



The Significance of the Early Buddhism Behind The Advancement Of the Academics In India

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ABSTRACT

The Indian culture and social structure are like the most exceptional ones that have ever developed in every continent. The uniqueness of this rests in its simultaneous embodiment of both old and contemporary qualities. It is a nation that encompasses adherents of all the prominent global faiths, including Hinduism, Buddhism, Jainism, Christianity, Judaism, Islam, and Zoroastrianism. Each of these factors exert a variable amount of effect on Indian society. Education and perfection are interconnected. Proper education is an essential prerequisite for the existence of any culture. India possesses a centuries-old system of education that is unique to its society. Throughout history, the concept of education in India has emphasised the development of a person's personality. Traditional Indian education spanned for numerous centuries, resulting in the existence of various schools during distinct time periods. The Buddhist philosophy is regarded to be one of the most esteemed ancient Indian ideologies, encompassing a multitude of beneficial principles such as religious, moral, instructive, electoral, and financial utilities. These principles hold great significance in promoting the well-being of humanity. Within the diverse range of values in Buddhism, there is a strong emphasis on the significance for learning and moral standards. Educational values in Buddhism refer to the principles which are implemented by the Buddhist System of Education in its instructional and learning methods. On the other hand, ethical principles in Buddhism pertain to moral principles advocated by Buddhist philosophy to regulate an individual's thoughts and behavior. The aim of this paper is to explore the ethical and pedagogical tenets embraced by the early adherents of Buddhism, and explore the impact of Buddhist philosophy on the education, monastic communities, and the general populace and society in ancient India.

Keywords: Education, Curriculum, Society, Buddhism, Ancient India.

Introduction:

The Vedic approach to education, which originated in the past in India, is the initial form of learning in the country. The Vedic Academic Philosophy was 'so' named because it was founded based on the principles of the Vedas, a centuries-old method of instruction. Several academics have categorised the Vedic Educational Era under different eras such as the Rig-Veda period, Brahmani period, *Upanishada* period, *Sutra* (Hymn) period, and *Smriti* period. However, despite these divisions, the fundamental goals and principles of education remained unchanged throughout all these periods of time, mostly due to the supremacy of the Vedas. Therefore, the schooling during these time periods is examined within the context of the Vedic period. According to Dr. P. N. Prabhu, academic achievement in ancient India was independent of external influences such as state authority, government interference, or political affiliations. The king had the responsibility of ensuring that knowledgeable scholars were able to complete their studies and fulfil their job of disseminating information without any sort of hindrance. Ancient India exerted a significant impact on the advancement and progress of

early civilization. India has possessed a substantial heritage of understanding and learning since the inception of its culture. Several literary works, such as the Vedas and other Hindu Scriptures and literature, offer insights into the schools of ancient nations. The primary sources on the ancient Indian educational system are the Mahabharata, select Dharma sutras such as those authored by Gautama Buddha and *Apastamba*, and the *Manu Smriti*. A child would inherit his father's occupation, whether it pertained to spiritual or non-religious matters, and the father would provide the youngster with instruction in that field inside the confines of their home. Over the years, two systems of learning, namely the Vedic and the Buddhist, arose. In the earlier system, the subjects covered included the *Vedas*, *Vedangas*, *Upanishads*, and other related disciplines. In the latter system, the primary schools of Buddhism were comprehensively addressed. Contrary to the Vedic educational system, which employed Sanskrit as its main instructional words, Buddhism's schooling system utilised Pali. Nevertheless, each system offered vocational education alongside religious teachings for different religious beliefs. The duties of an instructor and a pupil are described in *Shastras and Sutras* (Nath, 2022).

Buddhism played a significant role in facilitating the expansion of the system of learning in the past of India and the Buddhist world. The commencement of the golden era of Indian culture and civilization is usually recognised to coincide with the proliferation of Buddhism throughout the nation. Buddhism exerted a profound impact on all aspects of Indian civilization, resulting in significant progress. Several novel educational establishments emerged that were previously non-existent. The objective of the teachings of Buddha and Buddhist education is to acquire profound understanding. According to the Buddha, the primary objective of our daily meditation or growth is to attain this profound understanding. According to the teachings of the Buddha, supreme knowledge is inherent within each individual and cannot be obtained from external sources. Therefore, every person possesses the capacity to attain it. The primary objective of Buddhist education was to foster a complete growth of the personality of a child. All aspects of his ethical, cognitive, and mental development were addressed in this. The objective of Buddhist education is to cultivate an individual who possesses freedom, wisdom, knowledge, morality, non-violence, and secularism. Students cultivated their discernment, humanistic values, rational reasoning, and absence of prejudice. Students were emancipated from their state of apathy, need, and selfishness. Buddhist education was readily available to individuals from many origins. The objective of learning is to metamorphose an untamed creature into a knowledgeable clergyman. The objective of the Buddhist system of education was to reacquaint ourselves with our authentic identities. Preparation for life, aside from religious education, there was a facility for imparting linguistic and practical skills to ensure that the students would be capable of self-sufficiency upon entering mainstream society. The composition of public education Buddhist education in its early stages was limited to the monastic schools and exclusively accessible to the *bhikku* community. However, throughout time, it became widely available to all individuals, granting non-experts the chance to obtain an education from those establishments. Contemporary Buddhist education exhibits a far broader scope, embracing individuals from diverse origins. The objective of Buddhist instruction is to convert an ignorant individual into a knowledgeable and enlightened individual, and to elevate a like animals being into a spiritually awakened Buddha. Buddhist education triggered a profound transformation. Adhering to the Buddhist faith. The Buddhists were the pioneers in ensuring everyone had access to education (Nath, 2022).

