma-vayama (right effort), samma-sati (right mindfulness), samma-samadhi (right concentration), and panya including samma-dhitti (right view), samma-sankappa (right intention) (M. (Thai version)12/462/502-503).

For all of the eight principles of conduct, samma-dhitti or the right view is at the heart as the starting point of the learning process in Buddhism. In Samma-dhitti Sutta, the Venerable Sariputta instructed that) A thorough understanding of unwholesome which include taking life, stealing, sexual misconduct, false speech, divisive speech, abusive speech, idle speech, the desire to have other’s belongings, and hatred. Mittha-dhitti is unwholesome with its root causes arising from lobha (greed), dosa (enmity) , moha (delusion). 2) A thorough understanding of wholesome including abstaining from taking life, from



stealing, from sexual misconduct, abstaining from false speech, from divisive speech, from abusive speech, from idle speech, from the desire to have other's belongings, from hatred. Samma-dhitti is wholesome with the root causes arising from aloba (non-greed), adosa (non-enmity), amoha (non-delusion). A person who possess such reflection is the one with samma-dhitti or the right view as a mean to attain nirvana. Based on this teaching, it can be understood that individuals with the right view live their life with no intention to exploit, harm, but respect others, and even become less selfish to the extent of being selfless with the mind free from greed, hatred, and delusion. It enables human being to proceed gradually in attaining this state. Samma-dhitti in Buddhism has 2 types. Lokiya samma-dhitti involves the teaching while in the state of existence and ego, what human beings should hold is making merits and charity, parents as benefactor, this life-next life, merit and demerit, hell and heaven, etc. Lokuttara amma-dhitti denotes the knowledge to recognize suffering, the origination of suffering, the cessation of suffering, and the way leading to cessation of suffering. Buddhadasa, 2006, p.131). Basically, lokiya samma-dhitti is considered the entry or the first step to sustain favorable world by accumulating merits for oneself and extending love to others, while abandoning all those factitious things to free oneself from suffering.

The concept of learning following the Buddha's way takes on the perception based on the birth of human beings as suffering in addition to their encounter with ageing, illness and death which are fundamental to all. Learning in Buddhism thus begins with how they can break free of these problems, learn about the problems from truth, and how to live one's life as a human being. Based on the Buddha's teaching, defilement, craving, and attachment within oneself are believed to dictate a human being as good or bad. However, human beings are capable of learning and empowering themselves to transcend these things, and hence lead themselves a virtuous life. They can even escape from the dominance of defilement stream of either the inner self or the outer world and environment to seek an autonomous life, and escape from all sufferings as well.



A chart presenting the aim of learning by Buddhist principles
(Khantong Wattanapradith, , 2013).pp.69)

As the chart suggests, the learning in Buddhism defines a clear aim of developing human beings to attain virtuous life, as reflected by good physical, verbal and mental behaviors to refine the inner defilements and craving within oneself. It not only leads the way to happiness independent of external factors but also encourages positive interaction within a society that brings about peacefulness. The real purpose of learning is not merely to establish behavioral changes (somewhat permanent), rather, it ultimately aims to equip a human being with acquired wisdom of learning not to oppress or harm oneself or others. It is a spiritual development as an intellectual who can free oneself from the domination of the global stream of defilement toward the virtuous and happy life for the benefit of oneself and society or environment. It corresponds to the Buddha's intention of Buddhism propagation for the benefit, for the support, for the happiness of people at large, for the patronage and perfection of the humankind on earth. It hence affirms that Buddhism is an education for peace. To guide those interested people in the management of learning in their educational institutions, the authors introduced the following five golden rules as a ladder of learning for peace that should be studied and practiced by both the teachers and learners.

