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## **Buddhism: Analytical Explanation of Hell, Heaven, Reincarnation and Its Relevancy at Present Context**

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### **Abstract**

This study entitled "Analytical Explanation of Hell, Heaven, Reincarnation and its Relevancy at Present Context" is based on primary and secondary data and the structured questions have been used to collect Primary data in Bhojpur Municipality- 9, Bhojpur. The main objectives of the study are to find out the real meaning of Hell, Heaven, Reincarnation, to find out the problems and its solutions. Primary and secondary sources have been adopted to achieve the objectives and to draw the conclusion. The study concludes that Hell and Heaven depends on our own karma (action). Desires is the cause of suffering, pain, unhappiness, violence, exploitation, diseases. Happiness is not obtained from matters. Happiness obtained from the matters is transitory and human as well as other creatures change their forms after death. It means nothing is stable or everything changes its forms.

**Keywords:** Nirvana (enlightenment), action (karma), four noble truths, eight-fold path (Dharma Chakra), sufferings.

### **Introduction**

Buddhism is a storehouse of knowledge. There are 10000 Buddhas in Buddhism which means there are thousands of bits of knowledge, philosophy, and theory. Truth is not single. Simply rule or philosophy of love is Buddhism. Peace, love, compassion within human beings is Buddhism. The absence of anger, greed, theft, betrayal and violence is Buddhism. The rational quality of love within human being is Buddhism. Simply being a human is Buddhism. Buddhism is not simply a religion but it is a way of life (Badal 27). Buddhist temples in general are the places to learn Buddhist teaching and Buddhism in Nepal. Buddhist temples are designed to symbolize five elements: fire, air, earth, wisdom

and sky (Choea et al. 1) Everyone in the world is Buddhist because every heart has love, peace, and compassion. In Buddhism, equanimity or peace of mind is achieved by detaching oneself from the cycle of craving that produces suffering. It relieves stress and unwinds the mind to develop tolerance and empathy. It helps to be open minded, offers break from routine, life, and provides patience. It discovers human strengths and weakness (Acharya 63). Buddhist thoughts and practices directly contribute to society to maintain peace and compassion. It offers guidelines on understanding social problems and dynamics change in society. The main curiosity for the world about Buddhism is about four Noble Truths, Eightfold path (shipper 203). Buddha preached only about the true law of nature. He never taught Buddhism as religion (Rai 22). Buddhism is a non-theistic philosophy which emerged 2500 years ago or in the sacred plains area of southern Nepal according to the inscription on the pillar erected by Asoka. It was founded by lord Buddha in the fifth century B.C. who was born in Lumbini in Shakya kingdom in present day Rupandehi district and spread throughout the world. Siddhartha Gautama was born on the lap of Father Sudhodhan and Mother Maya Devi in Royal family. His wife's name was Yasodhara and Rahul was the name of his son. He is known as 'the light of Asia.' It is known as Buddha Dharma which is based on teachings of lord Buddha (Shashkevich 40). It prioritizes on individual freedom, honesty, non-violence, suffering, ethics, peace, harmony, equality, logics, cause and effect, karma (Action), four noble truths and eight-fold path to get enlightenment or Nirvana. It is the fourth biggest religion in the world which has been followed by 7 to 8 percent population of the entire world and 9 percent people were Buddhists in Nepal, according to 2058 and 2068 census, and 9.04 percent people follow this religion in Nepal according to the census of 2078 B.S. (Central Bureau of Statistics, Nepal).

The religion's founder Buddha is considered as an extra-ordinary being but not a god. The word Buddha means 'enlightened'. The path to enlightenment is achieved by utilizing morality, meditation, non-violence, nirvana, ethical leader and social reformer (Acharya 69). Buddha's main teaching known as the four noble truths, are essential for understanding religion (Holiday 208). Buddhism is the second largest religion in Nepal (Dhakal 21). Buddhism has been interpreted hermeneutically and allies with almost major disciplines - cosmology, psychology, religion, philosophy, science and Buddhism symbolized as peace. It is the philosophy or science of mind. It does not believe in the existence of lord, deity and soul. His father had observed his activities and all facilities had been granted to him to stop his aims. Nothing was lacking for him. He was not satisfied from materialistic luxuries or facilities. He thought that those materialistic facilities and luxuries were disturbance for him to meet the objectives and decided to leave the house in mid-night in search of finding out the truth of life or answers of his queries of grief by leaving his beautiful wife and small son (Rai 218–224). After long penance under a Bodhi

