

Central Objectives of Buddhist Education

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Introduction

Education is useful in the forward march in quality development using personal and social experiences. Education is the process of remaking experience, giving it a more socialized value through increased individual experience, by giving the individual better control over his own powers. With reference to the Early Buddhism the Pali terms, *Sikkhā* (learning) / *Sikkhāpana* (teaching) / *Sikkhāpaka* (teacher), *Sikkhā* is derived from the verb *sikkhati* which means training, instructing, disciplining, cultivating, developing etc. The terms such as *ajjhāpana* / *ajjheta*, are derived from the root *adhi*, conveying the idea of directing the mind forwards observation and understanding.

The word “*Sikkhā*” that also refers to ‘good conduct or virtue’ and ‘disciplinary conduct’ is also included. ‘*Sikkhāpada*’ means rules for discipline. Discipline or virtues lay the foundation for the path leading to emancipation.

In the definition on education, the term “*Vinaya*” takes a prominent place. *Vinaya* means discipline, eradication of defilements. *Vinaya* is physical and mental discipline and the whole Buddhist education is included in *Vinaya*. The commentary (1929) explains *Vinaya* thus; “Since it provides various, special, rules for physical, verbal and mental discipline, they are called *Vinaya*.” It is clear that the term “*Vinaya*” means that it helps to end all the mental ills like lust, ignorance. According to this, it is obvious that Buddhist education is a way of gaining spiritual purity through the entire physical and mental discipline.

According to the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka* Upanisad, a celebrated Philosophical text of ancient India, Education means “Leading one from the unreal to the real. From darkness to the light and from death to immortality” (*asatomāsadgamaya, tamasomājyotirgamaya, mṛtyormāamṛtaṅgamaya*). The primary objective of Buddhist philosophy of education is the development of the individual and the development of the society. The development of the individual according to Buddhist education is the development of individual personality, wholesome

transformation of character. The individual's personality is of two aspects as inner character and behavioral character. Inner character is the development of mental qualities and mind and the behavioral character is the development of bodily and verbal actions.

Research Objectives

In other words, the aims of Buddhist education include the development of individual's mental actions, verbal actions and bodily actions for the welfare and happiness of oneself and others in the society, the protection and preservation of all resources, flora and fauna in the environment and the restoration and establishment of peaceful and harmonious existence in the society and the world.

In terms of education, three types of objectives can be taken into consideration.

1. Considering personal benefit more important
2. Considering social benefit more important
3. Considering both personal and social benefit equally important

The third among the above is very important with regard to the objectives of Buddhist education. The main objective of Buddhist education is to develop the individual and society. Society is made up of individuals. When individuals are developed, society is developed. The prime objective of Buddhist education is to develop individual's mental actions, verbal actions and bodily actions. The most important objective of Buddhist education is the development of mind.

Research problem

There are many teachings or doctrinal factors taught by the Buddha for disciples to have a widening knowledge on the Buddhist philosophy of education for the realization of everlasting freedom. Here, it will discuss that what are the central objectives of the Buddhist education?, for the fulfillment of above task.

Methodology

The method of this qualitative research is to do a literary survey with Buddhist canonical texts in order to find out the details about the central objective of Buddhist education. The research will be based on an analytical and critical methods that concern with concept of the Buddha's doctrine described in the Pāli canon. In this endeavor, the Pāli canon and some other translations will be traced as the main sources. However, during the process of research, the other books relating to the research will also be consulted. As a result, these two primary and secondary sources would generate a sizeable and valuable collection of the research which

provides the evidence for the study of the path leading to Enlightenment.

Results and Discussion

The aim of Buddhist Education is a personality transformation into a highest form of humanity through the ethical, intellectual and spiritual perfection. These three faculties of perfection of human life certainly lead a man through mundane happiness to supra- mundane happiness, the highest achievement.

The main objective of Buddhist Education is to attain wisdom. According to Buddhism, the main objective of the practice is to achieve the ultimate wisdom (*Anuttaro sammā-sambuddho*) which means perfect ultimate wisdom. It aims at regaining one's intrinsic nature, innate wisdom and perfect wisdom. With wisdom one can solve internal problems and external problems and turn with wisdom suffering into happiness. The other aims of Buddhist Education are to make a free man, wise, intellect, moral, nonviolent and secular man. The aims of Buddhist education can be achieved on the basis of three principles

(1) Discipline - Discipline is verbal and bodily restraint and development

(2) Meditation - meditation is mental development and

(3) Wisdom - wisdom is development of right view and right thought.

Discipline lays the foundation for meditation, meditation lays the foundation for wisdom and wisdom leads to realization, the ultimate goal of Buddhist education.

