

The Buddhist Perspective of Interpretivism as a Philosophical Base for Social Science Research

MM Jayawardena¹, WAAK Amaratunga²

¹PhD (Colombo), MA (Peradeniya), BA Hons in Economics (Peradeniya), Dip in Psychology and Counselling (SLNIPC)

²MPhil (Kelaniya), MA in Linguistics (Kelaniya), BA Hons in English (Peradeniya), Faculty of Management, Social Sciences and Humanities, General Sir John Kotelawala Defence University, Sri Lanka

Abstract: *The practicability and the deliverability of research outcomes in social sciences have been rather questionable. In this context, interpretivism has become popular in social science research as it enables to capture more crucial qualitative information, which is based on inferences of sensory expressions rather than on direct information gathered through sensory organs. Although qualitative information cannot be numerically assessed, it is important in the deliverability of research outcomes. So, interpretivists believe that through a study of individual inferences, the reality of the research context can be better captured as it goes in-depth into the research issue while digging into the roots of individual human behaviour. Therefore, interpretivists argue that they can reach practicable outcomes that deliver a valid contribution at individual level as well as at societal level. On the other hand, some argue that as interpretivism does not have a constructive and strong theoretical base like in positivism, the research outcomes become subjective and less scientific. Addressing this criticism, Max Weber articulated "verstehen" (intuitive doctrine) and the "Ideal Type" referring to the society of the research context focused on by the researcher. As per Weber, it can be derived from the respective culture, religious beliefs, and traditions of the particular society. Based on this conceptual background, Weber has studied the Indian subcontinent referring to Hinduism, Buddhism and other cultures and beliefs as the "Ideal Type", and he has come to a conclusion that Marxism has neither been able to explain the Indian society, nor is it applicable to economic problems of the societies of the Indian subcontinent. However, Max Weber who sought for the "Ideal Type" of the Indian subcontinent was not able to penetrate the original and pristine Buddhist thoughts. Instead, he has based his theories on the erroneous and more mundane Buddhism, which is trapped with the consciousness of secular-centered aspirations of individuals and organizations. Therefore, Max Weber has apparently failed in deriving the real "verstehen" or the "Ideal Type" of the Indian subcontinent. Even though western philosophers including Max Weber and his followers have attempted to interpret the behaviour of individuals by addressing on "verstehen" and on the "Ideal Type" for which they have referred to interpretivism, they seem to have ended up with theoretical issues due to the failure in exploring the reality which is in essence beyond logic. Therefore, the authors argue in this paper that an in-depth analysis on pristine Buddha Dhamma can bridge this gap in interpretivism as a research methodology. Here, the authors propose that the pristine Buddha Dhamma (different from traditional Buddhism) enables the provision of a constructive theoretical base for interpretivism. As per the pristine Buddha Dhamma, the cause and effect, "Pattichcha Samuppāda" enables to explain the past, present and future of human action and behaviour through the individual's experiential knowledge (wisdom), which enables him or her to reach the different phases of cessation of suffering, starting from Sōthāpaththi. The paper discusses how pristine Buddha Dhamma could be used to clear out the theoretical issues of Max Weber's "verstehen" or the "Ideal Type" making it possible to reach practicable and deliverable research outcomes for social science problems.*

Keywords: Interpretivism, Human Behaviour, "verstehen", the "Ideal Type", Pristine Buddha Dhamma Experiential Knowledge, Pattichcha Samuppāda, Sōthāpaththi

1. Introduction

Positivism and interpretivism are the two main schools of thought that provide the philosophical bases of social science research. As per the Western teaching, positivism is precise as the positivist studies deal with the information that crosses the five senses. The outcomes of positivist analyses are open for retesting and can be continued with prospective changes in theory and practice. Therefore, positivism is straightforward and matched with natural sciences. Durkheim in his study on "suicide" suggested that social sciences also need to follow the same methodology used in natural sciences and should scientifically prove the validity of relevant research outcomes. Since then social sciences used positivism as well as interpretivism as the philosophical bases for social science research. In the meantime, many social science scholars argue that interpretivism is more important in social sciences as it helps to dig out the real meaning of social context on which the research is focused. Max Weber in the later years took the leadership in the interpretivist school. Karl Popper and Thomas Kuhn also contributed to clarify the philosophical

bases of social science research in the context of positivism as well as interpretivism and contributed to improve the rationale of social science research.

