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A study on the significance of ethical values of Buddhist philosophy

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Abstract---The Philosophy of the Buddhist ethical concepts and its theories are playing vital role on Indian Philosophical systems. Buddhism covers non-violence and materialism; hence, Buddha attacked the Brahmanic custom of animal slaughtering during their religious ceremonies. Buddhism does not belief in God; it teaches the unique purpose of human life in its moral. The Buddha's Philosophy in its implications depends theory of origination, theory of karma, theory of change, and the theory non-existence of the soul. Buddhist ethical idealism is the unique identification of Indian Wisdom.

Keywords---ethics, wisdom, humanity, Buddhist philosophy, nirvana.

Introduction

Buddhism in its original form, thus empower a practical religion with pure ethical discipline. It does not believe in God and therefore no ritualistic performances were found in any place on it concept.¹ It is totally off-centered to an existing religious phenomenon whereas it carries humanistic in its outlook, approach and aim. It concerns itself with human life: a step towards emergent problems at existing conditions. In its soul, Buddhism gives a way of life envisioned not for persons belonging to any particular caste or nationality but it is common to universal community. It firmly views that 'By following eightfold path' as oriented above, every man can surpass himself for his present miserable condition to attain a life which is completely free from sufferings through each direction.² Every man should be enlightened himself, sincere and savior himself. A man never seeks the kindness of any power that superior to him. He is sufficient himself for improving his condition by adopting the eightfold path as mentioned

above. Faithfulness to dharma which consists the believe in four 'Noble Truths' and some of the Doctrine like Pritithyasamuthbatha Anatmavada, Karema etc, as well as in practicing certain ethical virtues.³

The range of Buddhist literatures is very vast and it is difficult to give an account of it here. However, our knowledge of early Buddhism mostly comes from the Pali scripture, the monastic rules and the treatises of the Buddha. The Pali scriptures consists of three Pitakas (Baskets) known together as Tripitakas: they are Vinaya Pitakas, Dhamma or Sutta Pitakas and Abidamma Pitakas.⁴ The Vinaya Pitakas is concern with the rules for the Monks; the Damma (or) the Sutta Pitakas is the chief authority regarding the doctrine taught by Buddha.⁵ However, these Pitakas are resembling 'four noble thoughts' such as the doctrine of Nirvana and the eightfold path, the doctrine of Prdithyasamudpada, no-soul, the theory of Karma etc. The Abidhamma pitaka possesses more advanced doctrines than the Sutras.⁶ It is comprised of seven works produced in the course of centuries in the academic of Buddhist monasteries. Besides the Pitakas, there is also a collection of stories in Pali called "Jataka" which relates with the birth tales of Gautama Buddha.⁷

Materials and Methods

This study deals about the Buddhist moral Philosophy, the concept of Nirvana, and Four Noble truth by using the descriptive method. The literature studies are adopted with this methodology to uptake this study.⁸⁻³²

Results and Discussions

Basic features of Buddhism

- Buddhism, a religion without God which taught a purely humanistic religion. Man's only religious obligation is to free him from the bonds of worldly suffering by discriminating the eightfold discipline.
- Early Buddhism is a purely ethical religion and totally free from all sorts of ritualism, but latter Buddhism, at least in the form of Mahayana gives opening to ritualism and monasticisms.
- Belief in the four noble truths and the pursuits of the eightfold path discipline are seeming to be the essence of Buddhism. The four noble truths are
 - Dukka - Arya satya (The noble truth is concerning with the nature of suffering)
 - Dukka samudaya - Arya satya (The noble truth is concerning with the origin of sufferings)
 - Dukka noroda satya - Anga satya (The noble truth is concerning with the removal of suffering and the realization of the state of Nirvana)
 - Dukka Nioroda Kamini Pratipada - Arya satya (The noble truth concerning the paths of leading to the removal of suffering and the attainment of the state of Nirvana)
- One very important features of Buddhism which help to maintain its oriental character by bringing it very close to Hinduism is its belief in the

law of Karma and rebirth. Everyone has to be reaped the consequences of his action either in this life or in life after death. Exhaustion of the fruits of the past karma in necessary conditions of Nirvana.

- According to Buddhism the final destiny of man on the attainment of Nirvana is a state of spiritual freedom and perfection. This state of Nirvana may be attained in this life is not dependent with the causation of the present life for the attainment of Nirvana.
- Buddhism teaches the avoidance of extremes and the adoption of the middle path in every sphere, in metaphysics, in ethics, in general practice and anywhere. Buddha is as much famous for his teaching of Mahima, Nyakaya, as for any of his other teaching.
- Buddhism like existentialism teaches self-assistance and self-reliance at the most effective means of attaining perfection. Although unlike existentialism it also believes in the humanistic virtues of independence, mutual help universal service and brotherhood.
- Quite in conformity with its humanistic ethics Buddhism believe in the doctrine of universal salvation. It teaches that it is not sufficient for anyone to attain his own salvation.

