Socio-economic effect of covid-19 pandemic; surviving by way of Buddha; Metta –Karuna, and Eightfold Path

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Abstract: Since the ancient time, human has developed things and instruments, technology and methods to deal with chores and various calamities and has been succeeded in developing society and countering hurdles while maintaining solidarity and humanity. Humans have been successfully gone through and learnt from natural calamity and pandemic as well. However, the pandemic corona virus which is called ‘covid-19’ again raised the question of remaining socially and economic being-well during quarantine days. Temples and other holy places are closed and prevented gathering and any celebrations including local to Olympic sports events (Japan 2020). People have been living in a nonhabitual condition of quarantine at home or wherever they are in a limited resource. Covid-19 has stopped the Freedom of movement and need to keep distance of 1 to 2 meters between persons and also other health safety measures of which people are not habitual of; feeling uncomfortable and finding ways to speak such as singing and spreading positive messages from balcony and through media. Unemployment rate is raised and raised in job related insecurity on post lockdown. People are seeking happiness and economic well being in quarantine while obeying health safety advisory. What that has a method of being balanced mind, happy mind and economically well being? The social work approach of Metta and Karuna in Buddha’s dhamma, teaching of meditation ‘anapan’ and ‘vipassana meditation’, have been helping those who are practicing at home or wherever they are, making self stress free and happy. Economic approach of Buddhism is on three assumptions; as human, people are interdependent, they are dependent on nature, and happiness needs helping others to minimize sufferings

Key Words: Buddhism, Covid-19, Metta – Karuna, Anapan, Quarantine –Lockdown.

1. INTRODUCTION:

Human is a social animal and living with the different kinds of people along with the community have certain rules and regulations to be society and people in discipline, to their respective communities. To run the house and state and country, economic system follows. The impact of recognized and unrecognized religion is in every individual life while country runs by framed social and economical rules and regulations e.g., how to respond to the natural calamity or pandemic? In such situations where slowdown or lockdown occurs, it is so important and difficult to maintain balance in the society and economy. Most of the individuals go back to the path of religion or spirituality to find way to recover and to survive from pandemic while being in solidarity and peace of mind and society. While economically, workforce of unorganized sector, children, women, vulnerable groups are highly suffered and the insecurity or challenge of employment and income stability puts them into vulnerable condition. In this situation, Buddha’s Metta and Karuna, and righteous approach can be successful to recover global impact on society and economy.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW:
Covid-19 globally, social and economic impact