tree, he was enlightened and founded four noble truths and eightfold path. It is a main teaching of Buddhist philosophy. Bodhi tree means a people tree and knowledge. He got Buddhato. Buddhism is very difficult to understand being a philosophy. It had hidden meaning. Many pictures and words have been used metaphorically e.g. cat, dog, monkey, tiger, rabbit or cat, sheep, rooster, snake, bull, etc. Buddha got knowledge and teachings from these animals. It means nature is guru for him. Nature is learning. He learnt many things from these animals. So, every year has been named on the basis of these animals. He learnt many things from these animals thus these animals are the representation of the human behavior and nature of people. Thus, these animals are the representation of human behavior and nature of people. Lumbini, Bodha Gaya and Kusinagar are major pilgrimage sites of Buddhism. These places are birth place, knowledge obtained place, preached place and death place respectively and Tripitak is the sacred book of Buddhism.

### **Statement of the Problems**

Buddhism is a philosophy founded by Gautama Buddha in Nepali soil. It does not believe in god, goddesses, deity and the existence of soul. He has described his teaching and knowledge to his monks as he achieved Nirvana or enlightenment after having long penance. He told many things to people to follow his code of conducts or rules and regulation about food, behavior, habits and meditation and suffering, causes of suffering, to end the sufferings and the way to end the suffering by following eight-fold path or Dharma chakra but it is not told to people in simple words and language.

Metaphoric pictures, words have been used in this sacred book (Grantha). Metaphoric meaning of these words and pictures have not been stated clearly. So common people and religious priests having little knowledge did not understand the meaning of such words like metaphoric sentences, simile, pictures, reincarnation, hell and heaven. This study helps to find out the real meaning of the metaphoric sentences, words, picture, words and assist the followers as well as non-non followers the hidden meaning of it. Many authors have written about the symbolic meaning of hell, heaven and reincarnation in simple language. So, this study fulfils the gap of knowledge and be helpful to people having surface knowledge of symbolic words and pictures. It tries to investigate real meaning of the words, picture, reincarnation, hell and heaven.

### **Research Questions**

The following research questions have been raised to draw the conclusion by conducting the study well.

- What are the Metaphoric meanings of Hell, Heaven and reincarnation?
- Do the common followers have knowledge of Buddhist Philosophy?
- What are the benefits of Buddha's teachings?

### **Objectives of the Study**

The Specific objectives of the study are as follows:

- To find out metaphoric meaning of words, sentences like Hell, Heaven and reincarnation.
- To illustrate the benefits of Buddha's Teachings.
- To find out the common understanding of followers of this philosophy.

### **Limitation of the Study**

The study has been limited on the following conditions due to monetary fund and lack of time frame.

- The study is based on Bhojpur Municipality - 9.
- Selected questioners' views, opinions collected from the primary resources and data collected from the secondary sources have been analyzed on this study.
- This study only tries to find out the real meaning of Hell, Heaven and reincarnation.

### **Methods and Materials**

The required information has been collected from religious monks on their experience and knowledge by using structured questions. The main sources of the data of this study is primary and secondary sources that has been generated through interviews, published articles and books related on this topic.

### **Research Design**

Two types of research design have been adopted in this study i.e. qualitative and descriptive as required.

### **Hell and Heaven**

Buddhism is the fourth biggest religion in the world. It is based on facts, reasons, logics and truth. That is why, it is called science and philosophy. It is the teachings of lord Buddha. He has granted us such teachings to make the people and society civilized, disciplined, ethical, honest. It has focused on our behavior, habits, code of conducts of human behavior. This philosophy has connected to religion to make the people obliged to follow it. It has valorized on action (karma). Therefore, this philosophy argues that hell and heaven rely on people's action. People get the fruits on the basis of their action it means success and failures of people in any occupation depends on their deed. Happiness and sadness depend on people's actions and mind. Our thoughts or mind is the main cause of sufferings. Innumerable positives, negative and uncontrolled thoughts come in our mind. Negatives thoughts leads us into the negative path. It misleads us. It damages our life.

