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Buddhism: A analytic study of it's Branches and the Philosophy of Buddha

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Abstract:-

“Learning to let go should be learned before learning to get. Life should be touched, not strangled. You’ve got to relax, let it happen at times, and at others move forward with it... Letting go gives us freedom, and freedom is the only condition for happiness. If, in our heart, we still cling to anything - anger, anxiety, or possessions - we cannot be free.” (Internet)

Buddhism also known as Buddha Dharma, is an Indian religion or philosophical notion founded on a procession of actual education indicated to Gautama Buddha. It emerged in historical India as a Sramana convention eventually between the 6th and 4th centuries BCE, circulating through vastly of Asia. It is the world's fourth-largest religion with over 520 million supporters, or over 7% of the international community, recognized as Buddhists. Buddhism comprises a mixture of notion principles and spiritual traditions primarily founded on the Buddha's doctrines (born Siddhartha Gautama in the 5th or 4th century BCE) and ensuing examined ideologies. Buddhists acknowledge that the human being is one of misery, and that contemplation, spiritual and manual duty, and decent manner are the paths to attain enlightenment, or nirvana. Siddhartha Gautama was the introductory self to attain this phase of refinement and was, and is nevertheless present day, remembered as the Buddha. Buddhists do not acknowledge in any sort of divinity or god, although there are metaphysical resemblances who can assist or impede society on the path towards enlightenment.

The aim of this paper is to endeavors to interpret Buddhism from what has been discovered in the several religions sessions. It illustrates a beginning to Buddhism's foundation philosophy and principles emerged by the story of the tradition's creator, Siddhartha Gautama, and his inspiring voyage from prince to ascetic, and then Buddha. Similarly it will pertain to circulate of Buddhism and the various denominations that formulated in South and East Asia containing some of their core assumptions and practices.

Keywords :- Spiritual, Enlightenment, Religion, Buddhism, Philosophy, Siddhartha Gautama,

The Founder of Buddhism:-

“Believe nothing, no matter where you read it, or who said it, no matter if I have said it, unless it agrees with your own reason and your own common sense...Teach this triple truth to all: A generous heart, kind speech, and a life of service and compassion are the things which renew humanity.”

Siddhartha Gautama was an Indian prince in the fifth century B.C.E. who, upon watching people poor and dying, recognized that human life is agonizing. He relinquished his prosperity and expended momentum as an impoverished drifter, meditating and travelling but eventually, staying unsatisfied, resolving on something named “the Middle Way.” This notion implied that neither severe austerity or peak wealth were the way to enlightenment, but relatively, a way of life between the two extremes. Finally, in a state of intense contemplation, he accomplished enlightenment, or nirvana underneath the Bodhi tree (the tree of awakening). The Mahabodhi Temple in Bihar, India—the location of his enlightenment—is presently an important Buddhist voyage area. Its doctrines and principles have historically been most popular in East and Southeast Asia, but its significance is accumulating in the West. Many Buddhist beliefs and ideologies overlap with those of other beliefs.

Key Thoughts of Buddhism:-

The exact way to go on interpreting the main notions behind the Buddhist belief is to say that it is a non theistic philosophy that focuses on an individual's struggle in life, and proposes that instead of looking for answers around or beyond us, one should look within to find truth and enlightenment.

Buddhists that attended the Parliament of the World's Religions in Chicago in 1993, clarified that Buddhism is a religion of wisdom powered by compassion as well as the search for enlightenment. Furthermore, salvation is available to all who wish to attain it through the removal of defilements and delusions boosted by a life of self-reflection and meditation. They went on to say that the creator of the belief is not God nor any aspect of divinity, but is a man who achieved Buddhahood or enlightenment

(Fisher 143). Believers in this tradition usually look into three main areas for inspiration; Buddha, Dharma, and the Sangha. These are commonly referred to as the Three Jewels or the pillars that act as a refuge point to practicing Buddhists. The fact that there are various sects, implies that they may be looked at and understood through different paradigms, nonetheless the basis remain the same. The Buddha refers to the path one could take to reach salvation and enlightenment embodied in the life of the Buddha. The Dharma forms the core teachings of the Buddha presented in the Four Noble Truths and the Noble Eightfold Path to liberation. Last, but not least, the Sangha which is the Buddhist community, especially those devotional to the cause of preserving and teaching the Dharma are also considered a source of refuge (Fisher 151).

The Buddha's life and his way to redemption will be remembered in the additional paragraph, but here, the emphasis will be on the Dharma as well as briefly on the Sangha. The Four Noble Truths are the foundation of Buddha's teachings and outline his perspective on life. The first is that suffering, distress, and dissatisfaction are inevitable in one's life. Second, suffering results from craving, based on ignorance. Third, Suffering will cease when craving is ceased. And last but not least, there is a way to accomplish the latter state, and it is by adapting the Noble Eightfold Path (Fisher 143-144). Simply put, it is an approach meant to purify an individual from the lust of craving and drive one to wholesomeness in both thought and action. The first step in this path is acquiring the "right view" by deeply understanding the Four Noble Truths, allowing one to comprehend reality correctly. It is the ability of seeing through illusions of lust and ignorance that cause pain and dissatisfaction. Here it has to be kept in mind that everything one does or says is only a projection of their mind. If it is corrupt or misguided then disaster will follow, but if the mind is enlightened by the noble truths then one shall be capable of the right view. The second, is

