

Introduction:

The word Buddha is originated from word "Budh" of Pali language which means to wake up, enlightenment, or become aware and thus the Buddhism is the philosophy of awaking. It is a state of knowingness or a state of mind in which an individual is aware of absolute reality. It was started by Siddhartha Gotma Buddha in 5th century BCE, who attained enlightenment under a buddhi tree and became a buddha (aware).

Buddhism is the greatest religion of the world over the past 2500 years. It has 300 Million followers in the world. Asian civilization is largely influenced by this religion. This religion grew and its teachings was gradually spread in India in other centuries and became one of India's major religion but eventually declined in India because politics, wars and heaven in

Hinduism in this area made this ethical religion difficult to survive in India. Until a hundred years ago, Buddhism was mainly an Asian philosophy but increasingly it is gaining followers in Europe and America. There is no concept of God. Buddhists don't have a creator story there is no creator. Buddhism is based on the ethical and moral teachings of Buddha. The teachings of Buddha revolve around the attainment of Nirvana(enlightenment). It is based on the observation of Buddha. It is focusing on the spiritual development of a person. Buddhism is not just a philosophy but a supreme philosophy. In order to understand what is Buddhism let me explain who is Siddhartha Gotma and his life.¹

The Buddha:

The Buddha's real name is Siddhartha who was born in 563 BC in a royal family in northern India, now is Nepal. His father name was Suddhodana, who was the ruler of the kingdom of Sakyas. His mother was a Queen, named Maya. According to the customs of that time when queen Maya had become pregnant she moved toward her paternal home to give birth to her child there, but on her way, in the Lumbni Park in the neighbourhood of Kapilavatthu, now is a district of modern Nepal her child Siddhartha was born. The queen with her newly born baby reached her paternal home but she died after the 7th day of delivery. They named their child Siddhartha. A wise man at that time foresaw that Siddhartha would become an emperor or a Buddha. With the passage of time he attained character, thoughtfulness, seriousness and feelings. This child then became Buddha the awakened one.

He was brought up in a wealthy a luxurious environment like a bird in a golden cage.

At the age of 18(or 16) he got married to his cousin, a beautiful princess Yashodara. At the age of 27 he became father of his son Rahul. After the 27 years of luxurious life he saw a sick man, an old man, a dead man and a wise man. Then he realized that he would also become

sick, old and he would also die like others. He thought that how he would attain enlightenment and wisdom to get rid of these sufferings and worries.

Statue of Buddha

Journey for obtaining enlightenment:

At the age of 27 he left palace and his luxurious life for understanding the cause of sufferings. Wandering as a seeker of peace and cause of suffering and cure of suffering he placed himself under the spiritual guidance of two renowned brahman teachers, Alara and Uddaka. He Denied his body for food and drink until he reached the point of starvation. His blood dried up, the skin shrank and the veins swollen. After spending six years he found nothing in this way of starvation. He finally decided to follow an independent path avoiding the two extremes ways of self-indulgence and self-mortification, i.e. to avoid the luxurious lifestyle

and hurting your body. The new path was the Majjhima Patipada, the Middle Path, which subsequently became one of the salient characteristics of his teaching.

At the age of 35 he realized that death would bring him no closer to enlightenment, he again took food and entered deep meditation beneath a buddhi tree. After seven days and night meditation he attained enlightenment relying on his own efforts and became a buddha, who is truly awake. After enlightenment he delivered his first sermon to a group of people. He found four noble truths under this tree which are known as the ways to obtain enlightenment.

Having attained Buddhahood, the supreme state of perfection, he devoted his remaining 45 years of his precious life to serving humanity. After obtaining enlightenment and become Buddha he started teaching his monks and nuns the way to get nirvana. ²

Two groups of followers of Buddha:

Amongst the follower of Buddha there was two types of pupil one was those who served themselves for obtaining buddhood they are called bhikkhu(monks) and bhikkhuni (nuns), the others are those who could not left their homes and didn't have capacity to serve themselves for attaining enlightenment due to domestic compulsion they are called "upasaka". There was an exception for these people who couldn't left their home. For these they can try their best to attain enlightenment with continuance of their job. The team of bhikkhu is collectively called "Singh".