The Five golden Rules as the Ladder of Learning for Peace

The Buddha's teaching as a principle for practice was embedded in the Patimokkha (principle teaching), saying "Not performing evil, doing all kinds of kusala, purification of one's citta", this is the teaching of the Buddha. "Forbearing patience is the highest ascetism, nirvana is supreme", the Buddha



say. “He, verily, is not a recluse who harms another nor is he an ascetic who oppresses others, not insulting, not harming, restraint according to the patimokkha, knowing moderation of food, a secluded dwelling, endeavor as to higher consciousness”, this is the teaching of the Buddha. This teaching covers the matters needed to be learned and studied by human beings so as to bring themselves toward peacefulness. The authors adopted the Buddha’s teaching based on our wisdom and teaching experiences, introduced and shared ideas as a guideline for study that enable learner’s development and appreciation of genuine peace of mind. What follows is called the 5 golden rules as a ladder of learning for peace.

The five Precepts and the Observation

This is a universal rules fundamental to the proper conducts that keep human society in happiness. In the Buddhism sense, they provide minimum standard rules of conduct for human (Phra Brahmaganabhorn (P.A.Payutto, 1995, p.772), as rules to be practiced by those devout layman and laywoman. The Five Precepts instructed by the Buddha focus on abstaining from oppression but empathizing toward one another. In the authors’ perspective, for a society to attain true peace, the first picture visible is the absence of oppression, insulting, harming among its members. If each of them basically observes the five precepts, the society in which they live will be able to approach peace and order. Instructed in the Patimokkha as a rule for practice, one should abandon akusala or all evils. Accordingly, one should primarily avoid the oppression, an element included in the first four Precepts, that is, performing no harm to the life, asset, belongings of others, and abstaining from false speech. It also includes abstaining from oppression on oneself by avoiding alcohol as a cause of self-destruction and carelessness. The chaos appeared in our society makes it become even far from peace as days go by is partly due to our failure to observe the five precepts. As a result, people in the society are in suspicion and distrust of one another. Particularly with respect to the fourth precept, it is possible that lying became the cause of undermined good relationship between couples, friends, and colleagues. However, some might argue that for certain matter the truth might as well lead to a conflict. So, it requires individual’s wit to negotiate. The authors however believe in the Buddha’s teaching to mainly consider the intent.

In addition to abstaining from false speech, the Patimokkha also pointed out not to insult verbally. This is important because it appears in Thai society today that a number of created discourses can be deemed dark discourses of mitcha-dhitti, despite their polite statements, they envelope a weapon ready to poke at each other, like a sword under the monk robe. Accordingly with cleavages in Thai society, people reject to tolerate others. To apply the five precepts in management of the learning process, the practice of Buddhist principles by observing at the extent of the Five Precepts requires faith as a key component that provides support as an anchor for people to embrace and to resist any allurements, hence preventing them from doing evils (Phra Brahmagunabhorn (P.A.Payutto, 1995, p.649). Faith in here means faith in cause-effect, a belief in the law of karma with basic understanding and realizing the reason that for any conduct, its effect attributes to its cause. In this respect, teachers or those concerned are required to carry on the supplementation, encouragement, and accentuation. To elaborate, supplementation is to provide knowledge and take on the Buddha's teaching to show its significance and the aim of being born as human, that is, to create but not to destroy; to abandon but not to take. Encouragement is to assure, empower, and show that observing the Five Precepts is not for beyond to reach and can begin any day and at any time. Accentuation is to repeatedly emphasize on the aim of life and appreciation of peace, ways to reach that point by self-training to abstain all oppressions, and to create class atmosphere to nurture noble individuals who determine to develop themselves as perfect noble-minded human beings by observing the Five Precepts.

Learning about Giving to be the Givers

Although the five Precepts provide the bedrock for the attainment of peace and order in the society, it is not sufficient to sustain the power of peace, like an oasis in the desert where water is deprived. Being a provider encourages and enhances the spirit of both the giver and the receiver. Giving is not only in the form of external asset, but one needs to learn to give pleasant speech and kindly speech that indicate respect toward others. One also has to learn to do a favor for others such as social contribution. Finally, one needs to behave decently with equal treatment, behave in a cordially or friendly manner. All of the above is contained in the four Sangkahavattu (the principles of service and social integration), a universal rules fundamental to the conduct for the well-being of social integration. It is the principle of how to govern one's heart, to



