

Philosophy and Critical Thinking
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Lecture 45: Buddhist Philosophy

Namaskar to all. Today, I will be discussing Buddhist philosophy. In last class we have discussed Buddhist philosophy and the basic philosophy of Gautam Buddha that is Four Noble Truths and we have seen how Buddha has talked about the problem and the solution. He said that there is a problem in this life. That this life is full of suffering. And then he also talked about what is the solution of this problem. So, Buddhist philosophy is a very important philosophy in the sense that Buddhism or Buddhist philosophy has argued about the self in a very different way. So, today I will be discussing about this early Buddhist philosophy, and in early Buddhist philosophy, we will be discussing about the self. The first question you may ask, what is called early Buddhist philosophy? Because this is a Buddhist philosophy, then why we have an early Buddhist philosophy? Now, for the time being, because I will be discussing maybe in next class that how there are school of thought and what are they called. I mean, how there are many schools of thought and name of their school of thought. But you may understand in this way that there is an early and the later Buddhism or early Buddhist philosophy or Mahayana philosophy. So, today what I have planned for this course, this lecture is Mahayana. I will talk about little bit about the text and how this Buddhist scholars, how the Buddhist monk has compiled this text. That is very important because if you can understand this process what we have in name of history, about the Buddhist philosophy, then things will be clear that why it is called an early and then Mahayana philosophy. Why we have a difference between one text and another text, and so on. In early Buddhist philosophy, it is what is also called Theravāda. So, we will be discussing the little bit the idea of self from this perspective. So, before that we will start about the early Buddhism that how Buddhist philosophy started in the sense that when Buddha realized he got enlightenment then he started giving this information or let us say the teaching or telling the others the solution of the problem. So, Buddha renounced this world and led for the forest to search for truth when he was twenty-nine years old. Text says that Buddha while talking about this, it was fifty years ago. It means that Buddha lived till eighty years, eighty-two years. Some texts say that eight-two years and so on. So, time of Buddha, he gave all the teaching, He told everything. Now, but there was no way to record his teaching. As I was discussing this Indian philosophy and have argued that how the Indian knowledge system or the ancient texts which we have, we have received from the oral tradition. Now, oral tradition is when there is a person and he knows all the text. Knowing all the text means he has learned by heart. So, this all this text in a sutra form, and so this person he can chant this all the text orally. So, now this person is what is doing, he is training his disciple, his student let us say. Now, what was the method, method was

to ask students to repeat these hymns. So, this is what they were doing and this is what is one person is transmitting all the information to the next person or one generation to the next generation. So, this is how we have got a very important text from the ancient time. Now, I also have discussed that how this text also in sutra form is in an original form because there are many studies and they claim that the sutras cannot be altered, and therefore there is no way to argue or there is no space that for the argument that it can be altered time to time and therefore we have the ancient Indian text in a pure form, and that is very valuable. However, many of the texts we have lost, but also, we have many texts and in pure form. Similarly, when Buddha was there, there was no way to record his teaching or record his statement or record his command or instruction, whatever you say. So, when Buddha died at the age of eighty or eighty-two, after his death, when all rituals were done, the five hundred monks came together. Coming together means they had an assembly. But these monks were not the simple monks, they were Arhant. Now, Arhant means worthy ones or perfected ones. Meditated and then he achieved state. So, the five hundred Arhants, what they realized, monk, that it is very important to compile his teaching. If we are not going to do that, you are going to lose the essence or maybe it is a huge possibility to add some false doctrine. Therefore, it was an urgent work to compile this text. So, after and then final this Parinirvana of Buddha, the community of monks chose five hundred Arahants to work together to compile the doctrine and the discipline in order to prevent the true doctrine from being submerged in the false doctrine. So, this was an important and urgent work at that time. So, they did. Now, this assembly was held in Rājgṛh, since the great city could most easily support such a large assembly for several months because this compilation it will not an easy task or a day task, so it was important to also to choose a place where this place can support this large assembly because there are many monks, five hundred monks and then city can take care of these five hundred monks because this assembly is not going to end soon. So, it has not gone for many months, several months. Now, it does not mean that there were no differences. There is an obvious question that when all the monks are coming together, or let us say the five hundred monks coming together, discussing on the one point, then there is a huge chance, there is a chance for the differences. So similarly, there was a difference. But on overall details, there was an agreement in a broad outline. Now, so this is how they have accepted. Now, the question is, what was the method of doing that? So, method was, so there is a monk, right, who is either very close to Buddha or was expert in one area. What he is going to do? He is going to tell all these things. For example, like, someone is talking about the teaching. So, what he did? In assembly, he told everyone about his thing. His thing means whatever he remembered and he told the assembly. Now, all the members, what they are doing? They are endorsing, they are approving this statement, saying that, yeah, this is right. Then once assembly is approving, there is a general agreement, then it is a part of text. So this is how there was an assembly and this is a method of compilation. So, the text says that the doctrine of Dhamma was decided by Ananda. Ananda was very close to Gautam Buddha,

