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# **The role of reason in the search for Nirvāṇa**

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Submitted in April 1994

A Thesis submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research in partial fulfillment of the  
requirement of the degree of M.A.  
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## Abstract

Early Buddhists undisputably considered Nirvāṇa to be the ultimate goal of their practice. However, not only was the meaning of Nirvāṇa disputed, but so were the means (e.g., right view and no view) conducive to its achievement. The thesis proposes to examine the controversial status that scholars have accorded to faith and reason as elements of the path. In this respect, the Buddha's attitude toward tradition, reasoning and experience is examined, along with the epistemological foundations of Pāli canonical thought. Related issues such as identifying the ultimate criterion of reality advanced by Buddhism are also discussed. Moreover, since the Buddha suggested various ways leading to Nirvāṇa, an attempt is made to discover how the paths of *sīla*, *saṃādhi* and *paññā* relate to each other and to the final goal.

Le bouddhisme ancien considère l'atteinte du Nirvāṇa comme son but ultime. Toutefois, non seulement y a-t-il discorde sur ce que l'on entend par Nirvāṇa, mais il y a aussi des divergences à propos des moyens (e.g., vue juste et absence de vue) menant à sa réalisation. Cette thèse propose d'examiner la valeur accordée par les académiciens à la foi et à la raison en tant qu'éléments aidant à l'atteinte du Nirvāṇa. À cette fin, l'attitude du Bouddha envers la tradition, le raisonnement et l'expérience est aussi abordée, de même que les fondations épistémologiques du canon pāli. Des questions connexes telles que l'identification de l'ultime critère de vérité reconnu par le bouddhisme sont aussi analysées. De plus, puisque le Bouddha a enseigné divers moyens d'accéder au Nirvāṇa, l'auteur tente de découvrir comment les voies de *sīla*, *saṃādhi* and *paññā* sont interreliées, et comment elles peuvent mener à l'atteinte du but final.

## Abbreviations:

A.	Anguttaranikāya
D.	Dīghanikāya
G.S	The Books of the Gradual Sayings
It.	Itivuttaka
M.	Majjhimanikāya
Miln.	Milindapañha
M.L.S	The Collection of the Middle Length Sayings
PED	PTS Pali-English Dictionary
Pug.	Puggalapāṇiatti
S.	Saṃyuttanikāya
Sn.	Suttanipāta
Ud.	Udāna
Vin.	Vinayaṭṭaka

## Introduction

Even though people do not agree on the connotations of Nibbāna (Nirvāṇa in Sanskrit), most scholars agree that Nibbāna is the *summum bonum* of Buddhism and that the person who attains that goal is called *arahant*.<sup>1</sup> The Buddha himself is an Arahant. His life's work is to teach and to lead people to the same goal that he has achieved. Like other Indian philosophical systems, Buddhism deals with the problem of future existence. Since aging, sickness, dying and all suffering arise out of existence or becoming, the goal of Buddhist practices is to make an end to future existence: "Birth being absent, aging-and-death does not occur. With the cessation of birth comes the cessation of aging-and-death."<sup>2</sup> The Buddha claims that this is his last birth, there is not now again-becoming (*ayam antimā jāti, natthi dāni punabbhavo*.)<sup>3</sup>

The cause of birth, however, may be seen differently in Buddhism than in other Indian philosophical systems. In the light of the Four Noble Truths (*ariyasaccāni*) the root cause of rebirth and suffering is said to be craving, but in the formula of the Twelve Dependent Originations (*paṭiccasamuppāda*) though craving plays an important role in the course of rebirth and suffering, it is ignorance or misconception (*avijjā*) that seems to be the most important aspect of all causes.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Sanskrit, *arhant*, 'worthy one.'

<sup>2</sup> D.ii.34. All the textual references are based on the Pali Text Society Pāli version (e.g. Dīghanikāya ii.34 or D.ii.34) However when there is reference to a translation, the title, volume and page number of that translation will be used (e.g. Middle Length Sayings II.199 or MLS.II.199.)

<sup>3</sup> M.i.167.

<sup>4</sup> M.i.66-67.



Since craving is considered to be a cause of rebirth and suffering, one of the Buddhist paths is to eliminate craving: "The tranquillization of all activities of [worldly] life, the renunciation of all substrates of rebirth, the destruction of natural craving, passionlessness, cessation, Nibbāna."<sup>5</sup> "Rādhā, break it up, knock it down, cease to play with it, apply yourself to destroy craving for it. Verily, Rādhā, the destruction of craving is Nibbāna."<sup>6</sup> By the negative definitions of the word, i.e. cutting off, destruction, disappearance of the existent entity or being untraceable,<sup>7</sup> nibbāna may be interpreted as being nihilistic. However the Buddha refuses to be a nihilist (*venayika*). He says that his teaching is to "lay down... anguish and the stopping of anguish."<sup>8</sup> The annihilation that the Buddha speaks of is the annihilation of desire, aversion and misconception.<sup>9</sup> One of the definitions of Nibbāna is the destruction of desire, aversion and misconception.<sup>10</sup> And Arahants are those who do not have such defects as desire, etc.<sup>11</sup>

By the important role that misconception plays in the rise of craving, another eradication suggested is the eradication of misconception. The link runs as the cycle of interdependent causation in that "This being present, that becomes [or happens]; from the arising of this, that arises. This being absent, that does not become; from the cessation of this, that ceases"<sup>12</sup>:

1. Misconception conditions Activities (*avijjā-paccayā saṅkhāra.*)
2. Activities condition Consciousness (*saṅkhāra-paccayā viññānaṃ.*)
3. Consciousness conditions Name and Shape (*viññānaṃ-paccayā namārūpaṃ.*)
4. Name and Shape condition Six senses (*namārūpa-paccayā saḷāyatanaṃ.*)
5. Six senses condition sense contact bases (*saḷāyatana-paccayā phasso.*)

<sup>5</sup> S.i.136.

<sup>6</sup> S.iii.188.

<sup>7</sup> M.i.140.

<sup>8</sup> M.i.140.

<sup>9</sup> Vin.i.1.

<sup>10</sup> S.iv.251.

<sup>11</sup> S.iv.252.

<sup>12</sup> Ud.i.1-2. The same formula can also be found in S.ii.1, 26; S.v.388; A.v.184.

6. Sense contact conditions Feeling (*phassa-paccayā vedanā*.)
7. Feeling conditions Craving (*vedanā-paccayā taṇhā*.)
8. Craving conditions Grasping (*taṇhā-paccayā upādānaṃ*.)
9. Grasping conditions Becoming (*upādāna-paccayā kammabhavo*.)
10. Becoming conditions Birth (*kammabhava-paccayā jāti*.)
11. Birth conditions Aging-and-Death (*jāti-paccayā jarāmaraṇaṃ*.)
12. Aging-and-death produce all sorrow, lamentation, suffering, grief and despair (*jarāmarāṇaṃ soka-parideva-dukkhadomanas-supāyāsā sambhavanti*).

It then reads that when *avijjā* is eliminated, craving has no chance to arise and the cycle of causation will be broken, which means there will be then no further rebirth and distress.

This formula of causal conditions is considered to be one of the central doctrines in early Buddhism. It is identified by the Buddha as the truth teaching or *dhamma* (“Whoever sees conditioned genesis sees dhamma, whoever sees dhamma sees conditioned genesis”<sup>13</sup>), the middle way<sup>14</sup> and the Aryan method (*nāya*.)<sup>15</sup> Those who do not know the *paṭiccasamuppāda* are said not to be qualified to attain the ultimate goal,<sup>16</sup> and are not the wise.<sup>17</sup> The Buddha tells his disciples that by knowing the peril in being subject to rebirth, decay, dying and sorrow, he seeks and finally achieves the unborn, undecaying, undying and unsorrowing which are Nibbāna, the uttermost security from the bonds.<sup>18</sup>

The particular suttas that discuss this *paṭiccasamuppāda* formula do not explicitly mention how *avijjā* is to be uprooted. However, elsewhere in the Nikāya there are extensive discussions on what kind of knowledge people lack, or what kinds of misconception people usually have. Though the emphasis placed on eliminating misconception or developing *nāya* varies from sutta to sutta, there is only one goal to aim

<sup>13</sup> M.i.190-191. See also in M.ii.32.

<sup>14</sup> S.ii.16.

<sup>15</sup> S.v.184, 388. *Nāya* is also defined to be ‘truth’ or ‘system’ in the PTS’ Pali-English Dictionary.

<sup>16</sup> S.ii.13.

<sup>17</sup> S.ii.22.

<sup>18</sup> M.i.167.

at, that of Nibbāna: "Monks, as the great ocean has one taste, the taste of salt, even so, monks, does this dhamma and discipline have one taste, the taste of freedom."<sup>19</sup> The notion of deliverance from existence and anguish is the *raison d'être* of all Buddhist practices.

*Avijjā* is described in the Pāli canon as not comprehending (*nappajānanti*) things as they really are,<sup>20</sup> seeing the five aggregates<sup>21</sup> to be a self<sup>22</sup> or seeing the five aggregates with the notion that 'this is mine', 'this am I' and 'this is my self'. *Avijjā* is defined as *aññāna* (lack of knowledge) of the four noble truths about anguish and canker.<sup>23</sup> It is identified with being poor in intuitive wisdom (*dupañño*)<sup>24</sup>, wrong views (*miccadiṭṭhi*)<sup>25</sup> or supposition (*maññita*)<sup>26</sup>. Therefore having right view or right knowledge (*sammadiṭṭhi*) of things as they really are (*evaṃ etaṃ yathābhūtaṃ*), will counter the condition of *avijjā*. Seeing five aggregates to be impermanent, suffering and non-self, seeing them as "This is not mine, this am I not and this is not my self" (*n'etaṃ mama, n'eso 'haṃ asmi, na me so attā*),<sup>27</sup> are said to be the right views.

However, there are passages in such works as the Suttanipāta that state that in order to purify one's mind one should have no view. Now, the question that arises from this statement is this: is the view of impermanence, suffering and non-self another view that also has to be eliminated? In the final analysis, should one hold right views or no view

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<sup>19</sup> Cullavagga 239.

<sup>20</sup> M.i.65.

<sup>21</sup> Material shape (*rūpaṃ*), feeling (*vedanaṃ*), perception (*saññāṃ*), habitual tendencies (*saṅkharārāni*), consciousness (*viññāṇaṃ*).

<sup>22</sup> M.ii.17-18. The same idea can be found in A.ii.214 and S.iii.16.

<sup>23</sup> M.i.55.

<sup>24</sup> M.290-293.

<sup>25</sup> M.i.320, 326.

<sup>26</sup> According to PTS Pali-English Dictionary, *maññita* (illusion, imagination) is a past participle of *maññati* coming from the root *man* which means (1) "to think," "to be of opinion," "to imagine," "to deem," (2) "to know," "to be convinced," "to be sure," (3) "to imagine," "to be proud (of)," "to be conceited," "to boast."

<sup>27</sup> M.i.230-233.

at all to achieve the Buddhist ultimate goal? These problems will be looked at in chapter one.

Should all views that are said by the Buddha to be right views, even the view of no-view, be taken by Buddhists on faith or should these views be critically examined by means of inference and experience? Is critical reasoning a tool to achieve the ultimate truth or is it a kind of diffusion (*papañca*,) an obstacle of attaining the truth? Is the Buddha a rationalist or an experimentalist? These kinds of questions will be examined closely in chapter two and three, including scholars' views on the issue such as faith and reasoning.

If right views, no view, reasoning and faith can each lead to the goal, can other Buddhist practices such as ethical conduct and meditation lead to the same goal? Are all these theories reconciled or endlessly contradicted, since for example meditation leads to a complete quiteness of mind whereas reasoning always brings a critical examination of the truth? These issues will be discussed in chapter four.

The methodology I am approaching is to look at the primary texts, confining my studies to Pāli literature, to examine the early Buddhists' attitudes towards the above issues. An attempt will be made to look at the epistemological foundation of Pāli canonical thought, the means and limit of knowledge, the Buddha's attitude towards reasoning and its role in the search for an ultimate goal, Nibbāna. Other related issues such as the authority of the Buddha, faith, ethical conduct and meditation will also be discussed and, where relevant, scholars's views concerning these issues will be brought into the discussion.

## Chapter 1

### Right View and No View

In the Pāli canon are found at least five terms, *nappajānāti*, *duppañño*, *aññāṇa*, *micchaditṭhi* and *maññita*, whose meanings are all identified with *avijjā*. *Nappajānāti* is defined as not understanding as it really is the peril of the speculative views of becoming and of annihilation as they really are.<sup>1</sup> Since one does not know the rise, fall and the peril of these views he has attachment to becoming or annihilation. Aversion and confusion then follow. It is said that the goal (i.e. *Nibbāna*) is not for someone who has aversion, attachment and confusion but for someone who is otherwise.<sup>2</sup> In another passage, *nappajānāti* is defined as not understanding the arising, the cause of arising, the stopping and the way leading to the stopping of anguish, that is to say the four truths. *Avijjā* is also identified with *duppañño* which means 'poor in intuitive wisdom':

Your reverence, one is called: 'Poor in intuitive wisdom, poor in intuitive wisdom.' Now what are the respects in which one is called 'Poor in intuitive wisdom,' your reverence? Your reverence, if it is said 'He does not comprehend, [*nappajānāti*] he does not comprehend,' therefore he is called 'Poor in intuitive wisdom.' What does he not comprehend? He does not comprehend 'This is anguish,' he does not comprehend 'This is the arising of anguish,' he does not comprehend 'This is the stopping of anguish,' he does not comprehend 'This is the course leading to the stopping of anguish.' If it is said, 'He does not comprehend, he does not comprehend,' your reverence, therefore he is called 'poor in intuitive wisdom.'<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> M.i.65.

<sup>2</sup> This can be said to be a definition of *nibbāna*, i.e. the state of absence of aversion, attachment and ignorance.

<sup>3</sup> M.i.292.

The other definition of *avijjā* is the lack of knowledge (*aññāṇa*) regarding anguish<sup>4</sup>. *Avijjā* is also expressed as a wrong view (*micchādiṭṭhi*), often mentioned simply as view (*diṭṭhi*). Having *diṭṭhi* means holding an opinion or speculative view regarding everything permanent, stable and eternal<sup>5</sup>. Holding other views such as seeing the five aggregates as a self, seeing the world as eternal, not eternal, ending, not ending, seeing the life-principle and the body as the same, not the same, seeing Tathāgata as after dying, not after dying, is considered to be holding wrong views.<sup>6</sup> Another term which has the same expression as *avijjā* concerning self is *maññita*. It has been translated by I.B. Horner as 'supposition.'<sup>7</sup> In this context it can also mean an opinion or illusion of a self:

'I am,' monks, this is a supposition. 'This am I'... 'I will be'... 'I will not be'... 'I will be possessed of form'... 'I will be incorporeal'... 'I will be possessed of perception'... 'I will not be possessed of perception'... 'I will be possessed of neither perception nor non-perception,' this is a supposition. A supposition, monks, is an ill, a supposition is an imposthume, a supposition is a barb. Monk, when he has gone beyond all supposition the sage is said to be at peace. But, monk, a sage who is at peace is not born, does not age, is not agitated, does not envy. As there is nothing by which he can be born, how, monk, not being born could he age? Not aging, how could he die? Not dying, how could he be agitated? Not being agitated, how could he envy? When it is said: 'where there is stability, conceit and boasting [*maññussava*] do not continue in existence, and they do not continue in existence the sage is said to be at peace...'<sup>8</sup>

Since *nappajānāti*, *duppāṇño*, *aññāṇa*, *micchādiṭṭhi* and *maññita* appear to be the cause of all human distress, like *avijjā*, they have to be replaced by the right views (*sammādiṭṭhi*), and right knowledge or understanding (*ñāṇa*) of things as they really are. There are many views that are said by the Buddha to be right views, but there seem to be

<sup>4</sup> M.i.54. The same occurs in S.ii.4.

<sup>5</sup> M.i.326.

<sup>6</sup> M.i.485-486.

<sup>7</sup> According to PTS Pali-English Dictionary, *maññita* (illusion, imagination) is a past participle of *maññati* coming from the root *man* which means (1) "to think," "to be of opinion," "to imagine," "to deem." (2) "to know," "to be convinced," "to be sure." (3) "to imagine," "to be proud (of)," "to be conceited," "to boast."

<sup>8</sup> M.iii.246.

three views that are considered fundamental. The three fundamental perfect views one should have are seeing the five aggregates to be impermanent (*anicca*), suffering (*dukkha*) and non-self (*anatta*). The view of non-self is seen as threefold: 'This is not mine, this am I not and this is not my self' (*n'etaṃ mama, n'eso 'ham asmi, na me so attā*).<sup>9</sup>

The first argument, for impermanence, is that since the five aggregates are always liable to change, cease, or be destroyed, there is nothing here to sustain a substantial identity such as I, mine or self. According to *Cūḷasaccakasutta*, the five aggregates, being conditioned, are thus impermanent. Being impermanent they are thus suffering. Since they are conditioned, impermanent, suffering, and since one cannot have control over their arising and ending, they are argued to be non-self. With the assumption that something which has a self should be permanent and produce happiness, the five aggregates are concluded to be non-self because of their impermanence and ground of anguish:

Material shape, monks, is impermanent, feeling is impermanent, perception is impermanent, the habitual tendencies are impermanent, consciousness is impermanent. Material shape, monks, is not self, feeling is not self, perception is not self, the habitual tendencies are not self, consciousness is not self; all conditioned things are impermanent, all things are not self...

"What do you think about this, Aggivessana? Is material shape permanent or impermanent?"

"Impermanent, good Gotama."

"But what is impermanent anguish or is it happiness?"

"Anguish, good Gotama."

"But is it fitting to regard that which is impermanent, anguish, liable to change as 'This is mine, this am I, this is my self'?"...

What do you think about this, Aggivessana? When you speak thus: 'Material shape is my self,' have you power over this material shape of yours (and can say), Let my material shape be thus, let my material shape be not thus?<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> M.i.230.

<sup>10</sup> M.i.230-233. The same argument is used for the other four aggregates: feeling, perception, habitual tendencies and consciousness.

Another argument the Buddha adds to the claim of non-self is that the five aggregates do not have a core or identity of their own but rather constitute parts of other five-aggregate elements. Neither should it be understood that each of these five aggregates has its own identity. Material shape, or even consciousness itself, has no identity; their existence is dependent on other constituents of existence. At this the Buddha gives a simile of a man unrolling a plantain tree and looking for the pith. As he unrolls the tree, only spirals of leaves can be found. He can never see the so-called pith.<sup>11</sup> Another analogy suggesting an unsubstantiality of the self is that of the chariot given by Nāgasena in *Milinda's Questions*<sup>12</sup>. What is called a chariot in fact is a pile of parts, an axle, wheels, yoke and reins, et cetera, well put together to establish a thing called chariot. The axle, wheel, yoke, reins, et cetera, itself is not a chariot. The chariot is not separate from its parts and is only a sound or name. The same applies to the self and the five aggregates.

Since there is no such thing as a self, it follows that there can be no possession of a self. As the same attribution of permanence and happiness to a self, there is an attribution of permanence or eternality to possession of a self. Since everything is liable to change, impermanent and not eternal, it would be a wrong view to hold that there is any possession to grasp.<sup>13</sup>

The misconception of the five aggregates is the root cause of anguish and it is to be eliminated. *Vijjā* or *ñāṇa* (right knowledge or understanding) becomes a more important factor in seeing things as they really are and to remove anguish and all kinds of distress. Let us here closely examine what *ñāṇa* means and why it is so important in order to achieve the goal. *Ñāṇa* is defined in the PTS Dictionary to be 'knowledge', 'intelligence', 'insight', 'conviction' and 'recognition'. The key verb associated with *vijjā* and *ñāṇa* is *jānāti* which means 'to know' or 'to understand'. Knowing things in one way is called

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<sup>11</sup> M.i.233.

<sup>12</sup> Miln.25-28.

<sup>13</sup> M.i.137.