Aims & Objectives:

The paper's aims and objectives are as follows:

- i) To ascertain the ethical and academic tenets inherent in early Buddhism and the initial Buddhist Education System.
- ii) The impact of Buddhist philosophy on society, spiritual, and general education in ancient India.

Methodology:

The scholar in this study utilised a diverse range of sources both primary and secondary to gather information for an in-depth literature review. The scholar employed initial sources, such as particular Buddhist writings, alongside additional resources, such as various articles from journals, to acquire information and understanding of the topic area.

Education in Pre-Buddhist Era:

The ancient Indian political system, avoiding the uncertainties of conflict, hatred, and self-centeredness, was founded on the ideals of affection, honorable behavior, and moral conduct. Life possessed a clear objective, a lofty ideal that was believed to surpass all earthly accomplishments (Ghosh, 2001). The growth of education in prehistoric India was also based on this exact principle. The traditional way of life in India is characterised by a lack of emphasis on physical presence in the world, although it does recognise the value of being present in this physical realm. The concept of *Karma* holds a prominent position in the Indian way of life and learning. Conduct or *Karma* should not be used as a means of redeeming humanity. The concept of karma, as well as the educational framework of ancient India, has embraced this principle (Das, 2013). Therefore, the final goal of a person's attention should be on *Brahma*, rather than on the material world. The physical realm serves as a laboratory for the human spirit, where individuals must undergo structured instruction to foster personal growth. The Aryan civilization of India places utmost importance on a simple lifestyle and profound

contemplation as the ethical foundation for self-improvement through learning. Therefore, it is essential for a person to acquire both types of understanding, namely materialism and metaphysical (Altekar, 2010).

In the initial phases, the need for learning within the population was not particularly strong. The prevailing educational system of the past differed significantly than the present one. In the distant past, a group of altruistic individuals transformed their woodland dwellings into educational institutions, far from the noise and diversions of the physical realm. They dedicated themselves solely to the task of teaching, with unwavering focus and commitment. These institutes were in the tranquil and peaceful ambiance of the mountains and woodland. Initially, the priest or the *Brahminic* class received and passed down the traditions and folklore to the next age. During the early *Vedic* era, education was limited to young *Brahmins* and was primarily seen as a means of preparing them for their future role as priests. The *Brahmins* had virtually exclusive control over the process of learning. They constituted a minuscule segment of the society. Over time, the *Kshatriyas* and *Vaishyas* were also granted the right to acquire knowledge. During the early phase of Vedic Education, the Caste system had not yet acquired a rigid and inflexible structure. Although the *Sutras* were first prohibited from learning the Scriptures, throughout time, the focus shifted towards a person's capacity and suitability to receive a specific type of education, disregarding caste, and social standing. However, the act of providing guidance was solely reserved for the *Brahmins*. This signified the significant impact of the clergy on the act of tossing. During that age, most professions pursued by people did not necessitate formal education, with the exception from the knowledge acquired through informal instruction at home via practice and imitation. Hence, the desire for education originated from a restricted segment of the population. Therefore, there was not no need for a complex educational infrastructure (Talageri, 2015) (KUMARI, September 2017).

The Vedic period exhibited specific and unique characteristics. In Indian culture, *Bramahacharis* is considered to be the second phase of an individual's life phase, dedicated to the pursuit of knowledge and skill development. During the Vedic time, the bulk of the top castes, known as *Bramahacharis*, lacked the ability to read and write. The '*Gurukula*' educational system was specifically employed to educate individuals belonging to the *Brahmin* or *Kshatriya* castes. Students acquired knowledge through cohabitation with their mentors in remote forested areas, devoid of urban or rural settlements. Students who identified themselves as *Shiyas* led a highly rigorous and arduous lifestyle. Individuals who failed to meet these high demands would simply disappear. Indian culture was profoundly intertwined with spirituality and accorded a highly important role in the realm of schooling. The Vedic culture was conserved and transmitted by oral tradition to subsequent generations. The conventional Indian educational system successfully preserved and spread its literary and cultural traditions even without the use of writing. The enduring historical coherence of the expansive continent can be attributed to the efficacy of its ancient academy system in safeguarding and spreading its rich heritage of culture. Learning in India has a rich and extensive history dating least to the Vedic era. During this era, under the mentorship of a Guru or Prabhu, elementary education commenced with instruction in mathematics and Ghatshalas. The term "Later Vedic Age" is used to describe schools of elementary and secondary schooling. Initially, learning was regarded as a pathway to moksha, which is the state of awakening, and it was available to everyone. Nevertheless, as the "*varna system*" evolved, it was instructed according to the profession and duties performed by an individual belonging to a specific caste (Nath, 2022).

The conducting of education during this period was characterised by a certain level of rigidity and limited scope, despite its commitment to maintaining the principles established during the Vedic era. The current objective of education is to equip students with the necessary skills and knowledge to navigate the challenges of existence. After the "*Upanayana*" ceremony, teachers provided personalised education to their students, taking into account their individual interests, tendencies, and characteristics. The students rigorously maintained chastity. Teachers closely observed the psychological composition of their students when giving instructions. Physical or bodily retribution was considered as a final option for enforcing rules and regulations. Both the *Manu Smriti* and *Yajyavalka* make reference to it (The Manusmriti, 2022). During the early Vedic era, education was limited to young *Brahmins* and was primarily seen as a means of preparing them for their potential careers as priests. The *Brahmins* had virtually exclusive control over the process of education. They constituted a minuscule segment of the population. Over time, the *Kshatriyas* and *Vaishyas* were also granted the right to acquire learning. During the early phase of Vedic Education, the hierarchy of castes had not yet acquired a fixed structure. Although the *Sutras* were first prohibited from learning the Holy Scriptures, throughout time, the emphasis shifted towards a person's capacity and suitability for receiving a specific type of instruction, regardless of their socioeconomic status or social rank. However, the act of providing guidance was solely reserved for the *Brahmins*. This event signified the significant impact of the clergy on the act of pitching (Altekar, 2010). During that age, most professions pursued by individuals did not necessitate formal education, other from the informal training they acquired within their homes through imitation and observation. Consequently, the desire for education originated from a restricted segment of the population. Therefore, there was no need for a complex educational system (Talageri, 2015) (KUMARI, September 2017).

