

# Leadership through Buddhism

Pratibha Marothia<sup>1</sup> and Dr. Priti Vyas<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Research Scholar, Mody University of Science and Technology, Sikar

<sup>2</sup>Asst. Prof. Mody University of Science and Technology, Sikar

E-mail: <sup>1</sup>marothia800@gmail.com, <sup>2</sup>prityas.cash@modyuniversity.ac.in

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**Abstract**—It is an increasingly wide spread fact that leadership is one of the most frequently required skills for success and sustainability at professional front. Leadership is required in all professions and in all the aspects of our lives. In the absence of effective leadership no one can work efficiently. In Eastern philosophy there were the leaders who led the whole world with their powers. Their powers were not the heavenly powers but the powers of skills which they adopted to create the history. Anyone who wants to make history and wants to influence people as the legends did has to imbibe and unleash the similar skills. Indian students can easily learn these qualities from Eastern philosophy as it is more accessible, relatable and meaningful for them than the Western one, which appeals more to the mind than the heart. Effective leadership includes many qualities such as motivation, positivity, patience, self-confidence and so on which can be easily learnt from the life of Lord Buddha, the powerful and influential leader of Buddhist Philosophy. He introduced 'Buddhism' to the world and taught the world humanity and humility, that too without violence. It is in line with the Buddha's statement that "The mind is everything, what you think you become", this paper aims to elaborate how student can learn leadership by practicing the eight fold paths of Buddhism. Though the philosophy was introduced by Buddha so many years ago, the significance of Buddha's teachings and how they enlighten an individual's life is still very relevant. Thus an attempt has been made here to highlight the main tenants of Buddhism, their significance and the strategies to imbibe leadership through them for better and more sustainable understanding of life and work.

**Keywords:** Eastern philosophy, Soft skills, Leadership, Buddhism, Eight fold path.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Soft skills are personal attributes which complement hard skills to enhance an individual's relationships with others. Leadership is one of the most frequently required skills for success and sustainability at professional front. Educators always complain about lack of soft skills among graduates and students, and most of them complained about the skill which is leadership skills. The lack of leadership skills means lack of positive attitude, self-confidence, patience, motivation and so on. These problems not only restrict the development of students but also the organisation and country as well. Students are facing problems at various levels: individual, family, community, national and global levels and finding

themselves surrounded by physical, psychological and environment problems, degradation of moral values, terrorism etc.. Consequently, students are getting weaker when it comes to wisdom, ability to discern, handling anxiety arising from overload of work, ability to think and solve problems and so on. The quest to find solution to these problems requires us to have knowledge about the leadership skills. The main aim of this paper is to construct discussion on eastern philosophy of Buddhism. This attempt is not to extend any religious exercise but to gather practicality of Buddhism in developing soft skills. India is an amalgamation of various cultures, rituals and traditions. In all the culture Buddhism philosophy is relevant to the present society. Buddhism basically focuses on understanding ourselves, motivating ourselves, managing our own emotion in better way, our goals, intentions, responses, behaviour and all. Similarly, attention is given to understanding others, recognizing other people's emotions and managing relationships. Buddha propagated Astanga Marga (Eight fold path) and through these eight fold paths students can learn the skills effectively as the Eastern philosophy of education is more relatable, accessible, and meaningful for Indian students than the Western one.

## 2. EIGHT FOLD PATH OF BUDDHISM

The Noble Eightfold Path is a positive term. Buddha taught the Eightfold Path in his first teaching at Deer Park. Those principles of Eightfold path are Samyak Dhrushti (right view), Samyak Sankalp (right intention), Samyak Vakku (right speech), Samyak Karma (right action), SamyakJivana (right livelihood), Samyak Smirithi (right mindfulness), Samyak Dhristi (right concentration), Samyak Shrama (right effort).

### Samyak Dhrushti (Right View): Right Understanding

The path of awakening start with a step, Buddha called right understanding. It is the first step of eight fold path of Buddhism. According to Buddhism there are two types of understanding. The first called "knowing accordingly" (*anubodha*). It is an accumulated knowledge which is grasped according to given data. It is not very deep. Real deep understanding or "penetration" (*pavedha*) is seeing a thing in

its true nature, without any filter. This penetration is possible only when the mind is free from all distractions.

In working area everyone should have the quality of understanding each aspect of their work field and people. So Buddhism gives the students best guide to understand all the things in a proper way.

### **Samyak Sankalp (Right Intention): Positive Attitude**

Right intention denotes the intension of love and intention of non-violence, which are extended to all beings. This shows that true wisdom is full of noble qualities and that all intention of selfish desire, ill-will, hatred, and violence are the result of a lack of wisdom in all aspect of life whether individual, social, or political.

Right intention is necessary when the world is filled with much negativity; one has to win hearts with positive attitude and right intentions. Students have to adopt this skill to face the future challenges because your attitude makes your behaviour and behaviour develops your thinking. In future if students work in negative environment or work with their colleagues of negative behaviour they can change their environment with their high energy, positivity, enthusiasm and confidence.