*avijjā*, knowing in another way is called *ñāṇa*. *Jānāti* also means 'to recognize,' 'experience,' 'find,' 'infer,' 'conclude,' 'distinguish,' 'state,' 'define.'<sup>14</sup> The right knowledge (*ñāṇa*) is said to be the right understanding or right experience of the impermanence, distress, and non-self of the five aggregates, plus the knowledge of the four truths namely the truth of canker, its cause, its cessation and the way leading to its cessation. Right knowledge is sometimes mentioned as the knowledge of the four truths of skill, unskill, sustenance, anguish, aging, dying, birth, grasping, craving, feeling, sensory impingement, six bases of sense-impressions, name-and-form, consciousness, formations and ignorance.<sup>15</sup> In short it is the knowledge of the four truths of the twelve instances of dependent origination. Moreover, one of the definitions of right view is simply the understanding (*pajānāti*) of wrong view to be wrong view and right view to be right view.<sup>16</sup> With the same connotation of understanding things as they really are, in *Anaṅgaṇasutta*<sup>17</sup>, Sāriputta suggests that there are four kinds of people. They are (1) one who is subject to blemish (*aṅgaṇa*) but does not comprehend it as it really is (*yathābhūtaṃ nappajānāti*), (2) one who is subject to blemish and comprehends as it really is (*yathābhūtaṃ pajānāti*) that he is subject to blemish, (3) one who is without blemish and does not understand it as it really is, and (4) one who is without blemish but understands as it really is that he is not subject to blemish. The first and the third kind of person are said to be the inferior men (*hīnapuriso*). The second and the fourth one who comprehend as it really is whatever they are subject to are called the excellent men (*setṭhapuriso*). The reason for criticizing the former people as inferior is that since they are ignorant of their state of mind and of the presence or absence of such things as blemish, they will not put effort into eliminating desire and getting rid of that blemish. On the other hand those who understand the state of their mind as it really is will put effort into cultivating their mind so that attachment,

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<sup>14</sup> According to PED.

<sup>15</sup> M.i.47-55.

<sup>16</sup> M.iii.71.

<sup>17</sup> M.i.24f.

aversion and misconception will not deprave them. The Buddha himself claims to possess the right knowledge of things as they really are, the knowledge of anguish and cankers, their arising, their ending and the course leading to their ending, that is to say the knowledge of the four truths. With this knowledge he is free from all cankers and thus knows that this is his last birth:

I understood as it really is [*yathābhūtaṃ abbhaññāsim*]: This is anguish, this is the arising of anguish, this is the stopping of anguish, this is the course leading to the stopping of anguish. I understood as it really is: These are the cankers, this is the arising of the cankers, this is the stopping of the cankers, this is the course leading to the stopping of the cankers. Knowing this thus, seeing thus, [*evaṃ jānato evaṃ passato*] my mind was free from the canker of sense-pleasures and my mind was free from the canker of becoming and my mind was free from the canker of ignorance. In freedom the knowledge came to be: I am freed; and I comprehended: Destroyed is birth, brought to a close is the Brahma-faring done is what was to be done, there is no more being such or such.<sup>18</sup>

The term *jānāti* is usually accompanied by *passati* which means 'to see'. In combination with *jānāti*, *passati* can mean to 'recognize,' 'realize' and 'know.'<sup>19</sup> Both terms used together may imply sure knowledge with emphasis on its efficiency: "Knowing thus, seeing thus [*evaṃ jānato evaṃ passato*], his mind is freed from the canker of sense-pleasures and his mind is freed from the canker of becoming and his mind is freed from the canker of ignorance."<sup>20</sup> *Passati* is often used as the knowledge or experience of the goal: "Knowledge and vision arose in me [*ñāṇaṃ-ca pana me dassanaṃ udapādi*]: unshakable is freedom for me, this is the last birth, there is not now again-becoming."<sup>21</sup> Two other terms used very often to describe the intensity of knowledge are *abhijānāti* and *parijānāti*. *Abhi* is a prefix denoting an intensifying in action. *Abhijānāti* then denotes an intensified level of

<sup>18</sup> M.i.23. The same passage is found in Vin.iii.5, but in A.ii.211 and A.iv.179 only three cankers are mentioned.

<sup>19</sup> PED, under *passati*.

<sup>20</sup> M.i.348.

<sup>21</sup> M.i.167.

understanding. It can either mean 'to understand fully' or 'to understand thoroughly'.<sup>22</sup> *Pari* denotes an action which is accomplished. I.B. Horner renders it 'knowing accurately'. The difference in nuances of *abhiñānāti* and *pariñānāti* may be that after knowing thoroughly all dhammas (so *sabbam dhammam abhiñānāti*) one knows (*pariñānāti*) and brings that truth into functioning such as observing (literally, abiding in viewing) the impermanence of feelings (*vedanāsu aniccānupassī viharati, virāgānupassī...*) and then getting rid of desire :

If, lord of *devas*, a monk comes to hear this, that 'It is not fitting, that there should be inclination towards any (psycho-physical) conditions,' he knows [*abhiñānāti*] all the conditions thoroughly; by knowing all the conditions thoroughly, he knows [*pariñānāti*] all the conditions accurately; by knowing all the conditions accurately, whatever feeling he feels, pleasant or painful or neither painful nor pleasant, he abides viewing impermanence, he abides viewing dispassion, he abides viewing stopping, he abides viewing renunciation in regard to those feeling. When he is abiding viewing impermanence... dispassion... stopping, when he is abiding viewing renunciation in regard to those feelings, he grasps after nothing in the world, not grasping he is not troubled; not being troubled he himself has individually attained nibbāna and he comprehends: "Destroyed is birth, brought to a close is the Brahman-faring, done is what was to be done, there is no more of being such or such."<sup>23</sup>

In the above passage it is very interesting to see that knowledge and release here seem to cause each other to arise; knowledge leads one to release, and by that release he gains knowledge of his goal: "In freedom the knowledge comes to be: I am free..."<sup>24</sup> . The picture is painted here as follows: At the beginning a monk or an ascetic is ignorant about the impermanence of all dhammas.<sup>25</sup> When getting instructed he listens (*sutam hoti*), considers, and has knowledge (*pariñānāti*) of the impermanence of all dhammas. With this

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<sup>22</sup> The meanings of *abhiñānati* as given in the PED are 'to know by experience,' 'to know fully or thoroughly,' 'to recognize,' 'to know of,' 'to be conscious or aware of.' I.B. Horner renders it 'to know thoroughly' in her translation of *Cūḍapaṇḍāsāṅkhasutta* in M.i.255.

<sup>23</sup> M.i.255-256.

<sup>24</sup> M.i.23.

<sup>25</sup> Dhamma is impermanent by its being conditional (see M.i.230-233.) I.B. Horner renders dhamma here to be '(psycho-physical) conditions.'

knowledge he begins to get rid of craving and grasping and renounces all feelings; he then experiences the release. Finally by that release he knows (*jānāti*) that 'destroyed is birth...' The question arising here is that since it is said that one gains knowledge of the goal, 'destroyed is birth...' after he experiences release, then what about his knowledge of the goal before craving is got rid of? What about, for example, the knowledge of the peril of holding wrong views of craving and the cessation of craving and distress by getting rid of wrong view? Are the former knowledge (before craving is eliminated) and the latter knowledge (after craving is eliminated) the same or different? Through the former knowledge how does one know the goal is bliss when he has not yet attained the goal?

In the framework of Pāli literature there exists a logical foundation of early Buddhist theory based on the formula of causation: when this exists that arises, when this ceases to exist that will come to an end. When the Buddha speaks of the four truths and *Paṭiccasamuppāda*, people accept them on this basis of causation, that *avijjā* causes craving and then distress; when *avijjā* is eliminated craving comes to an end thereby bringing distress to an end. Hence one may be convinced through inference that there is a cessation of craving (*nibbāna* or release.) Though at this point one's craving has not yet been eliminated, one can still have the knowledge of the state where all cravings cease to exist. This kind of knowledge is described by Nāgasena in Milinda's Questions to be similar to the knowledge of one who has not had his hands and feet cut off, yet who knows it would be a thing of great sorrow to lose one's hands and feet. One can know this through the weeping and wailing and the testimony of those who have suffered this loss:

The king said: "Revered Nāgasena, does he who does not obtain *nibbāna* know that happiness is *nibbāna*?"

"Yes, sire, he who does not obtain *nibbāna* knows that happiness is *nibbāna*."

"But how, revered Nāgasena, does (anyone), without obtaining (*nibbāna*), know that happiness is *nibbāna*?"

"What do you think about this, sire? Would those who have not had their hands and feet cut off know that the cutting off of them is anguish?"

"Yes, revered sir, they would know."

“How would they know?”

“They know, revered sir, from having heard the lamentations of those whose hands and feet have been cut off that cutting off of them is anguish.”

“In the same way, sire, (anyone) who has heard those who have seen nibbāna knows that happiness is nibbāna.”<sup>26</sup>

Nāgasena gives more examples of the knowledge that can be achieved through inference, such as the knowledge of the existence of the river Ūhā, elder Tissa and the Buddha.<sup>27</sup> If it is true that the former knowledge can be gained through inference, then the latter knowledge should be gained through the experience of release after craving is got rid of:

In freedom the knowledge comes to be that he is free, and he comprehends: “destroyed is birth...”<sup>28</sup>

I,... won the unborn,... unageing,... undecaying,... unchanging,... unsorrowing,...stainless, the uttermost security from the bonds - nibbāna. Knowledge and vision arose in me: unshakable is freedom for me, this is the last birth, there is not now again-becoming.<sup>29</sup>

Nevertheless, the problem may not be that simple: when gained through inference, is the former knowledge of the goal a self evidence or does it have to be verified by other criteria such as experience? In the case of the Buddha’s search for truth, his claim of right knowledge is not heard until he directly experiences the final goal. Prior to that, the Buddha’s practices under Ālāra Kālāma and Uddaka Rāmaputta disclaim the knowledge he has inferred from their teachings. After leaving home and meeting these ascetics, he is told that achieving the state of nothing (*ākhiñcaññāyatanaṃ*) or neither-perception-nor-non-perception (*nevasaññānāsaññāyatanaṃ*) will lead him to the unborn..., Nibbāna:

Suppose that I... should seek the unborn,... unaging,... undecaying,... undying,... unsorrowing,... stainless - nibbāna...

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<sup>26</sup> Miln.69-70.

<sup>27</sup> Miln.70-71.

<sup>28</sup> M.i.38.

<sup>29</sup> M.i.167.

Suppose now that I should strive for the realization of that dhamma [the state of nothing] which Āḷāra Kālāma proclaims...

Suppose now that I should strive for the realization of that dhamma [the state of neither-perception-nor-non-perception] which Uddāka Rāmaputta proclaims...<sup>30</sup>

However, after experiencing these meditative states he concludes that “this dhamma does not conduce to disregard nor to dispassion nor to stopping nor to tranquillity nor to super knowledge nor to awakening nor to nibbāna.”<sup>31</sup>

In the other texts the Buddha is said to have also tried some other religious practices such as penance (*tapassī*), self-mortification (*lūka*), avoidance (*jeguccha*) and seclusion (*pavivitta*).<sup>32</sup> When he hears people say that release can be reached by ritual or food, he practices according to their words but he finally says: “But I, Sāriputta, even by this procedure, by this course, by this mortification, did not reach states of further-men or the excellent knowledge and insight benefiting the ariyans.”<sup>33</sup>

As these passages show, during the Buddha’s search for the truth he is subject to many false assumptions that lead him to unsatisfactory results. Though making many errors he keeps trying and finally he claims to achieve the truth that he has been looking for:

... the tranquillising of all the activities, the renunciation of all attachment, the destruction of craving, dispassion, stopping, nibbāna.<sup>34</sup>

The problem, then, is still here. Is the knowledge of a truth before craving is eliminated valid in itself, such as in the case of the man who can know the feeling of having his hands and feet cut off? Or must it be validated by direct experience, possibly after much trial and error, such as in the case of the Buddha trying to attain the states that

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<sup>30</sup> M.i.163-166.

<sup>31</sup> M.i.165.

<sup>32</sup> M.i.77.

<sup>33</sup> M.i.81.

<sup>34</sup> M.i.167.

Ālāra Kālāma and Uddaka Rāmaputta have attained? These problems will be touched on in later chapters.

Besides knowing the truth of cankers, their cause, their cessation and the way leading to their cessation, the Buddha is depicted as knowing the previous lives of himself and others.<sup>35</sup> He is known as the Threefold Knowledge Man (*tevijjo*). Another question then arising from this is whether knowledge need be threefold? Can one obtain one without the other two and be considered to be a Buddha or an Arahant? This kind of question was raised by the wanderer Kaccāna<sup>36</sup> in *Vekhanassasutta*<sup>37</sup> in which he criticizes the Buddha's disciples who do not know the past and future yet still claim that destroyed is birth, brought to a close is the brahman-faring, done is what was to be done, there is no more of being such or so. The Buddha authenticates the threefold nature of knowledge by saying that "This censure is only just, Kaccāna, for those recluses and brahmins who, not knowing the past, not seeing the future, yet claim: 'Destroyed is birth... there is no more of being such or so.'". However he tells Kaccāna to leave out the question on the past and the future. He says that the important thing is deliverance from the bonds of ignorance (*avijjābandhanā*). When they (those recluses and brahmins who have the false claim) listen to dhamma they will know and see. Though the Buddha tells Kaccāna to disregard the question on the past and the future, through his answer he seems to affirm that knowledge should be threefold; the last two appear to be attained following the first.

In the above discussion it has been demonstrated that having right view or right knowledge is the most important condition for those who seek Nibbāna. However preserved in *Suttanipāta*<sup>38</sup> as well as in other passages in the *Nikāya* are substantial statements criticizing the idea of holding views. The argument put forward by those

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<sup>35</sup> M.i.22-23.

<sup>36</sup> He is also called Vekkanassa by which the title of the discourse is named.

<sup>37</sup> M.ii.43-44.

<sup>38</sup> Most of the passages is found in *Aṭṭhakavagga* (The Chapter of the Eights), and *Pārāyanavagga* (The Chapter of the Way to the Beyond).

statements is that in order to obtain an ultimate release one has to detach not only false views, but ultimately right views; a sage or wise man should not hold any view or opinion whatsoever. This statement not only makes the Buddha's teachings of right view and no view contradict each other, but the claim of no view also contradicts itself. Saying 'holding no view' is as paradoxical as saying 'do not believe in what I am saying' or writing on the board that 'what has been written on the board is wrong,' for 'holding no view' is itself a view. This view may also cause difficulties to those who want to decide whether a claim is true or false in order for them to choose the right path to follow.

In spite of the paradoxical nature and problems of the statements, detaching from views is said to be the spiritual excellence (Sn. 786)<sup>39</sup>, inward peace (837), end of craving (1070), Nibbāna (896), and it is the state attained by the sage (780), wise (*vegagū* - 846) and Arahant (843). According to these passages, as one clings to ideas and views, one starts to grasp one's own view and asperses others'. Conflicts and disputes will remain as long as one thinks one's own view is true and superior, the others' false and inferior. These conflicts and disputes do not bring one to tranquillity. It is said that Nibbāna is the state in which there is no such dispute:

The person abiding by a certain dogmatic view, considering it is the highest in the world, claims 'This is the most excellent', and disparages other views different from that as inferior. As a result, he is not free from disputes. (796)

There are no ties to him who is free from ideas, there are no delusions to him who is delivered by wisdom. Those who grasp ideas and views, wander about coming into conflict in the world. (847)

'The tears and anguish that follow arguments and quarrels', said the Buddha, 'the arrogance and pride and the grudges and insults that go with them are all the result of one thing. They come from having preferences, from holding things precious and dear. Insults are born out of arguments and grudges are inseparable from quarrels.' (863)

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<sup>39</sup> Hereafter the Sutanipāta's verses are indicated in mere numbers.



Each one claims that his own view is perfect and that the belief of others is inferior. Thus they enter into dispute; thus each of them says that his own opinion is true. (904)

If a view becomes worthless because it is censured by others then no one will be distinguished because each one firmly regards another's view as low whilst one's own alone is regarded as true. (905)

Those who, adhering to their views, dispute 'this only is the truth', either bring blame upon themselves or obtain praise thereby. The result of the praise is trifling and not enough to bring about tranquillity. I say there are two results of dispute [victory or defeat]; having seen this, let no one dispute, realizing Nibbāna where there is no dispute. (895, 896)

There is a similar statement which appears in *Mahāsāropamasutta* stating that the honor and fame that one gains through religious practices may have a negative effect if one maintains his superiority in order to disparage others: "It is I who am a recipient, being famous, but those other monks are little known, of little esteem.' He, because of the gains, honours, fame, is exultant, indolent, and falls into sloth; being indolent, he dwells ill [dukkhaṃ viharati]."<sup>40</sup> As we can see in the above statements, in both the *Suttanipāta* and the *Mahāsāropamasutta*, there is much concern with human conflict and aggression rather than old age and rebirth. The overall problem which causes conflict, dispute and aggression, the *Suttanipāta* has pointed out, is the perception of duality. In other words, when the discrimination has been made between merit and demerit, superior and inferior, dispassion and passion, true and false, good and bad kamma, or purity and impurity, then conflict and dispute follow. The Brahmins who are pure and have transcended the limits of mundane existence (*sīmātigo*) are those who do not hold duality:

No brahmin claims purity from an external source such as what is seen, heard, or cognized, or from rule or rite. Unsullied by both merit and demerit he has discarded the ego; he does not commit here any action productive of [rebecoming] result. (790)

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<sup>40</sup> M.i.192.

The man who, having undertaken certain holy practices himself, attached to ideas, passes from superior to inferior states. But the wise man, having understood the Truth by the [supreme] means of knowledge does not pass from superior to inferior states. (792)

The brahmin who has transcended the limits of mundane existence; he has no grasping after knowing or seeing. He delights neither in passion nor in dispassion. For him there is nothing here to be grasped as the highest. (795)

The Buddha: There are not many diverse truths in the world except those which are surmised by [faulty] perception. Assuming mere sophistry in their views, they claim duality [*dvayadhammā*] - 'This is true and that is false.' (886)

Having abandoned formal religious practices altogether and actions both 'good' and 'bad', neither longing for 'purity' nor 'impurity', he wanders aloof abstaining from both without adhering to either extreme. (900)

The Buddha's rejection of holding to duality embraces ethical and logical concerns. Under the misconception of duality, people attach to their views and cause dispute. The rejecting of this attitude seems to be of ethical concern. In the logical concern if both sides are right, then by accusing each other of being a fool, both of them turn out to be fools by their opponent's claim. On the other hand if they are right by claiming they are wise then none of them would be of inferior wisdom. This contradicts their own claim that others are inferior:

The Buddha: If one who does not tolerate another's view is a fool, a dolt and stupid, then all of them are fools without understanding, because all of them abide by their [own] views only. (880)

If by reason of one's view one becomes pure, pure in wisdom, expert and intelligent — then there is none among them who is of inferior wisdom, for they have all equally arrived at [dogmatic] views. (881)

Holding to duality is said to be the source of desire (867), or the fruit of misconception regarding "self" (800). Since one makes distinction between false and true, demerit and merit, inferior and superior, et cetera, one releases one thing and grasps another; for this reason the craving will never be eradicated. The analogy is given that it is

just “like monkeys who let go one branch to grasp another.” (791) The person with spiritual excellence is said not to grasp or reject any of these pairs (787, 954 and 1098), that is to say he has no perception of duality. For the sages get rid of the notion of self, they have no reason to strive for anything; accordingly they do not take sides in the midst of controversy (800, 801, 843). The path of release or Nibbāna suggested here is the path of holding no duality. It is interesting to see that one should not depend even on knowledge (800), the acquisition of which some other passages say is fundamental to the course of getting rid of desire. Moreover one must not desire to learn and practice any good or bad kamma (846, 900). With this very radical detachment one is said to be able to avoid clinging to any label or category such as superior, inferior or equal. He is described to be unmoved to these three measurements (799, 842, 843). To these people who radically detach themselves from specific views there is no tie, bond or mental obstruction (780, 798 and 847).

There seems to appear an indication that causal problems do not only come from misconception or conducting bad karma but that hostile knowledge or conflicting ideas of good karma can also cause problems of dispute, hostility and especially the mental obstructions to realization of Nibbāna. This indication is even more obvious in the *Kalahavivādasutta*.<sup>41</sup> There is established in this sutta a kind of reduced formula of dependent origination in which the root cause of anguish is consciousness or perception (*saññā*). No matter whether one perceives goodness or evil, he or she will experience anguish and distress. The formula consists of eight links running as follows: Tears, anguish, arrogance, pride, grudges and insults are conditioned by arguments and quarrels (862). Arguments and quarrels are conditioned by having preferences (863). Preferences are conditioned by desire (865). Desire is conditioned by holding duality such as pleasant and unpleasant, becoming and disintegration (867). Duality is conditioned by the origin of

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<sup>41</sup> In *Suttanipāta* from verse 862 to 877.

contact<sup>42</sup> (870). The origin of contact is conditioned by Name and Form (872)<sup>43</sup>. And perception is said to be the condition of Name and Form. When it is asked how the name-and-form is to be got rid of, the Buddha says:

There is a state where form ceases to exist. It is a state without ordinary perception and without disordered perception and without no perception and without any annihilation of perception. It is perception, consciousness (*sañña*), that is the source of all basic obstacles. (874)<sup>44</sup>

It is like the formula of the Twelve Instances of Dependent Origination, in that when this exists that arises, when this is eliminated that does not arise. Similarly since consciousness causes the chain to arise, the chain will be broken when consciousness ceases to exist, thereby the anguish comes to an end. It is obvious that the very root cause which is being eliminated here is consciousness, not ignorance as stated in the formula of the Twelve Instances of Dependent Origination. The state of mind, described by the Buddha, where form ceases to exist seems to be the state in which there is not any form of perception, for subject and object should exist dependently.<sup>45</sup> Since perception is here considered to be the obstacle, for it is the ground for the arising of name-and-form, what seems to be suggested in this formula is that one should develop a state of mind where there is no perception. Moreover one should not even have any notion of non-perception or non-consciousness: "It is a state without ordinary perception and without disordered perception and without no

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<sup>42</sup> *phassanidānaṃ* is translated by H. Saddhatissa to be 'the action of contact' and adds to it 'mental impression.' K.R. Norman renders *phassanidānaṃ* to be 'origin of contact.'

