



## THE RELEVANCE OF BUDDHIST PERSPECTIVES TO POLITICAL SCIENCE EDUCATION

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### ABSTRACT

Buddhism aspires to impart truthfulness, beauty, morality, kindness, contentment, and enlightenment in its believers. Buddhism's primary teachings may also provide viewpoints for political science courses. The main objective of this paper is to identify human values and social values in modern society as the essence of Buddhist teachings that are significant in Political Science Education and modern civilization. As a review paper, this paper contains a comprehensive introduction to Buddhism, its basis, teaching methods, and educational approaches. The paper extensively uses secondary data in its methodology. The data were analyzed using the content analysis method, and the findings were discussed as the themes that emerged. Then, a contemplative conclusion on Buddhist teaching and its pedagogical components is included. The major implications of Buddhism for Political Science Education have been indicated. The conclusion is then that Buddhism provides such constructs for education as personal freedom, intelligence, wisdom, moral, talent, non-violence and the secular persons, and that it can be a significant source of the curricular contents for Political Science Education.

**Keywords:** Buddhism - essence - teaching - knowledge - enlightenment

### INTRODUCTION

Buddhism is one of the most well-known religions and ideologies having a significant impact on the growth and nature of Asian civilization from the past to the present. Buddhism absorbed indigenous ideas and integrated a broad spectrum - including both local and foreign images - into its artwork and religious ceremonies as it spread over Asia (Mahatera 1964). According to Mahatera (1964), Buddha desired to eliminate human

misery. Likewise, Parsons (1974) noted that Buddhism offers us how to deal successfully with issues of pain, stress, and individuality.

Buddhism may be seen from a variety of angles. Firstly, Buddhism teaches principles for peaceful life. According to Harvey (2000), in Buddhist ethics, every person is a friend, which means that each individual should be treated as a friend. This is exactly the type of reality that occurs in nature. Philosophically, Buddhism holds that fundamental facts rule biological cycles; that existence is the product of cause and consequence (the theory of dependent origination), that God does not exist, and that mind is the basis of our existence (Ronkin 2005, Harvey 2000, Mahatera 1964).

According to Laliberté (2011), Buddhism is a social revolution that redefined the Hindu system's philosophical conventional beliefs. It does not believe in a metaphysical deity, meaning that mythological beings distinguish it from other theological beliefs (Tomalin, 2007). Buddhism, on the other hand, is best described as a philosophy that gives a comprehensive vision of the universe and man's role in it as well as a prescription for the structure of human affairs (Jayasuriya, 2008). Buddhism, thus, is a science of the mind, not a religion. It can serve as a link between such two worlds. Tenzen Gyatzo (cited in Sahdra and Shaver, 2013) remarks that Buddhism is widely practiced in the Asian continent, with a big population in China (Laliberté 2011). As the literature reveals, Buddhism holds that there isn't any such thing as an everlasting, unchangeable spirit and that all in life is merely transitory and constantly changing. It transcends religion. Also in this sense, it is a philosophy or "style of life." It is a style of holy life, practices mindfulness and self-awareness - insightful and compassionate.

Briefly stating, the Buddhist ideology gives solutions to many difficulties in the contemporary materialist society. We all are undergoing various sorts of grief. Our materialistic sights are drawn to the reality of materialistic accomplishments, even if it is obtained by immoral methods. We have boundless yearning, unrest, bad thoughts, which are oblivious to human dignity, and so forth. In this environment, Buddhist teaching can help both teacher and student attain truth, morality, beauty, empathy, tolerance, generosity, and so on. In this context, this article attempts to present inspiring lessons that may be beneficial to both teachers and learners. This background necessitates a shift in our personal attitudes and social behaviors in order to shape a peaceful and harmonious society. This task is only achievable through education. Buddha built the philosophical

and social idea of non-violence. However, the subject of Buddhism is not sufficiently addressed in higher education, particularly in political science education. The purpose of this article is to investigate the philosophical and epistemological teachings of Buddhism, and then to draw pedagogical implications of Buddhism with an emphasis on political science education.