COVID-19 pandemic again reflects the reality of the capacity of human that no matter how rich or poor the human is, he is subject to fall ill. Siddharth Gautama’s message is indeed a timeless of integrity, and to serve all others (with the spirit of Metta; selflessness, and Karuna; compassion) is more significance than ever. Since the humans are suffering from COVID-19 (corona virus -2019), individual’s life in all the ways; spiritually, physically, mentally, socially and financially disturbed due to strictly obeying medical and health safety guidelines by W.H.O. and country /state to recover and to stop (COVID-19). Suspicious or patients of corona virus or COVID-19 negative individuals are socially disconnected and suffering from financial loss due to lack of employment, business and income (UN SG). According to the W.H.O. report 2020, coronavirus was immerged in Wuhan, China in December 2019 (31, December) and novel corona virus given name covid-19. Covid-19 has travelled across the world by May 2020. Covid-19 mostly proved to be a fetal pandemic. Till beginning of 9, May, 2020, death report country wise is US-67,710, Spain-25,264, Italy28,884, U-28,520, France-24900, Brazil-704-51 and in other countries as well this pandemic is rising (W.H.O., 2020).
According to the report by UNO, “Everyone included; social impact of COVID-19, the outbreak has affected all segments of the society, in particular, the population such as poor, elderly, children, persons with disabilities, workers in the unorganized sector, and living in slum areas. Preliminary evidence suggests that the health and economic effects of the virus are disproportionately emerged by the poor. Homeless people, for example, are at risk of contracting the virus because they may not be able to safely shelter. People who do not have access to safe drinking water, refugees, migrants or displaced people prone to both the epidemic and its aftermath – due to limited mobility, low employment opportunities, xenophobia may increase (U.N.O., 2020) Since January, 2020, lockdown of areas performed by respective governments and apart from essential medical services and food shops, all including transportation services were closed for weeks. People remained at home, in quarantine due to lockdown and some on containment to stop and to prevent spreading corona virus. Socially, people were at home with their families while personal contact and meetings were banned. Special care focused to children and old age people. Mental effect seen due to intensity of corona virus and socially personal disconnection, and for many no work or work at home also became stressful and depression at some point. For many, no job, ongoing unemployment, no salary or less salary, most of the industries were not functioning, and unorganised sector suffered a lot, all these lead to economic changes globally because countries and people are connected to each other for job and for export and import of goods and services. Due to covid-19, global economy affected whole society and to each individual. As per the report World Employment and Social Outlook Trends-2020 by I.L.O., global economic condition is worsening. Report states that in a low-income countries, effort of minimizing poverty and improve working conditions are in endanger due to pace of economic growth got slower in this pandemic-2019. Across the globe, supply and demand between labour is mismatch. The underutilization of labour is as very high as jobless that affects over 470 million people due to lack of enough access to paid work. In year 2019, unemployment rate across the globe was 5.4 per cent and jobs shortage is expected to continue in upcoming future. Paid work does not mean the guarantee of decent work in poor and even high income countries and across the world; almost 2 billion labourers are casually engaged that comes 61 per cent of the workers of the world. Around 19 per cent of workforce of the world comes 630 million workers are living in moderate or extreme poverty. This means the goal first of Sustainable Development Goals with the objective of “eradicating extreme poverty everywhere by 2030” will become very difficult to achieve. Gender equality is also an ongoing problem. Participant of women was 47 percent and youngsters (aged 15 to 24 yrs.) 22 per cent (unemployed, not in training, o education) are facing obstacles in labour market in year 2019 and those employed faced barriers to decent work. Access to decent work is not equal, translates to elevate and persistent come inequalities. In the global economy, income inequality is higher that recommended by last estimates (ILO. 2020). As a result, in India, during lockdown, around 40 million urban informal workers’ condition worsen. These jobs majorly in small shops vendors, workers of construction, manufacturing and transport, domestic helpers, housekeeping, painters, street vendors, sleepers, garbage collectors, restaurant service workers, and stall vendors (Faraz. K; Kashif M. 2020) 

3. MATERIALS:  
Secondary data are used for writing this academic research paper. 

4. METHOD: 
Exploratory 

5. DISCUSSION: 
Metta-karuna, righteous approach of Buddhism to recover from covid-19; a social work practice  
According to Buddha, “Mind is everything; it is a man’s own mind, not his enemy or foe that lures him to evil ways (Dhammapada, 1985). Siddharth Gautama gave his teachings methods including many practices of mediation, without anything in return. It is a method through which (by learning and regular practicing) individual can become mentally and physically calm and non-violent and spreading peace through his/her righteous approaches in his/her behavior/act and talk with Metta – Karunabhavana. Siddharth Gautam discovered meditation practice (Anapan and vipassana which is one of the meditations from many other meditation practices), he voluntarily gave (without anything in return) to the world and to all those who came to him. The systematically stored and managed teachings are still practically required even today and would be required for better world (Vissuddhimaga, 2010). For the social and economic betterment for all, and according to Prof. Clair Brown, Buddhist economy has assumptions of people who are dependent of each other. They are dependent of nature, and to reduce sufferings, happiness is needed by selfless helping to each other. These are used for framing economic policy and implementation during present pandemic or any natural calamity where shutdown or lockdown occurs and to recover from slow or weak economic. Also such righteous approach with Metta (selflessness, loving-kindness) and Karuna (compassion) can bring peaceful growth of individual, wellbeing of society, and economy (C. Brown, 2020). 

