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Classical Indian Philosophy, Introduction, Literature and Buddhism

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Introduction

- Siddhartha or Gautam Buddha was the founder of Buddhism.
- Buddhism is a school of Indian philosophy which deals with an elaboration of the teachings of Buddha.
- It is regarded as a heterodox school (or nastic) for it rejects the authority of the Vedas.
- Buddha was mainly an ethical teacher who rejected metaphysics and metaphysical concepts.
- He only preached orally or he only taught via conversations.
- The literature that we today study is the result of oral instructions imparted by his disciples to the successive generations.
- Buddhism will be studied under the two major headings- Epistemology and Ethics.

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Literature

- Our knowledge regarding the teachings of Buddha is dependent upon the three baskets or tripitakan.
- The three baskets or the tripitakan are in the Pali dialect.

The three baskets are;

- Vinayapitaka: It deals with the rules of conduct for the congregation or sangha.
- Suttapitaka: It deals with Buddha's sermons and dialogues.
- Abhidhammapitaka: It contains the expositions of philosophical theories.



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The Four Noble Truths

The four Noble truths of Buddhism are also called, “Arya-satya”

Life is full of suffering or “sarvam duhkha”

- Life is full of misery, suffering and pain even the so-called pleasures are really fraught with pain.
- According to Buddha, there is suffering in the world and this suffering is in fact a common experience.
- For example, poverty, disease, old age, debts, selfishness, meanness, greed, anger, hatred, quarrels, bickering, conflicts, exploitation, et cetera are rampantly present in the world.

There is a cause of suffering or “duhkha-samudaya”

- According to Buddha everything has a cause, nothing comes out of nothing or Ex Nihilo Nihil Fit.

- In other words, the existence of every event depends upon its causes and conditions.
- As a result, everything in this world is conditional, relative, and limited in nature.
- So, suffering being an effect, must have a cause, it must depend on some conditions.
- This is also called the causal law of Dependent Origination.

There is a cessation of suffering or dukkha-nirodha

- According to Buddha, every effect has a cause.
- So, if the causes and conditions are removed the effect must also be removed.
- Since everything is conditional, relative and limited is necessarily momentary and what is momentary must perish (as mentioned in the second noble truth) .
- In other words, this simply means that production implies destruction, birth implies death, etc.
- There is the way to the cessation of suffering or dukkha-nirodha-marga or dukkha-nirodha-gamini pratipat.
- According to Buddha there is an ethical and a spiritual path by following which misery or suffering may be removed and liberation can be attained.

The Eight-Fold Path

- The eight- fold path doctrine is also known as the astang-marga.
- Astang-marga comes under the Fourth Noble truth or dukkha nirodha marga.
- The noble eightfold path consists of eight steps;

Right faith or samyag-drsihti:

- It means to have the correct knowledge of the four noble truths.

Right resolve or samyag-sankalpa:

- It means firm determination to reform life in the life of truth and knowledge. In-other words, it deals with shunning all the worldly attachments.

Right speech or Samyang vaak:

- It means to have the control over one's speech and refrain oneself from lying, slander, frivolous talks, etc.

Right action or Samyang karmanta:

- It means to abstain oneself from wrong conduct. Right conduct includes the panca-silas or the five vows of refraining from killing, stealing, sensuality, lying and intoxication.

The Panca-silas are;

- Non-violence or ahimsa
- Truth or satya
- Chastity or Brahmacharya
- Non-stealing or asteya
- Contentment or aparigraha.

Hence, one must practice these five in one's action Right living or Samyang ajiva

Right living or Samyang ajiva

- It means to maintain life by honest means. In other words, it means one must never move towards ill means to attain an end. And must only work with good determination.

Right effort or Samyang vyayama

- It deals with putting constant effort to maintain moral progress by banishing evil thoughts and only entertaining good ones.