The rise of Buddhism and its impact:

The origins of Buddhism can be traced back to Gautama Buddha, who lived from 563 to 483 B.C.E. He originated at *Lumbini*, which is currently located in Nepal. The name he was initially given was *Siddhartha*. His father, *Suddhodana*, held the position of ruler in *Kapilavastu*. His mother belonged to the *Kosalan* clan and her name was *Mahamaya*. *Mahamaya* passed away after childbirth, and *Siddhartha* was raised by his step-mother,

Prajapati Gautami. He wed to *Yashodhara* and fathered a son named *Rahula*. *Siddhartha* enjoyed a life that was both comfortable and filled with happiness (Schumann, 2016). However, the opulence of the royal lifestyle failed to provide him satisfaction; he was deeply affected by the sufferings of humanity, particularly those caused by old age, illness, mortality, and a lack of hope. *Gautama* was profoundly affected by the profound suffering inherent in human existence. Upon witnessing an elderly individual, an infirm one, a deceased individual, and a person practicing extreme self-discipline, he made the resolution to embark on a nomadic lifestyle (Schumann, 2016). *Gautama* engaged in a period of six years as a nomadic ascetic, during which he engaged in intellectual exchanges with wise individuals and members of the *Brahmin* caste. Their instructions proved ineffective in assisting him in finding a resolution. To uncover the truth, he employed rigorous forms of self-inflicted suffering through various types of asceticism. Subsequently, he relinquished all possessions and journeyed to *Uruvela*, situated on the shores of the *Niranjana* River. There, he positioned himself beneath a pipal tree, also known as the *Bodhi* Tree, and engaged in meditation. He achieved the state of 'absolute wisdom' (Enlightenment) after meditating continuously for forty-nine days (Schumann, 2016) (Dar, 2017).

Buddha rejected the notion of God as a creator or determiner of destiny. He advocated *Anatmavada*, the belief that there is no immortal soul, and *Anitya-Vadha*, the concept that all things are impermanent and subject to change. He disregarded the sacredness and power of Vedas and Yagnas and rejected the caste system. He stressed the idea that individuals had control over their own future. The first sermon presented by Buddha at Sarnath includes his teachings. His instructions were basic and given to the general population in their vernacular, like in *Prakrit (Pali)* and never in Sanskrit. The core principles of his messages are encapsulated in the 'Four Noble Truths' and the 'Eightfold Path' (Dar, 2017). The eightfold road is regarded as a balanced approach among excessive asceticism and vanity. Buddha propagated the concept of 'Nirvana,' which represents the ultimate objective of a person's existence. Through the systematic removal of need, one can achieve the state of 'Nirvana'. He emphasised the importance of a person's ethical behaviour. Due to his concept of *Karma*, the present moment is shaped by what was done in the past. The state of an individual in this existence is contingent on their own good deeds. By improving what he does, he can attain redemption, as his afflictions are a result of his choices or karma. Neither an omnipotent deity nor religious practices can bestow forgiveness upon him. Therefore, man assumes the role of the creator of his own fate (Akira, 2007) (Dar, 2017).

Buddhism achieved remarkable advancement as a widely embraced faith, both within and beyond the borders of India. Several things contributed to this advancement and development. Ensuring the support and engagement of all segments of the population was a crucial element. *Kshatriyas* held great admiration for it as it posed a challenge to the dominant position of the *Brahmins*. Merchants appreciated it for its commitment to peaceful resolution and its endorsement of money lending. The Shudras were drawn to its promotion of racial fairness and equality. The common people, weary of intricate rituals, were drawn to a life of austerity centred on moral principles and devoid of ritualism. The unwavering dedication and fervour of Buddhist missionaries played a pivotal role in the swift ascent of Buddhism. They disseminated the teachings of Buddhism to various regions across the globe (Akira, 2007).

Their dedication, selflessness, and hard work were instrumental in establishing Buddhism as a prominent religion throughout South, East, and Central Asia. Brahmanism refers to the ancient religious and philosophical system that originated in India and is based on the teachings of the *Vedas and Upanishads* (KUMARI, September 2017). The personality and character of Buddha played a crucial role in the widespread adoption of Buddhism. The intelligentsia were drawn to his rational approach to things. The support of monarchs played a significant role in the emergence of Buddhism. Monarchs like as *Kanishka, Harsha, Ashoka*, and others embraced and endorsed the religion. They offered material resources, provided security, and rendered assistance bhikkus and bhikkunis. Additionally, they constructed Stupas and actively promoted such endeavors (Dutta, 2010).

Monastic code of Education:

The development of the Buddhist educational system is essentially synonymous with the origins of the Buddhist discipline or sangha. Buddhist education and study revolved primarily around viharas, while Vedic society focused on sacrificial rituals. Outside of its monasteries, the Buddhist culture failed to offer any possibilities for learning. The bhikkus had control over all forms of instruction, both religious and non-religious. They possessed exclusive control over knowledge and had the free time to share it. They were considered the sole guardians and carriers of the ancient Buddhist culture (Dutt, 1962).