For natural sciences, the methodological problem has not been critical as laboratory experiments and field experiments of both theoretical and empirical research contexts match with positivism. Regarding social sciences, both positivism and interpretivism have not been fully agreeable to researchers as there have been theoretical and empirical issues with respect to the nature of the data, methods of collection of such data and the analyses. As per the literature, compared with positivism and natural sciences, the philosophical base of social sciences, social science related data, methods of collection and analyses of the data are not philosophically sound because of the nature of the social sciences. As per the literature review, interpretivism in nature is not precise, and therefore, the scenarios represented by social science data tend to lend themselves towards a confused dichotomy. In this background Max Weber became popular in his novel approach of collection and analysis of social science related data. As per Max Weber, the reality reflected by qualitative data is dependent

Volume 8 Issue 10, October 2019

www.ijsr.net

Licensed Under Creative Commons Attribution CC BY

upon the reading capability of the researcher or the interviewer regarding the perception, action, reaction and the sensory expression of the interviewee and the information of other elements in the research context. This capability of the interviewer or the researcher is identified as "verstehen" (a German word), which means the understanding and perceiving of something in another's point of view. Yet, the subjectivity of the individuals of the research scenario is a serious limitation in making conclusions as there is no philosophical or theoretical explanation regarding the term "verstehen" or the understanding in another's point of view. Therefore, it is needed to explore possible avenues to explain the theoretical bases of interpretivism.

2. The Research Problem and Its Justification

The theoretical base of research methodology in social sciences is rather indistinct when compared with that of natural sciences because of the indistinct nature of the human psyche and its impact on both individuals as well as society. This issue is more critical in social science research under interpretivism than under positivism. Interpretivism is crucial in certain social science research where qualitative engagement of the stakeholders of a research context is crucial in all stages of the research. The data and other information gathered for interpretive research are closely associated with the individual perception which is determined by the individual psyche of all the stakeholders of the specific research. Herein, western sciences have not been able to provide a clear picture of the human mind. Therefore, the data and information gathered for social science research are remote from the reality due to the issues of mind dimension that has led to the misreading of humanities and socio-economic & political entities. Under these circumstances, the logic biased research outcomes of social science research based on existing research methodology are being questionable. The eastern philosophy, especially the pristine Buddha *Dhamma* emphasized on mind related functions in searching for reality. As per original Buddha *Dhamma*, human mind is identified as the core of the human behaviour and wisdom. Therefore, based on pristine Buddha *Dhamma*, interpretivism can be explored in the face of the issues of social science research, and it can shed light on improving the validity and practicability of social science research. Therefore, the analysis of the behaviour of the mind, based on the original (pristine) Buddha *Dhamma* with the aim of shedding new light on the theoretical base of interpretivism would enable to improve the validity of social science research, especially the research based on qualitative information.

3. Research Questions

- 1) Is interpretivism able to capture the reality of the social science research context?¹

¹Research context can be defined as: "The circumstances that form the setting for an event, statement, or idea, and in terms of which it can be fully understood." Simple follow on questions might then be: What is the context of a research article? How do we define that context? How do we build on that to do science more efficiently? The whole point for the existence of research articles is that they

- 2) How could interpretivism be improved to capture the reality of social science context?
- 3) Can issues of interpretivism be sorted out through Buddha *Dhamma*?

4. Philosophical Base for Social Science Research

Positivism and interpretivism are the theoretical bases of social science research methodology. The western teaching is generally pro positivistic as the western philosophy tends to believe that cardinal and rational information alone can invent theories on human behaviour. Unlike the eastern philosophers, western philosophers tend to be biased towards cardinal information reached through the five senses. Therefore, western sciences, unlike eastern teachings, do not seem to believe in a reality beyond sensory information. As per the western philosophical base prior to interpretivism, it was believed that the aspects of ontology, epistemology, human nature and the method of inquiry were based on external factors and the role played by the individual was insignificant.

However, along with interpretivism, it began to be argued that the ontology, epistemology, human nature and the method of inquiry for knowledge are based on the individual identity. For instance, Wilhelm Dilthey (1831-1911) and Storig (1959) argued that "human behaviour cannot be explained just rationally. A contextual reference (government, legal frame, literature, and social institutions), time factor, spirituality, morality etc. should be considered in the interpretation of the meaning of the issue."

Later, researchers found that in the context of ontology, epistemology, and human nature and the method of inquiry for knowledge, both positivism and interpretivism are valid, and therefore, pluralism, which incorporates both, is more popular among social science researchers (Jayawardena and Amarantunga, 2018).

