

Applied Buddhist Education in Life

Pham Thi Len

Ph.D Research Scholar, Department of Mahayana Buddhist Studies, Acharya Nagarjuna University, Guntur 522510, AP, India

Abstract: Education is a fundamentally important factor in any country. It plays a key role in all areas and especially develops the people's personality that is why all countries focus on investing in education to help their country grow steadily. To contribute to raising humanity's awareness, all religions also support countries with all their abilities including Buddhism, a religion born in India, which is a country rich in culture and intellect. Because of the influence of such a beautiful country, Buddhism has contributed a lot to the educational element of humanity. In this article I will present a small section on the educational aspect of Buddhism to society.

Keywords: Education, Dhamma, instruction, personality, humankind, Precepts, Meditation, Wisdom

1. Introduction

Buddhism was born 2,500 years ago and has brought peace and happiness to humankind that the world today must recognize. So, does our Buddha use "power to educate" to obtain that result? Or does the Buddha have other methods to bring success?

In the Nikaya Sutta, it is said that the Buddha was born for the sake of everyone and for the happiness of the masses. Thus, his teachings always perfect the personality of the people. In order to bring about the perfection of personality on that moral basis, along with the well-being of humankind, the Buddha used "education". However, the "education" spirit of the Buddha is egolessness, altruism, compassion, and equality; all of this are based on the doctrine of Dependent Origination, cause, effect and karma. From this foundation, Buddhism has supported to building a human society that can be considered impeccable in terms of every aspect.

2. Content

1) Philosophy of Buddhism - Perfection in All Aspects.

As stated above, the appearance of the Buddha, with the doctrinal basis of self-cultivation, the self-realization of profound intellect made Indian society what can be said to be perfect in every way. Why do we dare to make such conclusions? It is because in the midst of the luxury of the palace, the Buddha renounced all, regardless of money and fame. According to Him, the source of struggle is greed and anger. Greed without becoming hatred, resolving hatred by force to conquer others, thereby creating social insecurity. On the basis of the teaching he had come up with many realizations under the Bodhi tree such as the doctrine of Non-self, Dependent Origination, the Four Noble Truths, and so on. Buddha came from the royal lineage, but he never used the forces to evangelize instead his teachings were based on wisdom and compassion because he thought:

*"Hatred destroys hatred
This life is impossible,
Compassion eradicates hatred
This is an eternal law"*¹

Through compassion derived from the wisdom of the experiment, He erased the darkness of ignorance and pointed

out the path of liberation, helping people to realize the true nature of dhammas as dependent arising and non-self.

2) The Buddha - Education Reformer.

His appearance in this life was only to educate sentient beings. By all means skillful, He brought wisdom through practicing transmitting the instruction to bring Indian society out of the suffering from ignorance. Buddha was considered a great philosopher because the philosophy he acquired was the truth, the philosophy of life. During the forty-five years of the sermon teaching, his golden words were collected into the Tripitaka. In it, the core is wisdom and compassion. In the career of education, wisdom is the torchlight to guide the sentient beings, and compassionately takes people out of the night. He used various means of teaching, especially the way of teaching according to each radical level of each person to bring great success. That is the crystallization of the process of practicing empirical evidence. So, in the Sutta, he said, "A true way is about what I will say: is a love without of ignorance, born in life for the sake of all beings, for the compassion to love this life, for happiness and for peace of human."² Thus, the greatness of Buddha is not because of power, nor of wealth, but because of compassion to help sentient beings escape suffering.

3) Buddhist Education Facility

When we talk about education, it means talking about teaching place and knowledge transfer. Our Buddha with the method of teaching compassionately without fear does not need the spacious lecture hall for him to teach, but anywhere on the path of propagation, even at the edge of the field or side tree stump ... with one or two people ... He would still preach if they were spiritually seeking dharma. This was the method of teaching perhaps only applied by Him at that time. When the benefactor offered the Vihara, the lecture hall appeared. At that time, the number of people listening to the dharma was greater, the propagation of the teachings was somewhat more convenient because during that time the Buddha had transformed the kings and pundits ... Since then, the monasteries, Vihara continues to develop and become a center of activities to spread the teachings. In particular, the meditation courses are opened to help practitioners practice inner transformation, return to the pure reality while living

¹ Thich Minh Chau (Translate), *Dhammapada*, Religious Publishinging Housae, Ha Noi, 2008, p. 8.

