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**BUDDHIST CANONS ON EDUCATION FOR AUTHENTIC AND SUSTAINABLE  
EDUCATION TOWARDS MEETING 21<sup>st</sup> CENTURY GLOBAL CHALLENGES**

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**Abstract:**

Buddhist culture and related principles offer valuable insights into education, highlighting mindfulness, critical thinking, and compassion as essential principles for addressing 21st-century global challenges. These principles are crucial for fostering authentic and sustainable learning, empowering learners to address complex challenges such as sustainability, social inequality, and technological disruption. Buddhist principles, including mindfulness, critical thinking, and compassion, can be integrated into educational approaches to promote sustainable learning. Mindfulness practices improve emotional regulation, focus, and cognitive function, while critical thinking encourages analytical reasoning, reflective thinking, and discerning thinking. Compassion fosters empathy, kindness, and concern for others' well-being. The present paper offers a note on it.

**Keywords:** Mindfulness, Critical Thinking, Buddhist Canon, Contemporary Education

**INTRODUCTION**

Buddhist principles, including mindfulness, critical thinking, and compassion, can be integrated into educational approaches to promote

sustainable learning. Mindfulness practices improve emotional regulation, focus, and cognitive function, while critical thinking encourages analytical reasoning,

reflective thinking, and discerning thinking. Compassion fosters empathy, kindness, and concern for others' well-being.

By embracing Buddhist principles, education can address 21st-century challenges, including increasing sustainability, mitigating social inequality, and managing technological disruption. Buddhist Studies can provide a potential stream of energy for channelling human energy and promoting sustainable development. Ultimately, integrating Buddhist principles into education can foster a more compassionate, critical, and mindful approach to learning, empowering students to create a better future.

## METHOD

The author employed qualitative research methods in the present paper, conducting an analytical study of Bacon's essay 'Of Judicature'. The research utilizes associations and correlations to develop its ideas.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Buddhism is a scientific religion that believes in the evolution of soul and maintaining peace at different

levels. Buddhist canons offer valuable insights into various trajectories of education, emphasizing mindfulness, critical thinking, and compassion. These principles are essential for addressing 21st-century global challenges, such as sustainability, social inequality, and technological disruption. To be clearer, Buddhism, or Bauddha Dharma, is an elated philosophy of Karmic life. In this philosophic tradition, the human self is taken on the path of awakening, which culminates in full liberation from suffering (Dukkha). Buddhism propagates the Madhyam Marg (middle path). This middle path is a thought, something between sensual pleasure and the life of asceticism. Buddhist philosophy suggests that Suffering comes from attachment. Lord Buddha has preached the Four Noble Truths (*Chaar Arya Satya*) and the Noble Eightfold Path (*Astanga Marga*).

In the words of Paul Cyrus, "Buddhism originated, as all religions do, from the desire to escape the transiency of life with its incidental vicissitudes and to attain the permanent and enduring bliss of an undisturbed existence where there is no pain, no disease, no death, no incertitude of any kind. As soon as the

prevalence of suffering was recognized as an inalienable condition of bodily existence, the first attempt at obtaining deliverance from evil was naturally made by a mortification of the body for the sake of benefiting the soul.”<sup>1</sup> (255)

It is a scientific and logical religion that focuses on peace, meditation, and logic. On its philosophical and rational model, Monica Souza Neves-Pereira, Marco Aure’lio Bilibio de Carvalho, and Cristiana de Campos Aspesi state that :

Buddhism is a religious and philosophical model that emerged in Asia, and its history is also marked by multiple interpretations. Its model was introduced to the West during the Victorian Era, concomitantly with the emergence of modern science. An iconic figure such as Theosophist Helena Blavatsky affirmed that Buddhism is more scientific and philosophically pure than any other religious alternative (Harrison, 2007: 16). By affirming similar principles to those of science, including the fact that it did not oppose the Theory of Evolution-which was a new emergent

concept in European 19th century-Buddhism with its scientific rationalist teachings captivated adaptation in the academic milieu. Such adherence allowed it to begin dialoguing with the established science, as we see in the works of Vietnamese monk Thich Nhat Hanh.” (2017: 66)

