

Buddhacarita: the life of the buddha

Business



At the time of the Buddha, the primarily rural areas of India were transforming into urban centers. Powerful rulers began to conquer villages where democracy prevailed. Such small democratic consolidations were called sanghas; later on, the term would become an essential of Buddhism. Many citizens of sanghas began to apprehend themselves as individuals; they developed a great number of theories and teachings concerning this issue.

These theories were popularized throughout India by shramanas, vagrant philosophers. Some of these teachings were extremely religious; others were atheistic. Therefore, the Buddha, who appeared in the core of these different philosophies, was not only a religious leader. He had to find a golden grain of truth in all these philosophical teachings. The Buddha believed that birth means life. The result of birth is “existence,” so a desire for existence results in becoming alive.

This desire is related to the human nature and physical body, which are conditioned by understanding and thinking. Hence, mind and thinking control the desire for life; consequently, they control death. Young prince asserted, “... but remembering that the world is transitory, my mind cannot find pleasure in them. Old age, disease, and death — if these three things did not exist...” (A%u015Bvagho%u1E63a 52). It became a basis of the Buddha’s concept of dukkha, translated as “suffering” that is reflected in the Four Noble Truths. The Buddha has shaped the philosophy of Buddhism based on his personal experience and reflections.

The paper studies The Buddhacarita as the primary source of the Buddhism teaching and tries to find interrelation between the doctrine and the life events of its founder. According to The Buddha-Carita written by A %u015Bvagho%u1E63a, Buddha was a prince from a royal family who lived in the north of India, and his real name was Siddhartha Gautama. The story says that, at the boy's birth, the holy men came to the palace and foretold that the prince would be either a prominent king or a well-known holy man. Siddhartha's father, the King, was not going to allow his son becoming a holy man, so he kept the young prince in the palace and was satisfying all Siddhartha's needs and desires. In a few years, the boy got married and gave birth to a son.

Nevertheless, after Siddhartha had discovered the four things that became the prime focus of his life, his destiny was decided. Among four men that managed to change his life drastically was a poor one, a sick one, a dead one, and a holy one; these four aspects of life became the basis of the Buddha's teaching. Siddhartha considered that only the holy man was purely happy, so prince renounced his title and status to become a walk this path. The prince responded to the men, who had tried to reason him, " But I am fearful and exceedingly bewildered, as I ponder the terrors of old age, death, and disease; I can find no peace, no self-command, much less can I find pleasure..." (A%u015Bvagho%u1E63a 54). Siddhartha followed the philosophies of many holy teachers.

The prince refused all the desires of his body; he ate one grain of rice per day. Ultimately, Siddhartha understood that asceticism and offering sacrifices were against the right path, it just made him suffer pointlessly. He <https://assignbuster.com/buddhacarita-the-life-of-the-buddha/>

suggested a middle way between religious devotion and ordinary life, a doctrine that could be acceptable for anyone. Therefore, the Buddha began feeding without strict restriction; however, he continued seeking for further excellent tranquility (A%u015Bvagho%u1E63a 118). In a deer park, Siddhartha became an “awakened one”; he was sitting at the holy Bodhi Tree and could not move until he explored the existence to his ultimate satisfaction. After he had subdued the demon, Mara, his trance became profound, and he remembered his past lives.

He saw thousands of his births and deaths, as well as all his living forms, which had compassion in his heart. Nowadays, the day when Siddhartha had received his extraordinary experience, is considered as the most significant date for all Buddhists. Since that day, the prince received the new title – the Buddha. Even today, Buddhists call the person who has achieved enlightenment as a Buddha. Only by reaching enlightenment, Siddhartha was able to comprehend and explain a fundamental plan that would allow humanity understand the sense of life, birth and death, as well as the delusion of these stages.

A%u015Bvagho%u1E63a describes the scene when the Buddha awakened, “As he sat, his aim accomplished by his rejection of sin ... for the good of the world” (170). The Buddha’s major concern was the point that life includes suffering. He believed that suffering is in everything and everybody. The fundamental doctrine of Buddhism, the Four Noble Truths, is centered around the philosophy of suffering. The First Truth is the truth of suffering; the Second Truth is the truth of the cause of suffering; the Third Truth is the truth of the cessation of suffering.

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Finally, the Fourth Truth is the truth of the path that leads to the cessation of suffering. Every text and teaching of Buddhism is saturated by the notion of “ suffering.” However, the meaning that Buddhism inserts into a term “ suffering” is much deeper than its usual vocabulary meaning; the word means “ a change” or “ ultimate dissatisfaction.” The basis of the First Noble Truth is that living means suffering; everyone on the Earth suffers from illnesses, pain, injury, and aging. In general, life is incomplete and imperfect; death is inevitable; hence, the world is an object of impermanence.

The impermanence means suffering. People are not able to keep desirable things or be happy permanently, moments of pleasure and beloved people will pass by; therefore, life is suffering. The origin of suffering is an attachment to the transient objects, and it is the Second Noble Truth. These transient objects include physical objects, ideas, and feelings. Desire, love, hate, vanity, ambitions, and pride are causes of suffering.

The attainable cessation of suffering is the Third Noble Truth; it represents the idea that suffering can be ended by achieving inner peace and alienation from all kinds of attachment. Achieving and perfecting serenity and tranquility is a multilayered process that finally leads to Nirvana. Nirvana is a state of absolute liberty from negative feelings, anxiety, and problems. The path of cessation of suffering is the Fourth Noble Truth. It is the golden mean between the two different poles of human self-expression: hedonism, which is an absolute self-indulgence, and asceticism, which is an excessive self-mortification. Cessation of suffering stops the cycle of rebirth (A [%u015Bvagho%u1E63a 130-135](#)).

Enlightenment can also be achieved by following the Eightfold path that consists of eight steps of proper acting and thinking. The first step is a right seeing or understanding: it includes ensuring that things are seen clearly, maintaining things in the prospect of rebirth, and considering the impact of actions on karma. The Buddha teaches people to think and reflect about their anger. Often, there is no reason for being angry or frustrated. The second step is a right speaking: people should be sincere and truthful. The third step is a right action: people must act in a right way.

The Buddha expected that people would care about their better existence and strive for knowledge of how to make their lives meaningful. The fifth step is a right livelihood: people should do the work they love. The sixth step is a right effort: everyone should act in the best possible way developing honest and kind thoughts. The seventh step is a right mindfulness: the Buddha hoped that people would think comprehensively about the world. The eighth step is a right concentration: it is crucial to sit in silence, to achieve serenity and tranquility and think about the Buddha's teachings.

This sitting in calmness is called meditation, and it is an essential part of the Buddhism religious rituals (A%u015Bvagho%u1E63a 152-155). The path of enlightenment and Four Noble Truths teach people to overcome human nature and achieve the deep meditation. For example, basic human instincts, such as fear, hunger, and temptation, can be overcome by strong will, pure intentions, and high goals. However, self-doubts and low self-esteem are the hardest feelings to overcome. Those, who do not love and trust themselves, cannot love and trust others. Ability to love and trust is vital in Buddhism.

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Ignoring desires and avoiding temptation provides a clear and pure mind for meditation. People can apprehend themselves and understand the sense of being through meditation. In conclusion, the Buddha has built his teaching on his personal experience. Events from his life became a basis for the future doctrine of Buddhism. The idea of the Four Noble Truths, enlightenment and the Eightfold path appeared as a result of the founder's life events and philosophy.