UNIT 2  BUDDHISM - 1

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2.0 OBJECTIVES

This unit tries to make the students acquainted with the basic philosophical position of Buddhism in general. It enables them also to make comparative studies and answer the criticism raised by rival systems, as they expose the basic tenets of the system under survey. In this unit we will give the historical setting of Buddha, His teachings, its metaphysical pre-suppositions and its far-reaching implications.

2.1 INTRODUCTION

In the history of the world, 8th century B.C. to 1st century A.D is known as ‘Axial Era’, a period of great ‘Spiritual Quest’ where we get almost all lasting answers to life’s perennial questions. India gave her contribution to the genuine thoughts of Axial Era in the form of Upanishadic enquiry, religions of Jainism and Buddhism and all other systems of thought. We generally divide them as orthodox and heterodox contributions. Buddha is one fine product of this era as a new pathfinder. From him comes a religio-philosophical system which is a whole in itself with its diverse developments and spread in course of time.

Every person will be influenced by his age, but what will influence him and how, depends on his sensitivities too. Buddha was a very sensitive man. The story of four sights that made him a wanderer (old man, disease, dead body and recluse) bears witness to this. We also see these sights, but they are like speck of dust fallen on hand. In the case of Buddha they were like speck of dust fallen on eye which is very sensitive and could not rest at ease until a solution was reached. They worked like immediate catalysts that caused an awareness of the basic realities of life. What do these four sights symbolise? The first three; old man, diseased man and dead body speak about the common plight of human beings. This brings Buddha to the first noble truth ‘Sarvam Dukkam.’ Recluse or state of being a renouncer was the way of that age for dedicating
oneself for full time enquiry. Thus he leaves his palace and throne and begins his search for the reasons and remedies for the plight of man.

Buddha due to his sensitivity looked into solutions that were available at his time. After taking the life of a wanderer he visited many learned and rigorous practising ascetics. But he was not satisfied fully with any of them. After six years of search he came to his own discipline which he calls middle way and dharma. Middle way for him is rejection of extremes, be it rejection of extreme austerity or extreme indulgence in worldly pleasures (in his practical life) or rejection of ‘eternalism’ of Upanishads (there is one unchanging, permanent principle) or nihilism of Carvaka (there is no permanent, unchanging principle, life ends with physical death). Thus for his teachings the philosophical foundation becomes a new position that he reached through his enlightenment. This middle way is the theory of dependent origination, that everything is conditional, momentary and without essence. When one forgets this and considers something as unconditional, eternal and with essence, then suffering begins. This was a radical finding which begins with basic position which is opposite to the one that was accepted at that time.

Let us be aware of the complications in understanding what Buddha actually taught. Historically he is so remote and he didnot write down anything. He taught orally for 45 years and his teaching fell on the ears of people from various cultures and traditions. So from his part he must have adapted himself to their culture (paryaya), and from the hearer’s part they got only according to their capacity of reception (adhikari bheda). He taught in the language of the ordinary people and there were many, and the philosophical language was Sanskrit. In all these languages the disciples of Buddha later recorded his words. Buddha was a teacher who taught “be light unto thyself” (atta dipö bhava). It means do not take anything true without your rational scrutiny. He also repudiated human authority as the final word in his society of monks (Sangha) and taught, “let the dharma be your guide, no human authority”. All these caused lot of practical disciplinary problems as so many teachings came up as Buddha’s teachings. Thus the need for a canon came up and 30 years after Buddha’s parinirvana (death), the first council was conducted. Within a century in the next council strong disagreement between traditionalists (Teravadins) and progressivists (Mahasangikas) came up. Human emotional imbalance in the form of putting down and condemning the other as low and vile (hina) happened in the course of time. These all contributed to the growth of sects and sub-sects and many schools and many canons.