## **METHODS AND MATERIALS**

The relevant literature provides the foundation for this topic. It is the outcome of research conducted via library and online on historical documents related to Buddhism and its teachings. I examined the assembled material carefully and then took notes. I particularly concentrated on the theme within the scope of this study and then interpreted the contents correspondingly. In this way, the data were gathered and evaluated using the document-content analysis technique.

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

The results drawn from the review are organized and discussed under two major themes, namely, perspectives related to Political Science Education and implications for Political Science Education.

### **Perspectives of Political Science Education in Buddhism**

Political science is a well-established discipline in higher education globally. In Tribhuvan University (TU), the subject is offered in the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences. As a pedagogical course, TU introduced Political Science Education in the Faculty of Education. Buddhism potentially has crucial contents for Political Science Education, particularly philosophy, epistemology, ontology, and ruling principles, among other things. While studying Buddhist concepts and philosophy, the researcher got fascinated as to how the educational implications of Buddhism may be traced out in terms of Political Science Education. To satisfy the need, the researcher researched into Buddhism and interpreted his findings under the following sub-themes.

#### ***Globalization of the Buddhist ideology***

After studying Buddhist literature, it stood out that Buddhism is a global phenomenon. According to Ulanov and Badmaev (2015), in the globalization process, Buddhism has become one of the most significant parts of the cultural landscape. In different words, Buddhism is spreading to various regions and geo-cultural contexts. Buddhists constitute the majority

of the inhabitants in Thailand, Myanmar, Sri Lanka, Cambodia, Laos, and Bhutan, as well as a sizable number in Japan, Vietnam, Korea, Taiwan, and Nepal (Laliberté 2011). In Korea, Buddhism has evolved into a politico-religious philosophy. "In Korea, Buddhism is accessible as the politico-religious doctrine that will also serve the aim of constructing a strong central authority with a holy royal authority" (Keel, 1978 p.7). Buddhism exists in both democratic and socialist ideologies. According to Laliberté (2011), Buddhism flourishes under communism and that Western countries should enhance their connections with as a consequence. This indicates that Buddhism may fit any political situation. Buddhist philosophy is frequently used for political motives. Various kinds of Buddhist socialism were developed in Cambodia, Laos, Thailand, and Sri Lanka, particularly during the post-colonial era. Monks and intellectuals searched for probable links connecting Buddhism and other religions in Japan, China, Taiwan, Korea, Tibet, India as well as in other countries (Ladwig & Shields 2014). It is worthy to note that Buddhism is also developing most aggressively in Western countries wherein local populations rarely find solutions to their metaphysical questions in established conventions and must seek religion on their own. In fact, the Buddhist doctrine has a worldwide effect. According to Ulanov and Badmaev (2015), "it is notable that Buddhism is developing most rapidly in modern Western nations wherein native population cannot find solutions to their spiritual needs in conventional confessions and people look for religion on their own" (P. 16). Buddhism has proven to be incredibly adaptive to and versatile in many social and geographic contexts (Jayasuriya 2008). The interest in Buddhism is linked to liberal and democratic values in Russian cultural and social contexts as well.

### ***Political perspectives in Buddhism***

Because Buddha was a descendant of a reigning dynasty, political issues were the source of the Buddhist doctrine. The Buddhist goals of a "just community," defined as being one where there is fairness, economic success, and the observance of virtuous lifestyles. This was explicitly spelled out in the ethical norm of the Asokan "welfare state" (Jayasuriya, 2008). Buddhism has substantial historical roots in colonial politics and other contexts characterized by severe power disparities, economic injustice, and hegemony. In Asia's struggle against colonialism, the customary partnership between Buddhist and secularist authorities was constantly threatened (Ladwig & Shields, 2014). Buddhism and the political power

