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17.0 OBJECTIVES

Buddhism as propounded by Gautama Buddha is pragmatic and practical. The chief aim of Buddha's philosophy was to find a way out of suffering. Hence he did not indulge in abstract, metaphysical arguments. However, he left many things unsaid which led to some vagueness leading to many interpretations on the teachings of the Buddha. This resulted in the birth of many schools of Buddhism. Scholars point out that there were as many as eighteen in India itself. But for convenience the schools have been broadly classified under two heads – Hīnayāna and Mahāyāna. In this unit you are expected to study:

- Vaibhāṣika and Sautrāntika Schools
- Yogācāra School of Buddhism
- Mādhyamika School
- Metaphysical views of the Schools of Buddhism
- Practical teachings of the Schools of Buddhism

17.1 INTRODUCTION

After the enlightenment, the Buddha gave his first sermon to his five friends, which is termed as “Dharma Chakra Pravartana” or “Setting in motion the wheel of the Law”. Gradually, the number of disciples increased and they became the missionaries to spread the new Dharma. Buddha's teachings spread widely in course of time and eventually grew into a world religion. When Buddha visited his father's court, even his family members became his disciples. Having given his councils and directions to Ānanda, his favorite disciple, the Buddha died at the age of eighty.

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Heterodox Systems Quite early in the history of Buddhism, sectarian differences appeared. The tradition tells us that two great councils of the Buddhist order took place. The first one was soon after the death of the Buddha and the second a hundred years later. At the Second council, a Schism occurred and the sect of Mahāyāna broke away on account of differences on point of monastic order and also on certain doctrinal differences. At this point, the main body claimed that they were faithful to the teachings of the Buddha and called themselves ‘Theravāda’ or ‘the teaching of the elders’.

Mahāyāna literally means the ‘great vessel’ and Hīnayāna means the ‘small vessel’. Obviously, the name Hīnayāna must have been devised by the Mahāyāna thinkers because Hīnayāna means ‘low’ and they called the other sect of Buddhism as being lower than their own.

The fundamental truths on which Buddhism is founded are not metaphysical or theological, but rather psychological. However, after Buddha’s death his followers got more interested in subtle metaphysical arguments. The Enlightenment of The Buddha was the knowledge of ‘Dependent Origination’ or Pratītya Samutpāda’, on which was built the Four Noble Truths. The Theravāda or the Hīnayāna Buddhists claimed that they were the true followers of the Buddha and it is only their doctrines which represented Buddhism faithfully. But the Mahāyāna thinkers pointed out that their doctrines alone could unravel the truths latent in Buddha’s teachings. The exponents of Mahāyāna further claimed that the variations in Hīnayāna was due to either the Master saying those things for some of the followers who were less qualified or because some of these men were not capable of grasping the real significance of Buddhism. Whatever the truth maybe, both forms of Buddhism exhibit several important changes from early Buddhism. Undoubtedly, early Buddhism contained germs capable of development along different lines, and the advocates of these schools took different abstract positions. According to scholars, there are four chief schools, of which two belong to the Hīnayāna and two to the Mahāyāna. The Hīnayāna schools are Vaibhāṣikas and Sautrāntikas and the Mahāyāna schools are the Yogācāras and the Mādhyamikas. Vaibhāṣikas and Sautrāntikas are realists or Sarvāstivādins. They believe in a self-existent universe actually in space and time while the Yogācāras are idealists and the Mādhyamikas believe in Śūnyavāda.

The literature concerning these later schools of Buddhism appeared as early as the first or second century A.D. But some of the Sanskrit works are lost. The chief exponents of the Vaibhāṣikas views were Dinnāga and Dharmakīrti. Dinnāga the scholars believe belonged to 500 A.D. Dharmakīrti is often referred to as the chief interpreter of Dinnāga. The Important Work of Dinnāga is *Pramāṇa-Samuccaya*, and Dharmakīrti’s important work is *Nyāya – Bindu*. Kumāralabda is considered to be the founder of the Sautrantika School. The chief teachers of the Yogācāra school are Asanga and Vasubandhu. They were brothers and probably they belonged to the third century A.D. It is believed that Vasubandhu started as a realist, a Sautrāntika and later become an idealist under the influence of his brother. Vasubandhu’s *Abhidharma Kośa* is a very authoritative work on this school of thought. He has also written a commentary on it. It covers the whole field of ontology, psychology, cosmology, the doctrine of salvation and the discipline for the saints and the vast proportion of its matter is common to

