



Concept of Education and Eight Fold Path of Gautama Buddha: A Brief Study

Dr. Shyamal Chandra Sarkar

Assistant Professor, Department of Philosophy, Pramathesh Barua College, Gauripur, Assam

To Cite this Article

Dr. Shyamal Chandra Sarkar. Concept of Education and Eight Fold Path of Gautama Buddha: A Brief Study. *International Journal for Modern Trends in Science and Technology* 2021, 7, pp. 165-170. <https://doi.org/10.46501/IJMTST0710027>

Article Info

Received: 16 September 2021; Accepted: 15 October 2021; Published: 20 October 2021

ABSTRACT

Gautama Buddha was the son of Suddhodana and Maya and the only heir of Sakya kingdom. His wife's name is Yasodhara and son's name is Rahul. He was the founder of Buddhism who awakened to a consciousness of human suffering by the sight of disease, old age, death and other miseries, to which man is subject. Gautama Buddha discovered the origin of human sufferings and the means to overcome them owing to his study, penance and meditation and the result of which was set forth by him in the form of what has come to be known as 'the four noble truths' (catvari arya-satyani). These are--there is suffering, there is a cause of suffering, there is a cessation of suffering and there is a path leading to the cessation of suffering. Buddha was primarily an ethical teacher and reformer. He saw that life was full of sorrows and sufferings and also convinced of the futility of metaphysical speculations in the matter of solving the problem of human miseries. In formulating four-fold truth, Buddha was guided by the medical view of the time in regard to the curing of diseases.

From the very beginning, Buddhism was a missionary movement founded on compassion, determined spiritually to transform the world of humanity and to awaken it morally, intellectually and spiritually and tried to spread his thought to all those who wished to know, irrespective of caste, colour, creed or country. This universal attitude and catholic spirit of Buddhist culture and its educational centres earned a great international reputation for India. In Indian languages and literature, Buddhist contribution was matched only by the richness and variety of the Buddhist religion and philosophy. The development of Pali and its literature was wholly due to Buddhism. Buddhist tantras and sadhanas present yet another category of language.

Buddha recommended an ethical and spiritual path by which sorrow may be removed and Nirvana can be attained. In this regard, Buddha taught about Noble Eightfold Paths, namely, (i) Right views (samyak-drsti), (ii) Right aspiration (samyak-samkalpa), (iii) Right speech (samyak-vak), (iv) Right conduct (samyak-karmanta), (v) Right living (samyak-ajiva), (vi) Right effort (samyak-vyayama), (vii) Right thought (samyak-smrti), (viii) Right concentration (samyak-samadhi).

KEY WORDS: Introduction of Buddhism, Buddha's Conception of Education, Language & Literature, Eightfold Path of Buddha i.e. Right views, Right aspiration, Right speech, Right conduct, Right living, Right effort, Right thought, Right concentration.

INTRODUCTION

Siddhartha or Gautama is known as "Buddha", the knower. He was born in 567 B.C. His father's name is Suddhodana and mother's name is Maya. As the only heir to the Sakya kingdom he brought up in

Kapilavastu. He was the only heir to the Sakya kingdom, and was brought up in Kapilavastu. As his mother having died seven days after his birth, he was brought up by the second wife of Suddodana. Gautama married Yasodhara at the age of 16 and had a son whose

name is Rahul. Gautama Buddha, the well-known founder of Buddhism was awakened to a consciousness of human suffering by the sight of disease, old age, death and other miseries, to which man is subject. "The story of the four signs which Gautama met on the road of Kapilavastu, the aged man bowed down by years, the sick man scorched by fever, the corpse followed by mourners weeping and tearing their hair and the mendicant friar, points the moral that the misery of the world left a sting on his sensitive nature."