As per the literature of research methodology in social sciences, it has been failed to capture all the sensory information of the human behaviour through conventional positivist as well as interpretivist methods because of the failure in capturing all sensory information through conventional approaches. Further, as per western explanation the base of interpretivism is not philosophically sound because of the nature of the information and the perceptual difference between the interviewer and the interviewee. According to interpretivism, psychology of the individuals involved with the information flow and their role in expressing and interpreting actions and reactions are crucial in the research process. Therefore, the theoretical base of the mind and its behaviour are important in the determination of the quality of the data as well as the outcome of the data analyses of the research. Historically, the role of the human mind has not been given a prime place in western teaching as it emphasizes on factual

can be understood by as broad an audience as possible so that their re-use is maximised.

information based on cardinal measurements. In this background, individual identities are not given due consideration and thus interpretivism is not given appropriate attention in the classified research. This has been a serious constraint for the practicability and the deliverability of social science research. It is true that in certain subjects as well as in certain research areas, positivism is more appropriate whereas in certain other subjects and research areas, interpretivism is more

appropriate. Therefore, the issues with respect to the theoretical base for research methodology need to be cleared further while giving due attention to both positivism and interpretivism. Compared with positivism, interpretivism is theoretically weaker because of the nature of the assumptions. Yet, as far as practicability and the deliverability of the research outcome for social sciences is concerned, interpretivism is more important.

Table 1: Philosophical Base of Interpretivism and Positivism

Interpretivism	Nature of the Assumptions	Positivism
* Reality is a product of individual cognition. * Realities are multiple and holistic. * Individual constructs subjective world living.	Ontology related	* Reality is external hard and fragmental. * It exists prior to the individual. * It is imposed on the individual.
* All knowledge is subjective and self validated. * Experience is the best route to knowledge. * Knowledge and knower are inseparable.	Epistemology related	* Observation and measurement are the route to knowledge. * It is impersonal and discrete. * All knowledge can be passed on as hard facts.
* Human beings possess free will. * They create and control their environment.	Human nature related	* Human beings are like empty vessels driven by external forces. * They are controlled and directed.
* First hand techniques * Biographies, diaries etc. qualitative descriptions * Prediction and control unlikely * Value laden	Inquiry Method related	* Deductive and quantitative * Looks for causal and generalizable pattern * Survey questionnaires & statistical models * Value free

Source: Based on Jayawardena and Amaratunga, 2018

5. Theoretical Background and Literature Review of Research Problem

Hermeneutics and phenomenology are the bases for interpretivism. Interpretivism looks for meanings and motives behind people's actions, reaction and interactions (Wiltsey, 1984). Here, the process for setting of the "meaning" and "motives" is not given. Some say that the ideas or thoughts reflect the meaning fixed by the individuals (Boss, 1995). Here also the author has not been able to provide the base of the thinking and the ideas. Althusser (1918-1990) has mentioned that in order to understand the roots of socio-economic issues of a society, one has to go beyond the facts on the surface, as real facts are hidden and skewed with misleading information (Jayawardena and Amaratunga, 2018).

Interpretivists believe that the nature of social science research context is with the diversity and variance among individuals as well as in societies and therefore, the individual behaviour is uniform, and thus different methods are required.

In the view of interpretivism, it argued that value free data cannot be obtained since the enquiries use their own perceptions in order to guide the process of enquiry and furthermore the researcher interact with human subject of enquiry, changing the perception of both parties (Chowdhury, 2014).

Thus the conventional methods have not been able to identify the philosophical base to capture realistic information and thus subjectivity of the research outcome is continued.

The empirical evidence of the social reality has led to questioning the human psyche and as a

consequence the individual uniqueness towards tumulus has been observed. People create and attach their own meanings to the world around them and to the behavior they manifest in that world. Phenomenologists call this the world of created meanings and consciousness as the life-world (Schult, 1978 & Jayawardena and Amaratunga, 2018)

Despite the emphasis on the hidden factors of human behaviour under interpretivism, there is no specific reference given for a base for searching the hidden facts. Therefore, it is important to identify a philosophical base to interpret individual, social and cultural landscape of the research context from which the roots of the research problem can be identified. This would be an answer for the counter arguments of the positivists who believe that interpretivist studies are not constructive and scientific. Further, interpretivism draws attention to several inner expressions of an individual including the implied and intuitive expression of human being.

Interpretivism is important as this approach gives attention to sensory experiences, intuition, interpretation as well as the empathy, unipathy, antipathy, sympathy, mimpathy of the respective individual/s where mind-matter is connected (Jayawardena and Amaratunga, 2018)

In the interpretive literature, attempts have been made to capture different forms of interpretive information through ethno methodology, phenomenology, feminism, and naturalism. Yet, there is no common philosophical base to capture the human expression in qualitative research contexts. Therefore, there is a need for a strong philosophical base for interpretivism, which can be accepted

as a theory to capture the reality of human expression for social science research.

