
UNIT 16 BUDDHISM-I*

Structure

- 16.0 Objectives
- 16.1 Introduction
- 16.2 Metaphysical Views of Buddhism
- 16.3 Doctrine of Dependent Origination
- 16.4 Practical teachings of Buddhism
- 16.5 Nirvāṇa (In Pāli Language, Nibbāna)
- 16.6 Karma
- 16.7 Let Us Sum Up
- 16.8 Key Words
- 16.9 Further Readings and References
- 16.10 Answers to Check Your Progress

16.0 OBJECTIVES

Early Buddhism is also known as Pāli Buddhism or canonical Buddhism. Early Buddhism must be differentiated from the later schools, which grew up long after when Buddha Had Taught. This great creed called Buddhism was founded by Siddhārtha who belonged to the family of Gautama or Gotama. He was called 'Buddha', which means the 'awakened one' after he got enlightenment.

In this Unit you will come to know:

- metaphysical views of Buddhism
- doctrine of dependent origination
- practical teachings of Buddhism
- nirvāṇa (in Pāli nibbāna)
- karma

16.1 INTRODUCTION

The Buddha was born in the sixth century B.C. It was an age of spiritual restlessness. Society was going away from real Philosophy. The whole sacrificial cult became very complicated. The Vedic sacrifices meant conformity to the letters of the law instead of the spirit of worship. The princely patron's encouragement made way for priestly greed. Thus, there was a need for the re-orientation of faith. The Buddha came on the philosophic scene at such a time in history and gave to the world an extremely pragmatic and scientific Philosophy.

When Siddhārtha woke up to the fact that the world is full of suffering, his mind

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Heterodox Systems

got restless to find a solution for the ills of life. In fact, for him the individual instances of suffering were illustrations of a universal problem. Finding that the things of sense are empty, Siddhārtha decided to renounce the comfort of the palace and became a wanderer, for in those days the seekers of light began their search by repudiating the comforts of life and wandering in search of truth. He made this great renunciation at the age of twenty-nine and first tried to find spiritual rest by philosophical thought under the tutelage of great teachers of that time. But soon he found that subtle dialectics are no cure for mental unrest. The other means of escape was through bodily austerities. He wandered with five ascetics who underwent bodily mortifications of the most severe type. However, the fervour of asceticism did not give him any solace and hence decided to have a fresh course of self-discipline characterized by less vigour. He won over all evil thoughts and dispositions, conquered desire (*tr̥ṣṇā*), attachment (*rāga*) and aversion (*arati*). He gained a deep insight into the mysteries of existence – first of self and then of human destiny in general and lastly of the universe as a whole. Thus seated under the *bodhi tree*, a new light dawned on Siddhārtha and he became the enlightened one or the Buddha. Legend says that when he sat under the tree in meditation, *Māra* tried to distract him. But the Buddha conquered every temptation (*Māra*) and hence he is called hero (*Vīra*), the Victor (*Jina*) and *Tathāgata*, the one who knows things as they are. He is *Arhat*, the worthy. Buddha's mission now was to help the great multitude of people who were living in sin and infamy. He preached the Gospel of the four Noble Truths and the eight-fold path to the troubled world. The peace and serenity on Buddha's face just made him very dear to anyone who came under his influence. His first pupils were his five ascetic friends who had gone away from him when as Siddhārtha, he decided to give up severe asceticism.

Buddha never wrote any books and hence there is a certain amount of vagueness about his teachings as they were gathered from works that were compiled a long time after his death. However, the total literature of Buddhism is so large that it is quite impossible to master all of them. There are many versions of the sacred scriptures written either in Pāli, Prākṛt or in Sanskrit. It is not possible to say that all that has come down to us is absolutely authentic and are master's own words. Certain old works are identified as those which serve as the basis of our knowledge of early Buddhism. These works are written in Pāli, which may be a dialect of Sanskrit or may be a different language.