all Buddhist belief. The other important work on Yogācāra is *Lankāvatāra*. The significance of the name Lankavatara is the belief that it represents the teaching of Buddha as given to Rāvana, the king of Lanka. The chief exponent of the Mādhyamika school is Nāgārjuna. He was a renowned scholar. Some scholars believe that he was the pupil of Aśvaghosa (A.D. 100). Aśvaghosa was renowned Buddhist philosopher, poet and dramatist. His chief works are *Buddhacarita* and *Saudarānanda* and the drama *Sāriputraprakarana* -all on the life and teachings of the Buddha. Nāgārjuna's *Mūlamadhyama-Kārika* is a very valuable work. The commentary on this work is written by Candrakīrti. The *Sata-Śastra* or *Catuh-Sataka* of Aryadeva is another important work belonging to the Mādhyamika School. Aryadeva was the pupil of Nāgārjuna.

Check Your Progress I

Note: a) Use the space provided for your answer.

b) Check your answer with those provided at the end of the unit.

1. Write a note on the silence of Buddha.

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2. What are the main divisions of Buddhism.

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17.2 VAIBHĀSIKA AND SAUTRĀNTIKA SCHOOLS

Epistemologically, the Hīnayāna are called Sarvāstivādains. They believe that the mind is conscious of objects. Our knowledge of things not mental is no creation, but only a discovery. Things are given to us. The Hīnayāna thinkers or Sarvāstivādains believe in the existence of objects outside and independently of knowledge though the objects according to the general postulate of Buddhism are conceived as momentary. However, the Vaibhāṣika views differ from that of Sautrāntika views with respect to their stand on realism. Vaibhāṣikas hold that objects are directly perceived and the Sautrāntikas hold that they are known indirectly since according to the doctrine of Momentariness, objects cannot be present at the time they are perceived, for otherwise objects will have to last for at least two moments, one when they served as a stimulus and the other when they are actually perceived. Therefore, it is only a successor in the object series that is perceived. However, the previous member before it disappears leaves its impression on the recipient's mind and it is from this impression or idea (ākāra) that we infer the existence of the corresponding object. Thus the so-called perception really refers to the past and is in the nature of an inference.

Heterodox Systems They hold that the external objects are not perceived by us directly but are inferred from the perceptions, which are representations or copies of external objects. Therefore the Sautrāntika view is called copy-theory, or representations or representative theory of perception. But they are realists in so far as they do not deny the independent existence of external objects. Where the objects are not really existent, we will have illusions.

The Vaibhāṣikas who hold that objects are known directly are able to dismiss the intervening psychic medium. In fact, the Vaibhāṣika criticizes the Sautrāntika view saying that it goes against experience and also that perception itself cannot be made a matter of inference. Since without perception there cannot be inference. However, the criticism is not correct because according to the Sautrāntikas the existence of the object is not a matter of inference but only implies that the object is known indirectly. They're only giving an explanation on the process of knowing. Though there is this little difference between Vaibhāṣikas and Sautrāntikas with regard to the nature of knowing, both these schools believe that the particular or Svalakṣaṇa alone is real but not the general or the sāmānyalakṣaṇa. In other words, so far as the nature of universal is concerned, the Sarvāstivādins are nominalists. They deny any ontological status to the universals. The status of perception in Buddhism will be discussed further under the heading 'Pramāṇas'.

