

Buddhism

Syeda Umme Habeeba

Abstract: The Buddha is endowed with great compassion and wisdom. His advice to mankind is to be free from suffering and causing any inflict on any living being. Every being likes happiness and wellbeing. In this world, the goal of Buddhism is peace.

One central belief of Buddhism is often referred to as **reincarnation** -- the concept that people are reborn after dying. In fact, most individuals go through many cycles of birth, living, death and rebirth. A practicing Buddhist differentiates between the concepts of rebirth and reincarnation.

The precepts are commitments to **abstain from killing living beings, stealing, sexual misconduct, lying and intoxication**. Within the Buddhist doctrine, they are meant to develop mind and character to make progress on the path to enlightenment.

Introduction

Gautama Buddha was the founder of Buddhism. He was born at Lumbini Garden (now in Nepal) in 563 BCE. His early name was Siddhartha. His parents were King Shuddhodhana and Queen Mayadevi. Shuddhodhana was the chief of Shakya clan of Kapilavastu. Mayadevi died when Siddhartha was a child of seven days. So he was brought up by his aunt Mahaprajapati Gautami. Siddhartha was brought up in great luxury. He was married to Princess Yashodhara at the age of 16. A son was born to them, who was named Rahula. According to a Jataka story, one evening Siddhartha wandered out of the palace and he saw an old man, a sickman, a funeral procession and a sage. Siddhartha saw only sorrows and sufferings in the first three scenes and found happiness in the fourth i.e., a sage who had renounced the worldly life. These four sights profoundly affected the life of young Siddhartha. So he decided to renounce the worldly life. He renounced his wife, child, parents and the kingdom to find out the root cause for all the sorrows. This event is known as 'The Great Renunciation'.

Objectives

- 1) The goal of Buddhism is to become enlightened and reach nirvana. Nirvana is believed to be attainable only with the elimination of all greed, hatred, and ignorance within a person. Nirvana signifies the end of the cycle of death and rebirth.
- 2) Buddhism believes in Four Noble Truths and Eightfold Path. These truths are the Truth of Suffering, The Truth of the Cause of Suffering, The Truth of the End of Suffering, and The Truth of the Path that Leads to the End of Suffering, also known as the Eightfold Path.
- 3) Nirvana, or the liberation from cycles of rebirth, is the highest aim of the Theravada tradition. In the Mahayana tradition, the highest goal is Buddhahood, in which there is no abiding in nirvana. Buddha helps liberate beings from samsara by teaching the Buddhist path.
- 4) To promote the teachings, practice and realisation of Shakyamuni Buddha for the welfare and peace of all.
- 5) To encourage the teachings, methods and practice of all the Buddhists.
- 6) To promote, encourage, develop and assist the Buddhism.

Methodology

In this paper several methods have been used. Collection of secondary data from ICHR Library and Mythic Society, debate, discussion, lecture, speech hearing, question-answer, deliberation, and the like. Further, the emphasis was laid upon thinking and self-study, literature from various books and internet etc.

Teachings of Buddha

Lord Buddha attained "Enlightenment" under the Bodhi tree. After attaining nirvana, Lord Buddha became a figure providing the wisdom he obtained and helped billions of people to end their suffering and attaining the state of Nirvana.

After attaining nirvana, Lord Buddha started teaching the way of life to people. Near the city of Benares, he shared his first teachings to five holy men and they immediately understood his teachings and agreed to follow Lord Buddha. For forty-five years, Buddha along with his disciples started spreading Buddha's wisdom and teachings in India.

The Buddha's sermons and teachings pointed toward the true nature of the universe, what is known within Buddhism as the Dharma. He gave his first sermon on the outskirts of the city of Varanasi at a deer park called Sarnath. This first sermon presents an overview of suffering and the way out of suffering. It is called the "Four Noble Truths." The Buddha is often described as a physician who first diagnoses an illness and then suggests a medicine to cure the illness. The "Four Noble Truths" follow this pattern:

1. Life involves suffering, dukkha.

The Buddha spoke of three types of dukkha. First, there is the ordinary suffering of mental and physical pain. Second, there is the suffering produced by change, the simple fact that all things—including happy feelings and blissful states—are impermanent, as is life itself. Third, there is suffering produced by the failure to recognize that no “I” stands alone, but everything and everyone, including what we call our “self,” is conditioned and interdependent.

2. Suffering is caused by desire and grasping.

The Buddha saw that the impulse to crave, desire, or grasp something one doesn't have is the principal cause of suffering. Because of the impermanence and continuous change of all that we call “reality,” the attempt to hold on to it is as doomed to frustration as the attempt to stake out a piece of a river.

3. There is a way out of suffering.

This is the good news of the Dharma. It is possible to put an end to ego-centered desire, to put an end to dukkha and thus attain freedom from the perpetual sense of “unsatisfactoriness.”