Duties of Monks:

1. To seek knowledge
2. To teach the people
3. To do struggle for enlightenment

Functions of worldly (upasaka):

1. To seek knowledge
2. To carry out their domestic duties
3. To arrange the food for monks³

Monks

Teachings of buddha:

Buddha's teaching contains three major points: discipline, meditation and wisdom. Wisdom is the goal and deep meditation or concentration is an important process toward achieving wisdom. Discipline is the method that helps one to achieve deep meditation; wisdom will then be realized naturally. Buddha's all teachings as expressed in the sutras are not different from these three points.

Meditation:

The central part of the teachings of Buddha is to obtain or achieve meditation. Meditation is a cognizant effort to change how the mind work. The word use in Pali language for meditation is 'bhavana' which signifies "to make grow" or "to develop". Meditation helps to build the mindfulness.

The heart of the Buddha's teaching lies in four noble truths which he discovered during his meditation and preached to his old colleagues, the five ascetics, at Sannath. These four noble truths help to attain meditation. ⁴

Four noble truths in the teaching of buddha:

The Noble Truth of Suffering, The Noble Truth of the Origin of Suffering, The Noble Truth of the Cessation of Suffering, and the Noble Truth of the Way Leading to the Cessation of

Suffering.

[Digha Nikaya, Sutta 16]

First noble truth:

What is the Noble Truth of Suffering? Birth is suffering, aging is suffering, sickness is suffering, separation from the loved is suffering, not to get what one wants is suffering: shortly the five categories affected by clinging are suffering.

[Samyutta Nikaya LVI, 11]

As we know that the happiness, young age and health are not permanent so they will end at any time so these temporary things cause suffering.

Second noble truth:

What is the Noble Truth of the Origin of Suffering? It is craving which renews being and is accompanied by relish and lust, relishing this and that: in other words, craving for sensual desires, craving for being, craving for non-being. But whereon does this craving arise and flourish? Wherever there is what seems lovable and gratifying, there on it arises and flourishes.

[Samyutta Nikaya LVI, 11]

According to this noble truth there is cause of suffering and the cause of that suffering is desires and craving.

Third noble truth:

What is the Noble Truth of the Cessation of Suffering? It is the remainder less fading and cessation of that same craving; the rejecting, relinquishing, leaving and renouncing of it. But where on is this craving abandoned and made to cease? Wherever there is what seems lovable and gratifying, there on it is abandoned and made to cease.

[Samyutta Nikaya LVI, 11]

According to third noble truth, we can reduce or overcome desires and craving. Is this mean that we should cease our all desires? Now the cessation does not mean that we should cease all our desires this mean that we should cease that desires that cause suffering.

Fourth noble truth:

What is the Noble Truth of the Way Leading to the Cessation of Suffering? It is the Noble Eightfold Path, that is to say: Right View, Right Intention, Right Speech, Right Action, Right Livelihood, Right Effort, Right Mindfulness and Right Concentration.

[Samyutta Nikaya LVI, 11]

Eights fold paths:

Right effort:

Right Effort mean to utilize oneself to develop ethical qualities and release unethical qualities. Buddha taught that there are four ways to right effort. These are;

The effort to prevent unethical qualities especially greed and anger from arising.

The effort to crush out unethical qualities that already have arisen.

The effort to grow up skillful, or moral qualities especially Unselfishness loving, kindness, and wisdom (the opponents of greed and anger) that have not yet arisen.

The attempt to build up the moral qualities that you already have.

Right speech:

It means that to avoid such speech whose wording may hurt someone. i.e. to avoid from Falsehood, Talebearing and stuffs.

Right action:

To do good deeds and avoid from such deeds which are prohibited in the teachings of Buddha. Do not kill any creature for your benefit.

Right view:

In right view Buddhist understand the cause of suffering and the cure of suffering.

Right livelihood:

it is an important part of Buddha's teachings to live ethical live. Does not harm to others and earn money in lawful and ethical ways.

Right concentration:

Deep concentration is conceivable when one has the potential to stay focused on a single object in meditation. There are many procedures that can help us to grow that ability. Each tradition usually has several methods, and each school within a tradition has its focus on some of those methods.

Right mindfulness:

Its mean that we should develop and grow up such type of thoughts which contain love, salvation and kindness and does not contain anger and selfishness.