enjoyed peaceful co-existence in India (Keel, 1978). Because of the close connection that has historically prevailed between Buddhism and the state in Korea, Korean Buddhism is frequently noted for having a significant aspect of state-protecting Buddhism (Keel, 1978). Buddhism had a significant role in culminating world wars, a fact yet to be explored and written (Ladwig & Shields, 2014). Since Brahmanical theology had now gained access to the centers of political influence, North Indian Buddhism also adopted Sanskrit (Bronkhorst, 2017). Buddhist political theory holds that a king has a variety of vital obligations to take control of his constituents. Buddhist teachings built the divine king after mythological-historical figures (Tomalin, 2007). Regardless of the fact that the area of Buddhism and politics has all through the decades delivered a number of noteworthy works, the spotlight has usually been placed on the relationship's general structure instead of its potentially revolutionary aspects (Ladwig & Shields, 2014). Buddhist philosophy is primarily an ontology founded on assertions about the nature of reality out of which, depending on the circumstances and their interrelationship, insights relevant to sociology, psychology, or political theory can indeed be extracted (Ward, 2017). Buddhism was able to ideologically strengthen ideas of rule, which frequently assisted in maintaining the power of the governing authorities. The constitutive tales of Buddhist kingship form the base for this idealistic approach to leadership and statecraft (Ladwig & Shields, 2014). Buddhism's theory of human autonomy acts as a link between the ideologies of relativism and resentment (Ward, 2017). Heterodox people and groups have fostered resistance and opposition to rulers and governments through Buddhist history (Ladwig & Shields, 2014). According to Buddhism, political legitimacy is necessary to create and maintain a society in which its members are able to live in decency, peace, and mutual respect without having to endure the degrading effects of poverty and conflict (Khetjoi & Thasa, 2017).

### ***Socio-cultural perspectives in Buddhism***

In China, the cultural history of Buddhism is a significant economic advantage (Laliberté, 2011). If we limit ourselves to the social aspect of Buddhism, it may be described as a moral, spiritual, and practical education meant to create a human with direction and self-control (Gnanarama, 1996). Buddhism is currently relatively new and has inadequate resources to have an influence on social policy (Laliberté, 2011). Buddhist social and economic analysis, warfare, violence, conflict, and non-violence, as well as environmental concerns, prejudice and diversity, female rights, gender

and sexuality, work and livelihood, are all immediate problems (Tomalin, 2007), which are also the central concerns of Political Science Education. Not just was Buddhism a religious movement, it also served as "a social and intellectual movement impacting many aspects of human life" (Thapar, 2002 as cited in Jayasuriya, 2008) although it was developed in a sociopolitical environment that encouraged social hierarchies, partnerships with powerful individuals, and governmental control (Ladwig & Shields, 2014).

Neo-Buddhism, which is the updated or revitalized version, actively engages in social and political life and offers solutions to real world problems (Ulanov & Badmaev, 2015). Religions play four different societal roles: i) upholding social cohesion ii) offering theory-based solutions to life's issues iii) instilling society's ideals and standards iv) offering psychological help to believers (Gnanarama, 1996). Buddhism has historically been an important source of philanthropic activities and volunteering activities, and it continues to be (Tomalin, 2007). All these features of Buddhism can be the contents for Political Science Education.

### **Implications for Political Science Education**

The preceding analysis reveals that Buddhism inspires educational philosophical principles, political viewpoint, and socio-political perspectives that are pertinent to the teaching of political science. Underneath the following sub-themes, this article also analyzes the implications of Buddhist ideology to political science teaching.