17.3 YOGĀCĀRA SCHOOL OF BUDDHISM

The other name for this school of Buddhism is *Vijñāna Vāda*, as this name suggests, this is a school of subjective idealism. We can say that Vijñāna Vādais a direct outcome of the representative theory advocated by the Sautrantikas. Of the triple factors of experience, viz., knower, known and knowledge, for the Vijñāna Vādin, knowledge alone is real. There is neither subject nor object but only a succession of ideas. The specific form which cognition at any particular instance assumes is determined on this view not by an object presented to it but by past experience. That is, the stimulus always comes from within, never from outside. No object can be experienced apart from consciousness, therefore, according to Vijñāna Vāda, consciousness and its object are one and the same. The Yogācāra points out that objects are not substances but duration less point-instants on the basis of the theory of momentariness. The object as a point-instant cannot be causally efficacious. Therefore, it is not possible, says the Vijñāna Vādin, to accept an external object. Thus for these thinkers, the external world is not only epistemologically but also ontologically dependent upon the perceiving mind or consciousness. The argument from dream is considered by Yogācāra to prove their view. They point out in dream, experience arises even though no object is perceived. Secondly, cognition becomes aware of itself. In self-cognizing cognition what is known is identical with what knows. Also, they say that the so-called objects seem to impress different people in different ways, and sometimes the same person differently at different times. The Yogācāra argues that this is so because really there is no object out there. The above arguments do not assume the dimension of a proof for subjective idealism because these thinkers forget that the contact apprehended may have a subjective side and may at the same time, point to a real object outside.

The view of Vijñāna Vāda can be summarized as follows:

What appears in knowledge has no counterpart outside and what is supposedly outside does not appear in knowledge.

There are difficulties in accounting for cognition on a dualistic basis viz., knowledge here and object there with a similarity or *sārūpya* between them. The inconceivability of an unknown object throws doubt on the realistic hypothesis.

The occurrence of illusion, dream objects, mirage, reflection, etc., proves that *Vijñāna* can have content without there being a corresponding object outside.

We can explain all facts of experience on the view that *Vijñāna* manifests the object content from time to time owing to its own internal modification, which are the results of its latest forces or *Vāsanās* i.e., karmic impressions from the past, latent in the stream of consciousness. Just as out of the countless things in our memory, we only recall certain things at certain times, of the myriads of impressions that lie deep in our consciousness, only some rise to the surface at some time and under certain circumstances and appear as objects both internal and external.

It is from this point of view that *Yogācāra* calls consciousness (*Ālaya Vijñāna*, the repository or storehouse of all past consciousness). In conclusion, we have to emphasize that for *Yogācāra* consciousness is not an unchanging substance but an unbroken stream of states and impressions. As long as one is in bondage ignorance, impressions, thoughts, ideas and desires arise in accordance with the law of karma. One who overcomes attachment and illusion realizes the sole reality of consciousness.

17.4 MĀDHYAMIKA SCHOOL

The *Mādhyamika* is the most important outcome of Buddha's teaching. The literal meaning of the term *Mādhyamika* is 'the farer of the middle way'. *Mādhyamika* avoids all extremes such as eternalism and annihilation of spirit and body, unity and plurality and treads the middle path. This standpoint of the *Mādhyamika* with regard to knowledge is altogether novel. The other schools of Buddhism held at least the subject series as real but *Mādhyamika* is quite revolutionary and questions the validity of knowledge as a whole. They hold that if criticism of knowledge is necessary, it should be for all knowledge without presuming that some part of it is self-evident. We commonly believe that we get in touch with reality through knowledge. However, when we inquire into the nature of this so-called reality, we discover that our enquiry is full of discrepancies. Man in his thirst for knowledge, thinks of the world as the other. But all knowledge is a matter of relation. Knowledge, in so far as it can express anything at all, is propositional. Propositions are made up of percepts and concepts, which are called *nāma rūpa* (name and form) in *Mādhyamika* language. Accordingly, the reality created by philosophers in their knowledge is nothing but names and forms. This is ignorance leading to suffering. *Nāgārjuna* tries to free men by calling attention to the relativity of all thought constructions thereby eliminating the very basis for clinging.

