

An Analysis of the Key Concepts of the Core Dharma in Buddhism

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Abstract

This academic article examines the key concepts of core Dharma in Buddhism, focusing on its foundational teachings and historical development in northern India. The study explores how Buddhism emerged as a critical response to prevailing Hindu practices by rejecting ritualism and the caste system while emphasizing internal transformation and moral character development. The article investigates how Buddhism flourished through the establishment of monastic communities, royal patronage, and scholastic centers, particularly exemplified by institutions like Nalanda University from the 4th to 6th centuries CE. The analysis highlights the enduring relevance of Buddhist core teachings through their emphasis on the Four Noble Truths (cattāri ariyasaccāni), the Noble Eightfold Path (Ariya Atṭhaṅgika Magga), and concepts of impermanence, interdependence, and non-self, which provide a practical framework for addressing human suffering and achieving spiritual liberation. These teachings remain significant today as they offer insights into the nature of suffering, provide practical guidance for leading a meaningful life, promote mindfulness and wisdom, and emphasize compassion and ethical behavior.

Keyword: Key Concept; Core Dharma of Buddhism; Buddhist Perspective.

Introduction

Buddhism, which emerged around the 5th Century B.C. in northern India, developed amid a rich tapestry of intellectual and religious activity. This major world religion arose in response to significant societal and spiritual dynamics, including:

a) Social and Religious Upheaval:

The era was marked by dissatisfaction with traditional practices and a quest for more inclusive spiritual paths. The teachings of the Buddha provided alternatives to the dominant religious structures, appealing to those disillusioned by Brahmanism, Jainism, and various ascetic traditions. Engaging in a philosophical debate, Buddha rejected both ritualistic practices and extreme asceticism, promoting an individualized path to spiritual liberation (Nyanaponika Thera, 1996)

b) Intellectual Exchange:

The period was characterized by vibrant intellectual discourse, with interactions between ascetics, scholars, and the ruling classes. This exchange of ideas fostered the development of diverse philosophical systems that shaped the intellectual landscape of ancient India and influenced the evolution of Buddhism. The Buddha engaged with existing philosophies, critiquing and incorporating their elements into his unique teachings (Harvey, 2013)

c) Sangha and Monasticism:

The Buddha established the Sangha, a community of monks and nuns dedicated to practicing and propagating his teachings. Governed by Vinaya, this community emphasized ethical conduct and discipline, reflecting commitment to spiritual advancement and the pursuit of enlightenment.

d) Patronage:

The growth of Buddhism was supported by rulers and wealthy patrons who funded monasteries, temples, and festivals, thus facilitating its institutionalization. This patronage was often driven by the desire for spiritual merit and social prestige, as authorities sought legitimacy by aligning themselves with Buddhist teachings.

Through this introduction, the work aims to explore the origins and evolution of Buddhism, highlighting the Buddha's teachings and his criticisms of prevalent Hindu practices, particularly the ritualistic aspects of the Vedic tradition. The Buddha sought to foster a new human ideal, advocating self-reliance and personal responsibility in the quest for liberation.