² Majjhima Nikāya, *Fear and Dread*, Translated by Bhikkhu Nagamoli and Bhikkhu Bodhi, Wisdom Publications, USA, 1995, P.104.

in a noisy and boisterous society. Besides, the Buddhist schools are growing, both training and increasing talent, training the laity with the desire to learn Buddhism.

4) Practical Application of Buddhist Education In Life.

a) Fundamentals of Precepts - Perfection of Ethics for Society.

At any time, when Buddha was alive or today, there were evils of moral and character decline, ... so prisons sprung up continuously, but will these evils decrease or increase? Buddha said that such a solution is to solve the tops (consequences), while the cause is not resolve, it will create new results. Buddhism went against the above method. The Buddha with the wisdom of liberation taught the cause and effect, helping people to see the sense of responsibility for the consequences they cause, from which we will perfect our personality, live and love ourselves. and love others in the compassionate spirit of Buddhism. If you want to live in that spirit, keeping the precepts is extremely important. Because just considering the five basic precepts of the lay Buddhists and the renunciants are enough to see its importance. If we keep the precepts not killing, then there is no war to kill each other, without stealing and adultery then what can degrade the morals of people? Therefore, the method of solving the Buddha's problem is to solve its root, that is, the cause of the crime and the Buddha taught what is the root of goodness and what is the root of unwholesome so that everyone can do good and avoid evil: "*What is the root of akusala? Greed is the root of akusala, anger is the root of akusala, ignorance is the root of akusala ... what is kusala? not killing is ethical, not stealing is righteous ... not greedy is virtuous, not angry is kusala ...*"³. So, this will be an educational method based on arousing compassion in every human being. If everyone in the world holds the five precepts, it is enough to turn this world into a Pure Land. However, this has not really happened as the greed of people is so great because they are so dominated by worldly education. Worldly education only focuses on the subjects that bring immediate benefits but little on morality ... This is also the reason why young people live freely and selfishly without caring about the interests of the community.

Therefore, the teaching system in general or the system of precepts in particular is the way to achieving morality and happiness. A person's liberation or happiness depends on his or her moral behavior or in other words, it depends on his control of desire. Then how to overcome desire when people are living in a society full of temptations of sensuality? Besides being poisoned by greed, anger, and ignorance, this can only be done by a Buddhist education and at a higher level, which is inward education (Meditation).

b) Inverted Education - The Path of Inner Transformation.

As mentioned above, the reason for social instability by people living together always vying for interests is due to craving. So the Buddha - an educational reformer, pointed to the core of illnesses inside the human mind. Only with the transformation in the mind does the reform make sense,

³ *Majjhima Nikāya, Right View*, Translated by Bhikkhu Nagamoli and Bhikkhu Bodhi, Wisdom Publications, USA, 1995, P.133.

while the external reform imposed by the powers is only effective in the short term because there is no steady root. Only reforms based on kusala cittas can be sustained. Once the roots are strong, the branches of society will be more developed.

Thus, kusala cittas is the basis for bringing peace to oneself and others and the opposite unwholesome will bring suffering. In unwholesomeness, the Buddha teaches that it is originated from craving. When the craving is not satisfied, it leads to dissatisfaction and anger ... It is because of "craving" that so many generations in the nations have killed each other. So, in the *Majjhima Nikaya*, the Buddha taught: "*Bhikkhus! Craving is the reason why people compete with each other. When they are dominated by craving ... they have attacked each other with their hands, with stones, with sticks, or swords ... leading to death ... so the danger of craving is the original cause of suffering.*"⁴

Because of the harmful effects of such a great desire, Buddha taught us to see its roots clearly, to eradicate the root, not the tops. As the result, in order to see the root of desire, Buddha taught us to contemplate the mind by way of inner reflection, which is to meditate. This is the miraculous method where the Buddha himself achieved enlightenment under the Bodhi Tree. Since then, he has been teaching the disciples, and both renunciants and home Buddhists can practice. Because this is a method of practicing, looking back at yourself seeing how your mind arises, eradicating akusala and kusala dhammas in sequence. Because: "Internal reflection, returning to yourself, to your true self ... is the most vivid and practical motto to improve society ... and build Nirvana in this world." It is the practice of meditation that has come to life and changed so many suffering souls to return to the bliss and happiness in this present life. Nowadays all over the world, the practice of meditation is very popular. Meditation is also specially sent to prisons to educate prisoners very effectively. Let's listen to the confession of a prisoner at Prison Sangha, who used to practice meditation: "*I have really changed a lot since I entered the prison. I practiced meditation, I was very at peace. Now it is difficult to provoke or make me angry. Meditation and the Buddha's teaching transformed me completely.*"⁵

Thus, meditation education is not only in the lavish places of the city, or the tranquility of the villages but also in all corners of society, including prisons where people don't dare to go. The souls seem to be "emotionless" of crime. Yet Buddhism did it! And that has changed so many unwholesome souls to being pure. This is often the political opinion that the punishment must be used to do, but Buddhism has gone against it and brought unexpected results!

c) Liberation Wisdom – The Purpose of Buddhist Education

⁴ Thich Minh Chau (Translate), *The Greater Discourse On The Mass Of Suffering*, Religious Publishing House, Ha Noi, 2012, p. 121 – 122.

