



The Relevance Of Buddha Dharma Darśana In The Modern Age In The View Of Buddhism

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Abstract:

Buddha dharma darśana has its origin in opposing animal sacrifice, the performance of several rites and rituals to attain heaven and divinity. To find peace in life one needs the right path, where Buddha spoke of the eightfold path. The talk of divinity, even if is found to have been accommodated in a certain sphere, it is never at the cost of human welfare on the socio-empiric front. There is a religious prescription not only for the sacrifice of animals and a considerable amount of eatables but also for man-child to attain spiritual excellence. Not only the rigidity of jātivāda (casteism) is rationally unacceptable but, at the practical level, the suggestion of class rigidity is found to be most unworkable and immoral, causing serious damage to social cohesion and solidarity. Buddha is undoubted, critical of this irrational move. From this point of view, the philosophy of Buddha seems to be the logical culmination of the underdeveloped rather inarticulate philosophical position.

Keywords: Buddha dharma darśana, the relevance of Buddha philosophy, ethics, the role of Buddha darśana in the modern age

Introduction:

To find peace in life one needs the right path, where Buddha spoke of the eightfold path. What I want to show in the paper is how to live a life of peace and joy and gradually become non-violent. In India, where there is the origin and growth of at least three major religions of the world, viz; Hinduism, Jainism and Buddhism, there is the presentation of a different account conspicuously. But Buddhism is avowedly non-theistic. There is no scope for any creator God. The import is distinctly social rather than trans-social. The talk of divinity, even if is found to have been accommodated in a certain sphere, it is never at the cost of human welfare on the socio-empiric front. In China, “Taoism and Confucianism warrant numerous of the rudiments, common to other persuasions of the world”. While Taoism is taken as “the way” or “the way of nature” and is frequently described as a gospel of nature, Confucianism is more concerned about one “indifferent social order” than with belief in gods, practice for rituals and deification, etc., which are rated(there) as secondary. In modern times, the term ‘religion’ is also applied, in certain circles, to Marxism even though Marx held religion as “the opiate of the people”. Sometimes Freudianism is too designated as a type of religion. According to Freud, religion originated from Oedipus's complex of sub-conscious hatred of the son towards his father. Both these approaches are found to be the outcome of the wish-fulfilment theory, held by L. Feuerbach.

Instead of going to the details of other religious formulations, for our present purpose, this is sufficient to note that the term ‘religion’, when applied to different Asian religions, mainly emanating from India and China and also to the typical modern developments as indicated before is done in an extensive sense, transgressing the original established Semitic version of religion as theistic bound.

Buddha dharma darśana: Buddha dharma darśana, has its origin in opposing animal sacrifice, the performance of several rites and rituals to attain heaven and divinity. It never goes for blind acceptance of any scriptural text/ source as Holy or sacred. In this way, the Buddhist concept of Bodhisattva seems to have been directed towards intellectual enlightenment and not for any mystic/esoteric trans-mundane divine existence. Buddha's message thus is found to have distinct down-to-earth ethical and moral bearing than clinging towards any form of theologian, i.e. monotheism or polytheism.