Gautama Buddha spent years in study, penance and meditation to discover the origin of human sufferings and the means to overcome them. At last he received enlightenment, the result of which was set forth by him in the form of what has come to be known as 'the four noble truths' (catvari arya-satyani). These are-- the truth that there is misery, the truth that there is a cause of misery, the truth that there is a cessation of misery and the truth that there is a path leading to the cessation of misery.¹

Buddha was primarily an ethical teacher and reformer. He looked at life and the world around us with the eyes of a realist. And he saw that life was full of sorrows and sufferings. He was convinced of the futility of metaphysical speculations in the matter of solving the problem of human miseries. Buddha, therefore, did not encourage metaphysical speculations. Like Socrates, Buddha also laid more importance to the solution of problems which were intimately related to our life. Buddha found the way to peace on earth, and preached it to the world. He became enlightened or Buddha.

Instead of being engaged in metaphysical speculation about the nature of soul or the world, one should deem it one's primary and most urgent duty to end miseries. One, who indulges in theoretical speculation as to the nature of soul or God while he is writhing in pain, behaves like the foolish man with a poisonous arrow pierced into his body, whiling away time on idle speculation regarding the origin, the make etc. of the arrow instead of trying to pull it out immediately.²

Buddha mentions ten questions as uncertain and ethically unprofitable. These questions are: (i) Is the

world eternal? (ii) Is the world non-eternal? (iii) Is the world finite? (iv) Is the world infinite? (v) Is the soul identical with body? (vi) Is the soul different from body? (vii) Does one who knows the truth live after death? (viii) Does he not live after death? (ix) Does he live and not live after death? (x) Does he neither live nor not live after death? These ten metaphysical questions are known in Buddha literature as the ten "indeterminable questions." (avyakatani).

Therefore, instead of discussing metaphysical questions, Buddha tried to enlighten persons on the most important questions of sorrow, its origin, its cessation and the means of putting a stop to sorrows. Enlightenment on these questions makes a man free of passions. And freedom from passions brings quiescence, knowledge, supreme wisdom and nirvana.³

It is evident that in formulating this four-fold truth, Buddha was guided by the medical view of the time in regard to the curing of diseases,⁴ such transference of the method of current science to philosophy being not at all uncommon in its history. Buddha, who is sometimes styled the Great Healer, looked upon life with its suffering as a disease and his method was naturally that of a doctor seeking a remedy for it. We might say that the first three of these truths constitute the theoretical aspect of the teaching and the last, its practical. That suffering predominates in life, as we commonly know it, was admitted by practically all the Indian thinkers. The peculiar value of Buddhism lies in the explanation it gives of the origin of suffering, in the manner in which it deduces the possibility of its removal and in the means it recommends for doing so.⁵

From his spiritual experience, Buddha obtained answers to the four questions. These have come to be known as four Noble (catvari arya satyani). These truths are: (i) There is suffering; (ii) It has a cause; (iii) It can be stopped; (iv) There is a way to stop it.

The Buddha system of philosophy arose out of the teaching of Gautama Buddha, the well-known founder of Buddhism. The later followers of Buddha, in India and outside, developed the philosophical theories which resulted in the four schools of Buddhism that

³ Sanyal, Jagadiswar, Ibid, P.p.112-113

⁴ Bhandarkar: Peep into the Early History of India, P.p 56-7 & M. Hiriyanna, Outlines of Indian Philosophy, Motilal Banarsidass Publishers Private Limited, Delhi, 1994, P. 148

⁵ Hiriyanna, M., Outlines of Indian Philosophy, Motilal Banarsidass Publishers Private Limited, Delhi, 1994, P. 148

¹ Datta, D.M., S.C. Chatterjee, An Introduction of Indian Philosophy, The University of Calcutta, P. 30

² Sanyal, Jagadiswar, Guide to Indian Philosophy, 1989, Sri Bhumi Publishing Company, Calcutta-9, P. p. 109-110

become well-known in Indian Philosophy. These four schools are – (i) Madhyamika or Sunyavada School, (ii) Yogacara or Vijnanvada School. (iii) The Sautrantika School (iv) The Vaibhasika School.⁶

Commenting on this saying of Buddha, Dr. Kane says, ' It will be noticed that the Noble Eightfold Path which the Buddha put forward as the one that would put an end to misery and suffering is here expressly stated to be an ancient path trod by ancient enlightened men. Buddha does not claim that he was unique, but claimed that he was only one of a series of enlightened men and stressed that the moral qualities which he urged men to cultivate belonged to antiquity.'⁷

Objectives of the Study:

The objectives of the study are:

- (i) To attempt to reveal the introduction of Buddhism.
- (ii) To attempt to explain brief conception of education of Gautama Buddha.
- (iii) To attempt to reveal language and literature of Gautama Buddha.
- (iv) To explain the study of Eightfold Path of Gautama Buddha.

