

## CONCEPT OF PHILOSOPHY OF BUDDHISM

Buddhism is one of the prominent schools of Indian philosophy. It originated as a result of revolt against the Vedic practices. It was against the violence, animal sacrifices, caste and class distinction and exploitations of the Vedic period. It was based on the principles of equal treatment of the people, non-violence and peace. Gautam Buddha, the profounder of Buddhism believed that the world is full of miseries. Sight of old age, disease and dead body gave a great shock to the conscience of Gautama Buddha. He engaged himself in solving the problems of suffering and death by trying to discover their causes through meditation and yoga so as to attain Nirvana. All these gave rise to the philosophy of Buddhism.

The central doctrine of Buddhism is based upon the causal theory involving the formula 'this happening, that happens', which proceeds in a cyclic order in a sort of chain-reaction'. The start is made from the idea of ignorance (*Avidya*). From this proceeds greed, action, birth and rebirth and so on until the ultimate ignorance and greed are destroyed by knowledge.

The salient features of Buddhist philosophy are—

**Four Noble Truths:** One of the basic characteristics of the Buddhist philosophy is the four noble truths as consisted in the teachings of Lord Buddha. They are— There is suffering (*dukha*), there is a cause of suffering (*dukhasamudaya*), there is cessation of suffering (*dukkhanirodha*), there is away leading to the cessation of suffering (*dukha-nirodh marg*). Under first noble truth, he emphasized that this world is full of sufferings. Old age, disease, death, etc. are all painful. He had also explained that the cause of distress, cause of pain and sufferings in human life is *Trishna* (thirst). He had also suggested the means of complete deliverance from all the pains and sufferings of human life.

**Eight Noble Path:** Another prominent characteristic of Buddhism is the eight-fold path, i.e. adopting a middle course (*madhyamik marg*) to attain salvation.

These are—

Right Insight (*Samyak Drishti*)

Right Will-power (*Samyak Sankalp*)  
Right Speech (*Samyak Vak*)  
Right Deeds (*Samyak Karmant*)  
Right Vocation (*Samyak Aajiv*)  
Right Exercise (*Samyak Vyayam*)  
Right Memory (*Samyak Smriti*)  
Right Meditation (*Samyak Samadhi*).

**Twelve Noble Links:** There are twelve main causes of suffering. This is known as theory of natural causation of suffering. Buddha had pointed out twelve links in the chain of suffering which are–

1. Ignorance (*avidya*),
2. Impressions (*samskar*),
3. The initial consciousness of the embryo (*vignana*),
4. Mind and the body, the embryonic organism (*nama-rupa*),
5. Six organs of knowledge (*shadayatan*),
6. Sense contact (*sparsa*),
7. Sense experience (*vedna*),
8. Thirst (*trishna*),
9. Clinging (*upadan*)
10. Tendency to born (Bhav)
11. Rebirth (Jati)
12. Old Age –Death (Jati Marana )

These twelve links were arranged with reference to the three periods viz. past life, present life and future life. Our present life is an outcome of our deeds and *samskar* of previous birth. In present life, what so ever our *Samskar* would be, same would determine our life conditions in next birth.

**Non-existence of Soul and God:** Buddha believes that all things are transient. So, there cannot be any permanent soul or God. Though denying the continuity of an identical substance in man, Buddha does not deny the continuity of the stream of successive states that compose his life. In Buddhist philosophy, the place of God is taken by the universal doctrine of Karma, which governs the universe in such a way that every individual gets the mind , the body and the place in life that he deserves by his past deeds.

**Karma and Rebirth:** According to this doctrine, the present existence of an individual is, the effect of its past Karma and its future would be the effect of its present Karma. It believes that a person is happy or miserable or miserable only because of his actions. It believes in rebirth too.

**Nirvana:** Buddhist philosophy believes that attainment of Nirvana is the ultimate aim of life. Attaining Nirvana implies attainment of salvation, i.e. freedom from the attachments or bondages of ignorance.

**Non-violence:** Non-violence is a basic value of Buddhism. It spreads the message of non-violence and peace. It is dead against the animal sacrifices performed in the Vedic practices.

**Against the caste (varna) system:** Buddhism is against the rigid classification on the basis of Varnas, as prevalent in the Vedic system. He established equality among the people.

