

The Essence of Buddhism

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Abstract: *As the title indicates here I have mentioned about the essence of Buddhism and not about the life of Buddha about which I had mentioned in my earlier articles on Buddhism. What was Buddha in his earlier lives/births; how he faced the troubles of life and other difficulties before he was enlightened. How even the Lord of senses Mara could not harm him because he was enlightened.*

Keywords: Pitakas, Mara, Noble Truths, Discipline Baskets, Attachment

1. Research Methods

The Research Methods and its finding employed in this article shows how the ideas of Buddhism and its essence have been clearly depicted and how Buddha is a rare event in the history of mankind.

Appearance of Buddha is a rare event in the history of mankind. He appears generally in Bhaddakappa for eradicating of the sufferings of mankind. He is a man of endeavour, remains practical towards the surroundings and develops awareness towards all beings. He realized the basic facts of life, abandons his life hold ties, takes up the life of a recluse, practices penances, understands the futility of physical torture and proceeds further to realize the perfect Enlightenment, the Samma Sambodhi. He is then the Buddha. The attainment of perfect Enlightenment is not only for himself but also for the suffering humanity. He too, strived for this in his previous existences he remembers his determination for the eradication of the suffering by making a boat of righteousness and taking the beings of the state of suffering to the state of Eternal bliss. For he preached the Dhamma wandering people. His such dhammic way faring continued for forty five years without any interruption. During this period he breathed his last at Kushinagar, expressing clearly that the Dhamma and the Vinaya preached by him will be the teacher of all after his death. But where were Dhamma and Vinaya ? All his teachings related to Dhamma and Vinaya were existing in oral tradition.

After his demise, there became a vacuum. The monks were very much deprived of the occasions of approaching the Buddha and seeking clarity. They were in search of Dhamma and the Vinaya which were existing neither in one persons nor with the group of persons nor at a particular place. This was a mute problem prevailing among the monks. Sometimes, they expressed it to their friends but did not know the way out for knowing the Dhamma and the Vinaya. It was burring problem before them.

Mahakassapa understood the problem of the monks. He wanted to solve it. But for him it was a problem. He pondered after it and finally came to a decision of holding a council of such monks who had the opportunities to hear the sermons and the preaching's of the Buddha. He announced to hold a council of able disciples and accordingly, it was conveyed at Rajagaha. There were five hundred Arahata monks who assembled there and recited these Dhamma and the Vinaya of the Buddha. After recitation, they were classified and divided into three divisions namely, Vinaya Pitaka, Satta Pitaka and Abhidhamma Pitaka. It was with

that accumulative effort the Tipitaka came into existence.

Vinaya Pitaka

The Vinaya Pitaka is the first collection of the teachings of the Buddha. The word Vinaya has got two components – Vi and Naya which means that which leads properly. Technically it means those norms which leads one to the direction of purification. It is believed in the Buddhist tradition that there should be purification of physical and vocal deeds before proceeding towards the purification of mind. So the Vinaya is regarded as the collection of the monastic rules preached by the Buddha for regulating the life of monks or nuns leading holy life in the order. The Vinaya Pitaka has been explained generally with the following three attributes:

- a) Ana desana
- b) Yatha pardhasanam and
- c) Samsara – asamvaratha
 - Ana means order. Desana refers to preachings. Here the norms have been prescribed by the Buddha in the form of do's and don'ts.
 - Yatha pardhasanam prescribed that the norms are to be followed by the monks till the end of their life.
 - Samsara and asamvaratha mean putting restrains and not putting restrains respectively summarizing the three attributes there is a verse which speaks the nature of Vinaya rule in a nutshell.

Different books have been prescribed by the Buddha – (i) Parajika: It contains the offences and the punishment for which was expulsion from the order. Actually, speaking the moral code for the monks and nuns is available in the Patimodha. It contains 227 rules for the nuns arranged under seven heads account for the gravity of offences. There is no Anitya Dhamma for the nuns. In this book four types of Parajika dhamma thirteen types of Aniyata dhamma are meant for monks. Parajika is just like a penal code in modern terminology. Pacittya – contains the offences for which punishment was laid down. Mahavagga – throws light on a descriptive survey of the origin of Buddhism, together with the origin and development of the monastic order. Cullavaga – is the smaller division as is evident from its name, culla means small. It contains smaller and inner rules dealing with monastic life. Parivara – is the last book of Vinaya Pitaka. It consists of nineteen chapters and appears to be of later origin, being probably the work of Ceylonese monk. It is a manual instruction in the Vinaya Pitaka. Besides all these there are different other books which speaks highly about Buddha.

