



Role of Buddhist Religion in Development of Indian Education System

DR. LAXMI RANI

Associate Prof.

MSKB College, BRA BU, Muzaffarpur.

Supervisor

MRS. PUSPA KUMARI

Asst. Prof. MVCE

Padma, Hazaribagh

Research Scholar in Education, BRABU

Abstract:

Buddhism came into existence in about 600 B.C. Buddhism and Jainism were offshoots of Hinduism. As there was little change in their ideals of life, the concept of education also suffered only a shift of emphasis.

There was no water tight compartment in the realm of thought separating Brahmanism, Buddhism and Jainism. They all contributed harmoniously to the development of culture as a whole and their contributions to education were inextricably mixed up. The creative vein of the age was reflected in the field of education and culture.

As frontiers of knowledge became wide, pursuit of knowledge also assumed a more systematic and organised method. The practice of Buddhist Education probably varied very much in different countries and at different times. We get a valuable picture of Buddhist education as it existed in India from the records left by certain Chinese Buddhist scholars, who visited India in the fifth and seventh centuries of this era. Medical aid was free for all members of the order and it was one of its temptations to the lay public to join it. It was the duty of a monk (both teacher and student) to nurse the sick brethren. The duty of nursing the sick Bhikshu lay primarily upon his immediate associates, his Upajjhaya, Acharya, Saddhiviharika, Antevasika. Buddhist asceticism developed its own system of rules and regulations according to its particular view and definition of the ascetic life. It followed the Middle path, avoiding the one extreme of self-indulgence and the other of self-mortification.

Keywords: *Buddhism, Development, Jainism, Education and culture, Education system, Religion*

1. Introduction

Buddhism was nothing but a particular phase of Hinduism. It was not totally a different cult. By 600 B. C. there were many sects within Hinduism demanding reforms within it. Buddhism arose as a reform movement within the Hindu system. It was an enlargement of Hinduism. It had no original religious concepts. Buddhism is deeply rooted in the pre-existing Hindu systems of thought and life. In this context Max Muller says, "to my mind Buddhism has always seemed to be, not a new religion, but a natural development of the Indian mind in its various manifestations—religious, social, philosophical and political".

"Buddhism was a Hindu phenomenon, a natural product of the age and social circle that witnessed its birth". According to Rhys David's the Buddhist philosophy was not entirely his creation. Buddha himself was the product of his age.

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There was no water tight compartment in the realm of thought separating Brahmanism, Buddhism and Jainism. They all contributed harmoniously to the development of culture as a whole and their contributions to education were inextricably mixed up. The creative vein of the age was reflected in the field of education and culture.

As frontiers of knowledge became wide, pursuit of knowledge also assumed a more systematic and organised method. The practice of Buddhist Education probably varied very much in different countries and at different times. We get a valuable picture of Buddhist education as it existed in India from the records left by certain Chinese Buddhist scholars, who visited India in the fifth and seventh centuries of this era. They had undertaken long, toilsome and dangerous journeys, only because the fame of the Buddhist monasteries in India as places of learning had crossed the territorial jurisdiction of India. Fa-Hien, who was in India between A.D. 339 and A.D. 414, makes frequent references to monasteries as seats of learning. Huen Tsiang who came to India during A.D. 629 to A. 645 referred to the popularity of Buddhism which was in a flourishing state. I-Tsing another Chinese scholar who came to India and was in the country from A.D. 673 to 687 also highlighted some of the brighter aspects of the prevalent system of education.

The main educational centers of Buddhism were Monasteries and Viharas. A network of such centers of education was started during the period. The entire educational system was controlled and supervised by the monks. There was provision for both religions as well as secular types of education. Therefore, emphasis was laid on personal conduct rather than external rites and ceremonies as in the Brahmanism system. Thus, the aim of education was to prepare for a good life, a moral life.

The whole discipline (Siksha) had three important aspects viz, morality contemplation and wisdom. In Buddhist morality, there was infusion of practical needs with theoretical knowledge and stress on ascetic life against worldly life. With the advent of Buddhism the demand for education among the people considerably increased. The relaxation of barriers of caste in the sphere of religion and learning helped for the expansion of education. But it was confined to the upper classes of the society and did not make any headway among masses. As Buddhism became popular and attracted people, the demand for education considerably increased. Be it as it may, Buddhism broke the monopoly of any particular section of the society pertaining to teaching and learning.

2. Aims of Education

It is evident that during this period, the aims of education were similar to those of Vedic age. Instead of emphasizing spiritual elevation, the stress was laid on the development of personality which included physical, moral, mental and intellectual development; formation of moral character, which included among other things, right conduct, integrity, morality, piety, humility and good virtues.