METHODOLOGY:

The method of the present study is analytical in nature which is based on the primary and secondary sources. Secondary sources contain books, journals, leaflet, data collection from website documents published from research institutes. Books, particularly on the Buddhism are supplied a greater source of information.

Primary data collected by the meeting of some social workers and also in interview with renowned persons helped fruitful analysis and authenticity of the topic. In this topic, Secondary datas are mainly applied.

BUDDHA'S CONCEPTION OF EDUCATION:

When the Buddha had founded at Varanasi the ideal samgha consisting of sixty worthies (arahats) he commanded them in the following words: " Walk, monks, on your tour for the blessing of the many, for the happiness of the many, out of compassion for the world,

for the welfare, the blessing, the happiness of devas and men. Monks, teach Dhamma which is a blessing in the beginning, a blessing in the middle, a blessing in the end." We quote this passage from the Mahavagga to recall that Buddhism was, from the very beginning, a missionary movement founded on compassion, determined spiritually to transform the world of humanity and to awaken it morally, intellectually and spiritually. Buddhist monastic colleges and universities of ancient India threw open their doors to all those who wished to know, irrespective of caste, colour, creed or country.

This universal attitude and catholic spirit of Buddhist culture and its educational centres earned a great international reputation for India and attracted students and scholars from far-off countries. The influence of Buddhist monastic and educational institutions on the growth and propagation of Indian culture can scarcely be overestimated. It was through Buddhism that Indian art, literature, thought and morals were transmitted throughout the length and breadth of Asia during the first millennium of the Christian era. Charles Eliot is right when he observes that "the monastic institutions of Indian seem due to Buddhism". "Samkara perceived the advantage of the cenobitic life for organizing religion and founded a number of *maths* or colleges. Subsequent religious leaders imitated him."⁸

LANGUAGE & LITERATURE:

Buddhist contribution to Indian languages and literature was matched only by the richness and variety of the Buddhist religion and philosophy. The development of Pali and its literature was wholly due to Buddhism. Several other schools of Buddhism cultivated varieties of Buddhist Sanskrit and varieties of Buddhist Prakrit. The Buddhist intellectuals of ancient India contributed not only to what is now called Buddhist Sanskrit and its varieties but also to what is called Paninian or Classical Sanskrit. The Sanskrit of the Buddhist tantras and sadhanas presents yet another category of language.

The didactic material of the Puranas and the Dharmasastras contains much that can ultimately be

⁶ Das Juthika, Maina Sharma, A Text Book Logic and Philosophy, 2007, Assam Book Depot, Ghy-01, P. 245

⁷ Joshi Lal Mani, Brahmanism Buddhism & Hinduism, Critical Quest, New Delhi-47, 2007, P. 8 & P.V. (Pandurang Vaman), Kane, History of Dharmasra, Vol. V. (Part.II), Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute, Poona, 1962, Chapter XXV, P.p. 1004-1005 and note no. 1639.

⁸ Hinduism and Buddhism, Vol.II (London, 1921) P. 175 & L.M.Joshi, Aspects of Buddhism in Indian History, Critical Quest, New Delhi, 2012, P.p. 31-32

traced to Buddhist moral teachings. This is especially true of the Mahabharata. The beginnings of epic poetry, particularly of dramatic poetry, can possibly be traced to Buddhist *akhyana* poetry. The numerous dramatic narrations in the form of dialogues in Pali verse or in verse mixed with prose present us with the earliest forms of Buddhist *akhyanas* or so-called "ballads".