The present discussion explores Buddhist perspectives on education by highlighting the significance of mindfulness and critical thinking in fostering authentic and sustainable learning. The world has been thrown into dire confusion, presenting a plethora of information and access to the different versions of knowledge via different operating tools and techniques, AI being one of the most powerful challenges. While reading and reaching the knowledge industry, academics, research, and living with every new vision and development, man seems to get dislocated not only in his or her physical environment but also in mental peace. It appropriately reminds us of the popular expression of William Butler Yeats’ “ Centre cannot hold”, and Chinua Achebe’s *Things Fall Apart*. Social Control Theory under the sociology of understanding education may be seen

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Carus, P. (1897). The Philosophy of<sup>1</sup> Buddhism . *The Monist*, 7(2), 255–286.

as a cluster of factors emerging from values and virtues, or otherwise, the ill behavioral norms existing in the different established institutions, or narratives, or in any knowledge context that regulates people's behaviour and thinking in structuring society. Buddhist principles, temples, literature, and studies manifested and realized in different forms of human knowledge and experiences have been spoken and realized as a peaceful bridge in recognizing and offering solutions to irresistible twenty-first-century challenges.

### **1. Buddhist Principles of Education**

The Buddhist principles of education, generally, emerge as the authentic ways of a sustainable life, creativity, innovation, aims, and objectives, adding to an insightful method of learning and teaching the purposes of knowledge generated or to be evolved. In the current scenario of postmodernism, where there is a neo-debate between the real reality and the portrayed reality, where the meta-narratives are struggling with the mini-narratives, and there is very little difference between the centre and margin, different canons of mindfulness and critical thinking are

bound to put the things on the right track. To cite Dane Sawyer M, we can state that :

In Buddhist mindfulness meditation, practitioners are often encouraged to cultivate two different but related qualities of mind: samadhi(concentration) and sati (mindfulness). Sati is usually translated into English as "mindfulness," "awareness," or "bare attention," but it is a particular, unique kind of awareness and not just consciousness more broadly or generally construed. In fact, Buddhists distinguish between awareness (sati) and consciousness (vijñana), which is an essentially underdeveloped and unenlightened engagement with the world.<sup>2</sup> (Sawyer, 68)

### **2. Critical Thinking (Yoniso Manasikara)**

Encouraging analytical, reflective, and discerning thinking. Critical Analysis of a text, in broader words a text, for instance, may be anything, an incident, an event, a story, an experiment, a product, etc., would enlighten the path to education or lesson learned for the

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Sawyer, Dane. (2018). Mindfulness <sup>2</sup> Meditation: A Sartrean Analysis. *Sartre Studies International*, 24(2), 66–83.

good of a reasonable cause. Reflective or responsible behaviour for the good of one and all may bring a revolution for a bigger and better cause. Good governance is one of the many benefits that may enlighten the path of education desired and needed to structure a healthy and progressive society. Critical thinking emphasizes on the objective analysis of any fact or circumstance, which saves decision-making from prejudices and any ism. At a higher level it cuts the barriers emanating out of caste, creed, gender, or any other form of orientation.

### **3. Compassion (Karuna)**

It is an attribute fostering empathy, kindness, and concern for others' well-being. Compassion is a strength, it would help people to understand the situation, the root cause of the problems of the people's behavioural stands in establishing a condition that shall be turned into a worthy conditioning of pure heart and mind. Fostering empathy or being kind to other concerns broaden the reception of good deeds and consequently seeds to sown to a healthy environment and growth of all. Compassion is a lofty human value. William Shakespeare

highlights it in his play *The Merchant of Venice*<sup>3</sup>:

The quality of mercy is not strained;

It droppeth as the gentle rain from heaven

Upon the place beneath. It is twice blest;

It blesseth him that gives and him that takes:

'T is mightiest in the mightiest; it becomes

The throned monarch better than his crown. (Shakespeare, *The Merchant of Venice*, Act IV, Scene I)

### **4. Interdependence (Pratityasamutpada)**

Buddhist teaching recognises the interconnectedness of all phenomena. A broader perspective on education would be more fertile if we try to understand the interconnectedness of several academic initiatives and disciplines that don't exist in isolation. Let's say, for instance, Law doesn't exist in isolation. There is a serious and deep bond that exists between law and sociology, law and economics, law and political science, law and

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English drama by William Shakespeare <sup>3</sup>

literature, so on and so forth. Similarly, an individual's experiences get altered while attempting to listen to others' stories or experiences. Buddhist Principles talk about an individual's existence in unison with the cosmic powers, that is, the human soul and its connection with the universe, and so is the interconnectedness with each other or with the environment.

