



BUDDHISTIC VALUES AND RELEVANCE TO NATIONAL RECONSTRUCTION

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Introduction

Buddhism belongs to the heterodox school of Indian Philosophy and this paper is an attempt to deal with “Buddhistic Values”. The perspectives of Buddhism with its ethical structure will be dealt with. The first part will navigate through the pertinent ideals of value system of Indian Philosophy with focus on culture; the second part will probe into the Buddhistic ethics. The final section will provide the culture relevance to reconstruction using a common base. The Sanskrit term ‘culture’ is Sanskriti has sam and krti as constituents. Sam means together or refined and kr is ‘to do’. Different nations have different cultures and people exhibit an integrated pattern of human knowledge with beliefs. The language, codes, art works, rituals and ceremonies are all components of a ‘culture’ and the significant aspect is, this accumulated knowledge in consolidation, has to be transmitted to future generations. We do come across situations where people experience difficulties to readjust to new locations like in cases when migration is applicable, ‘culture shocks’ become inevitable. Anthropology provides an interpretation about culture, where in all activities such as life styles, eating habits, the type of houses they build, how social morals and religious values are viewed; all these depict the cultural pattern. The fundamental basis of any culture is its world view, how the human beings are placed in it, and a measure of ethical values. Spirituality helps inner contemplation.

The Vedas are the oldest and the origin of Indian Philosophy can be traced to these. The oldest of the four Vedas dates back to 1000 BC and the rest with the Upanishads were composed before the advent of Buddhism. It is necessary to have a glimpse into Indian Philosophy and its branches as this will throw sufficient light on to the chosen theme “Embodied Values in Indian Culture”.

Tendencies Common to the Majority of Schools

The schools of Indian Philosophy are divided into two broad classes viz Orthodox (*Astikas*) and Heterodox (*Nastikas*). The Orthodox system *Nyaya*, *vaishesika*, *sankhya*, *yoga*, *Purva mimamsa* and the *uttard mimamsa* (*Vedanta*) believe in the Vedas whereas the heterodox systems, *Charvaka*, *Jainas*, *vaibhasikas*, *Suntranikas*, *Yogacharas* and *Madhyamikas* (the latter four of Buddhist beliefs) do not believe in the authority of the Vedas.



Turning our attention to the tendencies, the prime observations are the beliefs and faiths in the reality of the world and self, bondage with a pessimistic outlook of present and optimism for future and philosophy as a means and not as an end in itself; law of Karma are the indices.

Amplifying the echoed voices on Indian Culture

Values constitute the essence of life and it is necessary to understand as to how cultures affect the value system. Scriptures advocate the relevance of values and morality is an important facet of human survival.

The point here is that all values a human being adheres to are understandable to be viewed as a part of culture and civilization. When not followed, it becomes a cultural crisis. Our reference to the theme is Indian culture and it is in order for interpreting that Indian culture continues in the living tradition spreading over millions of years. Values and ethics are thoroughly analyzed and addressed in the Western philosophy too but we limit the discussion to Indian philosophy. Variances are there in some schools of Indian philosophy, for example the Carvaka School refused to accept the notions like heaven and hell since it essentially believed in materialism. Race and culture determine the course of thinking. Indian culture distinctly outlines the following criteria and these project adequately the value based characteristics. Ancient thinkers have prescribed regulative rules and it is necessary that discipline, devotion and duty mindedness are followed in accordance. Karma, Bhakti, Jnana and yoga margas stipulate the means of reaching God. Human beings should be treated as equal attaching importance to hospitality and friendly attitude. Indian culture's foundation is leading a systematic and methodic life based on Chaturvidha Varnas, Chaturvidha Ashramas and Chaturvidha Purushartas. Human values and ends in life have been classified into the scheme of the four fold pursuit (purushartha) of existence namely the practice of righteousness and goodness (Dharma), the effort towards earning of the necessary material values (Artha), the fulfillment of permissible desires through honest means (kama) and the endeavor for the final salvation of the soul (moksha). Suffice it would be to understand the word purushartha which literally means the goals of human endeavor. Dharma and Moksha lead to the essential goodness of man and in turn to the society. K.Satchidananda murthy says 'By and large for what ever reasons philosophy in India has been religious, for the contribution of Carvakas and others when compared to those of Hindu, Buddhist and Jaina thinkers are negligible. There is a world view useful for life. Which ever geographic location we belong, the cultures are created by men and human nature is the same every where since the needs and aspirations are same. Dharma can be defined as the conduct which conduces to prosperity here (Abhyudaya) and spiritual blessedness hereafter (Nihisreyasa). Morality is