The canon is generally known as *Tripitaka* (The Three Baskets) after the three sections into which it is divided. They Are: –

Suttas or utterances of Buddha himself,

Vinaya or rules of conduct,

Abhidhamma or philosophical discussions.

These *piṭakas* are often in the form of dialogues and there is no methodical discussion in them of any topic in the modern sense of the term. They contain many metaphors and allegories, which is also the cause of some indefiniteness about the doctrine of the Buddha. Of the three *piṭakas* the *suttas* are very important because they contain discourses by Buddha. It is divided into five sections:

Digha Nikāya (long discourses)

Majjima Nikāya (discourses of shorter length)

Saṅyutta Nikāya (collection of short pronouncements)

Anguttara Nikāya (short passages arranged in sections)

Khuddaka Nikāya (a matter of works of varying types containing *Dhammapada*, *Jataka tales*, etc.)

The *Vinaya Pitaka* contains the rules of conduct of the Buddhist order of monks and nuns. The *Abhidhamma piṭaka* is a collection of seven works on Buddhist philosophy and metaphysics.

There are numerous other works in Pāli, which are not generally considered canonical. The most important are the commentaries on the books of the canon. It is believed that most of these were compiled in Ceylon by the great doctor Buddhaghosa of the fifth century A.D. from earlier commentaries. At a later date, Jataka verses were made into prose and that is one of their most beautiful narrative literatures. Buddhaghosa is also the author of '*Visuddhimagga*', which means 'The way of purification'. Another very important Pāli work of early date is '*Milindapañha*' i.e., the questions of King Menander. The inscriptions of emperor Ashoka (273-232 B.C.) are also of great value because they are inspired by Buddhism inculcating the moral philosophy of Buddhism.

Though Buddhism is a non-Vedic school and essentially different from the *Upaniṣads* in one sense we can say that certain Upanishadic tendencies are carried to their logical conclusions by the Buddha. For example, the *Upaniṣads* are against the belief in a personal God and the Buddha dismisses that conception altogether. So also, the self is explained negatively in the *Upaniṣads* and the Buddha eliminates the conception of a self, altogether. Buddha's belief in Karma doctrine is a clear proof of the connection of Buddhism with the *Upaniṣads*.

When anyone thinks of the general tendencies of Buddhism, the first thought that comes up is its pessimistic flavor. However, by any yardstick, Buddhism cannot be called pessimistic. If the Sarnath sermon is to be taken as our guide we may take one point of the Buddha's instruction as basic, namely, just as there are ills (heya), and their causes (heya-hetu), so also a cure (hāna) and a path (hānapāya) exist. This is just like the science of medicine. If there is an ailment (roga), there will be a cause for it (roga-hetu). Once the cause of the ailment is diagnosed, the cure is not far away. This shows that though the Buddha said that all is suffering – *Sarvam Dukham*, he did not stop at that. Buddha's doctrine is not a creed of despair. Even though he points out that misery is a fact, he does not say that man is doomed. Man can get peace here and now, says Buddha. Therefore Buddhism is not pessimistic but a doctrine of hope. Secondly, as pointed out earlier, its fundamental ideas and essential spirit is scientific. During the time of the Buddha excessive discussions were leading to anarchy of thought. The emphasis was on the performance of sacrifices. People were becoming more dogmatic and less positivistic. Buddha revolted against their trend and rejected all that was not positively known. Hence, he was against the Vedic rituals and Vedic tradition. He did not believe in any supernatural power. To put it briefly, Buddha did not believe in anything beyond the sphere of perception and reason.

Heterodox Systems One of the most important features of Buddhism is that it is pragmatic. Buddha taught only what was necessary for overcoming evil. Deliverance from pain and evil was his one concern and he did not find any need to unravel metaphysical subtleties. He was evidently practical in his teachings. He said, “Philosophy purifies none, peace alone does.” From what has been said so far it is clear that we should not look for any metaphysics as such in the teachings of the Buddha. We can truly say that, though there is no metaphysical aim in the teachings of the Buddha, there is a metaphysical view underlying it.