The psychological advances made by the Abhidhamma schools of Buddhist thought deserve detailed study in the light of contemporary psychology developed in the west. The problems of Abhidhamma psychology have hardly been studied yet in relation to the psychology of Tantrika yoga and the Siddha culture. A study of devotional meditation (bhakti-yoga), of its techniques and terminology as revealed in the Hindi literature of mediaeval saint-poets, is likely to throw important light on the transmission and transformation of the classical Buddhist system of dhyana.

It is well known that the first dramatist in the history of Sanskrit literature was a Buddhist poet, Asvaghosa (first century CE). Fragments of three dramas in Sanskrit, including the fragments of the *Sariputrprakarana*, a drama by Asvaghosa, have come to light from Central Asian Buddhist ruins. Asvaghosa was the forerunner of classical Sanskrit dramatists like Bhasa and Kailas. Winternitz states that "the finished form of the epics together with the perfect technique of the dramas of Asvaghosa proves that they were composed only on some longstanding models. By itself it appears improbable that a thoroughly Buddhist poet should be the first to have composed in this style".⁹

Buddhist poets were pioneers also in the composition of hymns of praise (stotra, stave, stuti) in Sanskrit. The greatest writer of Buddhist hymns was however Matrçeta (circa 100 CE). The following works ascribed to him, are preserved in the Tibetan by Tan-hGyur: *Varnarhavarna-stotra* (also called *Catuhsataka*), *Triratnamangala-stotra*, *Samyaksambuddhalaksana-stotra*, *Ekottarika-stotra*, *Sugatapancastrimsa-stotra*, *Triratna-stotra*, *Satapancaatkanama-stotra*, *Aryataradevi-stotra*, *Sarvarthasiddhinama-stotra-rajã*, *Matrceta-giti* and *Aryatara-stotra*. Asvaghosa, perhaps a contemporary of Matrçeta, composed the *Gandhi-stotra-gatha*. *Misraka-stava* of Dignaga, *Suprabhata-stotra* of King Harsa and

Sragdhara-stotra of Sarvajnamitra. All these texts are of immense value from the standpoint of religious poetry. The Bhakti-sataka of Ramacandra Bharati was perhaps the last hymn in praise of the Buddha composed in Sanskrit by an Indian Buddhist poet.

One of the latest contributions made by the Buddhists to the literature of India was in the form of dohas or gitis (songs) composed by Buddhist siddhas (adepts in Tantrika culture) in Apabhramsa. This language seems to have been the mother of several modern Indian languages including Hindi, Oriya and Bengali.

Finally, mention may be made in passing of the contributions of Buddhist writers to Sanskrit grammar and lexicography. A Buddhist scholar named Sarvavarman wrote the *Katantra*, in which he tried to build a new system of Sanskrit grammar. He possibly lived in or about the second century CE. In the eighth century a commentary was written on *Katantra* by one Durgasimha. The Buddhist scholar, Candragomin, (circa 500 CE) wrote the *Candravyakarana* with an auto-commentary (*vrtti*) on it. It became the standard grammatical treatise in most Buddhist countries of Asia.

The last Buddhist dictionary writer to be mentioned was Purusottamadeva (circa 12th century). As a supplement to the *Amarakosa* he wrote the *Trikandasesa*. The *Amarakosa* is divided into three parts hence its secondary title "Trikindi". Purusottamadeva follows this arrangement in his work which "contains rare names of the Buddha and many words that are peculiar to Buddhist Sanskrit".¹⁰ Another dictionary by this author is called the *Haravali*.