"right resolve" which implies choosing the correct motivation or intention to actively throw-off

selfish desires and ego, and be able to enjoy a relaxed and clear life without the limitations of self-centeredness. Third, is “right speech” meaning honesty and sincerity in all that’s said for the propose of tranquility and harmony in the community, keeping in mind that believer should avoid lying or deceiving, gossiping, and using harsh language. Fourth, is “right conduct” in accordance to the five basic precepts of ethical behavior listed in the tradition. To avoid destroying life and property, stealing from others, sexual misconduct, lying, and the use of intoxicants (Fisher 145-146). Fifth is “right livelihood” implying that the way by which an individual earns a living does not violate the latter five precepts. The sixth is “right effort” which’s to actively work on eliminating impurities from the mind, and strive to act wholesomely in all situations. The seventh and eighth points in the Eightfold Path are distinctive in nature and require great effort to implement. The seventh is “right mindfulness” which requires deep meditation and discipline. It is centered on the act of cultivating awareness while being aware of the mind’s treacherousness. The eighth step in the way commends the last and progresses it to “right meditation”, and pertaining it to domain the mind from its restless nature. In my opinion, the Four Noble Truths and the Eightfold Path truly summarizes the core philosophy and ideals behind the Buddhist tradition. One who wishes to take it as a path of self-enlightenment must recognize that the truth lies within and can only be after rigorous mindfulness and concentration

"on one’s own mind and actions. As the tradition spread, various schools developed with differing meditation techniques and practices, nonetheless, the core idea of coercing the mind from temptations through mindful acts and more importantly intentions is a common theme to all on the path to enlightenment or Nirvana. The latter is the goal of Buddhist practice, and is believed to be the most desirable state of mind. Nirvana was described by Buddha as the quietude of the heart where all suffering ceases due to the elimination of cravings and a life liberated from worldly attachment (Fisher 149). Famous meditation master, Ajahn Chah, described mindful meditation through the following summarized metaphor; “Let things take their natural course. Let your mind become still in any surroundings, like a clear forest pool where all kind of wonderful animals will come to drink. There you will certainly glimpse the nature of all aspects, and watch as strange and wonderful things come and go while you are still. That is the happiness of Buddha” (Kornfield and Breiter)¹

Branches of Buddhism:-

The three main branch of Buddhism are; Theravada, Mahayana, and Vajrayana. Minor sects like Pure land and Zen exist within the Mahayana branch.

- **Theravada – Way of the Elders** Theravada Buddhism is contemplated the most conventional group that prevails today, and is widespread in Southeast Asia in countries like Sri Lanka, Thailand, Cambodia, Myanmar, and Laos (Buswell836). It honors earlier scriptures such as the Pali Canon, encourages its followers towards the Three Jewels for refuge, and focuses on meditation. Theravada formulated in Ceylon, modern Sri Lanka, and is known to be the only surviving school from an array of traditional sects that have once existed (Chernow and Vallasi 387). The tradition includes devotional practices for its lay and monastic believers, but it also focuses on the meditational practices stressed by earlier Buddhism. There are two main meditational branches; “Samatha”, calm abiding, and “Vipassana”, insight (Fisher 153).
- **Mahayana – The Greater Wheel** The Mahayana branch evolved in the first century B.C, when the Mahayana sutras or scriptures were developed beyond the Pali Canon (Chernow and Vallasi 387). They taught that all things are empty and devoid, emphasizing the practice of compassion as well as wisdom to liberate all creatures from suffering (Fisher 157). This tradition is quite devotional compared to Theravada Buddhism, and mentions the existence of countless Buddha’s and bodhisattvas from our world and beyond who have reached an illuminated god-like status of being. Devotees have access to their stories and deeds through the many sutras available throughout the Mahayana practicing world. These Sutras emphasize the need to strive to be a bodhisattva, an eternal being who not only looks for self-enlightenment, but is concerned for the enlightenment of others through true compassion. Along with other Buddhist sects, it is traditionally found in China, Vietnam, Korea, Taiwan, and Japan, uniquely adapted within the cultural and spiritual framework of each individual nation (Buswell 492).

- **Vajrayana – The Diamond Vehicle** Originally a branch of Mahayana Buddhism,

Vajrayana is considered a branch in its own right by many scholars. This tradition has its roots in India and has historically been practiced in Mongolia, Bhutan, Nepal, and Sikkim, but mostly centered in Tibet. Vajrayana Buddhism emphasis three stages, the first stage requires the concentration of the mind, and riding it of all worldly attachment. The stage is special training in compassion and wisdom, similar to that of mainstream Mahayana. The third stage is what is called Vajrayana which happens to be an esoteric path, taken only by those with sustainable knowledge, to accelerate the process of enlightenment and nurture it within a single lifetime (Fisher 170). In Tibet, the spiritual head of the nation is also its political leader, and is referred to as the Dalai Lama or “Ocean Teacher”. At first they were leaders of a permanent monistic order, but in the thirteenth century they were bestowed the nominal rule of their homeland by Mongol overlords (Chernow and Vallasi 2744). Dalai Lama’s are believed to be the incarnations of a Bodhisattvas or a Buddha, identified at very young age (Chernow and Vallasi 2744).

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