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From monasteries to modern classrooms: A comparative analysis of Buddhist education and contemporary education system in India

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Abstract

This research paper highlights the development of education from monastery settings to modern classrooms, including a comparative analysis of Buddhist education and the Indian education system today. By giving importance, the pedagogical, philosophical, and historical perspectives, this paper examines the similarities and differences between these two systems of education. The study highlights the principles of morality and comprehensive knowledge that are rooted in Buddhist education, as well as the enduring ideals that underpin it. However, it also recognizes the difficulties in balancing traditional values with the demands of a quickly changing educational context. It also highlights the significance of developing an inclusive framework that incorporates new technology while upholding fundamental values. The study concludes that, in order to create a revolutionary educational environment that imparts not just knowledge but also a more comprehensive blend of traditional wisdom and contemporary approaches.

Keywords: Buddhist education, monastery, contemporary education, NEP, ancient education

Introduction

A good and strong education systems is an assert for every country's overall development. The Indian educational system is rich in tradition, history, and it celebrated a lot of achievements. Due to the dynamics of the society from the ancient times till this contemporary, the entire educational system had also undergone a lot of changes.

These modern changes in education makes our India more comprehensive and diverse. A long heritage from different eras of India such as, Vedic era, Buddhist era, Gupta Era, Mughal era, British Era and the modern era had contributed a lot to the education system of India. This heritage of India indeed had not only contributed to its own but also to the whole world, particularly in the field of education.

Education is not an abstract term but it is a manifestation of culture, values, philosophy, history and scientific advancements. So, education is called as the means of individual and society transformation (Meshram M, 2013) ^[12]. In the ancient times teaching was considered as a holy and education was a way for salvation of life, Dr. R.K. Mukherjee said, "Learning in India through the ages had been prized and pursued not for its own sake, if we may so put it, but for the sake, and as a part, of religion. It was sought as the means of self-realization, as the means to the highest end of life viz. Mukti or Emancipation".

The ancient education system was not attached with the physical and materials prospectus rather it was more connected with the spiritual and non-material aspects of human life. Among all the era of education, the Buddhist education era played a significant role in the history of education because due to the rise of Buddhism it created many centres for learning, monasteries, reputed scholar or monk, various philosophical theories and literatures We can also say that Buddhism is the first religion who broken the dominance of Brahmanism. It also tried to overcome the rigid caste structure that was prevalent in India by bringing the other castes into the mainstream so they could receive an education equal to Brahmins (Mashi A & Vidyapati, 2018) ^[15].

The contemporary education system was started from the period of TB Macaulay who made the foundation stone for the development of Indian education system.

With the recommendation and implementation of various policy, committee, commission and documents India education system is became the best and effective education system all over the world, which attracting lots of foreigners and researcher to come for education (Singh D, 2022) [14]. Besides that, The Buddhist monastery system has a significant impact on changing suffering, bringing happiness to life, and perfecting society. There are lots of monasteries and centre of learning during Buddhist period like Nalanda, Vallabhi, Takshashila and many else. These monasteries were not providing only Buddhist education but also, they help the monks to be a disciplinarian and spiritual. In modern periods, Buddhist monasteries growing up rapidly and disseminated all over the world, besides that today many universities are also established to expanse the Buddhistic ideology and philosophies. Moreover, today many universities have integrated Buddhist studies into their teaching, and are considered a major in the education and training system for practically implementing the Buddhistic theories and literatures. So, to make our life liberation and sublime Buddhist education is an instrument (Meshram M, 2013) [12]. Therefore, the education system of Buddhism plays an important role in human life, it is an ethical path applied in the teaching and leading to happiness and equality, freedom, and liberation in our life.

Objectives of the Study

1. To critically analyse and understand the characteristics and feature of Buddhistic education systems.

2. To critically analyse and understand the characteristic and features of Contemporary education system.
3. To analyse the traditional monasteries classroom and modern classroom education.
4. To compare the Buddhist education system and contemporary education system.

Buddhistic Monastic Education System and Its Features

The Buddhist educational system was a novel and unique educational framework that arose from the Brahminic education system in the ancient times. The Buddhist educational system was more inclusive and accessible to individuals from all backgrounds. This system of education seeks to transform an ignorant person into an intelligent one, and a beast into a priest.

The person must first receive novice ordination in order to join the Buddhist Sangha. He is required to shave his hair and put on monastery-style clothing as a sign of his resignation of the worldly life, marking his entry into the monastic tradition. The senior monk Mentor then ordains him, generally the monastery. The novice is subsequently entrusted with the guidance of a teacher and a mentor for the duration of his monastic training. At the completion of this period, the novice has the option to be upgraded to the title of monks (Bhikkhu) or nun (Bhikkhuni).

The educational institutions during Buddhist period is known as Monasteries or Vihar. It was the centre of learning where academic subject, religious knowledge and practical knowledge were taught.



