How the Buddha Taught

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ABSTRACT

How the Buddha taught is as important as what he taught. The Buddha was not only a consummate teacher who was hailed as a teacher of teachers that attracted disciples and debaters from far-flung places, but also an educator who was conscious of ways and means of preserving and propagating his teachings. Techniques and strategies adopted by him and his senior disciples had been most efficacious. His success in getting his discourses codified, explained, summarized and indexed is testified to by the extent, the internal consistency, and the amazing authenticity of the Buddhist canonical works as are accessible in the Pāli Tripiṭaka and the Āgama Sūtras of the Chinese Tripiṭaka.

This paper examines the textual evidence on the Buddha as a teacher and discusses the content, methods and techniques of his instruction. Subjected to a detailed and illustrated analysis are the two methodologies preferred by the Buddha: namely, Dhammadesanā (lecture-style delivery of discourses) and Dhammasākacchā (interactive, participatory discussion). How the Buddha encouraged question and inquiry is dealt with in some detail to illustrate his maeutic approach to learning wherein the learner was led to conclusions all of his own with the Buddha as only the 'midwife-like' facilitator.

A search is made of the theoretical constructs Buddhist education as gleanable from the Anguttaranikāya. Much remains to be known of how the Buddha taught from evidence from other canonical works and this paper serves to indicate further areas of research.

Pre-Buddhist Education in Indian Subcontinent

Indus Valley Civilization

By the time of the Buddha, over two millennia of educational development had taken place in the Indian subcontinent. The level of literacy suggested by the still undeciphered Indus Valley script required a sophisticated system of formal education, even if it was restricted to a privileged elite.

The presence of evidence for religious and philosophical thought (e.g. the seal depicting proto-Shiva as lord of animals and lord of yoga; worship of a deity in a tree or a tree as a deity; the symbolism of the bull, the phallus and mother goddess; etc.) presumes the development of complex concepts and their transmission from generation to generation. How this was done will be revealed only when scholars agree on the language and decipherment of the many statements recorded in seals and other artifacts of the Indus Valley Civilization.

What can be concluded at the moment is that the ideals of that branch of thought and practice, referred to in popular parlance as the Śramaṇa Cult, could persist for several millennia on account of an effective educational process.

Age of the Vedas

Similarly, the extensive literary achievements revealed in the Vedas – especially in the earliest stratum of Ṛgveda – establishes that the nomadic Aryans with their sophisticated language skills had perfected the necessary means and methods for the development, preservation and transmission of a vast intellectual heritage. Whether

they knew or employed writing in the process is a moot point. But the composers of the hymns or mantras were remembered as historical personages, even after the development of the belief that the Vedas were revealed texts as *Apauruṣeya* (not man-made) and *Śruti* (heard or revealed). Over a millennium and a half later, the list recurs in Buddhist texts.

The evolution of the priestly caste of Brahmans as Aryans settled down to a sedentary life as agriculturists in the Indian subcontinent is traceable as the cause and the effect of their effort to preserve and promote the authenticity of their literature. Much is known of the early Brahmanical educational process. (Mookherji 1989). *Carana* as an educational institution had operated at varying levels of complexity, for those at places like Takṣaśilā (modern Taxila near Islamabad in Pakistan) and Kasi (modern Vārānasī or Benares in India) to achieve fame as universities.

The oral transmission of the Vedas imposed continuous repetition. The self-learning process of *svādhyāya* or group recitation was necessarily the key method. This practice might have had its critics as revealed by such comparisons of Vedic recitation to croaking of frogs (Mookerji 1989 26,27, 35) and parrot-like rote-learning. But as Radha Kumud Mookerji argues, an intensive intellectual effort formed the basis of Vedic education. (Mookerji 1989 1-161). Without such an effort, the production and the preservation of the voluminous *Brāhmaṇas* on the art and theory of Vedic sacrifice, *Āraṇyakas* on the reinterpretation of sacrifice as a meditative process, and the ancillary sciences of the six Vedāngas (namely, *Śikṣā*, phonetics; *Chandas*, Meter; *Vyākaraṇa*, grammar, *Nirukta,* etymology; *Kalpa*, ceremonial; and *Jyotiṣa*, astronomy, (Mookerji 1989 165-167) would be unimaginable.

Similarly, the traditional list of sixty-four arts and sciences taught at centers of excellence like Takṣaśilā and Kāśī reflect a progressive expansion of the intellectual horizons of the Brahmanical educational system. It is also clear that theory and practice went hand in hand. Methods of assessment of quality education were significant. For example, the Buddhist sources show how Jīvaka, the Buddha's physician, was tested at the end of his course in medicine at Takṣaśilā. He was sent to the forest for a period with a spade and a basket to collect plants which had no pharmaceutical value. He proved his excellence by returning empty-handed (Malalasekera DPPN s.v.).

Vestiges of Śramaṇa Cult

It is in the Upanishads that we see the impact of pre-Aryan Śramaṇa Cult on Vedic education. Debate and discussion replace parrot-like repetition. Exploration of new ideas thorough a logical process of deduction takes the place of recapitulation of set themes. Points are illustrated with similes, metaphors, and stories. Practical demonstration reinforces conviction as in the case of dissolving salt in water to prove the immanence of the universal soul in the universe. Educational methodologies appropriate for philosophical and religious speculation had reached a high level of development in the pre-Buddhist Upanishads like Chāndogya, Bṛhadāraṇyaka, Taittirīya and Kauśītakī.

It is, however, noteworthy that, from a geographical point of view, these methodological innovations took place in the Prācya or the Gangetic Basin of the eastern parts of Northern India as opposed to the Udīcya or the region of the five rivers of Indus Valley where the Brahmanical traditions prevailed in greater strength. It is, therefore, conceivable that the Śramaṇa Cult which rose to prominence in the Prācya

region exercised a major impact on education pertaining to philosophy, religion, and spirituality (Guruge 1967/1991 75-78).

Education of the Elite of the Prācya Region

The education of the non-Brahmanical elite of the Prācya Region is directly relevant to an analysis of the Buddha's role as a teacher. According to later Law Books, the mastery of one or more Vedas could be the goal of any twice-born – Brahman, Kṣatriya or Vaiśya.

Whether the Kṣatriyas studied the Vedas in preference to martial arts and polity or even as an ancillary subject is not established by available data. On the other hand, the Kṣatriya kings Janaka of Videha, Ajātaśatru of Kāśī and Pravāhana Jāvāli of Pancala figure in the Upanishads as not only supporters or promoters of philosophical speculation but also exponents of Upanisadic doctrines. The education of such persons must have been in Sanskrit as the standard medium of communication among the elite. Whether a formal education in vernaculars went hand in hand is unrecorded but the literary characteristics of Jaina and Buddhist texts pertaining to narratives, similes and metaphors and poetic expressions imply that equal attention could have been given to the study of Māgadhī. A question to be pursued is whether a Śramaṇa Cult literature, parallel to Vedic literature, existed in Prakirt.

That there were treatises dealing with the Śramaṇa Cult in Sanskrit is established by later but poignant evidence. Quotes from a variety of such works and two authorities figure prominently is a work like *Yatidharmasamuccaya* of Yādava Prakāśa (Olivelle 1995, 40, 51, 69, 107, 111, 119, 133, 141). The two authorities are Sankha and Likhita. Their eminence as writers on the ascetic traditions is borne out by Buddhist literature which refer to them in several Jatakas, and also utilizes the enigmatic term *sankhalikhita* as an epithet to *Brahmacariya* (higher life of renunciation and celibacy of a recluse). The commentators, ignorant of Sankha and Likhita as authorities on asceticism, had explained it as meaning 'polished like a sea-shell' whereas it would rightly signify asceticism as expounded by Sankha and Likhita. It is possible that the education of the non-Brahmanical elite as represented by king Janaka included such works.

Early Education of Jina Mahāvīra and the Buddha Gotama

As members of the ruling caste of warriors or Kṣatriyas belonging to the Prācya Region, both Jina Mahāvīra and the Buddha Gotama must have received a comprehensive education in Sanskrit. Whether it included a formal study of a Veda or another aspect of Vedic literature is not clear. In fact, neither, the Digambara nor the Śvetāmabara tradition records any information of Jina Mahāvīra's childhood or education. One has to rely entirely on the internal evidence of Jaina scriptures to surmise that his education could have been as comprehensive as that of the Ksatriya elite.

Education of Prince Siddhārtha

The same could be said of the Buddha if not for the fact that information on his childhood appears both in the Canon and later treatises. The aspect highlighted in early biographies is his knowledge of martial arts. It is said that a demonstration of military skills was called for before his marriage to Yaśodharā.

Aśvaghoṣa in his *Buddhacarita* devoted a single verse on the education of Prince Siddhārtha:

> When he had passed the period of childhood and reached that of middle youth, the young prince learned in a few days the various sciences suitable to his clan (*vidyāh svakulānurupāḥ*), which generally took many years to master (II, 24).

The significance of *svakula anurūpa* is that his education was geared to the requirements of his caste as a potential warrior-ruler.

On the other hand, a later biography, also in Sanskrit, called the *Lalitavistara* takes up a whole chapter, which Maurice Winternitz (1983) summarizes as follows:

> "With a retinue of 10,000 boys, with huge pomp and participation of all gods – 8,000 divine damsels strew flowers in front of him – the tiny Bodhisattva marches into the school to learn writing. The poor schoolmaster cannot stand the splendor of the Bodhisattva and falls down to the floor. A god raises him and pacifies him saying that although the Bodhisattva is omniscient and has no need to learn anything, yet following the usual way of the world, he had come to the school. In the meantime the Bodhisattva surprises the schoolmaster by asking him which of the 64 ways of writing he will teach him. And he names them all – including the scripts of the Chīnas (Chinese) and the Hūnas (Huns) – scripts whose names the teacher has not even heard once. At last he begins to teach him and the 10,000 boys the alphabet. While learning every letter of the alphabet however the Bodhisattva gives by himself some saying of wisdom beginning with that particular letter." (Chapter 10)

Among the alphabets mentioned are also those of Sinhala and other later languages of South Asia.

