

## Good Governance Principles in Buddhism for Business and Politics Administration

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### Abstract

*The objectives of this research were: 1) to study the principles of good governance in accordance with the rules and regulations of the office of the Thai Prime Minister; 2) to analyze Buddhist teachings related to the principles of good governance; and 3) to analyze the benefits of good governance principles in Buddhism for business and politics administration. This is a qualitative research. The researchers have studied and discovered the principles of good governance from Buddhist texts, books, documents, journals and related researches. The data were analyzed, discussed and presented in descriptive details along with analysis and recommendation per each aspect. The results of the research were found that: 1. The principles of good governance comprised of 6 important components: 1) Rule of law: enacting law, rule and regulation which are update, fair and just to everyone with equal implementation without discrimination. 2) Merit: praising virtue and merit; adhering to the rightness and goodness; and encouraging government officials and people to have honesty, sincerity, diligence, patience, discipline, and perform trustworthy occupations and professions. 3) Transparency: creating trust among each other by improving working mechanism of each person and organization to be transparent by revealing information straightforwardly, and providing ease to people in accessing the information. 4) Participation: Providing opportunities to people to participate, express ideas, set up plan and policy, and make decision on important issues. 5) Accountability: paying attention to public problems; placing importance on right, duty and social responsibility as well as having braveness to accept the results of his or her own conduct. 6) Economy: using limited resources for the great benefits; encouraging people not to spend luxurious life, and knowing to save and use resources worthily. 2. The principles of good governance in Buddhism can be presented as follows: 1) Rule of law: The Buddha enacted discipline with equity and fairness without discrimination; all Buddhist people have to practice in the same rule and discipline equally. 2) Merit: Buddhism praises merit and virtue more than other things. There are many Buddhist teachings related to good governance which can be presented as Dasarajadhamma or the tenfold code of the king or virtues of the ruler. 3) Transparency: Buddhism encourages Buddhist people to practice in the rule and discipline to be transparent by having good conduct in action, good conduct in word, and good conduct in thought. 4) Participation: Buddhism places great importance on participation; this can be seen in Aparihaniyadhamma, which means the principles leading never to decline but only to prosperity. 5) Accountability: Buddhism teaches that everyone is born with duty and responsibility to themselves, to their relatives and society; everyone has to be responsible for his or her own conduct. 6) Economy: Buddhism teaches people to use resources with saving and worthiness such as the principle of moderation*

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*(Mattannuta) which suggests people to have moderation, temperance, and sense of proportion in spending resources. 3. Good governance principles in Buddhism have great benefits for business and politics administration as follows: in terms of governance, good governance principles in Buddhism can help to improve the governance to have good discipline and regularity, eliminate misconduct and corruption. In terms of economy, good governance principles in Buddhism can generate fairness and equity in carrying on an occupation, and improve right and freedom in doing business with knowledge and capability. In terms of society, good governance principles in Buddhism can support and encourage the society to live with happiness and peace, create social equity and integrity, improve human right, and build society to have harmony and unity.*

**Keywords:** *Good governance, Buddhism, business, politics, administration.*

## **Introduction**

Good governance is a crucial approach to the development of communities, societies, and countries, fostering sustainable progress and creating resilience for the long term. Establishing the governance principles of a state requires an efficient public administration system that operates within the bounds of the law and transparent policies. Reforms should be undertaken to ensure proper management based on reasoning and responsibilities, with an effective financial accountability system in place. The public sector's expertise should be enhanced, and the roles of private organizations and civil society in promoting good governance involve uniting citizens against corruption and misconduct. Today, it is believed that by applying the principles of good governance in both public and private sectors, and within society, the country can achieve sustainable and prosperous governance. This contributes to social, economic, and political justice as stated by Channuwong (2018) and Channuwong et al. (2017). They emphasize that good governance leads to ethical, transparent, just, and responsible management, encouraging public participation and ensuring the organization's advancement in a stable and sustainable manner.