<sup>43</sup> *Nāmaṇ ca rūpaṇ ca* literary mean 'name and form' but they can also be translated as 'mind and body' or 'mind and object'.

<sup>44</sup> In order to clearly understand the passage, let us compare K.R. Norman's translation and the original verse: "He has no (ordinary) perception of perceptions, he has no deranged perception of perceptions, he is not without perception, he has no perception of what has disappeared. For one who has attained to such a state form disappears, for that which is named "diversification" has its origin in perception." "*Nasaññasaññī na visaññasaññī, no pi asaññī na vibhūtaśaṇṇī, evaṃsametassa vibhoti rūpaṃ, saññānidānaṃ hi papañcasaṃkhā.*" *Rūpaṃ* here should imply *nāmarūpaṃ* on the basis of verse 872. *Nāmarūpaṃ* is equivalent to *nāmakāya* in verse 1074. Compare this to verses 530, 736 and 756.

<sup>45</sup> According to the Abhidhamma, perception of an object only arises out of the contact of faculty of sense and the object of sense. For that reason, perception of form, sound, smell, taste, touch and object of thinking (dhamma) cannot exist without the existence of both faculties of sense (eyes, ear, nose, tongue, body and mind) and objects of sense (form, sound, smell, taste, tangible objects.)

perception and without any annihilation of perception.” This notion of the complete annihilation of perception leading to the end of anguish related to various forms of practice of meditation and meditative states will be explored in greater extent in chapter four. Let us now examine how mental construction is said in other passages to be related to perception which is considered the obstacle to one’s goal:

Some people speak with malicious intentions and others with the conviction that they are right. But the sage does not enter into any controversy that has arisen. Therefore, the sage is free from all mental obstruction [*khila*]. (780)

He whose views are mentally constructed [*pakappitā*], causally formed [*samkhata*], highly esteemed [*purakkhata*] but not pure; views in which he sees personal advantage, will experience a calm which is unstable. (784)

It is hard to go beyond preconceived ideas [*ditthīnivesā*] reached by passing judgment [*niccheya*] regarding doctrines. Therefore, with regard to these views he rejects one and grasps another. (785)

For the person with spiritual excellence, nowhere in the world does he have any mentally-constructed view [*pakappitā ditthi*] about various spheres of becoming. As he has eradicated delusion and deceit, in what manner can he be reckoned? He cannot be reckoned in any manner whatsoever. (786)

The man who, having undertaken certain holy practices himself, attached to ideas, passes from superior to inferior states. But the wise man, having understood the Truth by the [supreme] means of knowledge does not pass from superior to inferior states. (792)

They do not speculate [*nakappayanti*], they do not esteem [*na purekkharonti*] any views and say ‘This is highest purity’. They release the knot of dogmatic clinging and do not long for anything in the world. (794)

A disciplined man does not engender [*na kappayeyya*] dogmatic views in the world either by knowledge or by rule or rite. Therefore, he does not consider himself ‘superior’, ‘inferior’ or ‘equal’. (799)

To the sage there is not the slightest prejudiced view [*pakappitā*] with regard to things seen, heard or felt. How can anyone in the world characterize by thought such a pure one who does not dogmatically grasp [*vikappayeyya*] any views? (802)

They neither form any particular dogma [*na kappayanti*] nor prefer anything [*purekkharonti*]. Dogmatic views are not esteemed [*paṭicchitāse*] by them. The brahmin is not led by rule and rite. Thus, the steadfast one has gone to the further shore, never more to return. (803)

In the above verses, mental construction (*pakappita*) has been described in various ways. It is identical with preconceived ideas (*diṭṭhīnivesā*), mentally constructed idea (*pakappitā diṭṭhī*), judgment (*niccheya*), speculation (*kappayati*), dogmatically grasping (*vikappayeyya*), or even honoring (*purekkharoti*) and preference to (*purekkharoti*) a doctrine. *Pakappita* is defined in the PED as 'arranged,' 'planned', 'attended to,' 'designed,' 'made.' It is the past participle of *pakappeti* which means 'to arrange,' 'fix,' 'settle,' 'prepare,' 'determine,' 'plan.' It has been used in different English renditions by Saddhatissa such as 'mental construction,' 'speculation,' and 'prejudiced view.' The forming or construction of such perception of things seen, heard or felt (797, 798) is the ground for other links, the cause of attachment and an unpeaceful state of mind. The perception which is constructed is not that of the sage (*muni*), wise (*bhūripaṇṇo*) or the purified person (*dhona*).

The use of the word *kappayanti* and *kappayeyya* in verses 794, 799 and 803 suggests the perceptual obstruction that occurs when one starts to construct an opinion. *Kappayanti* and *kappayeyya* are both derived from the root  $\sqrt{kapp}$  (*kappeti*)<sup>46</sup>. It is translated in the PED as 'to make,' 'get up,' and 'carry on.' In figurative form, it has special meanings such as 'to construct or form an opinion,' 'to conjecture,' and 'to think.' Saddhatissa translates *kappayanti* in his verses as 'form,' 'speculate' and *kappayayya* as

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<sup>46</sup> Warder 1974. P.375.

'engender' (dogmatic views). The terms *vikappayan*<sup>47</sup> and *vikampamāna*<sup>48</sup> are also found in *Aṭṭhakavagga* where they are related to speculative thinking. In verse 918, *vikappayan* is used as the mental image one constructs about the self when one comes into contact with various forms. This kind of mental image has to be avoided; thereby the thinking of oneself as better, worse than, or equal will not arise. *Avikampamāna* as used in verse 842 has the same implication. *Avikampamāna* as described as a state of mind in which there are no thoughts of being equal, inferior or superior.

There appear to be two ways of interpreting the notion of eliminating mental obstacles. In one way, mental obstacles are eliminated by the complete eliminating of perception altogether, one means of which is holding no view. The means (*nissāya*) by which one eliminates craving and crosses the ocean of anguish is the complete cessation of perception (*ākāṅkhaññam*) and the conviction that 'nothing exists' (*n' atthī*) (1071). In the other way, attachment to views that is said to be the mental obstacle to be eliminated, not the perception or view itself.

The latter interpretation may refer to the passage in *Majjhimanikāya* where the Buddha suggests that attaching to the view of 'holding no view' is as bad as holding other views. In *Bahuvedaniyasutta*<sup>49</sup>, the Buddha seems to suggest that there are two ways of holding views. One way of holding view is without approving or accepting others' which are well spoken; there is no possibility of changing one for another (*tañ ca diṭṭhiṃ nappajahanti aññañ ca diṭṭhiṃ upādiyanti*.) Those people who hold views in this way may be always busy defending their views. Thereby dispute, conflict and aggression will

<sup>47</sup> *Vikappayan* is derived from *vi+√kappeti* which together means 'to distinguish,' 'design,' 'intend,' 'to have intention or preferences,' 'fix one's mind on.' Its root (*√kapp*) is the same as *kappayanti* and *kappayeyya*. *Vikappayan*, in Sn.918, is translated by Saddhatissa as 'embellish,' (i.e., 'he should not embellish the self,') and by Norman (1992) as 'stay forming mental image,' (i.e., 'he would not stay forming mental images about himself.')

<sup>48</sup> PED says that this only appears in a negative form, *avikampamāna*, and renders it to be 'not hesitating,' 'settled,' 'well balanced' and 'resolved.' Saddhatissa translates *avikampamāna* to be 'there are not such thoughts,' and Norman to be simply 'there is no...'

<sup>49</sup> M.i.398.

follow; they cannot be in the state of tranquillity. The other way of holding views is that in which there is possibility of changing one for another for they approve and accept each other's views (*tañ c'eva diṭṭhiṃ pajahanti aññāñ ca diṭṭhiṃ na upādiyanti.*). Holding views like this, people need not be defensive. Since they do not need to be defensive, they do not dispute nor quarrel; they will see each other with the eyes of friendliness. The former way causes wrangling, quarrel and dispute whereas the latter is said to be harmonious. The latter way may be similar to Aggivessana's second attitude in which he says: "nothing is pleasing to me."<sup>50</sup> However Aggivessana does not hold the second view as a view. When he is asked by the Buddha, "This view of yours, Aggivessana, All is not pleasing me - is this view of yours not pleasing you?" (*yā... esā... diṭṭhi: sabbaṃ me na khamatīti, esā pi te diṭṭhi na khamatī ti.*), Aggivessana says: "If this view were pleasing to me, good Gotama, it is all the same [as pleasing as other views] (*esā ce me diṭṭhī... diṭṭhi khameyya, tam p'assa tādisameva, tam p'assa tādisameva*).<sup>51</sup> Elsewhere the Buddha says that he fully comprehends all but he is not subject to it,<sup>52</sup> and that: "view points, thus grasped and adhered to will lead to such-and-such destination in another world. This the Tathāgata knows, and more, but he is not attached to that knowledge. And being thus unattached he has experienced for himself perfect peace."<sup>53</sup> The problem and obstacles are not perception such as seeing, hearing or cognizing but rather the desire and passion arising out of things perceived. The path suggested is therefore the eradication of desire, not of perception: "The removal of desire and passion for pleasant things, seen heard or cognized is the sure path for realization of Nibbāna."<sup>54</sup> Whatever the interpretation of perception may be, it is

<sup>50</sup> M.i.498-499. Jayatilleke wants to translate the phrase '*sabbaṃ me na khamati*' to be 'I do not agree in any (view)' rather than 'nothing is pleasing me.' (Jayatilleke, p.215) I would think both of the translations would be all right since in this context '*khamati*' tends to denote attachment to views.

<sup>51</sup> A loose translation of this is:

The Buddha: is your view that "I do not hold any view" one of the views that you said you did not hold?

Aggivessana: My view that "I do not hold any view" is also a view.

<sup>52</sup> A.ii.23.

<sup>53</sup> D.i.22.

<sup>54</sup> Sn.1086.



obvious that mental construction or forming of an opinion on dhamma which causes craving is criticized and has to be eliminated.

The notion of no view presented here seems to cling to the middle way in which two extremes should be avoided; no view should be clung to or preferred. This may not imply any metaphysical ideal but rather focus on psychological effect, a radical elimination of attachment, even though the method of achieving the goal as suggested in *Atthakavagge* inevitably contradicts that of right view and itself. A possible reason behind these contradictory paths is that the target these passages aim at is probably those who, rather than taking views of truth, dispassion, superiority and merit in order to eliminate craving, instead grasp these views in a way that causes dispute, sorrow and unpeacefulness. This kind of interpretation then reminds one of a passage in *Alagaddūpamasutta*<sup>55</sup> where dhamma is said to be like a snake. If one grasps the snake in a wrong way he can be bitten to death by it. The other parable in the same sutta says that the raft of dhamma is used to cross over, not to retain (so that one can not go further). Therefore the notion of holding no view can be seen to be another suggested antidote for those who are poisoned by taking the medicine of dhamma in the wrong way.

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<sup>55</sup> M.i.135.

## Chapter 2

### Faith and Reason

Since the knowledge of impermanence, dukkha and anatta of the five aggregates are said to be the right view or healthy understanding for one to achieve Nibbāna, and even holding no view is maintained to be the efficient path to the goal, how do the disciples of the Buddha accept these teachings? Do they dogmatically accept the Buddha's teachings as they are on the basis of the Buddha's authority, out of faith, or on the ground of critical examination with their own reasoning and experience? In other words how does the Buddha or Buddhism expect people to accept his or its views of the truth and the path? What is the Buddhist foundation of truth?

To these problems, C.A.F. Rhys Davids is of the view that faith is a fundamentally important factor in Buddhism: "Years of study in Buddhism has shown me that for it faith is no less important than it is for all religions worthy of that name."<sup>1</sup> Kern refutes any existence of rationalism in Buddhism but the Buddha's authority; the Buddha's omniscience is the ground by which people can take his words to be trustworthy: "For Buddhism is professedly no rationalistic system, it being a superhuman (*uttarimanussa*) Law founded upon the decrees of an omniscient and infallible master."<sup>2</sup> Keith, in his section of the Authority, Intuition and Reason<sup>3</sup>, though he acknowledges the place of reason in Buddhism, maintains that faith is "the root of correct knowledge"<sup>4</sup> He says that since people cannot think out the doctrines of the Buddha by the independent light of

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<sup>1</sup> Wayfarer's Words, Vol. III, P.1124, quoted by Jayatilleke, p.383.

<sup>2</sup> Kern, P.50.

<sup>3</sup> Keith, P.33-39.

<sup>4</sup> Keith, P.33, 34.

reason, they have to hear them taught and explained. Because of the limit of human knowledge which is "by no means equal to that of the knowledge of the Buddha,"<sup>5</sup> one has to accept his words with faith. Keith thinks that faith is "an indispensable preliminary" for any Buddhist disciple who wants to attain the goal. To him faith is a means by which people can cross the river of existence. He even says that investigation is forbidden by the Buddha for it does not lead one to salvation.<sup>6</sup> To support his view that the Buddha is the ultimate source of all true knowledge, that his words are trustworthy and that faith is a means of salvation, Keith refers to (1) the *Aṭṭhakanipātasutta* where the Buddha is depicted as the great source of knowledge, like the granary from which people can obtain corn: "Whatsoever be well spoken, all that is the word of the Exalted One."<sup>7</sup> (2) In the *Kevaddhasutta*, the Buddha is said to know things that even gods are ignorant about: "... you have been as far as the Brahmā world searching for an answer to your question and not finding it, and now you come back to me [the Buddha says.]"<sup>8</sup> (3) In *Udāna*, the Buddha gives an analogy of the blind men who describe their knowledge of an elephant after being asked to touch different parts of it. Every one of them gives a different view. The one who touches the head says that an elephant is like a pot; the ear, a winnowing-basket; the tusk, a plough share; the trunk, a plough; the body, a granary; the foot, a pillar; the back, a mortar; the tail, a pestle; the tuft of the tail, a besom. They disagree and argue with each other, each saying that he is right and the others are wrong. The Buddha then concludes:

Just so are these wanderers [those who are reported to be quarreling and disputing with each other on the existence of self and the world] holding other views, blind, unseeing, knowing not the profitable, knowing not the unprofitable. They know not dhamma. They know not what is not dhamma. In their ignorance of these things they are

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<sup>5</sup> Keith, P.36.

<sup>6</sup> Keith, P.36.

<sup>7</sup> A.iv.163f.

<sup>8</sup> D.i.222-223.

by nature quarrelsome, wrangling and disputatious, each maintaining it is thus and thus...

O how they cling and wrangle, some who claim  
Of brāhmin and recluse the honoured name!  
For, quarreling, each to his view they cling.  
Such folk see only one side of a thing.<sup>9</sup>

Keith also refers to the passages in *Divyāvadāna*<sup>10</sup> and *Angugattanikāya*<sup>11</sup> to support the view that the Buddha's words are trustworthy. In the former sutta the Buddha is said not to lie even though the sky can possibly fall and the earth mount to the heaven. In the latter sutta, the Buddha says that the whole purity of his act of words is a fact that needs not to be cloaked, and that the well-proclaimed dhamma of the Tathāgata's is blameless.

For the view that faith is a means by which one can cross the river of existence, Keith refers to the five spheres of release (*vimuttāyatanāni*)<sup>12</sup>. It is said that release can be achieved either by (1) partaking of both the spirit and the letter of dhamma, (2) learning dhamma only by heart and teaching it to others, (3) repeating dhamma after having heard and learned it, (4) pondering, reflecting on dhamma as it is being heard and learned, and (5) obtaining concentration from attention and right reflection. He also refers to *Dīghanikāya* and *Milindapañha* to support this view:

Here, Ānanda, this Ariyan disciple is possessed of unwavering confidence in the Buddha..., Dhamma..., Sangha... He is possessed of morality dear to the Noble Ones, unbroken, without defect, unspotted, without inconsistency, liberating, uncorrupted, and conducive to concentration.<sup>13</sup>

By faith the flood is crossed,  
By diligence the sea;  
By vigour ill is passed,

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<sup>9</sup> Ud.68-69.

<sup>10</sup> Cowell, P.272.

<sup>11</sup> A.iv.82.

<sup>12</sup> A.iii.21. The whole sutta also occurs at D.iii.241.

<sup>13</sup> D.ii.93.

By wisdom cleansed is he.<sup>14</sup>

La Vallée Poussin's view is more moderate than that of Kern and Keith. To him faith and reason have equal emphasis in Buddhism; both of them are efficient paths leading to the goal:

Mystics sink into non-intellectual meditation and happily reach the end. Rationalists, by dialectical processes, reduce the soul and universe to a void, and are 'liberated' from existence through the conviction of nothingness. The simple of heart simply believe in the word of Buddha, in his qualities, in his miraculous, power of salvation, and belief in the incomprehensible brings to them incomprehensible fruits. All obtain calm, 'desirelessness' (*vītaragatra*), i.e. *nirvāṇa* here and hereafter. And I doubt if there is a Buddhist, I mean an enlightened one, who is not something of a mystic, of a rationalist, and of a believer.<sup>15</sup>

Like Keith, La Vallée Poussin also supports his view of the important position of faith in Buddhism by citing the passages depicting the Buddha as a great source of knowledge (like a large granary)<sup>16</sup>, as knowing things that even gods are ignorant about<sup>17</sup>, as one whose knowledge is not like the blind men who see only one side of things.<sup>18</sup> There is a passage quoted by La Vallée Poussin in which there is established a threat to those who do not believe in the Buddha: "The law saves the believer and destroys the unbeliever."<sup>19</sup> To La Vallée Poussin, since the Buddha is called omniscient, the one who knows the nature of everything, his words are always trustworthy and should be believed without inquiry. The Buddha's well spoken and trustworthy words are founded on the basis of his moral perfection, being free from desire, hatred and misconception, and his experience of salvation. Although faith is not the highest power or virtue compared to intuition or insight, to La Vallée Poussin, it is "the root of correct view." He adds: "Before

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<sup>14</sup> Mil.36. This verse is quoted from S.i.214 and also occurred in Sn.184.

<sup>15</sup> La Vallée Poussin, P.42-43.

<sup>16</sup> La Vallée Poussin, P.36. Most of La Vallée Poussin's quotes are occurred in Keith's article. His quotes are not given references whereas Keith's are.

<sup>17</sup> La Vallée Poussin, P.34.

<sup>18</sup> La Vallée Poussin, P.34.

<sup>19</sup> La Vallée Poussin, P.35. He does not give a reference to this quote.

meditating upon or comprehending truths, it is necessary to hear them and to believe them." By faith one "purifies the soul, suppresses or dismisses concupiscence, doubt, hatred, sloth, and pride, as a miraculous gem purifies turbid water." With faith one can consequently cross the river of existence to the shore of nibbāna. He says that there are enough references to prove that there are Arahants who are liberated by means of faith.

La Vallée Poussin recognizes the role of reason in Buddhism but argues that it is not the only way to the goal for there is not any assertion stating that intuition, mystic insight, and trances are the only way to "a right view" and to salvation. He maintains the co-existence of faith and reason by saying that "the letter of the scripture must be respected but the Buddha himself has enforced the duty of understanding the law."<sup>20</sup> In accepting the equal importance of faith and reason in Buddhism, La Vallée Poussin admits the contradiction of Buddhist texts in which there are permitted at the same time the principles of 'libre exam' and of faith. To reconcile the conflicting statements in Buddhist texts, he admits the pragmatic nature of Buddhism, the therapeutic device for the disease of desire, hatred and misconception: "Buddha's institute is not a darśana, a philosophical system, but a yāna, a vehicle, or mārga, a road to salvation, a method leading to nirvāṇa, a therapeutic of desire, i.e. of the sole obstacle to nirvāṇa."<sup>21</sup> To him the Buddha's well-said word (*subhāsita*) is not only the good word but also true in the sufficient way that it can lead to only one goal, that is salvation.

