

Right View on Sustainability

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Abstract

This paper explores the fundamental concept of sustainability and its relationship to right vision. Recognizing that a comprehensive understanding of sustainability necessitates a precise understanding of right vision, the researchers direct their focus to unraveling the essence of this concept. Drawing upon insights from Buddhist philosophy, the study highlights the interconnectedness between sustainability, simplicity, and detachment from excessive desires. It proposes that sustainability can be defined as the natural manifestation of Ariya qualities, guided by right vision. The study examines the cause-and-effect chain leading to overconsumption and scarcity of resources, emphasizing the need to address the attachment to extra wants. Insights from various scholars and research studies support the significance of simplicity and non-violence in achieving sustainability. The implications of this research extend to academia, policymakers, and society, emphasizing the importance of promoting sustainable lifestyles and integrating sustainable development goals into policy frameworks. By embracing simplicity and right vision, individuals can contribute to a more balanced and harmonious relationship with the environment. This paper provides a valuable perspective on redefining sustainability and offers insights for future research and practical applications in the pursuit of a sustainable future.

Keywords: Cause and Effect, Park, Recreation, Right View, Sustainability

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1. Introduction

The concept of sustainability has been widely discussed and researched in various fields. This paper represents another step in a long journey to find the root definition of sustainability. The researchers themselves embarked on this journey, initially attempting to derive the definition of the definition itself. Their exploration led them to the understanding that the definition should be derived from the term considered through the wisdom of Nirukti (K Jayantha, et al., 2022). Building upon this foundation, they further sought to uncover the root definition of sustainability using the same verse and the knowledge of Nirukti. Through their diligent efforts, they arrived at the realization that the root definition of sustainability is "letting to open Ariya qualities naturally" (K Jayantha et al., 2020).

However, a question emerged regarding the nature of Ariya qualities. In response, the researchers turned their attention to understanding what Ariya qualities truly entail. This subsequent endeavor proved fruitful, as they discovered that Ariya qualities refer to right vision (K Jayantha, et al., 2021). Recognizing that a comprehensive understanding of sustainability necessitates a precise comprehension of right vision, they directed their focus to unraveling the essence of this concept, which is the primary objective of this paper.

By delving deeper into the notion of sustainability and its foundational elements, this study aims to contribute to the ongoing discourse on sustainability. The researchers firmly believe that by uncovering the true essence of sustainability and understanding the significance of right vision, they can offer valuable insights into the concept and its practical application.

1.1 The study objectives and research questions are as follows:

1. to understand the right view leading to identify the closest cause of a problem.
2. to understand the right view leading to identify the root cause of a problem.
3. to understand the right view to demolish the root cause.
4. to identify the right view on steps that need to be taken to demolish the root cause.
5. to develop a definition for the concept of sustainability based on the right view.

1.2 Initially, answers were explored to the questions in brief:

1. What is meant by sustainability?
2. What is being addressed by sustainability?
3. And what are the existing criticisms of sustainability?

2. Definition of sustainability

The concept on sustainability and sustainable development of the environment became a major concern through the Brundtland Report in 1987. Sustainability means that the needs of the present will be fulfilled without adversely affecting future generations (Jarvie, 2011; Kono, 2014; Thomsen, 2013a; Visser & Brundtland, 2013). Many literary sources have followed the same definition or the same context of the Brundtland report to elaborate on sustainability (Mensah, 2019). Ultimately, the idea of sustainability must be the balance between the requirements of stewardship and a better quality of life (Kuhlman & Farrington, 2010). Therefore, it says reconciling these two is sustainable (Kuhlman & Farrington, 2010). Additionally, sustainability is defined as the ability to do little or no damage to the environment, and endure over a long time (Cambridge Dictionary, 2021). This description by the Cambridge Dictionary is consistent with other definitions. However, the Cambridge Dictionary defines the concept based on environmental science and it indicates an ecological balance in the long run. It is difficult to find considerably different meanings in relation to sustainability than wording they use (Kaiser et al., 2021; Towers, n.d.). Most probably, the majority mentions, almost the same idea, being specific to the field they belong to.