In Buddhism, good governance involves ruling based on moral principles. The text from the Dhammasattha states, 'The righteous sovereign, ruling with righteousness alone, reveres righteousness, practices righteousness, pays homage to righteousness, glorifies righteousness, and governs with righteousness. He manages, protects, and safeguards his subjects within the bounds of righteousness' (Anguttaranikaya 22/133/215, Mahamakut Buddhist University, 1982). The principles of good governance in Buddhism emphasize the virtues and moral conduct of leaders, promoting exemplary behavior characterized by honesty, integrity, moral strength, compassion, responsibility, and assistance to the people for their happiness.

Thailand has a long history of embracing Buddhism, and the principles of good governance in line with Buddhist teachings are evident in various scriptures such as the Tripitaka and numerous moral codes. However, there is a lack of analysis and application for the benefit of organizational, societal, and national development. Therefore, researchers are interested in studying and analyzing the principles of good governance according to Buddhist teachings.

## **Research Objectives**

1. To study the principles of good governance in accordance with the rules and regulations of the office of the Thai Prime Minister
2. To analyze Buddhist teachings related to the principles of good governance

3. To analyze the benefits of good governance principles in Buddhism for business and politics administration.

## Research Methodology

This research is a qualitative documentary study, and the research methodology is outlined as follows:

1. Collect and compile teachings on good governance from the scriptures related to the management of local communities and societies in Buddhism, namely the Thai versions of the Tripitaka from Mahamakut Buddhist University (1982) and Mahachulalongkornrajavidyalaya University (1996).
2. Gather teachings on good governance from secondary data sources, including books, articles, research papers, literature, and theses related to effective management of local communities and societies.
3. Based on data and details obtained from primary and secondary sources, the research study, analyze, and synthesize the principles of good governance according to the regulations of the Prime Minister's Office, which cover six aspects: Rule of law, merit, transparency, participation, accountability and economy aligned with Buddhist teachings. The researcher will present the research findings in a descriptive analysis format.

## Research Findings

The researcher summarizes the research findings according to the objectives of the study as follows:

1. The Principles of Good Governance in accordance with the Rules and Regulations of the Office of the Thai Prime Minister

The research findings indicate that the principles of good governance are fundamental concepts that reflect the efficiency and effectiveness of modern management. They serve as mechanisms for control, monitoring, and inspection to ensure transparency in administration and prevent harm to organizational management. This framework acts as a safeguard for all sectors, including the public and private sectors, as well as the economic and social sectors, enabling adaptability to internal and external changes. The principles of good governance consist of six key elements, as follows:

- (1) Rule of Law: This concept involves the idea of legislating fairly for equal treatment of all parties under the law. It aims to protect rights and freedoms, ensuring that laws are contemporary, accepted by society, and contribute to the peace and well-being of the community
- (2) Merit: This concept focuses on righteousness, goodness, honesty, integrity, selflessness, patience, diligence, discipline, orderliness, courage, moderation, and justice.
- (3) Transparency Principles: This idea revolves around disclosing information transparently, allowing for easy inspection. It includes public access to information, clear workflow processes, efficient work procedures, internal and external audit committees, and trustworthiness.
- (4) Participation: This concept emphasizes the involvement of the public in decision-making on crucial societal issues. It includes avenues for public participation in setting goals, decision-making, problem-solving, and driving change.
- (5) Accountability: This principle is about fulfilling assigned duties, accepting both positive and negative consequences of actions, taking responsibility for the tasks assigned, responsibility towards the public, and responsibility for the overall benefits.

(6) Economy: This principle involves using resources efficiently, budgeting resource usage, focusing on efficiency and effectiveness, and sustaining natural resources for long-term benefits to the community (Uwanno, 1999; Channuwong, 2018; Sirathanakul et al., 2023).

