

# **The Connection Between *Atta* and *Dukkha***

## **BUDDHIST ANALYSIS OF HUMAN EXPERIENCE AND THE WAYS TO TRANSCEND UNSATISFACTORINESS**

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## Abstract

This thesis is an attempt to discover the early Buddhist knowledge of human experience in different dimensions such the analysis of *Khandha*, *Āyatana* and *Dhātu*. What is considered as self or soul or ego-consciousness (*attā* or *ātman*) in different traditions are also presented in order to understand the Buddhist doctrine of *Anatta* more clearly. From a Buddhist perspective *Khandhas* or aggregates are the layers that cover different dimensions of human experiences: clinging, grasping at them causes pain, conflict and distress (*dukkha*). Relevant doctrinal points are being examined from a psychological perspective.

Out of five factors constituting a human, consciousness (*viññānakkhandha*), the factor that joins the different stages of experiences and makes sense of what is being felt and perceptions is a complex causal event based on the sense and its corresponding object. This analysis of human experience makes the Buddha's teaching a unique doctrine that not only denies the existence of an all- powerful- creator (God or Brahma) but also rules out the possibility of an independent and permanent self or soul that presides over and wields its power on human experiences. The assumption that one has a self, an identity that makes one's existence a separate unique entity is a problem: can we probe into that self? Many philosophers in different traditions, from the dawn of human civilization till now have tried to identify what that self truly is. In ordinary experience, the tension between the ongoing sense of self and the failure to find that self in reflection is the origin of human uncertainty and irritation (*dukkha*).

Buddhist Ways to Transcend Unsatisfactory Experiences are based on the knowledge of the human motivation which is governed by cognitive and emotive processes that intertwine in the human experience. The methods applied to solve human predicaments are many and various. The *Anatta* doctrine is a device to educate people to get out of the boundary of self-delusion. A similar expression concerning the non-validity of the world as conceived via our senses is termed *suññatā* or *sūnyatā* in Sanskrit. Besides, a systematic training called the Noble Eightfold Path or Threefold Paths is a gradual course to reach right knowledge (see things as they have come to be) and right deliverance (no longer grasping at experiences). Other ways intended for transcending ordinary experiences are also discussed, such as *jhāna* attainment, the art of deduction to unburden the mind of mental activities, and a rational way to transform emotions termed the miracle of the noble ones (*ariya iddhi*).

Finally, Buddhist Path is not to build up, but to deconstruct the unnecessary burden that one involuntarily carries with oneself as a misapprehension of ‘self’ and ‘the world’. This right understanding is termed *anāsava sammā ditṭhi* which turns one’s course of action to transcend all self-motive and be at peace with whatever comes one’s way.

## Abbreviations

A.	Āṅguttara Nikāya
AA.	Āṅguttara Nikāya Aṭṭhakathā (i.e, Manorathapūraṇī)
BPS.	Buddhist Publication Society
Br.	Brāhmaṇa <sup>1</sup>
Bṛh.	Bṛahadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad
Chand.	Chāndogya Upaniṣad
D.	Dīgha Nikāya (DN)
DA.	Dīgha Nikāya Aṭṭhakathā (i.e., Sumangala Vilāsini).
Dhp.	Dhammapāda,
DhpA	Dhammapāda Aṭṭhakathā.
Dhs.	Dhammasangani (1 <sup>st</sup> book of Theravada Abhidhamma).
DhsA.	Dhammasangani Aṭṭhakathā.
ITBMU.	International Theravada Buddhist Missionary University.
Khd.	Khuddaka Nikāya
KhdA.	Khuddaka Nikāya Aṭṭhakathā
Kaṭha.	Kaṭha Upaniṣad
M.	Majjhima Nikāya (MN)
MA	Majjhima Nikāya Aṭṭhakathā (Papañcasūdanī)
MLS	Middle Length Sayings
MilP.	MilindaPañhā
NdA.	Mahanidāna Aṭṭhakathā
Mhv.	Mahāvaggapāli (Vin. III)
Muṇḍ.	Muṇḍaka Upaniṣad.
MS.	Mīmāṃsā Śūtra
NB.	Nyāya Bhāṣya

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<sup>1</sup> Brāhmaṇa is one of the classified Vedic Books with a different spirit from Upaniṣad.

NM.	Nyāyamañjarī of Jayantā Bhatta
NS.	Nyāya Sūtra (Principle of Nyāya by Gautama, not the Buddha)
NSB.	Nyāya Sūtra of Gautama with Bhāsyā of Vātsyāyana
NV.	Nyāyavārtika of Uddyotakara
Praśna.	Praśna Upaniṣad.
PTS.	Pāli Text Society.
PGIPBS.	Postgraduate Institute of Pāli and Buddhist Studies.
S.	Samyutta Nikāya.
SA.	Samyutta Nikāya Aṭṭhakathā (i.e., Sāraṭhappakāsinī)
SDS.	Sarvadarśana saṅgraha
SK.	Sāṅkhya Kārikā
Prab.	Prabodha candrodaya.
Tait.	Taittirīya Upaniṣad
Tait.Br.	Taittirīya Brāhmaṇa.
Vin.	Vinaya Pitaka
Vism.	Visuddhimagga
VS.	Vaiśeṣika Sūtra of Kanāda

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## Chapter I

## Introduction

Students of Buddhism often feel confused by the two seemingly contradictory concepts that are *anatta* or not-self orientation, and *kamma* and rebirth in *samsāra*. If there is no-self, as the Buddha postulated, who or what takes rebirth? If there is no person in reality, then who is responsible for what has done by ‘nobody’? We all know that the Four Noble Truths constitute the central philosophy of Buddhism. The first Noble Truth is the fact of unsatisfactoriness, the second truth refers to the cause of unsatisfactoriness, the third to the liberation from unsatisfactoriness, and the fourth to the way leading to that liberation. Here, again, if there is no-self, who in fact suffers in *samsāra*? Who is liberated from the ills of *samsāra*? No body! That is the quandary I will proceed to discuss in the framework of the present thesis.

### Human Experiences

In order to understand this quandary properly, we have to examine Buddhist categories of human experiences. Since human experience is a complex, so is the conditions gives rise to such experience<sup>2</sup>. A being (*satta*)<sup>3</sup>, including a human being,

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<sup>2</sup> Kalupahana, David 1987: *The Principles of Buddhist Psychology*, State University of New York Press, p. 83.

<sup>3</sup> Ledi Sayadaw (1846- 1923), an eminent scholar of Buddhism who lived in Burma wrote: “A being is said, from the conventional standpoint, to be born, to decay, to die, to fall from one state of existence and to be reborn into another. Taken in this sense, a being is born, during his whole life-term, just once at the time of birth and die once for all at the time of death. Mind (*nāma*) and matter (*rūpa*), on the contrary, come to birth, undergo decay, die and breakdown many hundreds of thousands of times, even in in one day.” – *The Manuals of*

in the ultimate sense is a compound of psychophysical factors that termed *nāma-rūpa* in Buddhist psycho-philosophy (*Abhidharma*). By human experiences we means the interaction between the factors that constitute a human being and the ways such a being relates to the animate and inanimate world. Thus, human experiences are accounted for bodily functions, sensation, perception, feeling, volitions, and consciousness, i.e., our knowledge of the subjective as well as objective world via perceptive, reflective and affective ways. There is an epistemological question regarding to what extent our perceptions of ourselves and of the world are reliable? A realist would say that genera and species (*sattā-loka* in Pāli, and *sattvā* in Sanskrit) are real things or entities, existing independently of our conceptions.<sup>4</sup> A consequence of realism in this sense is that the entities are there to be discovered, and that ignorance and errors are possible. However, a mind-independent world exists and in our perception we mentally grasp qualities and objects that are parts of the world<sup>5</sup>. In the contrary, however, an idealist adheres to the doctrine that in sense perceptions, there is an immediate cognition of the external object, and our knowledge of it is not mediated or representative, therefore, our perceptions are, in most the cases, not reliable. Further more, idealism holds that mind is the only ultimate reality, and the external physical world (*saṅkhārā-loka*) is, but a mind-dependent construct.<sup>6</sup> In developed Buddhist systems of psycho-philosophy, we can see the represents of both trends.

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*Buddhism, Niyāma Dipani*, edited by Ayeyarwaddy, Publishing House Yangon, Myanmar 2004, p.219.

<sup>4</sup> Webster 1913: *English Dictionary*, electrical edition 2002.

<sup>5</sup> *The Penguin Dictionary of philosophy*, Ed. By Thomas Mautner, p 472

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.* p. 473.

In the early Buddhist perspective, not to comprehend the Four Noble Truths is said to amount to being in the state of ‘ignorance’.<sup>7</sup> If it is due to ignorance that we suffer in *samsāra*, then, what kind of ignorance is it? The Buddhist scriptures consistently give the same categorical answer that it is one’s ignorance of the Four Noble Truths. The first truth is stated in brief thus: “the five aggregates of clinging are unsatisfactory” [*sankhittena pañcuppādānakkhandha dukkha*]. The second truth is identified as craving (*taṇhā*), or sometimes, as clinging (*upādāna*). It appears that many scholars of Buddhism from the past to present have often missed the point when it comes to their interpretations of many doctrinal links. One of these is the link between an illusory notion (ignorance) of an ‘I’ and ‘mine’ which leads to craving and clinging to an identity (*attā*) and its property or a personality (*attābhava*). The first truth starts from the contention ‘birth is suffering’, begging the question of what is it that is being born? An authentic answer from a competent Buddhist would be that it is the birth of a personality here or there, or in other words, it is the process of identification with one’s experiences under the spell of ignorance.

Commenting on the critics of the Buddhist notion of *dukkha* as a pessimistic view of life, especially as illustrated by the first statement in the *dukkhasacca* ‘Birth is suffering’, professor Kalupahana writes: “It is indeed the excessive emotive element, namely, anxiety that gives rise to the belief in the permanent and the substantial”. He continues on the

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<sup>7</sup> Matthieu Ricard & Trinh Xuan Thuan, *The Quantum and the Lotus*, p. 224 (Published by Three Rivers Press) New York 2001: In Buddhism, the dichotomy between “me” and “the world” is the first sign of ignorance. In a sense, it’s Buddhism’s “original sin”, but its original only in name, given that we commit it every moment of our lives.

exposition of the concept of *vipallāsa*, or the distortion of perception (*saññā*), thought (*citta*), and view (*diṭṭhi*), that responsible for the two encompassed views in the world, the eternality (*sassatavāda*) and the annihilation (*ucchedavāda*), corresponding to an optimistic and a pessimistic attitude. Cited a text from M.I. 265, the Professor writes:

For the Buddha who was willing to recognize retro-cognition as a valid source of knowledge, and for whom the beginning of the stream of consciousness need not be strictly confined to a definite point in the present life of a human being. Birth (*jāti*) is the result of a process of dependent arising (*paṭiccasamuppāda*) involving psychological factors while excessive craving for survival (*bhavataṇhā*) constitutes one of the psychological conditions for the birth of a human being, birth will not occur unless the necessary physical condition provided by parents are also available. Further more, birth could be a source of suffering in the present life only if this craving for survival continues to dominate a person's life; not if he has, after being born, adopts an attitude of renunciation or dispassion (*virāga*) for such continuation. Birth is thus the result of excessive craving or passion for survival and the availability of other necessary physical conditions. Birth becomes a source of suffering only in this conditional, but not in an absolute sense. In other words, there is no intrinsic relationship between birth and suffering. If they were to be so related, there could not be any freedom from suffering for one who is born, at least in the present life. The same holds true to decay or old-age (*jarā*). It is

the unwillingness to accept decay as a fact of life that causes frustration and unhappiness.”<sup>8</sup>

It is clear that existence is uncertainty, and human craving (*taṇhā*) expecting (*chanda*), and clinging (*upādāna*) are the main factors responsible for anguish and frustration. A Danish philosopher Soren Kierkegaard (1813-55) wrote: “to exist is to face the uncertainty of the world and to commit oneself passionately to a way of life.”<sup>9</sup> Accordingly, ‘to exist’ is not simply ‘being born’, but the act of volition and effort especially in constructing one’s personality. The ground that provides materials for building a personality is uncertain and beyond one’s will to control, further more, every effort to move on and each will to change or resist to change creates conditions for one experiences oneself and the world. It is the emotive reaction (*taṇhā*, *upādāna*) which reflects the affective field (*vedanā*) in human experience that makes existence (*bhava*) unsatisfactory experience (*dukkhasmim’iti*). Why then this craving and clinging invading the human mind and making life more complicated and unpalatable? It is the ignorance of the true nature of existence that responsible for living beings to grasp and get caught up in an entangled net of conditioned experiences. From a Buddhist perspective, the five aggregates of clinging (*pañcuppādānakkhandha*) that constitute human beings are considered to culminate in suffering not because of *khandha* or aggregates themselves, but rather due to clinging (*upādāna*) that identifies *khandhas* as “I” or “mine”. *Khandhas* is an analytical scheme for human experience beside *salāyatana*, or six sense bases, and *dhātus* or elements of existence.

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<sup>8</sup> Kalupahana, David 1987; pp 85-6.

<sup>9</sup> Ref. *The Penguin Dictionary of Philosophy*; ed. By Thomas Mautner, pp 187.

According to Webster's Dictionary, experience is:

1. Trial, as a test or experiment.
2. The effect upon the judgment or feelings produced by any event, whether witnessed or participated in; personal and direct impressions as contrasted with description or fancies; personal acquaintance; actual enjoyment or suffering.
3. An act of knowledge, one or more, by which single facts or general truths are ascertained; experimental or inductive knowledge; hence, implying skill, facility, or practical wisdom gained by personal knowledge, feeling or action; as, a king without experience of war.
4. Experience may be acquired in two ways; either, first by noticing facts without any attempt to influence the frequency of their occurrence or to vary the circumstances under which they occur; this is observation; or, secondly, by putting in action causes or agents over which we have control, and purposely varying their combinations, and noticing what effects take place; this is experiment.

[Sir J. Herschel]

Relating these definitions to Buddhist concepts, we can match the first meaning with *kamma* or *karma* in which a person acts or reacts and experiences the effects of kamma in given circumstances<sup>10</sup>. This is to live a life without any

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<sup>10</sup> *Kamma*, according to the *Paṭiccasammupāda*, literally means 'happening-because-of'; karma is the law that governs action and reaction. Modern trends tend to explain it as merely psychological law. For example, Gina Cerminare in

theory or superimposition of intellectuals. The second meaning is compatible with the function of *vedanā* and *saññā* in Buddhist terms. They consist of two aggregates in the analysis of personality divided into five groups (*khandhas*, to be elaborated further in the chapter on *khandha* doctrine). In the field of feelings (*vedayitaṃ*), the experience is described as pleasant (*sukha*), or unpleasant (*dukkha*), or neither pleasant nor unpleasant (*asukhamadukkha*). In Buddhist classification, these sensations come under the aggregate of feeling (*vedanākkhandha*). Emotions, which comprise a developing stage of the felt experience, are those as like (*piya*) or dislike (*apiya*), glad or sad which come under the aggregate of volitional activities (*saṅkhārakkhandha*). The experience of happiness and suffering are considered as the results of volitions (*cetanā* or *kamma*), and thus volition is the present factor interacting with past *kamma* which are the conditions of that experience. By redefining *kamma* as *cetanā*, the Buddha avoids the pit fall of determinism (*niyata*).

In Buddhist analysis, all of these are included under the umbrella of the first and second Noble Truths, the truth of *dukkha* and its origin. The fourth meaning is equated with the term *bhāvanā* in Pāli. Literally, this Buddhist term *bhāvanā* means ‘development’, however, this development is used as a means to refine one’s personality as well as gaining insight knowledge into one’s own experiences. The technique is also

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her book: *Many Mansions*, writes: “Karma is a psychological law and acts primarily in the psychological realm. The physical circumstances bring merely the means whereby the psychological purpose is fulfilled. Therefore the reversal or reaction on the objective physical plane is not exact, but only approximate; on the psychological plane, the reversal is more nearly exact.” [The Edgar Ceyce story on Reincarnation; Signet Printing 1999. P. 56].

called ‘meditation’ employing two techniques termed *samatha*, or calming the mind and body by concentration, and *vipassanā* or insight meditation by a disinterested observation (*sati*). This also confirms that Buddhist practice (at least in its pristine form) is experimental field, and verifiable which is attributed as *ehipasiko*, literally “come and see” and *paccattam veditabbo viññūhi*, “to be experienced by the wises” here and now (*akāliko*) for a better quality of life (*opanāyiko*). Another aspect of *bhāvanā* is *jhāna* or *dhyana*, which are different degrees of mental absorption that sometimes mistaken as some mystic experiences.

### **The “I” or the Ego**

Can we experience something that is without the subject who is experiencing, and the object that is being experienced? In an ordinary sense, this is impossible. An ordinary person always feels that there is a ‘feeler’, a ‘perceiver’, a ‘goer’, a doer’, a seer’, etc., and a world ‘out there’. This is the problem of dualistic notions in which there is a self (subject) relating to the world (object). This self is thought of as distinctive from and independent of the world. There is a separate “I” and a distinguished “me” in contrast to the world of people and things that are perceived by the “I” which are related to the “me”. Thus, the conceptions that are formed by these perceptions and the feelings of the affective agent are all perceived via an egoistic perspective.

Now, what is that “I” or the subject that is experiencing? According to the English dictionary [1913 Webster +PJC], **ego** is defined as:

1. “The conscious and permanent subject of all psychical experiences, whether held to be directly known or the product of reflective thought; the subject consciously considered as “I” by a person; -- opposed to non-ego.”

2. In psychoanalysis, ego is “that one of the three parts of a person's psychic apparatus that mediates consciously between the drives of the *id* and the realities of the external physical and social environment, by integrating perceptions of the external world and organizing the reactions to it. Contrasted with the *id* and *superego*.”  
[PJC]

There are two Pāli terms matching this sense of “I”, one is the notion of a conscious and permanent subject that is termed ‘*atta*’ in Pāli or *ātman* in Sanskrit, and the other is *māna*, or conceit. In the first sense, there is an explicit notion of a metaphysical self (*ātman*) that is the subject of one’s action(s) and the object of one’s reflective thought(s). *Māna* or ‘conceit’ is its twin. A person with a ‘*māna*-istic attitude’ will relate himself with others in terms of ‘I am equal’, ‘I am inferior’, or ‘I am superior’. In Buddhist philosophy and psychology, the notion of a permanent self and the egoistic attitude (as a necessary sequel) are both harmful and problematic. This topic will be focused on in chapter three, and partly in chapter four and five of the present work. From a Buddhist perspectives, the “self”, individuality, or personality is a relative set or a complex of psychophysical factors termed ‘*nāma-rūpa*’ or in a more elaborated term ‘*pañcupādānakkhandha*’ - the five aggregates.

Experience is always through and through relational in structure. Things exist not as isolated units, but as participants

in a vast network of relationships which can be broken down only in thought and never in fact.<sup>11</sup> Interestingly, a modern French psychologist, Jacques Lacan also finds that “subjectivity is entirely relational; it only comes into play through the principle of difference, by the opposition of the ‘other’ or the ‘you’ to the ‘I’. In other words subjectivity is not an essence but a set of relationship.”<sup>12</sup> In search of an identity that accounts for an individual existence in the human realm, anthropologists look into different directions and many find out a similar notion with Buddhism. “Identities at all levels are constructed by establishing order and security within a radically impermanent and interdependent world.”<sup>13</sup> Another interesting conclusion were reached by the evolutionary biologists who observe that self-awareness typically entails a degree of built-in blindness, an innate ignorance about who we are and what we do, especially concerning the illusion that “the self” is a miniature, “controlling person”, a homunculus.<sup>14</sup>

## Consciousness

What is the ground for sentient beings, or to be more accurate, human beings, to grasp at to support the sense of his/her identity? To answer this question we are likely to stumble upon another problem in Buddhist philosophy and psychology that causes much debate and controversy, concerning the fifth factor in the analytical scheme termed *khandha* or aggregates. Whether **the aggregate of consciousness (*viññāṇakkhandha*)**

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<sup>11</sup> Bhikkhu Bodhi: *The Discourse on the Root of Existence*, BPS 1992; p.9.

<sup>12</sup> M. Sarup, *Post- structuralism and Postmodernism*. P. 24; also at *The Resonance of Emptiness* by Gay Watson, p. 41.

<sup>13</sup> William S. Waldron: *Common Ground, Common Cause: Buddhism and Science on the Afflictions of Identity, Buddhism & Science*; pp. 164.

<sup>14</sup> Ref. Ibid, pp 158.

is a merely personal component or universal phenomena is a matter of debate among the various Buddhist schools. Consciousness, is defined by Sir W. Hamilton thus: “Consciousness is thus, on the one hand, the recognition by the mind or “ego” of its acts and affections; -- in other words, the self-affirmation that certain modifications are known by me, and that these modifications are mine..”<sup>15</sup> According to this definition, consciousness is highly individual, an act of personalization. In Buddhist psychology, the word *viññāṇa* stands for consciousness, as we shall discuss in chapter three. In the analysis of elements (*dhātu*), it is one of the six elements (six elements being *paṭhavi*, *apo*, *vāyo*, *tejo*, *okāsa*, and *viññāṇa*), thus consciousness, as an element, is a universal factor. The universal characteristic of consciousness is approved in Dhātuvibhanga sutta (M.140) as follows: “There remains only consciousness: pure and bright. What does one cognize with that consciousness? One cognizes 'pleasure', One cognizes 'pain', One cognizes 'neither pleasure nor pain.’” This element which serves as a discerning faculty is a state of consciousness in *jhāna* or *vipassanā* knowledge (in the context of the quoted sutta). *Viññāṇa* here is equal to *paññā* or wisdom. This quality of consciousness is elaborated in Surangama sutra, a long discourse (circulated only in Mahāyana texts). This long discourse has served as the main text of Mahayana meditation, and demonstrates how consciousness is a universal element and unaffected by individual emotions and biases.

Consciousness (*viññāṇakkhandha*), the factor that joins the different stages of experiences and makes sense of what is being felt and perceptions is a complex causal event based on the sense and its corresponding object. This analysis of human

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<sup>15</sup> 1913 Webster; *English Dictionary*, E-ed. 2002

experience makes the Buddha's teaching a unique doctrine that not only denies the existence of an all- powerful- creator (God or Brahma) but also rules out the possibility of an independent and permanent self or soul that presides over and wields its power on human experiences. However, as a *khandha* or aggregate, consciousness is a personal component, a divided knowing via subject-object relational processing. Consciousness can not arise without an object, and as a mental processor, it always arises together with a certain number of mental concomitants such as attention, feeling, apperception, contact and volition. How many mental factors cooperate with consciousness is a matter of debate among the different Buddhist schools. However, that consciousness is colored by its associated factors is acknowledged by all schools. Consciousness in this sense is equal to a thought (*citta*).<sup>16</sup>, and is highly individual, and this consciousness (called *saññā* in D.9) is the subject of training in Buddhist meditation. The individual consciousness as the core of one's personality should be gradually purified from the *kilesa*, defiling factors. This can be done since Buddhist philosophy holds that they are changeable and conditioned, therefore, to alter condition(s) will affect the quality of consciousness. This is a crucial point differentiating the Buddhist philosophy and psychology from all other systems of philosophy.

Beside the *khandha* doctrine, Buddhist scriptures also describe human experiences in terms of *āyatana* – sphere or domain, and the psychophysical interactions that originate life are presented in the *Paṭiccasamuppāda* doctrine, or the law of

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<sup>16</sup> S. I: Citena nīyati loko. Cittassa parikkassati' cittassa ekadhammassa sabbeva vasaṃ angavū- the world is led by thought. By thought it is drawn along. All go under the sway of one thing, that is the mind (or thought)- Bhikkhū Bodhi. . P. 30; a similar expression is found in A. II. P. 177 and M I, ...

dependent existence. From the above analysis, experience is a complex relational field involving the interplay of a multiple factors. This interplay between the subject and object is a dynamic state that employs various functional interdependent factors termed *salāyatana*, six sense bases and their respective fields. Once, the Buddha told his followers: “bhikkhus, I will teach you *the all*. The eye and visible object...the mind and mental objects” [S 35:32 or S IV, 15]. The all (*āyatanasabbā*) here is restricted to the empirical realm of experience. Sometimes *the all* is taken as personal experience or the all of personality (*sakkāyasabba*). This restricted interpretation is presented in the first discourse of the Majjhima Nikāya, the *Mūlapariyāya sutta*, or *The Root of Existence*. Herein, the different modes of human experiences are divided into the cognitive patterns that pertaining to different levels of the cognizance. They are ordinary people (*puthujjanā*), the learners (*sekkhā*), the beyond learners (*Asekkhā* or *Arahant*), and the *Thus gone* (*Tathāgata*). Again, objects of experience are categorized into 24 modes or elements (*dhātu*). It is noteworthy that in Buddhist scriptures, the word *dhamma* and the word *dhātu* are in many cases interchangeable. The relationships between *dhammā* or *dhātus* are treated in a separate book of the *Abhidhamma* called *Paṭṭhāna Pāli*. In Mahāyana system, these modes of relational existence are explored in the Avatamsaka sutras.

As we have seen from the above analysis, the human experience, or in general, the *samsāric* experience is analyzed into five aggregates termed *khandha* in *Pāli* or *skandha* in *Sanskrit*. It is said in the Buddhist scriptures that whoever tries to pin together his self, or tries to conceive what is meant by his own existence, he is only doing so with regard to the five

aggregates, not otherwise<sup>17</sup>. The assumption that one has a self, an identity that makes one's existence a separate unique entity is a problem: can we probe into that self? Many philosophers in different traditions, from the dawn of human civilization till now have tried to identify what that self truly is. They speculate, contemplate, and describe its attributions in considerable details but all fail to come to a conclusion, and for that matter, they remain in *samsāra*, said the Buddha. In ordinary experience, the tension between the ongoing sense of self and the failure to find that self in reflection is the origin of human uncertainty and irritation (*dukkha*). This uncertainty and irritation push one forward in a struggle to build a self or a personality amounting to an ego-centric attitude inherent in every one. The outcome is, but grief, sorrow and despair caused by craving and grasping unto experience which is transient and dependent arising, that ever- proving its inherent non-self nature. Man's suffering is, indeed, due to his ignorance of this fact. The Buddha, over 2500 years ago, briefly stated: “*pañcupādānakkhandha’pi dukkha-* in short, the five aggregates of clinging is unsatisfactoriness”.

### **Khandhas and the Self**

The Pāli term *khandhas* is often translated as ‘aggregates’ or personal components. As we have stated at the beginning, the whole or partly personal components are ordinarily taken for granted as ‘mine’ or my-self. According to the Dictionary

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<sup>17</sup> SN 22.47: Ye hi keci bhikkhave, samaṇvā brahmaṇā vā anekavihiṭaṃ attānaṃ samanupassamānā samanupassanti, sabbe te pañcupādānakkhandhe samanupassanti, etesaṃ vā aññataraṃ.

of Psychology, self is defined as: "(1) the individual as a conscious being. (2) the ego or I. (3) the personality or organization of traits."<sup>18</sup> The definition of ego is "the self, particularly the individual's conception of himself." Personality is defined as "the dynamic organization within the individual of those psycho-physical systems that determine his characteristic behavior and thought." Another definition of personality is "that which permits a prediction of what a person will do in a given situation."<sup>19</sup> According to these definitions, the Buddhist technical term *khandha* or *nāma-rūpa* is the best equivalent to personality or individuality respectively.

The birth of an individual is described in the Pāli language as '*khandhānaṃ paṭilābhaṃ...*'the acquisition of aggregates', and in reflection on one's former experiences, one's accounts may run like this "I was born there, of such and such a name, in such a clan, such a class, enjoyed such a food, experienced such and such happiness and suffering, such was my life-spent."<sup>20</sup> In other words, we identify with our name, our positions, our happiness and suffering in this life time, and a sense of life's continuity (of oneself) is marked by events and memories. In another context, the individual existence is described as '*attābhava paṭilābha*', and thus, *khandhas* and *attābhava* are used as synonyms. The term *attā* when it is used in a metaphysical sense, is equivalence with 'individual' as this definition shows: 'Not divided, or not to be divided; existing as one entity, or distinct being or object; single; one;

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<sup>18</sup> Ref. U. Sīlananda, *No Inner Core: Introduction*; Singapore 1998; also at *Oxford Dictionary of Psychology* by Adrew M. Colman, p. 233, 547.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid.

<sup>20</sup> D, 28, P. 108: Amutrāsīṃ evaṃ nāmo evaṃ gotto evaṃ-vaṇṇo evaṃ- āhāro evaṃ-sukhaṃ-dukkha-paṭisaṃvedī evaṃ āyu-pariyanto.

as, an individual man, animal.<sup>21</sup> I will devote a full chapter, the second Chapter of this thesis, to research on the concept of self, soul, personality and ego in different systems of philosophy and theology.

### **Contention and Structure of This Study**

The first quandary characterizing Buddhist philosophy is the Buddhist acceptance of the concept of *samsāra*, the endless circle of birth and rebirth in Indian philosophy on the one hand and its revolutionary doctrine of *anatta* on the other. How can these two apparently contradictory conceptions of eternalism and annihilationism be in concert with the Buddhist unique doctrine of *anatta*? In his early discourses, the Buddha taught the doctrine of the Middle Way (*majjhimaṭṭipāda*) that avoids these two prevalent philosophical trends. Actually, Buddha's doctrine of the Middle Way or the Noble Eightfold Path was intended to counteract these two trends of motivational practice as the results of these above mentioned views. They are the asceticism, a postponement of indulgences for the sake of a greater pleasure, be it a heavenly rebirth or in union with the *Ātman* or *Brahma*, or hedonism, an attitude of nihilists and the practice of indulgence in each and every pleasure graspable here and now. For the intellectuals, the Buddha pointed out to the law of causality or dependent origination (*paṭiccasamuppāda*), thus avoiding both the nihilistic view as well as the belief in eternity.

In a later period, under the pressure of philosophical debates and in interaction with other faiths, Buddhist thinkers searched in different directions to solve these problems.

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<sup>21</sup> 1913 Webster

*Sarvāstivāda*, a Buddhist sect prevalent in India a few centuries after the demise of the Buddha had succumbed to metaphysical speculation whereby they tried to pin down the term *dhamma* in the early discourses, and redefined it in the sense of an element of existence. Even earlier than the *Abhidharma* system of *Sarvāstivāda* school, we find a systematic analysis of *dhamma* in *Theravāda* school. This system of Buddhist philosophy seeks to analyse all human experience into a scheme called *dhamma* classification. Perhaps, the best translation of the term *dhamma* as it appeared in the Buddhist scriptures is ‘idea(s)’.<sup>22</sup> *Dhamma* is a dynamic state that can be experienced objectively, and the subject that experiences a *dhamma* is also described as a *dhamma* itself. However, this is not a static entity. A renowned Buddhist meditation master puts it in a simple language thus: “the *dhamma* is simply the *dhamma*. It is a natural, selfless process. It does not belong to us or any one else. It isn’t any thing. Whatever a person experiences, it all falls within the five fundamental categories (*khandhas*): body, feeling, perception, thoughts and consciousness.”<sup>23</sup> Even in this simple definition, it appears to be difficult to understand! A more detailed treatment for the term *dhamma* as it is understood in Buddhist circles, especially in early Buddhism is presented in chapter fourth. Herein, we will have a glimpse at the map classification in the *Abhidhamma* system. This *Abhidhamma* system was

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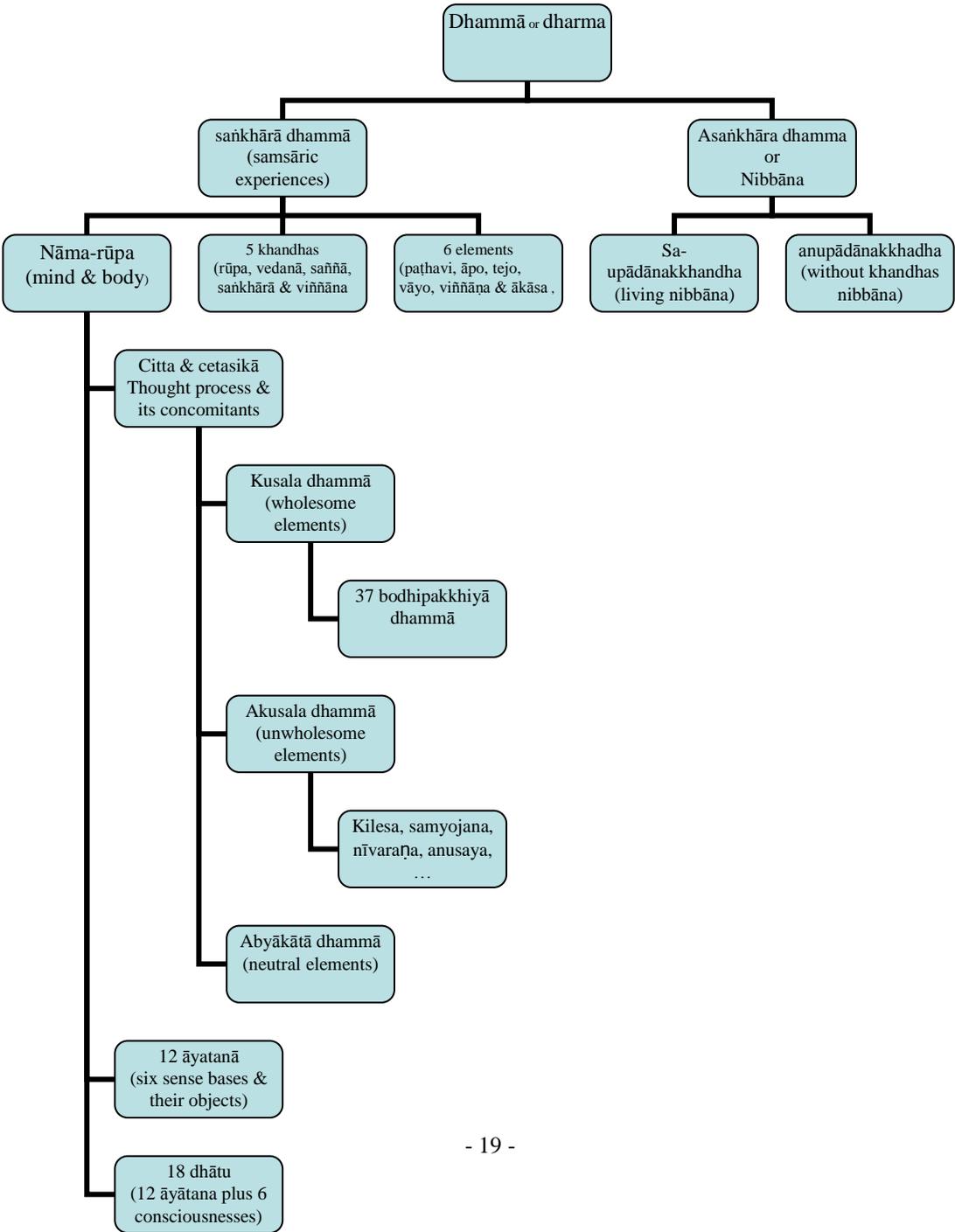
<sup>22</sup> Any object apprehended, conceived, or thought of, by the mind; a notion, conception, or thought; the real object that is conceived or thought of.[1913 Webster]

Whatsoever the mind perceives in itself, or as the immediate object of perception, thought, or understanding, that I call idea. Locke.[1913 Webster].  
A belief, opinion, or doctrine; a characteristic or controlling principle; as, an essential idea; the idea of development.

<sup>23</sup> Achahn Chah, *Talks on Meditation*, BPS 2006, p.20.

criticized very strongly by its younger brother, the *Madhyamika* or Middle way thinkers such as Nagarunja.

If the self is not a valid and enduring entity accounting for one's experiences, then, to what extent, can human perception of the external world (*loka*) be valid? This is a fundamental question requiring that a serious attention be paid to the analysis of human experience. The term *dhamma* as a basic unit of human experience thus covers a very wide range in its connotations. Buddhist philosophy and psychology, from the very early stage (as recorded in Pāli suttas) gives a very precise description of the cognitive process, and motivational behaviors (human characteristics). In fact, in its most highly developed stage (the sectarian period), it had agued extensively on the validity of perception. In this way, the Buddhist idealists deny the validity of *dhamma* as an irreducible unit of experience. However this line of inquiry is not within the scope of this thesis. Herein, I will mainly discuss on the analysis of *dhamma* in terms of *khandhas*- aggregates, *dhātu*-elements, *nāma-rūpa*, mind and matter, and how our perception of ourselves and the external world is conditioned in a certain dimension.



The explanation of each term in this diagram will be given in chapter three and chapter four; chapter five will deal exclusively with the *anatta* doctrine; while many of the terms will be discussed in the chapter on motivation from a Buddhist perspective, being an extension of the chapter four. In chapter seventh we will chiefly discuss on the *kusala-dhammā* as the means to liberation from the grip of *samsāra*. Note that all *dhammā* are in the range of human experience, and the classification as seen above is a map derived from the *Abhidhamma* tradition. *Dhamma* may be classified into different groups merely to meet the different temperament of the learners. While one person might apprehend and realize human experience better in terms of mind and body (*nāma-rūpa*), another might view it as being more comprehensive in terms of *khandhas*, and yet, another might incline towards the analysis of elements. Once again, we have to ascertain that a *dhamma* as an irreducible unit is not an entity as such. All *dhammā* are of non-self nature, i.e., impersonal elements and without substance, whether *saṅkhārā dhammā* or *asaṅkhāra dhamma*. All *saṅkhārā dhammā* are impermanent and therefore, unsatisfactory experiences. It is said that all human experiences are included in *dukkha*.<sup>24</sup> Unless we realize this reality of unsatisfactoriness, and start to look for a way to transform its causes, we are helplessly tossed up and down by the waves of worldly phenomena (*loka-dhammā*) that we call success and failure, gain and loss, fame and humiliation, happiness and suffering. A deep insight into the illusory nature of *samsāric* experiences is a necessary condition for liberation, corresponding to the Buddha's Fourth and Third Noble Truth.

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<sup>24</sup> S iv, 36:11: yaṃ kiñci vedayitaṃ taṃ dukkhasminti

According to Thompson, the difference between Western rationalism and the realism embodied in the *Abhidharma* is that in the latter, the designation of basic elements (*dharmā*) as ultimate reality was not an assertion that the elements were ontological entities in the sense of being substantially existent.<sup>25</sup> Further more, he argues: "...basic element analysis was not simply an abstract, theoretical exercise. It has both a descriptive and a pragmatic motivation."<sup>26</sup> This topic will be treated in details in chapter five.

Returning to the Mūlapariyāya sutta (M.1) which explores the different modes of cognizance in different kinds of persons (*Puthujjana*, *Sekkhā*, *Arahant*, and *Tathāgata*) in relation to the world of phenomena we can have a glimpse at how different fashions of cognitive process and emotive respond making people different. Herein, an ordinary person (*Puthujjana*) is described as an "untaught ordinary person, who has no regard for noble ones and is unskilled and undisciplined in their *Dhamma*, who has no regard for true men and is unskilled and undisciplined in their *Dhamma*, perceives earth (solid, extension element) as earth. Having perceived earth as earth, he conceives (himself as) earth, he conceives (himself) in earth, he conceives (himself apart) from earth, he conceives earth to be 'mine', he delights in earth. Why is that? Because he has not fully understood it", said the Buddha. Similarly, the sutta mentions twenty four modes of experiences that an ordinary person may encounter and how he, from the cognitive process to the emotive reaction, identifies phenomena and

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<sup>25</sup> Thomson, Varela, and Rosch 1991, *The Embodied Mind, cognitive science and human experience*, (Massachusetts Institute of Technology ) P. 118

<sup>26</sup> Thomson, Varela, and Rosch 1991, p. 118

experiences with the 'self'. Because of lacking comprehension, ordinary people are liable to perceive things in distorted ways and react with emotions leading to their own suffering. This 'self-made' suffering is called the psychological suffering.

How does a partly enlightened person (*Sekkhā*) relate to the world? A *sekkhā* is able to resist the temptation of identifying what he is experiencing with self and takes delight in it. The enlightened persons (*Arahant* and *Tathāgata*), who, on the other hand, have fully comprehended things as they are, they do not identify the phenomena with self, and they do not take delight in or become excited by what is being experienced. This is a very important factor differentiating the noble ones from the ordinary men, because the correct cognitive process necessarily results in correct perception. This in turn leads to proper attentions (*yoniso manasikāra*) which immunises the enlightened ones from subjective appreciation and emotive responses which in the case of ordinary persons would result in psychological suffering. This topic will be discussed in details in chapter fourth (in terms of *vipallāsa*) five, six, and chapter seven of the thesis.

In fact, the fact of impermanence does not affect anybody if one does not try to hold on to pleasant experiences and repulse to unpleasant experiences. Unskillful reactions to experiences are designated under *akusala dhammā*. They form the cause of suffering, the second Noble Truth, and are termed *kilesavatta*, the round of defilements, found in the twelve links of the dependent origination formula. Elsewhere, in the early discourses (*sutta*) they are termed *upakkilesa*, *nīvaraṇa* and *anusaya kilesa*. The *abyākāta dhammā* are those of neutral elements, i.e., dependent upon the way we handle them, they can be either beneficial or harmful to us.

This state of affairs is described in the suttas thus:

On seeing a form with the eye, he lust after it if it is pleasing; he distastes it if it is displeasing. He dwells into it with an unestablished mindfulness as regard to the body (i.e., he has no mindfulness or he is headless), his mind is contracted (due to reactions), and he does not understand it as it actually is the deliverance of the mind and the deliverance by wisdom wherein those evil states completely ceasing.

Engaged as he is in favoring and opposing, whatever feeling he feels – whether pleasant or unpleasant or neutral one – he delights in that feeling, welcome it, and remain holding to it. As he does so, delight arises in him. Now, delight in feeling is clinging. With his clinging as condition, being (comes to be); with being as condition, there is birth; with birth as condition, aging and death, sorrow, lamentation, pain, grief and despair come to be. Such is the beginning of this whole mass of suffering.<sup>27</sup>

Returning to the quandary proposed earlier, to answer the second question, who suffers in *samsāra*, the Buddha unfolds the nature of the first and second truths as *samsāric* experiences in which a seemingly concrete and continuous self

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<sup>27</sup> M 38: So cakkhunā rūpaṃ disvā piyarūpe rūpe sārājjati, appiyarūpe rūpe byāpajjati. Anupaṭṭhitakāyasati ca viharati paritta cetaso, tañca cetovimuttiṃ paññāvimuttiṃ yathābhūtaṃ nappajānāti yatthassa te pāpakā akusalā dhammā aparisesā nirujjhanti. So evaṃ anurodhavirodhaṃ samāpanno yaṃ kiñci vedanaṃ vedeti sukhaṃ vā dukkhaṃ vā adukkhamasukhaṃ vā, so taṃ vedanaṃ abhinandati abhivadati ajjhosāya tiṭṭhati, tassa taṃ vedanaṃ abhinandato abhivadata ajjhosāya tiṭṭhato uppajjati nandī. Yā vedanāsu nandī tadupadānaṃ. Tassupādāna paccayā bhavo, bhavapaccayā jāti, jātipaccayā jarāmaraṇaṃ soka parideva dukkhadomanassupāyāsā sambhavanti. Evametassa kevalassa dukkhakkhandhassa samudayo hoti.

exists due to illusory notion (*avijjā*) and grasping tendency (*upādāna*). As we have seen in the above quoted text, due to unmindfulness, one perceives things through a subjective approach, i.e., things are either ‘mine’ or ‘not mine’ (possessive attitude), it pleases ‘me’ or it does not please ‘me’ (emotive reaction). Towards these one feels delighted or rejected, and both states (the feeling of elation and rejection) are born of ignorance which reinforces an egocentric tendency that in turn prolongs the *samsāric* experience. *Avijjā* or ignorance represents for intellectual errors and *upādāna* or clinging represents for emotional tendency in regards to experiences. Under the influence of these two factors, one perceives and feels as if there is an identity (unchanging subject or agent) experiencing the world. This notion helps to affirm one’s authentic existence in relation to a real world of objective stimulations.

The problem is that one wants to affirm one’s identity in a world characterized by constant change. The personality (*khandha*– collective factors) is the result of a series of interactions between the senses and their corresponding objects (termed *sal’āyatana*). These interactions are mingled with an affirmation of identity, an “I” or ego in relation to the rest. This is the practical reason lies behind the Buddha’s advices in many occasions not to identify with sense-experiences. These reactions are termed *saṅkhārā* as the second link of the dependent arising formula, and they are the first truth, the truth of unsatisfactoriness. The personality is viewed as unsatisfactory because it is, in most cases, not subject to self-will, therefore, to identify with any of them or collectively to the whole set will inevitably meet with frustration. However, under the spell of ignorance (*avijjā*), people voluntary take the construction as their selves for granted. The fact that ordinary

people identify with that is due to their notion of *atta*, the personal view. It is ‘*atta*’ or the notion of a metaphysical self, an ego-centered attitude which creates the burdens of *dukkha* of existence. Firstly, one identifies with one’s body, *rūpakkhandha*, then with one’s feeling, *vedanākkhandha*, with one’s perception, *saññākkhandha*, with one’s volitional activities, *saṅkhārakkhandha*, and finally, with one’s consciousness, *viññāṇakkhandha*. The Buddha said that beside these five modes of identifications, there is nothing can be declared as ‘I’, or ‘me’.<sup>28</sup>

In many discourses<sup>29</sup>, birth is defined as "the coming into existence, the manifestation of aggregates..."<sup>30</sup> This begs the question of what is it exactly that has come into existence? The texts provide a categorical answer that it is consciousness (*viññāṇa*), the embedded impacts of sensory experiences on the human mind (*mano viññāṇa dhātu*). As we have seen from the above discussion on consciousness, *viññāṇadhātu* is an element of existence, and the process of birth and death is presented as the transition of a “stream of consciousness” (*viññāṇa sota*). “Birth (*Jāti*) is result of a process of dependent arising (*paṭiccasamuppāda*) involving physical as well as psychological factors.”<sup>31</sup> Citing the exposition on the process of birth (the continuation of death) in M I, 265, Professor Kalupahana continues: “While excessive craving for survival

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<sup>28</sup>SN: Ye hi keci bhikkhave samaṇā vā brahmanā vā anekavihitam attānaṃ samanapassamānā samanupassanti sabbe te pañcuppādākkhandhe samanupassanti etesaṃ vā aññataraṃ- Any ascetics or priests who conceive manifold (ideas) as the self, all conceive the five aggregates (as the self) or any one of them.

<sup>29</sup> M141; M 8; S ....

<sup>30</sup> M 1: Sattanikāye jāti, sañjāti, okkanti, abhinibbatti, khandhānaṃ pātubhāvo, āyatānaṃ paṭilābho

<sup>31</sup> Kalupahana 1987: *The Principles of Buddhist Psychology*, p.85.

(*bhavataṅhā*) constitutes one of the psychological conditions for the birth of a human being, birth will not occur unless the necessary physical conditions provided by the parents are also available”<sup>32</sup>. However, in a conventional language (*vohāra*, or *nirutti*) we say that ‘a being or person is born’ to such and such a parents. This conventional notion inevitably influences the way we think giving rise to the concept of self, soul (*atta* or *Ātman*), or an acquired personality (*attabhāvapaṭilābhā*). The notion of a 'self' or an ‘experiencer’ called 'I', 'me' incites the will to solidify or materialize it through the acquisition of many attributes and properties (*attaniya*). The struggles building up and maintaining an identity (*atta*) and its extended properties (*attaniya*) in the course of existence in order to certify that it is a distinctive entity incur much suffering. These struggles are the manifestation of the survival instinct (*bhavataṅhā*).

People in general see themselves and others as living entities, each with a soul, self or ego, called in Pali *atta*, corresponding with the Sanskrit word *Ātman*. *Atta* is also known as *jīva*, life; thus *atta* conveys the concept of life, soul or living entity. Holding the view that there exists a soul or a living entity in man is known as the misconception or wrong belief in self (*attadiṭṭhi*).

Ordinary worldlings are not free from this wrong belief in self; the only difference from person to person lies in how firmly it is held and how plainly it manifests. The *vipassanā* meditator who is developing keen insight into the physical and mental processes, and contemplating the fact that there is no self or living entity, is free from that wrong notion of self, but only for the duration of his noting the arising

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<sup>32</sup> Ibid.

and passing away of corporeality and mentality. The misconception of self is likely to return.<sup>33</sup>

This observation of a meditation master is true. Let us see another opinion, from the scholastic point of view that of Steven Collins in his book entitled "*Selfless Persons*" writes:

The idea of *kamma* is a very basic plank of the Buddhist doctrinal edifice; the theory of non-self and of continuity, [...] represent far more sophisticated and complex intellectual products. If *kamma* is not an ubiquitous and uniform element of religious practice in Buddhist societies, how much less so will be such abstruse matters as non-self and continuity?<sup>34</sup>

He then proceeds to point out the gap between theoretical doctrine and its actual practice, the idea of *anatta* and the problems of personality and continuity. This inquiry into the Buddhist theory and practice will be considered in a section on the social application of the *Anatta* doctrine in chapter five. The profound teaching of non-self or *anatta* is linked with the teaching of Dependent Origination (*paṭiccasamuppāda*), and sometimes, in terms of *suññatā*, voidness or emptiness, insubstantiality. Without seeing that things, people and events are conditioned, dependent upon a network of relationships termed *dharmā* in which karmic operation is one of the laws that govern the occurrence of personal traits and the existential conditions in which we find ourselves, we are easily prone to the wrong view of determinism and eternalism or existentialism and nihilism. According to the analysis of

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<sup>33</sup> Mahasi Sayadaw, *The Exposition on Anattalakkhaṇa sutta*, extracted from Buddhāsāna CD-ROM, version 2004.

<sup>34</sup> Steven Collins 1973: *Selfless Person*, pp.70

Professor Kalupahana, the belief in eternality as well as a nihilistic attitude would guarantee optimistic outlook while a view that sees life as circling struggles with uncertainties of a doomed separate self is a prey of pessimistic.<sup>35</sup>

Returning to the statement of the Buddha “In brief, the five aggregates of clinging is unsatisfactory”, one might tend to think that this is a gloomy view of existence based on the assumption that Buddhist philosophy is inherently pessimistic. However, with thoughtful analysis, one can see that the existential circumstance whether relating to one’s own personality or to the world (external factors such as family, society, and natural environment) are conditioned and changing (*vaya dhammā saṅkhārā*). In this regard, although they are considered unsatisfactory (*dukkha*), the key lies in the term “clinging” or *upādāna* in Pāli. In fact, if one does not cling to the percipient being or to personal factors in terms of ‘the five aggregates’ as oneself (*attā* or *ātman*) and to the external objects as mine (*attaniya*), any change or alternation of these factors or objects would not effect anybody. It is the clinging and attachment to changeable and impermanent things (*saṅkhāra* and *anicca dhammā*) that causes mental anguish and sorrow. Hitherto, one might have thought that it is possible to find something permanent or at least more stable to attach to or identify with. Is there any thing that is permanent and unchangeable in our perceptible world? This causes many speculations about the true nature of the self (*ātman*) and the world (*loka*). The second chapter of this thesis will explore in this topic.

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<sup>35</sup> Kalupahana, David : *The principles of Buddhist psychology*, (State University of New York Press 1987) p. 85.

The need for human beings to identify with something that is permanent, unchanging and uninterrupted, at least some stable thing to believe in, causes them to grasp at whatever is graspable in order to feel secure. This is such a wide spread belief and practice that no body before the Buddha had ever challenged it. Even among his immediate disciples, a monk named Sati expressed the view that there is some body or some agent transmigrating from this life to another.<sup>36</sup> He cited to the *Jātaka* stories in which the Buddha himself narrated his former births and his practices of perfections. Perhaps, he (Sati) was not only one, but only the one who dared to express that "vicious view" openly! Of course, he was rebuked sternly by the Buddha and other fellow monks for his apostasy. This incident reveals that the Buddha did not under any circumstances, implicitly or explicitly, encouraged his followers to find such an unchanging and independent agent in this compounded world. The quandary of such affirmation on the absence of a permanent agent in all beings and the notion of *samsāra* have, since the Buddha's time, caused much confusion. The same question was posed by a Greek King, Milinda in Pali, that if there is no self who takes rebirth who responsible for the evil *kamma* that done by 'nobody'?<sup>37</sup> The enlightened monk Nagasena satisfied him by the exposition on the continuity (of consciousness) and using the similes of a

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<sup>36</sup> M.38, Mahātaṇhākhaya sutta: "As I understand the Dhamma taught by the Blessed One, it is this same consciousness that runs and wanders through the round of rebirths, not another [...] It is that which speaks and feels, and experience the here and there the results of good and bad actions have been performed (by the same self).

<sup>37</sup> MilP. Bhante Nāgasena, atthi koci satto, yo imamhā kāyā aññaṃ kāyaṃ saṅkamati'ti.

Na hi, maharāja'ti.

Yadi Bhante Nāgasena, yo imamhā kāyā aññaṃ kāyaṃ saṅkamato natthi, na nu mutto bhavissati pāpakehi kammehi?'ti.

seed becoming a tree, the transition of a flame, etc. This will be discussed in chapter five. The Buddha had, in many ways demonstrated that clinging to the view of self whether it is intellectually or emotionally, is harmful<sup>38</sup>. On the intellectual level, this self-view (*sakkāyadiṭṭhi*) is due to an error in perception (*saññā vipallāso*), and at the emotional aspect, it is the very strong temptation to identify with perceptible experiences in order to feel authentic and stable in a changing world. *Atta* is considered as an illusory perception (*saññā vipallāso*), a wrong view, and a dogmatic grasping (*sakkāyadiṭṭhi*, and *attavādupādāna*). Nevertheless, it is still such a powerful temptation to be ‘someone’ (*ātman graham vāsāna*) that mere intellectual knowledge of it would not exempt the beholder from being involved. That is why suffering is a truth (*sacca*), corresponding to the inherent nature of existence in the conditioned or compounded world.

The Buddhist path is not to ‘build up’ but to deconstruct the superimposed structure in human experience to unburden the load that one involuntarily carries on as oneself, the ego or one’s identity. So far, we have identified that unsatisfactory experiences are psychological orientation, the solution is to alter or improve the mind’s contents to the effect that emptying all the unnecessary superstructures. There are a remarkably similar between the *Dhamma* therapy and the modern cognitive therapy. This will be discussed in chapter sixth, on motivation. Further, we shall discuss on the Buddhist ways to transcend the human limited experience based on the Pāli canon in Chapter VII. Due to the limit scope of this study, this will only sketchily discuss on the traditional and formal approach termed the Noble Eightfold Path which falls into a

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<sup>38</sup> M.22; PTS I, 231: Monks, I do not see any doctrine of self that not resulted in sorrow,...

systematic scheme named *Tisso-sikkhā*- The Higher Training in morality, concentration, and wisdom. This chapter also focuses on the *Vipassanā* technique- a unique approach termed *paññāvimutti* that helps to disillusion about a permanent and unchanging self. Chapter eighth will conclude harmoniously between theory and practice under the topics: *suññatā*, *anatta*-the *paramattha sacca*- the ultimate truth in the realm of noble ones; and the *samutti sacca*- the conventional truth in the realm of human experiences.

## Methodology

The method applied in this study is that of a critical textual analysis as the title of the thesis suggests. Besides this analytical method, comparative and critical as regard selected doctrinal points, their traditional expositions and some modern scholar's approaches are also presented. Being rather popular themes in Buddhist philosophy and psychology, *dukkha*, *khandha*, self (*attā*), and selfless (*anattā*) are widely discussed in many existing works on Buddhism. In this study, the researcher will draw on materials for these themes first from the Sutta Pitaka of the Pāli canon, especially from Nidānasamyutta and Khandhasamyutta (SN), and Vinaya and Abhidhamma works whenever necessary, with the additions from traditional expositions such as Milindapañhā, Visuddhimagga, and some from the Mahāyana suttas, e.g, Śūrangama-śūtra, Hodayaparamita-śūtra, Vajrachedikā-prajñā-paramitā-śūtra, Lankāvatāra śūtra, etc.

There are many well-known treatises on the same doctrinal points such as *khandhas*, self (*attā*) and not-self (*anattā*), and *dukkha*, etc., and the researcher will refer to these works in the context of the different topics of discussion. The

main reason for this work is to present a proposal for a new approach to Buddhist studies inhering in the examination of doctrinal points from the psychological approach, while putting texts in their contexts to avoid dogmatism. The present work is also an attempt to bridge the gap between purely theoretical approach and actual practice. Works of well-known scholars on the selected topics will thereby be used as secondary sources. The writings of modern scholars on the relevant themes are especially referred to, for example, a work by Professor Hajime Nakamura, *A Comparative History of Ideas*, Sue Hamilton's book entitled *Experience and Identity*, Steven Collin's book: *The Selfless Person*, and E.A.Johanson's *The Dynamic Psychology of Early Buddhism*.

## Chapter II ‘Soul’ Theories

We can not understand properly what is really meant by Buddhist *Anatta* if we isolate the concept from the Indian philosophical milieu, especially at the time of the emergence of Buddhism and its early development as a sect among many other systems of beliefs. In this chapter we will have a glimpse of the concept of the self, ‘soul’ (*ātman* or *atta*), personality and ego in different systems of belief, philosophy and psychology. To be more objective on the subject being discussed, the sources or materials quoted in this chapter will mostly taken from the corresponding texts and commentaries of each school of thoughts. However, when a parallel idea is recognized, a shift to Buddhist texts will be juxtaposed to see the matter in a historical comparative idea.

According to the philosophy of the Upaniṣads, *Ātman* or the Self is held in three dimensions as follows:

1. The corporal self – *sārisātman*;
2. The knower of the object, an entity that distinguished from object (individuality); and:
3. The supreme soul, the objectless knowing subject.<sup>39</sup>

In a general sense, the immaterial aspect or essence of a human being, that which confers individuality and humanity, is often considered as synonymous with the mind or the self in

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<sup>39</sup> Ref. *The Philosophy of the Upaniṣads*, a translation of rev. A.S. Geden, New Delhi 1979.

religion and philosophy. In theology, the soul is further defined as that part of the individual which partakes of divinity and often is considered to survive the death of the body.

Many cultures have recognized some immaterial principle of human life or existence corresponding to the soul, and many have attributed souls to all living things. There is evidence even among prehistoric peoples of a belief in an aspect distinct from the body and residing in it (*panpsychism* or animism)<sup>40</sup>. Despite widespread and longstanding belief in the existence of a soul, however, different religions and philosophers have developed a variety of theories as to its nature, its properties, its relationship to the body, its origin and its mortality.<sup>41</sup>

Among ancient peoples, both the Egyptians and the Chinese conceived of a dual soul. The Egyptian called it “ka”, meaning breath. It was said to have survived death but remained near the body, while the spiritual ‘ba’ proceeded to the region of the dead. The Indians also call living beings ‘prāṇa’ which means having breath. The Chinese distinguished between a lower, sensitive soul called ‘via’ which disappears with death, and a rational principle, ‘hun’, which survives death and is the object of ancestor worship. This belief exists even today in rural parts of China and Vietnam, and is the origin of ancestor worship in these countries.

We know that the Buddha was born in Northern India around the sixth century Before Common Era (BCE). At that

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<sup>40</sup> The term was coined by the anthropologist E.B. Tylor (1832-1917) to designate what he took to be the earliest stage of the evolution of religion, common among primitive peoples. *The Penguin Dictionaries of Philosophy*. Ed by Thomas Mautner, England 2000, P. 25

<sup>41</sup> Ref. Britannia Encyclopedia.E-edition 2002.

time Indian civilization was highly developed, especially with reference to religion and philosophy. Two main traits of religious practice prevailing at that time were Brahmanism or Vedic tradition which is also considered orthodox, and *Samaṇa* tradition, the contemplative or ascetic practice which required their practitioners to renounce all worldly affairs. The *Brahmanic* tradition had started more than a thousand years before the emergence of Buddhism. It was degraded to mere rites and rituals and especially its scriptures (Vedas) were interpreted to serve the social division of the caste system which reinforced the privileges of Brahmins (priest class). The postulation of *Ātman* theory in the *Upaniṣads*, perhaps, only made matters worse. When people firmly believed that each sentient being has a soul or a permanent self, it was a natural tendency to struggle for the advantage of that individual soul; and its corollary is the selfishness and cruelty in man. Realizing this shortcoming of blind faith and the evil tendency in religious degeneration as well as the futility of speculation, the Buddha, the Enlightened One, advocated the Middle Way. His discovery was not an invention, but, as he claimed, an ancient path. His opposition to the *Upaniṣadic* concept of soul or self (*ātman*) is obviously a rebellion against authority and common beliefs not only of his time but even to the present day. What was the reason for his opposition, and what were his main new philosophy of life and his concept of religion for the masses?

In opposition to the sacrificial Vedic cult which legalized cruelty and stabilized caste, Buddha minimized the importance of the Vedic gods in spiritual matters and discountenanced all speculations about the future state of the soul; and to reinforce his teachings, he preached that the soul was only a transient aggregation of five factors-

form, sensation, perception, predisposition and consciousness- which was dissolved at death. But he preached at the same time the inviolability of moral justice and the necessary of spiritual progress towards perfection in its intellectual and moral aspects.<sup>42</sup>

It seems, in intellectual speculations, the theme of the eternity and annihilability of the soul and the world prevailed (see **Brahmajalasutta**, D.I). In common religious practice, people performed sacrifices to please gods and to safeguard the self. There were dogmas that nobody contemporary with the Buddha had broken through. Moreover, contemporary with the emergence of Buddhism in this philosophical and social context, there were Jainism, a contemplative tradition which shared some similar beliefs and practices with Buddhism, and the Materialists whose philosophy advocated nihilism and hedonism. Whether it is an extreme asceticism (*attakilamathanuyogo* in Buddhist terms) as in the case of Jainas, or indulgence in sensual pleasures (*kāmasukhallikanuyogo*) as the materialists do, they are believers in the soul theory (*āstika* or *ātmanvāda*). The Middle Way emerges as a prudent device in this intellectual and social context.

## **I *Ātman, parātman* or *Brahma* in Indian philosophy and religions**

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<sup>42</sup> Bhatta Chayya, Haridas. *The Foundation of Living Faiths*. India 1978. P. 106

## I. 1 Metaphysical Speculation

In this regard, we will start with the first speculation that springs from self-consciousness as recorded in the *Upaniṣads*:

In the beginning, the *ātman* alone in the form of a man was this universe. He gazed around; he saw nothing there but himself. Thereupon, he cried out at the beginning:-“It is I.’ Thence originated the name ‘I’. Thereupon, today if anyone is summoned, he answers first ‘It is I’; and then he names the other name which he bears. [Bṛih. 1.4.1]

The soul as postulated in the animistic theories held in North India in the 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> century B.C., is described in the *Upaniṣads* as a small creature, in shape like a man, dwelling ordinarily in the heart. It escapes from the body in sleep, when it returns to the body and life and motion reappear. It escapes from the body at death, and then continues to carry on an everlasting life of its own.<sup>43</sup>

The cessation of the distinction of subject and object as this is attained in deep sleep is rather an entrance into the fullest light, a personal identification with the supreme Spirit, which is the knowing subject in us is unaffected by any change of organs or objects.<sup>44</sup>

Interpreted theologically, the soul (here *ātman*) is said to be the presence in the living being of a supreme deity,

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<sup>43</sup> *Pali-English Dictionary*, Delhi, Mooltilah Banasidass Publishers Private Limited, 1997, p. 22.

known generally as I's, *Ī'sa* or *Ī'svara*, and more particularly as Siva, *Visnu* or some other supreme deity according to the specific sectarian group.<sup>45</sup>

Living beings are called *prāṇa* or *bhūta* in Indian. *Prāṇa* literally means 'having breath'. Sentient beings have breath as 'life' or 'spirit'; *bhūta* comes from the root -bhū – which means 'to be'<sup>46</sup>, but in the *Upaniṣads* it is meant in a metaphysical sense termed 'substance' that is distinguished from the gross body, and is capable of leaving the body as a guest does his lodging:

As a man discards worn out clothes  
And puts on others that are new,  
The embodied being cast off bodies old,  
Receiving others anew. (Gītā, ii, 22.)

The belief in rebirth, common in Indian culture, reinforced the belief in a substance that is imperishable at the disintegration of the body. In this concept, the soul was interpreted as having the same meaning as '*manas*'-mind<sup>47</sup>,

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<sup>44</sup> Paul Deussen, *The Philosophy of the Upaniṣads*, p. 95.

<sup>45</sup> William K. Mahony, an article named: *SOUL in Indian Concepts of Ātman in Sanskrit or Atta in Pāli*

<sup>46</sup> It is interesting to note that the word for spirit and breath are the same in Greek (pneuma) and in Hebrew (ruach), in German, the word Atmen also means 'breath'. Similar to that of Egyptian and Indian, the Tibetans also call it "bdag" which in Tibet language is originally meant 'to breathe'.

<sup>47</sup> In Buddhist scriptures, The Dhammapāda also uses the word 'manas' (Dhp 1, 2) and 'citta' (Dhp 37) for 'mind', but not in the sense of absolute reality, or a substance without changing & modifying.

‘prāṇa’-breath, ‘ātman’- self, and ‘asu’- vital force, ‘jīva’- life principle, *saññā*- perception or consciousness.<sup>48</sup>

The idea that there is a separate entity, immaterial but vital, with power over its body is expressed as:

The inner being of all things,  
The one, controller  
Who renders his own form many  
The wise who perceives him in their self  
They, and no others, have internal happiness  
(*Muṇḍaka Upaniṣad*. 1, 2, 3).

The question what is that ‘inner being’ is a matter of many controversies among Indian thinkers. Is it *Ātman*, is it *Manas*, is it *prāṇa*, is it *sat*, is it *Jīva*, etc.? The question of inner being, the *Atman*, and its relation to universal consciousness, *paramātmān* or *Brahman*, have bothered many seekers of the truth in India.

As we have seen above, Indian thinkers employed many terms to denote a principle that is inherent in man and how it relates to wholeness, the universe or the absolute, ultimate reality. Vedānta, the concluding part of Vedas, held that *ātman* exists not only in human beings, but in all animate bodies:

The Self is the Lord of all beings. As the spokes are held together in the hub and in the felly of a wheel, just so all

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<sup>48</sup> *Paṭṭhappādasutta* (D. 9).

beings, all creatures, all gods, all worlds, all lives, are held together in the Self.<sup>49</sup>

That which is subtle essence- in that has all beings their existence. That is the truth. That is the Self. And that, O *Svetaketu*, That art Thou.<sup>50</sup>

Formless is he, though inhabiting form. In the midst of the fleeting he abides forever. All pervading and supreme is the Self. The wise man, know him in his true nature, transcend all grieves.<sup>51</sup>

Words cannot reveal him. Mind is unable to reach him. The eyes do not see him. How then can he be comprehended save when taught by those seers who indeed have known him?<sup>52</sup>

The original meaning of *Ātman* is ‘breath’, a synonym for the word ‘*prāṇa*’. In the later development of Indian philosophy, it comes to mean a universal life-principle. In the *Upaniṣads*, *Ātman* comes to mean the imperishable and unchanging reality underlying every sector and factor of the

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<sup>49</sup> *Bṛhadāraṇyaka* II. V.15; *The Upaniṣad*, Trs. By Svami Prapavananda and Frederick. Manchester 1947.

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*, *Chāndogya* VI.x.3.; Ramakrishna Puligandla 1997, *Fundamental of Indian Philosophy*.P.223

The Vedas contain four Mahavākyaḥ: Prajñānam Brahma (knowledge is Brahman), Ayamātma Brahma (This Atma is Brahman), Tath Twam Asi (That Thou Art) and Aham Brahmasmi (I am Brahman). The human qualities (*guṇas*) are three in number: Satva- humane, Rajas- active force and Thamas- negative tendency. The three *guṇas* have to be harmonized like the blades of the fan.

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*, *Kṛthā* I. ii. 22.