2.1 Historical view of sustainability

The history of the concept of sustainability seems to be lacking one opinion. The word "sustainably" or "*Nachhaltigkeit*" first appeared in 1713 (Wilderer, 2007). Researchers point out that the concept of sustainability originated in forests (Wiersum, 2004; Wiersum, 1995). According to Wiersum (1995), sustainability means not harvesting beyond the limits of forest growth. Some scholars even describe this concept as older. The effort of those scholars was to connect this concept with Paleolithic era and the scholars say protecting natural resources for the future should be everlasting (Muñoz et al., 2019). Paleolithic ancestors adapted their lifestyle to protect natural resources (Henke et al., 2007). Similarly, early farmers also took measures to protect the soils'

fertility. Traditional beliefs were carefully passed down to future generations to protect the soil and natural resources. A Nigerian tribal chief once said that ‘many people have died, few are alive, and countless others unborn’ (Ike, 1984; Oshio, 1990) . When considering historical perspectives, it is still hard to see any differences within their ideology on sustainability. It appears that they believed sustainability as something the man should do. Actually, can that be true?

2.2 Criticisms on Sustainability

Some accepted and some did not accept the definitions presented on sustainability. There are criticisms of this concept. Many critics say, a better lifestyle and protecting natural resources cannot be satisfied simultaneously. For instance, World Commission on Environment, (1987) pointed out that the problem for Brundtland and colleagues was how to reconcile people's pursuit for better lifestyles with the limitations of natural resource s and environmental degradation simultaneously. According to the Brundtland Report, the Brundtland commission aimed to integrate two different concepts at once: development and environment. In other words, the commission was trying to match short-term and long-term needs and limited resources. However, the concept of sustainability today, is mostly focused on three dimensions such as social, economic and environmental (Purvis et al., 2019; Thomsen, 2013b) Particularly, according to the United Nations Agenda for Development. The management of these dimensions is known as sustainable development (Purvis et al., 2019; Thomsen, 2013b). However, scholars have pointed out that the concept of sustainability is poorly defined (Kuhlman & Farrington, 2010). Sustainability means that both natural and man-made resources are maintained at a minimum capacity for future generations (Mensah, 2019). Scholars point out that this definition of sustainability is unclear (Kuhlman & Farrington, 2010). They highlight the need for further clarification of this concept. They state that the definition of sustainability needs to be reconsidered. They suggest that the concepts of well-being and sustainability should be considered together. Critics further explain the contradictions in definitions of sustainability. (Kopnina et al., 2018; Purvis et al., 2019). However, it is not clear whether such criticisms are still within or outside the main ideology because their explanations line to human activity or human well-being. They maintain the main idea of using natural resources in a safe way to meet existing needs. The concept of sustainability that focuses

the current and future needs, along with the limited resources, creates a conflict: how practicable is the effort to preserve the current consumer needs and protect the future needs simultaneously? Can people become easily satisfied and not self-centered?