## 2. Buddhist Teachings Related to the Principles of Good Governance

The principles of good governance in Buddhism can be presented as follows

(1) Rule of law: The term that closely corresponds to the meaning is "Vinaya," which translates to "discipline" in Buddhism. In Buddhism, Vinaya refers to the organized establishment of systematic structures within a community or society, aiming for individuals to coexist with good living and harmonious relationships. Vinaya also includes another closely related term known as "Vinaya Bhāṇavāra," which refers to the rules established by the Buddha for the Sangha, or the monastic community. These rules were promulgated by the Buddha based on the circumstances that arose, with impartiality and without discrimination. All monks, regardless of their individual backgrounds, are obliged to follow the principles of Vinaya equally. The purpose of promulgating Vinaya includes ten aspects: 1) For the comfort of the excellence of the unanimous Order. 2) For the comfort of the Order. 3) For the control of shameless persons 4) For the living in comfort of well-behaved monks 5) For the restraint of the cankers in the present; for the prevention of temporal decay and troubles 6) For warding off the cankers in the hereafter; for protection against spiritual decay and troubles 7) For the confidence of those who have not yet gained confidence 8) For the increase of the confidence of the confident 9) For the lastingness of the true doctrine 10) For the support of the discipline (Mahamakut Buddhist University, 1982)

(2) Merit: The meritorious principles in Buddhism are the most crucial guidelines in the Buddhist teachings. Lord Buddha highly respected and upheld Dharma, considering them greater than any other virtue, as it prevents individuals from falling into immoral circumstances. Dharma can purify the mind from desires and delusions. Even in the realm of governance, leaders who adhere to Dharma are respected by both subordinates and the entire populace. Virtuous leaders contribute to the happiness and prosperity of the country, fostering tranquility and freedom from oppression, creating a thriving and flourishing society. There are ten principles for leaders in Buddhism (Dasavidha-rājadhama), as stated by Lord Buddha, encompass various aspects, are as follows: 1. Dāna (charity) — being prepared to sacrifice one's own pleasure for the well-being of the public, such as giving away one's belongings or other things to support or assist others, including giving knowledge and serving public interests. 2. Sīla (morality) — practicing physical and mental morals and being a good example of others. 3. Pariccāga (altruism), being generous and avoiding selfishness, practicing altruism. 4. Ājjava (honesty) — being honest and sincere towards others, performing one's duties with loyalty and sincerity to others 5. Maddava (gentleness) — having gentle temperament, avoiding arrogance and never defaming others. 6. Tapa (self-controlling) — destroying passion and performing duties without indolence. 7. Akkodha (non-anger) — being free from hatred and remaining calm in the midst of confusion. 8. Avihimsa (non-violence) — exercising non-violence, not being vengeful. 9. Khanti (forbearance) — practicing patience and trembling to serve public interests. 10. Avirodhana (uprightness) — respecting opinions of other persons, avoiding prejudice and promoting public peace and order (Payutto, 2015)

(3) Transparency: The fundamental principle of transparency in Buddhism emphasizes personal conduct, considering individuals with unethical behavior as those who tend to conceal their wrongdoings out of fear of others' disdain or exposure. On the other hand, individuals with virtuous conduct are considered dignified, free from deceptive behavior, and capable of openly revealing their actions and information. Transparency can be measured through the practice of three aspects of actions: 1) Bodily Action (Kayakamma):

This refers to ethical conduct in actions, including: (1) Abstaining from taking life, (2) Abstaining from taking other people's properties, (3) Abstaining from sexual misconduct; 2) Verbal Actions (Vajikamma): This involves ethical conduct in speech, including: (1) Abstaining from false speech. (2) Abstaining from divisive speech. (3) Abstaining from harsh speech. (4) Abstaining from idle chatter. 3) Mental Action (Manokamma): This pertains to ethical conduct in the mind, including: (1) Not coveting others' possessions, (2) Not harboring ill will towards others, (3) Having a mind free from bias and prejudice, and in line with the moral code. These ethical practices, collectively known as "Kusalakammabhatta" or paths of wholesome karma, lead towards the attainment of ten wholesome results. These principles are derived from the Tripitaka (Dīghanikāya, 11/359/284, Mahamakut Buddhist University, 1982) and are referenced in the works of Payutto (2015).

