

# AN ETHICAL APPROACH TO GLOBAL EDUCATION IN A DIGITAL WORLD: A BUDDHIST WAY

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## ABSTRACT

It is an humble attempt to justify the essence and utility of the Buddhist Education in pursuit of individual and common interests that are shaped by global currents of every imaginable type of material and spiritual good, service, information, and knowledge responding to the values, intentions and practices. In the Post-Modern scenario, a trend to make self-advertisement imbued with arrogance and violence judging oneself as rational, modern and enlightened while looking others with contempt branding them as ignorant, superstitious and barbaric is becoming a common phenomenon.

A distinct, dynamic and unique interdependence is noticed between the Buddha's teachings (*education*) and current global trends to counteract, systematically and sustainingly, trouble or sufferings that mankind is confronting in everyday life in different spheres. Buddhism has positive role in changing society, for or while it has its other worldly aspects, it has also a genuine social ethics. The classic constellation of Buddha's teachings would include: the absence of fixed and essential identities (*all things are to be seen as having no self*); the dynamic and changing nature of all things (*all things are to be seen impermanent*); the troubled nature

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of all relational patterns (all things are to be seen as characterized by *dukkha* or trouble or suffering); the ontological ambiguity and mutual relevance of all things (the teaching of emptiness); and *karma*.

In the conclusion, it may be said that Buddhist Approach to Global Education would obviously reduce the negative spirit achieving a personalty transformation into a highest form of humanity through ethical, intellectual and spiritual perfection.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Proper education dispels ignorance disseminating knowledge-wisdom and enlightening the human mind to act in a judicious and rational way. It is also a tool for meditating diverse, and at times contradictory, bodies of knowledge associated with culture and world view, modernity and tradition, politics and religion, and temporal and ultimate visions of reality. Each country or nation has devised their specific policies and programmes to educate the masses in different streams. In the post-modern scenario, it is hardly found that the present education system hardly offers a scope to introspect one's own thought, mind and activities. It leads to numerous problems such as conflicts, tensions, anxieties and issues. But, it is Buddhism that offers ample scope to study one's own self and nature of own mind which makes a man ethically and morally sound. A sound mind enriched with experiential knowledge-wisdom would never produce an unethical, unwholesome and unhealthy situations in the existing environment, and, thus, saving the globe from polluting the entire atmosphere with different troubles and complexities. The essence and utility of the Buddhist education is to be critically analysed from the perspective of the pursuit of individual and common interests that are shaped by global currents of every imaginable intentions and practices. It is becoming a common phenomenon in this digital world to make self-advertisement imbued with arrogance and violence judging oneself as rational and modern and enlightened while looking others with contempt branding them as ignorant, superstitious and barbaric. To counteract this unhealthy, unwholesome, unprogressive and ruinous trend, education based on ethics and morality is a necessary requirement.

Due to this unethical trend, unwholesome environmental situation contrary to *Pañchśīla* principle of Buddhism, tensions and anxieties are created throughout the globe extending an apprehensive life to all sentient beings in all sphere. What essentially needed in this digital world is to train mind and attitude in such a manner that every day life would be peaceful and healthy. All religions profess ethics and morality to be practiced, but, it is Buddha's teaching based on the realm of philosophy, science and psychology shows the characteristic of human potential, the capacity of human mind. Buddhism is the pinnacle of the world's philosophy and that it provides the greatest enjoyment for humanity; it is not a religion, but a special kind of knowledge; and, in order to derive true benefit from it, its true nature is to be understood. Now, it becomes essential to refresh and reorient one's knowledge through Buddhist education to realize mindfully what is ethics and morality and how to distinguish between good and bad *kamma*. The ultimate destination of the Buddhist education is to attain *prajñā/pañña* which makes a man reasonable, rational, calm and composed leading him to reach a state of equilibrium and giving insight to distinguish between good and bad *kamma*.

## 2. OBJECTIVE

With a prime objective, the present paper is drafted with an evaluative analysis how to counteract the growing unrest, imbalances, perplexities and other outstanding problem following a Buddhist principle; to justify why it is essential to transform the educational pattern in a Buddhist way; what are the methods through which the Buddhist education mould the human character to develop with ethics and morality; and, what benefits the mankind would be derived from the Buddhist education.