Besides, religious education was given top priority and efforts were made to achieve Salvation or Nirvana through religious education. There was also provision for imparting worldly and practical knowledge along with religious education.

3. Educational Organisation

During this period education was institutionalized and the doors of education were open to all. In different parts of the country monasteries sprung up for diffusing education-religious, academic and practical. In consideration of their accessibility the sites of the monasteries were selected as centers of learning. The arrangement of boarding and lodging being excellent in the monasteries, many persons from wealthy, cultured and respectable families, were attracted towards education. The demand for education considerably developed in the upper class of the society. But it had no significant impact the masses.

The most important system of education in medieval period was the Buddhist system of education. Buddhist education came into the existence in the 5th century B.C. Brahman deprived the common people of their right to education and hence the emergence of Buddhism rented the people the freedom to obtain education and to practice their religion themselves. Lord Buddha imparted to life a perfectly practicable form. Consequently, a practicable region and a practical education system became a variable to the common people. Buddhist system of education was monastic. All castes were admitted to Buddhist Sangha. The history of education in Buddha period is inter-related with the history of monasteries and Vihara because there were no independent educational institutions or centers, other than those religious centers. Those centers were highly responsible for the spread of Buddhism in India by 600B.C.

4. Characteristics of Buddhist Education

4.1 The Core of Buddha's Teaching

The Buddha teaching contains three major points discipline, meditation and wisdom. Wisdom is the goal and deep meditation or concentration in the crucial process toward achieving wisdom. Discipline through observing the precepts, is the method that helps one to achieve deep meditation; wisdom will then be realized naturally. Buddha's entire teaching as conveyed in the sutras never really depart from these three points. Buddhism encompasses the entire collection of works by Buddha Sakyamuni and is called the Tripitaka. This can be classified into three categories sutra, Vinaya (precepts or rules) Shastra (Commentaries) which emphasize meditation, discipline and wisdom respectively.

4.2 The goal of Buddha's Teaching

The goal of Buddhist education is to attain wisdom. In Sanskrit, the language of ancient India, the Buddhist wisdom was called —Anuttara-Samyak-Sambhodi, meaning the perfect ultimate wisdom. The Buddha taught us that the main objective of our practice or cultivation was to achieve this ultimate wisdom. The Buddha further taught us that everyone has the potential to realize this state of ultimate wisdom, as it is an intrinsic part of our nature, not something one obtains externally. 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. With wisdom, we can then solve all our problems and turn suffering into happiness.

4.3 Admission in Monastery

Monasteries was the center 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 Bhikkhu in the monastery. This was due to their having as their residents several far-famed teachers". Fa-Hien spent three years at Pataliputra learning Sanskrit and Sanskrit books, and making copies of the Buddhist sacred works.

At Rajagriha, Fa-Hien found still existing as of old the Vihara originally built for the Buddha and his 1,250 disciples by Jivaka. At Gaya, at the place where Buddha attained perfect wisdom, Fa-Hien found "three monasteries, in all of which there are monks residing". Fa-Hien praised the efficiency of these institutions. The disciplinary rules are strictly observed by them. At Varanasi, Fa-Hien found the Vihara in the park of "the Rishis Deer-Wild", where there were two other monasteries in both of which he found monks residing. Fa-Hien visited a large number of monasteries in different parts of India such as Purushapura, Hidda in Peshawar, Sankhaya, Kanyakubja, Shravasti, Kushinagara, Vaishali, Pataliputra, Rajagriha, Gaya, Varanasi, Kausambi, Champa and Tamralipti.

4.4 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.

4.5 Upasampada

After the Pabbajja ceremony education continued for twelve years. When the student received twelve 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 favours 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.

4.6 Duration of Education

The total period of education was 22 years. Composed of 12 years as Pabbajja and 10 years Upasampada.

4.7 Curriculum

There were two types of education primary and higher education. In primary education reading, writing and arithmetic were taught and in higher education religion philosophy Ayurveda, military training was included. Everyone was free to choose his subject without any restriction.

4.8 Method of Teaching

The curriculum was spiritual in nature. The aim of education was to attain salvation. So the study of religious books was most important. Sutta, Vinaya and Dhamma Pitak were the main subjects prescribed for study. The method of teaching was mostly oral in nature. Teacher gives lecture on good behaviour and required topics and students were listen with attention. Afterword's students were expected to memories the same. The teacher educates the students through lectures and question answer method. Attendance of every monk was compulsory. The medium of Buddhist education was the common language of the people.

4.9 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 Vihar 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 Sangh. Some monk could give her religious instruction twice a month in the presence of another monk.

4.10 Qualities and Responsibilities of the Teacher

The teacher himself must spend at least ten 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.

