

Abstract

The analysis and comparison of the conception of justice in John Rawls' works and in Buddhism found that Rawls' conception of justice has more details more than the conception of justice in Buddhism. Although Buddhism has no clear conception of justice, Rawls's conception and Buddhist doctrines have some important features of justice which are similar and different as follows:

Rights, liberty and equality are the major elements of justice in Rawls' works and in Buddhism. Both accepts that human being is free and equal moral persons and the virtue of justice is an intrinsic good. Buddhism has moral principles of rights, duties and social practice and also encourages individuals to develop their reasoning called wisdom and accepts moral motivation by the four noble sentiments. Rawls does not accept moral sentiments, he accepts only justification based on reasons. Rawls' principles of justice give the priority to liberty over equality. Then, inequalities are acceptable unless there are no mutual advantages from social cooperation. The purpose of justice as fairness is to give a fair distribution, not an equal distribution. Buddhism reflects the concept of fair distribution by reciprocity among individuals. Justification in Rawls' conception of justice represents a higher order of abstraction in the traditional theory of the social contract. Since justification in the Buddhist conception of justice is based on natural laws, it has a meaning as moral desert and possesses the characteristic as fairness. Rawls does not accept naturalism but only justice proceeding from some consensus. However, political justice in Buddhism is established from a real social contract which the government has duties and obligations by using Dhamma in providing political and economic justice in order to have a sustainable and peaceful society. Therefore, Buddhism is compatible with a liberal democratic society which, in Rawls' opinion, is a just liberal society having the maximum of justice.