The Three Baskets

The Buddhistic canon has three main divisions called the 'Baskets' (in Pali Pitaka) and therefore Buddhistic Bible consequently called the three baskets (Ti - Pitaka). The first Pitaka has been coured and published by Oldenburg and a translation of a large part of it has appeared in the 'Sacred Books of the East'. The Pitaka gives the various rules and ordinances to be observed by the Buddhistic order and is therefore called the 'Discipline Basket' (the Vinaya Pitaka). The works of this Pitaka are five in number. The second Pitaka is called the Sutta Pitaka which can be termed as 'Sermon Basket'. It consists of a large number of sermons and discourses in prose and were delivered by the Buddha himself. Its work consists of nineteen in number. The third and the last Pitaka is the Metaphysical Basket known as 'Abhi dhamma Pitaka' in Pali and consists of seven in number.

Spread of Buddhism

The man who founded Buddhism did not preach any form of worship, did not recognize any personal duty, did not reply to metaphysical questions, but was worshipped and glorified by innumerable disciples, the concrete proofs we have being the great number of Buddhistic temples spread over the whole of Asia. What was then the secret of the spread of Buddhism? The simplest answer could be 'its practical worldly attitude'.

Buddha's entire life was a life of research based practical wisdom. In his youth the sight of an old man bowed down by years, a corpse, and a diseased let him think that life was full of sufferings and he was troubled. The sight of a wandering monk or a mendicant possibly indicated to him to find a remedy. To find a cause of suffering and bring about its cessation, at the age of twenty nine he left his princely rob, bade farewell to his sleeping wife and son and wandered from place to place. He came in contact with great scholars, Atman, Kalama and Uddaka Ramaputta who taught him the stages of meditation and philosophical speculation but that did not help him. He practiced severe austerities, but that too proved futile. Ultimately seated himself at the Bo - treat Bodhgaya he fixed his mind towards his goal and found the answer to the mystery of suffering through his own intellectual power and was enlightened. He attained Nirvana, the highest stage of positive bliss or pure consciousness, a state free from suffering.

The period of Nirvana

It was during this period, Mara, the Buddhist Lord of the senses repeatedly tempted Buddha when Buddha sat under the Bodhi tree at Bodhgaya to await enlightenment, the evil Mara appeared in the guise of a messenger claiming that a rival usurped the family throne. After sending a storm of live coals, take him feet up and head down he was thrown into a heated kettle that was blazing but he did not die because his wickedness remains unexhausted. Also Mara sent his three sisters to seduce Gautam but to no avail because Buddha attained enlightenment (i. e. the Nirvana) Mara pressed him to any attempt to preach but the God successfully persuaded him to preach the law.¹ "Finding no other way, the guardians of hell, threw him into the chiefest of hells as given beautifully in these lines- "Symmetrical and square in shape Four - gated into parts laid off

Of iron is at bounding wall, An iron roof does close it in,
And of its glowing iron floor

The light with dazzling brilliancy Spreads for a hundred league around, And over for a abides".

Thus, we can conclude that perhaps no other religions of the world have depicted such graphically of hell though all world religions have described about hell and its torturous paths. This is because of the vastness of Buddhistic literature and nothing else.

The Teachings of Buddha

The fundamental teachings of Buddha are (i) The four Noble Truths and the eight fold paths of suffering (ii) Nirvana (Discussed earlier) (iii) Meditation and concentration and he end of suffers (iv) God and the World. Besides these he was dwelt at length about ignorance, consciousness, desire, attachment, wisdom, sammumbonum of life (Moksha) and hail the saints as superior to Gods. In the Anguttara Nikaya (111.37) it has been clearly explained that the saints were superior to gods because they were free from passion, infatuation, hatred, greed and is released by perfect knowledge. Such a priest is real eased from birth old age, death, sorrow and lamentation, misery, grief and despair. In short, he is released from misery and therefore is superior to Gods.²

All the four noble truths given by Buddha says (i) There is suffering (ii) There is a cause of suffering (iii) There is cessation of suffering and (iv) The path to attain the cessation of suffering. Then there is the eight fold path promulgated by Buddha - Right views, right resolves, right conduct, right livelihood, right effort, right mindfulness and right concentration and right speech. The path is difficult no doubt but can be achieved through purity of mind and body and by repeated practice.