EIGHTFOLD PATH OF BUDDHA:

The fourth noble truth, as seen already, lays down that there is a path (marge)—which Buddha followed and other can similarly follow—to reach a state free misery. Clues regarding this path are derived from the knowledge of the chief conditions that cause misery. The path recommended by Buddha consists of eight steps or rules and is, therefore, called the eight noble path (astangika-marge).¹¹ Buddha recommended an

¹⁰ L.M.Joshi, Aspects of Buddhism in Indian History, Critical Quest, New Delhi, 2012, P.p. 35-36-38 & M. Winternitz, Ibid . P. 457

¹¹ Full discussion occurs in *Digha-nikaya-sutta*, 22 (Warren, pp.372-74), *Majjhima-nikaya* (quoted by Sogen, Systems, pp.169-71); *Dhammapada*, *Magga-vagga*. Vide Rhys Davids, *Dialogues*, I, pp.62-63; & D.M , Datta; Chatterjee, S. C., An

⁹ M. Winternitz, History of Indian Literature, Vol.III, Part-I, Eng. Tr. By Subhadra Jha (Delhi, 1063) P. 39 & L.M.Joshi, Aspects of Buddhism in Indian History, Critical Quest, New Delhi, 2012, P.35

ethical and spiritual path by following which sorrow may be removed and Nirvana can be attained. The Noble Eightfold Paths are: (i) Right views (samyak-drsti), (ii) Right aspiration (samyak-samkalpa), (iii) Right speech (samyak-vak), (iv) Right conduct (samyak-karmanta), (v) Right living (samyak-ajiva), (vi) Right effort (samyak-vyayama), (vii) Right thought (samyak-smrti), (viii) Right concentration (samyak-samadhi).

Right Views (samyak-drsti): A right view has the first place. What we do reflects what we think. Wrong acts issue from wrong beliefs. Mostly we do not realize that the elements of self will go down to dust in death and so cling to individuality. To remove wrong views, right knowledge is necessary. In Buddhist psychology will and intelligence go together.¹²

Right Aspiration (samyak-samkalpa): Right aspiration is a product of right vision. "It is the longing for renunciation; the hope to live in love with all; the aspiration of true humanity."¹³ Giving up the idea of separateness, the aspirant works for the whole. The resolve must be a real one, according to the Mahayana, making the aspirant say: "I must bear the burden of all creatures."¹⁴

Aspirations must be turned to activities. They must find expression in right speech, right action and right living. "To abstain from falsehood, to abstain from back-biting, to abstain from harsh language, and to abstain from frivolous talk is called right speech."¹⁵

Right Speech (samyak-vak): Abstaining from speaking lies, from slander, from the use of unkind words, from indulging in frivolous talk are called 'Right speech'.¹⁶

Right Conduct (samyak-karmanta): Right determination should not end in right speech only. It should end in right conduct. Right conduct consists in abstaining from doing injury to life, from stealing, and from indulging in improper gratification of the senses.¹⁷

Right living (samyak-ajiva): Right action leads to right living, free from lying and deceit, fraud and chicanery. Thus, far the stress has been on conduct, but inner

purification is also attended to. The aim of all endeavour is to remove the causes of sorrow. Subjective purification is needed for it. The last three of right effort, right thought and right tranquility refer to it.¹⁸

Right effort (samyak-vyayama): Along with the obedience of law regarding view, volition, speech, action and livelihood, it is also necessary to stop bad impressions and avoid bad feelings. Endeavouring to this end is called right effort. It includes self control, negation of sensuality, stopping bad thoughts, awakening good thoughts and concentrating the mind upon universal welfare. Five modes of restricting bad thoughts have been advocated:

- (i) Meditate upon some good thought.
- (ii) Study the results of acting upon bad thoughts.
- (iii) Analyse the causes of bad thoughts and stop its results.
- (iv) Control of mind by physical effort.¹⁹

Right thought (samyak-smrti): The moral aspirant cannot rest on his oars. He should constantly bear in his mind what he has already learnt. He should constantly remember that body is body, sensations are sensations. He should remember that he is neither the body, nor the senses, nor the mind. This will help him to remain free from attachment to objects.²⁰

Right concentration (samyak-samadhi): Right concentration is the attainment of the four stages of intent meditation one after the other. These four stages are as follows:-

- (i) Intent meditation which arises on one's separating one-self from passions and evil states of mind which is conjoint with application initial (vitakka) and sustained (vichara) which arises from seclusion and is coupled with pleasure and joy.
- (ii) Intent meditation which arises on the cessation of application initial and sustained is conducive to inward peace, is characterized by concentration of mind, disassociated from application initial and sustained, originating from *Samadhi* coupled with pleasure and joy.
- (iii) Intent meditation which involves indifference to pleasure is associated with mindfulness and

Introduction of Indian Philosophy, The University of Calcutta, p. 127

¹² Radhakrishnan S., Indian Philosophy, Vol-I, 1997, Oxford University Press, Calcutta, P. 420

¹³ Suttavibhanga

¹⁴ Vajradvaja Sutta.

