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## AN ANALYSIS OF EDUCATIONAL AND ETHICAL VALUES OF BUDDHISM

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#### **ABSTRACT**

Buddhist Education System is one of the prominent among ancient Indian education systems. Buddhism in India came into existence as a means to reform the deteriorating form of Hinduism. The philosophy of Buddhism was founded by Siddhartha Gautama, who later on comes to be known as Buddha (the awakened one). The Buddhist philosophy is considered as one of the most valuable ancient Indian philosophies of India that inscribe a lot of values like spiritual, social, ethical, educational ,political, economic values that have their significant importance for welfare of human race. Among these manifold sets of values of Buddhism, paramount importance is given on Educational and Ethical values. Educational values in Buddhism implies those ideals that are practiced by Buddhist System of Education in their teaching- learning process while ethical values implies moral ideals uphold by Buddhist philosophy for regulating man's thought and conduct. The present paper is an attempt to deal with axiological aspect of Buddhistic philosophy with respect to Educational and Ethical values. The purpose of this study is to extract the educational and ethical values enshrined in Buddhism. In this regard, the researcher has opted for qualitative technique study and has undertaken a content analysis based on primary and secondary sources of information to ascertain those values. After a detailed study, the researcher was able to deduce various educational and ethical

values from the Buddhist Education System and Buddhism as a whole and focused insight into their significant relevance in present system of education and society as a whole.

#### INTRODUCTION

The philosophy of 'Buddhism' is mainly attributed to Mahatma Buddha, of the 5<sup>th</sup> century BC, who preached his religion and philosophy till 483 BC. The main goal of Buddhism is to attain 'Nirvana' through attaining ultimate wisdom which shall enable a person to perceive the realities of life. The main objective of Buddhist education was to make oneself free from the bondage of material life and thereby to attain salvation. According to Buddha, ultimate wisdom can be obtained if a person practices or cultivate the habit of simple living and high thinking. According to Buddha, 'happiness is within us', we just have to realize it in the light of wisdom. Buddha have forwarded the Nobel eight fold path viz Right Faith, Right Resolve, Right Speech, Right Action, Right Living, Right Efforts, Right Thought and Right Concentration, that paves the way to attain ultimate wisdom in life. Buddhism as a philosophy has forwarded lots of values for leading a peaceful life that have potentiality to guide in developing a healthy society, unlike the present one which is full of chaos and human cries. This paper is concerned with the different ethical and educational values imbibed in Buddhism and Buddhist Education System as a whole. Educational values in Buddhism imply those ideals that are practiced by Buddhist System of Education in their teaching- learning process. Education is considered as the main medium to attain wisdom in one's life. While, ethical values implies moral ideals uphold by Buddhist philosophy for regulating man's thought and conduct. 'Ethics' in general sense implies goodness. Similarly Buddhism also advocates doing everything good in every walk of life by abstaining from performing any evil deeds and being kind to mankind. Thus 'ethics' becomes the main subject matter of Buddhism. So, it is evident that both 'ethics' and education' are among two strong bases of Buddhism.

#### RATIONALE OF THE STUDY

Buddhism and its education system can be considered as instrumental to this present world of dirt and disturbances. The values imbibed in this philosophy specially the ethical and educational values have great prospects to make this world a better place to live in. These values in real sense can give direction to the present educational trend as well as can foster desirable social change. Thus the researcher felt a need to make a study on ethical and educational values of Buddhism and their relevance to the present educational and social set up.

#### **OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY**

- 1. To extract the educational and ethical values enshrined in Buddhism and in Buddhist Education System as a whole.
- 2. To focus insight into the significant relevance of ethical and educational values of Buddhism in the present education system and society as a whole.

#### **METHODOLOGY**

The researcher in this study has conducted a content analysis based on various primary and secondary sources of information. The primary sources include certain books on Buddhism and secondary sources includes different articles of research journals that the researcher went through for developing insight and understanding on the topic under study.

#### EDUCATIONAL VALUES OF BUDDHISM

- 1. Intellectual Competence: Buddhism through it's education system encourages highest level of intellectual competence and critical thinking. 'Cultivation of Wisdom' is considered as one of the "The Three Studies" of Buddhist education (Dong, 2003, P 289). Buddhist educational centers like Nalanda also advocated higher level of intellectual pursuit of it's scholars through the subjects like Philosophy, Logic, Astronomy, Medicine etc (Wikipedia).
- 2. Learning Efficiency: In Buddhist Education System, though the method of teaching is mainly verbal yet due effort was given to keep a balance between understanding and practice by using some skillful means (Dong, 2003). For learning of particular subjects like spinning, weaving, tailoring, accountancy students need to undergo apprenticeship training under expert artisans.
- 3. Community Living: Buddhist teachings keep integrity with the community life of the people. Learning of five Precepts of Buddha viz to abstain from killing, stealing, adultery, lying and intoxicants that ensures harmonious coexistence of community people and peaceful sustenance of society as a whole (Dhammananda, 1985).
- 4. Self-sufficiency: Self-sufficiency can be considered as spirit of Buddhistic philosophy. Internalizing the Noble Eight-Fold path of Buddhism make one free from human failings such as ego, greed, envy, enmity and hate, which Lord Buddha acknowledge as Arhat, i.e. attaining first level of Perfect Complete Enlightment, which is the ultimate aim of Buddhistic education (Dong, 2003; Dhammananada, 1985).
- 5. Mindfulness: Mindfulness which implies "conscious awareness of present experience without judgment" (Makransky, 2012, P 4), is the principal aspect of Buddhist consciousness of true nature of self. Human sufferings are mediated by

mind's unconscious habit of holding a sense of permanence in self. Buddhism considers mindfulness, a way to gain insight into impermanence nature of self by practicing meditation (Makransky, 2012), which is considered as a crucial process towards achieving wisdom in Buddhist education (Kung, P 5).

