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Beyond the Divide: Integrating Buddhist Wisdom and Modern Education

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Abstract

Traditional Buddhist monastic education and modern education are frequently presented as separate or competing systems: the former emphasizing ethical formation, contemplative discipline, and philosophical reasoning, and the latter prioritising communication, technology, employability, and global participation. This practice-based conceptual study examines how these traditions can be integrated without weakening the integrity of either. It draws on the author's work at Drepung Losel Ling Institute in Mundgod, India, supporting international visitors who study Buddhist philosophy and teaching English to young monks.

Using reflective practitioner inquiry, the paper analyses recurring educational needs and responses through four bridges: dialogical learning, contextual English instruction, contemplative self-regulation and intercultural interpretation. It considers how established monastic methods of memorisation, instruction, debate, recitation, reading and discussion can interact with learner-centred pedagogy, communicative language teaching, digital resources and global citizenship.

The paper proposes a reciprocal model rather than a one-directional process of modernisation. Modern education can help young monks access international scholarship, communicate Buddhist knowledge accurately and participate confidently in wider society; Buddhist education can offer contemporary learners disciplined attention, compassion, ethical responsibility and critical reflection on the purposes of knowledge. The study argues that the future of monastic education lies not in replacing tradition, nor in treating mindfulness as an isolated secular technique, but in creating culturally grounded learning environments where wisdom, language, technology and ethical development support one another. This framework positions the monastery as a living site of multilingual, values-oriented and globally relevant education.

Keywords: Bilingual pedagogy; Contemplative inquiry; Ethical literacy; English-language teaching; Intercultural dialogue