1. Key Teachings of Buddhism

The teachings of the Buddha remain profoundly relevant in today's context, with foundational concepts that offer insights into leading meaningful lives as 1. The Four Noble Truths (Ariyasacca) consisting of (1.1) Life is suffering (Dukkha). (1.2) The cause of suffering is craving. (1.3) The cessation of suffering arises from the cessation of craving. (1.4) The path to liberation is the Eightfold Path, which includes Right Understanding, Intention, Speech, Action, Livelihood, Effort, Mindfulness, and Concentration (Saṃyutta Nikāya 56.11: SN 56.11, in Dharmacakkappavattana Sutta) 2. The Three Marks of Existence (Pāli: Tilakkhaṇa; Sanskrit: Trilakṣaṇa) are following (2.1) Impermanence (Anicca): Everything is transient and subject to change (Anicca Sutta – Saṃyutta Nikāya 22.15) (2.2) Suffering (Dukkha): Suffering is inherent in existence (Dukkha Sutta – Saṃyutta Nikāya 22.59) (2.3) Non-Self (Anatta): There is no permanent, unchanging self (Anattalakkhaṇa Sutta – Saṃyutta Nikāya 22.59) 3. Ethical Principles: The Buddha emphasized ethical conduct (Sila), rejecting harm, and promoting kindness and compassion as essential for harmonious living (Dharmacakkappavattana Sutta (Saṃyutta Nikāya 56.11; Magga Saṃyutta (Saṃyutta Nikāya 45). 4. Rejection of Vedic Norms: Buddhism diverges from Vedic traditions in essential ways, then Buddhism denies the existence of a permanent self (Atman) and a transcendent reality (Brahman). The Buddha analyzes the five aggregates (pañcakkhandha) and shows that none of them can be regarded as "self" (attā) "This is not mine, this I am not, this is not myself." (netam mama, nesohamasmi, na meso attā)— (SN 22.59). The Buddha explicitly rejects the eternalist view of a self (sassatavāda) and any metaphysical identity with a transcendent essence (i.e., Brahman). "I do not teach that the self is real and unchanging. That is not what I teach." He critiques the view that the self is identical with, or separate from, the body/mind (Alagaddūpama Sutta, Majjhima Nikāya 22). (5) Ritual Practices: The Buddha critiqued reliance on rituals for spiritual progress, focusing instead on personal experience and moral living. (6) Caste System: Buddhism challenged societal hierarchies, advocating equal potential for enlightenment across all social classes as said Vāseṭṭha Sutta in a dialogue between two Brahmins, the Buddha declares "Not by birth is one a Brahmin or non-Brahmin, but by deeds is one a Brahmin." — Na jaccā brāhmaṇo hoti, na jaccā hoti abrahmaṇo; kammanā brāhmaṇo hoti, kammanā hoti abrahmaṇo.— Sutta Nipāta 3.9 / Vāseṭṭha Sutta) and in Assalāyana Sutta, the Buddha debates with a Brahmin named Assalāyana and argues that "all castes are capable of ethical conduct, wisdom, and spiritual progress, and that no caste has a monopoly on purity."

(Majjhima Nikāya 93), appears also in Ambattha Sutta refers that “the Buddha confronts a Brahmin student who looks down on others due to caste. The Buddha traces the origin of Brahmins to common ancestors and denounces caste pride, affirming moral virtue as the true basis of nobility” (Dīgha Nikāya 3). (7) Middle Way: The Buddha’s Middle Way promotes a balanced approach between indulgence and extreme asceticism.

Thus, Buddhism evolved as a response to significant societal changes, intellectual currents, the establishment of a cohesive monastic community, and the patronage of various leaders. The teachings of the Buddha highlight a path of ethical living, compassion, and a deep understanding of suffering-principles that continue to resonate in contemporary discourse.

2. Overview of Core Idea

The Buddhist school developed within this milieu, and in order to understand what is original and what is developed, it is necessary to contextualize the original teachings of Buddha. This work also mentions that the approach of examining the characteristic features of Buddhism as they gradually evolved in ancient India has not been sufficiently taken into consideration. This work states that the principal aim of the depict Buddha and his immediate disciples within the context of the society and the world in which they lived, and to make an attempt to ascertain a clear understanding of Buddhism in its original teachings (Harvey, 1990). Therefore, it can be inferred that the original teachings of Buddha may include principles such as self-reliance, freedom from prejudices, and a clear understanding of Buddhism in its original teaching as mentioned above. The growth and development of Buddhism were deeply intertwined with the intellectual and religious expansion that occurred during that time (Hirakawa, and Groner, 1993). Buddhism was founded by Siddhartha Gautama, also known as the Buddha, in the 5th century BCE. At that time, northern India was a diverse and culturally vibrant region, where various religious and philosophical traditions coexisted. Hinduism, Jainism, and several other philosophical schools were prevalent, creating a rich atmosphere of intellectual and religious exploration. Northern India experienced significant intellectual and social changes during the time of the Buddha. This period, known as the “Axial Age,” witnessed a shift from traditional Vedic rituals and Brahmanical dominance to a more critical and philosophical approach. People were questioning the nature of existence, morality, and the role of ritualistic practices. This intellectual climate provided a fertile ground for the emergence of new religious and philosophical ideas, including Buddhism (Tyagi, n.d.). Buddhism gained significant support from various ruling dynasties and monarchs in northern India. Kings such as Ashoka the Great (3rd century BCE.) played a crucial role in promoting and spreading Buddhism across the region and beyond. Royal patronage provided resources, protection, and institutional support, facilitating the growth and establishment of monastic communities and the construction of sacred sites (Albahari, 2006). The intellectual expansion in northern India also witnessed the composition of numerous Buddhist texts and scriptures. The early Buddhist teachings, known as the Tripitaka (Three Baskets), were codified, and preserved in written form. Through these intellectual, religious, and social dynamics, Buddhism grew and developed within the northern Indian context. It engaged in philosophical debates, benefited from royal patronage, established centers of learning, and produced a rich literary tradition. Over time, Buddhism spread to other parts of Asia, adapting to different cultural contexts, and giving rise to various schools and traditions.