Fig 1: Buddhistic Monastic Education System

Aims of Education

According to Swargiary K, Buddhist education has following aims of education,

1. Formation of overall personality.
2. Salvation or Attainment of Nirvana.
3. To Make a Free Man, A Wise, Intelligent, Moral, Non-Violent & Secular Man.
4. Maintain a disciplined life.

Curriculum

The main purpose of Buddhist education is to overall development of personality so, the curriculum was also based on the rules and principles of Buddhism. The more stress was given to get a clear cut and basic idea about Tripitika i.e. Sutrapitaka, Binaya Pitaka and Abhidhampitaka which consists the basic teaching, theories, philosophy, rules and principles for all the Bhikkhus or Students. As the chief aim was salvation so the curriculum was spiritual in nature.

Besides that, other co-curricular activities like spinning, weaving, tailoring, gardening, medicine were also given importance.

Discipline

Discipline was the core hearts of Monastic education system. The Budha’s teachings emphasize the importance of controlling one’s own mind and behaviour, which can lead to liberation from sufferings. In Buddhism, Discipline can be achieved by observing the precepts. This practice helps achieving deep meditation, which leads to be a wisdom. Beside that in Buddhism, there was also a code of conduct which is known as Sila. It is the section of Noble eight- fold path and is a commitment to harmony and self -reliant. The buddha also taught for the practice of Samadhi, which is a mental discipline and concentration.

Role of Teacher

In addition to having to live a minimum of ten years as a monk, the teacher herself must have generosity, purity of thinking, and purity of character. The monastery was in charge of both the teacher and student. However, the teacher held complete responsibility for the student monk's education, attire, diet, and place of housing. In addition, the teacher was in charge of the student's health at all times. In order to clarify serious matters, teacher duties included teaching pupils, publishing books, spreading religion, organizing debates, and facilitating discussions. The teacher would show his students all of his love and use a lecture and question-and-answer format to teach them. (Meshram M, 2013) [12].

Bhikshu or Students

The Bhikshu or monk were resided in the Vihar or Monasteries. Student were free from superstitions, greed and ignorance. The students were also called Sharman. Under the close eye of their teacher, the monk cooked food, arranged water, washed the utensils, and went on alms missions with their teacher. The monks and pupils adhered to the idea of "high thinking and simple living." Women were previously prohibited from entering monasteries,

however, Later, they were permitted to women's education under several restrictions (Dahiya, 2016) [4].

Women Education

During the Buddhist era, women's education was at its lowest stage because women were despised in the sense that Lord Buddha believed they were the origin of all evils. Thus, throughout his life, he had opposed allowing women to enter monasteries. But after a while, at the insistence of his beloved student Anand, the Buddha agreed to provide entry to the Vihar to around 500 women, including his stepmother, under a number of conditions and restrictions (Rani & Kumari, 2019) [8].

Contemporary Education System and Its Features

We all know that India has a strong and comprehensive premier education system all over the world. By the progressive development of society our traditional education system is changing day by day and the different yardsticks of education like new courses, changing curriculum, updated methods and various contents is also changing time to time (Joshi, 2019) [7]. The contemporary education system in India based upon the principles of access, equity, equality, inclusiveness, and democratic principles (Advances in Global Education and Research, 2021). Now our education system attracts students from other countries such as China, Canada, South Africa, Germany, Canada, USA, UK and Australia. After the Macaulay Period many committees and commission organised to change the education system. So, by the recommendation of various committee and commission various new universities, new courses, new system of education emerged in the field of education (Kumar VS, 2022) [13]. Among all the Policy and commission NEP 2020 plays a major role in Indian education system which change the entire education system from elementary to higher education level. This policy also recommended to establish a new educational structure i.e. 5+3+3+4. While traditional education focused a lot on catching up with an ideal individualism, the modern education system emphasises critical thinking, visualising, and imagining. Besides that contemporary education system is more student-centred and flexible (Balmiki, 2023) [3].