Right thought or Samyang smriti

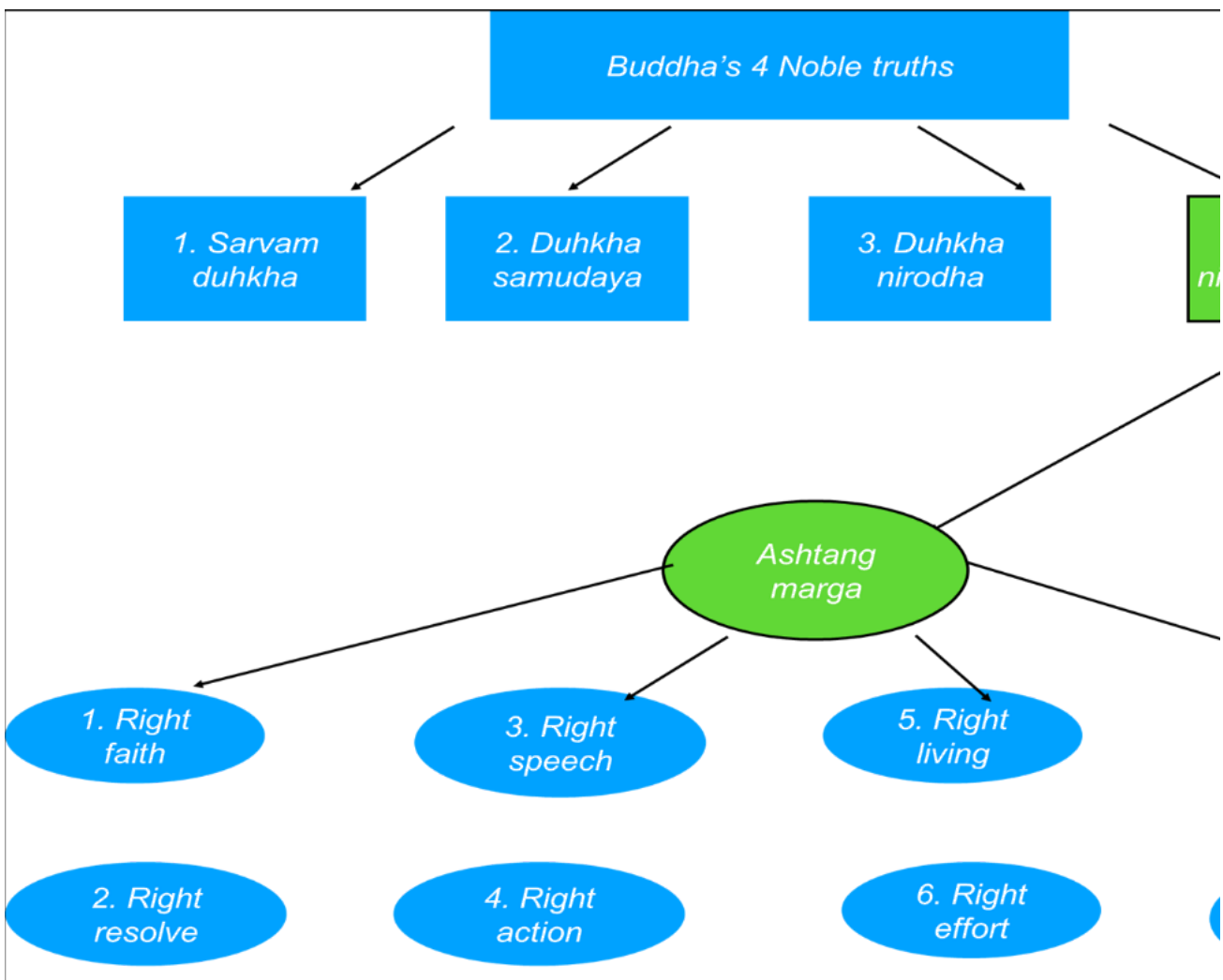
- It means to constantly remember and never forget the momentary existence of both the world and the self. In other words, it means, to always remember the perishable nature of things.

Right concentration or Samyang samadhi

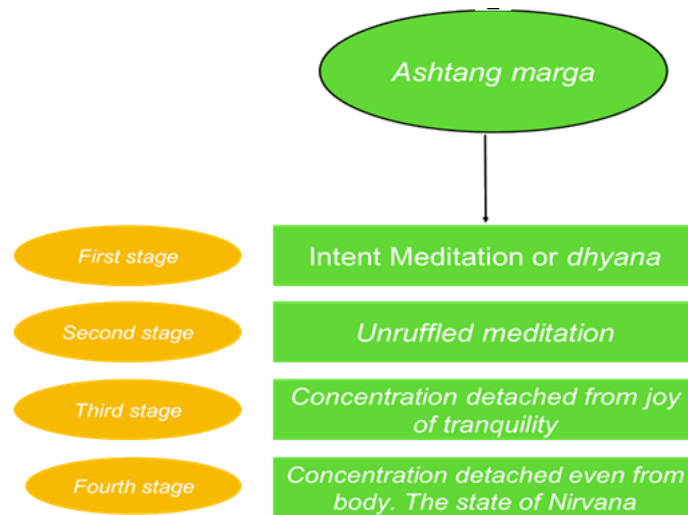
It consists of four stages via which one walks on the path of the ultimate goal, that is, Nirvana. They four stages are;

- First stage deals with concentration on reasoning and investigation regarding the four truths. This leads to a pure joy of thinking. This stage is called the stage of “intent meditation” or Dhyana.
- Second stage deals with unruffled meditation, this is free from reasoning, etc. Here one experiences the joy of tranquillity.
- Third stage deals with concentration which is detached from even the joy of tranquillity.
- Fourth stage deals with concentration which is even detached from the body. This is the stage of perfect equanimity, joy and indifference. This is the state of Nirvana or the perfect, ultimate wisdom.