The right approaches are as mentioned as ‘Eightfold path (ariyaatthangilkamagga)’ in the book ‘Gotama the Buddha; His Life and Teaching’; “Wisdom ( Panna) 1. Right view (samma-ditthi) 2. Right thought (samma-sankappo)
Moral Conduct (sila) 3. Right speech (samma-vaca) 4. Right action (samma-kammanato) 5. Right livelihood (samma-ajivo) Control of Mind (Samadhi) 6. Right effort (samma - samadhi) 7. Right awareness (samma-sati) 8. Right concentration (samma-samadhi) Buddha’s teachings at the time of pandemic, recover from worsen social and economy conditions by; Right View of present condition of pandemic in a medical and health point of view and its actual situation and seeing things objectively and accurate observation to understand from micro to macro, followed by research, and to analysis the condition. Right Thought in terms of (intention) having no discrimination in treating the needy and free form negative emotions, hatred, anger and greed/desire. Right Speech in terms of not to spread rumors, respect for truth, be polite, and having brainstorming on how to cope with changes in ongoing pandemic, society and economy for betterment of the world. Right Action in terms of respecting all life by keeping harmonious relations with self and others (no stealing, no tricking someone). And be selfless by not using others for self benefit and no adultery. Right Livelihood in terms of not selling weapons, poisons or intoxicants to prevent (no killings) and livelihood for self and others; should not to have wage slaves and employees should be treated fairly, safe working conditions, and paying a living wages (honesty and ethics). Right Effort in terms of by generating wholesome states (mindfulness, investigation, energy, joy, relaxation, concentration, and equanimity) and stopping any unwholesome states, remaining positive, happy, no slacking off. Right Awareness in terms of being conscious (e.g. be aware of what is happening, what we are doing/thinking/feeling) for present reality while remain calm. And lastly, Right Concentration in terms of practicing meditation to produce insight - inner calm and harmony and be aware of present life. Emptying mind requires gaining complete stillness of mind and body (VRI, 2017).

Studies on Improving Positivity in Physical and Mental Health by Metta-Karuna Bhavana

According to various explorative studies mentioned in Loving-kindness and Compassion meditation Potential for mind-interventions, proven that in any condition, Metta – Karuna bhavana (mind training) practice of Buddhism, cope with changes around us and within, improved positivity physical health, and reducing stress, anxiety, depression and creating Buddha’s teachings Metta and Karuna and Eightfold Path (righteous approach) through learning and practicing Metta meditation; study of 93 respondents under Hutchesm and colleague, 2008, sending love, wishing well-being and healthy, using positive words result in higher Metta-karuna, experienced for neutral strangers, relations to improve high positivity in practitioners of Metta-karuna meditation. Another study by Frederickson and colleagues, 2008, found that Metta-Karuna mediation brings positive emotions. Respondents expressed love, joy, pride, hope, interest, and self aware, all rose in peaceful mind and cooperative nature and improved mental and physical health and so satisfied with their lives. Another study by Carson and colleagues, 2005, on 43 respondents, found that patients practiced Buddhist meditation brought in metta-karuna in them and expressed in their interactions with others. Minimized pain, anger, and mental stress, and highly reduced negativity. Self-compassion in study meant as one’s own sufferings. Curing self by Metta, being mindful, share humanity, examined by many authors. Study by Leary and colleagues found that respondents moderate response to any digressing events (S. G. Hofmann: P. Grossman; D. E. Hinton, etal, 2011). Study on conflict management, Buddha’s proof of meditation for Metta-Karuna, respond in contemporary modern, advance society which is suffering from stress, conflicts, problems in micro to macro level; individual and in family, and in state, as well and reduce wrong view while improve right view.; reduce greed, egoism, hatred, by following righteous approach, as mentioned in Eightfold Path through Metta-karuna (O. Siddhi, 2018).

6. CONCLUSION:

Buddha’s dhamma of Metta and Karuna, with Eightfold path include impact of social harmony, economic harmony. Government and administrative as righteous approaches are a freely distributed approach since his time and is a social work intervention and methods that has been gain success in bringing and maintaining social, economic growth with harming no one. Buddha’s teachings are utilized in various fields (of sociology, economics, administrative, human rights, psychology, neuroscience, social welfare, etc. and more) for betterment of human, animal, birds, creatures, and environment. To a individual or individuals living alone, isolate, or with family or society, regular practice of Buddhist meditation brings and improves metta-karuna and righteous approach of Eightfold Path, reduces stress, depression, anger, hatred, and improves mental and physical health. Happiness and loving-kindness in social relations, intra, and interpersonal relations, help in minimizing conflicts from micro; individuals, family, to macro level across the world.

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Books, Journal, Articles

Website