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 Siddhartha’s journey for truth.

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2. Do you find any relation between Buddha’s philosophy and Upanishadic Philosophy?

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16.2 METAPHYSICAL VIEWS OF BUDDHISM

Early Buddhism recognizes the distinction between consciousness and matter but does not accept either a permanent self or a permanent unchanging material or physical world. Buddha established that there is nothing permanent and declared that everything is anattā or not self. Buddhist writings declare thus – “At any moment of experience, we stumble upon some particular perception or other, of heat or cold, light or shade, love or hatred, pain or pleasure.” As given in experience, the Buddha believed in these transient sensations and said that it is not necessary to believe that these sensations belong to a permanent self. That is, he believed in only the states of consciousness. To him a sensations and the thought together with the physical frame with which they are associated are themselves the self. He described the self as an aggregate or Saṅghāta. It is a psycho-physical entity known as nāma-rūpa (name and form). Nāma or name refers to the physical factors and rūpa or form refers to the physical frame. A Close analysis of the ‘self shows that it is made up of five factors or skandhas. They Are:

Sensation or feeling (vedanā) of pleasure, pain and indifference; Perception or idea (saṃjñā) conceptual knowledge; Conative disposition (saṃskāra);

Discriminative intelligence or reason (*vijñāna*); Physical form.

This brings out clearly the analytical character of Buddhism Highlighting The Psychological basis of its analysis. The explanation given about material things is similar. To the Buddha the attributes themselves are the objects and he denied any self-sustaining substance, apart from them. Thus, the material things, like the self, are also aggregates. This is Buddha's *nairātmya vāda* or denial of the soul.

The other important view of Buddhism is *kṣanika vāda* or the Law of Momentariness, according to which both the mental and physical reality are subjected to constant flux. When we look around us we notice that everything is subjected to constant change and nothing is permanent. To some extent, it is language, which leads to the mistaken notion of something enduring. We use one word to refer to one thing and one name to refer to one particular person and that makes us believe that a thing or a person is enduring even though it is constantly changing. Buddhism says that when we say "It thinks" or "It is white", we mean by the 'It', nothing more than when we say, "It rains". There are several parables in Buddhist literature to bring home to us the full import of the doctrine. The most famous parable is that of the chariot. In the work, "Questions of king Milinda", a conversation between the Greek King Menander and a Buddhist sage, Nāgasena is recorded. The sage described the doctrine of no self but the king was not convinced. In order to make the king understand the theory, the sage asked him if the king came on foot or in a chariot. To this the king replied that he always travelled in a chariot. On learning this, the sage asked the king to define the chariot. Counting on the various parts of the chariot, the sage asked if we could call the pole, or the wheels or the axle as the chariot. This example made the king realize that 'chariot' is just a symbol for the various parts assembled together in a particular way. According to Buddhism, both soul and matter exist only as complexes and neither is a single self-contained entity. The fundamental teaching of Buddhism is the doctrine of dependent origination.

16.3 DOCTRINE OF DEPENDENT ORIGINATION

According to this doctrine, "this arising that arises, this ceasing that ceases to be." The doctrine of universal change and impermanence follows from this fundamental teaching of Buddhism, viz., Pratitya Samutpāda (*Pacciya Samutpāda*). Change can be understood in terms of conditional existence. This law of causation is the basis of continuity. Both the elements of the material world and of the mental world are subjected to laws of physical and moral causation. This law insists on the necessity of sufficient conditions. Buddha neither believed in 'Being nor non-Being'; but only in 'Becoming'. Thus he gave a dynamic explanation of the real. The symbols generally used to illustrate this conception are the stream of water and the self-consuming flame. Just as the flame and the stream of water, both the mental and the physical reality are subjected to constant flux. When we view the aggregate, be it the self or the material object in time, we notice that they are not the same even for two moments. So the self and the material world are each a flux (*saṅtāna*). Just as the flame and the stream of water, everything is only a series (*vithi*) – a succession of similar things or happenings. The notion of fixity we have of them is wholly fictitious. There were two views currently during the time when