3. Spreading out of Dharma

Buddhism developed and thrived within the intellectual and religious expansion of northern India in several ways. Buddhism emerged as a critique of the dominant Vedic ritualism and Brahmanical orthodoxy of ancient India. It challenged the authority of the Brahmin priests and questioned the efficacy of elaborate rituals. The Buddha emphasized personal experience, ethical conduct, and introspection as the path to liberation, offering an alternative to the ritualistic practices of the time. Northern India was home to various sramanic traditions that advocated renunciation, asceticism, and meditation as means of spiritual liberation. Buddhism incorporated elements of these traditions into its teachings. The Buddha himself was influenced by ascetics and incorporated practices like meditation, mindfulness, and ethical living into his teachings. Buddhism engaged in intellectual exchange with other religious and philosophical schools prevalent in northern India. The establishment of monastic communities played a crucial role in the development of Buddhism. Northern India witnessed the growth of Buddhist monastic institutions that provided a structured environment for study, practice, and preservation of Buddhist teachings. Monasticism allowed for the transmission of knowledge, the development of specialized texts, and the growth of a scholarly tradition within Buddhism. Buddhism received significant support from rulers and monarchs in northern India. Prominent kings, such as Ashoka the Great, Kushan Empire who played an important role in the spread and embraced Buddhism and actively promoted its teachings. Royal patronage provided resources, protection, and institutional support, leading to the construction of monasteries, the sponsorship of Buddhist councils, and the dissemination of Buddhist teachings across the region. Northern India became a center of learning during this period, with renowned institutions like Nalanda, Taxila, and Vikramashila attracting scholars from various traditions. These centers facilitated the intellectual development of Buddhism, allowing for the exploration and elaboration of Buddhist philosophy, logic, and epistemology. Buddhist scholars engaged in rigorous debates and produced influential treatises and commentaries. In this period there were so many students who had come to study at Nalanda University approximately from the early 4th century CE to early 6th century CE. (Hodge, 2005). Northern India witnessed the translation of Buddhist texts from various Indic languages into Sanskrit, which was the lingua franca of intellectual discourse at the time. This translation movement facilitated the dissemination of Buddhist ideas across different regions and cultural contexts, contributing to the expansion of Buddhism beyond northern India. Buddhist scholars and monks made significant literary contributions during this period. They composed texts, commentaries, and treatises that expounded on the teachings of the Buddha, clarified complex philosophical concepts, and addressed contemporary intellectual debates. These works helped codify and systematize Buddhist thought and contributed to the intellectual growth of Buddhism. Overall, Buddhism developed within the intellectual and religious expansion of northern India by engaging in critical dialogue, incorporating elements of existing traditions, establishing monastic communities, receiving royal patronage, fostering scholastic centers, translating texts, and producing a rich literary tradition. These factors contributed to the growth, refinement, and dissemination of Buddhism across the region and beyond.

4. Concept framework

A Foundational Guide to Contemporary Living

This work endeavors to present a comprehensive and nuanced exploration of the concept of Dharma in Buddhism, with particular emphasis on its core teachings. The aim is not only to elucidate the fundamental principles of the Buddha's doctrine but also to reveal their enduring relevance as guiding tools for navigating life within the modern social context. The presentation follows a structured framework, designed to both preserve the original essence of the teachings and convey their philosophical depth in an accessible yet refined manner.

