



Buddhist Methods of Research: An Analytical Study

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ABSTRACT

Based on the teachings of Gautam Buddha, this paper presents a Buddhist method for research. The Buddhist approach to research makes use of Buddhist concepts closely related to living harmoniously, unlike Western approaches. Consequently, it reframes systemic problem structuring as an exercise in Buddhist disciplines applied to organisational life, which is likely to be viewed as a cooperative and culturally valued undertaking. Buddhism was founded about 2500 years ago as a result of philosophically conducted research by Gautam Buddha. The study undertaken by Gautam Buddha and he presented the Buddha after becoming the Buddha to his disciples. The main objective of this paper is to develop an academic insight that addresses the methods of research carried out by Gautam Buddha and analyzes the relationship between Buddhism and research methods. This paper will try to inquire about what can be learned from Buddhist methods for current research methodology, particularly in the field of social sciences.

Keywords- Buddhist research methods, Gautam Buddha, living harmoniously, philosophical research.

INTRODUCTION

Gautam Buddha learnt that our desire for good things and dislike of bad things cause us to suffer. We are dissatisfied when we try to hold on to positive things And experiences while Pushing away bad ones. This is because there are so many things in life that we can't control, and since everything is always changing. The senses, including the ideas we have in our heads, make us feel attached and repulsed all the time.

He gained relief from suffering by letting go of his wants and dislikes. He asserted that although one still has likes and dislikes in such a state, happiness is not reliant on them. This is because such a state does not eliminate the existence of personal preferences. The nature of reality is revealed through thought, which also eliminates ignorance and rejects advice to visualize the truth directly. The misery of people is the primary issue. The journey is tri-stepped Method, travelling from From one point to another, the solution is achieving a state of happiness. *Dukha* (suffering) is it; Enlightenment (*Nirvana*) is the latter; and *Magga* is the road. One of the Buddha's core teachings is nonviolence (*Ahimsa*). Buddhism's first precept-the nonviolent treatment of all living things- is founded on the notion that all things in nature are attracted to one another and are righteous. (Hanh, 1999).

Buddhism is a religion that rejects the idea that God or another supernatural being is real. The Buddha himself was against talking about such things. In his final discourse, the Buddha counselled his followers to seek solace in themselves. The *Kalama Sutra* (The *Kesamutti Sutta*, popularly known in the West as the *Kālāma Sutta*, is a discourse of the Buddha contained in the *Aṅguttara Nikaya* of the *Tipiṭaka* (Bapat, 2012). It is often cited by those of the *Theravada Mahayana* traditions alike as the Buddha's 'charter of free inquiry'. Buddha urged his followers to adopt a rationalism-based mindset to reject blind faith. Buddhism is a way of life rather than a religion in that sense. Rationalism and free thought are at the heart of Buddhism's authentic character. The world's intellectuals have been impacted by that. Buddhism is less of a religion and more of a set of ethical principles. On the foundation of the *Sila* (Buddhist Precepts), which the Buddha established, people might live peacefully and contentedly. The importance of living an honest and moral life cannot be understated as long as

man is present on this earth. In addition, the Buddha offers numerous environmental-related teachings in the Buddhist texts, which apply to both monastic and lay lifestyles. The foundation of Buddhism is love and compassion, or loving kindness. For the sake of happiness and good, the Buddha commanded his followers to disperse everywhere. Even in the twenty-first century, Buddhists and non-Buddhists alike are still motivated by the Buddha's teachings to improve the world in which they live (Thussu, 2013). A dynamic and ever-evolving movement loosely referred to as Socially Engaged Buddhism or the Fourth *Yana*, with roots in traditional Buddhism Buddhist nations like Sri Lanka and Thailand have emerged in response to Buddhism's growing relevance and influence in 21st-century global society. This movement is particularly strong in the West (Ruppert, 2000).

Buddhism views the mind as the precursor and origin of all things and is therefore better referred to as a psycho-ethical philosophy than as a conviction in the traditional meaning of the word. Buddhism has a distinctive place in the current society because, in contrast to many other religious systems, it is the only one to advocate the idea of independence, which is closely aligned with the core ideas of modern science. Buddhism can be divided into three basic categories: philosophy, religion, and science. Although Buddhism alone is concerned with its religious aspects, such as its interconnectedness concept and the science of cognition and human emotions, everyone can gain much from these aspects of Buddhism. Various practitioners and objectors look to Buddhism and academics for solutions to two of the most pressing and important concerns of our time: protecting the environment and eliminating discrimination, as Buddhism gains popularity in the West. There has been a lot of interdisciplinary research on environmentalism, the biological movement, and feminism on Buddhism. (Suzuki & Dixon, 2005).