According to Buddhist religion, the people who commits sins and crimes, they go to hell. They are punished by the god. They are tortured over there. They have to face many problems. They will not be happy there. Religious teachers connect it on it. But it has hidden meaning. Hell meaning the world/place where people are suffered by poverty, grief, pain, discrimination, inequality, that is hell. Gautama Buddha has given equal space and opportunity to woman. It is the symbol of gender equality. Racial discrimination has not been accepted in Buddhism. It means discrimination free society is heaven and society having inequality, discrimination, suffering is hell. Sufferings have been categorized into many types. They are physical sufferings, mental sufferings, emotional sufferings etc.

Gautama Buddha has described four noble truths or four Arya Satya which are mentioned below.

1. World of suffering
2. Causes of sufferings
3. End of sufferings
4. Way/Path to end the sufferings

Gautama Buddha is the founder of four noble truths and eight-fold path. These are the main teachings of Buddha given to people after having enlightenment for the welfare of the people to be free from sufferings. The goal of Buddhism is to reach nirvana. Nirvana is the stage of emancipation. World is full of sufferings, pain, grief etc. Grief means to be old, sick, death, failure. It is like a proverb i.e. "Man born free but everywhere he is in chain". There are the causes of suffering. Each and every suffering can be illuminated and there are many paths and ways to end the suffering. People's wants, desire are the main cause of sufferings. We must have desires but unnecessary desires and wants are vain. Our desires and wants never fulfill. It comes one after another. We must not have desires which are away from our capability and possibility. Greed, thirst, compassion, anger, hatred, desires are the causes of sufferings. We have to follow the eight-fold path to end suffering.

People who do the good action, they will go to heaven and people who do the wrong doings, they go to hell. People who do not misbehave to women, do not be aggressive, angry, lustful, envy, violence, corruption, discrimination to people, show compassion, pay attention on their speech, right action, foods, habits, behavior, (Aahar bihar, Bichar, Byabahar), they dwell in heaven. World is beautiful in itself but we make it ugly. It has hidden philosophy. Heaven means the place where people are happy, free from grief, anger, lust, compassion, inequality whereas the world having scarcity of all things, hunger, grief, pain, discrimination, poverty, greed, war, violence is hell. So, people themselves are the causes of hell and heaven. "Om Ma Ni Pe Me Hum" is the main mantra of this philosophy. Chanting of this holy mantra is a way to go to heaven. This mantra

carries the main theme and objective of Buddha Dharma or philosophy. People have to follow these mantras. Meaning of this mantra are as follows.



Om	- generosity (udarta)
Ma	- Ethics (Naitikta)
Ni	- Patience
Pad	- Diligence (Iagansilata)
Me	- Renunciation (Tyag)
Hum	- wisdom (D, 2021)

'I am ness' is another cause of suffering. Sufferings do not catch people but people catch the suffering themselves. That is why, people are suffering and people's mind and their thought are the causes of sufferings. Nobody loves us in this world. So, we have to learn to love to ourselves. Happiness and sadness are our thoughts. Our mind is powerful. Positive thoughts and way to look the people positively changes the lifestyle of people. People have to pay attention on our foods, exercise and sleeping, behavior, thoughts to be healthy and to survive for long life because health is the wealth. Drinking alcohol and chewing tobacco is stickily prohibited in this religion. It is good not to have it religiously and in terms of science. Buddhist counts the 'Thanga' mala. It has 108 beads and light 108 lamps. It has symbolic meaning that people have 108 Pralovan, like lust, greed, hatred, anger, etc. We have to control that lust to be happy and be free from the sufferings of this mundane world. All people have the seeds of being Buddha. It depends on our deeds. Karma is the best way to go to heaven. laziness is the way of hell. Fasting, Dhayan (Youngne) is prevalent in this philosophy. It is done by speaking, drinking and eating nothing. Nowadays, it has been scientifically beneficial to health and proved too but it is not obligatory in this religion. It is optional. This philosophy prioritized on reincarnation.

According to this religion, people have to leave eight things like wrath (anger, aggressive), pride, greed, lust (not to misbehave woman), violence, melancholy (Udash), sloth (not to be lazy). Buddha's curly hair of head is the symbol of suffering. He had 966 curly hairs. Buddhist philosophy has 84000 teachings. Buddha said to follow these teachings. Five color flag has symbolic meaning. Every color has meaning like (1) Red-hit, anger, (2) Yellow-mud, skin of Buddha, koruna (3) Blue-sky, water or hair of Buddha or swachha man (4) white- air, teeth of Buddha, peace, pabitratra, emancipation (5) Purple-cloud. We must not believe to four people (1) Talker (2) The Flatter (chaaplusi/chaakadi), (3) The Reckless companion (Iaparbahi game), (4) Aggressive and proud company. These