## CHARACTERISTICS OF BUDDHIST EDUCATION

The Buddhist system of education is the most important system of education in medieval period. Buddhist education came into the existence in the 5th century B.C. when in the later part of Vedic system of education deprived the common people of their right to education. Hence the emergence of Buddhism provided the opportunity to obtain education. Buddhist system of education was monastic. All castes were admitted to Buddhist Sangha, which served as the religious centres of Buddhism as well as educational institutions during the Buddhist period. The main characteristics of the Buddhist education system are—

**1) Education in Monastery:** Monasteries were the centre for imparting education during the Buddhist period. For admission the student had to present himself before the teacher and request him for giving education. The teacher was fully responsible for education of his pupil. In turn, the pupil had also to be responsive to the instructions received from the teacher. The student was not at all accountable to any other Bhikshuk in the monastery.

**2) Pabbajja:** Pabbajja was an accepted ceremony of the Buddhist monasteries. Pabbajja means going out. According to this ceremony the

student after being admitted to a monastery had to renounce all his worldly and family relationship. An individual belonging to any caste could be admitted to a monastery and after being admitted he did not belong to any caste. After admission he had to change his old clothes and all old ways and the manners of living. For the Pabbajja ceremony the minimum age was eight years.

**3) Upasampada:** After the Pabbajja ceremony education continued for 12 years. When the students receive 12 years education he had to undergo the Upasampada ceremony. This ceremony was democratic in nature. The Shraman had to present himself before all other monks of the monastery. One could be admitted for the Upasampada ceremony only when the majority of the monks voted in favor of the same. After the Upasampada ceremony the Shraman was regarded as a full-fledged member of the monastery. On this occasion all his worldly and family relationship ended.

**4) Qualities and Responsibilities of the Teacher:** The teacher himself must spend at least 10 years as a monk and necessarily must have the purity of character, purity of thoughts and generosity. Both the teacher and student were responsible to the monastery. But regarding education, clothes, food and residence of the student monk, the teacher was fully responsible. The teacher was also responsible for any treatment of the student whenever he fell ill.

**5) Daily Routine of Students:** The daily routine of the students starts with arranging everything for the daily routine of the teacher. They cook food and clean his clothes and utensils. Whatever he acquired through begging alms, he would place before the teacher. The students always obeyed the teacher and none other. They were also responsible to keep the monastery and its surroundings clean. The students had to prepare themselves to receive education at any time whenever the teacher required him.

**6) Boarding and Lodging of the Students:** In Buddhist period, education was imparted through monasteries and viharas. The teacher and the students lived together in these institutions. They followed simple living and high thinking principle. Their lives were full of purity, nobleness, dutifulness and humanity.

## **EDUCATIONAL IMPLICATIONS OF BUDDHISM**

The principles of Buddhistic philosophy have great educational implications. Therefore, Buddhist education system is revered as one of the prominent ancient educational systems of India.

## Aims of Education

The goal of Buddhist education is to attain wisdom. According to it, the main objective of our practice or cultivation was to achieve this ultimate wisdom. It believes that everyone has the potential to realize this state of ultimate wisdom, as it is an intrinsic part of our nature. The Buddhist education system aimed at regaining our intrinsic nature. It also teaches absolute equality which stemmed from Buddha's recognition that all sentient beings possess this innate wisdom and nature. Buddha's teaching helps us to realize that innate, perfect, ultimate wisdom.

The aims of Buddhist system of education may be pointed out as—

1) *Nirvana*: Education should aim at achieving Nirvana or self realization. It refers to emancipation from the earthly worries and miseries. Education should aim at giving eternal peace of mind and relieve oneself from physical sufferings.

2) *Development of personality*: Education was to control all the instinctive and physical needs and desires of man. Spiritual peace and happiness may be attained only through control of our senses. Education should train people to lead a simple life and a life of self discipline.

3) *Physical & intellectual development*: Jainism was in favour of both physical and intellectual development of the individual.

4) *Religious & spiritual development*: Another aim of Jainism was religious and spiritual development. Buddhist education aimed at propagation of the teachings of Buddhist religion as well as it emphasized on giving spiritual training to the learners.

5) *Preservation & spread of culture*: One of the main aims of the Buddhist education system was to propagate Buddhism in different parts of the world.

6) *Development of attitude of non-violence*: Education should generate the sense of non-violence in human mind. It should remove the narrow sense of killing of life for personal gain through the rituals of sacrifice.

## Curriculum

The major objective of education being the spiritual development, study of religion naturally dominated the curriculum. It includes the study of the *Tripitaka– Suttanta, Vinaya (precepts or rules) and Dhamma (Commentaries)* which emphasize on meditation, discipline and wisdom respectively.

The curriculum of Buddhist education system may be divided into two types–

1. Primary
2. Higher education.

In primary education, reading, writing and arithmetic were taught. Pali and regional languages were used as the medium of instruction. In order to fulfill the vocational needs of the common people spinning, weaving, tailoring, dyeing, printing, agriculture, commerce, accountancy and cottage industries were included.

