



IMPACT OF BUDDHISM ON SOCIAL VALUES OF PEOPLE

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ABSTRACT

Buddhism is seen as a system of psychological principles and practices that an individual can apply to the benefit of his own spiritual advancement and emotional wellbeing. Thus, the primary value of Buddhism in the modern world is that it shows a way to happiness and peace of mind regardless of the political and social environment. However, it would be wrong to assume that Buddha's doctrine was social and internalized to the exclusion of concern for human relations and society as a whole. The reason for focusing on individual development is based on the principle that blind people cannot lead blind people. Or as the Buddha said, "One, who has been sunk in the swamp of greed and delusion, cannot get another out of that muck." One must first purify oneself in order to be able to show the way to others. The numerous cases in both antiquity and in modern times of religious and political atrocities perpetrated by men who genuinely believed they served causes of justice and righteousness demonstrate the wisdom of this hypothesis. We can only have a better world when we first have better people. Fear, jealousy, selfishness, hatred and greed are the root causes of human conflict, whether it is a petty crime or a world war.

Keywords: - Doctrine, Buddha, Human, Religion, Society

I. INTRODUCTION

Many religious traditions have flourished and flowered in India time to time. Almost all scholars agree that the Indus-Valley civilization is ancient even from the Vedic period. The remains of the Indus Valley lack written evidence and what has been received has not yet been read. On the basis of the remains found from excavation, scholars have presented the contours of the prevalent religion.

It is well known that religion has been widely recognized in India and this means that religion has affected society and politics more than any other institution. Although 'Dharmashastra', 'Rajashastra' and 'Samajashastra' are considered separate entity in India, they could not remain untouched and effected from theology and sociology-theology. Neither their existence without theology was possible. In fact, both Dharma Shastra and Rajashastra preach duty to the society on practical level, the difference is only of the abilities of both. Where theology can preach good and ethical life to the society, Rajashastra teaches the observance of the objectives of society.



One of such religion is Buddhism. Mahatma Buddha, in search of knowledge, wandered here and there and finally attained enlightenment under the Peepal tree at a place called Uruvela. After attaining enlightenment, Mahatma Buddha came to Sarnath and gave his first sermon here which is known as ‘Char Arya Satya’. This event is known as ‘DharmachakraPramanan’ in Buddhism. Influenced by the teachings of Buddhism, Emperor Ashoka and Kanishka made it a state religion and did many philanthropic works for its propagation. After ‘Mahaparinirvana’, the bone relics of Buddha were divided into eight parts. Ajatashatru, the ruler of Magadha and the other republics of the region, built stupas with the relics and protected it. We get detailed knowledge of Buddhism from Pali-Tripitaka. According to Mahatma Buddha, there is enough sorrow in life. To get rid of this sorrow, he told us to follow the ‘Ashtangikamarga’ i.e octagonal path. Before understanding the nature of Buddhism, it can be said that the broad and common elements in different sects should be considered the basic precept of the Buddha.

Rosenvarg has also expressed his opinion in this regard that any theory that has been continuous since time immemorial does not remain unchanged. Even if history seems to follow the original principle from the later theories, it will be an evolved and metaphorical expression rather than its original form. In fact, by looking at the later theories, its basic form cannot be known with transparency. For this, ancient and original manuscripts can be considered as the primary. It is equally true that in the realization of these ancient principles, knowledge of their changed form and subsequent history can be of great help. In Buddhism, it is taken that all worldly material is degradable, and Nirvana is something which lasts forever. From this, it is known that ignorance is the root cause of sorrow. The chaotic world cycle keeps on taking recourse to karma, craving etc for ignorant people.

II. CONTRIBUTION AND IMPACT OF BUDDHISM TO INDIAN CULTURE

Buddhism has made a remarkable contribution to the political, social, religious and a cultural life of India. In social life Buddhism contributed egalitarianism. It raised voice against caste discrimination and social oppression. It helped in Upliftment of women by making religion and education accessible to them. The doctrine of ‘Ahimsa’ (non-violence) encouraged virtues like kindness and considerations among the people. In the sphere of religion, it was against ritualism, superstitions and sacrifices. Further, it popularized idol worship. It was Mahayana followers who worshipped images of Buddha. The Hindus took over from them the idol worship. In cultural field, Buddhism enriched the architectural heritage of India through Stupas of Sanchi, Gaya, and Amravati etc. Buddhist scholars made a significant contribution to the promotion of new literature in the language of the common people. Several genres like drama and poetry were enriched. Trip takas occupy the same position as the Vedas for Hindus. The Buddhist Buddhism has made a remarkable contribution to the political, social, religious and a cultural life of India. In social life Buddhism contributed egalitarianism. It raised voice against caste discrimination



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Buddhism exercised great influence in shaping the various aspects of Indian society. Its impact in socio-cultural, religious and political spheres cannot be overlooked. Buddhism developed a popular religion, without any complicated, elaborate and unintelligible rituals requiring necessarily a priestly class. This was one of the reasons for its mass appeal. The ethical code of Buddhism is also relatively simple based on charity, purity, self-sacrifice, truthfulness and control over passions. It laid great stress on love, equality and non-violence. It is an acknowledged fact that the Upanishads, too, had illustrated these virtues before the advent of Buddhism but credit goes to Buddhism for raising public morality to those heights never witnessed before. It became an article of faith for the followers of Buddhism. But more importantly Buddhism laid stress on the value that man is the architect of his own destiny, not any God or gods. There is a great element of individuality in Buddhism and it sans any elaborate idea of God.