embrace the heart of one another, and to be loved. It is also considered a principle of social welfare. It creates bonds and holds together the hearts of members in the society for its unity and that they live together with love and well-wishes. The four Sangkahavattu is important in that it contributes to peace building and peaceful society. There is a story of Hataka Ubasaka of Arlawi town who has a large number of followers and is well-beloved by everyone because he supports others based on the four sangkahavattu. The story provides the lesson learned for instruction in various aspects. Instillation of giving and sharing requires the giver to consider if the receiver wants what is given and if it is useful for the receiver, that is, giving should be made intellectually not randomly. Instillation of the use of speech is to establish a culture of using word of kindness, politeness, respect, and usefulness instead of words of ill-wish (despite politeness). It should also take into account whether the listener wants to hear it or not. Instillation of doing benefits is to discourage inconsideration but encourage offering help for the work at hand with generosity. This can be trained and fulfilled in the peace class. Instillation of avoiding overbearing is to create the atmosphere in class where there is only us but not them and everyone is treated equally. It recalls the past when learning had taken place in the temple, a great wisdom of our ancestor to keep us in the same cast as temple boys that allows for learning a pure relationship. It is important to note that teachers have to avoid paying attention to only learners who benefit them. Learners are to be treated fairly. This reflects the atmosphere to be absorbed by learners and in turn promotes their confidence and power to do benefaction collectively.

Nurturing the Breath of Loving

Learners learn to be self-aware and love themselves so they can share love to others. To teach learners to be self-aware, Buddhism offers a tool called **Vipassana Bhavana** which involves the learning of inner world, refining and training one's mind, cutting off mental engine for discomposure and anxiousness, and bring one's mind into tranquility. MCU encourages students to attend a Vipassana Meditation class for 30 days and 45 days respectively in the master and doctoral programs as a requirement prior to graduation. It benefits students as it keeps them on the right track to complete their study. It is also possible to introduce Vipassana Bhavana as a class culture by arranging time for students to train to control their mind to concentrate on something. Buddhism employed breath as a fundamental tool as it is available at no cost and the training can take place at any place and any time. Breath is particularly important. Our society today is in hectic situation because we each breathe out with flame and selfishness. Training to breathe out with happiness will help sustain the breath of society and of this world to become a better place to live.

Cool breath keeps us cool in mind to the extent that we want to share it with others. Chanting is another way to focus ourselves to the chanting verses, while in control of vocalizing, contemplating the chanting verses, and extending loving kindness to all after finishing the chanting. It is a tool for our mind to learn to share good things as Kusala to others, following the principle of Ovathapatimok on purification of one's citta. It is thus to transfer or transform the mind. This matter is confirmed in a reliable scientific investigation by Dr. Masaru Emoto, a Japanese modern physician who carried out a research on the crystals of water and wrote a book on his research entitled *Hidden Messages in Water*. He discovered that human mind and environment effect crystal formation of water since human is composed of 70% water. He used a very powerful microscope with high-speed photography to take photos of crystal formation in a room with very low temperature. He collected water from different sources and test them with detailed procedures. In addition to comparing the quality of water from different sources, he also found that water from praying or blessing water formed the most beautiful crystal. Water presented with pleasant written words or spoken words formed more beautiful crystal than water presented with negative or strong words (Myamoto Dewey - Reiko, [Online], 2013).

It can be seen that human thought not only influence their own body but also the environment and people surrounding them. Training to think and act positively towards surrounding people would allow them would sense it, and people can live a happy life in this world. Teacher should also focus on this aspect of development to create the culture of the class of love.