4.1 The Core Foundation of the Buddha's Teachings At the heart of Buddhism lies the Dharma—a term that encompasses the teachings, truth, and the natural law revealed through the enlightenment of Siddhartha Gautama, the historical Buddha. Delivered over 2,500 years ago, these teachings form the bedrock of Buddhist philosophy and practice. They are not merely historical relics but living principles that continue to inspire individuals in their pursuit of ethical living, inner peace, and wisdom. The Dharma embodies the Buddha's insight into the nature of reality, offering a path to liberation from suffering through mindful engagement with life's impermanence, interdependence, and moral causality (Rahula, 1974).

4.2 The Four Noble Truths: The Pillars of Insight The Buddha's first and foundational teaching following his enlightenment was the proclamation of the Four Noble Truths (Cattāri Ariyasaccāni), a profound framework through which one may understand and transcend the existential condition of suffering. This doctrine forms the cornerstone of all subsequent Buddhist thought and practice:

1. The Truth of Suffering This truth acknowledges the pervasive nature of suffering, discontent, and unease inherent in conditioned existence. It is not limited to overt pain but includes the subtle dissatisfaction that arises from change, loss, and the impermanence of pleasure.

2. The Truth of the Origin of Suffering Here, the Buddha identifies craving (taṇhā)—particularly the desires for sensory pleasure, existence, and non-existence—as the root cause of suffering. This craving leads to attachment and, ultimately, to the cycle of rebirth and dissatisfaction.

3. The Truth of the Cessation of Suffering Liberation becomes possible when craving is completely extinguished. This cessation (nirodha) is not mere annihilation but the realization of Nibbāna, a state of unconditioned peace, freedom, and clarity.

4. The Truth of the Path Leading to the Cessation of Suffering The path to liberation is systematically laid out in the Noble Eightfold Path, which encompasses ethical conduct (sīla), mental cultivation (samādhi), and wisdom (paññā). This path offers a holistic approach to transforming one's life through right understanding, intention, speech, action, livelihood, effort, mindfulness, and concentration (Sumedho, 1992).

The Four Noble Truths not only describe the human condition but also serve as a diagnostic and prescriptive model for spiritual development. They invite both contemplation and action, encouraging a direct engagement with life's challenges and a deep commitment to inner transformation.

These teachings remain relevant today as they offer insights into the nature of suffering, provide practical guidance for leading a meaningful life, promote mindfulness and wisdom, and emphasize compassion and ethical behavior. By applying these teachings, individuals can cultivate greater self-awareness, find inner peace, and navigate the challenges of life with wisdom and compassion (Bhikkhu Bodhi, 1999).

5. The main aim of Buddhism

The aim of Buddhism is often described as the attainment of liberation from suffering and the realization of enlightenment or awakening. This ultimate goal is known by different names, such as nirvana, nibbana, or moksha, depending on the Buddhist tradition. The primary aim of Buddhism is to end the cycle of suffering and achieve liberation from the cycle of birth and death (Samsara). Buddhism teaches that all existence is characterized by suffering (Dukkha), which arises from craving, attachment, and ignorance. The aim of Buddhism is to understand the nature of suffering, its causes, and the path to its cessation. The attainment of liberation or enlightenment is often associated with the realization of the Four Noble Truths and the Noble Eightfold Path. By recognizing the truth of suffering, understanding the causes of suffering, and following the Eightfold Path, the individuals can gradually overcome craving and attachment, leading to the cessation of suffering and the realization of liberation. Liberation in Buddhism is not seen as an annihilation of self but as a transcendence of suffering and the realization of one's true nature. It is often described as a state of profound peace, wisdom, and freedom from the limitations of conditioned existence. It involves the cultivation of insight, wisdom, compassion, and ethical conduct (Phra Brahmagunabhorn, 1998).

