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Buddhist Sustainable Development: A New Approach in Happiness and Development



Dr. Sauwalak Kittiprapas

BUDDHIST SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT:

A New Approach in Happiness and Development

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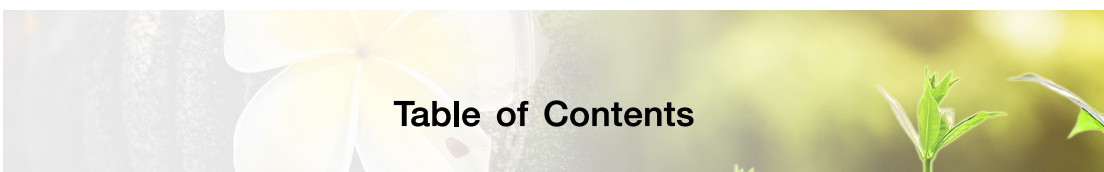


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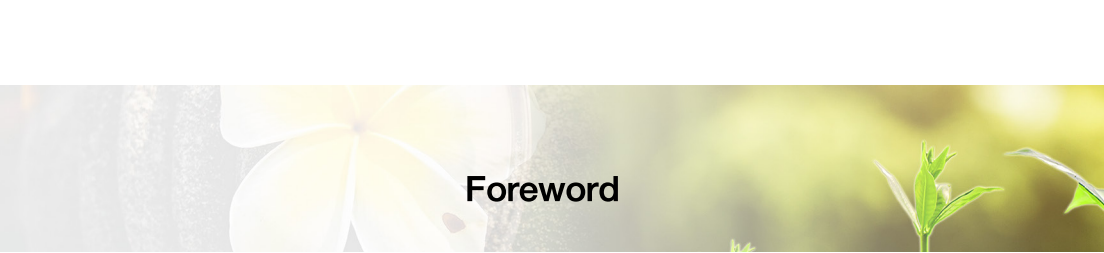
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Foreword

At present, human beings in the developed world, especially those living in the so-called highly developed countries, widely acknowledge that the development which has taken place so far has for the most part failed and is unsustainable. In April 1987, the United Nations launched the publication *Our Common Future*, which popularized the term ‘sustainable development’. This report suggested guidelines and measures to achieve sustainable development. However, thirty years later, concrete solutions to unsustainable development are still not clearly evident.

Although it is well-known that the depletion of natural resources and the increase in global pollution are the main symptoms of the unsustainable forms of development, humans in highly developed nations have still not found a clear way to solve these problems. It almost appears as if human civilization is coming towards an end.

In fact, these two problems are created by human actions, but they are extremely difficult or almost impossible to solve due to resistance in people, in particular for those devoted to consumerism. They are unwilling to comply with the known solutions, or if they do comply, they do so reluctantly and under duress. As a consequence, society needs to establish a code of environmental ethics, yet this ethical system is one of constraint and coercion. It cannot overcome

the problem, because people would feel unhappy if they try to adhere to their ethical standards; or if they instead choose their own pleasure or desire they would violate the ethics and create environmental problems. This approach to problem solving thus possesses inherent contradictions and leads to a dead end.

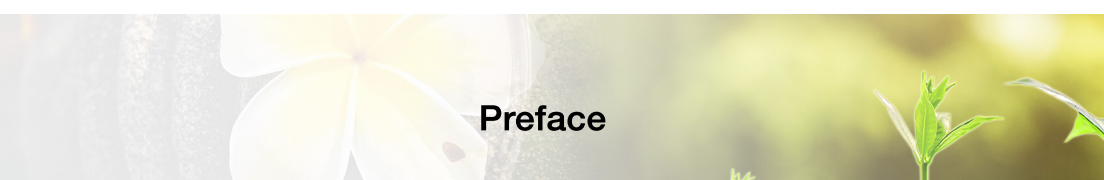
As mentioned, these dual problems result from human behavior, which in turn stems from people's will—from their intention. Intention is a clear indicator of a person's state of mind, accompanied by ulterior motives of seeking pleasure or by an intrinsic desire for happiness. Therefore, to effectively solve these problems, we must attend to people's state of mind, to their mental constitution. In this manner, the mode of external problem solving is integrated with people's volitional mechanisms. The result is that people will feel that their desires are being fulfilled. This process requires knowledge and understanding, which helps to adjust and fine-tune people's desires so that they are favorable to a genuinely happy way of life. Environmental crises will then be resolved automatically, as a matter of course. This is true sustainable development, which would be possible only with the cultivation of human mind and wisdom.