The objective of Buddha's teachings, as well as Buddhist learning, was to achieve enlightenment. The Buddhist knowledge in Sanskrit, the ancient script of India, was referred to as "*Anuttara-Samyak-Sambhodi*," which translates to the complete supreme knowledge (Walshe, 1995). The Buddha emphasised that the primary goal of the practice or training is to attain this final insight. According to the teachings of the Buddha, each of us possesses the inherent capacity to attain a level of profound enlightenment, which is an inherent aspect of our being rather than an external acquisition (Rahula, 1974). The primary objective of Buddhist education was to foster comprehensive growth in a child's individuality. This encompassed his mental, physical, moral, and intellectual growth. The objective of Buddhist Teaching is to cultivate an individual who is liberated, astute, ethical, non-aggressive, and secular. Students acquired the qualities of discernment, humanism, reasoning, and freedom from superstition. Students emancipated themselves from avarice, desire, and lack of knowledge. Buddhist Education was accessible and inclusive, catering to individuals from all social backgrounds. The

primary objective of Buddhist Education is to transform ignorance into wisdom and to elevate individuals from a state of being like animals to that of spiritual leaders. During the Buddhist period, spirituality held utmost importance and learning was primarily delivered via it. The primary objective of education was the dissemination of faith and the cultivation of faith. Learning served as a means to attain redemption or nirvana. In order to provide students with the knowledge and abilities they need to support themselves in their future lives, a curriculum was designed to provide both secular and practical training with a religious component. (Maheshwari, 2019).

The primary hub of Buddhist Teaching was Sangha, a place where Bhikkus, Bhikkunis and *samanas* resided. Sanghas were accessible to everyone. Students from many castes, creeds, colours, and religions received admittance without charge (Walshe, 1995). Buddhism emerged as a robust opposition to the established, Vedic religion as well as the prevailing educational system. Buddhism instituted the principles of democratic systems, egalitarianism, and monasticism. There was an absence of racism. Upon acceptance, the students were required to adhere to monastic regulations in addition to their curriculum, and they were categorised based on their academic excellence. The duration of the academia era was 12 years. The educators served as the custodians of the kids. Their role encompassed the holistic development of the kids, including their physical, mental, spiritual, and moral growth. As the Educational Institution (Monasteries) was a place of residence, the connection between the teachers and students was quite friendly. Buddhist Teaching prioritised the cultivation of ethical, psychological, and bodily faculties (Chakma, 2022). The primary emphasis was placed on obtaining a firm understanding of Tripitaka. In the following era, in response to societal demands and the need for professional education, subjects such as painting, architecture, sculpture, and medicine were also incorporated into the curriculum. In the beginning, the main form of education was in vernacular. Subsequently, it expanded to incorporate *Pali and Prakrit*, and eventually Sanskrit was added as well. It should be noted that *Vedic* studies are also covered in the curriculum. This was a momentous advancement. *Sanghas*, once a hub for Buddhist learning, subsequently evolved into institutions of higher learning such as colleges and universities. *Nalanda, Vikramsila, Sompori, Salban, Pandit Vihar, and Taxila* were exceptional universities. Scholars from China, Myanmar, Thailand, and Gandhara arrived to pursue their education there. The instructors were exceptionally experienced. The objective of Buddhist Teaching is to cultivate an individual who is liberated, astute, intellectually sound, ethically upright, non-aggressive, and agnostic. Pupils acquired the qualities of discernment, humanism, reasoning, and freedom from superstition. Learners emancipated themselves of avarice, desire, and lack of knowledge. Buddhist Education was universally accessible, without any form of prejudice. The primary objective of Buddhist Instruction is to transform the stupid into the wise and the beastly into the priestly (Chakma, 2022).

Monasteries served as the primary institutions for instruction throughout the Buddhist era. In order to gain admittance, the student had to appear before the instructor and make a formal request to receive training. The teacher bore complete responsibility for the instruction of his student. Similarly, the student was expected to promptly follow the directions given by the instructor. The pupil displayed a complete lack of responsibility for any other Bhikku in the monastic order (Walshe, 1995).

The newcomers initially joined the *Sangha*, which is the community of Buddhist monks (Bhikkhu Sangha). Subsequently, they were required to adhere to the monastic regulations and Sangha rules. Even at the present day, these regulations continue to be adhered to. The Sangha has established numerous regulations pertaining to food, attire, sleeping arrangements, meditation, devotion, and other guidelines. They needed to engage in physical activity to maintain their health. They were responsible for cleaning the campus, including the lodgings and residence halls, as well as serving the professors (*Achariya*) and assisting them in various tasks (Dutt, 1962). These were the main responsibilities of the pupils. Upon entrance, pupils were required to adhere to monastic regulations in addition to their academic curriculum, and they were categorised based on their academic performance. The duration of the school period was 12 years (Maheshwari, 2019). A young person who is not an expert and is less than twenty years old, who wants to join a monastery or vihara, must bring a set of yellow monk robes and present themselves to an elder of the monastery for the initial initiation known as pabbajja. *Upasampada* is a form of ordination that can only be achieved once an individual has reached the age of twenty. *Pabbajja*, on the other hand, is a lower form of ordination where a bhikku leaves his house and goes to a vihara, typically after reaching puberty. A monk is commonly referred to as a bhikku in Buddhism (Vidyapati, June, 2018; Walshe, 1995).