(4) Participation: The principle of participation in Buddhism emphasizes the significance of individual conduct. Buddhism places great importance on active participation as it generates the power for creation and development. In order to govern a country for prosperity, collaboration from all sectors is essential. No single individual can lead a nation to prosperity alone. Therefore, the active involvement of the entire population is crucial. Buddhism also teaches the importance of readiness and participation in community affairs. For instance, the Buddhist scriptures state, "Harmony, unity, and readiness bring happiness to the community" (Itivuttaka 25/238, Mahamakut Buddhist University, 1982). Additionally, the Seven Conditions of Welfare (Satta Aparihani Dhamma) emphasize the involvement of the entire community in decision-making which is a foundation towards prosperity for both community members and administrators. The Seven Conditions of Welfare are (1) as long as the Vajjian people meet frequently and hold many meetings; (2) as long as they meet together in unity, rise in unity and perform their duties in unity; (3) as long as they enact nothing not enacted, abrogate nothing that has already been enacted, act in accordance with the already established ancient Vajjian principles; (4) as long as they support, respect, venerate and honor the Vajjian elders, and pay regard to their worthy speech; (5) as long as no women or girls of their families are detained by force or abduction; (6) as long as they support, respect, venerate, honor those objects of worship – internal and external – and do not neglect those righteous ceremonies held before; (7) as long as the rightful protection, defense and support for the Arahants shall be provided by the Vajjian people so that Arahants who have not come may enter the realm and those who have entered the realm may live in peace – so long may the Vajjian people be expected not to decline, but to prosper (Dīghanikāya 10/131-144/78-89, Mahamakut Buddhist University, 1982; Payutto, 2015). Buddhism teaches that the Seven Conditions of Welfare (Sapta Aparihani Dhamma) serves as a guideline for community participation in establishing rules and regulations for communal living and social governance. It allows people in society or communities to express their opinions on governance, fostering unity within the community.

(5) Accountability: The principle of accountability in Buddhism holds that every human being is born with the responsibility towards their own lives and possessions, as well as the lives and possessions of others. Therefore, there are teachings on various duties that individuals must fulfill. Every person is born with the duty to benefit themselves, benefit others, and, particularly, engage in acts of generosity and charity. Buddhism therefore emphasizes the responsibility of leaders towards the lives and possessions of the citizens. The principle of responsibility includes being aware of duties, having a sense of responsibility towards society, paying attention to public issues, and being proactive in problem-solving. It also involves respecting diverse opinions and having the courage to accept the consequences of one's actions. The teachings on kamma (actions) and their consequences are significant in emphasizing individual responsibility for the results of their actions. The Twelve Duties of the Administrators (Cakkatvatti-Dharmas) further highlight the responsibility of rulers towards their subjects. These virtues include: 1) Providing for the welfare and well-being of people within and outside the realm, without neglect, 2)

Establishing friendly relations with other countries. 3) Taking care of the royal family, 4) Supporting the Sangha clergy (monastic community), government officials, and city dwellers, 5) Providing for the rural population, 6) Supporting virtuous religious individuals (Brahmins, monastic communities), 7) Preserving herds of cattle, birds, and wildlife from extinction, 8) Prohibiting the populace from engaging in immoral behavior and disciplining them by setting a good example, 9) Caring for the destitute to prevent them from committing crimes and dishonest acts to the society, 10) Approaching virtuous individuals to learn about merit and demerit, practicing charity, and abstaining from vices, 11) Restraining desires from reaching places where the king should not visit. 12) Suppressing greed and preventing the pursuit of undeserved gains (Aṅguttaranikāya 23/21-31/31-48; Dīghanikāya. 3/46, cited Payutto, 2015).

(6) Economy: The principle of economy in Buddhism is emphasized through teachings that encourage moderation (Mattaṅgaṇa) and resourcefulness, discouraging extravagance and attachment to material possessions. The monastic community in Buddhism serves as an exemplary society that relies on minimal material possessions, training monks to dedicate their time and energy to activities related to spiritual development rather than being preoccupied with acquiring material wealth. The Buddhist monastic life embodies simplicity by adhering to the principle of living an uncomplicated existence, sustaining life with the minimum essentials. Even though the monastic community relies on the bare necessities, they lead a beautiful and content life by living an economically sustainable life is guided by the principle of simplicity, relying on the Four Requisites and using wisdom in consumption. As taught by the Buddha, consideration of the Four Requisites involves careful evaluation before consumption. The principles include: 1. Clothing (Cīvara): Monks should consider clothing with the intention of providing adequate protection against cold, heat, insects, wind, and sunlight, without indulging in vanity; 2. Food (Pindapāta): Monks should consider food with the intention of sustaining the body for the purpose of leading a virtuous life. The focus is on preventing the arising of craving for new and luxurious food; 3. Shelter (Senāsana): Monks should consider dwelling places with the intention of providing protection against the elements (heat, cold, insects, wind, and sunlight) and avoiding discomfort; 4. Medicine (Bhesajja): Monks should consider medicine with the intention of using it for the treatment of illnesses that arise naturally, without indulging in excessive use or dependency (Majjhimanikāya, Thai 12/23/22-23 Mahachulalongkornrajavidyalaya University, 1996; Vinaya 4/87/106, Mahamakut Buddhist University, 1982).

