

## Research Paper

**Value Education contained in Buddhism in the Ancient India****Prof.Subhash Randhir**Head, Dept. of English,  
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A.Nagar.Maharashtra (India).**ABSTRACT**

In India today, the phrase 'value education' is on the anvil in the field of education— from primary level to the university level. The deluge of knowledge with the scientific progress of information technology has knowingly/unknowingly sidelined morality and humanity. It is found that man, over some last decades, notwithstanding a rational animal, has become so cruel and careless towards his fellowman and the nature which indicates the imminent destruction of the universe.

Though the entire domain of education in India is anxious to teach, through syllabuses, to shape minds with value education, it is not a novel idea for the Indians to learn. Once upon a time, it was in the Buddhist and in the post-Buddhist period for long time, the impact of Buddhist values had shaped the minds of the Indians. Lord Buddha has been the pillar of the light of wisdom for the entire world. It has been enforced in India; time to time up till now.

I It is rather difficult to trace out the beginning of the cultural history of mankind but, it is evidently clear that education, one of the important attributes of human culture, has been continuously keeping pace with the ethos of human culture in the long course of time. The basic purpose of education is to make man know about his surrounding and become more and more humane-- rational towards the activities in nature and rational towards his fellowmen. In fact, the rationale of man makes two kinds of manifestation— one can rouse his 'me' that is ego which treats others badly, denying their existence as human being and also makes man careless about the natural resources in the universe and the another is-- man can develop, in himself, the sense of fellow-feeling, liberty, equality, kindness towards all living beings, tolerance, friendly- nature, cooperation towards his fellowmen and sense of maintaining ecological balance.

However, merely getting known about the surrounding, analyzing the facts or accelerate power into machine or the gadgets manufactured with information-technology to ensure luxurious life of man, is not the significance of education. Education is supposed for emanating wisdom and to uphold human values for dignity of every person. It must teach, agitate and encourage man to sustain the sense regarding others as living human beings who have their natural rights and they must get full opportunity to enjoy all the natural rights. Different countries have made and followed their own educational systems down the ages. It is found today that the entire world is keen on the point of making education liberal and humanity-oriented. It is perhaps because of man has become aware of his dignity and different movements are launched to uphold human dignity everywhere in the world. The programmes undertaken by UN for promoting the

human rights, social justice and peaceful co-existence at the global level and the core point -- 'how to save the earth?'-- of international conferences, seminars, meets, summits have become an integral part of the syllabuses in schools, colleges, institutes and universities all over the world. Ironically, the leading countries, in the world today, are found to have been busy in preparing N- bombs and supporting to the means leading to destruction of the earth. Even some poor and backward countries which even cannot afford two squares of meals, education, health and standard living for their citizens, feel nuclear bomb as their most urgent need. They also inculcate in students, through syllabuses, the animosity against neighbouring countries. Their syllabuses are designed to teach the distorted history and breed racial, sectarian and regional hatred which manifests the fascist attitude that had once pushed the whole world into the cruel jaw of world-war and caused the gruesome tragedy of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. The progressive occidental countries often put blame on the countries like India, for delaying in signing some global pacts or being little careless about the ecological awareness.

## II

It is necessary for the world to delve the history and find that India, in the ancient time, had been the only country that upheld the wisdom through education. Lord Gautam Buddha (563- 483 B. C.) upheld human values and showed man the path i.e. way of virtuous life to achieve the zenith of rationale. From the time of his first discourse to the five Parivrajakas in the deer park at Sarnath to the time of his death, the Buddha went on initiating and admitting into his Sangh; all the members of the society from Brahmins to Sudra. His Sangh was an ideal model of society devoid of castes or inequality of any sort. While talking to Lohikka, the Buddha deliberated public education (even for women) for the well- being of society. Here, I press the point of women because, in the traditional varna-system in India, the plight of the Sudras was bad, and it was worse of women. A woman was considered as the subordinate sex, she was the true Sudra irrespective of her class --- whether she was a Brahmin or a Sudra --- in the ancient times or in the modern times. A woman has been the true sufferer. The Buddha freely threw open the doors of his Sangh for women so as to bring them at

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the equal level with men. Mahaprajapati, Khema, Utpalvarna, Patachara, Dharmadirna, Nanda, Shona, Sakula, Bhadra Kundalkesha, Kapilani, Kachchana, Gotami, Sikalmata, Sujata, Vishakha, Uttara, Samvati, Supravasa, Katyayani, Kali and others helped in the Buddhist ecclesiastical work. They also contributed to Buddhist literature. Women composed the 'Therigatha' in Vinaypitaka. (Sutta Pitaka Angutlar Nikaya). It is also an important achievement that the Buddha granted to women the right to the monastic life and founded an order of nuns. The discourses of the Buddha and the practice of his bhikkus in throng, place to place disseminated knowledge with the values like -- liberty, equality, fraternity, love, non-violence, peace aiming at the ideal society for the existence of mankind.