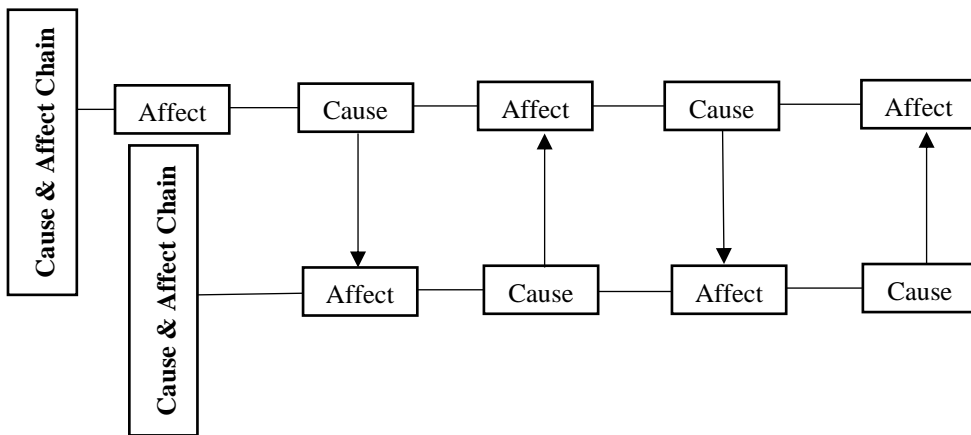
Therefore, various scholars and institutions have suggested various ways of addressing these issues. For example, some have suggested eco-friendly constructions. Many scholars have suggested the use of bamboo to promote sustainable construction (Manandhar et al., 2019; Nurdiah, 2016; Zea Escamilla & Habert, 2014). They emphasized the economic benefits that the community would experience because of bamboo-based constructions. This means that sustainable development can be achieved through eco-friendly products while maintaining economic expectations of the people. The aim was to make the production process environmentally friendly while-sustaining the existing consumption pattern. Some scholars have pointed out that sustainable construction should be introduced to tackle the air pollution caused by urbanization (Gan et al., 2015). However, the researchers propose that neither the constructions nor the urbanization are the problem, instead what has been missing due to urbanization or constructions, should be investigated. Some scholars seek to promote sustainable development by managing the resource overuse (Eisenmenger et al., 2020; Gupta & Vegelin, 2016). Creating a vision for sustainable development and planning the present and future consumption can be managed sustainably while meeting the needs of the growing global population (Hauschild, 2005, 2015). It is further proposed that the current requirements can be met within sustainable limits. The key here is to identify the current quota and consumption. The question that arises is whether the present share is sufficient to fill the present needs. These are just a few examples to demonstrate where the solutions are aimed to confirm the sustainability. However, it is necessary to reconsider whether these solutions are presented with the right vision.

2.3 Right View

The exploration on right view is basically a review of the cause-and-effect principle and the need of identifying this principle accurately is strongly proposed. A cause gives rise to a result or effect. Examining the result or effect as a coincidence does not help in identifying the actual underlying issue. It is essential to remember that finding an actual cause depends on to what extent

a problem is investigated based on the cause-and-effect chain (Bhattacharya, 1982; Cooper, 2014). One of the most appropriate methods for this is explained in the *Patichisamuppada* theory in Buddhist philosophy. According to the *sakaya nirukti* method of finding a definition *Patichisamuppada* is the corresponding generation of which willingly tied-up with something. (The *sakaya nirukti* method, which is used to find a definition, states that *Patichisamuppada* is the corresponding generation willingly linked to something). Thus, a picture could be drawn of cause-and-effect chain of something which willingly tied-up with another thing as shown in Figure 1.