4.11 Daily Routine of Students

On rising in the morning, the student will arrange everything for the daily routine of the teacher. He will cook food and clean his clothes and utensils. Whatever he required through begging alms, he would place before the teacher. The student was always to obey the teacher and none others. He would keep the monastery and its surroundings clean. The student had to prepare himself to receive education at any time whenever the teacher required him. There were regulations regarding the clothing of the Bhikshus. As in the case of food, there is a minimum prescribed for the clothing too. The doctrine of the Middle Path has been very well-exemplified in the regulations of the Order in this regard. It was expected that the clothing of a homeless Bhikshu should bear the conceptions of decency and decorum. The Bhikshus dress comprised of three parts yellow in colour symbolising sacrifice of worldly pleasures and hence was called Ticivara. The three parts were known as Antaravasaka, Uttarasanga and Samghati—a waist cloth, a single upper-rove, and a single undergarment. This dress was prescribed not only for health but also for decency.

4.12 Boarding and Lodging of the Students

In Buddhist period, there were no organized Gurukul, but the education was imparted through monasteries and Viharas. The teacher and the students lived together. Buddhist Vihara were fine and well-furnished separate rooms for dining, bathing, sleeping, reading, studying and discussions. The monk and the students in Buddhist period were following the simple living and high thinking principle their lives were full of purity, nobleness, dutifulness and humanity. There were special rules to maintain and govern the delicate relations among the staff and between the staff and the students. These rules were designed to preserve a proper academic standard and decorum in the Viharas. The rules and regulations were binding on all groups and members in a Vihara irrespective of status and standing. The rules were determined by the ends of monastic life.

4.13 The Four Noble Truths:

He preached his followers the four “Noble Truths” (Chatvari Arya Satyani) viz:

- (1) That the world is full of suffering
- (2) That there are causes of suffering like thirst, desire, attachment etc. which lead to worldly existence,
- (3) That the suffering can be stopped by the destruction of thirst, desire etc.
- (4) That the way leads to the destruction of suffering.

14. Astang Marg

The word Samma means ‘proper’, ‘whole’, ‘thorough’, ‘integral’, ‘complete’, and ‘perfect’ –

1. Samma-Ditthi — Complete or Perfect Vision.
2. Samma-Sankappa — Perfected Emotion or Aspiration.
3. Samma-Vaca — Perfected or whole Speech.
4. Samma-Kammanta — Integral Action.
5. Samma-Ajiva — Proper Livelihood.
6. Samma-Vayama — Complete or Full Effort, Energy or Vitality.
7. Samma-Sati — Complete or Thorough Awareness.
8. Samma-Samadhi — Full, Integral or Holistic Samadhi.

15. Four Nobel Truths

1. All life knows suffering.
2. The cause of suffering is ignorance and clinging.
3. There is a way to end suffering.
4. This is the way to end suffering.
15. Rules for Ashramner.
 1. Not to kill any living being
 2. Not to accept anything given to him.
 3. Live free from the impurity of character.

5. Not to tell lie
6. Not to take food at improper time
7. Not to use luxurious things.

16. Middle Path

The eight-fold path is known as middle path. It lays between two extremes, namely, the life of ease and luxury and life of severe asceticism. According to Buddha, this middle path ultimately leads to final bliss or 'Nirvana'. 'Nirvana' literally means "blowing out" or the end of craving or desire or trishna for existence in all its forms.

It is a tranquil state to be realized by a person who is free from all craving or desire. It is deliverance or freedom from rebirth, Nirvana is an eternal state of peace or bliss which is free from sorrow and desire (asoka), decay (akshya), disease (abyadhi) and from birth and death (amrita).

Buddha also prescribed a code of conduct for his followers. These are called the 'Ten Principles', consisting of:

- (1) Do not commit violence
- (2) Do not steal
- (3) Do not involve in corrupt practices
- (4) Do not tell a lie
- (5) Do not use intoxicants
- (6) Do not use comfortable bed
- (7) Do not attend dance and music
- (8) Do not take food irregularly
- (9) Do not accept gifts or covet-other's property,
- (10) Do not save money.

By following these ten principles one can lead a moral life

5. Law of Karma

Buddha laid great stress on the Law of Karma and its working and the transmigration of souls. According to him the condition of man in this life and the next depends upon his own actions. Man is the maker of his own destiny not any god or gods. One can never escape the consequences of his deeds. If a man does good deeds in this life, he will be reborn in a higher life, and so on till he attains nirvana. Evil deeds are sure to be punished. We are born again and again to reap the fruit of our Karmas. This is the Law of Karma.

