

EDUCATIONAL THOUGHTS OF BUDDHA AND ITS PRESENT RELEVANCE IN INDIA — AN ANALYTICAL STUDY

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ABSTRACT

The world has faced several challenges since January 2020 when the World Health Organization has declared it pandemic. The continuous three years of turmoil made life full of horrors for each individual throughout the world. All the religious populations are far away from the pre-corona situation. A tremendous current of death rallies makes the eight billion world population full of despair and sorrow. International cooperation with an all-around support system was the teachings of Buddha for the last two thousand five hundred years. The preaching of Buddha's religion was always in favor of the best human societies that lead to winning the sorrow of an individual. Buddha's educational thought was to lead a peaceful life by overcoming the sorrows of each individual. He preached four noble truths and eight paths for all human beings. Buddhist Education aims to change an unwise to wise, beast hood to Buddha hood. Present educational thought in India and the world is very much relevant to overcome the battle among the nations which is only possible through Lord Buddha's teaching.

Keywords: Educational thoughts, Buddha's teaching, analytical study

INTRODUCTION

International cooperation is crucial in today's world, and Buddha's teachings from two and a half thousand years ago emphasized this importance. His teachings focused on creating the best human societies that could overcome individual sorrows. This is especially relevant now, as the world has gone through a turmoil for the last three years due to the coronavirus pandemic. People across the globe are living in fear, uncertainty, and despair. All religious populations have been affected and are far from their pre-corona situation. A tremendous current of death rallies is causing the world's population of eight billion to feel full of despair and sorrow.

In this context, the modern education system is ambiguous regarding the continuity of vast scientific discoveries used in every sphere of life. The fear is that without them, global tranquillity may be denied. The goal of life is therefore dependent on the continuation of these discoveries.

To create a peaceful society, Jacques Delors, the eighth President of the European Commission, has emphasized four pillars of Education: learning to know, learning to be, learning to do, and

learning to live together. These four pillars indicate the key ingredients necessary for peaceful cooperation among people.

In this paper, the author will explore Buddha's educational thoughts and their relevance in the present scenario, especially in the post-corona world. By analyzing Buddha's teachings, one can gain insight into creating a peaceful society through international cooperation and education.

DISCUSSION

A brief life sketch and Educational Thought of Buddha :

According to historical research, Gautama Buddha (Siddhartha) was a spiritual leader who was born approximately 2600 years ago in the Shakyamuni kingdom of Kapilabastu Nagar, which is now situated in Nepal. Siddhartha's father was King Shudhodhana and his mother was Queen Maya. His mother died just a few days after his birth and he was raised by his mother's sister-in-law, Mahaprajapati Gautami, that is why he is known as Gautama Buddha.

Buddha grew up as a royal prince, leading a life free from sufferings until he was 29 years old. He married Yasodhara and became the father of his son, Rahul. Despite being content with his life as a prince, he wanted to renounce all kinds of desire which is the cause of sufferings and wanted to explore the truth of human life. He renounced his life of luxury, wealth, and power in order to become a monk and seek the truth of human life.

His journey towards enlightenment began with a period of asceticism and self-denial, but he soon realized that this was not the path to enlightenment. Instead, he discovered the middle way, a path of moderation that avoided both extremes of self-indulgence and self-denial.

Buddha spent six years on his spiritual journey, during which he gained a deep understanding of the nature of the human mind and the causes of suffering. He believed that all our problems and suffering arise from our confused and negative states of mind, and all our happiness and good fortune arise from peaceful and positive state of mind. He developed a set of teachings, known as the Four Noble Truths and the Eightfold Path, to help people overcome their suffering and achieve enlightenment.

The teachings of Buddha have had a profound impact on human history and have influenced many cultures and religions throughout the world. It continued to inspire people to this day to seek the truth and find inner peace.

Buddhism :

The four noble truths :

According to extensive research on Buddhism, the teachings of Buddha regarding Dhamma or Dharma have been regarded as the ultimate truth leading to liberation from the ignorance of life. The four noble truths represent a fundamental structure for comprehending the core beliefs of Buddhism.

The first noble truth clearly articulates that life is **full of suffering (Dukkha)**, which is due to human desires and expectations that often have conflict with the reality of the constantly changing world (Anicca). Therefore, each individual must experience Dukkha in their life.

The second noble truth emphasizes that the **root cause of suffering is attachment**. People tend to assume permanence to impermanent things, leading to a mismatch between expectations and reality. Buddha contended that our ideas about objects and perceptions are all transient, and even the notion of a “self” is an illusion as there is no permanent self. Clinging to these ideas and craving them ultimately leads to suffering.