Additionally, Buddhism emphasizes the aim of benefiting others. Once an individual has attained liberation or enlightenment, there is a strong emphasis on compassion and the commitment to alleviate the suffering of others. This includes actively practicing loving-kindness, compassion, and engaging in compassionate actions to support the well-being and liberation of all beings. It's important to note that different Buddhist traditions may have varying interpretations and approaches to the ultimate aim of Buddhism. However, the central goal of ending suffering, achieving liberation, and cultivating compassion remains consistent across different schools and lineages of Buddhism.

The Values of Life in the View of Buddhism: A Doctrinal and Practical Perspective

In the Buddhist worldview, the values that guide human life are not merely ethical prescriptions but profound existential insights rooted in the Dharma. These values are intimately connected to the central teachings of the Buddha and serve as practical tools for attaining inner peace, spiritual maturity, and harmonious coexistence in society. The following exposition delineates key life values in Buddhism, their doctrinal foundations, and their real-life applications.

1. Impermanence (Anicca): Embracing the Transitory Nature of Life

The recognition of impermanence is fundamental to Buddhist philosophy. All conditioned phenomena—be it thoughts, emotions, relationships, or material possessions—are in a state of constant flux. This realization, deeply embedded in the Three Marks of Existence (Tilakkhaṇa), fosters non-attachment and liberates the mind from clinging, which is the root of suffering (Dukkha) (Rahula, 1974). In facing loss, failure, or aging, one who internalizes impermanence learns to accept change with grace. For example, instead of resisting the natural dissolution of a relationship, one may view it as a part of life's flow, thereby reducing emotional turmoil and fostering equanimity.

2. Understanding Suffering (Dukkha) and Its Cessation: A Transformative Insight

Buddhism teaches that life, in its ordinary form, is marked by suffering—not merely physical pain but a deeper existential dissatisfaction. However, the Buddha's doctrine does not stop at diagnosis; it offers a path to liberation through understanding the causes of suffering, primarily craving (Taṇhā) and ignorance (Avijjā), and transcending them via the Four Noble Truths and the Noble Eightfold Path (Sumedho, 1992). When one experiences envy or frustration due to unfulfilled desires, reflecting on the origin of that suffering (craving) can open the door to letting go. By practicing contentment and mindfulness, one moves toward inner peace.

3. Compassion (Karunā) and Loving-Kindness (Mettā): The Heart of Buddhist Ethics

Among the highest virtues in Buddhism is compassion—the active wish to alleviate the suffering of others. Closely aligned is loving-kindness, which entails unconditional goodwill toward all beings. These qualities arise from the understanding of interconnectedness and the absence of a permanent self (Anattā) (Harvey, 2013). Volunteering to support the elderly, forgiving someone who has caused harm, or simply showing sincere interest in another's suffering are manifestations of Karunā. Cultivating these attitudes softens the heart and nurtures wholesome relationships.

4. Ethical Conduct (Sīla): The Foundation of Spiritual and Social Harmony

Ethical living is not merely rule-following but a conscious commitment to act in ways that do not harm oneself or others. The Buddha emphasized moral precepts such as refraining from killing, stealing, and false speech. These are integral to the Eightfold Path—particularly Right Speech, Right Action, and Right Livelihood—and create the groundwork for mental clarity and spiritual insight (Gethin, 1998). Choosing honesty over deceit, even in small matters, upholds one's integrity. A professional who refuses to engage in corrupt practices exemplifies the Buddhist ideal of ethical livelihood, contributing to a more just society.

5. Mindfulness (Sati): The Practice of Present-Moment Awareness

Mindfulness is a central contemplative practice that fosters deep awareness of bodily actions, feelings, thoughts, and mental states. It is through mindfulness that individuals gain insight into the impermanent and selfless nature of existence, weakening attachment and aversion (Nyanaponika Thera, 1996). While engaging in routine tasks—eating, walking, conversing, bringing full awareness to the present moment can reduce mental distraction and anxiety. Mindfulness also enhances emotional regulation and interpersonal sensitivity. The values upheld in Buddhism are not abstract ideals but living truths grounded in experiential wisdom. Whether through the contemplation of impermanence, the practice of compassion, or the cultivation of mindfulness, these values offer a transformative path toward personal liberation and social harmony. By integrating them into daily life, individuals can navigate modern challenges with clarity, serenity, and ethical depth—qualities that reflect the enduring relevance of the Buddha's teachings.