Figure 1: Cause-and-Effect Chain



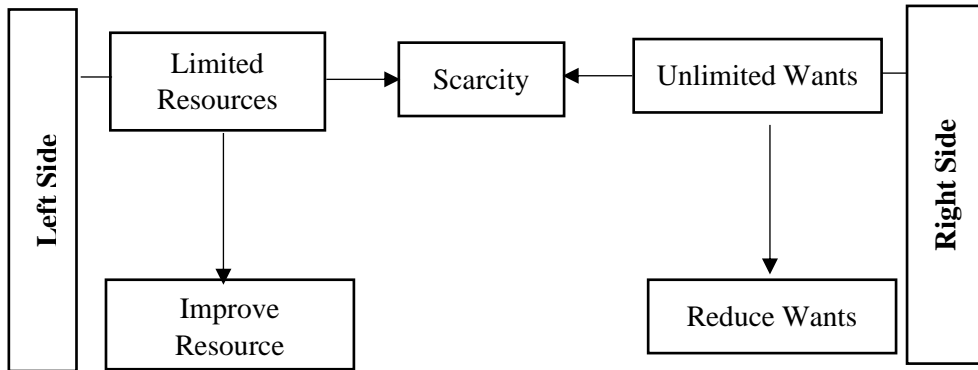
Source: Bhattacharya, 1982

The method of identifying the cause of the problem is lengthy. This process can be considered as an application of Right View that can be administrated to understand the order of the cause-and-effect relationships. To identify a correct answer, it is necessary to know the exact reason, which requires following the cause-and-effect chain. There is another side to this cause-and-effect. For instance, the cause of death can be anything such as an accident, sickness or committing suicide. There is a mechanism to treat these causes as well. Each of these immediate causes represents only surface observations. If there are people who would limit themselves to such kind of vision would be hindered by the ability to recognize the right view. In the aforementioned example, the cause of death was not correctly identified. The right reason must be birth (Ratanakul, 2004). In this way the cause must be understood correctly. That is called the Right View.

Now let us consider how the problems in world are identified and whether the provided sustainable solution is correct. Previously, it was discussed that a lack of resources has been identified as a major problem. Also, it was emphasized that the world tries to solve this problem of scarcity. The conflict that is being pointed out here is that the real issue is not the lack of resources. According to the theory of causation on the right view, there are two specific mistakes that can occur: not knowing the exact cause and not using the theory of cause-and-effect chain. Just as one identifies birth (based on the cause-and-effect chain) as the cause of the problem for death, it should be deeply discussed the factors affecting the scarcity of resource. Then only one will be able to evaluate whether the concept of sustainability is the right solution.

Economists commonly describe scarcity as a fundamental economic problem. For instance, argues that scarcity arises due to insufficient existing resources. Some others supportively say resource amenities have become scarcer (Krautkraemer, 2005). However, scarcity is not completely an economic problem. It occurs because of two immediate causes: 1. finite of resources and 2. the infinite wants (Chappelow, 2019; Krautkraemer, 2005). These two immediate causes are introduced as two-sides of a coin. In that sense, one side, wants represents socio-cultural factors. The economists consider only the other side of the coin: namely resources Economists research ways to use resources efficiently and effectively. Nevertheless, it is important for them to recognize that difficulty to change the existence of limited resources beyond a certain point and manage people's unlimited wants. Thus, it is evident that there are two immediate causes contributing to the problem of scarcity. Consequently, the next question arises: which immediate cause should be addressed? Scarcity arises from extra demand. People that extend beyond their basic needs. This consumer behavior leads to a high demand for resources. Wealthy nations fulfill their wants adequately while poorer nations-struggle to meet with their basic needs. In the pursuit of an over consuming lifestyle, resources are wasted at various stages, including production, transportation, and retention. For example, now it is vibrant that scarcity is caused by consumer behavior. Thus, it can be concluded that over-consuming lifestyle as the cause of scarcity. By carefully examining the problem based on the cause-and-effect theory, as initial level of causation can be understood as an over-consuming lifestyle that leads to scarcity. Figure 2 illustrates the factors influencing scarcity and highlights the main cause that requires attention.