Although accepting the valuable virtue of faith and reason, La Vallée Poussin maintains that they are not the highest virtues compared to intuition or insight. He makes a distinction between two kinds of knowledge, the knowledge endowed with discursive intellect and the knowledge associated with freedom, i.e. the freedom of desire and distress. Although intellectual knowledge achieved by reasoning is said to be the preliminary, it has nothing to do with the state where one experiences the truth of freedom

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<sup>20</sup> La Vallée Poussin, P.40.

<sup>21</sup> La Vallée Poussin, P.39.

from desire and distress. Insight knowledge or the experience of release is only found through meditation, trance and concentration (*samādhi*, *dhyāna*, *samāpatti*) where the intellectual notion falls into the background.

Jayatilleke, in *Early Buddhist Theory of Knowledge*,<sup>22</sup> differs in opinion from Rhys Davids, Kern, Keith and La Vallée Poussin; he shows that there isn't any notion of faith in Buddhism nor in the Buddha's claim of authority as they have been demonstrated. He disproves their claims as misinterpretations and their textual evidence as mistranslations.

Of the passage in the *Kevaḍḍhasutta* telling that Brahmā does not know the answer to the question, Jayatilleke says that "the fact that he [the Buddha] answers it is not intended to imply that the Buddha was omniscient but only that Brahmā was ignorant."<sup>23</sup> He refers to the *Tevijja-vacchagottasutta*<sup>24</sup> where the Buddha refuses to be called omniscient; he claims only that he is the man with three knowledges (*tevijja*), that is the knowledge of his former habitations, clairvoyance and the knowledge of the destruction of the cankers. To Jayatilleke, the *kevaḍḍhasutta* only reinforces the Buddha's claim to possess a threefold knowledge, for elsewhere it is said that Brahmā's memory is defective (*tassa... sā sati mutṭhā*),<sup>25</sup> that "there are three classes which you do not know, do not see, but which I know and see."<sup>26</sup>

The implication of the Buddha's total vision of reality in the parable of the blind men, to Jayatilleke, is not the same as a claim to omniscience. The Buddha just illustrates the fact that the other religious teachers have only partial vision of reality.

The saying "whatsoever well spoken is the words of the Buddha" Jayatilleke interprets as meaning that "those well-spoken utterances made by the disciples of the

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<sup>22</sup> Jayatilleke, p.376f.

<sup>23</sup> Jayatilleke, p.378.

<sup>24</sup> M.i.482

<sup>25</sup> M.i.329.

<sup>26</sup> M.i.329.

Buddha at that time and place when the Buddha had appeared are the utterances of the Buddha.” He argues that since Uttara merely repeats his master’s words at being asked, Uttara says that these ‘well-spoken’ words are said by the Buddha. Jayatilleke disproves not only the Buddha’s omniscience as claimed directly by the Buddha but also as claimed by his disciples in similar statements.

Among the ten cognitive powers (*dasa balāni*), and almost one hundred epithets attributed to the Buddha, there is no synonym for omniscience. The ten cognitive powers are as follows: The Buddha comprehends as it really is (1) causal occasion as such and what is not causal occasion as such. (2) the acquiring of deeds for oneself, past, future, and present, both in their causal occasion and their result, (3) the course leading to all bourns, (4) the world (of the *khandha*, *āyatana* and *dhātu*) with its various and diverse features, (5) the divers characters of beings, (6) the higher or lower state of the faculties of other people and beings (7) the defilement and purification of, and the emergence from attainment in meditation, deliverance and concentration, (8) his manifold former habitations, (9) that beings are mean, excellent, comely, ugly, well-going, ill-going according to the consequences of their deeds, and (10) that by the destruction of the cankers, he enters into and abides in freedom of mind, freedom through wisdom that are cankerless, having realized them here and now through his own knowledge.<sup>27</sup> In these ten cognitive powers, there is not found any synonym nor implication of omniscience. And in one hundred epithets of the Buddha, there is complete absence of the term *sabbaññū* (all knowing) and *sabbadassāvi* (all seeing).<sup>28</sup>

Though there appears in *Paṭisambhidāmagga* and the *Kathāvatthu* the term *sabbaññū*, Jayatilleke is of the view that this omniscience attributed to the Buddha was not established until the latest stratum in the Pāli canon by the disciples far removed in time from the Buddha himself. Even, he argues, if the Buddha is depicted as omniscient (based

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<sup>27</sup> M.i.69-71.

<sup>28</sup> M.i.386.



on the later texts), it does not mean that the Buddha claims authority for his teaching on the ground of his omniscience. Jayatilleke wants to treat the notion of faith in two strata of time. The early stratum should be valued in the spirit of *Kālāmasutta* where critical examination of the truth is respected, whereas the later stratum is not valued in the spirit of *Kālāmasutta*. Jayatilleke also criticizes La Vallée Poussin for including *Milindapañha* as reference to argue about 'la vieille doctrine bouddhique'.<sup>29</sup> He maintains that the Buddha's omniscience was not claimed until the composition of *Vibhaṅga*.<sup>30</sup>

Moreover, Jayatilleke rejects any notion of the Buddha's authority based on other divine sources. He argues that '*evam me suttam*' (thus have I heard) is not asserted by the Buddha but rather the words of Ānanda, who simply reports what he has heard from the Buddha. Moreover, the Buddha claims that what he talks about is not what he has heard from other recluses or brahmans but what he knows, sees and observes by himself;<sup>31</sup> for him there is no teacher.<sup>32</sup>

The Buddha does not only not claim to be omniscient but also criticizes those who claim so. He criticizes on omniscience on the grounds of its limitation of things that one can know, and on the impossibility of knowing and seeing everything all at once and at the same time. The Buddha rejects those who claim omniscience, but are like everyone else, in that there are some pieces of information that they do not know and they have to ask; they sometimes also get unsatisfactory results because of their ignorance:

He enters an empty place, and he does not obtain alms food, and a dog bites him, and he encounters a fierce elephant, and he encounters a fierce horse, and he encounters a fierce bullock, and he asks a woman and a man their name and clan, and he asks the name of a village or a market town and the way. He, being one who asks, 'How was this?' answers, 'I had to enter an empty place, therefore I entered; I had to obtain no almsfood, therefore I obtained none; (someone) had to be bitten by a dog, therefore I was bitten by one;

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<sup>29</sup> Jayatilleke, p.377.

<sup>30</sup> Jayatilleke, p.380.

<sup>31</sup> M.iii.186; It.59, 60, 74.

<sup>32</sup> M.i.171.

(someone) had to encounter a fierce elephant, horse and bullock, therefore I encountered them; (someone) had to ask a woman and a man their name and clan, therefore I asked; (someone) had to ask the name of a village and market town and the way, therefore I asked.<sup>33</sup>

When the Buddha is asked by King Pasenadi if he ever claims that no recluse or brahman is omniscient, he refuses to say any such words but rather that "there is neither a recluse nor a brahman who at one and the same time can know all, can see all — this situation does not exist."<sup>34</sup>

Jayatilleke criticizes La Vallée Poussin, Keith and Rhys Davids for their misleading statements and agrees with Dr. Ludowyk's interpretation concerning *saddhā*. According to Jayatilleke, Gyomroi-Ludowyk attempts to make a distinction between the notion of faith in Buddhism and Christianity. To Gyomroi-Ludowyk, *saddhā* having the meaning of trust and confidence, does not mean that the Buddha expects people to accept everything without contradiction or that he prohibits criticism and judgment. Although Gyomroi-Ludowyk recognizes that the new value of *saddhā* has taken place as the *bhakti* cult has developed, she says that 'if in using the word 'faith' for *saddhā* in translating, one restricts oneself to its meaning of 'confidence, trust, belief', no objection can be raised to it."<sup>35</sup>

Gyomroi-Ludowyk ranks the value of knowledge above faith by referring to the passage where the Buddha praises his disciples for their knowledge and not for their faith,<sup>36</sup> where faith is said to be the hindrance to release,<sup>37</sup> and not the characteristic of an Arahant.<sup>38</sup>

There is found other rating of knowledge over faith in the dialogue of Nigaṇṭha Nātaputta and Citta where Citta says that he does not accept the Buddha's teaching with

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<sup>33</sup> M.i.519.

<sup>34</sup> (Na'tthi so samaṇo vā brāhmaṇo vā yo sakideva sabbañ ñassatī sabbañ dakkhīti, n'etaṃ ṭhānam vijjatīti) M.ii.127.

<sup>35</sup> Jayatilleke, p.384.

<sup>36</sup> S.i.191.

<sup>37</sup> S.iii.119f.

<sup>38</sup> S.iii.82, 160; S.v.195, 205, 434.

faith. Nigaṇṭha Nātaputta admits that knowledge is better than faith, and Citta says that knowing and seeing thus, why should he accept this on the ground of faith?<sup>39</sup> The General Sīha says that he does not accept the four visible results of almsgiving out of faith but by his knowledge.<sup>40</sup> A monk who accompanies Subhūti in coming to see the Buddha is the one who starts with faith but attains freedom by insight and his own comprehension.<sup>41</sup>

There are at least ten lists of virtue where faith is leading and *pañña*, the wisdom which is associated with freedom, almost always mentioned last. This list may reflect one's spiritual development in which knowledge is the achievement one aims at and faith is a preliminary requirement:

1. *saddhā* (faith), *sīla* (ethical conduct), *suta* (learning), *cāga* (giving), *pañña* (intuitive wisdom) (A.ii.66, iii.6, 44, 181, iv.270, 271, 284, 288, M.i.465, ii.180, iii.99.)
2. *saddhā* (faith), *virīya* (energy), *sati* (mindfulness), *saṃādhi* (concentration), *pañña* (intuitive wisdom) (M.i.164, iii.99.)
3. *saddhā* (faith), *sīla* (ethical conduct), *cāga* (giving), *pañña* (intuitive wisdom), *paṭibhāna* (ready speech) (A.v.96.)
4. *saddho* (faith), *appābādha* (freedom from illness), *asaṭṭha* (detachment), *āraḍḍhavīriya* (power of understanding), *paññavā* (richness of wisdom) (M.ii.128.)
5. *saddhā* (faith), *hirimā* (modesty), *ottāpi* (being scrupulous), *akodhano* (no wrathfulness), *paññavā* (richness in wisdom) (S.iv.243.)
6. *saddhā* (faith), *hiri* (conscientiousness), *ottāpi* (fear of blame), *virīya* (energy), *pañña* (intuitive wisdom) (A.iii.4, 9, 352, v.123.)
7. *saddho* (faith), *araḍḍhavīriya* (power of understanding), *upaṭṭhitasati* (aroused mindfulness), *saṃāhito* (fitness), *paññavā* (richness in wisdom) (A.v.329, 333, 335.)

<sup>39</sup> S.iv.138.

<sup>40</sup> A.iii.39. It is of six visible results said in A.iv.82.

<sup>41</sup> A.v.340.

8. *saddho* (faith), *hiri* (conscientiousness), *ottāpi* (fear of blame), *bahussuta* (learning), *āradhaviya* (power of understanding), *upaṭṭhitasati* (aroused mindfulness), *paññavā* (rich in wisdom) (M.iii.23, A.ii.218, A.iv.23, 38.)

9. *saddho* (faith), *sīlava* (ethical conduct), *bahussuta paṭisallīna* (learning), *āradhaviya* (power of understanding), *satimā* (mindfulness), *paññavā* (richness in wisdom) (A.iv.85.)

10. *saddho* (faith), *sīla* (ethical conduct), *bahussuta* (learning), *suvaca* (well speaking), *kalyānamitta* (friendliness), *āradhaviya* (power of understanding), *upaṭṭhita-sati* (aroused mindfulness), *santutṭha* (contentment), *appiccha* (little desiring), *sammādiṭṭhika* (holding right view) (A.v.153, 154.)

If it is the case that faith is only a preliminary requirement to the achievement of intuitive knowledge, then faith cannot be said to be more emphasized than *paññā*.

As the verb ‘to know’ (*Jānāti*) also means ‘to recognize,’ ‘experience,’ ‘find,’ ‘infer,’ ‘conclude,’ ‘distinguish,’ ‘state,’ ‘define,’ and *ñāṇa* (knowledge and recognition) also means ‘intelligence’ and ‘insight’,<sup>42</sup> the right knowledge of something would be a knowledge, intelligence or insight resulting from an act of defining, distinguishing, inferring and concluding. The meaning of *paññā* is almost the same as *ñāṇa*: “For this, monk, is the highest ariyan wisdom, that is to say the knowledge of the complete destruction of anguish” (*paramā ariyā paññā = sabbadukkhakkhaye ñāṇam*).<sup>43</sup> And it is said that the cankers (*āsavā*) are got rid of in the case of one who thus knows and thus sees (*evaṃ jānato evaṃ passato*).<sup>44</sup> Therefore this *ñāṇa* (knowledge, experience, inferring or defining) or *paññā* (wisdom knowledge) is highly valued compared to faith. Although faith is a preliminary requirement, it is the understanding or intuitive wisdom that has capability to penetrate the truth:

<sup>42</sup> PTS Pali-English Dictionary.

<sup>43</sup> M.iii.245.

<sup>44</sup> M.i.38.

With faith born he draws close; drawing close he sits down near by; sitting down near by he lends ear; lending ear he hears dhamma; having heard dhamma he remembers it; he tests the meaning of the things he remembers; while testing the meaning the things are approved of; if there is approval of the things desire is born; with desire born he makes an effort; having made an effort he weighs it up; having weighed it up he strives; being self-resolute he realises with his person the highest truth itself; and penetrating it by means of intuitive wisdom, he sees.<sup>45</sup>

In La Vallée Poussin's and Keith's mistranslation of the text as Jayatilleke has pointed out, the notion of *saddhā* is seriously misleading; the translation establishes the notion of threatening to destroy to those who do not believe in the words of the Buddha. By taking *saddham* to denote the person, i.e. 'the believer' or 'one who has faith' La Vallée Poussin translates the Pāli passage as "the law saves the believer and destroys the unbeliever", and Keith as "The teaching of the Buddha saves him who has faith but destroys the faithless." Jayatilleke, on the other hand, takes *saddha-sapadam* to be 'the wealth of faith' and *asaddham*, 'lack of faith', for, he says, *assaddhiyam* always stands for 'disbelief' and never for 'disbeliever'. He then suggests another alternate translation: "It destroys lack of faith and promotes faith in the religion..."<sup>46</sup>

Jayatilleke admits the important place of faith in Buddhism but tries to show that faith is not similar to that as understood in Western religions where it means to accept something which is unexplainable. To him, therefore, *saddhā* in Buddhism does not mean belief in something that is unexplained or without understanding but rather a result of seeing, hearing, investigating, understanding and reasoning.<sup>47</sup>

<sup>45</sup> M.ii.173.

<sup>46</sup> Jayatilleke, p.385. According to Jayatilleke, the original text found in Dīghanikāya Commentary is as follows: '... *sabbadevamanussānaṃ imasmiṃ dhamme assaddhiyaṃ vināseti, saddhāsampadaṃ uppādeti. Ten'etaṃ vuccati: vināsayati assaddhaṃ saddhaṃ vaḍḍheti sāsane evaṃ me suttaṃ icc'evaṃ vadaṃ Gotamasāvako*' (D.A.i.31)

<sup>47</sup> Jayatilleke, p.386. He calls *ākāravati saddhā* to be 'rational faith', and *aveccappasāda* to be 'faith born of understanding' for he presumes that *avecca* is formed from *ava* and present participle of *√i*, 'to go,' 'understand.'

If investigation and understanding of the Buddha's statement are a must to verify whether it is true or false, what are the criteria for one to verify the truth? On what basis one can rely to judge whether another's statement is right? The attitude being suggested in *Kālāmasutta* is that one should not commit oneself to a view or statement prior to verification: "Kālāmas, when you know for yourselves: These things are unprofitable, these things are blameworthy, these things censured by the intelligent; these things, when performed and undertaken, conduce to loss and sorrow, — then indeed do ye reject them."<sup>48</sup>

The attitude suggested in *Kālāmasutta* is not to tell one to reject all views altogether, or that one should not consider others' views and rely entirely on one's own experience to search for truth. It rather suggests that before accepting or rejecting a statement which is claimed to be supreme or the only truth, one should carefully examine that statement. As a statement may turn out to be true or false, investigating and understanding is a safeguard against the risk of accepting something that is false, and against the failure to experience the truth by rejecting a claim without investigating. As shown in the chart, the second and the fourth attitudes are encouraged by the Buddha:

1. Accepting a statement + without investigating -> being at risk.
2. Accepting a statement + investigating -> safe
3. Rejecting a statement + without investigating -> missing a chance to experience  
the truth.
4. Rejecting a statement + investigating -> not missing a chance to experience  
the truth.

The first and the third attitudes are condemned by the Buddha: "Without testing or plumbing the matter, she shows her faith in things unbelievable, her disbelief in things believable; and she rejects the gift of faith."<sup>49</sup>

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<sup>48</sup> A.i.189.

<sup>49</sup> A.iii.139.

For verification of the truth, since the trustworthiness of the sayings is associated with the person by whom the sayings are spoken, inquiry into quality of the speaker is also required. It is said that before approaching and listening to a teacher, one should examine whether the teacher's mind is obsessed with greed, aversion and confusion that make the teacher claim that he knows or sees when actually does not know nor see, and that make him incite others so that all lead to a woe and ill.<sup>50</sup>

In *Vīmaṇsakasutta*<sup>51</sup> it is suggested that five factors in the teacher (in this case, the Buddha) should be looked into. One should see if (1) the impure state of mind exists in the Buddha; (2) for long time; (3) if he has a bad reputation, or is arrogant about his good reputation;<sup>52</sup> (4) if he has achieved fearlessness, and (5) detachment from sense pleasures. And it is said that in doing such "does there come to be study of the Tathāgata's dhamma, and thus does the Tathāgata come to be well studied in the proper manner."<sup>53</sup>

The knowledge one has acquired after this investigation is also called *saddhā* (faith, trust, confidence,) faith out of understanding, rational faith (*ākāravatī saddhā*), and faith based on vision (*dassanamūlikā*).<sup>54</sup> In this sense of *saddhā* then it can be certainly translated as 'trust' or 'confidence.' It can be called 'faith' or 'belief' in a Buddhist sense which is not in terms of accepting something on the ground of authority, inexplicability, or prohibited investigation. This "rational" faith is identical with *aveccappasāda*<sup>55</sup> (faith out of understanding), and obviously contrasts with groundless faith (*amūlikā saddhā*), mentioned in *Caṅkīśutta*,<sup>56</sup> which is condemned by the Buddha.

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<sup>50</sup> M.ii.171-173.

<sup>51</sup> M.i.317-320.

<sup>52</sup> my interpretation; I.B. Horner's translation is 'if there is perils of his fame or renown.'

<sup>53</sup> M.i.320.

<sup>54</sup> M.i.320.

<sup>55</sup> M.i.37, 320.

<sup>56</sup> M.ii.170.

Although *saddhā* has been used overlappingly with the terms *bhatti* (devotion), *pema* (affection) and *pasāda* (appreciation),<sup>57</sup> it is not hereby said that *saddhā* is assimilated with the latter, for *bhatti* and *pema* are mentioned with condemnation of their negative effects. *Bhatti* denotes devotion, attachment and fondness<sup>58</sup> such as a bad man has toward a bad man and a good man has toward a good man.<sup>59</sup> Although *pema* is said to be a possible way to heaven,<sup>60</sup> it can deteriorate: "... be careful lest even that little faith of his, even that little regard [*pema*], deteriorate."<sup>61</sup> Since another's treatment may cause one disappointments, *pema* can have its negative effect; hatred can arise out of affection.<sup>62</sup> It is a disadvantage to a person if he devotes himself too much to another.<sup>63</sup> However, *pasāda* as a result of examination with one's intuitive wisdom, has close meaning with *saddhā*: "from each bit that he would examine with intuitive wisdom [*paññāya*] as to the meaning of this disquisition on dhamma, he would get delight, he would get satisfaction of the mind [or mental appreciation—*cetaso pasādaṃ*]."<sup>64</sup> In *Vatthūpamasutta*, it appears to be the unwavering confidence [*avessapasāda*] in the quality of the Buddha arisen out of thinking, knowing and experiencing what the Buddha has said:

When, monks, the monk thinks that greed and covetousness is a defilement of mind... that indolence is a defilement of mind, and having known it thus, the defilement of the mind that is indolence is got rid of, he becomes possessed of unwavering confidence in the Awakened One and thinks: 'Thus indeed is he the Lord, perfected, wholly self-awakened, endowed with knowledge and right conduct, well farer, knower of the world(s), incomparable charioteer of men

<sup>57</sup> "Herein... a person is uncertain in faith, uncertain in devotion, uncertain in goodness." (*idha... ekacco puggalo ittarasaddho hoti, ittarabhaddhā ittarapemo ittarapasādo* - A.iii.165) Note that *pasāda* is translated by E.M.Hare to be 'goodness' whereas PTS dictionary (1) 'brightness, purity,' (2) 'joy, satisfaction, happy or good mind, virtue, faith,' (3) 'repose, allayment, serenity.' I agree with Jayatilleke to render it to be 'mental appreciation' or simply 'appreciation.'

