

## **BUDDHISM: PATH TO NIRVANA**

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### **ABSTRACT**

*Buddhism: Path to Nirvana explores the teaching of Buddhism from the perspective of a perennial philosophy that links all yearning for truth through a common foundation. Gautam Buddha is widely known for his sincere quest for the truth, persistent endeavour, moral earnestness, spiritual insight and finally his compassionate resolve. Buddha reflected after enlightenment that this Dharma won by me is deep, difficult to see and comprehend, excellent, beyond reason and comprehensible only by wise, not understood by people immersed in the darkness of ignorance, attachment and hatred. It would be like going against the current Buddhism occupy the central position in Indian philosophy Bharamincal and Jains system grow under the direct stimulus of Buddhism. Buddha avoided two extremes (sensual pleasure and other in to subject oneself to austerities and self mortification) and following the middle path under proper guidance leads to inner tranquility and full enlightenment. Buddha provided us noble eight-fold path to lead a purposeful life. So He taught us a practical path of Nirvana which extinguish the illusionary flame of our self or ego so that we too became enlightened.*

*Keywords – Nirvana, Enlightenment, Quest, Eternal Path*

### **Introduction**

Among all living beings only human beings are endowed with the faculty of reasoning and discrimination. Therefore, we have natural inclination to know about ourselves, unravel the mystery of world and realize the objective of human life. Gautama, the Buddha is certainly one of the greatest masters to ever appear in this world. He is widely known for his sincere quest for the truth, persistent endeavours, moral earnest, spiritual insight and finally his compassionate resolve, after his enlightenment to preach and propagate his teaching for the good and happiness of many. The Buddha established his Dharma (teachings) more than two thousand five hundred years ago but his thoughts and deeds are still alive and vibrant today in minds and hearts of a multitude of his devoted followers.

Buddhism profoundly influenced the philosophy and religion of India for over a thousand years. It adopted the method of critical analysis (Vibhajyavada) from the very outset. Buddhism occupies the central position in Indian philosophy. Brahmanical and Jaina systems grew under the direct stimulus of Buddhism. The Buddha preached and proclaimed the Dharma the spiritual path, which he said in eternal, “It is by following this path that men crossed the ocean of existence in the past, cross it now and will cross it in the future”. Although the focus of Buddhism path to Nirvana is on the Buddha's teachings, it is good to begin with an account of the Buddha's life. His life illustrates the spiritual journey of Buddhism, a journey to realize the state of perfect wisdom – the state of complete enlightenment from which the Buddha taught.

### **The Life of Buddha:-**

Gautam Buddha was born in the sixth century BCE and lived for some eighty years. His father was the ruler Shuddhodana of Kapilavastu and his mother was Mahamaya. He was given the name Siddhartha. Siddha means ‘accomplished’ or fulfilled and artha means ‘objective’ or ‘aim’. His family name being Gautama, he came to know as Siddhartha Gautama. King Shuddhadana asked the learned Brahmins to foretell the future of young prince. There are two versions of future: If the prince were to lead a householders life, he would be a universal monarch; but if he were to renounce the household life and that he would definitely become fully enlightened and unravel the truth to the world. Since the king was aware of the possibility of Siddhartha renouncing household life. He made special arrangements to keep Siddhartha in the most pleasant and luxurious surroundings. So every precaution was taken to ensure that he would never see anything that could disturb his mind. His early marriage was part of it. Couple was provided with immense luxury and pleasant environment. Feeling like an elephant confined inside a house, the prince set his heart on an excursion outside the city. The king heard of his plan and ordered his men to arrange the prince's pleasure excursion, clearing the royal road of unpleasant sights so that nothing would agitate the prince's mind. According to the Buddha charita the Gods of the five heavens of the pure Abode

(Shuddhandhivasa) has conjured up the Illusion of the old man to induce the prince to leave his. In the words of Buddha charita, "The same gods conjured up a man with a body affected with diseases". The prince looked at the man with great disease and sickness are common to all. On the third excursion the prince saw a dead body and so the charioteer explained the meaning of death pointing out that death spare no one. Buddha went to his father and respectfully to leave the palace for seeking salvation but king asked to have pity on the royal family, himself and the kingdom.