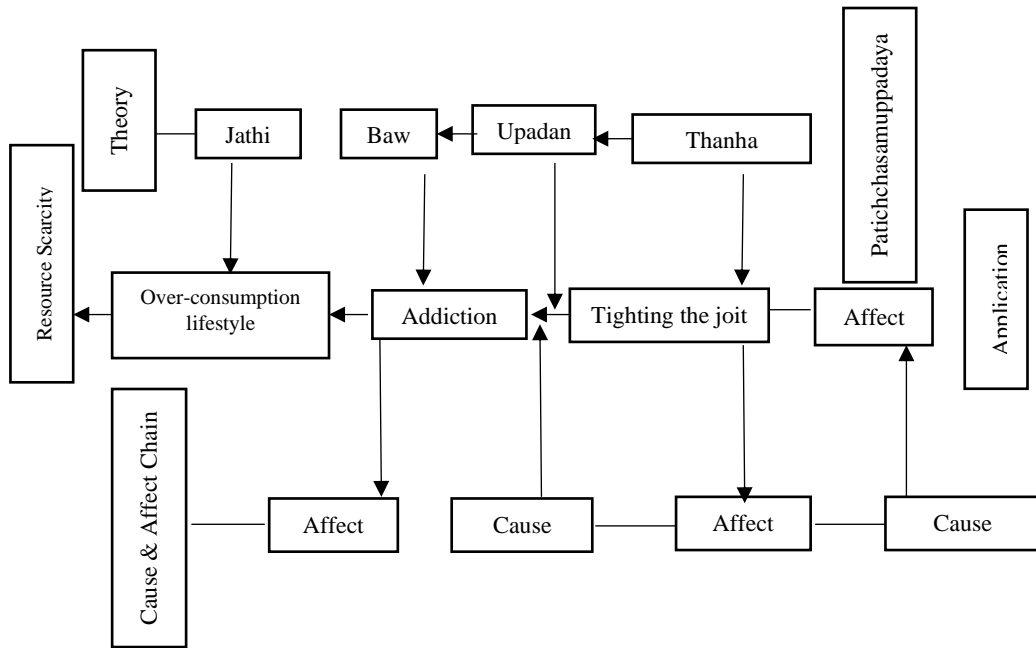
Figure 2: Factors influencing scarcity and main cause of scarcity



Source: Developed based on the literature and argument raised based on cause and affect theory

The real cause of scarcity has now been identified. Consequently; scarcity is the main problem while over-consumption lifestyle being the cause. In other words, the over-consumption lifestyle has led to the current problem of scarcity. If that is indeed the case, reducing over-consuming lifestyle should be considered as the solution to scarcity. Then, again the over-consumption lifestyle must be considered as the effect. At this stage, the over-consumption lifestyle is not the cause but the effect to delve deeper into understanding the reasons behind the over-consumption lifestyle, the principle of *patichcha samuppada* (willingly tied-up with something, here is a corresponding generate) can be applied. The theory says that the development of cause and effect occurs as a chain: "*thanha pathya upadaka* (the joining place to place, cause the tightening the association towards the same), *upadana pathya bawo* (tightening the association towards the same cause the accustomed to the tightened association) and *bawa pathya jathi* (accustomed to the tightened association cause the something generates according to accustomed)". Theory here is *Thanha* (attachment/ joining place to place), *Upadana* (tightening the association towards the same), *Bawa* (accustomed to the tightened association) and *Jathi* (something generates according to accustomed) are the sources of a problem (as shown in figure 3).

Figure 3: Way of happening the first joining and developing up to addiction



Source: Developed based on the literature and argument raised based on cause and affect

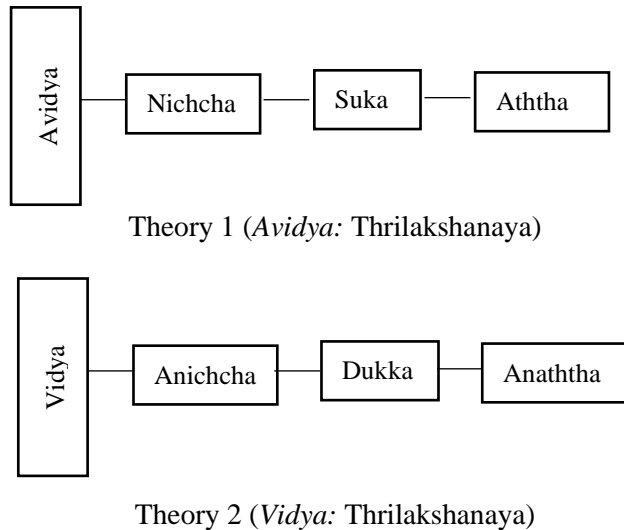
It is important to understand that the stages leading to development of over-consuming lifestyles are based on the theory. To gain further insight into this theory, studies related to drug addiction can be referred. Those studies explain stages leading to change of a person from a normal situation to an addicted position within a shorter period of time (Prochaska & Velicer, 1997). An addiction starts without a detailed plan (Helpguideorg International, 2021). Sometime stimulations of best friends (Bittar, 2018) and drug-abusing peers (Dusenbury, 1999; Gottfredson & Wilson, 2003; National Research Council, 1993) might be the triggering point of an addiction. Some scientists propose that the starting point of an addiction may be related to a biological reason such as alcoholic addicted family history (National Institute on Drug Abuse, 2011). Additionally, parental backing also may be a factor (Wills et al., 1996). Accordingly, addiction marks the beginning of a long chain that develops gradually. It can originate from simple reasons such as being exposed to peers those who are already addicted to drugs, or growing up in an environment where the drug use is common within a family, and the drug addiction would