<sup>58</sup> PTS Dictionary.

<sup>59</sup> M.iii.21, 23.

<sup>60</sup> "All those who have enough faith in me, enough affection, are bound for heaven" M.i.142.

<sup>61</sup> M.i.444.

<sup>62</sup> A.ii.213.

<sup>63</sup> A.iii.270.

<sup>64</sup> M.i.114.



to be tamed, teacher of devas and mankind, the Awakened One, the Lord.<sup>65</sup>

The same thing is said for achieving the unwavering confidence in the *dhamma* which is well taught, self-realized and leading onwards, and in *sangha* which is of good conduct, upright and worthy.

As demonstrated, there is a lot of emphasis on the investigation of the teacher before accepting his statements, Buddhism therefore appears to provoke doubt from a student. On the other hand, in *Cetokhilasutta*, doubting about the teacher, his teachings, Order, training and being angry with one's fellow Brahma-farers are considered to be the five mental hindrances or obstacles.<sup>66</sup> Though, nevertheless, doubts are said to be the mental hindrance, these doubts are apparently eliminated not by blind faith but rather by conviction which arises from critical observation and evaluation. Stating doubt to be a mental hindrance does not mean to say that critical observation and evaluation are prohibited. It simply means that the unclear state of mind may not lead one to the goal as one desires; in not investigating, one can risk an unexpected result.

When it is said that examining the conduct and quality of a person and the validity of one's statement are criteria by which one can judge the truth of his sayings, it raises the next important problem, i.e. what are other criteria, in turn, one can use to judge the conduct or quality of a person, or validity of one's statement. Whatever criteria one may find in the Pāli canon to be the ground for deciding whether one has good conduct or whether one's statement is valid, there seems to appear a requirement for another criterion. This is the problem put forward by a 150CE Buddhist scholar, Nāgārjuna, and is called infinite regress (*anavasthā*):

If *pramāṇas* [criteria of true knowledge] are established through other *pramāṇas*, then there is an infinite series (*anavasthā*).

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<sup>65</sup> M.i.37.

<sup>66</sup> M.i.101.

If you think that the 'objects of true cognition' (*prameya*) are established through the 'means of true cognition' (*pramāṇa*) and that those 'means of true cognition' are established through other 'means of true cognition', then there follows an infinite series — what harm is there if there is an infinite series? —

Neither the beginning nor the middle nor the end can be established. If there is an infinite series, the beginning cannot be established. — Why? — Because those *pramāṇas* are established through other *pramāṇas*, and those others again through other *pramāṇas*. Thus there is no beginning. [And] if there is no beginning, how can there be a middle? how can there be an end?

Consequently, the statement that those *pramāṇas* are established through other *pramāṇas* is not valid.<sup>67</sup>

A definite criterion for a valid investigation seems to be impossible to established here. If self-evidence of a criterion is suggested the defect is still there, for there will be self-evidence for any statement; hence there is no need for criteria of verification after all.

In a final observation, it is evident that the Buddha greatly emphasizes observation and investigation. There is also insistence on faith but this faith is understood in the Buddhist sense of trust and confidence. This trust and confidence are a result of critical observation and examination, not simply an acceptance of something which is based on tradition, authority, inexplicability or prohibited investigation. Although there is a logical defect (i.e. infinite regress) in determination of a definite criterion, it is still safer to investigate a statement before accepting or refusing it than accepting it without any investigation. Moreover, the Buddha's proposition regarding truth does not intend to fix any definite criterion but rather criticizes currently existent criteria which the Buddha considers invalid, risky and unworthy; he then simply suggests certain criteria by which, he thinks, the truth is more safeguarded.

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<sup>67</sup> Bhattacharya, P.115-116. (*Vigrahavyāvartani*, verse 32)

## Chapter 3

### Buddhist attitude toward tradition, reasoning and experience

The Buddhist attitudes represented in the preceding chapter may lead one to the conclusion that the Buddha's teaching is based on mere reasoning and that the Buddha is a reasoner or logician. The validity of this conclusion depends on what is meant by the term reason or logic. Nevertheless, there is some evidence indicating that the Buddha's teaching is not based merely on "reasoning" and the Buddha is not a "reasoner" nor a "logician."

It would be safe to say that the Buddha's teaching is rational in terms of not being dogmatic, mystical, metaphysical, divine revelation, or supernatural authority. And the Buddha's teaching is not based on reasoning simply for the sake of gossiping and outwitting opponents. This observation is credited on the account of the Buddha's criticism of the ten grounds of claiming knowledge. In *Āṅguttara-nikāya* the Buddha outlines ten possible ways of claiming knowledge, none of which is acceptable or satisfactory to him:

... be ye not misled by report [*anussavena*] or tradition [*paramparāya*] or hearsay [*itikirāya*]. Be not misled by proficiency in the collections [*piṭakasampadānena*], not by mere logic or inference [*takkahetu, nayahetu*], nor after considering reasons [*ākāraparivitakkena*], nor after reflection on and approval of some theory [*ditthinijjhānakkhantiyā*], nor because it fits becoming [*bhavyarūpatāya*], nor out of respect for a recluse (who holds it) [*samaṇo no garu*]. But, Kālāmas, when you know for yourselves: These things are unprofitable, these things are blameworthy, these things are censured by the intelligent; these things, when performed and undertaken, conduce to loss and sorrow, — then indeed do ye reject them, Kālāmas.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> A.i.189. The same occurrence also found in A.ii.190.

Six of these claims are based on (1) report (*anussava*), (2) tradition (*paramparā*), (3) hearsay (*itikirā*), (4) accomplishment of the collections (*piṭakasampadāna*), (5) appearance of becoming (*bhavyarūpatā*) and (6) respect for an ascetic (*samaṇo garu*).

*Anussava*, a compound from *anu* and *sava* which comes from the root *śru*, is rendered by PTS Pali-English Dictionary to be “hearsay,” “report,” and “tradition.” We find different translations used by I.B. Horner and F.L. Woodward; *anussava* is translated as ‘report’ in G.S.II.200, M.L.S.II.199, 360, 400, and as ‘tradition’ in M.L.S.III.6, 20. *Itikirā* may be translated as ‘hearsay’ where it also means ‘gossip’ or ‘oral tradition.’ Another term, *itiha*, which has the same meaning with *itikirā* as well. These terms, *anussava*, *paramparā*, *itikirā*, *piṭakasampadāna*, and *itiha* appear to be used overlappingly as ‘report,’ ‘tradition,’ ‘hearsay,’ ‘gossip’ or ‘oral tradition.’

In *Caṅkīsutta* the Buddha criticizes *anussava* as being blind tradition and groundless faith. Bhāradvāja asks the Buddha’s opinion about the *mantra*<sup>2</sup> that is coming down from hearsay and tradition and being claimed by brahmans to be “the truth, all else is falsehood.”<sup>3</sup> The Buddha says that, according to Bhāradvāja, there is not a single brahman, brahman’s teachers at the present nor their teachers up to several generations nor even the former seer of the brahmans, the makers and preservers of *mantra*, who have said that they know this, they see this: “this alone is the truth, all else is falsehood.” Since no one has ever claimed to know or see the *mantra*, those who proclaim this *mantra* as the truth and all else as false are like a string of blind men (*andhaveṇupamaṃ*) whose faith is baseless (*amūlikā*).<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> *Mantra* is a Sanskrit word for Pāli *mantapada*. It means hymn or scripture statement. *Mantapada* also means *Veda*, according to MA.iii.424 (Horner 1957, p.359, note 2.)

<sup>3</sup> M.ii.169.

<sup>4</sup> *Seyyathāpi, Brāradvāja, andhaveṇi paramparā-saṃsattā, purimo pi na passati majjhimo pi na passati pacchimo pi na passati, - evaṃ eva kho, Brāradvāja, andhaveṇupamaṃ maññe brāhmaṇānaṃ bhāsitaṃ sampajjati; - purimo pi na passati majjhimo pi na passati pacchimo pi na passati. Taṃ kim maññasi, Brāradvāja? Nanu evaṃ sante brāhmaṇānaṃ amūlikā saddhā sapajjatīti?* (M.ii.170)

Another argument put forward by the Buddha to Vāseṭṭha and Bhāradvāja criticizes their groundless faith in the path leading to union with brahmā.<sup>5</sup> The Buddha says that since not a single brahman who is learned in the Three Vedas, or brahman's ancestors up to several generations, or even the brahmans who made and expounded the mantra have seen brahmā face to face, those brahmans cannot claim that they teach the path leading to union with *brahmā*. How can one want to be in union with someone when he or she never knows if that person exists. The Buddha gives an example of a man who says that he loves the most beautiful girl of the town when he has never seen that girl. Another example given is a man who is building a staircase for a palace when he has no idea if the palace exists.

A brahman named Subha comes to the Buddha and speaks of the five good virtues (*pañca dhamme*) that the brahmans have laid down.<sup>6</sup> The Buddha rejects this claim on the ground that even those brahmans who lay down the five good virtues, or their teachers up to several generations, do not know the result of practicing these virtues, how can one declare the result of these things? In this passage the Buddha maintains that a statement made by a man who has self-discipline and experience outweighs any report or hearsay.

Subha becomes angry with the Buddha when the Buddha compares those brahmans to a string of blind men.<sup>7</sup> He then says that there is a senior brahman named Pokkharasāti who said that an ordinary man (*manussabhū*) cannot know, see or realize the state of a further-man (*uttarimanussadhammā*) which is "the excellent knowledge and vision befitting the ariyans"<sup>8</sup>. The Buddha rules this out by arguing that since the brahman Pokkharasāti does not know the mind of other recluses and brahmans he cannot know that they do not know, see or realize the state of a further-man. Rejecting the notion of the supernatural state of mind of a supreme man, the Buddha replies to Pokkharasāti that an

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<sup>5</sup> D.i.325f.

<sup>6</sup> M.ii.197f.

<sup>7</sup> or he may angry by the fact that the Buddha does not accept what he has said.

<sup>8</sup> M.ii.200-203. (*kathaṃ hi nāma manussabhūto uttarimanussadhammā alamaryaññāḍassanavisesaṃ ñassati vādakkhissati vā sacchi vā karissatīti n'etaṃ ṭhānaṃ vijjatīti.*)

ordinary man cannot see, know or realize the state of further-men not because this state is beyond the ordinary mind but because an ordinary man is obstructed by five hindrances, i.e. (1) hindrance of desire for sense-pleasure, (2) hindrance of malevolence, (3) hindrance of sloth and torpor, (4) hindrance of restlessness and worry, and (5) hindrance of doubt.

It may be true that these five hindrances make the Buddha's knowledge and vision (*ñāṇadassana*) "deep, difficult to see, difficult to understand."<sup>9</sup> And when it is said that there is nothing by which one can measure a person who has attained Nibbāna,<sup>10</sup> and that Form, Feeling, Perception, Activities and Consciousness cannot be taken to measure the Tathāgata's existence after death,<sup>11</sup> it does not mean to express a mystical or supernatural state of mind that an ordinary man cannot possibly reach. It rather tends to say that when a man is hindered by such obstacles as desire, malevolence, sloth, torpor, restlessness, worry and doubt, his five aggregates cannot be taken to measure an Arahant or a Tathāgata who is in a state of mind where all desires are extinguished. If that is true then this being "immeasurable" of an Arahant or a Tathāgata does not impose a mystical theory nor supernatural authority on Buddhism.

The Buddha also rejects the grounds of good memorization (*sussatam*) as a valid source of knowledge on which report, hearsay, collection or tradition rely on:

And again, Sandaka, some teacher here depends on report [*anussaviko*], holds to report [*anussavasacco*] for his 'truths,' he teaches dhamma according to report, according to hearsay [*itihīha*] and tradition [*paramparā*], according to the authority of the collections [*piṭakasampadāya*]. If a teacher, Sandaka, depends on report, holds to report for his 'truths,' he remembers (part) well and he remembers (part) badly, and is both right and wrong. Wherefore, Sandaka, an intelligent person reflects thus: 'This worthy teacher depends on report... and wrong'. Having realised that this brahma-faring is comfortless, he goes away uninterested in this Brahma-faring.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> M.i.167; D.i.17.

<sup>10</sup> Sn.1076.

<sup>11</sup> A.iv.376.

<sup>12</sup> M.i.520.

As one can see there are four alternative possibilities of report. The fact of being well or badly remembered is not correlated to the nature of truth or falsity of that report; it is not a satisfactory ground of knowledge:

- (1) Well remembered a report may be true.
- (2) Well remembered it may be false.
- (3) Badly remembered it may be true.
- (4) Badly remembered it may be false.

Moreover, it is said that though a tradition is well believed (*susaddhanitaṃ*), well inclined (*surucitaṃ*), well reported (*svānussutaṃ*), it can turn out to be empty (*rittaṃ*), void (*tuccitaṃ*) and false (*mūsa*). On the other hand, a tradition which is not well believed, not well inclined, not well report may turn out to be factual (*bhūtaṃ*) and true (*tucchaṃ*).<sup>13</sup> This attitude can be said to be rational in the sense of not being dogmatic.

To say that the Buddha's teaching does not rely on report or tradition does not mean that he altogether rejects tradition or its value. While on one hand, he insists on the careful examination of a report or hearsay, as it lacks a valid source of knowledge, on the other hand, he recognizes the ethical value, virtue and honesty inherent in tradition:

The sages of ancient times, possessed of self-control and restrained mind, abandoning the fivefold sensual pleasures, led a life for their own welfare.

The brahmins of ancient times had no cattle, neither gold nor corn. Learning was wealth and corn for them; they protected this divine treasure.

The brahmins were neither injured nor conquered. They were protected by virtue. No one ever opposed at the entrance of any household.

Formerly the brahmins practised celibacy from their youth up to their forty-eighth year. They were engaged in search of learning and good conduct.

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<sup>13</sup> M.ii.169-170.

They praised chasity, morality, integrity, amiability, penance, gentleness, non-violence and forbearance.

They give food, strength, beauty, health - knowing these benefits, they did not kill cattle...<sup>14</sup>

*Itikirā* (hearsay, gossip, oral tradition) and *itihītiha* (literally means 'so and so talk') having synonymous meanings as *anussava* and *paramparā* are also rejected by the Buddha. It is said that the Buddha does not proclaim the truth based on hearsay (*itiha*),<sup>15</sup> and that "an elder is said to have attained and realized the dhamma which is not based on *itiha*.<sup>16</sup>

The sixth claim of knowledge based on respect for an ascetic is also rejected by the Buddha in *Mahātaṇhāsankhayasutta*.<sup>17</sup> Eloquence in a speaker is not considered to be proof that his statements are true. This is because a capable teacher may not appear to be a good dhamma-talker and an incapable teacher may appear to be a good dhamma-talker. The dhamma-talker's reputation is, as well, not valid grounds for one to accepting his words.<sup>18</sup>

Rejecting not only claims of knowledge based on *anussava*, *paramparā*, *itikirā*, *piṭakasampadāna*, *bhavavyarūpatā* and *samaṇo garu*, the Buddha also rejects claims based on reasoning. As mentioned before, in *Aṅguttara-nikāya*, the Buddha lists ten various ways of claiming knowledge, six of which concern knowledge based on some kind of authority. The four claims concerning reasoning and speculation are logic (*takkahetu*), inference (*nayahetu*), considering reason (*ākarapavivakka*), and reflection on and approval of some theory (*diṭṭhinijjhānakhaṇṭi*). Moreover, in *Saṅgāravasutta*,<sup>19</sup> the Buddha identifies himself as not belonging to the second group (*takkī* and *vīmaṃsā*) in which people use logic (*takka*) and speculation (*vīmaṃsā*) as their means of knowledge. Let us

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<sup>14</sup> Sn. 284, 285, 288, 289, 292, 297.

<sup>15</sup> Sn.1053.

<sup>16</sup> Th.i.331.

<sup>17</sup> M.i.265.

<sup>18</sup> A.139.

<sup>19</sup> M.ii.211.



examine here for what reason the Buddha identifies himself as being outside the second group. What do *takkī* and *vīmaṃsī* mean, and in what context are they criticized?

According to the PED *takketi* means 'to think', 'to reflect', 'to reason' and 'to argue'. *Takkī* means someone who thinks, reflects, reasons or argues. And *takka* (identical with *tarka* in Sanskrit meaning 'doubt' or 'science of logic,' and literally meaning 'turning and twisting') means 'hair splitting reasoning,' 'sophistry,' 'doubt,' 'a doubtful view' (often as *ditṭhi*). It is said to be identical with *itihītiham* which means 'so and so talk,' 'gossip,' 'oral tradition,' 'belief by hearsay.'<sup>20</sup> *Vīmaṃsī*, meaning reasoning, is derived from *vīmaṃsati* meaning 'to try to think,' 'to consider,' 'examine,' 'find out,' 'investigate,' 'test,' 'trance,' 'think over.' *Vitaṇḍavāda* then means 'sophistry,' *vitaṇḍavādin*, 'sophist.' In his endnotes to *Thus Have I Heard*, Maurice Walshe remarks that Bhikkhu Bodhi's translation of the word *takkī* as 'rationalist' is misleading; Walshe's translation of *takkī*, therefore, is 'logician' and *vīmaṃsī* 'reasoner'.<sup>21</sup>

In the general sense of the terms, *takka* and *vīmaṃsā* have meanings similar to *jānāti* and *passati* which connote an act of examination, consideration, investigation and reflection. However the contexts in which *takka* and *vīmaṃsā* are used are different from those that use *ñāṇa* or *paññā*, these two latter terms being kinds of right knowledge derived from *jānāti* and *passati*.

*Takka* and *vīmaṃsā*, like report or hearsay mentioned earlier, are rejected by the Buddha as invalid sources of knowledge. They are criticized on the ground that the proficiency of an argument may not correspond to the state of truth, for an argument which is well reasoned (*sutakkitam*) may be true or false, and one which is badly reasoned (*duttakkitam*) may also be true or false.<sup>22</sup> A tradition characterized as well reasoned and

<sup>20</sup> PED refers this definition to *Cullanidesa*. PTS. 1918.

<sup>21</sup> Maurice Walshe, *Thus Have I Heard*. London: Wisdom Publications, 1987. P.74 and note 47: P.539.

<sup>22</sup> M.i.520.

reflected may turn out to be empty, void and false, and one which is not well reasoned nor reflected may turn out to be factual (*bhūtaṃ*) and true (*tucchaṃ*).<sup>23</sup>

There are found at least four conflicting theories which are supported by by *takka* and *vīmaṇsī*, i.e. the theories of (1) the eternity of the soul and the world,<sup>24</sup> (2) eternity of thought, mind or consciousness but not of sense and the world,<sup>25</sup> (3) neither finity nor infinity,<sup>26</sup> and (4) arising of the self and the world by chance.<sup>27</sup>

In the *Brahmajālasutta*, *takkī* and *vīmaṇsī* are criticized by the Buddha to be the people who by means of their reason (*takkapariyāhatam*) and lines of thought (*vīmaṇsānucaritam*) defend their views as follows:

Here, a certain ascetic or Brahmin is a logician [*takkī*], a reasoner [*vīmaṇsī*]. Hammering it out by reason [*takkapariyāhatam*], following his own thought, he argues: "The self and the world are eternal, barren like a mountain-peak, set firmly as a post; these beings rush around, circulate, pass away and re-arise, but this [self and the world] remains forever."<sup>28</sup>

Here, a certain ascetic or Brahmin is a logician, a reasoner. Hammering it out by reason, following his own thought, he argues: "what is called eye or ear or nose or tongue or body, that is impermanent, unstable, non eternal, liable to change. But what is called thought [*citta*], or mind [*mano*] or consciousness [*viññāṇa*], that is a self that is permanent, stable, eternal, not subject to change, the same for ever and ever!"<sup>29</sup>

Here, a certain ascetic or Brahmin is a logician, a reasoner. hammering it out by reason, following his own thought, he argues: "This world is neither finite nor infinite."<sup>30</sup>

Here, a certain ascetic or Brahmin is a logician, a reasoner. He hammers out his own opinion and declares: "The self and the world have arisen by chance."<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> M.ii.169-170.

<sup>24</sup> D.i.16.

<sup>25</sup> D.i.21.

<sup>26</sup> D.i.22-24.

<sup>27</sup> D.i.29.

<sup>28</sup> D.i.16.

<sup>29</sup> D.i.21.

<sup>30</sup> D.i.23.

