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## **UNIT 2**      **BUDDHISM**

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### **2.0 OBJECTIVES**

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In this unit we are going to study Buddhism only as a religion. For this, first we need to grasp the significance of the Buddha's life. Next we will try to get at the core of his teachings: 'The Fourfold Truth' and 'The Eightfold Path'. Then we will grapple with the Buddhist idea of human destiny and its ethical teachings. Finally we will identify the key scriptures of Buddhism in the context of its historical development.

By the end of this unit, you should be able to:

- Grasp the significance of the life of the Buddha as a new Path-maker
- Appreciate his Four Noble Truths and the Eightfold Path
- Grapple with the meaning of Nibbana
- Learn the ethical teachings of Buddhism
- Identify the key Scriptures as well as the kinds of Buddhism

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### **2.1 INTRODUCTION**

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Buddhism does not believe in personal God or substantive soul, as other religions would normally do. It also avoids all dogmas and theology. It is purely based on a religious sense to experience all things, natural and spiritual, as a meaningful unity. It suggests special kind of human destiny according to which he channels its teachings of morality, meditation and wisdom. Moreover, Buddhism is known for its adaptability to different cultures. Its concern has always been to impart simply its spiritual practices to people. It has never interfered with local cultures or original beliefs of peoples. Hence, it has easily spread to most countries of Asia and remains as a powerful cultural force. It has become popular in the West, too, since the late 19<sup>th</sup> century. It has been classified as one among the four 'universal religions' of the world.

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## 2.2 THE BUDDHA

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'Buddha' is not a proper name but a descriptive title meaning 'The Awakened' or 'The Enlightened'. He was born of Suddhodana, a petty king (chieftain) of the Śākya clan, in Kapilavastu on the border between Nepal and India, around the year 563 CE. His original name was Siddhartha Gautama. Gautama was his clan name. Siddhārtha meant "one who has achieved his aim".

### *Earlier Life*

Little is known about the early life of the Buddha. The Buddhist scriptures do not give his life in a continuous narrative. They have preserved some specific events from his life. Some of them are probably mythical in nature. At the time of his birth, an astrologer had prophesized that he would become either a great king or a monk. Obviously his father wanted his son to succeed him. Therefore, all precautions were taken to raise the boy in the luxurious environment of the palace. And at the age of 16, he was married to Yaśodharā. After 13 years of married life he fathered a son, Rahula.

Soon after the birth of the son, the prince Siddhartha took out a journey by chariot. There he was deeply disturbed by the sight of an elderly man, helpless and frail. Secondly, he saw a diseased man, emaciated and depressed. Thirdly, he spotted a family grieving at the death of their son. As he was reflecting deeply upon the suffering brought about by old age, illness and death, he came to see a religious mendicant who led a life of meditation, calm and serene.

Inspired by the last sight, Siddhartha decided to follow the path of the mendicant and to find a spiritual solution to the problem of suffering. He left his wife, child, lavish lifestyle, and future prospects. It was not out of despair that he renounced all this. It was expected that he enjoyed the greatest happiness in his palatial life. Yet at the sight of the threefold sufferings of life, he recognized that no matter how great one's indulgences in pleasures of the senses might be, one would have to eventually face these sufferings, early or later. It was the recognition of this fundamental truth of human life that moved him to renounce the household life. Of course the fourth sight of the mendicant inspired him to seek enlightenment for the sake of the whole of humankind.

### *Great Renunciation*

When he decided to renounce, it was final. After taking a last look at his young wife and infant son, he mounted on his horse and rode out of the limits of the sleeping city. He left the horse and sent the charioteer back to his father with his royal ornaments and a message. On the following morning, he cut off his hair. He exchanged his royal dress for a hunter's garb and became really a mendicant in search of the supreme ideal. This event was later called the Great Renunciation. He was 29 years old at that time.

### *Seeking Enlightenment*

The princely ascetic first tried meditation techniques from two teachers. He felt that these were valuable skills. However, meditation could not be extended forever. Eventually he had to return to normal waking-consciousness and face the same unsolved problems relating to birth, sickness, old age and death. So, concluded that meditation was inadequate.

He then joined a group of like-minded Brahmins in a forest near Gaya where he practiced intense fasting for six years, only eating the bare minimum. This technique produced a series of physical discomforts. Ultimately, he rejected this path also. He realized that he had to reject the extremes of the mortification of the flesh just as he had rejected the life of worldly enjoyment. He found that the "Middle Way", avoiding extreme austerity and enjoyment, a way largely defined by moderation and meditation, would lead to enlightenment.