Heterodox Systems Buddha philosophized – one believing in Being and the other in non-Being. Buddha opposed both these views when he propounded his view of reality as dynamic. . Thus, according to Buddhism, neither Being nor non-Being is the truth; the truth is that everything is ‘Becoming’. We know through experience that everything is characterized by birth, growth, decay and death, which means that everything is subjected to constant change and that nothing is permanent. What is important to note is that for Buddha, there is incessant change but at the same time there is nothing that changes. There is action but no agent. Since everything is a series, it is relevant to ask as to what is the relation between any two successive members of the series. One explanation given during the time of the Buddha was that it is accidental, and the other explanation did recognize a causal relation as underlying the succession but introduced a supernatural power like God in addition to the known factors. Buddha rejected both these views and postulated necessity as the sole governing factor. In denying chance he took his stand on the uniformity of nature and in denying supernatural intervention; he disassociated himself from all dogmatic religion. According To Buddhism, the causal law governing change in the phenomenal world is not a mere unfolding of a cause but the result of certain external factors co-operating with it. Change can be understood in terms of conditional existence. In other words, a causal series will not begin unless certain conditions are fulfilled and the series will continue so long as all the factors are there. The series will end only when one or more co-operating factors are withdrawn. For example, the flame series will not start until the wick, the oil, etc. are there and will continue till one or more of the factors are withdrawn. The law itself is universal and does not admit of exceptions but yet the operation of the law is dependent on conditions. This is the precise reason why it is called “dependent origination” or “*pratītya samutpāda*” - that being present, this becomes; from the arising of that, this arises”. The literal meaning of the phrase ‘*pratītya samutpāda*’ is “arising in correlation with”. Conversely, the law indicates that when the conditions cease to be, the series will cease, or “from the cessation of that, this ceases.”

The Buddhist psychology, which explains their views on epistemology, is also based on the theory of causation, or law of dependent origination. As pointed out earlier, the *nāma rūpa* (aggregate of name and form) refer to five conditions and they arise depending upon one another. In *Samyutta-Nikāya* III 1.0.1, it is said, “The four *mahābhūtas* (the elements of fire, air, water and earth) were the *hetu* and *paccaya/pratyaya* (reason and cause) for the communication of the *rūpa khandha* (form). Contact is the cause of the communication of the feelings (*vedanā*); sense contact is also the *hetu* and *paccaya* for the communication of the *sannakkandha* (specific knowing), sense- contact is also the *hetu* and *paccaya* for the communication of the *sankhārakkandha* (mental states and synthetic activity). But *nāma rūpa* is the *hetu* and *paccaya* for the communication of the *vinnanakkanda* (reason).”

Pratītya Samutpāda or the theory of dependent origination is the most significant in early Buddhism. It is central to all the views of the Buddha. Unlike the other causal theories like *svabhāva vāda*, which lead to determinism, Buddha’s views make room for human effort. After the great renunciation, under the bodhi tree, it is the law of contingent causation, which, at last, flashed across Siddhārtha’s mind and made him the ‘Buddha’. The theory states, “that becoming, this becomes or that being absent, this does not become” which means that every

effect has a series of causes and hence the Buddha went on to find the cause of suffering and the method by which with one's own effort, freedom from suffering is possible. Before going on to Buddha's practical teachings it is necessary to examine some of the criticism leveled against Buddhism.