Today we have Pali Canon, Chinese Canon, Tibetan Canon and Sanskrit Canon with their own special emphasis. To the question ‘which among this is really Buddha’s teaching (buddha vachana), nobody dared to negate the other canon, rather emphasised their own among others: “all these are ‘buddha vachanas’, but ‘this is His, ‘the teaching,’ is the trend of Buddhist sects. So each one will present Buddha’s teaching from his angle. This doesn’t mean that they all disagree in everything. In some basic teachings they all agree. They are the practical teachings of Buddha (the four noble truths), No-soul theory, conditioned origination, and the law of impermanence. To these basics each sect adds its own special emphasis as Buddha vachana. We don’t go into special emphasis of sects in this unit. But we only expose those teachings that normally all agree as real Buddha teaching. In unit ‘Buddhism – II’ we will discuss some distinguishing marks of some schools.
This unit is divided into two parts. First is the most known teaching of Buddha, (four noble truths) which is very much practical though deep understanding of it exposes metaphysical pre-suppositions. In the second part we will expose metaphysical pre-suppositions. But water tight compartmentalisation is not possible; for they go together always. Thus student will see repetitions in both parts. This is unavoidable as they always go together. This separation is for clarity sake only.

2.2 FOUR NOBLE TRUTHS

Everyone who accepts Buddha agrees on one thing that his basic teaching is four noble truths (chatvari arya satyani). They are ‘sarvam dukkam’, ‘dukka samudaya’, ‘dukka nirodha’, ‘dukka nirodha marga’. This is actually ethico-religious teaching. This is exposed in the first discourse the ‘Dhammacakkapavattana-sutta’. All agree that Buddha was against hair splitting metaphysical speculations that are useless from the perspective of life’s goal. He has a classical simile to explain it. He says if a man is struck by a poisonous arrow and is in immediate need of medication but says, ‘I will not allow you to remove this arrow and put medication until I know who shot, this arrow, what it is made of, how far away he was standing, what type of bow he used etc, then, by the time you collect all answers the man will die. Thus, these answers are useless at the moment. The fact is in front of us and the means for saving his life too. Let us do that.

Buddha was taken up by the plight of humans. He named it ‘dukkham’ (suffering), searched the cause of it and presented remedies like a doctor who diagnoses disease and prescribes medicine for cure. The goal is religious as life without ‘suffering,’is a stage beyond ‘this present life situation’. And the means are purely ethical and meditational. Only difference in this matter between him and the other religious thinkers was rejection of metaphysical speculations, be it on God or soul or the beginning and end of life, etc. Buddha saw it as not only useless but also detrimental to remove suffering. According to Buddha, suffering is caused by ignorance and this ignorance is ignorance about real nature of reality which is anatma, anitya and dukkha. This ignorance causes attachment, craving and all its evil effects. The goal for us is removal of this ignorance by removing attachment and craving. That is termed as ‘Nirvana’ and the means for this is prajna, sila and samadhi (awareness, moral precepts and meditation). They are elaborated into ‘noble eightfold path’.

Sarvam Dukkham: (everything is suffering)

Indian Philosophy in general begins at a realization of this human predicament; the unfortunate existential situation in which one finds oneself, that his life is ‘brutish and short’. It begets frustration, unhappiness and pain. Some scriptures say “life is a vale of tears”; “vanity of vanities, everything is vanity”. This is a pessimistic way of looking at life. Buddha also shares in it. According to him, “Birth is suffering, old age is suffering, sickness is suffering, death is
suffering, to be united with what is unpleasant is suffering, if one wants something and does not get it, that also is suffering; in brief, the life as we see it is suffering (it is the aggregate of five skandhas with thirst for existence and clinging). If we ask the question why it is suffering we must say it is suffering because it is impermanent. Though this initial pessimism is there in Buddha, it does not make him inactive; rather, it energises him to search for answers. One general answer was already there in the form of law of karma, i.e., the source of this unfortunate situation is of our own making. It is our own deeds that breed the karmic residue which is stored up and activated later and makes our life like this. And the future will be conditioned by the present deeds. This situation is called karmic circle, sanskara. Buddha shared in this worldview and within this context arrived at his enlightenment; having been dissatisfied of the already given explanation and he proposes his own.

