



Addressing Gender Bias, Cultivating Harmony, and Tackling Economic Crisis through Buddhist Philosophy

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ABSTRACT

This paper delves into the profound insights provided by Buddhism, centering on the theme "Addressing Gender Bias, Cultivating Harmony, and Tackling Economic Challenges Through Buddhist Philosophy." The abstract navigates the convergence of Buddhist principles with contemporary societal concerns, with a primary focus on three pivotal dimensions: addressing gender bias, fostering harmony, and confronting economic challenges.

Embedded in the wisdom of Buddhism, the exploration delves into the tenets of compassion and justice as potent tools against gender bias. It underscores the importance of embracing and respecting all individuals as part of creating an inclusive and equitable society. Additionally, the paper explores the cultivation of harmony and the navigation of intricate economic crises through the lens of compassion, loving-kindness, and understanding. The proposal advocates for daily practices fostering healthy relationships and cultivating a harmonious coexistence between individuals, families, schools and within society. I will be providing a comprehensive perspective on instigating positive change and building resilience in the face of multifaceted challenges in modern world.

Keywords: Addressing Gender Bias, Cultivating Harmony, Tackling Economic Crisis and Buddhist Philosophy

Introduction

Buddhism, with its profound teachings and timeless wisdom, offers valuable insights into addressing some of the most pressing issues of our time. In an era marked by gender discrimination, social disharmony, and economic crises, the principles of Buddhism can provide a beacon of hope and a path towards meaningful solutions. Gender bias persists as a long rooted problem in many societies, affecting the lives and opportunities of countless individuals. At the same time, social divisions and conflicts threaten the peace and unity of communities worldwide. Moreover, economic crises can lead to widespread hardship and inequality, leaving vulnerable populations in precarious situations. This exploration delves into the application of Buddhist tenets to these contemporary challenges. Buddhism, with its emphasis on compassion, mindfulness, and inner transformation, offers profound insights into addressing gender discrimination, fostering social harmony, and overcoming economic crises. By drawing on Buddhist principles, we can illuminate a path towards a more equitable, harmonious, and peace world. In this article, endeavors to harness the profound teachings of Buddhism as a means to address gender bias, foster social unity, and navigate economic turbulence. Through an in-depth exploration of Buddhist principles and their applicability to contemporary challenges, we aspire to ignite a broader conversation about the transformative potential of ancient wisdom in steering us towards a more enlightened and harmonious future. This study aims to illuminate the practical ways in which the timeless insights of Buddhism can be leveraged to create positive change, promote social cohesion, and offer valuable guidance in the turbulent seas of our modern realities.

Addressing: means dealing with, or confronting a difficult issue. It needs to resolve the matter at hand.

Gender Bias: Denotes the unequal treatment, prejudice, or discrimination based on an individual's gender, which often results in disparities in opportunities, rights, and social roles between genders.

Cultivating Harmony: means a sense of oneness among individuals, communities, or societies, emphasizing cooperation and mutual unity.

Tackling: Implies addressing or dealing with a particular issue or challenge in a proactive and constructive manner.

Economic Crisis: Signifies a period of financial and economic turmoil characterized by economic recession, instability, or challenges, such as unemployment, or financial market disruptions.

Buddhist Philosophy: refers to the principles, teachings, and practices that form the foundation of Buddhism. It encompasses a worldview rooted in concepts such as compassion, mindfulness, and interconnectedness

1. Buddhist Philosophy Contemplation on Gender Bias.

1.1. Definition Gender Bias

Gender bias is a cognitive predisposition to favor one gender over another, typically stemming from unconscious or implicit biases. It involves the automatic assignment of certain attitudes, stereotypes, and judgments to individuals or groups based on their gender. Gender bias often leads to the unfair or unequal treatment of individuals, with a particular focus on women and poor classes etc.,

1.2. Some concepts of gender bias

Actual gender bias in Indian society today is often expressed through many trends in society. These biases manifest in various forms, affecting individuals of all genders and can be influenced by cultural practices, regional or religious differences, and societal perspectives. Gender bias perpetuates unequal power dynamics and reinforces discriminatory behaviors lead to instability in family, school, and society etc.,

1.3. Objects of Gender Bias

Gender bias in India can affect various individuals and groups across different aspects of life. Here are some of the key objects or targets of gender bias in India:

Women: Women in India often face gender bias and discrimination in various forms, including unequal access to education, limited career opportunities, lower wages for the same work, and restricted decision-making power, especially in rural areas.