The essential recognition that all organisms and their inherent significance for the health and survival of the earth and all its inhabitants has led to a common ground being established between ethics, Buddhist philosophy and its system of meditation. These movements known as Eco-Buddhism and Deep Ecology. Buddhism is often a means of achieving inner serenity. It is a religion that aids people in discovering happiness and satisfaction. (Chodron, 1998).

Literature Review and Research Gap

The study of Buddhist methods of inquiry has attracted scholars from the fields of philosophy, religion, and epistemology. Classical Buddhist thinkers such as *Dignāga* and *Dharmakīrti* laid the foundation of Buddhist epistemology by identifying direct perception (*Pratyakṣa*) and inference (*Anumāna*) as reliable means of acquiring valid knowledge. Their contributions established a systematic approach to reasoning that continues to influence discussions on knowledge and cognition. Similarly, the *Kālāma Sutta* highlights the Buddha's encouragement of critical inquiry, urging individuals to examine ideas through observation, reasoning, and personal experience rather than accepting them solely based on authority or tradition.

Contemporary scholars have expanded these discussions by examining the empirical and experiential dimensions of Buddhist thought. Gethin (1998) and Harvey (2013) describe Buddhism as a tradition that values observation, mindfulness, and reflective analysis in understanding reality. *Kalupahana* (1976) emphasizes that the Buddha's teachings promote rational investigation and intellectual openness, while Wallace (2007) argues that contemplative practices provide a disciplined method for exploring consciousness and complement modern scientific inquiry.

Despite these valuable contributions, the existing literature remains fragmented. Most studies focus either on Buddhist philosophy, meditation, ethics, or epistemology without examining how these elements collectively constitute a coherent research methodology. Furthermore, limited attention has been given to the relevance of Buddhist methods in contemporary academic research and interdisciplinary knowledge production. This study addresses this gap by critically synthesising classical Buddhist teachings and modern scholarship to develop a comprehensive understanding of Buddhist methods of research and their significance for present-day research practices.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study adopts a qualitative, analytical, and interpretative research methodology to examine Buddhist methods of research. Since the topic is philosophical and conceptual, the study relies mainly on library-based research. Primary sources include the *Tripitaka* and important works of Buddhist philosophers such as *Nāgārjuna*, *Dignāga*, and *Dharmakīrti*. Secondary sources comprise scholarly books, peer-reviewed journal articles, theses, and research papers related to Buddhist philosophy, epistemology, and research methods. Data are collected through an extensive review of these sources and analysed using textual, conceptual, and critical analysis to understand the principles of observation, reasoning, and experiential knowledge in Buddhism. The study also employs a descriptive approach to explain key concepts and an analytical approach to evaluate their relevance in contemporary research. By interpreting classical Buddhist teachings within the context of modern scholarship, the research aims to present a systematic and balanced understanding of Buddhist methods of inquiry while ensuring academic rigour, objectivity, and faithful interpretation of the original texts.

Study Design

This study adopts a qualitative conceptual and philosophical research design to examine Buddhist methods of research through an analytical lens. Rather than collecting empirical data, the study explores the methodological principles embedded in Buddhist philosophy by critically analysing classical Buddhist texts and contemporary scholarly literature. The research is based on a comprehensive review of primary sources, including the *Tripitaka* and the writings of prominent Buddhist philosophers, along with peer-reviewed books and journal articles. A conceptual analysis is employed to interpret key ideas such as observation, reasoning, direct experience, and ethical inquiry. The philosophical approach enables a deeper understanding of how Buddhist thought conceptualises knowledge and research. This study is descriptive and analytical in nature, aiming to synthesise existing scholarship and develop a coherent framework of Buddhist research methodology. The chosen design is appropriate because it facilitates a systematic examination of Buddhist principles and their relevance to contemporary academic research without relying on quantitative or experimental methods.

Objectives of the Study

It is crucial to underline that without a ‘knowledge repository’, Buddhism would not have been able to develop such enduring ideas, hypotheses, or propositions as *Cakkavata* (cosmos), *Anicca* (impermanence), *Paticcasamuppada* (dependent origination causality), *Mahasammata* (social contract), or *Majjhimap* (The *Majjhima* Nikāya is a Buddhist scripture, the second of the five *nikayas*, or collections, in the *Sutta Pitaka*, ‘three baskets’ that compose the *Pali Tipitaka* of *Theravada* Buddhism. Composed between the 3rd century BCE and the 2nd century BCE. This is why the connection between Buddhism and some of the key areas of contemporary academic research was noted in the Introduction (middle path). The second objective is to demonstrate that, despite numerous parallels between Buddhist ideas and scientific theories or conclusions being demonstrated, very little systematic effort has been undertaken to draw inspiration from Buddhism to improve modern research methodologies or to demonstrate the parallels (Wright, 2017).