If we ask the question ‘What was Buddha’s enlightenment?’ we must say it was the realization, ‘sarvam dukkham’. Ordinary man, at one time speaks of life as vale of tears, in the next moment, strives for pleasure and clings to some soul. Even when he fails to attain pleasure he is under the impulse, the thirst for pleasure and appeasing of soul. For the ordinary man things are not consistently impermanent. The distinction of Buddha is that for him even those strivings for pleasure are painful and the attainment of the so-called pleasures too. Clinging to a permanent soul is the root delusion. Thus everything is pain, and this realisation is the first criteria for enlightenment. Thus this is the first noble truth, and this realization is the first criteria for following Buddha way.

One who realizes consistently that everything is suffering, he will strive with the whole heart to end it. In order to end it, first he must know how it originates and how it can be removed. An expert doctor will not only consider the symptoms of disease but also will find out the root cause of it, in order to root it out. Buddha did the same. If every action leads to suffering, can we escape from suffering by desisting from action? Here comes Buddha’s moral consciousness, that it is not action that is important, but the attitude behind it. Action before being done externally, happens internally or in the mind. As every action has its cause and brings out its fruits, every mental action too has its cause and effect. This cause-effect examination of all actions within the person through a psychological analysis is his second noble truth.

**Dukkha Samudaya (cause of suffering)**

Second noble truth says, our suffering has a cause. That which is caused can come to an end if the causal condition is removed. Something that is uncaused cannot be removed. (this is the foundation for Buddha’s rejection of Upanishadic uncaused and permanent soul). Thus the second noble truth is the message of hope that comes from Buddha. Since bondage is caused, there is possibility of removing it by controlling causes and eventually eliminating them.

What is it that causes suffering? In the first sermon at Benaras (Dhammacakkavattana-sutta) Buddha said, it is the thirst (trishna) that leads to rebirth, which is accompanied by delight and passion. Later this thirst is further elaborated as aroused by sense-objects (kamatrishna) and it is directed towards one’s worldly existence (bhavatrishna). When senses come in contact with their objects, sensations arise and these awaken desire. In this way the so-called thirst for objects of desire (kamatrishna) arises. The second type of trishna arises when one takes worldly personality
(five skandhas) as the self (atma) and clings to it. This is the ignorance that entangles one in the cycle of existence. When all these joined together in cause effect chain (dependent origination - pratitya samutpada), the famous theory of 12 spokes of bhavachakra of Buddhism originated. They explain it both in forward order and reverse order.

Let us see the twelve-membered chain of causes and effects:

Ignorance (avidya)

Impression (samskara)

Initial Consciousness in the embryo (vijnana)

Mind-body embryonic organism (nama rupa)

The six fields viz., the five senses and the mind together with their objects (sadayatana)

Contact between the senses and the objects (sparsa)

Sense experience (vedana)

Strong Desire (trishna)

Clinging to existence (upadana)

Will to be born (bhava)

Re-birth (jati)

Pain, old age and death (jara-marana)

In the general presentation of cause of suffering in the twelve-membered chain of causes and effects, the root cause of entanglement in causal chain is ignorance which is the absence of liberating cognition, the four noble truths. In such a person craving for worldly objects and worldly personality come into being (kama trishna and bhavatrishna). The impressions that are like a subtle body is the bearer of rebirth; it enters into a new womb after death, driven by these impressions. This necessitates formation of body-mind organism and in turn the formation of senses and mind as six organs of cognition. Due to that, contact with objects occurs. And that causes sensations of various kinds leading to the passions (raga, dvesa and moha), foremost being the thirst that clings to sense-pleasure and to the supposed self that grasps them, thereby leading to renewed bondage and new existence. Once again, birth and entanglement in the suffering of existence come about, and so it goes, in the endless chain, till the liberating cognition and annihilation of thirst put an end to the cycle of existence. When one strikes at the root of this endless chain by removing the basic ignorance which is the wrong view of atma, permanence and pleasure, one prepares the way for third noble truth.