Men: While women are often the focus of discussions about gender stereotypes, men in India can also encounter caste gender stereotypes such as Dalits, unemployed men, caste low, poor, uneducated. They have been conditioned by traditional concepts. It's very difficult to escape. **Dalits and Other Marginalized Communities:** Gender bias intersects with caste and class bias, affecting Dalit women and marginalized communities disproportionately. They may face discrimination and violence based on both gender and caste.

In the ancient kingdom of Kosala, there was a wise, compassionate and just king named Pasenadi. Wanting to have good relations between the two countries of Kosala and Kapilavastu through marriage, the king asked to marry the princess of Kapilavastu. But sadly, the Shakyamuni clan changed the marriage, choosing a very beautiful and graceful maid to replace the princess. But the king did not know anything until the two gave birth to a second child named Vidudabha. When the child grew up, he asked the King and Queen for permission to visit his mother's hometown, the Queen refused many times. But this time, she knew she couldn't stop him, so she allowed him to visit his hometown. With a large entourage and much fanfare, Vidudabha started his journey to Kapilavastu. He expected a warm welcome and generous gifts from his maternal relatives. However, when he reached Kapilavastu, he encountered a surprising truth. The Sakiyan princes, who were his cousins, wanted to stay away, none of them paid him any respect.

Despite this initial disappointment, the Sakiyas welcomed Vidudabha with hospitality and respect. He was treated to lavish parties, cultural performances and the most luxurious accommodations. However, on the day he had left, a member of his entourage overheard a comment criticizing Crown Prince Vidudabha for being the son of a servant. When he learned of this insult, he felt extremely hurt and hatred. His heart was filled with anger and he vowed to seek revenge on the Sakiyan clan.

When he returned to Kosala, Vidudabha questioned his father, King Pasenadi, who was also very angry. Stripping the queen and crown prince of their titles. But it was later restored. Tragedy happened because of this discrimination, after Vidudabha ascended the throne. The first thing was to avenge the hatred and insult that he was the son of a slave. He brought troops three times to massacre the Sakyas clan. The previous two times the Buddha had prevented him. But for the third time, Buddha knew that the clan Sakyas's karma was time to be paid. So the king led his army to massacre the Sakyas clan in the most barbaric and barbaric way in human history.

In modern times, the story of Dr. B.R. Ambedkar, who belonged to a lower caste, is a testament to the impact of class-based gender stereotypes. Such stereotypes can hinder the progress of talented individuals like Dr. B.R. Ambedkar, pushing them to a dead end. From a young age, he faced rejection, discrimination, and relentless oppression by many people. Some teachers even feared contamination if they came into close contact with him.

As he grew older, Dr. Ambedkar pursued his studies and achieved success. He returned to serve his homeland, aiming to contribute to the country's prosperity and strength. However, he continued to face discrimination, even being denied housing in Baroda state due to his Untouchable status. Consequently, he had to rent a house outside of his workplace. When people discovered his Untouchable identity, young individuals gathered to evict him from his boarding house, fearing pollution.

Transgender Individuals: Transgender individuals face significant challenges, including discrimination in education, employment, and healthcare. Many face social ostracism and are often denied their basic rights.

Children: Gender bias can impact children, influencing their access to education, healthcare, and opportunities. The most girls may face discrimination.

Rural Women: Rural women often face unique challenges, including limited access to resources, healthcare, and education. Traditional norms and practices can restrict their mobility and decision-making power.

Elderly people: Elderly people may neglect, abuse, and economic insecurity due to their age. They often face challenges in accessing healthcare and social support.

Religious and Ethnic Minorities: Gender bias can intersect with religious and ethnic bias, impacting women from minority communities who may face double discrimination based on both their gender and their religious or ethnic background.

Widows: Widows in India may face social isolation, economic hardship, and discrimination, particularly in certain communities where they are considered inauspicious.

1.4. The repercussions of discord can span from minor inconveniences to huge and dire consequences

The consequences that can occur due to disharmony, I will give some cases below. Disharmony and conflict between individuals, friends, families, schools and societies, multinational. When discord occurs, the relationship becomes tense, aggressive, even hostile and war. I will give some examples below:

In a family consisting of parents and two teenage children, a persistent source of discord revolves around technology usage. The parents, both concerned about their children's excessive screen time, constantly argue over how to manage the issue. The mother believes in setting strict limits on device usage and emphasizing outdoor activities and face-to-face interactions. In contrast, the father feels that technology is an essential part of modern life and allows the children more freedom in using their devices. This ongoing dissent not only strains the relationship between the parents but also affects the entire family dynamic. The children, caught in the middle, feel torn between their parents' conflicting approaches. They experience stress, confusion, and a sense of instability within the family.