The essence of Buddha's teachings, known as the Buddha Dharma, encompasses three fundamental principles: discipline, meditation, and enlightenment. The pursuit of knowledge necessitates the practice of profound meditation or intense focus. By adhering to the commandments and practicing discipline, one can attain profound states of meditation, leading to the innate realisation of knowledge. The entirety of Buddha's teachings, as transmitted in the sutras, consistently revolve around all three of these fundamental ideas. Acquiring knowledge from Buddhist educational institutions instills a strong sense of moral integrity, preventing individuals from engaging in unjust acts, falsehoods, theft, murder, alcohol addiction, and other immoral behaviours. Through this process, pupils are liberated from the vices of desire, animosity, and illiteracy. They diligently adhered to the Eightfold Path (Vidyapati, June, 2018).

The Buddhist educational system was established based on fundamental concepts. It focused on the ethical, psychological, and physical development of students, as well as guiding them to adhere to the principles of the *Sangha*. The primary emphasis was placed on developing a thorough understanding of the *Tripitaka*, which

comprises the *Sutta Pitaka*, *Vinaya Pitaka*, and *Abhidhamma Pitaka*. The complete *Tripitaka* comprises the instructions, communication, theology, and regulations for the Bhikkhus and Bhikkhunis as prescribed by Buddha. The course of study primarily focused on aspects of faith. The primary objective for learning was to achieve salvation (Vinaya Pitaka and Sutta Pitaka: Works of Traditional Buddhist Canon, 2023). The examination of the sacred texts held utmost significance. The course of study was exclusively designed for the *sramans*. In addition to weaving, spinning, and printing garments, making clothes, drawing, finance, pharmaceuticals, surgical procedures, and currency were also included as topics in Buddhist education. In subsequent eras, in response to societal needs and the advancement of professions, the curriculum was expanded to encompass artwork, sculpture, architecture, and medicine. Buddhist academics emerged from the religious sphere and extended its reach for the betterment of humanity (Vidyapati, June, 2018).

The teachers' responsibilities included educating students, creating books, promoting faith, facilitating discussions, and organising debates to clarify complex themes. The educators were accountable for fostering the physical, mental, spiritual, and moral growth of their pupils. The teachers had a deep affection for the children and provided assistance in all matters. They also provided care for them throughout their illnesses and suffering. The professors were accountable for their sustenance, lodging, and other essential needs. They closely monitored the comprehensive growth of the children. They placed particular emphasis on adhering to the precepts of the *Sangha*, as well as on practicing meditation and cultivating focused attention in their pursuit of knowledge (Vinaya Pitaka and Sutta Pitaka: Works of Traditional Buddhist Canon, 2023). The pupil was anticipated to demonstrate unwavering dedication to his instructor. Upon waking up in the early hours of the day, the pupil will organise all the necessary tasks for the teacher's daily routine. He will prepare his meals and wash his garments and kitchen tools. He was going to give to the teacher everything he obtained by begging for charity. The pupil had to be ready for education promptly whenever the teacher demanded it (Vidyapati, June, 2018).

Influence on Women's Education:

In earlier Buddhist times, women were also prohibited from entering the sangha. Buddha believed that they would cause conflict in the sangha. But later, on the demand of his beloved disciple Anand, Buddha let roughly 500 women, including his stepmother, enter viharas, subject to many limitations and requirements. So they managed to gain entrance into the sangha to deliver education (Singh A. K., BUDDHA'S APPROACH TOWARDS WOMEN STATUS). They had to adhere to all the regulations, just like monks. And afterward, Lord Buddha was astonished by the commitment of women to pursuing knowledge. In fact, according to accounts, many of the women in this sangha went on to study philosophy and religion for the rest of their lives. The sangha's guidelines and processes were essentially the same for bhikkus and bhikkhunis. Buddhism has a number of outstanding scholarly bhikkhunis (Shastri, May 2022). There were also Bhikkhunis with exceedingly advanced spiritual knowledge who had a sizable following. Many Bhikkhunis additionally took on the responsibilities of social services. They saw serving the ill, children in need, etc. as their primary responsibility. Some of them went on to become poets and authors after studying theology in depth. A few of them had even learned about politics and participated actively in the politics of the time. Some individuals even traveled abroad to spread Buddhism. In those days, Sheelbhattarika, Prabhudevi, and Viyanka were well-known poets and writers. The daughter of the emperor, Asoka Sanghamitra, was a well-known Bhikkhuni who propagated Buddhism in Sri Lanka. Therigatha was the first philosophical work composed in the whole world that had been written by women. The 'theri', means "seniors," and the gatha, which means poetry. During the third century BCE, the poems' were translated into Pali (Therigatha (From Sutta Pitaka): Verses of the Elder Nuns, 2023).

Early Buddhist Educational Centers:

Nalanda, located in Bihar, India, was a renowned educational institution that flourished from 427 to 1197 C.E. The history of Nalanda University can be divided into two primary periods. The first period, from the sixth century to the ninth century, was characterised by expansion, growth, and success. During this time, the university was influenced by the liberal cultural customs that were passed down from the time of the Gupta age. The second period, from the ninth century to the thirteenth century, marked an ongoing decline and ultimately the demise of the university. This period coincided with the rise of tantric advances in Buddhism, particularly in eastern India (Dutt, 1962) (Suresh, 2013). According to the Chinese monk Yijing, the affairs of discussion and management in *Nalanda* necessitated the gathering and agreement of all individuals present at the assembly, including the resident bhikkus (Mookerji, 1989) (Suresh, 2013). The centre consisted of eight distinct compounds, ten shrines, meditation halls, schools, water bodies, and gardens. The establishment featured a nine-story library where diligent bhikkus painstakingly transcribed texts and records, enabling students to amass their personal collections. The educational institution contained dormitories, which was a pioneering feature at the time. These dorms housed 10,000 students during the university's peak and provided rooms for 2,000 teachers. Nalanda University drew students and academics from Korea, Japan, China, Tibet, Indonesia, Persia, and Turkey. The University housed a magnificent library named Dharmarajana, consisting of three expansive structures, with one of them towering to a height of nine stories. Chinese scholars would spend extended periods of time at Nalanda in order to obtain authentic replicas of the sacred texts and other Buddhist literature. I-tsing received copies of 400 Sanskrit books totaling 5,00,000 verses at *Nalanda*. Buddhists assert that the University offered instruction in the three *Vedas*, *Vedanta*, *Samkhya*, and philosophy, as well as various other texts. The latter phrase likely encompassed the examination of disciplines such as *Dharmasastra* (holy