### *Attaining enlightenment*

One night on the full moon day of the month Vaisakh, he sat underneath a large Pipal tree – later known as the Bodhi tree, not to rise till he had attained enlightenment. He experienced some major spiritual breakthrough. The conflict between the human passions (symbolized by 'Mara' Satan, Darkness or Ignorance) and spiritual powers (Enlightenment or Wisdom) was finally resolved during that night. He ascended one by one four stages of trance (*dhyana*). The last stage was marked by pure consciousness and equanimity. It was at that stage that he felt that all the evil passions (craving, desire, hatred, hunger, thirst, exhaustion) which are at the root of people's suffering had been overcome. All fears, doubts, and delusions about the future destiny were at rest. He had progressed beyond 'spiritual defilements'. He had attained enlightenment!

### *After his enlightenment*

After the Enlightenment, the Buddha spent seven more weeks there under the sacred pipal tree, henceforth known as the Bodhi (enlightenment) or simply tree, enjoying the peace and bliss of Bodhi, the Enlightenment. For seven days, he puzzled over his future: whether to withdraw from the world and live a life of seclusion, or whether to reenter the world and teach his Middle Way. Finally he decided to proclaim his teachings to other humans so that they could also attain enlightenment. He was to go forth to preach the new saving doctrine. The Mara tempted him to disappear into nirvana without concerning himself with the tedious task of preaching to people and founding a religion. The Buddha rejected this selfish suggestion. The Teacher took himself to the holy city of Benares on the river Ganges to preach the doctrine.

There the Buddha met the same group of five Brahmin ascetics with whom he had earlier fasted in Gaya. After some initial hesitation they welcomed him and quickly realized the transformation that had taken place in him. Now he proclaimed himself a Tathagata' (the one who has attained what is really so) or "The Buddha" and preached the first sermon at Saranath, near Varanasi. The

first sermon is preserved as a discourse (Sutta) called ‘Setting in Motion the Wheel of the Dharma’. All the five accepted his teachings and became his disciples. They were ordained as monks (Bikkhus) in a simple ceremony. After the Buddha’s second sermon, all the five achieved enlightenment too. The news spread quickly and soon a large number of people began to follow the Buddha. Some 60 of them attained enlightenment. They were all now called Arhants (saints) and were charged to go forth as missionaries and spread the teachings out of compassion for the world. On his part, the Buddha went about teaching around Northeast India covering a “territory some 150 miles long by 250 miles wide.”

Gradually the number of followers increased. He had such a large public following and thousands of disciples, including women, that he established the order of monks (Bikkhus) and equivalent order for nuns (bhikkhunis). His wife Yaśodharā became the first nun. All the Buddhists put together came to be known as the Sangha. As his popularity increased and the number of his followers swelled, residential centers became established at which monks would remain for part of the year, notably during the rainy season when travel was difficult. Often these residences were donated by kings or wealthy patrons and in due course they evolved into permanent institutions known as Viharas or monasteries.

After forty-five years of teaching, Buddha died at the age of 80, apparently of natural causes. He did not choose a successor. He felt that the Sangha governed by his Dhamma (his teachings) and the Vinaya (his code of rules) would be sufficient.

### Check Your Progress I

- Note: a) Use the space provided for your answer  
b) Check your answers with those provided at the end of the unit

1. What are the four instances of life that happen to be a turning point in the life of Prince Siddhartha?

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2. Elucidate the “Middle-Path” of the Buddha

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### 2.3 FOUR NOBLE TRUTHS

The core of Buddhism is the Buddha’s teaching on the Four Noble Truths. In fact his very first sermon consisted of them only. They also prove to be summary of the Buddha’s teachings, both from the point of view of doctrine and also from the point of view of practice. They may be described in simple terms as follows:

- (i) The Truth of Misery (Dukkha)
- (ii) The Truth of the Cause (Samudaya)
- (iii) The Truth of Cessation (Nirodha)
- (iv) The Truth of the Path (*Marga*)

### *The Truth of Misery (Dukkha)*

It is plain truth that suffering is an intrinsic part of life. It pervades the whole of our life. It is real, not illusory. It is of two broad categories. There is first the physical or biological experience of pain. Birth itself is a suffering and is the gateway for other sufferings like disease, old age and death. Then there are the mental and psychological forms of suffering: distress arising out of separation from our loved ones, loss of things or people, grief over torture or persecution, failures or frustrated desire, the impermanence of pleasure. Thus physical and mental sufferings are woven into the fabric of our existence. Not that there is no joy and happiness at all in life; but they are all short-lived. Suffering dominates life.