Addressing issues of gender bias according to Buddha's teachings is based on the core principles of Buddhism, which emphasize compassion, equality, and the liberation of all sentient beings. The Buddha's teachings emphasize the practice of compassion (karuna) and loving-kindness (metta) towards all living beings. To address gender bias, individuals should cultivate empathy and understanding towards those who face discrimination, advocating for their rights and dignity. Because, "All human beings have the same red blood and equally salty tears." The Buddha taught: There should be no discrimination: "All sentient beings have natural Buddha or I have become a Buddha, all sentient beings will become the Buddhas in the future." The Buddha's teachings have destroyed all prejudices that have been held for many generations. Vietnam has a folk song: "Loving others is like loving yourself." Besides, the Buddha also taught about visualization and seeing clearly that human nature is impermanent, suffering and selflessness. Because, people suffer because of birth, old age, illness and death. From this perspective, we will treat each other with less greed, attachment, discrimination between rich and poor, high or low, beautiful or ugly, etc. Buddha always advocated non-discrimination based on caste, class, race or gender. In keeping with this principle, society should strive to eliminate gender-based discrimination in all areas, including education, employment, and personal relationships. Buddha taught: Practice Mindfulness to become more clearly aware of your own biases and work to overcome them. Self-reflection can lead to the development and transformation of one's bad habits and become a virtuous person in society, further to complete liberation for oneself and others.

In short, the Buddha's teachings provide a foundation for addressing gender bias by emphasizing compassion, equality, non-discrimination, and mindfulness. By applying these principles to our personal lives and as a society, we can work towards a more just and equitable world, free of gender bias. It's important to recognize that gender bias in India is complex and multifaceted, impacting individuals and communities in different ways. Addressing gender bias requires a comprehensive and inclusive approach that considers the intersectionality of various identities and backgrounds. Efforts to promote gender equality in India involve legal reforms, education, awareness campaigns, and social and cultural change.

2. Cultivating Harmony in Accordance with Buddha's Teachings

2.1. What is cultivating harmony?

Cultivating Harmony refers to the deliberate and proactive effort to promote and nurture a state of peaceful coexistence, understanding, and cooperation among individuals, groups, or communities. It involves creating an environment where people can live and work together with mutual respect, tolerance, and empathy, while minimizing conflicts, discord, and hostility. Fostering harmony often entails embracing principles such as compassion, non-violence, equality, and mindfulness to create a balanced and harmonious social, cultural, or interpersonal atmosphere.

2.2. Main causes of discord

There are main causes leading to disharmony of relationship mutual as following:

Conflict: Conflict is a common form of disharmony, where individuals or groups have opposing interests, values, or goals and engage in disputes, arguments, or confrontations.

Misunderstandings: Misinterpretations or miscommunications can lead to disharmony when people fail to grasp each other's intentions or perspectives accurately.

Discrimination: Discrimination, based on factors such as race, gender, religion, or ethnicity, creates disharmony by promoting inequality and division.

Disruption: External factors or events can disrupt harmony within a group or community, causing tension and unrest.

Distrust: A lack of trust among individuals or within a society can contribute to disharmony, as people may question each other's motives and actions.

Injustice: When people perceive unfairness, it can lead to feelings of resentment and disharmony within a society.

Prejudice: Prejudiced beliefs and attitudes can create disharmony by promoting bias, stereotypes, and discrimination against certain groups.

Lack of Empathy: A lack of empathy or understanding for others' perspectives can result in disharmony, as it hinders the ability to relate to and connect with one another.

Division: Factors such as political, ideological, or religious differences can lead to division and disharmony when people cannot find common ground or respect each other's views.

Hostility: Hostile behavior or attitudes, such as aggression or antagonism, can escalate conflicts and contribute to disharmony.

2.3. Some Ideals to Achieve Harmony Following Buddha's Teachings

In life, whether within the confines of our families, in our broader societal interactions, or in our relationships with one another, individuals with wisdom and insight invariably seek harmony and favorable conditions for collective existence, devotion, practice, and service. It's essential to recognize that the concept of harmony, both within and beyond the family unit, has long been considered the golden rule in many of our Asian families and societies.