takes into the hell. Tripitak is a holy book of it and it has been divided into three books like (1) Binaya pitika - code of conduct, instructions. (2) Sutta Pitika - commentaries on sutras by renown monks, (3) Avidharma pitika - philosophy and its symbolic meaning. People have to follow eight-fold path to go to heaven and to be free from sufferings. Eight-fold path is (1) Right speech - people must not lie, speak politely because friendship and enemy depends on our speech, (2) Right Action - people must not steal, misbehave and violate, (3) Right livelihood - people must be away from five things like drinking alcohol and chewing tobacco, business of meat and arms and ammunition (4) Right effort - people must be wise and must not have bad thoughts for other people (5) Right Mindfulness - people have to do physical as well as mental( meditation/Dhyan) exercise, (6) Right concentration - to meditate observing sky, water, fire, air, yellow, blue, white, light etc. there are the causes of suffering, (7) Right understanding and (8) Right thought (Samma Sankalppa). Each and every suffering can be illuminated and there are many paths and ways to end the suffering. people's wants, desires are the main case of sufferings. We must have desires. Our desires and wants never fulfill. It comes one after another. we must not desire which are away from our capability. Greed, thirst, compassion, anger, hatred, desires are the causes of sufferings. We have to follow the eight-fold path to end suffering. We should not forget three people like (1) The people who made us in great problems, calamity and pain, (2) The people who live with us in normal situation and live in painful and problematic situation, and (3) The people who do not care us in normal situations and helps in specific situation.

Buddha has given the following precepts (Upadesh).

1. Respect Life - do not kill or encourage other to kill
2. Be giving - do not steal and encourage to others to do it.
3. Manifest Truth - do not lie or encourage to others to do so.
4. Honor Body - do not misuse sexuality
5. Do not cloud the Mind - do not consume alcohol, tobacco, other drugs,
6. Avoid taking alcohol, tobacco and others drinks and encourage to others to do.
7. Avoid taking untimely meal.
8. Do not praise one self and speak ill of others or encourage others to do so.
9. Do not blame others

Above mentioned precepts must be followed to dwell in heaven and the six principles of lord Buddha like generosity, morality, patience, concentration, vigor, and wisdom be followed to get rid of sufferings. life is thorn or flower, It depends on our karma.

## Reincarnation

Buddhism believes in reincarnation. Reincarnation is the philosophical or religious concept that the non-physical existence of living being begins to new life in a different physical form or body after biological death. All people must die one day. Death is sure and death is the change of forms. This is why, lamentation for death of anyone is vain. Death must be accepted. Other religion argues that soul is immortal and it transmits into a new infant and or animal. The body is perishable but Buddhism does not believe on soul, god and goddesses. Buddhism recognizes that there is a continuous cycle of life, death and rebirth. This cycle is known as samsara. The ultimate aim of Buddhist practice is to become free from samsara. Generally, Buddhist teachings views life and death as a continuum, believing consciousness continues after death and may be reborn.

Death is opportunity for liberation from the cycle of, life, death and rebirth. Buddha attained nirvana or perfect enlightenment and he is not reincarnated because religious people get birth latter and the people who have done sinful act in moderate, they get life soon to encounter with suffering in this Manusya lok. Manusya lok is full of suffering. It is called karma lok too. Reincarnation means to encounter with sufferings. Buddha's last words for monks was 'Be a lamp unto yourself'. Karma is the determining factors for rebirth.

According to him, there are three types of karma i.e. (1) Action of mind, (2) Action of speech, (3) Action of the body. Karma refers to hard work. Buddhism believes in reincarnation. Reincarnation provides two types meaning. If we understand it in surface, reincarnation means rebirth or to get life after death. Reincarnation depends on the action done by them. If people have done right action, they will get life again after death but their forms will be changed. 'Re' means again and 'incarnate' means to born. But if we study deeply and analytically, it has philosophical and metaphorical meaning. It means nothing is stable in this world, everything changes continuously like Roland Barthes 'Death of Author'. Death means change of forms like water changes. For example: (1) snow--water--Vapor--water (2) paper--money---torn---paper (3) Iron----coin----black-smith--iron= it is a cycle of life. (3) Hail---water---water vapor---hail. (4) water seen two days before and water seen two days after is not same. The water seen two days before has gone and water seen two days after is another water. People think that water seen two days before and water seen two dater latter is same but it is their /our delusion. water has changed like people get rebirth. It is the example of reincarnation. It means everything is changeable. Nothing is permanent. It is still relevant and scientific. Our opinion, views, thoughts and health also reincarnate. It is like a leaf of tree.

