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Buddhist Education: Its Aim and Method

Buddhism prevalent in modern Japan belongs to the Mahāyāna School of Buddhism. The Mahāyāna Buddhism rests on the Dharma experience. Dharma is the highest sacred value and the inner unifier of all beings---that by which the life of division and rivalry is rendered innerly unified into the life of unity and peace. Dharma is thus a spiritual principle, that lurks a priori within all of us equally and not a transcendental being existing objectively. Regarded from the religious point of view, therefore, the Mahāyāna Buddhism might be said to be a sort of the Pantheistic Monotheism. When the Dharma is perceived and embodied, the interrelationship of all beings is really grasped; and when this interrelationship is grasped, compassion towards others begins to move on every side and all the kinds of practices of saving others as well as self begin to be active.

Buddha is the one in whom the Dharma is revealed, in whom the absolute value is realised, and in whom the highest cultured personality is attained. Accordingly, the Dharma is called the Buddha-nature, man's true character enabling the attainment of Buddhahood. As the Dharma is universal, so is the Buddha-nature. It is endowed in every mother's son. It may be said that here lies the philosophical basis of argument of pedagogic possibility. Here lies also the reason why Buddhism opens its door to all mankind. Again from this experience of the Dharma the society of mutual reverence is rendered possible. In the Saddharma Pundarīka Sūtra, which occupies an important position among Mahāyāna Sūtras and has exercised a great influence on Japanese Buddhism, an awakened Bodhisattva reverently bows before whomsoever he meet with, old or young, men or women, and he says, "In you the Buddha-nature exists. You shall be a Buddha in time. I do not despise you." It is to be said, here is given the philosophical and religious basis of reverence of personality, which is one of the most fundamental conception of Democracy.

Thus the aim of Mahāyāna Buddhism is the universal salvation, all sentient beings realising Buddhahood which is the highest personality. This being the case, the objective of Buddhist education is to lead men to the Dharma experience, rejecting the small contrivances and deeds coming out of our selfishness and practising the labour of love flowing out of that experience, and finally to the Buddhahood, which is the absolute personality.

As to the method of education, Cāramuni-Buddha the founder has left to posterity the standard one. He rejected the uniformity principle and adopted the method of teaching to lead each according to his individual character and circumstances. This method has been transmitted by the successive generations of Buddhists. No doubt it was the result of the repeated use of this method that has produced such an abundance of scriptures. To it also is to be ascribed the numerousness of the denominations, which were founded on the basis of some of those scriptures. The present Japanese Buddhism is divisible into two kinds in respect of the way in which Dharma is embodied. One is the Zen in which Dharma is experienced intuitively, and the other is the Nembutsu in which Dharma personified as Tathāgata such as Mahāvairocana or Amitābha, or as Bodhisattva such as Avalokiteśvara is worshipped and the worshipper in his whole-hearted faith is to be united with his object of worship. However they are one in the fact that each of these aims at becoming Buddhahood in the present life or in the life to come. This is the Buddhist method of education. In Buddhist order such an advanced method has been used since its beginning two thousand and five hundred years ago. May this not be a striking fact in the history of education?

### Buddhist Influence on Japanese Culture

For about one thousand and four hundred years since its introduction to Japan, Buddhism has exercised a great influence on her culture in its various phases. The role played by it was, is, will be important in respect of the development of the mental history of the Japanese people.

Religiously, Buddhism has awakened the Japanese genius to the truth of religion. Originally the Japanese people were the adherents of the clan god worship. Since its introduction Buddhism has spread among people the teaching of universal salvation, a teaching of bliss to be enjoyed by us not only individually but socially and universally and in the present life as well as in the life to come. As to the religious practice it has spread the precept---observance, meditation in all its kinds, the invocation of the Buddha's name or of the title of the scripture, the incantations and prayers, sūtra-reading and bombai-singing, the preaching of the doctrine and so forth. Festivals have been observed commemorating the Buddha on the day of his birth, of his enlightenment, and of his death. Obon and Higan are the days for the dead. The birthday of the founder of each sect and the day of his death are also celebrated. In family life a shrine containing Buddha's image or picture and the tablets of the deceased is placed somewhere in the house and every evening and morning all the member of the family bow before it and make incense-offering. This is the custom of the laity of the Japanese Buddhist.

In respect of philosophy, Buddhism has contributed to the development of philosophical view of life and of the world. It has taught that, as the actual man is defiled by three evil passions of lust, anger, and ignorance, and the actual world is subject to change like a house on fire, we should come beyond to the spiritual atmosphere in which freedom, purity, and absoluteness prevail, and spreading this atmosphere establish the Buddha country of serenity and immaculacy.