This book, *Buddhist Sustainable Development: A New Approach in Happiness and Development* by Asst. Prof. Dr. Sauwalak Kittiprapas, presents a Buddhist conceptual framework for solving the aforementioned human problems. It serves as a guide for finding solutions to unsustainable development, which is a means to foster global development—to nurture the world we live in—and, at the same time, to develop human happiness.

I wish to congratulate Dr. Sauwalak Kittiprapas for writing this book, which is a meritorious act in the advancement of wise knowledge and virtue for the good and sustainable happiness of the people at large.

Somdet Phra Buddhaghosacharya (P. A. Payutto)

November 10, 2018 (2561 B.E.)



Preface

Buddhist Sustainable Development: A New Approach in Happiness and Development has been developed from a research paper for the World Buddhist University (WBU) and substantively revised for this formal publication with the aim to initiate a new idea for development from Buddhist perspectives that would be useful for new development direction, leading to world peace and happiness. It highlights key essential features of Buddhist happiness and Buddhist economics concepts for development and the differences as compared to the conventional development model.

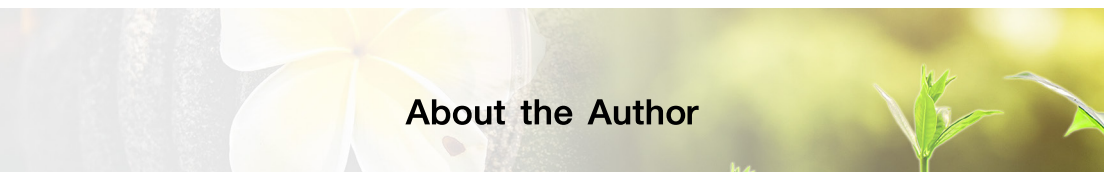
This publication proposes a new approach and concept of Buddhist Sustainable Development (BSD), which is human-centered sustainable development, driven by inner happiness (happiness at the mind and wisdom levels). This approach links the subject of happiness in Buddhism to sustainable development.

This book highlights the meanings of real quality of life, values of consumption, work, production, and natural wellbeing in Buddhist concept, as well as compares the differences in those concepts between conventional and Buddhist perspectives, that lead to different implications for development.

The publication also discusses on different schools of thought on sustainable development and introduces Buddhist-based concept. By focusing on the analysis of human happiness, BSD extends the conventional widely used sustainable development framework by dealing with the root causes of sustainable development problems arising from human behavior. It is hoped that the approach can contribute a possible solution to the world's development challenges and problems, especially when sustainable development goals become a global agenda today.

Last but not least, I would like to express my deep gratitude to Somdet Phra Buddhaghosacharya (P.A. Payutto) for his works that inspired me to study more on this subject for academic work. I am also highly grateful to those who have helped reviewing earlier versions of this study, particularly, Dr. Michael Sinclair, Prof. Dr. Apichai Puntasen, and Dr. Tavivat Puntarigvivat (former Research Director of WBU) for initially supporting my research on this topic.

Sauwalak Kittiprapas



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She has experienced working with both international and national organizations; for example, the World Bank, United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), Thailand Development Research Institute (TDRI), and the Public Policy Development Office (PPDO) under the Office of the Prime Minister in Thailand. She is also the Director of the not-for-profit organization - International Research Associates for Happy Societies (IRAH). She has contributed a number of publications to various academic institutions and international development organizations, i.e., the World Bank, UN organizations, ADB, etc.

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Introduction

Moving beyond the old development framework focusing on only economic indicators such as GDP, there are currently two important global issues in development: first, to move development towards happiness and well-being; second, to achieve sustainable development with the 2030 sustainable development goals (SDGs).

The uniqueness of this study is to link the issues of sustainable happiness and sustainable development. The issue of happiness and well-being is growing in importance among academic studies, development and policy designs. While a lot of studies on happiness so far have not focused on happiness in a more sustainable way, this book introduces happiness in Buddhism with the focus on inner happiness. By linking with inner happiness, sustainable development can be more

effective. This inner happiness focus in this study is a key difference from other sustainable development approaches.

Sustainable development has been a topic of discussion in development practices and theories for a long time. Since the industrial revolution, development has mainly focused on economic progress in consumption, production, and industrial growth together with technological advancement. Human and social development as well as the environment has not much received careful consideration, and all three have deteriorated. As human beings have experienced social, environmental, and psychological problems from development driven mainly by economic growth, there have been increased discussions on development directions and new paradigms for development. Sustainable development has become a topic of interest among development agencies.

Among major milestones in the sustainable development movement, the United Nations Conference on the Human Environment, held in Stockholm in June 1972, may be considered as the start of global concern towards the international environment.¹ Shortly thereafter, related UN organizations, as well as the World Commission, were established.

¹ Summarized background and ideas on sustainable development from P.A. Payutto, 2006 (p.56-60),