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superior to external rites. In the fourfold scheme of Dharma, Artha, Kama and Moksha, the society is preserved, and provides a remedy for the problems of life. The Purusharthas prescribe the ideal and supply the values to be practiced by the individual and community.

Buddhist Ethics

Buddha's moral preaching to the mankind is continuing to be relevant to the demands of the society even in today's context. Compassion and love are of importance in His teachings. Buddha's realization is due to mental development with purification, and not with rationality or intellect. Karma and rebirth are accepted and the highest teachings of early Buddhism are the Four Noble Truths. Buddhism recognizes 'will' and by virtue of this man is an ethical being. Buddha taught using practical approaches based on His own understanding and kept people away from fear of hell and the supernatural elements. One who conquers himself is the greatest contributor for creating peace and harmony in the community respecting cultures. One's own mind with concentration helps in the gain of wisdom to combat miseries and to work for liberation. Buddha's crème concept is 'Enlightenment' and this is not achieved by intellect but only practice can help. Ignorance is the root cause of the birth and death cycle and enlightenment eradicates it.

The subject under discussion is culture, values and how these help to improve the human kind. When behavioral attitudes improve by adhering to value system, the collective, positive efforts of individuals will get channeled into the right path for bringing improvements to welfare, economy and prosperity of the groups, and Nations, and this will eliminate the evil and greed. Thousands of years of teaching by sages and eminent philosophers consisted of the advice that values cannot be ignored and ethical behavior is a concrete requirement for our survival and to be able to reckon with the views and demands of the modern world. Our concern is now with Buddhism which emphatically echoed the value principles. Scriptures indicate that many eminent philosophers viewed with analysis as to what treatment the values received at various periods of time. One common significant feature is that all these stipulations say only are thing and that is to respect the fellow being with love, compassion, and justice. There is no room for hatred. All human beings are capable of willing the good. Escape from the chain of rebirth, the ideal of Buddhism, is excellently brought out by the "Four Noble Truths", and the eight fold path which vehemently represent the morality. Looking at these in brief, the sayings are (a) that there is suffering (b) the suffering has a cause, here lies the most important ethical concept "Pratityasamutpada" (Dependent Origination), incorporating the twelve links, (i)Avidya, (2)samskara,(3)vijnana ,(4) nama -rupa,(5)



sadayatana,(6) sparsa, (7)vedana,(8) trshna, (9)upadana,(10) bhava,(11) jati and (12)janana – marana. (c) It can be eliminated or stopped and (d) There is a way to stop it, which leads into the eight fold path, (i) Right views, (ii)Right resolve (iii) Right speech (iv) Right conduct (v) Right livelihood (vi) Right effort (vii) Right mindedness and (viii) Right concentration.

Dhammapada and values

‘Dhamma’ refers to Buddha’s doctrine or righteousness and ‘pada’ means path. This is a method taught by Buddha for humanity to follow with a specific purpose of protecting human dignity in order to stay on the course of a righteous way. Dhammapada forms part of the Pali Budhist canon. Dhammapada consists of many chapters and the values such as earnestness, wise man, evil, punishment, happiness, pleasure, anger, and impurity, the list is by no means exhaustive, but the point is that these values when understood are the ones for applicability into practical way of life. Non- adherence only causes distorted life patterns and each pulling in their own way and destroying the fabric of the society. Indian philosophy repeatedly asserts that compliance to values is more or less mandatory and ignoring this is the main cause for our not experiencing proper understanding with resultant frictions fuelling revolts, civil wars and terrorism. A grip on the values steers us on the right track. Earnestness is the path of immortality (Nirvana). A wise man should leave the dark state (of ordinary life) and follow the bright state (of the Bhikshu). Some people are born again; evil-doers go to hell; righteous people go to heaven; those who are free from all worldly desires attain Nirvana. All men tremble at punishment, all men fear death; remember that you are like unto them, and do not kill, nor cause slaughter.