Quite often it is advanced that Buddha was opposed to the scriptural authority of the Vedas. But it is not spelt out in that context the precise sense in which Buddha departed from the Vedic tradition. It is of course, evident that Buddha did not favour any blind, unconditional supra-rational authoritativeness of any source, be it Vedic or non-Vedic. Even the views that he expressed before his followers were never meant to be accepted without being tested on the canons of reason. The very saying: *ātmadīpa bhavaḥ* (be the lamp to yourself) is insightful in the sense one is to enlighten himself. There is no clear documentary evidence found in the Buddhist source in which there is the wholesale condemnation of the Vedas. It is therefore acknowledged by scholars that Buddhism began in India in the sixth Century BCE as another interpretation of Hinduism. Some of the theories, doctrines and concepts advanced in Buddhist sources are noticed in Vedic sources as well. For instance, the theory of world no eternality (*saṃsāra anityatā*), the doctrine of karma and non-violence and the concept of suffering can be considered Buddha's emphasis on reasoning (*hetu-buddhi*) and experience (*anubhava*) are also found acceptable in the Vedic source. In this context, later emphasized demarcation Between śruti(as vākyaṛtha vicāraṇa- Śāṅkara or vākyaṛtha jñāna vācaspati) and aitiḥya (traditional hearsay) is quite significant. Even in the *Anguttara nikāya*, there is a clear reference that Buddha declares Himself to be categorised as a Brahmin if it stands for a balanced and composed frame of mind, free from hatred, anger and jealousy. This shows that the broad classification of human society into four *varṇas* (class) as four equal pillars of human society for its sustenance is not seriously opposed by Buddha. Only the rigid imposition of social gradation of High and low to the four *varṇas* in terms of birth (*jāti*) and the presentation of each class as

most inflexible, inviolate and non-transferable is rightly set aside in the Buddhist framework. And interestingly that is also noticed to have been favoured by people accepting the Vedic tradition during the period of epics and thereafter.

Role of other darśana: Not only the rigidity of jātivāda (casteism) is rationally unacceptable but, at the practical level, the suggestion of class rigidity is found to be most unworkable and immoral, causing serious damage to social cohesion and solidarity. Buddha is undoubted, critical of this irrational move. But for all that it need not suggest that Buddha is opposed to the entire Vedas. No Vedāntin even accepts the Vedic utterances as such irrefutable and irrefragable. There is always scope for choice and selection. The Pūrva /Uttar mīmāṃsakas only take up such passages that suit their respective purpose and relegate other portions either to the periphery or to nullity. The emphasis on karmic rites and rituals to attain heaven (svarga) is set aside by the Advaita vedāntin, like Śaṅkara and his view of brahman as nirguṇa (Brahman is non-qualified) is disapproved by Ramanuja, as he is keen on viewing Brahman as saṅguṇa (qualitative) to accommodate the vaiṣṇavite concept of Īśvara within the Vedic fold.

Thus it seems evident that different religious philosophical trends that are formulated either within the Vedic or the non – Vedic fold are found to be that dogmatically scriptures depend or independent. In Buddhism, it can be marked, there is no absolute unconditional reliance bestowed upon the sayings of Buddha. Neither ever Buddha seems to have demanded nor expected that. Rather what he seems to have indicated is to keep oneself Free and open-minded to follow that which is prone both to reason and practice. He is not seen to be sticking to certain religious dogma and there is no attempt to rationalize the belief by way of advancing pseudo-reasoning, as is noticed in the case of some thinkers, prejudiced with personal religious affinity.

Relevance of Buddha darśana in the modern age: In that way, it can be noticed that Buddha has not preached any religion based on which one is to abide by certain fixed, unaltered dogmas and taboos. The logical foundation of Buddhism (Buddha dharma) at least in one of its (originally framed) dominant trends can be viewed as something startling. That can be termed as a sound representative of a different mode of thinking altogether. Neither there is any evidential source to the effect that Buddha declared himself as God or son of God or as a prophet of God, nor the original Buddhist sources like the Tipitaka depict Buddha as a theistic Lord, to be worshipped, prayed and to whom one is to completely surrenders to attain the highest beatitudes. The deification of Buddha found in some later works, mostly belonging to tantrayāna (and even admitting several devas and devis) attracted some adherents after several centuries of Buddha's disapproval of such moves. Tantric Buddhism was never found to be the major Current within the general Buddhist fold and it did not thrive in the major part of the Buddhist world on account of its inherent inconsistency with its principal tenet and also due to lack of popular appeal at the common social front.

