

# A Critique of Buddhism and the Political Struggles Facing India



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## Abstract

Buddhism is a religion-philosophical system that offers a world perspective and may be thought of generally as a vast church. It is suggested that this interpretation of Buddhism affects church-state ties among other things. The Paper employs a historical-doctrinal stance when examining various facets of religion and statecraft as opposed to one based on popular Buddhism, or the day-to-day practise seen historically. The Edicts of the renowned Indian Emperor Asoka were written in a humanist attitude, which was strongly reflected in the social and political philosophy that was expressed in questions of government. Buddhist ideas of statecraft, which include concepts and practises like the rule of law, deliberative democracy, governance processes, and the social programmes of the Asokan welfare state, are strikingly comparable to those of the European Enlightenment in many ways. The study concludes that this extraordinary East-West dichotomy may open the door to a civilizational conversation rather than a "clash of civilizations".

**Keywords:** Buddhism, Indian Emperor Ashoka, Politics, History.

## Introduction

In social and political institutions, politics practise has been intricately entwined with other activities. A sort of association linked to the "accumulation, organisation and marshalling of power to rule and control the fundamental institutions of society" serves as the foundation for politics as a particular type of human activity.

In this way, politics has long been linked to the "Abrahamic faiths"—Judaism, Christianity, and Islam—which see salvation as a matter of revelation, as well as the science of governance and the philosophy and practise of statecraft. According to these theistic religions, the existence of a God is acknowledged as "a superior being or a person transcendent to the universe that human authenticity is approved by [an] ultimate truth."

The Abrahamic religions have historically been inclined to have diverse effects on the everyday world, including the political and social order, depending on the theological teachings of each specific faith. They have made an effort to "reconstruct the ordinary world." based on the right transcendental perspective. The separation of religion and state, or "secularisation," as it is known in the case of Christianity, has only been taken for granted in the western world since the emergence of modernity in the period of empire and industrialization. Berger, a longstanding proponent of "secularisation theory," now claims that "modernity does not have to be antagonistic to religion" in light of the recent shift in the nature of church-state ties.

But how does Buddhism, which is sometimes described as a "otherworldly religion with a gnostic antipathy for the worldly order," fair with regard to the general issue of connections between religion and the state? Before attempting to respond to this, we must first address the much contested issue of whether Buddhism, which is non-theistic, should be categorised as a "religion." A complete system of ideas and beliefs about the nature of the ultimate reality that provides persons who practice a specific faith meaning and purpose in their life is often what is meant when the term "religion" is used.

## **Objective of the study**

- To understand the Concept of Buddhism in Political Conflicts.
- To determine the Contribution and Impact of Buddhism to Indian Culture

## **Buddha on Politics**

Buddha saw politics as a tool that could either create beneficial circumstances or negative barriers for people's personal progress rather than as an objective in and of itself. Buddha understood the importance of government in ensuring societal harmony and welfare and that its principles, policies, and procedures should be in line with the "dharma." The term "dharma" (dhamma in Pali) has numerous meanings, but in this context it refers to the realisation of the Buddha's teachings, which are presented as universal or natural laws, such as the rule of dependent origination and the suffering caused by ignorance of this fundamental fact. Buddha disclosed these rules and advised that we analyses them and act accordingly—not through blind faith, but through a process of human evaluation—not because they were established by him; they exist with or without him. The manifest

forms of suffering for all members of society could be reduced by a political system that is structured in accordance with these fundamental truths, especially for the most vulnerable members of society who experience the greatest visible suffering. It could also help people achieve higher levels of well-being.

Buddha emphasized that everyone has what is known as "Buddha nature," or the inherent value and ability for enlightenment. Buddha denounced the caste system and maintained that qualities were spread equitably, not hierarchically, across society, in contrast to the prevalent Brahmin beliefs. The wise do not accept the idea that the Brahmin caste is the greatest since both dark and light traits, which are disparately distributed among the four castes and condemned and lauded by the wise, may be attained by anybody via dharma, according to the Buddha. No of one's social standing, economic situation, or class, the dharma is true for everyone. Political structures need to be based on the fundamental understanding that, according to the law of dharma, both citizens and rulers are equal. These societal observations were really ground-breaking for their time.