One of the commonly alluded criticisms against Kṣāṇika vāda or the doctrine of momentariness is as to how such a theory can account for memory. If everything is continually renewed, it is important to know how recognition of objects, the apprehension of objects as the same that we already know is explained. Buddhism answers that things in the two moments of cognition are only similar and we mistake them to be the same. In other words, all recognition is erroneous since similarity is mistaken for identity. As regards memory, the Buddhist explanation is that each phase of experience as it appears and disappears is wrought up into the next, so that every successive phase has within it all the potentialities of its predecessors which manifest when the conditions are favorable. Hence, though a man is not the same in two successive moments, he is not quite different. The self is not only a collection entity but also a recollect-ive entity. It is on this basis Buddhism establishes moral responsibility. This is clear from the suttas of Buddhism and their Jātaka Stories, where a sinner is pointed at and told that he alone reaps the fruits of his actions. Buddhism denies unity in the sense of identity of material, but recognizes continuity in its place. If we represent two self-series as A1, A2, A3...and B1, B2, B3, ... though the two series are not identical, there is a kinship among the members of each series. That is, there is a kinship between A1, A2, A3...etc., but A1 will not have a kinship with B1 or A2 with B2 and so on. Thus, Buddhism recognizes a 'fluid self', which cannot be regarded as altogether a dissimilar or distinct series. Several thinkers commenting on this aspect of Buddhism have opined that by giving the above theory, the Buddhist has tacitly admitted a self, transcending the experience of the moment because a series can never become aware of itself. Some others are of the opinion that Buddha did not disbelieve in the concept of self but the later followers of the Buddha innovated the negation of the self. This point is debatable but it goes without saying that the principles of impermanence and no-self are fundamental to the teachings of the Buddha.

Early Buddhism recognized only four elements or bhūtas viz., earth, fire and air. They did not believe in the concept of ākāśa. However, we must remember that these names are only conventional and they do not stand for anything more than the sense data associated with them viz., hardness, fluidity, heat and pressure respectively. The material world, our senses and our bodies are all aggregates derived from these elements and they are called bhautika to indicate their secondary character. The psychological aspects are called caitta or mental "Dharma dhātu" is the term used in Buddhism to refer to the causal elements that are responsible for the manifestation of phenomena. Dharma dhātu has two aspects:

The world of phenomenal manifestation.

The state of 'thusness' or noumena.

The causal theory of Buddhism usually applies to the phenomenal world but in speaking of the ideal world as realized the latter sense is also applied. Taking the first sense of the term 'dharma dhātu' it refers to the actual world, the realm of all

Heterodox Systems elements of phenomenal existence. Causal origination is thus the theory, which sets out the fact that all beings are correlative, interdependent and mutually originating. Matter and mind arise simultaneously due to interdependence. It refers to the totality of all existence- Dharma dhātu, in its reference to the world, speaks of the sphere of saṃsāra (life flux), the cycle of birth and death, which is one of dynamic becoming. Thus, all created beings dependent on the principle of cause and effect are within its realm. Taken in this sense, only the Buddha or enlightened being is outside the dharma dhātu. In the second sense, i.e., in the sense of thusness or noumena, it signifies the state of liberation or 'Nirvāṇa.' It is the stage of cessation of all becoming, it is the true state of all things in the universe, freedom from bondage and the final release from suffering.

16.4 PRACTICAL TEACHINGS OF BUDDHISM

Practical teachings of Buddhism are in conformity with their theoretical philosophy. If all the things in the world are impermanent, then our effort to secure them either for ourselves or for others is meaningless. The very desire for them is a delusion. We must get over desire. More than desiring things, we are overcome with a desire to preserve ourselves. Since there is no self (anattā), we should get over the craving. With the negation of self, all the narrow selfish impulses necessarily disappear, along with the whole range of narrow love and hatred. Since The Belief In Self-identity is false, ignorance or *Avidyā* becomes the true source of all evil. Thus, here in Buddhism, as in the *Upaniṣads*, evil is traced to ignorance and the way to escape from saṃsāra is through right knowledge. But the meaning of '*Avidyā*' in the two teachings is different. *Avidyā* in the *Upaniṣads* represents the ignorance of the essential unity of all existence but in Buddhism, it means the failure to realize the hollowness of herself. The True Knowledge or *vidyā* in Buddhism is called the Arya-Satya or the Four Noble Truths. They are:

Duhkha– Suffering

Samudaya – The origin of suffering – cause of sufferings Nirodha – Removal of suffering

Mārga – The way to remove suffering

According to the Buddha, the failure to see the four noble truths is what leads to suffering and rebirth. Buddha looks upon suffering a great disease and while seeking a remedy, he follows the scientific method of a physician. After arriving at the right cause of misery, he proposes the remedy. Without a proper diagnosis, no disease will get cured. Similarly, the Buddha gives the remedy after analysing the causes of suffering. That is the reason why the Buddha is called the Great Healer. The first three noble truths speak of the theoretical aspect of the Buddhist teaching and the last its practical aspect.