Death is a symbol of transformation or way to have nirvana, 0, emancipation, peace. People acted sinful action born or reincarnate soon and suffer a lot in this manusya



lok again. Religious people dwell in heaven for long period being happy, they born in happy and rich family. Religious people stand for good, honest, laborious, industrious people. Criminal people who have done wrong doings or act, they reincarnate as insects and lower animals. People have to follow four noble truth/Arya Satya and eightfold path to reincarnate. They dwell in heaven and those who do not follow these paths, they reside in hell. Five colored flag is a symbol of five elements i.e. blue-water. red- fire, hit 3. white-peace 4. earth 5. air. Different animals have been used as symbols like deer-cleverness and pure way to look others, rooster for waking up early, pig for innocence, tiger for anger and aggressiveness, etc. 108 lambs stand for welfare for others, mind is powerful. Hell and heaven depends on our mind. He discourages emotion because emotion comes from spirituality. Spiritual people believe on god but he does not believe on the existence of god and soul. So emotion is symbol of sufferings. Mind is symbol of logics and reason. He believes on cause and effect. So it is science. Everything is creation of mind. People who take alcohol, drinks and other drugs, they reside in hell. It has philosophy and symbolic meaning- angry, aggressive, proud, flatter people go to hell. Discrimination based society is hell. People who chant the mantra 'Om Ma Ni Pad Me Hum' go to heaven. It has also symbolic meaning. They don't reincarnate. Heaven means prosperity, love, happy, pleasure, good health, success. Thus, reincarnation means transformation of forms life leaf of tree, hail, coin. Few coins only get chance to be a coin. Most of the coins change into iron, copper, silver. It is reincarnation. There are different types of reincarnation like reincarnation in thoughts, behavior, habit, life-style, perspectives to look to the people. People having wisdom can reincarnate and five sense organs are the cause of going hell e.g. ear needs appreciation.

### **Its Relevancy at Present Context**

Buddhist philosophy is the teaching of Lord Buddha. It is a non-theistic religion. It does not believe on god and prioritized on love ethics, honesty, individual freedom, logics, reason, karma (action), happiness, non-violence, peace, equality, life-style, cause and effect, reincarnation, four noble truth and eight-fold paths which bring Nirvana or enlightenment. He calls it paradise. He valorizes on the importance of health and mind. Meditation is the must for mental health. It is still relevant to maintain peace, harmony and to be free from such all human suffering and pain. In this scientific age, Action is very important to be happy, prosperous. We get rid of poverty through action. This philosophy can lead the people into the right path.

Our mind is the cause of suffering and man himself is the cause of sufferings. Karma or Action is very important at present time and it is still relevant even though he said it 2500 years ago. It is still relevant in present context to maintain harmony, peaceful society, equality-based discrimination frees society and to be healthy physically and

mentally. It is human-centered religion or philosophy. It helps to maintain peace, stop the conflicts and war. It makes the people moral, civilized. It minimizes violence and encourages to people for not doing sinful act. Thus, this religion is still relevant in the present situation too.

### **Conclusion**

Buddhism is a Nepali philosophy and has been regarded as religion. It has been founded in the soil of Nepal by Siddhartha Gautama 2500 years ago. He has given knowledge or teaching regarding sufferings. He has mentioned about sufferings, the cause of suffering, end of sufferings and the path or ways of ending sufferings. Main causes of suffering are our mind. Innumerable thoughts, opinion comes in our mind, these uncontrolled desires and thoughts must be controlled. Another cause of suffering of human beings is men themselves. Happiness and sadness depend on their thoughts and action. To be free from different suffering, people have to follow four noble truth and eight-fold path. The world having grief, pain, greed, violence, murder, immorality, inequality, discrimination, lust, hatred, anger is hell and heaven is opposite of it. Karma is Dharma. Reincarnation is a philosophical, symbolic or religious birth again into another form after biological death. Reincarnation is cycle of birth, death and rebirth. It means each and everything is unstable. Deep knowledge and study are needed to find out the philosophical and hidden meaning of the word, picture and to get the solution of this problems. People can understand the meaning of hell, heaven and reincarnation symbolically.

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