If the family is often heralded as the nucleus of society, then family harmony stands as the foundational pillar supporting the sustainability, stability, and growth of society as a whole. From one society to another, regardless of differences in identity, culture, skin color, religion, accent, and myriad other aspects, the common aspiration is to coexist in a harmonious and unified manner.

Within Buddhism, the principles of living in harmony are of paramount importance. Buddhists are encouraged to respect one another, to show deference to superiors and kindness to subordinates, and to cultivate an environment of mutual tolerance and understanding. Buddha always encouraged people to live together in a spirit of harmony and solidarity; No discrimination based on skin color or religion, racial discrimination, no conflicts, no misunderstandings, etc. Everyone must know how to refrain from causing harm to themselves or others. We must educate our children from a young age to obey their grandparents and parents, elders and respectable people such as Buddhas, Bodhisattvas, and Samanas, the brothers and sisters etc., in society. At the same time, parents teach children the Three Refuges and Five Precepts so they can live in moral standards in society. When a child knows how to live ethically and respectfully towards such elders, they will avoid all evil things, bad friends and bad people.

In the Sutra *"we are living in concord, with mutual appreciation, without disputing, blending like milk and water, viewing each other with kindly eyes."*¹

In the future, among the Heavens and the Human world, anyone who hears or mentions the names of these three Masters with joyous thoughts will experience great happiness in life.

This teaching underscores the invaluable merit that harmony and unity among individuals can generate, serving as a testament to the profound significance of living in accord with these principles, both within the Buddhist tradition and the wider human experience. Each person lives according to the other's will like water mixed with milk, blending together. Therefore, Buddha always taught people to live in harmony and solidarity to form a strong community. We live in a country where from the state to the people are united and united, that country will create a strong, prosperous, and happy family.

3. Tackling Economic Crises with Buddhist Wisdom

When a country lives in harmony, solidarity and peace, it is certain that the country's economy will develop more than ever. I will make the following points:

At the individual level, when we live in disharmony, we will have to strain to think of many plans to fight the other person, we will constantly think about arguing, disputing, criticizing, and opposition, or lead to fighting or even killing, etc. or discord grows from conflicts between family and family, school and school, society and society, or country and country. The level of escalation is getting bigger and bigger.

Economic horrors such as:

Stressed people often have to face medical costs, work inefficiently, and lack concentration to be creative at work etc.,

In families, parents do not get along, leading to arguments, beatings, and even divorce, which greatly affects children. They are not raised well, so many children have fallen into deadlocked paths with no way out, even into the path of addiction, theft, murder, leaving behind tragedies. Even, they are becoming a burden to society. Meanwhile, if children are properly educated and become talented people of the country, they will also contribute to the prosperity of the country.

¹ MN: 31. Cūlagosīṅga sutta— The Shorter Discourse in Gosīṅga was translation by Bhikkhu Bodhi. <https://suttacentral.net/mn31/en/bodhi?lang=en&reference=none&highlight=false>

The most worrying thing is the disharmony between countries that leads to not accepting negotiations that lead to war, the countries participating in the war must pay for the purchases of weapons, food, and supplies. Supplies, medicine, etc.

When we see the enormous and terrible of consequences of crisis economic we should live in harmony, no gender bias from individuals to each other, groups to groups, society to society, nation to nation. We will live in a peaceful, happy, and thriving nation in the future.

Conclusion

Buddhist Philosophy offer valuable guidance for addressing pressing issues in our world today. By tackling gender bias, fostering harmony, and overcoming economic crises, we can strive for a more just, equitable, and compassionate society.

Buddhism's teachings on non-discrimination and compassion provide a strong foundation for dismantling gender bias. When we recognize the inherent worth and potential of all individuals, regardless of their gender, we pave the way for a more inclusive and fair society.

Fostering harmony, both within ourselves and in our interactions with others, is central to Buddhist philosophy. Through practices like mindfulness and loving-kindness, we can bridge divides, promote understanding, and build stronger bonds within our communities. Facing economic crises, we can draw on Buddhist principles of moderation and compassion to find sustainable solutions. By prioritizing the well-being of all, we can navigate challenges and work toward economic systems that prioritize human flourishing over unchecked materialism.

Incorporating these Buddhist insights into our lives and societies is a step toward a more harmonious and equitable world, where gender bias is dismantled, harmony prevails, and economic crises are met with resilience and compassion.

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