The four noble truths about the path to liberation

The four noble truth as seen already, lays down that there is a path (marga) which Buddha followed and others can similarly follow to reach a state free from 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 eightfold noble path (Astangamaraga). These are the essentials of Buddha Ethics. This path is open to all including monks and laymen. The noble path consists in the acquisition of the following eight good things.

Right views (Samyagdṛṣṭi)

According to Buddha, ignorance and its consequences, namely wrong views (mithyādr̥ṣṭi) about the individual and the world is the root cause of every sufferings. It is natural that the first step to moral reformation should be the acquisition of right views or the knowledge of truth. Right view is defined as the correct knowledge about the four noble truths. It is the knowledge of these truths alone and not any theoretical speculation regarding nature and self. It helps moral reformation, and leads us towards the goal- Nirvana.

Right resolve (Samyaksankalpa)

A mere knowledge of the truths would be useless unless one resolves to reform life in their light. The moral aspirant is asked, therefore to renounce of worldliness (all attachment in the world) to give up ill-feeling towards others and desist from doing any harm to them. These three constitute the contents of right determination.

Right speech (Samyagvaka)

Right determination should not remain a mere “pious wish” but must issue forth into action. Right determination should be able to guide and control our speech, to begin with. The result would be right speech consisting in absent from lying, slander, unkind words and frivoloustalk.

Right conduct (samyakkamanta)

Right determination should end in right action or good conduct and not stop merely with good speech. Right conduct includes the “Panca-sila”, the five vows for desisting from killing, stealing, sensuality, lying and intoxication.

Right livelihood (Samma-ajiva)

Renouncing bad speech and bad actions one should earn his livelihood by honest means. The necessity of this rule lies in showing that even for the sake of maintaining one’s life, one should not take to forbidden means but work in consistency with good determination.

Right effort (Samyagvyama)

While a person tries to live a reformed life, through right views, resolution, speech, action and livelihood, he is constantly knocked off the right path by old evil ideas which were deep- rooted in the mind as also by fresh ones which constantly arise. One cannot progress steadily unless he maintains a constant effort to root out old evil thoughts and prevent evil thoughts from arriving a new. Moreover, the mind cannot be kept empty, he should constantly endeavor to fill the mind. The fourfold constant endeavor, negative and positive is called right effort. Thisrule points out that even one high up on the path cannot afford to take a moral holiday without running the risk of sleeping down.

Right mindfulness (Samyaksmr̥ti)

The necessity of constant vigilance is further stressed in this rule. Which laws down that the aspirant should constantly bear in mind thing he has already learnt. He should constantly remember and contemplate the body as body, sensation as sensation, mind as mind mental states as mental states. About any of these he should not think. “This am I”; or “This is mine” This advice sound no better than asking one to think of a spade as a spade but ludicrously superfluous as it might appear to be, it is not easy to remember always what things really are. It is more difficult to practice it when false ideas about the body, etc., have become so deep –rootedin us and our behaviors based on these false notions have become instinctive. If we are not mindful, we behave as though the body, the mind, sensations; mental states are permanent and valuable. Hence there arises attachment to such things and grief over their loss, and we become subject to bondage and misery. But contemplation the frail, perishable loathsome nature of these, help us to remain free from attachment grief. This is the necessity of constant mindfulness about truth.

Right concentration (Samyakmsrti)

One who has successfully guided his life in the light of the last seven rules and thereby freed himself from all passions and evil thoughts is fit to enter step by step into the four deeper and deeper stages of concentration that gradually take him to the goal of his long and arduous journey –cessation of suffering. He concentrates his pure and unruffled mind on reasoning and investigation regarding the truths, and enjoys in this state, joy and ease born of detachment and pure thought. This is the first stage of intent meditation (dhyana or jhana). When this concentration is successful, belief in the fourfold truth arises dispelling all doubts and therefore, making reasoning and investigation unnecessary. From the results the second stage concentration, in which there are joy, peace and internal tranquility born of intense, unruffled contemplation. There is in this stage a consciousness of this joy and peace too.

Conclusion

To sum up the essential points of the eightfold path (or what is the same, Buddha's ethical teaching) in Indian Philosophy knowledge, morality and thoughts are inseparable –not simply because morality, or doing of good, depends on the knowledge of what is good, about which all Philosophers would agree, but also because perfection of knowledge is regarded as impossible without morality, perfect control of passions and prejudices. Buddha's explicitly states in one of his discourses that virtue and wisdom purify each other and the two are inseparable. In the eightfold path one starts with "right views" – a mere intellectual apprehension of the fourfold truth. The mind is not yet purged of the previous wrong ideas and the passions or wrong emotions arising their form; moreover, old habits of thinking, speaking, and acting also continue still. Ignorance and desire are cut at their roots and the source of misery vanishes, perfect goodness and perfect equanimity -complete relief from suffering are simultaneously attained, therefore, in Nirvana.

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