### 3. Good Governance Principles in Buddhism for the Benefits of Business and Politics Administration

Good governance principles in Buddhism provide benefits and values for business and politics administration in the aspects of governance, economy and society as follows:

(1) Governance: Good governance in line with Buddhist teachings contributes to the establishment of a management system that emphasizes moral principles, righteousness, compassion, justice, and community harmony. It helps create an organized and orderly governance system, addressing issues of corruption and nepotism. The rule of law in the Buddhist context lead to the creation of governance characterized by orderliness and fairness. The ethical principles were outlined by the Buddha, devoid of bias or prejudice, which require those who wish to be ordained as a Buddhist monk to adhere to the same ethical standards without exception.

(2) Economy: Good governance in line with Buddhist teachings promotes virtuous livelihoods, free from exploitation and inequality. They foster justice and equality in professions, encouraging individual rights and freedoms in conducting business based on knowledge and abilities. Ethical values contribute to a virtuous and compassionate society, promoting professions that are free from exploitation. These principles cultivate compassion, mutual support, generosity, and sharing, as evident in the Dasavidha-



rājadhamma. Charity, known as "dāna," emphasizes sharing and providing assistance to others. Morality, or "sīla," involves ethical conduct in both speech and actions, abstaining from killing, stealing, lying, and substance abuse. When individuals and communities adhere to these ethical principles, it ensures the well-being and care of life, property, and relationships of others. "Pariccāga" refers to selfless donation for the common good, including public benefits without seeking personal gain. This practice helps promote a sense of community and discourages self-centered actions. Moreover, "Ājjava" represents integrity, fostering trust among individuals engaged in business and professions. It encourages ethical conduct, free from deception and fraud, which sustains long-term profitability and prosperity in business. In this matter, Lueangumpol and Limaroon (2015) stated that administrators play a crucial role in developing morality and ethics in terms of honesty, transparency, self-sacrifice, compassion, and frugality. Administrators should also serve as good examples for those under their command. The development of morality should go hand in hand with material development because morality is the foundation of prosperity, stability, and the well-being of individuals, society, and the nation.

(3) Society: In the social aspect, good governance in accordance with Buddhist teachings help shape individuals in society to be compassionate, supportive, and promote a happy and peaceful community. It fosters equality, advocates for human rights, and creates a society with unity and mutual understanding. A society with morality tends to be one with a humane spirit, compassion, and a culture of sharing. The moral principles contribute to building a society with peace and happiness, free from discrimination and conflicts. The principles of good governance at the household, community, and societal levels in Buddhism help promote a society with four moral foundations, namely: Metta (Loving-kindness): The attitude of love and desire for the well-being of others, thinking of benefiting others; Karuna (Compassion): Sympathy and willingness to help others alleviate suffering or difficulties they may face; Mudita (Sympathetic Joy): Feeling joy when others are prosperous, without jealousy or resentment towards their success; Upekkha (Equanimity): Maintaining a balanced mind, treating others fairly without bias in all four aspects. These principles align with the research findings Channuwong and Rusksat (2022) and Sisakhiran (1998) who found that ethical and moral principles help government officials to have love, solidarity, empathy, and mutual assistance both within and outside their organizations.