Vijñāna Vāda does not believe in the duality of subject and object and it is a form of *nis-svabhāva vāda*, so also *Mādhyamika* is a form of *nis-svabhāva vāda* for it

Heterodox Systems believes in only mutual dependence and the subject and the object are nothing in themselves. The Difference between the two is that the Mādhyamika considers the logical constitution of a thing and finds it lacking in essence. The Vijñāna Vāda views it psychologically and says that the object cannot stand by itself. It is nothing without the consciousness on which it is superimposed (parikalpita), it is Vijñāna that can undergo modification and it can purify itself by getting rid of the superimposed duality. Mādhyamikas point out that neither the external objects nor Vijñāna has any self-essence. It is śūnya. Thus they conclude that though knowledge serves the purposes of empirical life, and may be valid or not as the case may be, it is impossible to attach any metaphysical significance to it. This view accounts for the Buddhist criterion of truth viz., that knowledge is true which confirms the expectation it raises. Truth consists in its fitness to secure for us the object in question. Right cognition is successful cognition. Cognition, which leads us astray or which deceives us is wrong cognition or error. Thus, there is a connection between the logic of our knowledge and its practical efficiency. Right knowledge is efficacious knowledge. The other characteristic of right knowledge is the cognition of the object not yet cognized. It is the first moment of cognition, enduring cognition is recognition Diñnāga says that only the first flash of awareness can be a source of knowledge. According to the Vaibhāṣikas and Sautrāntikas, Sva-lakṣana is given but knowledge only directs us to the series of which Sva-lakṣana cognized was a member. Knowledge merely lights up the path of action and so long as it successfully does so, it is regarded as true. So also in inference, inference is based on invariable concomitance, invariable concomitance is a relation and according to Buddhism all relations are by hypothesis unreal. Yet, when it leads to the requirements of practical life it is valid. Since there can be errors in both perception and inference, knowledge can be accepted only after verification. However, it is necessary to distinguish between the content of error and ideal constructions or kalpanā. Kalpanā is false but yet it is necessary for all perceptions. They are the forms of the mind. As against this, errors are occasional and they affect only individual recipients.

All schools of Buddhism accept that knowledge serves the purpose of empirical life and hence it is necessary to discuss the meaning and significance of the word 'pramāṇa' and the source of empirical knowledge. The Buddhist philosophers differ among themselves with regard to the meaning of the word 'pramāṇa'. For the realists among Buddhists, viz., the Vaibhāṣikas and Sautrāntikas, the formal similarity obtained between cognition and its object is to be regarded as pramāṇa. According to Vijñāna Vādins, self-cognition and the capacity to acquire such cognition is pramāṇa. Nāgārjuna, the propounder of Mādhyamika School of Buddhism does not attach any special significance to the meaning of pramāṇa. For the Buddhists conceptual knowledge of language and all nameable things and of all names is dialectical.

The Buddhist epistemology divides knowledge into direct and indirect. The direct source of knowledge is sensibility and the indirect one is intellect or understanding. Diñnāga calls these sources of knowledge conventionally as perception and inference respectively. These Are the only two sources of knowledge accepted by the Buddhists. The Buddhists do not give verbal testimony the status of pramāṇa.

Diñnāga says that perception is a source of knowledge which is non-constructive

which means that it is direct. According To the view, pratyakṣa or perception is different from imagination and has no connection with names, genus, etc. This definition, we can notice, makes no mention of sense-object contact. So it signifies that as direct cognition, pratyakṣa includes mental cognition, self-consciousness and mystic cognition. This definition also makes no mention of pratyakṣa being non-illusionary. As against this Dharmakīrti Defines perception as a presentation which is generated by the objects alone, unassociated by names and relations (kalpanā) and which is not erroneous. Perception thus means the correct presentation of an object through the senses in its own uniqueness as containing only those features which are its own or Svalakṣaṇa. What is presented is only the bare particular or Svalakṣaṇa and all the general qualities or sāmānya lakṣaṇas, like the name, genus, etc. are constructed by the mind. These are the imaginative constructs or Kalpanās. These are five:

Jāti Kalpanā, having universal as its content

Guna Kalpanā, having an attribute as its content.

Nāma Kalpanā, having a name as its content

Karma Kalpanā, having an action as its content.