Right meditation:

Meditation is a physical and mental course of action. It is the only way to become aware and wise. Right meditation means simply being - not judging, not thinking, just being aware, at peace and living each moment as it unfolds.⁶

Other ethical teachings:

The ten fundamental principles:

1. Not to kill any animal for any reason even pests and worms, but to cherish all life.
2. Not to take that is not given to you, but to respect the things of others.
3. Not to misuse sexuality but to be caring and responsible.
4. Not to tell lie, but to speak the truth.
5. Not to cause others to use things that confound the mind, nor to do so oneself, but to keep the mind clear.
6. Not to speak of the wrong deeds of others, but to be understanding and charitable.
7. Not to praise myself nor belittle others, but to overcome my own defects.
8. Not to deduct spiritual or material aid, but to give them freely where they needed.
9. Not to be anger, but to keep control.
10. Not to rail the three Treasures; Buddha, Dharma, and Sangha, but to uphold and care for them.⁷

Negation of cast system:

There is no cast system in Buddhism. Buddha denied cast system of India.

“Not by birth does one become an outcaste, not by birth does one become a brahmin. By (one’s) action one becomes an outcaste, by (one’s) action one becomes a brahmin”

[Sn.136, cited in Harvey 2000, p. 110].

Rebirth:

“The pile of bones of (all the bodies of) one man Who has alone one aeon lived
Would make a mountain’s height –so said the mighty seer.” – Itivut’taka

According to Buddhism death is not permanent, it is ‘the temporary end of a temporary phenomenon’. Every birth relied upon past good or bad kamma (actions) which prevail at the time of death. Every person reborn again either in the shape of man, animal, worm or any other shape according to his deeds in this life. The death of a person is merely the temporary

end of a temporary phenomenon, the present form expires and another takes its place in accordance with the thought that was most intensive at the moment of death. A person doing good deeds in this life is reborn in a good form again. And if a person doing evil deeds is reborn in a bad form again.

Kamma:

By kamma is meant some action of a person, whether good or bad which decides his reborn life.⁸

Dharmachakra or the wheel of life, symbolizing eight fold path

Concept of god:

There is no concept of God in Buddhism. Buddhists do not have creation stories like other religions. There are many reasons behind it. According to Buddhists it is not really the objective, it is not an issue. What is the objective is the problem of human suffering and the solution of these sufferings. They focused mainly on the solution of suffering not on the worship of god or any other thing.

Buddhists, likely modern psychologists believed that the idea of God has its origin from fear. Buddha says:

"Gripped by fear people go to sacred mountains, sacred groves, sacred trees and shrines".
[Dp. 188]

Early humans found themselves in danger, fear of animals, natural phenomenon like, sun rise and sunset, thundering, lightning, not able to find food, injury and disease etc. They have no security and other helps so they created the idea of God. With the passage of time they created different gods for different purposes which they found more powerful.

Due to these reasons they don't believe on god because there does not seem to be any evidence to support this idea. Science has explained the origin of universe without the idea of god.⁹

Position of women in Buddhism:

In pre-Buddhist days the status of women in India was, over all, low and without respect. A daughter was nothing but a source of uneasiness to her parents, for it was a symbol of dishonor to them, and they could not marry her because they were often nearly ruined by their luxurious expenses on the wedding festivities.

In Buddha's era a change occurred and the women came to enjoy equality, authority and more respectful life. The Buddha gave his teachings to both men and women and he gave equal footing to women as men. In Buddhism women too can obtain meditation. Female monks named as "nuns".

As a wife a woman was not mere a household labor, but had significant authority in the home and classified as partner of her husband, companion and guardian both in secular and spiritual affairs. As a mother she was respected and appreciated, and she had strong position. As a widow she could go on her way and properly treated, not excluded from domestic activities. She was capable of inheriting property and managing it. Under Buddhism, as a wife, or widow, she had rights and duties not restricted to childbirth and became an essential part of society.¹⁰

A Female Monk

Growth and preaching of Buddhism:

After the death of Buddha a team of bhikkhus called "Sangha" preached the teachings of Buddha. Buddhism became a world religion over the centuries, spreading mostly in Asia. Starting around the 3rd century B.C.E., his followers from India went to Sri Lanka and

converted huge population into Buddhism. Buddhism spread from Sri Lanka to Southeast Asia, where it remains dominant in Burma (Myanmar), Thailand, Cambodia, Laos and Indonesia. The famous tall statues of the Buddha in Bamiyan, were the most dramatic evidence of Buddhism there, which were blown up by the Taliban in 2001. From Afghanistan, Mahayana Buddhism spread to China and then to Japan, adapting to local traditions as it went.