and Ananda spent most of the time with Gautam Buddha, and he was the monk who heard many things or let us say more than any other monk. So, he was the right person to talk about the doctrine. Therefore, when this doctrine came, I mean the idea was to talk about the doctrine. So, Ananda was recited everything, and whatever he has remembered, all the dialogues. Now, how he is doing that? He is telling the dialogues as it is. So, once upon a time or no one's time in this situation what Gautam Buddha said like this. This is a dialogue form. And this all the dialogues which he remembered he told, and it was endorsed by assembly. As his version is correct. So, if the assembly is endorsing it is in a part of Suttapīṭaka. Pīṭaka is in a basket, so it becomes a Suttapīṭaka. Now, Suttapīṭaka is a very important text, not for the one school of thought, but almost all school of thought. So, whatever the Ananda talked about, informed about the dialogue between Buddha and Ananda, and it was endorsed by the assembly, it was a part of Suttapīṭaka, or Sūtrapīṭaka. Now, the discipline was similarly decided by Upali. He was the specialist in that subject, and again it was endorsed by the assembly and it was codified as a Vinayapīṭaka. Vinayapīṭaka, where we talk about the rules for monk and nun. So Upali, he talked about all the things and again, it was endorsed by the assembly. On the third Pīṭaka, there is a controversy. We should make up the three pīṭaka. There is a disagreement. So, you need to understand one thing that in Buddhist philosophy, the three pīṭaka is important, and three pīṭaka, this is in a basket of three text. It consists of Suttapīṭaka, Vinaya pīṭaka, and then Abhidhamma pīṭaka. So, Abhidhammapīṭaka is basically a proper analysis of many sūtras of Suttapīṭaka. A philosophical part of the Buddhist or Buddhist philosophy or Buddha teaching. Therefore, there was a disagreement among the Buddhist monk. Now, the disagreement, as I said in the previous slide, there was differences, but overall they were accepting. That is how it become part of one text, another text Suttapīṭaka and Vinayapīṭaka. But, in terms of Abhidhammapīṭaka, there was a complete disagreement. So, all the monks were not one in terms of the philosophy of Buddha. And therefore, how they disagreed and they had their own school of thought because they have their own way to see the Buddhist preaching. So, here on terms of philosophy, they are in two parts. Let us say then Theravāda or Hinayana and then again, another part is called Mahayana philosophy. So, these are the two parts. So, this Hinayana what we are saying the early Buddhist philosophy and later, is the Mahayana Buddhist philosophy. Both sect or both groups argued that their philosophy is right and close to the Buddhist teaching, or authority, this had an authority of Buddhist teaching. Now, all the school, either you take later or early, early or Mahayana philosophy, both of them what, has accepted this text called Vinayapīṭaka and Suttapīṭaka. So, when we are discussing this early Buddhist philosophy, you will find many references from the Suttapīṭaka. Now, Suttapīṭaka was arranged in five āgamas, tradition, or the Theravadian always says it is Nikāya. So, it is called Nikāya Buddhism sometime. Now, this is a For example, the first one is Dīrgha Āgama. They say that Digh Nikaya and so on. So first one is the Dīrgha Āgama and it is a thirty long sutra. Second one is Madhyam Āgama It is a one hundred fifty sutras intermediate length. Third