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.* *Kṛthā* II. VI. 12.

world of change. “In the heart of all things, of whatever there is in the universe, delves the Lord.”<sup>53</sup> [Isa i]. “This is the truth of Brahma in relation to nature: whether in the splash of lightning or in the wink of the eyes, the power that is shown is the power of Brahma” [Kena iv.4], thus making the term *Ātman* a synonym of *Brahma*.

Etymologically, the word Brahma comes from ‘*brah*’, meaning to grow, to blush forth. But in a metaphysical sense, Brahma is defined as “The imperishable is the Real. As sparks innumerable fly upward from a blazing fire, so from the depths of the imperishable they again descend.” [Munḍaka II,i.1]. “Self-luminous is that Being, and formless. He dwells within all and without all. He is unborn, pure, greater than the greatest, without breath, without mind.” [Munḍaka.II, i, 2]. Apparently, we can not understand what is greater than the greatest! This kind of statement appears very illogical.

King *Asavapatti* asked five householders: “Whom do you meditate on as the self? The first answer is “The heaven (symbolized as ‘head’); the second answer is “The sun” (symbolized by ‘eye’; the third answer is “The air” (symbolized by ‘breath’); the fourth answer is “ether” (symbolized by ‘trunk’); and the fifth answer is “The water” (symbolized by ‘bladder’)”. The earth is the ground of central reality that also implies the universal soul: “The finite is the infinite. This *Ātman* is the entire universe”- [Chāndogya ii. 4.26]. These passages reveal a confused concept of *ātman*. Sometimes it is taken as twofold: *nāma* and *rūpa*, name and form. When *ātman* is identified with the body or the material shape, it is said to have a gross (*olarikaṃ... āttānaṃ*)

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<sup>53</sup> *Upaniṣad*, Tr. By Svami Prabhavananda & Frederick. Manchester, USA-Vedanta Press 1947.

appearance that consists of the four great elements (*catummahābhūmikam*) and sustained by food (*kabalinkārāhāra-bhakkhanti*). This kind of self apparently can not be taken as eternal, immortal, infinite, etc., as it is proposed in the *Upaniṣads*. When the self is identified with the *nāma* or *mano* (*manomayaṃ me āttānaṃ*), it is endowed with complete senses or faculties (*sabbaṅga-paccaṅgiṃ ahīnindriyaṃ*)<sup>54</sup>. *Mano* is the will or reasoning power of man, but when it works with senses (*indriyā*), it includes perception, feeling, emotion, and consciousness. Anybody with a proper attention would see that the material shape as well as these mental faculties are not compatible with the proposed attributions to *ātman* in the *Upaniṣadic* passages quoted above.

Further, they alleged that *ātman* can be identified with different faculties, from visible and conceivable that are breath (*prāṇa*) and speech, to something more subtle, invisible but still conceivable, that is mind (*manas*), then, fancifully it includes everything in the universe. This reveals the omnipresence of *Ātman* or Brahma, as the following verse proposes:

It is *prāṇa*. It is speech (*vāca*). It is mentality (*manas*). It is everything in the universe. God (*Brahma*) is present in the vile dust and the small mote. [*Muṇḍaka* ii, 2:II; *katha* ii, 5:2; *Tait.* ii.1..]

In Br̥h. 3.7:12, it is stated:

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<sup>54</sup> See *Poṭṭhappādasutta* (DN.9). PTS. 186, 187.

He who dwelling in the *ākāsa*, is distinct from *ākāsa*, whom the *ākāsa* knows not, whose body the *ākāsa* is, who rules the *ākāsa* from within, **he is thy soul, the inner guide, the immortal.**<sup>55</sup>

Herein *ākāsa* is the space or the material shape in which the soul or the Self dwells. In the *Upaniṣads*, the soul supported the immortal part of being, the controller. In many discourses, the Buddha strictly denounced this idea: if there is a controller who has the will over the five aggregates, then who wants to get old, sick, and finally, die? We will return to this theme in chapter four.

The *Upaniṣads* record a discussion among the god *Indra*, the demon *Virocaṇa*, and *Prajāpati* about the self in which *Prājapati*, in order to satisfy both of them, first introduced a corporal self similar to that recorded in the above Buddhist text, second, a spirit soul like in a dream, and lastly, “the cessation of the distinction of subject and object as this is attained in deep sleep, is rather an entrance into fullest light, a personal identification with the supreme Spirit”<sup>56</sup>

It is interesting to see that the first answer, which identifies the self with the body *sarisātman*, for the demon *Virocaṇa*, fits the materialist view and is also considered the demonic view of the world by the nihilists. The second answer that fits the god *Indra* reflects the view of theologians who incline to the concept of a realistic, individual soul. The third represents *Prājapati* who was looked up to as the embodiment of

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<sup>55</sup> Also at Bṛh. 3.8.11; 4.4.17/20

<sup>56</sup> Paul Dussen. *The Philosophy of the Upaniṣads*. Translated by Rev. A.S. Geden. India 1979. p. 95

knowledge of nature, corresponds to an idealistic, non-dualistic concept.

## I. 2 Psychological Approach

*Praśna Upa.* (iv.2) gives an account of ten *Indriyas* and five organs of action, and the five senses of knowledge. According to this account, *indriyas* work under the control of *manas*, the ‘director’ or the ‘manager’ of these faculties. Without mind, the senses cannot work. *Manas* is material in nature, and this *manas* can conduct only a single task at a given moment. *Buddhi*, intelligence, is higher than *manas*. *Aitareyya Up.* cites the functions of *buddhi* as “sensation, perception, ideation, conception, understanding, insight, resolution, opinion, imagination, feeling, memory, volition, conation, the will to live, desire and self-control, all these are different natures of *buddhi*.” [*Kausīlaki*, ii. 2]. The highest of all is the soul (*ātman*) which is the eye of the eye, the ear of the ear. *Ātman* controls *buddhi*, *manas*, *indriyas*, the *prāṇa*, etc [Bṛh. iv. 4:5; i. 4:17; v.6...]. The soul also has physical properties and is said to dwell in the cavity of the heart. [Bṛh. iv. 3:17; Chān. viii.3:3; Katha ii.20]

Beyond the senses are the rudiments of its objects, beyond these rudiments is the mind; beyond the mind is *ātman* known as *mahat* (great), beyond the *mahat* is *avyakta*, the unmanifested; beyond the *avyakta* is the *purusa*; beyond the *purusa* there is nothing. [*Katha* iii. 10:11; vi. 7:8]

The *Tattiriya-upaniṣad* (II, 2-5) assumes five *ātman*s (*Purusā*) lay the division of the intermediate, individual atman into five principles:

1. The food-sustained self (*annarasamayah ātman*);
2. The vital breath-sustained- self (*ātman prāṇamayah*);
3. The mind-make self (*ātman manomayah*);
4. The knowledge-based self (*ātman vijñānamayah*);
5. The bliss-sustained-self (*ātman ānandamayah*).

The last is the true self which manifests itself through meditation.<sup>57</sup>

The order of the five-fold self reveals that the perception of self is from gross, visible to more subtle but still perceptible. It seems to the ordinary man, and for that matter, to all living beings, that food is the first essential thing that all living beings have to depend on and therefore it is natural to conclude that self or the individual existence has food as its essence. But soon, it is evident that energy produced by the food one needs is manifest in breath and hence the assumption that *prāṇa* – breath - is actually one's self. What if man is without a desire to live? It must be his will to survive that is the most essential and thus arises the third self-assumption, *manomaya*- mind - making the self. To an educated man, food, energy and desire are not all there is to life. There must be something more like discriminative knowledge? Is it not man's ability to discriminate between good and evil which makes him a distinctive species on earth? Therefore, the subtle and more essential aspect of man is *vijñānamayah*, the knowledge-based self. But to those seekers of God (*Brahma*), there is still something missing. Thus they meditate and find out that *samādhi* (absorption) is the best thing that a truth-seeker

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<sup>57</sup> K.N.Jayatilleke, *Buddhist Theory of Knowledge*. P 220; Hajime Nakamura, *A Comparative History of Ideas*. P 114

should have. Therefore, they came to a final conclusion that the nature of man's soul is the bliss born of mental absorption (*samādhi*) which is also called *ānanda*.

A similar expression is confirmed by Sai Ba Ba as follows:

Human has five *koshas* (sheaths) covering individuality: the *annamaya* (material), *prāṇamaya* (vital), *manomaya* (mental), *vijñanamaya* (intellectual) and the *ānandamaya* (blissful). When human turns from the objective world to the subjective world within, he/she can unsheath own-individuality and reach own Bliss Nature. But most people revel in the material sheath and remain engrossed and entangled in material pursuits and pleasures and cannot penetrate it into the inner realms of delight.<sup>58</sup>

This fivefold construction of 'self' is discussed in an argument between *Saccaka*, a wandering debater at the Buddha's time (M. 35, *Cuḷasaccakasutta*) in which the first one is said to be of (gross) body, the second is mentioned as perception, the third is sensation, the fourth, mental formation, and the fifth, consciousness. The order of components is somewhat different from here. It is noteworthy that in this context the Buddha denounced Saccaka's view by pointing out that none of these is permanent, all of them existing and perishing not according to one's own will, or in other words,

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<sup>58</sup> Extract from Sai Ba Ba website; Reet's compilation from, Sathya Sai Speaks. Vol. 11. "The two poles," Chapter 23; Sathya Sai Speaks. Vol. 13. "Yoga maarga," Chapter 33; Sathya Sai Speaks. Vol. 17. "Spread the message of Love," Chapter 11; Sathya Sai Speaks. Vol. 19. "The Rama story is ours," Chapter 8; Sathya Sai Speaks. Vol. 29. "Message of the Avathaars and the Epics," Chapter 14).

there is absence of a ‘controller’. We will return to this theme in detail in chapters three and four.

It is interesting to note that the concept of *Ānanda* for some scholars like Deussen<sup>59</sup> is said to resemble the concept of *bhavaṅga citta* in Buddhist *Abhidhamma* works. Some other scholars consider the *viññāṇa*-consciousness in rebirth-linking consciousness (*Paṭisandhi citta*) as a substance that takes rebirth.

Although Buddhism denies the existence of an unchanging, substantial soul, it holds to a belief in the transmigration of the karma of souls. A complex of psycho-physical elements and states changing from moment to moment, the soul, with its five *skandhas* (groups of elements)—i.e., body, sensations, perceptions, impulses, and consciousness—ceases to exist; but the karma of the deceased survives and becomes a *viññana* (germ of consciousness) in the womb of a mother. This *viññana* is that aspect of the soul reincarnated in a new individual.<sup>60</sup>

I will deal with this kind of interpretation in chapter four.

### **I. 3 Why know thy Self**

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<sup>59</sup> Deussen, “Brahman is not ānandin, possessing bliss, but ānanda, bliss itself. This identification of Brahman and ānanda is effected through the medium of the view that, on the one hand, the deep, dreamless sleep, by destroying the existing contrast of subject and object, is a temporary union with Brahman; while on the other hand, since all suffering is then abolished, the same state is described as a bliss admitting of no enhancement.”[ *The Philosophy of the Upaniṣads* P.141]

<sup>60</sup> *Britannica, Encyclopaedia*, Electrical edition 2002.

Why are men encouraged to contemplate the self? If they do not know what is the self or the real Self, how can they progress in the spiritual realm? It is said that to know the self is to transcend from the finite to infinity thereby going beyond all sorrow. “*Tarati Śokaṃ Ātmavid*”- The knower of the Self crosses all sorrows.” And: “*Brahmavid Brahmaiva bhavati*- The knower of Brahma becomes, indeed, *brahma*.” [*Ārtabhāga*].

Commenting on these passages Deussen wrote: “The passages which declare that with the knowledge of *Ātman* all is known deny the universe of plurality”. But *Radhakrishna* does not agree with this statement. He argues:

If the *Ātman* is the universal Self embracing within it all thinking things and the object of all thought, if there is nothing outside it, then it follows that if it is known all else is known. The true knowledge which leads us to liberation helps us to realize the one indwelling spirit. There is no suggestion that the *Ātman* and the world exclude each other.<sup>61</sup>

The Muṇḍaka Upa. states:

He who has attained the highest wisdom unites with the universal spirit delivered from *nāma-rūpa* as the following streams enter in and rest in the sea, leaving *nāma-rūpa* behind.”

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<sup>61</sup> S. Radhakrishna. *Indian Philosophy*. Vol. I, (Indian Edition) 1941; P. 190

*Rūpa* is the object and *Nāma*, our conception of the object; since *nāma-rūpa* is the duality of our conception, we form a world of duality of the subject-object relation. ‘This name and form world the immortal essence’ [Brh i. 6.3: *amṛtam satyena channam*]. According to Radhakrishna, ‘*Sat*’ in one sense, means that all that is exists.

The world of change and growth is ‘*Sat*’. *Sat* also means the reality that persists in the midst of all changes, the immortal, *amṛtam*. The *Taitariya* calls the former ‘*Sat*’, and the latter ‘*tyat*’; therefore a distinction is made that *tyat* is opposed to the existent *Sat*, and there is something call ‘*asat*’ or ‘*amṛtam*’ [Tait. ii. 6].

Usually, *Brahman* or the ultimate reality is equated to ‘*Sat*’, and the world of change is ‘*asat*’ [Chañḍ. Vi. 2.1; iii. 19.1]<sup>62</sup> The highest principle or God (*Adhidaivaṃ*) is the eternal spirit, which transcends and includes the objective world (*Adhibhūtaṃ*) and the subjective man (*Adhyātman*). [Tait. i.7].

He is the Lord of the past and of the future. He is the same today and (will be) the same tomorrow. This (soul), truly, is That.<sup>63</sup>

To be reunited with the *Brahma* or *Ātman*, one needs to undergo certain rituals or practices as described in Vedic scriptures. But *Ātma* or *Brahma*, the absolute Self, also can be interpreted as the universal, objective principle while *ātman* or *atta* are individuals, subjective and personal experiences. *Atta*

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<sup>62</sup> Ibid. p. 192.

<sup>63</sup> *The Encyclopaedia of Religion*, vol.13, Collier Macmillan Publisher ;London, 1987, p. 440

as selfhood or individual personality or ego (in a Freudian sense) will be treated in more detail in the next chapter.

Someone asked *Yājñavalkya*: “Does the soul survive bodily death? If after the death of a man, his spirit goes into fire, his breath into wind, his eyes into the sun, his mind into the moon, his ears into the directions of space, his body into the earth, his self into the ether, the hairs of his body into plants, the hairs of his head into the trees, the blood and semen into water – what then becomes of the man?” The answer from this Guru is rather ambiguous. It reads: “Verily, one becomes good through good deeds, evil through evil deeds.” [Bṛh. iii.2:13]. This statement confirms a uniform belief in the philosophy of karma in Indian thought, but what has survived is still ambiguous.

There is a famous saying of *Yājñavalkya*, a philosopher of the later *Upaniṣadic* period: “Verily, a husband is dear, not for love of the husband, but for the love of the Self a husband is dear. Verily, a wife is dear, not for love of the wife, but for love of the Self a wife is dear.” The same statement is for sons, wealth, cattle, the Brahmin, khattiya, etc.<sup>64</sup> And “all things are dear not because I love all things, but because I love *ātman*” (*na vā sarvasya kāmāya sarvaṃ priyaṃ bhavati ātmanastu kāmāya sarvaṃ priyaṃ bhavati*)<sup>65</sup>. The Self here is an absolute, universal spirit (*Ātman-Brahma*) shared by every individual. When a question was put to *Yājñavalkya* thus: “How many gods are there in reality? His answer was; “One” [Bṛh iii. 9:1]. But why there are so many objects of worship among the people, such as *Agni* (fire), *Vāya* (air), *Āditya* (sun), *kāla* (time), that is *Prāṇa* (breath), the *anna* (food), *Brahmā*, *Rudra*, *Vius*? Thus do some meditate on him, some on another.

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<sup>64</sup> Hajime Nakamura, *A Comparative History of Ideas*. P. 116.

<sup>65</sup> Bṛhadāranyaka *Upaniṣad*, ii, 4, 5; *Encyclopaedia of Buddhism*, Vol, ii, P.317.

Say which of these is the best for us? The answer from *Yājñavalkya* was: “There are but the chief manifestation of the highest, the immortal, the incorporeal *Brahma...Brahman*, indeed, is all things, and a man might meditate on.”- [*Maitrāyani Upaniṣad* iv. 5; Bṛh. i. 4. 6]. This episode reflects the attempt to unify the plurality of worship (gods among the common folks) to but one unique reality (God or *Brahma*).

#### I. 4 The Problem of Samsāra and Suffering

Again, *Yājñavalkya* said to his wife, “the self is imperishable and of an indestructible nature”. But why is there *samsāric* separateness, and imperfection? From the eternal, uncreated and universal Self, selfhood (*atta*) was born as a separation from the Wholeness, Oneness; and since it is fragmentary, it is imperfect and unsatisfactory. To be reunited with the *Brahma* or *Ātman*, one needs to undergo certain rituals or practices as described in Vedic scriptures. But *Ātma* or *Brahma*, the absolute Self can also be interpreted as the universal, objective principle, while the *ātman* or *atta* corresponds to individual, subjective and personal experiences. *Atta* as selfhood or individual personality or ego (in a Freudian sense) will be treated in more detail in the following chapters from a Buddhist perspective.

In *Sāṅkhyā* philosophy, beings are consisted of two principal: *prakṛti* (matter) and *puruśa* (soul or self). *Prakṛti* is the ultimate cause of all physical existence, the three *guṇas* (*sattva*, *rajas* and *tamas*) which constitute *prakṛti* also constitute every objects of physical world. Hence every object

enhances in us pleasure, pain or indifference.<sup>66</sup> Puruṣa are plurality. “The distinction and uniqueness of men from each other certificate that there are many selves, each is unique in mental and moral identity. But Advaita Vedānta teaches that only empirical egos are different, but there are one and only one Self, the *Ātman*.”<sup>67</sup> According to *Sāṅkhyā*, *ātman* is the innermost self of man. It is pure, undifferentiated consciousness (VS. I, 3:19). Like Brahman, *ātman* is nameless and formless and hence it is not confined to any space or time. It is the silent witness of the world of change and appearance (VS.I,1)<sup>68</sup>.

*Ātman* is an immanent dominator, is immortal and controls all the existing things from their inside.<sup>69</sup>

The existence of *ātman* is beyond question in *Sāṅkhyā*'s thought:

No one can doubt the fact of his own existence. Were one to do so, who could the doubter be? Only a deluded man could entertain the idea that he does not exist.<sup>70</sup>

*Sāṅkhyā* protests against some schools of Buddhism which strongly deny the existence of ‘the self’. To *Sāṅkhyā*, “the *Ātman* is in the heart of all living creatures, from the Brahma to a reed.” This concept is very similar to the concept of *Bodhicitta* or Buddha nature in all living beings as advocated

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<sup>66</sup> Ref. *Fundamental of Indian Philosophy*, p. 122.

<sup>67</sup> Advaita Vedānta- IX.

<sup>68</sup> Varṣesika Sūtra of Kanada

<sup>69</sup> yah sarvāṇi bhānyantaro yamayatyēṣa ta ātmāntaryāmyamṛtah.

*Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad* iii, 15, 17.

<sup>70</sup> VS . II, 37:2

by *Mahāyana* Buddhism. We also find in the *Abhidhamma* the word ‘*hadayaavatthu*’ - base of consciousness, and in Buddhism, consciousness is the surviving factor after death. Do they talk about the same reality under a different name?

To the *Nyāya* school,<sup>71</sup> *ātman* or self as a permanent and immaterial substance is controversial. If we attribute many mental phenomena to self such as desire, aversion, pleasure, pain, etc, it is apparent that these qualities are impermanent. How can these impermanent things be reconciled with a permanent self?

“Desire, aversion, volition, pleasure, pain, and cognition are the signs of the self” (*Nyāya Sūtra*. 1, 1:10). And man’s soul or the individual self (*ātman*) that struggle in discordance should yearn to attain freedom of spirit, the delight of harmony and the joy of the absolute (the *Ātman* or *Brahma*). “All beings are only a fourth of the puruśa, while the three other fourths remain immortal in the shining region.” [*Chāndrogya*. Upa. Ii. 12:6]. And: “A return from the plurality into the One is the ideal goal, the most ultimate value. It gives satisfaction to the whole being of man.” [*Taitirīya*, Upa.].<sup>72</sup> *Kanada*, the founder of the *Vaiśeṣika* school also offered the same reason [VS. III, 1:18; III,2:4) as S.K.M put it:

And while *Brahma* was contemplated as the supreme principle on one hand, *ātman* was considered as the

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<sup>71</sup> *Nyāya* was founded by Gautama (or Gotama- 3<sup>rd</sup> BC, not the Buddha) which advocates the liberation through knowledge of ultimate reality. *Nyāya* is unique from the other systems of philosophy in India for its explicit and elaborate formulation of the principles of inquiry.

<sup>72</sup> *Prāṇārātmam mana-ānandam, santisamṛddham amṛtaṃ*. - The delight of life and mind, the fullness of peace and eternity. – Radhakrishna. *Indian Philosophy*. P. 208

principle of the coordinately-ranked on the other, and the identity of the two was accepted philosophically<sup>1</sup>.

It is considered as eternal, absolute reality, a metaphysical core of existence as in:

The wise one is not born, nor does he die. He has not come from any where, unborn, unchanging, eternal, original, he is not slain in the slaying of the body. (*Kaṭha, Upaniṣad* ii, 18).

Here we can see the inconsistency of the theory of a persisting identity (*ātman*) from life to life. If one's character is one's identity, even within one life one's character changes from time to time, what to say life to life? What survives death is one's *karma* (volitional action) as Buddhists say, but *karma* is not something with a fixed nature, so how can we ascribe a permanent substance or identity to *karma*? Again, if man and universe are governed by the law of *karma*, is there a need of *Brahma* or God? To this question, Radhakrishna answers:

This existence in *samsāra* is not the true existence of the soul. We have to bear the servitude of *samsāra* so long as the finite elements cling to us. With the finite we can never reach the absolute, however near we come to it. Progress is a ceaseless growth or perpetual approximation. When the finite element is completely given up, then oneness with God is realized, and there is no return to *samsāra*. [*Chān.* IV. 14:1]

Actually, it is the human soul or psyche that clings to worldly and finite elements, not these neutral objects clinging to us as Radhakrishna puts it. Because the soul or *ātman* is a

valid premise in his argument, therefore it needs to move on until it is one with the God, his creator, and is absorbed in infinity (*Ātman* or Brahma, the universal consciousness). If we view it from a different angle, i.e., from a psychological point of view, we will see that it is human psyche that confines himself or herself to a preconceived identity, and then consciously or unconsciously makes his / her personality limited within the dimension of his/ her conceptions. To be infinite or free, the conditioned personality has to break through that conditioned notion of a solid and unchanging soul or identity, not to move about in search of or yearning for an objective infinite called God. “His *prāṇas* do not go anywhere. Being *Brahma* he is merged in *Brahma*” [Bṛh. iv. 4:6].

A similar idea is shared by Plotinus (205-70), the founder of neo-Platonism. He alleged that all modes of being are an out-flowing from ‘the One’, an ultimate immaterial reality which Plato called ‘the Good’ (to Aristotle, it becomes ‘God’). These modes of being in descending order of unity and value are: mind (*nous*), soul (*psyche*) and nature (*physis*)<sup>73</sup>. Plotinus describes the soul as a grade lower than the mind, that which gives rise to space and time. This is in reverse order in comparison to that of *Upaniṣadic* psychology, but the idea that the human soul is a separate and somewhat degraded version of ‘the One’ is interestingly identical with that of the *Upaniṣads*.

Plotinus affirms that in the soul are included the principle of unity, of pure intellect, of vital power, and of matter itself. It touches every grade of value and existence. The human souls that are sunk in the material

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<sup>73</sup> Ref. *The Penguin Dictionaries of Philosophy*. Edited by Thomas Mautner. London 2000. p. 431

are ensnared by the sensuous and have allowed themselves to be ruled by desire. In attempting to detach themselves entirely from the true being and strive after independence. They fall into an unreal existence.<sup>74</sup>

We also find an interesting similarity of the above two traditions with the concept of Tao in “Lao Tzu Tao Duc King”. The order of creation in Taoism is: Tao > Mentality > energy (qi) > body or shape.

To recognise the problem of an unperceived soul, the real self should not be confused with mental states or the mind, as Sai Ba Ba, an eminent Master of Indian thought elucidates:

The mind requires persistent effort to sanctify the mind. It is named *manah* since it is ever busy with *manana* (recapitulation) of the past, confronting the present and planning for the future. It alternates between likes and dislikes, yes and no. It is carried away by fits of passion or panic. So, it has to be curbed and cured by patient persuasion. Above all, one must prevent it from catering to the greedy senses and thereby losing both health and happiness. The mind is described as the 'husband' (*pathi*) of the senses (*indriya*). The senses supply material to the mind. The mind is a by product of the ego. The ego is a reflection of the *Atma*. The *Atma* is wave of the *Paramatma*, the Universal Consciousness. Everyone must trace the ego to its spiritual origins and direct life on the lines of that heritage. So the mind must be saved from being enslaved by the senses. The mind has been provided with a master, whom it is neglecting and ignoring, through its degrading subservience to the

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<sup>74</sup> Radhakrishnan, *Eastern Religions*, P.211

senses. That master is *buddhi* (intelligence), the faculty of discrimination. When controlled and directed by this faculty, the mind becomes a sacred tool.<sup>75</sup>

## II Samaṇa Tradition

### II. 1 Materialist

Among many sects that are considered unorthodox (against the Vedas), we will single out two sects, i.e., the *Cārvākan* and the *Jainas*. Both of them are considered to be extreme<sup>76</sup> in Buddhist thought. The first advocates materialism in which the soul is identified with the body:

The *ātman* is the body itself, which is characterized by such attributes as are implied in the expressions ‘I am tout, I am young, I am old, I am an adult,<sup>77</sup> etc.

Further they argue: “Who has seen the soul existing in a state separate from the body? Does not life result from the ultimate configuration of matter?”

[*Prabodha candrodāya*. ii]

There are varied beliefs in this school of thought. One school maintains that the soul is identical with the gross body, another that it is identical with the senses, the third postulates

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<sup>75</sup> Sathya Sai Speaks. Vol. 11. "The two poles," Chapter 23; Sathya Sai Speaks. Vol. 13. "Yoga maarga," Chapter 33; Sathya Sai Speaks. Vol. 17. "Spread the message of Love," Chapter 11; Sathya Sai Speaks. Vol. 19. "*The Rama story is ours*," Chapter 8; Sathya Sai Speaks. Vol. 29. "*Message of the Avathaars and the Epics*," Chapter 14).

<sup>76</sup> *Dhammacakkapavattanasutta* (Vin. I; S. IV):Dve me... antā pabbajitena na sevitabba..

<sup>77</sup> *Sarvasiddhāntasāra saṅgraha* (SSSS) II.6.

its identity with breath, and the fourth with the organ of thought.<sup>78</sup> From this tenet, it is a corollary that after dying or disintegrating of the body, there is no more being (annihilism); and the soul is believed to be a natural phenomena and therefore God does not necessarily exist.

Materialism leads to hedonism explicitly in its attitude to life: “While life is yours, live joyously; none can escape Death’s searching eye. When once this frame of our they burn; how shall it ever again return?”<sup>79</sup> This attitude to life opens the way for indulgence without any restraint. Materialists sneer at the moralists and say: ‘While life remains, let one live happily, let him feed on ghee even though he runs into debt.’<sup>80</sup> The hedonists are despised by Buddhists as low, vulgar and base. The materialists’ reply to Buddhists is: “If you argue that pleasures are mixed with pain, (and out to throw away) but what prudent a man throws away the unpeeled rice, which encloses excellent grain because it is covered with the husk?” [Prabodha candrodaya.I,1]. They denounce the moral standards of the Vedas in the strongest terms:

There is no heaven, no final liberation, nor any soul in another world, nor does the actions of four castes, orders, etc., produce any real effect... if a beast slain in the *Jyotistona* rite will itself go to heaven, why then does not the sacrificer offers his own father? If being in the heaven are pleased by our offering the *śyāddha* here, then why do not give the food down below to those who are standing on the house-stop? The three authors of Vedas were buffoons, knaves, and demons [S.D.S. i].

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<sup>78</sup> Radhakrishna. *Indian Philosophy*. P. 280

<sup>79</sup> *Sarvadarśana saṅgraha*. S.D.S. p. 2

<sup>80</sup> Ibid. i.

Obviously, we can see some reasonable ideas in that they are rebels against the dogmatic rites and rituals of Brahmanism and moralists, especially the hypocrisy of sacrificers, and the selfishness of the priestcraft and their caste system. Commenting on the rise of Materialism, Radhakrishna writes:

Materialism signifies the declaration of the spiritual independence of the individual and the rejection of the principle of authority. Nothing needs to be accepted by the individual which do not find its evidence in the movement of reason. It is a return of man's spirit to itself and a rejection of all that is merely external and foreign. The *Cārvāka* philosophy is a fanatical effort made to rid the age of the weight of the past that was oppressing it.<sup>81</sup>

It is noteworthy to cite here some accounts of Buddhist scriptures on the 'heretics'. One of them is Pakudha Kaccāyana, who is said to have advocated such a doctrine as:

There are seven categories, which are neither made, nor commanded to be made, neither created, nor caused to be created, barren (i.e. nothing is produced from them) firm as mountain... one has no effect on the happiness or the sorrow, or both of others. What are they? Earth, water, fire, air, happiness, suffering, and the life (*jīva*) as the seventh... Thus no man kills or caused to kill, hears or causes to hear, knows or causes to know. When one cuts a head apart with a sharp sword, no one deprives anyone of

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<sup>81</sup> Radhakrishna, *Indian Philosophy*. P. 283

life, there is simply a sword-cut passing between the seven categories.<sup>82</sup>

The *Jīva* that is discussed as the seventh element in this view is not the immaterial and immortal soul. This element serves to animate the other four material elements, but it is obvious that the element of happiness and suffering is incorporeality, and these seven elements each exist independently of the other. There is another teacher of the time that was listed among the six heretics. His name in Buddhist scriptures is Ajita Kesakambalī. He also denies the efficacy of actions. He stated:

There is no result or ripening of good or bad deeds. A man is made of the four elements. When he dies, the earth return to the earth-category, water to water, fire to fire, air to air, and the senses pass into space... at the break up of the body, fools and wise men alike cut off, perish, they do not exist after death.<sup>83</sup>

This view not only denies the efficacy of karma, which needs an abiding identity to carry out the actions and bears its result (s), but it also negates the existence of any immaterial substance called ‘soul’, and survives death. In Buddhism, the law of karma is efficacy as cause and effect, and being causality, it exempts this tenet from believing in an unchanging and abiding identity. But to Makkhali Gosala, another heretic of the time who denies causality as following reported:

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<sup>82</sup> D. I, 57, Sāmaññāphalasutta. Ref. Maurice Walshe’s translation, P. 96.

<sup>83</sup> Ibid. 57; P. 96

There is no cause, no condition for the (moral) defilement of beings; they become defiled without cause and condition. There is no cause, no condition for the purification of beings; they are purified without cause and condition. No action of one's own, of another or of any person has any effect... All beings are changed by fate... through 84.000 great cosmic eons fools and wise (alike), wander through the round of rebirth before making an end to suffering.... Just as when a ball of string is throwing, it unwinds to its full length, so fools and wises (alike) wander through the round of rebirth (to full appointed term) before making an end to suffering.<sup>84</sup>

This principle as advocated by Makkhali Gasala is called *Niyati*', fate, and there is no room for human volition to exercise their free will. One has to go through one's allotted term in *samsāra* until its end; there is no choice whatsoever. This *Niyativāda* apparently believes in the round of rebirth and *samsāra*, but there is not sufficient document for us to ascertain what kind of human essence travels in *samsāra*.

## II. 2 Moralists

The Jain's concept of soul (*Jīva*-life principle) is an eternal substance dwelling in the body and conditioned by the body. *Jīva* is one of six realities (*dravyas or tattvas*) held by Jains, to wit: *jīva*- soul, *ajīva*-non soul, *dharma*- principle of motion, *adharmma*- principle of rest, *ākāsa*-space, and *kāla*-time. The soul is immaterial, uncreated and beginningless. It feels, perceives, reacts, and accumulates experiences (*upayoga karma*); it is the bearer of karma (*samsāri*) but is capable of freedom from old karmas by self-mortification to attain a state

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<sup>84</sup> Ibid, 53; P. 94, 95.

called *mukta*, the emancipated soul. *Samsāri* is a state of transmigrating souls of two kinds, *trasa*-movable (such as animals, insects, human beings) and *sthāvara*-static or immobile which consist of five subdivisions: earth, water, fire, air, and plants. For Jains, even plants have the faculty of life (*jīva*) not in the sense of organism, but which has sensation.

*Jīva* is twofold: *mukha*- the liberated soul, and *bandha*- the bondage soul. The second category is further subdivided into moving (*trasa*) and non-moving (*sthāvāna*). The moving *Jīvas* are grouped in different kinds such as *jīvas* with five senses (such as animals of quadrupeds or bipeds), *jīvas* with four senses (such as some kinds of insects), three senses (ants, moles), two senses (worms), one sense (plants). The five senses *jīvas* (*pañcīndriya jīva*) are capable of hearing, seeing, smelling, tasting, and touching. The four senses *jīva* (*catuīndriya*) are in the sense of hearing; the three senses *jīva* (*trīndriya*) minus one more sense that is of seeing. The two senses *jīva* (*dvīndriya*) are capable of tasting and touching only, and the most rudimentary *jīva* is endowed with one sense of touch.

Etymologically, the word *jīva* stands for ‘what lives or is animate.’ According to the classification of *jīvas* as we can see above, the concept rather bears a clear mark of formulation from observing the characteristics of life and then a metaphysical principle underlying individual existence. “Thus the word in the original sense stands for vital principle rather than for the soul.”<sup>85</sup>

The concept of *Jīva* has developed to a considerable extent. First the classification of *jīva* is based on biological and

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<sup>85</sup> N.N. Bhattacharyya: *Jain philosophy in historical outline*. New Delhi 1976

material considerations as we have seen above (one sense, two senses, three senses, etc), while later it developed into different degrees or levels of consciousness. These range from the most unperfected souls to the highest development of perfect souls (*moska jīva*) in that the soul has overcome all karmas and attained omniscience. The unperfected souls are those that inhabit the bodies of earth, water, fire, air or vegetable. [TTDS. ii. 22-23]. In the developed concept of *jīva*, it was looked upon as permanent and eternal:

Jainism, reflecting a belief in an absolute soul, holds that karma is affected in its density by the deeds that a person does. Thus, the burden of the old karma is added to the new karma that is acquired during the next existence until the soul frees itself by religious disciplines, especially by ahimsa (“nonviolence”), and rises to the place of liberated souls at the top of the universe<sup>86</sup>.

*Jīva* as experiment (*bhoktā*) and *jīva* as agent (*kartā*), thus *jīva* is the knower, the doer, the enjoyer of pleasure and the sufferer of pain according to the karmas which it has accumulated during the course of its existence. It is postulated that the relationship of *jīva* and the body during the period it occupies the body, is obscured. *Jīva* is capable of expansion and contraction to fit the dimension of the physical body, though without form it acquires the shape of the living body that it occupied. Through the association with matter, *jīva* is limited, bound by matter. To liberate the *jīva*, the body has to endure severe mortification; this is traditional Jain practice. Ātmanusāranā by Sri Gunabhadra ācharya wrote:

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<sup>86</sup> *Britannica Encyclopeadea.*

This unshakeable Lord (soul) is uncreated, eternal, non-material, doer and enjoyer of one's own self, blissful, knower, free from impurities and is of the size of the body it occupies"*(Ajātonasvaro murtah kartā bhokta sukhi budhah; dehamātro malairmukto gatvordhva machalah prabhuh)*<sup>87</sup>.

A Jain master named Kunda Kunda Achariya stated:

In the soul, there is no color, no smell, no taste, not even touch, not any material form, nor body, neither material figure nor any kind of born.<sup>88</sup>

Further: "In the soul there is no attachment, no hatred no delusion, neither cause of āsavās, nor karmas and not the no-karma (material forming outer body)<sup>89</sup>."

In *Niyamasāra* by the same author, it is stated:

My soul is ever one, eternal, having knowledge and perception as its differentia. All the other thought activities are foreign to me, due to connection with (non-soul). (*eko me sāsado appa nāna damsana lakkhano, sesa me bahira bhava save sanjoga lakkhana.*)

Also:

A pure soul is devoid of birth, old age and death, is supreme and free from the eight karmas, pure, having the

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<sup>87</sup> B.S.Prashad. *Jain and Buddhism*. P.77.

<sup>88</sup> Ibid. Jivassa natthi vanno navi gandho navi raso naviya phaso. Navi rūvam na saīsam navi santhanam na sanghadanam, p. 81.

<sup>89</sup> Bṛhadāraṇyaka aṇiṣad, ii, 4, 5: Jivassa natthi rāgo navi doso neva vijjade moho. Na paccaya na karma no karma chāvise natthi; *Encyclopaedia of Buddhism*, Vol, ii, P.317.

four kinds of qualities of knowledge, perception, power and bliss, is indestructible, eternal and unbreakable (*Jai jaramaranarahiyam paramam kammatta vajjiyam suddham. Nande chau sahavam akkhayamavināsa maccheyam*).<sup>90</sup>

In Yogasāra by Sri Yogindra Acharya, we can find this definition:

The soul is pure, conscious, enlightened (*Buddha*), conqueror (*Jina*), having the attribute of independent knowledge; if you desire the acquisition of nirvana, then meditate upon it day and night (*suddha sacheyāna Buddha jiṇu kevala ṅāṇa saha-u. So appā anudiṇa muṇahu jai chahau siva lahu.*).<sup>91</sup>

As was stated earlier, the classification of *Jīva* is obviously based on empirical observation, not on metaphysical speculation, but later in its development, the concept of soul or self is in consonance with the *Upaniṣads*.

### **III. The Occidental Concept of Personality, Ego and Soul**

According to the Webster English Dictionary, personality is ‘That which constitutes distinction of person; the externally

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<sup>90</sup> <sup>90</sup> Malalasekera, *Encyclopedia of Buddhism*, Vol ii. P.316

<sup>90</sup> Brhadāranyaka Upaniṣad, ii, 4, 5; *Encyclopaedia of Buddhism*, Vol, ii, P.317.

<sup>91</sup> Brhadāranyaka Upaniṣad, ii, 4, 5; *Encyclopaedia of Buddhism*, Vol, ii, P.87.

evident aspects of the character or behavior of a person; individuality<sup>92</sup>. Thus personality is not only a characteristic way of thinking, feeling, and behaving, but the corporal aspect of a person as well. Personality embraces moods, attitudes, and opinions and is most clearly expressed in interactions with other people. It includes behavioral characteristics, both inherent and acquired, that distinguish one person from another and that can be observed in people's relations to the environment and to the social group.

The study of personality can be said to have its origins in the fundamental idea that people are distinguished by their characteristic individual patterns of behaviour—the distinctive ways in which they walk, talk, furnish their living quarters, or express their urges. Whatever the behaviour, personologists—as those who systematically study personality—examine how people differ in the ways they express themselves and attempt to determine the causes of these differences. Although other fields of psychology examine many of the same functions and processes, such as attention, thinking, or motivation, the personologist places emphasis on how these different processes fit together and become integrated so as to give each person a distinctive identity or personality. The systematic psychological study of personality has emerged from a number of different sources, including psychiatric case studies that focused on lives in distress, from philosophy, which explores the nature of man, and from physiology, anthropology, and social psychology.<sup>93</sup>

## **Ego**

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<sup>92</sup> 1913 Webster

<sup>93</sup> Ref. *Britannica Encyclopedias* , Electrical Ed. 2002.

In Indian philosophy, the ego is called *ahaṃkāra*, but it is not particularly mentioned in the *Upaniṣads*. In Buddhist philosophy, *ahaṃkāra* also stands for ego. The soul is the *jīva*. This also is not discussed in the *Upaniṣads* but is discussed in the commentaries. The *jīva* consists of a vital principle (*prāṇa*), of mind (*manas*), of reason (*buddhi*), of the subtle elements and of the bliss body (*Ānanda*). This is also according to Sāṅkhya; but according to Rāmānuja, the bliss body is the same as the *ātman*. The *jīva* is thus the ethical personality that enjoys and suffers the consequences of its actions (*karma*), and that which transmigrates from life to life. There is another name for it, *sūksmaśarīra*. *Ātman* is the self in metaphysical implications. Sāṅkhya attributes good (*dharma*) and evil (*adharmā*) to the *buddhi* but Nyāya- vaiśeṣika and Mīmāṃsā attribute them to *ātman*.

In psychoanalytic theory, that portion of the human personality which is experienced as the “self” or “I” is in contact with the external world through perception. It is the part which remembers, evaluates, plans, and in other ways is responsive to and acts in the surrounding physical and social world. The ego coexists, in psychoanalytic theory, with the *id* and *superego* (qq.v.), as one of three agencies proposed by Sigmund Freud in attempting to describe the dynamics of the human mind. Ego (Latin for “I”) comprises, in Freud's term, the executive functions of personality; it is the integrator between the outer and inner worlds, as well as between the *id* and the *superego*. The ego gives continuity and consistency to behaviour by providing a personal point of reference, which relates the events of the past (retained in memory) and actions of the present and of the future (represented in anticipation and imagination). The ego is not coextensive with either the personality or the body, although body concepts form the core

of early, it remains unchanged until the next world's conflagration.<sup>94</sup> The ego, once developed, is capable of change throughout life, particularly under conditions of threat, illness, and changes in life circumstances.<sup>95</sup>

As the individual continues to develop, the ego is further differentiated and the superego develops. The superego represents the inhibitions of instinct and the control of impulses through the incorporation of parental and societal standards. Thus, moral standards as perceived by the ego become part of the personality. Conflict, a necessary ingredient for the growth and maturity of the personality, is introduced. The ego comes to mediate between the superego and the id (agency of primitive drives) by building up what have been called defense mechanisms.

## Soul

The Epicureans considered the soul to be made up of atoms like the rest of the body. For the Platonists, the soul was an immaterial and incorporeal substance, akin to the gods yet part of the world of change and becoming. Aristotle's conception of the soul was obscure, though he did state that it was a form inseparable from the body: "The world is something more than the confused transition which is revealed by the senses, it has a changeless structure which makes each thing what it is (*ti esti*) irrespective of whether it is known or not"<sup>96</sup>. This observation is very similar to the concept of *dharma* in post-Buddhist scriptures (*Abhidharmakośa*, *Sarvāstivādā*) which define *dharma* as bearing its own nature. In other words "*dhamma* is

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<sup>94</sup> Ref. B.Russell, *History of Western Philosophy*, p.258.

<sup>95</sup> *Encyclopædia Britannica*- 1994-2002.

<sup>96</sup> *Ibid.* p. 69.

that which carries its distinctive characteristic” [*sva sāmānya lakṣaṇadhāraṇāt dharmah*].<sup>97</sup> In Socrates’ view, natures are independent of human consciousness, but human knowledge is a matter of interaction with natures. Natures are independent of human sensation and desire, but they are not independent of each other. Natures are not an accidental chaos, but an interdependent and interacted order in which one supports another. “ Thus Socrates in the *Phaedo* speaks of the deep impression made upon him by Anaxagoras’ doctrine that the cosmos is governed by mind and of his conviction that even though our knowledge may not often grasp it, everything really is ordered for the best.” [Plato, *Phaedo*, 97. c]. Socrates also believed that man alone possesses the faculty of reasoning, and this very reasoning ability is man’s soul:

Man is not a cosmic accident but a culminating phase of the whole natural order with a peculiar and important function to perform. He alone can bring nature into the light of understanding and consciously direct his life and activities into voluntary harmony with this order. Thus Xenophon tell us that Socrates held that just as our bodies are composed of the same matter which is found throughout the universe, so must our human reason be part of a universal cosmic reason.<sup>98</sup> [*Memorabilia* I, 4,8].

It is interesting to see that the concept of soul as an immaterial substance that reincarnates was believed by the ancient Greeks (at least Socrates and his prominent disciple, Plato).

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<sup>97</sup> *AbhidharmaKośavyākhyā*. Edited by U.Wogihara, Tokyo 1936. P. 12

<sup>98</sup> Radhakrishna & P.T.Raju. (Delhi 1992) *The concept of man in Greek thought*. P. 69.

Orphism held that a pre-existent soul survives bodily death and is later reincarnated in a human or other mammalian body, eventually receiving release from the cycle of birth and death and regaining its former pure state. This theory of soul and body, the relationship of the two, and the idea of rebirth is very similar to Indian philosophy. Plato, in the 5th–4th century BC, believed in an immortal soul that participates in frequent incarnations. According to Plato's *Republic*, a human life is divided into four phases: under twenty years old, he is considered as a child that should be given a simple form of education. From twenty to thirty, he is capable of absorption of scientific disciplines like mathematics, physics, cosmology, etc (Rep. VII. 522-531). This means that in this phase of life, man is able to comprehend abstract concepts and things. The ideal student of dialectics and philosophical training began at the age of thirty (rep. VII, 531-537). At the age of 35 he is capable of administration in a community and should give his services until the age of 50. After that he can retire from public life in order to engage in meditation and prayer; this is the religious phase in one's life (Rep. VII, 540 ff). But a single human life is not sufficient for the evolution of the human soul. When the invisible spirit leaves the body and all that is connected with earthly life, it takes the training (paideia) with it. [Phaedo 107]. In Plato's theory of soul or spirit humans must undergo learning and training from life to life. It is a strikingly similar concept to karma and rebirth in Indian thought, especially in the Buddhist aspiration of *paramitā* practice to attain Buddhahood.

The early Hebrews apparently had a concept of the soul but did not separate it from the body, although later Jewish writers developed the idea of the soul further. Old Testament references to the soul are related to the concept of breath and

establish no distinction between the ethereal soul and the corporeal body. Christian concepts of a body-soul dichotomy originated with the ancient Greeks and were introduced into Christian theology at an early date by St. Gregory of Nyssa and by St. Augustine.<sup>99</sup>

In Christian theology, St. Augustine spoke of the soul as a “rider” on the body, making clear the split between the material and the immaterial, with the soul representing the “true” person. However, although body and soul were separate, it was not possible to conceive of a soul without its body. In the European Middle Ages, St. Thomas Aquinas returned to the Greek philosophers' concept of the soul as a motivating principle of the body, independent but requiring the substance of the body to make an individual.

From the Middle Ages onward, the existence and nature of the soul and its relationship to the body continued to be disputed in Western philosophy. To René Descartes, man was a union of the body and the soul, each a distinct substance acting on the other; the soul was equivalent to the mind. The most famous statement of Descartes is termed *Cogito*: “I think, therefore I exist.” [je pense, donc je suis] (*First Meditation*). This is the first principle of philosophy that Descartes discovered. “It is then argued that the self of which I am aware of is ‘in the strict sense only a thing that thinks’ (*res cogitans*), that is, a thing that doubts, understands, affirms, denies, is willing, is unwilling, imagines and senses” (*Second Meditation*). But his perception of the *self* did not stop there. In a later observance, he observes “the soul is not merely present in the body, but closely conjoined and intermingled with it.”

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<sup>99</sup> Ref. *Britannica Encyclopedias*, electrical ed. 2002.

He developed this idea further in his last book *Passions of the Soul* (1649) in which he spoke of a ‘substantial union’ between mind and body: purely intellectual and volitional activities belonged to the mind alone, physiological events to the body alone, but emotions and sensations could not be understood without reference to the union of the two<sup>100</sup>.

To Benedict de Spinoza, body and soul formed two aspects of a single reality. Immanuel Kant concluded that the soul was not demonstrable through reason, although the mind inevitably must reach the conclusion that the soul exists because such a conclusion was necessary for the development of ethics and religion. To William James at the beginning of the 20th century, the soul as such did not exist at all but was merely a collection of psychic phenomena:

This me is an empirical aggregate of thing objectively known. The I which knows them can not itself be an aggregate, neither for psychological purposes need it be considered to be an unchanging and metaphysical entity like the Soul, or a principle like the pure ego, viewed as ‘out of time’. It is a Thought, at each moment different from that of the last moment, but *appropriative* of the later together with all that of the latter called its own. All the experiential facts find their place in this description, unencumbered with any hypothesis save that of the existence of passing thoughts or states of mind. [William James (1950) p.400-1].

Perhaps of all the Western philosophers, William James came nearest to the Buddhist Epistemology as follows:

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<sup>100</sup> *The Penguin Dictionary of Philosophy*. Edited by Thomas Mautner. pp. 135, 136.

In spite of the momentary and fragmentary nature of our impressions, we ascribe a distinct and continued existence to them, and thus generate the belief in an external world of continuing objects. The belief is a product of our indolent preference for smooth sequences of relative impressions, whose separateness we elect to ignore.” And “we similarly allow ourselves to ascribe identity to the successive changing perceptions that make up the mind, treating a related series of perceptions as though its members were one and the same; we thus create the ‘fiction’ of personal identity.<sup>101</sup>

Just as there have been different concepts of the relation of the soul to the body, there have been numerous ideas about when the soul comes into existence and when and if it dies. Ancient Greek beliefs were varied and evolved over time. Pythagoras held that the soul was of divine origin and existed before and after death. Plato and Socrates also accepted the immortality of the soul, while Aristotle considered only part of the soul, the *noûs*, or intellect, to have that quality. Epicurus believed that both body and soul ended at death. The early Christian philosophers adopted the Greek concept of the soul's immortality and thought of the soul as being created by God and infused into the body at conception. Interestingly, this idea is shared by Indian religious thinkers as reported in *Poṭṭhappāda sutta* (DN.9) in Buddhist scriptures.<sup>102</sup>

Thus as we have seen above, most religions and their sacred scriptures share the same concept of "soul": soul often refers to

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<sup>101</sup> Humes: *A Treatise of Human Nature*, p....; *The Penguin Dictionary of Philosophy*. pp. 258.

<sup>102</sup> D. 180 : Santi hi bho devatā mahiddhik mahānubhāvā. Tā imassa purisssa saññaṃ upakaddhanti pi apakaddhanti pi...

human life or the entire human person. But "soul" also refers to the innermost aspect of man, signifying the spiritual principle in man. The Church teaches that every spiritual soul is created immediately by God – it is not "produced" by the parents – and also that it is immortal: it does not perish when it separates from the body at death, and it will be reunited with the body at the final Resurrection.

## Chapter III On Dukkha

Plato honors beauty as the only value we can *see*; but in *being* beautiful, in *being* valuable as objects, this reminds us of our *status* as objects in the world, vulnerable and subject to all the random, or not so random, humiliations of objects. With beauty goes the blush of self-consciousness. We want to be valued as *more* than objects, even as we don't mind being valued *as* objects as well, if someone recognizes some beauty in us. We are unhappy if we are valued *merely* as objects, as though we had no self or interior existence; and we are unhappy if we are valued *merely* as subjects, as though our bodies were worthless and ugly. We cannot escape the ambivalence that this duality creates.

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### I The Journey of *Atta* in *Samsāra* and Suffering Evolved Therein

“In brief, the five aggregates of clinging is suffering”-  
The Buddha.

Thus far we have not shown a close connection between *dukkha* and *atta*. As we have qualified the word *dukkha* as a sense of unsatisfactoriness, insufficiency, insecurity, humiliation and distress in the introductory chapter, here the word *atta* should be understood as the ego-consciousness (Freudians) and self-centered attitude or self-identification. When the Buddha said “the five aggregates of clinging is suffering” he must have indicated a kind of subjective feeling

in self-conscious beings, like us humans. As Kelley has phrased it, our sense experiences and self-consciousness with its ambiguous search for an identity gives us an ever-disappointed feeling. An identity or a personality is what we are searching for, but we poor human beings, we do not know that an illusion it is! Why should we need an identity?

During the course of existence, man builds up his identity, beginning with the idea “I” when he is conscious of an “I” existing separately from others and things. This is the self-consciousness which needs to be supported by an identity; without it, the subject feels empty and humiliated. The identity might be a personality (consisting of body or *rūpa*, and all concepts, ideas, or *nāma* attached to it) which is often distorted by one’s imagination, that is, one’s unchanging self, a distinguished and unique one; if a person does not feel in this way, he must be suffering from an inferior complex. This attitude of regarding personality components (*khandhas*) as self is described in many *suttas* as “*Etaṃ mama, eso hamasmi, eso me attā*”. Then whatever one has seen, heard, sensed, cognized, obtained, longed for, and pondered over is regarded as “mine”, “I”, “my-self”. This unrealistic attitude is vividly described in *Alagaddūpamasuta* as follows:

There are six kinds of views, monk. What are the six? Here, monks, an instructed common folk who has no interest in noble persons and their teaching, who is ignorant of the noble teaching, untrained, unskilled in the true teaching, regards the body as “This is mine, this I am, this is my-self”, regard the feeling...perception... mental formation... consciousness as “This is mine, this I am, this is my-self”. And also he regard whatever is seen, heard, sensed, cognized, reached, searched for, has

in mind as “This is mine, this I am, this is my-self”. And come to view that “This is the world, this is the self; after dying I shall be permanent, lasting, eternal, not subject to disintegration, I will stand fast like unto eternity; he regards that as “This is mine, this I am, this is my-self”<sup>103</sup>.

Thus the identification ranges from past to future, projecting on material shapes as well as the psyche, on experiences through senses to personal interpretations, expectations and wishful images...It not only holds on to personal factors and personal experiences as ‘I’, ‘mine’, and ‘my-self’ (*attā*), but man extends his possessive nature to external things as well. By identifying with one’s clothes, ornaments, certificates, position, house, money, properties, etc, one becomes proud of them and anxious over these possessions (*attaniya*).

Since the time one becomes conscious of an ego as one’s identity, one first tries to shape it in some way, to build it up

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<sup>103</sup> M.22, Chayimāni bhikkhave diṭṭhiṭṭhānāni. Katamāni cha? Idha bhikkhave assutavā puthujjano ariyānaṃ adassāvī ariyadhammassa akovido ariyadhamme avinīto, sappurisānaṃ adassāvī sappurisadhammassa akovido sappurisadhamme avinīto - Rūpaṃ 'etaṃ mama, esohamasmi, eso me attā'ti samanupassati. Vedanaṃ.. Saññaṃ ... Sankhāre ... viññānaṃ 'etaṃ mama, esohamasmi, eso me attā'ti samanupassati. Yampi taṃ diṭṭhaṃ suttaṃ mutaṃ viññātaṃ pattaṃ pariyesitaṃ anuvicaritaṃ manasā, tampi 'etaṃ mama, esohamasmi, eso me attā'ti samanupassati. Yampi taṃ diṭṭhiṭṭhānaṃ 'so loko so attā, so pecca bhavissāmi: nicco dhuvo sassato avipariṇāmadhammo, sassatisamaṃ tatheva ṭhassāmi'ti tampi 'etaṃ mama, esohamasmi, eso me attā'ti samanupassati. [Burmese 6<sup>th</sup> Buddhist Council Edition, Sitagu Academic 2000].

and struggles to protect that image. In psychological terms, ego is the real force behind one's actions. It is the ego that makes itself known by getting others' attentions; it fights for recognition. It would not be happy until it is 'someone' in another's eyes; but the satisfaction achieved by recognition is a short-lived feeling; one is pushed further in an endless search with the ups and downs of flattery and depression which all lead to irritation and disappointment. "Who am I? From where have I come? Who was I in the past? And who will I be in future? Where am I going? (to in my next life), etc." Perhaps the most cherished thoughts of man is the thought of "I" and "me". Most of our thoughts rotate around an "I" and a "me" and even when it gives painful feelings, still man cannot forsake it! There was a beggar roaming miserably on the street. A landowner saw him and thought to give him a job to help him to earn a living. The latter asked: "Hey, there, can you clear this garden? I will pay you for that." Answered the beggar: "No. I cannot. I am a beggar!" Like this beggar, everybody has his own identity and in some way or another, feels obligated to be faithful to it.

The identity might extend to family, race, class, nation, ideology or religion. Even in animals there is a vague sense of identity that causes identity with the group, place, or master. One desperately fights for that identity as if it was one's only purpose or meaning to life. Otherwise man would feel his existence to be meaningless, life is empty; devastated, he reaches out to some object to attach himself to. Krisnamurti had deeply penetrated this psychological anguish in the following lines:

Being nothing, being a desert in oneself, one hopes through another to find water. Being empty, poor,

wretched, insufficient, devoid of importance, one hopes through another to be enriched. Through the love of another, one hopes to forget oneself. Through the beauty of another, one hopes to acquire beauty. Through the family, through the nation, through the lover, through some fantastic belief, one hopes to cover this desert with flowers. And God is the ultimate cover. So one puts hooks into all these things. In this there is pain and uncertainty, and the desert seems more arid than ever before.<sup>104</sup>

Why should we be content with being nothing? Any reasonable person would accept that personality is but a process, an ever becoming, changing, and to be other. If a person ignorantly grasps at something in the process and claims it is his or hers, that would incur immeasurable suffering and distress. Pointing out the disadvantageous consequences of grasping, whether it is to hold on to a view or to an emotional inclination, the Buddha asked: “Could you...grasp that grasping of the theory of self, so that by that grasping would not cause grief, anxiety, anguish, lamentation, and despair arise?”<sup>105</sup> I will return to this topic in the next chapter.

*Samsāra* is described as a predicament in which we experience both happiness and suffering as two sides of a page. Being trapped in this condition, we are blindly roaming here and there, entertaining ourselves with fantasies, finding escape from pain through sense pleasures; ever searching for

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<sup>104</sup> *The second Penguin Krishnamurti Reader*, P.260.

<sup>105</sup> M 22: Taṃ bhikkhave attavādūpādānaṃ upādiyetha, tassa attavādūpādānaṃ upādiyato na uppajjeyyūṃ sokaparidevadukkhadomanassupāyāsā.

something to be attached to (*satva*- being is born of *taṇhā*-craving)<sup>106</sup>. This is called fundamental ignorance (*avijjā*), the condition of *saṅkhārā*, genetic activities which are the cause of birth and rebirth (*samsāra*). *Avijjā* and *taṇhā* are always paired to renew a being. A being ultimately consists of name and form (*nāma-rūpa*). It connects with the world or consciousness of the world through the six sense bases (*salāyatana*). The thought of 'being someone' is *jāti* or birth, the beginning of a process that inevitably incurs humiliation and distress. Why is that? We are conscious of our existences via sense-experiences. We identify ourselves with what we are experiencing, and a sense of insatiateness pushes us further and further. This is our journey in *samsāra* which the Buddha said begins from ignorance (*avijjā* means lack of penetrating knowledge into the reality of existence), perpetuates and nourishes by craving, and ends up in "a mass of suffering" (*dukkhakkhandhassa samudayo hoti*).

## II *Dukkha*

*Dukkha* (Sanskrit *duḥkha*) is a fact of life. This fact is the first thing one must comprehend (*pariññeyya*) and the following three truths are corollary to this one. Any thoughtful person can see that life, in general, is unsatisfactory; if it is not so, people would not yearn for God/gods and a heaven somewhere not on earth. When studying world religions, we can see that different people describe God(s) and their heaven(s) differently, which are generally reflected images of what they need and wish for. Atheists either plunge themselves in sensual pleasures as a way of escape, or they try to improve the quality of life on earth by different ideologies and technologies or sciences. Why do we need to involve ourselves

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<sup>106</sup> S III, 23: 3 sattva sutta.

in many activities and training in order to get on with our lives on earth? To Buddhists, these are caused by the very fact of *dukkha*. We must confront it and reflect upon it to see its cause, and thereby strive to overcome our weaknesses. Thereafter we can live happily without the burning flames of desire, hatred, and ignorance.

*Dukkha* is often rendered into English as ‘suffering’ or ‘pain’. The word ‘suffering’ is not a satisfactory rendering for what is meant by *dukkha* is the first noble truth. For the word ‘*dukkha*’ covers even pleasant experiences which are transient (*anicca*) and beyond the wish to control (*anatta*). It is sometimes translated as illness, pain, unpleasantness, woefulness, instability, insecurity, liable to give trouble, anguish, unsatisfactory-ness, etc. In the following discussion I will examine the more accurate meaning of the word *dukkha* according to texts and contexts, especially in its three main usages: (1) *dukkha* in the first Noble Truth, (2) *dukkha* as a mark of all existence, and (3) *dukkha* as viewed from the perspective of Dependent Origination (*paṭiccasamuppāda*).

*Dukkha* is one of the three marks of existence (*ti-lakkhaṇa*), to wit: *anicca*, *dukkha* and *anatta* in Buddhist philosophy:

All compounded things are impermanent

*Sabbe saṅkhārā aniccā.*

All compounded things are unsatisfactory

*Sabbe saṅkhārā dukkhā.*

All states are non-self

*Sabbe dhammā anatta.*<sup>107</sup>

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<sup>107</sup> I prefer *dhammā* as ‘states’ to emphasis on its psychological sense in this context.

The dynamic (*anicca*), self-conflict (*dukkha*) and non-substantial (*anatta*) nature of all phenomena are three interconnected concepts in Buddhist philosophy [*yaṃ aniccaṃ taṃ dukkhaṃ; yaṃ dukkhaṃ tadanatta*]<sup>108</sup>. Everything is changing; nothing retains a permanent quality or value: this is *anicca*. Encountering change, one is either excited or frustrated, but one has to adapt to the changing nature of things within as well as without: this is *dukkha*. Hence things exist by being dependent on impermanent factors. Their nature is that of adaptability which we call evolution that is *anatta*. Thus it is evident that the word *dukkha* in this context is not merely suffering or pain. In the following pages we will discuss the different usages of this technical term in Buddhist philosophy.

## II. 1 Etymology of the Term *Dukkha*

The derivation of the term *dukkha* (noun or adj.) is not very clear. The Pāṇi-English Dictionary (PTS) has it that the word comes from the prefix *duḥ* plus “ka” in contrast to ‘*sukha*’-pleasantness.<sup>109</sup> We know that as a feeling, *dukkha* is in contrast with *sukha*; and the two words may come from the same root with different prefixes of opposite meaning. The Sanskrit-English Dictionaries offer another analysis of the word. Accordingly, *duḥkhā* (mfn) comes from *dush-kha* or *dus-kha* (opp. of *su-kha*), but more probably a *Prākṛit* form for *duḥ-stha*, meaning uneasy, uncomfortable, unpleasant, difficult, painful (personified as the son of *Naraka* and *Vedanā*, VP.).<sup>110</sup> However, there is another explanation. The word *dukkha* comes from prefix *duḥ* meaning bad, difficult,

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<sup>108</sup> S.I. 188; II. 53; III. 112.

<sup>109</sup> See *Encyclopaedia of Buddhism*. Vol. IV. P.696; Edited by Dr. Jotiya Dhirasekera. Sri Lanka 1989.

<sup>110</sup> M. Monier – Williams, *Sanskrit- English Dictionaries*. P. 483

not functioning well, plus the root-/kham<sup>111</sup> (of the verb *khamati*) meaning to bear, to endure, to be able. The compound *dukkham* literally means difficult to bear or to endure (pain, affliction), ill-fitted, disharmonious; the noun form of *dukkha* is best translated as unsatisfactoriness, affliction, suffering, instability, etc. In the *Visuddhi magga*, the great commentator Buddhaghosa explained the term *dukkha* by way of derivation as follows: (1) as a compound of *du*, bad, vile, difficult (as opposite to *su*, good, desirable); and *kham* means empty, vain (state of); thus *dukkha* means badness, the state of undesirability, or something liable to give trouble, intrinsic conflict, “void of lasting beauty and pleasantness. Therefore it is called emptiness, badness”<sup>112</sup>; (2) as a feeling denoted by the verb ‘*dukkhāyati*’- causing one to suffer, or pain; thus *dukkha* is ‘pain’ or ‘suffering’; or it consumes in two ways (*dvedha khaṇati*) by means of arising and enduring.

Meaning of Suffering is of oppressing, of being formed, of burning, of changing, these are four meaning of suffering which are real, not unreal, not otherwise. (Vism XVI, 15).<sup>113</sup>

Or “the truth of suffering has the characteristic of afflicting (496). Its function is to burn. It is manifested as

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<sup>111</sup> *Kham* in Vedic has the meaning of ‘space- ākāśa’, playfully; a similar spelling ‘kam’ bears a quite different meaning, ānanda- bliss, happiness.

<sup>112</sup> PTS *Vism*, p.494: Idha *du*-iti ayaṃ saddo kucchite dissati...*khaṃ*- saddo pana tucche...idaṃ pathamasaccaṃ kucchitaṃ aneka upaddavādītthānato. tucchaṃ bālajanaparikkappitadhuvasubhasukhattā tucchattā ca dukkhaṇti vaucati . Trans. *The Path of Purification* (BPS 1999), p. 500

<sup>113</sup> Vism. XVI: dukkhassa pīḷanaṭṭho saṅkhataṭṭho vipariṇāmaṭṭho. Ime cattāro dukkhassa dukkhaṭṭhā tathā avitathā anaññathā [Vis 419- HOS].

occurrence (as the cause of an existence). (Vism XVI, 23)<sup>114</sup>

In Sanskrit, the word *duḥkham* is derived from a prefix *duḥ* plus *ka* meaning wheel with an ill-sorted hub and spokes<sup>115</sup>, thus *duḥkha* (adj) means unharmonious or conflicting, ill-functioning or distressful.

## II. 2 Dukkha in the First Noble Truth

In the very first sermon, *Dhammacakkappavattana sutta*<sup>116</sup>, the Buddha revealed all the basic central doctrines of his philosophy known as the Four Noble Truths (*cattari ariya saccāni*) and the Noble Eightfold Path (*ariyo atthaṅgiko maggo*). Herein the truth of unsatisfactoriness is stated:

This, O monks, is the noble truth of unsatisfactoriness (*dukkhaṃ ariya saccam*). Birth is unsatisfactory (*jāti'pi dukkhā*), old-aged is unsatisfactory (*jarāpi dukkhā*), disease is unsatisfactory (*vyādhi'pi dukkho*), death is unsatisfactory (*maraṇam'pi dukkham*), grieving, lamenting, pain, distress, and unrest (*soka-parideva-dukkha-domanassūpāyāsā*) are unsatisfactory. Associated with unpleasant objects (*appiyehi sampayogo dukkho*) is unsatisfactory, separated from beloved objects (*piyehi vippayogo dukkho*) is unsatisfactory. Being unable to get what one's desires is unsatisfactory (*yaṃ piccham na labhati'pi*

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<sup>114</sup> Ibid: Ettha hi bādhanalakkaṇaṃ dukkhasaccam santāpanarasam, pavattipaccupaṭṭhānam.

<sup>115</sup> Prof. Kalupahana: "A History of Buddhist Philosophy", University of Hawaii Press 1992; Delhi 1994. P. 95

<sup>116</sup> SN. V. Saccasamyutta.

*dukkham*), and in brief the five aggregates of clinging is unsatisfactoriness (*saṅkhittena pañcupādānakkhandhā'pi dukkham*)<sup>117</sup>.

However, in some *Suttas*, they omit some of the items of *dukkho*. I will elaborate them in the following pages. In *Mahāhatthipādopama sutta* (M 28), the greatness of the Four Noble Truths in comparison with other *dhammas* is compared to the footprint of elephants and to the footprints of other animals: “*ye keci kusalā dhammā, sabbe te catūsu ariyasaccesu sangahaṃ gacchanti*”. Here some aspects of *dukkha* are not referred to e.g., *vyādhi*, *appiyehi sampayogo*, *piyehi vippayogo dukkho*. In *Sammādiṭṭhi sutta* (M 9), only ‘*vyādhi dukkho*’ is omitted; the same omission is found in the *Mahāsatiṭṭhāna sutta* (M 10, D 9). In *Saccavibhanga sutta* (MN), the list has omitted two items (*appiyehi...* and *piyehi...*). The *Samyutta* version has thirteen items as mentioned above. *Abhidhammaṭṭhasangaha* also lists the number of *dukkhā* as twelve aspects only (omitted *vyādhi*, sickness). Usually the list of *dukkha* is eight in number.