The challenge that Siddhartha Gautama looked into was one that all living things face. This study focuses on the teachings and enlightenment of Buddha, mainly the process or methodology used by him. How Buddha fought all challenges and attained enlightenment. We would study the process that Gautam Buddha adopted or the research methods he used during his attainment of enlightenment and apply those processes in Buddhism. The many mindfulness practices that are encouraged by the traditions include various methods that take place with various theoretical explanations.(Shetty, 2020).

Psychological Dimensions of Buddhist Research

Research-based evaluation and study of the mind, behaviour, and habits are what psychology is known for. Detailed information and inferences about human activities are sought by this intricate discipline. The study of behaviour can be traced back to ancient times when philosophers discussed a variety of philosophical issues; even though psychology is a relatively new profession, much of its development and investigation materialised in the late 19th century. The behaviour of our brains and the reasons behind it are of particular interest to modern

psychology. Over the years, many psychologists have shared their perspectives and theories on the origins and rationales of particular beliefs and behaviours. To comprehend, perhaps level, or modify behaviour, these researchers have examined the relationships that exist between the mind and our behaviour, environment, and past experiences. Among psychology's numerous facets are these studies, which are also known as psychological research (Hanh, & Nhat, 2007).

There are numerous different fields of research where Buddhism might be discovered to have parallels. Buddhism, other than being 'religion' in the conservative intellect of the word, is also a philosophy in itself; hence, the congruence between modern philosophy and it is unquestionably deeper than the congruence between Buddhism and current science. Despite the abundance of conveniences available to people in today's scientifically and technologically advanced global society for ease of living and pleasure, people nevertheless lack a sense of safety and are neither physically nor mentally fulfilled. The mind develops a sense of safety after it is convinced that the person is not in bodily danger. Given that it's clear that conducting research is an activity and, by extension, a human activity, it becomes increasingly obvious that there are several lessons to be learned about conducting research and research methodology from the teachings of the Buddha. For instance, the foundation for science, research, and primarily problem solving is provided by the Four Noble Truths (*Dhammacakka ppavattanasutta in Sutta-pitaka*): Dukkha as problem identification, Samudaya as causative investigation, Nirodha as potential or necessary answers, and Magga as suggestions or paths to desired solutions. The other two methodological components identified and investigated in this investigation are dialectical causality, or dependent origination or arising, and the significance of independent observation (*Kalamasutta*) (*Paticcasamuppada*). Buddhism is a psycho-ethical ritual that primarily takes the form of two paths: the first method of progressive pacification (*Pariyatti*) and the second method of applying it in real life (*Patipatti*) (Hanh, 2017).

Buddhism can never be evaluated psychologically; such a notion is only a creation of the modern West. Buddhist teachings contain in-depth phenomenological psychology that is based on introspection, according to Western and Buddhist researchers. Buddhist philosophy is ethical first and foremost, according to Rhys Davids, who produced the book 'Buddhist Manual of Psychological Ethics'. Buddhism made a point of classifying and analysing mental processes with extraordinary wisdom and insight. As may be seen from her various writings, Rhys Davids has been working on the psychological orientation of Buddhism for many years. A liberation program is presented within the framework of the *Abhidhamma Pitaka*, which also articulates philosophy, psychology, and ethics. Understanding the nature of experience is the main goal of the *Abhidhamma* (also known as *Abhidharma* in Sanskrit); hence, conscious reality is the centre of its attention. Because of this, the *Abhidhamma's* philosophical project begins to resemble phenomenological psychology (Jhangiani et al., 2019).

Buddha's Process to Achieve Enlightenment

It is good knowledge that the eventual goal of the study is to reach a reliable and precise conclusion regarding a troubling phenomenon. Buddhist studies researchers are well known that Siddhartha Gautama's scientific investigation led to the development of Buddhism. Without a question, Siddhartha Gautama has made his mark on history as the first person to conduct a legitimate exploration study using scientific techniques in recorded human history. Siddhartha Gautama, before he became the Buddha, conducted an extensive investigation, and he communicated his findings to his followers after becoming the Buddha. The findings of this study have been documented in the *Nidana-samyutta* of the *Samyutta-nikaya's Sutta*, the *Ariyapariyesana Sutta*, and the *Majjhimanikaya's Ariyapariyesana Sutta*. In Buddhist terminology, the investigation is referred to as *Pariyesan*. It is not difficult for us to determine how Siddhartha Gautama conducted honourable research during his research procedure if we attentively read these discourses. (Tomalin, 2007).