<sup>31</sup> D.i.29.

The Buddha may not be criticizing these *takkī* or *vīmaṃsī* strictly on their proficiency or rationality but rather on their holding of speculative views. Since they hold views that are criticized by the Buddha as speculative and mere faith, even though their arguments are well reasoned, they are fundamentally rejected. In other words these *takkī* or *vīmaṃsī* simply use reason and logic to defend their views: "There are some recluses and brahmins such as reasoners and investigators [*vīmaṃsī*] who with mere faith claim that... they have attained here and now to excellence and to going beyond through super knowledge."<sup>32</sup>

Besides those *takkī* and *vīmaṃsī* who use reason and logic to defend their speculative views, there are some kinds of *takkī* or *vīmaṃsī* who use it to avoid a question, problem or debate. It is reported by king Ajātasattu that the brahmins Pūraṇa Kassapa, Makkhali Gosāla, Ajita Kesakambalī, Pakudha Kaccāyana, Nigaṇṭha Nātaputta and Saṅgya Belatṭhaputta, when being asked about the fruit of homeless life, reply by evasion, as if when being asked about a mango these brahmins talk about a breadfruit tree and when being asked about a breadfruit tree they talk about a mango.<sup>33</sup> There are some other *takkī* or *vīmaṃsī* who do not want to claim anything definitely because they are afraid that other ascetics who are wise, skillful or hairsplitting debaters may rule them out. They fear and abhor holding false views (*musāvāda*),<sup>34</sup> having attachment (*upādāna*), and being questioned (*anuyoga*). They try to escape debate by evasive statements.<sup>35</sup> Their equivocation is expressed to be like the wriggling of an eel when it tries to escape; thereby they are called Eel-Wrigglers (*Amarā-vikheppikā*).<sup>36</sup> They evade the problem in one way or another (*aññena aññaṃ paṭcari*), shift the topic of discussion and even show signs of irritation, anger and displeasure: "I allow that I, good Gotama, took Pūraṇa Kassapa in

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<sup>32</sup> M.ii.211.

<sup>33</sup> D.i.53-59.

<sup>34</sup> *Musāvāda* also means 'lying'.

<sup>35</sup> D.i.26.

<sup>36</sup> D.i.24-27.

hand speech by speech, but he, when taken in hand by me, speech by speech, shelved the question by (asking) another, answered off the point and evinced anger and ill-will and discontent.”<sup>37</sup> Their equivocation is not only the result of their intellectual cowardice, fearing to be outwitted, but also the result of their scruples. They fear to lie by denouncing things that they did not actually know.<sup>38</sup> Moreover they equivocate probably because they worry about causing vexation, for they may realize that vexation is caused by debate.<sup>39</sup>

When it is said that these *takkī* or *vīmaṃsī* shun debate for they fear holding false views, having attachment and being questioned, are they considered to be either intellectual or moral sceptics? Intellectual sceptics are those who do not propose any true state of reality or who admit the inevitable contradiction of truth. They shun debate in order to avoid being questioned about the contradiction or possibility of a truth. Moral sceptics, for fear of being said to have attachment, escape debate to defend their ethical conduct. These moral sceptics may fear the peril or hindrance of holding false views or attachment to views. Aggivessana who says that he does not agree to any view<sup>40</sup> may be one of those sceptics. One thing that is not clear in the passage is whether these *takkī* and *vīmaṃsī* shun debate because of their scepticism or whether they adopt scepticism in order to avoid debate.

*Takkī* or *vīmaṃsī* may also be those who always debate merely for the sake of outwitting their opponents, such as *Nātaputta* the Jain. He tells the Prince Abhaya to come to the Buddha and ask him the double-edged question (*ubhatokoṭikam*) so that the Buddha can not neither spew out nor swallow the puzzle.<sup>41</sup> They are those who “master this dhamma simply for the advantage of reproaching and for the advantage of gossiping.”<sup>42</sup>

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<sup>37</sup> M.i.250, 442.

<sup>38</sup> D.i.25.

<sup>39</sup> M.i.499.

<sup>40</sup> M.i.498-499.

<sup>41</sup> *Ubhatokoṭikam* is said to be like a double-edged iron hook stuck in a man's throat.

<sup>42</sup> M.i.133.

They are said to be addicted to such unedifying conversation [*tiracchāna-kathā*]<sup>43</sup> as about kings, robbers, ministers, armies, danger, war, food, drink, clothes, beds, garlands, hero, gossip.<sup>44</sup>

Takkī does not mean 'sophist' in all senses of the term as it is translated by Woodward in Udāna 73,<sup>45</sup> since the Greek sophists were 'paid teachers who undertook to prepare young men, by lectures or private tuition, for public career in the city-states of Greece.'<sup>46</sup> However *takkī* may be taken as 'sophist' in the sense of a teacher of rhetoric, scholar or thinker, especially one who is skillful in devious arguments. Incidentally, the Greek word *sophos* means 'clever,' and *sophizesthai* means 'to play tricks.'<sup>47</sup>

There are some recluses and Brahmans reported to be very learned, skillful in debate and honoured by others, like *takkī* and *vīmaṃsī*, who like to exhibit their dialectical skill by defeating their opponents, such as the case of Saccaka:

Now at that time, staying at Vesālī was Saccaka, the son of Jains, a controversialist [*bhassappavādiko*], giving himself out as learned, much honoured by many folks. As he was going about Vesālī, he used to utter this speech: "I do not see that recluse or brahman, the head of a company, the head of a group, the teacher of a group, even if he is claiming to be a perfected one, a fully Self-awakened one, who, when taken in hand by me, speech by speech, would not tremble, would not shake, would not shake violently, and from whose armpits sweat would not pour."<sup>48</sup>

There may be a lot of such *takkī* and *vīmaṃsī* who are said to be skilled, practiced in disputation and hairsplitters (*vāḷavedhirūpā*.) These *takkī* and *vīmaṃsī* are reported by some witnesses such as Kuṇḍaliya, in S.v.72, and found in other passages as well.<sup>49</sup> They are said to break or defeat others by their intelligence. When they know that the

<sup>43</sup> *Tiracchāna-kathā* literally means 'animal-talk,' implying the talk that does not lead one to upward.

<sup>44</sup> D.i.7-8.

<sup>45</sup> The same for *takka* which is translated to be 'sophistry,' *viṇṇavāda* — 'sophistry,' *viṇṇavādīn* — 'sophist' in the PED.

<sup>46</sup> Hicks, P.687.

<sup>47</sup> American Heritage Dictionary, second edition.

<sup>48</sup> M.i.227, 237.

<sup>49</sup> D.i.162; M.i.176; M.ii.122, 123.

Buddha will be visiting a certain village, they go there and question the Buddha, having planned everything beforehand: "If, on being asked by us thus he answers thus, we will refute him thus; and if, on being asked by us thus he answers thus, we will refute him thus."<sup>50</sup> They appear to impose a form of dilemma question so that either alternative answer cannot be given. This form of question is similar to the double-edged question (*ubhatokoṭīkaṃ*) which is proposed by Nātaputta the Jain. It is said to be like an iron hook stuck in a man's throat; he can neither spew it out nor swallow it down.<sup>51</sup> Nātaputta the Jain tells Prince Abhaya to go see the Buddha and put this kind of dilemma question to him. If the Buddha admits that he sometimes says things that displease others, then Abhaya says that the Buddha is not different from an ordinary man; if the Buddha says that he never says anything that would displease others, then he will be asked why Devadatta was angry and displeased with the Buddha's statement that Devadatta will fall into sorrowful realms, the Niraya hell, sentenced for a kalpa and without remedy? There are such people who "by nature quarrelsome, wrangling and disputatious, lived wounding one another with the weapons of the tongue."<sup>52</sup>

There is found another rejection of reasoning in the context of *papañca*. *Papañca*, having various meanings such as 'obstacle,' 'obsession,' and 'diffusion,'<sup>53</sup> is a kind of internal reasoning which obsesses the mind, causes diffusion and is thereby an obstacle to the understanding of things as they really are. *Papañca* is said to arise out of *vitakka* (reflection, thought, reason and argument), the root cause of disease (*rogamūla*),<sup>54</sup> craving and pain.<sup>55</sup> Since *papañca* is the cause of unskillful deeds, when it is eliminated these unskillful deeds such as attachment, repugnance and speculative views come to an end:

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<sup>50</sup> M.i.176, ii.122, 123.

<sup>51</sup> M.i.393.

<sup>52</sup> Ud.67.

<sup>53</sup> PED.

<sup>54</sup> Sn.530.

<sup>55</sup> Th.i.519.

What is the origin, monk, of the number of obsessions (*papañca*) and perceptions (*saññā*) which assail a man, if there is nothing to rejoice at, to welcome, to catch hold of, this is itself an end of a propensity to attachment, this is itself an end of a propensity to repugnance, this is itself an end of a propensity to views, this is itself an end of a propensity to perplexity, this is itself an end of a propensity to pride, this is itself an end of a propensity to attachment to becoming, this is itself an end of a propensity to ignorance, this is itself an end of taking the stick, of taking a weapon, of quarreling, contending, disputing, accusation, slander, lying speech. In these ways these evil unskilled states are stopped without remainder.<sup>56</sup>

The eradication of *papañca* requires the uprooting of *vitakka*, and *vitakka* is regarded to arise out of perception: “What one perceives one reasons about (*vitakketi*); what one reasons about obsesses one.”<sup>57</sup> And since perception (*saññā*) and consciousness (*nidāna*) are said to be the source of all basic obsessions (*papañca*),<sup>58</sup> does it mean that in order to eliminate *papañca* one has to make an end to perceptions? In the passage where it is said that perceptions and consciousness are the source of *papañca*, it is also said that there is a state of mind where there is no ordinary perception, no disordered perception, and neither perception nor annihilation of perception. This passage does not imply any metaphysical state of mind nor suggest a state of mind where perceptions cease to exist but rather appears to say that the metaphysical views about perception such as being ordinary, disordered or annihilated do not lead one to peace of mind. This then implies that other perceptions such as of impermanence, suffering and non-self can lead one to peace of mind. Therefore, eliminating *papañca* does not seem to mean to eliminate perceptions altogether but to say that the perceptions on metaphysical matters (such as on perception itself) cause reasoning; speculative thinking (in terms of *takka* and *vīmaṃsa* as discussed above) is a hindrance of mind and should be eliminated.

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<sup>56</sup> M.i.109-110.

<sup>57</sup> M.i.112.

<sup>58</sup> *saññānidānaṃ hi papañca saṃkhā* (Sn.874), *yatonidānaṃ purisaṃ papañcasaññāsaṃkhā samudācaranti...* (M.i.112.)

This observation refers to the *Sakkapañhasutta* in which the Buddha is asked by Sakka what practice should be undertaken to make an end to the tendency of *papañca*. The Buddha says that there are two kinds of happiness (*somanassa*), unhappiness (*domanassa*) and equanimity (*upekkhā*); one should pursue that which causes wholesome factors and is not accompanied by thinking (*vitakka*) and pondering (*vicāra*),<sup>59</sup> two of the five mental hindrances. This passage suggests that the way of eliminating *papañca* is by pursuing that which leads to wholesomeness and the cessation of *papañca*. It does not suggest eliminating all states of happiness, unhappiness or equanimity altogether. This notion of cessation of *papañca* relates to another subtle issue concerning mental concentration or meditational practices which will be discussed in the following chapter.

When the Buddha refuses to be a traditionalist or a reasoner, does he identify himself with any certain group or category? In *saṅgārava*, The Buddha classifies his predecessors and contemporaries who claim that they have attained the excellence and gone beyond through their super knowledge into three classes: There are those (1) who attain knowledge by means of report (*anussava*) and are called Three-Veda-brahmans (*tevijjā*),<sup>60</sup> (2) who with mere faith claim to attain excellence and are called reasoners (*takkī*) and investigators (*vīmaṃsī*), And (3) who attain excellence by understanding the truth themselves only. Jayatilleke calls these three classes the traditionalists (*anussavikā*), the reasoners (*takkī*) and metaphysicians (*vīmaṃsī*), and the experientialists. The Buddha claims himself to fall into the third group in which people rely on their own direct personal knowledge and experience, i.e. not learning or hearing it from others; or “I have no teacher”<sup>61</sup>:

I, Bhāradvāja, say there is a difference among those who claim that, in regard to the fundamentals of the Brahma-faring, they have attained here-now to excellence and to going beyond through super knowledge. There are, Bhāradvāja, some recluses and brahmans

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<sup>59</sup> D.ii.277-279.

<sup>60</sup> Jayatilleke, 170-171.

<sup>61</sup> (*na me ācariyo atthi*) Vin.i.8.



who depend on report; these claim that it is through report that, in regard to the fundamentals of the Brahma-faring, they have attained here-now to excellence and to going beyond through super knowledge — such as the three-Veda-brahmans. But there are, Bhāradvāja, some recluses and brahmans who with only mere faith claim that, in regard to the fundamentals of the Brahma-faring, they have attained here-now to excellence and to going beyond through super knowledge - such as reasoners and investigators. There are, Bhāradvāja, some recluses and brahmans who by fully understanding dhamma of themselves only, although these truths had not been heard before, claim that, in regard to the fundamentals of the Brahma-faring, they have attained here-now to excellence and to going beyond through super knowledge. Now, Bhāradvāja, I am one of those recluses and brahmans who by fully understanding dhamma of themselves only, although these truths had not been heard before, claim that, in regard to the fundamentals of the Brahma-faring, they have attained here-now to excellence and to going beyond through super knowledge.<sup>62</sup>

If the Buddha identifies himself with the group in which people rely on their own direct personal knowledge and experience, does it necessarily mean that this kind of personal or individual (*sāmaṃ*), is incommunicable and subjective? The distinction trying to be made in the above passage is that between the knowledge which is claimed after hearing from a report and the knowledge which is claimed from one's own experience. This distinction can also be seen when the Buddha criticizes those Brahmans who claim the five good virtues (*pañca dhamme*) but do not know the result of practicing those virtues.<sup>63</sup> The distinction between these kinds of knowledge is that "one has [either] seen it by himself or has heard it from a tradition."<sup>64</sup> In a passage in *Itivuttaka*,<sup>65</sup> the Buddha says that his words are not heard from other recluses and brahmans but are the result of what he himself has known, seen and observed. When the Buddha says that he has eliminated all desires, he himself has already understood, seen, known and realized the state where his

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<sup>62</sup> M.ii.211.

<sup>63</sup> M.ii.197f.

<sup>64</sup> M.i.465.

<sup>65</sup> It.59.

desires have been eliminated.<sup>66</sup> The Buddha suggests that his knowledge is claimed from his experience, not from report or any divine source.

This direct knowledge and experience does not appear to be mystical but a result of cultivation and development. It is said that knowledge has its causes and reasons.<sup>67</sup> These causes and reasons are the practicing of jhāna,<sup>68</sup> eliminating the five hindrances,<sup>69</sup> and developing the seven factors of enlightenment (*sattabojjhaṅga*).<sup>70</sup> This knowledge and experience is not private in the sense of prohibition of communicating, sharing or investigating, for there is always an invitation to everyone to “come and see” (*ehi-passiko*),<sup>71</sup> and examine by telepathic mind.<sup>72</sup> The communicability of this knowledge is not in mystical form that one can receive from a divine source, but in the form of a teacher giving instruction to a student: “The Tathāgata is fully enlightened,... he fully understands. Fully enlightened, fully understanding he declares it, teaches it, reveals it, sees it forth, manifests, explains, makes it plain, saying ‘behold!’”<sup>73</sup> The student has to verify by his own knowledge, realize the truth and become liberated by himself: “‘It is not my practise to free anyone from confusion’, said the Buddha. ‘When you have understood the most valuable teachings, then you yourself will cross the ocean.’”<sup>74</sup> Moreover this personal direct knowledge and experience can be said not to be subjective, for this knowledge is described as the knowledge of things as they really are (*yathābhūtañāṇam*), i.e. when blemish exists one knows that the blemish exists, when blemish ceases to exist one knows that blemish ceases to exist.<sup>75</sup>

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<sup>66</sup> M.i.475-476.

<sup>67</sup> S.v.126.

<sup>68</sup> D.i.73.

<sup>69</sup> S.v.127.

<sup>70</sup> S.v.127-128.

<sup>71</sup> D.ii.222.

<sup>72</sup> “An inquiring monk, learning the range of another’s mind, should study the Tathāgata... [i.e.] ‘do those that are impure state cognisable through the eyes and the ear do not exist in a Tathāgata or not?’”

<sup>73</sup> S.ii.25.

<sup>74</sup> Sn.1064.

<sup>75</sup> M.i.24-25.

This objective knowledge, the knowledge of things as they really are, cannot be seen as scepticism in the sense of uncertainty about the truth. On the other hand it emphasizes avoiding emotions, which can cause misconceptions. Either anger and displeasure at disparagement, or being pleased and elated at praise can hinder one from understanding whether what others say is right or wrong.<sup>76</sup> The Buddha is said to be one who has no resentment or distress when others revile, abuse or annoy him.<sup>77</sup> On one occasion Sāriputta praises the Buddha by saying that there never has been or will be and is not now another ascetic or Brahman who is better or more enlightened than the Buddha. At this the Buddha asks if Sāriputta has knowledge of the mind of all Arahants and the Buddhas of the past, future and present. Sāriputta says no. The Buddha thereby says: "So, Sāriputta, you do not have knowledge of the mind of the Buddhas of the past, the future or the present. Then, Sāriputta, have you not spoken boldly with a bull's voice and roared the lion's roar of certainty with your declaration?"<sup>78</sup> This statement of the Buddha evokes his declaration that a statement should be based on evidence, not on opinion or subjective prejudice.

Like emotion, desire (*taṇhā*) also appears to have a causal impact on objective knowledge (*yathābhūtañāṇam*). Since one is impelled to hold two extreme views or theories by one's desire for eternalism (*bhavataṇhā*) and/or annihilation (*vibhavataṇhā*),<sup>79</sup> one's lacking of such desire is considered to be the main condition for objective knowledge, that is the knowledge of things as they really are.

As we have learned from this chapter, the Buddha does not entirely accept or refute tradition for on one hand he praises virtue in some brahmans, while on the other hand he criticizes those claims that are groundless and unsatisfactory. He promotes a critical

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<sup>76</sup> D.i.3.

<sup>77</sup> M.i.140.

<sup>78</sup> D.iii.99.

<sup>79</sup> "Whatever, friend visākha is the craving connected with again - becoming, accompanied by delight and attachment, finding delight in this and that, namely the craving for sense-pleasures (*kāmataṇhā*), the craving for becoming (*bhavataṇhā*), the craving for annihilation (*vibhava-taṇhā*) (M.i.299)

reasoning and investigation, but at the same time rejects those who base their arguments on pure logic and reasoning merely for the sake of outwitting opponents, or avoiding issues. The Buddha, then, encourages personal effort, training and experience. This personal or individual experience does not imply a subjective knowledge or mystical authority, but rather an achievement of release that should be acquired through personal effort, not from any other source.

## Chapter 4

### Relationship Between *sīla*, *samādhi* and *paññā*

It is stated that right view, right understanding, right knowledge or the knowledge of things as they really are, i.e. the knowledge of impermanence, suffering and non-self, lead one to the cessation of desire, thereby to Nibbāna, the ending of canker or suffering. This knowledge is described as not coming from blind faith or any mystical or supernatural source but achieved through reasoning, critical examination and an objective mind. This path can also be called *paññā* or discriminative insight. The path is mentioned again in the passage of *Dīghanakhasutta*, where it is said that the release of cankers, Nibbāna, can be achieved simply by listening, seeing and reflecting (*paṭisañcikkhato*),<sup>1</sup> such as in the case of Sāriputta:

Now at that time the Venerable Sāriputta was standing behind the Lord, fanning the Lord. Then it occurred to the Venerable Sāriputta: "The Lord speaks to us of getting rid of these things and those by means of knowledge, the Well-farer speaks to us of casting out these things and those by means of super-knowledge." While the Venerable was reflecting on this, his mind was free from the cankers without clinging.<sup>2</sup>

The question here is whether the release is achieved simply through knowledge which is gained from listening, or through a constant cultivation or development of mind. For if knowledge is the only means for liberation, what is the place of ethical conduct and meditative practices which receives no minor emphasis in the Pāli literature? Can

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<sup>1</sup> *Paṭisañcikkhati*: 'to think over,' 'to discriminate,' 'consider,' 'reflect.' (PED)

<sup>2</sup> M.i.500-501.

fulfillment of knowledge, ethical conduct or meditative practices be obtained independently, or are each of them inaccessible if treated separately from one another?