### **Mindfulness and Critical Thinking in Education:**

If we look at the importance of Mindfulness in Education, we find that it is the panacea in reducing stress and anxiety, as mindfulness practices improve emotional regulation and well-being. Further, it may be used in improving focus and concentration. Mindfulness, in almost all cases, enhances attention and cognitive function. Mindfulness also cultivates self-awareness and helps students in developing a better understanding of themselves and their values. Buddhist-inspired educational approaches focus on critical thinking and rational attitude. The Use of Critical Thinking in Education increases analytical reasoning and reflective thinking, which encourages students to evaluate information, identify patterns, and

draw logical conclusions. Further, the canon of reflective thinking fosters self-reflection, metacognition, and critical evaluation of one's own thought processes. In this series, the patterns of discerning thinking develops the ability to distinguish between relevant and irrelevant information and to recognize biases and assumptions. The future directions also add significantly in this regard:

- i. Inquiry-Based Learning: Encouraging students to explore questions and problems through critical thinking and investigation.
- ii. Project-Based Learning: Fostering deep learning through real-world applications and collaborative projects.
- iii. Mindfulness-Based Learning: Integrating mindfulness practices into the curriculum to enhance focus, creativity, and well-being.

**Addressing 21st-Century Global Challenges:** The Buddhist principles can address the twenty first century challenges in the following manner:

**1. Increasing Sustainability:** The Buddhist canons of education believe

in sustainable growth . The true realization of those principles can help in cultivating environmental awareness, responsibility, and stewardship. Difficult subjects, issues in question, and challenges may be considered potential prompts to understand the path to the right action for the right cause and well-being of all. Man's relationship with *prakriti* i.e., nature or mother Earth, water in rivers and oceans, and skyline movements constituting hundreds and thousands of stars and other planets, is an important aspect of understanding Education in rich canons of Buddhist studies.

### **2. Mitigating Social Inequality:**

Buddhist principles ordains the lofty ideals of fostering empathy, understanding, and action to address social injustices. Buddhism teaches us to embrace the qualities and attributes required in a human being who would contribute to an egalitarian society where happiness reigns supreme. It inspires to read about unequal social and economic equations to fill and improve upon the knowledge gap to a brighter and prospective future.

### **3. Managing Technological Disruption:**

Buddhist principles help

in developing critical thinking, adaptability, and resilience in the face of rapid technological change. These principles offer a dictum for the middle path that is very useful in the current phase of mechanization. Artificial intelligence-driven tools and devices have unique access to people's thought processes. AI-driven technologies, logistics, algorithms, and the internet's giant-size fabrication of networks have posed a mixed bag of information and knowledge in expanding people's imagination and the quest for unlimited questions about one and everything, which is reverberating, resonating, and often confusing. Buddhist Studies may be considered as the potential stream of energy in channelizing the energy of the people and the sources of energy in the people's world.

### **CONCLUSION:**

In the words of Ashitsu, we can summarise the canon of Buddhism :

“The Law of our Lord, the Buddha, is not a natural science or a religion but a doctrine of enlightenment: and the object of it is to give rest to the restless ; to point out the Master (the Inmost Man)to those



that are blind and do not perceive their Original State. Without deep meditation and a full understanding of the Doctrine of Enlightenment, no one can attain to ornament with the Master within. He that would know the spirit of the Good Law should not idle away his time in books and scriptures, nor fatten upon the thoughts of others, but should meditate upon his own state of life and conduct: closely guard his mind and senses; and learn who, in himself, it is that thinks and feels: this being the key that opens the gate which leads into the Path of Buddha.(Ashitsu,Z.1894: 69)

Buddhist canons offer valuable insights into education, emphasizing mindfulness, critical thinking, and compassion. By integrating these principles into educational approaches, we can foster authentic and sustainable learning, empowering students to address the complex challenges of the 21st century. The interdisciplinary aspect and the interconnectedness lying in Buddhist educational approaches and activities offer an all-time relevant stories of human physical and natural growth. The energy in Buddhist cannons inspires an illuminating path of success in an action or behaviour that

an individual reflects. Learning out of critical thinking and practicing adapted mindfulness leads to a constructive reception of a problem and choices made for the sustainable development of one and all in the broader ambit of structuring a society or nation.

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