Life and Modifying for Sufficiency

Once the learning offers the understanding and reflects reality to learners, this step provides another aspect of training, that is, changing behavior based on the understanding of the world, seeing the world in reality, and developing the consciousness to change behavior to become an individual with clean body, clean mind, and clean speech. In this aspect, the authors added self-conduct toward the environment, awareness of the value of things, asset, and utensils. Learners learn to pay attention to the use, care, and the value of things since the world resources have now become insufficient because of the endless demand of human and not unlimited search for them. It is thus the duty of teachers and those concerned to establish the culture of sufficiency. It can begin with knowing one's consumption, excessive consumption, as suggested in the Patimokkha that knowing moderation of food, a secluded dwelling. Training the



consciousness in class and the worthily consumption of food may include drinking up bottled water or using a container instead of a plastic bottle, using recycle papers, for example. Other trainings involve slowing down activities such as chewing food, consuming what is benefit not harmful to health, adhering to study, research and learning, recognizing an endeavor to seek to know what is unknown rather than being academically negligent or plagiarizing or claiming the work of others. For this issue, the authors focus on educational institution and teachers who need to occasionally stress and warn learners while at the same time pay attention and support learners at the best of their ability. Teachers and students will learn to listen and share. Particularly, teachers have to create a culture of listening, listening with heart, listening with loving-kindness, so that the loving-kindness space is enlarged for all, creativity grows beautifully in the learning with a sense of self-esteem.

The Forgiveness and Learning to Let It Go

When development and learning reach the last step of the ladder, what is most important is to relax one's heart, learn to let go or Upekkha Bhavana (equanimity) as the heart of true peace. This is to appreciate forgiveness, accept the possible mistake of oneself and others, give an opportunity, give love and well-wish without expectation as it can causes suffering. Training to focus on the other being there at the moment is more important than the thought about the other in the past that will cause mentally bias and reject to act well due to being previously insulted or hurt by the other. One should thus train to do well or kusala and something useful without expecting reciprocation. Reciprocation is the word the authors learned from Hansa Dhammhaso. In working if we can let go and be happy and forgive the other for what have been done to us, and treat the other well too, the conflict problem will not escalate to blow up and destroy the relationship. On the contrary, this will become the ladder that leads the learner to access the world of peace by oneself or become self-dependent. In this way, the world will experience true peace and sustainment. As instructed by the Buddha "santimeva so sikkheyya -to train oneself in tranquility, the learning and development to attain peace occurs within oneself, to keep oneself in tranquility, to abandon desire and adherence, and to struggle to discard one's adherence (Phra Dhammapitaka (P.A.Payutto), p29).

For the authors, adherence to one's own merits obstructs oneself to acquire tranquility since one is obsessed with what is good and what benefits the country. Abandoning what is adhered will calm one from flame and bring peace

of mind. This will support, empower and secure the desirable good deeds, and thus peace manifests.

Conclusions

The above five rules were transcribed by the authors from the experiences through the learning and teaching in peace studies program at MCU University. For the authors, the culture being stressed includes “mindfulness, tolerance, and peace” as the golden phrase of this program. The word peace is the aim that enables students to access the knowledge and the truth of life. However, the steps along the pathway for practice will never be achieved if in absence of mindfulness or seeing through what is happening in reality. To have tolerance is to learn to stay suppressed which will penetrate in the training to reach peace or tranquility. Tranquility, mindfulness, and tolerance will reinforce each step of learning the inner peace to move and grow strongly which requires perseverance to attain it. It is the perseverance to be patient, suppressed, and to fight against the sound unwanted to hear, the thing unwanted to see, perceive, and touch. It is the perseverance to stay mindful, conscious, and aware of the inner sense and mind which will restrain or break one’s thought, action, and speech that is harmful to others. Mindfulness and tolerance are important tools to support each of the 5 steps along the ladder toward the pathway of peace. It is through this learning that peace occurs instantly. The key factor considered indispensable are those good companies in educational sphere, i.e. teachers and instructors who would support learners to acquire the learning which can be extended on their own wisdom. As viewed by the author, good companionship of teachers involves more details to be discussed, it is thus omitted in here. The authors however believe that it is possible for this article to be shared among readers, students, teachers or individuals concerned or even parents to guide in growing tree of peace in everywhere and every society. Certainly, when every sector works together to pave this pathway of learning, then peace can be assured in society.



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