Since the Buddhist theory of causation maintains that nothing can exist by itself without depending on other things, and that nothing arises without a cause, there must be a relationship between the fulfillment of knowledge, ethical conduct and meditative practices. Whereas Pūraṇa holds that there is no cause or condition for the lack or presence of knowledge and insight, the Buddha maintains that knowledge and insight do have cause and reason (*atthi hetu atthi paccayo*). The cause of suffering, according to Buddhism, is sensual lust which is in turn caused by lack of right knowledge or right understanding of things as they really are. The cause of ending of suffering (Nibbāna), of course, is right knowledge or right understanding and passionlessness.

In the Buddha's first sermon to the five ascetics, it is reported that "While this discourse [of the four noble truths] was being uttered, the minds of the group of five monks were free from cankers without grasping."<sup>3</sup> This passage is a conclusion of the meeting between the Buddha and the five ascetics rather than a description of a method where the cankers are eliminated just by listening to the discourse and gaining knowledge. It appears that listening and reflecting help these monks to attain dispassion, and through dispassion they are free from cankers:

Seeing in this way... the instructed disciple of the ariyans disregards [*nibbindati*] body,... feeling,... perception,... habitual tendencies,... consciousness; disregarding he is dispassionate; through dispassion he is free; in freedom the knowledge comes to be: 'I am free', and he knows: Destroyed is birth...<sup>4</sup>

After listening to dhamma, the fulfillment of disregarding the five aggregates with its resulting dispassion may take one a long period of time or just a few moments.<sup>5</sup> In the

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<sup>3</sup> Mahāvagga 14.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>5</sup> The reason behind the difference of time may be due to the person's faculties or ability. It is like the difference between attainment of arahantship through calm and that through insight. When it is asked by

case of the five ascetics it may have taken them a few days to have this fulfillment, because it is written that the Buddha arranges how each of them can go for alms while the others listen to dhamma. In this period they may have done contemplation or certain other kinds of practice. If the meeting takes only the time of the sermon then the release of cankers should also be achieved through a moment of dispassion after listening to the four noble truths.

Elsewhere it is said that not knowing and not seeing have as their cause the five hindrances.<sup>6</sup> The situation is presented as that of a man who cannot see his face as it really is in a bowl of water on which the surface is disturbed, ruffled by the wind and rippling with waves.<sup>7</sup> The five hindrances are described as the defilements of mind and weakening of intuitive wisdom.<sup>8</sup> It follows that when the five hindrances are eliminated, right knowledge arises,<sup>9</sup> and cankers are stopped.<sup>10</sup> The five hindrances are so obstructive that only one of them can hinder one's access to right knowledge; therefore they have to be eliminated altogether.<sup>11</sup> These five hindrances are said to be eliminated by cultivating the seven factors of enlightenment (*sattabojjhaṅga*): "A monk cultivates the limb of wisdom that is mindfulness, that is based on seclusion, on dispassion, on cessation, that ends in self-surrender. With mind that is cultivated he knows, he sees as it really is the limb of wisdom that is mindfulness. This... is the condition, this is the cause of knowing and seeing. Thus, knowing and seeing have a condition, have a cause..."<sup>12</sup> It is also said that these five hindrances can be eliminated by developing mental concentration or mindfulness

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Ānanda why there is such a difference, the Buddha replies that it is because the difference in their faculties. (M.i.437 and note of Horner 1954, p.107)

<sup>6</sup> S.i.120-123. Five hindrances: (1) hindrance of desire for sense-pleasure (*kāmachanda*), (2) hindrance of malevolence (*abhiṭṭhāvyāpāda*), (3) hindrance of sloth and torpor (*thīnamiddha*), (4) hindrance of restlessness and worry (*uddhacca-kukkucca*), and (5) hindrance of doubt (*vicikicchā*.)

<sup>7</sup> S.120-123.

<sup>8</sup> M.i.270, 276, 521; ii.28.

<sup>9</sup> S.v.127.

<sup>10</sup> A.iii.16-17.

<sup>11</sup> S.v.127.

<sup>12</sup> S.v.127-128.

(*parimukhaṃ satim*): “He sits down cross-legged, holding his body erect, and concentrates on keeping mindfulness before him... abandoning worldly desires,... ill-will and hatred,... sloth and torpor,... worry-and-flurry,... [and] doubt...”<sup>13</sup> When one’s mind is in concentration, he begins to have the knowledge of seeing things as they really are,<sup>14</sup> such as that his body and consciousness are unsubstantial, impermanent: “With mind concentrated, purified and cleansed, unblemished, free from impurities, malleable, workable, established, and having gained imperturbability, he directs and inclines his mind towards knowing and seeing. And he knows: ‘This my body is material, made up from four great elements, born of mother and father, fed on rice and gruel, impermanent, liable to be injured and abraded, broken and destroyed, and this my consciousness which is bound to it and dependent on it.’”<sup>15</sup>

There is also a causal relation established among *sīla* (virtue,) *samādhi* (concentration) and *paññā* (insight.) *Sīla*, virtue or ascetic conducts, is a prior requirement for the development of mental concentration. The total destruction of the five fetters, reduction of attachment, aversion and confusion, and attaining of Nibbāna require the fulfillment of *sīla* as prerequisite:

Monks, if a monk should wish: ‘By the total destruction of five fetters... reduction of attachment, aversion, confusion... one who has utterly attained to nibbāna... should be one who fulfills the moral habits, who is intent on mental tranquillity within, whose meditation is uninterrupted, who is endowed with vision, a cultivator of empty place.’<sup>16</sup>

It is stated in *Cūḷasāropamasutta* that the attainment of virtue is followed by the attainment of concentration, and the attainment of concentration is subsequently followed by the attainment of knowledge and insight (*ñāṇadassanaṃ ārādheti*.)<sup>17</sup> *Sīla* seems to even

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<sup>13</sup> D.i.71.

<sup>14</sup> S.ii.30.

<sup>15</sup> D.i.76-77.

<sup>16</sup> M.i.34.

<sup>17</sup> M.i.200-202.



have a direct impact on wisdom: "Wisdom shines forth by one's behavior."<sup>18</sup> The causal relation of *sīla*, *samādhi* and *paññā* does not seem to be in one direction only but each appears to cause the other to arise: "Wisdom is purified by morality and morality is purified by wisdom: where one is, the other is, the moral man has wisdom and the wise man has morality."<sup>19</sup> And the Buddha is known as the one who is endowed with wisdom and good conduct (*vijjā-caraṇa-sampanno*).<sup>20</sup> The former passage can also be understood as meaning that whenever one sees a cause one sees the result, and whenever one sees a result one sees the cause. This interpretation then admits a "one way causal relation." However, the following passage indicates that objective knowledge brings one's mind to mindfulness (and not that mindfulness brings one to objective knowledge): "The purity of perfect, balanced mindfulness [*upekhāsatisaṃsuddhaṃ*], built on a basis of seeing the Way Things Are: this is liberation-knowledge and this is the destruction of ignorance."<sup>21</sup>

Virtue or ethical conduct is regarded as practice and preparation for ascetic life which is suitable for *jhāna* (meditative practices.) Ascetic conduct can give one control over one's attachment to sensual pleasure and aversion, and can frequently lead one to concentration, then right knowledge and subsequently release. Ethical conduct not only promotes the welfare of other beings<sup>22</sup> but is also a preliminary step for one to attain happiness, the happiness of having control over the six sense organs:

Having seen a material shape with the eye he is not entranced by the general appearance, he is not entranced by the detail. If he dwells

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<sup>18</sup> A.i.102.

<sup>19</sup> D.i.124.

<sup>20</sup> D.i.62.

<sup>21</sup> Sn.1107.

<sup>22</sup> "He... is one who [1] abstains from onslaught on creatures; the stick laid aside, the knife laid aside, he lives kindly, scrupulous, friendly and compassionate towards all breathing things and creatures;... [2] abstains from taking what is not given;... [3] abstains from dealing with women;... [4] abstains from lying speech, a truth-speaker;... [5] abstains from slanderous speech. In this way he is a reconciler of those who are at variance and one who combines those who are friends... [6] abstains from harsh speech. Whatever speech is gentle, pleasing to ear, affectionate, going to the heart, urbane, pleasant to the many folks;... [7] abstains from frivolous chatter. He is a speaker at a right time, a speaker of fact, a speaker on the goal, a speaker on dhamma... He speaks words that are... connected with the goal. [8] He comes to be one who abstains from what involves destruction to seed-growth, etc..." (M.i.179-180)

with this organ of sight uncontrolled, covetousness and dejection, evil unskilled states of mind, might predominate. So he fares along controlling it; he guards the organ of sight, he comes to control over the organ of sight..., he guards the organ of mind, he comes to control over the organ of mind. If he is possessed of this ariyan control of the (sense-) organs, he subjectively experiences unsullied well being [*abyāsekasukhaṃ paṭisaṃvedeti.*]<sup>23</sup>

Besides the benefitting of others and usefulness for meditative practices, *sīla* does also aim at the courteous or polite behavior that an ascetic should have or that society expects an ascetic should have. However it would be misleading to say that the whole *vinaya* (discipline) rule is only useful for one of these aspects (eg. meditative practice or knowledge) for it appears that each *vinaya* rule aims at certain aspect and may be useful for the other two.

This attention to sense-control of the body (*sīlakkhandhena samannāgato*) when being kept constantly whenever one is walking, standing, asleep, awake, talking or silent, promotes what is called ariyan mindfulness and clear consciousness (*ariyena satisampajaññaṇa*).<sup>24</sup> Hence by retreating to a wilderness and sitting cross-legged, the monk abandons or eliminates the five hindrances and achieves four stages of *jhāna*: “He, by getting rid of these five hindrances — defilements of mind and weakening of intuitive wisdom — aloof from pleasures of the senses, aloof from unskilled states of mind, enters on and abides in the first..., second..., third..., [and] fourth meditation.”<sup>25</sup> The four states of meditation are said to be as follows: The first state of meditation is attributed to be accompanied by initial and discursive thought, arises out of aloofness, and is rapturous and joyful. The second one is devoid of initial and discursive thought, but arise out of concentration, and again is rapturous and joyful. The third one is said to be accompanied by diminishing rapture, and the monk dwells in equanimity, attentive and clearly

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<sup>23</sup> M.i.180-181.

<sup>24</sup> M.i.181.

<sup>25</sup> M.i.181-182.

conscious. The fourth state of meditation is one of neither anguish nor joy, entirely purified by equanimity and mindfulness.<sup>26</sup>

Following the fourth state of meditation, the sutta describes further states where one can have the knowledge of former births of himself and of others. He then has knowledge as it really is of the destruction of cankers and the way leading to that destruction; that is to say the knowledge of the third and the fourth noble truths.<sup>27</sup> Subsequently, "when he has known thus, when he has seen thus, the mind is freed from the canker of sense-pleasures and the mind is freed from the canker of becoming and the mind is freed from the cankers of ignorance. In freedom the knowledge comes to be that he is freed, and he comprehends: 'Destroyed is birth, brought to a close is the brahma-faring, done is what was to be done, there is no more of being such.'"<sup>28</sup> In this description, the final release appears to have a very close causal relation with ethical conduct and meditative practices.

The right knowledge or insight requires concentration also in terms of keeping that right knowledge uninterrupted: "For half a month... Sāriputta had uninterrupted insight into things... as to this... Sāriputta [was] aloof from pleasure of the senses,... unskilled states of mind..."<sup>29</sup>

The fulfillment of the meditative states or concentration is identified with parts of the Noble Eightfold Path (*ariyo aṭṭhaṅgiko maggo*.) Perfect speech (*sammāvāca*), action (*sammākamma*), and way of living (*sammājīvo*) are identified as in the class of *sīla*; the perfect endeavor (*sammāvāyāmo*), mindfulness (*sammāsatī*), and concentration (*sammāsamādhi*) as in that of *samādhi*; and perfect view (*sammādiṭṭhi*) and thought

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<sup>26</sup> M.i.181-182. The same as M.iii.92-94.

<sup>27</sup> M.i.182-183. The knowledge of the first and second truths can be said to be obtained in the previous stages (M.i.183) where he knows the former birth of himself and of others. In these stages he supposedly knows (1) the suffering of himself and other beings, and (2) its causes.

<sup>28</sup> M.i.183-184.

<sup>29</sup> M.iii.25. According to Horner's note, it is said in M.A.iii.203, iv.86; D.A.418; DhA.i.97, that Sāriputta then gained arahantship in the fortnight.

(*sammāsaṅkappo*) are identified as in that of *pañña*. These three classes are considered to be the field of practice or development; that is to say development of body (*kāyabhāvanā*), development of mind (*cītabhāvana*), and development of insight (*paññabhāvana*).<sup>30</sup> The class of concentration includes the practice of one-pointedness of mind (*cittassa ekaggatā*) and the four arousings mindfulness (*cattāro satipaṭṭhanā*): “Whatever... is one-pointed of mind, this is concentration; the four arousings of mindfulness are the distinguishing marks of concentration; the four right efforts are the requisites for concentration; whatever is the practice, the development, the increase of these very things, this is herein the development of concentration.”<sup>31</sup>

If *sīla*, *samādhi* and *pañña* are observed in the context of the eightfold path, then it is not necessary to rank them in hierarchy. Like the eight branches of the path, *sīla*, *samādhi* or *pañña* each can be considered to be the primary path and they are all interdependent in spiritual progress. The same attitude is found in *sabbāsavasutta* where vision (*dassana*), control, endurance, avoidance, elimination and development (*bhāvanā*) can be regarded as different paths to the goal.<sup>32</sup> The same idea of all different paths leading to the goal appears elsewhere: “If right understanding is forwarded by five factors there comes to be the fruit of freedom of mind and the advantage of the fruit of freedom of mind, and the fruit of freedom through intuitive wisdom and the advantage of the fruit of freedom through intuitive wisdom: in this case... right understanding is forwarded by moral habit, and it is forwarded by hearing, and it is forwarded by discussion, and it is forwarded by claim and it is forwarded by vision.”<sup>33</sup> The release can be achieved both through

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<sup>30</sup> D.iii.219.

<sup>31</sup> M.i.301. Four right efforts (*cattāro sammappadhānā*) are only the prerequisites for meditation but considered to be part of concentration.

<sup>32</sup> M.i.8.

<sup>33</sup> M.i.294.

development of wisdom and development of concentration. The only difference may be that one of the two ways is cultivated more than the other.<sup>34</sup>

On the path leading to Nibbāna, a meditative state is posited wherein all perceptions and feeling are stopped (*saññāvedayitanirodha*.) This meditative state is said to be attained after leaving the plane of neither-perception-nor-non-perception (*nevasaññānāsaññāyatana-saññānā*). And this meditative state may belong only to Buddhism because non-Buddhist paths such as the plane of neither-perception-nor-non-perception are attributed to Ālāra Kālāma and Uddaka Rāmaputta, the Buddha's teachers during his search for truth. According to Vetter, the *Visuddhimagga* identifies the state of stopping of perception and feeling with Nibbāna.<sup>35</sup> To him this state is achieved after attaining the state of neither-perception-nor-non-perception which is accompanied by discriminative insight.<sup>36</sup>

Even though there exists such a meditative state (stopping of perception and feeling), there is in fact not a lot of textual reference supporting such practice. On the other hand there is much emphasis on the path of discriminative insight. Besides the fact that the *Visuddhimagga* identifies this meditative state with Nibbāna, in those passages that mention the state, it is always followed by the statement that freedom from cankers is achieved through intuitive wisdom.<sup>37</sup>

In *Mahāparinibbānasutta*<sup>38</sup>, the Buddha does not enter into the state of stopping perception and feeling as Nibbāna. After reaching to this state, he abandons it and reverts

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<sup>34</sup> According to Horner's note citing M.A.iii.147-148, "if when a monk goes after calm, one-pointedness of mind is to the forefront—this monk is called freed in mind; but if wisdom is to the forefront—such a monk is called freed through wisdom. When one goes after insight, if wisdom is to the forefront, such a monk is called freed through wisdom; if his one-pointedness of mind is to the forefront, he is called freed in mind. The two chief disciples attained arahantship with calm and insight to the forefront; Sāriputta was freed through wisdom and Moggallāna was freed in mind.

<sup>35</sup> Vetter, p.70.

<sup>36</sup> "In *Visuddhimagga* the discriminating insight used to reach the cessation of apperceptions and feelings is not a means of destroying rebirth, neither is this state of cessation itself a means. It rather appears to be that only those who have discriminating insight to a great degree and who, in addition, possess a talent for this kind of meditation will be able to reach the cessation of apperceptions and feelings." (Vetter, p.70)

<sup>37</sup> M.i.160, 170, 204.

<sup>38</sup> D.ii.156.

to the state of neither-perception-nor-non-perception, and from there proceeds upwards to the fourth *jhāna*. From there he enters the final Nibbāna (*parinibbāna*). What may this sutta want to tell us? It may want to tell us that the state of stopping perception and feeling is not the state that the Buddha enters just prior to *parinibbāna*. If stopping of perception and feeling is nibbāna the Buddha could have remained in that state in order to enter *parinibbāna*.

Since the state of stopping of perception and feeling is defined as the stopping of all activities of body, speech and mind, it is hardly convincing to identify it as a state of release. Activity of the body is defined as the breath of the body,<sup>39</sup> activity of speech as the initial and discursive thought leading to speech,<sup>40</sup> and activity of mind as perception and feeling.<sup>41</sup> Even though such a meditative state is almost inconceivable, there are still descriptions of certain people who attain this state, such as Sañjāva. People think that he is dead and cremate him. The next day they see him walking on the street begging for alms food.<sup>42</sup>

In one passage Sāriputta tries to make the distinction between the person who attains the state of stopping perception and feeling and the person who is dead:

The bodily activities of that dead thing, passed away, have been stopped, have subsided, the vocal activities have been stopped, have subsided, the mental activities have been stopped, have subsided, the vitality is entirely destroyed, the heat allayed, the sense-organs are entirely broken asunder. But that monk who has attained to the stopping of perception and feeling, although his bodily activities have been stopped, have subsided, though his vocal activities have been stopped, have subsided, though his mental activities have been stopped, have subsided, his vitality is not entirely destroyed, his heat is not allayed, his sense-organs are purified. This... is the difference between the dead thing, passed

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<sup>39</sup> "In-breathing and out-breathing... are bodily things dependent on the body, therefore in-breathing and out-breathing is activity of body." (M.i.301)

<sup>40</sup> "Having first had initial thought and discursive thought, one subsequently utters speech, therefore initial and discursive thought is activity of speech." (M.i.301)

<sup>41</sup> "Perception and feeling... are mental things, dependent on mind, therefore perception and feeling are (each) activity of mind." (M.i.301)

<sup>42</sup> M.i.333.

away, and that monk who has attained to the stopping of perception and feeling.<sup>43</sup>

Sāriputta suggests a state of meditation of which property cannot be measured by the property of perception and feeling. It is called *āyusaṅkhāra* (vitality): "These properties of vitality are not themselves states to be felt. If... these properties of vitality were themselves states to be felt, no emergence could be shown for a monk who had won to the stopping of perception and feeling. But because... the properties of vitality are one thing and states to be felt another, therefore the emergence of a monk who has won to the stopping of perception and feeling can be shown."<sup>44</sup> This is the suggestion of a possible state of meditation where there is no more perception and feeling; it is *āyusaṅkhāra* (vitality.) Does this vitality or "life force" (*āyusaṅkhāra*) here suggests an atman theory in Buddhism? Is this mystical interpretation acceptable to Buddhists? This interpretation may unavoidably lead to the conception of *atta* (self)<sup>45</sup>, but it does not happen to fit into the whole enterprise of *anatta* (non-self)<sup>46</sup> in early Buddhism. Whatever this interpretation may lead to, this "life force" is not further indicated if it is not liable to change or eternal as the theory of atman is alleged. Moreover, most of the Buddhist definition of the ultimate goal is in negative. *Āyusaṅkhāra* is no exception. The positive translation of vitality or "life force" may easily and unavoidably lead one to the interpretation of *atta*. However *āyusaṅkhāra* is a negative term simply denoting a state of meditation where there is no perception and feeling. It is the state of cessation of all mental activities. The same idea can be seen in the term *Nibbāna* (extinction) and *venayika* (annihilation.)

As described in *Kāyagatāsatisutta*, attainment of the meditative states is not associated with lack of perception or knowledge. One rather has super-knowledge (*abhiññā*) after attaining the four *jhāna*. With *Jhāna* one can "turn his mind to this or that

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<sup>43</sup> M.i.296.

<sup>44</sup> M.i.296.

<sup>45</sup> Sanskrit: *atman*.