The Process of deification of Buddha has also been noticed in the dominant Vaisnavite tradition, especially in eastern India (during the later period, commencing since 800 CE) and Buddha is adored and accepted as one of the avatars (incarnation) of the Supreme Lord by Sri Jayadeva of Gita Gobinda fame. But wherever strong emotional cum devotional appeal might have been attained utilizing such a twist of Buddhist trend in a certain circle, it is not found to be coherently fitted to the original Buddhist stand and the Buddhists in their later works have never accepted this move of treading Buddha as one Avatara. It is interesting to note in this context that number of archaeological sites have been discovered in some parts of the country where several sculptures present Buddha's image in central position and images of other Vedic devas and devis as Buddha's follower's attendants and so on. Of course, this feature does not substantiate any logical force in the theoretical plane to accommodate theism within the Buddhist fold. And in addition, such as reference provides scope for mutual hostility between Buddhism and Hinduism on the Religion-theological front.

As stated earlier Buddha's dharma has been on a non-spiritualistic foundation insofar as it distinctly avoids the acceptance of any soul/spirit. The view that spirit is ultimately the real essence and immortal sustentative entity, is overtly refuted and the view of inessentiality (Niḥsvabhāvata) is implied in the theory of Anātmavāda (the doctrine of no-self). In this way, there is no scope for the metaphysics of spiritualism in the logical Foundation of Buddhism. In this regard, Buddha's silence for the metaphysical queries is a definite move for the non-speculative enterprise. Buddha's messages are more plausibly directed towards practical issues than to make fruitless surmises about transcendence. From this point of view, the philosophy of Buddha seems to be the logical culmination of the underdeveloped rather inarticulate philosophical position of the earlier Ajivakas like Sañjaya Belaṭṭhiputta who remained hesitant to give either a positive or a negative response to the query, whether there is another world, whether man continues or does not continue beyond death. It is not that because no definite answer is available to meet the question and as such the attitude of indifference is advanced but because the question per se is so formulated that it cannot ever be answered without putting oneself into logical difficulty.

As a matter of fact, Buddha Dharma darśana, instead of advocating either spiritualism or materialism has placed itself in the positive set-up and attempts to offer the pragmatic solution of causal efficiency about various human issues at the practical front (Arthakriyākāritva). Without making any theological conjectures, Buddhist message is directed to face challenges in life from a socio-human ethical point of view. It is predominantly of ethical import and it does not necessarily have any theological implications. Dharma, from a moral angle, has its clear explicitness in Buddhism. In this way, the doctrine of karma, carrying moral import, has its placement within the total Buddhist framework without the admittance of a trans empirical spiritual substance (Atmā). The moral sense is distinctly comprehended in Buddha's positive approach towards eliminating caste discrimination in terms of higher lower gradation theology based dogmas and superstitions and last but not the least, repudiation of personal /individual Salvation or liberation. Here the importance given to Sangha (order) needs to be noted.

Different religions have tried to evolve different notions of truth and reality in their respective religious framework which is other than the usual common notion of factual truth and real as noticed in the sense of actual occurrence. God for instance is claimed to be real and the assertion god exists is claimed to be true. The sense of reality and truth in such claims is quite considerably different from the sense, commonly attributed to these two concepts in the usual parlance. But despite all this a point from strong common sense, as well as the general logical stand, is relevant and that is to enquire about the precise sense of truth and reality used in religious language and further that sense is the common use found acceptable to all religious framework. Unless this point is clearly deciphered and well pinpointed the move for putting different religions on one single common foundation seems to be not that compelling.

All these different formulations and changes reveal that like other world religions, Buddhism also has undergone several modifications in its tradition, adhering to the needs and demands of the situations. Certain forms of theologian and occultism have also been included. But, even then, the major objectives of getting rid of sorrow and sufferings with the aspiration for universal human happiness and prosperity have never been ignored. A significant move, in this direction, is now noticed in the case of the present Dalai Lama.