Dravya Kalpanā, having a substance as its content.

Pratyakṣa is knowledge free from constructions when it is not affected by illusion caused by colorblindness, rapid motion, travelling on board a ship, sickness and other causes. One factor that is significant from the Buddhist view of perception is that a real sense of cognition or perception exists through the senses only the first moment of perception. The first instant can be called sensation when only the bare unrelated particular is given. This stage is generally described as indeterminate or nirvikalpaka. Here the mind is passive but in the next stage of determinate perception or savikalpaka the mind becomes active giving it a subjective elaboration because of which the reality becomes greatly transformed. However, a conceptual judgment is not the same as an erroneous judgment, erroneous perceptions are of different kinds.

An illusion proper is when intellect mistakes a ray of light for water in the desert. Here the intellect mistakes what is imagined for what is presented. This illusion disappears as soon as a man realizes that it is a mirage and not water. But if a man sees a double moon due to some defect in the eye, their image persists even when he is aware that actually there is only one moon. Apart from these illusions, hallucinations and dreams are also illusory. As Against These Illusions, the empirically true judgments are efficacious or they have the quality of *arthakriyākaritva*.

Inference

The cognition of a non perceived object through a perceived object is called inference. It is an indirect cognition, cognition of an object through its “mark”. The inferential judgment is possible only because the ‘mark’ that you see is related to the object yonder by a necessary relation or vyāpti. According to the Buddhists only two types of vyāpti are legitimate. They Are:

Sphere of causation – we can infer fire from smoke because smoke is caused

Heterodox Systems by fire. To doubt the law of causation is to take away the meaning from life's activities.

Sphere of identity – when we know that a certain thing is Śimśupa, we know that it is a tree. This relation between genus and species can be the basis of a valid inference, so long as what is inferred is not narrower than from which it is inferred. For example, we can say that all Śimśupa are trees but all trees are not Śimśupa.

Every inference has three terms, the logical subject, the logical predicate and the mark which unites them. Inferential reasoning that is used for the knowledge of others, is called a syllogism (parārthānumāna) when it is for oneself, it is called svarthānumāna (Inference for oneself), which can be worded as 'there is a fire on the hill because there is smoke just as in the kitchen. The syllogism reads as:

wherever there is smoke, there must be fire as in the kitchen. There is such a smoke on the hill.

Therefore there must be fire on the hill.

Diñnāga says that these three propositions are enough in a syllogism and he criticizes Nyāya for their five membered syllogism.

Diñnāga gives three rules that should be followed. The presence of the reason in the subject

Its presence is necessarily in all similar instances. It's necessary absence in all dissimilar instances

A fallacy will occur when anyone of these rules are violated.

17.5 METAPHYSICAL VIEWS OF THE SCHOOLS OF BUDDHISM

The important features of early Buddhism are emphasized to a great extent by all the schools of Buddhism. The view that everything is flux and everything is an aggregate or saṅghāta are two important theories which have influenced the views of the schools of Buddhism. Undoubtedly, the doctrine of dependent origination or pratīyasamutpāda is the very foundation of Buddhism and therefore it continues to be very important for the development of the schools of Buddhism as well.

According to Buddhism, when there is a change, the change is total and there is nothing that remains, which endures the change. For example, according to common sense, when XA changes, it becomes XB; such that X endures and it is the characteristic. A, which becomes B. Buddhism does not accept this view. For them change is total. It is a revolution not an evolution. Going back to our example, XA will become YB, because reality is becoming, change is not only total but perpetual. This follows from their conception of reality according to which, that which is capable of causal efficiency. For example; when a seed becomes a shoot it becomes wholly different without anything called seed surviving-niranvāyana. This causal efficiency is described in Sanskrit as artha-Kriyā Kāritva. To go back to the example taken, causal efficiency means

that when a seed gives rise to shoot the seed series will give rise to the shoot series and the activity is continuous. Also, no extraneous causes are required for the destruction of the thing. Non existence cannot be brought about. If anything does not annihilate itself, nothing can do it. Also, if the thing does not lend itself in the instant following its appearance, there is no reason why it should disappear at all. Hence if things are not momentary, they have to be eternal which is not acceptable.