Human capability in Buddhist Perspectives

In the Buddhist perspectives, the concept of Human capability is highly regarded and emphasized. Buddhism recognizes the immense capacity and potential of human beings for growth, transformation, and the attainment of enlightenment.

The key points are regarding Human capability in the Buddhist perspective that Buddhism teaches that all sentient beings, including humans, possess Buddha nature; Buddha nature refers to the inherent potential for awakening and the realization of enlightenment that exists within every individual. It is the seed of wisdom and compassion that can be nurtured and developed through

practice. Buddhism emphasizes that human beings have the ability to transform their minds and overcome negative qualities such as ignorance, attachment, and aversion. Through the cultivation of virtues, ethical conduct, mindfulness, and wisdom, individuals can develop their positive qualities and liberate themselves from suffering. Buddhism recognizes free will and responsibility, and it is the importance of free will and personal responsibility in shaping one's actions, intentions, and ultimately, one's destiny (Neminda, 2019).

Individuals have the freedom to choose their thoughts, speech, and actions, and are responsible for the consequences that arise from them. This understanding empowers individuals to take ownership of their lives and make conscious choices that lead to positive outcomes. Buddhism also teaches that human beings have the potential to attain awakening, enlightenment, or liberation from the cycle of suffering. The teachings and practices offered by the Buddha provide guidance and methods for individuals to cultivate their potential, develop wisdom, and awaken to the true nature of reality. Buddhism places great emphasis on ethical conduct and the development of compassion. Human beings have the capacity to cultivate virtues such as generosity, kindness, patience, and empathy. By practicing ethical conduct and cultivating compassion, individuals can create harmonious relationships, contribute to the well-being of others, and work towards their own spiritual growth. Buddhism emphasizes the practice of mindfulness and self-awareness, which allows individuals to observe their thoughts, emotions, and actions with clarity and non-judgmental awareness. This self-awareness enables individuals to recognize their habitual patterns, overcome negative tendencies, and make positive changes in their lives.

In summary, the Buddhist perspective acknowledges and celebrates the inherent potential and power of human beings. It emphasizes the capacity for personal transformation, the cultivation of positive qualities, and the pursuit of awakening and liberation. By recognizing and nurturing this manpower, individuals can lead meaningful lives, alleviate suffering, and contribute to the well-being of themselves and others.

The way to practice having a happy life

Buddhism offers numerous values and principles that can be beneficial for life. Furthermore, Buddhism encompasses a set of core values that guide practitioners in leading a meaningful and ethical life. Then all human beings are urged to practice these methods properly: Compassion (Karuna): Compassion is at the heart of Buddhism. It involves developing a deep understanding and empathy for the suffering of others and actively working to alleviate it. Practicing compassion promotes kindness, generosity, and selflessness, creating harmonious relationships and fostering a sense of interconnectedness with all beings. As we know, Buddhism places great emphasis on cultivating compassion and loving-kindness towards oneself and others. Loving-kindness promotes a sense of genuine care, goodwill, and friendliness towards all beings, fostering harmonious relationships and a more compassionate society (Anālayo, 2015). Wisdom (Prajna): Wisdom in Buddhism refers to the understanding of the true nature of reality and the human conditions. It involves seeing beyond appearances and recognizing the impermanent and interconnected nature of existence. Cultivating wisdom enables individuals to make informed choices, overcome ignorance, and attain liberation from suffering. So, Buddhism encourages the cultivation of wisdom and insight into the nature of reality, including the impermanence of all things, the interconnectedness of beings, and the transient nature of suffering. This wisdom helps individuals gain a deeper understanding of life, develop clarity of thought, and make wiser decisions.