- 6. Ideal teachership: Buddhism in it's system of education greatly considers trait acquired by teachers for ideal teachership. In Buddhist education, teachers are identified with a person of great moral character, discipline, truthfulness, honesty as well as having a compassionate heart and feeling towards his disciples (Raval, 1985).
- 7. Reverence for teachers: Buddhist education system evokes great respect for teachers. In Buddhism "The prime duty of a pupil is to honour and respect his teacher who is always to be held in high esteem" (Dhammananda, 1985, P 9). Such gratitude, respect towards teachers significantly boost the mutual love and faith in teacher-pupil relations to make it a cordial one (Raval, 1985).

#### ETHICAL VALUES OF BUDDHISM

In Buddhism, ethics is way to attain freedom from the sufferings of life by realizing the true nature of the world, away from it's distorted projections created by human thoughts and emotions (Meshram, 2013). "the Vinaya-pitakamay be considered the most systematic and voluminous documentary evidence of Buddhist emphasis on ethics." (Meshram, 2013, P 18)

- 1. Purity: It is the highest form of value practiced by Buddhist System of Education. In Buddhist Sanghas, the Sangha members by practicing the Five Buddhist Precepts keep themselves away from all instinctive pleasures and temptations of worldly life which in turn lead them to achieve ultimate liberation as well as boost their strong moral character (Meshram, 2013).
- 2. Non-violence: Buddhist Education System teaches maintenance of peace and harmony among all living beings. "The Buddhism considers the life as sacred and treats it with highest regard." (Raval, 1985, P 260) The principal of Buddhism itself made restriction on killing or destroying any form of life on earth, including human beings, animals, plants and thereby observing the spirit of non-violence in it's true sense. (Raval, 1985)
- 3. Humanity: Buddhist education places supreme emphasis in cultivating the sense of humanity. "Buddhism has six characteristics of humanism, emphasis on daily life, altruism, joyfulness, timeliness and universality." (Dong, 2003). In

Buddhism humanity comes from moral purification that leads to maintenance of right relationship between man and man (Raval, 1985)

- 4. Equality: Buddhism advocates providing education for all people without discrimination (Dong, 2003). Buddhism rejects the evil of casteism and precedes equality based on a new social order of deeds and qualities, not on birth or heredity, which ultimately leads to removing social unjust and thereby social evils (Raval, 1985).
- 5. Happiness: In Buddhism, happiness is related to ethics or morality, rather it is considered as the offshoot of morality. "The Buddhist term for what is morally good is 'skillful' (Kusala) and what is morally bad is 'unskillful' (Akusala) (Karunadasa, 2013), where 'Kusala' stands for happiness and 'Akusala' stands for miseries and problems of life. Buddha's the Nobel Eightfold Path, which leads to 'Nirvana' is also a path of attaining ultimate happiness (Ying-Fa).
- 6. Compassion: In Buddhism, compassion denotes a form of empathy, ability to feel and sense others sufferings as like our own. In Buddhism, compassion is intimately connected with love, sympathetic joy and equanimity-called the "four immeasurable attitudes" (Makransky, 2012, P 2) that forms the bases for strong meditative insight. "From Buddhist perspective, compassion with wisdom is the foundation of emotional healing" (Makransky, 2012, P 1).

### RELEVANCE OF ETHICAL AND EDUCATIONAL VALUES OF BUDDHISM

The first and foremost appeal of Buddhist Education System is the concept of purity and wisdom. Education system of a present society must aim at producing wise man with a moral boost, instead of merely producing literates, as our present education system has made man literate, but not educated, isolating the moral, spiritual values.

Today's education system must deal 'happiness' as a state of mind rather than a outcome of material possession as opposed to present trend of materialism in the wake of the globalised competitive world.

In today's society where the sense of humanity rapidly lost it's existence, Buddhistic values of compassion and humanity have their far reaching effect on changing attitudes and value system of students and other stakeholders of society as a whole. In the present social situations of restlessness, tension and anxiety, the provision of meditation of Buddhism can ensure developing mindfulness mostly among young generations, which will help them to develop their power of insight into different crucial social problems and thereby finding out constructive measures.

The qualities of 'ideal' teacher as inscribe in Buddhist Education System also a great source of inspiration to the present day educators to develop ethical qualities of ideal teachership.

In contrary to the wake of some incidence of teacher- student conflict in present education, system, Buddhist system of education evokes great reverence and faith for teachers that have it's significant relevance to the present system of education.

The increasing incidence of violence in the society in different forms staring with terrorism, naxalism, communal conflicts, domestic violence to environmental destructions, also raise great demand of Buddhistic ethical values of non-violence, equality for formation and sustenance of a peaceful society.

#### CONCLUSION

The ethical and educational values of Buddhism and the Buddhist Education System discussed above throw light on how Buddhism with respect to it's axiological aspect holds a front seat among different Ancient Education Systems. The present day educational and social system is in dire need of Buddhistic values in its struggle to attain a balance between science in one hand and morality or ethics on the other.

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