As we see above, the aspects of *dukkha* are various in different texts. Though we know that *dukkha* is countless in our life and in the world, Buddhist texts often mention about thirteen principal kinds as we see above. Most of the *dukkhas* listed above are evident to any thoughtful person. To some persons and in certain circumstances, the Buddha pointed out a real cause of the prevailing

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<sup>117</sup> S. V, P 412; M I, 9,p 59- *Sammādiṭṭhi sutta* and M I,28 p 242 the list of *dukkha* omit ‘*vyādhi*’; the same omission is found in DN, *Mahāsatiṭṭhāna sutta*; *Saccavibhaṅga sutta* (M. III,p.292) three items are omitted: *vyādhi*, *appiyehi sampayogo*, *piyehi vippayogo*; Vin. Version omits *sokaparideva*, *dukkha* (physical pain), *domanassa* (mental pain), *upāyāsā*-tribulation or unrest

manifestations of *dukkha* as particular to a certain person at a certain time. For example, to a grief-stricken person who lost his/her reasoning over the death of a beloved one, the Buddha said that the fact that his/her tears were shed for the departed one in *samsāra* is comparable to water in the four oceans. The cause of suffering here is due to clinging to the beloved object and the inability to let go of memories, even the painful ones. In other circumstances, when the suffering is disappointment or disillusion due to the person's expectations not coming true, the Buddha said "craving begets sorrow, craving begets fear..." (Dhp 214, 216). When people are afflicted by disputes, conflicts, fighting, etc, the Buddha said the root of conflict springs from envy (*issā*) and selfishness (*macchariya*) generated by likes (*piya*) and dislikes (*appiya*). This in turn has its root in desire (*chanda*) which is built on thought (*vitakka*); furthermore, *vitakka* has its root in proliferation (*papañcasaññāsankhā*) (D21, Mahāvagga-pāli). This description of *dukkha* and its causes is sometimes confused by using a scholastic approach<sup>118</sup>, but from a practical point of view, it is quite obvious: *The Buddha did not make a theory of suffering and its causes as being of a fixed nature, but he only pointed out the empirical fact that everybody would encounter it in his/her own life.* All the above-mentioned kinds of *dukkha* are rooted in defilements (*kilesa*) which are mind-made and self-generated or, in psychological terms, they are psychopathic, beginning with ignorance<sup>119</sup>. In this section we will discuss different aspects of suffering ranging within the

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<sup>118</sup> See the article on 'dukkha' in *The Encyclopedia of Buddhism*, Vol. IV, p 700

<sup>119</sup> AN, Mahāvagga mentions twelve categories of suffering, omitted sickness. Herein the cause of suffering is elaborated in twelve links of Dependent Origination.

three worlds<sup>120</sup>. In the following pages, some descriptions of *dukkha* in different *suttas* will be presented.

In *Saccavibhanga Sutta* as well as *Mahāsatipaṭṭhāna Suttas* where each item of *dukkha* is explained, strangely, they are only elaborated in different terms, but do not mention that the causes of birth, aging, sickness, etc. are rooted in defilements. *Visuddhimagga* expounds them in different ways. Why is birth and so on considered as *dukkha*, as being unsatisfactory in Buddhism? The *Vibhanga* defines birth as *yā tesam tesam sattānaṃ tamhi tamhi sattanikāye jāti sañjāti okkanti abhinibbanti khandhānaṃ bātubhāvo āyatanaṃ paṭilābho. Ayaṃ vuccati jāti.*<sup>121</sup> Birth here refers to the birth of beings on various planes of existence, their being born, springing into life, with the appearance of aggregates, the manifestation of the sense bases; and it is *dukkha* because it is conditioned, the first cause of old-age, sickness and death. Elsewhere the Buddha said: “The repetition of birth is suffering, *dukkhā jāti punappunaṃ*” (Dhp 153). Obviously, this refers to birth and rebirth according to the Indian philosophy of life and death, the bondage of being conditioned in a certain circumstance (*samsāra*). This point is sometimes ridiculed by Westerners who study Buddhism with an overly critical view.

## II. 3 Birth and Life

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<sup>120</sup> Three loka are *kāmaloka*- the world of sense-pleasures, *rūpaloka*- the world of fine materials, and *arūpaloka*- the world of non-materiality. Human world, animals, ghosts, hellish beings, and certain kind of devas belong to *kāmaloka*. Beings in *rūpaloka* and *arūpaloka* are called Brahmas; they are temporary purity due to practicing meditation.

<sup>121</sup> M 141, p292, *Chaṭṭha sanghayatana* edition, 2000, Sitagu academy.

Birth is reckoned from the time of conception; it is the meeting of three individuals, not two. The (rebirth) consciousness of one who is destined to be born, the arousing of lust (and its actualization) between parents. [*gandhabbo ca paccuppaṭṭhito hoti*, M. II, 157; and *viññāṇaṅca hi... mātu kucchim na okkamissatha, api na kho nāmarūpaṃ mātukucchimiṃ samuccissatha?* D. II, 63]. Whether one is to be reborn in the human world (*manussā loka*), animal kingdom (*Tiracchāna*), ghost sphere (*petā*), as hellish beings (*niraya*), or heavenly states (*devaloka*), all are transient states and therefore inevitable resulted in unsatisfactoriness. The state of most suffering is being in hell where beings are constantly tortured by burning, afflictions, etc. The cause to be born there is often due to hatred, enmity, envy and misdeeds done under the influence of detrimental factors termed defilements (*klesas*). The next unbearable suffering is in the *petā* world where beings always feel lonely, roaming and haunting, and burning with many different desires that have never been satisfied, especially thirst and hunger, but they can not eat or drink. To be born in the *petā* world is caused by strong craving that has no opportunity to be realized. The animal state is relatively better than hellish and ghost states, but they are unable to reason and only follow their instinctive natures. Animal life is considered as suffering by human beings, but whether animals feel and know that they are suffering or not is open to question. The fact that they seem to be enjoying their lives very much could be due to their ignorance, a dominant factor which caused rebirth in the animal world. It is said that the same thing happens when the celestial beings look at the human world. They feel its grossness, its misery, its disgusting nature, but we human beings do not feel the same way. Thus we can see that in the human world there is a mixture of happiness and suffering though happiness and suffering are subjective feelings, and above all, **they are transient states.**

It is noteworthy that all states of existence in the three worlds (*ti loka*) are considered as temporary in Buddhist philosophy, though lives spent are various on different planes. Celestial beings variously range from sensual heavens belonging to *kāmaloka* to fine material heavens (*rūpaloka*) and non-material heavens (*arūpaloka*). Heavenly beings have desirable states wherein afflictions and suffering are temporarily suspended due to their good *kamma*. When their merit is used up, celestial beings are liable to fall into a lower state and some of them can even fall from a very high state to a very low state entailing immense suffering. Some Buddhist texts<sup>122</sup> elaborate on the manifold suffering in different worlds. Here we will focus on human experiences only. The fact of unsatisfactoriness as elaborated in the First Noble Truth is very likely to describe human experiences only, though birth and death are common to all states of existence, but old-aged, sickness, etc, are not experienced in heavenly states.

All babies cry with pain, fear and distress at the moment of birth. There are countless even more unhappy things waiting him in the course of his life. Having a body exposed to heat and cold, hunger and thirst, the first touch with the world is as painful as the last one that is death when all breathing stops. Birth starts a journey that incurs sickness and old age, expectations and disappointment, hopes and fears, loves and hates, separation from the loved object(s) and joining with unwanted things and persons. Disillusioned and frustrated, he

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<sup>122</sup> Asanga, *Abhidharmasamuccaya*, the only existing text of Mahāyana Buddhism deals with 'higher doctrine', in which the truth of suffering is presented in a different way, mostly as a description of suffering in different planes of existence according to Buddhist cosmology. Recently, a book entitled "*Four Noble Truths*" written by Ven. Chandawimala Thera (Sri Lanka 1947) also treat the first truth in the same way, i.e. describing suffering in different planes of satta-loka.

is irritated and dismayed finding himself ever insatiate, ever running after the temptations of the world. Describing the inevitable unsatisfactoriness that life generally creates, besides the predicament of *samsāra*, the Buddha said:

Bhikkhus, just as a stick thrown up into the air falls now on its bottom, now by its middle, now on its top, so too as beings roam and wander on hindered by ignorance and fettered by craving, now they go from this world to the other world, now they come from the other world to this world. For what reason? Because they have not seen the Four Noble Truths.<sup>123</sup>

#### **II.4 Life in Different Planes of Existence as Experienced by Humans**

We have briefly seen that the causes to be born in different planes of existence (*sattaloka*) are implanted in the psyche. Here and now, in this very human birth, we are liable to experience all of this suffering and pleasures by being psychologically involved. Though it is true that we cannot reduce Buddhist doctrine to mere psychology and psychotherapy as recently some Western Buddhist scholars

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<sup>123</sup> SN, V. 56:33 [PTS 439]-Seyyathāpi bhikkhave, daṇḍo upari vehesaṃ khitto sakimpi mulena nipatati, sakimpi majjhena nipatati, sakimpi aggena nipatati. Evameva kho bhikkhave, avijjānīvaraṇā sattā taṇhāsaṃyojanā sandhāvannā sakimpi asmā lokā paraṃ lokam gacchanti, sakimpi parasmā lokā imaṃ lokam āgacchanti. Taṃ kissa hetu? Aditṭhattā bhikkhave, catunnaṃ ariyasaccānaṃ.

and practitioners have done, but the fact that we can experience all kinds of suffering and pleasures in our human body can not be denied. Thirty one planes of existence<sup>124</sup> are in our mind. When one is boiling with anger, hatred, animosity, revenge, fear, remorse, etc, one experiences hellish states because they burn us from within. When one is frustrated, stressful, feeling rejected or locked into himself/herself in an unapproachable despair, one is experiencing a ghostly state. Being furious and revengeful, aggressive, etc, is the demonic state. An *asura* is a class of beings who are demigods and demi-ghostly whose appearance is very unpleasant. Being driven by instincts (sexually) without shame and reason, ever running after one's gross and low desire, insatiate wanting, deluded, etc, are in an animal state. Sublime and refined in enjoyment, benevolent and pleasant, light-hearted, etc., are the godly states. Pure, radiant, noble, serene, tranquil, etc, are the state of brahmas. Even in one day, a human being can experience all those states. That is why Buddhists believe that being born in the human world is a great opportunity; Buddhas appear only in the human world where happiness and suffering are mixed up. Being a human, one has a greater chance of realization of the sublime *dhamma*; to see the fact of unsatisfactoriness and aim for higher states, and to make an end of *samsāra*.

That life is unsatisfactoriness is illustrated in the *Mahādukkhakkhandha sutta* (M.13). Herein the term *dukkha*

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<sup>124</sup> 31 planes of existence consist of 11 states in *kāmaloka* (hell, peta-ghosts, asura- demons, animals, human beings, and 6 categories of sensuous deities); 16 stages of *Rūpaloka* corresponding to four *jhāna* attainments; and 4 *arūpaloka* corresponding to 5<sup>th</sup>, 6<sup>th</sup>, 7<sup>th</sup>, and 8<sup>th</sup> *jhāna* (*sampatti*). *Dhammacakkapavattanasutta*, Vin. Version mentions that these *devas* & *brahmas* beings echoing each other from lower sphere to higher spheres in praising “the Act of Turning the Wheel of Dhamma.”

is applied to the afflictions that one would experience during the course of one's existence. There are many hardships, pains, unsatisfactoriness and disappointments involved in the course of man's existence. This is a very down-to-earth description of life showing its real face. Herein the concept of *dukkha* is identified with the danger of sense pleasures and suffering or conflicts involved in seeking them. Similar to these traits are the kinds of suffering described in A IV, 45, starting with 'poverty is suffering in the world for one who enjoys sense pleasures.' These plain and obvious aspects of unpleasant experiences in life are easy to understand by ordinary people, but they do not convey the profound aspect of Buddhist philosophy contained in the term *dukkha*<sup>125</sup>.

### **III. Categories of *Dukkha***

As a wide spread phenomenon (*sabbe saṅkhārā dukkhā*), *dukkhas* can be classified as (1) natural disasters such as earthquakes, storms, droughts, floods, tsunamis, massive diseases, etc; (2) social injustices and conflicts; (3) self-conflict or psychological suffering. Of these, the Buddhist approaches are most concerned with the third category, though in some way Buddhist ethics help to prevent the second category, too; and Buddhist psychology and practice also prepare one to face the first category in a sober way.

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<sup>125</sup> Bhikkhu Bodhi, (BPS. 1994): "The suffering with which the Buddha's teaching is concerned has a far deeper meaning than personal unhappiness, discontent, or psychological stress. It included these, but it goes beyond. The problem in its fullest measure is existential suffering, the suffering of bondage to the round of repeated birth and death." P.3, Introduction to *The Great Discourse on Causation*.

According to the first Sermon of the Buddha, the *Dhammacakkapavattana sutta*, we can categorize suffering as the inevitable experiences of birth, old-age, sickness, and death; the bio-psychological aspect of suffering: *sokaparideva dukkhadomanassa upāyāsā*; the non-fulfillment of wishes is suffering: *Yaṃ p'icchaṃ na labhati taṃ'pi dukkhaṃ*; the social aspect of suffering: *appiyehi sampayogo dukkho, piyehi vippayogo dukkho*; and in brief: the five aggregates of clinging is suffering: this is the most striking statement which needs to be explained in detail forming the core of this thesis.

*Samyutta Nikāya* records of **three types of dukkhas**:

There are these three forms of stressfulness (*dukkha*), monks, the stressfulness due to pain (*dukkha-dukkhātā*), the stressfulness due to formation (*saṅkhāra-dukkhātā*), and the stressfulness due to change (*vipariṇāma-dukkhātā*). These are the three forms of stressfulness.<sup>126</sup>

Strangely, commentaries do not explain anything further as concerns the three types of *dukkha*. It seems the listeners of that time were so learned that these terms needed not to be exaggerated! Scholars often translate *dukkha-dukkhātā* as intrinsic suffering, *saṅkhārā-dukkhātā* as suffering of rising and falling, *vipariṇāma –dukkhātā* as changing suffering. Venerable Nyanatiloka defined the first kind of *dukkha* as “bodily or mental feeling of pain as it is actually felt.”<sup>127</sup> This refers to *dukkha vedanā*, a painful or unpleasant feeling. There may be an alternative explanation of the term as denoting the tendency to react to pain which causes another unpleasantness,

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<sup>126</sup> Tisso imā bhikkhave dukkhātā. Katama tisso? Dukkha-dukkhātā, saṅkhāra-dukkhātā, vipariṇāma-dukkhātā. Imā kho...SN, *Mahāvagga Pāli*, 156.

<sup>127</sup> See *Visuddhi Magga* XIV, 34 f; Nyanatiloka: *Buddhist Dictionary*. P.55

mental suffering. Thus *Dukkha-dukkha* denotes general suffering such as a painful feeling (*dukkha vedanā*) which is physical discomfort, but due to unskillful or emotional reactions of the subject, it would give rise to mental suffering, too. Therefore a painful feeling (*dukkha*) leads to mental aversion (*domanassa*) or mental anguish (*soka*) which is the multiplication of *dukkha* in an ordinary man. Referring to this kind of unskillful reaction to pain is described in the text thus: “that fellow would be pierced by two arrows-*taṃ enaṃ dutiyena sallena anuvedhaṃ vijjeyyūṃ*”<sup>128</sup>. We will discuss this theme in more detail in chapter three, under the heading *vedanākkhandha*.

***Saṅkhāra dukkhātā*** usually refers to the oppressive nature of all formations (*saṅkhārā*). This is a shortcut of “*sabbe saṅkhārā dukkhā*”, i.e., that all compounded things are unsatisfactory. Why are compounded things unsatisfactory? Things that rise due to conditions will fall when conditions are altered. The rise and fall of *saṅkhāra* is *saṅkhāra* itself, thus *saṅkhāra* is suffering. In other words, the process of formation and transformation is a stressful state, especially when the change is in rapid succession. Buddhist practitioners when contemplating their own body and mind, seeing the rapid rising and falling of phenomena, often get frightened; this is real knowledge of *saṅkhāra dukkhā*. In modern society, people in big cities are liable to experience stresses caused by rapid changing lifestyles; this is also included in *saṅkhāra dukkhā* which is experienced by ordinary people. There are many kinds of struggling to become something else, either willingly or forced to change, it is all the same, leading one to a state of ever dissatisfactoriness. The commentaries match it with a neutral feeling (*upekkha vedanā*) and the tendency of searching

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<sup>128</sup> SN. IV, *Vedanasamyutta* 36:6

for something more exciting and more interesting. When one's wants are fulfilled, it gives a short term of satisfaction; but wanting what one is unable to have is distressful (*yaṃ picchaṃ na labhitaṃ 'pi dukkhaṃ*). All of us have experienced these kinds of longing and disappointments in our lives. This wanting and becoming, to be otherwise are all termed *saṅkhāra dukkhātā*, stressfulness of formation and transformation.

***Vipariṇāma dukkhātā*** is disappointment due to change. No pleasant feeling (*sukha vedanā*) lasts forever, therefore, when the pleasant feeling or favorable situation changes adversely, one gets disappointed; but the nature of things is ever changing, we can not stop it. This is a kind of dissatisfaction due to the changing nature of things. Parting with beloved objects or persons (*piyehi vippayogo dukkho*) is a kind of suffering included in this term. Old age, sickness and death are also categorized under *vipariṇāma dukkhātā*. We all want to be ever young, beautiful, healthy, attractive, etc., but we are all getting old just the same; old age still comes in a natural way; nobody can avoid getting old! Nobody is forever attractive and never getting sick; nobody lives forever, nor can death be avoided. One is changing though one does not want to change: all of this is suffering.

All these three kinds of *dukkhas* are the different psychological aspects of suffering generated by the emotional reactions to experiences. In summary, our reactions to stimulations are often found in either of these three patterns: resistance (*dukkha-dukkhātā*), indulgence (*vipariṇāmadukkhātā*), or indifference (*saṅkhārādukkhātā*). If the stimulation is not agreeable (either physically, mentally or morally), we tend to resist or avoid it (defense mechanism in a

Freudian sense); if the stimulation is agreeable and pleasant, we tend to indulgent in it (self-interest principle); if the stimulation is not distinct or insignificant, we are likely to ignore it. This is due to the latent tendencies (*anusaya kilesa*, which is similar to the concept of the unconscious in Freudian psychology) as stated in the sutta:

When one experiences pleasure,  
If one does not understand feeling  
The tendency to lust is present  
For one not seeing the escape from it.  
When one experiences pain,  
If one does not understand feeling  
The tendency to aversion is present...<sup>129</sup>

As has been mentioned above, experiences (*vedayitam*) are of three kinds: pleasant feeling (*sukha vedanā*), unpleasant feeling (*dukkha vedanā*), and neutral feeling (*upekkha vedanā*). Feelings, as all phenomena, are impermanent. Good feeling gives rise to craving and clinging in an ordinary person. The person wants it to be longer, lasting forever, but is there any feeling that lasts forever? That very wanting which is contradictory to the natural course of feeling brings forth disappointment. Bad feeling gives rise to aversion, contempt and repulse toward the object; and the subject of such a feeling wants to push it away, annihilate and destroys it as soon as possible. This repulsive attitude increases the actual pain, producing psychological suffering. The neutral feeling is neither pleasant nor unpleasant, that would be considered boring, and the pleasure-seeker's mind would try to look for something which is more exciting and more interesting than

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<sup>129</sup> SN. IV, *Vedanasamyutta* 36; Ven. Bhikkhu Bodhi's trans. P.1261 [Wisdom Pub. 2000].

what is being experienced at present. This discontented state of mind leads to mental action (*vitakka or mano saṅkhāra*) and bodily action (*kāya saṅkhāra*) which is searching, creating and moving on.

Three kinds of stressfulness connected with three kinds of feeling are stated in *Vedanāsamyyutta* thus: “Whatever is felt is included in suffering”<sup>130</sup>. The *sutta* continues to explain the maxim by stating that it is said with reference to the impermanent nature of all formations (*sabbe saṅkhārā aniccā*), i.e., that feelings are of the same nature. They can not provide lasting happiness and security. *Dukkha vedanā* as painful feeling is apparent to everybody, but *sukha vedanā*, and *upekkhā vedanā* are not easily seen as suffering if we do not see their impermanence (*anicca*), instability (*khayadhamma*) and fleeing nature (*vayadhamma*). Only by contemplating these aspects of feelings in particular and all *saṅkhārā* in general, can we stop arousing passion for them.

There is, monks, three kinds of feelings. What three? Pleasant feeling, painful feeling, neither painful nor pleasant feeling; But whether it is pleasant, painful, or neither-painful nor-pleasant feeling, internal or external, whatever feeling there is, “having known this is suffering, evanescent, disintegrated, moment by moment

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<sup>130</sup> SN IV, 36: 11: yaṃ kiñci vedayitaṃ taṃ dukkhasminti. Taṃ kho panetaṃ bhikkhu mayā saṅkhārānañceva aniccatam sandhāya bhāsitaṃ. Taṃ kho panetaṃ bhikkhu mayā saṅkhārānañceva- Khayadhammatam sandhāya bhāsitaṃ: yaṃ kiñci vedayitaṃ taṃ dukkhasminti. Taṃ kho panetaṃ bhikkhu mayā saṅkhārānañceva- Vayadhammata sandhāya bhāsitaṃ...

seeing their fleeting away, thus one disinterests in them.<sup>131</sup>

## Five Khandhas

In Saccasamyutta (S.V) there are some deviations in the definition of the truth of unsatisfactoriness. In S.V, 56: 13, the first truth is taught in summary as follows:

Monks, what is the truth of unsatisfactoriness? The five aggregate of clinging should be said; that is the form aggregate of clinging, the feeling aggregate of clinging, the perception aggregate of clinging, the will aggregate of clinging, the consciousness aggregate of clinging. This is called the noble truth of unsatisfactoriness.<sup>132</sup>

As stated earlier, of the eight items presented in the first truth starting from “birth is suffering...”, the last account of suffering concerns the aggregates. This is the most important idea that conveys the Buddhist perspective on experiences of existence. What is covered by *Pañcupādānakkhandha* (*pañcupādāna-khandha*) are very significant points to be correctly understood, for they are the philosophical and psychological

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<sup>131</sup> S iv, 36:2. Tisso imā, bhikkhave, vedanā. Katamā tisso? Sukhā vedanā, dukkhā vedanā, adukkhamasukhā vedanā- imā kho bhikkhave tisso vedanāti.

Sukhaṃ vā yadi vā dukkhaṃ adukkhamasukhaṃ saha; ajjhatañca bahiddhā ca, yaṃ kiñci atthi veditaṃ, “etaṃ dukkhanti ñatvāna, mosadhammaṃ palokinaṃ; phussa phussa vayaṃ passaṃ, evaṃ tattha virajjati”ti.

<sup>132</sup> S.V, 56: 13, Katamañca bhikkhave, dukkhaṃ ariyasaccaṃ: pañcupādānakkhandhātissa vacanīyaṃ. Katame pañca: seyyathidaṃ: rūpūpādānakkhandho vedanūpādānakkhandhā saññūpādānakkhandho sañkhārūpādānakkhandho viññāṇūpādānakkhandho, idaṃ vuccati bhikkhave, dukkhaṃ ariyasaccaṃ.

aspects of Buddha's teaching. The word *khandha* is often translated as aggregate, mass, heap, etc. *Pañcupādānakkhandha* are the five aggregates of clinging (*upādāna*) consisting of materiality (*rūpakkhandha*), feeling (*vedanākkhandha*), perception (*saññākkhandha*), volition (*saṅkhārakkhandha*) and consciousness (*viññāṇakkhandha*). According to Professor Asanga Tilakaratne<sup>133</sup>, the Buddhist teaching of the five aggregates is unique; this idea is shared by another scholar, Sue Hamilton who wrote in her exhaustive work on the *khandha* doctrine that “A large part of the third volume of the Samyutta Nikāya, itself entitled the *Khandha Vagga*, consists of *Khandha Samyutta*, which exhaustively discusses the five *khandhas*. Used in this way, the term *khandha* is distinctively Buddhist, not being found in the earlier Vedic literature...”<sup>134</sup>. However, this opinion should be examined further as some *Suttas* reveal that the theme of *khandhas* as comprised of five categories as mentioned above was a popular subject at the Buddha’s time. For example, *Cūlasaccaka Sutta* (M 35) mentions the fact that the Buddha and *Saccaka* argued about this topic and it seems that *Saccaka* was quite familiar with the doctrine of personality consisting of five aggregates or sheaths. Whether the assumption of five aggregates as constitutions of personality is unique in Buddhism or not is not within the scope of this study. Buddhism, from the beginning up to date, whether the Northern or Southern tradition, always denied the existence of

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<sup>133</sup> Asanga Tilakaratne: *Nirvana and ineffability*, P.45.

<sup>134</sup> Sue Hamilton: *Identity and experience*. P. XXIX.

an unchanging, permanent substance that called ‘*atta*’ or ‘*sakkāya*’ within or outside these aggregates<sup>135</sup>.

The five *khandhas* can be divided further into two categories: body (*rūpa*) and mind (*nāma* consists of feeling, perception, volition and consciousness). These apparent separate entities are often mistaken as self (*atta*) or ego (*attakāra*) or something belonging to self or ego (*attaniya*). There are some variations in the definition of *nāmarūpa*. In S ii, P 3,4, and Mi, P. 53, the Buddha said: “O monks, what is *nāmarūpaṃ*? Feeling, perception, volition, contact and intention are *nāma*. The four great elements and their dependent materiality are *rūpa*”. The complex psycho-physical entity called *nāmarūpa* is not an independent entity, and can not be taken as a permanent dwelling agent comparable to the concept of soul or self. The Buddha said:

Better it would be to consider the body as the 'self' rather than the mind. And why? Because this body may last for ten, twenty, thirty, forty, fifty, even for hundred years and more. But that which is called mind, consciousness, thinking (*citta*, *viññāṇa*, *mano*) arise continuously during day and night as one thing and then as something else it vanishes. (S. XII, 61).

Thus the fact of impermanence and evanescence of body and mind gives rise to ambiguity and disappointment in one who tries to grasp it. In *Anatta lakkhaṇa sutta*, the Buddha draws his listeners to the fact of impermanence in the compounded things and how what is ever changing gives rise

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<sup>135</sup> *Cūḷa Vedalla Sutta*: Sakkāyo sakkāya ti eye vuccati. Katamo nu kho eyye sakkāya vutto Bhagavatā’ti. Pañca kho ime āvuso Visakha upādānakkhandhā sakkāyo vutto Bhagavatā.

to *dukkha*, the fact of unsatisfactoriness; and what is ever flowing and unsatisfactory is not fit to take hold of as 'self' or 'I', 'mine', for it is this very grasping that produces suffering<sup>136</sup>. In the same vein, it is said in *Nakulapitu Sutta*, 'the uninstructed common worldling clings to the five aggregates through craving and conceit, and holds the wrong view that each of the aggregates (*rūpa*, *vedanā*, *saññā*, *saṅkhāra*, and *viññāṇa*) is self- *atta*. But inspired of his clinging to them, the five aggregates prove their own nature of changing and oppressing which inflict pain of old age, pain of diseases, pain of defilements (*kilesa*)'<sup>137</sup>. That wrong perception about the nature of *khandhas* and emotional attachment to them bring sorrow, lamentation, pain, grief and despair upon the unskillful mind.

#### IV. Dukkha as viewed from the *Pañiccasamuppanna* Perspective

*Avijjā paccayā saṅkhārā. Saṅkhāra paccayā viññānaṃ. Viññāna paccayā nāma-rūpa. Nāma rūpa paccayā salāyātanaṃ. Salāyātana paccayā phasso. phassa paccayā vedanā. Vedanā paccayā taṇhā. Taṇhā paccayā upādānaṃ. upādāna paccayā bhavo. Bhava paccayājāti. Jāti paccaya jarāmaranaṃ soka parideva dukkha domanassa upāyāsā sambhavanti. Evametassa kevalassa dukkhakkhandhassa samudayo hoti.*

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<sup>136</sup> S. II, 15: Rūpaṃ bhikkhave aniccaṃ. Yadaniccaṃ taṃ dukkhaṃ, yaṃ dukkhaṃ tadanattā

<sup>137</sup> S. IV, *khandha samyutta* pāḷi

Conditioned by ignorance (are) activities. Conditioned by activities (is) consciousness. Conditioned by consciousness, name and form; conditioned by name and form, six sense bases. Conditioned by six sense bases, contact; conditioned by contact, feeling. Conditioned by feeling, craving; conditioned by craving, clinging; conditioned by clinging, becoming; conditioned by becoming, birth. Conditioned by birth, old age, sickness, death, sorrow, lamentation, pain, distress, mental torment coming into existence. Such is the generating of this whole mass of suffering.<sup>138</sup>

The law of dependent origination is presented in formulated form sometimes shorter than only eight or ten links, but its implication is always the same: *paṭiccasamuppāda* in *anuloma* order is the first and second noble truth that must be realized and unfolded. Those same links when they have unfolded [*avijjāyatveva asesavirāganirodhā... dukkhakkhandhassa nirodho hoti*] lead to liberation (third and fourth noble truth).

It is noteworthy that if suffering as described in the Four Noble Truths is a kind of subjective evaluation, in the doctrine of Dependent Origination, suffering is viewed in an objective perspective. Putting it another way, *dukkha* in the first place is ‘a perception of suffering’ [*dukkhasaññā*], i.e., reflective knowledge based on concepts and ideas. It is verifiable via personal experience, though they are universal facts; however, these facts would not affect anybody unless one identifies with them. In the law of dependent origination, *dukkha* is a sequel of a psychological process observed by the knowledge of

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<sup>138</sup> S.II. 12: 1

causal relations [*idappaccayāñāṇa*]<sup>139</sup>. Herein, the fact of life is observed as a natural process that is independent of any subjective evaluation. Suffering is a reality inseparable from existence that has started from ignorance. It is created, but not by anyone; this is a paradox and we will see how the Buddha solves this problem later. On more than one occasion, the Buddha said: “Whether, monks, there is an appearance of *Tathāgata* or not, this natural law exists just the same...Conditioned by this that comes to be.”<sup>140</sup>

Causality is a universal law: whether we perceive it or not, it is always there. The Buddha has realized this law of cause and effect, but he did not invent it. In M.I. 190, 191, the Buddha said: “One who sees dependent origination sees the *Dhamma* (i.e. the Buddha’s teaching), and one who sees the *Dhamma* sees dependent origination.” This statement stresses the importance of the comprehension of the law of causality. Without seeing this causal operation in this microcosmic world, i.e., in this mind and body, or in the objective world (*loka*), beings get caught in the endless cycle of *samsāra*:

This dependent origination is deep and profound in implications. It is because of not understanding and not penetrating this Law, Ānanda, that this generation has become like a tangled skein, like a knotted ball of thread, like matted reeds and rushes, and do not pass beyond the

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<sup>139</sup> PTS, D. 185

<sup>140</sup> S.II.12: 20; 25:6: dhamma-niyāmatā: tathāgatānaṃ anuppādaṃ vā tathāgatānaṃ ṭhitāva sà dhātu dhammaṭṭhitatā dhammaniyāmatā idappaccayatā; A.I. 286: dhātu-dhammaṭṭhitatā= svabhāvaṭṭhitā (comy)

plane of misery, the bad destinations, the nether world,  
*samsāra*.<sup>141</sup>

Sometimes, it was fashionable to talk among the ascetics and Brahmins contemporary with the Buddha about whether or not suffering is caused by oneself or by other(s) thus:

“How is it, Master Gotama, is suffering created by oneself?

-Not so, Kassapa, the Blessed One said.

-Then, Master Gotama, is suffering created by another?

-Not so, Kassapa.

-How it would be, Master Gotama, is suffering created both by oneself and by another?

-Not so..

-Then, Master..., has suffering arisen fortuitously, being created neither by oneself, nor by another?

-Not so, Kassapa.”

-Is it, Master Gotama, there are no suffering?

- There is, Kassapa.”<sup>142</sup>

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<sup>141</sup> S.II.12:60: gambhīro cāyaṃ ānanda, paṭiccasamuppādo gambhirāvabhāso ca etassa ānanda, dhammassa aññāṇā ananubodhā appaṭivedhā evamayāṃ pajā tantākulakajātā gunāgunṭhika jātā muñjababbajabhūtā apāyaṃ duggatiṃ vinipātaṃ samsāraṃ nātivattati.

Why it is that all the answers of the Buddha are negative? This passage is another document confirms the consistency of the Buddha in the *anatta* doctrine. If one holds that suffering is created by oneself, then he falls into eternalism (*sassatavāda*), the doctrine of an unchanging self or identity which created (bad) *kamma*. Now that same person experiences the (evil) consequence(s) of his action. If one holds that suffering is caused by others that means someone performed bad actions, and another (unrelated) person reaps the bad result. This way of interpretation paves the way for nihilism (*ucchedavāda*) which denies the moral efficiency of one's actions in the long term. The third question is still a proposal for a nuance self or an identity between the two (oneself and other); thus the notion of 'the self' and 'other' is still there. Hence the Buddha says 'not so..' The fourth question proposes that suffering is an ultimate reality which exists independent of any agent. This, again, was negated. Suffering is not something which exists objectively (*adhiccasamuppannaṃ*, arisen without a cause, unconditioned), **it is caused, being conditioned, dependently arising**; but this is not to say suffering is not there, rather it is dependent on conditions. This is the message the Buddha would like to convey to all of us. A related topic will further be discussed in chapter five under the headline 'is suffering a subjective experience?'

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<sup>142</sup> S.II:17: Kinu kho bho gotama, sayam kataṃ dukkhanti? Mā hevaṃ kassapà'ti bhagavà avoca. Kimpāna bho gotama, paraṃkataṃ dukkhanti? Mā hevaṃ kassapà'ti bhagavà avoca. Kinu kho bho gotama, sayam kataṅca paraṃkataṅca dukkhanti? Mā hevaṃ kassapà'ti bhagavà avoca. [PTS P. 020] kimpāna bho gotama, asayaṃkāraṃ aparakāraṃ adhiccasamuppannaṃ dukkhanti? Mā hevaṃ kassapà'ti bhagavà avoca. Kinu kho bho gotama, natthi dukkhanti. Na kho kassapa, natthi dukkhaṃ. Atthi kho kassapa, dukkhanti

The law of Dependent Arising was taught by the Buddha as the Middle Way. Accordingly, suffering is said to be dependent on contact (*phassa paccayā vedanā*), and the disciple should see all kinds of feelings, whether pleasant or unpleasant or even neutral, all constitute suffering. This is certified as a right view in Nidāna Samyutta as follows:

He has no perplexity or doubt that what arises is only suffering arising, what ceases is only suffering ceasing. His knowledge about this is independent of others. It is in this way, Kaccāna, that there is right view.<sup>143</sup>

The law of dependent origination is often presented as twelve links in the above text. Though it is elaborated in twelve links, the two most crucial factors are *avijjā* and *taṇhā* as singled out in the previous text: “Hindered by ignorance and fettered by craving”. Beginning with ignorance and ending in ‘a mass of suffering’, this is a very significant description of the course of worldly experience. This course of *samsāric* experience (*lokadhammā*)<sup>144</sup> is causally operated, and it is universal and impersonal, but beings (*satta*) mistakenly grasp at it, identify with them giving birth to a personality (*attabhāva*). Until the *bhava*, they are just a psychological process, however, they are actualized through birth, and after that unsatisfactoriness such as old age, sickness, sorrow, lamentation, frustration, etc., follows.

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<sup>143</sup> S.II. 12: 15 : Dukkameva uppajjamānaṃ uppajjati, dukkhaṃ nirujjhamānaṃ nirujjhatīti na kaṅkhati. Na vicikicchati. Aparappaccayā ñāṇamevassa ettha hoti. Ettāvata kho kaccāna, sammādiṭṭhi hoti.

<sup>144</sup> Lokadhammā – worldly experiences are often talked in eight forms: gain and loss, honour and dishonour, happiness and misery, praise and blame. See Vism. XXII, or A. VIII. 5.

According to this causal connection, all evils of the world are traced back to ignorance (*avijjā*). There are many degrees of ignorance ranging from muddle-headed and even to scientific or philosophical achievements. It is interesting to note that the gross and obvious forms of ignorance cause suffering in the short term often affecting the agent and only his limited surroundings. However, subtle and sophisticated ignorance can cause harm in the long term and its effects are immensurable. For instance, a drunkard may harm himself and someone near him the most, but Pol Pot with his crazy ideology harmed the whole Cambodian nation and Hitler caused harm for the whole of Europe. Another example is the E-bomb representing the misuse of scientific achievements in our age.

If ignorance (*avijjā*) is the first link as far as human knowledge can discern, of the cause of existence ultimately leading to ‘a mass of suffering’ (*dukkhakkhandhassa samudayo hoti.*), then *avijjā* is defined as not understanding the Four Noble Truths. Hence one is pushed voluntarily or involuntarily into activities (*saṅkhārā*) as illustrated thus:

Those recluses and priests who do not understand suffering and so on as it is...They take delight in creations that rolling on to birth. Having enrolled in the activities that lead to birth... they reach/ obtain birth. But those who understand will not delight in *saṅkhārā*-creations and not enrolling in activities; they are released from birth.<sup>145</sup>

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<sup>145</sup> S.V, 449: *Ye hi...keci samana vā brahmana vā idaṃ dukkhaṃ'ti yathābhūtaṃ nappajānanti... te jātisamvattanikesu saṅkhāresu*

Here the psychological significance is that ignorance and uncertainty (*avijjā*) serve as a background for *sāṅkhāra*, the creative force or activity that involves further activities. According to the *Sammādiṭṭhisutta* (M.18), the progressive degree of *sammādiṭṭhi*, which in this context means right knowledge (thus its opposite is ignorance, *avijjā*), starts from discriminate knowledge of good (*kusala*) and bad (*akusala*), their roots (*kusalamūla* and *akusalamūla*), knowledge of the Four Noble Truths, and the knowledge to see things as they are (*yathābhūtamñānadassanaṃ*). By inference, we can go backwards to the different levels of ignorance here regressively. Thus, the first degree of ignorance is the uncertainty about moral law, or in other words, one does not know what is good and what is bad. This kind of ignorance certainly causes one to behave in an unacceptable way, or to commit immoral actions (*apuññābhisāṅkhārā*). The second degree of ignorance is that one does not know the cause of good or bad. This means that consciously, someone knows what is good and what is bad in some contexts, but unconsciously, they are governed by latent tendencies (*anusayakilesa*), and thus might behave disgracefully or unskillfully and inevitably acquire demerits (*apuññābhisāṅkhāra*). The third degree of ignorance is blind to the four noble truths: he does not know that life is basically unsatisfactory; and that unsatisfactoriness has its cause that is his craving; the extinction of his craving is the end of unsatisfactoriness; and there is a way that leads to supreme happiness. The last but not least degree of ignorance is not seeing the way things are and thus one views thing(s) in an opposite way: one sees happiness in misery, beauty in

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*abhiramanti... te jātisamvattanīke pi sankhāre abhisāṅkhāritvā... jātīpapātāṃ pi papatanti”.*

disgrace, permanence in impermanence, and self in non-self. The third and fourth degree of ignorance can motivate one to acquire merits (*puññābhisāṅkhārā*) for a better life in *samsāra*, or to achieve a state of imperturbability (*āneñj'ābhisāṅkhāra*).

All of the above mentioned *saṅkhārā*, the creative force (*saṅkhāra*), enrolls (*sankhāreti*) one in activities and accumulations (*upādāna and kammabhava*) that lead to further manifestations (*vipāka-bhava*). The *Abhidhammikas* classified *avijjā* and *saṅkhāra* as past causes, but some modern scholars<sup>146</sup> observed that this way of classification is artificially articulated. Perhaps the intention of the *Abhidhammattha sangaha*'s compiler (Ācariya Anuruddha) when he put the twelve links of *Paṭiccasamuppāda* into the past, present and future is to emphasize the endless perpetuation of existence in the chain of birth, death and rebirth. In the past there were *avijjā* and *saṅkhāra*, but there are *avijjā* and *saṅkhārā* in the present, too, and there will be *avijjā* and *saṅkhāra* in future. However, according to Buddhism, time is a concept (*paññatti*) and not a reality (*paramattha*), but rather a notion perceived via events. Here the relativity of our notion of the object makes it unreal in the ultimate sense. The *saṅkhārā* at present is our reaction towards sensory stimulations. They are *taṇhā*, *upādāna*, and *kammabhava*, which we will discuss later. The *Maddhyamikans* (the *Middle Way* philosophy advocated by Nāgārjuna) even went so far as to say that events are all illusory and there is nothing to come, nothing which has gone, no origination, no cessation.<sup>147</sup> Therefore, birth and death is merely an illusion of ignorance. As pertains to the future, i.e.,

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<sup>146</sup> Etienne Lamotte, *Histoire du buddhisme* 1967. P.43.

<sup>147</sup> Nāgārjuna's *Philosophy of non-identity* (*Madhyamaka sūtra* I. 1.2). Trans. And ed by Ramchandra Pandeya and Manju. Delhi 1991

*jāti*, birth, *jarā*, old age, etc., there is *avijjā* and *saṅkhārā* embedded deeply in the notion of events/ phenomena. Therefore the cycle is endless (for the ignorant).

To explain Dependent Origination it would be easier to start in the present phase. This is also a practical approach for we can not undo the past. To understand what is in the present is crucial which all Buddhist texts emphasize. Because there were *avijjā* and *saṅkhārā* (in the past), there is *viññāṇa*, rebirth consciousness or conception. This is called *samvattaniḥ* *viññāṇaṃ* in M. 106 (M.III, 262)<sup>148</sup>, the continuing consciousness which joins life to life. The *Abhidhamikas* call it *paṭisandhi citta*, rebirth consciousness. *Viññāṇa*, *nāma-rūpa* (psycho-physical complex), *salāyatana* (six sense bases) are the results of past *kamma*. The *vipassanā* approach starts from *phassa* or contact between the senses and their respective objects to unravel the mystique of becoming. I will return to this in a section called *Dhammānupassanā* in Chapter seventh.

Contact (*phassa*) is defined as the meeting of the three: sense base (*āyatana*), its relative object (*ārammana*), and the present consciousness (*viññāṇasota* in its active mode). As a resulting event, this contact is not recommended to be undone; and since the function of sense-bases or doors are to perceive their respective objects, they just perform their function. Lacking one or more sense-base is considered a defective existence, but shutting down some sense-bases for the sake of concentration or unified mind is an art called meditation.

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<sup>148</sup> M.III, 262: kayassa bhedaṃ paraṃ maraṇā thānaṃ etaṃ vijjati yaṃ taṃ samvattaniḥ viññāṇaṃ assa āṇaṅjapaṃ.

Contact gives rise to feeling (*phassa paccaya vedanā*). This feeling is said to be of three kinds, i.e., pleasant feeling (*sukha vedanā*), unpleasant feeling (*dukkha vedanā*) and neutral feeling (*asukhamadukkha vedanā*); or of five kinds, i.e., pleasant feeling with regard to bodily sensation, pleasant feeling with regard to mental pleasantness (*somanassa*), unpleasant feeling as pertains to bodily sensation (*dukkha vedanā*), distress (*domanassa*, a kind of mental suffering), and neutral feeling.

It seems the most natural thing on earth is to avoid/escape/wish to destroy the unpleasant feelings/things/events/persons, and crave the pleasant feelings/things. These two contradictory reactions to different feelings is called *taṇhā* or craving which originated in feeling (*vedanā paccaya taṇhā*). The word *taṇhā* is often translated as thirst or craving, but this is not rendered very well in English to convey the psychological meaning of the word *taṇhā*. *Taṇhā* apparently denotes two aspects of a psychological reaction as seen in the above analysis, not merely a physical instinctive survival factor. *Taṇhā* is called ‘house builder’ as it alone makes up the second noble truth, the cause of suffering, and this *taṇhā* is to be eliminated (*pahātabbam*). However, *taṇhā* can not arise by itself as it arises dependent on feeling and perception that was misguided by ignorance as we have mentioned in previous pages. *Taṇhā* as a kind of subjective evaluation based on a (wrong) perception and emotional reaction to feelings will be discussed in chapter three under *vedanākkhandha* and *saññākkhandha*. *Taṇhā*, craving, as a processor of becoming (*bhava*) will be treated in more detail in chapter sixth, on motivation.

Craving leads to clinging (*upādāna*) as when one likes something, one wants to get hold of it and possesses it. Hence, it is of one mind (*bhava*- existence). When one gets the object that one desires, there are two possibilities: (1) one becomes fed up with it and the result is boredom and irritation leading to the search for something else, termed *saṅkhāradukkha*; (2) the desirable object changes so there is fear and resentment of the possibility of losing it (*viparināmadukkha*). Insatiate, boredom, fear and resentment are apparently those uneasy states caused by craving and clinging. Thus in the light of Dependent Origination, suffering is caused, conditioned, but, it too, is *anatta* or non-substantiality. Hence, the sage advice is to view it objectively but not to identify with it:

“It is mere suffering rises.

It is mere suffering appears and remains.

It is mere suffering disappears and departs.

No thing rises else than suffering;

And nothing ceases else then suffering.”<sup>149</sup>

This is a succinct summary on Dukkha by Professor De Silva:

In general, these are three facets of human suffering: the directly experienced physical pain and distress; the mental painful ranging from sadness, grieve, depression to despair, finally a more basic condition like disharmony, dissonance, emptiness etc, which the Buddha renders by the term “Unsatisfactoriness”. Most of these facets of suffering discussed in the Buddhist texts have clear empirical content and

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<sup>149</sup> S.I, 135; Vism. XVIII, 27

relevant contexts and terminology to describe them. In fact, the impact of the existential phenomenological traditions of philosophy in clinical psychology during recent times, takes us to the deeper existential levels of dissonance and ambiguity. The fragmentation, as well as the vacuity and aridity emerging out of the routine life styles of people [...] Thus human suffering ranges from feeling depressed because he has lost his job and unable to feed his family to the man who has plenty but is feeling joyless. This is depression which can be easily tracked down, as well as the kind of depression which is puzzling to fathom. The Buddhist concept of *dukkha* can absorb these different manifestations of human sufferings”.<sup>150</sup>

In conclusion, *dukkha* is a common characteristic of all creations or compounded things. It is not “I” or “mine” and it should be viewed as a fact inherent in all conditioned existence. On realizing the fact of *dukkha*, one shall no longer blindly delight in activities that lead one to perpetuate the predicament of *samsāra*, however, this does not necessary result in a pessimistic view of life and world. In fact, it does help one to live a more meaningful life, a life that is ennobled with compassion and wisdom to understand oneself, people and things as what they have come to be (*yathābhūtaṃ-nāṇa-dassanaṃ*).

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<sup>150</sup> De Silva. Padmarisi: *Emotion & the “Self” in Buddhist & Western Thought* P.143

## Chapter IV *Khandha* Doctrine

In this chapter we will mainly discuss the five *khandhas* as the components of personality<sup>151</sup> in relation to the *Paṭiccasamupāda* as the first Noble Truth (*dukkha sacca*) and the second Noble Truth (*samudaya sacca*) which is identical with *kāmatanḥā*, *bhavatanḥā*, and *vibhavatanḥā* mentioned elsewhere as the three principal causes of the truth of suffering. The discussion will focus on the analysis of personality in terms of *khandhas* according to the dependent arising perspective (*paṭiccasamuppāda*). Before going into detail, a general overview of *khandhas* is a necessary step.

### I The *Khandha* Doctrine

Birth is generally described as ‘*khandhānaṃ pātubbhavo*’- the appearance of the aggregates. What are exactly the aggregates? A typical account of aggregates is:

And what, bhikkhus are the five aggregates? Whatever kind of material there is, whether past, future, or present, internal or external, gross or subtle, inferior or superior, far or near: this is called the material aggregate (*rūpakkhandha*). Whatever kind of feeling there is...this is called the feeling aggregate (*vedanākkhandha*). Whatever kind of perception there is...this is called the perception aggregate (*saññākkhandha*). Whatever kind

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<sup>151</sup> I use two English words for *khandha* in Pali: components in the sense that they are part & parcel of personality, and the word aggregate to denote each of them is a collection itself.

of volitional formation there is...this is called the formative aggregate (*sāṅkhārakkhandha*). Whatever kind of consciousness there is, whether past, future, or present, internal or external, gross or subtle, inferior or superior, far or near: this is called the aggregate of consciousness (*viññāṇakkhandha*).<sup>152</sup>

Commenting on this kind of description, Sue Hamilton in her treatise writes:

[...] the term *khandha* is distinctively Buddhist, not being found in the earlier Vedic literature except in the sense of ‘trunk’. Most frequently, the *khandha* are referred to by name without giving any explanation as to what the name means or implies; where descriptions are given, there are sometimes so brief that it is difficult definitively to ascertain the precise characteristics and functions of each one.<sup>153</sup>

The term *khandha* (*skandha* in Sank.) means a mass, a heap (*rāsi*), a collection of something. In Buddhist terminology *khandha* has two meanings: (1) multipliable physico-psychological phenomena; (2) something that hinders, an obstacle. The first meaning is widely used and is especially applicable to the five *khandhas* as groups or aggregates; the second meaning is found only in some Chinese translations of the word *skandha* as “am” which means hindrance or concealment, and “uan” meaning collection, or over lay upon each others. Bhikkhu Bodhi in his introduction to the *Khandhasamyutta* (SN) writes: “The five aggregates are so called because they each unite under one label a multiplicity of

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<sup>152</sup> S. III, 48:6. *Khandhasamyutta*:

<sup>153</sup> Sue Hamilton 1996. *Identity and experience, Introduction*. xxix.

phenomena that share the same defining characteristic.”<sup>154</sup> This kind of definition corresponds to the Chinese translation of ‘uǎn’ which means a heap, a mass, or a collection of something that shares similar characteristics.

Returning to the typical description of five aggregates above, each in eleven modes in regard to time (past, future, present), situation (subjective or internal, objective or external, near, or far), and quality (coarse, subtle, low, high), we can infer that the purpose of this description is to enable many aspects to be included. In this way the five *khandha* include all material and mental phenomena found in the range of human experience. This also explains why five *khandha* are sometimes shortened into *nāma-rūpa* which means mentality and materiality. *Nāma* consists of the four aggregates of feeling, perception, volition and consciousness of which three of them (*vedanā*, *saññā* and *viññāṇa*) are inseparable.<sup>155</sup> Volitional formation (*saṅkhāra*) is also included in mentality (*nāma*); *rūpakkhandha* alone stands for all materiality (*rūpa*), whether internal, i.e, pertaining to the body, or external, the objective world. But in Buddhist philosophy and psychology, the objective world or external existence is not of much interested. According to some passages of the Buddha, the world is described as follows: “In this fathom long body with its perception and mind that there is the world, the origin of the world, the cessation of the world, and the path leading to the

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<sup>154</sup> Bhikkhu Bodhi, *The Connected Discourses of The Buddha*. P. 840 [Wisdom Publication, USA, 2000]

<sup>155</sup> MN, Mahāvedalla sutta: vedanā ya ca saññā yañca viññāṇaṃ ime dhammā saṃsaṭṭhā no visamsaṭṭhā. Na ca labbhā imesaṃ dhammānaṃ vinibbhujitvā vinibbhujitvā nānākaraṇaṃ paññāpetuṃ. Yañcāvuso vedeti taṃ sañjānāti, yaṃ sañjānāti taṃ vijānāti, tasmā ime dhammā saṃsaṭṭhā no visamsaṭṭhā. Na ca labbhā imesaṃ dhammānaṃ vinibbhujitvā vinibbhujitvā nānākaraṇaṃ paññāpetunti

cessation of the world.”<sup>156</sup> In another instance, he stated: *cakkhuna lokasmiṃ hoti lokasaññī lokamati ayamvuccati bhikkhave ariyassa vinaye loke*. “Via eyes one is conscious of the world, thought of the world; this is called the world in the training of the nobles”<sup>157</sup>. The same statement is applied to other sense organs. Thus the whole conscious physical body, i.e., the six sense organs in their interrelations and interactions with their corresponding objects are what makes sense of the world, not what is ‘out there’<sup>158</sup>. This reflects a subjective attitude in which the world is qualified only through what one perceives, conceptualizes and thinks of. This philosophy exerts a great influence on the doctrine of *khandhas* as we will see presently in the analysis of human experience by the way of *khandhas*. It is noteworthy that this method of teaching has been taken to prove the omniscience (*sabbaññū*) of the Buddha.<sup>159</sup>

The term *nāma-rūpa* as the fourth link of *Paṭiccasamuppāda* also implies the five *khandhas* as analyzed above. There is a deviation in the definition of *nāma-rūpa* in *Samyutta Nikāya* as follows: “*Catumahābhūtānañ ca upādāyarūpaṃ idaṃ vuccati rūpaṃ. Vedanā saññā cetanā phasso manasikāro idaṃ vuccati nāmaṃ*. The four great elements and derived materiality are called *rūpa*. Feeling, perception, volition, contact (and) attention, these are called

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<sup>156</sup> A. IV, 45 : Imasmim yeva vyamamatte kalebare sasaññimhi samanake lokañca paññāpemi lokasamudayañca lokanirodhañca, lokanirodhagamini patpadañca.

<sup>157</sup> S. IV, 95; Similar definitions of the loka-world are found in S IV, 15, M I, 3-4

<sup>158</sup> I use the word of Sue Hamilton in her article named “*The Dependent Nature of the Phenomenal World*”.

<sup>159</sup> For further information, see Prof. Tilak Kariyawasam’s article: *The Development of the Concept of Omniscience. Essays in Honour of Ananda W.P. Guruge*, Colombo 1990. This idea was expressed by him also in his (unpublished) PhD Thesis, Lancaster University, (England 1973).

*nāma*.”<sup>160</sup> Herein we can see *cetanā* being substituted for *saṅkhāra*, but does *phasso* and *manasikāra* stand for *viññāna*? If it is so, in what sense can it be substituted for consciousness? I will discuss this later in a diagram that reveals the relationship of psychological factors and in the definition of *viññānakkhandha*.

There are three ways to translate the term *nāma-rūpa* in Indian psycho-philosophy. (1) As ‘name and form’; wherein *nāma* or name is our concept of something, and *rūpa* is the object that is so called, or the thing that is so conceived. (2) As ‘mind and matter’: this translation is copied from the definition given in the quoted passage above; and (3) as a ‘psycho-physical complex’. This is the most accurate meaning for the term *nāma-rūpa* as it is used in Buddhist psychology and philosophy, and in this sense, it is a synonym of ‘*pañcakkhandha*’, the five aggregates.

A being (*satta* or *sattva*) is described in terms of the five aggregates<sup>161</sup>. The enlightened nun Vājira stated ‘a being’ is a conventional term for the ‘assembly of aggregates’. The Buddha plays on the word and indicates that one is struck (literally taking delight in, craving for, lusting after, desiring) in the experiences which are described as form, feeling, perception, formations and consciousness and it is through this

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<sup>160</sup> SN. II. P.3

<sup>161</sup> S.I, 5:10; S. III, 23:2

one is called a being.<sup>162</sup> From these two instances, we might conclude that the theory of the five aggregates represents a comprehensive analysis of human experience. Here we will not go into detail about what is meant by each aggregate; actually, we can not isolate them one by one and declare that this is materiality that is feeling and so on. Even a skillful meditator who contemplates the five aggregates does so by conceptualizing his experiences into categories, and seeing them as objects of observation, not to be identified with as ‘I’ or ‘mine’ or ‘myself’. Perhaps that is why in the original scriptures (*Tipitaka*) aggregates (*khandha*) are presented in a very sketched form appearing as though they need naming only without a clear comprehensive explanation of what each actually contain. Contrary to that, the so-called ‘universal characteristics’ of aggregates as impermanence (*anicca*), suffering (*dukkha*) and selflessness (*anatta*) are repeatedly stated. This serves a purpose for it induces the students of Buddhism to deal with the five aggregates as sources of identification and clinging. The *khandhas* should be understood according to their functions, and not as metaphysical entities which would lead to dogmatic view of a permanent self or a fixed identity (*sakkāyadiṭṭhi*), and grasp at the manifestations of existence (*ātman* in Sanskrit or *atta* in Pāli).

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<sup>162</sup> S. III, 23:2: Rūpe kho rādhā, yo chando yo rāgo yā nandi yā taṇhā.  
 Tatra satto tatra visatto tasmā sattoti vuccati. Vedanāya yo chando yo rāgo  
 yā nandi yā taṇhā tatra satto tatra visatto tasmā sattoti vuccati. Saññāya yo  
 chando yo rāgo yā nandi yā taṇhā tatra satto tatra visatto tasmā sattoti  
 vuccati. Saṅkhāresu yo chando yo rāgo yā nandi yā taṇhā tatra satto tatra  
 visatto tasmā sattoti vuccati. Viññāṇe yo chando yo rāgo yā nandi yā taṇhā  
 tatra satto tatra visatto tasmā sattoti vuccati.

## 1. *Rūpakkhandha*

*Rūpakkhandha* is defined as consisting of the four great elements (*mahābhūta*) and the materiality derived from them (*upādāya rūpā*)<sup>163</sup>. Each element is described according to its characteristics. For example, *Paṭhavidhātu*, the earth element, is described in term of its materiality internally and subjective or externally and objective that is hard, hash, clung to (born of *kamma*). The Visuddhimagga explains that the earth element is that which extends, or occupies (space); internally or subjectively they are hair, teeth, nails, skin, flesh, sinews, bone, bone-marrow, kidney, heart, liver, midriff, spleen, lungs, bowels, entrails, small intestines, dung.<sup>164</sup>

Interestingly, the six sense organs are not included in the list.

*Āpodhatu*, the water element, is also viewed as twofold according to its position, internally and externally. The internal water element is a liquid, pertaining to liquid, born of clinging, such as bile, phlegm, pus, blood, sweat, fat, tears, grease, spittle, snot, oil of the joints, and urine<sup>165</sup>. The water element,

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<sup>163</sup> S.III, 22:56, 57; M.9,para. 100: cattāni ca mahabhūtāni catunnañca mahābhūtānaṃ upādāyarūpaṃ, idaṃ vuccati rūpaṃ.

<sup>164</sup> M. 38, Mahāhatthipadopamasutta: paṭhavidhatu...ajjhattikā siyā bāhirā... paccattaṃ kakkhalaṃ kharigataṃ upādinnaṃ...kesā, loma, nakhā, daṇḍa taco mamsaṃ nahāru atthi atthimimjaṃ vakkhaṃ hadayaṃ yakanāṃ kilomakaṃ pihakaṃ phapphāsam antaṃ, antagunaṃ udariyaṃ karisaṃ.

<sup>165</sup> M. 38. Āpodhatu siyā ajjhattikā siyā bāhirā. Ajjhattikā āpodhātu: āpo, āpogataṃ, upādinnaṃ pittaṃ semhaṃ pubbo lohitaṃ sedo medo assū vasā kheḷo singhānikā lasikā muttaṃ.

according to commentators, has the characteristic of cohesion<sup>166</sup>, i.e., binding substance.

*Tejodhātu*, the fire element, refer to the temperature. “And what is the element of fire? It is that which heats, that which causes thing to decay, that which consumes, and that through which things reach an entice change.”<sup>167</sup> The internal fire element is that which makes the body warm, aging, burning, and digesting (of food, drink, etc). *Tejodhātu* also keeps the living body soft and flexible. Somewhere else (Dhp), it is termed *usmā*, or heat, being one of the three factors (*āyu*, *usmā*, and *viññāṇa*) that animate the body.

*Vāyodhātu*, the wind element, is motion and its characteristic is distension<sup>168</sup>. “Whatever there is internally in oneself that is air, airy, and clung to, that is to say, up-going winds, down-going winds in the belly, wind in the bowels, wind that course through the limbs, in-breath and out-breath”<sup>169</sup>.

Thus internal earth and water elements make up thirty-two parts of the body. The purpose of this analysis, according to the author of *Visudhimagga*, is to discard the concept of ‘human being’ in the *rūpakkhandha* as a separate and unique entity, along with the tendency to cling to it as ‘self’. For this

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<sup>166</sup> Vism. XI, 36. The Path of purification. P. 345

<sup>167</sup> M. I, 188, 422

<sup>168</sup> Ibid. p.346.

<sup>169</sup> M.I, 188: Vāyodhātu siyā ajjhattikā siyā bhāhira. Katamā cāvuso ajjhattikā vāyodhātu? Yam ajjhattam, paccattam vāyo vāyogatam upādinnam - seyyathīdam: uddhāgamā vātā, adhogamā vātā, kucchisayā vātā, koññhasayā vātā, aṅgamaggānusārino vātā, assāso passāso iti vā, yam vā panaññampi kiñci ajjhattam paccattam vāyo vāyogatam upādinnam - ayam vuccatāvuso ajjhattikā vāyodhātu

reason, in *Mahāsatipaṭṭhāna* sutta (D.22; M.10) the Buddha taught:

Bhikkhus, just as though a skilled butcher or butcher's apprentice had killed a cow and were seated at the cross roads with it cut up into pieces, so too, bhikkhus, a *bhikkhu* review this body however placed, however disposed, as consisting of elements: in this body there are the earth element, the water element, the fire element and the air element.<sup>170</sup>

As we can see above in the account of the elements, they are all described as “clung to”- *upādinnaṃ*, in the sense that they are born of *kamma* as well as being the objects of clinging, identifying “this is I, mine, myself”. However, the *Mūlapariyāyasutta* gives an account of how different people perceive things in different ways. About an ordinary person, it is said:

Here, bhikkhus, the not learned ordinary man, not seeing Great Men, not clever and not trained in the noble Teaching, perceives earth, thinking it is earth, becomes earth, thinks it is mine, delights. What is the reason: I call it not knowing thoroughly. Perceives water, thinking it's water, becomes water, thinks it's mine, delights. What is the reason: I call it not knowing thoroughly. Perceives fire, thinking it's fire, becomes fire, thinks it's mine, delights. What is the reason: I call it not knowing

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<sup>170</sup> Seyyathāpi bhikkhave dakkho goghātako vā goghātakantevāsī vā gāvīm vadhitvā cātummahāpathe khīlaso vibhajitvā nisinno assa, evameva kho bhikkhave bhikkhu imameva kāyaṃ yathāṭṭhitam yathāpanihitam dhātuso paccavekkhati: atthi imasmim kāye padhavīdhātu āpodhātu tejodhātu vāyodhātū ti.

thoroughly. Perceives air, thinking it's air, becomes air, thinks it's mine, delights.<sup>171</sup>

The *sutta* gives an account of twenty-four kinds of experiences or phenomena, beginning with earth (*paṭhavi*), in which the ordinary person (*puthujjana*) conceives of each as a concrete entity, and identifies with it, taking delight in it because he fails to comprehend it (*apariññātāṃ*). However, for a learner (*Sikkho*, one who has an authentic experience of the *Dhamma* but is not fully enlightened yet), he experiences the same phenomena but is able to resist from identifying with it (*paṭhaviṃ meti mā maññi*), not taking delight in it (*paṭhaviṃ mābhinadi*) because he must strive to understand it correctly (*pariññeyyaṃ*). To an Arahant who has transcended all psychological afflictions (*khīnāsavo*), and is fully liberated from all conceptual proliferations (*Nippapañca*), he does not think (in terms) of earth, nor does he identify with earth, not taking delight in earth. The reason is that he has fully comprehended all experiences (*pariññātāṃ*)<sup>172</sup>.

In regard to the four great elements, an interesting story in *Dīgha Nikaya* narrates that there was once a monk in seclusion who pondered over the questions: “where (do) the four great elements, that is the earth element, water..., fire..., wind element cease without remainder?”<sup>173</sup> By his psychic power, in

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<sup>171</sup> M.I,1: Idha bhikkhave assutavā puthujjano ariyānaṃ adassāvī ariyadhammassa akovido ariyadhamme avinīto sappurisānaṃ adassāvī sappurisadhammassa akovido sappurisadhamme avinīto paṭhaviṃ paṭhavitto sañjānāti. Paṭhaviṃ paṭhavitto saññatvā paṭhaviṃ maññati paṭhaviyā maññati paṭhavitto maññati paṭhaviṃ me'ti maññati. Paṭhaviṃ abhinandati. Taṃ kissa hetu? Apariññātāṃ tassā'ti vadāmi. The same account is for other elements. [Ref. translation of Metta Net:www.metta.lk].

<sup>172</sup> Mūlapariyāyasutta, M I, 1.

<sup>173</sup> DN, Kevaddha sutta: kattha nu kho bhante ime cattāro mahābhūtā aparisesā nirujjhanti seyyathidaṃ: paṭhavidhātu āpodhātu tejodhātu vāyodhātu'ti?

persuit of the answer to his questions, he traveled throughout the world starting from the lowest heaven realm (of The Four Great Kings) to the highest realm, that is the realm of the Great Brahma who is believed by common folk to be the Creator, the All-seeing, the All-powerful, etc., to have his question answered. Yet none of the celestial beings or their kings, including the great Brahma, knew where the four great elements actually ceased. Finally, following the advice of the great Brahma, the monk returned to the Buddha with his question. The Buddha restated his question as follows:

“Where do earth, water, fire and air no footing find?  
Where are long and short, small and great, fair and foul-  
Where are ‘mind-and –matter totally destroyed?’”<sup>174</sup>

And the answer given by the Buddha is:

Where consciousness is signless, limitless, all-luminous,  
That is where earth, water, fire and air find no footing,  
There both: long and short, small and great, fair and foul-  
There ‘mind-and-matter completely destroyed.  
With the cessation of consciousness this is all destroyed.”<sup>175</sup>

It is noteworthy that the concept of the four great elements is given here along with the discriminative mind with regard to the material object. The duality-notion that discriminates

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<sup>174</sup> D.11. PTS: D.I. 223: Kattha àpo ca paṭhavi tejo vāyo na gādhati. Kattha dīghañca rassañca añuṃ thūlaṃ subhāsubhaṃ, Katta nāmañca rūpañca asesam uparujjhatīti.

<sup>175</sup> Ibid: Viññāṇaṃ anidassanaṃ anantaṃ sabbato pabhaṃ. Ettha àpo ca paṭhavi tejo vāyo na gādhati  
Ettha dīghañca rassañca añuṃ thūlaṃ subhāsubhaṃ. Ettha nāmaca rūpañca asesam uparujjhati.  
Viññāṇassa nirodhena etthetaṃ uparujjhatīti

subject (*nāma*, the knowing mind) and object (*rūpa*, the characteristics that perceived) always perceives a thing in its dual dimension, i.e., long and short, big and small, beautiful and ugly, etc. Thus the four great elements only arise as the conceptual construction of our mind about the object. Therefore, they are not real; but how can something unreal cease? This is the reason why the Buddha said his question was wrongly put. In its ordinary mode (or an untrained mind), consciousness (*vi-ñāṇa*) always perceives things through discrimination. However, when the mind is purified (in *jhāna* or mental absorption), when consciousness is freed from the duality-notion, or the notion of subject-object based on sensory experiences ceased, it does not grasp at signs (*anidassanaṃ*), and is not limited to an established concept (*anantaṃ*). Rather it shines every- where (*sabbato pabhaṃ*) and thus the four great elements find no footing and the dual notion also ceases. With the cessation of discriminative consciousness (*viññāṇa*), conceptual thinking also ceases, and thus all these (dual notions) cease.<sup>176</sup> For a more profound treatment of this subject, we will return to it in chapter seven.

Nowhere does the *sutta* mention what derived materiality is. The *Abhidhammatthasangaha* elaborates twenty-four *upādāyarūpā*. They are: (1) the group of sensitive materiality consisting of five *pasādarūpa*, i.e., eyes, ears, noses, tongue, body; (2) the materiality that is perceived via sense faculties called *gocararūpa* consisting of form, sound, smell, taste, and tangibility – the three elements of earth, fire, air; (3)

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<sup>176</sup> This passage was interpreted in many different ways by the English translators. E.g. *anidassanaṃ* was translated as “non-manifestative” by Ven. Ñāṇananda, but Ms Hornor had it translated as ‘can not be characterized’; the word *sabbato pahaṃ* or *pabhaṃ* is also another controversial one. The commentary explains it as a port that accessible from all sides.