The third noble truth suggests that **suffering can be eliminated** in this life. Nirvana, akin to the Hindu concept of Moksha, can be achieved in life through rigorous discipline and effort. Nirvana denotes freedom from troubles, worries, ideas, and the illusion of self, and by following Buddha’s teachings, one can become an arahant.

The fourth noble truth lays out the **path to the cessation of suffering, known as the Middle Way**. It is a route between the two extremes of clinging and aversion, both forms of attachment, arriving at a state of complete equanimity. The Eightfold Path constitutes the Middle Way, including right understanding, right intention, right speech, right action, right livelihood, right effort, right mindfulness, and right concentration.

The teachings of Buddha on the four noble truths provide a complete framework for understanding the human condition and the path to liberation from suffering, which is a vital aspect of Buddhist philosophy.

THE EIGHTFOLD PATH

Summa, which means “right,” is a concept in Buddhism that aims to promote the end of suffering. It is traditionally divided following sections and subsections :

1. Study - Cultivating Wisdom

- **Right Understanding:** One becomes acquainted with the basic principles of Dharma and the Buddha’s teachings, gradually awakening an understanding.
- **Right Intention:** One contemplates the desire for all beings to be happy and free from suffering. One cultivates goodwill, harmlessness, and non-attachment, avoiding tendencies towards greed, hatred, and harm.

2. Practice - Cultivating Virtue

- **Right Speech :** One should refrain from false speech, gossip, cursing, swearing, or meaningless babble. One should communicate with others in kind and gentle words.

- **Right Action** : One vow to live by the five precepts of non-harming (ahimsa) and refrain from harming sentient beings and taking what is not offered. One also refrains from sexual misconduct and stupefying drinks.
- **Right Livelihood** : One earns a living in a way that benefits humanity.

3. Meditation - Cultivating Concentration

- **Right Effort** : The student pays deliberate attention to developing positive thoughts that alleviate suffering and let go of negative ones, practicing generosity and patience.
- **Right Mindfulness** : One takes meditative awareness into everyday life, restraining the mind's proclivity to make immediate judgments, reducing its tendency to need stimulation, and sharpening its awareness in the present moment.
- **Right Concentration** : One takes time each day to practice meditative awareness.

These eight elements may be symbolized by a wheel and practiced simultaneously, as the practice of one supports the practice of the others. The Buddha maintained that one could develop the virtues described as one would develop any skill, with regular practice. It is worth noting that Buddha saw himself as a healer, not as a God. He was never represented in human form until 300-400 years after his death. He described himself in his own words “**Remember me as one who is awake.**”

EDUCATIONAL THOUGHTS OF BUDDHA

There was racial discrimination in the society in India during the time of Buddha. This discrimination was according to the profession of man and according to birth. In the society, there were four divisions of Varna of whom Brahman was the superior. They enjoyed rights to religious training and education. But other categories of people are deprived of their religious and educational rights.

It should be observed that it is “the life of holiness” that Buddhism emphasizes much more than the philosophy of life, speculations concerning the mysteries of life and death and such ultimate truths. The entire system of Buddhist education must be rooted in faith (saddhâ)— faith in the Triple Gem, and above all in the Buddha as the fully enlightened One, the peerless teacher and supreme guide to right living and right understanding.

Based on this faith, the students must be inspired to become accomplished in virtue (sîla) by following the moral guidelines spelt out by the Five Precepts. Students should come to appreciate the positive virtues such as kindness, honesty, purity, truthfulness, and mental sobriety. They must also acquire the spirit of generosity and self-sacrifice (câga), which are essential for overcoming selfishness, greed, and the narrow focus on self-advancement that dominates in present-day society.

In the early period, Buddhist Education was limited to the monasteries and only for the members of the monastery. But later on, it was open to the mass, even lay people got scope to have education in those institutions.

In modern days, Buddhist Education became wide open and embraced by the people of various sections of society. Buddhist Education aims to change an unwise to wise, beasthood to Buddhahood.

According to Lord Buddha, after achieving knowledge through six years of practice and seeking answers about human life, the ultimate goal was to remove sorrows. This teaching can be considered the educational thought of Lord Buddha. His teachings encompassed various aspects of life, including spiritual attainment, mindfulness, positive thinking, and the development of virtues.