⁵ Toihochien.com/tintuc/Dai-Bang-va-Dau-Gau-Thien-Trong-Tu-20/07/2020.

In contrast to worldly education, learning only external knowledge is gathering the knowledge of others to be its own knowledge, while Buddhism takes wisdom as the main element, as the root. Wisdom as the Buddha taught is enlightened wisdom from oneself, the practice of meditation is the ultimate wisdom. In other words, to attain this wisdom, we must cultivate the three basic foundations of Buddhism, namely the Precepts - Meditation - Wisdom. So, with the basic Buddhist education that we have assessed through the two Precepts and Meditation above. They will be the first solid steps for us to reach the highest rung, which is the peak of wisdom. With the wisdom gained from the basis of observing the precepts, through the practice of meditation, it will be a sharp sword severing the suffering, disturbing emotions brought about by greed, hatred, and ignorance. Therefore, the purpose of the Buddha's education is to help humanity reach enlightenment, the pinnacle of wisdom. Nevertheless, enlightenment here is not something that someone gives or passes on to us, but it is when we understand ourselves and see the problem. From that understanding, we can stop worrying. In the sutras, the Buddha taught: "*Dear Bhikkhu! They were introduced to the Dharma, this dharma is currently practiced and understood by the wise people. Dear Bhikkhu! This Dharma is practically present, without time, to come to see, and is understood by the self-conscious people*"⁶.

Thus the education of the Buddha is to "come and see" and practice by himself, not praying. When we have reached the position of "self-awareness," we have liberated ourselves. In the process of liberation, the mind will be the sword that cuts the ignorance. That means, without wisdom, ignorance cannot be eradicated.

3. Conclusion

The teaching of Buddha is founded on the foundation of educating people on the principles of the Precepts - Meditation - Wisdom. Gender is built on the moral foundation of the first five precepts which is enough to bring peace to society. Meditation is practiced in life to bring about inner peace. From there, the intellect will be the result of arising from Precepts and Concentration, an intelligence that transcends ordinary world knowledge. However, with that result, the Buddha said that what we have taught is just holding the leaves in our hands, and what we already know is the leaves of the forest. What a humble thing, this shows that the Buddha has transcended everything to bring happiness to humanity. Until now, his teachings still live with time, because that is the truth.

Thus, just going through three educational perspectives alone, we can see that the education of Buddhism is very profound because we are on the path of the Precepts - Meditation - Wisdom (or Eightfold Path). For all that Buddha taught, it was only a part of his contribution, the rest of his life was the real-life he lived, that life was manifested through actions, words, deeds. et cetera. All are practical

teachings sown into the minds of people, from which turn into nectar nourishes kindness in each of us.

References

- [1] Majjhima Nikāya, *Fear and Dread*, Translated by Bhikkhu Nagamoli and Bhikkhu Bodhi, Wisdom Publications, USA, 1995.
- [2] *Majjhima Nikāya, Right View*, Translated by Bhikkhu Nagamoli and Bhikkhu Bodhi, Wisdom Publications, USA, 1995.
- [3] *Majjhima Nikāya, Mahātanhāsankhaya sutta*, Translated by Bhikkhu Nagamoli and Bhikkhu Bodhi, Wisdom Publications, USA, 1995.
- [4] Thich Minh Chau (Translate), *Dhammapada*, Religious Publishing Housae, Ha Noi, 2008.
- [5] Thich Minh Chau (Translate), *The Greater Discourse On The Mass Of Suffering*, Religious Publishing Housae, Ha Noi, 2012.
- [6] Toihochthien.com/tintuc/Dai-Bang-va-Dau-Gau-Thien-Trong-Tu 20/07/2020.

⁶ *Majjhima Nikāya, Mahātanhāsankhaya sutta*, Translated by Bhikkhu Nagamoli and Bhikkhu Bodhi, Wisdom Publications, USA, 1995, p.345.