one is Samyukta Āgam or Samyukta Nikaya. It is a connected tradition. Fourth one is Ekottara Āgam or Ekottar Nikaya. It is one of tradition. Fifth one is khuddak or Kṣudraka āgam or Nikāya. These are some text or some part which was not accepted by the assembly. Or let us say the assembly was not numb on. So therefore, the authenticity was not checked. All those things was part of this khuddak, the fifth text is khuddak nikaya, khuddak āgama. So, this Khuddak Nikaya also consists of many important texts, but the text says that this is a doubtful authenticity because this assembly could not authenticate this set of texts. And all these five sets, five Agamas, five Nikayas are very important in Buddhist philosophy. There are many texts in Buddhist philosophy in early and Mahayana. We are not going now to discuss everyone. But just to give an idea of this Buddhist text, at a very elementary level, I am just discussing these things. I will not be going in detail. Now, as I discussed, the first rehearsal is recorded to have taken place during the rainy season of the first year after Parinirvana. The second rehearsal recorded after one hundred years after the Parinirvana. So, Binaya was again, all the text was rehearsed again by seven hundred monks. This is the book, right, taken from the book, who says that it was rehearsed again. Now, the question arises that once it was rehearsed, that again, why we, there was a need for the second time or third time or fourth time and so on. Now, after hundred years, there were many things, there were a lot of controversy, right, regarding the rules in Vinaya. So, the monk from the Vaishali has a different opinion about it and there are many stories which is the cause and requirement of the second rehearsals. So, they all the rehearse the second time by the seven hundred monks. My intention was to tell you this first and second that this is how it processed and later on it also for the third time and the fourth time. So, in all the time what they were doing they all are repeating the rehearsing this the text. Abhidhammapīṭaka, which I just said apart from the Vinayapīṭaka and Suttapīṭaka. Abhidhammapīṭaka is an analysis the material it collects from the sutra, poses question, and answer them, works out systematic treatise. So, this is what the three pīṭaka, the Suttapīṭaka, Vinayapīṭaka, and Abhidhammapīṭaka. So, it is very basic level. You take it in this way that first is in a rule regulation for monk and nun in the monastery, so that you need that because otherwise you have to follow the particular rule or for the many things right so that is mentioned where, in the Vinayapīṭaka. There are very interesting things which is there but however, we do not have that time to discuss but you take it in this way that this Vinayapīṭaka it talks about the rules, Suttapīṭaka deals with the many dialogues between the monk and the Buddha, and you can also, it is mentioned there. The third one is Abhidhammapīṭaka. It is a philosophical part and each school has one pīṭaka, believing that there Abhidhammapīṭaka is the right interpretation of Buddhist teaching.

Now, let us understand because we have been discussing about the concept of soul and concept of body in this course. So, I also would like to first question I ask or address in this course about the soul. So, it is very important. However, whatever I discussed, the text, this text is on a very basic level and it is also in the reference part, there is a book who can tell you about the more text and while discussing the philosophy of Mahayana philosophy or