4. The way is the “Noble Eightfold Path.”

To develop this freedom one must practice habits of ethical conduct, thought, and meditation that enable one to move along the path. These eight habits include:

Right understanding: Truly and deeply knowing, for example, that unwholesome acts and thoughts have consequences, as do wholesome acts and thoughts.

Right intention: Recognizing that actions are shaped by habits of anger and self-centeredness, or by habits of compassion, understanding, and love.

Right speech: Recognizing the moral implications of speech; truthfulness.

Right action: Observing the five precepts at the foundation of all morality: not killing, not stealing, not engaging in sexual misconduct, not lying, and not clouding the mind with intoxicants.

Right livelihood: Earning a living in ways that are consonant with the basic precepts.

Right effort: Cultivating this way of living with the attention, the patience, and the perseverance that it takes to cultivate a field.

Right mindfulness: Developing “presence of mind” through the moment-to-moment awareness of meditation practice, including mindfulness of breathing, mindfulness of walking, and mindfulness of bodily sensations.

Right concentration: Developing the ability to bring the dispersed and distracted mind and heart to a center, a focus, and to see clearly through that focused mind and heart.

Spread of Buddhism

Buddhism spread far and wide in India. It crossed the boundaries of India and spread to China, Tibet, Myanmar, Ceylon, Central Asia and South East Asia.

Causes for the spread

1. Simple Doctrines:

As compared with Jainism, Buddhism was essentially simple. It did not confuse the people. Rather its ‘Arya Satya’ ‘Eight-fold Path and ‘concept of non-violence’ were so simple that people could easily understand and follow these. Buddhism also lacked the severity of Jainism, as well as the complexity of Vedic rituals. The people, already fed up with Brahminical manipulations of Vedic religion, came to accept Buddhism as a soothing and refreshing change.

2. Simple Language:

The Buddha spread his message in the simple language of the masses of people. The Prakrit language which Buddha used was the spoken language of India. The Vedic religion was understood only with the help of Sanskrit language which was the monopoly of the Brahmins. Buddhism was easily understood and people accepted it after being convinced about its simple philosophy and pleasing message.

3. Personality of Buddha:

The personality of the Buddha endeared him and his religion to the masses. The Buddha was kind and ego-less. His calm composure, sweet words of simple philosophy and his life of renunciation drew the masses to him. He had ready moral solutions for problems of the people. His example of a prince renouncing the world to save humanity from sins and rebirth and wandering from place to place to convince the people with his messages and sermons came to naturally evoke awe, admiration and acceptance of the people for him and his religion. The spread of Buddhism was thus rapid.

4. Inexpensive:

Buddhism was inexpensive, without the expensive rituals that characterized the Vedic religion. Practical morality, not rites and expensive rituals, came as its beacon feature and helped to set up a healthy tradition in society. It advocated a spiritual path without any material obligations of satisfying gods and Brahmins through rituals and gifts. People competed to embrace Buddhism.

5. No Caste Harried:

Buddhism did not believe in cast-distinctions. It opposed that caste system and regarded people of all castes equally. Its followers sat together, forgetting their caste and discussed ethics and morality. The non-Brahmins in particular were drawn to its fold. Its popularity spread by leaps and bounds.

6. Royal Patronage:

Royal patronage of Buddhism also accounted for its rapid rise. The Buddha himself was a Kshatriya prince. Kings like Prasenjit, Bimbisara, Ajatasatru, Asoka, Kanishka and Harshavardhan patronised Buddhism and helped its spread throughout India and outside, as well. Asoka deputed his children, Mahendra and Sanghamitra, to Sri Lanka for the spread of Buddhism. Kanishka and Harshavardhan worked untiringly for the spread of Buddhism throughout India.

7. Buddhist Monks and Sangha:

The Buddhist monks and the Buddhist 'Order' (Sangha) did incomparable service for the spread of Buddhism. Prominent among Buddha's disciples were Ananda, Sariputta, Maudgalayana, Sudatta and Upali etc. They were singularly determined and dedicated to spread Buddhism throughout India. The Buddhist sanga came to establish its branches throughout India. Soon local people were drawn to these branches of the Buddhist 'Order'. They either became monks (bhikshu) or Upasakas (lay-worshippers) and led lives of austere serenity. Their example influenced more and more people to follow it. As a result, Buddhism spread rapidly.

8. Buddhist Councils:

The Buddhist Councils played an important role for the teaching and spread of Buddhism in India. Following the death (Mahaparinirvana) of Lord Buddha, the First-Buddhist Council was held in 487 B.C. (or 486 B.C.) in the Magadhan capital at Rajagriha, under the leadership of Ajatasatru and the presidency of Mahakashyap. Nearly 500 Buddhists attended this council.