*bhavarūpaṃ*: femininity and masculinity; (4) *manovatthu*: the heart base (also called *hadayarūpa*); (6) *Kabbaḷikarāhāra*: nutriment; (7) *jīvitindriya*, life faculty. These are eighteen kinds of *nipphannarūpa*, concretely produced matters grouped into the seven groups above. These material phenomena are so-called because they possess *svabhāvalakkhana*, i.e., intrinsic characteristics which mark their existence. Besides, there is ‘non-concretely produced matter (*anipphannarūpa*) such as the space element (*ākāśadhātu*) intimating material phenomena (*viññattirūpa*), mutable material phenomena (*vikārarūpa*: lightness, malleability, suppleness), marks of materiality such as generation (*upacaya*), continuity (*santati*), decay (*jaratā*), and impermanence (*aniccatā*). We must bear in mind that *rūpa* is not described as substance. Etymologically, *rūpa* is that which has the nature of breaking down or disintegration (*ruppati*). This is certified by a definition of *rūpa* we found in Samyutta Nikaya:

And why, *rūpa* is so called? It is disintegrated (or) affected, therefore it is called *rūpaṃ*. By what it is affected? It is affected by cold, by heat, by thirst and hunger, by contact with flies, insects, mosquito... It is affected (or) disintegrated, therefore, monks, it is called *rūpa* [*Kiñca bhikkhave, rūpaṃ vadetha: rūppatīti kho bhikkhave, tasmā rūpanti vuccati. Kena rūppati: sītena'pi ruppati uñhena'pi ruppati jighacchāya'pi ruppati pipāsāya'pi ruppati dāṃsamakasa-vātātapasirim-sapasamphassena'pi ruppati. Ruppatīti kho bhikkhave, tasmā rūpanti vuccati*]<sup>177</sup>

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<sup>177</sup> S.III. 22:79

This clearly means our body, for inorganic materiality is not affected by thirst, hunger, or contact with flies, etc. Only sensitive materiality or the bodies of sentient beings are disturbed by these factors. Thus *rūpakkkhandha* especially denotes the material aspect of sentient beings or a human being only. This qualification of *rūpakkkhandha* is supported in *Khandhasamyutta*, *Upādānaparipavaṭṭasutta* in which it is stated that the material aggregate originated in nutriments and with the cessation of nutriments comes the cessation of the material aggregate.<sup>178</sup> Somewhere in the *sutta* when the account of four great elements is given, it mentions the external concrete materiality as found in mountains, water in the seas, wind blown on the field, forest fire, etc. are mentioned, but its purpose is only to point out that even such a mass of materiality is impermanent and changing<sup>179</sup>.

The four great elements and four derivative materials, i.e., smell, color, taste and nutritive essence are termed a ‘pure octet’ (*suddhaṭṭhaka*). The group of *rūpa* (*kalāpa*) forms the base unit of material existence found in all materials. They are inseparable, each being an aspect of materiality, and each of the group of eight represents a distinctive characteristic of materiality as it is perceived by human sensitivities (*pasadarūpa*), not substantiality. In other words, materiality is perceived by its intrinsic characteristics and is named after it.

It is a common saying among Buddhists that having a body is suffering. This saying is connected with the definition of *rūpakāya* or material body as above and it is quite common knowledge. Everyone knows that our bodies are vulnerable to many kinds of afflictions. Since it is conceived as an embryo,

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<sup>178</sup> S.III, 22: 56, 57: āhārasamudayaṃ rūpasamudayo, āhāranirodhā rūpanirodho

<sup>179</sup> MN, Mahāhatthipadopama sutta.

it needs much care. It is so tender when it is born that every touch hurts like being stuck by needles. Its maintenance and development depend on many conditions such as fresh air to breathe, food of different kinds to eat, clean water to drink, clothes to ward off sunlight and wind, flies, mosquitoes, insects, etc. Thus is our body which we often take for granted as “I” or “mine” and take delight and conceit in it when it is beautiful, young, and strong; yet we feel depressed, angry and rejected when that very body gets old and sick, going beyond our control and finally lying on the death bed in great pain and agony. That is why the Buddha said that identifying with the body is pain and distress itself as well as the cause of pain and distress.

## 2. *Vedanākkhandha*

The sensation aggregate is of six kinds according to where it is ‘touched’.<sup>180</sup> Sensations arise when we are conscious of a visible object through the eye, a sound through the ear, a smell through the nose, a tactile object through the skin (literally body), and ideas through the mind’s door (*manodvāra*). *Vedanā* is also translated as feeling:

And why, Monks, do you call it feeling? It feels,... And what does it feel? It feels pleasure, it feels pain, it feels neither pain-nor-pleasure; It feels, therefore it is called feeling.- *Kiñca bhikkhave, vedanaṃ vadetha: vediyatīti ..., tasmā vedanāti vuccati kiñca vediyati sukhampi vediyati dukkhampi vediyati adukkhamasukhampi*

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<sup>180</sup> S. III, 22: 56, 57: Chayime ca bhikkhave, [PTS P. 060] vedanākāyā: cakkhusamphassajā vedanā, sota samphassajā vedanā, ghānasamphassajā vedanā, jivhāsamphassajā vedanā, kāyasamphassajā vedanā, manosamphassajā vedanā ayam vuccati bhikkhave, vedanā. Phassasamudayā vedanāsamudayo, phassanirodhā vedanānirodho.

*vediyati. Vedyatīti kho bhikkhave, tasmā vedanāti vuccati.*<sup>181</sup>

Whether *vedanā* is cognitive or emotive is a matter to be examined. The word *vedanā* comes from the root *-/vid*, which means ‘to know’ and thus etymologically it is part of a cognitive process. *Vedanā* is a feminine noun often rendered into English as sensation or feeling. Both English translations are accurate in that each shows a special aspect of the word *vedanā* as is conveyed in *Pali*. Since *vedanā* originated through sense contact, so it is sensation as in the simple definition of *vedanā* above and it is also cognitive. But since it does not only feel or sense, being conditioned by previous experiences, and at the same time paves the way for further reactions. From *vedanā* comes *taṇhā*, and therefore it is also emotive. We will see this more clearly in the following analysis of *vedanā*.

There are three kinds of feelings: *sukhā-vedanā*, pleasant feeling, *dukkhā-vedanā*, unpleasant feeling, and *adukkhamasukhā-vedanā*, neither pleasant-nor-unpleasant feeling<sup>182</sup>. Another way of classifying feelings is into the following five: bodily pleasant feeling (*sukhā-vedanā*), mentally pleasant feeling (*somanassa*), bodily unpleasant feeling (*dukkhā-vedanā*), mentally unpleasant feeling (*domanassa*), and neutral feeling (*upekkhā-vedanā*)<sup>183</sup>. The texts mention two, three, five, six, eighteen, thirty-six kinds of

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<sup>181</sup> S.III. 22: 79.

<sup>182</sup> *Vedanā samyutta*: Tisso imā bhikkhave vedanā, katamā tisso,\* sukhā vedanā dukkhā vedanā adukkhamasukhā vedanā. Imā kho bhikkhave tisso vedanāti

<sup>183</sup> S. IV, *Vedanasamyutta*:

*vedanā*, one hundred and eight kinds.<sup>184</sup> The Buddha also stated that he has classified feelings into different kinds (variety in number) according to his different audiences, however, in the case of those disciples who were not informed about this concept, they held fast to the idea that only what he has heard was correct, and therefore, this was a ground for controversies to arise.<sup>185</sup>

In another text from the *Vedanā Samyutta*, the classification of feelings is divided into degrees of defilements or worldliness (*sāmisā*) on the one hand, and freedom from defilement or spirituality (*nirāmisā*) on the other. In an interesting simile, the Buddha compared our body to a guest house where various classes of people may come and go from different directions. Likewise different feelings arise in this body, feelings that are carnally-originated, but also feelings that are spiritually-originated.

So too, bhikkhus, various feelings arise in this body: pleasant feeling arises, painful feeling arises, neither pleasant-nor painful feeling arises; canal pleasant feeling arises; canal painful feeling arises, canal neither pleasant-nor painful feeling arises; spiritual pleasant feeling arises; spiritual painful feeling arises; spiritual

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<sup>184</sup> Bahuedanāsutta, MN; S IV, 36: 19; 22 :Dvepi mayā-1. Bhikkhave vedanā vuttā pariyāyena, tissopi mayā vedanā vuttā pariyāyena, pañcapi mayā vedanā vuttā pariyāyena, chapi-2. Mayā vedanā vuttā pariyāyena, aṭṭhārasapi-3. Mayā vedanā vuttā pariyāyena, chattiṃsāpi mayā vedanā vuttā pariyāyena, aṭṭhasatampi mayā vedanā vuttā pariyāyena

<sup>185</sup> S. IV, 36: 19 ; B.Bodhi, P 1275: “When the Dhamma has been taught by me in such a way through different methods of exposition, it may be expected of those who will not concede, allow, and approve of what is well stated and well spoken by others that they will become contentious & quarrelsome, and engage in disputes, and that they will dwell stabbing each other with verbal daggers.

neither pleasant-nor painful feeling arises.” *Evameva kho bhikkhave imasmiṃ kāyasmīṃ vividhā vedanā uppajjanti: sukhāpi vedanā uppajjanti, dukkhāpi vedanā uppajjanti, adukkhamasukhāpi vedanā uppajjanti, sāmisaṃpi sukhā vedanā uppajjanti, nirāmisāpi sukhā vedanā uppajjanti sāmisaṃpi dukkhā vedanā uppajjanti, nirāmisāpi dukkhā vedanā uppajjanti, sāmisaṃpi adukkhamasukhā vedanā uppajjanti, nirāmisāpi adukkhamasukhā vedanā uppajjanti.*<sup>186</sup>

This *sutta* reminisces about a paragraph in M 137, *Salāyatana vibhanga sutta*, in which feeling is viewed from the perspective of worldliness and also from that of renunciation. A similar classification is found in S IV, 36:22. In M.137, there is a further elaboration on the subject to make the distinction clear between what worldly and what spiritual emotions. In this context, the word ‘emotion’ corresponds more closely to the *Pāli* word *vedanā*.

The thirty-six states to which beings are attached (*sattapāda*) should be known': thus was it said. And in reference to what was it said? Six kinds of household joy and six kinds of renunciation joy; six kinds of household distress and six kinds of renunciation distress; six kinds

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<sup>186</sup> S IV. 36: 14; Samyutta Atthakathā said that the word *sāmisa* denotes bodily feelings connected with sensuality; *nirāmisā* are feelings connected with spiritual development, i.e. *bhāvana* or *jhāna*. In the course of spiritual training ones might encounter discontent (*domanassa*), that is *nirāmisā dukkha vedanā*; and the joy (*piti*) and happiness (*sukha*) as factors of attainment (*jhāna*) are that *nirāmisā sukha vedanā*. Neutral feeling (*upekkha*) in the fourth *jhāna* is the last one in the above passage.

of household equanimity and six kinds of renunciation equanimity.<sup>187</sup>

These states of mind, being described in terms of feeling, correspond to the different patterns of human reactions to reality through the emotions, *not* sensations.

From a soteriological perspective, the number of feelings is less important than the comprehension of their nature, its cause and its potentiality. It is stated that to be skillful in the *Dhamma*, *vedanā* (and the same for the other aggregates) should be understood in seven cases.<sup>188</sup> I will return to this theme later in chapter seven. The Buddha said for those ascetics and Brahmins who do not understand feelings as they really are, i.e., the gratification (*assāda*) of feeling, the danger (*ādināvā*) in feeling, and the escape (*nissaraṇa*) therefrom, they are not considered to be ascetics among ascetics, or brahmins among brahmins.

Whatever pleasant and happy feeling there is, that is the gratification in feeling; (but) feelings are changing, impermanent, and unsatisfactory, that is the danger/insecurity in feeling. Whoever restrains from taking delight in feeling, abandons lust for feeling, this is

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<sup>187</sup> M.137: Chattim̐sa sattapadā veditabbāti iti kho panetaṃ vuttaṃ, kiñce taṃ paṭicca vuttaṃ: cha gehasitāni somanassāni, cha nekkhammasitāni somanassāni, cha gehasitāni domanassāni, cha nekkhammasitāni domanassāni, cha gehasitā upekkhā, cha nekkhammasitā upekkhā [Ref. Trans. Of Thanissara Bhikku Fr. Accesstoinsight Net]

<sup>188</sup> S. III, 22: 57: Vedanaṃ pajānāti, vedanāsamudayaṃ pajānāti, vedanānirodhaṃ pajānāti, vedanānirodhagāminim̐ paṭipadaṃ pajānāti, vedanāya assādaṃ pajānāti, vedanāya ādinavaṃ pajānāti, vedanāya nissaraṇaṃ pajānāti.

escape from feeling. [*Yaṃ vedanaṃ paṭicca uppajjati sukhaṃ somanassaṃ, ayaṃ vedanāya assādo; yā vedanā aniccā dukkhā vipariṇāmadhammā, ayaṃ vedanāya ādīnāvo. Yo vedanāya chandarāgavinayo chandarāgappahānaṃ, idaṃ vedanāya nissaraṇaṃ. (Vedanā samyutta. SN)*]<sup>189</sup>

*Vedanā* has its cause in contact (*phassa paccaya vedanā*). Feeling gives rise to lust, hate or delusion depending on the quality or subjective appreciation of the feeling of the bearer. This is a crucial point which shows feeling to stand out as an important factor in our experience, or, in other words, contact>feeling>craving, is its *samsāric* origination. The importance of feeling that stands out as a distinctive aggregate is seen in the Law of Dependent Origination, *vedanā paccaya taṇhā*; we must bear in mind that *taṇhā* is the ‘house-builder’. From an experimental point of view, being caught in feelings is equivalent to *samsāric* involvement. The text reads:

Owing to the eye and visible object, arises eye-consciousness. The coming together of the three is contact. Depending on contact is feeling. Depending on feeling is craving. Depending on craving is grasping. Depending on grasping is becoming. Depending on becoming is rebirth. Depending on rebirth is decay and death, sorrow and grief, woe, lamentation and despair. This is the arising of the world.<sup>190</sup>

When the eye meets a visible object and if that object is pleasant to the beholder, the tendency towards lust arises; if the object is unpleasant, the tendency towards hatred arises. This

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<sup>189</sup> S. IV, 36: 27, 28

<sup>190</sup> SN. II, 12:44.

ascertains that *vedanā* is the base for emotions to arise. However, judging from the classification above, we are tempted to view *vedanā* as emotion itself (such as joy-*somanassa*, happiness-*sukha*, sorrow-*soka*, distress-*parideva*, aversion- *domanassa*). These are the emotive aspect of experience as we have a glimpse from earlier analysis: our feelings are subjective and very emotive<sup>191</sup>. The Buddha said that a person experiencing a painful feeling with aversion is shot immediately by another arrow of pain. This point is missed out in Hamilton's work: our reactions to feelings generate suffering<sup>192</sup>. Here we also see clearly how *tanhā* plays the role of *saṅkhāra* which works in a mechanical way to refresh experience. A text in *Vedanāsamyyutta* (SN) vividly describes these kinds of unskillful reactions in the ordinary persons as follows:

Monks, when the uninstructed worldling is being contacted by a painful feeling, he sorrow, grieves and laments; he weeps beating his breast and becomes distraught. He feels two feelings- bodily one and mental one...Being contacted by the same painful feeling, he harbors aversion towards it. When he harbors aversion towards painful feeling, the underlying tendency towards painful feeling lies behind this. Being contacted by painful feeling, he seeks delight in sensual pleasure. For

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<sup>191</sup> My idea here is not in the same line with Abhidhamikas. According to Ven Revata Dhamma & Bhikkhu Bodhi who revised the *Comprehensive Manual of Abhidhamma* (BPS 1993), p 80, "Feeling (*vedanā*) is the mental factor that feels the object: it is the affective mode in which the object is experienced. The *pāli* word *vedanā* does not signify emotion (which appears to be a complex phenomenon involving a variety of concomitant mental factors), but the bare affective quality of an experience".

<sup>192</sup> The Ven. Buddhadasa of Thailand said that "the world is led by feelings" – Dhamma talk retreat 1986.

what reason? Because the ordinary people do not know any escape from painful feeling other than sensual pleasure. When he seeks delight in sensual pleasure, the underlying tendency to lust for pleasant feeling underlies this.<sup>193</sup>

Perhaps we should make the point of “subjective and emotional” in feeling more clear. Being in touch with the same object, one person may feel it pleasant, another may feel it unpleasant, and yet still another may have a neutral feeling about it. Modern psychologists also confirm that the objective world is rather neutral, but the way each individual feels about and reacts to it reveals his/her own type of character. From a Buddhist perspective, one’s feelings are conditioned by previous *karma* as well as one’s mood at the moment one experiences an object. For instance, our tastes are different; a very spicy dish may appear tasty to some, but repugnant to others and yet a mindful meditator may feel neutral about it. The same can be applied to feelings that arise via other senses. Here we might consider the quality of objects, too. Although, the object inherent in it certain inherent qualities, which make itself known to our senses, but we have different standards of evaluation. The criteria that we apply to evaluate the object in

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<sup>193</sup> S. IV, 36:6: Assutavà bhikkhave puthujjano dukkhàya vedanàya phuṭṭho samàno socati kilamati paridevati urattīvā kandati sammohaṃ āpajjati so dve vedanā vediyati kāyikañca cetasikañca seyyathāpi bhikkhave purisaṃ sallena vijejhayyūṃ, tamena dutiyena sallena anuvedhaṃ vijjheyūṃ, evaṃ hi so bhikkhave puriso dve sallena vedanā vediyetha... Tassāyeva kho pana dukkhàya vedanàya phuṭṭho samàno paṭighavā hoti. Tameṇaṃ dukkhàya vedanàya paṭighavantam yo dukkhàya vedanàya paṭighānusayo so anuseti, so dukkhàya vedanàya phuṭṭho samàno kāmasukhaṃ abhinandati. Tam kissa hetu, na bhikkhave pajānāti assutavà puthujjano aññatra kāmasukhā dukkhàya vedanàya nissaraṇaṃ, tassa kāmasukhaṃ abhinandato yo sukhàya vedanàya rāgānusayo so anuseti.

Bhikkhu Bodhi: *The Connected Discourses of the Buddha*. P. 1264

the present is conditioned by our past experiences. Thus we pay for former debt(s), and the way we deal with or react to what we feel now generates new *karma*, and in this way we invest something in the future.

By reacting to feelings, we generate personal kamma and under the influence of group or society, by adopting the common aesthetic standards or ethical evaluations we generate collective kamma. The following diagram shows the relationship between our reactions to feelings through six sense faculties and how these reactions generate suffering:

<b><i>Salāyatana Phassa</i></b>	<b><i>Vedanā</i></b>	<b><i>Saṅkhārā taṇhā, upadāna-</i></b>	<b><i>Dukkhā (Bhava)</i></b>
Eyes → ← form	Pleasant <i>sukha</i>	Like, taking delight, craving <i>kāmatāṇhā</i>	Fear & worry of losing the pleasant feeling or object <i>viparināma-dukkha</i> )
Ears → ← sound			
Nose → ← smell	Painful <i>dukkha</i>	dislike, hatred, wanting to destroy <i>vibhavataṇhā</i>	multiplied suffering, 'being pierced by two arrows' <i>dukkha-dukkha</i>
Tongue → taste			
Body → tactile	Neutral <i>Asukha- madukkha</i>	neglectful, indifferent, <i>bhavataṇhā?</i>	bored, wanting something else <i>saṅkhāradukkha</i>
Mind → mental objects			

As the above diagram shows, three kinds of suffering are the outcome of our reactions to different feelings. This is the first and second noble truth as perceived in the dependent arising view. In S IV, 36:11, the Buddha indicated that “whatever one feels is included in suffering” (*yaṃ kiñci vedayitaṃ taṃ dukkhasmin'ti.*). In this context, the Buddha

explained further that what he has stated was with regard to the fleeting nature of feelings being described in terms of *saṅkhārānañceva anicca, khayadhamma, vayadhamma, viparināmadhamma*. In another *sutta*, it is stated: *sukhā vedanā dukkhato daṭṭhabbā; dukkhā vedanā sallato daṭṭhabbā; adukkhamasukhā vedanā aniccato daṭṭhabbā*: pleasant feelings should be seen as suffering; painful feelings should be seen as arrows; and neutral feelings should be seen as impermanent”<sup>194</sup>. Even the enlightened disciples and the Buddha felt these three kinds of feelings but the difference is that they did not react to those feelings with greed, aversion or delusion. Without any reactions, there will be no mental suffering.

Feeling is a conditioned phenomenon resulting directly from contact and indirectly, it is conditioned by previous experiences. A certain woman might appear pleasant and delightful to a particular man, but the same reaction does not arise in others who see her. The reasons may either be that in the past she had good *kamma* or had shared pleasant experiences with that particular man, or that she and others had a neutral *kamma* or not any special experience, or she might have a bitter experience with someone among them. With those who she had a good experience with, pleasant feelings will arise mutually (sometimes not mutually but only from one party); with the person who had no experience or no special connection with her in the past, neutral feelings arise amongst them; whereas in the person who had experienced a bitter experience with her, her appearance will be an unpleasant sign, and anger and hostility would arise on seeing her. This happens because feelings entail perception, which carry with it

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<sup>194</sup> S.IV. 207 (PTS)

past impressions.<sup>195</sup> The process is described in the text as follows:

*Cakkhuñca paticca rūpe ca uppajjati cakkhuviññānaṃ; tiñṇaṃ sanghati phasso; phassa paccayā vedanā, yaṃ vedeti taṃ sañjānati, yaṃ sañjānati taṃ vitakketi, yaṃ vitakketi taṃ papañceti*<sup>196</sup> Because of the eye and visible form, eye-consciousness arises; the meeting of the three is contact; contact arouses feeling. What one feels, one perceives; what one perceives, one thinks of; what one thinks of, one conceptualizes.

This also explains why *vedanā*, *saññā* and *viññāṇa* always occur together and, as I have mentioned on the previous page, they are inseparable. From this passage we can see that they are all viewed from a different aspect and stage of a cognitive process in which each involved the other. Later, *Abhidhamma* works classified them as *citta* (*viññāṇa*) and *cetasikas* (*vedanā*, *saññā*, *saṅkhāra*) which share four common basics: 1- they arise together; 2- they cease together; 3- they share the same object; and 4- they share the same base.<sup>197</sup>

### 3. Saññākkhandha

The apperception aggregate arises when the sense faculty meets its corresponding object which it is conscious of. There are six sense faculties in the Buddhist classification system; accordingly, there are six kinds of apperception: (1)

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<sup>195</sup> See Ven. Nanaponika Thera (BPS 1998): *The Omission of Memory from the List of Dhammas*.

<sup>196</sup> M.I, 18, *Madhupiṇḍaka sutta*.

<sup>197</sup> *Abhidhammaṭṭhasangaha*, *cetasikasangahavibhāga*: Ekuppāda-nirodha ca ekalambana-vatthukā.

apperception via the eye (*cakkhusamphassajā-saññā*), (2) apperception via the ear (*sotasamphassajā-saññā*), (3) apperception via the nose (*ghānasamphassajā-saññā*), (4) apperception via the tongue (*jivhasamphassajā-saññā*), (5) apperception via the body (*kāyasamphassajā-saññā*), and (6) apperception via the mind (*manosamphassajā-saññā*).<sup>198</sup>

The word *saññā* comes from the root *jñā* meaning to know plus the prefix *sam* meaning ‘with’, ‘together’. This root also forms the other two popular words we will discuss in turn, i.e., *viññāṇa* and *paññā*, each with a different prefix. *Sam + jñā > saññā*; the verb form is *sañjānāti* which means to perceive, to recognize, to figure out. According to *Abhidhamma*, *saññā* perceives general features of the object such as color and shape and offers an idea or concept of the object; therefore sometimes it is rendered as ideation or conceptualization. We know that ideation or conceptualization can not function unless they have enough raw data, i.e, a prior experience of the object, and as a result, some ideas has been formed. This way of the interpretation of a cognitive process fits with the usage of the word *saññā* in *saññā vipallāsa*, the distortion of perception.

According to the definition in *Khandhasamyutta*, apperception is so-called because it (directly) perceives and therefore it is called apperception. What does it perceive? It perceives blue, yellow, red, white; it (directly) perceives, therefore it is called apperception.<sup>199</sup> Thus, the function of

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<sup>198</sup> S.III, 22: 56, 57: Chayime bhikkhave, saññākāyā: rūpasaññā saddasaññā gandhasaññā rasasaññā phoṭṭhabbasaññā dhammasaññā, ayaṃ vuccati bhikkhave, saññā. Phassasamudayā saññāsamudayo, phassanirodhā saññānirodho

<sup>199</sup> Kiñca bhikkhave, saññaṃ vadetha: sañjānāti kho bhikkhave, tasmā saññāti vuccati kiñca sañjānāti: nīlampi sañjānāti; pītakampi sañjānāti;

*saññā* is to perceive colours, however, this rather oversimplifies *saññā*, and is not at all in harmony with the meaning of *saññā* in *saññā vipallāso* in A.IV, 52 or the *sasaññā* in A.IV, 45 (I quoted this on page 4), or in other passages in *Āṅguttara Nikāya*; and *Dīghanikāya*, *Poṭṭhapāda sutta*.

Some authors<sup>200</sup> indicate that while *vedanā* gives rise to defilements (*klesa*), *saññā* gives rise to the wrong view (*diṭṭhi*); this makes both *vedanā* and *saññā* stand out as a distinctive aggregate. In the *Vedanākkhandha* section we have seen how *vedanā* gives rise to *taṇhā* and other *kilesas*; in this section we will see how *saññā* involves view. However, first I will discuss *saññā vipallāsa*, a distortion of perception: “Monks, there are four kinds of distortion of perception. One perceives what is impermanent as permanence, what is suffering as happiness, what is non-self as self, what is foul as beauty.”<sup>201</sup> Thus in the cognitive process, *saññā* would be the first point to lead one astray. That is the reason why, in the same *sutta*, the distortion of perception is mentioned first. This leads to the distortion of thought (*citta vipallāso*) and to the distortion of view (*diṭṭhi vipallāso*). For example, in a dim light when one sees a wound-up rope on the road, one may perceive (*saññā*) it as a snake and the thought (*citta*) arises that it might bite, which is frightening. The person jumps or runs

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lohitakampi sañjānāti; odātampi sañjānāti; saññātīti kho bhikkhave, tasmā saññāti vuccati.

<sup>200</sup> Ven. Thich Thien Sieu: *The Five Aggregates are non-self*; Ven. Mahasi Sayadaw: *The Exposition of Anattalakkhaṇasutta* [Buddhasasana CD-ROM, version 04.01].

<sup>201</sup> A.IV, 49: Anicce nicca saññino dukkhe ca sukha saññino anattani ca attā ti asubhe subhasaññino...

away, being obsessed with (*ditṭhi*) the idea that there is a snake.

### ***Saññā Vipallāsa***

Just how our present perception is distorted by past ideas and experiences is illustrated by the following example. In some cultures, crows and owls are considered as evil symbols and therefore the sign and sound of crow(s) or owl(s) are perceived as bad luck or an ill-omen. When someone, especially if s/he is alone, hears the cry of these birds, the person may become very emotionally disturbed because the sound appears frightening to him/her. Even people may believe that owls are messengers from the demon world or the world of death, so if someone is sick in the family, the hoot of an owl is regarded as the call of death and thus perceived as evil or frightening. But in some other cultures, an owl may be a symbol of good luck and of fortune and therefore the sign of that animal is greeted with joy, and not as a frightening omen. Then the animal is not seen as ugly and repulsive. To someone who has no concept of good or bad about these animals, the sign or sound of them appear as normal as any other sign or sound. When we look closely at the eyes of an owl, we may see that they are quite beautiful, not ugly or evil because of our cultural bias.

Another commonly distorted perception is about our own self-image. Most adults have a certain self-image: I am a man or a woman of such and such a stature (short or tall, fat or thin, attractive or not attractive, etc), such and such is my family, such and such is my nationality or my religion, such and such is my status in my family or in society, etc. Most people like to think that they are good, kind and attractive in some way or

other and therefore it is very hard to tolerate the idea that we may in fact be quite remote from our own self-image. We like to perceive ourselves as good and noble in character, and attractive in appearance. Whatever is disagreeable to our self-image, we may develop a defense mechanism in order to avoid the pain or hurt that perception may cause. A defense mechanism is an unconscious systematic self-deception used in order to cope with frustrating situations. We do not want to see ourselves as we truly are, but only as what we imagine about ourselves. We easily feel hurt, upset and frustrated when our self-image is injured. Due to our misconception of ourselves, our experiences of ourselves are inevitably partial, and thus our perceptions about ourselves are often distorted.

The right perception is that of impermanence in a changing world, of suffering in an imperfect world, of non-self in everything, of impurity in what is foulness. In youth, the prime phase of life, people are often very optimistic and naive. They perceive life as an endless road covered in roses and they travel on that road joyously and carefree, believing that their happiness would last forever. However, this appears to be a rather unrealistic view, for life is a mixture of happiness and suffering due to the changing nature of things. When life is hard to cope with, sweetness turns bitter, youth and strength turns to infirmity, illness and finally, old age and death. In disappointment and despair, people would beat their breasts, crying out: Alas! We have betrayed by our naïve ideas about life and world!

However, the philosophical aspect of the *saññāvipallāso* is much more profound. In the *Brahma* world, according to Buddhist cosmology, the life span of celestial beings is very long, of many world cycles and therefore the Brahmas think

that they are permanent, and the omniscient creators of the world (See *Brahmajalasutta*, DN). The idea of permanence also comes from a belief in reincarnation, that an indestructible ‘soul’ (as depicted in the *Upaniṣads*) transmigrates from this body to another body at death; and that the body being impermanent, whereas the soul is considered permanent. The Buddhist teachings deny the existence of such unchanging identity or soul or self, which I will discuss in the next chapter. The (wrong) perception of permanent and the (wrong) perception of the soul are a corollary of each other. Similarly, the (wrong) perception of happiness in what is actually suffering is due to *taṇhā*, thirst or craving; this thirst, being but a consequence of the perception of beauty (*sukha saññā*).

Therefore, *saññā* emerges as a neutral faculty that may be right or wrong, correctly or incorrectly function in the act of perceiving. In other words, in the cognitive process, *saññā* plays an important role in giving an idea of the object perceived, and as I stated earlier, it might be the first factor leading one astray. What caused perception to be perverted? In a philosophical sense, it is ignorance about the real nature of things (the three signata: *anicca, dukkha, and anatta*) and therefore one perceives it in opposite ways. In an epistemological sense, perception or discrimination and identification are a more accurate rendering of *saññā*. It can not, however, take place without the previous conceptions. Such and such is called blue, red, etc., and thus, according to the knowledge acquired earlier, one identifies what one sees presently as having such and such a colour. The same thing applies to the perception of shape: big or small, round or square, long or short; these perceptions build up the conception of things such as woman, man, monkey or cow, a dog or tree, etc. Perceiving, discriminating and identifying are the

functions of *saññākkhandha*. It is conditioned by what one has learnt, intellectually or practically.

In the *Madhupiṇḍika sutta* (M.I, sutta No18), it seems that perception comes after feeling, but careful investigation reveals that this is not true; they are, in fact, simultaneous. We cannot stop feeling, for already we sense it or are conscious of it. However, the crucial point is that the average mind does not stop at what is perceived, it makes a comparison with past experiences and identifies what is experienced with reference to oneself, either taking delight in or rejecting it. Thus the process entails all *khandhas* with an ego-centered attitude (*papañcasaññāsāṅkhā*). This is what we have come across when saying that the five aggregates are not something one can pick up one by one separately. The experience which is described in terms of *khandhas* is an overall process, it piles up and overlays one upon the other; that is why it is called *khandha*.

In *Dīghanikāya, Poṭṭhapāda*, when a wandering ascetic asked the Buddha whether *saññā* is one's self (*attā*)<sup>202</sup>, they argued that perception arises and ceases without causes or conditions; when perception enters one's body, one is conscious; when perception leaves the body, one is said to become unconscious. Though it seems the argument around *saññā* among ascetics is something very similar to consciousness (*viññāna* in Buddhist terms), this certainly is not in accordance with *saññākkhandha* in the Buddhist sense; the answer of the Buddha concerning this matter is that *saññā* being caused, arises and ceases according to conditions, and *saññā*, in fact, can be trained. This certainly refers to *citta* or

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<sup>202</sup> D.I, 186 ( Poṭṭhapāda sutta): Saññā nu kho bhante purisassa attā...

mind which consists of the four *arūpakhandhas* (*vedanā*, *saññā*, *saṅkhāra*, and *viññāṇa*) as a whole.

There seem some conflicts in the usage of the word *saññā* in different places in the texts. In A.IV, 45, the Buddha talked about the ‘world’ as a compound of *kalebare sasaññimhi samanake lokam* - “in this body with perception and mind”, whereby the word *saññi* (being an adjective of *saññā*) may be translated as ‘conscious’, thus making a distinction between “conscious body” and “mind”. This meaning is also in accordance with *saññisatta* - conscious being, and *asaññisatta* - a being without perception; and in the description of the seventh *jhāna nevasaññā-nāsaññā* - “neither perception, nor non-perception”, and more subtle in the ninth attainment “*saññā-vedayita-nirodha sammāpatti*” which is a state described as being the extinction of feeling and perception. Now we see that *saññākkhandha* is not always a necessary part of human experience.

*Saññā* in some other contexts may be understood as “thought” or “reflection” or “contemplation”:

*Sattimā bhikkhave, saññā bhāvitā bahulīkatā mahapphalā honti mahānisamsā amatogadhā amatapariyosānā. Katamā satta: Asubhasaññā, maraṇasaññā, āhāre paṭikkūlasaññā, sabbaloke anabhiratasaññā, aniccasaññā, anicce dukkhasaññā, dukkhe anattasaññā.* There are seven ways of contemplation which developed and frequently practiced yield great fruit and benefits, lead to deathless and ripen in deathless. What are the seven? The reflection of foulness, the reflection of death, the reflection of repulsiveness in food, the reflection of disenchantment

with the whole world, the reflection of impermanence, the reflection of suffering in impermanence, the reflection of non-self in suffering.<sup>203</sup>

In *Girimānandasutta* (A.X), ten reflections are recommended by the Buddha. They are: the reflection on the impermanence (*aniccasaññā*), the reflection on the non-self nature of things (*anattasaññā*), the reflection on the repulsive nature of things (*asubhasaññā*), the reflection on the peril inherent in things (*ādīnavasaññā*), the reflection on abandonment (*pahānasaññā*), the reflection on dispassion (*virāgasaññā*), the reflection of cessation (*nirodhasaññā*), the reflection of disenchantment with the whole world (*sabbaloke anabhiratasaññā*), the reflection of the impermanence of all compounded things (*sabbasankhāresu aniccasaññā*), and the contemplation on the breath (*ānāpānasati*). Here, too, *saññā* is contemplation, i.e., bearing in mind, or frequently paying attention to.

Perception is a part of a cognitive process as we have seen earlier: *cakkhum ca rūpaṃ...yaṃ vedayāti taṃ sañjānāti*, but both, *vedanā* and *saññā*, can be temporarily detached in the experience of *jhāna* that might culminate in the highest attainment of *extinction* (*Nirodhasammāpatti*). Therefore *saññākkhandha* is a part of a cognitive process that is only experienced on a mundane level, which Hamilton called “*samsāric-experience*”<sup>204</sup>. This, perhaps, is the reason for comparing it with mirage, which is unreal; the developed Buddhist thought even went so far as to confirm that all *samsāric* experiences result from unreal illusions of a deluded mind. We can compare this idea with a passage in SN in which

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<sup>203</sup> A VII, 46.

<sup>204</sup> Sue Hamilton 1996: *Identity and Experience*. P. 60.

the Buddha admonished Ven. Anuruddha that, indeed, the *Tathāgata* can not be conceived of in terms of five aggregates even when still alive, so how can this be the case after his *Parinibbāna*? The *Hadayapajñāparamitā- Śūtra* states that when the *Bodhisatva* is in a state of imperturbable jhana, a deep reflection, s/he sees the five aggregates as empty; as he/she has transcended all suffering. What is meant by ‘empty’ here should be made clear. Perception is compared to mirage in SN.III.141:2; we will analyze this in the next chapter. A similar passage is found in *Aksayamatinirdesa Śūtra* as follows:

The form aggregate is like a ball of foam; it cannot withstand being held and separated. The feeling aggregate is like a water bubble; because it is momentary, it is impermanent. The aggregate of discrimination is like a mirage; because it is mistakenly apprehended by the thirst of attachment. The aggregate of compositional factors is like the stalker of a lotus; when it is destroyed it has no core. The aggregate of consciousness is like a dream; it is mistakenly conceived. Therefore the five aggregate are not a self, not a person, not a sentient being, not a life, not a nourished being, not a creature. The five aggregates are naturally empty of ‘I’ and ‘mine’, unproduced, unarisen, non-existent the sphere of space, unconditioned and naturally passed beyond sorrow.<sup>205</sup>

#### 4. Saṅkhārakkhandha

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<sup>205</sup> P 5220, Vol 94, 294.3.1; 294.4.5; *The Heart sutra exposition*, New Delhi 1990. P. 67, 68.

*Saṅkhārakkhandha* is usually translated as a mental formation aggregate. This aggregate includes many mental factors within three worlds, to wit: *kāmaloka*, *rūpaloka*, and *arūpaloka*. The word *saṅkhāra* is translated into English as mental formation, volitional activity, disposition, karmic formation, fabrication, synthesis, etc. In different contexts, the word conveys a different meaning. Due to various usages of this term, Sue Hamilton remarks: “The term *saṅkhāra* occurs in many different contexts in the *Nikāyas*, and has been notoriously difficult to explain and understand.”<sup>206</sup> This idea is shared by other modern scholars of early Buddhism, too, for instance R.C. Childer and Johansson<sup>207</sup>. Traditional expositions of the term gave two mainstream meanings of *saṅkhāra*: (1) as conditioned, compounded things which are constantly changing and becoming; in short, *saṅkhāra* is a state of instability; (2) volitional activity or karmic formation. Merely translating *saṅkhāra* as volition (equal to *cetanā*) only conveys one aspect of this term; as ‘disposition’ it also does not embrace the wide-ranging connotations of the word *saṅkhāra*.

Etymologically the word comes from the root *-/kar* meaning to make, to do, to perform plus the prefix ‘*sam*’ meaning ‘together’, ‘combined together’, equal to the prefix ‘sync’ in Latin. Thus the noun form *saṅkhāra* literally means ‘make together’, ‘combination’, ‘compound’, ‘composition’. This meaning is widely accepted as *sabbe saṅkhārā anicca/dukkha* – all compounded things are impermanent and suffering; *vayadhammā saṅkhārā* – change is the nature of conditioned things (D.I, sutta No 16); and in S III, 22: 96, all

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<sup>206</sup> Sue Hamilton: *Identity and Experience*, P.66

<sup>207</sup> R.E.A. Johansson 1978. P. 41: “Saṅkhāra is one of the least understood concepts in Theravada Buddhism.”

wordly achievements, materiality as well as status, fame, etc are called *saṅkhāra*: “Thus, *bhikkhus*, all those formations have passed, ceased, changed. So impermanent are formations, *bhikkhus*, so unstable, so unreliable.”<sup>208</sup>

Texts mention three kinds of *saṅkhārā* connected with ignorance (*avijjā*); this is *saṅkhāra* as the second link of the formula of Dependent Origination (*paticcaṣammupāda*). In the Dependent Origination formula, *saṅkhārā* denotes: (1) *puññābhisāṅkhārā*, wholesome effort conducive towards one’s own welfare (*kusalacittā* ranging from *kāmavacana* to *rūpavacana*); (2) *apuññābhisāṅkhārā*, unwholesome effort leading to bad *kammic* results; (3) *ānenjābhisāṅkhārā*-imperturbable attainment (in *arūpajhāna*)<sup>209</sup>. In this sense, *saṅkhāra* is translated as *kammic* formations; Johansons renders it as ‘creative activity’<sup>210</sup> in the sense that it triggers a process. Beside the word *saṅkhāra*, there is the word *abhisāṅkhāra* and the verb form *abhisāṅkharoti* which are found quite often in the texts. According to R.C. Childer, *abhisāṅkhārā* is used equally as *saṅkhārā*<sup>211</sup>, and its verb form is virtually a synonym of *saṅkharoti* which means ‘cause to form’, ‘compile’, ‘construct’, ‘produce’. In another sense, *saṅkhāra* is understood as mental activity (*cittasaṅkhāra*), verbal activity (*vacīsaṅkhāra*), and bodily activity (*kāyasaṅkhāra*)<sup>212</sup>. In this context, breath is the activity of the

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<sup>208</sup> S III, 22: 96; Bhikkhu Bodhi. P.955 : Iti kho bhikkhū, sabbe te saṅkhārā atīṭa niroddhā, viparinatā. Evaṃ aniccā kho bhikkhu, saṅkhārā, evaṃ addhuvā kho bhikkhu saṅkhārā, evaṃ anassāsikā kho bhikkhu saṅkhārā, [PTS Page 147]

<sup>209</sup> S.II. 12: 51; S IV, 41:6; D.33; Vibhanga 135, 340

<sup>210</sup> E.A. Johansson 1978. P. 50

<sup>211</sup> R.C. Childer, *Pāli Dictionary*. P. 455

<sup>212</sup> M.I, Cūlavedallasutta: “kati panāyye saṅkhārā’ti? Tayo me avuso Visākha saṅkhārā kāyasaṅkhāro vacīsaṅkhāro cittasaṅkhāro; S IV, 41:6 Kāmabhū sutta.

body or bodily functions, thinking (*vitakka*) and articulating (*vicāra*) are verbal activities or verbal functions, perception (*saññā*) and feeling (*vedanā*) are the activities of the mind or mental functions. Thus according to this definition, *saññā* and *vedanā* are both subsumed under *saṅkhāra*<sup>213</sup>. Evidently, this meaning of *saṅkhāra* cannot apply to the word *saṅkhāra* in *saṅkhārakkhandha* where *vedanā* and *saññā* each standing out as a separate *khandha*. The definition of *saṅkhārakkhandha* in SN is as follows:

How, monks, are they called *saṅkhārā*? They construct (what is) constructed, monks, therefore they are called *saṅkhārā*. How do they construct the compounded things? They construct material things (to be) the body/materiality; they construct composite feeling as feeling; they construct conditioned perception as perception; they construct volitional activities to be motivation; they construct composite consciousness as consciousness; therefore they are called *saṅkhārā*.-  
*Kiñca bhikkhave, saṅkhāre vadetha: saṅkhatam abhisankharontīti bhikkhave, tasmā saṅkhārāti vuccanti. Kiñca saṅkhatam abhisankharonti: rūpam rūpattāya saṅkhatam abhisankharonti. Vedanam vedanattāya saṅkhatam abhisankharonti. Saññam saññattāya saṅkhatam abhisankharonti. Saṅkhāre saṅkhārattāya saṅkhatam abhisankharonti. Viññāṇam viññāṇattāya saṅkhatam abhisankharonti. Saṅkhatam abhisankharontīti kho bhikkhave, tasmā saṅkhārāti vuccanti*<sup>214</sup>.

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<sup>213</sup> S.III. 87: “Assāsapassāsa kho...kāyasaṅkhāro, vitakkavicārā vacīsaṅkhāro, saññā ca vedanā ca cittasaṅkhāroti.

<sup>214</sup> S.III, 79; Be S.II.72

This passage contains perhaps the most controversial of all the semantic definitions of the terms. Woodward translates it as: “Because they compose a compound...”. Whereas E.A.Johansson translates it as: “Because they create what is created...They create form by form-process, sensation by sensation-process, image by ideation-process, *saṅkhāra* by *saṅkhāra*-process, consciousness by consciousness-process.”<sup>215</sup> Sue Hamilton is not much different; she translates the word *saṅkhātaṃ* as ‘conditioned phenomena’, and *abhisankharonti* as ‘they volitional construct’<sup>216</sup>; Bhikkhu Bodhi also renders a similar translation:

They construct what is conditioned...and what is the conditioned that they construct? They construct conditioned form as form; they construct conditioned feeling as feeling; they construct conditioned perception as perception; they construct conditioned volitional formation as volitional formation; they construct conditioned consciousness as consciousness...<sup>217</sup>

Herein I prefer to translate the word *saṅkhātaṃ* in different ways in order to convey its different meanings; and *saṅkhāra* as motivation to indicate the dynamic nature of the fourth aggregate. *Saṅkhārakkhandha* is best translated as “volitional formations” or “volitional activities” as Bhikkhu Bodhi did. This is justified as the definition of volition is: (1) The act of willing or choosing; the act of forming a purpose; the exercise of the will [1913 Webster]; (2) Volition is the actual exercise of the power the mind has to order the consideration of any idea, or the forbearing to consider it.

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<sup>215</sup> E.A Johansson 1978. P. 48

<sup>216</sup> S. Hamiolton 1996. P. 71.

<sup>217</sup> Bhikkhu Bodhi 2000. P. 915.

[Locke - 1913 Webster]; (3) Volition is an act of the mind, knowingly exerting that dominion it takes itself to have over any part of the man, by employing it in, or withholding it from, any particular action [Locke, 1913 Webster].

According to the above quoted text, *saṅkhāra* plays an active role in forming other aggregates. In my opinion, the word *saṅkhāra* in *saṅkhārakkhandha* resembles the English word ‘motivation’ the most if we choose ‘volition’<sup>218</sup> as its core. The reason is that according to the *Abhidhamma* method, *saṅkhārakkhandha* includes under it fifty mental factors (wholesome as well as unwholesome and neutral ones), which determine the quality of thought (*citta*), and of these, *cetanā*, volition, is the most significant one. (I will discuss *cetanā* and other *Pāli* terms for motivation further in a separate chapter.) In S III, 60, *saṅkhāra* is identified with *sañcetanā*, a volitional act. *Cetanā* is a dynamic force motivating one to action. The Buddha affirmed that *cetanā* is *kamma*; as the cognitive process starts from *phassa*>*vedanā*>*saññā*> *cetanā*, it is this *cetanā* that determines the quality of action upon the object; it may be called reaction, or attitude as well. This also explains why tradition has the word *saṅkhāra* in the *Paṭiccasamuppāda*

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<sup>218</sup> The power of willing or determining; will [1913 Webster]

Syn. -- Will; choice; preference; determination; purpose. -- Volition, Choice. Choice is the familiar, and volition the scientific, term for the same state of the will; viz., an “elective preference.” When we have “made up our minds” (as we say) to a thing, i. e., have a settled state of choice respecting it, that state is called an immanent volition; when we put forth any particular act of choice, that act is called an emanent, or executive, or imperative, volition. When an immanent, or settled state of, choice, is one which controls or governs a series of actions, we call that state a predominant volition; while we give the name of subordinate volitions to those particular acts of choice which carry into effect the object sought for by the governing or “predominant volition.”

denoting the implication of *taṇhā*, *upādāna* and *kammabhava* which make it a mentally active force destined for further manifestation (*bhava*). As the second link of Dependent Origination, it constructs consciousness (*viññāṇa*) which is the conception of one's present life. *Saṅkhāra* as a *khandha* is our reaction to stimulations via sense media which is given in the following classic definition of *saṅkhāra* as found in SN:

And what, monks, is volitional activity? There are six classes of volition: volition regarding to forms, volition regarding to sounds, volition regarding to odours, volition regarding to tastes, volition regarding to tactile objects, volition regarding to mental phenomena. This is called volitional activity. With the arising of contact there is the arising of volitional activity; with the ceasing of contact, volitional activity ceases.<sup>219</sup>

Our reactions to experiences might be positive (bring good results) and skillful (*kusala*), or alternatively, negative (bring bad result) and unskillful (*akusala*). The scriptural terms for them are *puññābhisāṅkhāra* and *apuññābhisāṅkhāra* respectively. These reactions are conditioned by many factors, and in turn, they form a pattern of behavior; in other words, they construct personality as the sketched definition in the quoted text above. In this sense, *saṅkhārā* are volitional activities corresponding to a synonym of *cetanā*, and restricted to mental activity other than *vedanā* and *saññā*.

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<sup>219</sup> S III, 22: 56: Katame ca bhikkhave, saṅkhārā: Chayime bhikkhave, cetanākāyā: rūpañcetanā saddasañcetanā gandhasañcetanā rasasañcetanā phoṭṭhabbasañcetanā dhammasañcetanā, ime vuccanti bhikkhave, saṅkhārā. Phassasamudayā saṅkhārasamudayo, phassanirodhā saṅkhāranirodho.

Making a differentiation between the usages of the word *saṅkhāra*, Sue Hamilton writes:

[...] the volition of *saṅkhārakkhandha* is concerned with how the individual operates: his or her day to day volitions during this life. This difference is compatible with the fact that the *paṭiccasamuppāda* formula is a synthetical explanation of how a human being functions, why the *khandha* formula is analytical: the former is creative and the latter is not...<sup>220</sup>

This dichotomy between the different connotations of the word *saṅkhāra* appearing in two very important places in Buddhist philosophy and psychology is not necessary. In both instances, *saṅkhārā* are both conditioned and creative (as we have discussed on the preceding page). In the first place, i.e. in *Paṭiccasamuppāda* formula, *saṅkhāra* is classified as the past cause, along with *avijjā*, ignorance, for this present life, i.e. the five *khandhas*; but even in that past creativities they did not come by themselves, they were conditioned by a former set of *khandhas* which were swayed under the charm of *taṇhā* and *upādāna*. Craving (*taṇhā*) and clinging (*upādāna*), two psychological factors that spring and interfere in experiences are made possible by ignorance (*avijjā*) and, at the beginning of *samsāra* it is even said they are indiscernible. In S II, 15:1, it is stated: “This *samsāra* is without discoverable beginning. A first point is not discerned of being roaming and wandering on hindered by ignorance and fettered by craving.”<sup>221</sup> That is

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<sup>220</sup> Sue Hamilton 1996. P. 73

<sup>221</sup> Bhikkhu Bodhi, Wisdom Puclication 2000. P. 651, 652, 653: The original Pāli: Anamataggoyam bhikkhave, saṃsāro, pubbā koṭi na paññāyati avijjānīvaraṇānaṃ sattānaṃ tanhāsaṃyojanānaṃ sandhāvataṃ saṃsaratam.

why in Buddhism we do not discuss on the ‘first cause’, because there is no first cause which can be discerned that responsible for the whole process; rather it is “conditioned by this, that come to be; by the arising of this, that arise; by the absent of this, that is not; by the cassation of this, that disrupted.”(*imasmim sati idaṃ hoti; imass’ uppādā idaṃ uppajjati; imasmim asati idaṃ na hoti, imassa nirodhā idaṃ nirujjhati*)<sup>222</sup>; and the *Paṭiccasamuppāda* is presented as a cycle, while *samsāra* experiences are perpetuated in an endless cycle. *Saṅkhāra* is called *hetu-* cause, but the qualities attributed to it such as *taṇhā*, *upādāna*, *chandārāgā*, etc, belong to *kilesavatta-* the round of defilements.

We see that in A. IV, 171 *Saṅcetanā* and *saṅkhārā* are used as synonyms. The phrase *kāyasaṅcetanāhetu*, *vacīsaṅcetanāhetu*, and *manosaṅcetanāhetu* occurring in the first paragraph; and *kāyasaṅkhāraṃ abhisāṅkharoti*, *vacīsaṅkhāraṃ abhisāṅkharoti*, *manosaṅkhāraṃ abhisāṅkharoti* occurring in the following paragraphs denote the same role: the creative ability of the volitional activities. These *kammic* volitions which are enacted through the three doors: body, speech, and mind generate either happiness (*sukha* in the cases of *puññābhisāṅkhārā*), or suffering (*dukkha* in the cases of *apuññābhisāṅkhārā*) for oneself (*ajjhataṃ*). At the end of the *sutta*, the Buddha stated that “in all these states, monks, ignorance is involved”<sup>223</sup> (*Imesu bhikkhave dhammesu avijjā anupatitā*). In S II, 12:2 *saṅkhāra* is defined as: “And what *bhikkhus*, are the volitional formation? There are these three kinds of volitional formations: the bodily volitional formation, the verbal volitional formation, the mental

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<sup>222</sup> SN II, 12: 21: Dasabālasutta.

<sup>223</sup> Nyanaponika & Bhikkhu Bodhi, BPS 1999. P. 115

volitional formation.”<sup>224</sup> This definition is given in the analysis of Dependent Origination, so therefore there is no doubt that it is intended for the *saṅkhārā* as the second link of *Paṭiccasamuppāda*. Sue Hamilton also suggested that the triads of *kāya vacī*, and *citta* is specially refer to *saṅkhārā* of the *Paṭiccasamuppāda* formula.<sup>225</sup> According to Bhikkhu Bodhi, the commentary on the above passage of SN made a distinctive definition that this threefold *saṅkhārā* should not be mistaken with those passages on S.IV, 41: 6, and of M .44; for the definition in *Paṭiccasamuppādavibhanga* specially denotes twenty kinds of thoughts in sensual sphere (12 *akusala citta* and 8 *kusala citta of kāmavacara*)<sup>226</sup>.

The present *saṅkhārakkhandha* is a conditioned set of volitional activity, but they do not passively reacting to experiences, it does activate and govern the other sets (*khandhas*). Purposefulness and motivation under self-centered-principle are the nature of *saṅkhārā* or *cetanā* in an ordinary person. We will return to this nature of *saṅkhārā* in Chapter VI, under the heading of motivation. The world of formations (*saṅkhāra loka* as distinguished from *satta loka*, the abode of beings; and *okāsa loka*, the spatial world) is specially referred to as the five *khandhas*; thus all *khandhas* are *saṅkhārā* composing a microcosmic world. In a psychological term, *samsāra* is defined as the cycle of birth and rebirth in this

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<sup>224</sup> S II, 12:2

Katamecabhikkhavesaṅkhārā?Tayomebhikkhave,saṅkhārā:kāyasaṅkhāro vacīsaṅkhārō nīkhaṅgocittasaṅkhārō.

Imevuccantibhikkhave,saṅkhārā.

*Vibhanga* 140 gives a similar definition; *Vibhanga* 135 gives two triads: in *kāya*, *vacī*, and *citta* added *puññābhisaṅkhāra*, *abhuññābhisaṅkhāra*, and *ānenjābhisaṅkhāra*.

<sup>225</sup> Sue Hamilton 1996. P. 75.

<sup>226</sup> Bhikkhu Bodhi 2000. P. 727, 728.

very microcosmic world by virtue of the recurrence of thoughts and the repetition of habitual behaviors. This is considered as suffering regardless of whether the person is conscious of it or not. At this juncture, we should recall *sañcetanā* as one of the nutriments mentioned in Buddhist texts, - the effect on one's mind and personality constructed over and over again.

Like *vedanā* and *saññā*, *sañkhāra* has 'contact' as its immediate cause. Contact should be understood in two ways: (1) *paṭighāsamphassa*, impingement through material sense faculties (*pasadarūpā*) and their corresponding objects (*gocarā*), (2) *adhivacanasamphassa*, abstract contact, i.e. mental faculty (*manindriya*) and ideas (*dhammā*). Thus, *sañkhārā* constitute our reactions to sense experiences. Through our eyes, we perceive visible objects; through the ears, sounds are registered; etc. Sense data give us information of the objective world, and *sañkhāra* is the faculty that makes use of this information. First, it personally evaluates the object along the same line as *vedanā* and *saññā* are presented; it then deals with the experience in subjective and personal ways such as showing likes or dislikes, taking delight in or rejecting the perceived object. These mental reactions do not pass without leaving any trace; in fact, they leave impacts on the mind in terms of memories, which in turn condition the new experiences. Since these mental activities might exert their power beyond the mental realm (*manokamma*), one triggers the other in a chain of *sañkhārā*; they are verbalized (*vacīkamma*), and acted accordingly (*kāyakamma*). Having subjectively appreciated the object, *sañkhārā* motivates one to perceive and reckon it in a personal way, then conceptualize or reconstruct it in one's mind, making a mental image. Thus, what follow is verbalization of what one feels which entails

thinking (*vitakka*) and pondering (*vicāra*) which is called *vacīsāṅkhārā*; then one's attitude is expressed by bodily functions such as the heart rates change, the breath becoming grosser (*kāyasāṅkhārā*); this notwithstanding, one may still take some certain actions. This kind of human behavior is described by the Buddha in M18, as follows:

*Bhikkhu*, on whatever account there is reconstructed in the manifoldness of the (microcosmic) world, you should not be pleased, or welcome it and appropriate it, then all demeritorious things that rise from the latent tendencies to lust, to be hostile, to hold views, to doubt, to measure, to be greedy, to be ignorant, to wield sticks and weapons, to fight, to take sides, to dispute, to slander, to tell lies, all these cease without remainder<sup>227</sup>

Returning to the question of how *saṅkhārā* forms our personality: it determines our personal attitudes and subjective reactions to experiences as in the above analysis. This also explains why a person is often prone to react or behaves in a certain pattern of behavior. This habitual tendency defines a man's character. The influence of the environment such as family, society, culture, religion and so on also plays an essential part, but the psychological trait called *anusaya*- latent tendencies are perhaps the most powerful force governing

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<sup>227</sup> M.18: Yatonidānaṃ bhikkhu purisaṃ papañcasaññāsāṅkhā samudācaranti, ettha ce natthi abhinanditabbaṃ abhivaditabbaṃ ajjhositabbaṃ, esevanto rāgānusayānaṃ. Esevanto paṭighānusayānaṃ. Esevanto diṭṭhānusayānaṃ. Esevanto vicikicchānusayānaṃ. Esevanto mānānusayānaṃ. Esevantobhavarāgānusayānaṃ. Esevanto-vijjānusayānaṃ. Esevantodaṇḍādāna-satthādānakalahaviggahavivāda tuvantuvampesuññāmusāvādānaṃ. Ethete pāpakā akusalā dhammā aparisesā nirujjhantīti [PTS P. 110]

one's activities. In this way, personality is constructed, inherited from the past *saṅkhārā* (in terms of *viññāṇa* as the second link of the law of Dependent Origination, and *anusaya kilesas*), or recently accumulated (in terms of *taṇhā* and *upādāna*), all is but a phase in a perpetual process.

*Saṅkhārā* are not always attributed to negative qualities (*akusala*), but they can be positive, too, such as faith (*saddha*), energy (*viriya*), concentration (*Samādhi*), resolution (*pañidha*), mindfulness (*sati*), shame of wrong doing (*hiri*), fear of evil consequences in immoral act (*anottappa*), etc. For the negative force, they are described in term of *taṇhā*- craving, and *upādāna*- grasping, or *kilesas*, defilement, in general, but for the positive force they are called *indriyā*- spiritual faculties or *bala*- will power. For instance, (1) “the assurance: I shall know what I did not yet know! -*aññātañ-nassāmi ’t’indriya*”; (2) the faculty of highest knowledge- *Aññindriya*; (3) the faculty of him who knows- *aññātāvindriya*. These three acts of will are called three supramundane faculties; the first one arises on the path when the practitioner enters the *soṭāpatti magga*, the second when he reaches the fruition of sainthood (*soṭāpatti phala*), and the third one occurs at Arahantship (*arahatta phala*).

What is the difference between the *cetanā* of an ordinary person (*puṭhujjana*) and the *cetanā* in a noble person (*ariya puggala*)? As we have discussed earlier, the will of an ordinary person is always self-centered, and ego-building, but the will of a noble person is less so; only in a fully awakened person (*Buddha* and *Arahant*) who has destroyed the seed of an egoistic attitude, ceased I-making (*ahaṃkāra*) and ‘mine-making’ (*mamaṃkāra*), and has eliminated the tendency of conceit (*manānusaya*) is freed

from this kind of personality-build up. The five *khandhas* may still remain (*sa-upādānakkhandha nirvāna*), but the accumulated function of *saṅkhārakkhandha* has been neutralized. To summarize the account in *saṅkhārakkhandha*, an authoritatively sketched typical commentary in the *Theravāda* tradition can be cited as follows:

Whatever has the characteristic of forming should be understood, all taken together, as the *saṅkhārakkhandha*...They has the characteristic of forming. Their function is to accumulate. They are manifested as intervening. Their proximate causes are the remaining three mental aggregates. So according to characteristic, they are singlefold. And according to kind they are threefold, namely: profitable, unprofitable, and indeterminate.<sup>228</sup>

## 6. *Viññāṇakkhandha*

The consciousness aggregate is a popular translation of the fifth factor of personality. This is perhaps the most important factor in Buddhist psychology; different from the concept of consciousness in the *Upaniṣads*, this aspect of the personality is not viewed as a permanent and ever-abiding self (*ātman*) in Buddhist philosophy. Being one of the *khandhas*, perhaps, the most subtle aggregate of all, consciousness is a causal event, not a substance. *Viññāṇa* in early Buddhist texts appeared in many different contexts, but for a convenience, we will select to discuss it in three main contexts only: (1) as cognitive element (*manodhātu viññāṇa*); (2) as a stream of consciousness (*viññāṇasota*); and (3) as a link from life to life

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<sup>228</sup> *The Path of Purification*. P. 464. *Visuddhimagga* XIV. 129

(*samvattanika viññāṇa* or *paṭisandhi citta*). According to the author of *Visuddhimagga*, *viññāṇa*, *citta* and *mano* are synonyms.<sup>229</sup>

*Viññāṇa* occurs in many classifications in early Buddhist texts. In *Paṭiccasamuppāda*, *viññāṇa* is the third link; in *khandha* doctrine, it is the fifth aggregate; in the analysis of element (*dhātu*), it is one of the six elements (the six elements being *paṭhavi*, *apo*, *vāyo*, *tejo*, *okāsa*, and *viññāṇa*); in the four kinds of nutriments, *viññāṇa* is one kind of the nourishment that feeds living beings. Earlier, we have observed that man is such a creature that he or she would never tire of the thought of ‘I am’ because the thought connected with and rotating around an ‘I’ is the most favorite toy man plays with! In the drama of daydreaming he is normally the main character and the mind is the stage. In this sense, *viññāṇa* is identical with *citta*, thought, is a kind of nutriments. As an aggregate, *Viññāṇakkhandha* is defined as:

What, bhikkhus, is the consciousness aggregate? There are six class of consciousness: eye-consciousness, ear-consciousness, nose-consciousness, tongue-consciousness, body-consciousness, and mind-consciousness - *Chayime bhikkhave, viññāṇakāyā: cakkhaviññāṇaṃ sotaviññāṇaṃ, ghānaviññāṇaṃ jivhāviññāṇaṃ, kāyaviññāṇaṃ, manoviññāṇaṃ. Idaṃ vuccati bhikkhave, viññāṇaṃ*<sup>230</sup>

This sixfold of consciousness is also found in the classification of eighteen elements. In addition to these six kinds of consciousness, *Mahāyana* sutras classify

<sup>229</sup> Vism. XIV, 82. *The Path of purification*. PTS 1999. P. 453

<sup>230</sup> S II, 12: 3; S.III, 22: 56:4

consciousness into eight kinds, the seventh consciousness is being the thinking mind: “that which continues to possess discerning nature even in the absence of sense data”<sup>231</sup>, and the eighth consciousness is *ālaya-viññāṇa*, the store-consciousness which has some characteristics in common with the concept of *bhavaṅga citta* in the *Abhidhamma*. And in *Vimuttimaggā*, the *viññāṇakkhandha* is counted as seven in number: eye-consciousness, ear-consciousness, nose-consciousness, tongue-consciousness, body-consciousness, and mind-element (*manodhātu*) depending on the five doors adverting. “The cognizing immediately after the five kinds of consciousness is called mind element.”<sup>232</sup> The mind-consciousness element (*manoviññādhātu*) is the seventh. “These seven kinds of consciousness should be known in three ways: through organ-object, through object, through states.”<sup>233</sup>

The definition of *viññāṇadhātu* in *dhātuvibhangasūta* (M.140) is different from other suttas. After giving the definition of other element beginning with earth, through to the space element, the Buddha said to a new comer:

There remains only consciousness: pure and bright. What does one cognize with that consciousness? One cognizes 'pleasure,' one cognizes 'pain,' or one cognizes 'neither pleasure nor pain.' *Athaparaṃ viññāṇaṃyeva avasissati parisuddhaṃ pariyojanaṃ, tena ca viññāṇena kiṃ vijānāti. Sukhaṃtipi vijānāti, dukkhaṃtipi vijānāti, adukkhamasukhaṃ vijānāti* [M.140].

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<sup>231</sup> *Śūraṅgama sūtra*. An English translation of Charles Luk. New Delhi 2001. P.17

<sup>232</sup> *Vimuttimaggā. The path of Freedom*. Translated from Chinese by Somathera. PTS 1995. P. 251

<sup>233</sup> *Ibid.*

This consciousness, being pure and bright is a mental faculty that recognizes. This reminiscence is found in a passage in A I, iv:1-2, in which is described the mind (*citta*) is described as being pure and illuminous (*pabbhassam*). The commentary on the passage explains that this refer to *bhavangacitta*, the unbroken stream of consciousness that serves as undercurrent from which all the cognitive processes ‘surged out’ and ‘drop in’. As concerns to the function of *viññāṇa*, all texts agree on the point ‘it recognizes-*vijānāti*’. The above quoted texts seem to talk about the *viññāṇasota*-stream of consciousness in D 28 (PTS. D.III, 105). *Viññāṇasota* is a rare term describing the *kammic* force that flows on unbroken from life to life (in *samsāra*). According to the same *sutta*, this life-force can be observed when a meditator has made a certain progress in *jhāna*. The text reads: “*purisassa ca viññāṇa-sotaṃ pajānāti ubhayato abbochinnaṃ idhaloke patitṭhitañca paro loke patitṭhañca. Ayaṃ tatiyā dassana-sammāpatī*”- He discerns the unbroken stream of consciousness established both in this world and in the other world. This is the third vision-attainment.” In M 106, another term describing the function of consciousness at the death-rebirth event is presented. This is called *samvattanīkaṃ viññāṇaṃ*, the ‘rolling on consciousness’ occurring when the body is broken; this consciousness may then pass on to take rebirth in the imperturbable realm. (*kayassa bhedaṃ paraṃ maraṇā thānametaṃ vijjati yaṃ taṃ samvattanīkaṃ viññāṇaṃ assa ānañjūpagaṃ*.) Perhaps these kinds of expressions about the continuity of consciousness made Sati, a monk at the Buddha’s time mistook it as something that is unchanging which migrates from life to life. We will return to this kind of misunderstanding, i.e. that consciousness is in fact a causal event in the following chapter on *anatta*.

*Visuddhimagga* XIV, 84 states: “whatever has the characteristic of cognizing should be understood, all taken together, as the consciousness aggregate.” Further, referring to the classification of consciousness, *Buddhaghosa* followed the *Abhidhamma* method, classifying consciousness according to its ethical *kammic* force (*kusalacitta*, *akusalacitta*, *abyākatacitta*) that distributed among the three planes of existences (*kāmaloka*, *rūpaloka*, and *arūpaloka*) which is *lokiya citta*, mundane consciousnesses, and that of beyond the world (*lokuttara citta*). The method of classifying consciousness according to where it is stationed (*viññāṇaṭṭhiti*) is also founded in some *suttas* such as in *Mahānidāna sutta* (DN), A. vii. 41, wherein the seven stations of consciousness are mentioned. However, in the *suttas*, the location or station (*ṭhiti*) is not described in terms of the concept of “vertical world”\*.