Although India was the land where Siddhartha Gautama the Buddha lived and taught, Buddhism died out there over the centuries. In part, this was because Buddhism caught the attention of kings and emperors. Most likely the emperor Ashoka played a vital role to spread and to make it a world greatest religion. ¹¹

Emperor Ashoka as a preacher of Buddhism:

The most important Buddhist layperson in history has been the Emperor Ashoka, who ruled most of India for the middle third of the third century B.C. Asoka was the grand son and second successor of Candra-gupta, who founded the Mauryan dynasty. Kalinga war was the reason to convert the Ashoka into Buddhist. He made Buddhism the official religion of his empire due to which it spread very quickly to many other countries.

According to tradition, when he became a monk, he made huge investment to the Buddhism, and attempt pilgrimages to the Buddhist shrines. He held third Buddhist council (sangiti) and convert the people into Buddhism. Preaching groups were also send to Sri Lanka, Burma and many other countries. He built many Holy sites of Buddhism.

Today, there are about eight million Buddhists in India. But this is less than one percent of the total population of Indian.¹²

Sects in Buddhism:

There are three fundamental Buddhist factions:

- 1. Theravada Buddhism,**
- 2. Mahayana Buddhism**
- 3. Vajrayana (Tibetan Buddhism and Tantrism).**

As indicated by the Asia Society Museum: "Three principle sorts of Buddhism have created over its long history, each with its own qualities and other worldly standards. "Basic Buddhism,"(precursor of Theravada Buddhism) frequently known by the derisive term Hinayana (Lesser Vehicle), is the most punctual of the three and underlines the achievement

of salvation for oneself alone and the need of ascetic life so as to accomplish spiritual discharge. The Mahayana (Greater Vehicle), whose individuals authored "Hinayana" and accepted its disciples sought after a way that couldn't be trailed by most of common individuals, shows the salvation of all. Experts of the Vajrayana ("Diamond Vehicle"), or Esoteric Buddhism [Tibetan Buddhism], accept that one can accomplish enlightenment in a single lifetime, rather than the other two sorts, which hypothesize that it takes numerous ages to gather the important great karma.¹³

These three types were not mutually absolute, but they stress on different practices of Buddhist. For example, whereas foundational Buddhism teaches that only a few followers are able to reach enlightenment and that they do so by their own efforts, Mahayana and its later roots, Vajrayana, teach that Buddhahood is achievable by everyone with help of bodhisattvas.

Theravada Buddhism and Mahayana Buddhism are the two primary parts of Buddhism. Theravada signifies "Method for the Elders," it is truly what Buddha taught. Mahayana signifies "More greatly vehicle," it better than Theravada Buddhism, the Lesser Vehicle. One

of the primary distinction between the two is that the perfect of Mahayana is turning into a Bodhisattva (Buddha to be). Buddha just referenced himself as this and never gave guidelines on how one should turn into a Bodhisattva. During his life, The Buddha focused on the need to end enduring right now and go after the most significant standard Arhatship. Theravada Buddhists oppose the possibility of Bodhisattvas and view their arrangement of convictions as being cleaner and near what The Buddha delivered.¹⁴

Sacred texts:

It is true that Buddha had not left any book behind him. Bikkhu's the followers of buddha used to memorize his teaching and his sermons and then delivered to other followers in this way. The teachings of Buddha were written in the form of books after many centuries of his death. The main books of Buddha are collectively known as tripitka means three baskets. It is the early collection of the teachings of Buddha, recognized by Theravada Buddhists. They are called baskets because these books were written on the skin of tree and then put into baskets. These books are also called Pali canon because these were first written in Pali language. According to tradition the teachings and the disciplinary rules in their present form compiled and arranged by first Buddhist council held right after the death of Buddha. First this was handed down orally then written in third century B.C.E. The Tipitaka represents the entire body of the Buddha's Teaching.