Dukka Nirodha (cessation of suffering)
It is the third noble truth about cessation of suffering, nirvana. Negatively if we speak of nirvana it is cessation of all suffering; annihilation of all that binds; complete vanishing of thirst, abandoning of all afflictions (upadhi). Positively it is attainment of freedom. The question is freedom from what and freedom to what. Nirvana is a freedom from all the three types of acts that bind mental, vocal and physical. This can happen only when one’s actions do not create craving (raga), aversion (dvesa) and delusion (moha). Again Nirvana is a freedom to a life with full of good will (metta), compassion (karuna), sympathetic appreciation (mudita) and equanimity (upekkha). Its outward expressions include politeness, good manners, cleanliness of habits and the like. Buddha himself stands as a beacon with his personality.

Buddha when he started teaching was a man of harmonious, self-contained personality with great magnetism. This comes from self-confidence resulting from his enlightenment, the attainment of the right view. This is liberation. He had a contemplative temperament and kind-heartedness towards all mankind, even towards one who came to kill him. The majesty of his appearance and his courtesy towards people even of lower status and his noble manners converted many even Angulimala and impressed even those who rejected his teaching.

What is the nature of Nirvana, if we take it as the permanent state after death? It is a controversial issue. For Buddhism teaches anatma and anitya. If no permanent agent to experience freedom, then who attains liberation? Or what will be that after right view dawned and aggregate of skandhas are no more which we normally call death? Rightly Buddha kept these questions in the inexpressible (avyaktas), for they are beyond our categories of linguistic expression. Later schools explained it in their own way.

Dukkha Nirodha Marga (path for cessation of suffering)

The fourth noble truth is about the path to liberation. This is the path that Buddha followed and attained enlightenment. So anyone who wishes to follow Buddha and attain enlightenment can follow this and attain enlightenment. In fact, it is path to moral perfection, through practice of morality or virtues. Morality in Buddhism has a deeper understanding than popular understanding. Normally we judge rightness or wrongness on the basis of actions externally seen, but in Buddhism emphasis is on what is going on in the mind. Again popularly morality means following moral precepts i.e., emphasis on actions performed. In Buddhism emphasis is on ‘being moral’ than following precepts. Being moral emphasises total personality. It is not one action that decides morality but the moral culture of the person.

Fourth noble truth is generally described as the noble eightfold path. Some books divide them into three groups. They are wisdom (prajna), morality (sila) and meditation (samadhi). Among the eight first two are classified in the group of wisdom, next three are in the group of morality and last three are in the group of meditation. They are

I) Right View (samyak drsti)
II) Right Conception (samyak samkalpa)
III) Right Speech (samyak vak)
iv) Right Conduct (samyak karmanta)

v) Right Livelihood (samyak ajiva)

vi) Right Effort (samyak vyayama)

vii) Right Mindfulness (samyak smriti)

viii) Right Concentration (samyak samadhi)

i) Right View (samyak drsti)

‘Right view’ here refers to comprehensive understanding. Its opposite wrong view then refers to one-sided or excessively bent to one extreme, be it about self or about world, and that is the root cause of suffering. Thus if we want to be free from suffering we must come out of our one-sidedness. Buddha came out of both extremes of ‘it is’ (sasvatavada) and ‘it is not’ (uchedavada). He gave the truth as middle way, which is the right view, claim his disciples. This truth is exposed in the form of four noble truths and their presuppositions, which are dependent origination as becoming (pratitya samutpada), no permanent soul (anatma) and law of impermanence (anitya).

ii) Right Conception (samyak samkalpa)

Right conception is the decision in the mind of what is to be practically followed. As far as practice is concerned, the right view remains impractical, for it doesn’t become part of the active mind. It is duty of right conception to make mind active in that way. If that is not there, wrong conception may carry the mind away. Wrong conceptions are associated with lust (kama-samkalpa), conception of ill-will (byapada-samkalpa) and conception of harm (vihimsa-samkalpa). The right conceptions are conceptions of renunciation (nishkama-samkalpa), conceptions of good will (abyapada-samkalpa), and conceptions of compassion (ahimsa-samkalpa).