Note: The astang-margays are open to the both, the clergy and the laity alike.



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Madhyam-Pratipada

- Buddha's ethical theory of middle path or madhyam-pratipada is just like the golden mean theory of Aristotle.
- According to the theory, self-indulgent and self-mortification are both equally rolled out.
- In his very first sermon at Sarnath, Buddha said, "there are two extremes, O monks from which he who would lead a religious life must abstain, it is the life of pleasure devoted to desire and enjoyment that is ignoble, unspiritual, unworthy and unreal. The perfect one, O monks, is removed from the extremes and discovers the way which lies in the middle. The middle way or the middle path is that which enlightens the mind, and leads to knowledge or enlightenment or towards Nirvana."
- Similarly, between cowardice and brutality, courage is the middle path which both Aristotle and Buddha accept.

Pratityasamutpada

- The doctrine of dependent Origination or Pratityasamutpada is the foundation of all the teachings of Buddha.
- It is contained in the second noble truth which gives us the cause of suffering and the third noble truth which shows the cessation of suffering. Suffering according to Buddha is samsara, cessation of suffering is Nirvana.
- Dependent origination from the point of view of relativity is samsara while viewed from the point of reality, it is Nirvana.
- According to Buddha, everything is relative, conditional, dependent. subject to birth and death and therefore impermanent or momentary in nature. The causal formula is that depending on the cause, the effect arises. Hence, it is relative in nature, it is neither absolutely real nor absolutely unreal.
- Buddha avers, "he who sees the dependent origination or pratityasamutpada, sees the Dharma. And he who sees the Dharma sees the dependent origination or pratityasamutpada." Our failure to grasp this leads to misery or suffering whose root cause is ignorance.

The 12 chains of dependent origination or pratityasamutpada are;

- Ignorance or Avidya (it is related to past life)
- Impressions of karmic forces or Samsara (it is related to past life)
- Initial consciousness of the embryo or VI jnana (it is related to present life)
- Psychophysical organism or Nama-rupa (it is related to present life)
- Six sense organs including mind or Sadyatana (it is related to present life)
- Sense objects contact or Sparsha (it is related to present life)
- Sense experience or Vedanta (it is related to present life)

- Thirst for sense enjoyment or Trishna (it is related to present life)
- Clinging to this enjoyment or Upasana (it is related to present life)
- Will to be born or Bhava (it is related to present life)
- Birth or rebirth or Jati (it is related to future life)
- Old age or death or Jaramana (it is related to future life)

Some of the other names of pratityasamutpada or dependent origination are;

- 12 wheels of causation,
- Bhava Chakra,
- Samsara Chakra,
- Jaramana Chakra,
- Dharma-chakra,
- Dvadas-Nidana.
- From these 12 links we understand that nothing is unconditional.
- The existence of everything depends upon some conditions or causes.
- Or, "whatever originates, originates on some conditions."
- Hence, if the root cause that is ignorance is removed, then Nirvana can be attained.

1. The link preceding sadyatana is

- A. Sparsha
- B. Nama-rupa
- C. VI jnana
- D. Vedanta

Answer: B

2. The Golden mean theory of Aristotle is similar to Buddha's

- A. Pratityasamutpada
- B. Madhyampratipada
- C. Both A and B
- D. Arya-Satya

Answer: B

3. The doctrine of astang-marga comes under which Arya Satya

- A. Sarvam-duhkha
- B. Duhkha-samudaya
- C. Duhkha-nirodha
- D. Duhkha nirodha marga

Answer: D

4. Devadas nidana is another name for

- Nirvana
- Pratityasamutpada
- Karma
- Madhyampratipada

Answer: B

5. The concept of Panca-sila comes under

- Samyang Carita
- Samyang Vak

- Samyang Drishti
- Samyang Karmanta

Answer: D

#Buddhism

#Epistemology

#Pratityasamutpada

◀ Manishika

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