*Viññāṇa* serving as a rebirth-linking factor (*paṭisandhicitta*) is found in D. II, 63: *viññāṇaṅca hi Ānanda mātu kucchiṃ na okkamissatha, api nu kho nāmarūpaṃ mātukucchismiṃ samuccissatha?*—If, Ananda, the conception does not descend into the mother’s womb, will there name and form be generated?” This is the *viññāṇa* as the third link of the *paṭiccasamuppāda* formula. According to the *Abhidhamma* method, there are twenty-four resultant consciousnesses serving as rebirth-linking factor. Where does this *viññāṇa* come from? In the concise formula, this consciousness is said to be conditioned by genetic activities (*saṅkhārā paccaya viññāṇaṃ*) carried out in the past. However, it is apparent that consciousness cannot operate by itself, as Hamilton points

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\* “vertical world” is a term I use for the cosmic order in the *Abhidhamma* world, categorized in terms of the world from low to higher, from gross to subtle.

out, it is not an independent agent.<sup>234</sup> Consciousness, being one of the *khandhas*, depends on other *khandhas*, and “with the arising of *nāma-rūpa*, *viññāna* arises, with the ceasing of *nāma-rūpa*, *viññāna* ceases”<sup>235</sup>. *Viññāna* and *nāma-rūpa* are mutually dependent (D II, 62,63). *Nāma-rūpa* with co-operation of *viññāna* is five *khandhas* at a tender phase of being; *salāyātana* is, but that same five *khandha* at a more mature phase. One’s present consciousness, supported by other aggregates (D.33; S. III, 22:9, 54), “bound by desire and thirst, takes delight, that delighting in what is present, it collects” (*chandārāga paṭibandhattā viññānassa tad abhinandati; tad abhinandanto paccuppannesu dhammesu saṁhirati*)<sup>236</sup>. This passage describes how *viññāna* got caught up in what it is experiencing; being thus caught up, it acts as *saṅkhāra* itself, i.e. collecting materials and embedding them into the undercurrent that serves as fuel to be renewed moment to moment. In S II, 12: 64, *Viññāna* comes to be established when the person takes delight in edible food, contact, volitional profiting, and thought reviewing sense impressions. Also in the same context, the pain that *viññāna* would bring (as a kind of poisoned food) is compared with a man being hit by thousands of spears in a single day! For a single consciousness arising in a causal process, as a cognitive factor, the following description is a standard in the early texts:

Friends, on account of eye and forms arises eye consciousness. The simultaneously meeting of the three is contact, on account of contact feelings, what is felt is perceived, of what is perceived there is thinking, in

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<sup>234</sup> Sue Hamilton 1996. P. 87: “In order to function, *viññāna* is dependent on this ‘fuel’ of *samsāric* existence; it is not function independently.”

<sup>235</sup> S III,22: 53,54: *Nāmarūpasamudayā viññānasamudayo, nāmarūpanirodhā viññānanirodho*

<sup>236</sup> M.III, 197.

thoughts there is diffusion on account of that, diffused perceptive components of forms of the past, future and present cognizable by the eye consciousness arise and assault in that man.<sup>237</sup>

This passage aroused a controversy as regards the order of the perceptive process. It is clear that when there is a visible object within the eye-sight, eye-consciousness arises. The meeting of these three is contact. Thus the contact and eye-consciousness is simultaneous. Contact is an immediate condition for feeling; and what one feels that one perceives; what one perceives that one thinks about...This description gives an impression that consciousness (*viññāna*) must be there first, and feeling, perception etc, only arise as a means of co-operation. This might be the case, as the practitioner can detach oneself from feeling and perception in the highest absorption (*Saññāvedayitanirodha samāpatti*), but in sense-impression (*paṭigha-samphassa*), feeling and perception is part and parcel of the process.

As we have seen earlier, *viññāna*, *saññā*, and *paññā* come from the same cognitive root *-jñā* meaning to know; therefore it seems the functions of *saññā* and *viññāna* in the cognitive process are somewhat overlapping each other. The definitions of each *khandha* in S III, 22: 79 also do not justify the overlapping function of at least three aggregates: *vedanā*, *saññā*, and *viññāna*. According to these definitions, *vedanā*'s function is to feel (*vediyati*) and *saññā*'s function is to perceive

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<sup>237</sup> M.18, PTS Page 112: Cakkhuñcāvuso paṭicca rūpe ca uppajjati cakkhuvīññānaṃ. Tiṇṇaṃ saṅgati phasso. Phassapaccayā vedanā. Yaṃ vedeti, taṃ sañjānāti. Yaṃ sañjānāti taṃ vitakketi. Yaṃ vitakketi taṃ papañceti. Yaṃ papañceti tato nidānaṃ purisaṃ papañcasaññāsaṅkhā samudācaranti aññānāgatapaccuppannesu cakkhuvīññeyyesu rūpesu

(*sañjānāti*) and discriminates between different colors, and the function of *viññāṇa* is to recognize (*viñānāti*) different tastes. Thus we can see that it is really *vedanā* which feels pleasure and pain, and the above quoted text indicates “what one feels one perceives”, and therefore, what is the use of *viññāṇa* to recognize pleasure and pain again as stated in *Dhātuvibhanga*? If we content that *vedanā* is feelings, and *viññāṇa* is the factor cognizing what is being felt, then what does *saññā* do?

The great commentator Buddhaghosa tried to explain that *saññā* knows only shape and color, and not any thing details of the object, whereas *viññāṇa* knows the nature of the subject slightly better, but *paññā* for its part, knows all of these which amplify the quality of the object. He gave a simile of three people who see a heap of coins: a child sees it as a round or a square object with such and such color; a villager knows they are coins which can be used in monetary exchange; a money-changer knows all of these and furthermore, whether or not these coins are genuine, where they are produced, etc<sup>238</sup>. However, the author of *Visuddhimagga* admitted that one cannot always find the exact location of perception and consciousness is. He cited to *Milinda Pañhā*, a book that was compiled earlier which stated that to declare “this is contact, this is feeling, this is perception, this is volition, this is consciousness” in a single act of cognition of an object is a very difficult task that perhaps, only *Buddhas* can accomplish.<sup>239</sup>

Returning to the definition of *nāma-rūpa* in S II.3 stating that *vedanā*, *saññā*, *cetanā*, *phassa*, and *manasikāra* are *nāma*; and according to the *Abhidhamma* method, *phassa* being one

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<sup>238</sup> Vism. XIV, 4,5; Nyanamoli, BPS 2004. P. 436.

<sup>239</sup> Ibid; Miln. 87

of the seven universal mental states belongs to *saṅkhārakkhandha*. This is also agreed by the author of the Buddhist Dictionary, Ven. Nyanatiloka (third revised and enlarged edition 1998. P. 142), but this is true or not need to be examined in order to ascertain that whether *phassa* and *manasikāra* is belonged to *viññāṇakkhandha* as I have suggested earlier.

*Phassa* is not a physical event, but a conscious point arrived at when the stimulation is able ‘to wake up’ the subconscious stream (*bhavangacitta*)<sup>240</sup>. There are always many stimuli around us but we do not pay attention to all of them, only a few enter our minds. Even they do not all enter our minds at one as the mind works with only one object at a given moment. The mind of an ordinary man is said to be ‘flicking’, and like a monkey in the forest keeps on jumping from branch to branch; in the same way, our mind shifted from one object to the other in a very quick succession, leaving no room for a complete examination of the object or a proper appreciation the feeling that affects one’s mind. When an object enters the mind, the event is called *phassa*, it arouses attention (*manasikāra*); thus mind is adverted to the object. *Phassa* and *manasikāra* occur more or less simultaneously; it is a conscious event, or in other word, the mind recognizes the

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<sup>240</sup> Bhavanga citta or bhavanga- sota, according to some scholars, is a postulate term of Abhidhammikas. It occurs first in Patthana book, latter, it was exaggerated by the Abhidhamma commentators as the sine qua non of life, an unbroken process (lit. a stream-sota). This undercurrent is said to be carrying all the sense impressions from the immemorial time, and it conditions the perceptive process of the present. Its function is the foundation for the operation of cognition (*viññāna*); it also serves as death-consciousness and rebirth consciousness. This concept is very similar to the term *ālaya-viññāna* in a school of Mahāyāna Buddhism.

object in a process called *viññāṇa*. Thus *viññāṇa* is the arousing of the mind to perceive the stimulation.

*Viññāṇa* is that which recognizes the object through sense doors; with the cognition, there is ideation (*saññā*) and feeling (*vedanā*), and reactions (*saṅkhārā*) [quoted texts]. This will be seen more clearly in the thought process as described in the *Abhidhamma* method and in *Visuddhimagga*. Therein, the mind (*citta*) is said to perform seven functions in a thought-process (*citta-vithi*) requiring conscious dealing with a tempting stimulation. Normally, the stream of consciousness (*viññāṇa sota*) is flows on evenly, but an object comes into its notice (the tempting stimulation again and again strikes on it!) The stream vibrates (*bhavanga calite*) triggering the five sense-doors into an active mood (*pañcadvārāvajjana*); if it is a visible form, eye-consciousness (*cakkhu viññāṇa*) arises and the mind receives it (*sampaticchana citta*), investigating it (*santīraṇa citta*) and determining (*votthapana citta*); this is followed by a full experience of the object called *javana*. In these *javanā* moments the mind values the object (being conditioned by previous experiences which conscious or unconsciously piled up in *bhavangacitta*); being thus valued, the whole experience is registered (*tadalambana citta*). If the object occurs at the mind-door (*manodvāra*) in the form of a clear idea, a memory, a feeling etc, the inner sense (*manodhātu*) or mind door is activated to perceive the object. Then the whole process continues in a similar way.

According to *Abhidhamma* and *Visuddhimagga* XIV, *Viññāṇa* performs fourteen functions (*viññāṇa-kicca*): rebirth (*patisandhi citta*), sub-consciousness (*bhavanga citta*), advertence (*āvajjana*), seeing (*cakkhu viññāṇa*), hearing (*sota viññāṇa*), smelling (*ghāna viññāṇa*), tasting (*jīva viññāṇa*),

sensing (*kāya viññāṇa*), receiving (*sampañicchana*), investigating (*santīrana*), determining (*votthapana*), experiencing (*javana*), registering (*tadārammaṇa*), and death consciousness (*cuti citta*).

It should be emphasized that, in a very important phase of the thought process when the mind reacts to the object in a quick succession that “partaking” of the object is called *javana*. Being conditioned by past experiences, an unmindful mind habitually deals with the present experience with like (*piya*) or dislike (*apiya*) an emotive reaction, and good/agreeable or bad/disagreeable derives from the intellectual superstructure; all is, but a personal valuation. Thus a thought process (*citta vithi*) is a complexity that engages all five *khandhas*. Therefore it is justifying stated that the arising of a thought is birth (*jāti*).

Thoughts arise from *manodvāra*- mind door. Whosoever has mastered his own mind is the one who has all his senses guarded, this including *mano* as a sense; by guarding over the senses, he can tame his mind and thus becomes a master of his thoughts or states of mind, not a slaver to them<sup>241</sup>. A person who is aware of his thoughts and knows their quality: whether beneficial or unbeneficial can direct them to be developed or discouraged; thus he deliberately alters his mind.<sup>242</sup> This is done with volition (*cetanā*), not without volition. This kind of person is called a trainee (*sekkhā*), one who trains his mind. In one whose cankers (*āsava*) have all been destroyed (*asekkhā* or *Arahant*), there are no more unbeneficial states of mind, and therefore, such a person is described as someone who “has

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<sup>241</sup> M.I. 214: bhikkhu cittaṃ vasaṃ vatteti, no ca bhikkhu cittaṃ vasaṃ vattati

<sup>242</sup> M.I. Dvedhāvitakkasutta.

done what should be done”<sup>243</sup>, in whom the will to be good becomes unnecessary as this person is naturally wholesome and skillful (*kusala*). The mind of an *asekkhā* is *visaṅkhārāgataṃ cittaṃ*, a non-genetically mind that has ceased piling up, and there is no more grasping, instead, it is letting go. Another term for such a liberated mind is *khīnāsava*. But this does not mean “one’s volitional activity is ceasing” (Hamilton. P. 113) as Hamilton had stated. The Arahant still has volitional activities but these volitions are not associated with a notion of an “I” (*ahaṃkāra*), or “me” (*mamaṃkāra*); they are not governed by an ego-centric tendency (*mānānusaya*), and therefore these actions are merely functional (*kiriya*), not giving results for future becoming.

## II Conclusion on Khandhas

In many suttas it is affirmed that all *khandhā* are *saṅkhārā*: “These five clinging components are dependently arising-*paṭiccasamuppannā kho pan’ime yadidaṃ pañcupādānakkhandhā*”<sup>244</sup>. And it is said that an enlightened disciple is able to see thus:

One understands as it really is conditioned form as ‘conditioned from’. One understands as it really is conditioned feeling as ‘conditioned feeling’. One understands as it really is conditioned perception as ‘conditioned perception’. One understands as it really is conditioned volitional activities as ‘conditioned volitional activities’. One understands as it really is conditioned consciousness as ‘conditioned consciousness’. [*Saṅkhatam rūpaṃ 'saṅkhatam rūpanti*

<sup>243</sup> S.III, 22:61: *katam karanīyaṃ*.

<sup>244</sup> M I, 191; S I, P.135; S III, P. 115 (PTS).

*yathàbhūtaṃ pajànàti. Saṅkhatam vedanam saṅkhatam vedananti yathàbhūtaṃ pajànàti. Saṅkhatam saññam 'saṅkhatam saññan'ti yathàbhūtaṃ pajànàti. Saṅkhatam saṅkhàre 'saṅkhatà saṅkhàrà'ti yathàbhūtaṃ pajànàti. Saṅkhatam viññāṇam 'saṅkhatam viññāṇanti yathàbhūtaṃ pajànàti]*<sup>245</sup>

Obviously this passage implies that *khandhā* are dependently arising; they are conditioned phenomena in conjunction with the fact that they are impermanent, unsatisfactory and non-substantial nature. E.A.Johansson translated the word *saṅkhārā* here as “creative process” is perhaps not justifiable. The word *saṅkhārā* here should be understood as denoting whatever that is created (*katam*) or conditioned (*saṅkhātam*); processes that are ever changing (*vayadhamma*), become otherwise (*aññathābhavati*) and come to naught (*vinābhāvo*); in short, it is a state of instability. Due to this instability of *khandhā*, they are known as unsatisfactory (*dukkha*), and essenceless (*anatta*). It should be emphasized again that, in this injunction the famous statement *sabbe saṅkhārā aniccā, sabbe saṅkhārā dukkhā*, the term *saṅkhārā* are strictly referred to the five *khandhas*.

*Pañcuppādānakkhandha* as a whole is the living conscious body that an unenlightened person takes delight in, clings to, and identifies with as it is expressed by *Saccaka*, a Jain follower that:

Like these seed groups and vegetable groups that grow and develop, established and supported on earth. So also all powerful work, that has to be done, should be done, established and supported on earth. In the same manner

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<sup>245</sup> S.III.22. 54

this person, established in matter, with the material self accrues merit or demerit. This feeling person established in feelings accrues merit or demerit. The perceiving person established in perceptions accrues merit or demerit. The determining person established in determinations, accrues merit or demerit. The conscious person established in consciousness, accrues merit or demerit.<sup>246</sup>

Thus identifying and involving with the five *khandhas*, which constitute one's personality (*ātman*). Jains are among the eternalists (*atthikā*) of those who advocate that there is an eternal soul fare on from life to life. S.III.22:22 states that the *khandhas* are burdens and the person who identifies with them is the carrier of the burden:

I will teach you the burden, the carrier of the burden, the taking up of the burden and the putting down of the burden. The five aggregates of clinging is the burden...the form aggregate of clinging; the feeling...perception...mental formation...consciousness

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<sup>246</sup> M 35, Cūlasaccakasutta: Seyyathāpi bho gotama ye kecime bījagāmahūtagāma vuddhiṃ virūlhiṃ vepullam āpajjanti, sabbe te paṭhavim nissāya paṭhaviyaṃ patiṭṭhāya evamete bījagāmahūtagāma vuddhiṃ virūlhiṃ vepullam āpajjanti. Seyyathāpi vā pana bho gotama ye kecime balakaraṇīyā kammaṇṭā karīyanti, sabbe te paṭhavim nissāya paṭhaviyaṃ patiṭṭhāya evamete balakaraṇīyā kammaṇṭā karīyanti. Evameva kho bho gotama rūpattāyaṃ purisa-puggalo rūpe patiṭṭhāya puññaṃ vā apuññaṃ vā pasavati. Vedanattāya purisa-puggalo vedanāyaṃ patiṭṭhāya puññaṃ vā apuññaṃ vā pasavati. Saññattāyaṃ purisa-puggalo saññāyaṃ patiṭṭhāya puññaṃ vā apuññaṃ vā pasavati. Saṅkhāraṇṭāyaṃ purisa-puggalo saṅkhāresu patiṭṭhāya puññaṃ vā apuññaṃ vā pasavati. Viññāṇattāyaṃ purisa-puggalo viññāṇe patiṭṭhāya puññaṃ vā apuññaṃ vā pasavati"ti

aggregate of clinging...The person, such a venerable of such a name, such a clan is the carrier of the burden...

The five aggregates are truly burden; the burden carrier is the person. Taking up of burden is the suffering in the world, laying the burden down is blissful.”<sup>247</sup>

The question of why it is five, is not addressed by any *sutta* gives any explanation. We only find in the *Visuddhimagga*, the work of the commentator *Buddhaghosa*, who justifies the number on account of three reasons: (a) because all formed things that resemble each other fall into these groups; (b) that is the widest limit as the basis for the assumption of self and what pertains to self; (c) because of the inclusion by them of the other sorts of aggregates.<sup>248</sup>

As concerns to the order in listing the aggregates, we can easily agree that it goes from gross to subtle, from oblivious to a more complicated and abstract aspect of our experience. *Rūpakkhanda* is quite visible and touchable; *vedanākkhandha* is also gross, so most people can identify their feelings, and they know it is desirable or undesirable; the knowing is *saññākkhandha* which apprehends the aspect of feeling, for “what one feels that one perceives” (M.I. 293). Thus the first three aspects of personal components are more or less easy

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<sup>247</sup> SN. III, 22: Katamo ca bhikkhave bhāro: pañcupādānakkhandhātissa vacanīyaṃ. Katame pañca: rūpūpādānakkhandho vedanūpādānakkhandho saññūpādānakkhandho saṅkhārūpādānakkhandho viññāṇūpādānakkhandho. Ayaṃ vuccati bhikkhave bhāro. Katamo ca bhikkhave bhārahāro: puggalotissa vacanīyaṃ, yo'yaṃ āyasmā evannaṃ evaṃgotto, ayaṃ vuccati bhikkhave, bhārahāro.<sup>247</sup> ... Bhāra bhava pañcakkhandhā bhārahāro ca puggalo, Bhāradānaṃ dukhaṃ- loke bhāranikkhepanaṃ sukhaṃ. Bhikkhus

<sup>248</sup> Vsm XIV. 216. Nyanamoli , BPS.P. 484.

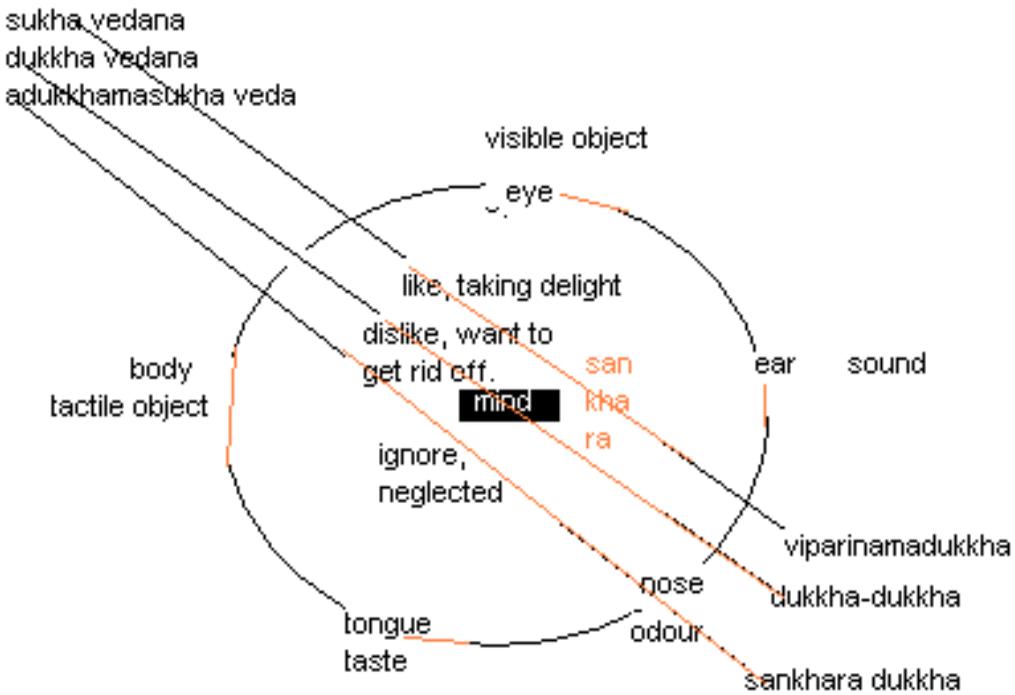
apprehended. The *saṅkhārakkhandha* that works dependent on *saññā* and *vedanā* is not always evident to us.

We do not always apprehend the volitional aspects of our activities, which cause us quite often to become helpless in our reactions. In Buddhist terms, it is known as “*avijjā paccayā saṅkhārā*”. Perhaps this helplessness is the cause of defense mechanisms in psychological terms. In Buddhist psychology, the *saṅkhārakkhandha* is nothing other than three kinds of *taṇhā*. When one perceives a desirable feeling or object via sense impression (*Phassa*-contact), one seizes it, taking delight in it; this type of reaction is termed *kāmatanḥā*- the craving for sensual pleasures which is a parallel of the Freudian concept of ‘pleasure-principle’. The *kāmatanḥā* is governed by *rāgānusaya*- the latent tendency of lust or sensuous motivation. In the law of *kamma*, *kāmatanḥā* or the thirst for loves and pleasures is the cause of rebirth in the sensual realm (*kāmaloka*). When an undesirable feeling/object is perceived, one is repelled; one’s reaction is trying to escape from or to annihilate the thing or object that is unwanted and rejected. This is termed *vibhavanḥā*- the craving for annihilation that is governed by *paṭighānusaya*- the latent tendency of hatred or destructive desire, or in Freudian terms, the death- instinct.

Contrary to that is the constructive desire or the thirst of becoming- *bhavanḥā* which is governed by an ignorant tendency- *avijjānusaya* and a perpetual tendency- *bhāvanusaya*. When there is an ambiguous feeling, one is either perplexed or forced to look for another experience that would solidify one’s identity. This kind of motivation occurs under the influence of delusion, uncertainty or confusion termed *avijjā*, the background of *samsāric* experience. On the other hand, *bhavanḥā* as a constructive desire is part and

parcel of the survival instinct (*bhavānusaya*). *Bhavataṇhā* solidifies one's sense of an authentic personality or it motivates one's to be fitted, to be better in one way or another under the influence of the ego.

The following diagram shows how the mind reacts to different feelings that arise through sense contact that generate suffering.



## Chapter V On ANATTA

Buddhism stands unique in the history of human thought in denying the existence of such a reparative soul, self or *ātman*. According to the teaching of the Buddha, the idea of self is an imaginary false belief which has no corresponding reality and produces harmful thoughts of “me” and “mine”, selfish desire, craving, attachment, hatred, ill will, conceit, pride, egoism, and other defilements, impurities and problems. It is the source of all troubles in the world from personal conflicts to wars between nations. In short this false view can be traced all the evil in the world.

[What the Buddha taught, Walpola Rahula 1959, p. 51; William Gilbert 1966: *Soul and Substance*]

## I. The Etymology of the Term *Anatta*

The word *Anattā* (adj. or n) is a combination of a negative prefix ‘na’ and ‘attā’ which means self or soul (*ātman* in Sanskrit). Grammatically, when the negative prefix ‘a’ precedes a vowel, it changes to ‘an’ for the euphonic sake. Thus the word ‘*anatta*’ conveys the meaning of negation of self or soul. The most popular renderings of the word in English are ‘non-self’, ‘not-self’, ‘egoless’, or impersonality, or insubstantiality.

There are two main *Pāli* forms of the word: (1) *attā*, *attanā* as its instrumental case; (2) *atta*, *attena* (instr.). According to Venerable Ñāṇamoli, neither form is used in the plural in The *Tipitaka*.<sup>249</sup> But we can see the word ‘*attānaṃ*’ used as an accusative, singular or dative and genitive plural quite frequently. There is a rare derivative form ‘*atumo*’ (S. 782; Nd. 1, 60; A.III, 99/1, 249) and ‘*tumo*’ (S. IV, 890). The

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<sup>249</sup> Gnanamoli Thera, *Anatta according to Theravada*. The Wheel No 204, (BPS 1986).

confusion about the meaning of ‘atta’ in *Pali* literatures is perhaps because of its different usages. We see the word ‘attā’ quite frequently in the *Tipitaka*, and although many scholars<sup>250</sup> translated it all as ‘the self’ with a metaphysical notion, this is not a truly rendering of what the word *attā* means in all cases. The venerable Ñāṇamoli pointed out that there are five ways the word is used: (1) as a reflective pronoun ‘oneself’ (eg, Dhṃ 157, 158, 159, 160, S. I, 78; M. 17, etc.); (2) as one’s own person (*attabhāva*- personality) which denotes the complex psycho-physical body (*nāma-rūpa*) that distinguishes one from the other; (3) ‘self’ with a metaphysical notion as in ‘*atthi me attā*’, “*rūpaṃ attano samanupassati*”, “*attānudiṭṭhi*”, “*attavādudupādāna*”; (4) enclitic-*atta* in the sense of –ness, e.g, *socitattam* (D. 22, or D.II, 306); (5) confusion with *atta* as the past participle of *ādādati* and *niratta* as past participle of *nirassati*.

The first and second usage of ‘atta’ is merely common expression (*vohāra*), and the Buddha was not against it. What is repeatedly denied as an illusory notion is the ‘atta’ in the third sense. The traditional negation of ‘atta’ is expressed in four ways as follows: (1) *Avassavattana*- not following one’s desires; (2) *Asāmika*- absence of the owner; (3) *Suññatā*- void/emptiness of self-existence; (4) *Atta patikkhepa*- refutation/negation of self.

In the famous *Anattalakkhaṇasutta* (S. III, 22; Vin) and *Cūlasaccakasutta* (MN) The Buddha in many ways demonstrated that the personal components (*khandhas*) have

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<sup>250</sup> I.B. Horner 1936. P. 236, 238. Translated “attā va attānaṃ atimaññesi” as ‘declare the Self by the self’, and she did the same with many other passages (S.II, 68; A. IV, 405; V.182) where these two forms of ‘attā’ occur with the connotation of ‘the highest Self’ in capital letter, and the lesser being by a normal letter.

never followed one's desire. At this point, perhaps most sane people have to admit that they cannot make their body taller or shorter nor keep them ever young, and always free from sickness. The same thing happens to our feelings. Most of us want to achieve and retain the pleasant feelings and when they are gone we tend to relive the pleasant memories. As I have pointed it out in the preceding chapter, this tendency only give us disappointment due to the changing nature of all *saṅkhārā*, especially in the case of the fleeting nature of feelings. Although we shun painful feelings, however, they still arise from time to time. When we try to escape from them, our reactions only multiply the actual painful feelings, making them all the more unbearable. Perceptions, mental formations, and consciousness share the same nature: they follow their own courses disregard for our emotional wishes. Therefore we are not the owner of these personality components. If we were their owner, we would have the right to command or order them to be like this (the way we want them to be), not like that (the unwanted way to us)<sup>251</sup>. Thus the second point is, of necessity, a corollary of the first point.

## **Suññatā**

*Suññatā* is void-ness, coreless-ness, non-substance in personality components or anything pertaining to them. *Suññatā* is a synonym of *anatta*. In M.106, contemplating on *suññatā* is described: “This is void of a self or of what belongs

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<sup>251</sup> S.III, 22: *Evaṃ me rūpaṃ hontu, evaṃ me rūpaṃ mā ahoṣi*. The same statement is applied for *vedanā*, *saññā*, *saṅkhārā*, and *viññāṇa*.

to a self.” And: “I am not anything belonging to any one, nor is there anything belonging to me in anyone, anywhere.”<sup>252</sup> The commentary on the passage exaggerates this idea into four points of voidness: (1) he does not see his self anywhere; (2) he does not see a self of his own that can be treated as something belonging to another, e.g. as parents, a brother, friends, etc; (3) he does not see the self of another; (4) he does not see the self of another that can be treated as something belonging to himself<sup>253</sup>. The fourth point in the traditional explanation of *anatta* is that the personality components always reject or negate the false value we put on them as ‘the self’. This is a corollary of the third point on *suññatā*, and perhaps, the idea is extracted from a passage in Samyutta Nikāya where the five *khandhas* are compared with ‘the five murderous enemies’, and the six internal sense bases with an empty village.<sup>254</sup> “*Suññato lokam avekkhassu...attānudiṭṭhiṃ ūhacca*”- looking at the world as void...uproot the false view of self. (SN. 1191).

The world (*loka*) in early Buddhism is usually refers to the microcosmic, i.e. six senses and their corresponding objects as well as consciousness and feelings arising dependent on the senses. Perhaps that is all an ordinary human being can experience; the world of sensory experiences. And the void or emptiness (*suññāto*) is often specially referred to the self (*atta*) and what belongs to the self (*attaniya*) only. The following passage in SN affirms this qualification.

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<sup>252</sup> M.II, 263 (M 106): *suññamidam attena vā attaniyena vā'ti. Tassa evaṃ ; nāhaṃ kvacani kassacī kiñcanattasmiṃ, na ca mama kvacani kismici kiñcanatatti'ti tassa evaṃ paṭipannassa tabbahulavihārino āyatane cittam pasīdati* [PTS P. 264]

<sup>253</sup> Bhikkhu Bodhi 2000. P. 873.

<sup>254</sup> S.IV, 35: 238, *The simile of vipers*.

Because the world is void of the self, Ānanda, or of what belongs to the self, therefore it is said: ‘void is the world’. And what, Ānanda, is void of the self or anything that belongs to the self? Eye, visual objects... eye-consciousness...eye contact...and whatever feeling (born of these contacts), pleasant, painful or neutral that arises on account of mind contact, that too, is void of the self or of what belongs to the self.<sup>255</sup>

Thus in the *Nikāya* tradition, the concept of *suññāta* is strictly applied to the *Anatta* doctrine, especially in sensory experiences as the above passage conveys. Later, the developed Buddhist thought had expanded this concept to a greater extent: the whole *samsāric* experiences are empty, illusory<sup>256</sup>. When *Mahāyana* thought emerged, the concept of

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<sup>255</sup> S.IV. 54: Yasmā ca kho Ānanda suññaṃ attena vā attaniyena vā tasmā suñño loko vuccati. Kiñca...suññaṃ attena vā attaniyena vā? Cakkhuṃ kho Ananda suññaṃ attena vā attaniyena vā rūpa...cakkhuvīññānaṃ, cūkkhusamphasso suñño attena vā attaniyena vā ..pe...Yaṃpidam mano samphassapaccayā uppajjati vedayitaṃ sukhaṃ vā dukkhaṃ vā aḍukkhamasukhaṃ vā tampi suññaṃ attena vā attaniyena vā.

<sup>256</sup> **Lankavatara Sutra**, a well-known Mahāyana text discusses of seven kinds of emptiness: “What is the emptiness of individual marks? It is that all things have no [such distinguished] marks of individuality and generality. In consideration of mutuality and accumulation [things are thought to be realities], but when they are further investigated and analysed, they are non-existence, and not predictable with individuality and generality; and because thus no such idea as self, other or both, hold good, the individual marks no longer abstain. [...]

What is meant by the emptiness of self-nature? ... it is that all things in their self-nature are unborn, hence the emptiness of self-nature,...

What is meant by the emptiness of no- works? It is that the *skandhas* are *nirvāṇa* itself, and there is no work doing in them from the beginning. Therefore one speaks of emptiness of no-work.

emptiness or non-substantiality was expounded in twofold: non-substantiality of person (*puggala anattā*), and non-substantiality of the *dhammā* (*dharma nairātman*). And the great Mahayana writers like *Nāgārjuna* and *Subhuti* especially emphasized on the dependent nature of all phenomena, that nothing arises by ‘itself’, and nothing possesses the self-nature (*svabhāva*). This is not a new idea, as we will see later in the *Nikāya* documents which will reveal the crucial link of the two: we cannot isolate the *anattā* doctrine from the doctrine of Dependent Origination. The Mahayana critique on *svābhavavādā* and the so called *Hīnayana* systems of

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What is meant by the emptiness of work? It is that the *skandhas* are devoid of an ego and its belongings, and go on functioning when there is a mutual conjunction of cause and action....

What is meant by the emptiness of all things in the sense that they are unpredictable? It is the nature of the false imagination is not expressible, hence the emptiness of all things in the sense of their unpredictability...

What is meant by the emptiness in its highest sense of ultimate reality reliable by noble wisdom? It is that in the attainment of an inner realization by means of noble wisdom there is no trace of habit energy generated by all the erroneous conceptions [...]

What is meant by the emptiness of mutual [non-existence]? It is this, when a thing is missing here, one speaks of its being empty (absent) there. For instance, in the lecture hall there are no elephants, no bulls, ... There are seven kinds of emptiness of which mutuality ranks the lowest of all and to be put away by you.

(Verse 76) ... not that things are not born, but that they are not born of themselves, except when seen in the state of Samādhi – this is what is meant by ‘all things are unborn’. To have no self-nature is, according to the deeper sense, to be unborn. That all things are devoid of self-nature means that there is a constant and uninterrupted becoming, a momentary change from one state of existence to another; seeing this, Mahāmati, all things are destitute of self-nature. ..

(verse 137)... I always preach the emptiness which is beyond eternalism and nihilism; samsāra is like a dream and a vision, and karma vanishes not.”; T.D. Suzuki’s translation. P. 67-68, Indian Publication 2006.

philosophy on the identity of *svabhāva* and *dhamma* (*attano sabhāvaṃ dhārentī'ti dhammā*)<sup>257</sup> is not justified if we put the *Anattā* doctrine in the contexts of the *Nikāyas*. The analysis of human into the *khandhas* serves the sheer purpose of preventing and destroying the (false) notion of ‘the self’ or of a person who presides over the personal components. The same aim is assigned to the analysis of *āyātana* as we have seen in the above quoted text. But regarding the analysis into elements (*dhātus*) in which each element is also called *dhamma*, and the Master recommended on seeing all phenomena as *suddhadhammā*- pure phenomena that later gave rise to the exegetical works on the term is perhaps the main motivation of *Abhidhamma* systems<sup>258</sup>. But this definition of the term *dhamma* is only found in post-canonical works.

## **Dhamma and Dhammā**

The word *dhamma* (Sanskrit *dharma*, m or neut.) has many meanings and it becomes a notoriously difficult word in the Buddhist canons, both in *Pāli* and in *Sanskrit*, for many Buddhist scholars. In the singular form, *Dhamma* often refers to the body of the Buddha’s teaching, which is one of the three cardinal objects for refuge (*Buddha*, *Dhamma*, and *Sangha*). In the early discourses, the Buddha often refers to his system of teaching and training as *Dhamma* and *Vinaya*. In the Vedic tradition, *dharma* or *dharman* comes from the root *dhṛ* meaning to uphold or to support and hence *dharma* is the foundation, institution, which in The Upaniṣads it comes to mean duties, principles, laws, etc. It is often goes together

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<sup>257</sup> MhNdA 261; DhsA 126; Vism; S. V, 6

<sup>258</sup> I conceived this idea when studying the *Abhidhamma* and *Visuddhimagga* some time ago. Later when I read *The Dhamma Theory* of Prof. Y.Karunadasa, the idea appeared clearer to me.

with *artha* which means gain, benefit, *kāma* means enjoyment and *mokkha*, liberation. In Buddhist canons, occasionally the word *dhamma* also retains the meaning given in the Vedas and Upaniṣads. In The *Aggaññāsutta* (DN), *the Discourse on the Knowledge of Beginning*, it is states: “*dhamma* is the best thing for people in this life and the life to come”<sup>259</sup>, and in the context of the same discourse, *Dhamma* is not in uniform for different groups of people, but rather a common law accepted and followed by a particular group of society. It is reported that the Buddha, after his enlightenment exclaimed that it is the *Dhamma* that he is due to reverence, not any person, deity or god or Brahma, for he is the highest evolutionary being in the cosmic order. What he has realized is the *Dhamma*. This *dhamma* is the causal law, or the principles that governs the world: its formation, its existence, its decaying and dissolving as an endless circle in the cosmos. In M.28 (M. I, 191) and S. 12: 20 (S. II, 12: 25-26) the Buddha said that “one who sees Dependent Origination, sees the *Dhamma*, and one who sees the *Dhamma*, sees the dependent origination”. Thus *dhamma* is identical with the law of *specific conditionality* (*idappaccayatā*).

*Dhammā* in plural form means phenomena, things (e.g., *sabbe dhammā anattā*), as means (e.g., *bodhipakkhiyā dhammā*), and states (e.g., *kusalādhammā*), or merely mental phenomena like as in *dhammānupassanā*, contemplation on *dhammā*. We will return to the meaning of the word *dhamma* in *dhammānupassanā* in the next chapter. A fourfold definition of the word *dhamma* given by Ven. Buddhaghosa is as follows: (1) *guṇe* (*saddo*) is applied to good conduct; (2) *desanīyaṃ*, to preach and moral instruction; (3) *pariyattiyaṃ*,

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<sup>259</sup> D.34: Dhammo hi, ..., seṭṭho janetasmim diṭṭhe ceva dhamme abhisamparāyaṅca

to the nine modes which the Buddha used to teach or the nine-fold collections of the teaching; (4) *nissatte-nijjīve*, to the cosmic impersonal phenomena.<sup>260</sup> Elsewhere, also Ven Buddhaghosa gave a similar fourfold meanings of the *dhamma* with a slight difference as follows: (1) *pariyatti*, the theory or doctrine as it is recorded and explained in the scriptures; (2) *hetu*, condition or causal relation, here, it specially refers to the analytical knowledge<sup>261</sup> of the doctrine; (3) *guṇa*, quality; and (4) *nissatta-nijjīva* as in the above. Thus the definition is very faithful to the *anatta* doctrine.

Returning to the post-canonical works concerning the interpretation of the anatta doctrine and the ontological validity of the term *dhamma*, in the commentaries rewritten by Ven. Buddhaghosa, and his momentous work *Visuddhimagga*, a *dhamma* said to be perceived by its specific characteristics and is viewed in its common characteristics. For instance, earth element (*paṭhavi dhātu*) has specific characters of hardness and softness. This idea (*dhamma*) is formed by a direct experience through the sense of touch (*paṭigha samphassa*). Whether this mental representation (i.e., the concept of earth) has a reciprocal substance that exists ‘out there’, it is not found in the *Visuddhimagga*. However, The *Abhidhammas* have listed *rūpa*, *citta*, *cetasikas* and *nibbāna* as ‘*paramatthadhammā*’, which is the ultimate reality. Perhaps the criticisms of some Mahāyana texts are focused on the classification that would turn into a dogma of plurality that might uncritically affirm the validity of our perceptions. This criticism offers a re-evaluation of many standards in Buddhist practices. It is an open-ended issue. My contention is only to see the common

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<sup>260</sup> D.A.I, 22

<sup>261</sup> DhsA. 38: Hetumhi ñāṇaṃ dhammapañisambhidā

ground on which the anatta doctrine, as a basic tenet of all Buddhist sects, is formed as formerly presented.

The links between phenomena are also termed the ‘*connecting Teaching*’ in contrast to a so called the ‘*Perfect Teaching*’ as depicted in *Prajñāparamitā* literatures. We will return to this theme in the last chapter. In this chapter my discussion is restricted to the theme according to different approaches, under four head-lines: ontological and epistemological; psychological; ethical and social application of the *Anatta* doctrine.

## II Ontological Argument on *Atta*

In this changing world, there are only things which are subject to constant changing and decay. Perceiving their real nature, I declare that the world is compounded of things, subject to decay and decomposition, namely, the aggregates of matter, sensation, perception, mental formations and consciousness which are incessantly arising and passing away. There is nothing else besides these perishing aggregates. *Bhikkhus*, I teach this *Dhamma* in a brief manner. I also teach this *Dhamma* more comprehensively and completely...<sup>262</sup>

Perhaps the most controversial issue surrounding the notion of *atta* or self inheres in its ontological aspect. In the second chapter, we have presented some views on self or soul in different systems of philosophy, now we will see how Buddhism denies the existence of such an entity that is identified with a real and solid personality. Steven Collins in his highly scholastic book named “Selfless Persons” has

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<sup>262</sup> S. IV, *Khandhasamyutta*, *puppha sutta*.

systematically pointed out how linguistic and psychological belief has misled people to the view that in certain ways the Buddha did not deny the ontology of the self. One of these typical views are found in Hajime Nakamura's work "A comparative History of Ideas", in which he calls 'the true self' (p.269) when he picks up many examples such as "*attaññū*" (A IV, P.113; D.III, p.252), *Attanā'va kataṃ pāpaṃ; attajaṃ attasambhavaṃ*- "By oneself alone is evil done; (it is) self-born self-generated" (Dhp.161); and *Attānaṃ ce piyaṃ jaññā*- "If one holds oneself dear" (Dhp.157); and translates the word '*attā*' as 'the self' which appears to be very misleading. In another example, he writes: "The second type of self, a latent self, was called "the Lord of self" (op. cit; p. 270). This is from the *Dhammapāda* 160 "*Attā hi attano nātho. Ko hi nātho paro siyā. Attanā'va sudantena, nātham labhati dullabhaṃ*" which should be understood as: "Oneself is one's own refuge, for who else would be (his) refuge? With oneself well tamed, one gets a savior difficult to gain". This appears on the same line as Dhp.161, 165, 166 in which the word '*atta*' should be understood as a reflective pronoun, not 'the self'.

Yet, Buddhist philosophy does not deny the empirical notion of differentiations among individuals which is called '*puggalapaññatti*' and *sammutti sacca*- the conventional truth; **what is denied is a metaphysical entity and what is to be eliminated is an egoistic attitude as a sequel of 'personal view-sakkāyadiṭṭhi'**, caused by craving (*taṇhā*) and attachment (*upādāna*) in general, especially attachment to the components of personality- *pañcuppādānakkhandha*. As observed by Steven Collins, it is fruitless for scholars to argue about the nature of *Anattā* in technical terms of what is meant and what

such a salvation can be<sup>263</sup>. We have also suggested earlier that a mere intellectual approach to the *Anattā* means nothing because it cannot exempt one from being involved in the process and suffer its consequences. We will return to this contention in the following sections. Returning to the previous work, in another place, Collins writes:

It is (the doctrine of *anatta*) a form of denial of self which in the *Theravāda* tradition has been of most importance in the ethical and psychological dynamic of spiritual education, while in other traditions, especially *Mahāyana* schools, it has been much developed as a topic of epistemology and ontology under the general name of “emptiness (*śūnyatā*)”<sup>264</sup>.

As a practitioner from both traditions, I must add to his comment that even in *Mahāyana* tradition, the education on *Anatta*, especially to practice in an unselfish way is much emphasized. In the following pages I will present more

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<sup>263</sup> Steven Collins 1978: *Selfless Persons*, P.78: “The intellectual position of specialist Buddhism is quite specific; despite its being a system which emphasizes to an almost exaggerated degree individual responsibility in ethics (through the strict application of karma) and which offer a way to complete salvation (in nirvāna), there is a radical refusal to speak of a self or permanent person in any theoretical contexts. It is, I think, fruitless for a scholar to try to explain, in his own more or less technical terms, what is “mean” and what such a salvation can be. Rather he should see Buddhism’s ideological stance as a social, intellectual, and soteriological strategy. Among those Buddhists who are concerned with and pay explicit allegiance to the doctrine of anattā, it provides orientation to social attitude and behavior (particularly vis-ā-vis Brahmanical thought and the ritual priests who purveyed it), to conceptual activity in the intellectual life of Buddhist scholastics, and to soteriological activity in the life of virtuoso meditators.”

<sup>264</sup> Steven Collins 1978, p.116

quotations pertaining to the notion of self or soul and the way early Buddhist texts denounce its ontological validity.

## **II.1 *Attabhāva*- Personality Is Not an Independent Agent**

It is very clear that the Buddha had on many occasions denounced the belief in ‘the self’. *Nikāya* texts record that even in the second sermon (*Anattalakkhaṇasutta*), the Buddha did frankly deal with this topic in that he divided personality into five components (*khandha*) and declared that none of them could identify with the self. *Rūpa*- the material component is not self, *vedanā*- the sensation component is not self, *saññā*- the perception is not self, *saṅkhārā*- the mental constructions are not self, and *viññāna*- the consciousness is not self. The reasons are that they are all share the nature of impermanence, and what is impermanent is also suffering; what is impermanent and suffering is reasonably not self, for they disobey one’s commands (M.I, 237). This may lead to the conclusion that the self must be something apart from these components. At this point, Dr Malalasekera, echoed the commentator Kumāralabha, who exclaimed: if there is such a thing as self (*atta*) what on earth prevented the Buddha to speak out about it? [Ref. Encyclopedia of Buddhism Vol.I, an article on Anatta].

Samyutta Nikāya records a very important dialogue between the Buddha and the wanderer named Vacchagotta that concerns this topic.

“Now, master Gotama, is there a self?” –at these words the Exalted One was silent.

“How, then, master Gotama, is there not a self?” – For a second time did the Exalted One keep silent.

Then the wanderer Vacchagotta rose from his seat and went away. Not long after the departure of Vacchagotta, the wanderer, the venerable Ānanda said to the Exalted One: “How is it, lord, that the Exalted One gave no answer to the question of the wanderer Vacchagotta?”

“If, Ānanda, when asked by the Wanderer: ‘Is there a self?’ I had replied to him: ‘there is a self’, then, Ānanda, that would be siding with the recluses and Brahmins who are Eternalists”

“But, if, Ānanda, when asked: ‘Is there not a self?’ I had replied it does not exist, that, Ānanda, would be siding with the recluses and Brahmins who are Annihilationists.”

“Again, Ānanda, when asked by the Wanderer: ‘Is there a self?’ had I replied that there is, would my answer be in accordance with the knowledge that all things are impermanent?”

“Surely not, lord.”

“Again, Ānanda, when asked by Vacchagotta: ‘Is there a self?’ had I replied that there were not, it would have been more bewilderment for the already bewildered Vacchagotta.

He would have said: ‘Formerly indeed I had a self, but now I have not any more.’<sup>265</sup>

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<sup>265</sup> SN. IV, 44: 10: kinnu kho bho gotama, atthattāti. Evaṃ vutte bhagavā tuñhi ahoṣi. Kiṃ pana bho gotama, natthattāti. Dutiyampi kho bhagavā tuñhi ahoṣi. Atha kho vacchagotto paribbājako utthāyāsanaṃ pakkāmi. Atha kho āyasmā ānando acirapakkante vacchagotte paribbājake bhagavantam etadavoca: kinnu kho bhante bhagavā vacchagottassa paribbājakassa pañhaṃ puṭṭho na vyākāsi. Ahañca ānanda vacchagottassa paribbājakassa atthattāti puṭṭho samāno atthattāti vyākareyyaṃ, ye te ānanda samaṇabrāhmaṇā sassatavādā, tesametam laddhi abhavissa. Ahañca ānanda vacchagottassa paribbājakassa natthattāti puṭṭho samāno natthattāti

This dialogue still continues to give rise to many controversies up to date. The reason for his silence to Wanderer Vacchagotta was explained by the Buddha to the venerable Ānanda quite clearly. First, Vacchagotta was not in a position of understanding his profound teaching yet, for the person who is obsessive about the idea of a real and permanent self would not catch what is 'selfless'; second, the Buddha avoided discussing the metaphysics of the concept of self as the prevailing ideas of the time. The speculation about the 'self'- *atta*, and the 'world'- *loka* was a big topic of discussions at the time (and even today!). Quoting the same message, Brahmchari Sital Prashad wrote:

The above conversation requires a careful and deep thinking. The reason why Gotama Buddha did not reply to the question of Vacchagottra and remained silent, appears to be that he avoided a discussion on these topics, and further his mode of silence showed to Vacchagottra that the soul can not be known by talking, but by realizing.

Gotama Buddha's first reply to his near disciple Ananda shows that he did not take one-side view, did not maintain that the soul was absolutely indestructible or destructible. As stated in Jain Philosophy, the soul

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vyākareyyaṃ. Ye te ānanda [PTS P. 401] samaṇabrāhmaṇā ucchedavādā, tesametam laddhi abhaviṣṣa. Ahañca ānanda, vacchagottassa paribbājakassa atthattāti puṭṭho samāno atthattāti vyākareyyaṃ, apinu me taṃ ānanda, anulomaṃ abhaviṣṣa ñāṇassa uppādāya. Sabbe dhammā. Anattāti no hetam bhante. Ahañca ānanda. Vacchagottassa paribbājakassa natthattāti puṭṭho samāno natthattāti vyākareyyaṃ, sammohassa ānanda, vacchagottassa paribbājakassa bhiiyo sammohāya abhaviṣṣa: ahu vā me nuna pubbe attā, so etarahi natthīti.

according to him has both the attributes of permanent existence, and changeability.<sup>266</sup>

It appears that B.T.Prashad cannot relinquish the position of a “pure soul”, as he calls it, which is admitted in Buddhism, and it is identical with Nirvana.<sup>267</sup> Quoting many messages from *Samyutta Nikāya* and *Majjhima Nikāya*, he tried to prove that the “pure soul” is something indestructible, and not included in five *khandhas* which are destructible. Again, in S.IV, *Anicca sutta*, he commented: “The above statement also clearly declares that ‘I’ am something else; ‘I’ am not the five senses and the mind.”<sup>268</sup> He also referred to F.L.Woodward, *Some saying of the Buddha*, and concluded: “Some quotations from the above book which show the existence of the soul”. These are D. II, 198; Dhp. verse 236, 378.<sup>269</sup> In the following further reading, I also quote nearly the same sources with which he had quoted, but with different interpretations.

*Dīgha Nikāya, Poṭṭhapāda sutta* is a long discourse in which the Buddha patiently explained to the wandering ascetic *Poṭṭhapāda* and his friends who were discussing on the nature of ‘the self’, whether it is identified with the consciousness or

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<sup>266</sup> Sital Prasad, *A Comparative Study of Jainism and Buddhism* (Sri Satguru Publication, India) P. 47; 1982.

<sup>267</sup> Op.cit. p. 15: “This clearly shows that Nirvana itself is such, or there is something in “Nirvana” condition which is uncreated. And it cannot be anything else than a pure soul”.

<sup>268</sup> Op.cit .p. 61.

<sup>269</sup> Dhp. 236: So karohi dīpaṃ attano; khippaṃ vāyama paṇḍito bhava. Niddhantamalo anaṅgaṇo; dibbaṃ ariyabhumiṃ ahisi.

It is Dhammapāda 379, not 378 as B.T. Prashad sai, the original Pāli: Attanā coday’attānaṃ; patimāse attaṃ attanā. So attagutto satimā, sukhaṃ bhikkhu vihāhisi.

not. It seems the understanding of what is a human being consisted of among ascetics and thinkers of the day consisted of a clear cut dichotomy of body and mind. *Saññā*, the term used here denotes the conscious, non-material part of being in contrast to *kāya*, a solid shape, or material build. I choose to translate the term *saññā* in this context as ‘consciousness’, not in its usual meaning of ‘perception’ because the term is used by the *Poṭṭhapāda* to refer to a more complex sense implicating the self or soul in his way of thinking.

Some ones said: “One’s consciousness arises and ceases without cause and conditions. When it arises, one is conscious, when it ceases, then one is unconscious.” But the others argued: “No, that is not how it is. Consciousness is the person’s self, which comes and goes. When it comes, the person is conscious; when it goes the person is unconscious.”<sup>270</sup>

Someone poses as a third party or agent outside the person acting as one who injects the soul into a man’s body, or withdraws it from him, appears to be similar to the Christian concept of Creation. But the *Poṭṭhapāda* was interested in the ‘higher extinction of consciousness’ (*abhisaññānirodho*) only, and therefore the Buddha revealed the way consciousness

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<sup>270</sup> DN 9, *Poṭṭhapādasutta*: (1) *Tatrekacce evamaḥṃsu*: "ahetu appaccayā purisassa saññā uppajjanti'pi nirujjhanti'pi. Yasmim̐ samaye uppajjanti, saññī tasmim̐ samaye hoti. Yasmim̐ samaye nirujjhanti, asaññī tasmim̐ samaye hoti"ti ittheke abhisaññānirodham̐ paññāpentī. (2) *Tamañño evamaḥa*: "na kho pana me'tam̐ bho evam̐ bhavissati. Saññā hi bho purisassa attā. Sā ca kho upeti'pi apeti'pi. Yasmim̐ samaye upeti, saññī tasmim̐ samaye hoti. Yasmim̐ samaye apeti, asaññī tasmim̐ samaye hoti"ti ittheke abhisaññānirodham̐ paññāpentī

arises and ceases owing to a cause and conditions, and that consciousness can be trained in a successive steps. In subduing of formations in *jhānas*, and finally, in the highest attainment of this kind, the practitioner can reach the summit: the cessation of consciousness, i.e. ceasing all mental activities. But still then Poṭṭhapāda was not quite satisfied, causing him to wonder: “-Is then, Sir, the consciousness identical with a man’s soul, or is consciousness one thing and the soul another?” -“What, then, Poṭṭhapāda? Do you again postulate the soul?” asked the Buddha. (*saññā nu kho bhante purisassa attā udāhu aññā añño attā’ti? Kiṃ pana tvam, Poṭṭhapāda, attānaṃ paccesī’ti?*) At this point, the wandering ascetic had to admit that he takes for granted the existence of a self or soul in some form or another, and in dismay, he asked whether it is material or mind-created (*oḷārikaṃ kho ahaṃ attānaṃ...manomayaṃ kho ahaṃ bhante attānaṃ*)? All of which were refuted by the Buddha as not ‘the self’. In this context, the Buddha also avoided giving a categorical answer to this kind of inquiry, saying:

It is difficult for one of different views, a different faith, under different influences, with different pursuits and a different training to know whether consciousness is the man’s soul or it is a different thing. [*Dujjānaṃ kho etaṃ poṭṭhapāda tayā aññadiṭṭhikena aññakhantikena aññarucikena aññatrayogena aññatrācariyakena saññā purisassa attā’ti vā, aññā saññā, añño attā’ti vā*].<sup>271</sup>

Thus the Buddha appeared very consistent in his way of dealing with the followers of other sects. He knew the measure of their intellectual (this knowledge is termed *attaññū*) and did

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<sup>271</sup> D. I, 189 [PTS]

not make a forceful attack on the prevalent *Brahmanical* point of view. It is noteworthy that in due course, both Vacchagotta and Poṭṭhapāda followed the Buddha's teaching and realized the ultimate goal: *anattā*, the nature of all phenomena and thereby attained *Nibbāna*. I will return to this discourse later in the psychological approach to the doctrine of non-self. It is in this context, when Poṭṭhapāda proceeds to put questions on the metaphysical issues, the Buddha said such a query does not concern his Dhamma, for they are not practical and beneficial the enquirers. As to what he was actually concerned about, the Bhuddha said:

I have expounded what *dukkha* is; I have expounded what is its cause; I have expounded what is the cessation of *dukkha*, and the method that leads to the cessation of *dukkha*. [*Katame ca te poṭṭhapàda mayà ekaṃsikaṃ dhammà desitā paññattā? 'Idaṃ dukkha'nti kho poṭṭhapàda mayà ekaṃsiko dhammo desito paññatto. 'Ayaṃ dukkhasamudayo'ti kho poṭṭhapàda mayà ekaṃsiko dhammo desito paññatto. 'Ayaṃ dukkhanirodho'ti kho poṭṭhapàda mayà ekaṃsiko dhammo desito paññatto. 'Ayaṃ dukkhanirodhagàminīpaṭipadā'ti kho poṭṭhapàda mayà ekaṃsiko dhammo desito paññatto.*]<sup>272</sup>

## II. 2. *Pañca Khandha*- The Personality's Components Are Not Self

In the preceding chapter I have attempted to present the *Khandha* doctrine as an empirical way to understand

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<sup>272</sup> DN. Poṭṭhappādasutta. [PTS Page 192].

personality (*attabhāva*) as a psycho-physical process and how to identify with that process involving suffering. We see, in numerous *suttas* that the Buddha and his great disciples have made the same attempt to persuade people from taking a stand (*ditṭhigataṃ*, literally meaning wrong view) in the process. To sum up this kind of attitude toward the *khandhas*, the Buddha said:

Monks, whatever contemplatives or priests who assume in various ways when assuming a self, all assume the five clinging-aggregates, or a certain one of them. Which five? There is the case where an uninstructed, run-of-the-mill person -- who has no regard for noble ones, is not well-versed or disciplined in their Dhamma; who has no regard for men of integrity, is not well-versed or disciplined in their Dhamma -- assumes form (the body) to be the self, or the self as possessing form, or form as in the self, or the self as in form.

He assumes feeling to be the self... He assumes perception to be the self... He assumes (mental) fabrications to be the self... He assumes consciousness to be the self, or the self as possessing consciousness, or consciousness as in the self, or the self as in consciousness.

Thus, both this assumption & the understanding, 'I am,' occur to him. And so it is with reference to the understanding 'I am' that there is the appearance of the five faculties -- eye, ear, nose, tongue, & body (the senses of vision, hearing, smell, taste, & touch).<sup>273</sup>

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<sup>273</sup> S. III, 47: 5: Ye hi keci bhikkhave, samaṇàva brahmaṇà va anekavihiṭaṃ attānaṃ samanupassamaṇà samanupassanti, sabbe te pañcupādānakkhandhe samanupassanti, etesaṃ va aññataraṃ. Katame pañca: Idha bhikkhave, assutava puthujjano ariyaṇaṃ adassavī ariyadhammassa akovido

The above passage is a typical account of assuming *attā* with *khandhas*, each in four ways reflecting the dogmatic speculation of thinkers at the time. These fourfold assumptions plus with the five *khandhas* that makes up twenty types of wrong views are elaborated in *Brahmajalāsutta* (DN). It is said due to ignorant element that prevents the ordinary folks from seeing rapid successive changes in the process of sense-impressions. It is the nature of a deluded mind to perceive the phenomena in a personal way, asserting his ego into each experience as ‘this I am’, ‘I shall be this or that’.

If cognitive errors lead to wrong views as we have discussed in the preceding chapter, in the *saññākhandha* section, in terms of *vipallāso*, therefore a correct vision or insight into the sensory experiences will prevent the beholder from identifying with phenomena. Upon this injunction, the Buddha stated:

The five faculties, monks, continue as they were. And with regard to them the well-instructed disciple of the noble ones abandons ignorance and gives rise to clear knowing. Owing to the fading of ignorance and the arising of clear knowing, (the thoughts) -- 'I am,' 'I am this,' 'I shall be,' 'I shall not be,' 'I shall be possessed of

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ariyadhamme avinīto, sappurisānaṃ adassāvī sappurisdhammassa akovido sappurisdhamme avinīto, rūpaṃ attato samanupassati rūpavantaṃ vā attānaṃ attati vā rūpaṃ, rūpasmiṃ vā attānaṃ, vedanā...saññā...saṅkhārā...viññānaṃ...Iti ayañceva samanupassanā asmīti cassa avigataṃ hoti. Asmīti kho pana bhikkhave avigate, pañcannaṃ indriyānaṃ avakkanti hoti: cakkhunadriyassa sotindriyassa ghanindriyassa jivhindriyassa kayindriyassa. Atthi bhikkhave mano atthi dhammā, atthi avijjādhātu avijjāsamphassajena bhikkhave, vedayitena phutthassa assutavato puthujjanassa asmīti'pissa hoti, ...

A translation of Thanissara Bhikkhu, Access to Insight source.

form,' 'I shall be formless,' 'I shall be percipient (conscious),' 'I shall be non-percipient,' and 'I shall be neither percipient nor non-percipient' -- do not occur to him.<sup>274</sup>

A more common approach, and also more specific in dealing with *sakkāya diṭṭhi* is found in *Cūḷa Saccaka sutta* (M.I, suta No 35). This records a debate between the Buddha and the famous wandering ascetic Saccaka on the subject of *atta*; in which Saccaka maintained that *rūpa*, *vedanā*, *saññā*, *saṅkhāra*, and *viññāṇa* were one's *atta*-self and that it was the self which enjoyed the fruits of good deeds and suffered the consequences of bad deeds. The Buddha refuted this view by pointing out that none of the aforementioned aggregates was 'self'; each being subjected to the same law of impermanence, unsatisfactoriness and non-substance, without being amenable to any one's will. Here the argument emphasized on the empirical point of view and practical observations reveal that holding a view or theory of the existence of a solid, permanent and identical soul or self is a grave error. The following points demonstrate for this position:

1. There is no such a soul or self which can be identified with each of *khandha* or all the *khandhas*;

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<sup>274</sup> S. III, 22: 47: tiṭṭhanti kho pana bhikkhave, tattheva pañcendriyāni, athettha sutavato ariyasāvakaassa avijjā pahīyati, vijjā uppajjati, tassa avijjāvirāgā vijjuppādā asmīti'pissa na hoti. Ayamahamasmiti'pissa na hoti, bhavissanti'pissa na hoti, na bhavissanti'pissa na hoti, saññī bhavissanti'pissa na hoti, asaññī bhavissanti'pissa na hoti, nevasaññīnāsaññī bhavissanti'pissa na hotī'ti.

A translation of Thanissara Bhikkhu; see also in Bhikkhu Bodhi's translation: *The Connected Discourses of the Buddha*. Wisdom 2000. P 886.

2. For each *khandha* has the nature of changing and becomes otherwise beyond the will to control of the person who identifies it with himself.
3. The five *khandhas* arise and vanish according to conditions, not by ‘itself’ which is implied an identical entity.

In another *Sutta* (SN) the Buddha made a striking comparison of the five *khandhas*:

*Rūpakkkhandha* as a lump of foam;  
*Vedanākkhandha* as in a bubble;  
*Saññākkhandha* as a mirage;  
*Sañkkhārakkhandha* as a plantain trunk; and  
*Viññāṇakkhandha* as an illusion.

The fact that they lack an essence is due to their ephemeral nature of them. Regarding this point we can conclude that Buddhism does not under any circumstance accept a metaphysical self as a lasting and unchanging substance within or without this psycho-physical complex. Further, we find a message in *Dīghanikāya*, *Mahānidānasutta* in which the Buddha eloquently denounced the assumption of self in feeling as regards to the epistemological approach. The text reads:

To what extent, Ananda, does one assume when assuming a self? Assuming feeling to be the self, one assumes that 'Feeling is my self' [or] 'Feeling is not my self: My self is without feeling' [or] 'Neither is feeling my self, nor is my self without feeling, but rather my self feels, in that my self is subject to feeling.'<sup>275276</sup>

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<sup>275</sup> D. II, Mahānidāna sutta: Kittā vatā ca, Ananda, attānaṃ samanupassamāno samanupassati? Vedaṇaṃ vā hi, ānanda, attānaṃ samanupassamāno

Herein, the self is identified with the most sensitive aggregate, feeling, in three points: (1) totally identifying the self with feeling, (2) avoiding an identification of self with feeling, (3) asserting that the self is subject to feeling. Regarding the first position, the Buddha asked us: there are three kinds of feelings: pleasant, unpleasant, and neutral one, that they are not only different but also mutually exclusive; to which of them should one regard it as ‘my-self’? Commenting on this, Bhikkhu Bodhi writes: “Calling attention to this diversity in feeling already deals a blow to the notion of self.”<sup>277</sup> Further, feelings are constantly changing, one alternating with another; when one particular kind of feeling ceases, it gives a chance for a different experience, so it is questionable as to whether one should assert that his self has changed or ceased to exist (*byagā me attā*)? In the case of fleeting feelings, how could a person seek to establish a (permanent) self? The Jain’s theory of soul (or self) is that the soul has the attribution of change as well as eternality (as I had quoted in the previous page & chapter), but empirical experiences show that none of these feelings are endowed with a permanent quality, so self (or soul) cannot be an identical thing with feeling. This leads to the second position “feeling is not myself, myself is without experience of feeling”, about which it should be asked: “where there is nothing at all that is felt, could the idea ‘I am’ occur then?” The commentary on the passage said that this position

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samanupassati. Vedanā me attā’ti. Na heva kho me vedanā attā,  
 appaṭisaṃvedano me attā’ti; iti vā hi, ānanda, attānaṃ samanupassamāno  
 samanupassati. Na heva kho me vedanā attā, no pi appaṭisaṃvedano me attā,  
 attā me vedayati, vedanadhammo hi me attā’ti.

<sup>276</sup> D. II, Mahānidāna sutta. Para. 121

<sup>277</sup> Bhikkhu Bodhi. *The Great Discourse on Causation* (BPS 1995), p. 34, 35.

refers to the view that self is purely materiality. The meaning is “can the ego-conception ‘I am’ (*asmi*) arise in that which is devoid of feeling, (in a bare material object) such as a palm-leaf fan or a window panel?”(DA). According to Bhikkhu Bodhi, this argument is based on the theorist’s presupposition that selfhood requires some degree of self-consciousness. Whether the subject denies feeling as his self or not, the dichotomy between the subject (one who feels) and the object (feeling) is there; for “without the experience of feeling” is an absent of object, could self (as a subject) asserts its existence? This quandary seem to be avoided in the third position “feeling is not my self, but my self is not without experience of feeling. My self feels; for my self is subject to feeling”. It should be asked: “If feeling were to cease absolutely and utterly without a remainder, then, in the complete absence of feeling, with the cessation of feeling, could (the idea) “I am this” occurs there?”. Yet, it seems to be safe to detach feeling which is evanescent with self which is supposed to be indestructible, and the participation of self in what is experiencing is a consistent witnesser to the vicissitudes of experiences. This resembles the *Saṅkhya* philosophy of the dualism of changeless self (*puruṣa*) and changeable nature (*prakṛti*). [See Chapter II, p. 43]

Though more promising at first than the other two positions, this position too turn out to be flawed. Fundamental to the notion of selfhood is an inherent capacity for self-affirmation..., self should be able to affirm its own being and identity to it self without need for external referents. Yet the theorist is forced to admit that, with the cessation of feeling, in the complete absence of feeling, the idea “I am this” could not be

conceived.” (Bhikkhu Bodhi, *Introduction to the Mahānidāna sutta*. P.36).

The value and benefit of not identifying and assuming there is a self was revealed by the Buddha in next paragraph:

Now, Ananda, in as far as a monk does not assume feeling to be the self, nor the self as oblivious, nor that 'My self feels, in that my self is subject to feeling,' then, not assuming in this way, he does not cling to anything in the world. Not clinging, he is not agitated. Unagitated, he is totally unbound right within. He discerns that 'Birth is ended, the holy life fulfilled, the task done. There is nothing further for this world.'<sup>278</sup>

As we have seen from the earlier quoted texts, the reason for the Buddha to be silence on these issues is the futile nature of these metaphysic questions. Let us take a glimpse at some other materials connected to this theme.