iii) Right Speech (samyak vak)

When right view and right conception start to regulate life, they bring qualitative change in the way of speaking, behaviour and lifestyle. Right speech is that speech which does not consist of lies, gossip, abuse and idle talk. This rule asks for restraint of speech and practice of virtues with one’s speech.

iv) Right Conduct (samyak karmanta)

This noble truth asks the practitioner (sadhaka) to abstain from wrong actions. This contains famous “Pancha-Sila” – the five vows for desisting from killing, stealing, sensuality, lying and intoxication. Killing refers to destruction of the life of any being. He who takes away life or
instigates another to do so is guilty of this crime. Stealing is taking away of that which is not given. Sensuality or adultery is the holding of carnal intercourse with the female that belongs to another. Lying is one among the four sins of the speech. Others are slander, abuse and unprofitable conversation. Intoxication refers to intentional drinking of any liquor. This is forbidden because it is the root cause of all other sins. For liquor takes away the rationality and morality of the one who is under the grip of liquor, and he commits all types of sins.

v) Right Livelihood (samyak ajiva)

Right Livelihood refers to earning one’s everyday living by honest means. This rule tells the practitioner (sadhaka) that even for the sake of maintaining one’s life one should not take to forbidden means, but work in consistency with good determination.

vi) Right Effort (samyak vyayama)

Right effort refers to mind control. Mind is the root where all types of tendencies reside, whether they are good or wicked passions. Sometimes undesirable ideas may haunt the mind, and hence mind control is needed. Sins of the mind are covetousness, malice and scepticism. They need to be controlled. One cannot progress steadily unless he maintains a constant effort to root out old evil thoughts and prevent new evil thoughts from arising. Again since mind cannot be kept empty, he should constantly endeavour to fill the mind with good ideas and retain such ideas in the mind. These four are the right efforts.

vii) Right Mindfulness (samyak smrti)

This rule further stress constant vigilance, constantly keeping in mind the good things he has already learned. He should constantly remember and contemplate the body as body, sensations as sensations, mind as mind, mental states as mental states and contemplate on the frail, loathsome and perishable nature of things. These help us remain free from attachment and grief.

viii) Right Concentration (samyak samadhi)

Buddhism speaks of four stages of concentration. The first stage is dhyana or meditation on four noble truths. Here mind makes its reasoning and investigation about truths. At the second stage of concentration there is no reasoning and investigation, but an unaffected contemplation. Here still the practitioner enjoys an experience of joy, peace and internal tranquillity. At the third stage one detaches himself even from joy of concentration, attitude of indifference increases, still conscious of the ease and equanimity he experiences. At the last stage one puts away even the ease and equanimity and all senses of joy and happiness he earlier had. This is a stage of perfect
equanimity, indifference and self-possession. Here he attains the desired goal of nirvana, the right view in its perfection.

Check Your Progress 1

Note: Use the space provided for your answer.

1. What are the noble truths of Buddha? Explain.

2. Elaborate the ways of cessation of suffering.

2.3 PHILOSOPHICAL IMPLICATIONS OF BUDDHA’S TEACHING

We know Buddha as an ethical teacher and founder of religion who gave the eightfold path. Can one be a founder of a religion without being a philosopher or without having philosophical ideas as the foundation for these teachings? It is not possible. For religion is moulding of life in the light of reality as one sees it and knowledge of the nature of that reality shapes ideals of life. Thus philosophy is pre-supposition of religion. Sometimes religious teachers will grow from the existing philosophy of the time, without questioning it. But Buddha was not satisfied with the philosophy of the times. He questioned theory and practice of Vedic sacrifice, theory and practice of ‘soul-realization’ and theory and practice of ‘this-life-alone’ holders. He comes to a new vision, accepting the spiritual, accepting morality, but rejecting ‘permanence’ and ‘soul’ or ‘substantiality’. That which is ‘not-permanent’ breeds suffering. Everything is not-permanent. Hence, ‘sarvam dukkam’. His vision springs from awareness of the causal genesis of things and ideas (pratitya samutpada), their impermanence and insubstantiality.