remain over a longer period of time. This addiction would gradually motivate the people to escape from family and social responsibilities. Also, they would retard from social or recreational activities, and behave anti-socially (stealing and drug transportation) to buy drugs (Litin, 2018). These anti-social activities then become normalized behavior for them. This example illustrates how a behavioral pattern of a person can change. A behavioral change can start with a simple act influenced by their surroundings, without a deliberate and intentionally created plan. However, that simple act can evolve into a strong addiction over time and the extent of its impact varies from person to person and individual lifestyle choices. Likewise, this condition applies to the over-consumption lifestyle of a person. It is evident that the consumption of resources begins with a simple action. When that simple action continues, and the person is influenced by his/her surroundings simple actions would become complex as the wants of the people continuously grow.

3. How to overcome the attachments towards over-consuming lifestyle (Escaping from *thanha*)

It is convinced that the *thanha* or the excessive attachment towards something serves as the starting point of a problem. This is the root point, where a person should address in providing a solution to a problem. In other words, detaching from something is the solution to a problem. In Sinhala culture there is a saying: “remove anything from the root otherwise, it will be difficult to remove later”. Do not wait until something grows if you want to cut that thing. Cut that thing when it is possible for you to cut using your nails. Do not let that to grow and make yourself find an axe to cut it. Therefore, having the knowledge and awareness to identify a problem at an early stage make it easier to overcome. This can be understood via two Buddhist philosophical theories: 1. the attachment towards new wants would create problems (*Avidya*) and, 2. the understanding that detaching oneself from continuous pursuit of growing desires can lead to problem resolution (*Vidya*).

Figure 4: Theory of Overcoming "Joining or the Attachment"