#### ***Philosophical teaching***

The 14th Dalai Lama and spiritual *guru* Tenzin Gyatzo stated that Buddhism rejects the concept of God or even the creator. Buddhism holds that one's own deeds are eventually what constitute one (Tenzin Gyatzo, as mentioned in Sahdra & Shaver, 2013). The "eightfold road" of ideas can be applied to the teaching of political science: thinking, speech, deed, lifestyle, endeavor, mindfulness, and concentration. They were how the Buddha taught people to eliminate desire and connection (Tomalin, 2007). The founding ideas of Buddhism hold that the practice of Buddhism is a way to spiritual liberation for all individuals (Gamlath, 2016). According to Buddhist mythology, all of the realms and all life are always changing. Nothing is everlasting except for *nivana*, which is the transcending of physical existence. When people or nations accept the fact that change and hardships are inevitable, they will automatically reduce their excessive desire. To meet their biological necessities, not their psychological need,

they will acquire wealth and possessions that will alleviate the rivalries, disputes, and conflicts between people and nations (Gnanarama, 1996). The Buddhist concept of emerging dependency and continuous flux are extremely congruent with the modern empirical psychologists' view that each given psychological phenomenon exists in the midst of a complicated nexus of causative factors.

### ***Epistemological teaching***

Wisdom and compassion are conceived as complementary "skills" in Buddhist psychology that have become proceduralized through experience. Buddhism regards that 'rational thought' and 'emotional responses' are not mutually exclusive but, rather, interrelated. Since Buddhist thinking exists from outside of the Western epistemologies and ontologies, this can break a few of the stumbling blocks of the Western thoughts (Ward, 2017). Buddhism advises the accomplishment of a greater level of *sukha* (happiness) which emerges from non-acquisition; it can also be obtained from offering, assisting others to be reassured from suffering. The ultimate degrees of *sukha* are obtained from contemplation, with the deepest being emancipation or liberation from all mental impurities or defilements, *nirvana* (Zsolnai, 2016). Buddhism encourages modest consumerism and actively works to change one's tastes through meditation, introspection, analysis, autosuggestion, and other means (Zsolnai, 2016). In pursuit of knowledge, the Buddha abandoned all types of harsh spiritual disciplines he had been practicing for six years and devised a methodology, a way by which he might attain his goal of enlightenment (Gnanarama, 1996). According to Buddhism, the role of work is now at least threefold: it allows a man to use and expand his psychic abilities; it allows him to transcend his ego-centeredness by collaborating with others on a common task; and it provides the goods and services required for survival (Khetjoi & Thasa, 2017). Buddhist meditation, according to Wallace (2006), entails maintaining a prolonged, calm, attentive attention with few lapses into sleepiness, mental laxity, or extreme excitement, and keeping open to whatever emerges without consciously grasping or denying it (as cited in Sahdra & Shaver, 2013).

### ***Personal and social emancipation***

The eventual aim of Buddhism is personal and social emancipation. Buddhism is an "enlightened" religion of redemption (Keel 1978). Buddhism is among the divine faiths dedicated to emancipating people from



negative secularized habits (Gamlath, 2016). Moreover, on the basis of the theological and public perceptions (particularly in the West), moderation and its cognates - balance, harmony, tranquility, and so on - have sometimes been viewed as the essential underpinning of leading a life in accordance with Buddhist teachings (Ladwig & Shields, 2014). The moral values of Buddhism are built on humanitarian concepts that improve both personal and societal well-being (Gnanarama, 1996). Buddhist psychology and Western psychology both emphasize the significance of expressing and receiving kindness, as well as limiting neurotic attachment or ambivalent detachment while suppressing undesired mental processes. As stated by the Buddha, there is no difficulty in the world that cannot be addressed with proper knowledge and dedication (Gnanarama, 1996). Equality is viewed as a social ideal in Buddhism (Tomalin, 2007). Buddhist science also explains how to cultivate healthy human emotions and healthy social interactions while, at the same time, eliminating "toxic" or "distressing" emotional reactions (Goleman, 2003 as cited in Sahdra & Shaver, 2013). Because all beings are in situations of distress, everyone's primary responsibility is to express sympathy to all. Compassion is a powerful positive force that may transform foes into allies (Gnanarama, 1996).