In the Cūḷamālukya sutta (M 63), a bhikkhu named Mālukya asked the Buddha some well-known classical questions such as is the universe eternal or not etc; is the soul the same as the body, is the soul one thing and the body another etc; does life exist after death. The Buddha explained to him that the practice of the holy life does not depend upon

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<sup>278</sup> DN. 15: Yato kho panānanda, bhikkhu neva vedanaṃ attānaṃ samanupassati, no pi appaṭisaṃvedanaṃ attānaṃ samanupassati, no pi 'attā me vedayati vedanāddhammo hi me attā'ti samanupassati, so evaṃ asamanupassanto na ca kiñci loke upādiyati, anupādiyamaṃ na paritassati, aparitassaṃ paccattaṃ yeva parinibbāyissati. Khīṇā jāti, vusitaṃ brahmacariyaṃ, kataṃ karaṇīyaṃ, nāparaṃ itthattāyā'ti pajānāti  
A translation of Thanissara Bhikkhu, [www.accesstoinsight.com](http://www.accesstoinsight.com)

these views. Whatever view one may hold about them, there would still be birth, aging decay, death, sorrow, lamentation, pain, grief, distress and despair. The Buddha said that he taught only about *dukkha*, its cause, its end, and the way leading to its cessation.<sup>279</sup>

Thus the reasons for the Master dismissed the queries on metaphysic issues are very clear and practical. He led his listeners to some observable experiences as feeling, craving, clinging, and common problems of life inhering in the pain of birth, aging, sickness, and the fear of death and separation. How can one understand whether life is *attā* or *anatā* without understanding life process and have an authentic attitude towards what is happening? Inquiring on the self and its nature is not fit to answer as reference to the modes of answers to questions, this is called the question should be put aside. Once, two wandering ascetics named Mundiya and Jāliya approached the Buddha and asked whether the self was the physical body, or that the physical body was the self; or the self was one thing and the body another. Here we see the speculation about and the identification with an entity (self, soul) as regards to the physical body (*kāya* or *rūpakkhanda*) in its classical three or four ways. The Buddha explained how a person who had finally realized liberation would not even need to reflect upon these things.<sup>280</sup>

Perhaps one of the most interesting and comprehensible books that discusses on the notion of *atta/anatta* is a text named *Milindapañhā- The Question of King Milinda*<sup>281</sup> that

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<sup>279</sup> *The compendium of Buddhism*. P.63. Burmese Ṭipitaka committee, Penang 2000.

<sup>280</sup> Ref. op. cit. p.30

<sup>281</sup> This book is compiled around 1st BC.

when the Greek king Mendros (Milinda in Pāli) asked Ven. Nagasena, a renounced Buddhist monk about whom he is talking with. The monk answered:

As Nagasena I am known, O Great King, and as Nagasena do my fellow religious habitually address me. But although parents give name such as Nagasena, or Surasena, or Virasena, or Sihasena, nevertheless, this word "Nagasena" is just a denomination, a designation, a conceptual term, a current appellation, a mere name. For no real person can here be apprehended."

As the Greek king was not an ordinary one, he vociferously asked his large company to bear witness to what the monk had just stated. The monk calmly asked him: your majesty, by what means did you come here? – I came here by chariot; answered the king. The monk continued:-What is that you call a chariot, your majesty? Is it the wheels? No. Is it the axle? No. Or is it the pole, or the framework etc that you call a chariot? To all, these questions, the king denied that these individual components are not the chariot, but the combination of these in a certain way makes up the chariot. The monk said: in the same way, what is called Nagasena is the combination of many individual parts such as body, feeling, perception, volitions, and consciousness that people call Venerable Nagasena.<sup>282</sup> This echoing a verse in Samyutta Nikāya in which the nun Vajirā answered the Mara, the evil one as follows:

When certain things we find combined,  
We speak of 'chariot', speak of 'car'.  
Just so when all five aggregates appear,  
We use the designation of 'man'."

*(Hoti sattoti sammuti.”  
Yathā hi āngasambhārā,  
Hoti saddo ratho iti;  
Evaṃ khandhesu santesu.)* [S.V.10]

## II. 3 Did the Buddha Teach Phenomenalism or Nihilism?

The Buddha refuted to answer the questions concerning the existence of an entity or identity of *atta* or *Tathāgata* or the existence or non-existence of such an identity after the death of an *Arahant*.

"How do you construe this: Do you regard the Tathāgata as form-feeling-perception-fabrications-consciousness?"

"No, lord."

"Do you regard the Tathāgata as that which is without form, without feeling, without perception, without fabrications, without consciousness?" "No, lord."

"And so, Anurādha -- when you can't pin down the Tathāgata as a truth or reality even in the present life -- is it proper for you to declare, 'Friends, the Tathāgata -- the supreme man, the superlative man, attainer of the superlative attainment -- being described, is described otherwise than with these four positions: The Tathāgata exists after death, does not exist after death, both does and does not exist after death, neither exists nor does not exist after death?'" "No, lord."

"Very good, Anurādha. Very good. Both formerly and now, it is only stress that I describe, and the cessation of stress."<sup>283</sup>

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<sup>283</sup> S.22: 86: Taṃ kiṃ maññasi anurādha, rūpaṃ tathāgato'ti samanupassasīti? No hetamaṃ bhante. Vedanā tathāgato'ti samanupassasīti no hetamaṃ bhante. Sañña tathāgato'ti samanupassasīti no hetamaṃ bhante.

Noted that an *Arahant* is the person who has destroyed all defilements (*kilesa*), rooted up all the roots of anger (*dosa*), craving (*lobha*) and ignorance (*moha* or *avijjā*) which are the roots of rebirth and becoming. This very subtle point brings the accusation that the Buddha teaches annihilation (“There is also a way in which one can rightly say that I am an annihilationist. For I teach the annihilation of greed, hatred and delusion; I teach the annihilation of the multitude of evil and unwholesome qualities” (A viii, 12)). At his time, the Buddha was accused of upholding an annihilationist view (“there are some recluses and brahmas who misrepresent me untruly, vainly, falsely, not in accordance with the fact, saying: “The recluse Gotama is an annihilationist, he lays down the cutting off, the destruction, the disappearance of the existent entity.”(M. 22. 180); modern scholars like R.C. Childers and Mr. James D’Alvis<sup>284</sup> ...also misunderstood that *Nibbāna* is annihilation, and even Mahāyana Buddhism accuses the Theravada Buddhism that the latter has wrongly grasped an annihilationistic view.<sup>285</sup>

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Saṅkhàrā tathāgato'ti samanupassasīti no hetam bhante. Viññāṇam tathāgato'ti samanupassasīti no hetam bhante. Tam kammaññasī anurādha, ayam so arūpī avedanā asaññī asāṅkhāro aviññāṇo tathāgato'ti samanupassasīti? No hetam bhante. Ettha ca te anurādha, diṭṭheva dhamme saccato thetato tathāgate anupalabbhiyamāne kallannu te tam vyākaraṇam "yo so āvuso, tathāgato uttamapuriso paramapuriso paramapattipatto tam tathāgato aññatiramehi [PTS. 119] catuhi ṭhānehi paññāpayamāno paññāpeyya "hoti tathāgato parammaraṇāti vā na hoti tathāgato parammaraṇāti vā hoti ca na ca hoti tathāgato parammaraṇāti vā neva hoti na na hoti tathāgato parammaraṇāti vā"ti? No hetam bhante. Sādhu sādhu anurādha, pubbe cāham anurādha, etarahi ca dukkhañce va paññāpemi dukkhassa ca nirodhanti.

<sup>284</sup> R.C. Childers: *Dictionary of the Pāli language*, P.265, 267.

<sup>285</sup> *Ch'an and Zen teaching*, P 10. Charles Luk.

Here a certain teacher sets out soul as something real and permanent in the present life as well as in the future life. Again, another teacher sets out soul as something real and permanent as far as this world is concerned but does not say so with regard to any future existence. Lastly, a certain teacher does not set out the **soul as a real and permanent entity** either in regard to the present or to the future life.” The first type is identified with teacher who upholds the doctrine of eternalism; the second type is identified with annihilationist; and the third type is said belong to the teaching of the fully enlightened one (the Buddhas)<sup>286</sup>.

Here we should emphasize that the concept of self or soul is held as ‘real’, a valid ontology of the soul, and ‘permanent’ which means a lasting and unchanging personality. And the denial of the Buddhists is mainly focused on these two points, not on the empirical features that distinguished one from another that in Buddhist terms are called *puggala paññatti*, the concept of person or individual. This topic had been brought in from time to time whenever the controversy around the notion of a real and independent agent that abides in living things, and imperishable with the destruction of the body (as depicted in *Upaniṣad; Gītā*, ch2, 22) was being raised. The Buddhist denial of this self of the Upaniṣads:

“The inner being of all things,  
the one, the controller  
who renders his own form many,  
the wise who perceive him in their self...” ( *Maṇḍūkya Upaniṣad*, 1,2,3).

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<sup>286</sup> *Human types*, P. 53, PTS,- *puggala paññatti*

But those terms *atta*, *puggala*, *purisa*, etc when employed in the Buddhist scriptures are still the subject of misinterpretation in that the word is thought to denote some valid and distinctive substance. To counteract this tendency, the book called “Points of controversy”- *Kathavatthu pakaraṇaṃ*, one of the *Abhidhamma* books of the Theravada tradition gives a lengthy repudiation of the *Theravādin* to the so called ‘*Puggalavādin*’ who uphold the view that there is a ‘real person’ existing. The other *Abhidhamma* books which was compiled by *Vasubandhu*, a great Buddhist philosopher of 5<sup>th</sup> AD also devotes a book discusses on this presumption. As quoted:

(*Vasubandhu*)“-When we are applying to an idea the name of ‘an individual’, what is the corresponding object? Is it the elements of a personal life, or is it a (real) individual?” And the argument continued:” In the first case we are applying the name to the elements only, since there is no ‘real’ object so called. In the second, why should this name be conditioned by the elements, since it is conditioned by the real individual itself?”

(*Vatsiputriya*)” We maintain that in the presence of all the elements of a personal life we perceive the object called ‘individual’. Therefore we use this name as conditioned by the elements.”

(*Vasubandhu*)-“But colors too is perceived under the condition that the sense of vision, aroused attention and light be present. Hence you must maintain that it is ‘conditioned’ by them therefore monind. (There will be no unconditioned existence altogether).

In another approach, *Nāgārjuna* refutes the notion of ‘*svabhāva*’- the essential characteristic that is inherent in every existence that makes ‘itself’ or ‘its own nature’ (of the *Sarvāstivāda*). According to this great Buddhist philosopher, everything is interdependent, inter-relative, and in relativity there is nothing called ‘its own identity’ (*svabhāva*), for a thing that depends on the cause(s) for its emergence what is there to be called ‘its own’? And “that which is relative to others is justifiably not the essence (*ātman*)”. (*Madhyamaka-sāstra*, I, 5; XII, 3).

I do not teach that there is one thing called old age and death, and that there is someone to whom they belong. Verily, if one holds the view that life (*jīva* = life principle, soul) is identical with the body (*taṃ jīvaṃ taṃ sarīraṃ*), in that case there can be no holy life. And if one holds the view that life is one thing but body another thing (*aññaṃ jīvaṃ aññaṃ sarīraṃ*), also in that case holy life is impossible. Avoiding both of these extremes (i.e. complete identity and complete otherness) the Perfect One has taught the doctrine that lies in the middle, namely: Through rebirth conditioned are old age and death;...through the process of becoming, rebirth;... through clinging, the process of becoming;...etc.<sup>287</sup> (S XII, 35).

This passage is a weighty statement of the Buddha to denounce the ontological existence of self or soul. It also conveys a clear and straightforward manner of his discourses on this issue. Herein, the conditioned arising of phenomena is offered to avoid two prevalent trends of the contemporary

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<sup>287</sup> S XII, 35

philosophy: nihilism and eternalism that insist on ontological argument. However, it is not an act of shutting down the issue; rather, it opens a new dimension in understanding the life process without succumbing to ontological inquiry.

### III Psychological Approach

Returning to the Potṭhapāda sutta (DN) in which the Buddha pointed out to the ascetics that consciousness arises via cause and conditions, and therefore by the alternation of cause(s) and conditions the whole course of consciousness would be changed: “By training some states of consciousness arise. By training others pass away”. This art of alternating consciousness (from a negative course to a positive course) is called *Bhāvanā* in Buddhist terms. This will be discussed in chapter seven, for now we will further trace into the psychological aspects of the *anatta* doctrine.

#### III.1 Thought Processes

Elsewhere the Buddha rebuked Sati, a monk believing that an unchanging self (*atta*) transmigrates from this life (or body) to the next. The Buddha then explained that it is dependent on conditions that the consciousness arises, and by what door that consciousness arises, it is named after that door (*Yaṃ yadeva bhikkhave paccayaṃ paṭicca uppajjati viññāṇaṃ, tena teneva viññāṇaṃtveva saṅkhyāṃ gacchati. Cakkhuṃ ca paṭicca rūpe uppajjati viññāṇaṃ, cakkhuvīññāṇaṃtveva saṅkhyāṃ...M 48, para.400*). This is further explained by Ven.Sariputta that, for example eye-consciousness arises when there are three necessary conditions such as:

- (1) An impaired eye
- (2) A visible object comes into contact
- (3) Attention (*tajjosamannāhāra*)<sup>288</sup>

The *Abhidhamma* lists one more condition that is light.

As according to this analysis, along the internal sense organ and its corresponding object (*cakkhu-rūpa, sota-sada, Ghana-gandha...*), there is a factor called attention (*tajjassamanāhāra*), a question would arise: who directs the mind toward the object? This is considered a wrongly-put question. There is nobody whether an internal (*atta-* the controller) or external agent (God, Brahma) who interferes in the process. It is merely the reaction of the sense organ to its corresponding object, and this reaction takes place due to the functional of the sense organs (*indriyā*) and the power of the object (*ārammana*) that comes into the field of a conscious mind.

In the *Abhidhammthasangaha* where the mind, its properties and matters are explored as impersonal *dhammā*, the thought process is elaborated as follows:

*Ārammaṇa-* the stimulating object comes into the felt senses---  
*bhavanga sota-* the stream of consciousness vibrates-> five doors adverted-> if it is the visible form, eye-consciousness arises-> recognizing-> investigating-> determining-> experience (feels it with subjective appreciation as pleasant or unpleasant or neutral)-> registration (*tadālambana-* this is some kind of registration of the object that one has

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<sup>288</sup> MN, Mahāhatthipadopamasutta, para.306: Ajjhattikañceva ...cakkhuṃ aparibinnaṃ hoti, bāhirā ca rūpā āpāthaṃ āgacchanti, tajjo ca samannāhāro hoti. Evaṃ tajjassa viññāṇabhāgassa pātubhavo hoti.

experienced), then the stream of consciousness sinks back into the passive state called *bhavaṅgasaṭṭa*. During this process, while the active consciousness recognizes the object, the mind as a unit of perception, feeling, volition, and attention unitary hanging on to the object. It is possible as *Abhidhammikas* explain that the duration of matter is seventeen times longer than that of consciousness (in the light of momentary existence). By this way of analysis, we see that the process is spontaneous, and none of the participants is identified as ‘I’ or ‘me’. Also from this we can see how five aggregates participate, and manifest themselves as functional only. That is why the Buddha said in the *sutta*:

Therefore, monks, what is not yours, put it away. Putting it away will be for a long time for your welfare and happiness. And what, monks, is not yours? Material forms, monks, is not yours...feeling is not yours...perception is not yours...volition is not yours...consciousness is not yours; put it away, putting it away will be for a long time for your welfare and happiness. (Alagaddūpamasutta, MN).

### **III. 2 The House’s Builder and His Materials**

The first words Buddha said is to have exclaimed after his enlightenment was that he had searched for the builder of the house (*gahakārako ditthesi*). The builder of the house is identified with craving (*Taṇhā*, to be of three kinds *kāmatāṇhā*-craving for sense pleasures, *bhāvataṇhā*- craving for (continuing in a better) existence and *vibhava taṇhā*-craving for non-existence). This craving is just a mental factor, not a person, and the “house” is but a combination of *Khandhas*-aggregates. Remembering that in Buddhist

traditional analysis ‘being’ is divided into parts or elements such as Five *Khandhas*, twelve *āyātana*, eighteen *dhātu*, etc in order to dispel the belief in an entity, a solid, and unchanging or lasting being or self, soul (*atta*).

In M.43, Anāthapiṇḍikovādasutta, Ven. Sariputta exhorted the householder Anāthapiṇḍika not to grasp at the six internal sense-bases (eye, ear, nose, tongue, body, and mind), nor the six external objects (form, sound, smell, taste, touch, and ideas), nor to the feelings that arise in relation to them, nor at the six elements (earth, water, air, fire, space, and consciousness), nor at the five aggregates (body, feeling, perception, mental formation, and consciousness), nor the realms of infinite space,... The same analysis is found in A.III, 61 as follows:

Now on account of what was it said that the eighteen mental examinations (*Dhātu*) are the *dhammā* taught by me? ...Seeing a form with the eye, one conceives it a form may give rise either to joy, sadness or indifference. Hearing a sound with the ear... Smelling an odor with the nose... Tasting a flavor with the tongue... Touching a tactile object with the body... Cognizing an idea with the mind, one conceive it that give rise either to joy, sadness or indifference. There are the eighteen *dhātu*.” [...] Bases on six elements there is descend into the mother’s womb. Such descend taking place, there is name and form (*nāma-rūpa*). With the name and form as condition, there are the six sense bases (*āyātana*); with the six sense bases as condition, there is contact (*phasa*); with contact as condition, there is feeling (*vedanā*)...”

From the above passage, we see that eighteen *dhātu* are merely sensory experiences. Each sense base recognizes its corresponding object with an affected feeling. Thus is the way of analysis in order to destroy the tendency of grasping at, and distorting the perception of a unitary entity called a permanent and unchanging self or soul by way of ‘personal view-*sakkāyadiṭṭhi*’ or by way of attachment (*tanhā*).

### III. 3 Who Takes Rebirth?

It is an assumption among ascetics and yogis that with a purified vision (*dassanā-samāpatti*) obtained via *jhānas*, the practitioner can see an unbroken stream of consciousness (*viññāṇaṃ sota...abbocchinnaṃ*) joining life after life.<sup>289</sup> Because of this vision, they think that there is something which migrates from this body to the next body in the course of *samsāra*. One should be cautious when using the Buddhist term *viññāṇa sota* as the term suggests a continuity of consciousness, not an identity. Abhidhamma works speak about a “*Paṭisandhi citta*” which links life to life. Why can we not call this is a substances, or a self (*atta*) that takes rebirth? But *Paṭisandhi Citta* is but a consciousness, a thought moment that arises and ceases depending on conditions. Preceding the rebirth consciousness is death consciousness (*cuti citta*); this thought arises and ceases giving way to another thought moment arising that is rebirth consciousness. It is not the same thing transmigrating from this body to another. This is explained as *natthipaccaya*-absence condition and *vigatapaccaya* the disappearance of a condition in the *Paṭṭhāna* method. The relation between *cuticitta* and *paṭisandhicitta* is also called *anantarapaccaya*, the proximity

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<sup>289</sup> D. I. 105

of a condition and *samanantarapaccaya*, the contiguity of a condition. When the first thought moments cease they give their energy (that was not used up) to the arising of the next thought moments.

The relationship between *kamma*, *citta*, and *taṇhā* as three conditions for a person to take rebirth is revealed in A.III, 76, 77 thus: “*Kammaṃ khettaṃ, viññāṇaṃ bījaṃ taṇhā sineho*”. *kamma* here is *kammavipāka*, the results of one’s actions serving as the field; *viññāṇa* here refers to *paṭisandhicitta*, the rebirth-linking consciousness is the seed; and *taṇhā* is craving that has bound one to existence. (The commentary on the passage explains that *taṇhā* is like the water that moistened the seed.) Consciousness which does not arise by itself as an entity which is self-sufficient by the fact that dependent on certain conditions, a consciousness arises was emphasized by the Buddha many times. Consciousness being one of the five *Khandhas*, is not a “being” or “*atta*”, it even not the mind – *nāma* or a complex mental phenomena. *nāma* or *citta* consist of four *khandhas*, to wit: *vedanākkhandha*, *saññānakkhandha*, *saṅkhārakkhandha* and *viññāṇakkhandha*. A *citta* or a state of mind is said to arise together with varied mental-factors which determine its quality. These mental factors include *vedanā*, *saññā* and *saṅkhāra* – volition. But this “bundle” what is called “mind”, even then is not fit to be called a being (*satta*). A being is ultimately consists of two constituents: *nāma*- mind and *rūpa*- body.

*Rūpa* or *kāya* or the material part of a being is but another way of combination of different elements such as the element of extension (*paṭhavi dhātu*), the element of cohesion (*āpodhātu*), the element of motion (*vāyodhātu*), the element of heat or consumption (*tejo dhātu*), and the materiality derived

from the four great elements. This has been elaborated in details in the preceding chapter, the *rūpakkhanda* section. Thus the compounded mind and matter (*nāma-rūpa*) come into being under some certain conditions formulated as *avijjā*-ignorance and *saṅkhāra*- the formative force in the past, is not fit to hold together as an entity (*atta*). From an empirical approach, every body with a sound mind paying due attention would notice that our mind and body are not same things fixed, but they change from time to time, and they are relatively effecting each other (i.e. they mutually depends upon each other). In one *Sutta* the Buddha stated:

Better it would be consider the body as the ego rather than the mind. And why? Because this body may last for ten, twenty, thirty, forty, or fifty years, even for hundred years and more. But that which is called mind, consciousness, thinking (*citta = mana = viññāṇa*), arises continuously during day and night as one thing, and then as something else it vanishes. Here the learned and noble disciple considers thoroughly the Dependent Origination: when this arises then that arises. Through the arising of this, that comes to arise; through the extinction of this, that becomes extinguished, namely: Through ignorance arise the *kamma*-formations; through *kamma*-formations, consciousness (in next life); through consciousness, corporeality and mind ... etc”<sup>290</sup>

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<sup>290</sup> S. II, 12: 61: Varam bhikkhave, assutavā puthujjano imaṃ cātummahābhūtikam kāyaṃ attato upagaccheyya, natveva cittaṃ. Taṃ kissa hetu: dissatāyaṃ bhikkhave, cātummahābhūtikō kāyo ekampi vassaṃ tiṭṭhamāno, dve’pi vassāni tiṭṭhamāno, tīni’pi vassāni tiṭṭhamāno, cattārī’pi vassāni tiṭṭhamāno, pañca’pi vassāni tiṭṭhamāno, dasa’pi vassāni tiṭṭhamāno, vīsati’pi vassāni tiṭṭhamāno, tiṃsampi vassāni tiṭṭhamāno, cattārīsampi vassāni tiṭṭhamāno, paññāsampi vassāni tiṭṭhamāno, vassasatampi tiṭṭhamāno [PTS.

## IV. Ethical Value of the Anatta Doctrine

The Buddha did not see himself as a philosopher constructing an ethic of argumentation but as a healer concerned to cure the suffering of mankind from which he himself had recovered. The tumor of desire and attachment was diagnosed as causing the sickness, and it was to be excised by all the possible means.<sup>291</sup>

### IV. 1 Non-Self and Moral Responsibility

Buddhism accepts the theory of rebirth and retribution of *Kamma* in countless chains of life in *samsāra*. So the question arises thus: if there is no soul then who takes rebirth? This question disturbs many students who seriously wish to comprehend the Buddha's teaching properly. When the Buddha was expounding his non-self doctrine, a certain monk pondered: "So -- form is not-self, feeling is not-self, perception is not-self, volitional activities are not-self, consciousness is

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095]bhuyyo'pi tiṭṭhamāno. Yañca kho etaṃ bhikkhave vuccati cittaṃ itipi mano itipi viññāṇaṃ itipi. Taṃ rattiyaṃ ca divasassa ca aññadeva uppajjati aññaṃ nirujjhati.

Tatra bhikkhave sutavaṃ ariyasāvako paṭiccasamuppādaṃ yeva sādhuḥkaṃ yoniso manasikaroti: iti imasmiṃ sati idaṃ hoti. Imassuppādā idaṃ uppajjati. Imasmiṃ asati idaṃ na hoti. Imassa nirodhā idaṃ nirujjhati: yadidaṃ avijjāpaccayā saṅkhārā saṅkhārapaccayā viññāṇaṃ. Viññāṇapaccayā nāmarūpaṃ. Nāmarūpapaccayā saḷāyatanāṃ. Saḷāyatanapaccayā phasso. Phassapaccayā vedanā. Vedanāpaccayā taṇhā. Taṇhāpaccayā upādānaṃ. Upādānapaccayā bhavo...

<sup>291</sup> *Buddhist Dictionary*, p.157,-8; 197,-8; Steven Collins 1978: *Selfless persons*. P. 177.

not-self. Then what self will be touched by the actions done by what is not-self?" (M. I, 109). Reading his thoughts, the Enlightened One sternly asked: Does this monk think he can outsmart the Teacher?<sup>292</sup> Then there and again, the Buddha draws his listeners to the fact of impermanence and suffering in *sāṅkhārā dhammā* that constitute personality. As regard to the moral responsibilities or the law of retribution (kamma), the Greek king asked:

“If, revered Nāgasena, there is no one transmigrating from this body to another body, is not one freed from evil deeds?”

“Yes, sire, if one did not take rebirth one would be freed from evil deeds. But, as ,sire, one does take rebirth one does therefore not utterly freed from evil deeds.”

“make a simile”.

“support, sire, some man were to steal another’s man mangoes, would he deserve punishment?”- the king say “yes”.

“But how, if the mangoes he stole were not those that has been planted, why would he be punished?”

“Those mangoes, revered sir, exist because of those others, therefore he would deserve punishment.”

“In the same way, sire, it is through the deed one does with this mind and matter, be it good or bad, that one takes

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<sup>292</sup> M. III, Mahapaṇṇamasutta: Atha kho, aññatarassa bhikkhuno evaṃ cetaso parivitaṅko udapādi: 'iti kira bho, rūpaṃ anattā, vedanā anattā, saññā anattā, saṅkhārā anattā, viññāṇaṃ anattā anattakataṇi kammaṇi kamattānaṃ phusissantīti. Atha kho bhagavā tassa bhikkhuno cetasa ceto parivitaṅkamaññāya bhikkhū āmantesi: tḥānaṃ kho panetaṃ bhikkhave, vijjati yaṃ idhekacco moghapuriso avidvā avijjāgato taṇhāhipateyyena cetasa satthusāsaṇaṃ atidhāvitaṅgaṃ maññeyya:...

rebirth in another mind and matter, and therefore, one is not utterly freed from the sequels of one's actions."<sup>293</sup>

The explanation of the enlightened monk Nagasena gives a glimpse of contiguity in the operation of cause and effect. Though it is impersonal, it does not fail to carry the effect into some way or other.

If the moral responsibility can be counted only when the subject of one's actions (the self) reaps the consequence(s) of one's acts, then the law of *kamma* would be understood as an existing for moral education only. But it is not the case. *Kamma* niyāma is an impersonal and impartial law as the same as *cittaniyāma*- the psychological principle, and *utuniyāma*- the natural order. Therefore, whether the subject of action is personalized/ identified or not, the consequence(s) of that action remain the same. But it is difficult to explain to a common man, to remind him of a sense of responsibility without a promise of reward for his good deeds and punishment for his immoral ways. Impersonal phenomena operate according to the law of cause and effect (*kammaniyāma*): "by the arising of this, this is; by the disappearance of this, this ceases" (M. 63).

#### **IV. 2 Moral Criteria from an Enlightened Point of View**

According to Buddhist ideals, a person who tries to be 'good' (behave in an approved way) in order to gain a reward or a favor is not good enough! Why? Because he is just acting

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<sup>293</sup> *The question of king Milinda*, an Abrid. Translation by N.K.G.Mendis, BPS 1993. p. 59

towards fulfilling the aims of mundane pursuits, not beyond a self-interest-principle. If he lives a virtuous and respectable life in order to gain respect, fame and a high position in society, that man may only be considered as prudent or wise, but not a saint. A noble person is the one that has given up the belief in personality (*sakkāyadiṭṭhi*) and abandoned the tendency of selfishness. He is no longer acts with the grandiose impulses, although the tendency of identification and conceit may not be entirely abandoned in the learners (*sekkhā*). [M.I,1; S.III, 89-7]

In some discourses, when the Buddha teaches *Dhamma* to the unbelievers in the afterlife, the annihilationist, he applied a different approach. The Buddha asked: do you see that the virtuous ones are respected, approved of and are less likely to get into trouble with the authorities? Do they often have a happy family life and harmony with their neighborhoods? Are these the desirable results of being good? To all, the reasonable answer is positive. The doctrine of nihilism leads to not to belief in morality and the advantage of leading a moral life. From this point of view they live unrestrained in bodily conduct, unrestrained in verbal conduct, and unrestrained in mental conduct. To these people, the Buddha said:

About this a wise man considers this: “If there is no other world, then on the dissolution of the body, this good person will have made himself safe enough. But if there is another world, then on the dissolution of the body, after death, he will reappear in a state of deprivation, in unhappy destination, in perdition, even in hell...Let me assume that there is no other world; still this person is here and now censured by the wise as an immoral person, one of wrong view, who holds the

doctrine of nihilism”. If there is other world, thus to this good man there will be two disadvantages of being censured here and now by the wise, and at the breaking of the body he will reappear in misery realm...”<sup>294</sup>

Thus from an empirical approach it is not necessary that there must be a permanent soul bearing the results of one’s actions, and a supreme God with the power of reward and punishment for mankind’s right or wrong conduct for morality to have some value. However, we must keep in mind that morality is not an end in itself, and the criteria of what and how being moral is, in any event, not the same in different cultures and societies. Moralists who desperately seek to protect their beliefs and ideals might be considered as being cruel (to themselves and to others) in another time or in another society. And the narrow-minded persons who are arrogantly convinced that only their beliefs and moral codes are right, and anything else is wrong (*idaṃ saccaṃ aññaṃ moghaṃ*) is not accepted according to the Buddha’s teaching.

The dogmatic belief that the soul is imprisoned in the body and it becomes impure because of the soiled body, being limited by the body’s size, etc generates the idea of torturing body in order to free the soul. This idea is considered an extreme as it generates pain, and is thus ignoble and

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<sup>294</sup> M. 60, Aparaṇṇaka sutta, para. 95: “sace kho natthi paro loko, evamayam bhavam purisapuggalo kāyassa bheda sotthimattānaṃ karissati. Sace kho atthi paro loko, evamayam bhavam purisapuggalo kāyassa bheda paraṃ maraṇā apāyaṃ duggatiṃ vinipātaṃ nirayaṃ upapajjissati. Kāmaṃ kho pana māhu paro loko... atha ca panāyaṃ bhavam purisapuggalo dittheva dhamme viññaṃ gāreyho: “dussīlo purisapuggalo micchādiṭṭhi natthikavādo”ti. Sace kho attheva paro loko, evaṃ imassa bhoto purisapuggalassa ubhayattha kaliggaho”.

unbeneficial (*attakilamathanuyogo, dukkho, anariyo, anattasamhito*)<sup>295</sup>. It should be avoided in Buddhist practice. Another extreme is identifying the soul with the body which leads one to seek to satisfy all primitive as well as fantastic desires by any means, including those which are immoral. This hedonistic attitude is considered as debased, common, low-minded, ignoble, and unbeneficial (*kāmasukhallikanuyogo, hino, gammo, pothujjaniko, anariyo, anattasamhito*).

**The ethical value of the anatta doctrine lies in the Middle Way** (*majjhima Paṭipadā*) or the Noble Eightfold Path (*ariya atthaṅgika magga*) in that the main characteristic of this path is adhering to the right view (*sammā diṭṭhi*). This right view ranges from a conviction in the law of *kamma* to the knowledge of seeing things as they really are (*yathābhūtaṃ-ñāṇa-dassanaṃ*), i.e., perceiving them as impermanent (*anicca*) causing distress (*dukkha*), and without substantiality (*anatta*). Thus Buddhist ethics are based not on the dogmatic beliefs, but rather on the ability of discernment between right (*kusala*) and wrong (*akusala*), the psychological forces behind right action (*kusala mūla*) and that of wrong action (*akusala mūla*). This discernment leads one to realizing the Four Noble Truths, and further, the right knowledge (*sammā ñāṇa*) and right liberation (*sammā vimutti*). Right view leads to right thought (*sammā saṅkappo*) which is free from unwholesome motives (greed, ill-will and cruelty) and negative emotions (obsessive longing- *kāmarāga*, hatred- *byāpāda*, fear- *bhaya*, depression-*domanassa*, etc..)

Right view is a pre-condition for right thought (*sammā saṅkappo*); right thought gives rise to right speech (*sammā vācā*), right action (*sammā kammanta*), and right livelihood

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<sup>295</sup> Dhammacakka pavattana sutta, S. III; Vin. Mahāvagga.

(*sammā ājivo*) which are the three constitutions of higher morality (*Sīla sikkhā*). To be virtuous (*sīlavā*) and skillful needs another three attributes: right effort (*sammā vāyamo*), right thoughtfulness (*sammā sati*), and right concentration (*sammā samādhi*). The Buddha on many occasions spoke about the threefold trainings (*sīla*, *samādhi*, and *paññā*) as fundamental and pre-requisites for each other<sup>296</sup>. The Noble Eightfold Path or the Threefold Training (*Tisso-sikkhā*) is the path of self-reliance, it is to be gradually developed. And here the point of *anatta* -egoless is high lighted as a conditional and supplementary aspect of existence in the course of self-evolution. There is nothing such as a (permanent) soul that has been implanted into a sentient being by a supreme God; and there is no such thing as purity occurred by chance as advocated by the immoralists.

#### IV. 3 “I do not dispute with the world”...

As it is stated by Professor Karunadasa : “According to Buddhism, the object of higher knowledge is not a higher reality, but the phenomenal world.” This statement is very meaningful, especially in the context of *Pāli Nikāya* whose many passages I have quoted. But how can the *khandhas*, the phenomenal world, which is always stressed as impermanence, insecurity, and non-self in Buddhism, be the object which man seeks refuge? Where would his refuge be after all? Since the world of sense-experiences is regarded as “on fire”<sup>297</sup>, is the Buddha’s intention to throw men into totally confusion and depression?

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<sup>296</sup> DN, Mahāparinibbāna sutta.

<sup>297</sup> Aditta sutta, S. IV, Sabba vagga.

Bhikkhus, I do not dispute with the world; rather, it is the world that disputes with me. A proponent of the *Dhamma* does not dispute with anyone in the world. Of that which the wise on the world agree upon as not existing, I too say that it does not exist. And of that which the wise in the world agree upon as existing, I too say that it exists (*nāhaṃ, bhikkhave, lokena vivadāmi, lokova mayā vivadati - Na, bhikkhave dhammavādī keraci lokasmīṃ vivadati. Yaṃ, bhikkhave natthisammataṃ loke paṇḍitaṇaṃ, ahaṃpi taṃ 'natthi'ti vadāmi. Yaṃ bhikkhave, atthisammataṃ loke paṇḍitānaṃ, ahaṃpi taṃ atthi'ti vadāmi*")<sup>298</sup>

Here, once again, the approach is the middle way. The Buddha did not break with the conventional expression, but he just pointed out the fact that universal laws which ‘the world of phenomena’ (*lokadhammā*) have to undergo. The Buddha did not deny the existence of the individual as totally non-existing, but in terms of five aggregates as follows:

Form that is permanent, stable, eternal, not subject to change: this is the wise on the world agree upon as not existing... Perception... volitional formations... consciousness that is permanent, stable, not subject to change...”: this is the wise on the world agree upon as not existing, and I too say that it does not exist. “And... form that is impermanent, suffering, subject to change: this the wise in the world agree upon as existing, and I too say that it exists. Feeling... perception... volitional formations... consciousness...”: this the wise

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<sup>298</sup> S III, 2, phuppha sutta, khandha vagga. Bhikkhu Bodhi’s translation. P. 949.

in the world agree upon as existing, and I too say that it exists.<sup>299</sup>

In this light, the doctrine of *anatta* is understood in connection with ‘impermanence, distress, and subject to change’. It does not “exist or not exist” nor is it thought of as “to be or not to be”, but it is more important to contemplate how it actually exists and what it should really be. For arguing on the existence and non-existence of the ‘self’ or soul, or *Tathāgata*, an enlightened being is considered as futile, not conducive to one’s spiritual upliftment.<sup>300</sup> Perhaps, in the same context the Buddha told a group of nobles (Bhadrakumārā, Mhv. Vin III, P.) that they should search for themselves rather than searching for a woman. (*Taṃ kiṃ maññatha vo, kumārā, katamaṃ nu kho tumhākaṃ varaṃ- yaṃ vā tumhe itthiṃ gavesayyātha, yaṃ vā attānaṃ gavesayyāthā’ti.*)

Many scholars argued that there is a ‘self’ (*attā*) that the Buddha directed these young people (*kumārā*) to search for as their ‘true selves’ in order to attain true happiness. In my opinion, the Buddha’s intention is to get these nobles to ‘look inside’, to be introspective and realize the truth through their knowledge of discernment within their own framework of mind and body, not to be turn outwardly to the objective world (for example, by searching for a woman). For the path of self-realization is to be realized on the basis of one’s own personal components (*khandhas*) that they are impermanent in order to

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<sup>299</sup> Ibid. Bhikkhu Bodhi translation *The connected Discourse of The Buddha*. P. 949. Wisdom Publication. 2000.

<sup>300</sup> . See Poṭṭhapāda sutta, DN; Culamālunkya sutta, MN ii. “kasmā cetam...mayā abyākatam. Na hetam...atthasamhitam, na ādibrahmacariyakam, na nibbindāya na virāgāya na nirodhāya na upasamāya na abhiññāya na sambodhāya na nibbānāya samvattanti.”

eliminate the tendency of conceit (*mānānusaya*), that they are imperfection in order to quench the thirst of craving after them (*taṇhā*), that they are empty of a controller in order to relinquish personal view (*sakkāyadiṭṭhi*).

To him, O Meghiya, who comprehends impermanence, the comprehension of no soul manifests itself. And to him who comprehends no soul, the fantasy of an ‘I’ presiding over the five aggregates is brought to destruction, and even in this present life he attains Nibbāna. (*Anicca saññino meghiya anatta saññā santhāti; anatta saññino samugghātaṃ pāpunāti dittheva dhammā nibbānaṃ.*)<sup>301</sup>

In M.18, Madhupiṇḍika sutta, when being asked what sort of doctrine that he is advocating, the Buddha answered:

The sort of doctrine, friend, where one does not keep quarreling with anyone in the cosmos (*na kenaci loke viggayha tiṭṭhati*) with its *devas*, *Maras*, and Brahmas, with its contemplatives and priests, its royalty and common folk; the sort [of doctrine] where perceptions no longer obsess the *brahman* who remains dissociated from sensual pleasures, free from perplexity, his uncertainty cut away, devoid of craving for becoming and non-existence. Such is my doctrine, such is what I proclaim.

If, monk, with regard to the cause whereby the perceptions and categories of complication assail a person, there is nothing there to relish, welcome, or

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<sup>301</sup> AN.IX, 3, Meghiyasutta.

remain fastened to, then that is the end of the obsessions of passion, the obsessions of resistance, the obsessions of views, the obsessions of uncertainty, the obsessions of conceit, the obsessions of passion for becoming, and the obsessions of ignorance. That is the end of taking up rods and bladed weapons, of arguments, quarrels, disputes, accusations, divisive tale-bearing, and false speech. That is where these evil, unskillful things cease without remainder.<sup>302</sup>

What is experienced by the enlightened practitioners as non-self (partially by the learners (*sekkhā*) and completely by the *Arahant* (*asekkhā*)) is not a matter of intellectual discussion or consideration. The Buddha did in many cases, threw his listeners into confusion<sup>303</sup>. A modern observation by Sue Hamilton is as follows:

Several scholarly studies have draw together extensive textual evidences suggesting that early Buddhist texts do in fact allow for a conventional every day self, and it was at this conventional level that the teaching applied (Collins 1982; Harvey 1995). But they did not satisfactorily explain what to me was the more fundamental problem: how can one experience that one

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<sup>302</sup> M.18: Yatonidānaṃ bhikkhu purisaṃ papañcasaññāsankhā samudācaranti, ettha ce natthi abhinanditabbaṃ abhivaditabbaṃ ajjhositabbaṃ, esevanto bhavarāgānusayānaṃ, esevanto paṭighānusayānaṃ, esevanto diṭṭhānusayānaṃ, esevanto vicikicchānusayānaṃ, esevanto mānānusayānaṃ, esevanto bhavārāgānusayānaṃ, esevanto avijjānusayānaṃ, esevanto daṇḍādāna satthādāna kalaha viggaha vivāda tuvamtuvaṃ pesuñña musāvādānaṃ. Etthee pāpakā akusala dhammā aparisesā nirujjhantīti.

<sup>303</sup> M. I. 1, Mūlapariyāya sutta; M. I, 35, Cūlasaccaka sutta; DN, Dighanakka sutta.

is or has no self? With the best will on the world, I could not but think that in any context out side of a madhouse the very idea of it is incoherent. In offering alternative interpretations, some scholars went so far as to suggest that the point of *anatta* teaching was that one should not confuse any conventional notion of self with one's eternal & real transcendental self (Prez- Remon 1980). But eternalists are coupled with annihilationists in the texts and get equally short shift.<sup>304</sup>

WE will return to this subject in the following sections in which the doctrinal points are examined from a psychological perspective.

#### **IV. 4 Is Suffering a Subjective Experience?**

Why does impermanence of *saṅkhāra dhammā* give rise to suffering? The nature of attachment and clinging is identical to self-identity and self-assertion. This tendency is to hold on to the object as permanent, solid and reliable, but the nature of compounded things is ever changing which proves completely contrary to the self-perception of an ordinary man. Therefore, suffering and insecurity is a subjective experience in one who holds on to an (wrong) attitude that things are 'I', 'me', and 'mine'. If there were no self-identity, and no self-consciousness, then the fact of impermanence would not affect anybody. A paragraph in *The Parable of the Water-snake* discourse illustrates this point very well.

What do you think about this, monks? If a person were to gather or burn, or does as he pleases with the grass,

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<sup>304</sup> Sue Hamilton: *Early Buddhism: a New Approach...* P. 22. Black stone 2002. London.

twigs, branches and foliage in this Jeta grove, would it occurs to you: the person is gathering *us*, he is burning *us*, he is doing as he pleases with *us*?'- No, Lord. What is the reason for this? It is that, Lord, this is not our self nor what belong to self <sup>305</sup>

This is a very clear illustration of how craving and clinging affect us in dealing with things and events. If there is no identification, there is no affection or rejection, and therefore no suffering at whatever happens 'out there'. This is not indifference, but impartiality and equanimity. It is rather easy for a man not to identify himself with the inanimate objects outside which do not belonging to him, and his attitude to these things is indifference, but for the personality-components (*khandhas*) which he mistakenly hold on to as his self (*attā*), it is not so easy to give them up, and whatever is dear or desirable to a man (*attaniya*) is also not so easy to give up. At this point we should recall a *sutta* from SN. IV, 42: 11, in which the Buddha asked a layman named *Bhadra* whether there is there any person in his village that on account of whose executed, fined, imprisoned or censored, had not made him suffer, worry, distressed, etc? The lay man answered: Yes, there are people who are not dear to him; if they were fined, executed, imprisoned or afflicted will not affect him; but if the same bad things happened to his son, or his wife, it would be a great suffering for him. At this point, the Buddha said:

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<sup>305</sup> M.I,140-141; S.III, 34: Taṃ kiṃ maññatha bhikkhave, yaṃ imasmim̐ jetavane tiṇakaṭṭhasākhāpalāsaṃ, taṃ jano hareyya vā daheyya vā yathāpaccayaṃ vā kareyya, api nu tumhākaṃ evamassa: amhe jano harati vā dahati vā yathāpaccayaṃ karotīti? 'No hetam̐ bhante.' Taṃ kissa hetu? 'Na hi no etam̐ bhante attā attaniyaṃ vā'tī. Evameva kho bhikkhave yaṃ na tumhākaṃ taṃ pajahatha. Taṃ vo pahīnaṃ dīgharattaṃ hitāya sukhāya bhavissati

This, headman, is a principle by seeing, understanding immediately here and now, (and) this also true in the past and future that: whatever suffering arose in the past, all that arose rooted in desire, with desire as its source, for desire is the root of suffering. Whatever suffering will arise in the future, all that will arise rooted in desire [...]

Even so, the Buddha reminded his listeners not to view any personal component (*khandha*) as ‘self’ (*atta*) or what belongs to self (*attaniya*) for doing so would bring themselves unnecessary disturbance (*dukkha*). In this interpretation, we can say that inherent in the *anatta* doctrine is a kind of pragmatism.

The above quoted texts prove that the experience of suffering is subjective and the cause of suffering is a subjective view and emotional reactions. The world *taṇhā* covers two aspects: craving for desirable objects and aversion to undesirable objects. Because there is a notion of an ‘I’, ‘me’ and ‘mine’ so there is like and delight in what is agreeable or desirable to the ‘I’; the ‘I’ takes delight and thinks: “it pleases me”. When there is a time when “thing(s) went wrong”, it is disagreeable or undesirable to the ‘I’, so one’s subjective reaction is: “why I! why me!” In other words, the ego inclines to what affirms its preconception, and rejects whatever threatens to injure its image. Sure enough, an egoistic attitude always takes things personally. This is a real disease and a great disaster that personal belief (*sakkāyadiṭṭhi*) would bring one. Beside that, the tendency of an ‘I’ is expended from ‘I’ to ‘my family’, to ‘my class’, ‘my nation’, ‘my race’, ‘my religion’, etc. If any thing happens that is agreeable to this ‘mine’, one is happy and contented; but when there is a threat

of harming or loosing what is ‘mine’, one gets upset and grieves.

Happiness and suffering are not merely bodily sensations but deep-rooted under these sensations is a notion of a subject (*attā*) who enjoys in or bears them out. This underlying notion gives rise to attachment (*rāgānusaya*) to whatever pleases the self, and aversion (*paṭighānusaya*) to what is displeased (by itself). Thoughts such as “I am happy”, a feeling of elation, conceit and superiority is also aroused; or alternatively, a feeling of “I’m unhappy” generates a feeling of depression, rejection, inferiority, etc which is incited by *mānānusaya* and dependent on circumstances.

If we view that everything is dependent arising, we would neither be upset or elated in what is happening ‘in’ and ‘out there’. As Hamilton suggested: “If all things are dependently originated, then it follows that nothing has independent selfhood”<sup>306</sup> If we view that things exist relatively, interdependently, we would come to accept whatever situation with a right attitude that we are not the owner, nor the controller, and therefore, from where does self-blame or self-conceit arise? This view also rules out the possibility of a Lord or a Creator who supervises over the world, who is responsible for the good and evil in the world. Therefore who is there to please or to be pleased, who is there to be annoying or to be annoyed? Nobody! That is why all enlightened persons (*Arahants*) are not affected by the ups and downs of feelings and circumstances as in the verse in “The Discourse on Blessing”:

*“Phuṭṭhassa lokadhammehi - cittaṃ yassa na kampati*

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<sup>306</sup> Sue Hamilton: *Early Buddhism: a New Approach...* P. 22. (London 2002).

*Asokaṃ virajaṃ khemaṃ - etaṃ mangalamuttamaṃ*<sup>307</sup>

“He whose mind does not flutter by worldly contingencies,  
Sorrowless, unstained, (and) tranquil – This is the highest  
Blessing.”<sup>307</sup>

The world remains as it is but the enlightened one changes his attitude and his outlook on the world. If confusion, aversion, and attachment get man involved in the world and suffered its consequences, the knowledge ‘seeing things as they are’ [*yathābhūtaṃ ñāṇa dassanaṃ*] will exempt the enlightened one from the delusion of a separate dumped soul who helplessly behold the up and down of the world. When illusory perception is expelled, he is no more confused by the way the world is, he is neither taking delight in successes, nor is he repelled by failures, he does not expecting things to be the way he wished; without expectation he is not agitated; non-agitated, he accepts things as they are with calm and balance mind. With a detached attitude, he is no more involved, and not subjected to the causal process. This is called ‘the deliverance from *samsāra*’ [*vimokkha*].

## V. Social Application of *Anattā* Doctrine

As we have seen earlier, self-assertion and self-assumption often give us unnecessary disturbances. Ambition (*chanda*) and other defilements (*kilesa*) which associate with ego-consciousness not only cause inner conflicts, they also extend to social level. Wars and social disruptions are often caused by different views and ideologies. View and taking side spring from the notion of *attā*, ego and its corollary, *attānīyā* “mine”. Because of there is the notion of a self, it naturally

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<sup>307</sup> Mangala sutta, Khuddaka Nikaya.

extends to things that belong to the self, and view is established:

Is it, monks, self's property (when) there is self? Yes, Lord. Is it self's when there is self's properties? Yes, (it is). Monks, self and self's properties are not to be found in reality, this is the established view." [Attani vā bhikkhave sati' attaniyaṃ me'ti assāti? 'Evaṃ bhante.' Attaniye vā bhikkhave sati 'attā me'ti assāti? Evaṃ bhante. Attani ca bhikkhave attaniye ca saccato thetato anupalabbhamāne yampidaṃ diṭṭhiṭṭhānaṃ]<sup>308</sup>

The egoistic attitude first conflict within itself when desires and ambitions meet with 'reality principle' (Freudian), but the desire to feed that very ego and the ambition to expand it naturally lead to conflict with others. The nature of ego is expansive, therefore when there are two egos, they tend to crush down each other!

In association, the more selfless each party is, the more harmonious and satisfactory the relationship give. The first schism in the *Sangha* happened during the Buddha time at *Kosambi*. There was a learned monk (*bahusutta*) who has many followers lived in the same monastery with some other monks who were severe and somewhat over strict in *Vinaya*. One day the learned monk committed a small offence, not knowing that it is an offence, he did not confess to other monks. The over strict monks criticized his behavior, but the former did not make any apology (due to his pride of being learned), the latter made a campaign for a legal procedure to put the learned monk in probation. Not withstanding it, the followers of the learned monk also made another campaign to outrage the over strict monks. Thus both parties tried as best as

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<sup>308</sup> M.22, Alagaddupamasutta.

they could to insult and denounce each other. In this incidence, those monks who are very strict in *Vinaya* did so because of their ego, thinking that they are very good at discipline and expecting other monks respect and follow them suit. The learned monk and his followers also thought that they are the followers of *Dhamma*, wise and learned therefore they are to be exempted from the censure of others. Herein, even the followers of the same teaching under the same Master (the Buddha himself) but have a different view in practice, one party stuck to *Vinaya*- the discipline code, and the other stuck to the *Dhamma*- the philosophical aspect of Teaching that enough to cause schism and conflict.

Another community lived not so far from the *Kosambiya* monks, consist of venerable *Anuruddha*, venerable *Kimbila*, and venerable *Nandiya* was in a very different atmosphere. They all abided by the *Dhamma*, meditating, loving and respecting each other. Their concord and harmony are described as “blending like milk and water, viewing each other by loving eyes” [*samagga sammodamānā avivadamānā khīrodakībhūtā aññamaññaṃ piyacakkhūhi sampassantā*].<sup>309</sup> This pleasant atmosphere was achieved because each member of the community surrenders his own ego, and lived for the sake of his own and the other’s well being and for the happiness of the all.

Why should I not give up my own mind (idea) and live by the mind (ideas) of these venerable ones- thinking thus, I surrender my mind to and live for the sake of these venerable ones. Lord, though we are different in body but we have the same mind.” [*yamñūnāhaṃ sakaṃ cittaṃ nikkhipitvā imesaṃ yeva ayasmantānaṃ cittaṃ*]

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<sup>309</sup> M.I, Cūlagosingasutta.

*vasena vatteyya'nti. So ko ahaṃ bhante sakaṃ cittaṃ nikkhipitvā imesaṃ yeva ayasmantānaṃ cittaṃ vasena vattāmi. Nānā hi kho no bhante kāyā, ekaṃ ca pana maññe cittanti.]*

This is, perhaps the most beautiful illustration of egoless attitude and behavior which is the most essential for healthy relationships and social non-conflict. The sutta describes how these venerable ones lived in concord and their practice though individuality (they go for alms separately, meditating, and not talking much to each other.) but conduce to the harmony of community as well as making the environment where they live more beautiful, more pleasing. All the monks in the context achieved their ideal of religious life of the renunciants (*pabbajjas*). With regards to this characteristic of ‘living alone’ (*ekaṃ viharati*) and ‘living together in harmony’ (*sangha samaggi*), we see the *anatta* ideal or non-egoistic practice is the perfect way for the growth of personality, and the best method of forming a harmony society.

*Anatta* idea is not an ideology or a mere theory, but it is a healthy attitude and wholesome behaviors within each individual and to be applied in society. If the egoistic attitude lead to haughty and aggressive behaviors which is always harmful to relationships and disrupt the peaceful atmosphere, the selfless thinking and practice give chance to grow in healthy relationship(s) and create peaceful society. This is not a utopian strategy; it is a way of living in Buddhist communities. A passage in AN affirms this as follows:

Again, the brāhmin says thus: “I have no part in anything any where, and herein for me there is no attachment to anything; so saying the brāhma speaking the truth, not

falsehood. Therein he has no conceit of (being) a “recluse”, or a “brāhmin”, or “better am I”, or “equal am I”, or “inferior am I”. Moreover, by fully comprehending the truth contained in that saying, he is bent on the practice of having nothing at all. [*Puna ca paraṃ...brahmano evaṃ āha: nāhaṃ kvaci kassaci kiñcanaṃ tasmim̐ na ca mama kvaci katthaci kiñcanaṃ natthī’ti; iti vadaṃ brahmano saccaṃ āha no musā. So tena na samaṇo ti maññati na brahmaṇo ti maññati na, na seyyo’haṃ asmī’ti maññati na sadiso’haṃ asmīti maññati na hīno’haṃ asmīti maññati*].<sup>310</sup>

Commenting on this passage, Johanson wrote: “this is a description of a man basing his life on a null hypothesis: there is no individual unity, only impersonal processes, there is no self-assertion, not even a comparison with others, no social role to play, no function to fill...”<sup>311</sup>

This description is to a recluse, or a contemplative man in seclusion, and it is true, not false to state that he does not find any self or soul as an abiding entity to be identified with in any form, any where, nor is there any property of that “I” to call ‘mine’. He does not think himself as a recluse, not as a priest, or comparing himself with others in term of superior, equal or inferior. In other words, this man has realized the non-self nature of phenomena, and he has destroyed the tendency to conceit (*mānānusaya*). Johanson was right when he stated that ‘only impersonal processes, there is no self-assertion’, but he had over reached when stated that ‘no social role to play, no

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<sup>310</sup> A. II (PTS), 177; adapted translation from A.II, 206 by F.L. Woodward; (Indian Edition 2006).

<sup>311</sup> E.A. Johansons 1978. p. 166.

function to fill...’ Actually the contemplation on the non-self nature of phenomena is for the purpose of destroying ego-centered attitude which, as I has stated earlier, is very harmful and gross (as in the first incidence cited). Seeing the non-self nature in phenomena does not imply that the person feels empty and meaningless as concern to social role or his position in the community. We have seen in the second instance cited, these venerable Anuruddha, Kimbila, etc. still live a very meaningful life. There are many examples of the Arahants who have realized the *Anatta*, rooted out the tendency of conceit, they still lived and served the community at their best ability. In such a community of the noble ones there are no conflict, dissension, or fighting, but peace and harmony prevail among them and around them.

The way to live in peace and harmony with oneself as well as with others starting with *dāna*- giving or generosity, is a first noble practice in Buddhism. By giving one over comes selfishness and stinginess. *Dāna* is sharing with and helping others what one has with a loving and generous mind; this is a practice to counteract with selfish and protective tendency. But *dāna* as a means of business, i.e hoping something in return, or investing for one’s own fame and gain, is not an act of reducing the ego. Next to *dāna* is *sīla*- moral practice (not killing, not stealing, not to be unfaithful, not telling lie, not taking alcohol or drug). The *sīla* should be practiced with a sense of respecting others and social norms; it is not something taken on to make the ego bigger. If one wrongly practices *sīla* and associates it with one personality, this does very litter, if not at all, for the progress on the Path. Like *suta*, learning, acquiring knowledge, if wrongly grasp at, it only proves harmful to one’s self as well as to others. In the Alagaddupamasutta(MN) he Buddha warned his disciples that

there are some foolish persons (*ekacca moghapurisā*) who learn the *Dhamma*, master the *Dhamma* for the sake of argument, and make his learning an ego, not examining the profound meaning of the suttas, their knowledge only harmful to themselves, and it conduce to long term suffering. [*tesaṃ te dhammā duggahitā dīgharattaṃ ahitāya dukkhāya samvattanti*]. This wrong attitude of acquiring knowledge is compared with some one wrongly catching a snake by its tail; the snake will coil up and bit him sooner or later.

The same right attitude should be practiced in mental development (*Bhāvanā*). *Bhāvanā* is a general word to denote the practice of meditation, either insight (*vipassanā*) or concentration (*samatha*). Insight meditation is the contemplation on the rise and fall (*anicca*) of phenomena which induces the beholder to see it as unsatisfactoriness (*dukkha*), and finally comes to the conclusion that what is impermanence and suffering is not-self (*anatta*). I will discuss on this topic in details in next chapter, here something deserve our attention is that *bhāvanā*, especially concentration (*samatha* or *jhānas*) is a kind of *saṅkhārā* called *āneñj'ābhisāṅkhārā* we have mentioned in the preceding chapter, is a training to enforce mental ability. The practitioner might, in the course of practice, have a very strong tendency to identify with his mental ability, and thus, the ego, though refined but became even bigger! To be reborn in the Brahma world one has to acquire the imperturbable mental training called *jhānā*. Because of their great ability and priority in the Brahma world, some Brahma thinks that he is the Creator, the Highest Self. This is considered as a wrong perception, an illusion in the Buddhist right view. Perhaps referring to this attitude of accumulating merits [*punṇābhisāṅkhārā* and *āneñj'ābhisāṅkhārā*] for a better existence in the human world

or in the heavenly world, and to strike for the realization of Anatta or for the final deliverance of *Nibbāna*, A.E. Johansons states that it is a ‘double standard’ in Buddhism<sup>312</sup>.

How to explain this ‘double standard’, as Johansons puts it, we have discussed in the previous section on ethical significance of *Anatta* doctrine, it need not to repeat here. In the Buddhist Path, the Noble Eightfold Path, the accumulation of merits which is still under the spell of *āsavas*- the intoxications of the self-preservation (*bhavataṇhā*) [quoted text in MN, Mahācattālīsasutta], should be led by right view (*sammādiṭṭhi pubbaṅgama*). The accumulation of merit (*puñṇā kiriyā patha*) is a gradual path to cultivate a healthier and nobler personality. The highest level of right view is seeing things as they are (*yathābhūtaṃ dassanaṃ*), i.e. see things as impermanence, suffering, and non-self. Thus there is no conflict or problematic as some scholars<sup>313</sup> worrying about in Buddhist doctrine and moral standard as well as its social practice.

Another way to view *anatta* in social relationships which give one the advantage of maintaining balance, impartiality, and non-prejudice attitude is through seeing the causality. Personality and events that we meet are not to be praise or blame for its sheer ‘thing that happen to me’ (if we personalized it and attributed to it solid and unchanging quality). A rational out look with a profound reflection will reveal that personality and events are, but conditioned phenomena as we have discussed in *khandha* sections. Here, the impersonality and non-substance should apply not only to the components of personality (*khandhas*), but also to things

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<sup>312</sup> E.A. Johansons 1978. p.

<sup>313</sup> Sue Hamilton 2002. P. 69; Steven Collins 1982. P.

(*dhammā*) and events (*saṅkhārā*). This was emphasized by the Buddha many times as the Middle Way that he had discovered. The Middle Way is to avoid two extremes of eternalism (attributed to the soul-*attā* and the Creator- God or Brahma), and annihilationism (materialists and individualism). In a wider connotation of the law of causality, personalities, things and events are all viewed as interrelated, interconnected, and interacted. Thus nothing comes into existence by itself, nothing exists independently, but, yet, nothing ceases without significance. In this light should the Dependent Origination (*paṭiccasamuppāda*) be viewed. In this way we do not see a person or event to be blame or praise, but trace back to its cause(s), seeing it as impersonal *dhammā*, conditioned phenomena, thus freed ourselves from partiality and prejudices.

In association, when something unsatisfactory happen, we should command on the act or event itself, not the person involved or making a personal attack. This is a prudent strategy for the maintenance of relationship. It bases on the understanding of ‘self-interest principle’, not on the selfless principle which is based on wisdom [*yathābhūtaṃ ñāṇadassanaṃ*] that advocated in higher standard of Buddhism. [And this is the big difference between prudence and wisdom].

## Chapter VI. On Motivation – From a Buddhist Perspective

Among the many beautiful verses of the Dhammapāda, the most popular Buddhist collection of Buddhist Suttas, we can find several passages that explore how our states of mind influence our experiences. State of mind (*citta-dhammā*) is also called *mano*- mind contents. What is in our mind actively participates in the cognitive process and influences the final image of the object that is then perceived differently. We have discussed on feeling (*vedanā*), perception (*saññā*) and volitional activities (*saṅkhārā*) in the chapter on *khandhas* as different aspects of human experiences that are considered to be functional, rather than substantial. Herein, I feel a need to clarify on the motivational aspect in human experiences more as it is founded in early Buddhist texts. In line with many other Buddhist treatises, the following verses in Dhammapāda, a practical guide to right living, we can see this psychological orientation of human experiences. In other words, it emphasizes the influence of the mind-content or motivational factors on human experiences.

Mind is the forerunner in all mental states.  
Mind is their chief; they are all mind-wrought.  
If with a corrupt mind one speaks or acts,  
Suffering follows one like the wheel  
That follows the foot of the ox...  
... If with a pure mind one speaks or acts,  
Happiness follows him, like his never-departing shadow.  
*Mano pubbaṅgamā dhammā*  
*Manoseṭṭhā, manomayā*  
*Manasā ce paduṭṭhena - bhāsati vā karoti vā,*  
*Tato naṃ dukkhamanveti- cakkhaṃ 'va vaharo padaṃ.*

*Mano pubbaṅgamā dhammā.*

... *Manasā ce pasannena - bhāsati vā karoti vā,*  
*Tato naṃ sukhamveti – chāyā’va anapāyinī.*<sup>314</sup>

## I Terminology

The word motivation comes from the Latin term ‘*motivus*’ meaning ‘a moving cause’. The Webster English Dictionary defines the word as “a mental process that arouses an organism to action”. From the Latin root, motivation and motive are synonyms. Motivation is a driving force or forces responsible for the initiation, persistence, direction, and vigor of goal-directed behavior<sup>315</sup>. Another common use of the word in psychology is ‘drive’. According to the Dictionary of Psychology (Oxford 2001), drive (n) denotes any internal source of motivation that impels an organism to pursue a goal or to satisfy a need, such as sex, hunger, or self-preservation. A *primary drive* is an innate physiological urge or need, such as hunger or thirst; a *secondary drive* is an acquired non-physiological urge, such as the need for achievement, or the need for affiliation. In psychoanalysis, drive is another name for instinct<sup>316</sup>. More generally, motivation is a person’s energy and determination to achieve something.

Motivation and behavior have a causal relationship. From a particular behavior, one can guess the motive of an action, and being driven by a certain motive or need one acts in a certain way. There are three major areas in the study of motivation: biological, behavioristic, and cognitive

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<sup>314</sup> Dhp.1, 2.

<sup>315</sup> *Oxford Dictionary of Psychology* (2001 edition), by Andrew M. Colman; Oxford University Press, pp 464.

<sup>316</sup> *Ibid*, pp 221.

psychology. The latter is a branch of psychology concerned with all forms of cognition, including attention, perception, learning, memory, thinking, problem-solving, decision-making and language. According to Padmasiri de Silva (1984), there is a remarkable similarity between Buddhist psychology and the established techniques of modern behavioral therapy. There is also a striking similarity in Buddhist mindfulness therapy and cognitive therapy, which are the techniques applied for altering or modifying people's beliefs, expectancies, assumptions, and styles of thinking based on the study that psychological problems often stem from erroneous patterns of thinking and distorted perceptions of reality. The four opening verses of the Dhammapada directly point to this<sup>317</sup>. There are also many other verses in the same text directly or indirectly ascertaining the importance of a correct (or incorrect) cognitive process leading to right (or wrong) thinking, and in turn, thinking plays a chief influence on one's experiences<sup>318</sup>.

Biological approaches to motivation explain the biological changes caused when an organism moves in a direction that adjusts or fulfills a particular need. For example, when one's blood sugar is down, one feels hungry and weak, causing one to search for food. Besides that, the way one eats also suggests how much hungry one is; this is the behavioral approach. A cognitive explanation as advocated by Abraham Maslow proposes that human motivation can be understood as resulting from a hierarchy of needs, from the most basic physiological

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<sup>317</sup> Dhp 3, 4: "He abuses me, he struck me, he overpowered me." Those who harbor such thoughts do not still their hatred.... Those who do not harbor such thoughts, their hatred are appeased.

<sup>318</sup> Dhp 11, 12: Those who mistake the unessential (*asāra*) to be essential (*sāra*), resorting to wrong thoughts, never arrive at the essential (*sāra*). Those who know the essential to be essential, dwelling in right thoughts, arrive at the essential.

demands progressing upwards to safety needs, belonging needs, esteem-seeking to grandiosity. In a practical observation, we can identify at least five major stages in motivations. They are: (1) biological need that are the most fundamental requirements for the survival of organisms; (2) security needs such as house, family, job, etc; (3) social needs such as relationship and association; (4) esteem-needs such as having a good personality, a good name and fame; (5) self-actualization needs such as the need for success, attainment etc.

We can divide motivation into different levels: (1) primitive drives or instinctive needs such as thirst, hunger, the need to rest, and sex; (2) secondary or emotive needs, to satisfy our emotions such as love and hate, to care and to be cared for in relationships; (3) rational needs, to adjust ourselves in family or social relationships or environment, job, etc. This is somewhat similar to Sigmund Freud's classification of personality into 'the id'- primitive impulses, 'ego'- the 'I' as a dynamic shaped in relationships and conflicts, and 'the superego'- an agent that controls impulses and supervises the adjustment of the 'I'. There is another aspect of personality which is termed "defense mechanism", i.e., certain reaction patterns developed in order to cope with frustrations. The most well-known of these are rationalization, regression, projection, pretension, etc.

Interestingly, the above analyses fall into two majors classifications of developed Buddhist thought: (1) the innate self-grasping (*sahaj'ātmangāha*) and (2) intellectually-constructed-self-grasping (*parikalpit'ātmangrāha*). The first

type is what we were born with (*sahajā*).<sup>319</sup> This instinct, in the early Buddhist terms, is called the resultant karma or the inherited habitual tendency. The second type is what we have constructed in this very life in interaction with the environment that we live in such as parental influence, the educational system, the cultural, social and religious environment. This process goes with self-consciousness, though it is based on the innate life instinct, nevertheless, it is strengthened through the articulation of theory and dogmas. Due to the limited space, hereafter we will only focus on the cognitive approach grounded in early Buddhist psychological and terminological contents, while examining this theme from three angles: psychological, ethical and soteriological approaches.

## II Motivation is a Complex Psychological Force

The terms for motivations are rich in Buddhist psychology. The most common of them are *cetanā*-volition/intention; *manasikāra*-attention/ reflection; *chanda*-wish, want; *saddha*, faith or confidence, *rāga*-lust after, infatuated by; *taṇhā*-craving, thirst; *sankappa* or *vitakka*-thought, intention, *āsva*-influx, canker, intoxication. There is a group of mental factors termed *anusāya*, or the latent tendencies, also worth to mention.

Concerning driven forces, Buddhist terminology classifies them into six roots which bear much ethical connotation. They are: greed (*lobha*), hatred (*dosa*), ignorance (*moha*) belong to the immoral causes<sup>320</sup>; and non-greed (*alobha*), non-hatred

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<sup>319</sup> Ref. *Void and Fulness in Buddhist, Hindu, and Christian tradition* – Ed. by Bettina Bauman and John R. Douche; New Delhi 2005, pp. 89.

<sup>6</sup> A.III , 33: There are, monks, three causes of action. What three? Greed (*lobha*), hatred (*dosa*), and delusion (*moha*)...

(*adosa*), and free from delusion (*amoha*) are the moral causes. Another set of motivations is mentioned in Sigālaka sutta (D.31) as fourfold: act motivated by partiality (*chandāgatam*), act motivated by hate (*dosāgatam*), act motivated by confuse (*mohāgatam*), and act motivated by fear (*bhayāgatam*); all of them are considered as unskillful acts which ultimately lead to downfall.