law), Puranas, Astronomy, Astrology, and others, which held great significance for *Braminical*-Hindu and Buddhist students who were not part of the clergy. The study of medicine, known as *chikitsasastra*, was also pursued at the location mentioned in the sacred canon. It is worth mentioning that even in the present day, no university can assert to possess the same level of greatness and reputation as *Nalanda* (Apte).

Takshila has always been a significant hub of education in the past. *Takshila* was established during the *Brahmanic* period and survived until the Buddhist period. It served as a connection between both of the systems of instruction. It was located approximately twenty kilometres from Rawalpindi. Gandhara province's metropolis. According to the *Ramayana*, King *Bharata* established the city and renamed it after his son, '*Taksa*'. It stood at the site where King *Janamejaya* conducted his Serpent sacrifice. Although the *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharata* make reference to *Takshila* as a prominent institution of learning, our knowledge on its specific educational endeavours is regrettably limited based on these texts. The *Jataka* provides us with additional knowledge regarding *Takshila* as a prominent educational hub. *Takshila* accepted students from all walks of life and classes. However, the *Chandalas* were denied admission as pupils of *Takshila*. The *Cittasambhuti Jataka* recounts the tale of two Chandala boys who assumed the identity of Brahmanas and travelled to *Takshila* with the intention of studying law (Yadav, 2019). However, their true identities were exposed due to their crude speech and behaviour. Due to this circumstance, the Chandalas were unable to enroll at *Takshila*. *Takshila* provided a diverse range of classes for academic pursuits. The three Vedas, along with eighteen Sippas, constituted the primary disciplines of study. The topics enumerated in *Milindapanha* are *Sruti*, *Smriti*, *Samkhya*, *Yoga*, *Niti*, *Vaisesika*, Arithmetic, Music, Medicine, *Purana*, *Itihasa*, and Astronomy. The *Takshila* syllabus also encompassed subjects like as Magic, Hetu Vidya, and Polity. In addition to disciplines like as Medicine, Surgery, Archery, Military Science, Astronomy, Astrology, Magic, Snake Charming, the Art of locating riches, Law, Music, Dancing, and Painting were also part of the course of study. For many decades, this university has been a leading institution in the field of higher learning, serving as an example for the nation as a whole. However, when *Fa-Hien* visited *Takshila* in the fifth century C.E., he found no evidence of a university. Similarly, as *Hiuen Tsang* arrived in the seventh century, he was greatly dismayed to witness the remaining remnants of this once significant educational institution (Apte).

Valabhi was a renowned Buddhist Monastic University. *Valabhi* has attained significant academic prominence in the 7th century C.E. *Valabhi* was a competitor of the College of *Nalanda*. The institution primarily offered instruction in Hinayana Buddhism. The inaugural Vihara of *Valabhi* was constructed by Princess *Dudda*, who is the niece of King *Dhruvasena*. *Duddavihara* was a spacious and prominent Vihara, commonly referred to as '*Viharamandala*' (Dutta, 2010). The text states that more Viharas, such as *Yaksasura Vihara* and *Gohaka Vihara*, were constructed in the same area. In 580 C.E, King *Dharasena I* issued a gift to support *Sri Bappapada*, a Vihara established by *Acaryas Badanta*. It was located on the coastline and served as a significant hub for global commerce. A multitude of affluent traders resided in this location. Furthermore, these affluent Traders supported the advancement of education at *Valabhi*. The *Maitraka* kings generously contributed a significant amount of funds to the University, specifically for the goal of enhancing the library (Mookerji, 1989). *Valabhi* held significant academic prominence during the seventh century C.E. Regrettably, our knowledge of *Valabhi* is insufficient. According to *Hiuen Tsang*, during his visit, there were also a total of six thousand monks engaged in study at the University, and they were accommodated in one hundred religious institutions or *Samgharamas*. Similar to *Hiuen Tsang*, *I-Tsing* also discovered *Valabhi* in the western region of India to be equally magnificent as *Nalanda*. A multitude of students from all regions of the country would congregate there for the sake of learning. According to *Hiuen Tsang*, *Sthiramati* and *Gunamati*, who served as the instructors at *Nalanda*, were formerly responsible for overseeing the Monastery at *Valabhi*. Pupils who enroll at *Valabhi* are required to remain at the institution for a duration of between two and three years in order to fulfil their educational requirements. Upon finishing their study, the pupils of *Valabhi* would attend the royal palace to demonstrate their competence. They showcase their organisational prowess to the Imperial court in order to secure employment in State services. This argument unequivocally demonstrates that *Valabhi* offered instruction not just in Hinayana Buddhism but also in several worldly areas, including *Arthasastra*, Law, Politics, Varta, Theology, *Chikitsasastra*, and Accountancy (Dutta, 2010).