### ***Peaceful and harmonious social living***

The major guiding Buddhist principle for overcoming societal issues is *ahimsa* (non-violence) (Zsolnai, 2016). Some other cases would be the Buddhist approach to family relation that leads to harmonious living (Gnanarama, 1996). The Buddhist that adopts the Buddha's advice is a seeker of harmony both personally and socially (Gnanarama, 1996). The fundamental premise on which the goal of harmony is based is the concept of non-violence. To avoid violence and threats and to follow the idea of friendliness and fellow sentiment is valued and encouraged in Buddhism (Gnanarama, 1996). Buddhism is commonly connected to tolerance and harmony (Tomalin, 2007). It promotes compassion, tolerance, the *sangha* (community of practitioners), and ties with instructors (Sahdra & Shaver, 2013). The utmost happiness, according to Buddhism, is complete liberation from the root causes of all pain and misery: selfishness, hatred, and illusion, that are also plainly the underlying causes of all societal problems (Khetjoi & Thasa, 2017).

Buddhist psychology provides a new perspective on safety. People's attempts to achieve stability in relationships, jobs, belongings, riches, or



reputation are viewed as mistakes in reasoning and bad judgments in the quest of pleasure in this tradition (Sahdra & Shaver, 2013). Buddhism is unique as a religion because it seeks to approve a person's day-to-day existence while positing a 'personal deity' or a mystical entity (Jayasuriya, 2008).

### ***Equity and social justice***

Buddhism regards all humans as equal, and hence adheres to the concept of human brotherhood (Khetjoi & Thasa, 2017). Buddhism is dedicated to promoting harmony among the many ethnicities where Buddhism is prominent, specifically Tibetan Buddhism (Laliberté, 2011). Mankind commit crimes or sins, according to Buddhism, because of three essential attitudes: *lobha* (craving), *dosha* (ill intent), and *moha* (cluelessness). On the contrary, the core factors of wholesome or excellent behaviors are *alobha* (non-craving), *adosha* (non-ill intent), and *amoha* (non-ignorance) (Gnanarama, 1996). Despite the fact that Buddhism had differing views to *Brahmanism*, the claim of early Buddhism deliberately opposed the class structure and supported an equal society has been extensively questioned (Ladwig and Shields, 2014) The Buddhist approach to offenders is geared at rehabilitating and reforming them into decent citizens (Gnanarama, 1996). It opposes inhumane physical punishment. The punishment must be meted out after a rigorous examination of the facts in compliance with the law (Gnanarama, 1996).

### ***International relationship***

Buddhism has definitely connected numerous countries in a chain of cultural links. As mentioned earlier, Buddhists represent the majority of the population in Thailand, Myanmar, Sri Lanka, Cambodia, Laos, and Bhutan, Japan, Vietnam, Korea, Taiwan, and Nepal (Laliberté, 2011). In Korean history, Buddhism and political authority have had a tight association (Keel, 1978). Conversely, Buddha and Buddhism are connected with several aspects of Nepal's international relations, notably peacefulness, equality, cohabitation of sovereignty, universal brotherhood, no-war policy, cultural legacy, and so on. Early Buddhism established a new link among religion and politics. Buddhism has been able to provide intellectual support to conceptions of authority by integrating its precepts in statecraft, and thus frequently preserved the predominance of governing elites (Ladwig & Shields, 2014).

### ***Buddhism, inclusive democracy and development***

Buddhism and democracy have a rich history in common, with many academics claiming that Buddhism's core foundations are liberal (Kierstead & James, 2018). Nepal is a nation that is diverse in many ways, including its people, culture, race and tradition. Inclusive democracy seeks to incorporate marginalized minorities into the larger framework of public policies, procedures, and actions. Buddhism proposes a series of ideals that lay the groundwork for equitable democracy. Secularism, corporate development, utilization of local sources, moral education, and pleasure are examples of such notions.

