**YMBA SENIOR PART (2) COURSE (YMBA BOOK 4)**

**DHAMMA CHAPTER (8): BUDDHIST APPROACH TO DISCERNING THE TRUTH**

**LESSON PLAN SP2-DH-08**

[Any suggestions to improve the plan or to make corrections will be gratefully received by Rahubadde Sarath-Chandra and Tanuja Sarath-Chandra]**[TELEPHONE 3278-9021, 3879-8015]**

**INTRODUCTION**

The presentation of Chapter 8 in the text book is not clear, although a lot of facts are given. These notes make the main issues stand out and students will find it easy to learn from these notes.

However the teacher with the students must read the whole chapter once and ask a few questions. After that the teacher needs to go through these notes with students and explain the sets of facts clearly.

This chapter deals with three matters:

1 Intellectual appeal of Buddhism

2 The ancient non-Buddhist methods of discerning the truth and the corresponding Buddhist methods. The ten aspects are explained.

3 How does a monk ascertain whether a doctrine is correct or incorrect according to Buddha’s teachings.

**INTELECTUAL APPEAL OF BUDDHISM**

Buddhism is for the wise and discerning people and not for those who are incapable of thinking. It is to be understood on understanding and experiential conviction and not on devotional faith or blind faith.

Discussion, questioning and investigation are promoted in Buddhism. Buddhism stands out as compared with all other religions due to these features:

1 Encourages free and open enquiry of doctrine and tenets

2 Demands a critical approach before accepting principles

3 Rejects dogma and authority as the basis for reposing faith in the doctrines taught

4 Rejects uncritical faith and bigotry as good attributes of disciples

5 Undervalues rites and rituals as a path to liberation

**STORY OF KALAMA PRINCES**

Kalamas lived in Kesaputta in the kingdom of Kosala. They were not happy when teachers of various religions claimed that only they had the truth and condemned others. So they told the Buddha that they were perplexed and had doubts about such teachers.

In the conversation Buddha lists 10 grounds on which ancient religions attempted to prove that they only knew the truth, and then explains why they are not helpful in discerning the truth. These are the ten grounds:

***BASED ON AUTHORITY***

1 Report (or revelation) (*Anussava*)

The vedic books recorded the word of Brahma as reported by previous generations. So Vedas cannot be questioned. They contain the truth and must be believed.

2 Tradition *(Parampara)*

Even knowledge other than the Vedas need to be believed if it got handed down from one generation to another.

3 Hearsay (*Itikara*)

Because the doctrine is heard (from a source) it must be believed.

4 Authority of Religious Texts *(Pitakasampada)*

Statements in the scriptures were not to be questioned.

5 Appearance of teacher taken as testimony *(Bhavyarupata)*

Accepting the testimony of reliable persons leads to the truth.

6 Idea of “This is our Teacher” and he must be right *(Samano no guru)*

Going after the prestige of ‘our teacher’, and believing that he utters the truth.

***BASED ON REASON AND LOGIC***

7 Mere Logic *(Takkahetu)*

This means that if a teaching is logical then it can be accepted.

8 Inference *(Naya hetu)*

This is taking a present occurrence as the standard and extending it for future and past occurrences.

9 Speculative opinions *(Akara Parivitakka)*

This means depending on a reason to come to a conclusion. If the reason is objective there may be no harm but when it is subjective it can be wrong.

10 Delight in Speculative opinions *(Ditthi Nijjanakkhanti)*

This means accepting an opinion because it agrees with a theory one believes in. This is subjective.

These grounds of ascertaining whether a statement is true can be useful to some extent in the preliminary sense but are not valid ultimate grounds, according to the Buddha as explained in the Kalama Sutta. He recommended intelligent understanding and critical judgment in looking for the truth. Finally one needs to ask ‘is this action wholesome or unwholesome’ and convince oneself about the truth.

Two other discourses in which similar teachings were given are:

Vimansaka Sutta

Maha Parinibbana Sutta

In the latter the Buddha declares four guidelines to check whether a statement is true:

1 It is from discourse of the Buddha

2 From a senior monk in a monastery

3 From the erudite monks in a monastery

4 From any erudite monks

The term EHIPSSIKA in the stanza venerating the Dhamma implies the invitation to come and see (not to accept blindly). In the same stanza the words *Paccattam Veditabbo Vinnuhiti* says that the Dhamma has to be understood by the wise each for himself.

**THE END OF SP2 LP DH 08**