Similar in hyperbolic style and miraculous contents are the references in the *Fo-hing-king, the* Chinese translation of *Abhiniṣkramaṇasūtra* by Jñānakūṭa during Tsui Dynasty. It says that the education of the prince lasted from the eighth to the twelfth year of age (chapter 12). It further shows how the prince supersedes his cohorts in writing, calculation and arithmetic and finally martial arts.

Knowledge of the Vedas

In the canonical texts in Pāli, the Buddha has shown significant familiarity with the education of a Brahman. An accomplished Brahman is described as:

> Studious, carrying the Mantras in mind, a past master in the three Vedas with the indices and the ritual (*sanighaṇḍuketubhāna*), in phonology or analysis of letters (*sākkharappabheda*) and in history or legends as the fifth; an expert in verse (*padaka*) and grammar (*veyyākaraṇa*) (A. III, 192).

It was also known that a Brahman would spend forty-eight years as a celibate student to acquire such an education (Ibid). In several suttas recurs a list of "Brahman-sages of old, mantra-makers, and mantra-sayers" which consists of the following: Atthaka, Vāmaka, Vāmadeva, Vessamitta, Yamadaggi, Angirasa, Bhāradvāja, Vāseṭṭha, Kassapa and Bhagu. (Ibid.; D. 3-Ambattha; D. 13-Tevijja) The same Sutta also lists as Brahmans teaching various paths like the following: Addhariyā, Tittiriyā, Chandokā, and Bavharijā. (Ibid). The Buddha was also aware that the Brahmans practiced the chanting of the Vedic mantras in secrecy and not openly (A III, 129-Secret).

Whether the knowledge of the Vedas was acquired by the Buddha through some formal Bralimanical education in his youth is debatable. It is more likely that his familiarity of Vedic literature and education resulted from his contact with Brahmanical scholars during the six years of penance as well as his mission as the Buddha.

Ñānavāda and *Theravāda*

The Buddha's knowledge of Yoga and ascetic practices as well as the theory of the Śramaṇa cult is undoubtedly a product of his career as a seeker. The brief accounts of his association with forest-dwelling teachers, Āḷāra Kālāma and Uddaka Rāmaputta, indicate that their hermitages were seats of learning with formal methods and contents. In both cases, the knowledge acquired is presented as comprising two distinct aspects: namely, *ñānavāda* and *theravāda*. It appears that later commentators had no direct information on these two terms and hence their interpretation is of little help (Guruge 2000 88). What is more likely is that these two terms indicate the contents and, in extension, the methods of Śramaṇa education.

If so, *ñānavāda* refers to theoretical knowledge acquired through the cognitive process. There is no doubt that each hermitage had a body of knowledge which was imparted to the disciples. When a teacher had shared with a disciple the body of knowledge that he possessed, the successful completion of the learning process was declared with the expression: "Whatever I know you know." The ascetic prince was so complimented by both Āḷāra Kālāma and Uddaka Rāmaputta (Ibid).

Theravāda, on the other hand, referred to affective and practical aspects of education, which came with experience. The *ñānavāda* imparted by teachers was supplemented and reinforced by the understanding and practical application of senior disciples (Sthavira or Thera means senior or elder). Such a two-tiered educational experience is relevant to the curriculum of Śramaṇa education in which meditation according to the theory and principles of Yoga was mastered through application with the guidance of peers and role-models.

Nine Limbs or Elements of Instruction

The more one delves into the methods of education of the Buddha and examines the basic contents of his teachings, the more one feels that the theory and the practice of the Buddha's educational effort was founded on the Śramaṇa system. In this context, one sees the need to re-examine the concept of *Navanga-satthusāsana*, the nine limbs or elements of a teacher's instruction. The limbs or elements are listed in the Pāli Canon (M I, 133; A II, 103-178, III, 86f, 177f, Vin III; 8I Pug. 43) as follows:

Sutta: discourses – "Discursive, narrative part of Buddhist Scriptures" (PTS PD s.v.)

Geyya: literally, what can be sung; but explained in commentaries as "mixed prose and verse" (Cf. *Campu kavya*). Only found in enumeration.

Veyyākaraṇa: answer, explanation, exposition; includes grammatical analysis.

Gāthā: Stanzas of four half-lines, each of eight syllables, usually in the Anustubh or Ariya meter.

Udāna: spontaneous utterances mostly in verse inspired by a particularly

intense emotion of joy or sorrow (PTS PD s.v.).

Itivuttika: Quotes or 'Logia' (PTS PD s.v.).

Jātaka: narratives of previous lives (not found in that sense in the Four Nikayas – PTS PD s.v.)

Abbhutadhamma: mysterious phenomena; wonderful; supernormal

Vedalla: Catechetical texts (Similar to later works known as *paripṛcchā*).

In some contexts, the list occurs as *Navangabuddhasāsana* or nine limbs or elements of the Buddha's instruction. F.L. Woodward reflected the opinion of early Western scholars when he described the list as 'a late insertion of the ninefold Buddhist scriptures, not collected at that time, classed according to their contents." *Vinayapiṭaka*, on the contrary, shows that these nine kinds of presentations came from an earlier tradition in that the previous Buddhas Vipassi, Sikhi and Vessabhu had used them in their instruction of disciples (Vinaya III p.8). All references in the Anguttaranikāya confirm the same impression that the list was traditional and might have come from the Śramaṇa system. The older Upanishands include most of these elements with the exception of *Itivuttaka* and *Jataka*. The Mahayana tradition added later literary forms, as in Sandhinirmocanasutra, where nine elemnts were increased to twelve by adding *Avadana*, *Nidana*, *Vaipulya* and *Vedalla* was replaced by *Upadesa*. (See Naichen Chen, p. 14)

The Buddha as a teacher

Satthā Devamanussānaṃ – Teacher of Men and Gods

In Indian terminology, every exponent of a religious or philosophical system was a teacher. The generic term for them was *Śāstṛ* from the root *śās* – to preach, to admonish and to instruct. From it comes the term *anusāsanā* meaning a discourse and *sāsana*, the dispensation or religious order. Jaina literature presents Jina Mahāvīra as a teacher but with a difference. It is said that he did not speak and the sound emanated miraculously from his body (Jaini 1990 42). On the other hand, the Buddha is presented as a consummate speaker who used the power of the spoken word to convince people. Critics called it *khattiya-māyā* – kṣatriya magic or illusion. At a time when rival religious teachers resorted to magical and miraculous deeds to win disciples for themselves, the Buddha upheld only one type of miracle. That was teaching or instruction through which minds and behaviors could be changed. While discouraging his disciples to utilize miracles to win over people, he urged that the miracle of instruction be the only one to be used for this purpose (D I, 212; III, 3; S. IV 290; A. I, 170; V, 327, etc.).

The Buddha was called *Satthā* – the teacher. Among the nine or ten traditional epithets used in Tipiṭaka for the Buddha, several imply his skill as a teacher: *vijjācaraṇasampanna* – endowed with knowledge and conduct; *purisadammasārathī* – charioteer for tamable men; *satthā devamanussānaṃ* – teacher of men and gods. In a cliché that recurs hundreds of times in the Canonical discourses, the effect of the Buddha's teaching are described as follows:

> "Most excellent are the words of your mouth, most excellent, just as if a man were to set up what has been thrown down, or were to reveal that which has been hidden away, or were to point the road to one who has gone astray, or were to bring a lamp into the darkness, so that

all who have eyes could see external forms – just even so has the truth made known to me, in many a figure by you."

Effectiveness as Teacher

How effective a teacher was he? What methods of instruction did he use? What innovations in teaching procedures can we attribute to him? What was his concept of learning? What impact did his ideas of teaching and learning have on the later educational efforts of the Buddhist Order?

The Buddha believed strongly in the power of the spoken word to convince people to change their way of life, adopt new values, and seek new goals. Repeatedly he emphasized how difficult it was for one to become a good teacher, especially because of his stress on precept and example as mutually indispensable in a teacher.

Clarity and logical presentation marked his longer discourses, which he had delivered on his own accord. In these he addressed small or large groups and sought to take them step by step to a point of view he sought to establish. A few characteristics stand out in these discourses: He began with an attention-catching statement, e.g. "There are two extremes which the truth-seekers ought not to follow" or "There is one sure and straight path, etc." (D.22, M. 10). "This must be done by one skilled in welfare to realize the state of peace" (Sn. I, 8). He analyzed a concept to its constituent elements and presented them with a numerical enumeration, serving both as a framework for presentation and an aid to memory.

The Buddha used similes and analogies freely and frequently and drew them usually from the day to day life of the people, e.g., the work of the butcher, the florist, the weaver, the potter, the blacksmith, the fletcher, the irrigator, the boatman, the soldier, the royal official. He repeated the important concepts over and over again, returning to them whenever it appeared permissible. The presentation of such concepts developed almost to the level of standardized and stereotyped formulae, which were expected to reappear in identical phraseology whenever the concept was referred to. The discourse led the audience gradually to the conclusion, which usually was a strong plea for the pursuit of the path of deliverance he advocated.

His dialogues, with individuals, were livelier as he used several other learning devices: usually he would get the discussant to clarify his point of view and to adopt a definite position. But the Buddha would not proceed unless he was sure that he understood clearly the discussant's standpoint. Clarification of premises was diligently resorted to at the beginning of each discussion. If he disagreed he would not ridicule the opponent or his ideas, but would begin asking questions. These were always searching, incisive questions, carefully arranged to convince the discussant of the fallacies of his arguments. The discussant was gradually led to make concessions and give up his original stand.

The impression often given is that the Buddha reorganized the discussant's thinking process by rapid-fire questioning. Similes and analogies were used in elaborating and explaining these questions. Anecdotes from legend and history figured prominently. The evaluation of the original standpoint of the discussant to the point of downright ridicule and denunciation, as on several occasions, would be done only when the discussant had given up his ground and was ready to agree with the Buddha.

Only after such a point of agreement would the Buddha begin to expound his own ideas on the point at issue: Whatever be the subject of discussion, the Buddha led the discussant gradually to an exposition of the path of deliverance.

Standard Educational Practices

Whether in discourses and expositions or dialogues and debates, the Buddha resorted to a series of standard educational practices. He aimed at the intellectual level of the "pupil". He had expounded the same idea in so many different ways according to the nature and composition of the audience. He started with the known and insisted on it as a fundamental principle in all his teachings. He eschewed speculation as a waste of time. He urged that one should endeavor to "know it as it really is" – the emphasis being on both knowing and reality.

