

Exploring the Affirmation of Human Rights in Buddhism: A Study of *Dhamma* Theory in Relation to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights

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Introduction

This research investigates the concept of human rights in relation to the early Buddhist *Dhamma* concept and examines how the notion of rights can be equated in the teachings of the Buddha. As early Buddhism presents in the project of moral development, the concept of *Dhamma* is acknowledged, as a key moral criterion, in shaping social, cultural and religious life of the individual “*Ye dhammā hetuppabhavā, tesaṃ hetuṃ tathāgato āha; Tesañca yo nirodho, evaṃvādī mahāsamaṇo’ti*”, “Of those phenomena (*dhammā*) that arise from a cause...the *Tathāgata* (the Buddha) has explained their cause, and also their cessation...thus teaches the Great Ascetic (the Buddha)” (Mv I.6.38). Specially, from Buddhist religious and philosophical point of view, the theory of *Dhamm* plays a key role and denotes different contextual meanings as such justice of righteousness, law of righteousness, ethical behavior, ethical order and truthfulness. Moreover, from early Buddhist doctrinal perspective, the interpreting of *Dhamma* theory concept seems to be fairly complicated because *Dhamma* theory concept in Buddhism has been analyzed in different contexts as such mundane and supra-mundane. Thus, it is possible to note that providing the exact meaning to the term *Dhamma* is not easy. Therefore, on top of the *Dhamma* theory concept in Early Buddhism and the integration of Human Rights Declaration with that *Dhamma* theory is shall be analyzed from ethical moral and psychological ground. At this point, the meaning of *Dhamma* theory is about the justice of ethical and moral behavior. To connect aforesaid Buddhist opinion with the UDHR (Universal Declaration of Human Rights) can be connected as such, “all human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights. They are endowed with reason and conscience, and should act towards one another in a spirit of brotherhood”. This statement affirms that the notion of rights being inherent by human birth is a fundamental principle that will transcend social, religious, and political and gender diversity. Thus, the core meaning of UDHR conceptually aligns with the Buddhist teaching in such a way that one’s life destiny cannot be predicted and preplanned by accidental determines. In addition, Buddhism further confirms, the potential of individual has intrinsic capacities; capabilities and potentials for the transformation of human destiny. Therefore, Buddhist teaching and UDHR preamble have not any paradoxes.

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Literature Review

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948) declared by United Nation Assembly, it shall enforce the individual protection irrespective of cast, gender nationality or any other specifications; therefore in simply, human rights can be interpreted as universally admitted principles that adapt by 187 countries at present. However, among the scholars debatable issues attach to this concept. For example, David Robertson (2004) holds the opinion that the rights protected by the Charter are not justifiable, so deeply are they tied to the Charter's communitarian ideals which promote shared values, social responsibility based on individual interests on circular matters rather than admitting of religious matters or activities. In supporting of this opinion, Von Senger (1998) makes harsh criticism of the "Western" idea "that in principle human rights should be exclusively a matter of the right of the individual to protection. In connection with aforesaid opinions, it is possible to note that the Western concept of 'Human rights' shall become challengeable at some points. However, from early Buddhist point of view, some scholars as such Harvey (1990) does not state Buddhism holds negative attitude but he holds the opinion that Buddhist doctrine presents ethical substance of human rights even though early Buddhist discourses do not provide literal concepts similar to the concept of "right". However, he further shows the fundamental meaning of the concept of rights in Universal declaration form bounds for the protection of human values and the respect for life as well the Buddhist concept of Dhamma can be applicable as ethical, holistic, anthropocentric and eco-centric perspective in parallel rights language. In case of finding Buddhist response on human rights, we shall investigate Perera (1990) holds the opinion that the Universal declaration form is fully agree with early Buddhist thought, from this strategic work, Perera is very positive mind while Harvey slightly holds causation about the translation of the term. However, it is possible to understand these selected texts provide different critics for the affirmation and the negation of the concept rights from early Buddhist point of view in response to UDHR.

Research Problem

This research will investigate how early Buddhist teaching assesses the modern concept of rights quoted in the UDHR particularly through the lens of *Dhamma* theory concept? While identifying the contexts in which provide convergence and divergence cited between two paradigms.

The aims of the Research

This research contains three aims:

To analyze how early Buddhist teaching affirms the concept of rights in the context of affirm the well being of each and every living being

To identify the convergence and divergence of early Buddhist teaching and UDHR claims from ethical point of view

To assess how the early Buddhist principles can be incorporated as collective well being entire of universe, these three aims shall support for the strength of the research.

Objectives

This research contains two objectives:

Examine the early Buddhist attitude on the concept of rights and how this concept shall be challenging from Buddhist perspective.

Exploring of how *Dhamma* theory concept contextually aligns with UDHR statements. These two objective will provide a structural analysis, ensuring deep understand of these two areas.

Research Methodology

This research shall adopt qualitative, comparative and thematic methods for the exploring of the gap between early Buddhist teaching and UDHR statements. Over the gather data, the early Buddhist canonical texts shall be admitted as the primary sources while citing of the statements stated in UDHR preamble.

Finding

This research highlights as a guiding sample as a potential document to brought the attention how human rights declaration form can be used as a guiding document for the integration of social cohesion. Hence, by integrating early Buddhist teaching, we can achieve a similar approach.

Result

This research identifies that the early Buddhist concept of *Dhamma* can be illustrated from both ontological and ethical perspectives. However, this work mainly focuses on ethical basis than ontological. Hence, the research has been confirmed that the notion of rights articulated in the UDHR remains a contested

claim but by early Buddhist *Dhamma* theory emphasizes the cultivation of ethical conduct as the basis of justice.

Keywords - Human rights, Dhamma concept, Psychological ground, Brotherhood, Transformation of human destiny

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