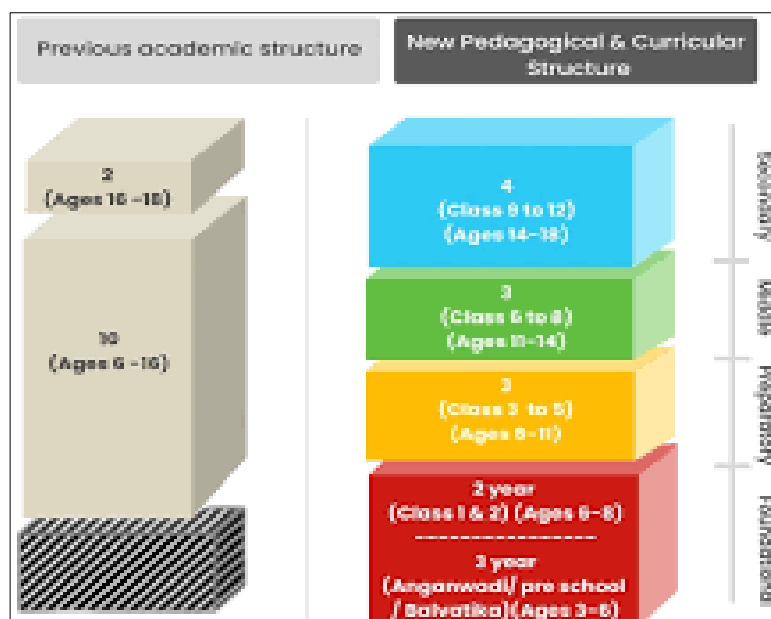


Fig 2: Current Educational Structure in India

There are two types of education system in India i.e. formal and informal. The term "formal education" implies the curriculum-driven dissemination of knowledge in schools, colleges, and universities. The term "informal education" describes education that is given outside of the formal educational system and is curriculum-free (Education System in India. 2022) ^[5].

Aims of Education

1. Developing creative thinking, critical thinking and problem-solving skills.
2. Holistic developments of students irrespective of their caste, colour and gender.
3. Ensuring universal access, equitable and quality education to all.
4. Develop leadership and professional skills among the learners.



Fig 3: Current education system

Curriculum

Present-day curriculum doesn't only focus on basic courses; it also includes a holistic approach to learning. Nowadays, the importance of learning technology, communication, critical thinking, and problem-solving abilities is typically given more attention in schools.

Additionally, social science and cultural studies are given adequate attention. These elements provide students a greater understanding of the issues that many communities confront and give them ideas for how to apply their knowledge to improve those communities. Co-curricular and extracurricular activities are equally valued in helping students develop their personalities and capitalize on their natural abilities (Indian School: Top Advantages of Indian Education System - GIIS Bangalore, 2023).

Higher education System

Indian higher education system is the third largest system after United state and China. After the independence India higher education system is significantly growing on the terms of enrolment, retention and increase of no of new universities and college (Sheikh, 2017) ^[9]. As of 2000, there are 1000+ universities including central university, state university, deemed universities, IIT, IIM and various private universities. In higher education sector the more emphasis is

given on science and technology. Distance and open learning system is another the feature of Indian higher education. Indian higher education system consists Undergraduate, Post Graduate, Doctorate and Post Doctorate level. Besides that there various organisational bodies like UGC, NCTE, AICTE, ICAR, ICMR AND NAAC playing very important roles in Indian higher education system (Agarwal P, 2007) ^[1].

Women Education

At present, Women Education in Modern India has achieved a new height. Currently, entrance of women in engineering, medical and other professional colleges is overwhelmingly elevated. Women are getting reservation and lots facilities in the education field (*Women Education in Modern India*, n.d.) The social stigma and inequality in women education is changing rapidly. By promoting education for women, India is also achieving higher female literacy and success rate in every field of education. India is becoming a superpower country by the contribution of both Gender.

Conclusion

In conclusion, this comparative analysis has explored the domains of Buddhist education and the modern Indian education system, tracing the journey from monastery contexts to contemporary classrooms. Both parallels and differences have been found through the examination of philosophical foundations, historical precedents, and pedagogical approaches, providing educational theorists, decision-makers, and practitioners with insightful information.

A significant finding is the continued relevance of various of the ideas instilled in Buddhist education, including the development of mindfulness, an ethical perspective, and a holistic approach to knowledge. These timeless qualities ring true in today's educational discourse, indicating the possibility of a mutually beneficial collaboration between traditional knowledge and cutting-edge techniques. The study also highlights the difficulties in balancing traditional values with the requirements of a technologically advanced and quickly changing educational environment. While the modern educational system places a priority on skill development, employment, and global competitiveness, Buddhist education stresses introspection and self-realization. To close this gap and promote peaceful cohabitation, a balanced strategy that capitalizes on each system's advantages is required. Furthermore, the comparative research highlights the vital role that creativity and adaptation play in schooling. Incorporating technology improvements while maintaining the core of foundational concepts becomes crucial as we go from monastic traditions to digital classrooms. Developing an adaptable and inclusive educational framework that takes into account various learning environments and cultural settings is the difficult part.

In essence, the journey from monasteries to modern classrooms is a dynamic continuum marked by an interplay of tradition and progress. As we draw inspiration from the rich tapestry of Buddhist education, we must also acknowledge the unique demands and opportunities of the contemporary era. The synthesis of these two paradigms holds the potential to sculpt a transformative educational landscape that not only imparts knowledge but also nurtures wisdom, compassion, and a holistic understanding of the

world. It is in this delicate balance that the future of education in India may find its enduring strength and relevance.

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