The Buddha assigned little value, however, to knowledge *per se*. Knowledge was valid only up to the point it was applied. A little knowledge but duly applied in life was rated far superior to vast stores of knowledge with no effort to practice what was learnt. Those who believed in the latter were criticized as cowherds who looked after cattle for other people's benefit (Dh. 19-20). He was never satisfied until he was sure that the pupil actually understood what was being expounded. He tested them as he went along with searching questions. He used strings of synonyms for important words. He narrated stories. When appropriate, he summarized the lesson into a capsule form, usually a couplet.

The advantages of poetry, particularly as an aid to memory, were recognized. Most of the popular themes were expounded in versified discourses (Cf. *Suttanipāta* and *Khuddakapāṭha*). But he was not in favour of presenting his teaching in Sanskrit verse – the medium of elitist philosophers and religious teachers of his day. He preferred to allow each person to learn the doctrine in his own language and the Buddha himself chose to speak in the vernacular of the day – Māgadhī rather than elite Sanskrit.

He encouraged his pupils to discuss and debate and he was often only an arbitrator. He arranged prominent pupils to become teachers for others (See D. 23 – *Pāyāsisutta* where Sāriputta serves as a model for Nāgasena of Miḷindapañha). He evaluated their teaching ability and ranked them according to their specializations and instructional methodologies.

The Buddha organized the Sangha to be a learning society. In it the members spent their life-time learning, practicing what they learnt, teaching others, engaging in debates and discussions to clarify concepts, memorizing discourses and utterances of the Buddha and transmitting them by word of mouth for preservation, developing commentaries, and winning more and more members who would similarly continue a lifelong learning process.

As a teacher the Buddha demonstrated many other remarkable competencies. He could convert any incident to an occasion for teaching. If all occasions on which he preached to an audience are analysed as classes, one would be amazed at his ingenuity to use any situation or any congregation of people as an opportunity to teach something.

Urchins harassing a snake, an old man abandoned by his children, the search for a bandit murderer, the sacrificial ceremonies of a Brahman, a war between kinsmen and scores of similar occasions provided him the "classes".

Sometimes, he contrived them himself. He did not fail to use opportunities which others provided. He readily accepted the challenges of others and was always ready to participate in a debate. Even on his death-bed, he would teach Subhadda

(D.16). Though a consummate user of the spoken word, he was equally adept in using other methods of instruction. Discovery method finds one of its earliest, and perhaps the most perfect, application when a mother grieving over her dead child was made to realize the universality of death by getting her to beg for a mustard seed from a home that had not seen death (DPPN s.v. Kisagotamī).

Visual Aids

Buddhist literature ascribes to Moggallāna one of the earliest recorded incidents when a diagrammatic representation was utilized to reinforce and enrich a lesson. According to Divyāvadāna, Ānanda reports how Moggallāna illustrated a talk on Dependent Origination (*Paṭiccasamuppāda*) with the diagram of a wheel in which the twelve causal factors were symbolically depicted (p.300). Not only does the Buddha express his admiration for Moggallāna as a teacher but suggests that the diagram be displayed over the gateway in the monastery of Veḷuvana in Rājagaha. This illustration is reputed to be the origin of the "Wheel of Becoming", seen in a 7th century cave painting in Ajanta in a fragmentary condition. It is a popular theme in the Tibetan and Nepali Tangka paintings.

The Buddha himself is attributed with the use of a series of visual images, miraculously created, to convince an arrogant young queen of the fleeting nature of beauty and life itself.

The Buddha's concept of Teaching and Learning

Far more important as all practical applications of a number of important educational devices are the Buddha's views on teaching and learning and related subjects.

An interesting passage in the *Sigālovādasutta* enumerates the duties of teachers and pupils:

The Teacher should:

(1) show affection to his pupil;
(2) train him in virtue and good manners;
(3) carefully instruct him, impart unto him a knowledge of the science and wisdom of the ancients;
(4) speak well of him to friends and relations; and
(5) guard him from danger (D. 31).

The Pupil should:

(1) minister to his teacher;
(2) rise up in his presence and wait upon him;
(3) listen to all he says with respectful attention;
(4) perform the duties necessary for his personal comfort; and
(5) carefully attend to his instructions.

These were meant to be obligations between teachers and pupils in a secular setting, because the same Sutta lays down a similar set of duties between religious teachers and their lay disciples. Here the ethical content of what is taught is emphasized and, interestingly, an obligation is cast on the lay disciples to make themselves accessible to their teachers.

In both cases of secular and religious education, the obligation cast on the pupil or disciple as regards learning is very important. The pupil is expected to listen

to everything the teacher says with respectful attention. The lay disciple similarly is asked to minister to their teachers with respectful attention to their words, deeds and thoughts.

Critical Examination as Aim and Foundation of Learning

At no time did the Buddha advocate unquestioned acceptance of anything on the authority of the teacher. Such an assertion would have gone against one of his own basic principles of guaranteeing to each person the full and undisputed right to think for himself. The Buddha's approach to learning as a free and unfettered exercise of one's own intellectual capacity to think was in keeping with his over-riding principle, so eloquently enunciated to the Kālāmas as well as to Bhaddiya Licchavi (A. III, 7,65; II, 191; IV, 20, 193)

The method which the Buddha proposed for this process of self-examination of all knowledge is observation and analysis. His own philosophy or religion was described as *ehipassika* (come and observe or examine), and *paccattaṃ veditabba* (to be realized by each one independently). Buddhism was given very early in its career the epithet *vibhajjavāda* meaning the doctrine of analysis. The Buddha's position was also stated as that of a pointer of the way while each individual had to realize the truth for himself (Dh. 276).

One would, of course, ask here whether the role of the teacher as conceived by the Buddha was a passive one. Our brief sketch of the Buddha as a teacher shows that he was anything but passive. In several passages the Buddha describes his role as a teacher in some detail. Speaking to Bhaddāli in the Majjhimanikāya, the Buddha compares himself to an expert horse-trainer. He draws a parallel between his method and that of graduated exercising which a horse trainer adopts with a new horse. "In this way," runs the Sutta, "the Buddha offers everyone who submits to his guidance by methodical exercise of concentration, therefore by pure thinking, to free him from all passions and to make him the holiest place in the world" (M. 65).

Known to the unknown

Again in the Majjhimanikāya (M. 82; 101) the Buddha's method of gradual onsetting, gradual progress and gradual ascension from the lowest step upwards has been compared to learning processes in archery and accountancy "When we take pupils we first make them count one, the unit, two, the duality, three, the trinity and thus we make them count up to hundred", the illustration goes. In an Udāna verse, the Buddha explains this process further, "Just as the great ocean becomes deeper, gradually steepens, gradually becomes hollowed out and there is no abrupt fall, in exactly the same way, in this Doctrine and Discipline, the training is gradual, the working is gradual, the path is gradual and there is no sudden advance into full knowledge" (Udāna V, 5; See also A. VIII, II, 19).

In another passage of the Majjhimanikāya, the Buddha compares himself to a trainer of elephants, who by means of a tamed elephant lures the wild elephant into a clearing and takes out its wild ways through methodically progressive exercises to make it "become accustomed to the environs of the village and to adopt the manners in vogue among men" (M. I 27).

To summarize these statements, it can be assumed that the Buddha designed and administered these "methodically progressive exercises." It is important to note here that the entire emphasis of the Buddha's course of spiritual training is one of

progressively difficult mental exercises. Morality or Sīla is only the foundational preparation. Starting with simple heedfulness (by which one learns to be conscious of everything one does in all his waking moments), through contemplation on inhalation and exhalation, the process of exercising the mind advances through meditation on a variety of subjects to higher mental states called Dhyānas.

Individual Differences

Here the Buddha recognizes the significance of individual differences and developed individualized courses of meditation for his disciples according to each one's psychological make-up. As many as forty different subjects of meditation had evolved in the Buddhist tradition of mental development. Concentration of the mind to which all this training leads, is again only a means to an end.

The end of this learning process is the supreme knowledge (*Paññā*) with which the disciple reaches the highest attainment of the realm of deathlessness. Here, the disciple leaves everything behind including the very teachings of the Buddha, which were meant to serve only as a raft, a means of escape, but not meant to be retained.

Methods and Techniques of Instruction

The learning devices, methods, and techniques adopted by the Buddha in his discourses, debates and discussions are traceable in both the Pāli Canon and the Āgama Sūtras of the Chinese Tripiṭaka. During his forty-five-year mission, the Buddha preached many discourses either on his own initiative (e.g. *Mahāsatipaṭṭhāna-sutta*) or in response to questions addressed to him (e.g. *Maāamangalasutta*), and engaged himself in many discussions and debates. As a preacher the Buddha was analytical. His very first discourse, (*Dhammacakkappvattanasutta*), as already discussed, indicates that he had already perfected a format in which

(i) attention-catching aphoristic statements and questions, usually with a quantitative reference, and

(ii) a detailed analysis of the statement or question with definitions of all keywords and phrases

were the main features. The earlier discourses are strictly analytical and concise (compare also *Anattalakkhaṇa-sutta*). Further on, one meets longer discourses in which parables and similes play an important part. On occasion, the Buddha had also been a consummate story-teller as the Jātaka stories suggest.

One may not be able to date the development of each stylistic innovation in the Buddha's art of preaching. But the tendency to summarize doctrinal points in metrical form as in the *gāthās* met in *Dhammapada*, *Udāna*, *Suttanipāta* appears to coincide with the widening of the circle of missionary monks. Their need for codified and epitomized restatements of doctrinal principles was related to the vital requirement of maintaining the authenticity of the Buddha-word. Although one does not come across any metrical *gāthās* in either the *Dhammacakkappavattanasutta* or the *Anattalakkhaṇasutta*, Assaji who proceeds on his missionary activities after his initiation to Buddha-dhamma with these two discourses, instructs Upatissa (who later became the chief disciple of the Buddha under the name Sāriputta) in a single verse: *Ye dhammā hetuppabhavā, tesaṃ hetu tathāgato aha.*

There is no doubt that the Buddha himself was a talented poet and his powers of poetic expression were of a very high order. (Guruge 1993 148-165) He identified four kinds of poetry as *cintā* (imaginative), *suta* (tradition), *attha* (didactic) and *paṭibhāna* (extempore). (A. IV, 23. 230). *The* verses attributed to the Buddha as his first thoughts after enlightenment (i.e. *Anekajātisaṃsāraṃ* etc.) and those in conversations with Māra and Sahampati reflect a very early beginning for metrical compositions. Inspired by him, the monks and nuns did compose many poems, and those we meet in *Thera-gāthā* and *Therī-gāthā* are indeed remarkable for their lyricism.

