

ISSN : 2616-0196 (Print)  
ISSN : 2717-4603 (Online)

# Lumbinī Prabhā

2565 B.E.

Vol. 6

May, 2021



**Lumbini Buddhist University**  
**Central Campus**

Rupandehi, Lumbini, Nepal



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# Incorporating Social Justice Education in Academic Programs: Case Study of Lumbini Buddhist University, Nepal

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## Abstract

*Social justice is a common outlook of both Buddhism and contemporary studies. The academic programs of Lumbini Buddhist University (LBU) have been designed to address the country's socio-economic development for social justice based on Buddha's message of noble eightfold path. In 2004 when it was established, LBU was conceived for promoting Buddhist studies. Upon self-evaluation, it created School of Development Studies & Applied Sciences in 2019 and Faculty of Humanities & Social Sciences in 2018. The academic programs have been designed in accordance to the guidelines of University Grants Commission (UGC). Program-wise, the courses of Buddhist studies include contemporary subjects such as economics, environment, law etc. Similarly, the courses on applied & social sciences have incorporated Buddhist philosophy, such as Buddhist economics, Buddhist ecology, Buddhist jurisprudence etc. The programs have been designed to balance subjects of Buddhist philosophy and contemporary studies. For pragmatic and efficient implementation of courses, it has adopted pedagogy of modified version of experiential learning and the teacher-learning interface. Each faculty substantially devoted (79%) credits to its own areas. Further research requires for substantiating on how the linking of Buddhist philosophy and contemporary studies have enhanced professionally and institutionally.*

**Key words:** academic programs, Buddhism, Lumbini, pedagogy, social justice

## Background

Social justice has been a spiritual aspiration in Buddhism, and an intellectual base of the contemporary education system. Gautam Buddha is regarded as the proponent of social justice some 2,500 years ago. In his early life before he left home in search of universal solution to the sufferings, he first acquired knowledge of the prevailing society by experiential learning as a prince. In his time, the society was ruled under the Brahminic doctrine of four classes of caste system, such as (1) *Brahmins* (priests), (2) *Kshatriyas* (warriors), (3) *Vaishyas* (traders), and (4) *Shudras* (laborers). He challenged the caste system that used to treat women and *Shudras* as invalid for their basic human rights to education, whereas the 'upper class males' used to enjoy all privileges and discretionary powers. He discovered social disorder, injustice and dichotomy of love and hate (Ambedkar, 1956: pp66-69).