Intention (*cetanā*) as one of the mental factors is a common factor in every activity of the mind; it is morally neutral. Good intention springs from moral roots such as generosity (*alobha*), benevolence (*adosa*), and wisdom (*amoha*), or impartiality or justice, kind-hearted, clear-minded, and intrepidity. Bad intention is generated in immoral roots and unskillful states of mind. Bad intentions generate bad *kamma*, such intentions are rooted in greed (*lobha*), hatred (*dosa*) and ignorance (*moha*). They are also called *micchāsāṅkappā*- wrong thoughts, which are generally spoken of in three forms, to wit: *kāma vitakka*- thought of sensuous, *byāpāda vitakka*- thought of hurting, harming, *vihiṃsā vitakka*- thought of cruelty.<sup>321</sup>

In Buddhist psychology a more complex mental constructions are discussed such are *vitakka*- initial thought and *vicāra*- sustained thought that make up verbal activities (*vācī saṅkhāra*)<sup>322</sup> for before one speaks one has to articulate it first. And before one acts, there is a very decisive mental factor called *cetanā*- volition or will. Volition is called *kamma*- the driven force behind actions, and its quality is considered very important factor in Buddhist psychology and morality.

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<sup>321</sup> M. III, sutta 117, Mahācattārīsaka sutta.

<sup>322</sup> M I, sutta 44, Culavedalla sutta.

Monks, I say that volition is karma; having motivated one act by body, speech, mind. (*cetanāhaṃ, bhikkhave, kammaṃ vādāmi; cetayitvā kammaṃ karoti kāyena vācāya mānasam*. [A. II , 415])

**Vitakka**, **vicāra**, and **manasikāra** are very difficult to differentiate one from the other though the Abhidhamma works try to group them in different groups. *Vitakka* and *vicāra* are absorbed factors (*jhāṅga*) but not the *manasikāra*, perhaps the kind of intention in *manasikāra* is a spontaneous attention without any focused that need a certain amount of will (*cetanā*). A text in Aṅguttara Nikāya states that “All things are rooted in desire (*chandamūlaka sabbe dhammā*). They come in actual existence through attention (*manasikārasambhavā sabbe dhammā*).”<sup>323</sup> *Manasikāra* as a mental factor participates in five sense-consciousnesses. In this context ‘all things’ denote whatever perceivable, and attention is the drive that bends the mind toward the object so that it is perceived or ‘comes into existence’ (*sambhāva*). *Manasikāra* bears no moral responsibility; however, a kind of reflection that occurs at mind-door (*mano viññāṇa*) which relieves the sense impressions in different ways is worth to mention in details. It is two kinds of motivations that literally called “making in the mind” (*maṇasikāra*). They are *yoniso manasikāra*- which means wise attention or proper consideration, and *ayoniso manasikāra*- unwise attention or improper consideration. Wise attention is the root of all wholesome states<sup>324</sup>, and in contrary, unwise attention is the

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<sup>323</sup> Bhikkhu Bodhi, *The Numerical Discourses of the Buddha*. P. 251. Vistaar, New Delhi 2000.

<sup>324</sup>S.v. 46: 32:2. Ye keci bhikkhave, dhammā kusalā kusalabhāgiyā kusalapakkhiyā, sabbe te yonisomanasikāramūlakā

root of all unwholesome states. Commentaries modified wise attention is: (1) paying attention at the unattractiveness of things (*asubha*) in order to prevent and reduce greed and lust after sense pleasures; (2) paying attention at the impermanent nature of things (*anicca*) in order to reduce and prevent conceit or distress with regards to the vicissitudes of life; (3) paying attention at unsatisfactoriness or distress (*dukkha*) that is inherent in compounded things in order to inculcate disenchantment in sense pleasures; (4) paying attention to the non-self nature of things (*anatta*) in order to give up egoism and vanity. And unwise attention is those considerations that lead to infatuation, craving, grasping and clinging, conceit, envy and feeling of grandeur.

**Chanda**, want, desire or wishing is another term for motivations, even it is considered as “all things are rooted in *chanda- sabbe dhammā chandamūlakā*”<sup>325</sup>. Thus, *chanda* is apparently the motive force that forms all actions or ‘every thing’ (*sabbe dhammā*). E.A. Johanson translated *chanda* as ‘ambition’; this can only partially convey what is meant by the *Pāli* term *chanda*. The word *chanda* in this context is interchangeable with *taṇhā*- craving, desire which is identified as ‘*samudaya sacca* - the truth of origin’. However, In Nettippakaraṇa, craving is classified as two kinds, wholesome and unwholesome. While the unwholesome kinds go with the unsatisfactory worldly existence, the wholesome kinds lead to the abandonment of craving<sup>326</sup>. We will see this clearer in the following cited text and its context.

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yonisomanasikārasamosaraḍḍā yonisomanasikāro tesam dhammanam  
aggamakkhāyati.

<sup>325</sup> A X, 58; *The Numerical Discourses of the Buddha*. P. 251.

<sup>326</sup> KN, 16, *The Guide to the Teachings*.

Usually the word *chanda* bears no ethical connotation, except when it appears in a compound with the word *rāga*-lust, infatuation. In the above instance, it bears more psychological significance than ethical sense. There might be evil want or wish such as wishing for the downfall of other (motivated by jealousy or enmity), wanting objects not belong to oneself such as other's wives or husbands which in the case of liaison lead to adultery, wanting other's properties which would lead to stilling, robbing, killing, etc. There might be proper want or wish which when realizing is legal and does not harming anybody. When we see that some one is happy and successful in life, we may aspire to be like that person, and we try hard, motivated by that aspiration to achieve all conditions that conducive to making one happy and successful. Even in the religious field a neutral element or negative quality can use as a means to motivate one to a nobler goal. We find a message in Aṅguttara Nikaya as follows:

Sister, this body has come into being through food; yet based on food, food can be abandoned. This body has come into being through craving (*taṇhā*); yet based on craving, craving can be abandoned. This body has come into being through conceit; yet based on conceit, conceit can be abandoned...<sup>327</sup>

Food is a neutral element to satisfy our hungry and sustained our body; wisely partaking of food helps us to stay healthy, but greed and without any restraint in taking of foods may cause many diseases. Motivated by craving for existence (*bhavataṇhā*) we come to this world, the force that sent us to this world is called desire (*taṇhā* or *chanda*); this can be

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<sup>327</sup> A iv, 159; *The Numerical Discourses of the Buddha*. P.111.

transformed into a motivation called *saṃvegha*<sup>328</sup> - a kind of religious sentiment to strike for the higher and nobler life. But *saṃvegha* is often used in the contexts that a religious practitioner is stirred up by seeing or reflecting on the suffering of *samsāra*, or is reminded by a Deity about the insecurity of life. On seeing others attain such and such state in the religious life, one thinks: I'm endowing with many qualities like these persons, why not I strike for the higher goal? This thought which is a comparison usually rooted in conceit, makes him strike hard and attain Arahantship in which there is no more conceit.

*Taṇhā* (**Sansk.** *Tṛṣṇa*) is often translated as desire, craving, or attachment. *Taṇhā* is the cause of suffering (*dukkha samudaya*), and it is to be eliminated (*pahātabbaṃ*). There are three kinds of *taṇhā*, to wit: (1) *kāma-taṇhā*, craving or thirst for sensualities (libido); (2) *bhava-taṇhā*, craving for existence, self-preservation, to be known (the ego or constructive desire); (3) *vibhava-taṇhā*, craving for non-existence (destructive desire or death instinct). The above mentioned passage of AN first refers to *kāma-taṇhā* (libido), then one can use *bhava-taṇhā* which motivates one on the higher form of life until finally one attains Arahantship in which all *taṇhā* are eliminated.

*Taṇhā* is a positive element for 'to be'<sup>329</sup>, however, in Buddhism it is always denotes a derogatory connotation, the

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<sup>328</sup> *Samveghā-vatthu-* the sources of arousing a sense of urgency, such as birth, old age, disease, death, misery in the lower realms of existence, misery in this very life rooted in searching for food, misery of the repetition of birth and rebirth. ( *Vism.* III).

<sup>329</sup> *Dhp* 154. The Buddha called *taṇhā* the "house-builder". And in many other suttas, *taṇhā* is identified as the main factor leads to rebirth here and there.

negative quality called defilement (*kilesa*). According to M.M. Agrawal “a state of total desirelessness is humanly impossible”. He argued that “we must satisfy our many primitive and non-primitive desires in order to survive as a living being and to survive as a member of human society”<sup>330</sup>.

*Tañhā* as an activated factor or a motivating force of existence is affirmed in many suttas, the most frequently is this phrase: “*Idaṃ kho pana bhikkhave dukkhasamudayaṃ ariyasaccam: yāyaṃ tañhā ponobhavikā nandirāgasahagatā, tatratatrābhinandini seyyathīdaṃ: kāmatañhā, bhavatañhā, vibhavatañhā*”<sup>331</sup>. And in S.I, 208, it is stated: “The world is led by craving; by craving it’s dragged here and there. Craving is the one thing that has all under it control.”<sup>332</sup> Whereas in A.III, 76, *Tañhā* is only one of three factors, to wit: karma, *viññāṇa*, and *tañhā*. Herein *tañhā* is called the moisture that nourishes life, *viññāṇa* as seed, and karma as field. In D. 22, D. 15, and S.II, etc, *tañhā* is a very decisive link of the Dependent Origination; originated in feeling, *tañhā* arises in regards to the six objects of senses, then it is intensified in *upādāna*- grasping, and further manifested in becoming (*uppatti-bhava*). It should be mentioned that until feeling (in the chains of dependent origination), it is the resultant (*vipāka vatta*) but the mind activated at this point as reaction (*saṅkhāra*) toward the sense contact(s) and its associated feeling to made *kamma*. In this sense, *tañhā* is called “the house-builder”, the ‘maker’ of the five aggregates. Therefore, *tañhā*, *upādāna*, and *kammabhava* are the present causes of existence, and they pertain to the round of defilements (*kilesa*

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<sup>330</sup> M.M. Agrawal: *The philosophy of non-attachment*. P. 44.

<sup>331</sup> S.IV, Bhadraka sutta, Dhammacakkapavattanasutta; Vin.III; M.i, 9, 28,

<sup>332</sup> S.I. 2208. Bhikkhu Bodhi translation. P. 131. Wisdom 2000.

*vatta*). A passage in Mahānidānasutta (DN) portrays craving (*taṇhā*) as the cause of all defilements and unwholesome actions as follows: feeling > craving > pursuit > gain > decision making > desire and lust > attachment > possessiveness > stinginess > safe-guarding > taking up of clubs and weapons, conflicts, quarrels, disputes, insulting speak, slander and falsehoods<sup>333</sup>. A similar list of behaviors started from craving is given in A. IX, 23.

Sense-impressions are usually associated with neutral feeling (*upekkhā vedanā*). At the same time many objects of the senses may present within the fields of our senses, but we do not respond to all of them. Only a few impressive objects draw our attentions. We respond to these with like (*lobha*), indifferent (*moha*) or dislike (*dosa*). A passage in SN illustrates the progressive reactions of human beings to the objective world as follows: *kāmadhātu* > *kāmasaññā* > *kāmasankappo* > *kāmachando* > *kāmaparilāho* > *kāmapariyesanā* > *micchā-pañipajjati kāyena vācāya manāsā*.

In dependence on sensual element, arises sensual perception. In dependence on sensual perception, arises sensual intention. In dependence on sensual intention arises sensual desire. In dependence on sensual desire, arises sensual passion. In dependence on sensual passion, arises sensual search. In searching

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<sup>333</sup> D. I, 59: Iti kho panetaṃ ānanda vedanaṃ paṭicca taṇhā, taṇhaṃ paṭicca pariyesanā, pariyesanaṃ paṭicca lābho, lābhaṃ paṭicca vinicchayo, vinicchayaṃ paṭiccachandarāgo, chandarāgaṃ paṭicca ajjhosānaṃ, ajjhosānaṃ paṭicca pariggaho, pariggahaṃ paṭicca macchariyaṃ, macchariyaṃ [PTS Page 059] paṭicca ārakkho, ārakkhādhikaraṇaṃ paṭicca daṇḍādāna satthādānakalahaviggahavivādatuvamtuvaṃ pesuññamusāvādā aneke pāpakā akusalā dhammā sambhavanti.

for sensualities one engages in wrong bodily actions, wrong verbal actions, and wrong mental actions.<sup>334</sup>

The same course of motivational behavior is repeated for ill-will element (*byāpādhātu*), harmful element (*vihimsādhātu*), renunciation (*nekkhamma* or *alobha*), benevolence (*abyāpāda* or *metta*), and compassion (*avihiṃsa* or *karuna*). Thus there are six basis of motivation which are originate in the mind, three from wholesome factors (renunciation, benevolence, and compassion), and three from unwholesome factors (sensual desire, ill-will, and harmful thought). This is another way to articulate how six kinds of thoughts (*vitakka* - I mentioned earlier) motivate and govern one's actions in which *kāmadhātu* is equal to *kāmavitakka*-thought of sensuality, *byāpādhātu* is equal to *byāpādavitakka*- thought of ill-will, *vihimsadhātu* is equal to *vihimsavitakka*- harmful thought, and the three wholesome thoughts respectively. According to this passage, motivation must base on perceptual. In the context, the sutta illustrates how thought (*vitakka*) lead to action. I will return to this later.

How can sensual perceptions turn into the element of desire and repulsive perceptions turn into loath, hate or ill-will element? This is explained in the texts as being governed by **latent tendencies** (*anusaya kilesa*). The term comes from prefix *anu*, meaning following or beneath, and root *-/sī*,

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<sup>334</sup> S II. 14: 12: Kāmadhātuṃ bhikkhave, paṭicca uppajjati kāmasaññā. Kāmasaññaṃ paṭicca uppajjati kāmasaṅkappo. Kāmasaṅkappaṃ paṭicca uppajjati kāmacchando. Kāmacchandaṃ paṭicca uppajjati kāmapiṇḍāho. Kāmapiṇḍāhaṃ paṭicca uppajjati kāmapiyeyanaṃ. Kāmapiyeyanaṃ bhikkhave, piyeyamaṇo assutavā puphujjano tīhi thānehi micchā paṭipajjati: kāyena vācāya manasā.

meaning lying. The English translations of the term thus range from ‘bias’, to ‘predisposition’, or more literally as ‘bend on’, or ‘inclination’. There are seven kinds of latent tendencies in the unenlightened persons. They are *kāma-rāga*, sensuous or sexual tendency, *paṭigha*, grudge or resentful, *diṭṭhi*, speculative or opinioned, *vicikicchā*, skeptical, *māna*, conceit or vanity, *bhavarāga*, preservative desire, and *avijjā*, ignorance. These latent tendencies govern one’s feeling, perception, view and the actual experience of oneself as well as the objective world. *Anusaya kilesas* are something that we are born with. In MN, the Buddha is reported to cite out that even in an infant, these tendencies are there, only they have not a chance to manifest. We can see this from an empirical observation. For instance, when an infant get wet, the discomfort feeling causes the child to cry (*paṭighānusaya*), when the baby is hungry, it attaches to the mother’s breast (*bhava-rāganusaya*). These instinctive reactions help the infant to survive, and call for the attention of the mother or the caretaker. In SN, it is said that when one experiences a pleasant feeling without mindfulness and clear comprehension, this would trigger the sensuous tendency. Contrarily, when one experiences an unpleasant feeling, the latent tendency of grudge arises and turns one into aversion. It is necessary to cite here again the passage in Madhupiṇḍika sutta (MN) in order to see the cognitive map in Buddhist psychology.

Because of the eye and visible form, eye-consciousness arises; the meeting of the three is contact; contact arouses feeling. What one feels, one perceives; what one perceives, one reason about; what one reasons about, one turn into *papañca*, because of that, the man is assailed in regards to the visible forms recognized by

the eye belong to the past, the future and the present”.<sup>335</sup>

*Papañca* (fr. *Papañceti*) is the final stage of the sense-cognitive process. This is a very difficult Pāli term, and many scholars have attempted to decrypt it. From the above passage, this can be understood as the proliferation of ideas. “As a result, the person is no longer the perceiver who is in control, but one who is assailed by concepts and linguistic conventions”<sup>336</sup>. According to the commentary on the term, *papañca* turn what perceived into “I” under the influence of *mānānusaya*, latent tendency of conceit, into ‘mine’ due to *tañhā*, or craving tendency, and ‘my-self’ under the influence of predisposition to view (*diṭṭhānusaya*)<sup>337</sup>. Thus, the passage portrays a very clear what we call the “I- insertion”, or the egocentric attitude in the cognitive process.

Another term for motivation should be brought into notice is *āsava* (Sansk. asravas) from the root -/sru that means ‘to flow’; the term is often translated as cankers, taints, ‘bias’, corruptions, or ‘influx’ or ‘intoxication’ because under the influence of *āsava*, the mind can not rise to a higher state. There are three or four types of *āsava*, to wit: *kāmāsava*-intoxication of sensuality, *bhavāsava*- intoxication of self-preservation, *avijjāsava*- intoxication of ignorance and

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<sup>335</sup> M.18: Cakkhuñca paticca rūpe ca uppajjati cakkhuviññānaṃ; tiṇṇaṃ sanghati phasso; phassa paccayā vedanā, yaṃ vedeti taṃ sañjānati, yaṃ sañjānati taṃ vitakketi, yaṃ vitakketi taṃ papañceti, yaṃ papañceti tatonidānaṃ purisaṃ papañcasaññāsankhā samudācaranti atītānāgatapaccuppannesu...

<sup>336</sup> De Silva, Padmasiri: *Buddhist Psychology in the Theravada theory and practice; Horizons in Buddhist Psychology*, Taos Institute Publication 2006, p.

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<sup>337</sup> Mahāniddeśa I.

*diṭṭhāsava*- intoxication of view. Referring to these influenced mental defilements, Prof. De Silva writes “They color one’s attitude and thwart one’s insight”.<sup>338</sup> In the Buddhist psychology and cosmology, the world consists of three spheres: *kāmadhātu*- the sphere of sensuous, *rūpadhātu*- the sphere of fine materiality, and *arūpadhātu*- the sphere of non-materiality. All the three spheres are under the spell of *āsava*. All formative activities (*puṇṇābhisankhāra*, *apuṇṇābhisankhāra*, *anejñābhisankhāra*) are soaked in *āsava*, therefore we can say that *āsava* is the fuel for the continuity of *samsāra*.

Monks, I say that there are two types of right thought. There is right thought impassioned with the expectation of partaking (worldly) merit, (and) there is right thought which is noble, without fermentation (of becoming), pertain to supramundane path.  
*(Sammāsankappapaṃpaṃ bhikkhave dvayaṃ vadāmi.  
 Atthi bhikkhave sammāsankappo sāsavo puññabhāgiyo  
 upadhivepakko, atthi bhikkhave sammāsankappo ariyo  
 anāsavo lokuttaro maggaṅgo.*<sup>339</sup>

The Arahants and Buddhas are called *khīnāsavo*, the one who has extinguished all passions for life. Another term is *āsavakkhāya*, extinction of passion; this is a condition for making an end of unsatisfactoriness (*sabbā dukkhā vimuccanti*).

### III. Buddhist Ethical View on Motivation

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<sup>338</sup>, Ibid, p 58.

<sup>339</sup> Mahācattārīsakasutta, M. III, p117.

A verse in the Dhammapāda employs different term for motivation; it is called *paṇihitaṃ* that may be *micchā paṇihitaṃ cittaṃ*- ill-directed mind, or *sammā paṇihitaṃ cittaṃ*- well-directed mind. The text read: “Whatever harm a foe may do to a foe, or an enemy to an enemy, an ill-directed mind can do one even a greater harm.” And “What neither mother, nor father, nor any other relative can do, a well-directed mind does and therefore evokes him”. (Dhp 42, 43). The word *paṇihitaṃ* come from *paṇidahati* meant resolves, determines, or intents. *Appaṇihito* is another word for absorption (*jhāna* or *samādhi*) which is free from all disturbances and is sometimes considered as liberation (*vimokkha*). According to R.C. Childers the author of *Pāḷi Dictionary*, *appaṇihito* is free from three *paṇidhis*-aspiration, wish, and resolution spring from *rāga*-lust, *dosa*-hate, and *moha*- delusion. In *Abhidhamatṭhasangaha*, *appaṇihito* is one of the three doors of deliverance; and the contemplation of desirelessness or disinterestedness (*appaṇihitānupassanā*) is a means to achieve Nibbāna<sup>340</sup>.

What is “ill-directed mind” and what is “well-directed mind” is very significant to be discussed here. An ordinary man with an egoistic attitude often view thing as ‘I’, ‘mine’, or ‘for me’. He does not know that things are ‘in itself’ and ‘of itself’<sup>341</sup>, i.e., things are objectives that they come and go according to their own courses, not under any body commands; or in other word, things are impersonal phenomena (*sabbe dhammā anattā*). But a deluded mind always sees things from the self-centered point of view (*sakkāya diṭṭhi*).

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<sup>340</sup> Abhi. IX, S.26, 27.

<sup>341</sup> I borrow the term used by Thanissara Bhikkhu in his book entitled: *The Wings to Awakening*.

An ill-directed mind often has improper reflection (*ayoniso manasikāra*) which is a kind of subjective judgment, irrational feelings which cause irritations, discontent and outburst of anger causing unpleasant situation; and greed, infatuated, illusory and unrealistic state in case of self-deceived. (It considers: this is beautiful, this is permanent, this is myself, I am better, I am inferior and so on.) An ill-directed mind comes from a distorted perception (*saññā vipallāso*). Whatever it sees, the object is always colored via personal preference, subjected judgment and emotional respond which lead to false valuation of the object. A text from Aṅguttara Nikāya gives us a glimpse of how *ayoniso manasikāra* is the root of all evil state as stated previously. The causal chains of ignorance which is the root of all misperception and suffering (due to subjective judgment and emotional respond) as follows: associating with bad people leads one to lose the opportunities to listen to *dhamma*; due to not hearing the good *dhamma* one lack of conviction and faith (*saddha*); lacking of conviction makes one prefer the inappropriate attention (*ayoniso marasikāra*); inappropriate attention leads to heedlessness and thoughtlessness; this careless attitude and behavior is the cause of lack of restraint as regard to senses; unrestrained leads to misbehaviors (three kinds of misconduct); and this bring hindrances to oneself; hindrances muddle one's vision, this is ignorance<sup>342</sup>. From this passage, we can see a vicious circle of a life without any guidance. Herein, the guidance is good teachings or *Dhamma* that can arouse faith or confidence in the good or righteous life.

Again, an ill-directed mind is a mind that is overwhelming by defilements such as lust, hate, envy, arrogant, jealousy, fear, slothfulness, delusion, doubt, etc. With such a negative

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<sup>342</sup> A. II, 31, 32

qualities in mind, the person is driven by his primitive impulses without any restraint; he would speak or act unskillfully and bring ill-fame, woe and downfall upon himself. Under the light of psychoanalysis, the process is not as simple as that. Narcissism, for example, apparently is the exceeding love for oneself. We might say that he is infatuated with his own body, thus being obsessed by lust after pleasurable, he is a pleasure-seeking with a very strong sense of self-interest. To fulfill his instinctive drives, he might assail pleasant objects belong to other. If his impulse is not satisfied, he would have very frustrated, even gone mad or he might hate the person who possesses the object that he is longing for; tormented by envy and jealousy, he makes a scheme to slander the other person; he even went so far as to kill the other.

### **The Self-Interest Principle**

It is interesting to cite here a passage in Samyutta Nikāya in which the Buddha affirmed that most of the worldlings do not go beyond the self-interest principle. This is a very realistic view of human motivation. The context of the passage is that: one day, a king named Pasenadi had a private talk with his favorite queen, Mallikā, he asked his beloved: “Is there any one dearer to you than yourself?” An astonishing reply from the intelligent and bold queen was: “There is no one, great king, dearer to me than myself.” This reply appeared to be a selfish attitude amounting to narcissism of the queen (and most of us, frankly speaking!), but the Buddha confirmed this as a truth, common to everybody in which the king confessed that it is true for him, too.

“Having traversed all quarters with the mind,

One finds none anywhere dearer to oneself.  
 Likewise, each person holds himself most dear;  
 Hence one who loves himself should not harm others.<sup>343</sup>

This verse reveals a reality that Freudians called ‘self-interest principle’, but the Buddha in no means to encourage the selfish and egoistic tendency in ordinary man. The Teacher sees that men’s thoughts and actions are usually govern by self-motives, or in other words, everybody has a self-image, a sense of self-respect, and is motivated by self-interest. On the other hand, human being is a social species; this requires man to co-operate with others in relationships rather than to competition which would expand the ego. If one holds himself the dearest, likewise, the other does to his self, one should be careful not to hurt the other’s feeling. The Teacher reminds them to respect others for the sake of harmonious living. We see: how skillful he is to divert the attention from self-motive to a sense of reasoning and morality.

The motive of self is always “self-seeking”. The following three categories of motive are presented in three phases: motives, actions, and results.

<b>Desires (motive), Acts (means to achieve), Results, Associated feelings</b>			
(1) Self/ personal promotion (impure motive or egoistic attitude)	Resource to any means, including evil, unlawful one in order to achieve desirable object.	Success	Happy, elated, joyful, conceit
		Failure	Unhappy, depressed, frustrated, sorrow...

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<sup>343</sup> S.I, 3:8.

(2) For the benefit of others or for common good (pure motive or altruistic)	Resource to only righteous means, lawful pursuits	Success  Failure	Happy  Unhappy.
(3) Act for the act itself without attachment or expectation for the desirable result (transcendental motive).	Any means which would consider as good, not necessary follow a rigid course of any established institution.	Success or Failures do not affect the operator.	Equanimity

With the impure motive, one might resort to even unlawful, evil means to achieve one's projected result. The associated emotions are varieties which depend on circumstances as indicated above. With a pure motive one is able to resist from unlawful and evil means nevertheless, one is still concern to the result(s), therefore one is not free from agitations and expectations and their associated emotions. The emotion associated with pure motive if often calm or joyful: if the action is successful, one feels joy, happy, contented; if the action if failure, one might feel sad and disappointed.

With a transcendental move one is free to act with a librated mind beyond conventional notion of moral and immoral. The feeling associated with the process is always equanimity (*upekkhā*) for s/he acts without concern for any projected result; his/her state of mind is not pre-occupied by any notion of self or other(s) or the results of action (in the

sense of self-interest). This is true spirit of *Prajña paramita*, especially as described in Hadayaprajñāparamita Sūtra and Vajraprajñāparamita Sūtra. However, we should not confuse this point (which if wrongly grasped would lead to amoral) with the existentialist view which negates the value of morality.

From a Buddhist perspective, all defilements are rooted in craving (*taṇhā*) and ignorance (*avijjā*). Acting under the influence of defilement(s) which often spring from the egoistic attitude, some times give satisfaction (in the case of success), some time give frustrations (when one meets with failure). Because of there are satisfaction and gratification, people are attracted to this world<sup>344</sup>. In Cūladukkhakkhandha sutta<sup>345</sup> the Buddha said: with sensuous as cause, with pleasure-seeking as motive people flung into all kinds of activities, they quarrel and fight with each other, they live in discord, they resort to rods and weapons, killing each other, being injured they suffer as dying or die in agony.

#### IV Buddhist Way to Transform Motivation

In the session of how to control motivation, E.A.Johansons writes: “because of the double standard of Buddhism referred to above, the attitude to motivation and motivated activities is ambivalent”<sup>346</sup> The ‘double standard’ he

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<sup>344</sup> S. I, 3: 8, Kosalasamyutta, Mallikā sutta: Sabbà disà anuparigamma cetasà Nevajjhagà piyataramattanà kvaci, Evaṃ piyo puthu attà paresaṃ, Tasmà na hiṃse paraṃ attakāmoti.

Bhikkhu Bodhi’s translation. P. 171.

<sup>344</sup> A. III, 101, 102. *The Numerical Discourses of the Buddha*. P. 76.

<sup>345</sup> M. I, sutta 14.

<sup>346</sup> E.A. Johansons 1978: *The dynamic psychology in Early Buddhism*. P.

referred to are motivated oneself to be better by performing meritorious deeds (*puññābhisankhārā*); and ‘not to be reborn again’, disinterested with all formations (*asankhātam cittam*). This remark is not justifiable, but it reflects the skeptical attitude of many western scholars on the practical path of Buddhism. He is right when he states: “the motive are secondary products, just our way of reacting, we can manage to control them”. However, the next sentence reflects his confusion of the Buddhist Path. “How this is done is the chief problem of Buddhism”. We will see this in the following analyses on motives and course of actions presented from a Buddhist perspective.

First we must know that the Buddha taught *Dhamma* to different people. Most people are infatuated with sensual pleasures (*kāmarāga*), they are blinded by sensuous feeling, sensuous things (*kāmaguṇa*), ever searching for new sensations (*kāmatanḥā*). To these dispositions, the Buddha teaches them a better way, a moral course of actions to have a better life by performing meritorious deeds. The motivation toward a better way of living in Buddhist standards is termed *Upaya-kausala* or skillful means, or *puññāpathavatthu* consists of ten meritorious acts starting from *Dāna*, *Sīla*, and *Bhāvanā*, etc. The teaching to cope with ordinary dispositions is also called ‘a progressive talk’, that is a talk on charity (*dāna*), morality (*sīla*), heavenly enjoyment (*sagga*). Only when the listeners have been prepared, the Buddha proceeds to a more difficult thing to hear: the danger, the disadvantage of sense pleasures (*ādīnāva*), and finally, the Four Noble Truths. When one sees the danger in sense pleasures, he might motivate to search for something subtler to be enjoyed; this kind of motivational activity is called *āneñjābhisankhārā*, the unperturbed bliss of mental absorption (*jhāna*). Only when the

listener is at an advanced level of understanding, he is able to comprehend the Four Noble Truths, the teaching is to motivate him to be disenchantment (*nibbindati*) with all kind of enjoyment, whether they are gross or subtle, one is dispassionate (*virāga*); forsaking every will of becoming, one is liberated (*vimutti*). The Path to reach this lofty ideal is called the Noble Eightfold Path starts from right view (*sammādiṭṭhi*).

As we see from the above analysis, motivation bases on perception, therefore *sammādiṭṭhi* work with this very first point to guide perceptive process. Right thought (*sammāsankappo*) is the next step that effectively deals with motivation, guides it in proper course. Right speech (*sammāvācā*), right action (*sammākammantā*), and right livelihood (*sammājīva*) are categorized as morality. This implicates that the means to achieve one's motive must be right, i.e. not going against the universal standard of morality. In order to achieve these (i.e. right motives and moral means) there are three complement factors are required. They are termed right effort (*sammāvāyāma*), right mindfulness (*sammāsati*), and right concentration (*sammāsamādhi*). Thus, we see, there is definitely a very clear and practical way in theory as well as in practice of Buddhism to guide and transform one's motives.

We can see from the early discourses of the Buddha offer different methods to channel or alter the pattern of thinking and clarify the thoughts. From these discourses, it is essential to be aware of one's thoughts or mind-content in any given moment, and honestly identify its quality. Many early discourse give the impression that Buddhist psychology is akin to modern humanistic, transpersonal and existential psychologies in view of it emphasizes on the individual, his

problems and anxieties, his predicament, and his ability to overcome all problems through spiritual development via personal effort.<sup>347</sup> Cited from MN, Dvedhāvitakka and Vitakkasaṅṭhāna suttas, De Silva shows that Buddhist methods to channel and improve human motivation have a clear affinity to the present-day behavioral psychology in view of these explicitly behavioral techniques. This theme also have explored and discussed by Mikulas (1983), these similar, according to this author are:

- (1) The rejection of the notion of an unchanging self or soul;
- (2) Focus on observable phenomena (five aggregates or psychophysical complex, mind and body);
- (3) Emphasis on testability or verifiable experience;
- (4) Stress on techniques of awareness of the certain bodily responses (*kāyanupassanā* and *Vedanānupassanā*);
- (5) For here and now.

We will return to this subject in the next chapter, the Buddhist Path to transcend human unsatisfactory experiences.

Another way to master over one's unruly, natural reactions such as averse to pain and unpleasant object, and crave to, hang on with pleasant objects or feeling is called "the power of the noble ones (*ariya-iddhi*) in which one can regard the repulsive as non-repulsive and the attractive as repulsive, and view both with equanimity. By developing loving kindness (*metta bhāvanā*) one pervades all living beings with a loving heart free from enmity, hostile and ill-will; seeing only good quality in oneself as well as in others. By practicing reflection on the repulsive nature of food and body (*paṭikulanussati*), one

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<sup>347</sup> Ref. De Silva and Samarasinghe 1988.

prevents greed to the food, or lust toward the body. [S. V, 52:1]. I will continue on this topic in the next chapter on the Buddhist Path to transform unsatisfactoriness.

We have discussed earlier that *taṇhā* is the main force of existence. *Taṇhā*, in the psychological term is the two principles that have accepted as the instinct nature of all animate bodies. They are the repulsive to pains and the attraction to pleasures. In a degree, it is the survival factor; but *taṇhā* as reactions to the experience (in the term of feeling) is the self-builder, the *saṅkhāra* that is conditioned by ignorance (*avijjā*) in the Dependent Origination formula. The nature of desire (*chanda*) and attachment (*taṇhā*) is something non-stopping, insatiate; from primitive needs, one finds the way to satisfy appetite such as when being hungry one seeks for food, but this process would not stop here. When his basic needs are fulfilled he might desire for certain kind of food that is desirable to him, and further, he might get addicted to that particular food or drink and cannot stay without it even it prove unhealthy to him. This is corruption of desire when it is not checked.<sup>348</sup>

Aversion and attraction are the motive for some further actions, instinctive or sophisticated. All reactions are categorized in *saṅkhārā-kammic* formations or genetic activity. In order to nullify the *kammic* process and emotive reactions, a disciple may follow a systematical method called Threefold Training (*tisso sikkhā*), another way of organizing the Noble Eightfold Path mentioned above. *Sīla*, is a code of behaviors that trains practitioner to eliminate the gross, disgraceful, immoral behaviors that are unacceptable to the common standards of morality. A second step on the Path is

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<sup>348</sup> M.M. Agrawal, *The Philosophy of non-attachment*. P. 26

training in *samādhi*, purifying the mind from hindrances which are less gross but which muddled the mind and hindrance to the spiritual progress such as hankering after sense pleasures, nourishing ill-will, entertaining doubt, etc. And the last stage on the Path is *paññā* or wisdom which is the discerning knowledge and the power to chop off the arising of ‘self-motive’. Thus the Noble Eightfold Path or the Threefold Training is the means to cultivate motivation and behaviors, not only to be virtuous and graceful, but to the higher and nobler goal: liberation from the bondage of emotional conflicts, and deliverance from subjective and psychological suffering.

## Buddhist Ways to Transcend Unsatisfactoriness

Noble Lady, it is said the path to the cessation of the fabricated self, to what did the Blessed One say, the path to the cessation of that self? Friend, Visākha, the Blessed One declared the Noble Eightfold path, it is the path, for the cessation of the fabricated self: namely, right view, right thoughts, right speech, right actions, right livelihood, right effort, right mindfulness and right concentration.<sup>349</sup>

### Chapter VII. The Noble Eightfold Path and Threefold Training

In this chapter, we will further discuss how the Buddha's teaching can be applied to different approaches to solve human problems at different levels, be they personal, interpersonal, social or religious. For an unshakable follower of the Buddhist path, this method leading to enlightenment and the eradication of all kinds of self-generated suffering is in no doubt. However, to many scholars, it is still a matter of debate and skepticism. In a recent publication, for example, Jack Engler writes:

I agree with this Buddhist analysis of the concept of self  
(*as constructed and without ontological core-* added).

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<sup>349</sup> MN, Cūlavēdallaśutta: Sakkāyanīrodhagāminī paṭipadā sakkāyanīrodhagāminīpaṭipadāti ayye vuccati. Katamā nu kho ayye sakkāyanīrodhagāminīpaṭipadā vuttā bhagavatāti? Ayameva kho āvuso visākha ariyo aṭṭhaṅgiko maggo sakkāyanīrodhagāminīpaṭipadā vuttā bhagavatā seyyathīdam: sammādiṭṭhi sammā saṅkappo sammāvācā sammākammanto sammāājīvo sammāvāyāmo sammāsati sammāsamādhi.  
[PTS P. 704]

But I have never been satisfied with it. To my mind it still leaves the crucial question unanswered: *Why* would we represent ourselves to ourselves in just this way if it is only produces suffering, as Buddhism maintains? This does not make sense. We have to assume that every mental structure, every pattern of behaviour, emerges only because it is an attempt at adaptation, either to meet a specific developmental task or to deal with some internal or external need. The way we organize ourselves, the way we present and represent ourselves, always constitute a best effort to solve or negotiate some task or problem. Psychodynamically, our intent is never simply to create more pain for ourselves, even this is often unintended outcome. The most maladaptive beliefs and behaviors have some adaptive intent, misguided and pathogenic though they may be.

Buddhist psychology does not address this issue. While it describes in great detail the processes of identification by which the experience of being a separate self can arise, Buddhist thinking does not explain *why* we construct our experience in this way. It is only interested in how this mistaken self-construct contributes to suffering and how its hold on the mind can be released. But if it isn't necessary for healthy functioning, as Buddhism maintains, and if fully free and liberated action is not dependent on a sense of separate selfhood at all (...), then why is this sense of self so real and pervasive in our psychic life and our day-to-day experience?<sup>350</sup>

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<sup>350</sup> Jack Engler, *Being Somebody and Being nobody: a Reexamination of the Understanding of Self in Psychoanalysis and Buddhism; Psychoanalysis and Buddhism*, Ed. By Jeremy D. Safran; Wisdom Publication 2003, P. 52-3; the italic in the quoted passage are added.

This question has been posed by many other Westerners who also seek to combine Buddhist psychology and meditation practice to eliminate the self-generated suffering with the help of western psychoanalysis and psychotherapy. In the question ‘is self an adaptation?’, the above inquirer seems to forget that in Buddhist philosophy, the self or personality is always presented as a composite, conditioned and dynamic set of aggregates. Moreover, being conditioned, one does not have a total freedom to choose how and what to be, since we are the heirs of karma, the result of past volitional actions in interaction with present self-will. This, however, is not sufficient to address the question of ‘*why* we construct our experience in this way?’<sup>351</sup> However, as human beings, we are endowed with a reasoning faculty or discriminative knowledge enabling us to choose a correct course of action to deal with different situations that we encounter in our daily lives. Buddhism does not hold that suffering and discontentment are due to the original sin, but rather that suffering is traced back to ignorance (*avijjā*) of the law of dependent arising (*paṭiccasamuppāda*). This kind of ignorance is not considered to be an ordinary kind, but in fact, the ignorance of the Four Noble Truths is consistently postulated in Buddhist philosophy. Therefore, the Buddhist path first seeks to deal with this fundamental question by offering ‘right view’ as the very first step on the path as I will explore in the following pages. Being gradual practice, according to the Theravada tradition, there are different stages of realization on the path and each eliminates certain kinds of bonds or fetters (*samyojanā*) binding one to conditioned or *samsāric* existence.

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<sup>351</sup> A Buddhist categorical answer would be “it is because of ignorance”. The elaborate answer has been provided in this thesis in the Introduction Chapter, p. 2-3.

Regarding the failure of meditative exercises and an attitude of distrusting the human mind, or in a more specific term, consciousness that can be used as a tool to discern itself objectively, Mathew Recard writes:

The problem arises from the methods used. The first requirement for the practice of a contemplative science is to have a suitable tool at hand which to work. An unsuitable mind, perpetually in motion, or a mind weighted down by torpor, is of little use in such an undertaking. It is essentially to acquire mental stability and clarity, for without those qualities the mind is quite inadequate as an instrument with which to investigate its own nature. That is the obstacle confounding those few psychologists who, in the late nineteenth century, attempted to study the mind introspectively. They lack the indispensable prerequisite of having mastered the mind, an achievement brought about only through long, sustained effort. Too little time spent on personal experience was that led one of the founders of modern psychology, William James, to declare that it was impossible to still the flow of discursive thoughts.<sup>352</sup>

Perhaps, this is a very good answer to those who are intellectually grounded and entertaining skeptical doubts as regards the viability of a practical path to end unsatisfactory experiences. We will see this accurate criticism of the Western psychologists in their attempts to integrate meditation and yoga practice with psychotherapy clearer in our detailed treatment of the Buddhist systematic trainings in this chapter.

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<sup>352</sup> Recard, Mathew: *On the relevance of a Contemplative Science, Buddhism and Science* (Delhi 2004), p. 263.

Their failure probably lies in their omitting to observe the training in morality and in meditation or concentration as an indispensable prerequisite to insight meditation which enables the practitioner to perceive the true nature of the human psychophysical complex. Without perceiving this, unconsciously, one continues to construct a self that detrimental to its own well-being and happiness. There is stress, pain, and suffering ranging from personal conflicts to interpersonal conflicts due to attachment and clinging to a fabricated self that is conceived of in terms of five aggregates (*pañcupādānakkhandha- dukkhā*). This fabricated self is also named *sakkāyadiṭṭhi* in other *suttas*.<sup>353</sup>

We have already discussed the self-motive and the process of becoming in relation to the Law of Dependent Arising (*patīcasamuppāda*). *Sakkāya diṭṭhi*, the belief in a permanent and unchanging self that abides in or presides over the five aggregates, is eliminated at the first stage of sainthood (*sotapannamagga*) together with all the impulses that prompt one to commit gross offences resulting in rebirth in the lower worlds. However, a self-centered tendency and an ambiguous feeling of an “I” separate from the rest still lingers on until the

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<sup>353</sup> Ibid .“How does the self view arise? Here, friend, Visākha, the not learned ordinary man who has not seen the noble ones and Great Beings, not skillful in their Teaching and not trained in their Teaching, considers matter in self, or a material self, or in self matter, or in matter self. Considers feelings in self, or a feeling self, or in self feelings, or in feelings self. Considers perceptions in self, or a perceiving self, or in self perceptions, or in perceptions self. Considers determinations in self, or a determining self, or in self determinations, or in determinations self. Considers consciousness in self, or a conscious self, or in self consciousness, or in consciousness self. Friend, Visākha, thus arises the self view-*sakkāyadiṭṭhi*.

last stage on the path (*Arahanta magga*). As stated previously, a mere intellectual approach to the *Anatta* and *Suññatā* doctrine is not enough to negate ego-consciousness and a self-centered tendency. A Buddhist monk neatly puts this as follows:

The ignorance that gives rise to suffering occurs not because you do not know enough or are not philosophically sophisticated enough to understand the true meaning of emptiness. Rather, it comes from being unwilling to admit that what you are doing right before your very eyes is causing suffering. This is why awakening destroys conceit: it awakens you to the full extent of the willful blindness that has kept you complicit in unskillful behavior all along. It's a chastening experience. The only honest thing to do in response to this experience is release. That is the emptiness that's superior and unsurpassed.<sup>354</sup>

Hereafter, we will discuss the Noble Eightfold Path as a radical path and how it is arranged in threefold trainings as a systematic method to eradicate the cause of unsatisfactoriness. As we have indicated in the chapter on motivation, The Noble Eightfold Path is a distinguished Buddhist path consisting of eight factors, starting from right view as follows:

And this, monks, is the noble truth of the way of practice leading to the cessation of dukkha: precisely this Noble Eightfold Path: right view, right thought, right speech, right action, right livelihood, right effort, right mindfulness, right concentration. [S.V. 56:11]

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<sup>354</sup> Thanissaro Bhikkhu: *The Integrity of Emptiness*, an article in *Buddhadharma, The practitioner's Quarterly*, Winter 2006. USA.

It is worthy to mention that this path is not revealed by deities or God, or by any superhuman phenomena, but it was discovered by a strong-minded truth seeker by contemplating on the human predicament with a clear, undivided and impartial mind. Penetrating to its deepest root, he saw that ignorance is the cause of this endless wandering in *samsāra*, therefore, he came to the realization that it is only light of wisdom which comprises the means to dispel the darkness of that ignorance. Defilements, the causes of birth, death and suffering are originated in the mind due to ignorance; therefore, it is in the mind that we should clear the cause(s).

### **Right View (*sammā diṭṭhi* )**

Right view or right attitude (*sammā diṭṭhi*) is that first step but it requires many preceding acts or factors to reach that right view according to a Buddhist viewpoint.

We find a passage in Mahāvedallasutta (MN) as follow:  
Dependent on two conditions, brother, right view arises: hearing sound from others (i.e. learning from teacher(s), and wise reflection. [*Dve kho àvuso paccayà sammādiṭṭhiyà uppādāya: parato ca ghoso, yoniso ca manasikāro. Ime kho àvuso dve paccayà sammādiṭṭhiyà uppādāyāti.*]

The passage is further illustrated by considering how right view is supported by other factors such as learning and discussing the doctrine (first condition), and by virtue, by calm abiding (*samatha*) and by steady awareness (*vipassanā*) – the second condition. A person is not born with a right view except he had learnt it from a previous birth; therefore, in this present birth, he must learn it from others and from his own experiences. A person who only learns it superficially without discriminative knowledge cannot succeed in attaining the right

view. From intellectual knowledge gained through learning, he must reflect upon its content deeply, and then put it into systematic practice; and each step further solidifies his right view. These steps are corresponding to the three kinds of (acquiring) knowledge: *sutamayañāṇa*- knowledge via learning, *cintamayañāṇa*- knowledge via thinking, and *bhāvanāmayañāṇa*- knowledge via meditating (using calm and insight).

The fruit of mind's release and the advantage of mind's release through right view are supported by five factors. The fruit of liberation through wisdom and the advantage of such a liberation: here, friend, right view is supported by morality, by learning, by discussion (on *dhamma*), by calm, and by insight."<sup>355</sup>

Although right view is the first factor on the Noble Eightfold Path, as the above passage reveals, but it does not mean that it is the first step; actually all the factors of the path involve each other. In the Threefold Training, right view is included in the training of wisdom, the last but not the least stage on the path. Though this may seem confusing at first glance, in the following analysis, this matter will be clarified.

As we have seen in the section on perception in Chapter Three, that *perception leads to view, and view governs one's*

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<sup>355</sup> MN, Mahāvedalla sutta: Pañcahi kho āvuso āgehi anuggahītā sammādiṭṭhi cetovimuttiphala ca hoti cetovimuttiphalaṇisaṃsā ca. Paññāvimuttiphala ca hoti paññāvimuttiphalaṇisaṃsā ca: idhāvuso sammādiṭṭhi sīlanuggahītā ca hoti, sutānuggahītā ca hoti, sākacchānuggahītā ca hoti, samathānuggahītā ca hoti, vipassanānuggahītā ca hoti.

*motives*. The kind of right view in Buddhism is a means to guide one to acquiring a proper perspective, i.e., it effectively deals with the cognitive process that will result in right intention, right action and moral motives. Therefore, right view is called the forerunner in all wholesome states<sup>356</sup>, and wrong view, its opposite, is the very single factor that is responsible for all unwholesome states and suffering<sup>357</sup>. Mahācattārīsakasutta (M.117) shows that all eight factors of the Path are intertwined with each other. In the same discourse, the Buddha reveals what is right view and what is wrong view and the right view is the discriminative knowledge that examines what is right and what is wrong view. This is also in consonance with the discourse on right view the Sammādiṭṭhisutta (M.18). As a forerunner, right view is the guiding light throughout the path. There are two kinds of right views postulated in the early discourses: right view that pertaining to the mundane level and that pertaining to the supramundane level as follows:

Bhikkhus, what is right view? I say right view is twofold. There is right view with desires to share merit, which mature as substratum\*(1).and right view, that is noble, without desires, transcends this world and is a feature of the path (2).

What is right view with desires to share merit, which mature as substratum? There are results for gifts, sacrifices and offerings. There are results for good and

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<sup>356</sup> M.117: Tatra bhikkhave, sammādiṭṭhi pubbaṅgamā hoti. Kathaṅca bhikkhave, sammādiṭṭhi pubbaṅgamā hoti: micchādiṭṭhiṃ micchādiṭṭhīti pajānāti. Sammādiṭṭhiṃ sammādiṭṭhīti pajānāti. Sāssa hoti sammādiṭṭhi.

<sup>357</sup> AN. I. 16:2: Monks, there is no a single factor that is so responsible for unwholesome state as wrong view, and there is no single factor that enhance all the wholesome states as right view.

bad actions. There is this world, another world, mother, father, spontaneously arisen beings, there are recluses and priests who realizing this world and the other world declare it. This is right view with desires, to share merit, which mature as substratum.

Bhikkhus, what is right view that is noble, without desires and transcending this world is a feature of the path? The noble mind's development of the enlightenment factor investigation of the Teaching without desires, together with the path factors of wisdom, the faculty of wisdom, the power of wisdom, is right view that is noble, transcending this world and is a feature of the path. He endeavors to dispel wrong view and gets established in right view that becomes his right Endeavour. He mindfully dispels wrong view and abides established in right view that becomes his right mindfulness. Thus these three things follow each other, turning in a circle. Such as right view, right endeavor and right mindfulness.<sup>358</sup>

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<sup>358</sup> M.117: Katamà ca bhikkhave, sammàdiṭṭhi: sammàdiṭṭhimpahaṃ bhikkhave, dvayaṃ vadāmi: atthi bhikkhave, sammàdiṭṭhi sāsavaṃ puññabhāgiyā upadhivepakkā atthi bhikkhave, sammàdiṭṭhi ariyā anāsavaṃ lokuttarā maggaṅgā.

Katamà ca bhikkhave, sammàdiṭṭhi sāsavaṃ puññabhāgiyā upadhivepakkā: atthi dinnam, atthi yiṭṭham, atthi hutam, atthi sukataḍukkaṭaṇam kammaṇam phalaṃ vipāko, atthi ayaṃ loko, atthi paro loko, atthi mātā, atthi pitā, atthi sattā opapātikā, atthi loke samaṇabrāhmaṇā sammaggatā sammāpaṭipannā, ye imaṃ ca lokam paraṃ ca lokam sayam abhiññā sacchikatvā pavedentīti. Ayaṃ bhikkhave, sammàdiṭṭhi sāsavaṃ puññabhāgiyā upadhivepakkā.

Katamà ca bhikkhave, sammàdiṭṭhi ariyā anāsavaṃ lokuttarā maggaṅgā: yā kho bhikkhave, ariyacittassa anāsavacittassa ariyamaggasamaṅgino ariyamaggaṃ bhāvayato paññā paññindriyaṃ paññābalaṃ dhammavicayasambojjhaṅgo sammàdiṭṭhi maggaṅgaṃ ayaṃ vuccati bhikkhave, sammàdiṭṭhi ariyā anāsavaṃ lokuttarā maggaṅgā. So micchādiṭṭhiyā pahanāya vāyamati sammàdiṭṭhiyā

This passage marks a very important turning point in Buddhist practices. It shows two different directions: one is that of a mundane level leading to worldly progress, prosperity and happiness, and the other way is beyond mundane standards, to the cessation of craving and attachment, to the cooling down and extinguishing of all passions that imprison us in *samsāra*.

According to this passage, right view on the first level is the belief in the efficacy of the law of karma. This view leads one to perform good or meritorious deeds in order to get good results in one's future birth. We also can interpret this as the kind of right view that motivates people to improve their quality of life and even the world. This E.R. Johansson calls this 'the double standard in Buddhism'. On the mundane level, right view also embraces a religious tendency as stated in the above passage. This religious practice is rather common for the masses, i.e., living a moral life, performing one's family duties, accepting and conforming to social orders, and supporting religious persons to obtain merits. We can see that, this concept of right view in Buddhism is in conformity with common beliefs that are influenced by the Vedic standards of morality, social orders and worldly responsibility. To conform to a common belief and practice is also a mark of the 'Middle Way' or to be more precisely, the flexible way as declared by Buddhists. This way enables the followers of the Buddha to live harmoniously with other faiths, a characteristic of

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upasampadāya. Svāssa hoti sammāvāyāmo. So sato micchādīṭṭhiṃ pajahati. Sato sammādīṭṭhiṃ upasampajja viharati. Sāssa hoti sammāsati. Itissime tayo dhammā sammādīṭṭhiṃ anuparidhāvanti anuparivattanti. Seyyathīdam: sammādīṭṭhi sammāvāyāmo sammāsati.

tolerance in Buddhism. This conformity is a virtue of Buddhists in some respects, i.e., it serves as a prudent attitude and motivates one towards modest behaviors; however, it also reflects a weak point of Buddhism. I will return to this critical point on Buddhism later.

The higher kind of right view is intended for a more serious practitioner whose motivation is to get beyond predicaments of worldly condition (*samsāra*). This is termed ‘*anāsava sammādiṭṭhi*’ in Pāli, that is the right view which is freed from self-motive, or self-interest principle. It is described as “noble, without taint, a constitution of the path transcending the world” (*sammādiṭṭhi ariyā anāsava lokuttarā maggaṅgā*) while the former is described as “with taint or expectation to partake the worldly rewards that rooted in attachment” (*sammādiṭṭhi sāsava puññābhāgiyā upadhivepakkā atthi*). The nobler kind of right view requires two other factors for accomplishing it, i.e., exertion (*virīya*) and mindfulness (*sati*). Only on this level, is right view qualified as the faculty of wisdom (*paññindriya*).

It is interesting to note that, the first level of right view as postulated in the above quoted text is not freed from ignorance (*avijjā*) because it motivates one to acquire merits and deposit it in the store of consciousness as good seeds for a good harvest in a good field. We find a text in the A.IV which states that: *kammaṃ khettaṃ, viññānaṃ bījaṃ, taṇhā sineho*—“*kamma* is the field, consciousness is the seed, and craving is the water”. The word *kamma* (*karma*) expresses two aspects: as a passive resultant (*kamma vipāka*) and as an active performance (*abhisankhārā*). Thus ‘the field’ indicates all potential actualizations or possibilities, ‘the seed’ is a product as well as a potentiality to produce its own result, and craving

always serves as an active element that motivates and governs those potentialities. This is again confirmed in the Samyutta Nikāya thus:

If, oh, monks, a man is filled with ignorance (*avijjā*) performs a meritorious deed, then consciousness brings him merit. If he perform a demeritorious deed, then consciousness bring him demerit. If he performs an imperturbable karma, then his consciousness brings him imperturbability.<sup>359</sup>

All these three kinds of *kamma* or *saṅkhārā* are performed under the influence of ignorance (*avijjā*) of the four noble truths and therefore they are embedded into the consciousness (*viññāṇa*) as seeds. In time, when conditions are ripening for these seeds to sprout, they are actualized in terms of ‘birth’ (*jāti*). If conditions are not favorable, there seeds might have no chance to grow and bear their fruits, or they might be defaulted if the ‘field’ is barren. The conditions here are equated with one’s attitude, actions and reactions in a given context, be it due to one’s personality or one’s family or a particular social environment that one was born into. We have to bear in mind that in Buddhist philosophy, *kamma* is not fate because it subject to change in the here and now. What we inherit now may be the fruit(s) of our past actions, but still our attitude and reactions in a given condition also determine the outcome of the whole process.

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<sup>359</sup> SN 12: 51: Avijjāgatoyam bhikkhave, purisapuggalo puññaṃ ce saṅkhāraṃ abhisāṅkharoti, puññoṇopagaṃ hoti viññāṇaṃ. Apuññaṃ ce saṅkhāraṃ abhisāṅkharoti, apuññoṇopagaṃ hoti viññāṇaṃ. āneñjaṃ ce saṅkhāraṃ abhisāṅkharoti, āneñjopagaṃ hoti viññāṇaṃ.

The discourse continues to state that in those whose *āsava* are destroyed, they are no more performing meritorious or demeritorious deeds or karma as conditions to be reborn in the *Brahma* world (imperturbability). With the ceasing of karma formation, nothing is deposited in one's consciousness as a future investment. This is termed the cessation of consciousness (as a crucial factor of rebirth). However, the consciousness, or the mind needs to be purified of its (former) tendencies or its accumulated seeds. Enlightenment does not come suddenly from nowhere but, rather, it needs to be cultivated systematically. *Right view as the faculty of wisdom guides one to abandon what should be abandoned and to cultivate what should be cultivated.*

### **Right Thought or Right Intention – Sammāsaṅkappo**

Right thought is the thought absent of hankering after sensual pleasures, thought of ill-will and thought of harming oneself or others. This factor of the Buddhist path is often defined as thought of renunciation, thought of loving and caring, and thought of compassion for all living beings. As we have seen from chapter on motivation, right thought is the factor that guides one on a correct path of motivation. Any motivation springs from right thought is considered as wholesome or a pure motive. However, to keep one's thoughts pure and wholesome is a difficult matter that needs assistances of many other factors such as right view, right effort and right mindfulness. In the threefold training, right intention is the right attitude concerning the use of material things as well as to one's achievement on the path. This we have briefly discussed in some sections of the chapter on *anatta*. We will return to this in the following sections.

The path of purification is an inward journey termed *Vipassanā*- insight meditation. This journey is considered a gradual path, and it is often explained in many discourses as the cultivation of threefold trainings: *Sīlasikkhā*- training in morality, *Samādhi sikkhā*- training in concentration, and *Paññā sikkhā*- training in wisdom. Elsewhere, in AN, the three kinds of training are termed *adhisīla sikkhā*, or the higher training in morality, *adhicitta sikkhā*, or the higher training of the mind, and *adhipaññā sikkhā*, or the higher training in wisdom. Herein, a monk who excels in the training of morality is described as perfect with regard to restraint in accordance with the moral code for a monk (*Paṭimokkhasamvarasīla*), perfect in conducts and behaviors, with fear of the transgression even the slightest fault, thus training himself in the moral vows that he has taken. This is the training in higher morality. The higher training of the mind culminates in the attainment of the four *Jhāna* or mental absorptions: “Herein, a monk detached from sensuous objects, detached from karmic unwholesome states, enter into the first, second, third, and fourth *Jhāna*”<sup>360</sup>. The higher training in wisdom is the realization of the Four Noble Truths: “herein, the monk understands according to the reality what suffering is, what the origin of suffering is, what the cessation of suffering is, and what the path is leading to cessation of suffering”<sup>361</sup>. To achieve the highest goal in Buddhist ideals, the destruction of all taints (*avakkhāyāsava*), the deliverance of the mind (*cittavimutti*) and the deliverance through wisdom (*paññāvimutti*), a practitioner has to practice perfect morality, be devoted to mental tranquility (*samatha*), able to enter upon

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<sup>360</sup> AN. 3:38, 89; a translation of Venerable Nyanatiloka Thera; 5th edition. BPS 2000.

<sup>361</sup> Ibid. p 50

mental absorption and practice insight meditation frequently in seclusion.<sup>362</sup>

*Sammādiṭṭhisutta* (MN), the discourse on right view elucidates what is right view according to Buddhist criteria. According to this *sutta*, firstly right view entails a belief in the law of karma or moral causality. This requires the knowledge of good (*kusala*) and bad (*akusala*), what actions or behaviors are considered as good, and what is contrariwise, bad; and lastly, what is the cause of these (*kusalamūla* and *akusalamūla*). Further, there is right view as regards to the Four Noble Truths, and the right view of seeing things as they are (*yathābhūtamñānadassanam*). We might ask why is the first step so big that it covers almost the entire teaching of the Buddha? The answer is that, although right view is the first step but it is not to be discarded once it was reached, as it is, in fact, the forerunner of all wholesome states and skilful actions, shining and guiding one from the beginning to the end of the path. This is the reason why right view is categorized in the higher training of wisdom (*paññā sikkhā*) which is preceded by the higher training in morality (*Sīla sikkhā*) and the higher training in mental power (*samādhi sikkhā*) that we have briefly discussed previously.

It is interesting to note that the noble eightfold path is not to be practiced step by steps but they are to be followed all at once. Though right view is intended to be in first place, as a forerunner it runs throughout the way, and even though right concentration is mentioned last but it is not the end of the Path. This makes the intellectual and practical method of Buddhism a unique one, a teaching that unheard of before the rise of the Buddha. We will return to this subject later.

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<sup>362</sup> MN. 6

How can we understand this Path in relation to the threefold training? A lay-man named *Visākha* asked the enlightened nun *Dhammadinnā* this question and the *Arahant Bhikkhuni* cleared the matter thus:

The three categories are not included under the noble eightfold path, friend Visākha, but the noble eightfold path is included under the three categories. Right speech, right action, and right livelihood come under the categories of **morality**. Right effort, right mindfulness, and right concentration come under the categories of **concentration**. Right view and right thought come under the categories of **wisdom**.<sup>363</sup> [ [MN 44](#) ]

In the threefold training, morality forms the foundation of concentration, and in turn, concentration serves as a pre-requisite for wisdom, nevertheless, morality and concentration are to be guided by wisdom. Thus, these three categories of training on the Buddhist Path have been intended as cooperating and supporting each other. Wisdom that is born of concentration fortifies this right view which keeps the practitioners on the track of practicing morality with a right attitude. We have discussed this issue in chapter five, the social aspect of *anatta* doctrine. Hereafter I will focus on how morality is a pre-requisite for concentration in Buddhist Path.

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<sup>363</sup> MN, Cūḷavedallasutta: Na kho āvuso visākha ariyena atthaṅgikena maggena tayo khandhā saṅgahītā. Tīhi ca kho āvuso visākha khandhehi ariyo aṭṭhaṅgiko maggo saṅgahīto: yā cāvuso visākha sammāvācā yo ca sammākammanto yo ca sammāñjīvo, ime dhammā sīlakkhandhe saṅgahītā. Yo ca sammāvāyāmo yā ca sammāsati yo ca sammāsamādhī, ime dhammā samādhikkhandhe saṅgahītā. Yā ca sammādiṭṭhi yo ca sammāsankappo, ime dhammā paññākkhandhe saṅgahītāti.

## I The Higher Training in Morality

Practicing morality is intended for freeing one's mind from remorse and disturbances due to wrongdoing. Another aspect of morality is not going against the current standards of one's society; therefore, one will not be blamed, criticized, or persecuted by the authorities. Thus, a moral man is, to some degree, at peace with himself and at peace with others. Whenever he reflects on his conduct, a state of joyous, calm, and tranquility would pervade his mind. Joy (*piti*) and tranquility (*passadhi*) are the approximate conditions for concentration. A question that would arise is thus: is right concentration possible even without the support of morality? To answer this question, we have to consider what morality is first. The word morality is used in various ways. In the English Dictionary, morality is defined as: "The relation of conformity or nonconformity to the moral standard or rule; quality of an intention, a character, an action, a principle, or a sentiment, when tried by the standard of right."<sup>364</sup> This definition may not be very clear but at last it imparts a sense of the diversity of the usage of the word. Herein we will limit it to: (1) **positive v. natural**, i.e. the relation between the norms and standards which are valid merely because they are acts of divine or human legislation, and whose validity is independent of that<sup>365</sup>; (2) **ethical v. the moral**. The word moral comes from the Latin word *moralis*, coined by Cicero from *mos* (pl. more), meaning custom(s) corresponding to the Greek *ethos*- *custom*. This is why in many contexts, the two words are

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<sup>364</sup> *English Dictionary*; Webster 1913. E-edition. CD LACVIET 2002, A Dictionary of English-Vietnamese; Vietnamese-English.

<sup>365</sup> Ref. *The Penguin Dictionary of Philosophy*. 2000. P. 366

interchangeable, but in various ways, they are also used in a much more contrasting sense<sup>366</sup>.

Morality is not a mere ethical code, for ethical codes vary according to different traditions, cultures and different religions, and also in different societies. An ethical code is a conventional set of rules and regulations, laws and customs found at a given time and in a particular society. Thus, an ethical code has its value only in relation to time and space, i.e. in its social context. Further more, being moral is not necessary as being good for goodness is pure and spontaneous but morality is preconditioned and entails calculation or prudence. In philosophy, morality is in relation to *the theory of justice*. Moral causation (*kammaniyāma*) as explained in Buddhism is also of this kind. In psychoanalysis, a sense of morality is a very similar to the concept of super ego.

## Sīla as Precepts

In Buddhism, the word *Sīla* is often rendered as morality. As we have mentioned earlier, the Noble Eightfold Path is not a revelation by God or by any superhuman agent (divine beings). The codes to regulate the conduct of different groups of Buddhist followers is not predetermined, but comes into being in a naturally with the growth of each group of followers in their social context<sup>367</sup>. Therefore, **it is more a natural morality than a positive (forced) morality**. The practice of *sīla* as a prerequisite varies according to the practitioner's status in the community. Laypeople (*upāsaka* and *upāsika*) are required to keep five precepts consisting in the training of (1)

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<sup>366</sup> Ibid. p. 365.

<sup>367</sup> We can see this in *The Books of Discipline, Vinaya pitaka* translated by Ms. I.B. Horner. PTS

not killing or injuring, (2) not stealing or taking what is not given, (3) not lying or using words that have destructive consequences, (4) not to be led astray through sensual pursuits, and (5) not to be influenced by liquor and drugs. In *uposatha*-the observance days, the lay followers may take more vows, numbering nine as follows. Novice monks (*samanera* and *samanerī*) are obligated to keep ten precepts: five precepts as lay people do plus (6) not eating at an improper time, (7) not using luxurious things, (8) not decorating their bodies, (9) not indulging in worldly entertainments, (10) not accepting or keeping money, silver, gold and other valuable items. The novices' fourth precept is different from that of lay people in that they are required to live a celibate life, and in addition, they should train themselves in seventy five *sikkhā* (*training rules*) to make their behaviors more refined. Monks (*bhikkhu*) and nuns (*bhikkhunī*) they have many more rules to regulate their self-disciplined and noble lives. There are a total of 220 rules for monks and 311 or 350 rules for nuns.<sup>368</sup>

### **Right Speech, Right Action, and Right Livelihood**

Keeping precepts and behaving in an acceptable way is only parts of the *Sīlasikkhā*- the training in higher morality. When right speech (*sammāvācā*), right action (*sammākamanta*) and right livelihood (*samm'ājīva*) are arranged under the training of morality, meticulously following the precept is just a half, negative aspect (i.e. abstinence) of the higher training in morality. There are four abstinenes in speech that a Buddhist should follow: conscious

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<sup>368</sup> According to the Pāli version of *Patimokkha- the Disciplined Code for monks and nuns*, there are 227 rules for monks, and 311 rules for nuns; but in the Chinese version which is a translation from Sanskrit of the Dharmaguptra sect, there are 350 rules for nuns.

lies, harsh words, slandering, and idle chattering. The positive aspects of the noble training in speech are: truthfulness, using polite and gentle words, speaking with a loving attitude and a good intention to build up a harmonious community, and to speak constructive words timely. The standards of right speech must be justified according to the three qualities: truthfulness, being beneficial, and timely.

He unites the united, does not separate the broken, fond of uniting and not fond of separating; he talks words to unite and not to separate. Abstains from rough, angry words, and talks gentle words pleasant to the ear going straight to the heart and acceptable to many. Abstains from frivolous untimely, untruthful and useless words, talking according to the Teaching and the Discipline<sup>369</sup>

This standard of right speech is more applicable under the guidance of mindfulness and clear comprehension (*sati-sampajaññā*). Again, right view and right thought, even at a mundane level, serve as an intellectual foundation for the training or practice of morality. When we speak of right action, it covers the first, second, and fourth precept. Further, right actions are the actions that are guided by a

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<sup>369</sup> MN. 114, Sevitabba- asevitabba sutta : iti bhinnānaṃ va sandhātā sahitānaṃ va anuppadātā, samaggārāmo samaggarato samagganadī samaggakaraṇiṃ vācaṃ bhāsītā hoti. Pharusam vācaṃ pahāya pharusāya vācāya paṭivirato hoti. Yā sā vācā nelā kaṇṇasukhā pemaṇīyā hadayaṅgamā porī bahujanakantā bahujanamanāpā, tathārūpiṃ vācaṃ bhāsītā hoti. Samphappalāpaṃ pahāya samphappalāpā paṭivirato hoti. Kālavādī bhūtavādī atthavādī dhammavādī vinayavādī nidhānavatiṃ vācaṃ bhāsītā hoti kālana sāpadesaṃ pariyaṇṭavatiṃ atthasaṃhitāṃ evarūpaṃ bhante, vacūsamācāraṃ sevato akusalā dhammā parihāyanti, kusalā dhammā abhivaṇṇahanti.

compassionate mind, helping oneself and others to live a peaceful and harmless life.