These are three books

1. Vinay pitka
2. Sutta pitka
3. Abhidhamma pitka

Vinay pitka:

The Vinay Pitaka consists of five books:

- (1) Parajika Pali
- (2) Pacittiya Pali
- (3) Mahavagga Pali
- (4) Culavagga Pali
- (5) Parivara Pali

The Vinaya Pitaka (discipline basket) was recalled by a monk named Upali. It deals with rules and regulations for the community of bhikkhus (monks) and bhikkhunis (nuns) as well as their relationship to lay people. It Includes 227 rules for monks, further rules for nuns, and road map for the relation between the sangha and the laity.

About twenty years after obtaining enlightenment there was no definite rule laid down to control the discipline of sangha. Afterward, as event rise up, the Buddha promulgated rules for the discipline of the Sangha. There are also stories, partly of the Jataka stories (birth stories). The first part of the Vinaya Pitka contains the rules, which every member of the Sangha is compulsory to follow, and the second part is related with legal procedures. Thus, the first part concerned to the individual members of the Sangha, and the second part to the all members of sangha. It also includes the stories behind origin of every rule. It includes the answer of question like how to create Harmony within a large religious community.

Sutta pitka

It is the Collection of the Preaching and sermons of Buddha. There are many other sermons that deal with both the material and moral progress of lay followers. The Sutta Pitaka, the second main part of the Tipitaka, is distributed into five sections or collections (Nikayas) of discourses (suttas).

1. Digha Nikaya.
2. Majjhima Nikaya.
3. Samyutta Nikaya.
4. Anguttara Nikaya.
5. Khuddaka Nikaya.

The Sutra Pitaka (Discourse Basket) was recited by Ananda, a cousin of Buddha and nearest follower. It includes the teachings of Buddha on philosophy and behavior, stressing especially on meditation techniques.

Abhidharma Pitaka:

The Abhidhamma Pitaka is the most important and most interesting amongst the three Pitakas, containing the fundamental philosophy of the teachings of Buddha in distinguish to the simpler preaching of the Sutta Pitaka. Abhidhamma, the Higher philosophy of the Buddha, elaborate the quintessence of his fundamental Teachings. According to some scholars, Abhidhamma was not taught by the Buddha but was later elaborated by philosophical monks. Tradition, however, assign the Abhidhamma to the Buddha himself.

The Abhidharma Pitaka (Higher Knowledge or Special Teachings Basket) was recited by Mahakashyapa, the Buddha's successor. It is essentially a collection of Multifaceted writings, including songs, poetry and stories of the Buddha and his past lives.¹⁵

Sacred places Or Holy sites:

Worshipping is not essential for Buddhists but they do visit shrines and temples to pay their honor to Buddha and to meditate with other Buddhists.

Buddhists go on pilgrimages to places that are associated with Buddha's life. These places include his birthplace (Lumbini Grove), the place of enlightenment (Bodh Gaya), the place of his first sermon (Sarnath), and the place he died (Kusinara).

Lumbini:

Siddhartha Gautama a prince was born in Lumbini, in present day called Nepal.

The birth place of Buddha

Bodhgaya:

The most important Buddhist pilgrimage site is Bodhgaya, Buddha attained enlightenment there after sitting and meditating under the Bodhi tree.

Sarnath:

Buddha delivered his first sermon to his early followers at Sarnath , in which he explained the four noble truths and the eightfold path.

Kushinagar:

It is the place where Buddha die. The Buddha passed away at the age of 80 in Kushinagar in eastern Uttar Pradesh.¹⁶

Conclusion:

Hence it is concluded that Buddhism is one of the greatest religion of the world based on the ethical teachings of buddha. Most teachings of Buddhism are abidance to other religions but in some aspects it is different from other religions. It is mostly based on the ethical and moral teachings. It does not concentrate on the god which make it distinguish from other world's religions. He did not claim that he was a god, the child of god or even the messenger of God. He was simply a human being who attained enlightenment by his own effort. It mainly focuses on the cause of human suffering and the solution of these sufferings. After a deep study of this religion I reached at a point that it is not a divine religion because there are no

creator stories in this religion and its focusses mainly on human beings rather than on God. Its central idea is enlightenment which can be obtained by any human being through deep meditation by following the four noble truths and eight fold paths. It teaches us to develop love and kindness for others. Thus, Buddhism is a philosophy but not just a philosophy. It is the supreme philosophy.