First, Lord Buddha advised his pupils to accept everything only after verifying ideas and views with logic and judgment. He encouraged them to question their mind, body, and outer and inner environment to ensure they don't blindly follow the utterings of sacred people or teachers.

Second, he taught that spiritual attainment was not confined to certain castes, and everyone had the potential to achieve it, regardless of gender, age, social status, or moral standing. He emphasized the quality of mindfulness, which involves being aware without judgment.

Third, Lord Buddha's teaching focused on the methods for gradually overcoming negative mental activities such as anger, jealousy, and ignorance and for developing positive minds such as love, compassion, and wisdom. Through this, we can experience lasting peace and happiness.

Fourth, these methods work for anyone, anywhere, of any age. Once anyone gains experience, they can pass them on to others, allowing them to enjoy the same benefits.

Fifth, the Buddhist way of life is still relevant today as it was when Buddha appeared in ancient India. It advocates searching for peace, loving-kindness, and wisdom.

Finally, the seven factors of awakening, also known as Inner Wealth within the Buddhist religion, are seven mental capacities placed significant value. These factors are mindfulness, investigation, energy, joy, tranquility, concentration, and equanimity.

PRESENT EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM IN INDIA

India's educational ideology has evolved over the course of different dynasties spanning more than thousand years. The original Indian thoughts of Hindu and Buddhist culture and education were destroyed by various rulers. The invasion of Mughal Emperors changed the then-Persian culture and education, while the British rulers changed the traditional system of mixed education of Tole of Hindu and Madrasah of Mughal to a modern School education according to Christian concepts.

However, after the independence of India in 1947, several Commissions were formed to develop scientific educational parameters. Since independence, India has mostly followed the British Educational System for Science and Technology, but it has paid scant attention to the study of religious scriptures. This lack of attention towards the study of scriptures has deprived Indians from the true understanding of culture and knowledge in India.

Education, from kindergarten to postgraduate levels across the world, is predominantly competitive, with a focus on the accumulation of resources rather than cooperative sensitization. This has resulted in a world population filled with the ingredients to fight with each other, highlighting the fallacy of the modern education system.

The National Education Policy 2020 of India has introduced a new framework for school education, with a 5+3+3+4 structure and a higher education frame of three to four years for undergraduate courses and one to two years for post-graduate courses, which replaces the traditional 10+2+3+2 system. While this may align with modern international education standards and promote economic growth by developing a skilled workforce, it may not lead to a peaceful life for the population of India if it does not include value education, as suggested by Lord Buddha and other great personalities.

Unhealthy competition can destroy the inner spirit of a nation, and therefore, Buddhist educational thoughts are necessary to search for peace in life. The NPE-2020 aims to develop learners' skills and competencies through modern science and technological education, but it must also prioritize value and peace education. Without this, the education system may produce a society of people who act like beasts rather than humans with kindness and compassion. Hence, it is crucial to incorporate Buddhist educational thought judiciously to help individuals become potential kind-hearted human beings.

RELEVANCE OF BUDDHA'S EDUCATIONAL THOUGHTS

The goal of human life, in a spiritual sense, is to achieve self-knowledge. However, this is only possible when an individual lead a peaceful life, which is attainable through both mental and social peace. On a societal level, the goal should be to establish an environment of cooperation that promotes peace among its members, thus creating a heavenly society. The four pillars of education are crucial in achieving this goal, which is commonly referred to as "learning to live together."

To achieve this objective, the education system must be a careful blend of modern change in society and valuable education, which promotes mental discipline and peace from early on in life. This can be achieved through value education and cooperative learning, which are the teachings of Buddha. Japan is an excellent example of a country that has successfully incorporated Buddha's teachings into its current scenario. India can follow this example and work towards transforming its society.

CONCLUSION

According to Buddha's educational philosophy, it is important for individuals, regardless of gender, to develop values and ethics that align with nature and the environment. From an early age, everyone should cultivate a sense of selflessness, generosity, and self-actualization. The ultimate goal is to eliminate the sorrows of life through the power of knowledge and activities that promote peace at the individual, societal, and global levels.

However, modern technology and ICT have the potential to distract learners from valuable and peaceful education. Without incorporating value and peace education into the school system, AI and other technological advancements may disable critical thinking and lead to brutality.

To successfully incorporate Buddhist educational principles, practical applications are necessary. This can only be achieved if the government, guardians, and teachers understand the whole process. By blending modern education with Buddhist educational principles, the world could transform into a heavenly place, fulfilling the ultimate desire of the global population. This would also achieve the four pillars of education.

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