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Dhamma and the Transformation of the Self**Dr. Mitima Sachdeva***Assistant Professor, Amity Institute of Education, Amity University, Lucknow Campus, (U.P.) India***Abstract**

“The Buddha and his Dhamma” is a profound expression of Buddhism that presents the life and teachings of the founder Gautam Buddha. It considers that beliefs and ideas are important, to gain some harmony between present and past experience and to reach a position which shall satisfy the demands of feeling and reflection and give confidence for facing the future. The Dhamma, the truth taught by the Buddha, is uncovered gradually through sustained practice. The Buddha made clear many times that Awakening does not occur like a bolt out of the blue to the untrained and unprepared mind. Rather, it culminates a long journey of many stages.

The paper would explore the fact that, Does experiencing Dhamma lead to a transformation in a person’s meaning system, as measured by spiritual strivings? Would experiencing a spiritual transformation predict an increase in virtues in an individual?

Key Words: Dhamma, Transformation, Self.

Religion transforms the individual, brings positive changes and plays a role in changing “goals, feelings, attitudes, and behaviors”.

Dhamma the religion propounded by Buddha and explained by Dr B.R Ambedkar in his book, “The Buddha and his Dhamma” is a profound expression of Buddhism that presents the life and teachings of the founder Gautam Buddha. It considers that beliefs and ideas are important, to gain some harmony between present and past experience and to reach a position which shall satisfy the demands of feeling and reflection and give confidence for facing the future.

Buddhism at its best is not about monastic’s withdrawing from "the world" in order to attain some quiescent nirvana detached from the suffering of others, nor is the main

responsibility of Buddhist laity to "make merit" by supporting those monastics. Moreover, little of what follows is unique to Buddhism; anyone familiar with it will be able to identify profound parallels to beliefs and practices in all the religious traditions, For Example the most important Buddhist term is *dukkha* ("suffering" in the broadest sense). Shakyamuni (the original historical Buddha) emphasized that his only concern was understanding *dukkha* and ending it. To put an end to one's *dukkha*, however, one needs to "wake up" ("the Buddha" literally means "the Awakened") and realize *anatta* "not-self"—one's lack of any substantial self. For Buddhism, the self is the ultimate source of *dukkha*.

What is Dhamma?

Dharma (Sanskrit) or *dhamma* (Pali) is a word Buddhists use often. The word often is defined as "the teachings of the Buddha," but don't think of dharma as just a label for Buddhist doctrines. It means something more than that.

The word *dharma* comes from the ancient religions of India and is found in Hindu and Jain teachings as well as Buddhist. Its original meaning is something like "natural law." Its root word, *dham*, means "to uphold" or "to support." In this broad sense, common to many religious traditions, dharma is that which upholds the natural order of the universe. This meaning is part of the Buddhist understanding also.

Dharma also supports the practice of those who are in harmony with it. On this level, dharma refers to ethical conduct and righteousness. In some Hindu traditions, dharma is used to mean "sacred duty."

The Dhamma, the truth taught by the Buddha, is uncovered gradually through sustained practice. The Buddha made clear many times that Awakening does not occur like a bolt out of the blue to the untrained and unprepared mind. Rather, it culminates a long journey of many stages.

Just as the ocean has a gradual shelf, a gradual slope, a gradual inclination, with a sudden drop-off only after a long stretch, in the same way this Doctrine and Discipline (*dhamma-vinaya*) has a gradual training, a gradual performance, a gradual progression, with a penetration to gnosis only after a long stretch.

Dhamma means:

- To maintain purity of life,
- To reach perfection in life,
- To live in nibbana,
- To give up craving,
- To believe that all compound things are impermanent
- To believe that Karma is the instrument of moral order.

How Dhamma Transforms the Self?

Dhamma transforms the individual and brings positive changes within his spiritual meaning system. This is true if we see the composition of dhamma.

Purity of life has to be maintained by thoughts, actions, and speech. Here one needs to abstain from falsehood, be courteous at heart without any harsh feelings for others.

To Reach Perfection in Life is to be achieved by realizing in this very life himself, knowing it thoroughly--the heart's release, the release by insight, to achieve patience and instigate others to generate it. Morality, concentration in the endeavors, working with full vigor, contemplating are some ways leading towards perfection in the self.

To live in Nibbana means that nothing can give real happiness as Nibbana, So said the Buddha. Of all the doctrines taught by the Buddha, the doctrine of Nibbana is the most central one. It means the salvation of the soul. Nibbana is the exercise of control over the flames of the passions which are always on fire, the fire of hatred, infatuation; with

birth, old age, death, sorrow, lamentation, misery, grief and despair anger and delusion. It etymologically means out blowing, extinguishing the outbursts.

To Give up Craving is that contentment is the highest form of wealth man should not allow himself to be overpowered by greed which has no limits. Greed creates discontentment and leads the individual to follow the wrong path thus adding to his sufferings in the life. He should be well satisfied with whatever he receives and consider it as the gift of GOD.

To believe that all compound things are impermanent is a self explainable doctrine as it states that if things were not subject to continual change, but were permanent and unchangeable, the evolution of all of life from one kind to the other, and the development of living things, would come to a dead stop.

To believe that Karma is the instrument of Moral Order, states that there is a certain

order by which seeds grow into trees, and trees yield fruits, and fruits give seeds. Buddha wanted to convey was that the effect of the deed was bound to follow the deed, as surely as night follows day. Thus the Law of Kamma has to do only with the question of general moral order. It has nothing to do with the fortunes or misfortunes of an individual. It is concerned with the maintenance of the moral order in the universe. It is because of this that the law of Kamma is a part of Dhamma which adds to the meaning system of the individual self.

Thus the paper has tried to explore some facts that, experiencing Dhamma lead to a transformation in a person's meaning system, as measured by spiritual strivings, and that experiencing a spiritual transformation certainly predicts an increase in virtues in an individual.

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