

Rousseau's Education Philosophy from Buddhist Perspectives

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Introduction

The Buddha can be considered as a great religious leader as well as a great philosopher who nourished both eastern and western educational contexts through his vital and deep but subtle teachings over 2500 years. Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1712-1778) is also considered one of educational philosophers who contributed immensely for developing educational field over three hundred years. Rousseau was a naturalist. But the Buddha did not belong to any extreme end since his major teaching was the middle path.

Research Method

Historical-Comparative method was used as the research method in this research. While the Buddhist teachings in Sutta Pitaka have been examined as primary sources western philosophy books, relevant research papers and conference papers have been examined as the secondary sources. The author has paid his attention only to Rousseau's education philosophy since the scope should be narrowed down.

Findings/Discussion

Rousseau viewed that nature is the best teacher and the main way of getting learning experiences (Sahu, 2002). This nature is of two types: inner and outer. Although the Buddha admired the influence of inner and outer nature in one's education but he did not consider nature as the one and only influential factor in the process of education. As Rousseau believed, children should learn through their sensory experiences because the senses are the gateways of knowledge. Though the Buddha showed the importance of sensory organs in the process knowledge construction he did not view that knowledge gain through sensory organs is accurate and perfect. According to Buddhism there are cognitive levels beyond the knowledge gain through sensory organs. They are, Panna and Parinna. Rousseau viewed that education is not memorizing or storing information. It is the process which results in the development of the child's nature and personality

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internally. This proves that Rousseau promoted negative teaching method rather positive. In another way, Rousseau's philosophy of education emphasizes that child learns by his/her own experiences (Shahid, 2000). This learner centered leaning situation is highly appreciated in Buddhist education too. According to Buddhist education the leaner is in the center of learning teaching process. As revealed by naturalists including Rousseau there is no significant role played by the teacher in the learning teaching process. The learner is an explorer and discoverer. The Buddha too illustrated in his role as a teacher that the teacher is a facilitator and guide in the teaching learning teaching process since the education is pedo-centric. Rousseau's opinion was that children should never be punished for their wrong deeds because nature spares none. The Buddhist view regarding the punishment is somewhat different from Rousseau because the Buddha has recommended mental punishment except physical punishment in order to modify the behavior of the offender without leaving it for nature. As Rousseau believed the mind of a new born baby is pure. It is corrupted by stimuli coming from outside. This is a major fact that discussed in Buddhist books including Sutta Pitaka prior to Rousseau. It can be argued that Rousseau may have influenced by Buddhist teachings directly or indirectly along with his life experiences.

Conclusion

Teachings of Both the Buddha and Rousseau on educational concepts: child's nature, learner's task and the teacher's task in the learning teaching process, way of knowledge construction, building student discipline in the leaning teaching process are not exactly the same. But there are some similarities as well as differences in these philosophical views presented from two different perspectives.

Keywords: Buddhist teachings, Education Philosophy, Perspectives, Teaching Learning Process

References

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