Models of Discourses

A further element discernible in the discourses delivered by the Buddha is the tendency towards exegesis attempted primarily by using a string of synonyms and, where appropriate, elaborating further with a simile or a parable (D.2 and 23). These elements of a typical discourse of the Buddha may be further clarified by quoting three texts: one in which a discourse by the Buddha is described in indirect speech; the second in which the actual words are quoted; and the third where the recourse to parables and similes is clearer.

(i) From *Vinayapiṭaka* comes this account:

> Then Anāthapiṇḍika said to himself: "The Buddha calls me by my name!" So, delighted and elated thereat, he approached the Buddha, fell at his feet, saying: "Hath my Lord, the Exalted One, rested happily?"
>
> And the Buddha replied:
> Happy he ever rests, the *brāhmaṇa* set free,
> Whom lusts defile not, who is cooled and loosed from bonds,
> Who hath all barriers burst, by taming his heart's pain
> Happy the calm one rests, reaching the Peace of Mind.
>
> Then did the Buddha discourse unto Anāthapiṇḍika, the housefather, with talk that led gradually on, thus: of charity and righteousness and the heaven-world; of the danger, uselessness, and defilement of the passions, and of the profit of giving up the world.
>
> And when the Buddha saw that the heart of Anāthapiṇḍika, the housefather, was made pliable and soft and without obstruction, uplifted and calmed, then did he set forth the Dhamma teaching of the Buddhas, proclaimed most excellent, that is, suffering, the arising of suffering, the cessation of suffering, and the way leading to the cessation of suffering.
>
> Then, just as a clean cloth that is freed from stains can readily take on the dye, even so in Anāthapiṇḍika, the housefather, as he sat there, arose the pure and spotless eye that sees the Dhamma, (the sight) that whatsoever is of the nature to rise, all that is of nature to cease again (Vinaya II, 6, 4; S. I, 211).

(ii) In *Dīghanikāya* is recorded his discourse to young Sigāla:

> "Now, young master, since the Four Vices of Actions have been put away by the Ariyan disciple, and since he does no evil deed through the Four Motives for evil deeds, and since he does not follow the Six Openings that swallowed up wealth, he is thus one who has forsaken fourteen evil ways: he is the one who covers the six regions of space; he is the one equipped for the conquest of the two worlds: he is the one for whom both this world and the world beyond are assured. When body breaks up, after death he is reborn in the blissful return, the happy world.
>
> Now what are those Four Vices of Action which he has put away?
> They are these, young master:

The vice of taking the life of creatures; of taking what is not given; of wrong practice in acts of passion; and falsehood. These four."

Thus spoke the Buddha. He added this further:

"Who takes life, who steals, who tells lies,
Who fouls another's wife, him wise men blame.
And what are the Four Motives of Evil-doing
free from which he does no evil deed?
A man does evil deeds by going on the wrong path through desire, through hatred, through delusion, and through fear. But since the Ariyan disciple does not go on these four wrong paths, he does no evil deed through these Four Motives of Evil-doing,"

Thus spoke the Buddha. He added this further:

"Who oversteps the *Dhamma*
Through lust or hate, stupidity or fear,
His good name wanes.
As in the dark fortnight wanes the moon.
Who steps not o'er the *Dhamma*
Through lust or hate, stupidity or fear,
His fame does wax,
As in the bright fortnight waxes the moon." (D.31)

(iii) In *Saṃyuttanikāya* occurs this discourse addressed to Ānanda on the causal law:

"Say not so, Ānanda! Say not so! Deep indeed is this Causal Law, and deep it appears to be. It is by not knowing, by not understanding, by not penetrating this doctrine, that this world of men has become entangled like a ball of twine, become covered with mildew, become like *muñja* grass and rushes, and unable to pass beyond the doom of the Waste, the Way of Woe, the Fall, and the Ceaseless Round (of rebirth).

In one, Ānanda, who dwells contemplating the enjoyment of all that is concerned with grasping, there grows up craving. Craving is the condition of grasping: grasping is the condition of becoming.

Conditioned by these are birth, decay-and-death, grief and suffering, woe, lamentation, and despair. So arises all this mass of suffering.

Just so, in one who dwells contemplating the enjoyment of all that is concerned with grasping, there grows up craving. And (as I told you) from craving arises all this mass of suffering.

But in him, Ānanda, who dwells contemplating the misery of all that is concerned with grasping, craving ceases. By the ceasing of craving, grasping ceases: so also cease becoming, birth, decay-and-death..... and suffering and despair. So ceases all this mass of suffering.

Suppose, Ānanda, there were a great tree, and a man comes with axe and basket and cuts down that tree at the root. He cuts it at the root and digs a trench all round and pulls out the root, even the little roots and the fibres of them. Then he cuts it into logs, splits the logs, and cuts the logs into chips. Then he dries the chips in wind and sun, burns them with fire, collects them into a heap of ash, winnows the ashes in a strong wind, or lets them be carried away by a swift-flowing stream.

Surely that great tree, thus cut off at the roots would be made like a stump of a palm-tree, becomes nothing, becomes unable to sprout again in future time. Just so, Ānanda, in him who dwells contemplating the misery of all concerned with grasping, craving ceases. And with the ceasing of grasping cease also becoming, birth, decay-

and-death, grief, sorrow, woe, lamentation, and despair. Such is the ceasing of this whole mass of suffering" (S. II, 92).

Pedagogical Soundness of Instructional Sequences

When one examines the various discourses as recorded in the Pāli Tripiṭaka as well as in Āgama sūtras of the Chinese Tripiṭaka, one is impressed with the pedagogical soundness of the instructional sequences that have been adopted. In fact, the lucidity and orderliness of presentation could be utilized as main criteria for determining the authenticity of discourses attributed to the Buddha. It may not be altogether hazardous to conjecture that these characteristics of authenticity had been recognized in Buddhist circles from very early days when some of the discourses which are products of scholastic activity such as the *Abhidhamma* in the *Theravāda* tradition or *Avataṃsakasūtra* in Mahāyāna were attributed to esoteric origin (e.g. *Abhidhamma* as preached in Tusita heaven for devas or *Avataṃsaka* as beyond the comprehension of the immediate disciples).

Dhammadesanā has been developed as an act of teaching. On identifying monks capable of performing as missionaries propagating the *Dhamma,* the Buddha issued the following instructions which are found in both the Vinayapiṭaka (Vinaya CV.7,6) *and* the Anguttaranikāya (A. VIII, 16).

> A bhikkhu is fit to go on a mission when he has eight qualities. What are the eight? Here a bhikkhu is one who listens, who gets others to listen, who learns, who remembers, who recognizes, who gets others to recognize, who is skilled in the consistent and the inconsistent, and who does not make trouble. A bhikkhu is fit to go on a mission when he has these eight qualities. Now Sariputta has these eight qualities; consequently he is fit to go on a mission.
>
> 'He does not falter when he comes
> Before a high assembly;
> He does not lose his thread of speech,
> Or cover up his message.
> Unhesitatingly he speaks out;
> No questioning can ruffle him.
> A bhikkhu such as this is fit
> To go upon a mission.'

The characteristics highlighted are those of a competent teacher. The quality of the listener has also received his attention:

> "Then the Buddha said: There are three sorts of people to find in the world:
> The empty-head, the fool who cannot see,
> Though oft and oft unto the Sangha going,
> He hears their talk, beginning, middle, end,
> Can never grasp it. Wisdom is not his.
>
> Better than he the man of scattered brains,
> Who oft and oft unto the Sangha going
> Hears all their talk, beginning, middle, end,
> And seated there can grasp the very words,
> Yet, rising, nought retains. Blank is his mind.
>
> Better than these the man of wisdom wide.
> He, oft and oft unto the Sangha going,
> Hears all their talk, beginning, middle, end,
> And, seated there, can grasp the very words,
> Bears all in mind, steadfast, unwavering,

Skilled in the Dhamma and what conforms thereto.
This is the man to make an end of III" (A. VIII, 1, 2).

Recognizing the diversity of individual differences of the people who constituted his audience, the Buddha did adopt a variety of individualized approaches. He would not preach to an eager but hungry and tired learner until he was fed and rested. He would not discuss impermanence of life or certainty of death with a woman whose mind was distraught with grief. He devised simple exercises for those whose mental capacities were limited, as in the case of Kisā Gotamī who sought the Buddha to revive her dead son and Culla Panthaka, the slow learner. In the latter case, the Buddha uses a piece of cloth as a means of enabling the young disciple to realize the significance of impermanence (Malalasekera DDPN, s.v.).

The Buddha was equally conscious of the importance of being tactful. When Kūṭadanta approached him for instruction on a new technique of holding a sacrifice, which the Brahman assumed the Buddha to know, the Buddha adopted an exceedingly tactful approach. Where one would expect him to condemn sacrifice as futile, he proceeded to narrate a story of a chaplain who was asked by a king to conduct a sacrifice. The Buddha achieved his objective of dissuading the Brahman from holding the intended sacrifice; but at no point did the Buddha appear to present him own views (D.5). A similar approach to answering a question of General Sīha is recorded in Anguttaranikāya (A. VII, 4, 54). The Buddha is recorded to have in a similar manner clarified to Anāthapiṇḍika the relative merit in charity according to recipient:

'For, though brahman Velāma gave that very rich gift, greater would have been the fruit thereof, had he fed one person of right view.

Though he gave that very rich gift, or though he fed a hundred persons of right view, greater would have been the fruit thereof, had he fed one Once-returner.

Though he gave that very rich gift, or though he fed a hundred Once-returners, greater would have been the fruit thereof, had he fed one Non-returner.

Though he fed a hundred Non-returners, greater would have been the fruit thereof, had he fed one Arahant.

Though he fed a hundred Arahants, greater would have been the fruit thereof, had he fed one silent Buddha.