The Buddha cultivated the minds of people with his example of tolerance. Simha Senapati, a Jain king expressed his wish to become member of the Buddha's order. The Buddha allowed him to become the member of the sangh, but also insisted him to continue the financial assistance to the Jain order. Buddha also taught about the ecological balance where no source of nature should be destroyed; it can be utilized wisely for the human needs. The traditional Vedic religion had the rituals like yajnyas for invoking rains, alter the course of nature or get son issue with the sacrifices of so many useful things and the livestock. Buddha, at the palace of the king Pasenjit or at the place of Kutdanta Brahmin, appealed to stop the destruction of the useful things and killing of animals. He suggested using oil, sugar and honey instead of the livestock and useful things in the sacrificial fire. The sacrifice was out of the tears and reluctance of the servants, who had been forced to take the animals to the sacrificial fire. The society, in the light of the Buddha—at his time and for many centuries in the aftermath -- was an ideal society under the rule of the Mauryas. Ashoka, one of the Maurya kings, happens to be the most important figure giving turn to the Indian history and making confirmation of the Buddhism in India and the entire oriental part of the world by setting in motion the wheel of Dhamma after the Buddha. He embraced Buddhism even in the high tide of his victory in the war of Kalinga. Besides the many other acts of social well-fare, he propagated the importance of education. Available records show that Ashoka took interest in the vernacular educational accomplishments. He gave up war and undertook different 'army' in the yellow robes of Bhikkus for the cultivation of human minds. He established the world famous universities—Nalanda, Mathura, Takshila and Ujjain -- in those days. The education, imparted in these universities, was to make man wise in true sense of term. Ashoka looks to have undertaken the major programmes like the preservation of herbal plants, nurturing of the animals and transformation of human mind from the evil tendency. It is found in the modern world today that almost all the nations have prescribed in their legal systems the preservation of the flora and fauna so as to keep ecological balance. Hunting was prohibited in jungle and slaying of any animals, even in the royal kitchen, was strictly prohibited. Hospitals for men and animals were opened and kept freely open, round the clock. Prisoners, punished for life, were given respite of some days so as to let them think and retreat. Though capital punishment was not totally abolished, prisoners had been given chance to improve their lives. It was gesture of believing in human being and making their lives endurable. In his time, Ashoka set the true example of democracy, the truly best and pure political system for mankind. He made his officers to be in touch with the masses

for any of their favours at any point of time. He himself allowed people to see him at any time or place even though he was at his dining or in the garden for relax. He tried to bring the tribal people in the main stream of life of the society. He treated them equal with other people. If they were found guilty, for their daily maintenance, they were forgiven and special counseling meetings were arranged for them.

Ashoka's edicts are famous in the world, they were specially made for the officers, and he had conquered them in the Kalinga war. The edicts were purposefully placed in the conspicuous places for all the people to read. The edicts are applicable to world today. Ashoka had made the society making manifestation of the ideal life for purity, honesty, and mercy for man and animals. Ashoka being a Buddhist, deliberated virtuous life—honour for parents, teachers and elderly persons. Every individual should have high moral attitude in the social and private life. The principle of tolerance looks to have been one of the gems of Buddhism. Ashoka upheld and practiced it.

### III

Time changes, things change but mankind and its values need to be continued and reformed for the comfortable and harmoniously peaceful existence of human society. Education has to play its role effectively in the changing times. Higher education, as it has been assumed, 'the pursuit of knowledge after the secondary education'—that assumes inculcation of values like scientific attitude, secularism, humanism, pluralism, tolerance and global peace. All trends of philosophies for mankind fall short but, Buddhism has been and will always be the sufficient guideline for the existence of mankind at all the times. In the modern times religion, traditional faiths, irrational practices, exploitation of mankind by all means have been discarded. Almost all the new-born nations after the Second World War, have adopted secular constitutions and the old ones have been innovating their laws to keep pace with the changing times, holding human dignity as their main programmes. Dr. B. R. Ambedkar, an erudite, a liberal humanist thinker and the champion of human rights, once again set in motion the wheel of the Dhamma on 14th October 1956. He, as the chief architect of the constitution of India, formed the constitution as the replica of the Buddha's Dhamma. It has enshrined human rights and the directives for the human progress purely based on rational attitude. It directs the citizens of the country to develop scientific temper, foster secular outlook, keep view of the ecological balance and it also ensures self-respect and dignity of every citizen of the country. In the trouble-torn world today with all the man-made problems out of the bad side of the human rationale, Buddhism only can guide the world; it has already been accepted in India by law. The higher education in India has merely to follow the laws and eschew irrational attitude transmitted from one generation to another. The education in India should train the minds of the students to preserve the natural resources, curb degree of the pollution of all sorts under the name of the gods and festivals. Education should prepare youths to abolish the social evils like casteism, segregation, untouchability, sati practice and superstitions with rational attitude. The fascist tendencies work everywhere in the world; the manifestations of these tendencies in India are the govt. sponsored pogrommes, spreading of hatred against other sects, encouraging superstitions, admiring the events of sati practice and suppressing liberal thoughts. Buddhism is the treasury of human values; they can create the true human

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society with harmony that is aim of human life.

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**Notes**

Varna – In the Indo-Aryan social system, there were four sections of the society.

Brahmin—Hindu priest Bhikku— Members of the Buddha's Sangh. Bodhisatva—the stage before the Buddha. Dhamma—Doctrine of the Buddha.

Sati---- a woman's self immolation on the pyre of her husband. Yajna --- sacrifice

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