### *The Truth of the Cause (Samudaya)*

There is a cause for suffering. In unfolding this cause Buddha says that the primary cause is desire or craving (Trishna or Raga). We all enjoy good food. We want more and more of it. Just because you are fond of a particular food, you may eat it again and again. But you get bored with it. Then you try another kind of food. You enjoy it. But again you get bored with it. Thus, though you may like to prolong such pleasant experience, yet we are never completely satisfied. Our craving is un-ending.

### *The Truth of Cessation (Nirodha)*

So the only way to put an end to suffering is to put an end to both desire and ignorance. Thus it is possible to put an end to suffering. With cessation of suffering the mind can enjoy the final liberation, *Nibbana* (in Sanskrit 'Nirvana').

### *The Truth of the Path (Marga)*

But, how to put an end to both craving and ignorance? This is precisely being worked out in the Eightfold Path.

## **2.4 EIGHTFOLD PATH**

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As it is obvious from the name, the Eightfold Path is the Way that consists of eight components. They should not be taken as 'stages' meaning that we go over them one by one in succession and that while climbing one you leave the other behind. Rather they are different aspects of a total view of life and therefore they must all be cultivated together on a continuing basis. They are all organized for transformation of intellectual, moral, and emotional restructuring of oneself.

*Right View:* According to Buddha, there is no 'I' as such. What we think as self is not a permanent, independent reality. The 'self' is only a convenient name for a 'collection' of processes like feelings, perceptions which are ever-changing, dependant and contingent, just as there is no 'forest' apart from trees. It is mere 'ignorance' that we think of a permanent and independent self as opposed to things around us or persons opposed to us.

*Right Thinking:* Thought has immense influence on one's behaviour. If you want to be morally good, you should first think that it is necessary to do good and avoid evil. To remove ill-will, you need to think lovingly and kindly and cultivate compassion. To cultivate compassion you must

think of the essential equality of all living beings and their right to be happy. If you go on cultivating such thoughts you will have eliminated greed and anger, purified yourself of those three defilements and set the path for attaining freedom or Nirvana.

*Right Speech* is an extremely important part of human life. We often tend to appreciate the power of speech. But we may often neglect the need to control our power of speech. By cultivating the right speech one will achieve greater harmony in society. The faculty of speech should be used constructively in order to promote meaningful communication, to unite and encourage rather than destructively abusing others.

*Right Action* entails respect for life, respect for property and respect for personal relationship. The principles of equality and reciprocity are applicable especially to this realm of action. Right action also involves respect for property, in the sense of not stealing from others, or cheating. Finally, right action means respect for personal relationship, and avoiding adultery, sexual misconduct and male exploitation of women, etc.

*Right Livelihood* is extension of the previous step. It is right action applied to oneself, seen as a breadwinner in society. It means that one ought not to earn one's living in such a way as to violate these principles which are the underlying principles of good conduct for the welfare of others.

*Right Effort* here means undertaking our task with energy, enthusiasm, confidence and a firm determination to carry it through. But, of course, effort must be controlled and be balanced, not to be too tense nor too slack, just like the string of a violin which should neither be too tight nor too loose.

*Right Mindfulness* means full awareness and total attention, avoiding a distracted and clouded state of mind, so as to increase one's efficiency and productivity.

*Concentration* is focusing the mind fully on a single object (which may be physical or mental) to the exclusion of all other thoughts, distractions, wavering agitation or drowsiness.

**Check Your Progress II**

Note: a) Use the space provided for your answer  
b) Check your answers with those provided at the end of the unit

1. What are the Four Noble Truths enunciated by the Buddha?  
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2. Express the Eightfold Path in a nut-shell.  
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## 2.5. BUDDHIST IDEA OF HUMAN DESTINY

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The idea of life after death is differently conceived in different religions. Buddhism teaches that humans are trapped in a repetitive cycle of birth, life, death and rebirth. This is a vicious circle. The one goal of human is to break this cycle and experience complete liberation from suffering by putting an end to desire, the cause of suffering. That attainment, called in Buddhism Nibbana (Nirvana), is indeed the human destiny.

Buddha's discovery of Path began from his analysis of the conditions of human existence which is marked with three main characteristics:

*dukkha*, meaning ills, sufferings, misery, evil, etc;

*anicca* (or *anitya* in Sanskrit), the impermanent or transient quality of all earthly things, especially the so called 'pleasures' of life;

*anatta* (or *anatman*) absence of a permanent or enduring self within the human individual, as against the usual conception of an eternal element within human.