The First Noble Truth is about the fact that there is suffering. The Buddhist texts say that birth is painful, decay is painful, disease is painful, death is painful, union with the unpleasant is painful, painful is the separation from the pleasant, any craving that is not satisfied is painful; in short, the five aggregates (body, feeling, perception, will and reason) which spring from attachment are painful.

The Second Noble Truth is about the origin of suffering. That there is a cause

of suffering, follows from the belief that whatever is, must have had a cause. Pratitya samut pāda clearly states that “from the arising of that, this arises. Now, suffering is a fact and it must have had a cause. Buddha found this cause to be ignorance in the last resort. The aim of the Buddha was to find out the process by which ignorance leads to evil. The way in which ignorance causes misery is explained with the help of twelve links. They Are:

Ignorance (*Avidyā*)

Action (*Samskāra*)

Consciousness (*vijñāna*)

Name and form (*nāma rūpa*)

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

Contact between the senses and the objects (*sparśa*)

Sensation (*vedanā*)

Desire (*tṛṣṇā*)

Clinging to existence (*upādāna*)

Being (*bhava*)

Re-birth (*jāti*)

Pain old age and death (*jarā-maraṇa*)

This chain of causation is not restricted only to the present life but it includes reference to the past and the future. Putting it briefly we can say that ignorance is the root cause of suffering. From ignorance proceeds, desire, desire leads to activity and it brings in its turn rebirth with its fresh desires. This is the vicious cycle of *samsāra* – the *bhava-cakra* or the wheel of existence.

The Third Noble Truth is the removal of suffering. Breaking the chain of existence is *bhava-nirodha*. Buddha states that for each condition in the chain, there is a cause, a source or origination. If the condition ceases, the effect does not occur. When the attachments to desires are absent, the fetters of lust, hate and delusion are rooted out. Thus, one succeeds in breaking the links of the chain of causation. The goal of liberation is attained which is the end of all suffering and cessation of the cycle of birth and death. The Buddhist causal theory clearly states though the process which gives rise to suffering involves a necessity, the necessity is not absolute. A Series though began, admits of being put an end to.

The Fourth Noble Truth is the way to remove suffering. This gives the path that one has to follow in order to overcome suffering. The path of self-discipline, which leads man to the desired goal of emancipation from *samsāra* is eight-fold. They are –

Right faith (*Samyak Dṛṣṭi*), Right resolve (*Samyak Saṅkalp*), Right speech (*Samyak Vāk*), Right action (*Samyak Karmānt*), Right living (*Samyak*

Heterodox Systems Ājīva), Right effort (Samyak Vyāyāma), Right thought (Samyak Smṛti), Right Concentration (Samyak Samādhi).

To put it briefly, prajña or right knowledge of the four-fold truth is the basis of the whole discipline. But prajña does not mean mere intellectual conviction, but it means an intuitive experience. Buddha Said That Salvation Is Possible Only Through Self-reliance. For knowledge to become an internal certainty, śīla and samādhi are necessary. Śīla means right conduct which includes virtues like veracity, contentment and non-injury (ahimsā). Samādhi is meditation, which aids in securing tranquility of mind gaining a clear insight into the truth.

Right living prescribed for the lay men is different from what is described for the monks. But in both cases, the discipline is not very severe. Buddha strikes a mean between self-indulgence and self-mortification. Buddha says that self-indulgence is a life of pleasure and devoted to desire and enjoyment, which is base, ignoble, unspiritual, unworthy and unreal. Again, self-mortification is gloomy, unworthy and unreal. Buddha says that the perfect path lies between the two extremes. It is the middle way (Madhyama Pratipada) which enlightens the eyes, enlightens the mind which leads to rest, to knowledge, to enlightenment, to Nirvāna.