Vikramasila monastery, established by monarch *Dharmapala* between 775 and 800 CE., was a renowned hub of global education for over four centuries. Several monasteries flourished during the Pala era in ancient Bengal and Magadha. *Vikramasila* was a prominent Buddhist institution, boasting a faculty of over one hundred educators and an enrollment of over a thousand scholars. The institution generated distinguished academics who were frequently summoned by foreign nations to disseminate Buddhist knowledge, culture, and religious teachings. *Atisa Dipankara*, the preeminent and illustrious figure, is renowned as the progenitor of the Sarma lineages in Tibetan Buddhism. Subjects such as philosophy, grammar, metaphysics, and Indian logic were taught at this institution. However, the most significant area of study was always focused on the most knowledgeable and devout religious scholars. *Hiuen Tsang* and *I-Tsing*, renowned foreign travellers, provided firsthand accounts of the actual operations of the university. *Tathagata Rakshita*, a highly esteemed scholar, is said to have originated from the *Kayashtha* caste of Orissa, a renowned lineage of medical practitioners. He was a former pupil of *Vikramasila* and earned the titles "*Moha Pundit*" and "*Upadyayas*". In addition, he held the esteemed position of a prominent Tantra Professor and authored numerous notable publications (Suresh, 2013).

Odantapuri was regarded as one of the most ancient among India's educational institutions. This was located in Magadha, approximately 6 miles from *Nalanda*. *Acharya Sri Ganga*, who was from *Vikramasila*, had studied

at this institution. Subsequently, he became a member of *Odantapuri*. *King Gopala* (660-705) served as the benefactor responsible for the establishment of this university. Based to the Tibetan archives, the number of students at *Odantapuri* was approximately 12,000. We have little information about this educational institution, therefore we are unable to provide further specifics. According to reports, they mistakenly identified the institutions, which had tall walls, as fortifications. They believed that the Buddhist bhikkus were "*Brahmins with shaven heads*" who practiced idolatry. Several monasteries flourished during the Pala era in ancient Bengal and Magadha. According to Tibetan sources, there were five prominent Mahaviharas: *Vikramashila*, which was the leading institution at that time; Nalanda, which was no longer at its peak but still highly esteemed; *Somapura Mahavihara*, *Odantapuri*, and *Jagaddala* (Suresh, 2013).

Jagaddala Mahavihara was the final pinnacle of Buddhism in ancient Bengal. The city of *Ramavati*, located on the shores of the Ganges and the *Karatoya* rivers, is where it was originally established. This city is situated in the nation of Varendri (Bose, 1923). According to Tibetan sources, it is evident that the *Jagddala* University was located in Orissa, which attracted experts of Tantric Buddhism. During the reign of *Ramapala*, it transformed into a prominent hub of education and scholarship. For a century, this University served as a renowned hub for Buddhist instruction. The library is excellent. Pupils hailing from remote regions of the country frequently travel to *Jagddala* University for their studies. A significant number of Tibetan scholars migrate to *Jagddala* with the purpose of translating Sanskrit literature.

Pushpagiri, also known as *Puspagiri Mahavihara*, was a Buddhist monastery that existed in the 3rd century CE. It was located in the Cuttack and Jajpur districts of Odisha, which was known as Kalinga in ancient times. The establishment of this entity occurred in the 3rd century and it thrived for the subsequent 800 years until the 11th century. The institution's site spanned three contiguous hills - *Lalitgiri*, *Ratnagiri*, and *Udayagiri*. Alongside the universities of *Takshashila*, *Nalanda*, and *Vikramashila*, this establishment stood out as a leading hub for advanced study in ancient India. The university was visited by the Chinese traveller *Hiuen Tsang* in the year 639 CE. *Lalitgiri* is believed to have been established in the early 2nd century B.C.E, making it the oldest Buddhist institution in the world. Recently, several depictions of Emperor Ashoka have been unearthed in this location, leading to the speculation that Emperor Ashoka personally founded the *Pushpagiri University* (Suresh, 2013).

Somapura Mahavihara was founded by *Dharmapala* of the *Pala kingdom* in Bengal during the late 8th centuries. It thrived for four centuries till the beginning of the 12th century. The University, encompassing a total area of 27 acres, with the main structure occupying 21 acres, stood as one of the biggest organisations of its kind. It served as a prominent hub for the study and practice of Buddha *Dharma*, *Jina Dharma* (Jainism), and *Sanatana Dharma* (Bramanical-Hinduism). Even in the present day, one may observe decorative terracotta adorning the exterior walls, showcasing the impact of these three cultural customs (Singh, 1982).

Influence of Early Buddhism on the progression of education system in Ancient India:

Buddhism has significantly influenced all of the social, religious, and cultural aspects of Indian society. Buddhism has made a significant contribution to promoting equality in social life. It vehemently opposed caste prejudice and oppression in society. It facilitated the empowerment of women by providing their opportunities for education and faith. The principle of 'Ahimsa' (non-violence) promoted values such as compassion and consideration among individuals. Within the realm of faith, it opposed rites, occult beliefs and tributes. Buddhist scholars played a substantial role in advancing the dissemination of contemporary literature in the vernacular. Drama and poetry experienced significant enrichment across several genres. Buddhism exerted significant effect in developing several facets of Indian society. The significance of its influence in social and cultural, spiritual, and legislative domains can't be disregarded. Buddhism emerged as a widely embraced faith, characterized by its simplicity, lack of intricacy, and comprehensibility.