Theory of dependent origination (pratitya samutpada)

This is the central conception of the system of Buddha. This is the Buddhist theory of causation. This explains the nature of existence. He said “leave aside the questions of the beginning and end. I will instruct you in the Law (dharma of Buddhism). If ‘that’ is, ‘this’ comes to be; on the springing up of ‘that’, ‘this’ springs up. If ‘that’ is not, ‘this’ does not come to be; on the cessation of ‘that’, ‘this’ ceases”. This is the common description of dependent origination. This
exposes most salient features of Buddha’s conception of the principle of dependent origination. There is a temporal relation between the ‘that’ and ‘this’. ‘This’ is an experiential component. For ‘this’ refers to the effect that is experienced rather than inferred. And ‘that’ refers to the cause that has already been experienced. Formulating the principle of dependent origination in this manner, the Buddha attempts to avoid the search for any mysterious entity or substance in the explanation of phenomena. Avoiding mysterious entity or substance does not mean abandoning all enquiry and go to absolute scepticism. Rather it represents the acceptance of a middle standpoint and he calls it right view. In Kaccayanagotta-sutta, when question asked about ‘right view’ Buddha said; .... “this world, is generally inclined toward two views: existence and non-existence. To him who perceives with right wisdom the uprising of the world as it has come to be, the notion of non-existence in the world does not occur. To him who perceives with right wisdom the ceasing of the world as it has come to be, the notion of existence in the world does not occur.

The world for the most part, is bound by approach, grasping and inclination. And he who does not follow that approach and grasping, that determination of the mind, that inclination and disposition, who does not cling to or adhere to a view, “this is my self”, who thinks “suffering that is subject to arising arises; suffering that is subject to ceasing, ceases” such a person does not doubt, is not perplexed ..... there is “right view” (that leads to liberation).

“Everything exists” is one extreme. “Everything does not exist” is the other extreme. Without approaching either extreme, the Tathagata teaches you a doctrine of the middle.....(then follows exposition of 12 factors of bhava chakra as causes of suffering). This we already saw in the second noble truth, where he applied this theory of causation (pratitya samutpada) in the origin of suffering. Like that in other fields too his disciples apply it. In the field of Logic it is law of identity. Something is, is; is not, is and is not. When it is applied in metaphysics it becomes theory of momentariness (everything in constant flux, changing from cause to effect). And when applied in ethics it becomes law of karma as every action leaves its effect. This principle of dependent arising is an alternative to the Brahminical notion of eternal self (atman) as well as to the Carvaka rejection of spirituality. As an alternative Buddha explains phenomena as a state of being in constant arising and ceasing. What is it that arises and ceases, they say ‘dharmas’. It does justice to the need of both permanence and change to explain our experience and ethics.

**Doctrine of Universal change or impermanence (Sarvam anitya)**

The metaphysical application of law of dependent arising arrived by investigation and analysis of the empirical, is the doctrine of universal change. All things are combination of ‘dharmas’ and subject to change and decay. Since they all originate from some condition, it disappears when the condition ceases to be. Whatever has a beginning has an end. Buddha therefore says “know that whatever exists arises from causes and conditions and is in every respect impermanent. That which seems everlasting perishes, that which is high will be laid low; where meeting is, parting will be; where birth is, death will come”. This is doctrine of impermanence. When this is brought to its logical conclusion, by asking the question, how one thing can become another if it is not continuously changing. If not changing it will remain as it is, if it remains as it is, it will never change combination of dharmas too become impossible. If there is no change, we cannot explain our experience, morality cannot be explained, for morality in order to be meaningful actions
should bear fruit, no fruit without change. If change, change must be at all moments. If at one moment it is permanent, then it will go on like that for ever. For Buddhism does not accept of an external mover.