## 3. METHODOLOGY

To draft this paper, good number of Buddhist literature has been consulted as a primary source with proper evaluation and analysis. For secondary sources, books, journals, proceedings souvenirs and other literary publications are minutely dealt with. Besides, interactions, counseling are made with a number of students while talking their interviews.

#### 4. DISCUSSION

Why it is essential to inculcate 'Buddhist Approach to global education in ethics' is discussed with paradigms citing a case study of two girls who are the Post Graduate 2<sup>nd</sup> year students of Department of History, of Rama Devi University where I am presently working as a visiting professor. One among them named Sagarika Nanda is a very brilliant, dynamic, innovative calm and composed, but, the woe is that she is often suffering from epilepsy. The physicians advised her not to be too emotional, upset in trifling matters and to take unnecessary stress and strain. One of her classmates named Rajashree Patra, average one, who is sharing the same room with her in the girl's hostel has displayed a nuisance only to make her psychologically down, constantly telling her that this disease is incurable and she has to suffer from it thorough out her life ; While Sagarika needs sound sleep in the night due to medicinal effect, Rajashree is used to listen music in the night with heavy volumes or talking over cell phones with a high pitch; Rajashree is in the habit of tearing away pages from the books purchased by Sagarika according to syllabus recommendations. Annoyed with her nuisance activities, Sagarika has decided to shift to other hostel.

When I got this information, I thought that who could say that same thing would not happen to her in another hostel. I took an initiative to influence both minds with Buddhist ethical teachings while teaching other papers according to their syllabus. I have started to read both minds through interrogating separately in a very indirect manner. I have found that though Rajashree is a good natured girl, but internally she becomes jealous and intolerant to Sagarika' achievements and to distract her from her mindful concentration from studies, she has created this type of unusual situations. I realise her psychology and started counseling her inside the classroom passively while teaching the paper "World from 1900-1945" for the first semester examinations. Discussing about the causes of ensuing conflicts, issues and problems which resulted in various wars and treaties, I had presented the causes of untold miseries and sufferings in the light of of the Buddha's teachings highlighting the 'Four Noble Truth' in befitting manner; that too much cravings (*tanhā*) attached with lobha (greed), *dosha* (hatred)

and *moha* (delusion) - colonial expansion, exercising hegemony and supremacy over other nations and the feeling of superiority complex undermining other nations, and growth of militant nationalism - which was caused due to anger (*patigha/khodha*), jealousy (*issā*), intolerance (*akkhanti*), hypocrisy (*makkha*), mistrust, and pride (*māna*) caused this great disaster taking millions of innocent lives either in Pearl Harbor Case and bombardment of atomic bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki by USA as a retaliation of Pearl Harbor incident on 6<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> August, 1945 respectively.

This type of attitudes destroys inner purity, peace of mind and virtuousness that is embedded within you. Anger, jealousy, intolerance spring from the mental activities which becomes a source of unhappiness and suffering distracting your concentration and attention on your studies as a result of which out of perplexation you would never fare well in your examinations. An irritable person is truly a very sad person, and what is worse he/she infects others around him/her too with same sadness (Silva, 1986, p.4). Competition, mostly intellectual competition, is good. But adoption of unfair means to reach in the highest rung of the ladder is contrary to ethical approach. Success in each sphere could be achieved by cultivating virtuous mode of behaviour, i.e. , loving kindness (*mettā*), compassion (*karuṇā*), sympathetic joy (*mudita*) and equanimity (*upekkhā*). Loving kindness is the positive wholesome attitude one can cultivate with the benefit for oneself and others for interpersonal relationships. Compassion is the emotion with which one should regard and help those in distress. Sympathetic Joy stands for one rejoicing with others success and joy. A man of jealous, intolerant and haughty character could rejoice with the achievement, success or joy of another person as he/she is infested with such evil attitudes. He/she lost his/her mental balances and peace. Where there is jealousy there is no unity, and where there is no unity there is no progress. Equanimity is the attitude to be adopted in the face of the vicissitudes of life. If one trains oneself to maintain an equanimous temperament without being either elated or dejected in the face of these vicissitudes, one can avoid much stress and lead a simple life with peace and contentment. It is not possible to change the world to get peace. But one can change one's

own attitude towards the world so as to remain unaffected by the stresses exerted by events around him.