Key Buddhist Values

“Let a man overcome anger by love, let him overcome evil by good; let him overcome the greedy by liberality, the liar by truth! (Dhammapada. 223).

Arising from the world views and ideals of Buddhism; greed, hatred and delusion are the roots of unwholesome actions, and non-greed, non-hate and non-delusion are regarded as the roots of wholesome action. These are the central values of Buddhism. In addition to the above, faith, mindfulness, self-respect, are mental abilities which are contributory.

The most commonly observed set of precepts followed by people are five, as virtues, Panca –silam. (1) Abstain from onslaught on breathing beings (2) Abstain from taking what is not given (3) abstain from misconduct



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concerning sense pleasures (4) abstain from false speech and (5) abstain from alcoholic drink or drugs. Importance of inter-personal and social-relationship are a disciplinary measure.

Social Ethics

Buddhism greatly values social harmony and togetherness with the philosophy that good of self and others is intertwined. In a gradual manner, the intent now is to gently navigate into the area of discussion on values relevance to National Reconstruction. Buddhist doctrine talks of individual betterment and perfection on the one hand and the social good on the other, which are inter dependent. These reflections are very much noticed from the philosophical observations of many thinkers of ancient, medieval, modern and contemporary periods. Buddhist ethics emphatically iterate that everyone is a friend and others should be treated same. Nations look for growth and development and human capital is as important as any other resources. Self discipline and self reliance will reinforce social equality. Dogmatic vision on caste and Varna systems cause havoc and thus the feeling that certain people are superior to others is detrimental to the growth and progress. “Not by birth does one become a Brahmin. By (one’s) action one becomes an outcaste, by (one’s) action one becomes a Brahmin (Sn 136)” Buddha criticized the class and caste system.

Buddha indicated “Political ideals” such as holding assemblies, respect the elders and consider them worth listening to, and to protect ‘honor’ at all times.

National Reconstruction

The most significant model worth mentioning and with utmost universal acceptance is that of Mahatma Gandhi which can be utilized to telescope the thoughts into the attempt of this paper, in the sense Gandhi put into practice all these values such as truth, untouchability, non-violence, religious unity, self-reliance, freedom, welfare of all and self-restraint in his approach of constructive program. With specific reference to Nation’s progress, Gandhi’s work towards communal unity, advocating the use of khadi, development of village industries, village sanitation, women empowerment, adult education, importance of language, are noteworthy. Gandhi firmly believed that an open – ended developmental approach of humility, tolerance and mutual respect can deal with the root causes of disunity, conflict and misunderstanding. The emphasis here is that any development can take place only when the good value system prevails, and neglect means inability to accomplish. Individualism is more of a western value. Indian society has always focused more on paying ones debt to humanity and being responsible



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for a common identity upholding the value structure for peaceful co-existence, spirituality and economic prosperity. Today humanity is at the crossroads, on the one hand enjoying the material development with technology progress and on the other living with the threat of a nuclear war. Pollution is on the rise across the globe; poverty, malnutrition in large proportions is threatening the very survival of the human species.

Recommendations for Reconstruction

- 1) Youth should participate and elderly statesmen should encourage them
- 2) Youth should help rural masses in all possible areas.
- 3) If Buddhist values are followed, there is no place for corruption and this will eliminate frustration in the minds of youth.
- 4) Unity of Indian civilization will eliminate caste feelings, regionalism and ethnic problems.
- 5) To combat communalism, secularism has to create harmony of religions and enlightened humanism.
- 6) Tribal population should be protected from exploitation by the dominant groups.
- 7) Regional economies have to be protected by the governing agencies.
- 8) Rural improvement measures are to be undertaken to uplift their status.
- 9) Educational systems – should be for social needs with focus on ethical values.

Conclusion

Buddhist values help create mental clarity, and cultivate insight. Hatred anger and harming others become non-existent after virtues are practiced. Every human being should be treated with respect and equality. Values cannot be ignored or neglected. Whichever religion or path one follows, adherence to the morality is mandatory in order to carry out the reconstruction promises.

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