Max Weber in his new concept of “verstehen” that suggests to search for meaning along with causal analysis has concluded on the “Ideal Type” which is taken for comparison of social constructs of research contexts. It was believed that this “Ideal Type” needs to be investigated through the culture and beliefs in the society (Weber, 1949). This has been widely accepted by post Weber researchers (Coser, 1977; Elwell, 1996; Giddens, 1993). However, the philosophical base here is rather vague as the “Ideal Type” depends on a specific society, and it was difficult to derive a general theory for the “ideal types” of research contexts. Further, deriving the “Ideal Type” of a society through conventional sensory perceptions of the five senses is also not easy as the core of a culture and beliefs of a society is subjected to transformation and it could be interpreted depending on the individual interest. Based on Weber’s “verstehen” and the “Ideal Type”, the application of the Marxist theory of capitalism in the Indian subcontinent is rejected. Weber in his study has argued that the “ideal Type” in the Indian subcontinent is based on Buddhism and other religions such as Hinduism and Jainism which are not pro capitalism (Gellner, 1982). Here, it is apparent that Max Weber who sought for the “Ideal Type” of the Indian subcontinent could not penetrate the pristine Buddha *Dhamma*, and instead he had been trapped by the contemporary yet erroneous interpretation of Buddhism which itself is trapped in the *viñāna* (consciousness)² centered aspirations of individuals and organizations of secular life including the traditional Buddhist temples etc. Therefore, the “Ideal Type” given by Max Weber for the Indian society with regard to Marxism has been beyond the reality and thus, the conclusion of Max Weber’s study on the “verstehen” and the “Ideal Type” is questionable.

6. Individual and Social Reality: The Pristine Buddhist Perspective

Buddha *Dhamma* is one of the Eastern Philosophies popular among easterners as well as some westerners, and it has generalized the nature of the human being and his environment. However, western scholars have not yet been able to capture the essence of pristine Buddha *Dhamma* due to the language uniqueness of the “*Māgadhi*”³ which was the language of the Buddhas. Therefore, the Buddhist texts available in the west as well as in the east based on different interpretations/translations need to be carefully handled in making conclusions. As far as the explanation of the human nature including the human psyche is concerned, the pristine Buddha *Dhamma* is unparalleled compared with scientific studies and eastern and western religious teachings. Pristine Buddha *Dhamma* is neither a religion nor a science, and it is a path to *Nibbāna* (deliverance from continued perilous existence-*Mārga Chariya*). Therefore, there is a significant difference between western scientific base and the base of

theories of pristine Buddha *Dhamma*. Western science is based on logical rationale whereas pristine Buddha *Dhamma* is based on wisdom which arises through reflections on causes and effects (*hēthu pala*) of the stakeholders. For instance, in the *Kālama Sutta*, Lord Buddha has said that the acceptance of the teaching needs to be filtered not only through what books say (*Pitaka Sampadāya*), what a distinguished authentic philosopher, scholar or a religious leader says...., but also through experiential knowledge/wisdom gained through a filtering process of cause and effect. As per the pristine Buddha *Dhamma*, one who filters the information through experiential knowledge (wisdom) only on his or her own can seize the absolute (*paramattha*) truth. Most individuals and social realities are based on accumulated knowledge in relative terms as it could be found in research outcomes under positivism and those based on predominantly western views. In such contexts, it is very rare that the individual and social realities have tried for absolute reality on a par with the concept of cause and effect known as *Patichcha Samuppāda*, which is the basis of pristine Buddha *Dhamma*. Yet, it is required to recognize pristine Buddha *Dhamma* from other types of interpretations because the original Buddha *Dhamma* had been coerced to change to suit the time, place and context for secular life and societal requirements over a period of 2500 years.