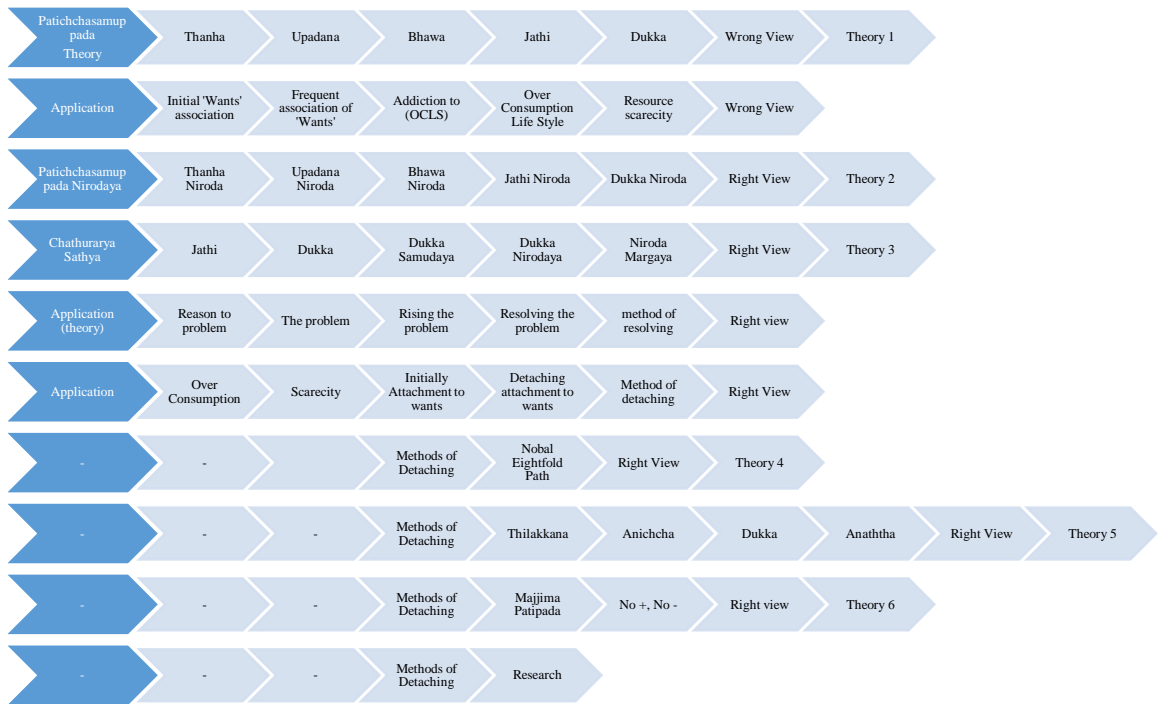


Source: Developed based on the literature and arguments raised based on cause-and-affect

According to the figure 4, theory 1 explains the reasons for a person joining with desires beyond his/ her basic needs. According to this theory, they basically think that they can fulfill all their desires definitely as it is (*Nichcha*). Therefore, they can live happily (*Suka*). This world is effective, and the happiness is definite in that sense (*Aththa*). Theory two explains the opposite ideology of theory one. According to Theory Two, one cannot maintain anything in the world as they wish. (*Anichcha*). If one wishes for all things to be aligned in order to fulfill their desires and then becomes attached to those desires, they will inevitably experience disappointment when those things are unable to fulfill their desired needs. (*Dukka*). Within such a background, if one tries to associate with the changing nature of things, one will understand that the change is a continuous happening and it is nature (*Anaththa*). Theory one explains the typical ideology of the person. However, the reality is the opposite of that ideology. Unless they are aware of the reality of the world, people would always try to fulfill their desires. They will not be convinced that such desires would never be able to fulfill. Therefore, if one can introduce the reality of the world (theory two), people will not try to make an attachment with such desires. In order to change the behavior of attachment towards extra wants one should come up with solutions to convince the *Vidya* theory because

people are in different mindsets and ideologies, and different strategies should be created in order to keep people away from the attachment to extra wants. Whatever the strategy is, the ultimate goal should be assist people in detaching themselves from extra wants.

Figure 5: Theory of Overcoming "Joining"



Source: Developed based on the discussion, 2022

One can obtain guidelines from medical research to develop detachment programs. For instance, enhance protective factors and reverse or reduce risk factors (Hawkins et al., 2014, 2002), changing attitudes and behaviors and compelling parental support (Wills et al., 1996), changing peers' behavior (Ashery et al., 1998; National Research Council, 1993), help changing aggressive behavior and poor self-control (Ialongo et al., 2001) implementing different programs for different age groups, gender groups, ethnic groups, cultural groups, and environments (Marsiglia et al., 2009; Moon et al., 1999). In addition to those attempts, the noble eightfold path, and theory of middle path (Bajželj, 2017; Compson & Monteiro, 2016) can be used. Those theories support detachment from unnecessary attachments on the materialistic things (Bajželj, 2017; Becker, 1998; Brown & Ryan, 2003; Compson & Monteiro,

2016; Conze, 1959; Wong, 2006). By understanding the reality and inability to maintain the desires as one wish, people would willingly change to a simple lifestyle which leads to decline the existing over-consumption lifestyle. All of these theories and their applications, which we have discussed so far, can be explained pictorially