Mindfulness (Sati): Mindfulness is the practice of being fully present in the moment, non-judgmentally observing one's thoughts, feelings, and sensations. It involves cultivating an awareness of one's actions, intentions, and the impact that they have on oneself and others. Mindfulness enhances self-awareness, concentration, and emotional well-being, leading to greater clarity and insight. Then, Mindfulness also is a fundamental practice in Buddhism. It involves being fully present and aware of the present moment without judgment as said above. By cultivating mindfulness, individuals can develop greater self-awareness, reduce stress and anxiety, and deepen their experience of life.

Ethics (Sila): Ethical conduct forms the foundation of Buddhist practice. The Five Precepts and the Noble Eightfold Path provide guidelines for leading a virtuous life. These principles emphasize refraining from harming living beings, practicing honesty, avoiding sexual misconduct, abstaining from false speech, and abstaining from intoxicants that cloud the mind. Upholding ethical values fosters a sense of personal integrity, social harmony, and responsible behavior (Dar,2019). **Interconnectedness and Interdependence:** Buddhism emphasizes the interconnectedness and interdependence of all beings and phenomena. This understanding challenges a self-centered perspective and encourages a sense of responsibility towards the well-being of others and the environment. It promotes a holistic view of life and encourages compassionate action for the benefit of all.

Impermanence and Acceptance: Buddhism recognizes the impermanent and ever-changing nature of all things. This understanding helps individuals develop acceptance and adaptability in the face of life's challenges. By embracing impermanence, individuals can cultivate a deeper sense of contentment and let go of attachments that lead to suffering.

Generosity (Dana): Generosity is the practice of giving without attachment or expectation of personal gain. Buddhists believe that generosity cultivates positive karma and helps break the cycle of greed and attachment. By sharing material resources, time, and kindness, individuals promote a sense of interconnectedness, reduce self-centeredness, and contribute to the well-being of others.

Renunciation (Nekkhamma): Renunciation involves letting go of attachments and desires that lead to suffering. It does not mean rejecting worldly responsibilities or possessions but developing an inner detachment and understanding that true happiness lies beyond material pursuits. Practicing renunciation encourages contentment, simplicity, and the pursuit of spiritual growth over material accumulation. These Buddhist values are not exhaustive but provide a foundation for ethical conduct, personal development, and spiritual awakening. They encourage individuals to live a life of compassion, wisdom, and mindfulness, ultimately leading to the cessation of suffering and the realization of enlightenment.

Equanimity (Upekkha): Equanimity refers to maintaining an even-mindedness and emotional balance in the face of life's ups and downs. It involves accepting the impermanence and unpredictability of existence without clinging or aversion. Cultivating equanimity helps individuals develop resilience, inner peace, and the ability to navigate challenges with grace and acceptance (Pasadika, 2008).

Liberation from Suffering: Buddhism offers a path to liberation from suffering. The teachings of the Four Noble Truths and the Noble Eightfold Path provide a roadmap for overcoming suffering and attaining liberation (Nirvana). Buddhism teaches that by understanding the causes of suffering and following the path of ethical conduct, mental cultivation, and wisdom, individuals can gradually free themselves from the cycle of suffering and experience lasting peace and liberation.

These values of Buddhism can bring numerous benefits to life, including increased self-awareness, inner peace, compassion towards others, ethical living, and a deeper understanding of the nature of reality. They provide a framework for personal growth, harmonious relationships, and a meaningful and purposeful existence.

New Knowledge

Practical Applications and Future Directions of the New Knowledge on Buddhism's Distinctive Ethos

The newly acquired knowledge—centering on Buddhism's doctrinal, philosophical, and sociocultural differentiation from Hinduism—offers profound implications for multiple contemporary fields. It illuminates not only the historical evolution of Buddhist thought but also its unique emphasis on non-theism, personal responsibility, and cultural adaptability. These qualities render Buddhism not a static doctrine but a dynamic, living tradition with transformative potential across diverse domains.

1. Practical Applications Across Disciplines

Religious and Comparative Philosophy. The non-theistic nature of Buddhism and its critique of rigid metaphysical absolutism mark a crucial philosophical departure from Vedic orthodoxy. This has direct relevance for modern philosophical inquiry, particularly in comparative religion, ethics, and existential studies, where Buddhism offers a viable framework for spiritual development without reliance on a divine creator. In secular educational contexts, this model promotes a moral philosophy grounded in mindfulness, introspection, and ethical autonomy.