The existing Buddhist literature is comprised of different schools of Buddhism, which is an outcome of the application of original Buddha *Dhamma* preached by the Buddha *Gōthama*. As per the historical record, the *Thripitaka* (three *pitaka* or three baskets) in which the original teaching of the Buddha was continued and preserved from generation to generation in verbal form as *Pela dahama* in *Māgadhi*⁴. This verbally preserved *thripitaka* was recorded in Sinhala script in 456 BC at Mathula Alulena during the king Walagamba’s reign in Anuradhapura. Here, the monks in Sri Lanka need to be honoured as they have protected the pristine Buddha *Dhamma* in the face of local and foreign threats and secured it for those who are born and will be born in the future as gifted *kulaputtassa*; the divinity and the mankind to attain *Nibbāna* or to be the absolute enlightened ones whose embodiment would fit well for wisdom as well as penetrative knowledge. However, as the time passed by, on the one hand, the pristine Buddha *Dhamma* could not be interpreted in the *Māgadhi* tonal meaning as originally intended because of the dearth of enlightened ones (especially the *sivpilisimbiāpath*)⁵ and the influence of Mahayana traditions, Hinduism, and Jainism that are coupled with fabricated poetic/aesthetic oriented living languages such as Sanskrit and other similar languages. Yet, from time to time, as per *Dharmaniyāma*, the natural phenomena, the pristine Buddha *Dhamma* has emerged only

² Though the direct translation for *viñāna* is given as consciousness, the term *viñāna* means distorted way of knowing.

³ The meanings of *Māgadhi* tones and intones are quite close to the language in ancient *Siv Helaya* or *Helabima* (present day Sri Lanka), (Meevanapalane Siri Dhammalankara, 2019).

⁴ The Buddha language, which is known as *Māgadhi* is quite a different phenomenon. The sounds and intones survive over time, as originally intended. The meanings of *Māgadhi* tones and intones are quite close to the language in ancient *Siv Helaya* or *Helabima* (present day Sri Lanka), (Meevanapalane Siri Dhammalankara, 2019).

⁵ One who can interpret the contents of the *thripitaka* as per the sounds and intones of the *Māgadhi* language on a par with the consistency of main concepts of pristine Buddha *Dhamma* such as *Patichcha Samuppāda*

in isolation as there is a strong resistance from other teachings including conventional Buddhism equipped with *Mahayāna* traditions that are geared to address mundane or secular requirements of individuals as well as societies. Thus, the Buddhism available in many countries including Sri Lanka appears to be distortions of the pristine Buddha *Dhamma*. In this back ground, it is difficult to shed light on interpretivism via existing Buddhism available in Sri Lanka or elsewhere and thus, Max Weber's interpretation and application of interpretivism as a social science research methodology also happened to be questionable. Therefore, the authors emphasize on the need for exploring the possibility of the use of the pristine Buddha *Dhamma* to shed light on interpretivism as a social science research methodology as it explains the absolute reality with regard to individual and social behaviour as discussed above.

The validity of positivism as a scientific research methodology for social sciences is agreeable; yet it has been questionable as far as the deliverability and the practicability of the research outcomes are concerned. Under these circumstances, it has been suggested that interpretivism is to be suggested as a social science research methodology. However, as per the evidence of the existing explanation, the theoretical base of interpretivism is also thought to be having its own structural weaknesses, and therefore, the validity of research outcomes is again subjected to argument. If a particular research is scientific and practically acceptable and deliverable to the society, then the research outcome should be able either to connect to a policy for the benefit of society or to contribute to the subject knowledge under the assumption that the research is focused on a valid problem. Regarding social sciences, there is no clear evidence that the body of knowledge and the deliveries towards socio economic progress at society level and global level are beneficial from the accumulated social science research. Instead, there are evidences of socio-economic disasters and confusions at societal level as well as at global level, and consequently arise problems and issues for the mankind. Therefore, the philosophical bases of social science research need to be further investigated with the focus on the practicability and the deliverability in the context of policy formulation and improving the body of knowledge.

Both Buddha *Dhamma* and interpretivism have given prominence to the individual. In other words, Buddha *Dhamma* as well as interpretivism believes that the individual is the core of its involvement in any context whether in humanities, socio-economic and political entities or otherwise. Based on this assumption, authors argue that the pristine Buddha *Dhamma* provides the basis for interpretivism to study and conclude with practicable and deliverable research outcomes, especially in qualitative social science research contexts. Here, it is important to note that the pristine Buddha *Dhamma* based on *Māgadhi* explanation has now emerged as never heard before; the *Dhamma* which was totally new and different from the religious and philosophical teachings prevailing around the 6th century BC in the Indian subcontinent during the time of the Buddha.