16.5 NIRVĀNA (IN PĀLI, NIBBĀNA)

The goal of discipline is Nirvāna. Nirvāna is the Summum Bonumm of Buddhism and the person who has attained the ultimate goal is called Arhat. What is Mokṣa to the Hindu, the Tao is to the Chinese mystic, Fana to the Sufi, Eternal Life to the followers of Jesus, that is Nirvāna to the Buddhist. The word Nirvāna literally means, ‘blowing out’ or ‘becoming cool’. It is the blowing out of the fire of lust (rāga), of resentment (doṣa), of glamour (moha). It is thus becoming cool, reaching perfect calm, to be reached within the four corners of the present life. An Arhant, after the dissolution of his body and mind, reaches the state of Pari-Nirvāna. Thus, “blowing-out” and “cooling” is not complete annihilation but the extinction or dying out of hot passion. It is the destruction of the fires of lust, hatred and ignorance. These Two Implications Of Nirvāna, namely, ‘blowing-out and ‘cooling are to be understood as the negative and positive sides of one ultimate state of being which cannot be adequately described in terms of thought but it is given to one’s own experience. Buddha asked his followers to be a light onto themselves.

16.6 KARMA

Finally, the knowledge on Buddhism will not be complete without a discussion on Buddha’s views on Karma. Karma Is One Of The Most Important Doctrines Of Buddhism. Buddhism resolves the human being into a number of elements called dhammas, which possess no permanent existence. Thus to Buddhist belief in transmigration seems inconsistent with their denial of an enduring self. Deussen criticizes Buddhism by saying that Karma needs an individual bearer like the Upanishadic Self And Buddhists, therefore, are contradicting themselves, believing in Karma And denying an enduring self. However, the belief in the Karma doctrine really presents no difficulty to Buddhism. If there can be action without an agent, there can be transmigration without a transmigrating self.

The word Karma means ‘deeds’ or in singular ‘action’. So there is really nothing wrong in saying that a deed is not immortal and what transmigrates is not a soul but only one’s character. But the question still remains – How can character that is no entity in itself be reborn? When a person dies, his character lives after him and by its force brings into existence a being, who, through possessing a different form, is entirely influenced by it. Though the dead person does not revive, another may be born with the same disposition. When a lamp is burning, there is transmission of light and heat. They are transmitted every moment and when one lamp is lit from another (just before the former is extinguished), a new series of flames is started. Similarly, according to Buddha, there is rebirth not only at the end of this life but also at every instant. What is of importance is to note that the word Karma covers two distinct ideas, namely, the deed itself and the effects of that deed in modifying the subsequent character and fortunes of the doer. The Buddhists say that their subjective effect continues after death into the next life. Karma expresses not that which a man inherits from his ancestors but that which he inherits from himself in some previous state of existence.

In *samyutta-Nikāya* (III 1.4), it is said, “Let anyone who holds self dear, that self keep from wickedness, for happiness can never be found by anyone of evil deeds.” So, Buddha preached that merit gained in this life will yield a blessing in the next. In *Milindapañha* it is said that Karma is the cause of inequality in the world.

Buddhism makes a distinction between fruitful and barren Karma. When a man’s deeds are performed from the three conditions of covetousness, hatred and infatuation, he reaps the fruition of those deeds be it in the present life or in some subsequent one. Those deeds done without such base conditions are barren Karma and they are abandoned, uprooted and pulled out, not liable to spring again.