Though he fed a hundred silent Buddhas, greater would have been the fruit thereof, had he fed one Tathagata, Arahant, fully awake.

Though he fed the Order of monks, with the Buddha at their head, greater would have been the fruit thereof, had he built a monastery for the use of the monks of the Order of the surrounding country.

Though with pious heart he took refuge in the Buddha, Dhamma and the Order, greater would have been the fruit thereof, had he with pious heart undertaken to keep the precepts: abstention from taking life, from taking what is not given, from carnal lusts, from lying and from intoxicating liquor, the cause of sloth.

Though with pious heart he undertook to keep these precepts, greater would have been the fruit thereof, had he made become a mere passing fragrance of loving kindness.

Though he made become just the fragrance of loving kindness, greater would have been the fruit thereof, had he made become, just for a finger-snap, the thought of impermanence.'

The Buddha discussed the manner in which rival teachers were dealt with, as illustrated by the following:

> 'Now there are, O Kassapa, certain recluses and Brahmans who are clever, subtle, experienced in controversy, hair splitters, who go about, one would think, breaking into pieces by their wisdom the speculations of their adversaries. And as between them and me there is, as to some point, agreement, and as to some point, not. As to some of those things they approve, we also approve thereof. As to some of those things they disapprove, we also disapprove thereof. As to some of the things they disapprove, we approve thereof. And some things we approve of, so do they. And some things we disapprove of, so do they. And some things we approve, they do not. And some things we disapprove of, they approve thereof.
>
> 'And I went to them, and said: "As for those things, my friends, on which we do not agree, let us leave them alone. As to those things on which we agree, let the wise put questions about them, ask for reasons as to them, talk them over, with or to their teacher, with or to their fellow disciples, saying: 'Those conditions of heart, Sirs, which are evil or accounted as evil among you, which are blameworthy or accounted as such among you, which are insufficient for the attainment of Arahatship, or accounted as such among you, depraved or accounted as such among you – who is it who conducts himself as one who has more absolutely put them away from him, the Samana Gotama, or the other venerable ones, the teachers of schools?'" (D.8)

The Buddha took care to avoid what he called 'wrangling phrases' such as the following:

> "You don't understand this doctrine and discipline, I do."
> "How should you know about his doctrine and discipline?"
> "You have fallen into wrong views. It is I who am in the right."
> "I am speaking to the point, you are not."
> "You are putting last what ought to come first, and first what ought to come last."
> "What you've excogitated so long, that's all quite upset."
> "Your challenge has been taken up."
> "You are proved to be wrong."
> "Set to work to clear your views."
> "Disentangle yourself if you can" (D. 1)

The Buddha spoke and expected his disciples to speak only words, which were –

> Blameless, pleasant to the ear, lovely, reaching to the heart, urbane (*pori* < *pura*, city), pleasing to the people, and beloved of the people (D.1).
>
> In praising Sanatkumara, eight qualities of voice of a speaker were identified as ideal: "fluent, intelligible, sweet, audible, continuous, distinct, deep, and resonant" (*visattho*, *vinneyyo*, *manju*, *savaniyao*, *bindu*, *avisari*, *gambhiro*, *ninnadi*) – D. 18.
>
> He upheld amity and peace as a binder together of those who are divided, an encourager of those who are friends, a peace-maker, a lover of peace, impassioned for peace, a speaker of words that make for peace (D.1).
>
> So was the Buddha reputed as a 'Teacher of teachers of many.' It was said that 'people came right across the country from distant lands to ask him questions' (D.4). Even on his death-bed, he was ready to teach Subhadda, his last disciple (D.16).

There were, of course, critics and adversaries who did not accept the Buddha's answers. He listed the standard charges made against him and suggested how they should be refuted:

> And it may well be, Kassapa, that the recluses of adverse schools should thus, in succession, raise, each of the following objections:

"But it is not in full confidence that he roars"
"But men put no questions to him"
"But even when questioned, he cannot answer"
"But even when he answers, he gives no satisfaction by his exposition of the problem put"
"But men do not hold his opinion worthy to be listened to"
"But even when men listen to his word, they experience no conviction therefrom"
"But even when convinced, men give no outward sign of their faith"
"But even when they give such outward sign, they arrive not at the truth"
"But even when they arrive at the truth, they cannot carry it out"

'Then in each such case, Kassapa, they should be answered as before, until the answer runs: "Say not so. For the Samaṇa Gotama both utters forth his lion's roar, and that too in assemblies where men congregate, and in full confidence in the justice of his claim, and men put their questions to him on that , and on being questioned he expounds the problem put, and by his exposition thereof satisfaction arises in their hearts, and they hold it worthy to listen to his work, and in listening to it they experience conviction, and being convinced they give outward signs thereof, and they penetrate even to the truth, and have grasped it they are able also to carry the truth out!" (D.8)

Expected Behavior of Disciple

The word for a disciple in Pāli is *sāvaka* and it means a listener. As all learning was obtained through oral instruction (cf. Bahusuta – the 'well-heard' which stands for 'well-read'), listening attentively was *sine qua non* for a learner. The Buddha is said to have begun presenting his doctrines only when he saw that the listener "had become prepared, softened, unprejudiced, upraised and believing in heart" (D.3 – Ambaṭṭha). So did the Buddha rebuke Ambaṭṭha saying,

> Is that the way you would hold converse with aged teachers and teachers of your teachers well stricken in years, as you do now, moving about the while or standing, with me thus seated" (Ibid).

But the Buddha did not expect the listener to be either passive or too ready to accept what was taught. In the *Vinayapiṭaka* (*Vinaya II, 10*) is described an occasion when Mahapajāpatī Gotamī said," Well for me if the Buddha would show me a teaching, hearing which from his own lips I might dwell alone, solitary, zealous, ardent and resolved," and the Buddha's response was a call for critical evaluation:

Of whatsoever teachings, Gotamī, you can assure yourself thus:

> "These doctrines conduce to passions, not to dispassion; to bondage, not to detachment; to increase of worldly pains, not to decrease them; to covetousness, not to frugality; to discontent, and not contentment; to company, not solitude; to sluggishness, not energy; to delight in evil, not delight in good; of such teachings you may with certainty affirm, Gotamī, "This is not the Dhamma. This is not the Discipline. This is not the Buddha's Message."
>
> "But of whatsoever teachings you can assure yourself that they are the opposite of these things that I have told you, and of such teachings you may with certainty affirm: 'This is the Dhamma. This is Buddha's Message.'"

All his listeners had not been diligent, attentive or faithful students. There had been occasions when some had to be rebuked and the main line of the Buddha's

admonition is, in itself, a significant pointer to the pedagogical principles upheld by him in *Dhammadesanā*". In the *Majjhimanikāya* is this reprimand addressed:

> 'Well said, brethren! Well indeed do you understand the Dhamma, which I have shown you. In diverse ways as you repeat have the Hindrances been told by me...but yet this brother Arittha, the late vulture-tamer, failing to grasp my meaning aright, misinterprets me and digs a pit for himself to fall into, and begets demerit thereby...
>
> Now herein, brethren, certain misguided ones learn the Dhamma by heart, to wit: the discourses, the songs, the exposition, the verses, the solemn sayings, the words of the Master, the birth tales, the marvels and the miscellanies. **Thus learning them by heart they do not by wisdom investigate their meaning: they do not take interest therein**: just for the sake of being free from reproach they learn the Dhamma by heart: just for the profit of pouring out a flood of gossip. But as to the essence of the Doctrine which thus they learn by heart, they have no part nor lot in that. The teachings are ill-grasped by them and lead to their loss and suffering for many a long day. Why so? Because of wrongly grasping the teachings, brethren.
>
> Just as, brethren, a man in need of water-snakes, searching for water-snakes, going about in quest of them, sees a big water-snake and grasps it by the body or the tail: and that water-snake turns back on him and bites him in the hand or arm or some other limb, and owing to that he comes by his death or suffering that ends in death. And why? Because he wrongly grasped the snake, brethren.
>
> Even so, brethren, in this case some misguided ones learn the Dhamma by heart, and come to suffering because they grasp it wrongly' (M 22).

The discourses delivered by the Buddha are recorded in the *Tripiṭaka* as receiving a two-fold reaction from the listener. In some cases the appreciation ends with the taking of refuge in the Buddha, the Dhamma and the Sangha and an invitation for lunch on the next day. In others, the listener expresses his desire to join the Order as a monk or a nun. The usual formula of appreciation, quoted earlier, became so stereotyped as to conceal individual reactions of different persons whom the Buddha convinced.

Dhammasākacchā: Interactive, Participatory Discussion

While the Canon has this much information on *Dhammadesanā*, very little is gleanable on the other instructional methodology of *Dhammasākacchā*. The problem appears to be one of recording. The Buddha was certainly involved in many disputes and debates and these could not have been all one-sided as the *Tripiṭaka* has recorded. Apparently, the counter-arguments of disputants were lost sight of in these reports which highlight usually the Buddha's point of view. The format of interactive, participatory discussion, implied by *Dhammasākacchā*, apparently survived in the scholastic activity of the Sangha and resurfaced in the major Mahāyāna Sūtras. In them, the disciples Bodhisattvas and Mahāsattvas discuss doctrinal issues and the Buddha is more or less a moderator.

The Buddha, of course, was not a believer in debate for the sake of debate. In denouncing it, he listed in the *Saṃyuttanikāya* the usual expressions used in such wordy warfare:

> 'And how is one not eager of wordy warfare with people? Herein, housefather, a brother does not talk like this: "You know not about this *Dhamma-Vinaya*. I do know about this *Dhamma-Vinaya*. How could you know about it? You have fallen on wrong views. I have come by right views. You speak last what should come first, and first what should come last. I am speaking to the point: you are not. What you have thought out so long is quite upset. Your view is confuted. Go explain yourself. You are shown

up. Clear yourself if you can!" That, housefather, is how one is a wager of wordy warfare with people.'

Home he abandons: homeless wandering
The Sage with folk no longer makes ties.
Empty of Lusts, showing no preference,
With no man wages wordy warfare more (S. II, 11).

In the same strain and in the same text, the Buddha declared:

"I quarrel not with the world. It is the world that quarrels with me. No preacher of the Dhamma quarrels with anyone in the world" (S. III, 94).