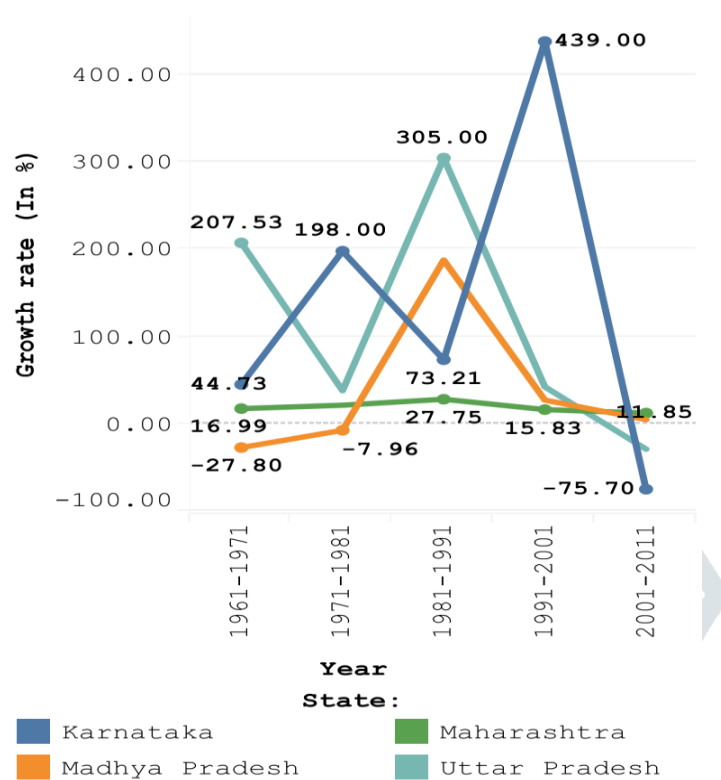
It was in this council that the teachings of the Buddha were compiled and codified into scriptures called 'Tripitaka'. The Tripitaka' consisted of Sutra Pitaka, Vmaya Pitaka and Abhidharma Pitaka Sutra Pitaka consisted of the advices of the Buddha, Vinaya Pitaka prescribed the norms and rules of the sangha. Abhidharma Pitaka contained the Buddhist philosophy. This council went a long way in making Buddhism popular.

Exactly hundred years later, in 387 B.C. (or 386 B.C.) the Second Buddhist Council was convened at Vaisali under the supervision of Kalasoka Kakavarni.

The third Buddhist council was held at Pataliputra in 250 BCE.

The fourth Buddhist council was held at Kundalavana (Kashmir- Shrinagar) in 102 CE. It tried to settle the differences among the monks. But the religion itself came to be divided into two sects namely Hinayana and Mahayana.

Population Growth Rate For Buddhists, 1961-2011



Literature

The teachings of Buddha are collected in Tripitakas (three baskets). They are - 1. Vinaya Pitaka 2. Sutta Pitaka 3. Abhidamma Pitaka. These are the most important sacred books of Buddhism.

Contributions

Buddhism also contributed to the development of art and architecture. Buddha's disciples built stupas, Viharas and Chaityalayas at various places. The statues of Buddha at Amravati, Nagarjunakonda and Ajanta are famous. The stupas at Sanchi, Amravati, Nagarjunakonda etc., are famous. Viharas and Chaityalayas can be seen at Kanheri, Karle and Nasik. Gandhara art also developed.

Conclusion

Thus, Buddhism is one of the world's largest religions and originated 2,500 years ago in India. Buddhists believe that the human life is one of suffering, and that meditation, spiritual and physical labor, and good behavior are the ways to achieve enlightenment, or nirvana.

The philosophy of Buddhism teaches the practice of mindfulness, which involves focusing on one's thoughts, emotions, and surroundings to be fully present in the moment. The central practice of mindfulness meditation, which is integral to Buddhism, has been shown to decrease levels of stress, anxiety, and depression.

Suggestions

The lack of interest in abstract speculation about the creation of the world or the existence of gods.

Exclusion or aversion of new ideas – whenever a new idea is presented for the development of Buddhism it is faced with overwhelming scepticism and negativity by some individuals which also discourages others.

The Buddhist 'Sangha' became corrupted throughout time. The monks and their followers were enamoured with luxury and pleasure.

They became hungry and materialistic as a result of receiving and saving expensive presents such as gold and silver.

References

1. The Buddha Book: Buddhas, Blessings, Prayers, and Rituals to Grant You Love, Wisdom, And Healing by Lillian Too.
2. The Tibetan Way of Life, Death and Rebirth by John Peacock.
3. Introducing Buddha by Jane Hope (Author) and Borin Van Loon (Illustrator).
4. Handbook of Tibetan Buddhist Symbols by Robert Beer (Translator).
6. Oxford Dictionary of Buddhism by Damien Keown.