3.1 Relationship with Other Research

There are many supportive ideologies for the ideas proposed in this study among academia worldwide. For example, Rafikov & Akhmetova (2019) recently pointed out the necessity of simplicity, spirituality, and universal values to remedy overconsumption. They were supported by Kenyalang (1999), who quoted Mahatma Gandhi's declaration: "the world has enough for everyone's needs, but not for everyone's greed." This idea is further defined by Bakshi (2012), who argues that it leads to the voluntary reduction of wants. Schumacher (1973) presented a very similar idea in his book "Small is Beautiful," emphasizing the importance of sustainable development and the limitations of excessive economic growth. Furthermore, several decades ago, scholars emphasized the importance of simplicity and non-violence (De Jong, 1980; Hession, 1986; Leonard, 2019; Weber, 1999). Research has also demonstrated that a simple lifestyle can lead to a higher level of life satisfaction (Boujbel & d'Astous, 2012; Leonard, 2019). Moreover, the consequences of overconsumption have driven many individuals to voluntarily change their lifestyles towards simplicity (Erdoğan & Karapınar, 2015). Consequently, transitioning from an over-consumption lifestyle to a simpler one can propel the world towards sustainability (Elgin, 2013).

4. Conclusion

It has been realized that the scarcity of resources is the primary problem at present. It was understood that over-consumption of resources is the cause of this problem. Furthermore, the study has revealed that the initial attachment to extra wants serves as the starting point for the development of an over-consuming lifestyle. Finally, it was theoretically proved that demolishing the initial attachment towards the extra wants would discourage the over-consuming lifestyle. Finally, the concept of sustainability was defended by suggesting that the sustainability is letting the right-view of people naturally open. This right view will be naturally emerging when the *vidya* of people is awoken. Then they will lose excessive attachments towards the wants. As

paths to the detachment, one would suggest few theories: the theory of *Thrilakshana* (joining for and detaching from something), *Noble Eightfold Path* (The Eight Ways of Leaving Something) and *Majjhima Patipada* (method of releasing from sticking and collision) and some other ways that can be found through research studies, which will be suited to different cultures and societies. As novel facts the nature of cause-and-effect chain and the significance of the need of understanding the root cause of any problem have been introduced.

5. Limitations and Future Directions

Despite the valuable insights provided in this study, it is important to acknowledge its limitations. First, the research focused primarily on theoretical perspectives and philosophical concepts, which may require further empirical validation and practical application. Future studies could explore the practical implementation of the proposed concepts and assess their effectiveness in real-world contexts.

Second, the scope of this study was limited to the exploration of the root definition of sustainability and its relationship to simplicity and right vision. While these concepts provide a solid foundation for understanding sustainability, there may be additional dimensions and factors that contribute to its comprehensive definition. Further research could delve into these aspects to provide a more holistic understanding of sustainability.

Additionally, the study primarily draws upon philosophical and academic literature, which may limit its accessibility to a broader audience. Future research could bridge the gap between theory and practice by investigating case studies, conducting surveys, or engaging with stakeholders to gain practical insights and perspectives.

6. Implications and Recommendations

The findings of this study have several implications for academia, policymakers, and society as a whole. Firstly, the recognition of simplicity as a fundamental aspect of sustainability can guide researchers and scholars in their investigations and discourse on sustainable development. It underscores the importance of promoting lifestyles that prioritize essential needs over excessive consumption, fostering environmental consciousness, and nurturing a sense of interconnectedness with the natural world.

For policymakers, understanding the root causes of overconsumption and the potential solutions offered by simplicity and right vision can inform the development of effective strategies and policies. This includes promoting sustainable consumption patterns, incentivizing eco-friendly practices, and integrating sustainable development goals into policy frameworks.

At the societal level, embracing simplicity and right vision can foster a shift in values and attitudes towards a more sustainable future. It encourages individuals to reassess their personal choices, adopt mindful consumption habits, and actively participate in creating a more balanced and harmonious relationship with the environment.

In summary, this study highlights the importance of simplicity and right vision in defining sustainability. While acknowledging the limitations of the current research, future studies should explore the practical applications, investigate additional dimensions of sustainability, and bridge the gap between theory and practice. The implications of this research emphasize the role of academia, policymakers, and society in promoting sustainable lifestyles and advancing the global agenda for a more sustainable future.

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