**Buddha said:** O lord, I wish for four boons. Kindly grant them to me if you can. I wish that old age should never assail me and that my youth, beauty and attractive complexion should endure forever; that I should enjoy good health and never fall victim to any disease; that I should have a never ending life; that no disease should ever befall me.

Prince Siddhartha renounced his palace precisely to seek spiritual illumination. The prince arrived at the heritage of Arada Kalama with purity and sincerity, the prince practiced the discipline in a solitary dwelling and long mastered that system of meditation. The prince passing through the kingdom of Magadha then came to Gaya. Here ascetics engaged in various kinds of penances and fasting. Reasoning that self mortification was a means of self purification that would lead onward to inner illumination. Prolonged fasting make his body so emaciated that he turned into a skeleton and looked like a dead man. After six years of these austerities, it dawned upon him that this kind of physical denial was merely wearing his body out. So Siddhartha decided to return to his same practice of meditation with diet of Juice rice gruel and some solid food.

### **The Quest for Enlightenment**

Siddhartha regained his strength and natural physical beauty. On the full moon of the month of Vaishakha he went to a peepal tree and sat quietly awaiting the time to go begging for alms. He did not know that tree was sacred to the local people. Sujata, the daughter of the Chief of Senani village placed the vase of milk rice which Siddhartha accepted. This was the last meal that Siddhartha took before he sat down for his most fulfilling meditation. He sat down cross legged with the following

resolution. My body may dry up, my skin, bones and flesh may be destroyed, yet my body shall not move from this posture without attaining enlightenment, so hard to attain even in many aeons.

Buddha later described in his dialogues how one gradually ascend in meditation from the first to the fourth state of awareness in which the mind becomes placed, pure and well concentrated. Then he gradually acquired the following six-fold higher powers the capacity to assume multiple forms: the divine ear to hear and the divine eye to see; the knowledge of others mind the knowledge of past lives; and to knowledge of the destruction of impurities. With his inner experience, Siddhartha attained enlightenment. It was dawn in the full moon of the month of Vaishakha Buddha reflected.

“This Dharma won by me in deep. Difficult to see and comprehend, tranquil, excellent, beyond reason, subtle and comprehensible only by the wise. It would be like going against the current”.

Buddha explained his path namely middle path to his first five disciplines. He pointed out that there are two extreme approaches: one is to indulge in sensual pleasure and other is to subject oneself to austerities and self mortification. Avoiding these two extremes and following the middle path under proper guidance leads to inner tranquility and full enlightenment.

### **The four noble truth and the eightfold path**

The Buddha taught them the four noble truths which explain the fundamentals of the Buddhist path there four principles are; Life in the world is full of suffering (dukkha), There is a cause of this suffering (dukkhasamudaya), It is possible to bring an end to suffering (dukkhanirodha), There is a path that leads to the cessation of suffering (dukkha-nirodha-gaminini-patipada), which is the Noble Eightfold Path (ariya-atthangika-magga). The usual translation of the pali word dukkha as suffering is actually too severe. ‘Suffering’ gives the impression that life is nothing but pain, But the Buddha does not deny happiness in life: he simply teaches that suffering occurs because of the impermanent nature of happiness.

The Buddha taught the Noble Eightfold path which he called the middle path (majjhimapatipada) brings an end to suffering when one follows eight disciplines; Right view (Samma-ditthi), Right thought (Samma-sankappa), Right Speech (Samma-vaca), Right Action (Samma-Kammanta), Right Livelihood (Samma-ajiva), Right Effort (Samma-vayama), Right Mindfulness (Samma-sati), Right concentration (Samma-Samadhi)

Buddha set in motion the wheel of Dharma he started giving out his teaching. Buddha in due course from Varansi to Gaya then to Kapila-Vastu gathering new disciples as he travelled Buddha granted ordination to everyone in family. Buddha indicated that those who were ordained by him should not worry. Buddha clarified that the Dharma the holy discipline or path taught by him, is the sole refuge of his disciples and that they should practice his Dharma to best of their ability and kindle the light within themselves.

