The Buddhist Education System for Moral and Spiritual Development in the Modern Society

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Abstract

This research aims to discover the application of Buddhist education system as revealed in the Buddhist scripture for moral and spiritual development in the modern society. This study is a type of qualitative research with library research approach. The data is collected from Buddhist scripture, especially Pali literature and contemporary works done by scholars such as journal, paper, books, etc. Most of education system in the modern society emphasizes on material profits but neglects the development of individual character. The Buddhist education system offers an effective solution for modern world to prevent the moral degradation. Buddhist education refers to the word "sikkhā" which means "good conduct or virtue," highlighting that education is aimed not only for achieving the academic knowledge, but also training oneself in good conduct as the base of moral life. The Buddhist education system as revealed in the Buddhist scripture is able to contribute to moral and spiritual development in the society. Buddhist education highlights the development of oneself and others. Therefore, Buddhist education is aimed to produce generations who are beneficial for themselves and others (attahitāya ceva paṭipanno parahitāya ca).

Keywords: Education, System, Buddhist, Moral, Spiritual

Abstrak

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menemukan penerapan sistem pendidikan Buddhis sebagaimana terungkap dalam kitab suci agama Buddha untuk pengembangan moral dan spiritual di masyarakat modern. Penelitian ini merupakan jenis penelitian kualitatif dengan pendekatan penelitian kepustakaan. Data dikumpulkan dari kitab suci agama Buddha, khususnya kepustakaan Pali dan karya-karya ilmiah kontemporer yang dibuat oleh para cedekiawan seperti jurnal, makalah, buku, dll. Sebagian besar sistem pendidikan dalam masyarakat modern menekankan pada keuntungan materi tetapi mengabaikan pengembangan karakter individu. Sistem pendidikan Buddhis menawarkan solusi efektif bagi dunia modern untuk mencegah degradasi moral. Pendidikan Buddhis mengacu pada kata "sikkhā" yang berarti "perilaku baik atau kebajikan," yang menekankan bahwa pendidikan ditujukan tidak hanya untuk mencapai pengetahuan akademis, tetapi juga melatih diri dalam perilaku yang baik sebagai landasan kehidupan moral. Sistem pendidikan Buddhis sebagaimana terungkap dalam kitab suci agama Buddha mampu memberikan kontribusi terhadap perkembangan moral dan spiritual masyarakat. Pendidikan Buddhis menyoroti perkembangan diri sendiri dan orang lain. Oleh karena itu, pendidikan Buddhis diharapkan mampu menghasilkan generasi yang bermanfaat bagi diri sendiri dan orang lain (attahitāya ceva paṭipanno parahitāya ca).

Kata kunci: Pendidikan, Sistem, Buddhis, Moral, Spiritual

Introduction

Education is very important in life, since it promotes personal growth and development of society. Education facilities people to expand the knowledge, improve skills and foster the critical thinking. It is a powerful instrument for personal and social changes. United Nations (UN) has designated education as one of the 4th Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) of the 2030 Millennium Development Goals on promoting equal education and lifelong learning

for everyone (World Bank Group, 2017). The aim of national education according to the 1945 Constitution of Indonesia is to educate the life of the nation and promote general welfare. National education functions to develop abilities, forming dignified character and civilization, in order to educate national life (Yulianto, 2024: 626).

Nevertheless, in the contemporary world, number of problems arise in regard to educational system. A major cause of educational problems lies in the "commercialization" of education (Bodhi, 1997). In modern society, education is taken by the aim of material profits. Modern educational system prepares students to become productive citizens in an economic, but neglecting to the development of individual characters. As result of that, educated people are increasing together with problems in the society and the world. As technology becomes increasingly sophisticated, human morals continue to decline. People become richer economically, but remain poor mentally. Greed, hatred and ignorance are growing because the aim of education is solely for material profits. Education that only prioritizes secular knowledge does not guarantee that it can produce people with good moral and good spiritual. In the modern world like today, there is a great need for an education system that not only prioritizes on secular knowledge, but also education that can produce people who have good character in society.