6. Methods of Teaching

Buddhist education aimed at purity of character. Buddhist education was training for moral and psychological development of the student. One had to attain the stage of bodhisattva. following were the methods of teaching.

6.1 Verbal Education

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 education was prevalent. The teachers used to give lessons to the student who learnt them by heart. The teachers used to put questions on learning the lesson by heart. That is to say, the teacher and his pupil must first nurse each other in case of illness. A Bhikshu who is neither a teacher nor a pupil should be wafted upon by the Sangha itself. Nursing was encouraged by a special reward.

6.2 Discussion

Discussion is one of the methods of teaching in Buddhist period because it impressed the general public. Scholars discussed the important questions. Discussion continued till cleared every kind of doubts. The Buddhist schools were not isolated or independent institutions like Brahmanism ones. They were federal organisations called the Viharas or Monasteries. While Brahmanical culture depended upon the system of individual schools, the Buddhist culture was the product of confederations of such schools in larger monastic institutions comprising numbers of teachers and students. The monastery provided wider, collective academic life. A Vihara was a federation of individual educational groups or schools. The monasteries were the centers of education, teaching not only the doctrines of Buddhism but also other subjects.

6.3 Evidences

To established the disputes, point the following evidences of eight kinds were required theory, cause, example parallelism, contradiction, evidence, argument and induction. Tamralipti (near the mouth or the Hooghly), the last place visited by Fa- Hien was a flourishing seat of Buddhism with twenty-two monasteries, at all of which there are monks residing. In the Punjab he found that the oral method of instruction was used, but in the more eastern regions of India writing was more freely used. Nalanda was visited by Fa-Hien, but it had apparently no monks or monastery.

6.4 Prominence

The important of discussion encouraged the logic in the Buddhist period. The controversial matters could not be decided without logical arguments. "One of the most prominent centers of Buddhist learning in Fa-Hien's time was Pataliputra, where he saw the Mauryan royal palace and halls. There were in the city one Mahayana monastery very grand and beautiful, and another Hinayana one, the two together containing six or seven hundred monks. The rules of demeanour and the scholastic arrangements in them are worthy of observation.

6.5 Tours

The main aim of the Buddhist monks was to propagate Buddhism. Hence some Acharyas like Rahul and Sariputta gave the importance to tours for educating people. After completion of the education the student were encouraged to undertake long tours to gain the real and practical knowledge.

6.6 Conferences

Conferences were arranged 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. Manuscripts of sacred texts which he could copy were found in the Mahayana monastery at Pataliputra and in the monasteries in Tamralipti. Thus, oral instruction was the only educational method followed in the north, while the rule was relaxed in the east where the aid of written literature to education was recognized.

6.7 Meditation

Some Buddhist monks are more interested in isolated spiritual meditation in lonely forests and caves. Only those monks were considered fit for lonely meditation who had fully renounced the worldly attraction and had spent enough time in the Sangha has gained the efficiency for solitary meditation.

7. Merits of Buddhists Education

1. Well organized centers- Buddhist education was imparted in well-organized centers, monasteries and Vihara which were fit places for the purpose.
2. Cosmopolitan-Buddhist education was free from communal narrowness.
3. Simple and austere-Bhikshus led a life of austerity and simplicity.

4. Total development- Buddhist education laid much emphasis on the physical mental and spiritual development of the students.
5. Disciplined Life- both the teachers and students led disciplined life.
6. Ideal student teacher relationship.
7. International importance- Buddhist education helped to gain international importance it also developed cultural exchange between India and other countries of the world.

8. Demerits of Buddhists education

1. Buddhist Education could not give the proper attention to the occupational, industrial and technical education.
2. It gave severe blow to the social development because it derided family ties. Leaving their family life Buddha Bhikkhus devoted their whole lives to Sangha and Buddhism.

9. Conclusion

Buddhist education aimed at purity of character. Vihars or monasteries are the centers of education in Buddhist education; monks are receiving the education in a Viharas, cordial relationship between the teacher and the students. The total period of Education was 22 Years, 12 years As Pabbajja and 10 Years Upasampada.

The teacher responsible for food, clothing and residence and also moral and religious education. Acquisition of knowledge through lecture and question answer as well as different types of teaching methods like discussion, tours, conferences, meditations evidences and prominence etc. Buddhist asceticism developed its own system of rules and regulations according to its particular view and definition of the ascetic life. It followed the Middle path, avoiding the one extreme of self-indulgence and the other of self-mortification. Buddhist Education crossed Indian subcontinent and expanded up to China, Japan, Sri Lanka, Korea, Thailand, Tibet, Mongolia, Myanmar, Cambodia, Laos, Vietnam, Malaysia, Singapore, with the rise and development of Buddhism in those countries.

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