

# Development of Education during the Buddhist Period

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**Abstract:** Education in the Buddha period aimed at “Nirvana” (Salvation). Buddhist education system was democratic and had an interactional appeal. Teachers were monks who were well read, of high moral character and kind and fair. The learners were mostly monks. Later on women were also admitted but with lots of restrictions. Aims of Buddhist education were individual and social, academic and vocational, and earthly and heavenly. Along with aim of salvation, it also prepared pupils for worldly life through vocational education. The aims of Buddhist Educational System were comprehensive.

**Keywords:** Education, Buddhis, Monks, Sharman, University, Nirvana, Vihars.

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## INTRODUCTION

Education is the stepping stone for high flying career. We Indians are proud of our past, specially the Education system. India is proud of its glorious past, its stimulating present and its hopeful future. An educational system should be able to preserve the past, enrich the present and provide guidelines for development in the future. Education System in India is of dates back where the children were taught in Gurukuls and the Guru-Shishya system was the means of education. Education system in India is managed and controlled by government well, providing education to all without any discrimination. Education dominates the scenes of what was, what is and what will be.

History has a forward movement. That is why what has already happened becomes “history.” But history keeps patience in that it can wait for events to take place as a consequence of certain words, actions, policies and programmes. We Indians are proud of our past in that the Vedas, the Upanishads, the Gita are at once profound, sublime, practicable and comprehensive yet we are not vainglorious to claim that these are written by God Himself. Our thinkers, seers and writers are inspired beings and were also had been study, wide experience, convincing logic, deep reflection and requisite dynamism. Knowledge is the “third eye”. And it is helpful in intellectual humility rather than arrogance. Education itself is an enlightening experience. Education is the process of facilitating learning, or the acquisition of knowledge skills, values, beliefs and habits. Every era has its own educational method. Educational methods include storytelling, discussion, teaching, training and directed research. Education helps us to set a goal and go ahead by working on that throughout the life. Proper education identifies our career goals and teachers to live in more civilized manner. The bright future of the individual, society, community and country depends on the education system getting followed. Education plays a paramount role in the overall growth of a person.

Education in the Buddha period aimed at ‘Nirvana’ (Salvation). The universities of Taxila, Nalanda, Vikramashila, Jagdala etc., were renounced centres of higher learning which attracted students from Tibet, Korea, and Java. Education was open “For all” a concept of the present centuries and that too in some countries only. It seems that the Vedic and Brahmanic education covered a period from 5000 B.C. to 200 B.C. Many ills had crept into the Brahmanic system of education – domination of religion and ritualism, emphasis upon philosophy, deprivation of right to education for the shudras and women and tendency to hamper logical and rational thought were the serious ills. There was a socio-religious vacuum. The society felt that life for it was aimless. To fill the socio-religious and educational vacuum, appeared the Buddha.

The greatness of Lord Buddha lies in benefiting from the Vedic traditions. Buddhism added to the Vedic traditions his own overpowering message of Buddhism. Buddhism outlined aims of education, institutions of learning for realizing the aims, role of pupils and teachers and curriculum. Buddhist education aimed both individual and social, academic and vocational, earthly and vocational. The aims were individual because great care was taken in the formation of character and development of personality. Physical, moral, and intellectual aspects were looked after. Celibacy, simple food, purification of the soul, sympathy and pity were stressed.

Individual were stressed and were given training in the monasteries to understand the grief of others. Through religious education one prepared oneself for salvation (nirvana). The aims were comprehensive. Aims were heavenly in that Buddhist education was thoroughly in formed by the Buddhist culture and ethos. Aims were vocational because curriculum included agriculture, dairy farming, art, craft, handwork, commerce, military training, spinning and weaving for worthwhile living. Students were social as the educational system during this time was a good deal of interaction and students were taught collectively. This leads to be a great system to the society.

The metaphysics of Buddhist, philosophy of education was the primacy of mind in all men's thought and action : path to self-realisation lay through purity of mind. The epistemology was to apply the standards of reason and logic to all philosophies, ideas and practices. The aims of Buddhist educational system were comprehensive. The student was then called 'Shraman'. Education was imported in Maths, Vihars and Monasteries. Monasteries were the main centres of learning. Students approached the teachers and requested them for being educated. The teacher accepted him as his student and he was not accountable to any other teacher (Bhikshus). At the age of eight, the students started with first ordination ceremony called Pabhja which meant going out. The student renounced his family and worldly relationship. He didn't belong to any caste after being admitted to a monastery. He got his shaved fully and put on yellow clothes. The ceremony continued for twelve years, after his education twelve years, the student at twenty underwent the upasampada ceremony. The sharamam was presented before all other monks of the monastery. He was entitled to the full membership of the monastery and remained a monk for good. The availability of universities demonstrated the democratic feelings of those times. Vihars education centres were emerged wherever Buddhist monasteries or vihars were established. Higher centres of learning, equivalent to universities, developed at Ballabhi, Jagdala, Nadia, Nalanda, Odantpuri, Vikrumshila and Taxila. Nalanda University was the most famous. There were chancellors for running administrative and academic work. Bhikshus, the eminent Bhikshus were the incharges of the Buddhist universities. Incharge Bhikshus was known for his age, learning and character. The universities were housed in huge buildings. Students from Java, Tibet, Korea and China came to study in these universities. India of even those times had international reputation.

The pupils were expected non-violence, no temptation, no impurity of character, no lies, to be teetotaler, not be a glutton, not to speak ill of anybody, be generous, not to be luxurious, free from greed and not to take interest in music, dance, play, show etc.

The student obeyed none else but his teacher. Disciples were under the firm control of their teacher students served their teacher, arranging water, arranging food, cleaning the utensils going out for alms with him. The monks and students followed the principle of "simple living and high thinking." Earlier women were not allowed to join the monasteries but later on they were allowed with many restrictions for women education, Buddhism wasn't favourable.

In all, Buddhist education was democratic and had international appeal. Buddhist philosophy is based on four noble truths- all existence involves suffering, suffering is caused by desire, suppression of desire leads to its extinction and deliverance. Buddhist educational system aims individual and social, academic and vocational and earthly and heavenly progress. Teachers were monks who were well read, of high moral character and kind and fair. But later on, Buddhist education degenerated because of arbitrariness and corruption.

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