Of the three features mentioned above, the first point is the overall feature which arises as a result of the other two. *Anicca* is the first intuition on which the Buddha's teachings rest. The things that we see about us, tree, tables, mountains, rivers, etc., seem to be permanent. Since, all is subject to change, there is no fundamental substance called soul. What appears to be lasting and permanent is an ever changing compound, a ceaseless succession of physic-mental states, a mere aggregate or composite of the changing states of being

Now, from both *anicca* and *anata* is derived the *dukkha*. Since there is no fundamental self whatever it experiences is bound to be unsatisfactory (*dukkha*). Unsatisfactory-ness comes from desire which comes from ignorance (*avidya*). The end result is suffering and despair.

The one and the only goal of Buddhism is to remove suffering from life and give a taste of supreme bliss (*Nibbana*) to human beings. It is precisely to reach that destiny that the Buddha gave the Eightfold Path. To practice the Path it is not necessary for people to become a monk or a nun, although the monk's life may be the ideal for practice. Being a monk also may not mean anything if one does not practice the Path.

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## 2.6 ETHICAL TEACHINGS OF BUDDHISM

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Morality in Buddhism is like the foundation of the Spiritual path. Morality makes manifest of one's innate Buddha nature. The overcoming of *dukkha* is its central preoccupation towards which ethical action contributes. It is in the nature of things that behaving ethically reduces suffering and increases happiness for oneself and others. Thus, moral life is proposed not as a burdensome duty or set of 'oughts' but as uplifting source of happiness in which sacrifice of lesser pleasures facilitates the experiencing of more enriching and satisfying ones.

The importance of morality is explained in Buddhism with a simile. The earth is the base of all animate and inanimate things: be it the buildings, mountains or rivers, or be it tree or bush, or

animals everything rest on the earth. So also morality is the foundation of all qualities, all virtues and all attainments, ranging from the worldly success to the supernatural achievements, or any skills like meditation or wisdom and enlightenment. If this moral foundation is not set properly one will succeed in going over to other stages of the Eightfold path.

Another general characteristic of Buddhist morality is that it is based on a democratic principle: All living beings want to live, enjoy happiness and security. They all fear suffering and death. This is true of all living beings just as it is true of ourselves. This is what is called the universal vision of equality of Buddha. On the basis of the equality follows the next principle of reciprocity. Just as we would not like to be killed, robbed, abused and so forth, so would all other living beings not like to have these things happen to them. To put it simply: "Do not act towards others in a way which you would not want them to act towards you."

To be specific, there are three kinds of precepts prescribed as means of cultivating Sila (virtue).

(i) 'Five Precepts' (Punchasila) to be observed by all, monks and laypeople alike; (ii) 'The Eight Precepts' (Asntanga Sila) to be observed by the novices who are preparing for monastic life; and (iii) 'Ten Precepts' (Dasa sila) to be observed more rigorously and on a long term basis according to the status of the practitioner or to suit a particular occasion.

*The Five Precepts (Punchasila):*

1. "Not harming" living beings (Non- violence)
2. "Not Taking what is not given" (Non- stealing)
3. "Misuse of sensual pleasures" (complete celibacy for monks and nuns; for the lay persons, adultery or any sexual harassment is forbidden).
4. "Avoiding false speech" or gossip (Non-lying)
5. "Unmindful states due to drinks or drugs" (The main concern here is that intoxicants cloud the mind. Some have included anything that divorces us from reality, e.g., movies, TV & the Internet.

*The Eight precepts (Astanga sila)* include the following three in addition to the five already mentioned above:

6. 'Avoidance of eating in unreasonable time'
7. 'Avoidance of dancing, singing, music, watching grotesque mime'
8. 'Avoidance of wearing garlands, perfumes and ointment and personal adornment'

*Ten Precepts (Dasa sila)* include the following two in addition to the eight:

9. Avoiding 'Use of high seats or luxurious beds'
10. Avoiding 'Accepting gold or silver'

The above mentioned precepts are all negative in as much as they prescribe what ought to be avoided. But they need to be complemented by the positive content that is already given in the eightfold Path.