As to morality, it has taught that, as the Buddha is our highest ideal, we should take as the standard the life of Buddha filled with

serenity and overflowed with benevolence, and in thus doing we should live a life of peace for ourselves, and as the negative duty towards others should keep the precepts of "not to kill", "not to steal", "not to be unchaste" and so forth, and as the positive duty give the full play to compassion and endeavour to perform the deeds of love. Again it has contributed to the promotion of the practice of moral deeds. As the Buddhist karma theory has penetrated into the mind of men and made them believe in the law of retribution, they have become cautious in their behaviour, avoiding evil-doing and endeavouring to do good. Again it has made men awakened to the sense of gratitude. It has taught that we should return our sincere thanks to the Buddha who saves us sentient beings and to the society which directly and indirectly gives us diverse kinds of favours sustaining our life.

Buddhist influence on our literature is found in a large number of religious and scholastic writings which elucidate the philosophical doctrine of Buddhism, and also in the diverse kinds of compositions, monogatari, yōkyoku, jōruri, waka, and haiku, in which the various Buddhist ideas are stated or the Buddha's or Bodhisattva's favours are described. As to the Buddhist art, there are Buddha's images and pictures, temple-buildings, articles in their various kinds. In bugaku-play, no-play, tea ceremony, and gardening, Buddhist influence is also remarkable.

Thus Buddhist culture occupies a dominant position in the thought and life of Japanese people. Accordingly it is natural that we should find in mottoes and proverbs so many Buddhistic ones. Therefore it is not too much to say that without the knowledge of Buddhism the history and culture of Japan and the spiritual life of the Japanese people cannot be clearly known.

### Educational Institutions Managed by Buddhist Denominations

The educational institutions of higher grade managed by Buddhist denominations, as is shown in the table placed at the end of this section, are six in number; each of these institutions is a "Tanke-daigaku" ( a university comprising a faculty of letters only ) organised in accordance with the Provision of the Imperial Ordinance ( No. 338, issued Dec. 6, 1918 ).

Thus their founding was in accordance with the Government's requirements, it was necessary for them to obtain the sanction of the Educational Department; consequently it was inevitable for them to be controlled by the uniform regulations of the said Department. In fact, if they had failed to obtain its sanction, they would not have been allowed to possess the privilege of the postponement of conscription; and if they had lost that privilege, they would have been rendered disqualified to take in the students of conscription age. The uniform regulations enacted by that Department were extremely strict; for example, in respect of the name of the university, it was forbidden to use the one which represents the establishing Buddhist denomination; the college managed by the Otani Branch of the Shin Sect of Buddhism which had been hitherto called Shinshū (Shin Sect) Daigaku was compelled to change its name into Ōtani Daigaku; similarly, Bukkyō (Buddhist) Daigaku of the Hongwanji Branch of the same Sect into Ryūkoku Daigaku; again, Shingonshū Daigaku of the Shingon Sect into Koyasan Daigaku; so with the others. As to the curricula, these institutions were obliged to adopt the same system as that of the Faculty of Letters of the Imperial University; consequently, their sole feature distinguishable from secular universities consisted in the fact that in them than in the latter the number of lectures on Buddhism are more numerous. Probably, the Educational Department could not help but meddling with their curricula, for it granted them the privilege of awarding the degrees and of bestowing upon their graduates

the qualification of the teacher of high schools as well as schools of secondary grade. Be that as it may, being under such strict regulations, they could not afford to develop their respective special character and to give the full play to their religious enthusiasm. Recently, however, at the assembly of the presidents of the private universities, the Educational Minister Abe stated that hereafter each of the private universities should develop its distinctive character in accordance with the democratic ideals of education. This being the case, Buddhist educational institutions now expect that the free developing of their character as religious schools will be allowed, and began the work of remodelling the educational system with a view to embodying in curricula as well as in moral training their respective religious ideal and sending forth to the world the true religious men of piety.

As to the Preparatory Course appended to each of these universities, it has been entirely fettered by the dictations of the educational Department; for instance, in moral course of study even its principal items of instruction have been laid down; the sole feature of the Preparatory Course of the Buddhist universities is seen in its having two hour lessons every week on the outlines of Buddhism and also two hour lesson on the outlines of the dogma. The real case is, however, that in the Preparatory Course the most part of school hours are spent in acquiring the knowledge of languages, especially of foreign languages, so that there is hardly any time to spare for specially religious education.

Again, with respect to the Senmon Gakko (college) managed by various denominations, here are two kind of them, the independently established ones and those attached to the universities above-mentioned. They are fifteen in number, as the table shows. All of these schools aim at chiefly the training up of the presiding priests of the temples. From this reason the Educational Department has not meddled them too much, allowing them to do their will in curricula as well as in

discipline. Even the religious service and other purely religious matters are permitted to teach. Hereafter these colleges will develop their special character more clearly than before as the denominational establishment of education. Finally, Buddhist Women's Colleges are counted seven, as is shown in the table. The guiding principle is the religious ideal of each of their establishing denominations. Two or three hours lesson on Buddhism is given every week. Concerning these colleges, the specially noticeable fact is that with the recent introduction of democratic ideal in education some of them are planning to promote their status to the school of university grade.

We must say in addition that, besides these stated above, more than eighty schools of the secondary grade are maintained in various quarters of the country by various denominations, and that the special institutions are established in some monasteries or great temples in order to exercise the religious, special practice and investigation.