According to the pristine Buddha *Dhamma*, except "*Nibbāna*" (deliverance from continued perilous existence) all other things are subject to *Anichcha* (cannot continue as per the wish of a relevant person), *Dukkha* (everything ends up with dissonance and *Anattha* (everything is transformative). As per the pristine Buddha *Dhamma*, all things (objects) and phenomena are comprised of five aggregates, i.e. *Rūpa* (physical forms– *Patavi*-solidity (hard substance), *Āpō*- Liquid content, *Thējō*- heat or cold energy, and *Vāyō*-ether(oscillation), *Vēdanā* (feeling), *Sañña* (perception), *Sankhāra* (mental activity), *viñāna* (consciousness). According to pristine Buddha *Dhamma*, these five aggregates are also identified as mental components (*nāma*) and physical body (*rūpa*). Here, mental components include *Vēdanā*, *Sañña*, *Sankhāra* that are coupled with *viñāna* and the physical body includes *Patavi*, *Āpō*, *Thējō*, and *Vāyō*. Even though, the five aggregates are so classified, they occur together as *nāma and rūpa* (five aggregates).

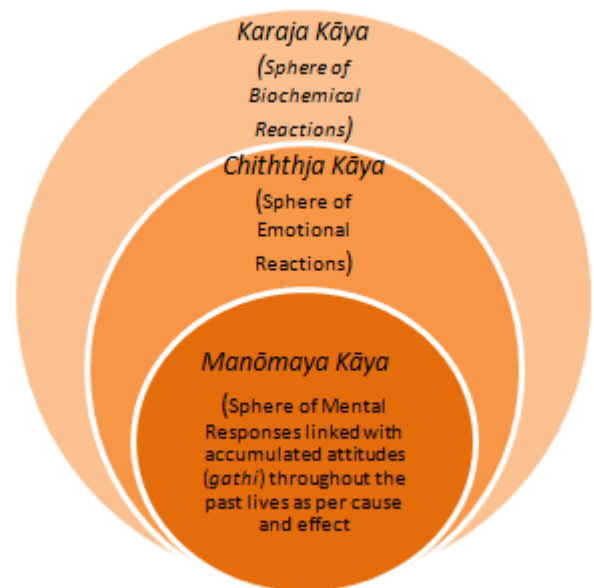


Figure 1: The Process of Mental Construction of a Person

Source: Construction by the Authors (Based on the pristine Buddha *Dhamma*)

According to the pristine Buddha *Dhamma*, the five aggregates are subjected to *Anichcha* (cannot keep as it is on par with one's wish), *Dukkha* (in essence leading to dissonance) and *Anattha* (in essence undergoing transformation) and thus not worthy of ownership. One who is incapable of comprehending this reality assimilates or grasps (*upādāna*) the five aggregates and continues with existential discordance fuelled by seeds of existential continuity (*bhawa-gathi-kammabīja*) of the life as per the *Pattichcha Samuppāda* (the cyclic process of cause and effect) due to which the being is subjected to continued dissonance.

As per the pristine Buddha *Dhamma*, *bhawa* (the seeds) are made through the grasping of the five aggregates due to *kilēsa*– the three fetters or the three mental defilements, i.e. *Lōba-Rāga* (passion), *Dvēsha-Dōsa* (dissonance/discord), *Mōha* (judging based on choices/ignorance) which are raised from the individual's mental desire. Once the activities are

mentally constructed, the outcomes, i.e. the tendencies or the attitudes become conditioned traits in *Manōmaya Kāya* as *bhawa* (*gathi*) (Refer to Figure 1). According to the pristine Buddha *Dhamma*, all such *bhawa*— the seeds of mental tendencies accumulated since time immemorial do get firmly anchored and activated in the *Manōmaya Kāya*, and they influence the emotional mental sphere (*Chiththja Kāya*) (Refer to Figure 1). The settled *bhawa* are the mental attitudes of individuals. They are linked with the objects grasped through the five senseorgans, namely, the eyes, ears, nose, tongue and the body via the *Chiththja Kāya*, consolidating further accumulation of three defilements. They continue as *bhawa* in the infinite cycle of *Pattichcha Samuppāda* unless the "*Nibbāna*" (deliverance from continued perilous existence) is fulfilled.

As per pristine Buddha *Dhamma*, either a being can be on the path to *Nibbāna* (deliverance from continued perilous existence) or can generate seeds of *bhawa* and continue the journey in the infinite perilous existential continuum. One who fulfills the conditions for *Yōnisō Manasikāraya*⁶ enters the phases of *Nibbāna*, and one who entertains the conditioning of *Ayōnisō Manasikāraya*⁷ continues with continued existence based on the corresponding *gathi* or *bhawa*. As per the pristine Buddha *Dhamma*, the Buddha attained *Nibbāna* with full enlightenment, which is the supreme position inherently possible without any external assistance. As per pristine Buddha *Dhamma*, others can reach *Nibbāna* through four different systematically ascending phases and become fully enlightened.

