

## BUDDHISM

### *Bis Millaa Hir Rahmaa Nir Raheem*

*(In the name of ALLAH, Ever Gracious, Ever Merciful.)*

These days in America Buddhism is gaining ground. For some inexplicable reasons, people from other religious faiths are being attracted to it. Its message of NIRVANA, peaceful existence and successful life, is appealing.

In order to understand the philosophy of Buddhism, we should first study the life of Buddha himself. Buddhism is today a major religion of the world. About 165 million people follow it. It is mostly prevalent today in Japan, China, Korea, Vietnam, Tibet and Ceylon (Sri Lanka). The irony of fate of Buddhist Religion is that it is almost non-existent in a country called India where it was born. 500 to 600 years before Jesus. So today it is about 2500 years old. Now only Dalai Lama is there as their spiritual leader, living in India as an exile from his native Tibet.

The name of the founder of Buddhism is "Siddharta Gautama." The word or title of Buddha was added to his name later on when he received the so called enlightenment. Buddhist religious books do not throw any light as to from where or from whom he got the enlightenment. Was it from within or without?

Siddharta Gautama was born at a place called 'Kapil Vas' which is in the foot hills of Himalayas near the Nepal-Indian border. His father 'Siddho Dhana' was a warrior king of a powerful royal family.

Siddharta Gautama enjoyed the luxuries, facilities and privileges of a prince in the royal palace. Within the palace he never saw a single dried or withered leaf or a petal. He never saw a face within the palace that was unhappy, sickly

or in pain. He did not know what was unhappiness, pain or difficulty.

At the age of 20, Siddharta Gautama was married to princess 'Yasodhra.' He had a child son named 'Rahula.' The small family was leading a satisfied, contented and well provided life in the palace.

Then one day, when he was 29, he has an occasion to go out of the palace. In the market place he happened to see a frail old man, then a weird sick man and finally a corpse of a dead man. These has a deep impact on his mind. For the first time he noticed what aging is what sickness is and what death is. He was mentally upset. What is this life all about. How one can get a release from the pangs and the miseries of this life. Release from sufferings of not only present life but also from the sufferings of repeated lives. He aspired to get a release from NIRVANA from the process of repeated lives and deaths—a concept or a doctrine found only in Buddhism and Hinduism. (This concept is not found in any other religion of the world).

Shaken and upset by seeing the stark realities of life, he decided to abandon his young wife and child son for ever. He abandoned them. He went to jungles and into wilderness,— never to return.

Let us stop here for a while. Was it proper for him to abandon his wife or child son? How would it be taken in America or in any civilized society? Can any man do this kind of a thing today and get away without being condemned or even prosecuted? A good religion should encourage and direct human beings towards proper behaviour and towards his duties and responsibilities to his family and to his country. Withdrawing from one's own family and loved ones in the name of searching the Truth, amounts to shirking personal responsibilities. It is cowardice. No other religion encourages this kind of inhuman behaviour.

The point to note is that he not only missed the natural love between the wife and husband but also shirked the prime responsibility of caring and raising his own child. Further, he also did not get the chance to lead a life of an ordinary man. Thus he had no experience in human dealings, in business or agriculture or statecraft. He did not get an opportunity to understand the miseries and expectations of an ordinary man in life, he did not have a chance to face the vicissitudes of life of an ordinary man. He remained inexperienced in the art of statecraft, in organizing and commanding standing armed force. He was not exposed to justice and judiciary, to mutual dealings among relatives and clan and society. It is therefore obvious that there is an absence of this experience in his teachings. It is due to these limitations that the religion and the teachings of Buddhism fall much short of human demands on body and soul. In Buddhism there are restrictions on food on eating and on living a full life. Earning for living, having a bank balance and raising a decent family are far off things to the Buddhist doctrine. A Buddhist monk lives and sustains himself on begging – a tradition undignified.

Let us now see what Siddharta Gautama did after he left his palace, wife and son. For the next six years he underwent an extreme sense of self punishment by denying himself every conceivable thing on earth which were there for his asking. He lived in filth and in starvation. It is said that he only ate a morsel of rice a day. He even pulled out the hairs of his beard one by one (that is why his statues always look clean shaved). After six years of wandering and self denial and self punishment, he came to realize that such forms of self denial and self punishment would never lead to enlightenment, he therefore abandoned this mode of living.

Then he decided to sit down on a meditation station and meditate without getting up till he gained enlightenment. It is said that days and nights passed before he

gained enlightenment. And what were the pointations of his enlightenment, he realized two things. First he learned that man could achieve NIRVANA (i.e. release from repeated birth— a concept taken from Hindu mythology). And secondly that complete happiness and peace can only come if man frees himself of all desires and worldly things. These were the two indications. One is a myth and the other is an impossibility.

For some reason, Gautam Buddha believed that life is filled with suffering alone. By running away from his palace, wife and son, he thought that he could escape from his unhappy existence. One is not certain whether Siddharta Gautam, after releasing and freeing himself of all desires and worldly things, died as a really happy man!

After the experience of “Enlightenment”, his name and fame spread widely. Many stories called JATA-KAAS spread out regarding his belief, religion and message. At this point of time people began to call him “BUDDHA”, the wise. People were impressed by his religious insight, compassion and even a magical influence on others.

For the rest of his life after achieving “Enlightenment”, he preached to his followers how to overcome suffering. He called his message as DHARMA. DHARMA means “saying the truth.” His first sermon was in a park near Banaras City in India to a group of fine men. Subsequently, he delivered more and more sermons in Northern India where more and more people were attracted to him. His humility, compassion, zeal to teach what he thought was right, were the remarkable features of his personality. His message was of his own creation. It was not a Divine Message.