## **2.7 SCRIPTURES OF BUDDHISM**

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The Buddha gave his teachings in the form of discourses (*Sutta*). He spoke not in Sanskrit, the language of the priestly class, but in dialect close to *Pali*. Three months after his death, one of his most accomplished students, the Venerable Mahakassapa, assembled 500 senior monks in what was to be called the First Council. It was held in Rajagriha, Magadha. Their goal was to give the Buddha's teachings a degree of permanence and consistency by converting them to written form for use by the *Sangha* (the Community of Buddhists). The inner meaning of the life of the *Sangha* was expressed in the songs of the early monks. They were called the 'Songs of the Elders' *Theragatha* by monks, *Therigathi*, by the nuns.

In that First Council itself, certain differences arose in the *Sangha*. Some conservatives claimed to follow the teachings of Buddha in their 'ancient' or 'primordial' (*Thera*) form. As against them, a new movement arose which was more overtly innovative with an emphasis that it should be open to the concerns of the lay people. This led to the division of Theravada school and the new Mahayana (Greater Vehicle).

The division became as sharp as to lead into a schism in the Second Council which was held a century after the first, in Vesali. Seven hundred arhants (enlightened followers) were present. A few conservative Elders of the council felt that discipline within the *Sangha* needed tightening and that the Buddhist religion had to be focused on meditation and concentration, to be pursued primarily by monks in monasteries and that the lay people's task was only to support the monasteries. They were to be encouraged "to engage in merit-making activities to improve their future rebirth status." But a group of monks, the Vajjians, argued that the emphasis on monastic life would imply that lay people could scarcely hope for salvation. So the Ten Precepts should be relaxed in a such a way that it could be practiced by the "common people." They also wanted lay people to have equal representation.

The Vajjian monks were outvoted, and left the council to form a different Buddhist tradition. That is how the Mahayana Buddhism (Greater Vehicle) came into existence. The innovative spirit of the Mahayanists was so vibrant that for many centuries Indian Mahayanists continued to compose new scriptures, extending the implications of the earlier teachings. These non-Theravadin scriptures (Sanskrit Canon) are still existing in Nepal in fragments and preserved in Chinese and Tibetan translations. The Mahayana scriptures were composed from around first century BC originating as written works in Sanskrit. Though many of them are attributed to the Buddha their form and content clearly show that they were later re-statements and extensions of the Buddha's message. The main sources for our understanding of Mahayana teachings are the very extensive Chinese and Tibetan Canons.

The traditionalists denied the new literature the value of scripture as Buddha-Vacana'. But validity was established through various devices: Firstly, they were seen as inspired utterances coming from the still existing Buddha, through meditative visions and vivid dreams. Each explanation saw the Sutras as arising from meditative experiences. Nevertheless they take the form of dialogue between the historical Buddha and his disciples and gods. Above all the new Sutras were seen as turning of the new wheel of Dharma, deeper level of teaching than the early Suttas. This new perspective on scriptural legitimacy led to the Mahayana having an open ongoing 'revelation' which produced a huge outpouring of a new Sutras in India around

650CE. They were all composed anonymously often by a number of authors, often elaborating basic text.

Theravada Buddhism ( the “Doctrine of the Elders” ) later spread from northern India to Sri Lanka and most of Southeast Asian countries like Burma, Cambodia, Laos, Thailand, mostly thanks to King Ashoka. He organized the Third Council involving 1,000 attendees, in the third century BCE. Under his leadership, Buddhist monks were sent into neighboring countries; thousands of stupas and monasteries were built. Then the Fourth Council was held during the first century BCE in Sri Lanka. It was during this Council that the Theravada Buddhist scripture (The Pali Canon) was given a formal shape. It was all recorded on palm leaves and passed intact to the present day. Its name is derived from the Pali language in which the scriptures were written. Today, they would fill several thousand pages.

As a result there are two types of scriptures for Buddhism. The Mahayana scriptures, previously written in Sanskrit and preserved in Chinese and Tibetan translation. The Pali Canons of scriptures, written down in Sri Lanka around 80 CE in Pali language, a dialect close to that spoken by the Buddha, derived from the early Sangha’s transmission of earliest material, agreed on at several councils.

The Buddhist scriptures (the Pali Canon) originally comprised an enormous mass of literature that was compiled over several centuries. It was divided into three main parts, called Tripitaka (literally, basket) (meaning three collections of religious texts

*Sutta Pitaka*: It contains the core teachings of Buddhism. Sutta literally means discourse. Divided into five groups called Nikayas or Agamas. The last of them contains the commonly known texts:

- *Dhammapada*: collection of important religious and moral saying;
- *Theragatha*: collection of religious poems composed by the Buddha’s disciples themselves. It is all in old *prakrit* language, but a portion of a Sanskrit version is included.
- *Jataka*: collection of birth stories some of which are moral fables full of wisdom and humour.