This must be a reference to such incidents as the debate with Saccaka in which the latter is reported as having said:

"It is wonderful, Master Gotama, it is marvelous how, when Master Gotama is attacked again and again with personal remarks, the color of his skin brightens, the color of his face clears, as happens in one who is accomplished and fully enlightened! I have had experience of engaging Pūraṇa Kassapa in argument, and then he prevaricated and diverted the talk and even showed anger, hate and surliness. And likewise with Makkhali Gosāla and the rest. And now, Master Gotama, we depart; we are busy and have much to do" (M. 35, 36).

Maeutic Method of Drawing Answers

Despite the paucity of detailed recording in the Canon there is enough evidence to show that the Buddha was a master of the art of questioning. A charming example is the encounter with the devotee Visākha who was mourning for her dead grandchild, as recounted in the *Udāna*:

"In broad day Visākha went to the Buddha with her clothes and hair wet. After paying homage to him, she sat down at one side, and the Buddha said to her: 'Now where have you come from, Visakha, in broad day with your clothes and hair wet?'

'Lord, a dear and beloved grandchild of mine has died. That is why I have come here in broad day with my clothes and hair wet'.

'Visākha, should you like as many children and grand-children as there are people in Sāvatthi?'

'Lord, I should like as many children and grandchildren as there are people in Savatthi'.

'But, Visakha, how many people die in Sāvatthi in a day?'

'Ten people die in a day in Savatthi, Lord, or nine or eight or seven or six or five or four or three or two or one person dies in a day in Sāvatthi. Sāvatthi is never without people dying'.

'Then what do you think, Visākha, would you ever be with your clothes and hair not wet?'

'No, Lord. Enough of so many children and grandchildren for me'.

"Those who have a hundred dear ones have a hundred pains. Those who have ninety dear ones have ninety pains." Those who have eighty ..twenty ..ten ..five ..four .. three ..two dear ones have two pains. Those who have one dear one have one pain. Those who have no dear ones have no pains. They are the sorrowless, the dispassionate, the undespairing. I say.

'Sorrow and mourning in the world,
Or suffering of every sort,
Happen because of one beloved,
But happen not when there is none.
Happy are they and sorrowless
That have no loved one in the world.
Who seeks the sorrowless dispassion
Should have no loved one in the world'" (Udāna VIII 8).

A more illustrative example of the Buddha's maeutic method of questioning and leading the listener to realize the answer by himself is the discussion with the king Ajātasattu as narrated in the *Dīghanikāya.* Quoted below is the version as preserved in Tibetan scriptures:

"Mahārāja, ask whatever question you like."
"My Lord, there are many kinds of trades and professions, such as wreath-makers, basket-makers, weavers, grass-gatherers, trainers, elephant-riders, horsemen, chariot-drivers, swordsmen, archers, body-servants, scribes, dancers, rajaputras, warlike and valorous, jesters, barbers and bathers. Anyone of these exercising his trade or profession gives in charity, does good, tends the sick; he acquires the five kinds of desirable things (i.e., all that he can wish for), he enjoys himself, is happy, and partakes of the pleasures of this world; is there any such visible reward for one who devotes himself to monastic life?"

"Mahārāja, have you ever propounded this question before to any recluse or brāhamaṇa?"
(King Ajātasattu describes his encounters with various religious teachers).

"Mahārāja, let us suppose that you have a slave, a student, without a will of his own who knows no pleasure of his own. This man, seeing you in your palace, in possession of everything which can gratify the senses, living in the midst of more than human bliss, amusing and diverting yourself, thinks, 'Vaidehiputra Ajatasatru, king of Magadha, is a man, and I also am a man; but Ajatasatru, because he has formerly accumulated good deeds, now lives in a palace, in the midst of more than human joys, amuses and diverts himself, and I also may become like him if I perform meritorious acts. I will shave my head and beard, put on an orange robe, and filled with faith, I will gives up the home life and retire from the world.' Then, cutting the rope (which holds him to the world), he shaves his head and beard, and, filled with faith, give up a home and retires from the world. He abstains from taking life, from stealing, from fornication, from joking, from mocking, reviling, converting, slandering, and from malice. Now if your emissaries should meet him, and thinking, 'This was a slave, an attendant, without a will of his own, of Vaidehiputra, king of Magadha; he abstains from slandering and from malice; let us go and tell the king.' If then coming to where you are, they should say, 'Does your majesty know that his slave, his attendant is living abstaining from slandering and from malice?' Would your majesty on hearing this say, 'Bring the man here; he shall again be my slave, my attendant, without a will of his own.'?"

"Not so, my Lord: but in whatever place I met him I would speak respectfully to him, bow before him; rise in his presence, join my hands to him in salutation, and show him every possible kind of respect; and as long as he leads such a life I would provide him with clothes, food, lodgings, and medicines."
"What think you, Mahārāja? In such a case as this, have I not demonstrated that there is a viable reward for monastic life?"
"Of a truth you have, my Lord. In such a case the Buddha has shown that there is a visible reward for a life of virtue?"

(The Buddha continued to converse with him until the king was finally gained over to the Buddhist creed.)

Debates among exponents of different doctrines were the order of the day. Apparently, there were conventions and taboos connected with such exercises. Recorded in Anguttaranikāya are at least the unacceptable conduct of debaters:

> 'Wanderers, if any one should say to me: "You have not perfect knowledge of these things, though you claim to be fully enlightened," I should closely examine him, question him and talk to him. He, thus closely examined, questioned and talked with, would surely and inevitably be reduced to one of those three conditions: Either **he would shelve the question by another, and direct the talk to an alien subject**: or **he would display anger, malignity and sulkiness**: or he **would sit silent, confused, hanging his head, looking downwards, a disappointed man, unable to make reply**, just as now does Sarabha the Wanderer.'

Dhammasākacchā, as a means of clarifying, evaluating and analyzing the teachings of the Buddha, has, no doubt, been a major intellectual activity of the Sangha. While the process is not adequately elaborated, the results of such an activity is to be seen in the vast exegetical and scholastic literature which found inclusion in the Tripiṭaka itself. The Abhidhammapiṭaka is, in itself, a product of such a process. In style a work like *Kathāvatthu* exemplifies the interaction and interplay of diverse points of views which had to be analyzed in the light of the doctrine as enunciated by the Buddha. Perhaps, we get a glimpse of the process of *Dhammasākacchā* from the debates between Nagasena and king Menander as recounted in Miḷinda-pañha. The effectiveness of the process as a learning methodology is beyond question.

Theoretical Constructs of a Buddhist System of Education

How the Buddha taught appears to have been subjected to in-depth analysis by the Buddha as well as his senior disciples. Out of such analysis has developed a series of observations, which form a basis for theoretical constructs of a Buddhist system of education. The Buddha and the senior disciples had been conscious of the need to ensure the continuing education of generations of new learners to preserve and propagate the Dhamma.

Apparently, action in this direction had been taken as early as the initiation of the missionary role of the Sangha and, that was, within four months of the attainment of Buddhahood. Most likely with the experience gained in the hermitages of Āḷāra Kālāma and Uddaka Rāmaputta, the Buddha must have contrived the conditions for a theoretical component similar to *Ñāṇavāda* and *Theravāda* which were discussed earlier. In such an effort, the preservation of the Buddha's utterances would receive the highest priority, especially as the Buddha appointed no successor and enjoined the disciples to have his teachings as the future teacher (D. 16).

The Buddha as Final Authority

It was Sāriputta who had pointed out that the final authority for the doctrine was none other than the Buddha:

> If anyone has a doubt or perplexity, then what is the use of his questioning and my explaining, when here is the Teacher face to face with us, he who is to us the well-skilled in things (A. IV, 18, 173).

This is in conformity with the oft-repeated declaration *Bhagavanmūlikā no dhammā* (our teachings have the Buddha as the originator) (S.II, 24, 80, 198). The need to establish the authenticity of a discourse or utterance attributed to the Buddha was vital. Accordingly, in the Pāli Canon and the Āgama Sūtras of the Chinese Canon, a senior disciple (e.g. Ānanda or Upāli) vouched for the authenticity of a discourse with the standard assertion: *Evaṃ me sutaṃ* (*śrutaṃ*) – Thus it was heard by me.

In the case of poetic compositions or utterances in verse, the origin (nidāna) was recorded in an introductory text as in *Udāna* and *Itivuttaka* or in elaborate commentaries as in Dhammapada and Suttanipāta Commentaries. The expression *Evaṃ me śrutaṃ* recurred in later works without clarification of the authority mentioned as "me" to ascribe authenticity.

The Buddha himself is reported to have confirmed this position when he told Saraba, the wandering recluse,

> "It is by me that the Dhamma of the Sakyan's sons who are recluses has been revealed" (A.III, 7, 64).

> Reviewing the continuing acceptance of this position, Edward Conze says, "In all disputes, the ultimate appeal is, however, not to the 'experience' of Tom, Dick and Harry, but to that of the fully enlightened Buddha, as laid down in the Buddha-word" (Conze 1962 30).

Guaranteeing Textual Accuracy

The Buddhist Sangha does not appear to have taken the sophisticated methods of Vedic teachers (e.g. the development of parallel texts with varying word-arrangements to resolve errors due to lapses of memory). Yet, the Sangha had adopted equally efficacious learning techniques for assuring the accuracy of the orally transmitted texts. This is particularly evident as regards Vinaya texts on account of their legalistic character. Numbering of categories, organization of subject matter, abstracts, and indices had been so ingeniously devised that hardly any omission or interpolation would pass unnoticed. *Parivāra,* the fifth book of the Vinayapiṭaka, stands out as a textbook example of a practical guide covering through catechism and systematic reorganization the entire subject matter of the Vinaya.

As regards the Suttapiṭaka, a similar degree of stability of textual content had been achieved by the grouping of discourses according to length, numerical graduation, subject-wise, audience-wise, and venue-wise. The division of the Suttapiṭaka in to Nikāyas or Āgamas and further subdivision of each into groups of fifty (paṇṇāsaka) or ten (vaggas), and listing of contents of such sections had given the Pāli Canon and the Āgama Sūtras a structured framework. This framework enabled the Sangha to verify if any discourse was left out in oral transmission.