Buddhism offers a solution for the education system that can be useful in producing a generation that is not only knowledgeable, but also a generation that has good morals and spirituality. Buddhist education is aimed for the development of individual and society, both in the sense of material development and behavior as well as mental transformation. Education in Buddhism refers to the Pāli terms 'sikkhā' (learning) and 'ajjhāpana' (understanding). The word 'sikkhā' also refers to 'good conduct or virtue' and 'disciplinary conduct.' Therefore, Buddhist education encompasses not only acquiring knowledge but also training oneself in good conduct as a foundational aspect of life. Buddhist education is a process of learning to get understanding the reality of life, which is aimed to eradicate the mental defilements. This process of learning can contribute the development of moral and spiritual in the contemporary world. The principles of Buddhist education which based on the Buddha's teaching can be implemented in the education system in the modern world. This paper purposes to discover the application of Buddhist education system as revealed in the Buddhist scripture for moral and spiritual development in the modern society.

Research Methodology

This is a qualitative research with library approach. Library research is classified as qualitative research, but in the context of library research, data is taken from exploration of library materials which are studied holistically, then analyzed based on a particular framework of thought or theory/philosophical paradigm that underlies it, then uses a certain approach in accordance with the research objectives achieved (Hamzah, 2019: 25). Library research is a research that uses books as a data source with a focus on a qualitative approach trying to reveal and find a fact systematically (Ibrahim, 2015: 23). This data of this research is taken from primary sources and secondary sources. Primary sources are the main sources that give authentic information about the topic. In a case of research on religion studies, scripture is

considered as the primary sources. In the Buddhist context, primary sources refer to Pali Canon which contains the original Buddha's teachings. Secondary sources refer to articles, journals, and books of scholars to get addition information relevant to the topic. Data collection techniques are carried out by means of observation, documentation and triangulation. Data analysis techniques used in this research is content analysis, by means of data reduction, data display, and drawing conclusion.

Result and Discussion

Buddhist Education System

In Buddhism, term education generally refers to the Pāli term '*ajjhāpana*' or '*adhyāpana*' in Sanskrit. *The Pāli English Dictionary* translates the word '*ajjhāpana*' as advising or education (Davids Rhys, 2009: 11). Buddhadatta (1955: 164) refers education as '*ajjhāpana*' or '*sikkhāpana.*' The word '*sikkhā*' is also introduced since it has a proper meaning related education in Buddhist principle (Piyaratane, 2002: 3). Therefore, in Buddhist philosophy of education, the term education refers to the terms '*sikkhā*' (training) and '*ajjhāpana*' (understanding). The word *sikkhā* is derived from the verb *sikkhati* which means training instructing, disciplining, cultivating, developing etc. The terms '*ajjhāpana*' or '*ajjheti*' are derived from the root '*adhi*', conveying the idea of directing the mind forwards observation and understanding. In short, education in Buddhism is the process of training and understanding. The word '*sikkhā*' also refers to 'good conduct or virtue' and 'disciplinary conduct.' Therefore, in Buddhism, education is not only gaining the knowledge, but also training oneself in good conduct as the base of life. Buddhist education means bringing knowledge and skills to a person, enabling him to translate such knowledge and skills to appropriate situations in life, finally developing discipline, insight and wisdom (Nandasena, 1993: 117). The knowledge and the good conduct will lead the person to achieve the welfare and happiness. It is related with famous Sanskrit stanza "*Vidyā dadāti vinayaṃ, vinayād yāti pātratām; Pātratvāt dhanamāpnoti, dhanāt dharmaṃ tataḥ sukham*" which means "Knowledge gives discipline, discipline begets worthiness, worthiness creates wealth and enrichment, enrichment leads to right conduct, right conduct brings happiness".

Buddhist education aims at a parallel transformation of human character and intelligence (Bodhi, 1997). Education is not only a process of gaining knowledge but also as a maturity process in order to have developed thinking and good attitudes. Education is not only in the area of school or college, but including at home and in the society. This education should be given from the young age and trained in the family itself. The duties of parents mentioned in *Sigālovāda Sutta* are to be concerned here. It is said that parents should refrain children from evil deeds (*pāpā nivārenti*), encourage children in doing good (*kalyāṇe nivesenti*), and train the children kind of skill and profession *(sippaṃ sikkhāpenti)* (D. III. 189). It means education started from the family itself, and it is responsibility of the parents. In the life of children, parents are the first teachers and trainers at home. The compassion of the parent toward children is shown how they refrain children from doing wrong actions and encourage children in doing good actions (Medhacitto, 2022: 61).

