

THE CONCEPT OF *ĀCARIYAMUṬṬHI* AND ITS RELEVANCE TO THE BUDDHA

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Introduction:

The concept of *ācariyamuṭṭhi* is termed as ‘Closed Fist of Teaching’ and ‘Secret Teaching Given only to the Most Trusted Pupil’. The objective of this research is to find out the details regarding the concept of *ācariyamuṭṭhi* and its relevance to the Buddha. This concept, *ācariyamuṭṭhi* has come into use at the *Upanisad* age. Later, it can be found in the canonical texts. So, it is an area worth focusing the attention of the researchers to find out its relationship with the Buddha.

Material and Method:

Pāli Canonical materials are used in this research work. The methodology of research relies on literary survey and its main content is taken from the discourses in *Pāli* canon.

Result:

The researcher holds the view that the Enlightened One taught the world without keeping *ācariyamuṭṭhi* or the secret teaching given only to the trusted student. The teachers in the world can follow the Buddha as a teacher who taught His disciples without keeping secret teachings for himself.

Discussion:

The concept of *ācariyamuṭṭhi* is discussed in this research work. The concept has been termed as ‘Closed Fist of Teaching’ and ‘Secret Teaching Given only to the Trusted Pupil’. One of the significant features of the Buddha is that he taught the doctrine that he understood to the students without secret teaching given only to the trusted pupil. A teacher with love for the students must possess this virtue since he expects the benefit of them. It says in the discourse, “A teacher must teach all he knows to the students (*sabba sippa suta samakkhāyino bhavanti, Sigālovāda Sutta D. III*)”.

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On one time, the Buddha said to Venerable Ānanda like this, “I have set forth the *Dhamma* without making any distinction of esoteric and exoteric doctrine; there is nothing, Ānanda, with regard to the teachings that the *Tathāgata* holds to the last with the closed fist of a teacher who keeps some things back (*Natthānanda tathāgatassa dhammesu āariyamutt̥hi, Mahāparinibbāna Sutta D.II*)”. From this, he intends that he preaches the doctrine to the students without keeping any part as secret. If one teaches with the closed fist of a teacher, he is jealous that his pupil would come to a great place than himself. That feeling should not be with the teacher. There will be the possibility of accusing the Buddha by considering Views and Unsolvable Questions (*Avyākatapañha*) that he did not teach all he knew and did not answer all the questions. But, since his objective of education was to give the liberation to person, it should not be forgotten that all the teachings necessary for it were taught. If something is kept as the closed fist of a teacher, it is the spirit or the most important part of a particular subject. But, there isn't a most essential part that the Buddha was hiding.

There is a great difference between not teaching having kept as the closed fist of a teacher and not teaching due to its irrelevance. In the old Indian education system, there prevailed a system with the closed fist of a teacher according to Upanishad. Without teaching every student, in the *Upanisad* age, teaching has been done to very trustworthy students and even it has been done keeping them very closely. Upanishad expression, “*Upanishad iti rahasyam*” says that ‘secret teaching given only to the most trusted pupil’. The Buddha did not have such secret teaching or teaching for the selected students. He taught doctrine to all in common in just manner.

“All the other Religious Teachers, Saviours, Creators, Leaders etc. did not point out about the origin or creating a similar person to them. But, the Buddha wished if all in the world become Buddhas like himself. He taught the way to become a Buddha. His honest wish was that all should achieve the greatness, and all-knowing nature (*Sammāsambuddha*) that he had reached. The Buddha preached that if one tries, encourages himself, everyone can become a Buddha”. From this, it is obvious that the Buddha acted with the great pure thought of making other to the great position he achieved by teaching without the closed fist of a teacher.



As a significant characteristic of the Buddha, it is possible to see that the Buddha let a student to ask any question from him and get to know about it and solve it. One such example can be illustrated from *Tipiṭaka*. The story about Sabhiya reveals some facts about this. A certain deity or god approached Sabhiya and asked some questions and then told him to ordain under a person who is capable of solving those questions. Then, Sabhiya went to various old Religious Teachers in India at that time. Some didn't give a chance even to ask questions. Some expressed displeasure about them. Thereafter, though he was young in age, he remembered the Buddha and deciding that it is better to meet the Buddha and went to see the Buddha. The Buddha let him ask any question (*Puccha maṃ sabhiya pañham - yaṃ kiñci manasicchasi, tassa tasseva pañhassa - ahaṃ attam karomi te. , Sutta nipāta*, PTS, 94 page, *Sabhiya Sutta*).

From the fact that he was asked to enquire any question, Sabhiya's intention for truth became more developed. It became an encouragement for developing creativity. One of the main factors that should be fulfilled by a teacher has completed here. It is the giving of the opportunity. The same opportunity was given to the Demon, *Ālavaka*, (*Suttanipāta*, PTS, 32 page, *Ālavaka Sutta*). Having taken the opportunity that the Buddha gave to question, some have asked embarrassing questions from the Buddha. Some of them are Saccaka.

(*Majjhimanikāya i*, PTS, 227-237 pages, *Cūla saccaka (35) Sutta*), Up āli, the layman (*Majjhimanikāya i*, PTS, 371-387 pages, *Upāli (56) Sutta*) and *Abhayarājakumāra* (*Majjhimanikāya i*, PTS, 392-396 pages, *Abayarājakumāra (58) Sutta*).

Students were so happy and satisfied with this that it is clear through the expressions of delight and praise of them at the end of solving questions (*Sutta Nipāta*, PTS, 100-102 pages, *Sabhiya Sutta*). If the student is not given the chance to question and solve problem willingly, his abilities will get vanish. The Buddha has not hidden any fact even about his character. He has openly expressed everything. The Buddha gave the opportunity to question even about himself if there are questions to be asked and it can be seen from *Vimamsaka Sutta*. "Bhikkhus, by the Bhikkhu who could examine the thought processes of another the Thus Gone One should be examined on two things, on things cognisable by eye consciousness and ear consciousness"

(*Vīmaṅsakena bhikkave bhikkhuṇā parassa cetopariyāyaṁ ajānantena dvīsu, dhammesu tathāgato samānesi tabbā. Cakkhu sota viññeyyesu dhammesu* , Majjhima Nikāya i, PTS, 318 page, Vīmaṅsaka (47) Sutta). In the above manner, it has been given in the discourse. Unlike any other teacher, the Buddha let the others know about himself. All these facts show that the Buddha engaged in education without keeping the closed fist of a teacher.

Conclusion:

In conclusion, it is very clear that the Buddha becomes the most exemplary teacher in the world since he didn't have any secret teaching given to the trusted student. Purpose of His teaching was to give the deliverance to the entire living beings. Therefore, he preached everything helpful for gaining deliverance.

Keywords: *Ācariyamutti*, teaching methods, secret teaching

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