In the recent past, in an interview Dalai Lama has boldly declared that the usual Buddhist religious practice is no longer tenable. Even being a representative Buddhist monk of the highest order and of international fame (Nobel Laureate), he has pronounced firmly about his view on morality and ethics as secular and universal (sharply differing from the sacerdotal and theological version). It is almost true that no non-Tibetan Buddhist accepts him as his spiritual leader. Despite that, he has the illimitable frankness to go away from religio-theological conservatism, fundamentalism, and radicalism. While the general view of the religionist is that morality flows from religion, Dalai Lama holds that morality is secular, because it is a core of ethics.

A point here needs to be clarified. What is about Dalai Lama's own position? Is he not a great religious spiritual leader of Buddhism? Has he relinquished it? How can he remain as a spiritual leader and at the same time plead for secular morality? Is the move for rejection of Buddhism religious practice and acceptance of secular morality consistent with spiritual leadership? It seems that Dalai Lama moves on for retaining spiritual leadership along with developing a critical outlook towards religious practices. This implies that he goes for reform and meaningful change in Buddhism. He never, unlike leaders of religions (inclusive of Buddhism) supports a static view of Buddhism. To him, Buddhism (or any religion for that matter) must be liberal, flexible and open-textured. Instead of a static form of fundamentalism, he opts for change for the sake of giving due regard to social dynamics. In other words, spiritual needs are required to be reviewed in terms of human welfare within the social framework and not outside that. It must be open for free morality and not for closed one which is bound by some sacerdotal restrictions. In that way, to Dalai Lama, it seems that true spiritualism needs to be interpreted in terms of a secular outlook. He concedes that some religious leaders continue to have a narrow and rigid view of religious spiritualism, resulting thereby a very closed and impractical view of morality that becomes responsible for creating social dissension, disharmony and consequently endangerment of human peace.

Theravāda Buddhism is mainly now located in Sri Lanka, Myanmar and South East Asian countries. According to it, man must work out his own enlightenment without any extraneous source including gods. But some of its followers hold that Buddha was actually a divine, omniscient and sinless being who lived many lives before he become Gautama and that another Buddha is waiting now to be born and reincarnated.

Mahāyāna Buddhism is quite flexible in accommodation changes. Several types of religious sects gradually have come to exist in many Asian countries, being tuned with the localized beliefs, customs and traditions. The prominent among those are the pure land sect (Ching-t'u, Jodo), the intuitive sect (Ch'an Zen), the rationalist sect (Tien-t'ai, Tendai), the socio-political sect (Nichiren) and the Tibetan Buddhism. All these sects, besides other minor ones, are found in China, Japan and Korea. In all these different Buddhism sects, Buddha is not simply identified with Goutama but the deification of Buddha has been incorporated in various forms, based on local/regional needs. In China, Buddha is known as O-mi-to and in Japan, he is called Amida. In Japan, the term Zen stands for *dhyanā* or meditation in general. The intuitive sect gives more emphasis on the distrust of reason while the rationalist sect pays more attention to reason. The rationalist sect is introduced to Japan and is known as Tendai.

Tibetan Buddhism has given more prominence to magic, keeping in tune with its native religion known as Bon. Consequently, it has given rise to Tantric Buddhism. It has a distinctive feature of giving importance to clearly or the lamas. In course of time, Tibetan Buddhism has been divided into two main types: one is the Red Hat group depending upon the book (Bardo Thodal, i.e. The Book of the Dead) and the other is the Yellow Hat group (known as accepting Dalai Lama) regards him as the superior one having the vastness and depth like that of "the sea".

Conclusion:

Therefore needs to be socially bent and global in its outlook not simply limited to a closed fanatic group or community. In that way, religion and social change can go together and a secular morality can be spiritual in the human sense of the term, setting aside transcendentalism. This approach requires elucidation and exploration. In that way, Buddhism is simply to be acknowledged as a major religion (which it, of course, is) since antiquity, it would also be relevant in present-day social setup, without damaging its core philosophical message to humanity.

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