**No-soul theory (anatma)**

From the beginning of human reflection up to now, one prominent theme is ‘soul’. But it is known by different names. To the primitive man inside him or in any animal that lives and moves there is a living principle, a man inside a man or an animal inside an animal that we call ‘soul’. This is animism. As religion becomes refined soul concept also becomes refined. But in one form or another we see it in living religions of Hinduism, Jainism, Christianity and Islam. They teach a man’s personality or self is his soul, known by different names like ‘atman’, *pudgala*, *pneuma*, or psyche which enters body at birth and quits at death. The common element is, it is the invisible, immaterial ego, the ‘I’ that is unchangeable amidst everything that is changing, the ‘Lord’ of the body and mind. Those who hold that, there is a soul that exists say, without a soul there could be no immortality, without immortality life would not be worth living. The existence of a soul alone could ensure to each individual the fruit of his actions; without soul there could be no reward in heaven or punishment in hell and without it transmigration could not be explained, and so also we cannot explain differences between man and man in character, position, peculiarities and fate.

For Buddha such a permanent soul, a permanent self is the most deceitful of illusions, the basic wrong view that leads man into the pit of sorrow and suffering. In order to be a Buddhist practitioner first thing that is to be rejected is such a belief in permanent self. The reason given is – self naturally produces attachment; and attachment to it leads to egoism, craving for pleasure and aversion to pain on earth and then beyond in heaven. So search for soul is a wrong start, and wrong start will lead in false direction. “Some say that the ‘I’ endures after death, others say it perishes, both have fallen into a grievous error. For if the ‘I’ is perishable the fruit people strive for will perish too, and then deliverance will be without merit. If, as the others say, the ‘I’ does not perish, it must be always identical and unchanging, then moral aims and salvation would be unnecessary”. Because of this logical difficulty, Buddha kept that matter in the ‘inexplicable’. This silence of Buddha was explained differently by different schools, though all agree ‘soul’ does not exist. First systematic exposition of that we have in the book ‘*The Questions of King Menandros*’ (*Milindapancha*). Here Nagasena the monk convinces the king with the example of chariot, there is no permanent personality, but only name and form, i.e. the five groups (*skandas*), which continuously cease and arise anew.

**Check Your Progress II**

**Note:** Use the space provided for your answer.

1. How does Buddhism understand the reality as dependent?

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2. Describe the Buddhist notion of ‘self’.

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2.4 LET US SUM UP

Buddhism as we see today is a big forest with such a lot of variety of trees in it. Though the schools and sects keep up their uniqueness, they all claim that they give the Master’s teaching. Modern times when study of Buddhism was rejuvenated in Europe, a fresh scientific enquiry into what is later and what is the core was taken up. All unanimously agree on the so-called four noble truths (catur aryasatyani) as Buddha’s own words and contains a summary of his teaching and gives theoretical framework of philosophy for Buddhists everywhere. Among these truths, the first, the truth of suffering is the basis of Buddhist ontology. The second, the truth of the Origin of Suffering is the basis of Buddhist psychology or the ontology of the mental. The third, the truth of the cessation of suffering is the basis of Buddhism as a religion. The fourth, the truth of the path leading to cessation of suffering, is the basis of Buddhism as a moral and meditational practice. All the later developments in any of these fields have this same fundamental heritage – the vision of Buddha. It is presented as ‘sarvam dukkam’, ‘sarvam anatmam’ and ‘sarvam anityam’. If we ask the question why everything is suffering? The answer is because it is impermanent. Why is it impermanent? Because it is dependently originated. Why is it dependently originated? The answer is, it is like that. We experience it like that.

2.5 KEY WORDS

Dharmas (dhamma in Pali): in Buddhism are the elements of existence. These are grouped into 5 Skandhas, 18 dhatus and 12 ayatanas and their subdivisions. They explain Buddhist ontology.

Reality: It means the sum total of elements (dhammas) with which everything is made of, and with in which we comprehend everything.

Religion: In Buddhism refers to spirituality, not to worship of personal God. In a broader sense it refers to a belief that liberation from a frustrating and painful existence or from eternally repeated existence is possible and can be achieved through appropriate mental and moral practices.

2.6 FURTHER READING AND REFERENCES