No test of internal accuracy was, however, designed to ensure whether a discourse by the same name had been corrupted in transmission. There is no doubt that this had happened during the four centuries of oral transmission. Yet, the internal consistency of oft-repeated themes and the reduction of certain regular elements into clichés show that sufficiently reliable methods of textual preservation had been utilized.

Assumption of the Possibility of Corruption of Texts

The Buddha was himself concerned that his teachings would decline and even disappear. His senior disciples, Sāriputta and Ānanda, were concerned that disputes would arise among disciples on the authenticity of the Buddha's teachings, as was seen among Jainas after Mahāvīra's death. Sāriputta in the *Sangīti* and *Dasuttara* Suttas (D. 33, 34) took the ingenious step of preparing two most comprehensive lists of key-words to subsume all teachings of the Buddha and facilitating retrieval by arranging them with reference to the number of categories under each key-word. A careful examination of the two lists show that no aspect of the Buddha's teachings is left out.

The Buddha identified five factors as essential for the Dhamma to last long after his demise: namely, bhikkhus, bhikkhunis, and lay devotees give heed to (i) Teacher, (ii) teachings, (iii) Sangha, (iv) training, and (v) one another (A.V, 21, 201). His list of five factors leading to confusion and disappearance of the Dhamma stresses the role of education: (i) monastics not mastering the Dhamma, (ii) not teaching others in detail as heard and learned, (iii) not making others speak of the Dhamma in detail as heard and learned, (iv) not repeating it in detail as heard and learned; and (v) **not turning over and pondering upon Dhamma and not reviewing it in their minds** (A. V, 16, 155).

Authority for verification of accuracy

The Buddha did expect that later disciples would wittingly or otherwise misrepresent his teachings. To counteract it, he outlined what he called the 'Four Great Authorities,' to be applied: "Without welcoming and without scorning, scrutinize the words and the syllables, if a monk claims to have learned directly from the Buddha, and if

(i) they lie along with Sutta and agree not with Vinaya – reject them
(ii) they lie along with Sutta and agree with Vinaya – accept them

and if a monk claims to have learned the Dhamma in a monastery where resides 'a great number of elder monks, *widely learned, versed in the doctrines, who know the Dhamma by heart, who know Vinaya by heart, who know the summaries by heart* and if the words and syllables

(iii) lie not along with Sutta and agree not with Vinaya – reject them.
(iv) lie along with Sutta and agree with Vinaya –accept them."

The significance of this statement is that authenticity is assessed in terms of internal consistency vis-à-vis Sutta and Vinaya and not in terms of actual words (A IV, 18, 180). These four great authorities are dealt with in somewhat greater detail in Dīghanikāya (D. 16). The interdependence of Dhamma (Sutta) and Vinaya is emphasized (A. II, 17, 2) and corrupt Dhamma is said to corrupt Vinaya and *vice versa* (A. V, 8, 79).

Institutionalization of Education

1. Objectives

The primary objective of the Buddha's educational effort, which he enjoined the Sangha to persist in achieving, was soteriological. In short, it was presented with the expression that all Dhamma had the pervading flavor of liberation *vimuttirasa*. (A. VIII, 11, 19. See also III, 9, 85). It was further elaborated through the concept of four states of higher knowledge: namely states to be comprehended; states to be abandoned; states to be made more or developed; and states to be realized:

- to be comprehended: the five factors of grasping.
- to be abandoned: ignorance and craving
- to be made more or developed: calm and insight (i.e. cultivation of the mind through *Samatha* and *Vipassanā*)
- to be realized: knowledge and release (A. IV, 26, 252).

A secondary objective related to the preservation and propagation of the Dhamma. A formal approach in achieving this objective in traceable in the comprehensive literary and instructional functions which the Sangha had carried out with the Buddha's encouragement, if not direct involvement. The evolution of specialists in Vinaya and Dhamma (*Vinayadhara* and *Dhammadhara*), summaries or codifications (*mātikādhara*) and reciters of specific texts (*bhāṇakas*) resulted from action taken to hand down the Dhamma from generation to generation (cf. *Āgatāgama*) – A. V, 16, 156.

2. Strategy

Learning and teaching constituted the basic strategy for the achievement of the set objectives. Both were designed to be concise and detailed. (A. I, 1, 10; III, 4, 32). The emphasis, however, was on learning a little and practicing it especially for the achievement of the primary objective of liberation (Dh. 19-20). Erudition, expressed by the terms *bahussuta* and *bāhusacca* (well-heard), was in no way a secondary goal (A. V, 16, 156, VI, 5, 51).

3. Process

Learning was conceived as a process involving a series of many steps. In elaborating how Punniya learned from the Buddha, eight steps are mentioned:

- visits the Buddha
- sits down to listen to what the Buddha teaches
- asks questions
- listens with attentive ear
- bears in mind what was heard,
- tests the truth of the doctrines heard,
- knows both the letter and the spirit
- walks in conformity with Dhamma (A. VIII, 9, 82; X, 9, 86).

Teaching likewise was analyzed to include:

- mastering the Dhamma
- teaching in detail as learnt and mastered
- making the learners to say it
- getting the learners to repeat it
- reflecting, pondering and poring over it.

It is described as 'disclosing the undisclosed, making a causeway where there was none, and driving away doubt concerning many perplexing things' (A, VI, 5, 51). Discourse was the most frequently used delivery system as has been noted earlier when examples of the Buddha's role as a teacher was discussed. As topics for discourse are listed: 'Thus it was in the past;' 'Thus it will be in the future;' and 'Thus it is at present' (A.III, 7, 67).

Repetition especially in groups, was indispensable for oral transmission and the Sangha continued the Vedic practice of *Svādhyāya*. The main advantage of frequent verbal practice of teachings 'heard with the ear' (*sotānugata*) and *repeated while considering them by the mind and thoroughly penetrating them by vision* is the

development of the memory to remember identify, distinguish and recall the Dhamma (A. IV, 19, 191). Particularly significant was that repetition was not a form of rote-learning because reflecting and penetrating were essential elements of the process.

Discussion figured prominently in the process of learning and teaching. One had to determine through conversation whether a person was competent to discuss or otherwise:

The incompetent when questioned:

(i) does not give a categorical reply as required, does not give a discriminating reply as required; does not reply with a counter-question as required; and does not waive a question which should be waived;

(ii) does not abide by conclusions right or wrong; does not abide by an assumption; does not abide by recognized arguments; and does not abide by usual procedure.

(iii) Evades the question by another; turns it off the point; displays vexation, malice and sulkiness; and

(iv) Loads with abuse and beats down the questioner, laughs him to scorn; and catches up when he falters.

While extolling the opposite of above as the hall-mark of a competent discussant, the Buddha added,

> He who lends an ear in assured. He, being assured, fully understands one thing, comprehends one thing (cf. Four states of higher knowledge discussed earlier). So doing one realizes the perfect release. This is the profit of deliberation, of assurance, of giving ear to advice, namely, the release of mind without grasping (A. III, 7, 67).

4. Spoken word

In all the educational processes, described above, speech forms the base in the oral tradition, which existed of books composed (*gantha*) and unwritten but preserved in memory and transmitted by word of mouth. Hence the emphasis on proper speech:

> If fain to speak, the wise man, since he know
> The time, the way of speech the Aryans use,
> The practice proper for expounding Dhamma,
> That sage will use such talk: not bored by wrath,
> Unbiased, with unruffled mind, not spiteful,
> Not arbitrary-minded, not detracting;
> But with full knowledge speaking **he speaks well,**
> **Please with right speech, not gleeful at a slip,**
> **Not studying censure, catching not at faults:**
> **Reviles not, crushes not, nor speaks at random.**
> **O! Good men's words alike instruct and please:**
> Thus Aryans talk. Such is the Aryan speech.
> And knowing this the wise will humbly speak (A. III, 7, 67).

Memory-training and the development of oratorical skills have remained areas of primary attention in Buddhist education. The ideal product of the system is as described by Ānanda as the competencies of Sāriputta:

- Apt at meaning,
- Apt at Dhamma,
- Apt at letters,
- Apt at language,

- Apt at orderly sequence,
- Comes speedily to know aptness in things,
- His grasp is a good grasp,
- Grasps much and forgets not what he has grasped (A. V, 17, 169).

Such a competent person is able to be engaged in "instructing, inciting, enlightening, and inspiring [an audience] with a Dhamma-talk in language polished, distinct and free from hoarseness, unfolding the meaning, comprehensive, and unbiased (A. IV, 5, 48)."

A list of four qualities is including as the criteria of Brahmans for a man of wisdom:

- learned - understands the meaning as soon as it is heard
- good memory – remembers and recalls things done and said long time ago
- skilled and diligent
- resourceful and capable

These would apply to the education of the laity (IV, 4, 35).

5. Curriculum

The contents of Buddhist education, as repeatedly stated, comprise the Vinaya and the Dhamma. Vinaya, of course, was meant for the monastics – both male and female. As already mentioned, the very organization of the Vinaya texts of not only the Pāli Canon but also of all traditions in the far-flung Buddhist schools in Asia facilitates study and reference. Abstracts, definitions, lists, and case studies had been specially designed for this purpose.

Apart from that, the Vinaya Rules as compiled in *Pātimokkha* or *Prātimokṣa* were to be recited every fortnight in the Uposatha confessional ceremony. Very early in the formation of this compilation of Rules, when only one hundred fifty out of the two hundred and twenty-seven were in force, the bi-monthly recitation by monastics in each community was already a regular practice (A. III, 9, 85).

The Buddha had many teachings meant for the socio-ethical transformation of the laity in such discourses as Sigālovada, Vasala, Dhammika, Vyagghapajja, and Parābhava. These figures collectively as *Gihivinaya* (lay-discipline). In Anguttaranikāya is a delightful discourse on how the Buddha presented a curriculum for training girls for marriage (A. V, 33). The Buddha advises Uggaha's daughters to train themselves to:

(i) rise up early, be the last to retire, be willing workers, order all things sweetly and be gentle voiced;

(ii) honor, revere, esteem and respect all whom your husband reveres, whether mother, father recluse or godly man and offer them on arrival a seat and water;

(iii) be deft and nimble at home-crafts, whether they be wool or cotton, and make it your business to understand the work so as to do and get it done;

(iv) know the work of each slave, messenger or work folk of the husband's household by what has been done and their remissness by what has not been done; know the strength and the weakness of the sick; divide the hard and soft food to each according to his share;

(v) keep safe watch and ward over money, corn, silver and gold that your husband brings home; and act as no robber, thief, carouser, wastrel therein.