As well as there are major qualities that should be developed in individual

Saddhā – confidence / faith / conviction

Viriya – energy / exertion

Sīla – virtue / wholesome behaviour

Cāga – generosity / self-sacrifice

Sutā – learning / listening

Sammā-dīṭṭhi – Right view Sati – mindfulness / awareness / alertness

Samādhi – sustained attention or Concentration

Paññā – wisdom

A Buddhist is said to have faith if he believes in the Perfect One's (the Buddha's) Enlightenment or in the Three Jewels by taking his refuge in them. His

faith, however, should be reasoned and rooted in understanding and he is asked to investigate and test the object of his faith. A Buddhist's faith is not in conflict with the spirit of inquiry, and doubt about dubitable thing is admitted and inquiry into them is encouraged. Through wisdom and understanding, faith becomes an inner certainty and firm conviction based on one's own experience. Faith is called the seed of all wholesome states because, according to commentarial explanations, it inspires the mind with confidence and determination for launching out to cross the flood of samsara. Saddhā is the wise and factual conviction towards the qualities of the Noble Teacher, the Noble Teaching and the Noble Disciples. Saddhā (conviction) includes three aspects.

(1) Social aspect (whom to trust) – how to recognize good people, and why one should associate with them.

(2) Intellectual aspect (what to believe)

(3) Practical aspect (how to act as a result)

These three aspects of saddhā are inseparably intertwined because saddhā is focused on a course of action the skillful mastery of the processes of kamma in a social context. The social aspect comes from the need to associate with people who have already mastered these processes, learning from their words and following their actions. The intellectual aspect — belief in the principle of kamma — is necessary because the development of skillfulness within the mind requires that one understand the nature of kamma, take responsibility for one's actions, and have conviction in one's ability to benefit from developing one's skills. The practical aspect is necessary because if one does not follow the process and develop skill, it shows that one's *saddhā* in the development of skillfulness is not genuine, and that one is not fully benefiting from one's saddhā.

Significance of Conviction (*Saddhā*) for a lay person as shown in Saddhā Sutta exposes that a lay person endowed with saddhā

(1) Gets priority in receiving compassion from good people,

(2) He gets priority in being visited by good people,

(3) Good people gives him priority in receiving gifts from him,

(4) Good people teach him Dhamma with priority and

(5) A person of saddhā will be born in good destination

The Sikkhāpada Sutta elucidates that an individual who practices virtue (*sīla*) for his own benefit and for that of others (society) abstains from the taking of life and encourages others in undertaking abstinence from the taking of life.

This is the same with stealing, sexual misconduct, lying and taking intoxicants. In the Mahāvaccagotta Sutta, the Buddha shows wholesome behavior as abstention from,

- (1) Killing living beings - (social wellbeing)
- (2) Taking what is not given - (economic wellbeing)
- (3) Misconduct in sensual pleasures - (family and social wellbeing)
- (4) False speech (falsehood/lies) - (social wellbeing)
- (5) Malicious speech (slandorous / insulting speech) - (social wellbeing)
- (6) Harsh speech (unkind/ fierce / cruel words) - (social wellbeing)
- (7) Gossip (frivolous / idle / trivial talk) - (social wellbeing)

The first three are included in Right Action (*sammākamanta*) and the last four are in Right Speech (*sammāvācā*) of the Virtue Section (Sīla) of the Noble Eightfold Path. Noble Eightfold Path is the practical path for fulfilling all the objectives and aims of the entire Buddhist philosophy of education. Ethical, physical and mental wellbeing of both individual and the society is safeguarded by practicing all the above moral rules. This is a basic objective of Buddhist education.

Conclusion

According to the Path of Purification (Visuddhimagga), the following five benefits that can be gained through the observance of the precepts fulfil aims of Buddhist education in worldly context.

- (i) Great increase of wealth and prosperity through diligence (economic wellbeing)
- (ii) Noble reputation (personal and social wellbeing)
- (iii) Confident behavior without shyness in every society (personal and social wellbeing)
- (iv) Serene death after a full life-span (spiritual wellbeing)
- (v) Re-birth in a happy state or in a heavenly world. (Future wellbeing)

As mentioned above in the Sikkhāpada Sutta an individual is to practice virtue (sīla) for his own benefit and for that of others society. The absence of these two aspects is a failure to achieve the basic aims of Buddhist education.

The application of the five precepts in their actual sense and purpose leads

to develop individual life, family life, social life as well as educational, economic, professional, political, environmental, cultural and religious life. The final aim of Buddhist education is learning and treading the path that leads to the total freedom from all types of mental ills.

Keywords - Buddhism, Education, Individual Development, Worldly Life, Spirituality

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