During its initial phase, Buddhist Instruction was confined exclusively to the monasteries and restricted to the Vihara inhabitants. Subsequently, access to learning at these places was extended to all individuals, including those who were not part of the clergy. Buddhist Knowledge has been widely accessible in modern times, welcoming individuals from all backgrounds. Buddhist Education has brought about a transformative shift in society. The Buddhists were the pioneers in establishing universal access to schooling worldwide. Students, regardless of their caste, creed, or religion, were given the opportunity to receive an education that was previously denied to them by the privileged class in society. In India as well, pupils from lower classes were denied admittance in *Vedic* Educational schools (Vidyapati, June, 2018). The teachings of the Buddha on morality and leading a virtuous life also encompassed the domain of political and social matters. He was progressive in multiple aspects, as he embraced egalitarianism by rejecting the system of castes and did not fully oppose women's education. He advocated for governments to demonstrate ethical leadership and alleviate poverty by creating possibilities for prosperity (Vidyapati, June, 2018). Buddhist academics was primarily rooted in Vedic learning, with a central emphasis on religion. This ancient trend in India effectively eliminated the distinction among secular schooling and Buddhist education. The emergence of Buddhism in India led to the establishment of numerous educational institutions that were previously nonexistent. Buddhist bhikkus had the choice to live a life of contemplation in the woods or a life of teaching and spreading the teachings of Buddhism. As a consequence of the efforts of these teaching bhikkus educational institutions were established. The Pirivenas, which were seats of monastic study, progressively evolved and transformed into fully-fledged universities (Vidyapati, June, 2018).

In order to fully comprehend the impact of Buddhism and Buddhist schooling, it is imperative to investigate the effect they had on women throughout civilization. It is well acknowledged that women in ancient India held a disadvantaged status. Traditionally, women were seen as subordinate to men. Women had very restricted freedom. Women were predominantly perceived as homemakers. They had a duty to perform all domestic tasks in accordance with their husbands' desires. Women were denied the autonomy to pursue education. Freedom of faith was additionally curtailed. Due of their limited autonomy, their opportunities to engage in commendable religious rituals were severely restricted. Traditionally, women were often perceived as a liability to the loved ones, as it was the males' duty to take care of them. In addition, she lacked the ability to carry out ceremonies of faith for the benefit of her deceased parents, thus rendering her in minimal utility. Hence, the arrival of a female offspring was regarded as an indication of adversity inside a household. Families sought the delivery of sons to ensure the continuation of their family's name, uphold traditions, and fulfill their spiritual responsibilities that would benefit them after their passing. However, Buddhism does not regard women to be subordinate to men. In Buddhism, albeit acknowledging biological and physical distinctions among the two genders, men and women are regarded as equally valuable to society. The image of the Buddha highlights the significant and beneficial function that women are able to fulfill as a partner and a nurturing mother in order to ensure the achievement of the household. Within the family unit, wives as well as husbands are anticipated to assume the same duties and fulfill their obligations with equivalent commitment. The husband is advised to regard the wife as a confidant, a comrade, a collaborator. In household affairs the wife was supposed to be a substitute for the spouse if the husband happened to be unable. Indeed, it was anticipated that a wife would get to know herself with her husband's business, profession, or sectors, enabling her to effectively oversee his affairs during his time away. Despite her lack of recognition as a person in society as a whole she attained a nearly equal status to her husband as a wife in the Buddhist community. The Buddhism does not place limitations regarding the educational opportunity or freedom of religion of women. The Buddha unequivocally acknowledged that women possess the ability to attain enlightenment, just as males do. That is the reason why he granted permission for women to join the Order, despite his initial reluctance due to concerns about potential complications within the Sasana. Once women established their competence of regulating their affairs in the Order, the Buddha acknowledged their skills and talents, and awarded them responsible posts in the Bhikkhuni Sangha. The Buddhist books document the achievements of highly revered Bhikkhunis, who possessed extensive knowledge and were proficient in delivering teachings on the Dhamma. Dhammadinna was one such *Bhikkhuni Khema and Uppalavanna* are two further individuals. The *Theri-gatha* comprises various verses that vividly articulate the profound elation felt by virtuous bhikkhunis upon their admission into the monastic community and attainment of enlightenment (Chakma, 2022).

Conclusion:

The Buddhist academic system is inclusive, catering to individuals of all genders, religions, ages, occupations, and nationalities. Anyone can acquire knowledge and engage in the study of Buddhism, as it encompasses the teachings of profound and flawless enlightenment. The dissemination of Buddha's teachings is necessary worldwide. Nevertheless, cultivating Buddhist instructors is a challenging task. The challenge arises from the fact that the majority of individuals are unable to relinquish their worldly renown and material possessions, which serve as significant impediments to the acquisition and application of Buddhist teachings. One cannot properly comprehend Buddha's teachings and identify the root causes of every issue in the world without possessing a mind that is free from impurities. However, without the presence of goodness, benefits, and favorable circumstances, followers are unable to encounter skilled instructors.

Buddhist Viharas in the ancient era and Buddhist Universities in the later time significantly contributed to the advancement of Buddhist Education. Within the educational institutions, the professors shown a high level of expertise and dedication to their responsibilities. The primary objective of Buddhist academia is to cultivate an individual who is liberated, intellectually astute, discerning, ethically upright, skilled, peaceful, and detached from religious affiliations.

Buddhist Education cultivates qualities of discernment, humanism, reasoning, and freedom from superstitions in individuals. Upon receiving instruction from Buddhist educational institutions, individuals are inherently inclined to abstain from engaging in unjust acts, falsehoods, theft, murder, alcohol addiction, and moral depravity. By adopting this approach, pupils are liberated from the vices of greed, lust, animosity, and ignorance. The expansion of Buddhist Learning from the Indian Sub-continent to countries such as China, Korea, Japan, Tibet, Mongolia, Srilanka, Myanmar, Thailand, Cambodian, Laos, Vietnam, Malaysia, and Singapore is a source of immense pride. This expansion occurred alongside the growth and development of Buddhism in these countries. Buddhist Education in those countries has achieved significant advancements by including contemporary concepts into the curriculum.

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