From *Sigālovāda Sutta*, it is understood that establishing the children in moral is the most important. Buddhism promotes education to establish moral by refraining from all bad actions (*sabbapāpassa akaraṇaṃ*), encouraging in doing good actions (*kusalassa upasampadā*), and purify the mind from mental defilements (*sacittapariyodapanaṃ*) (Dhp. 183). Students should be trained to practice Five Precepts (*pañcasīla*), refraining from (1) killing living beings, (2) stealing, (3) sexual misconduct, (4) lying, and (5) consuming intoxicant. Students are also encouraged to practice *Pañcadhamma*, namely (1) loving kindness, (2) giving, (3) satisfaction, (4) truthfulness, and (5) awareness. In other words, morality (*sīla*), concentration (*samādhi*) and wisdom (*paññā*) should be developed in the process of learning. The Buddha's teaching on Noble Eightfold Path can be implemented in the Buddhist education. Buddhism suggests right view, right thought, right speech, right action, right livelihood, right effort, right mindfulness and right mental concentration as vital tools for the development of personality. These eight teachings will contribute for the cultivation of good educational lifestyle in social life of persons (Dharmasiri, 2019: 93). By following these principles, the moral, intellectual and spiritual development can be expected from education.

According to Theravāda Buddhism, there are three stages of Buddhist education; learning (*pariyatti*), practicing (*paṭipatti*), and realization (*paṭivedha*). By developing this peacefulness activities in the society, people can follow four principal strategies as; Physical Development, Behavioral Development, Mental Development and Intellectual Development (Subinoy, 2019: 41).

Buddhist Education for Moral and Spiritual Development

The main objective of Buddhist education is to achieve the main goal of Buddhism, namely to attain ultimate liberation through wisdom. Buddhist education aims at a personality transformation into a highest form of humanity through ethical, intellectual and spiritual perfection (Meshram, 2013: 7). Buddhist education is distinct to its holistic approach to personal development which includes not only intellectual achievement but also the moral and spiritual development. Education is the principal tool of human growth, essential for transforming the unlettered child into a mature and responsible adult (Bodhi, 1997). Buddhist education means bringing knowledge and skills to a person, enabling him to translate such knowledge and skills to appropriate situations in life, finally developing discipline, insight and wisdom (Nandasena, 1993: 117).

Buddhist education was meant for the growth of the personality and to explore the qualities or "man" inside a man (Kumar, 2019: 443). In the *Karaniyametta Sutta* (Sn. 25), there are mentioned good qualities which can be considered as objectives of Buddhist education for moral and spiritual development. Those qualities are to be achieved in education since those qualities are needed in this global modern society.

Those fifteen qualities are as follows:

1. *Sakko*: Capable of doing wholesome actions. He is endowed with energy, effort and wisdom to engage in wholesome activities and avoid unwholesome activities.
2. *Uju*: Be honest. He speaks the truth, be sincere, not deceive or lie.

3. *Suhujū*: Be absolutely honest. He is straightforward, transparent and upright in one's physical and verbal action.
4. *Sūvaco*: Easy to receive instruction. Being a pleasant speech or obedient to parents and elders.
5. *Mudu*: Flexible mind, not to be obdurate. Being gentle in speech and manners.
6. *Anatimānī*: Be humble and not being arrogant on account of one's abilities, knowledge, wealth, power, etc.
7. *Santussako* = Be contented and satisfied with what one has and not crave for more and more.
8. *Subharo* = Easily supported without becoming burden of others.
9. *Apakicco* = Undertake few tasks. One who does that he is able to do.
10. *Sallahukavutti* = Lead a simple life.
11. *Santindriyo* = Subdued faculties.
12. *Nipako* = Expert in something.
13. *Appagabbho* = Being humble and polite in good manners.
14. *Kulesu ananugiddho* = Not attached to family.
15. *Na ca khudham samācare* = Never commit in bad action, even it is small