Buddha makes it clear that the law of Karma operates in such a way that the character of the individual and his disposition is of great importance in giving reward and punishments even when the deed performed by two persons is the same. In *Anguttara Nikāya* (iii.99), it is explained that a person who has done a slight deed of wickedness may expiate it in the present life. That man who is not proficient in the management of his body, precepts, concentration and wisdom, who is bound by wickedness would go to hell where as another man may not go to hell for the same mistake because he is proficient in the management of his body, precepts concentration and wisdom and is greatly involved in good deeds. The word ‘hell’ here means only the severity of the punishment one gets if they do not correct themselves. This concept Buddha explains by saying that when a lump of salt is put into a glass of water, it tastes very salty but the same amount of salt added to Ganga River will not make any difference to the river.

To be born and to die here and be born elsewhere is called the round of existence. This process will go on until the person overcomes his thirst for being. This is bhava- cakra, which gets annulled only by knowing the Four Noble Truths – It is then that one reaches ‘Nirvāṇa’

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. Write a note on Four Noble Truths.

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2. Write a note on Buddhist concept of Nirvāna.

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16.7 LET US SUM UP

We see from the above description that for the Buddha, the self is a continuity and hence there is no inconsistency in upholding the Karma doctrine. It admits that nothing disappears without leaving its results behind and the good or evil so resulting recoils upon the doer. Buddha rationalized the whole doctrine and he disassociated it from all supernatural and materialistic *appanage*. Thus the law of Karma in Buddhism is a law in the sphere of morality working according to its nature and by itself.

16.8 KEY WORDS

Appanage : An appanage is the grant of an estate, titles, offices, or other things of value to the younger male children of a sovereign, who under the system of primogeniture would otherwise have no inheritance.

The Jātaka Tales : The Jātaka Tales refer to a voluminous body of folklore-like literature native to India concerning the previous births (jāti) of the Buddha. The word most specifically refers to a text division of the Pāli Canon of Theravada Buddhism, included in the *Khuddaka Nikāya* of the *Sutta Piṭaka*. Jātaka also refers to the traditional commentary on this book.

16.9 FURTHER READINGS AND REFERENCES

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16.10 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Answers to Check Your Progress I

1. When Siddhārtha (Siddha+ artha) woke up to the fact that the world is full of suffering, his mind got restless to find a solution for the ills of life. In fact, for him the individual instances of suffering were illustrations of a universal problem. Finding that the things of sense are empty, Siddhārtha decided to renounce the comfort of the palace and became a wanderer, for in those days the seekers of light began their search by repudiating the comforts of life and wandering in search of truth.
2. Though Buddhism is a non-Vedic school and essentially different from the *Upaniṣads* in one sense we can say that certain Upanishadic tendencies are carried to their logical conclusions by the Buddha. For example, the *Upaniṣads* are against the belief in a personal God and the Buddha dismisses that conception altogether. So also, the self is explained negatively in the *Upaniṣads* and the Buddha eliminates the conception of self, altogether. Buddha's Belief in Karma doctrine is a clear proof of the connection of Buddhism with the *Upaniṣads*.

Answers to Check Your Progress II

1. The true knowledge or *vidyā* in Buddhism is called the Ārya-Satya or the Four Noble Truths. They are:
 - Dukkha– Suffering
 - Samudaya – The origin of suffering – cause of sufferings
 - Nirodha – Removal of suffering
 - Mārga – The way to remove suffering
2. The word Nirvāna literally means, 'blowing out' or 'becoming cool'. It is the blowing out of the fire of lust (*rāga*), of resentment (*dosa*), of glamour (*moha*). It is thus becoming cool, reaching perfect calm, to be reached within four corners of the present life. An Arhat (In Saṅskṛt)/Arhant (In Pāli), after the dissolution of his body and mind, reaches the state of Pari-Nirvāna. Thus,

Heterodox Systems

“blowing-out” and “cooling” is not complete annihilation but the extinction or dying out of hot passion, if it is the destruction of the fires of lust, hatred and ignorance. These Two Implications Of Nirvāṇa, namely, ‘blowing-out’ and ‘cooling’ are to be understood as the negative and positive sides of one ultimate state of being which cannot be adequately described in terms of thought but it is given to one’s own experience. Buddha asked his followers to be a light on to themselves.



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