	Name	Lokation	Management	
Universities	Ōtani University	Kyoto	The Ōtani Branch of the Shin Sect	
	Ryukoku University	Kyoto	The Hongwan Branch of the Shin Sect	
	Komazawa University	Tokyo	The Soto Branch of the Zen Sect	
	Risshō University	Tokyo	The Nichiren Sect	
	Taisho University	Tokyo	The Association of the Jodo, the Tendai and the Shingi Shingon Sect	
	Koyasan University	Wakayama Prefecture	The Kogi Shingon Sect	
	Semmonbu attached to the Universities above-named			
Colleges	Bukkyo-Semmongakko	Kyoto	The Chinzei Branch of the Jodo Sect	
	Seizan-Semmongakko	Kyoto	The Seizan Branch of the Jodo Sect	
	Rinzaigakuin-Semmongakko	Kyoto	The Rinzei Branch of the Zen Sect	
	Eizan-Senshugakuin	Kyoto	The Tendai Sect	
	Chizan-Semmongakko	Tokyo	The Shingi Shingon Sect	
	Shinshu-Semmongakko	Nagoya	The Ōtani Branch of the Shin Sect	
	Takada-Semmongakko	Mie Prefecture	The Takada Branch of the Shin Sect	
	Minobusan Semmongakko	Yamanashi Prefecture	The Minobusan Branch of the Nichiren Sect	
	Women Colleges	Kyoto Joshi Semmongakko	Kyoto	The Honganji Branch of the Shin Sect
		Kōkwa Joshi Semmongakko	Kyoto	The Ōtani Branch of the Shin Sect.
Kōsei Joshi Semmongakko		Kyoto	The Chinzei Branch of the Jodo Sect	
Chiyoda Joshi Semmongakko		Tokyo	The Honganji Branch of the Shin Sect	
Shukutoku Joshi Semmon- gakko		Tokyo	The Jodo Sect	
Ōtani Joshi Semmongakko		Ōsaka	The Ōtani Branch of the Shin Sect	
Sōai Joshi Semmongakko		Ōsaka	The Honganji Branch of the Shin Sect	



### New Orientation and Requirements

While war was being carried on, all the educational institutions of Japan had suffered under the same fate. Buddhist schools were no exception. Willing or unwilling, they could not help but to obey the forcible orders of the government and military authorities and adopt the ultra-nationalistic and militaristic type of education, for to do so was the most indispensable condition for their maintaining existence. Some educators believed that it was an inevitable obligation for them to do so in compliance with the urgent need of the nation, but at the same time there were many who harboured strong antipathy towards the narrow-minded, selfcomplacent, and "demoniac-possessed" opinions, held by bureaucracy, soldiers, Shintoists, and a part of learned men: especially the practical movement intending to sweep out all religions other than Shintoism was the cause of general disgust. Only the situation, however, prevented them from resisting it.

Since the cessation of war, however, the authorities of the Educational Department, loyal to the orders of SCAP, issued the detailed directions one after another to the effect that all the thought and equipments based upon ultra-nationalism and militarism should be completely rooted up. All the schools including Buddhist ones willingly obeyed these directions and put them into practice. This being the case, peace is now restored to the schools. None of the professional soldiers or demobilised officers are met with there; the practice of military art, whatever kind it may be, are all forbidden; the lectures on moral course, Japanese history, and geography, are entirely abolished; in the other lectures too, the subject-matter of instruction are corrected and recasted thoroughly, so that there is no longer any fear of breed in up a wrong such as was committed before. On this occasion, Buddhist schools are preparing themselves for rendering a willing service to the promotion of culture and the furtherance of world-peace. They are planning to embody in curricula as well as in moral training the religious ideals bequeathed to them as tradition, each disclosing the feature of its own; and, in the united efforts of teachers and students, to enhance their religious faith. In order to realise this,

each school is endeavouring to remodel its school system which should be carried into effect with the new academic year.

Of recent events, what grieves us most are those deeds of cruelty committed by our soldiers and the moral degradation---indeed such a degradation never dreamt of---on the part of our Japanese people at large. We believe that these moral weaknesses are chiefly due to our lamentable failure in developing a clear conception of the meaning of religion for human life, social as well as individual. Since Meiji Restoration our country has had no consistent policy towards religion and her government authorities, most educators, disregarding the function of religion, neglected the cultivation of religious sentiment among the nation. The remote cause lies here also of having committed a blunder to wage a war which should have not been waged. It is most natural that a nation without faith in cosmic fellowship of a world-religion should be driven into moral degradation and international isolation. Accordingly we desire most earnestly that the following items should be speedily carried into effect.

1. The Educational Department should not meddle in the matters of religious schools and should give them freedom to carry out the religious education of their own.

2. The religious course should be established in universities, colleges, and schools of primary and secondary grade for the purpose of cultivating religious sentiment and imparting religious knowledge among their students and pupils.

3. Graduates of religious schools (universities and colleges) should be granted the qualification of the teacher of religious course.

4. Equipments for training the teacher of religious course should be established in universities, normal schools and so forth.