The anger, jealousy, intolerance, mistrust, misconduct and pride, etc., turns the human being into beast like nature. One's morality and ethics would be elevated, says Buddha, who adopts 'goodness' and good work (*kalyāṇa*) for others renouncing evil: if he/she is obedient and respectful of others and guided by the behest of goodness; and, this act definitely lead him/her to reach in highest goal of his life (Moore, 1981, p. 30). If *pañchaśīla* (the Five Precepts-abstain from killing living beings, stealing, sexual misconduct, lying and intoxication) or five rules of training of Buddha's sayings (Agostini, 2004, pp. 63-95) would have been followed sincerely by the populace, it would be undoubtedly told that no issues, no problems, no conflicts, no complexities, no quarrel, no misunderstanding of any kind, no wars, no treaties would have never arose giving you pains and sufferings mentally, physically and psychologically.

One must refrain from doing to others what he does not like others to do on to himself; this is the basic principle underlying these virtues. Buddha gave great emphasis that one must be guided by his/her conscience. In Buddhist logic, conscience has two broad ethical aspects, *Hīri* and *Ottapa* (A, I, p. 51) the immediate cause of virtue and as two bright state that guided the world. *Hīri* denotes 'self-respect' which causes one to seek to to avoid any action in which one feels is not worthy of oneself and lowers one's integrity. *Ottapa* is 'regarded by consequences'; it is a karmic results of action in which he/she is reproached or blamed (whether from oneself or from others, or feels embarrassment before others, those one respects), and legal punishments (*Asl*, pp.124-127).

It is becoming an emerging trend in th present scenario to make self-advertisement imbued with arrogance and violence judging one self as rational, modern and enlightened while looking others with contempt branding them as ignorant, superstitious and barbaric. Buddha gives emphasis on to understand the relationship between humans, once this is understood, one will love to people; to understand the relationship between humans and environment, once this is understood one will learn to take care of the environment

and to appreciate every single thing around him/her; and one must try to lead a virtuous life, for without morality and proper conduct one becomes selfish and concerned only with himself / herself at the cost of the society. A man becomes pure not by rank or wealth, but by practicing highest conduct based on morality and wisdom and cultivating good will, having perfectly trained his mind; A virtuous man with his experiential knowledge-wisdom with all his stirring effort and strength could easily confront all the odds just like an easy-swim across a heavy flood; and he/she would never fails in his/ her mission (Tin, 1922, p. 30).

Today everyone longs for world peace, but it is needed to be started from filial piety to obtain it. Buddhism emphasizes unconditional compassion for all sentient beings in the universe and beyond; in the past, present and future. The continuum of time and space is inseparable from oneself, for We Are All One Entity (Kung, p. 17). Loyalty, filial piety, compassion, love trustworthiness, responsibility, peace and equality are the cardinal principles of Buddhism the sincere practice of which would give *nirvāṇa* from all sufferings; it is the extinction of “three fires” or “three poisons” (Buswell, Jr. & Lopez, Jr, 2013, p143), i.e., passion (*raga*), aversion (*dvesha*) and ignorance (*avidyā*). *Nirvāṇa* here signifies “absence of any instrument of torture”, or “extinction without remainder”. So the word *nirvāṇa* has two very important meanings; firstly, absence of any source of torment or burning, freedom from all forms of bondage and constraints and secondly, extinction, with no fuel for further arising of suffering (Bhikkhu, 1956, p. 93). One becomes perfect and acquire abundant virtue by tendering friendliness with compassion from the core of soul and no evil thought (Moore, 1981, p. 41).

*Nirvāṇa* may be explained or interpreted in terms of ‘Supreme Enlightenment’ or ‘Supreme Achievement’ which may be achieved by a person following the Buddha’s sayings. A person of slothful, froward, indolent, feeble, idle, lazy, shameless and disrespectful character would be unfit for reaching at the last rung of success-ladder. On the contrary, a person who is thoughtful, prudent, reflective, fervent, not froward and earnest achieves the best success in his or her life (Moore, 1981, pp.47-48). Buddha emphasizes to

the life of chastity (*brahma chariya*), and tells that life of chastity should not be practiced for not deceiving or prating to mankind, nor for the sake of the advantage (*ānisamasa*) of reputation (*siloka*) for gain or one's own affairs; but this life of chastity is to be lived for the purpose of Restraint, Renunciation, Insight, and Thorough Knowledge.

