



## **Role of Buddhism on Indian culture**

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Indian history boasts to religious which had moved the hearts of uncountable people. Buddhism is one of them. It is a religion of kindness, humanity and equality. Its expansion and wide literature within Indian and abroad has hardly a parallel in the history of the world. One of the important factors for its appeal on a massive scale was its catholicity. From time immemorial India has remained the scared land where innumerable sages and saints, pertaining to different religious faith and convictions, have pursued their intensive penance for obtaining sublime salvation. This land, known for its perfect blending of natural beauty and mystic grandeur, proves to be a grand stage, where multitude of religious faiths thrives with ease. Among these religious faiths which held sway over India and the Indians Buddhism comes in the forefront. One of the soils of India lord Buddha lived and meditated. There are so scared Buddhist shrines scattered all over this land bearing mute testimony to the pervasive influence of the Buddha and his teaching on a vast population. The shrine still reverberate the tales of the Buddha who left his foot-prints not only on the soil but on the soul of mankind as well.

In the words of Rabindranath Tagore “like the religion of the Upanishads, Buddhism also generated two different currents; the one impersonal, preaching the self-abnegation of self through discipline, and the other personal sympathy for all creatures, and the other which is called the Mahayana, had its origin in the positive element contained in the Buddha’s teachings, which is immeasurable love. It could never, by any logic, find its reality in the emptiness of the truth less abyss.”

The great enshrinement marked the fact that India, by virtue of its tolerance and peace-loving character, entertained the growth of many religions on its soil, by imbibing the spirit and inherent dogmas present in them.

In the Nehru’s words-“The conception of the Buddha, to which innumerable loving hands have given shape in carved stone and marble and bronze, seems to symbolize the whole spirit of Indian thought, or one vital aspects of it. Seated on the lotus flower, calm and impassive above above passion and desire, beyond the storm and strife of this world, so far away, he seems, out of reach, unattainable. Yet again we look and behind those still unmoving features there is apassion and an emotion, strange and more powerful than the passions and emotion, we have known. His eyes are closed, but some power of the spirit looks out of them and a vital energy fills the frame. The ages roll by and Buddha seems not so far away at all; his voice whispers in our ears and tells us not to run away from the struggle but, calm-eyed, to face it, and to see in life ever greater opportunities of growth and advancement”

After four or five hundred years of comparative stagnation the present century is witnessing a resurgence of Buddhism in many parts of Asia. Buddhist revival in India began as an organized movement in 1891, when Anagarika Dharmapala founded the Maha Bodhi society.

The revival of Buddhism which has been going on in India for the last sixty years, but particularly during the past decade, is one of the strangest and most striking events in the history of religions. Nowhere else in the world does one find a parallel case of a religion being revived centuries after its disappearance, not by the command of a despot, not as the result of foreign conquest, but simply because it is the will of the people. Yet this is what is happening in India today. Less than a century ago Buddhism was unheard of in the land of its birth: if remembered at all, it was as an objectionable but fortunately extinct heterodoxy which had for a brief space space trouble the placid waters of Brahmanism. Today it is a household world. Over the chair of the president of the republic of India, in the house of the people the message dharmacakra-pravarttanaya, ‘to turn the wheel of the dharma’ flashes forth in electric light to the assembled representatives. At the very centre of the national flag as it floats over ten thousand public buildings, the same historic symbol reminds the nation not only to the sublime doctrine of the Buddha but also the dharmavijaya or conquest by Righteousness of Asoka similarly, the lion –capita of Asoka, representing the fearless proclamation on the Dharma to the four quarters of space, has been adopted as the official seal of the Republic. The Buddhist culture, as far as its manifestations in India are concerned, is an integral part of Indian culture.

India has recognized the importance of studies in Pali, Sanskrit, Tibetan and Chinese for a full understanding of Buddhism and the subject has been discussed elsewhere. These naturally have had their effect on writers in the modern Indian language, who either translated Buddhist works from the original or were inspired to write independent books that reflect Buddhist thought. Rabindranath Tagore's magnificent invocations of the Buddha, his drama, Natir puja, his narrative poem, Abhisar, are fine examples of the free handling of Buddhist themes. Other writers who work has been deeply influenced by Buddhism include yaspal, one of the greatest master of the modern Hindi short story and novel, Gurubaksh Singh, who Asia da chanana, a prose translation of Sir Edwin Arnold's The Light of Asia, is regarded as a classic in modern Punjabi literature, and kumaran Assan, one of the three greatest Malayalam poets of the twentieth century. But like hundreds of less well-known poets, dramatists and novelists, they are all Hindus who have been deeply moved by the sublimity of the Buddhist ideas and the beauty of its cultural manifestations. Only two or three Indian Buddhists have succeeded in carving niches for themselves in the temple of literary fame. Dharmananda Kosambi's numerous writings on Buddhist subjects described elsewhere have secured him a name in Marathi literature, while the writings of Rahul Sankrityayan and Anand Kausalyayan are outstanding contributions of Hindi belles-letters.

Though mere numbers have little culture significance, they do count politically, so that the political, unlike the cultural, implications of Buddhism in the modern world are necessarily confined to Asia in which continent alone it counts its adherents by the million. From what has been said above, it should already be clear that in the present, no less than in the past, Buddhism implies peace. But this peace is not a condition of unstable political equilibrium but rather a state of mind purified from all feelings of antagonism and thoroughly permeated by that impersonal and universal love which the Buddhists, call maïtre. Love, in the same of maitri, is the most powerful force in the world; but it is a neutral force. Whether one's love be directed towards concrete persons and things, or whether it be directed towards abstract, conceptions and ideas, if it causes one to feel hatred towards some other object, of a different kind, it is of a limited extent, and therefore, not true love but only a species of attachment. Similarly, if peace, which is a form of love, is not universal it is not peace at all.

Buddhism softly pacing through the centuries hand in hand with culture and peace. So far as the immediate future is concerned, there is little doubt that the tempo of Buddhist resurgence and revival throughout Asia, as well as that of its propagation all over the non-Buddhist world, will be accelerated with the passing of every remaining decade of the present century. The culture manifestation of Buddhism will bloom more and more profusely will the grey-green olive of peace, lovingly tended by the ever-stronger-growing hands of the Dharma, will put forth their black shining fruits for their healing of the nations in ever greater abundance.

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