The gradual steps of these four phases are:

- Sōthāpatthi*- State of stream winner or Comprehension of four immovable (noble) truths
- Sakadāgāmi*-Path of one returner
- Anāgāmi* - Path of non-returner
- Arahant* - *Arahantship* (the ultimate salvation or emancipation from existence)

Out of the above four phases, in the state of stream winner, one comprehends the *Pattichcha Samuppāda*, the four immovable truths and gains the experiential knowledge of the four phases with a certain degree of wisdom. Therefore, the one who attains the *Sōthāpatthi*⁸ phase gains a degree of wisdom, which is an outcome of the comprehension of the true nature of oneself transforming from the core view of the five aggregate as a composite being (*ditty*). Peeling out the

⁶Cease to follow blindly the instincts and actions governed by *viñāna* (distorted way of knowing) (Meewanapalane Siri Dhammalankara, 2019)

⁷An ignorant mind (*ayōnisō Manasikāra*) will always appraise and perceive mental objects that result in feeling (*assādo*) as I, me or mine (*attasañña*) without being aware of their inevitable transformation or blindly following the instincts and actions governed by *viñāna* (Meewanapalane Siri Dhammalankara, 2019)

⁸In order to accomplish the *Sōthāpatthi* phase, the following conditions need to be fulfilled. 1. The association of *Kalyāna Mitta*- One who has accomplished the minimum of *Sōthāpatthi*. 2. Listen to unadulterated *Siri Sadhdharma* 3. *Yōnisō Manasikāra* thinking ability as per *Kusala Mūla Pattichcha Samuppāda* or in other words overpowering the consciousness 4. Treading *Dhammānudhamma Patipadā* (following with the comprehended path) (Meewanapalane Siri Dhammalankara, 2019)

erroneous view, the individual turns to *sammāditthi* (attitude) from *michchā ditthi* characterized by *vichikichchathāwaya*, conditioned corrupt desires of consciousness, *viñāna*⁹ and unrealistic and firm beliefs and rituals known as *sīlabbathaparāmāsa* (Meewanapalane Siri Dhammalankara, 2018, 2019). As per the pristine Buddha *Dhamma*, this attainment (*sōthāpatthi*) enables one to interpret one's own actions and reactions as well as those of others as per cause and effect on a par with Buddha *Dhamma*. At this juncture, as a comprehended follower (*Sruthawath Srāwaka*) of the above gradual phases of enlightenment, he or she gains the experiential knowledge through *Yōnisō Manasikāra*, which means the comprehension of *Kusala Mūla Pattichcha Samuppāda* (the cyclic process of deliverance from continued perilous existence) and *Ayōnisō Manasikāra*, which means the comprehension of *Avidyā Mūla Pattichcha Samuppāda* (the cyclic process of continued perilous existence). One who is with this comprehensive wisdom is truly capable of grasping the reality of the behaviour of an individual or a group in a particular defined social context unlike an individual who goes into research with only the factual information in a research context based on the *viñāna* of the parties involved in the particular research context. Therefore, pristine Buddha *Dhamma* provides a constructive theoretical base for interpretivism as a research methodology of social sciences.

7. Conclusion

Exploring avenues for a constructive theoretical base for interpretivism is a timely requirement in social science research as the issues of the practicability and deliverability of social science research outcomes are frequently raised by theoreticians (the subject authorities) and policy makers. The theoretical base of interpretivism is weaker than that of positivism, and thus discovering the reality of issues in social contexts is more critical under interpretivism. Further, in social sciences, especially in researches involved with qualitative information, interpretivism is more crucial, and therefore, addressing the theoretical issues of social science research methodology becomes significant. Here, the pristine Buddha *Dhamma* is chosen as the potential theoretical base for interpretivism through the investigation of the literature. According to the discussion in this paper on a par with pristine Buddha *Dhamma*, the behaviour of human beings is linked with the mental attitudes which are the outcome of accumulated *bhawa* (seeds of mental attitudes) in the human psyche-mental sphere (*Manōmaya Kāya*). The *bhawa* referred to here is an outcome of fetters of *Rāga*, *Dvēsha-Dōsa* and *Mōha* or the grasping of the five aggregates that are grounded from the *viñāna* (consciousness: refer to foot note 7). The base for such mental process is ignorance-rooted (*Avidyā Mūla*) *Pattichcha Samuppāda*. This process of the mental attitudes can be transformed toward the detachment of five aggregates (*Nāma* and *Rūpa*), and by doing so full enlightenment could be achieved on a par with the *Kusala Mūla Pattichcha Samuppāda* – process of cause and effect leading to cessation of defilement oriented mental tendencies (*bhawa*). This is unique for each and every individual

