

Concept Paper

For Organizing

**Three-day International Conference on
Buddhist Philosophy and Its' Role in
Inculcating
Values among Youth
(February 17-19, 2021)**

*According to Buddhist Philosophy,
"Youth are foundations of all human beings"
"One who has wisdom is considered an adult although he is young by age"*

Jointly by

Rajiv Gandhi National Institute of Youth Development
(An Institution of National Importance by Act of Parliament No.35/2012)
Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports (MYAS), Government of India (GOI)
Pennalur, Sriperumbudur, Tamil Nadu – 602 105, India

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Indian Council for Cultural Relations
Government of India

Background

Philosophy in India is aimed mainly at spiritual liberation and has sociological goals. In his study of Mādhyamaka Buddhist philosophy in India, Peter Deller Santina writes, [1]. Attention must first of all be drawn to the fact that philosophical systems in India were seldom, if ever, purely speculative or descriptive. Virtually all the great philosophical systems of India: Sāṅkhya, Advaitavedānta, Mādhyamaka and so forth, were preeminently concerned with providing a means to liberation or salvation. It was a tacit assumption with these systems that if their philosophy were correctly understood and assimilated, an unconditioned state free of suffering and limitation could be achieved. If this fact is overlooked, as often happens as a result of the propensity engendered by formal Occidental philosophy to consider the philosophical enterprise as a purely descriptive one, the real significance of Indian and Buddhist philosophy will be missed.'

For the Indian Buddhist philosophers, the teachings of the Buddha were not meant to be taken on faith alone, but to be confirmed by logical analysis (pramana) of the world [2]. The early Buddhist texts mention that a person becomes a follower of the Buddha's teachings after having pondered them over with wisdom and the gradual training also requires that a disciple "investigate" (upaparikkhati) and "scrutinize" (tuleti) the teachings [3]. The Buddha also expected his disciples to approach him as a teacher in a critical fashion and scrutinize his actions and words, as shown in the Vīmaṃsaka Sutta.

Values reflect our sense of right and wrong. They help us grow and develop. They help us create the future we want. The decisions we make every day are a reflection of our values.

Individual values reflect how we live our life and what we consider important for our own self-interests. Individual values include enthusiasm, creativity, humility and personal fulfilment. Relationship values reflect how we relate to other people in our life, such as friends, family, teachers, managers, etc. Relationship values include openness, trust, generosity and caring. Social values reflect how we relate to society. Social values include justice, freedom, respect, community, and responsibility. In today's world, it may seem our society in general and youth in particular don't practice many values. We have a rise in discrimination, abuse of power, greed, etc. What are we leaving behind for our future generations? Maybe it's time younger society takes a hard look at its values.

There have been recent reports, including one in the *Global Times* newspaper, which suggest that Buddhism is growing in popularity among young people. Some reasons given were the exoticism of Buddhist culture, psychological comfort, a greater variety of practices, and the allure of reaching enlightenment faster.

Any interest in Buddhism on the part of young people is driven by concerns about its relevance to their lives. Yet this pragmatism doesn't lack idealism: teenagers say they might turn to Buddhism if it could help them deal with stress or empower them to make a positive impact. Buddhism would also interest them if it could help them understand the meaning of life and make sense of a confusing and complex world, with meditation and a correlation with science being points of interest as well. Exploring how Buddhist practices can be adapted for young people can therefore be viewed as a global concern. One approach has been to remove or play down the liturgical aspect so that the chanting, the sutras and doctrines, and the dense

textual material do not intimidate, and to promote “non-religious” aspects such as social justice and meditation.

Rationale for Organizing the International Conference on Buddhist Philosophy

Since Buddhism is appealing to younger generations who share certain commonalities across cultures (even if the contexts are dissimilar), the solutions might not differ too drastically. A multifaceted and imaginative approach emphasizing relevance of Buddhist philosophy is necessary [4]. In this background an International Conference on Buddhist Philosophy & Its Role in Inculcating Values among Youth proposes to organise by Rajiv Gandhi National Institute of Youth Development (RGNIYD), Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports, Government of India.

Objectives

- To discuss the various dimensions of Buddhist Philosophy and its culture.
- To give an overview of Buddhist literature and architecture available across the countries.
- To highlight the relevance of Buddhist Philosophy for the youth across the society.
- To understand Buddhist Philosophy’s impact on youth across the society.
- To share the experiences of best practices of Buddhist Philosophy inculcating the values among the youth.

Broad Themes of the Conference

- Origin of Buddhist philosophy
- Dimensions of Buddhist philosophy and culture
- Essence of Buddhist philosophy and its best practices
- Role of Buddhist philosophy behind positive mental health
- Impact of Buddhist philosophy in society and in inculcating values among youth
- Strengthening Buddhist culture in India and other countries

Expected Outcome

- Gaining better understanding about Buddhist philosophy and its’ culture from the deliberations of national and international scholars.
- Having clear idea about availability of Buddhist literature and its locations.
- Understanding and imbibing the values of Buddhist Philosophy among the youth.
- Sensitizing youth to engage in positive and constructive activities for creating a healthy and prosperous society.

Participants

Youth/ scholars/ academicians across the different nations

Evaluation of the Conference

An effort will be made to get the feedback from the participants about the conference circulating a semi-structured questionnaire online to all the participants.

Certificate

All the participants will be issued an e-certificate for attending at least 80% of the lectures.

References

1. Santina, Peter Della. Madhyamaka Schools in India: A Study of the Madhyamaka Philosophy and of the Division of the System into the Prasangika and Svatantrika Schools. 2008
2. Siderits, Mark. Buddhism as philosophy, 2007
3. Smith, Douglas; Whitaker, Justin; Reading the Buddha as a philosopher, Philosophy east and west, volume 66, April 2016
4. <https://youthfirstinc.org/values-in-todays-society>
5. <https://www.buddhistdoor.net/features/buddhistdoor-view-communicating-buddhism-to-young-people>
6. https://www.google.com/url?sa=t&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&source=web&cd=&cad=rja&uact=8&ved=2ahUKEwjD_YG3jPjtAhXmgtgFHfk1C9sQFjAMegQIHxAC&url=http%3A%2F%2Fonline.sfsu.edu%2Fronline%2FBuddhism%2Ffootsteps.htm&usg=AOvVaw0kukSCupfxytVCddGhqhFA