Identifying a problem that has to be solved during the research process is the first condition for a successful study. Gautam Buddha was confronted with an issue that no one had adequately addressed before. It was not his issue. It should be noted that the research problem cannot be a personal one only at this point. There are occasions when a problem that is personal is not a concern for others. The resolution of a personal issue has no bearing on the body of human knowledge. It ought to be a frequent issue. A contribution that advances human knowledge is the answer to the right research challenge. As a result, to contribute to the academic community, research

students have to choose an actual issue for which a solution might be discovered through the research process. (Aich, 2013).

The issue, according to this, was how to put an end to the pain, which includes birth and death. It is empirically shown that people suffer. Finding a solution to an empirical problem, therefore, has nothing to do with unobservable metaphysics. He spent six years conducting arduous research on this issue. When he saw that the results he was achieving under the guidance of the advisors were not helpful to his goal, he parted ways with them. He had met with several professors in the field to acquire their advice. Finally, he began to use inductive reasoning to make experimental observations. It's a rational process that's employed specifically in modern sciences to base a general conclusion or hypothesis on a certain observation. We need to use logic in our research on Buddhism so that we may get conclusions that are more trustworthy.

Siddhartha Gautama discovered through his investigation that birth itself is the root of misery in this existence. He arrived at that conclusion by carefully examining the specific instances in his experience. However, he did not intend to end his investigation at this point. He sought to establish the connection between each event and the birth that it causes. He used his meditative reasoning (*Yoniso manasikara*) for this purpose. Until he was able to get to the correct understanding of the cause emergence of pain. The whole procedure of research finally directed him to come to the conclusion. Conclusion, which finds Expression in the formula '*Asmin sati idam hoti. imassa uppādā idam uppajjati. Asmin asati idam na hoti. Imassa nirodhā idam nirujjhati*' (Kitagawa, 2012).

The Buddha has inspired others to conduct study since he was a master who engaged in moral inquiry and attained the highest outcome. According to him, only by thorough investigation or research can one truly understand or gain a factual understanding of any troubling phenomenon. In addition to the noble quest described above, it appears that the Buddha conducted numerous other studies during his lifetime and taught the results of those studies. However, these studies are not acknowledged as the Buddha's research findings in the canon because the canon's compilers attributed all of the Buddha's teachings to his omniscience. (Adarkar and Keiser, 2007).

There is no denying that the majority of the Buddha's social teachings include crucial findings from in-depth studies of modern society. The social categories that were brought together according to each group's unique characteristics show us the authority of the Buddha's critical analysis. Various social behavioural patterns have been laid forth by the Buddha by their intrinsic traits. When discussing people's attitudes toward their own and other people's well-being, the Buddha, for instance, discussed four different types of individuals. The Buddha offers four different types of husband-and-wife pairings based on their marriage relationships. Regarding their views toward their husbands, there are seven different types of wives. These social behavioural tendencies that the Buddha described inexorably demonstrate that he possessed an outstanding level of critical awareness about modern civilisation. He did not just happen to have this expertise. More likely than not, the Buddha's inquiries are what led to these discoveries (Choi and Choo, 2019).

One of the most crucial steps in the research process is critical inspection. Buddhism is the only religion in the world that encourages people to conduct critical analysis. Buddhism holds that nothing in the study of religion in particular or anything else should be embraced without a careful evaluation. Brahmins who adhere to their unquestioning acceptance of religious doctrines are characterised in the *Tevijja-sutta* of *Digha-nikaya* as a group of blind men who are holding each other's hands without fully understanding the road. Buddha explicitly invited monks In the *Vimansaka-sutta* of *Majjhima-nikaya* to question even him to determine whether or not he was the Buddha. This invitation makes clear the importance the Buddha placed on a critical investigation. (Fernando, 2017).