¹⁵ Radhakrishnan S., Ibid P. 420

¹⁶ Saratchandran, K., A Critical Study of Indian Philosophy, 1967, P.72

¹⁷ Sanyal, Jagadiswar, Guide to Indian Philosophy, 1989, Sribhumi Publishing Company, Calcutta-9, P. 117

¹⁸ Radhakrishnan S., Ibid P. 422

¹⁹ Saratchandran, K., Ibid, P. 72

²⁰ Sanyal, Jagadiswar, Ibid, P. 118

knowledge and connected with the bodily feeling of joy.

- (iv) Intent meditation which involves the purification of mindfulness coupled with indifference, freedom from joy and sorrow consequent on the renunciation of either and the previous cessation of joy and sorrow.²¹

The Eightfold path of Buddha has three significance aspects—*Shila* or right conduct, *Samadhi* or concentration and *prajna*. *Prajna* is real knowledge. Good conduct (*shila*) is impossible without real knowledge. On the other hand, perfection of knowledge, too, is not possible without conduct. Accordingly, in accordance with the tradition of Indian philosophy, Buddha looks upon *shila* and *prajna* as complimentary. *Prajna* is destructive of sexual and ignorant tendencies. It awakens undisturbed concentration. Perfect *prajna*, perfect *shila* and perfect peace spring immediately after Nirvana is attained.

Buddha's ethical 'middle path' is like the 'golden mean' of Aristotle. Self-indulgence and self-mortification are equally ruled out. In his very first Sermon at Saranatha he said: 'There are two extremes, O monks, from which he who leads a religious life must abstain. One is a life of pleasure, devoted to desire and enjoyment: that is base, ignoble, unspiritual, unworthy, unreal. The other is a life of mortification: it is gloomy, unworthy, unreal. The Perfect One, O monks, is removed from both these extremes and has discovered the way which lies between them, the middle way which enlightens the eyes, enlightens the mind, which leads to rest, to knowledge, to enlightenment, to Nirvana.'²²

This is the Noble Eight-fold Path contained in the Fourth Noble Truths.

REFERENCES

- [1] Datta , D.M ; Chatterjee,S. C., An Introduction of Indian Philosophy, The University of Calcutta
- [2] Hiriyanna, M., Outlines of Indian Philosophy, 1994, Motilal Banarsidass Publishers Private Limited, Delhi-07
- [3] Joshi, Lal Mani, Brahmanism Buddhism & Hinduism, 2007, Critical Quest, New Delhi-47
- [4] Joshi , L.M., Aspects of Buddhism in Indian History, 2012, Critical Quest, New Delhi
- [5] Radhakrishnan S., Indian Philosophy, Vol-I, 1997, Oxford University Press, Calcutta
- [6] Sharma Chandradhar, A Critical Survey of Indian Philosophy,1991,Motilal Banarsidass Publishers Pvt. Ltd. , Delhi- 28
- [7] Sinha Jadunath, Outlines of Indian Philosophy, Central, Calcutta-26
- [8] Sanyal, Jagadiswar, Guide to Indian Philosophy, 1989, Sribhumi Publishing Company, Culcutta-9
- [9] Saratchandran, K., A Critical Study of Indian Philosophy, 1967

²¹ Saratchandran, K., Ibid, P. 73

²² Oldenberg : Buddha, P. 127, & Sharma Chandradhar, A Critical Survey of Indian Philosophy,1991,Motilal Banarsidass Publishers Pvt. Ltd. , Delhi-28, P. 72