Buddhism, as a religion of transcendental enlightenment, may have established a comparable organizational autonomy against secular governmental power (Keel, 1978). Thus, Buddhism signifies the legitimate use of political power, which is crucial in context of the Nepalese international relations.

Many researchers have found that the rise of Buddhism in China is mostly due to the efforts of enterprising monks and enthusiastic worshippers as well as their strong ties with local authorities (Laliberté, 2011).

Similarly, Buddhists believe that producing goods with community resources for local concerns is the most reasonable way to organize economic activity (Zsolnai, 2016). This notion is also equally important for the self-sufficiency of the Nepalese economy. Plenty of Nepalese youngsters are seeking work in foreign countries. This is not due to a lack of work opportunities in Nepal. Moreover, the problem is profoundly embedded in entrepreneurship in industries such as agriculture, tourism, and manufacturing. The Buddhist idea that the source of a problem lies within oneself might be a valuable lesson in this regard.

The Buddhist perspective on service to others has been effectively conveyed by highlighting the viability of one's moral character (Gnanarama, 1996). Ethics, as the total sum of Buddhist conduct, requires that an action or proposition be examined in light of the moral implications latent in that specific action or proposition. As Ganarama (1996) suggests, the bad streams are *lobha*, *dosha*, and *moha* whereas the virtuous springs are *alobha*, *adosha*, and *amoha*. The contemporary Nepalese politics dominated by corruption and immorality may learn a lot from Buddhism's moral teaching.

### **Happiness**

*Arthik sukha* (financial stability), *bhoga sukha* (sharing riches with others), *ananya sukha* (debtlessness), and *andanawajja sukha* (faultless conduct of the body, tongue, and mind) are the four-fold pleasure of the layman (Gnanarama 1996). At present our observation shows that the Nepalese individuals are enveloped by temptation because they are strongly influenced by neoliberal thinking, which regards every human action as an investment in economy. Furthermore, as Buddha's birthplace, Nepal has a strong connection to the Buddha and Buddhism. As a result, individuals who are interested in the Buddha and Buddhism - from the administration to the general population - naturally travel to Nepal, particularly Lumbini. This is an advantage for the growth of tourism as an industry now and maybe in the long term also.

### **CONCLUSIONS**

Education is a continuous and life-encompassing process. The main objective of the Buddhist educational system and the associated process of cognitive (mental) growth is the freedom of the person from all forms of bonds. All of the teachings of Buddha aim to heal the soul. Buddhism, in reality, is an education which will help us achieve truth, morality, creativity, knowledge, and authentic eternal bliss. In the setting of Nepal, the *gumba* system of education has aided in the production of moral, logical, and spiritually trained students. In other words, Buddhist education provided in Nepal's *gumbas* is beneficial in shaping students' personalities in accordance with Buddhist standards and principles for the development of ethical, intellectual and spiritual characteristics in the learners. It is said that Buddhist education makes persons wise, humanistic, rational, and devoid of prejudices. It is thought that after receiving an education from Buddhist schools, colleges, and universities, one cannot conduct any wrong, say a falsehood, theft, cruelty, or addiction to alcohol and moral depravity. Personal, social, intellectual, vocational, worldly, and spiritual advancements are all benefits of the Buddhist educational system. The primary goal of Buddhist education is to develop a person who is free, intellectual, enlightened, moral, gifted, non-violent, and democratic. The route to awakening is paved with morality and wisdom. Buddhism has numerous theories and perspectives, rendering it a tolerant and progressive religion. The Four Noble Truths, Buddha's most fundamental doctrines, are vital for understanding religion. Buddhism teaches us the importance of honesty, elegance, integrity, compassion, pleasure, and knowledge. To sum

up, Buddhism can occupy some space into the Nepalese curriculum, more explicitly into the curriculum of Political Science Education.

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