This conception of reality is criticized by the other systems of Indian philosophy. The critic says that if everything is a flux, how is it that there is recognition? The Buddhist answers this criticism by saying that everything is continuously changing but we mistake similarity for identity. Recognition is a compound of memory and perception. What we perceive and what we remember are two members of the same series and hence they are similar and we mistake the similarity for identity. The example of a flame is taken to prove this point. When a flame is burning it is not the same flame in any two instants and that is clear from the consumption of oil. Similarly All things are changing from moment to moment.

The next criticism is regarding the causal efficiency as being the criterion of the real. According to Buddhism, a series never ends but maybe transformed into another like the seed series making way for the shoot series. But when they speak of the ego series, it is said that it ends when an arhat attains nirvāṇa. If so, the final member of the ego series has no causal efficiency and so is it real? If so, then the whole ego series must be unreal or they have to give up the ideal of nirvāṇa. However, the Buddhist claims that Nirvāṇa or freedom from samsāra is the truth because there is scope for any one to get to that state of experience.

Of The Four Schools of Buddhism, the Vaibhāṣika may be described as pluralistic realism. They believe only in the bare particular or the Svalakṣaṇa as what is independent of the perceiver. Time and space are also mental devises and no Svalakṣaṇa by itself has either duration or extension. But these Svalakṣaṇa are not ultimate. They are secondary. The ultimate elements of reality are the atoms. The critics of Vaibhāṣika point out that the Svalakṣaṇa is not able to explain the world view and it can as well be dispensed with. Since it is always accompanied by the subjective categories or sāmānyalakṣanas, the critics say that it is not much of a realism. However the Hīnayānists were not idealists and in attempting to be most loyal to Buddha's teachings, they committed some subtle errors and the dimensionless Svalakṣaṇa is a weakness. To improve on this, the Sautrāntikas advocated the representative theory of perception.

Vijñāna Vāda represents the idealist view-point. They are called Yogācāra because they believe that Buddhahood is attainable through the practice of yoga. In this school, all reality is reduced to thought-relations. The truth is one homogenous Vijñāna which is not an abstract but concrete reality. The whole system of facts is placed within the individual consciousness. It is Ālaya Vijñāna. The Ālaya with its internal duality of subject and object becomes itself a small world. It is confined to its own circle of modifications. The Ālaya which is a continually changing stream of consciousness is contrasted with the Ātman which is immutable. Every individual has in him this vast whole of consciousness, the great tank, and we are not aware of the entire contents. Our personal consciousness knows but a small fraction of the sum total of our

Heterodox Systems conscious states, the Ālaya Vijñāna. Particular phenomena are manifestations of the Ālaya according to the number and nature of the conditions. Ālaya Vijñāna is the absolute totality, originality and creativity, unconditioned space and time. Space and time are the modes of existence of the concrete and empirical individuality. Ālaya Vijñāna is the whole containing within itself the knower and the known.

Śaṅkara criticizes this theory on several grounds.

Śaṅkara says that Yogācāra fails to account for perception satisfactorily. He says, because things and ideas are presented together it does not mean that they are the same. Inseparable connection is different from identity.

Śaṅkara says that Vijñāna Vāda is wrong in so far as it compares waking experience with dream experience. What is true of dream experience cannot be taken as an example to explain the nature of waking experience. Dream experience is subjective and private and lasts so long as the dream lasts, while waking experience endures. Śaṅkara further says that waking experience can be said to be false only if we have access to some experience to contradict it. The dream experience is contradicted by waking experience because of which we say that the dream experience is false. Similarly, waking experience can be falsified only when there is another higher experience.

Check Your Progress II

Note: a) Use the space provided for your answer.

b) Check your answer with those provided at the end of the unit.

1. What arguments Vijñānavādin give to refute the existence of the external world?

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2. Write a note on the divisions of knowledge in Buddhist philosophy.