In higher education, curriculum had covered wide ranging subjects both intellectual and professional. They include philosophy, literature, logic, law, astronomy, medical science and warfare. Sanskrit used to dominate the higher studies. Provision was made for study of the four *Vedas, Vedangas, Purana, Samkhya, Yoga, Tantra, Ayurveda & Vedanta*, study of animals like elephants, horses and snakes. Everyone was free to choose his subject without any restriction.

## Methods of Teaching

The methods of teaching followed in the Buddhist education system are almost same as those used during Vedic period.

Following were the methods of teaching of Buddhist period–

**1) Oral Teaching:** The art of writing had been well developed up to the Buddhist period. But due to the shortage and non availability of writing material verbal (oral) method of teaching was still more prevalent. The teachers used to give lessons to the students who learnt them by heart. The teachers used to put questions on learning the lesson by heart.

**2) Discussion:** Discussion was one of the methods of teaching in Buddhist period because it impressed the general public. Scholars discussed the important questions. Discussion continued till every kind of doubts is cleared. To establish the disputes point the following evidences of eight kinds were required theory, cause, example, parallelism, contradiction, evidence, argument and induction. The important of discussion encouraged the logic in the Buddhist period. The controversial matters could not be decided without logical arguments.

**3) Tours:** To fulfill the aim of propagating Buddhism and to give the students real and practical knowledge, tour was used as a method of teaching. Tours were given importance for educating people. After completion of the education the students were encouraged to undertake long tours.

**4) Conferences:** Conferences were arranged on full moon and first day of the month in Buddhist Sangha. The monks of different Sangha assembled and put forward their doubts freely. The attendance of every monk was compulsory in such conferences. An annual conference was arranged in which a well-renowned monk would challenge the whole Sangha to disprove his purity.

**5) Meditation:** Meditation was used as a method of attaining Nirvana.

## **Women Education**

Women education during Buddhist period was at its lowest ebb, as the women folk were despised in the sense that Lord Buddha had regarded them as the source of all evils. So, he had advised during his life time not to admit women in monasteries. But after some time due to the insistence of his dear pupil Anand, Buddha had permitted about 500 women along with his step mother for admission in the Vihars with many restriction and reservations. Strict rules were enforced for women monks. The first two years was their probation period. The women monks were not allowed to meet any male monk in loneliness and their residence was arranged separately at a distant place. They were not given any permanent post in the Sangha. Some monks could give them religious instruction twice a month in the presence of another monk.

### **Merits of Buddhist Education:**

- 1) Buddhist education was imparted in well organized centers, monasteries and Vihara which were fit places for educational purpose. Education was more democratic in its structure as well as function.
- 2) Buddhist education was free from communal narrowness. It was given to all sections of people irrespective of caste and creed. It gave more importance to genuine personality of the students while giving admission. It was also secular in nature.
- 3) The teachers and the students lived together and they led a simple life in the monasteries. The students were kept away from the life of temptation and public impurities. This kind of life had helped them for ideal education and meditation
- 4) Buddhist education laid much emphasis on balanced physical, mental and spiritual development of the students. It aimed development of high moral character and ideal personality in the students.
- 5) Both the teachers and students led a controlled and disciplined life. They kept themselves away from instinctive pleasures like music, dance, fragrance, receiving gifts from others, etc. They were not allowed to contact women in the Sanghaa.
- 6) There was a cordial and pampered relationship between the teacher and the students. The teacher considered the students as his own sons and took all care and responsibility of them. The students also revered the teachers like their father.
- 7) There was no system of corporal punishment. The teachers completely trusted the personality of the students. The students also exhibited the sense of politeness, obedience and simplicity in their educational life.
- 8) Education was imparted through local languages which made education easily accessible to the common masses. No undue importance was given to Sanskrit which was used only by a small section of the society.

9) Buddhist education helped to gain international importance. Students used to come from other countries for higher education. It developed cultural exchange between India and other countries of the world.

### **Demerits of Buddhist Education:**

1) Buddhist education could not give the proper attention to the occupational, industrial and technical education.

2) It neglected social development because the Buddhist scholars devoted their whole lives to Sangha and Buddhism leaving their family life.

3) Following the principle of non-violence, Buddhist education system avoided military training which affected national defense.

4) The sanctity of the Sangha as an educational institution was destroyed as anti-social people were also given shelter in the Sangha.

5) Buddhist education system is considered undemocratic in nature as it totally discouraged women education. Girls were not allowed to get education in the Sanghas.