Notwithstanding Buddhism could never dislodge Brahmanism from its high pedestal it unquestionably jolted it exhilarated institutional changes in Indian society. Rejecting the caste system and its concomitant evils, violent rituals based on animal sacrifices, pilgrimage, fasting and conservation, it propagated total equality.

In the Buddhist system gods and goddesses, fatalism, previous birth and movements of planets are not believed to be accountable for man's present plight. It exhorts people to seek answers from this world. Therefore 'this worldliness' rather 'that worldliness' should be the basis of man's quest for seeking answers of the unknown. Compassion, equality between all human beings including gender equality, protection of all life forms and welfare of all tried to bind the entire society into one. Promotion of social equality and social justice helped Buddhism cross the frontiers of Indian sub-continent and become a world religion.

The impact of Buddhist thought may be seen in our foreign policy, national integration, mutual cooperation, peace efforts, Mahatma Gandhi's philosophy of non-violence, Upliftment of weaker



sections and welfare of SCs, STs and depressed classes. Since Buddhism identified ignorance as the root cause of sufferings, it laid great stress on acquisition of knowledge.

Promotion of democracy and democratic values is yet another contribution of Buddhism to Indian society. Buddhist 'sanghs' and 'math's' promoted democratic conduct and in the course of time its impact was felt in many Hindu 'maths' and religious institutions.

III. CONCEPTS, Values AND PRACTICES COMMON TO BUDDHISM AND SOCIAL WORK

1) Social Welfare

All civilized societies throughout the globe continue to work for the well being of mankind. In both social work and Buddhism, social welfare is considered as the work done in different forms intended for the benefits of humankind. Such work ranges from simple individual acts of charity, teaching and training to organized services in different forms for the betterment of the community, which are also common areas of social work intervention.

2) Precepts

The precepts in Buddhism and social work values are very similar to each other. Non-violence; not committing theft; refrain from sexual misconduct; always speaking truth; and refraining from abusing drugs or alcohol are some of the common concerns. Gandhiji strongly propogated some of the values and teachings found in Buddhism such as self-sufficient villages, celibacy, nonviolence and truth.

3) Social Services

The Buddhist monks and nuns from the monasteries are doing social service along with and for the common people. Both Buddhism and social work provide social services to the members of the society to enable them to develop optimally and help them to function effectively and to lead a life of decency, dignity and liberty. These services have been rendered to all the members of the society, irrespective to their religion, caste, race, language, culture etc.

4) Social Work Values and Conditions in Buddhism

Both social work values and Buddhism teach the individuals to understand their responsibility towards oneself, the family, and the society. Buddhism and social work values caution the social worker not to neglect himself/herself, his/her family and the society in which he/she is living while he/she is discharging his/her professional duties. Both Buddhism and social work teach the



people to respect and obey elders and superiors; respect, worship and honor all religions; honor and respect all people irrespective of their caste, creed or gender; respect the worth and dignity of each individual and respect women in general.

5) Upliftment of Oppressed

Upliftment of oppressed in society have been taken into consideration by both social work and Buddhism. Both are against the caste based social inequality and emphasized social equality and justice for the oppressed mass, especially for the scheduled caste. They are aimed at the rejection of untouchability and favored the participation of the oppressed castes towards undertaking more social and political activities for their liberation from the exploitative force.

6) Compassion

The Buddhist way of life is compassion, equanimity, tolerance, concern for self reliance and individual responsibility which are similar to social work. The social worker's compassion is the prerequisite for effective social work practice. Both Buddhists and social workers empathize with others. They willingly join with and enter into the pains of those who are distressed or troubled. Both believe in self-reliance; dignity of each individual; cultivate spirit of openness, co-operation, goodwill and equality.

7) Community Welfare Services

Buddhist communities are reaching and training community members in general and running hospice for the terminally ill, providing an information and advice center on a wide range of personal and social problems for the terminally ill, for the people of the local community and assisting in various aspects of a socially deprived local community. Similarly, a number of professional social workers are engaged in providing welfare services to the communities. Various community developmental activities have been initiated by Buddhists. After care services have also been provided by Buddhist group to those who are mentally or emotionally ill.

8) Empowerment of Women and Development of Organizational Skills

Buddhism and social work has a very positive and revolutionary attitude towards women. Both believe in equal benefits for men and women. Both in Buddhism and social work women are able to indulge in activities outside the home, including proselyte, development of organizational skills, and above all, an atmosphere where they could experience a sense of accomplishment.

IV. CONCLUSION



Buddhism originated in Ancient India sometime between the 6th and 4th centuries BC from where it spread into foreign countries like China, Japan, Mongolia, Burma, Tibet, Sri Lanka, and Nepal and exercised substantial impact on the culture and civilization of those countries. It made valuable and lasting contributions in the field of religion, philosophy, literature and art. Its contribution was not confined to architecture and sculpture alone. It also made valuable contribution to the art of painting. It gave us a simple, intelligible and popular religion. It immensely appealed to the people on account of its simplicity; emotional element, easy ethical code, the use of vernacular language and the methods of teaching. One of the greatest contributions of Buddhism to India was that it promoted a sense of national feeling amongst the Indians. It laid great stress on the principle of Ahimsa which immensely affected the character of the people. It insisted on virtues like charity, purity, compassion, self-sacrifice, truthfulness, control over passions, non-injury to living creatures in thought and action etc.

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