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17.6 ŚŪNYAVĀDA OF THE MĀDHYAMIKAS

The term Mādhyamika refers to the middle path of the Buddha. It is said to be the middle path between Being and Non-Being, attribute and Substance, cause and effect. Thus the Mādhyamika philosophy tries to adopt the mean between extreme affirmation and extreme negation.

The phenomenal nature of the world follows from the doctrine of *pratityasamutpada* or dependent origination. Nothing is by itself. Everything depends on something else. The *Mādhyamika* do not dismiss all dharmas as well as their collections as unreal, though they look upon them as phenomenal and momentary (the word ‘dharma’ here in Buddhism stands for the causal elements). According to the *Mādhyamikas*, if incapacity to explain is sufficient reason to deny the reality of a thing, then, neither external objects nor inner souls are real. The *Yogācāra* argues that external objects are unreal since we cannot say whether they arise from existence or not, from atoms or complex bodies. *Nāgārjuna* goes one step further and says even consciousness or *Vijñāna* is unreal, because we cannot say anything consistent about it. *Mādhyamika* calls the objective world *śūnya*. Empirical reality is designated as *śūnayata*, it is the non-existence of individuality or *puḍgala śūnyata* or *dharmā śūnyata*. This word *śūnya* had been used in early Buddhism but not in the *Mādhyamika* sense. When this word was used by *Hīnayānists*, it was used as the fourth term, along with the usual three terms, namely, *duḥka*, *anitya*, *anātma*. So for the *Hīnayānists*, *śūnya* was used as *anatama*, and *śūnya* connoted no other sense. For the *Mādhyamikas* *śūnyata* is the middle way, it is the logical consequence of *pratityasamutpada*. The *śūnya vādin* is neither a thoroughgoing skeptic nor a cheap nihilist, who doubts and denies the existence of everything for its own sake, or who relishes in shouting that he does not exist. His object is only to show that world-objects when taken to be ultimately real, will be found self-contradictory and relative and hence mere appearances. However, *Nāgārjuna* maintains the empirical reality of all phenomena. *Mādhyamika* is aware that absolute negation is impossible because it necessarily presupposes affirmation. *Nāgārjuna* denies the ultimate reality of both affirmations and negation. *Śūnya* is understood as what is indescribable. It is beyond the four categories of understanding. It is neither affirmation nor negation, nor both affirmation and negation and neither affirmation nor negation. Empirically *śūnya* is relativity and transcendently it is indescribable. Therefore everything is *śūnya*. Appearances are *svabhava śūnya*, that is devoid of ultimate reality.

Reality is *prapañca śūnya* or devoid of plurality. Dialectic is the soul of *Mādhyamika* philosophy. The primary alternatives are the affirmative (*sat –is*) and the negative (*asat –is not*). These are conjunctively affirmed and denied, yielding two derivative alternatives of the form both ‘is’ and ‘is not’ (*sadāsat*) and neither ‘is’ nor ‘is not’ (*na sat naiv asat*). This is the celebrated ‘*catus-koṭī*’ of the *Mādhyamika*. According to *śūnya vādins* he who knows that all empirical dharmas are *śūnya* or devoid of self reality, knows the supreme wisdom of the Buddha. He who knows that all worldly objects are like illusion, dream, echoes of reality reaches blissful *Nirvāṇa*.

17.7 LET US SUM UP

The practical teachings of the Buddha (early Buddhism) were carried forward almost faithfully by all the followers of Buddhism. That all is suffering and pleasure itself is ‘attenuated suffering’ continues to characterize later doctrines as also that knowledge is the means to overcome it. The course of discipline laid down for *Nirvāṇa* is also the same as before, partly moral and partly intellectual. But the divergence of *Mahāyāna* from *Hīnayāna* is in their conception of the ideal of life. Both *Hīnayāna* and *Mahāyāna* do believe in aspiring for one’s own