Siddharta Gautama Buddha died at the age of 80. His body was buried as ashes just like a Hindu cremation. His ashes were distributed as relics far and wide.

Buddhist believe in three things; The personality of Buddha as God; His teachings are called DHARMA; and the Buddhist Religious Community is called SANGHA. These three are called the 3 Jewels. The analysis of Buddha's belief—called DHARMA are as follows:

1. He believed that life was filled with suffering. This to some extent is true but the entire life is not suffering. There are moments and periods of joy and happiness too.
2. Like Hindu belief, he also believed that human existence was a continuing cycle of death and re-births. This thinking was his own, not propagated by Judaism, Christianity or Islam. It is not even proven by modern science. So is it a fact or a fiction?
3. Each person's present life status was determined by his deeds in the previous life. If his deeds in the previous life were good he can get a birth as a human being. And if his deeds were not that good he maybe born as a monkey or a donkey.
4. Good deeds in previous life may even lead him to a birth as a wise, wealthy and well provided man.
5. Evil deeds in the previous life on the other hand may automatically lead him to a birth as a poor, sickly and ill-provided man.
6. This cycle of repeated births and deaths, according to him, would continue. Thus his pain and suffering will continue too.
7. According to him, this cycle of births and deaths would continue. This process could be broken by achieving NIRVANA and the sufferings of life could be reduced by eliminating all attachments to worldly life!

According to him, the sufferings of life could be reduced by adapting a **Middle Way in life**. He advocated

to avoid the extremes in life. For this **Middle Way of Life**, he advocated the following Eight Fold Noble Path.

1. Avoid extremes in achieving uncontrolled satisfaction and human desires.
2. Acquire knowledge of TRUTH— But he did not define Truth.
3. Resist evil—including demands of sex and social necessities.
4. Do not hurt others by words and deeds
5. Respect life and property.
6. Control your feelings and thoughts. Have positive approach in thought, behaviour and action. Think positive. Act positive.
7. Avoid evil—He did not define evil.
8. Concentrate and Meditate. Though there is no idol or deity, worship in Buddhism; yet he did not define the ultimate goal or ideal, or the point to which an individual should concentrate his mind, thought and his spiritual energy. There is no concept of GOD in Buddhism. Followers of Buddhism therefore take Gautam Buddha as their god and they pray and worship him saying— “you are our Lord, our protector, guardian and helper.”

Buddhism was born in India as a result of Religious Revolt against Hinduism particularly against idol worship and caste system. Therefore, one can notice that in each of the above mentioned eight fold Noble paths, there is a principled stand against Hindu caste system. All these 8 paths or principles are the Buddhist way of leading a life. But they are lacking towards leading a happy, healthy human life. It is an unnatural way and falls short of many physical, mental and spiritual demands of human life. It is

an unnatural way and falls short of many physical mental and spiritual demands of a human life. It may apparently look an easy and an ideal way of life, but it is unrealistic and imaginary. Life is much more. In an ideal religion all demands of body, mind and soul must be met. Man is a composite being of physical, intellectual and spiritual needs. He needs answers to his moral, intellectual, physical and spiritual needs and aspirations. For these reasons, Buddhism falls short of being called a Truly Complete Religion.

Now we will discuss the third jewel of Buddhist belief which is called SANGHA, i.e., the composition of orthodox Buddhist Religious Community. This community comprises of those who have achieved higher spiritual development. This community consists of Monks and Nuns who dress in Saffron colored unstitched sheets of cotton without shoes or cap. This special class of people not only preserve Dharma (8 principles of Noble Path) but also spread Dharma to Others. These monks live a monastic way of life which they consider is essential for seeking NIRVANA. This means that ordinary human beings with families and who work for a living, both men and women, cannot achieve NIRVANA.

Who is a Monk? One who lives in poverty. His only job is to meditate and concentrate sitting quietly. He spends most of his time in studying the 3 books of Buddhist religion. Those three books are known to them as Three Baskets (of wisdom), leading to NIRVANA. A monk could be a full time monk or even a part time one. His job is to avoid sexual activity and adapt a Basic Moral Law consisting of 8 Fold Noble Path. A monk does not work or earn a living, instead he goes from door to door every day begging with a beggar's bowl in hand, asking for food. This type of living is bound to give him an inferiority complex. His ego and pride as a normal human being suffers. He becomes a parasite on the society. It is against the demands

of nature and is not the dignified way of living. It is for this reason that ordinary men and women in Buddhism have really no role for themselves in their religion except to continue to honor and dignify the monks and keep living their own way of life.

By today, four schools of thought have developed in Buddhism. They are (a) Thera-Veda, (b) Maha-Yana, (c) Mantra-Yana and (d) Zen.

In Buddhism, there is no concept of a Prophet or Messenger of God. Therefore Buddhist rely on Siddharta Gautam Buddha as their god. Gautam Buddha preached in PAALI language which was the language of the day. Today, PAALI is not spoken anywhere in the world. Paali language is lost to humanity. Only weak religions lose their original language of preaching.

Buddhism is more of an imaginary religion. It is neither fully secular nor fully spiritual. Its structural foundations are weak and conceptual. Buddhism does not meet the ordinary requirements of body, mind and soul. Its doctrines fall short on all three fields. Buddhism does not provide answers to the demands and values of an individual or of a clan or of a society either.

For a better model for life, men of understanding carrying the burdens of their thirsty souls, will have to look elsewhere—for an ideal answer.

By Abdul Waheed Khan

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