*Vinaya Pitaka*: It consists of mainly rules governing the daily life of monks and nuns. This contains instructions on the organization of the Sangha and how to keep the sangha working harmoniously.

*Abhidhamma Pitaka*: (*Abhidharma* in Sanskrit) is higher and advanced formulation of Buddhist teachings. It seeks to avoid some of the inexactitudes of colloquial conventional language as is sometimes found in the Sutta. It gives a precise and detailed description of the "principles behind the mental and physical processes of the Buddha’s teaching" and states everything in psycho-philosophical language, expressing the ‘ultimate’ (*paramattha*) teachings.

### Check Your Progress III

- Note: a) Use the space provided for your answer  
b) Check your answers with those provided at the end of the unit

1. Distinguish between the two types of Buddhist scriptures

2. Indicate the main divisions of the Pali Canon

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## 2.8 LET US SUM UP

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Buddhism provides many opportunities for dialogue with a diverse range of subjects. For example, dependent origination can be considered one of Buddhism's contributions to philosophy. Additionally, Buddhism's emphasis on the Middle way not only provides a unique guideline for ethics but has also allowed Buddhism to peacefully coexist with various other religious beliefs, customs and institutions in countries in which it has existed throughout its history. Also, its moral and spiritual parallels with thought of other religions — for example, with various tenets of Christianity — have been topics of immense interest.

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## 2.9 KEY WORDS

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**Enlightenment:** In Buddhism, enlightenment is when a Buddhist discovers the truth about life.

**Canon:** A group of literary works that are generally accepted as representing a body, or authoritative and official.

**Precept:** A *precept* (from the Latin *præcipere*, to teach) is a commandment, instruction, or order intended as an authoritative rule of action.

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## **2.11 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS**

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### **Answers to Check Your Progress I**

1. Siddharta's sight of first an elderly man, helpless and frail; secondly, of a diseased man; thirdly, of another deceased man gave him an experience of life as characterized by suffering brought about by old age, illness and death. Finally, the mendicant's life of meditation and serenity inspired the Prince Siddharta to renounce his life of luxury into a life of renunciation.

2. The prince had lived already the life of worldly enjoyment. As against it now, after the great Renunciation he experimented with extreme austerity. Now both the extremes of enjoyment and austerity do no good. So, he rejected both and found the "Middle Way" of moderation and meditation.

### **Answers to Check Your Progress II**

1. The Fourfold truths of the Buddha are: The Truth of Misery (*Dukkha*), the Truth of the Cause (*Samudaya*), the Truth of Cessation (*Nirodha*), and the Truth of the Path (*marga*).

2. All the factors of the Eightfold Path are organized for transformation of the three aspects of human personality: intellectual, moral, and emotional. Thus, the first two are concerned about discernment or wisdom: (Right view and Right thinking). The next three are related to Virtue or Morality: (Right speech, Right conduct and Right livelihood). The last three are about Concentration or Meditation: (Right Effort, Right Mindfulness and Right Concentration).

### **Answers to Check Your Progress III**

1. There are two types of scriptures in Buddhism: *The Pali Canon* are scriptures of the Theravada Buddhists. Its name is derived from the Pali language in which the scriptures were written; and the non-Theravadin scriptures of the Mahayana Buddhists are *Sanskrit Canon*, parts of which are still existing in Nepal and preserved in Chinese and Tibetan translations. They were composed anonymously often by a number of authors, often elaborating the basic text, from around first century BC originating as written works, in Sanskrit.

2. The Pali Canon is divided into three collections called Tripitaka: (i) Sutta Pitaka: it contains the core teachings of Buddha in the forms of Suttas (discourse). They are subdivided into five groups called Nikayas or Agamas. The last of them contains the commonly known texts: *Dhammapada* ( collection of important religious and moral saying), *Theragatha* and *Theragati* (collection of religious poems composed by Elder monks and nuns). *Jataka* (collection of birth stories, some of which are moral fables with full of wisdom and humour). (ii) Vinaya Pitaka which consists of mainly rules governing the daily life of monks and nuns, the Sangha and how to keep the sangha working harmoniously. (iii) Abhidhamma Pitaka (*Abhidharma* in Sanskrit) is higher, precise and advanced formulation of Buddhist teachings, avoiding inexactitudes of colloquial conventional language as is sometimes found in the Sutta, and giving a detailed description of the principles behind the mental and physical processes of the Buddha's teaching.