Heterodox Systems salvation, but in Mahāyānism the salvation is not recommended for its own sake but it is regarded as a qualification to strive for the salvation of others. This is the ideal of Bodhisattva as distinguished from that of the Arhat of the Hīnayāna schools. The bodhisattva, having perfected himself, renounces his own salvation work for the good of others. It is even believed that the Bodhisattva can even transfer his good deeds to others thereby helping them in their struggle for freedom from suffering. This new feature has a special appeal to the layaspirant and that is shown by the large following that is therefore Mahāyāna Buddhism. The other significant change that one notices in the Mahāyāna faith is the deification of Buddha. Buddha is revered as a God. The iconic worship of Buddha became popular by 1st century A.D. the formula of the “Three Jewels”... “I take refuge in the Buddha, I take refuge in the doctrine, I take refuge in the order”... became the Buddhist profession of faith and is used by monk and layman alike.

“Buddham sharanam gaccāmi; Dhammam sharanamgaccāmi; Sangam sharanam gaccāmi.”

17.8 KEY WORDS

Monastery

: Monastery, a term derived from the Greek word monasterio (from monazein, “to live alone”) denotes the building, or complex of buildings, that houses a room reserved for prayer as well as the domestic quarters and workplace(s) of monastics, whether monks or nuns, and whether living in community or alone (hermits).

Stimulus

: In physiology, a stimulus (plural stimuli) is a detectable change in the internal or external environment. The ability of Organism or organ to respond to external stimuli is called sensitivity. When a sensory nerve and a motor nerve communicate with each other, it is called a nerve stimulus.

17.9 FURTHER READINGS AND REFERENCES

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17.10 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Answers to Check Your Progress I

1. Buddhism as propounded by Gautama Buddha is pragmatic and practical. The chief aim of Buddha's philosophy was to find a way out of suffering. Hence he did not indulge in abstract, metaphysical arguments. A story in one of the Suttas makes this point very clear. Sitting under the Śimśupa tree, the Buddha gathered some leaves and asked his disciples if these were the only leaves on the tree. The disciples said that surely there were many more. Then, the Buddha said, similarly, he knew much more than what he had told the disciples and it was not necessary to say everything, since it has no practical utility.
2. According to scholars, there are four chief schools, of which two belong to the Hīnayāna and two to the Mahāyāna. The Hīnayāna schools are Vaibhāṣikas and Sautrāntikas and the Mahāyāna schools are the Yogācāras and the Mādhyamikas. Vaibhāṣikas and Sautrāntikas are realists or Sarvāstivādins. They believe in a self-existent universe actually in space and time while the Yogācāras are idealists and the Mādhyamikas believe in Śūnyavāda.

Answers to Check Your Progress II

1. Of the triple factors of experience, viz., knower, known and knowledge, for the Vijñāna Vādin, knowledge alone is real. There is neither subject nor object but only a succession of ideas. The specific form which cognition at any particular instance assumes is determined on this view not by an object presented to it but by past experience. That is, the stimulus always comes from within, never from outside. No object can be experienced apart from consciousness, therefore, according to Vijñāna Vāda, consciousness and its object are one and the same. The Yogācāra points out that objects are not substances but duration less point- instants on the basis of the theory of Momentariness. The object as a point- instant cannot be causally efficacious. Therefore, it is not possible, says the Vijñāna Vādin, to accept an external object. Thus for these thinkers, the external world is not only epistemologically but also ontologically dependent upon the perceiving mind or consciousness. The argument from dream is considered by Yogācāra to prove their view. They point out that dream experience arises even though no object is perceived. Secondly, cognition becomes aware of itself. In self-cognizing cognition what is known is identical with what knows. Also, they say that the so-called objects seem to impress different people in different

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ways, and sometimes the same person differently at different times. The Yogācāra argues that this is so because really there is no object out there. The above arguments do not assume the dimension of a proof of subjective idealism because these thinkers forget that the contact apprehended may have a subjective side and may at the same time, point to a real object outside.

2. The Buddhist epistemology divides knowledge into direct and indirect. The direct source of knowledge is sensibility and the indirect one is intellect or understanding. Dinnāga calls these sources of knowledge conventionally as perception and inference respectively. These are the only two sources of knowledge accepted by the Buddhists. The Buddhists do not give verbal testimony the status of *pramāṇa*.



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