CONCLUSION

In consideration of the frequent concerns expressed by theorists (the subject authorities) and policymakers regarding the applicability and deliverability of social science research findings, options for a constructive theoretical foundation for interpretivism must be explored. Interpretivism is a school of thought in contemporary jurisprudence and the philosophy of law. Finding the truth about problems in social contexts is more crucial

under interpretivism because the theoretical underpinnings are weaker than they are under positivism. Additionally, interpretivism is more important in social science research, particularly in studies including qualitative data; therefore, it is important to address the theoretical problems with social science research methods. In this case, the pure Buddha *Dhamma* is selected as a possible theoretical foundation Interpretivism through the analysis of the literature. The discussion in this paper is comparable to the pure Buddha *Dhamma* in that it holds that human behavior is related to mental Attitudes that are the result of *Bhawa* (seeds of mental attitudes) that have gathered in the psyche-mental domain of the individual (*Manmaya Kya*). The *Bhawa* being discussed here is a result of the five aggregates that are grounded from the *Vina*-namely, the grasping of *Rga*, *Dvsha-Dsa*, and *Mha*-or of their entanglement. Such mental processes have ignorance-based (*Avidy Mla*) *Pattichcha Samuppada* as their foundation. Full enlightenment comparable to the Kusala Mūla *Pattichcha Samuppāda*, a cause-and-effect process that ends defilement-oriented mental tendencies can be attained by transforming this mental attitude process towards the detachment of the five aggregates (*Nāma* and *Rūpa*) (*Bhawa*). Depending on the path each person has chosen for themselves, this is different for every one of them (Tweed, 2011).

This research on the relationship between the Essence of the original, pure Buddha *Dhamma* and the basis for interpretivism sheds light on the issues and the essence of interpretivism, enabling researchers to be competent in their grasp of research objectives. It is noted that while the beginning of the phrase ‘pristine Buddha *Dhamma*’ and the various schools of Buddhism and the current form of Buddhism are the same, it should not be confused with the terminology used in generally practised Buddhism. Therefore, there are no restrictions or limitations for anyone, at any time or place, in the pure Buddha *Dhamma*. Without any limitations, it is applicable and inclusive of all inanimate objects, all beings, whether human or not, and all times and places. Therefore, pristine Buddha *Dhamma* can also be used to encode the authenticity of the study context, or the ‘*verstehen*’ and the ‘Ideal Type’ referred to by Max Weber in probing for the Realism of individual and social behaviour in a study context, and interpretivism can also be improved as a research methodology in social science.

The area of Buddhist studies is really very broad and yet has a lot of room for further investigation. Numerous Buddhist sources can be found in it, along with information from numerous other academic fields like history, culture, philosophy, archaeology, disciplines, and other disciplines. Theravada. *Mahayana Buddhism*. *Vajrayana* or *Tantrayana* combined with Buddhism. Buddhism rounds out the three Buddhist traditions that make up original Buddhism. Within these Buddhist traditions, comparative studies are still very much a possibility. We must conduct interreligious discussions across these Buddhist ethnicities because it is a current necessity. The nature of today's global civilisation is that Everything is coming together rather than falling apart. One of the key elements in fostering harmony and peace among traditional followers is religious integrity among the traditions. Comparative studies among the many Buddhist traditions can simply be conducted by research students in Buddhist studies to achieve. The researcher must let go of any preference for any certain *kind* of tradition, which is what is most significant and crucial in this regard. As the Buddha noted, as is seen above, it is indeed quite difficult to overcome our irrational tendencies toward religion. However, we are unable to make any kind of positive impact on the world as long as we let our irrational desires rule us. Both the variations and parallels among the various Buddhist traditions must be understood. As sincere researchers, we must refrain from making value judgments about whether one is better or worse than the other based on historical distinctions. We must be unbiased about the variations. Integrity in research requires objectivity. Unity in variety can be achieved through impartial study.

This study contributes to the growing body of knowledge on Buddhist philosophy by examining Buddhist thought from a methodological perspective rather than solely as a religious or ethical tradition. While previous research has primarily focused on Buddhist doctrines, meditation, or epistemology, this paper brings these dimensions together to explain how they collectively form a systematic approach to inquiry and knowledge generation. In doing so, it broadens the understanding of Buddhist methods of research within contemporary academic discourse.

The study also contributes by demonstrating that Buddhist principles such as critical inquiry, direct observation, logical reasoning, and experiential verification remain relevant to present-day qualitative and interdisciplinary research. It highlights that these principles can enrich research practices by encouraging intellectual openness, ethical responsibility, and reflective analysis. This perspective is particularly valuable in the social sciences,

humanities, peace studies, and philosophy, where understanding human experience is central to knowledge creation. Furthermore, the paper identifies important gaps in existing scholarship and offers an integrated analytical framework that connects classical Buddhist teachings with modern research methodology. By presenting Buddhist methods of research as a coherent and systematic framework, the study provides a foundation for future researchers interested in indigenous knowledge systems, comparative research methodologies, and alternative approaches to scientific inquiry. It is expected that this work will encourage further academic dialogue on the relevance of Buddhist philosophy in contemporary research and knowledge production.

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