Buddha's political teachings emphasize tolerance for other political systems as well as a practical and non-dogmatic (in this sense, "liberal" or "pluralistic") attitude to political issues. In befriending and advising both republics and monarchs, Buddha suggests that good governance can take many forms but must allow for the maximization of individual happiness of its citizens (defined in a way that goes beyond mere sensual enjoyment to include self-realization) and that minimizes their suffering, allowing them to cultivate compassion, patience, generosity, meditative concentration, and other virtues, rather than overtly endorsing a particular form of government. Buddha did not expressly support a particular kind of governance and, to some extent, acknowledged that many sorts of regimes may be seen as valid provided both the ruler's and the rule's spirits were in line with the dharma.

Buddha did, however, express a support for democratic and representational systems of governance. Buddha advocated for democratic ideals such citizen engagement, freedom of speech, consensus-building, voting, respect for the will of the people, openness to public discussion and face-to-face meetings, the supremacy of the law, and limited government in his teachings and precepts. These preferences are shown by the fact that Buddha supported republican values in the stras and included democratic values into the regulations regulating his own order of monks and nuns in the vinaya. The political climate of today and the administration of a contemporary democratic state are both clearly addressed by the Buddha's teachings. Buddha's political philosophy is similar to Western liberal-democratic ideology in that it emphasizes equal rights, equality before the law as a means of protection against tyranny, and participatory and deliberative government.

## **Contribution and Impact of Buddhism to Indian Culture**

India's political, social, religious, and cultural life has benefited greatly from Buddhism. Buddhism made a contribution to equality in social life. It raised a voice against social inequality and caste prejudice. By granting them access to religion and education, it contributed to the advancement of women. The non-violence concept known as "Ahimsa" (non-violence) promoted human qualities like compassion and consideration. It was opposed to ritualism, superstition, and sacrifices in the context of religion. It also made the worship of idols more common. The people who worshipped Buddha pictures were Mahayana adherents. The Hindus took up idol worship from them. Buddhism contributed to India's cultural history by enhancing the architecture of Sanchi, Gaya, Amravati, and other stupas. Buddhist academics had a key role in advancing new works of literature written in popular languages. Drama and poetry were two of the richest genres. For Hindus, the Tripitaka has a similar importance to the Vedas. Buddhism has made a significant contribution to education. They established schools for women and Shudras alike and made it universal. The Buddhist missionaries who travelled outside of India also brought Indian language, literature, and culture with them.

Buddhism had a significant impact on how Indian civilization was shaped in many different ways. Its influence in the political, ecclesiastical, and sociocultural realms cannot be disregarded. Buddhism evolved becomes a widely practiced religion without the need for any convoluted, intricate, or difficult-to-understand ceremonies. This was a contributing factor in its widespread popularity. Buddhism has a rather straightforward moral code that is centred on virtues like generosity, chastity, sacrifice, honesty, and restraint of the emotions. It emphasised love, equality, and nonviolence strongly. Although it is believed that the Upanishads also provided examples of these characteristics prior to the emergence of Buddhism, Buddhism is credited for elevating public morality to previously unheard-of levels. For Buddhists, it grew to represent one of their core beliefs. Buddhism, however, placed greater emphasis on the idea that man, not any God or Gods, is the architect of his own destiny. Buddhism has a strong sense of individuality and lacks a complex conception of God.

## **Conclusion**

Between the sixth and fourth centuries BC, Buddhism first appeared in Ancient India. From there, it expanded to other nations including China, Japan, Mongolia, Burma, Tibet, Sri Lanka, and Nepal, having a significant influence on their cultures. It contributed significantly and enduringly to the fields of philosophy, literature, and art. Its contribution went beyond only the realms of art and architecture. Buddha made it clear that he preferred representational and democratic systems of governance. Buddha endorsed democratic ideals such as citizen participation and free expression, deliberation, consultation, and consensus building, voting and respect

for popular consent, transparency through in-person meetings and public debate, the importance of the rule of law, and limited government in his teachings and prescriptions.

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