### **Last Words**

The Buddha's final words as an early text from the Pali canon: "It may be, Ananda, that after my passing away you might think 'Gone is the utterance of our master: But you should not think so. Ananda for the doctrine (dharma) and discipline (vinaya) which I have taught to you and prescribed to you will be your master after my death'".

He addressed the monks for the last time: Now, O monks, I exhort you: All compound things are subject to decay. Work for your salvation with earnestness". He retired, gradually raised his consciousness, and in the fourth watch of the night entered into state of deathlessness, and AnandPravenced. "The Lord has attained Parinirvana". Thus was the physical passing of a great guide, a torchbearer who showed the way to immortality to a multitude of people. He shunned the pomp and grandeur of the world to seek solitude and peace and abandoned earthly future to discover spiritual treasure. As an embodiment of Dharma, a fountainhead of spiritual powers and a repository of compassion, he worked for the good and happiness of humanity. His grace and bounty uplifted and fulfilled all who turned to him, and he left a legacy that still serves as a beacon for the world.

## **Human Life**

Buddhism teaches that the cosmos contains many worlds and creatures, all of which are trapped in a cycle of birth and death (samsara) due to their past actions. Among the various life forms in the Buddhist cosmos, the human life is a rare and invaluable gift. No other form of life provides the same privilege of striving for and attaining liberation. Buddha and Buddhist teachers refer frequently to the impermanent and perishable nature of the world and life. It is recounted that it was the sight of old age suffering, disease and death that turned prince Siddhartha away from the pleasures of the world towards the path of enlightenment.

Buddha teaches that human life has immense potential, we have the choice to uncover develop and utilize this potential and thereby attain immortality, the very goal of this life; or to disregard, degrade and misuse it and remain caught in the cycle of birth and death, wasting his life. Buddhism therefore emphasizes the need to be vigilant and to make sincere effort to attain immortality and liberation, therefore fulfilling immortality and liberation, therefore fulfilling the highest possibilities of this human life.

## **The Eternal path**

Buddhism offers a comprehensive guide to the attitudes and actions essential to the pursuit of enlightenment. Two basic conditions are essential for the pursuit of a spiritual path. The first is birth as a human being, and the second is finding and following an enlightened teacher. Human beings unique amongst all the species are endowed with the faculty of discrimination. Therefore, once we obtain this invaluable human birth, it is in our highest interest to direct our lives towards the fulfillment of our ultimate spiritual goal as diligently as possible. It is essential to work assiduously during our life to realize the goal – the complete cessation of suffering.

## **Conclusion**

Buddhism offers a pragmatic and achievable path to final liberation from suffering. The Buddha descended into the mire of reality and emerged with the rare gem of

eternal wisdom. Siddhartha Gautama came to see the suffering and impermanence of life, he dedicated himself to the search for permanent release from suffering. He tried various rigorous austerities but external methods proved to be of no avail. Through the inner practice of meditation, he discovered the way to attain Nirvana, the state of liberation from suffering. When after attaining Nirvana the Buddha was reflecting on whether or not to teach the profound truth to a world lost in ignorance and delusion, Sahmpati Brahma a God from pure abode, come to urge him to teach.

Reason and intellect can generate great feats of exploration in the outer world, enabling people to dive deep down to the bottom of the ocean or to fly to great heights in outer space. Buddha taught there is a means of awakening to his transcendent conscience and gave us a practical path that leads to Nirvana. It is then for us to step onto the path of Nirvana and extinguish the illusory flame of our self or ego so that we too can become enlightenment.

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