later Buddhism, I will be discussing some more text just for the reference purpose. Now, let us come back to the philosophical path where the first question arises that is there any soul in Buddhist philosophy and what was the notion of soul in Buddhism. Now, text says that there are two kinds of false opinion. The first false opinion is the life principle, Jiva and we are saying that there is a soul so the conception of soul and jiva is the wrong or false opinion, this is not right. So, first one is saying that the life principle is the same thing as the body, *śarīra* so so soul and *śarīra* is same it is not different. Now, why this buddha has said so. Now, you have to understand there are two concept was prevalent at that time of Buddha. First is, there are one group who argued that there is a soul and soul is eternal, and they are also talking about the many sets of actions in name of eternal soul. There are another group. So, this group, first group is called Sāsvatvāda. And another group who believe that there is no soul or soul is not different from body. So, your body is everything. So, your birth is the starting point and biological death is the final end. For example, the Charvaka. So, Charvaka said that your birth is the starting point and death is the final end. So, what he is doing? He is identifying soul with the body. So, both sides. The two extremes. So, first one is saying that the soul is body. Another group is saying that the life principle is one thing and body is another thing. So, something is life principle, let us say soul, and soul is different from the body. What we have discussed in the Vedanta philosophy. So, there are two options or there are two extremes. One is saying that there is an eternal soul, and soul is different from body. And other group is saying that soul is not different from the body. Soul and body is same. Buddha, what he argued that both are false opinion. This is not in a right way to see. So, when you are saying that this body is not yours. I mean Buddha is mentioned in a text. It mentioned that this body is not yours. You have to take it this way. If you are going to take that something is observing this world or experiencing this world. Buddha said that this is not right. This is an unsound argument. So, he said that this body is not yours, nor is it another's. It should be seen as an old action synthesized, willed, and experienced. So, the word *Ātman* is basically a reflexive pronoun meaning himself, herself, oneself, myself, etc, according to the context. So, Buddha in one place mentioned that Ananda, a monk does not envisage a soul as experience, nor a soul having no experience, nor a soul as having experiences and of the principle of having experiences. He is not attached to anything in the world. Basically, Buddha is rejecting the both sides, the both extremes. So, one extreme which talks about the eternal soul and another extreme talks about there is no soul and the soul is not more than the body. This is called Uchhedvāda. So, there is a Sāsvatvāda, and then Uchhedwad. Sāsvatvāda argues for the eternal soul and Uchhedvāda argued about no soul. Now, what is the problem? Problem goes like this. If you are going to talk about the Uchhedvāda, then sometime you may not be able to talk about the ethics. So, when you are giving any concept or any explanation of the reality, it is a very important response when you talk about the ethical things. So, ethics, if you are going to remove, then it will be difficult to talk about many things. So, therefore, what Buddha used, Buddha used the middle path, Madhy-pratipada.

So, he is neither going this side nor this side. Neither the Sāsvatvāda supporting nor the Ucchedavāda. So, Buddha argued that any kind of this kind, if you are saying this soul is an experiencer or is an experiencing, both side is not correct. Both side, both argument is unsound theory. He understand that birth is exhausted, the base life has been properly lived and the biggest hand be done afterwards there will be no more of this world. It only means that Buddha argued that this world is because of the karma as we have discussed in the last class. So, because of the karmic force we are in this world and there is a world. And, if you have solved this problem, if you have done this so properly, then there will be no world. So, when you achieve the state, you have exhausted all the inclination and the karma force, then things will be over. So, Nirvana for Buddhism is, you are not going to get something after this Nirvana. So, Buddha argued that no permanent eternal soul can possibly be demonstrated to exist through the changing principle of this universe. So, Buddha argued that there is no permanent thing. Nothing is permanent. So when he said that nothing is permanent or everything is momentary, it only means that there is no soul, there is no God. Because the basic definition of the Upanishadic soul and Upanishadic idea of God is both are eternal. The Upanishadic concept of God, that God is eternal. The Upanishadic concept of soul also argues that soul is eternal. What Buddha said, Buddha is not saying that there is a soul, there is no soul. He said that nothing is permanent. Everything is momentary. So, it means, once an argument that everything is momentary means, there is no soul, there is no God. So, he is rejecting the idea of Upanishadic self, the Upanishadic God. So, Buddha rejects any conception of a soul or essential self. So, this is how Buddha talked about the Buddhist soul. So this is how buddha has rejected the idea of eternal soul or eternal self and argued that this world is worth is this momentary this is not permanent so if you are going to hold any of this position it is in the wrong notion and wrong notion is always going to lead you the cycle of birth and rebirth. Now, how Buddha has argued for the no-self and how he has defined this personal identity, that I will be discussing in the next class from the early Buddhist point of view. So, thank you for your attention. This lecture was based on these books, the Indian Buddhism, the Indian Philosophy and Introduction to Indian Philosophy. So, thank you so much for your kind attention. Thank you.