2. Education and Curriculum Development

The emphasis on intellectual discourse, monastic scholarship, and the cultivation of wisdom (*paññā*) presents a valuable paradigm for educational institutions. Integrating Buddhist-inspired pedagogical methods—such as dialogical learning, self-reflection, and experiential inquiry—can enhance critical thinking and moral development in both religious and secular curricula. Such integration fosters holistic learning that unites intellectual rigor with ethical depth.

3. Psychology and Mental Health

Buddhism's insight into self-transformation, detachment, and the alleviation of suffering provides substantial contributions to modern psychology, especially in cognitive-behavioral therapy (CBT), mindfulness-based stress reduction (MBSR), and trauma-informed care. The Buddhist understanding of the mind as trainable and impermanent aligns with current neuroscience findings, offering practical techniques for emotional regulation and psychological resilience (Kabat-Zinn, 2003).

4. Cultural Studies and Global Ethics

The adaptability of Buddhist teachings across diverse cultural contexts demonstrates its potential as a model for intercultural dialogue and global ethics. Its inherent flexibility allows it to address contemporary concerns such as environmental sustainability, non-violence, and social equity—making it a valuable resource for transnational moral frameworks in the era of globalization.

5. Directions for Future Study

The insights drawn from the Buddhist divergence from Hindu orthodoxy and its philosophical elasticity open several fertile avenues for further scholarly exploration:

6. Buddhism and Postmodern Thought

Exploring the affinities between Buddhist epistemology and postmodern critiques of objective truth, identity, and grand narratives. Such an inquiry could bridge classical Buddhist thought with contemporary philosophical discourses (Loy, 2008).

7. Gender and Ordination in Monastic Communities

A deeper study into the role of women in early Buddhist sanghas, their subsequent marginalization, and the current efforts toward bhikkhuni ordination can illuminate ongoing debates about gender equity within religious institutions.

8. Buddhism in Secular Societies

Investigating how Buddhist principles are reinterpreted in secular, non-religious contexts (such as mindfulness in corporate and clinical settings) can offer insight into both the integrity and transformation of traditional teachings.

9. Cross-Cultural Transmission and Adaptation

Research into how Buddhist doctrines were recontextualized as they entered various regions—such as Tibet, China, Japan, and the West—can reveal the mechanisms through which religious ideas evolve while retaining core ethical commitments.

This new understanding of Buddhism not only deepens historical and doctrinal knowledge but also opens practical pathways for its integration into education, philosophy, psychology, and intercultural ethics. It underscores Buddhism's role not as a static belief system but as a dynamic tradition that continues to shape, and be shaped by, the evolving human condition.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the Buddha's critique of prevalent religious and philosophical practices of his time was centered around promoting inner transformation, ethical conduct, wisdom, and mindfulness as the path to spiritual liberation. He rejected external rituals and sacrificial practices, emphasizing that they do not lead to true liberation. Additionally, the Buddha challenged the caste system and advocated for a society where one's worth is determined by actions and character rather than social position. The absolute authority of the Vedas was questioned by the Buddha, who encouraged his followers to rely on personal experiences and critical thinking rather than blindly accepting dogmas. He rejected the concept of an eternal and unchanging self (Atman) proposed in Hindu philosophy, teaching instead the impermanence and interconnectedness of all phenomena, including the self. The Buddha's teachings also emphasized non-violence and compassion towards all living beings. He taught that harming others ultimately harms oneself and that true peace can only be achieved through non-violent means. Moreover, the Buddha highlighted the importance of recognizing the impermanence of all things and cultivating detachment from material possessions and worldly desires. These values, put forth by the Buddha, remain relevant in modern times and offer guidance for leading a more meaningful and fulfilling life. By focusing on inner transformation, ethical behavior, mindfulness, and compassion, individuals can strive for personal growth and contribute to a more harmonious and just society. The Buddha's teachings encourage us to question established beliefs, cultivate self-awareness, and live in harmony with the impermanent nature of existence. The most furthermore, men shall trust on their abilities as the power and potentials of human beings as mentioned above.

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