### **Samyak Vakku (Right Speech): Effective Communication Skills**

According to Buddha If one cannot say something useful, one should keep "noble silence." Right speech means absence of telling lies, absence of backbiting and talk that may bring about hatred, enmity, disunity, and disharmony among individuals or groups of people, absence of harsh, rude, impolite, malicious, and abusive language, and absence of idle, useless, and foolish gossip. When one abstains from these forms of wrong and harmful speeches one naturally has to speak the truth, has to use words that are friendly and benevolent, pleasant and gentle, meaningful, and useful.

Communication skill is the most required skill in every field of work and every aspect of our life. It is required when we search for a job placement, new college, and in every other field accordingly. Apart from the professional front we need good communication skills in our daily life too because this is a reflection of our personality.

### **Samyak Karma (Right Action): Work Ethic**

According to Buddhism right action aim to promote moral, honourable, peaceful and good social conduct. It teaches us that we should abstain from certain things that are destroying our lives, like stealing and dishonest deeds. And apart from these we should also help others to lead a peaceful and honourable life in the right way.

The right action helps students in their work ethics. In every field of work people want to work with those who have a strong work ethic. Those who possess this trait are better

worker and get the best job and then a bright career. So students can learn this ultimate quality from this path of Buddhism.

### **Samyak Jivana (Right Livelihood): Self-Management**

According to Buddhism right livelihood means that one should abstain from the things which are harmful to other living beings. For instance to adopt a profession that brings harm to others, such as trading weapons, intoxicating drinks or poisons, killing animals, cheating, etc., and should live by a profession which is honourable, blameless, and causes no harm to others. We can easily see that Buddhism is strongly opposed to any kind of war, violence, evil business and all the wrong ways of money making.

The better livelihood teaches us the better way to manage ourselves. We should learn the quality of self-management from Buddhism because management is an essential tool of success. Time management skill in which students can learn prioritisation, focus, planning and conflict management in which one can limiting the negative view of conflict and increasing the positive views and stress management in which students can learn the quality of work under pressure.

### **Samyak Smirithi (Right Mindfulness): Critical and Structured Thinking**

Right mindfulness is the energetic way to prevent evil and depress states of mind from arising and also to get rid of evil thinking and to produce good and healthy states of mind. The right mindfulness also helps us to achieve perfection in the good and wholesome states of mind which is already present in an individual.

Structured thinking is a thinking which is the most needed skill. It centres our mind and aware us to take right decisions. To take right decision is the most valuable thing in this world because it decides our future and forms the base of our successful career.

### **Samyak Dhristi (Right Concentration): Awareness**

The practice of concentration on breathing (*anapanasati*) is one of the most well-known exercises. It connects our body to mental functions and then we see the development. There are several other ways of developing attentiveness also which relate the body as modes of meditation.

We should be clearly aware of all forms of feelings and sensations whether it is pleasant or unpleasant or neutral. Also should know how they appear and disappear within our self. Concerning the activities of mind, we should be aware whether one's mind is lustful or not, given to hatred or not, distracted or concentrated, etc. In this way we should be aware of all movements of mind, how they arise and disappear in our mind. In Buddhism we also find this concept in detail in the *Satipatthana Sutta* (The Discourse on the Establishing of Mindfulness) and in *Mahāsatiṭṭhāna Sutta* (The Great Discourse on the Establishing of Mindfulness).

Some necessary elements of self-awareness are open mindedness, confidence, happiness, initiatives, and so on. People who are self-aware get on by themselves. They are good to work with because they are generally aware about every aspect of their life and stay motivated all the time. Students need this skill in their life the most because a person will be successful in any field if he or she is self-aware and doesn't get affected by the adverse conditions and opinion.

### **Samyak Shrama (Right Effort): Problem Solving**

We learn from Buddhism how to train our mind in the right direction and how to discipline and develop it through correct efforts, right mindfulness, and perfect concentration.

The right efforts help us to solve our problems easily. Problem solving attitude means to view a problem as a challenge or an opportunity for new experience, focus on present and future obstacles and deal with the problems in positive way. This problem solving attitude will help the students in controlling situations that may get out of their hand. This skill helps one to come up with solutions for different problem.

### **3. CONCLUSION**

From the details of the noble eightfold path, we may get to know that it is a way of life to be followed, practiced and developed by each person. It is self-development of some particular things such as body, word, mind and in another words the complete development of our-self. It has not related with the belief, prayer, worship, or ceremony. In another words, it has nothing which may popularly called "religious." It is a Path leading to the realization of Reality, to complete freedom, understanding, happiness, and peace through moral, spiritual, and intellectual perfection. It is most important for students and learners to acquire adequate skills beyond academic or technical knowledge and this is not particularly difficult. Once a shortcoming in awareness of soft skills has been identified at oneself, there are numerous ways of rectifying such a deficiency. Schools have a special responsibility regarding soft skills, because during School and University time students get major impact on their development of soft skills. Besides raising awareness regarding the importance of soft skills, teachers should also encourage their students to improve their life skills through eight fold paths. The lecturers and teachers should actively teach soft skills to their students. It will increase the success rate of learners.

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