Buddhist education has focus on the three sources of education; 1) associate with good teacher or good friend, 2) listening or learning, 3) wise attention or thinking and 4) practicing or training (Zana, 2023: 39). Association with good teachers and good friendship is very important aspect of education. The good teachers and good friends will lead the person to be good too. In the *Maṅgala Sutta*, the Buddha put it as the first blessing of life (Sn. 46). Listening is another aspect of learning. The learned person in called *Bahussuta* since he has heard a lot. Wise attention is very important in the process of learning. It can produce critical thinking and moral consideration. Finally, practice is another way of learning. By continuous practice, one can expert in that subject and has many experiences on the field he is working in. In the *Paññāvuddhi Sutta* of *Aṅguttara Nikāya*, the Buddha mentions these four things as the factors of the growth of wisdom, namely; 1) Associating with wise people (*sappurisasaṃseva*), 2) Listening to the correct Dhamma (*saddhammasavanaṃ*), 3) Careful observation (*yonisomanasikāra*), and 4) Practice according to the Dhamma (*dhammānudhammappaṭipatti*) (A. II. 245).

Buddhist Education to the Development of Individual and Society

The primary aim of Buddhist education is the development of individual and development of society (Ratanasara, 1995: 17). In this case, the principle of Buddhist philosophy of education is bringing the development of individual and society. Generally, the objective of education are classified intro three types, namely considering: (a) personal benefit, (b) social benefit and (3) both personal and social benefit. In Buddhist education, the third objective are considered as the more important. Educational Buddhist Philosophy is built on the Buddhist philosophy of society and the individual (Gill, 2023: 3047). Buddhist education highlights the development of oneself and others. In other words, Buddhist education leads to the development of individual and society. Knowledge and skill are not only for individual happiness and welfare, but also for happiness and welfare of others. The meaning of Buddhist

education is to outline the best life for people and to develop their faculties. It is to foster the highest degree of peoples' excellence. It aims at all-round development of individuals. Education in Buddhism means to learn about Buddha's teachings, understand themselves and make themselves most useful to society (Zana, 2023: 41).

In the *Chavālāta Sutta* of *Aṅguttara Nikāya*, the Buddha mentions four types of person in this world, namely; 1) people who are not beneficial to themselves and others (*nevattahitāya paṭipanno no parahitāya*), 2) people who are beneficial to others, but not to themselves (*parahitāya paṭipanno no attahitāya*), 3) people who are beneficial to themselves, but not to others (*attahitāya paṭipanno no parahitāya*), 4) people who are not beneficial to themselves and also to others (*attahitāya ceva paṭipanno parahitāya ca*) (A. II. 95). Among those types of people, the fourth persons are the best. Their life is not only beneficial to themselves, but also beneficial to others. In the same way, the Buddhist education system is aimed to produce development of individual and society. Education is not only for personal benefit, but also for benefit of others in the society. Therefore, Buddhist education produces the person to be one who bent on the benefit of oneself and others (*attahitāya ceva paṭipanno parahitāya ca*).

In Buddhist philosophy of education, the major qualities are expected to be developed in individual are: confidence (*saddhā),* exertion (*viriya*), virtue (*sīla*), generosity (*cāga*), learning (*sutā*), right view (*sammādiṭṭhi*), mindfulness (*sati*), concentration (*samādhi*) wisdom (*paññā*). If these individual qualities are developed, it affects to the development of social too. Society is made up of individuals. When individuals are developed, society is also developed. In this case, the development of individual is development of individual character or personality, which includes inner character and behavioral character. Development of inner character consists of development of mind and mental qualities, while development of behavior character includes the development of bodily and verbal actions. Thus, Buddhist philosophy of education contributes moral and mental development to the contemporary world.

Conclusion

Education according to Buddhist perspective is not merely aimed for secular knowledge which brings to the happiness and welfare of individual, but education also is aimed to develop personal character as well as mental transformation among the people in the society. In the modern contemporary world, where these good qualities are lacking and not concerned by modern system of education, Buddhist education system is needed. The principles of Buddhist education can be implemented in order to contribute to the development individual's mental actions, verbal actions and bodily actions which create to the development of society in many aspects. Buddhist education brings to the personality transformation through the ethical, intellectual and spiritual perfection. Buddhist education brings to the establishment of morality, development of mind and wisdom.

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