A man who is cautious without requiring caution, reposeful in manner, fervent, prudent in wisdom, not vaunting himself, possessed of tranquility of soul, forsake wickedness, loathed sin not the sinner, and taking delight by non-injury would never be sufferer from misery (Moore, 1981, pp.50-51). What makes a man degraded and become a spiteful element in the society is nicely illustrated by the Buddha to inculcate a sense of ethics and morality in the thought, speech and action; Merciless killing, or harming, or injuring living beings leads to be short lived; stealing to loss of wealth; sensual misconduct to rivalry and hatred from others; lying to one's false words; backbiting to break-up of the friendship; harsh words to enmity; frivolous chatter to unacceptable, ineffective speech; intoxication to madness (A, vol. iv, pp. 247-248); being easily angered leads to being ugly; being jealous and spiteful leads to being of no account; being stingy leads to being a poor; being haughty and disrespectful leads to being of no account; and, not asking about what is morally wholesome or unwholesome one leads to being weak in wisdom (M, III, pp. 203-206). Its opposite action gives pleasure, glory, fame and reputation.

In an answer "why one should lead an ethical life?" from Buddhist perspectives, it is told one can acquire wealth through diligence, a good reputation, joyful recollection of moral purity; self-confidence in all types of company, without fear of reproach or punishment; easier progress in meditation; and, dying without anxiety and remorse (RhyDavids & Rhy Davids, 1899-1921, p. 8). Good actions are wholesome and leads to bright results whereas wrong views leads on to wrong thought, and this to wrong speech and thus wrong action (A, vil. iv, pp. 211-212). Due to misperception of reality, wrong actions emerges leading to unpleasant results. Thus, it is said to be impossible that wrong conduct of body, speech or mind could result in a 'fruit that was agreeable, pleasant, liked', for

right conduct to lead a 'fruit that was disagreeable, unpleasant, not liked' (Harvey, 2000, p.17). Explaining 'what is crime?', Buddha says that, committing of any evil actions thorough body, word , or thought or all other actions is called crime and one who does this type of improper action is called criminal (Moore, 1981, p. 76).

It is not wise to take anyone else's word for anything or not to believe someone telling something without questioning. Here one must act in accordance with what one's own insight reveals. In this context Buddha's explanation to Kālāmas of Kessaputta who asked Lord Buddha to whom they would have to believe is to be cited. The Buddha said to them, "they should not go by reports, by legends, by scriptures, by logical conjecture, by inference, by analogies, by agreement through pondering views, what one thinks should be true or respect for a particular person. They mu rather reject those states which are unwholesome and blameworthy leading to harm and suffering" (A, II,pp.188-193). Buddha further made the Kālāmas to get agreed that greed (*lobha*), hatred (*dosha*) and delusion (*moha*) are each states which brings misfortune when they arise. When any of them arise in a person, he/she kills, steals, commits adultery, lies, forcefully possesses others belongings, leads others to do likewise, so that he/she suffers for long time on account of *kārmic* results of his/her actions.

There are three key source in the Buddhist ethics to guide mankind for the establishment of a welfare society: *Buddha*, *Dhamma* and *Saṅgha*. The word *Buddha* signifies to knowledge-wisdom or "Rediscover "and teacher of liberating Truths and the embodiment of liberating qualities to be developed by others. The *Dhamma* is prescribed duty based on morality and ethics be followed by one and all irrespective of age, sex, status and religion. The *Saṅgha* represents unity, integrity and solidarity leading to spiritual, moral and material prosperity. To win over cravings, hatred , delusion, jealousy, anger, pride, hypocrisy, intolerance , the practice of Eightfold Path is essential.

## 5. COCLUSION

Culminating Budddhist ethics means to culminate a life with promises to extend help to others as and when required, especially,

in assisting them to break through delusion to attain true happiness and leave suffering behind. One can not help others to escape from suffering without his excellent moral and academic achievements. A cultivator can learn by upholding the precepts to guard against harmful consequences created by speech, deeds and thought. It is necessary to cultivate virtue by ending all afflictions including greed, anger, ignorance and arrogance, as they are the source of all desires and delusions. One gained true wisdom by cultivation of high moral character, from a pure, non-discriminatory and compassionate mind, and not from the knowledge from the books.

Let me conclude with Sagarika and Rajashree's changes noticed before the commencement of their first semester examination. They now become too pally pally with one another extending help not only to themselves, but to other friends with a positive spirit in all sphere of academic and non-academic life.

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