⁹ Though the direct translation for *viñāna* is given as consciousness, the term *viñāna* means distorted way of knowing.

depending on his or her own track chosen by himself or herself. As far as the issues and the essence of interpretivism are concerned, this study on the linkage between the essence of original and pristine Buddha *Dhamma* and the base for interpretivism sheds light for the researchers to be competent in the comprehension of research targets. Herein, it should be emphasized that the term "pristine Buddha *Dhamma*" referred to in this paper is not interchangeable with similar terms in commonly practiced Buddhism even though the origin of "pristine Buddha *Dhamma*" and different schools of Buddhism and the Buddhist religion available at present is the same. So the pristine Buddha *Dhamma* has no restriction or limitation for anybody, anytime or anyplace. It is inclusive and applicable at all times, to all places, to all beings human or otherwise and to all inanimate things and objects without any restrictions whatsoever. Therefore, the reality of research context or the "verstehen" and the "Ideal Type" referred to by Max Weber in searching for the reality of individual and social behaviour of a research context can also be encoded from pristine Buddha *Dhamma*, and interpretivism can also be improved as a research methodology of social sciences.

8. Acknowledgement

Most Venerable Meevanapalane Siri Dhammalankara Maha Thero, his *Dharmadēshanā* (Lecture series) including the discussions published in the internet (<http://sirisaddharmaya.net/>) and the in house programme at Mirigama Parama Nibbāna Dharmāyathanaya have immensely contributed in comprehending the pristine Buddha *Dhamma* for creating the foundation for this article. Therefore, the Most Venerable Meevanapalane Siri Dhammalankara Maha Thero and Mirigama Parama Nibbāna Dharmāyathanaya are acknowledged for their valuable contribution.

References

- [1] Althusser, Louis (1969). *For Marx*, London: Allen Lane, Penguin Press.
- [2] Boas, F. (1995). *Race, Language and Culture*. Chicago, University of Chicago Press.
- [3] Coser, L.A. (1977). *Masters of Sociological Thoughts: Ideas of Historical and Social Context* (2nd ed.) New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich.
- [4] Chowdhury, M. (2014). Interpretivism in Aiding Our Understanding of the Contemporary Social World. *Open Journal of Philosophy*, 4, 432-438. doi: [10.4236/ojpp.2014.43047](https://doi.org/10.4236/ojpp.2014.43047).
- [5] Dilthey, Wilhelm (1833), 1989. *Introduction to the Human Sciences: An Attempt to Lay a Foundation for the Study of Society and History*, Detroit, Michigan: Wayne State University Press.
- [6] Gellner, D. (1982). *Max Weber Capitalism and the Religion of India*. *Sociology*. Vol.16 No.4 Sage Publications Ltd.
- [7] Giddens, A. (1993). *New Rules of Sociological Methods* (2nd ed.). Palo Alto, CA: Stanford University Press.
- [8] Jayawardena, M.M. and Amaratunga, W.A.A.K. (2018). Pluralism: Research Methodology for Social

- Sciences, *International Journal of Science and Research* (IJSR)ISSN: 2319-7064.PP 979-984.
- [9] Meewanapalane Siri Dhammalankara (2019). *Remove the Blinds of the Eye and Gaze upon the Truth*. Translated by Dr.Gamini Randeni. Surendra Graphics. Matara, Sri Lanka.
- [10] Meewanapalane Siri Dhammalankara (2019). *Punya Kamma and Kusala Dhamma and to Path to Sōthāpaththi Pala*. Translated by Dr.Gamini Randeni. Surendra Graphics. Matara, Sri Lanka.
- [11] Meewanapalane Siri Dhammalankara (2018). *Conventional Truth and Absolute Truth (Paramartha Truth) or Knowledge (Janatho) and Experiential Knowledge (Passatho)*. Translated by Dr.GaminiRandeni. Surendra Graphics. Matara, Sri Lanka.
- [12] Schultz, Alfred (1966),1978. "Some Structures of the Life-world", in Luckman Thomas,(Ed), *Phenomenology and Sociology*, Harmondsworth, England: Penguin Books, pp 257-274.
- [13] Weber, M. (1949). *The Methodology of Social Sciences*. New York: Free Press.
- [14] Wilthy, R. R. (1984).The Scientific Status of Management Research as a Practically Oriented Social Science. *Journal of Management Studies*,21, 369-380.<http://dx.doi.org/10.1111/i.1467-6486.1984.tb00234.x>.
- [15] www.sirisaddharmaya.net