

Buddhism: Its Socio-Economic Relevance in the Present Changing World

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Abstract : 'Buddhism', as such signifies the 'ism' that is based on Buddha's life and teachings or that is concerned with the gospel of Buddha as recorded in the literature available in Pali, Sanskrit, Buddhist Sanskrit, Prakrit and even in the other non-Indian languages wherein it has been described a very abstruse, complex and lofty philosophy of life or 'the way of life' preached by Him (Buddha). It has another side too, i.e., the applicability of the tenets of Buddha according to the needs of the present society, where human life and outlook has been totally changed. Applied Buddhism signifies the applicability of the Buddha's noble tenets. Along with the theological exposition and textual criticism of the Buddha's discourses, it has now become almost obligatory for the Buddhist scholars to re-interpret Buddhism from modern perspectives. Basically Applied Buddhism defined a 'way of life' which may transform the higher quality of life or essence of life due to changed circumstances, places and time. Nowadays, if we observe the present situation of the world, we will find the current problems such as health, economic, politic, global warming, population explosion, pollution of all types including cultural scarcity essential commodities and indiscriminate use of human, natural and water resources are becoming more and more pronounced day by day, under such a backdrop of world situation. Applied Buddhism rather Buddhism may be the only instrument left now for mankind to address all such human achievements, lapses, and problems. Buddha's doctrine is itself called 'akālika, timeless'. On the eve of the Mahāparinibbāna at Kusinara, the Blessed One allows His disciples to change, modify and alter His minor teachings according to the needs of the future, although He has made some utterances, which would eternally remain fresh. Hence Buddhism has been able to occupy a prominent place in modern life, because of its timeless applicability, emanating from a set of eternal values. The logical and scientific outlook of Buddha may be traced in His very first sermon named the Dhammacakkapavattana-Sutta where He suggested to avoid the two extremes, namely, constantly attachment to sensual pleasures (Kāmasukhallikānuyoga) and devotion to self-mortification that is painful as well as unprofitable and asked to adopt Majjhimapaṭipadā, 'Middle path', which is very much applicable even today in every spheres of human life; and the absence of which is the root cause of all problems event at present. This paper will be a humble attempt to highlight the relevance of Buddhism in the present society.

Keywords : applied Buddhism, ecology, self-awareness, value

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