Karma and Rebirth

In the Milanda panha Nagsena has pointed out that it is through a difference in their Karma that men are not alike (from the result of previous causes) some men are long - lived, some short - lived, some healthy, some sickly, some handsome and some ugly, some powerful and some weak, some rich and some poor, some of high degree and some of low degree, some wise and some foolish.³

God and the World

We have discussed at length in my earlier articles that Buddhism is antitheist. It does not believe in God. Buddha believed in the chain of causation, in relation between cause and effect and not ready to accept God as an uncaused cause. All the arrangements of God's existence, such as the ontological, causal, teleological failed as proofs, Moreover, the world is full of imperfections could not have been created by a perfect God. Sufferings of the beings are due to Karma. Buddha realized that the only way to remove the fearing of Gods, the threatened torments of the future and the corruption of the human spirit, inclined to buy the good will of Gods by flattery and praise is to destroy Gods once for all.⁴

Observation / Abstract

From what has been said above it is clear that Buddha always wanted to be free from attachment and misery and reach Moksha without any fear from all. He enjoyed the bliss of emancipation and therefore sat an interruptedly cross - legged at the foot of the Bodhi tree just before he became sambuddha. Later on he answered several questions about his taking several births and at last his work was finished. The Bhikkus should work with interest and lead the way of preaching as advised by him.

After fulfilling his duties for forty - five years he established three Buddhistic council in his life time and answered various questions of the Bikhsush's.

Abhidhammatta sangha A manual of Abhidhamma

He explained the (A) Immoral consciousness rooted in Greed, Ill will or Aversion and delusion or Ignorance (B) Rootless consciousness, moral resultant consciousness without roots and functional consciousness with Roots (C) Beautiful consciousness of the sensuous nature - Eight types of moral consciousness, Eight types of resultant consciousness, Eight types of Functional consciousness.

The moral, resultant and functional types of consciousness of the sensuous sphere with Hetus, which differ according to feeling, knowledge and inducement, should be understood as twenty-four. In the sensuous sphere twenty-three are resultant, twenty moral and immoral, and eleven are functional, fifty-four in all form – sphere moral consciousness, sphere resultant consciousness, sphere functional consciousness. From – sphere consciousness is five hold according to different Thanas. That becomes fifteen-fold according to Moral resultant and functional types. There are four types of supramundane moral and resultant consciousness. Thus, end in all, the right types of supramundane moral and resultant consciousness. Differing according to the very paths, the moral consciousness is four-fold. So are the resultants being their fruits. Thus, the immoral are twelve, the morals are twenty-one, the resultants are thirty-six, the functional are twenty. In the sensuous sphere, they say are fifty-four types of consciousness, in the form sphere are fifteen in the formless sphere are twelve and in the formless – sphere are twelve and in the supramundane are eight. In this way types of consciousness went on divided.

Mental states or Psychic Factors

Similarly there are several kinds of mental states. The seven states –

(i) contact (ii) feeling (iii) perception (iv) violation (v) one pointedness (vi) Psychic life (vii) Attention. These seven mental states are common to every consciousness. Then there are different kinds of consciousness – Beautiful (19) Abstinences (3) Illimitable (2) and Wisdom (1). Then there are different kinds of mental states (i) Beautiful (47) Six factors of supramundane etc Then there are also classification of matter (i) rootless (ii) casual (iii) with defilements (iv) conditioned (v) Mundane (vi) Pertaining to the Karma, sphere and objectless etc. Thus the wise analyze accordingly the 25 kinds with respect to personal and so forth.

Dr. Ramesh Prasad, Senior Lecturer Deptt. Of Pali and Theravada Sampurnanand Sanskrit, Varanasi has done a yomen's service in giving all such type of consciousness which I do not know how he gathered. To the common mind all these are not understandable. I personally is not aware of such kinds of consciousness.

2. Conclusion

Buddha is a household name in the annals of history. There is hardly anyone in the world who does not know the name of Buddha. His sufferings are known to all. Everyone loved him because he always loved the suffering humanely. He crossed through several hurdles, wanderesed from one place to another in search of peace and at last got peace and attained Nirvana under the Bo - tree at Bodh Gaya. But one thing which does not come to mind that he left his wife, Yasodhara and son Rahul before he was enlightened and attained Nirvana though he himself has said that Hirvana can be attained in this very life. Nothing in history speaks of his son Rahul but Yasodhara who became a nun met him once after Buddha attained Nirvana.

My Guru Shri Sudin Kumar Mitra who had Divine powers also cared for the suffering humanity like Buddha and so he established a Jan Kalyan Ashram in life time during 1979 where provision has been made to help the poor and down trodden by giving them books, copies, clothes, foods so eat and medicines etc so that they can feel at home. His slogan was – “If you ignore men you cannot at all meet Goddess Kali who was worshipped by him. The conclusion thus gives a clear picture of what has been said above

References

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