Unlike the Vinaya, what constituted the Dhamma was a voluminous compilation of discourses, both prose and verse, presented and available in the aforesaid nine literary forms. It was too vast and varied to be handled in regular instructional exercises. A basic identification of the essentials of the Dhamma was a vital necessity in curriculum development. This the Buddha himself had done and the result is a curriculum which consists of the following:

- **Four foundations of mindfulness (*satipaṭṭhāna*)**
- **Four right efforts (*padhāna*)**
- **Four bases of psychic power (*iddhipāda*)**
- **Five faculties (*indriya*)**
- **Five powers (*bala*)**
- **Seven factors of enlightenment (*bojjhanga*)**
- **Eightfold Path (*ariyaṭṭhangikamagga*)**

The list recurs in several contexts as the thirty-seven requisites of enlightenment (*Bodhipakkhiyadhamma*) – D. 16 and M. 77. In *Satipaṭṭhānasutta*, a different list of forty-three elements occurs in connection with the contemplation on Dhammas:

- **Five hindrances (*nivarana*)**
- **Five aggregates (*khandha*)**
- **Twelve bases of mental activity (*āyatana*)**
- **Ten fetters (*saṃyojana*)**
- **Seven factors of enlightenment (*bojjhanga*)**
- **Four Noble Truths (D. 22; M. 10).**

Only the seven factors of enlightenment are common to both lists. The two lists together form a comprehensive summary of the Buddha's teachings **in 73 elements** and have constituted the core curriculum in the education of both monastics and laity.

If it is observed that Vinaya pertains to change of behavior through objectives in the affective domain, Dhamma with its emphasis on knowledge seeks to achieve objectives in the cognitive domain. Interestingly, Buddhist education had its own objectives in the domain of skills.

A third aspect of Buddhist education pertains to the cultivation of the mind. D. 22 and M. 10 – the longer and the shorter versions of the Satipaṭṭhāna-sutta - provide guidance for the development of mindfulness through four contemplations. The development of tranquility (*samathabhāvanā*) and Insight (*vipassanābhāvanā*) and the achievement of absorptions (*jhāna*) of fine-material (*rūpāvacara*) and immaterial spheres (*arūpāvacara*) are goals to be achieved by application and practice (A. IV, 3, 22; IV, 13, 124; IV, 20, 200' V, 11, 104). The perfection of techniques of mental development has continued unabated as seen from Buddhaghosa's *Visuddhimagga* written in Sri Lanka in the fifth century CE.

6. Safeguards against Corruption and Disappearance

As the system of Buddhist education was formalized, thought had been given to causes of corruption, confusion and eventual disappearance of the teachings. Four such causes are identified:

i. learning a text by heart wrongly with words and sense wrongly arranged and the meaning misleading;

ii. intractable and unamenable disciples, incapable of being instructed;

iii. widely learned monks, who know the Dhamma, the Vinaya and the summaries by heart but do not dutifully hand on a text to another; and

iv. elder monks setting the wrong example to the generation that follows by living in abundance, being lax, backsliding to worldly life, shirking the burden of secluded life, and making no effort to win the goal, realize the unrealized and attain the unattained.

Remedial measures to eliminate these causes are to be built into the educational effort (A. IV, 15, 160. See also A. V, 16, 154-156).

The Buddha foresaw four future causes for the corruption of the Dhamma and discipline and enjoined the disciples to be awake and strive to get rid of them. Among them the third and fourth referred to deficiencies in education:

> "Again, monks who have not made this becoming..., when giving a talk on Abhidhamma or on the catechisms, will not be fully awake (to the meaning, but will enter on a state of darkness.)
>
> Thus verily, monks, from corrupt Dhamma comes corrupt Discipline; from corrupt Discipline corrupt Dhamma." (A. V. 8, 79)

7. Nonformal Education

The Buddhist system of education is not confined to the Sangha and monastic establishments. A role was envisaged for the lay disciples. In a discourse addressed to Mahānāma, the Sākyan, the Buddha says that a lay disciple should develop virtues for self such as faith, virtue, renunciation, longing to meet monastics, listening to Dhamma, being mindful of Dhamma, reflecting Dhamma, knowing both the letter and the spirit of Dhamma, walking in conformity with Dhamma and striving for one's welfare and also enable others to achieve the same. 'A lay disciple helps on his own welfare and the welfare of another' (A. VIII, 3, 25).

Roles of Teacher and Learner

Anguttaranikāya records many statements of the Buddha on the roles, qualifications and obligations of the teacher and the learner. Teaching is perceived as a spiritual exercise:

> When teaching, one partakes of both the spirit and the letter of Dhamma; from this experience gladness (*pāmujja* < *pa* + √*mud* – *to rejoice*) springs up; from that zest (*pīti*); in such a state his whole being (*nāmakāya*) calms down; when he is calm, ease (*sukha*) is experienced; and for him who dwells at ease the mind is composed ..... and finds release (A. V, 3, 26).

Teachers of Dhamma are categorized as:

(i) One who says little and that not to the point while the learner is unskilled to judge what is the point or otherwise,

(ii) One who says little and that to the point while the learner is skilled to judge,

(iii) One who says much and that off the point while learner is unskilled to judge, and

(iv) One who says much and to the point while learner is skilled to judge (A. IV, 14, 139).

No assessment is made of the most competent among them. The next discourse states that a teacher possessed of the four analytical powers of analysis of meaning (*attha*), of reasons (*dhamma*), of definitions or etymology (*nirutti*) and wisdom (*patibhāna*) would, as an expounder, never be at a loss both in the meaning and the letter (A, IV, 14, 140).

In two lists occur qualities of a wise person and the most significant among them have a relation to education. The first includes:

(i) Dhamma-knower (sound knowledge base of texts)
(ii) Meaning-knower (such is the meaning of this discourse or that)
(iii) Self-knower (knows how far one is in faith, virtue, learning, self-surrender, wisdom, and ready speech)
(iv) Time-knower (knows the proper time for recitation, questioning, effort and solitude).
(v) Assemby-knower (knows the kind of assembly and how one should approach, stand, sit, speak and be silent)
(vi) Noble or base person-knower (knows to distinguish the worthy and the blame-worthy) (A. VII, 7, 63 and 74)

In the second list of eight qualities, the first two relate to education: viz.

- dwells near a teacher so that he is firmly established in consciousness, fear of blame, love, and respect.
- Approaches the teacher from time to time questioning and inquiring, 'How is this? What is the meaning of this?' and the teacher reveals what is hidden, explains the obscure and dispels doubt in many perplexing matters (A. VIII, 1, 2).

In a conversation with Ānanda, the Buddha had stated,

> 'Verily, Ānanda, not easy is it to teach Dhamma to others. In teaching others Dhamma, Ānanda, make five things stand up within you, then teach others Dhamma. What five?
>
> (i) Teach others Dhamma, thinking: I will talk a talk on the gradual;
> (ii) Teach others Dhamma, thinking I will talk a talk with the way in view;
> (iii) Teach others Dhamma, thinking: I will talk a talk out of kindliness;
> (iv) Teach others Dhamma, thinking: I will talk a talk not as a means for gain;
> (v) Teach others Dhamma, thinking: I will talk a talk not to my own hurt nor to others.
>
> Verily, Ānanda, not easy is it to teach Dhamma to others. In teaching others Dhamma, Ānanda, make these five things stand up within you, then teach others Dhamma.'

Learning is highlighted as a treasure along with faith, virtue, charity and insight and learning is defined as a retentive and well-stored memory (A. V, 5, 47; See also A. V, 10, 96; V, II, 101). A learner is said to possess five powers: faith, conscientiousness, fear of blame and energy (A. V, 1, 1). With the analogy of a nurse who gradually relaxes her watch over a child as he or she grows up, the Buddha had said, "As long as the right things are not done by a monk, that monk must be watched by me. When the right things are done, I no longer look after him, knowing 'The monk is now self-guarded (*attagutta*)' (A. V, 1, 7).

Summation

This brief analysis of the theoretical constructs of a Buddhist System of Education is based primarily on statements attributed to the Buddha and his senior disciples in the Anguttaranikāya. Similar statements are to be found in other Canonical works. A systematic treatment of modalities of instruction is to be found in *Nettippakaraṇa*, which is included in the Canon in Myanmar. These statements

provide the rationale for methods of instruction adopted by the Buddha and close disciples like Sāriputta, Moggallāna, Ānanda and Kaccāyana, the basic contents utilized, and the objectives sought to be achieved. Out of these statements can be derived the theoretical foundation of Buddhist education as it evolved and developed in the major part of the Asian Continent over a period of twenty-six centuries.

Conclusion

How the Buddha taught can thus be traced from both example and precept. The discourses of the Pāli Canon and the Āgama Sūtras of the Chinese Tripiṭaka reveal that an exceedingly competent teacher spared no pains to achieve the highest level of learning and comprehension from his disciples. When he considered instruction or teaching to be the most effective miracle – as opposed to wondrous feats of levitation, mind-reading, clairvoyance etc. – he was conscious of the superior skills which were necessary to make someone to learn and be convinced.

Examples extracted for this discussion may be fairly representative but are not in any way exhaustive. A closer analysis of all discourses is likely to elicit more techniques and educational concepts. Equally fruitful will be an analysis of educational concepts as contained in the Commentaries and treatises like *Nettippakaraṇa*, *Miḷindapañha*, and *Peṭakopadesa* – all three considered Canonical in Myanmar. The importance of such a task cannot be over-emphasized.

"How the Buddha taught and why?" will remain a challenging research theme. Much of what we discover is bound to have wider application to the current educational effort of humanity.

Abbreviations

A	Anguttaranikāya
Cv	Cullavagga
D	Dīghanikāya
Dp	Dhammapada
DPPN	Dictionary of Pāli Proper Names by G.P. Malalasekera
M	Majjhimanikāya
Pug.	Puggalapaññatti
S	Saṃyuttanikāya
Sn	Suttanipāta
U	Udāna
Vinaya	Vinayapiṭaka

(Translations are from Pāli Text Society Publications with modifications by the writer as required.)

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