<sup>46</sup> Sanskrit: *anatman*.

realization through super knowledge of a thing that may be realised through super-knowledge and achieve ability as a witness now here, now there.”<sup>47</sup> Moreover with *jhāna* one “overcomes dislike and liking, and dislike (and liking) do not overcome him; he fares along constantly conquering any dislike (and liking) that have arisen. He is one who overcomes fear and dread, and fear and dread do not overcome him; and he fares along constantly conquering any fear and dread that have arisen.”<sup>48</sup> The ending of mind-flow (*viññāṇam*) is said to be the eradication of fascination (*abhinandati*)<sup>49</sup> or desire not the cessation of perception nor feeling: “The sensations that he feels from the inside have no more fascination for him. And the sensations that he feels from outside no longer fascinate. The wanderer is mindful and brings his mind-flow [*viññāṇam*] to an end.”<sup>50</sup> Furthermore, the highest ariyan calm is defined as freedom from attachment, aversion and misconception.<sup>51</sup>

There may be another way of seeing the state of stopping perception and feeling and its place in the course leading to Nibbāna. In the context of abhidhammic analysis, suffering is caused by craving and craving will not arise without the fulfillment of the field of condition. It is the condition of six sense objects, six sense faculties and six sense consciousnesses. The idea of cessation of perception and feeling may then be observed as follows: When the domain of the sense object (eg. color) is in contact with the sense faculty (eg. eyes), the sense consciousness (eg. consciousness of color) arises. Desire then may arise afterward. In order not to let desire come into being, one either recognizes all dhammas (eg. color) as being impermanent, suffering, and having no identity, or constantly concentrates on one single object. The former way is fulfilled through discriminative wisdom (i.e. that of impermanence, suffering and no-identity.) The latter

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<sup>47</sup> M.iii.97.

<sup>48</sup> M.iii.97.

<sup>49</sup> According to PED, *abhinandati* means ‘to rejoice at,’ ‘find pleasure in,’ ‘be pleased or delighted with.’

<sup>50</sup> Sn.1111.

<sup>51</sup> M.iii.246.



path is fulfilled through concentration (i.e. keeping control of the senses.) The problem with the second path is that one has to be always in that meditative state in order not to let craving arise. If it is true that craving is only got rid of when one is in this meditative state, then craving cannot be uprooted when he is not in the state. It is also then true for Sañjāva who is not free from desire when he is on the street begging for food. It follows that the same conclusion holds for the Buddha, that he too is free from passion when teaching, going for food, or engaged otherwise than meditating. The admittance of this observation means that discriminating insight can ultimately uproot desire altogether whereas meditative states such as that of the stopping of perception and feeling are only temporary means of weakening desire.

This becomes clearer if one considers the state of stopping of perception and feeling not as a state of *lacking* perception and feeling as is the case with rock, wood or metal (which are also lacking vitality), but rather a state of one-pointed concentration or solitude (*ekatta*). In this state a man's mind no longer behaves like a swinging monkey, constantly letting go of one branch to grasp another. He dwells rather in control, calm, peace and mindfulness. There is no disturbance (*daratha*)<sup>52</sup> for him. Whatever arises or comes to an end he just knows as it really is:

A monk not attending to the perception of village, not attending to the perception of human beings, attends to solitude [*ekatta*] grounded on the perception of forest. His mind is satisfied with, pleased with, set on and freed in the perception of forest. He comprehends thus: "The disturbances there might be resulting from the perception of village do not exist here; The disturbances there might be resulting from the perception of human beings do not exist here. There is only this degree of disturbance, that is to say solitude grounded on the perception of forests. He comprehends, 'This perceiving is empty of perception of knowledge.' He comprehends, 'This perceiving is empty of perception of human beings.'... He regards that which is not there as empty of it. But in regard to what remains there he comprehends, 'That being, this is.'<sup>53</sup>

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<sup>52</sup> *Daratha* means anxiety, care, distress, according to PED.

<sup>53</sup> M.iii.104-105.

The degree of reducing disturbance depends on the practice of solitude. This solitude is described as grounded on perception of forest, (*araññasaññāṃ paṭicca ekattaṃ*), earth (*paṭhavisaññāṃ*), the plane of infinite ākāsa, (*ākāsanañcayatanasaññāṃ paṭicca*), the plane of infinite consciousness (*viññāṇaṇcāyatanasaññāya paṭicca*), the plane of no-thing (*ākāñcaññāyatanasaññāṃ paṭicca*) and the plane of neither-perception-nor-non-perception (*nevasaññānāsaññāyatanasaññāṃ paṭicca*).<sup>54</sup>

When one attends to solitude grounded on perception of the plane of neither-perception-nor-non-perception, "his mind is pleased with... and freed in the perception of the plane of the neither-perception-nor-non-perception. He comprehends thus: 'The disturbances there might be resulting from the perception of the plane of infinite consciousness... resulting from the perception of the plane of no-thing do exist here. There is only this degree of disturbance, that is to say solitude grounded on the perception of the plane of neither-perception-nor-non-perception.'<sup>55</sup>

The last disturbance which is the six sense fields (*saḷāyatana*) is described as follows:

"And again, Ānanda, a monk, not attending to the perception of the plane of no-thing, not attending to the perception of the plane of neither-perception-nor-non-perception, attends to solitude grounded on the concentration of mind that is signless (*animitta*).... There is only this degree of disturbance, that is to say the six sense fields that, conditioned by life, are grounded on this body itself.<sup>56</sup>

After attending to solitude grounded on the concentration of mind that is signless his mind is said to be "satisfied with, set on and free in concentration that is signless."<sup>57</sup> He then comprehends that: "This concentration of mind that is signless is effected and thought out. But what is effected and thought out, that is impermanent, it is liable to

<sup>54</sup> M.iii.104-107.

<sup>55</sup> M.iii.107.

<sup>56</sup> M.iii.107. According to Horner's note, *vipassanācittasamādhī* (the concentration of mind in insight) is said that as it is without a permanent sign it is called signless (M.A.iv.153.)

<sup>57</sup> M.iii.108.

stopping.”<sup>58</sup> The same idea is addressed in *Mahāvagga*: “Whatever is of the nature to uprise, all that is of the nature to stop.”<sup>59</sup> “When he knows this thus, see this thus, his mind is free from the canker of sense pleasures and his mind is free from the canker of becoming and his mind is free from the canker of ignorance. In freedom is the knowledge that he is freed and comprehends: destroyed is birth, brought to a close the brahma-faring, done is what was to be done, there is no more of being such or so.”<sup>60</sup>

Although the disturbances which are caused by the cankers of sensual pleasures, becoming and ignorance no longer exist, yes there still exists a disturbance: the six sensory fields, said to be conditioned by life and grounded in the physical body. There is no further indication of how this disturbance is to be eliminated. Can one maintain that “destroyed is birth...” while the physical body and six sensory fields still remain? In Buddhism the attainment of Nibbāna in present life is not impossible. Therefore the distinction between that Nibbāna and *Parinibbāna* is that the former is attained while the physical body remains whereas the latter is attained after the physical body ceases to exist. It is possible, then, that when the last disturbance of six sense fields<sup>61</sup> is eliminated, one attains *Parinibbāna*. In other words, even though there still exists the disturbance of six sense fields, the attainment of Nibbāna is still possible. Since Nibbāna is not a state of stopping perception and sensation, but rather the elimination of disturbance, it may be identified with knowledge (*pañña*;) whatever ceases or continues to exist, one always has full understanding of it: “He regards that which is not there as empty of it. But in regard to what remains he comprehends: ‘That being, this is.’”<sup>62</sup>

Concerning the knowledge of the Four Noble Truths and super-knowledge (*pañña*) that are achieved after attaining the fourth state of *jhāna*, can one achieve the same

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<sup>58</sup> M.iii.108.

<sup>59</sup> *Mahāvagga* 11.

<sup>60</sup> M.iii.108.

<sup>61</sup> PED: The six organs of sense and the six objects — viz., eye, ear, nose, tongue, body and mind; forms, sounds, odours, tastes, tangible things, ideas.

<sup>62</sup> M.iii.108.

knowledge without going through the four states of *jhāna* (i.e. only understanding of the Four Noble Truths.) If knowledge of the Four Noble Truths that is gained before fulfillment of ethical conduct and meditative states differs from knowledge gained after such fulfillment, the only possible difference is that between knowledge with and without bodily and mental quality. This means that one person may have knowledge of the Four Noble Truths by listening to someone<sup>63</sup> but have no quality of virtue or of mental concentration; the five hindrances still obstruct him. Another person may also have knowledge of the Four Noble Truths by listening to someone and have no quality of virtue or of mental concentration, but this knowledge can encourage him to go further in developing his bodily and mental qualities. After fulfillment of bodily and mental concentration (through a long or short period of time,) he obtains the knowledge of the Four Noble Truths through his insight of the former births. This latter knowledge is achieved when his body is pure with virtue and his mind is peaceful in meditative states. When it is said that the five ascetics attain arahantship by listening to the Four Noble Truths, it may imply that after listening to the Four Noble Truths their minds are immediately free from desire; at this state they attain arahantship.

This observation reconciles that which is given in chapter two, which states that the inferential knowledge of the goal is different from the knowledge associated with direct experience. In these observations, there is no attempt made to answer which one is more valid or truer than the other. If there is a validity to be judged, there is only validity in its own respective area. This attitude leads to an indispensable theory of the Two Truths, Conventional Truth and Absolute Truth. In the context of Pāli literature, the former truth (or knowledge of the truth) is associated with inferential understanding, logical examination, reasoning; this truth can be grasped by simple description, instruction or example. The latter truth is associated with experience, practice, virtue and mental power

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<sup>63</sup> In some cases of later time, reading from books.

(i.e. the power of concentration or ability to eliminate the five hindrances, cankers and desire.) This latter truth may be realized by achieving the highest state of meditation (viz. stopping of perception and feeling) accompanied by with intuitive wisdom, seeing that one's cankers are destroyed: "This... is a state that is higher and more excellent than knowledge and vision."<sup>64</sup> This truth is not gained through the knowledge that is achieved by means of teaching or example but through direct seeing or experience. This kind of realization of truth is well known to those who are called "Buddha-alone" (*paccekabuddha*), who realize the truth by their own effort and experience.<sup>65</sup> The absolute truth can also be seen to be the unshakable freedom of mind. *Sīla*, *jhāna* and knowledge and vision are only means to the release of mind: "This brahma-faring is not for advantage in gains, honour, fame, it is not for advantage in moral habit [*sīla*], it is not for advantage in concentration, it is not for advantage in knowledge and vision. That... which is unshakable freedom of mind, this is the goal."<sup>66</sup>

A similar attitude toward the truth is attributed to the Buddha. The Buddha suggests three ways of handling truth. When a man seeks for truth based on the five characters such as faith, inclination, report, consideration of reasons, reflection on and approval of an opinion, he is not capable to ascertain that "this alone is the truth, all else is falsehood".<sup>67</sup> The fact that he cannot ascertain a definite truth is because of those five characters have twofold maturing (i.e. truth and false).<sup>68</sup> His approach to the truth based on those five characters is only called preserving the truth, not awakening to or experience the truth. The second way of handling the truth, which is called awakening to the truth, is based on the examination with one's own intuitive wisdom. One who awakens to the truth, for example, is one who examines an assertion made by a person who is without greed,

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<sup>64</sup> M.i.204.

<sup>65</sup> Law, p.14, 70.

<sup>66</sup> M.i.204-205.

<sup>67</sup> M.ii.171.

<sup>68</sup> M.ii.170.

aversion and confusion; he then tests and sees the truth by his own intuitive wisdom. However this person still hasn't attained the whole truth yet. In order to attain the whole truth, which is the third way, he should practice or experience the truth that he has heard, tested and seen by his own intuitive wisdom. According to this claim, the attainment of the truth at the level of practice and experience is considered to be the highest level.

Since release is based not only on true knowledge but also on practicing or living according to that truth (dhamma), true knowledge does not necessarily mean to know a lot of things (dhamma), but rather means an efficient knowledge accompanied by practice: "Now if a monk understands the meaning and (text of) Dhamma, - even if it be but a stanza of four lines, - and be set on living in accordance with Dhamma, he may well be called 'one widely learned, who knows dhamma by heart.'<sup>69</sup> It is said that "the Lord knows what should be known, sees what should be seen."<sup>70</sup> This efficient knowledge should be the knowledge of the Four Noble Truths, the knowledge of impermanence, suffering and non-self, that will lead one to the cessation of cankers or cessation of desire, Nibbāna.

As observed, ascetic conduct, meditative practice and right knowledge cause each other to arise; they exist dependently. They can be treated as one compound or three qualities of release (Nibbāna). Since it is unfeasible that the meditative state of cessation of perceptions and sensations is likely to be the final release, this state is then considered to be only a means for weakening desire. A complete uprooting of desire is credited to discriminative knowledge. However, the final release is endowed not only with right knowledge but also with virtue and meditative power.

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<sup>69</sup> A.ii.177.

<sup>70</sup> M.ii.111.

## Conclusion

All human distress or unpeacefulness of mind, according to Buddhism, is caused by desire which is originally caused by misconception. The ultimate goal of Buddhism is, therefore, fulfillment of knowledge and elimination of desire and suffering, Nibbāna. This theory is well construed in the doctrine of the Four Noble Truths and the formula of the Twelve Instances of Dependent Origination. The insistence in the former is on uprooting desire whereas that in the latter is on eliminating misconception or cultivating objective mind. This is inherent in all Buddhist practices.

However there are found along these paths unavoidable contradictions. One contradiction is that whereas on one hand the Buddha insists on right view and right understanding, on the other hand the Buddha promotes the attitude of holding no view. Any duality of right view and wrong view, virtue and bad conduct, knowledge and misconception, et cetera, should be abandoned altogether. The teaching of no view is not only contradictory with the teaching of right view but also contradictory in itself. For holding no view is itself a view, inherently paradoxical in nature. It is as paradoxical as saying that 'do not believe in what I am saying,' or 'what has been written on the board is false' whereas this statement is written on the board.

There are different opinions among scholars regarding the issue of how Buddhists accept the Buddha's teachings (e.g. of right view and no view). C.A.F. Rhys Davids, Kern and Keith are of the view that having faith in the Buddha's quality and his trustworthiness of words is fundamentally important to the search for truth; it is an indispensable preliminary. Kern even refutes any existence of rationalistics in Buddhism

and considers only the Buddha's authority. La Vallée Poussin recognizes the equally important places of faith and reasoning in Buddhism, and admits their unavoidable contradiction. Jayatilleke, on the other hand, argues that Kern, Keith and La Vallée Poussin mistranslate the Pāli passages and misinterpret the Buddha's words. He maintains that the authority of the Buddha's teaching is not found on the Buddha's omniscience. He recognizes the position of faith in Buddhism but values critical understanding above faith. Moreover, Jayatilleke agrees with Gyomroi-Ludowyk that *saddhā* should be understood in terms of trust or confidence that come as a result of critical examination and experience.

In the *Kālāmasutta* the Buddha refutes the ten ways of claiming knowledge, six claims of which are based on tradition or report, four of which are based on some kind of logic and speculation. When Buddhism admits an objective knowledge, critical examination and rationalistics, there may follow the conclusion that Buddhism is based merely on logic and reasoning. It would be safer to say that the Buddha's teaching is rational in terms of not being dogmatic, mystical, metaphysical, divine revelation, or supernatural authority. The fact of a report's being well believed, well inclined, well remembered or descending from a tradition does not guarantee its truth. The Buddha's rejecting the ground of knowledge that is based on tradition does not mean that he does not recognize the ethical value, virtue and honesty inherent in that tradition. He rather criticizes its ground of claiming knowledge as being unsatisfactory. The ground that is based on pure logic and reasoning is also rejected because the proficiency and the eloquence of an argument are not correlated to the nature of truth and falsity. The Buddha criticizes those *takkī* and *vīmaṃsī* who use logic and reasoning simply for the sake of outwitting and reproaching their opponents but do not have their own theory. These *takkī* and *vīmaṃsī* include those who escape debate by evasive arguments out of their intellectual cowardice. In other words they are afraid to be criticized or to have the flaws in their theory pointed out to them. Moreover the Buddha rejects logic and reasoning in terms of avoiding



disputation, quarrels, outrage and diffusion of mind which is caused by gossiping. The attitude of no view may be then the suggested antidote for these *takkī* and *vīmaṇisī*, for Buddhism focuses greatly on the effort of elimination of desire, the ultimate goal in which there is no *papañca*.

Rejecting logic and reasoning in terms of the unsatisfactory guaranty of the state of truth or false by the proficiency and eloquence of an argument, and of misusing it for the sake of gossiping or just for the sake of outwitting and reproaching opponents, the Buddha still highly values careful and critical examination above blind faith. He insists on investigation of report, hearsay or statement before accepting or rejecting it. Besides the suggestions of an objective knowledge, methodological examination, and logical inference, there also suggests the quality of the person on which others can base on to justify the person's claims. If there is an urge to eliminate doubt, it does not mean that one must prohibit investigation; doubt is eliminated only by careful observation and examination.

However, whenever a criterion is suggested there arises a requirement for another criterion. And this becomes endless. This problem is proposed by a 150CE Buddhist scholar, Nāgārjuna. He calls this infinite regress (*anavasthā*). Is the Buddha aware of this problem? If he is why does he still demand a true criterion? One of the possible answers to this problem is that the Buddha does not try to establish an ultimate criterion but rather criticizes those claims that are groundless and suggests alternative criteria. To him these alternative criteria are like any dhamma, impermanent and having no identity, but more secure and trustworthy than the existent ones in terms of leading to the goal; that is the goal of cessation of desire. Furthermore the Buddha is not metaphysically interested in what the very first original cause is. He is rather interested in what symptoms cause suffering or unpleasantness and the treatment that promotes his goal. The parable of the arrow may not only mean that the Buddha is not interested in metaphysical questions, and that aiming only to the goal, but also that logical and reasoning knowledge is not trustworthy on its own terms (e.g. its paradoxical nature and infinite regress); therefore it will lead nowhere for

one who tries to solve the metaphysical questions. If Buddhism is identified as pragmatism, this pragmatism should be understood in the Buddhist sense (i.e. Nibbāna). This pragmatism does not imply that the Buddha is interested only in utility or being practical without considering the state of truth. The Buddha says that he makes a speech only if that speech is according to the truth, leading to the goal and agreeable.<sup>1</sup> It is also said that even if people dislike the speech, the Buddha would not hesitate to give a speech which is according to the truth and leading to the goal. He says that he does that out of his compassion toward beings. This compassion is like that of one who holds a child's head in one hand and sticks a finger down its throat to remove a stick or a stone. Even if the child bleeds the adult would not hesitate to do that in order to rescue the child.<sup>2</sup>

Whereas the Buddha rejects the ground of knowledge which is based on either tradition or on pure logic, he identifies himself with the group of people who rely on their own direct personal knowledge and experience, who do not learn it or hear it from others. This individual knowledge and experience does not imply a mystical state which is incommunicable and subjective. It is simply distinguished from the knowledge which is based entirely on tradition or hearsay; the distinction is made between the knowledge that is based on other sources, such as tradition or divine revelation, and the knowledge that arises out of one's own practice and development.

The next question concerns development of knowledge in connection with other Buddhist practices such as ascetic conduct and meditation. There appears to be a very close causal relationship between *sīla*, *samādhi* and *paññā*. They are dependent on each other to arise. They are regarded as three classes of eight paths and therefore each of them can be a primary path and support the others. The fulfillment of knowledge, ethical conduct or meditative practices cannot be obtained independently; each of them is inaccessible if treated separately. They can be considered as three aspects of an element or three qualities

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<sup>1</sup> M.i.395.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*

of Nibbāna. *Sīla*, *samādhi* and *paññā* are so related with each other that when this arises the other naturally arises; there is no need to make effort to have the other arise:

For one whose body is calmed there is no need for the thought: I feel happiness. This... is in accordance with nature—that one whose body is calmed feels happiness... For one who is happy there is no need for the thought: my mind is concentrated. It follows that the happy man's mind is concentrated... For one who is concentrated there is no need for the thought: I know and see things as they really are. It follows naturally that one concentrated does so... For one who knows and sees things as they really are there is no need for the thought: I feel revulsion; interest fades in me. It follows naturally that such an one feels revulsion and fading interest...<sup>3</sup>

Among these practices there are contradictory statements of the release which is achieved through a complete stopping of perceptions and feelings and discriminative insight. The former is described as a quiet state of mind (eg. being without diffusion of mind—*papañca*), whereas the latter is described as a state of reasoning, critical examination and discriminative wisdom (*paññā*). Although there is evidence that the former state exists in some monks, it is likely inconceivable that this is a final release itself. However this state of mind may be a means for weakening desire or maintaining the right knowledge. The final release is, therefore, the complete cessation of desire, cankers and suffering (which is achieved through ascetic conduct, mental concentration and discriminative wisdom) and the true recognition or understanding that desire, cankers and suffering have ceased to exist, that is Nibbāna.

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<sup>3</sup> A.v.3.

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