## Discussion and Conclusion

Good governance is a principle and concept reflecting the effectiveness and efficiency of modern management in continuous development. This is relevant to a study of Kwanmuang (2005) who found that good governance is the guiding philosophy for managing households, communities, and societies with efficiency and effectiveness, leading towards sustainable national development. It also corresponds to the sufficiency economy philosophy of King Rama IX, emphasizing moderation, reasonableness, and resilience. Good governance is crucial in Buddhist way of life, promoting a harmonious and just society with a balanced and ethical life

Good governance results in a society capable of living together harmoniously and justly, and wielding authority in the administration of the country with strength, efficiency, quality, transparency, fairness, justice, and accountability. This leads to the development of the nation in a stable, sustainable, and stable manner, aligning with the Center for Ethics of Private Organization (2012), defining good governance as the management of households, organizations, institutions, or businesses with honesty, transparency, auditable accountability, fairness, justice, quality, efficiency, and moral standards (Channuwong, 2018). These principles contribute to a robust democratic foundation, legal integrity, efficient and transparent governance structures, and ultimately to the nation's prosperity. Chaicharoenwattana and Lee (2011) stated that good governance fulfills the role of a

mechanism, tool, and interconnected approach in the economic, social, and political sectors. It emphasizes the importance of fostering collaboration from the government, private sector, and civil society to establish a strong democratic system, legal integrity, efficient governance, transparency, and accountability, leading to sustainable national development.

The principles of the rule of law in line with Buddhist teachings help promote righteousness, justice, and equality in the formulation and enforcement of laws. This is in accordance with the philosophy of Tansiri (2009) who stated that good legislation should be based on righteousness, ethical values, reasonability, justice, and equality in enforcement, ensuring the protection of rights and freedoms of the people. The moral principles in Buddhism contribute to the development of individuals and society in a peaceful manner, free from discrimination, promoting empathy, self-awareness, and justice. These principles align with the ideas presented by Kæwpijit (2006), outlining the four virtues of Aristotle: prudence, justice, fortitude, and temperance. The emphasis on transparency in Buddhism creates trust and credibility in society, in line with the thoughts of Kæwpijit (2006), highlighting that transparency is a crucial tool in building confidence and trust. This enables government agencies to manage operations efficiently and effectively, preventing corruption and collusion in both public and private sectors.

The principle of participation in Buddhism helps create a society with love, solidarity, and opportunities for citizens to participate in planning, expressing opinions, and deciding on the organization's crucial policies. This corresponds to the concept of Harnphanich et al. (2023) and Nawikan (1997), stating that participation provides opportunities for people or those under authority to express opinions and participate in decision-making on the organization's critical policies. This helps generate more benefits for the organization than decisions made solely by the management.

The principle of accountability in Buddhism aids in making individuals accountable for their duties and the consequences of their actions. The principles of economy in Buddhism help people understand moderation in consumption and the use of resources. This aligns with the teachings of King Bhumibol Adulyadej, emphasizing that frugality is a fundamental guarantee for the well-being of frugal individuals and families, preventing shortages in the future, benefiting not only the savers but also the nation as a whole (Amarin Publishing, 2013).

## **Recommendations**

### **Recommendations for an Implementation**

Based on the research on the analysis of good governance according to Buddhist teachings, the following policy recommendations are proposed for practical implementation:

- (1) The government should promote public education on rules, regulations, and laws to empower citizens to act responsibly. Legal enforcement should consider the principle of equality.
- (2) The government should encourage citizens to appreciate the importance of ethics and morality to instill compassion, diligence, patience, and discipline.
- (3) The government should encourage citizens to uphold honesty, transparency, accountability, reject bribes, nepotism and to act selflessly without bias, prioritizing the common good.
- (4) Given the materialistic and consumer-oriented nature of Thai society, measures should be taken to address issues of debt and overspending. Promote the philosophy of economic self-sufficiency to instill reasonableness, frugality, and resilience, leading to sustainable development.



### Recommendations for Future Research

Based on the study of good governance principles according to Buddhist teachings, the researchers would like to suggest the following for future research:

- (1) Future research should be conducted on the application of good governance according to Buddhist teachings in both public and private sector organizations, accompanied by in-depth interviews to gather comprehensive data.
- (2) There should be future study about the opinions of employees regarding factors influencing the application of good governance based on Buddhist teachings in both public and private sector organizations.

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