Abandoning killing, he lives a harmless life without injury to any living being; putting down stick and weapon, he gives a sense of fearlessness to other beings; he dwells with a mind pervaded with compassion for all sentient beings.<sup>370</sup>

Right livelihood is the livelihood that does not engage in killing or injuring sentient beings such as trading in human beings or animals, dealing with weapons or poison, or doing business with harmful drugs and intoxicating substances. Right livelihood is a righteous and honest way of earning a living to support oneself and one's family. The person who is accomplished in the training of morality is always confident everywhere and has no fear due to the protection afforded by his pure conduct. He experiences an inner happiness that is born of a pure mind.<sup>371</sup>

By keeping precepts, the practitioners are free from gross transgressions concerning to bodily and verbal conduct. Since the practice of morality is a prerequisite for the two other trainings, the higher training in morality is not only to train oneself to be virtuous and graceful, but also to help to stem the tendency towards greed and attachment. It is noteworthy that the higher training in morality according to the Buddha's

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<sup>370</sup> D 9: BPS. P. 181: Idha ... bhikkhu pānātipataṃ pahāya pānātipātā paṭivirato hoti, nihita-daṇḍo nihita-sattho lajjī dayāpanno sabbapāṇābhūtaṃ-hitānukampī viharati.

<sup>371</sup> D. 9. PTS p. 181: Atha kho ... evaṃ sīla-sampanno na kuto ci bhayaṃ samanupassati yadidaṃ sīla-saṃvarato... So iminā ariyena sīlakkhandhena samannāgato ajjhattaṃ anavajja-sukhaṃ paṭisamvedeti.

teaching is quite different from the common or superficial moral standards. The text reads:

Being endowed with wholesome karma with regards to body and speech, a pure livelihood, accomplished in morality, guarded in the sense-doors with mindfulness and clear comprehension, having contentment. [ *kāyakamma- vacīkammena samanāgato kusalena parisuddhājīvo sīla sampanno indriyesu gutta-dvāro satisampajaññaena samanāgato santuṭṭho* ]<sup>372</sup>

Thus in the first stage, the higher training in morality is to check out the unwholesome karma with regard to bodily and verbal actions and to become mentally prepared for a higher training by guarding the senses through mindfulness and clear comprehension.

### **Right Attitude Concerning Material Things**

In addition, a virtuous practitioner reflects on the purpose of using the basic material things such as lodging, food, clothes, and medicine. This is to help him remain contented with the least requirements, unburdened by material things. The reflection is as follows:

- Wisely reflect, I use this robe in order to protect this body from cold and heat, from mosquitoes, flies, snakes, scorpions and the contact of other harmful things. This cloth helps me to cover the shameful parts of the body.<sup>373</sup>

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<sup>372</sup> D. 9; PTS. P.181

<sup>373</sup> AN: Paṭisankhā yoniso cīvaraṃ paṭisevāmi yāvad-eva sītassa paṭighātāya, unhassa paṭighātāy daṃsamakasavātātapasiriṃ sapaśamphassānaṃ paṭghātāya, yāvad-eva hirikopīnaṭicchādanatthaṃ.

- Wisely reflect, I take this food not as a kind of enjoyment, nor for decoration of this body, nor for its look more beautiful and attractive. This food is partaken only for maintaining the body to practice the holy life, to eliminate the past painful feelings (due to hunger), to check out the arising of new feelings (due to greed). Thus it gives me a joyful state of being without fault.<sup>374</sup>
- Wisely reflect, I use this lodging in order to protect (me) from the heat and cold, rains and winds; to guard off the harmful touch of insects such as mosquitoes and gadflies, snakes, and other seasonal elements; and I can stay harmlessly and joyfully.<sup>375</sup>
- Wisely reflect, I use these materials to comfort sickness as medicament only. They are provided for warding off the pains and uneasiness due to sickness, and freedom from disease is the highest gain.<sup>376</sup>

Thus having prevented himself from succumbing to the temptation of greed and rampant of desire, he lives

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<sup>374</sup> AN: Paṭisankhā yoniso piṇḍapātaṃ paṭisevāmi, neva davāya na madaya na maṇḍanāya na vibhūsanāya. Yāvad-eva imassa kāyassa thitīyā yāpanāya vihiṃsūpatiṃ brahmacariyā nuggahāya. Iti purānaṃ ca vedanaṃ paṭihankhāmi, navaṃ ca vedānaṃ na uppādesāmi, yātrā ca me bhavissati. Anavajjatā ca phāsu vihārocāti.

<sup>375</sup> AN: Paṭisankhā yoniso senasānaṃ paṭisevāmi yāvad-eva sītassa paṭighātāya, unhassa paṭighātāy dāmsamakasavātātapasirīṃ sapasamphassānaṃ paṭghātāya, yāvad-eva utuparissayavinodanaṃ paṭisallānārānattham.

<sup>376</sup> AN: Paṭisankhā yoniso gilānapaccayabhesajjaparikkhāraṃ paṭisevāmi, yāvad-eva uppanānaṃ veyyābādhikānaṃ vedanānaṃ paṭighātāya abyāpajjharamatāyāti.

comfortably with a life of simplicity. For developing concentration, the trainee voluntarily guards his senses as follows:

Having seen a form, he does not grasp at the general appearance, nor does he with the details of the object. Since he knows that if his eye(s) is unguarded, covetousness, grief and evil- unskillful tendencies might invade his mind. Therefore, he guards his eyes, and follows a right method of training with regard to the eye<sup>377</sup>.

The same course of action is applied in the case of the other senses.

In conclusion, the training in *Sīla* stems all the gross behaviors as concerning bodily and verbal conducts. The first step in the noble training also has prepared the practitioner to have a pure mind that enables him to experience an inner happiness born of a pure conscience (*ajjhataṃ anavaṃja-sukhaṃ*). Preventing oneself from viewing or hearing sensual media enables one to experience a more serene state born of seclusion from the five (disturbing) sensual channels (*ajjhataṃ avyāseka-sukhaṃ*).<sup>378</sup> Thus, the practitioner physically and mentally has become prepared for the next step, the higher training in concentration. The *Sīlakkhandha* of *Dīgha Nikāya* mentions many aspects of morality, ranging from basic to more elaborated conduct; however, the Buddha

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<sup>377</sup> D.9. PTS. D. I. 181: cakkhumnā rūpaṃ disvā na nimittaggāhī hoti nānuyyañjanaggāhī. Yatvādhikaranaṃ eṇaṃ cakkhundriyaṃ asamvuttaṃ viharantaṃ abhijjhā-domanassā pāpakā akusala dhammā anvāssaveyyuṃ, tassa samvarāya paṭipajjati, rakkhīti cakkhundriyaṃ, cakkhundriye saṃvaram āpajjati. Sotena saddaṃ sutvā...

<sup>378</sup> D.9; PTS D. I. 182: So iminā ariyena indriya saṃvarena samannāgato ajjhataṃ avyāseka-sukhaṃ patisaṃvedeti.

said that these are only frivolous compliments praising him in the accomplishment of morality. There are greater and distinctive aspects which he himself had reached and taught to his followers are elaborated in the categories of concentration and wisdom or insight knowledge.

## II. The Evolution of Consciousness: The Discipline of the Mind

The second stage in the threefold training is the training in concentration popularly known as *samādhi sikkhā* or elsewhere *adhicitta sikkhā*, the higher training of the mind. In relation to the Noble Eightfold Path, this training covers three factors of the Path, i.e., right exertion (*sammāvāyāmo*), right mindfulness (*sammāsati*) and right concentration (*sammāsamādhi*)<sup>379</sup>. In many discourses, the training in concentration is elaborated in a systematic application to alter one's consciousness or to enable the purposeful evolution of consciousness. The higher training of the mind is a process of purification of the mind from mental defilements (*kilesas*), and this process is compared to a gold-smith refining the gold by filtering it out from the dirt by passing it through water. Similarly, the art of refinement of the mind in the Noble Teaching is a gradual training passing through many stages. The text reads:

It is similar, monks, a practitioner who devotes himself to the training in the higher mind (knows that): there are

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<sup>379</sup> See M.44, Cūlavedalla sutta.

(in his personality) gross impurities such as bad conduct of the body, speech and mind. Such conduct an earnest, capable practitioner abandons, dispels, eliminates and abolishes.

When s/he has abandoned these, there are still impurities of a moderate degree that cling to him, such are sensual thoughts, thoughts of ill-will, and violent thoughts. Such thought an earnest, capable practitioner abandons, dispels, eliminates and abolishes.

When s/he has abandoned these, there are still subtle impurities that cling to him, such are thoughts about his relatives, his home country, and his reputation. Such thought an earnest, capable practitioner abandons, dispels, eliminates and abolishes.

When s/he has abandoned these, there are still remaining thoughts of higher mental states experienced in meditation. That concentration is not yet peaceful and sublime; it has not attained to full tranquility, nor has it achieved mental unification; it is maintained by strenuous suppression of the defilements.<sup>380</sup>

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<sup>380</sup> A. III, 100; 1:10: Evamevaṃ kho, bhikkhave, santi adhicittamanuyuttassa bhikkhuno olārikaṃ upakkilesaṃ kāyaduccaritaṃ vacīduccaritaṃ manoduccaritaṃ, tamenam sacetaso bhikkhu dabbajātiko pajahati vinodeti byantīkaroti anabhāvaṃ gameti. Tasmim pahīne tasmim byantīkate santi adhicittamanuyuttassa bhikkhuno majjhimasahagataṃ upakkilesaṃ kāmavitakko byāpādavitaṃ vihimsāvitaṃ, tamenam sacetaso bhikkhu dabbajātiko pajahati vinodeti byantīkaroti anabhāvaṃ gameti. Tasmim pahīne tasmim byantīkate santi adhicittamanuyuttassa bhikkhuno sukhumasahagatā upakkilesāññātivitaṃ janapadavitakko anavaññattipaṭisamyutto vitaṃ, tamenam sace taso bhikkhu dabbajātiko pajahati vinodeti byantīkaroti anabhāvaṃ gameti. Tasmim pahīne tasmim byantīkate athāparam dhammavitakkāvasissati ,09. So hoti samādhi na ceva santo na ca pañito nappaṭippassaddhaladdho na ekodibhāvādhigato sasañkhāraniggayhavāritagato hoti.

The commentary on the passage (AA) explains that the agitation or expectation in practice that described as “thoughts of higher mental states experienced in meditation” as quoted in the above text is a kind of subtle defilements (*upa-kilesa*). Accordingly, these discursive thoughts, although not unwholesome, might distill the mind, like a lake being touched by breezes causing small ripples on the surface. The training is further carried on until the cultivation reaches concentration as described in the text thus:

There comes a time when his mind becomes inwardly steadied, composed, unified and concentrated. That concentration is then calm and refined; it has attained to full tranquility and achieved mental unification; it is *not* maintained by strenuous suppression of the defilements.<sup>381</sup>

Only in this state, is the mind an ideal tool for the discernment or investigation of itself in relation to one’s experiences. We will return to this subject in the section on the higher training in wisdom. Now, a look into the other factors of the path that conduce to the refinement of the mind deserved our attention. These factors are also termed ‘controlling faculties’ (*indriya*) elsewhere. They are mindfulness (*sati*), effort (*virīya*), and wisdom (*paññā* or *sampajjaññā*). In the Noble Eightfold Path, they are termed right mindfulness (*sammāsati*) and right exertion (*sammāvāyamo*).

### **Right Exertion (*sammāvāyamo*)**

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<sup>381</sup> A. III, 100:1:10: So, bhikkhave, samayo yam tam cittam ajjhattamyeva santiṭṭhati sannis<sup>2</sup>dati ekodi hoti samādhiyati. So hoti samādhi santo paṇīto paṭipassaddhiladdho ekodibhāvādhigato na sasaṅkhāranigga yhavāritagato.

This refers to the effort that eliminates the unwholesome factor that has arisen, to prevent the evil state from arising, to prepare for the arising of the unarisen beneficial factor, and to develop the beneficial factor that has arisen. In meditation, the five mental obstacles (*nīvaraṇā*) are unwholesome factors that are to be (temporarily) eliminated, made not arising, and the five *jhāna* factors are to be developed, to use as a means to achieve a higher and more refined happiness. To lead a moral life needs a lot of effort, and it is therefore sometimes called “going against the current”. In the mental discipline known as meditation, even more effort is needed; however, it should be used wisely to have a balanced mind. As a mental faculty (*indriya*), exertion should be balanced with *samādhi*, the concentration itself. When right exertion is well applied and working in concert with the other mental faculties (*saddha*, *virīya* = *vāyama*, *sati*, *Samādhi*, and *paññā*), the five hindrances (*nīvaraṇā*) are dispelled. The text reads: “When he sees himself free of these five hindrances, joy arises; to a joyful mind, rapture arises; in him those mind is enraptured, the body is tranquil; in a tranquil body, he feels blissful; and a blissful mind is concentrated”<sup>382</sup>.

## Indriyas – Controlling Faculties

The art of concentration involves the exercise of five mental faculties known as *indriyā*. They are a group of five faculties among the thirty seven enlightenment factors (*bodhipakkhīyādharmā*) and among them faith (*saddha*) is the first faculty. This refers to the conviction in the Buddha, the Enlightened One, in his teaching (*Dhamma*) that leads to

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<sup>382</sup> D. 2: Tassime pañca nīvaraṇe pahīṇe attāni samanupassato pāmojjaṃ jāyati. Pamuditassa pīti jāyati. Pīṭimanassa kāyo passambhati. Passaddhakāyo sukhaṃ vedeti. Sukhino cittaṃ samādhīyati.

enlightenment, in the noble fellowship (*Sangha*) as a supportive environment, in the personal guidance of one's mentor, and in one's own ability to achieve enlightenment through the given method. This faith or confidence enables the practitioner to embark on the spiritual quest and make the necessary exertion. Next is the effort (*viriya*) which is equal to exertion (*vāyama* on the noble eightfold path). Effort is the factor that enables one to achieve the desirable goal in whatever endeavor, however, in meditation, this effort must be kept in balance with another faculty, that is of *samādhi*, the concentration itself. Mindfulness (*sati*) is the faculty keeping the other factors in well concerted state that produces concentration of the mind. Wisdom or discerning knowledge (*paññā*) is the last factor that should be balanced with *saddha*, the first factor to keep the practice on the right track.

### **Right Mindfulness –Sammā-sati**

Herein Right Mindfulness especially refers to the four foundations of mindfulness termed *satipaṭṭhāna*. The *Satipaṭṭhāna* is the method that conduces to those states of the meditative experiences. The term *satipaṭṭhāna* can be broken down into *sati* + *upa* + *ṭhāna* some times is translated as the establishment of mindfulness or the application of mindfulness. Both are correct, according to the commentaries on the texts. The text reads:

And what, monks, is the right mindfulness? Herein, a monk dwells contemplating the body (*kāya*) in the body (*kāye*), ardent, clearly comprehending and mindful, having put away covetousness and grief concerning the world. He dwells contemplating feeling (*vedanā*) in the feeling (*vedanāsu*)...states of mind (*citta*) in the states of mind (*citte*)...phenomena (*dhammā*) in the phenomena

(*dhammesu*), ardent, clearly comprehending and mindful, having put away covetousness and grief concerning the world.<sup>383</sup>

We should take note of the Pāli passages: *kāye kāyānupassī, vedanāsu vedanānupassī, cite cittānupassī, dhammesu dhammānupassī viharati* which are rather awkwardly translated into English in the above quoted text. However, there is an explicit implication in the Pāli text that the practitioner should apply his mind ‘here and now’ to the reality that is perceivable and in the present. He should either engage his mind with his body or feelings or with his moods or any phenomena that is present. In the Pali passages, mindfulness is always accompanied by clear comprehension.

The alertness or awareness of what is going on is called ‘*sampajañña*’ and the reflective knowledge is termed ‘*sati*’. *Sati* is often translated as ‘mindfulness’, and *sampajañña* stands for ‘clear comprehension’ or non-delusion. On the spiritual path, *sati* is one of the five faculties, one of the five powers, and one of the ‘factors of enlightenment’- *satisambojhaṅga*. In the Noble Eightfold Path, *sati* stands for the seventh factor- *sammāsati*. In the *Mahāsatipatṭhāṇa sutta* (DN, MN) where *sati* plays an eminent role earning it the

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<sup>383</sup> D. 22: Katame ca bhikkhave sammāsati: idha bhikkhave bhikkhu kāye kāyānupassī viharati àtāpī sampajāno satimā vineyya loke abhijjhādomanassaṃ.  
Vedanāsu vedanānupassī viharati àtāpī sampajāno satimā vineyya loke abhijjhādomanassaṃ,  
Citte cittānupassī viharati àtāpī sampajāno satimā vineyya loke abhijjhādomanassaṃ,  
Dhammesu dhammānupassī viharati àtāpī sampajāno satimā vineyya loke abhijjhādomanassaṃ.

status of most important practice leading to liberation and enlightenment. This is solemnly declared by the Buddha thus:

This is the only way, monks, for the purification of beings, for the overcoming of sorrow and lamentation, for the disappearance of pain and grief, for reaching the noble path, for the realization of Nibbāna, namely, the Four Foundations of Mindfulness [*Ekāyano ayaṃ bhikkhave maggo sattānaṃ visuddhiyā sokaparidevānaṃ samatikkamāya dukkhadomanassānaṃ atthaṅgamāya ñāyassa adhigamāya nibbānassa sacchikiriyāya, yadidaṃ cattāro satipaṭṭhānā.*]<sup>384</sup>

In the noble eightfold path and the threefold training, *sati* represents for concentration (*Samādhi*) and *sampajañña* stands for wisdom (*paññā*). However, *sati* as represented in the above text is the establishment of mindfulness that is accompanied by clear comprehension and *ātāpī* is an ardent practice to remove covetousness and aversion concerning body, feeling, mind and *dhammā* or ideas. Thus, *sati*, *sampajañña*, and *ātāpī* here are used as tools to refine the mind in its relation to experiences. *Sati* and *sampajañña* is a pair that always goes together. How these two faculties work harmoniously to ensure the practitioner stays on the right path is succinctly and lucidly captured by Venerable Nyanaponika Thero as follows:

Let us take the example of a pleasant visual object which has aroused our liking. At first that liking might not be very active and insistent. If at that point the mind has already been able to keep still for detached observation or reflection (*sati*), the visual perception can easily be divested of its still very slight admixture of lust. The object becomes registered as “just something seen that

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<sup>384</sup> DN, Mahāsatiṭṭhāṇa sutta

has caused a pleasant feeling.” or the attraction felt is sublimated into a quiet aesthetic pleasure. But if that earlier chance has been missed, the liking will grow into attachment and into the desire to possess. If now a stop is called, the thought of desire may gradually lose its strength; it will not easily turn into an insistent craving, and no actual attempts to get possession of the desired object will follow. But if the current of lust is still unchecked, then the thought of desire may express itself by speech in asking for the object or even demanding it with impetuous words. That is unwholesome mental karma is followed by unwholesome verbal karma. A refusal will cause the original current of lust to branch out into additional stream of mental defilements, either sadness or anger. But if even at that late stage one can stop for quiet reflection or bare attention, accept the refusal, and renounce wish-fulfillment, further complications will be avoided. However, if clamoring words are followed by unwholesome bodily karma, and if, driven by craving, one tries to get possession of the desired object by stealth or force, then the karmic entanglement is complete and its consequences must be experienced in their full impact. But still, if even after the completion of the evil act, one stops for reflection, it will not be in vain. For the mindfulness that arises in the form of remorseful retrospection will prelude a hardening of character and may prevent a repetition of the same action.<sup>385</sup>

Of these two mental factors, *sati* stands for *samādhi* or being firmly grounded, and *sampajaññā* stands for wisdom in

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<sup>385</sup> Nyanaponika Thera: *The Power of Mindfulness*; BPS 2005. *The Wheel Publication* No. 121/122. p. 30

action. Ordinarily, almost everyone can be aware of their bodily movements and their actions, however, this superficial knowing is not called mindfulness (*sati*) in its technical sense. The awareness in meditation practice requires a more serious engagement of the faculty of wisdom (*paññindriya*). This differentiation is described as follows:

Mindfulness accompanied by clear comprehension, differs from ordinary awareness. Rather than seeing the conventional features of objects more clearly, mindfulness goes beyond them to perceive something quite specific – the ultimate characteristics common to all formations, good or bad. There are only three of these: impermanence, unsatisfactoriness, and non-self. (...) Mindfully noting mental and physical phenomena, we learn that they arise only to pass away. In the deepest sense, we cannot manipulate or actually own them.<sup>386</sup>

True mindfulness has arisen when there is only the action but no doer. With divided mindfulness we experience both, the one who is mindful and the one who is being watched. If we use precision in our attention, we see – even if only for a moment – that no person is embedded in our mind/ body proceed. We can never forget that experience.<sup>387</sup>

The practice of mindfulness and clear comprehension is an indispensable practice for the purification of the mind (*sacitta pariyodāsa*). In brief, this is the third step on the Buddhist Path to the ultimate happiness that all the Buddhas or

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<sup>386</sup> Cynthia Thatcher: *What is so great about now?* – an article in the *Tricycle Journal*, P. 35; Winter 2006- USA.

<sup>387</sup> *Ibid*, P. 75

Enlightened Ones recommend.<sup>388</sup> *Sati* and *sampajañña* keep one's mind in the present, not lurking into the past nor dreaming about the future. As the nature of an ordinary mind is flickering, vacillating and irritating, the task of *sati* is to pin it down and that of *sampajañña* to channel it into a correct course of action. Thus, under the discipline of *sati* and *sampajañña*, the mind virtually stays in the present *dhamma* (physical and mental phenomena); this makes it lucid and alert. In the *Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta*, mindfulness and clear comprehension occupy one section, describing how meditation is carried on in one's daily activities. This is a very important practice, for if these two mental controlling faculties do not exert their role in one's bodily, verbal and mental activities in the daily basic practice, meditative attainments are impossible<sup>389</sup>. As at the beginning of this chapter, I have cited out the critique of a western practitioner (and also a scholar who is representative of many other half-hearted practitioners) that it is this lacking of persistence of making a daily practice out of applying the spirit of awakening in the diverse complication of circumstances that accounts for one's failure.

## ***Kāyanupassanā, Contemplation on the Body***

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<sup>388</sup> Dhṛ: Sabba pāpassa akarānaṃ; kusalassa upasampada; sacittapariyodāpānaṃ – etaṃ buddhānaṃ sāsaṇaṃ.

<sup>389</sup> The researcher have heard of many complains of failures in achieving the mental unification ( access absorption and *jhāna*) as well as the failure in carrying on the purification yielded by concentration in the context outside the meditation centre. This, the researcher also have personally experienced until following the advices of the meditation masters, to incorporate the practice of *sati-sampajañña* into all daily activities.

Contemplation on the body serves the purpose of dispelling misapprehending the body as the self. At the grossest level, people take their body to be their self, then cling and attach to it, thereby giving an overdue regard to the body. This tendency inevitably causes unnecessary worry and distress when the body changes its appearance, getting sick, old-aged and finally disintegrating. Most of man's pleasures are extracted from the body and man gratifies his / her carnal desires, seeing it as beautiful, attractive, enticing, etc. Contemplation on the body consists of the mindfulness of breathing, analysis of the four primary elements, the postures, the 32 parts of the body, and the nine stages of the disintegration of a corpse. This helps in discerning the impure and vulnerable nature of the body. The knowledge gained through contemplation of the material aspect of one's being acts to dispel the illusion of beauty and attractiveness, and this is a good therapy for narcissism and hedonistic addictions.

We have seen in Chapter Three how the metaphysical speculation postulates breath for the self or soul (*prāṇa ātman*). In order to see the connection of the breath with the living body as merely functional, the first exercise offered in this method of training is *Ānāpaṇasati* or mindfulness of breathing. This is the most popular meditative practice, and it is common both to Yoga (Hinduism) and Buddhism. The practice of mindfulness of breathing according to Buddhist technique does not require the breath control as in Yoga which is termed *prāṇayana*. Buddhist texts describe this theme in 16 steps, which again can be divided into four Tetrads modeling itself on the *Satipaṭṭhāna* method. The first Tetrad which deals with the contemplation of the body is described as follows:

1. Breathing in long, one knows, ‘I breathe in long’; or breathing out long, one knows, ‘I breathe out long’.
2. Breathing in short, one knows, ‘I breathe in short’; or breathing out short, one knows, ‘I breathe out short’.
3. “Experiencing the whole body, I shall breathe in”, thus one trains oneself; “Experiencing the whole body, I shall breathe out”, thus one trains oneself.
4. “Calming the bodily formation, I shall breathe in”, thus one trains oneself”; “Calming the bodily formation, I shall breathe out”, thus one trains oneself.”

The second Tetrad is described with a shift of attention to the feelings that the contemplation on breath in a deep absorption would entail (in the first and second *jhāna* according to the commentary on this discourse). The text reads as follows:

5. “Experiencing rapture, I shall breathe in”, thus one trains oneself; “Experiencing rapture, I shall breathe out”, thus one trains oneself.<sup>390</sup>

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<sup>390</sup> Ven. Nāṇamoli: *Mindfulness of Breathing and its commentary*; Vism: “herein rapture is experienced in two ways, as object and as non-delusion. How is rapture experienced as object? He enters into the first two *jhānas* in which rapture is present. Owing to his obtaining of *jhāna*, at the moment of attaining it, rapture is experienced by him as object, because of the experiencing of object. How as non-delusion? Having entered into the two *jhānas* in which rapture is present, and emerged therefrom, he masters the rapture associated with *jhāna* (by contemplating it) as destructible and perishable. By his penetration of its characteristics at the moment of insight, rapture is experienced by him as non-delusion.” (BPS 6<sup>th</sup> Edition 1998), p 44.

6. “Experiencing bliss, I shall breathe in”, thus one trains oneself. “Experiencing bliss, I shall breathe out”, thus one trains oneself.
7. “Experiencing the mind- activities, I shall breathe in”, thus one trains oneself; “Experiencing the mind- activities, I shall breathe out”, thus one trains oneself.
8. “Calming the mind- activities, I shall breathe in”, thus one trains oneself; “Calming the mind-activities, I shall breathe out”, thus one trains oneself.

The third Tetrad is the contemplating on the mind while the main object of exercise is still the in- and out- breath. However, the awareness is sharper so that it is capable of encompassing the wholeness in the experiencing of the mind-body relationship. The text reads:

9. “Experiencing the mind, I shall breathe in, thus one trains oneself; “Experiencing the mind, I shall breathe out, thus one trains oneself.
10. “Gladdening the mind, I shall breathe in, thus one trains oneself; “Gladdening the mind, I shall breathe out, thus one trains oneself.”
11. “Contemplating the mind, I shall breathe in, thus one trains oneself; “Contemplating the mind, I shall breathe out, thus one trains oneself.”
12. “Liberating the mind, I shall breathe in, thus one trains oneself”; “Liberating the mind, I shall breathe out, thus one trains oneself.”

The fourth Tetrad entails the contemplation of mental objects or *Dhammas* as follows:

13. “Contemplating impermanence, I shall breathe in, thus one trains oneself; “Contemplating

- impermanence, I shall breathe out, thus one trains oneself.”
14. “Contemplating fading away”, I shall breathe in, thus one trains oneself; “Contemplating fading away”, I shall breathe out, thus one trains oneself.
  15. “Contemplating cessation, I shall breathe in, thus one trains oneself; “Contemplating cessation, I shall breathe out, thus one trains oneself.
  16. “Contemplating relinquishment, I shall breathe in, thus one trains oneself; “Contemplating relinquishment, I shall breathe out, thus one trains oneself.<sup>391</sup>

Mindfulness of breathing can also be applied in developing concentration (*samatha*) as well as for insight meditation (*vipassanā*). It can lead up to the fourth *Jhāna* in the Buddhist meditative classification. Developing insight knowledge, as we have seen from the above prescribed exercise, it gradually leads to the understanding, transforming and transcending the conditioned experience in this very human body through the transformation of both consciousness and mind. The text reads:

And how developed, monks, how repeatedly practiced, does respiration-mindfulness perfect the four foundations of mindfulness? On whatever occasion, [...the 1<sup>st</sup> tetrad, 1-4] – on that occasion, monks, a practitioner abides contemplating the body in the body, ardent, clearly comprehending, mindful, having put away covetousness and grief regarding the world.<sup>392</sup>

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<sup>391</sup> M 118: *Mindfulness of Breathing (Anāpānasati) and its commentary*, Adapted from the translation of Ven Bhikkhu Ñāṇamoli, (BPS 6<sup>th</sup> Edition 1998).

<sup>392</sup> Ibid, p. 7.

From a therapeutic perspective, the first tetrad is recommended for the people who have a distracted mind as this exercise helps to keep the mind firmly on one object; thus the mind will become focused and unified, not scattered here and there and thus losing energy. A unified mind is more healthy and penetrative, and this mind can thereby become a good tool to examine the mental contents of one's being. Mindfulness of breathing can be practiced everywhere and all the times because one's breath is always available, and it even helps a great deal for relaxation at the office or working place, in the examination hall, in a tense meeting, etc. If even for some brief moments, practicing mindfulness of breathing can so beneficial, one can just imagine how, as a long term practice, it could be even more helpful. The phrase "having put away covetousness and grief regarding the world" indicates a state of non-reaction such as bodily attraction or repulsion. There are many benefits one may gain through the practice of the Mindfulness of the body. The text reads:

In him who thus lives earnest, ardent and resolute, worldly memories and inclinations will fade away, and through their fading his mind will become firm within, will be calm, harmonious and concentrated. In that way, monks, a practitioner develops mindfulness of the body.<sup>393</sup>

### ***Vedanānupassanā- Contemplation on the Feelings***

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<sup>393</sup> S.V. 47: *The Discourse on the Mindfulness of the Body*; Ven. Nānaponika Thera; *The Heart of Buddhist Meditation*, BPS 1992, p.159.

Contemplation on feelings helps one to discover the true nature of human experience at the sensational and emotional level. This exercise is a good therapy for those who regarding feeling as the self, and as a sequel, are attached to feelings and emotions, thus being in a state of constant inner turmoil produced by their uncontrolled feelings and emotions. As we have seen in the previous chapters, feelings form the basis of all of one's reactions (*vedanā paccayā taṇhā*). "The world is led by feeling"<sup>394</sup>, said a Buddhist master. People crave pleasant feelings and shun unpleasant feelings. Most of man's activities are governed by these two principal survival apperceptions.

In recent times in western psychotherapy, there have been many reports of alienation in which the patient feels 'not himself' or 'not-herself'. This symptom has its cause in the misrepresentation of one's real feelings to oneself. This is a kind of defense mechanism that has subconsciously originated from a period of difficulty in one's personal development; however, it is 'out of fashion' or no longer suited to one's present situation. In an attempt to avoid painful feelings and blindly searching for pleasant feelings, one has cut oneself off from one's real feelings. All of these, in Buddhist terms, happen because of one not comprehending of the true nature of feelings, and this makes one's journey in *samsāra* a long and painful one. Contemplation on feelings is the best therapy for this mental illness.

To practice contemplation of the feeling (*vedanānupassanā*), the practitioner is requested to pay close attention at the sensation that is accruing in the body. There are three kinds of feelings at the sensational level, i.e., pleasant,

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<sup>394</sup> Ven. Buddhadasa, *Dhamma talks for foreigner retreat* in Thailand 1987.

unpleasant and neutral which have originated from the contact of sense organs with their respective objects. At the emotional level, feelings are classified in fivefold as regards to worldly emotion and spiritual emotion. Whatever sensation or feeling there is, one should mentally note it without reaction. If a reaction arises such as like or dislike, or ignoring, this is *saṅkhārakkhandha* and one should mentally note it as it is. Like or dislike or attraction or repulsion to bodily sensations are emotions, and they belong to the fourth *khandha*, the aggregate of mental formations. If one is not aware of these reactional occurrences, they may develop into negative emotions such as lust, hatred, daydreaming, etc. Being aware of them is called the contemplation on the mind. With a keen awareness, one will see that feelings are of a fleeting nature arising and fading away in rapid succession, and therefore, all feelings are unsatisfactory (*dukkha*). They are not fit to be held for the self or the core of one's being. They are not self, and therefore holding on to them only yields unsatisfactory experiences. The text read:

Whatever feeling there is, pleasant or painful or neither pleasant nor painful one; whether it is internal or external (feeling) that has been felt. By having known that is unsatisfactory, a deluded state, decaying. Seeing its ephemeral nature moment by moment (i.e., coming in touch with the impermanence of feelings), thus become detached from it. Realizing the destruction of feelings, the practitioner thus no more hankering after feeling, and becomes perfectly at peace.<sup>395</sup>

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<sup>395</sup> Suttanipātapāli: versēs738-9: Sukhaṃ vā yadi vā dukkhaṃ, adukkhamasukhaṃ saha. Ajjhatañca bahidhā ca, yaṃ kiñci atthi veditaṃ. Etaṃ dukkhanti ñātvāna, mosadhammaṃ palokinaṃ. Phussa phussa vayam

Furthermore, this practice can lead to liberation from all limited and conditioned experiences. When a practitioner exercises mindfulness and clear comprehension, feelings are understood as they arise, understood as they remain or present, understood as they are passing away. Thoughts are understood as they arise, as they present, and as they dissolved. Perceptions are understood as they arise, as they present and as they pass away.<sup>396</sup> Elsewhere, feelings, as instructed by the Buddha, should be experienced in seven modes. It is stated that when a noble disciple feels a painful feeling, s/he does not react with distraught or aversion towards that unpleasant feeling, thus the underlying tendency to hatred (*paṭighānusaya*) is abolished; when s/he experiences a pleasant feeling, this is known, and it can not tempt him/her to taking delight in it, thus the underlying tendency to lust (*rāgānusaya*) is abolished; when s/he experiences a neutral feeling, this is known, therefore it is experienced with non-delusion. “Because the instructed noble disciple knows of an escape from painful feeling other than sensual pleasure...<sup>397</sup> He understands it as it really is the origin and the passing away, the gratification, the danger, and the escape in the case of these feelings. Since he understands these things, the underlying tendency to ignorance in regard to neither- pleasant- nor-painful feeling does not lie behind this.”<sup>398</sup> Herein, the escape from feelings is the detached attitude towards feelings. This detachment is the distinction between worldly and the noble ones in the teaching and discipline of the Buddha [S. 36, 6:6, *the dart*].

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passaṃ, evaṃ tattha vijānati. Vedanānaṃ khayā bhikkhu, nicchāto parinibbuto’ti; also at S.IV, 36:1.

<sup>396</sup> S. V, Mahāvaggapāli, satisutta: Idha, bhikkhave, bhikkhuno veditā vedanā uppajjanti, veditā upaṭṭhahanti, veditā abbattham gacchanti. [...] Evaṃ kho, bhikkhave, bhikkhu sampajāno hoti.

<sup>397</sup> S.IV, 36:6, Vedanāsaṃyutta, *The Dart*.

<sup>398</sup> Ibid; Bhikkhu Bodhi’s translation 1265, Wisdom Publications 2000.

## ***Cittānupassanā*- Contemplation on the Mind**

Contemplation on the mind encompasses the awareness of every thought that occurs in the mind; this includes both *saṅkhārakkhandha* and *viññāṇakkhandha*. The texts give a list of 16 states of mind that a practitioner has to be aware of or honestly acknowledged. These states include the mind with lust or the mind without lust, the mind with hatred or the mind without hatred, the mind with delusion or the mind without delusion, the contracted mind or the distracted mind, the developed mind or the undeveloped mind, the surpassable mind or the unsurpassable mind, the concentrated mind or the unconcentrated mind, the freed mind or the not-freed mind. Of them, perhaps most frequently occurring to the ordinary persons are the first ten states of mind. A contracted mind is one that has shrunken due to encounters with undesirable elements, whereas a distracted mind is one that is agitated and wandering here and there without aiming or purpose. A developed mind is the state of mind in meditation, usually denoting the different stages of mental absorption (*mahaggatā*), whereas the undeveloped mind is one not in concentration, or a momentary mind.

Practical advice for contemplation of the mind in its interaction with the environment was given by the Buddha as follows:

Herein, Upavāna, a practitioner having seen a visible object with his own eyes, is aware of the form and aware of his desire for (or aversion to) the form. Of the desire for (or aversion to) the form, he knows: ‘there is in my mind a desire (or aversion) for the form’. If a practitioner having seen a form is aware of the form and being aware of the desire (or aversion) for the form,

knowing that desire (or aversion) for form is present in his mind, in so far, the teaching (*Dhamma*) is visible here and now, is of immediate result, inviting to see, onward-leading, directly experiential by the wise.<sup>399</sup>

The same observation is prescribed for encountering sounds, smells, tastes, tangible objects, and the ideas that originated in the mind. If one can be alert to whatever occurs in one's mind through the interaction with the inner (*ajjhataṃ*) and outer (*bahiya*) environment, being aware of every impingement on the mind is called the contemplation of the mind in the mind (*citte cittānupassī viharati*).

### ***Dhammānupassanā* or Contemplation of the *Dhamma***

The word *Dhammā* in the *Dhammānupassanā* compound denotes the mind's objects. *Citta* signifies state of mind, and *dhamma*, the idea that occurs in the mind. *Cittā* are *saṅkhārā* but not all *dhammā* are *saṅkhāra* (see the *dhamma* chart on page 16). An enlightened mind is the *asaṅkhāra cittaṃ*. Contemplation on perception belongs to the fourth category of the Four Foundations of Mindfulness, the *Dhammānupassanā*. This contemplation ranges from all *saṅkhārā dhammā* to *asaṅkhāra dhamma*. The text divides them into five groups of *Dhammā*:

- (1) Contemplation on the five mental hindrances (sense-desire, anger, sloth and torpor, agitation and worry, and doubt), seeing them as *cetasikā*, i.e., mental properties, or qualities that occur with the arising of consciousness (*citta*).

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<sup>399</sup> SN, *The Visible Teaching Discourse; The Heart of Buddhist Meditation*, p. 176.

- (2) Contemplating on the five aggregates of clinging: “Thus is the material form, thus is the arising of material form, thus is the passing away of material form; thus is feeling...; thus is the perception...; thus is the mental formation...; thus is the consciousness, thus is the arising of consciousness, thus is the passing away of consciousness.” This observation must be done passionlessly so that the five aggregates are seen objectively as not I, nor as me or not mine. They are virtually *dhammā* that has originated and dissolved in the mind-body interaction.
- (3) The six internal and six external sense-bases denote once again contemplation on the interaction between senses and their respective object whenever there is a contact, i.e., the meeting of at least three elements: *sense, stimulation and attention*. Whatever ‘happens there’, the meditator must be aware of them, and by this keen awareness, the process will not grow into *papañca* or mental proliferation.
- (4) With a keen awareness, the meditator’s mind is now consists of only wholesome factors that termed “*The seven factors of enlightenment*” (*sattabojjhaṅga*). They are *sati* or mindfulness, *dhammavicaya* or selecting of a suitable means, *virīya* or energy, *pīti* or spiritual joy, *passaddhi* or tranquility, *samādhi* or concentration, and *upekkhā*, equanimity. Rather than all of these occurring together when one is practicing, but any one or a group of these enlightenment factors can in fact, occur at any given time. The practitioner must know its (or their) presence, its (or their) absence, the cause and condition(s) that giving rise

to their occurrence(s) and the cause(s) and condition(s) causing its (or their) disappearance.

- (5) The Four Noble Truths: whatever occurs, it is seen in the light of the Four Noble Truths encompassing all ranges of human experiences. This contemplation belongs to the third training, the training in wisdom (*paññā sikkhā*) which we will return to shortly later in the third section of this chapter.

### ***Sammāsamādhi* or Right Concentration**

Etymologically, the word *samādhi* comes from prefix *sam* plus *ā*, and the root *dhā* literally means ‘the state of mind being firmly fixed’. In M.44, it is explained as ‘one-pointedness of the mind’ (*cittass’ekaggatā*). According to the Abhidhamma, *samādhi* or concentration is a mental factor that participates in all mental activities. Thus there might be wholesome concentration or unwholesome concentration. Herein, only wholesome concentration is intended because it is modified by the word ‘*sammā*’, ‘right’ (opposed to ‘*micchā*’, wrong). The word *samādhi* is also translated as meditation in many contexts. Meditation does not always mean mental absorptions or *Jhāna* states in which all mental activities are gradually suspended. Although Right Concentration is the last factor on the Noble Eightfold Path, however, it is not the end of the Path as we have seen in the earlier analysis. In Mahācattārīsakasutta (M.III) we find the following definition:

Bhikkhus, what is noble right concentration together with the means and accessories? It is right view, right thoughts, right speech, right actions, right livelihood, right endeavor and right mindfulness. Bhikkhus, one-

pointedness of the mind that endowed with these seven factors is called noble right concentration together with the means and the accessories.<sup>400</sup>

Thus, the eight factors of the Path are involved in only a single factor, right concentration. In the noble training, concentration must be led by right view, and it is a result of the right application of thoughts (*vitakka, vicāra*), being preceded by a firm grounding in morality that is formulated as right speech, right action and right livelihood, and it is accomplished by means of right mindfulness and right exertion.

### **Jhāna or Mental Absorption**

Right concentration also exclusively refers to the four *jhāna*, or mental absorptions. The first stage of this higher training is requires the displacement of the five mental hindrances (*pañca nīvaraṇa*) by developing the five *jhāna* factors. Etymologically, the word *jhāna* (Sans. *Dhyāna*) comes from *jhāyati* which has two meanings: to meditate and *jhāpeti* (causative) to burn up, set on fire. In *Visuddhimagga*, Ven. Buddhaghosa gives this definition: *āramman'ūpanijjhānato paccañīka-jhāpanato vā jhānaṃ*, meaning (it is) “called *jhāna* from meditation on the objects and from burning up anything adverse”<sup>401</sup>. Hence *jhāna* is often translated into English as meditation, absorption, trance, etc. This is referring to the four mental absorptions.

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<sup>400</sup> M. 117: Katamo ca bhikkhave, ariyo sammāsamādhī saupaniso sapaṛikkhāro, seyyathīdaṃ: sammādiṭṭhī sammāsāṅkappo sammāvācā sammākammanto sammāājīvo sammāvāyāmo sammāsati. Yā kho bhikkhave, imehi sattaha'ṅgehi cittassa ekaggatā parikkhatā ayaṃ vuccati bhikkhave, ariyo sammāsamādhī saupaniso itipi, sapaṛikkhāro itipi

<sup>401</sup> Vism. 150; also PTS *Pāli-English Dictionary*, P. 286

In the first *jhāna* when the five hindrances are suppressed by five *jhāna* factors, the practitioner experiences a kind of happiness that is born of withdrawal from sensuous desires and disassociated with unwholesome states. The Text reads:

He enters upon the first *jhāna* which is absent of sensual desires and removed of unwholesome states, with application of thought and pondering (repeatedly on the meditation object), dwell in the joy and happiness born of seclusion. [*So vivic'eva kāmehi vivicca akusalehi dhammehi savitakkaṃ savicāraṃ vivekaṃ pīti-sukhaṃ paṭhamajhānaṃ upasampajja viharati.*]<sup>402</sup>

As it is described in the above text, the first *jhāna* requires some measure of mental exertion, using application of thought (*vitakka*) and pondering or sustaining thought (*vicāra*) in order to get rid off the disturbances of the mind known as the hindrances (*nīvaraṇa*). In the first *jhāna*, the mind becomes free of all the unwholesome factors enabling the practitioner to enjoy a purer happiness called *vivekaṃ pīti-sukhaṃ*.

### **The Five Mental Hindrances (*Pañca nīvaraṇa*)**

There are five mental hindrances frequently mentioned in the texts as follows: (1) sensual desire (*kāmacchanda*), (2) ill-will (*vyāpāda*), (3) sloth and torpor (*thīna-middha*) (4) restlessness and remorse (*uddhacca-kukkucca*), and (5) doubt (*vicikicca*). In the *Samaññāphala* sutta (D.2) sensual desire is compared to being in debt (and thus one has to endure harassment), ill-will is similar to being ill (so that one can not enjoy even delicious

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<sup>402</sup> D.2; D.9; PTS D. I. 182

foods), sloth and torpor is likened being imprisoned (one is kept in dullness or darkness due to lethargy), restlessness and remorse are compared to a slave who has no freedom (being pushed and pulled), and skeptical doubt is as uncertain and frightening as being in a desert. The ordinary mind is preoccupied by one or others of these hindrances most of the time. When the mind rests on a single object of meditation (*ekaggata*), sensual desire is burnt up; the application of the thought (*vitakka*) on the meditation object helps to dispel slothfulness; joy (*pīti*) displaces remorse and happiness or serenity (*sukha*) replace restlessness; the pondering (*vicāra*) on the meditation object burns up doubt. In this sense, it is said the *jhānas* burn up their adversaries.

In the second *jhāna*, the mind of the practitioner becomes more refined by the dropping off of the first two *jhāna* factors of *vitakka* and *vicāra* that are considered as gross instruments. The text reads:

*vitakka-vicārānaṃ vūpasamā ajjhattaṃ sampasādānaṃ cetaso ekodībhāvaṃ avitakkaṃ avicāraṃ samādhijaṃ pīti-sukhaṃ dutiyaṃ jhānaṃ upasampajja viharati* – having calming down the application and pondering thought, experiencing an inner tranquility of the oneness of the mind, he dwells with joy and happiness born of concentration, without application and pondering thought.<sup>403</sup>

We can see that, the art of living happily (*ditṭhadhamma sukhaṃ viharati*) in the Buddhist system of meditation is not achieving through acquisition but rather through relinquishment. The training in morality is to relinquish the

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<sup>403</sup> D.9; PTS, p. 182

external obstacles and gross behaviors. In the next preparatory step, the practitioner mindfully exercises the guarding his senses. The five sense media are subdued even to the extent that they are totally shut down. There remains only the mind door, which is considered as the inner sense in Buddhist psychology. The training in concentration is intended for the removal of internal obstacles from the unwholesome to the neutral and even the wholesome states when they are no more necessary. *Vitakka* and *vicāra* are *mano saṅkhārā*<sup>404</sup>, mental activities and they are rather neutral, i.e., depending on their application they are either seen as wholesome or as unwholesome. In the mental discipline as in this context, they are wholesome mental factors used to combat with the unwholesome hindrances. However, even this wholesomeness should eventually be dropped for a more refined application. In the second *jhāna*, when the mind has been unified (*cetaso ekodībhāvam*) the first two factors (*vitakka* and *vicāra*) naturally disappear. This enables the practitioner to experience an inner tranquility without the disturbance of the thoughts.

The third *jhāna* is even more subtle in which joy or rapture (*pīti*) is considered as gross factor and has to be calmed down. There is only happiness, the highest state of mundane happiness that one can reach, which is experienced on this third level of absorption. It is described as follows:

After the fading away of rapture he dwells in equanimity, mindful, clearly conscious, and he experiences in his body that feeling in which the noble

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<sup>404</sup> In M.44, these two factors is categorized under *vācī saṅkhārā*, verbal activity.

ones say, ‘happy lives the man of equanimity and attentive mind’; thus he enters the third absorption.<sup>405</sup>

The happiness that is experienced in this degree of mental absorption is born of equanimity (*upekkhajā-sukhaṃ*) while in the preceding state, joy and happiness are born of concentration (*samādhijaṃ pīti-sukhaṃ*).

In the fourth *jhāna*, the practitioner feels no pain or pleasure; he has a total control over bodily sensations. Further, it is a state that is absent of emotions, and he feels neither joy, nor grief. The text reads:

After having given up pleasure and pain, and through the disappearance of previous joy and grief, he enters into a state beyond pleasure and pain. It is the fourth absorption, which is purified by equanimity and mindfulness.<sup>406</sup>

### ***Iddhipāda* – Supernormal powers**

The process of psychological reduction in *jhānas* leads the mind to be unified, progressively more refined and more subtle. It is described in the text thus:

His mind is concentrated, pure, radiant, unblemished, free from defilements, soft, pliant, wieldy, steady, and attained to the imperturbability, he directs and inclines it

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<sup>405</sup> D.9; PTS D. I, p. 183: Bhikkhu pītiyā ca virāgā upekkhako ca viharati sato ca sampajāno, sukhañca kāyena paṭisaṃvedeti yaṃ taṃ ariyā ācikkhanti: “upekkhako satimā sukha vihārī ti” tatiyajjhānaṃ upasampajja viharati.

<sup>406</sup> D.9: Bhikkhu sukhasa pahānā dukkhasa ca pahānā pubb’eva somanassadomanassānaṃ atthagamā adukkhaṃ-asukhaṃ upekkhā-sati-parisuddhiṃ catutthajjhānaṃ upasampajja viharati.

to creating a mind-made body. From this body he creates another body having material form, mind made, having complete in all its parts, not lacking any faculties. [*So evaṃ samāhite citte parisuddhe pariyodāte anaṅgaṇe vigatūpakkilese mudubhūte kammaniye ʃhite àneñjappatte manomayaṃ kàyaṃ abhinimminanāya cittaṃ abhinīharati abhininnāmeti. So imamahā kàyà aññaṃ kàyaṃ abhinimmināti rūpiṃ manomayaṃ sabbaṅgapaccaṅgiṃ ahīnindriyaṃ*]<sup>407</sup>

This pure, radiant and flexible state of mind is an ideal ground to exercise the wonder called *iddhi*, the *supernormal powers* or miracles. When the mind has reached fourth *jhāna*, it is possible to develop psychic powers (*iddhipāda*). It is noteworthy that, in Buddhist practice, psychic powers are only the byproducts of a right practice. Samaññaphala (DN) gives a full account of different achievements called wonders or miracles (*iddhipāda*) such as traveling by air (without an aircraft), creating multiple bodies from one, diving into earth as if it were space, walking on water as if it were solid earth, reading another person’s mind, etc. In Sampasādanīya sutta (D 28, D.III. 112), it is stated that there are two kinds of supernormal powers: “one is that bound up with corruption and attachment, which is called ‘not-ariyan’, the other is that of ‘ariyan’, free from corruption and not bound up with attachment”<sup>408</sup>. It is of the first type, in D11, Kevaṭṭa sutta, that the Buddha confessed that: “It is because of I see danger in the

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<sup>407</sup> D.2, Samaññāphalasutta

<sup>408</sup> D III, 112: .Dvemā, bhante, iddhividhāyo atthi, bhante, iddhi sāsavāsa-upadhikā, ‘no ariyā’ti vuccati. Atthi, bhante, iddhi anāsavā anupadhikā ‘ariyā’ti vuccati.

practice of these mystic powers that I loath and abhor and I am ashamed thereof<sup>409</sup>

As byproducts, those powers are thus not encouraged to be displayed, neither for gain nor fame. Once, the Buddha accompanied by a large group of monks came to a town named Nālanda, a citizen of that town came to pay his respects to him and requested the Buddha commending his great disciples to exhibit miracles so that all inhabitants of prosperous Nalanda city would become his followers. The Buddha rejected his request and on this occasion, he stated that of the three well - known psychic powers that he himself had mastered, **the miracle of instruction** was the best (*anusāsani-pāṭihāriya*)<sup>410</sup>. This miracle is nothing other than the act of education and the course of training to transform one's low motives and vulgar gratifications into a nobler and more refined enjoyment. On this point, we can see that in the Buddhist systematic scheme of teaching and training, there are many options when it comes to the pursuit of the noble life. Practitioners can choose either passive withdrawal happiness in *jhāna* or an active life of engagement in education and instruction for personal and social transformation. However, the latter is generally encouraged only after the practitioner, has, to some degrees, mastered his or her own mind.<sup>411</sup>

### ***Ariya-Iddhi* – The Miracle of Noble Ones**

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<sup>409</sup> D I, 213

47. DN, Kevaṭṭa sutta; AN III, 60. Three kinds of supernormal powers or miracles: Iddhipada- dive into the earth, fly on the sky, etc; paracitta nāṇa- thought reading, and anussāsani- the miracle of instruction “you should think in this way and not in that way! You should attend to this and not to that! You should give up this and should dwell in the attainment of that.”

<sup>411</sup> Ref. Sallekha Sutta, M.I.8.

If *jhāna* attainment is the art of deduction to unburden the mind of mental activities, there is another kind of wonder or miracle that is termed the noble wonder or the miracle of the noble ones (*ariya iddhi*) that does not require the practitioner to master *jhāna* or mental absorptions. This is considered to be a rational way to transform emotions. As we have seen in the section on motivation, cognitive and emotive processes intertwine in the human experience of the subjective or objective world (all termed *dhammā*). To an ordinary person, an attractive object or a pleasant experience always remain as a drawing force, i.e., a force that is enticing, inviting, and provoking *taṇhā* in the mind. From the perception of beauty or pleasantness comes the emotion of liking, loving, and attachment. The opposite emotional reaction arises when the object is perceived as unattractive or disgusting, provoking disliking, loathing and aversion. All these bi-polar states are termed *akusala dhammā*, unskillful states. The method of guarding against these sense faculties offers a passive counter to the invasion of unwanted emotions or unskillful states imported through sense-impingements (*paṭighasamphassa*). An active way of dealing with the possibility of the arising of unwanted emotions is a radical turning of one's attitude toward the object. The text reads:

What is the Ariyan supernormal powers? Here a monk if he wishes: “Let me abide with disgusting not feeling disgust”, can so abide, and if he wishes: “Let me abide with the non-disgusting with feeling disgust”, he can so abide, also feeling either disgust or non-disgust in the present of both... or: “Ignoring both the disgusting and

the non-disgusting may I abide in equanimity, mindful and clearly aware” he can so abide.<sup>412</sup>

In common language, this passage can be translated as: he might regard the beautiful object as unattractive, the ugly object as lovable, and consider both the beautiful as well as the ugly as repulsive. He dwells in both a beautiful object or a repulsive object with equanimity. This ability makes the noble person lives with a sound mind that imbibed with wisdom, compassion and equanimity. In other words, the *Ariyan* lives immune from the bombardments of sense-impressions. In psychological terms, he is unaffected by experiences, whether good or bad, positive or negative.

Herein, the contemplation on the repulsive aspects of human bodies is a rational way to counteract with carnal desires. Among the *kammaṭṭhānā* or the subjects of meditation, twelve are devoted to this kind of practice. This practice enables the practitioner to live amidst the beautiful objects but not to be distracted by the attractive qualities of the objective world. The cultivation of loving kindness (*metta bhāvanā*) enables one to treat even a naturally repulsive object or unlovable qualities with kindness and care. The contemplation on the purposeful use of the four basic requisites (food, clothes, shelter and medicine) is useful to prevent the rampant

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<sup>412</sup> D III. 113: “Katamā pana, bhante, iddhi anāsavā anupadhikā, ‘ariyā’ti vuccati? Idha, bhante, bhikkhu sace ākaṅkhati– ‘paṭikūle appaṭikūla saññī vihareyyan’ti, appaṭikūlasaññī tattha viharati. Sace ākaṅkhati– ‘appaṭikūle paṭikūlasaññī vihareyyan’ti, paṭikūlasaññī tattha viharati. Sace ākaṅkhati– ‘paṭikūle ca appaṭikūle ca appaṭikūlasaññī vihareyyan’ti, appaṭikūlasaññī tattha viharati. Sace ākaṅkhati ‘paṭikūle ca appaṭikūle ca paṭikūlasaññī vihareyyan’ti, paṭikūlasaññī tattha viharati. Sace ākaṅkhati– ‘paṭikūlañca appaṭikūlañca tadubhayaṃ abhinivajjetvā upekkhako vihareyyaṃ sato sampajāno’ti, upekkhako tattha viharati sato sampajāno.

desires as regards to the material objects. The contemplation on equanimity (*upekkha Bhāvanā*) offers one an equally balanced state of mind to all kinds of objects. This is considered as the noble art of living pertaining to the noble-minded persons (*Ariyā-iddhi*).

### ***Abhiññā* or the Higher Knowledge**

*Abhiññā* comes from the root *-/jñā* meaning to know and the prefix *abhi*, usually denoting intensity, or a higher degree /quality. We have discussed on *saññā*, *viññāṇa*, and *paññā* which also come from the same root, but with different prefixes, and therefore, they convey different meanings. *Abhiññā* in the early discourses of the Buddha denote six kinds of higher knowledge gained through the successful practice of meditation. They are as follows:

1. *Iddhi-vidhā*- manifold of supernormal powers such as diving into the solid materials (ground, wall, etc.), similar to *iddhi-pāda* described above.
2. *Dibba-sota*- or Divine Ear that enables the person to understand the language of different species, including the divine beings.
3. *Ceto-pariya-ñāṇa*, or The understanding of the other's mind.
4. *Dibba-cakkhu*- or Divine Eye that sees invisible objects to the normal eyes.
5. *Pubbe-nivāsānussati*- the ability to recall many previous existences.
6. *Āsavakkhayañāṇa*- the knowledge of the extinction of cankers.

Of the six, only the last one is supra-mundane knowledge gained through insight meditation (*vipassanā*).

In the Poṭṭhapāda Sutta (D. 9) where the Buddha patiently explained to the wandering ascetic Poṭṭhapāda how to reach the state of culmination of consciousness in the noble teaching and discipline (i.e., the Buddha's *Dhamma*), which is called 'the cessation of the refined perception' (*abhisaññā nirodho*). This course of training is purposefully prescribed for dispelling the illusion of a permanent self or soul that identified with *saññā* or consciousness in this context.

The text further describes the four *arūpajhāna*, the immaterial attainments termed *ākāsānañcāyatana*, the attainment of which the perception of space has disappeared, allowing the practitioner to experience the infinite space. The next is a state of attainment in which he perceives the infinity of consciousness (*anantaṃ viññānaṃ*) that is termed *viññāṇañcāyatana*. The third attainment is a state in which all conceptions have disappeared (*n'atthi kiñci*), and herein the practitioner dwells in a state of nothingness termed *ākīñcaññāyatana*. Even in this highest state of consciousness (*saññagge*), he knows in his own person that it is not satisfied (*papiyo*), and it is better to be in "acetayamānassa"- a non-volitionally-mindless state. This denotes the gradual process to complete cessation (*anupubbābhisaññā-nirodha-sampajjāna-samāpatti*).<sup>413</sup>

We have, hitherto, cited many sources describing different states of mind during meditative exercises or training in concentration, and also what lies at the end of these attainments. If the practitioner is fortunate enough, at the culmination of this training, she or he would view them as non-satisfactory as did the ascetic Gotama (Buddha) prior to his enlightenment. Discontentment or disappointment comes

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<sup>413</sup> D.I. 184

about when the practitioner sees that they, too, are impermanent, and therefore, unsatisfactory. This realization incites the spiritual seekers to find another method which might be more conducive to lasting inner peace. This newly discovered method is termed *Vipassanā*, or the analytical method, elsewhere it is known as the training in wisdom.

### III *Adhipaññā-sikkhā* or The Higher Training in Wisdom

“What we observe is not nature in itself, but nature exposed to our methods of questioning”.<sup>414</sup>

In relation to the Noble Eightfold Path, the training in wisdom or the discipline of insight knowledge consists of the first two factors of the path, i.e., Right View and Right Thought as we have discussed on the previous pages. The definition of the third method applied on the path to enlightenment is described as follows:

What, Monks, is the higher training in wisdom? Herein, monks, a practitioner who has extinguished of the intoxicated factors (*āsava*), being without *āsava*, the one liberated of the mind (and) liberated by wisdom in this very life having realized, entered and dwell in the higher knowledge. This, monks, is the higher training in wisdom. [*Katam± ca, bhikkhave, adhipaññ±sikkh±? Idha, bhikkhave, bhikkhu ±sav±na½ khay± an±sava½ cetovimutti½ paññ±vimutti½ diṃuḥeva dhamme saya½ abhiññ± sacchikatv± upasampajja viharati. Aya½ vuccati, bhikkhave, adhipaññ± sikkh±*].<sup>415</sup>

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<sup>414</sup> Heisenberg, Werner: *Physic and Philosophy – the Revolution of modern Science*, New York [Happer and Row] 1962; p. 58.

<sup>415</sup> AN. III, *The Discourse on Gradual Training*.

Elsewhere, the higher training in wisdom is defined as the discernment of the Four Noble Truths. This aspect of the third training is described in details in the Mahāsatipaṭṭhāna Sutta that we have already dealt with in a concise discussion in the section on right mindfulness. According to the *Visuddhi Magga*, the Path of Purification (Vism XVII), the field of *paññā* or wisdom consists in the discernment of the Law of Dependent Origination in its different modes. This qualification is in accordance with the *Dhamma*, i.e., Buddha’s teaching in his early discourses that recorded in the five Nikāya. It is reported that, the Bodhisatta got enlightenment when he turned his meditative power to analyze human experience and discovered its causal occurrences, a process he termed *Paṭiccasamuppāda* or the ‘dependent arising’<sup>416</sup>.

Etymologically, the term is coined by the combination of *paṭi* meaning ‘dependent’ or ‘against’ and *eti* (being a causative case of the root *-ī*, ‘to go’), plus ‘*sam*’ meaning ‘together’ (equivalent to the prefix *syn-* in Gr. or *con-* in Latin) and *uppāda* meaning ‘arising’. Literally, it is translated as ‘having depended, it’s arising’ or ‘due to arising together’. There are many modes of dependent arising, such are expressed as “because of this is, that arises” (*imasmim sati idaṃ hoti*), or “because of ignorance, karmic activities (are performed)” (*avijjā paccayā saṅkhārā*), or ‘due to the eye and the visible object, eye-consciousness arises’ (S.II. 72; M.I.8), etc. *Paññā* (*Pa* and *-jñā* ‘to know’) here means the wisdom that sees the dependent origination of phenomena (*dhammā*). Seeing the arising, one will not hold fast to the nihilist view, seeing the dissolving (of the arisen *dhamma*), the tenacious clinging to eternity is shattered. This is the highest level of

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<sup>416</sup>D.I, Mahā Nidana sutta; S.II, 12:10, *Discourse on Origination and Cessation*.

the *sammādiṭṭhi* or the right view exempting one from the two extremes of nihilism and eternalism or the hedonistic practice of materialism or the self-mortification of the asceticism. At this level, right view keeps one's practice on the right path leading straight to the extinction of delusion, greed and hatred that culminates in lasting inner peace of *Nibbāna*.

To people endowed with a sharp faculty in wisdom who are able to discern the dependent arising of phenomena and realize the Four Noble Truths, the liberation is called *paññāvimutti*. However, there are many practitioners who have developed a gradual practice of mind-cultivation (*bhāvanā*) to reach different stages of the purification (of the mind or the purposeful evolution of consciousness) as we have discussed in the section on the *Samādhi sikkha*. There are still many other approaches presented in the early discourses (*suttas*) such as *Sabbāsava Sutta* (M. I.2), *Vitakka saṅḥāna Sutta* (M.I. 18) and *Dwedhavitakka sutta* (M.I.19). For example, in *Sallakha Sutta* (M.I.8), the Buddha explained to Ven Mahā Cunda how various kinds of wrong views concerning the self (*atta*) and the world (*loka*) can be removed through *vipassanā* or insight meditation only. *Jhānic* attainment is explained not as an austere practice that enables one to remove mental defilements, but rather, it is a mere practice leading to a blissful existence. Hereafter, this training is presented in a different fashion.

### **Living in the Present**

A theme of practice that is rather popular among the practitioners of the Buddhist Path is *Bhaddekaratta*. It is reported that a *deva* (an angel) was surprised when s/he came to know that a certain monk did not know what this theme was.

The celestial being asked the monk to go to see the Buddha in order to learn more about it; accordingly, the monk went to see the Buddha who explained to him what the ideal solitude practice is. Subsequently, there were three *suttas* (discourses) in *Majjhima Nikāya* devoted to the theme of *bhaddekaratta*. The name of these *suttas* is a scholarly controversy.<sup>417</sup> The commentary on the *Majjhima Nikaya* explains: *vipassanānuyoga samannāgatattā bhaddakassa ekarattassa-* of the one who is fortunate to devote one night to the practice of *vipassanā*. It is true that the expositions in these *suttas* are of *vipassanā* practice or insight meditation, a practice consisting in letting go of the past, not yearning for the future, and being attentive to the present, which allow one to live moment to moment anew. The texts reads:

*Atītaṃ nānvāgameyya - nappaṭikaṅkhe anāgataṃ  
yadatitaṃ pahīnaṃ taṃ; appattañca anagataṃ.*

*Paccuppannañca yo dhammaṃ, tattha tattha vipassati*

Let one not long for the past; or expect things in the future.

That which is in the past is no more; yet, the future has not come.

That what is present he discerns, that when it comes.

This art of dwelling in the present and not moving back and forth between the past and the future, gives one a sense of perfect happiness here and now. A related teaching is recorded in SN when a *Deva* asked the Buddha why his complexion was so bright, his face so calm, and his manners so composed, as are those of his monks who live deep in the forest, eating but only one meal a day. The Buddha said: “They live in the

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<sup>417</sup> See Ven. Ñāṇananda Bhikkhu: *Ideal Solitude, An exposition of the Bhaddekaratta Sutta*. The Wheel Publication No. 188; also I.B. Horner. *M.L.S. III, Introduction*, pp XXVI.

present, they do not sorrow over the past events; they do not yearn for or excite in what has not come (the future). Hence, their complexion is so serene. Through hankering for the future, and sorrowing over the past, fools dry up and wither away as a green reed cut down.”<sup>418</sup> To live in the present is to let go of things, to surrender one’s will and cease controlling or manipulate in regard to one’s own experiences in relation to the world. We have seen this subject in the terms of *sati-sampajañña* and the domains of a practitioner in the section on right mindfulness. The art of living happily is further explained in another *sutta* of SN ii, *Theranāmo sutta* thus:

*Idha therā yaṃ atītāṃ taṃ pahīnaṃ. Yaṃ anāgataṃ paṭinissatṭhaṃ. Paccuppannesu ca attabhāvapaṭilābhesu chandarāgo suppaṭivinito. Evaṃ kho therā ekavihāro vitthārena paripuñño hoti.*- Here, Elder, whatever is past, that is abandoned. Whatever is yet to come (the future), that is relinquished. And the desire and love in the present for a personality is well removed. It is with regard to this (mode of living) the living- alone is fulfilled.<sup>419</sup>

### ***Vipassanā***

The word *Vipassanā* is a technical term often appearing in the texts along with the term *samatha* which means a state of calmness and tranquility. In D.33, 34, MN. 6 (quoted) and in A.II, *Vipassanā* and *Samatha* are the *dhammā* that should be cultivated. The cultivation of *samatha* (more or less a synonym of *samādhi*) leads to the tranquility of the mind and hence it belongs to the higher training of consciousness or the art of

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<sup>418</sup> SN. I. 21:10

<sup>419</sup> SN. II. 282

concentration. This training suppresses defilements, compared to the way a chemical to clear the water does and similarly, the practice of *samatha* makes the mind calm and clear (of disturbances-*kilesa* or hindrances- *nīvaraṇa*). When the mind is thus freed from defilements or hindrances, it is called ‘*cetovimutti*’- the liberation of the mind (quoted text). The practice of *Vipassanā* or insight meditation is to dispel the ignorance and hence it is described as “liberated through wisdom” (*paññāvimutti*).

The text reads:

Monks, there are two conditions lead to knowledge. What (are) two? *Samatha* and *Vipassanā*. If cultivated, what benefit does *samatha* confer? The mind is developed. What benefit does result from a cultivated mind? All lust is abandoned. Monks, if *Vipassanā* is cultivated, what benefit does it confer? Insight is developed. If insight is developed, what is the benefit? All ignorance is abandoned. A mind is perturbed by lust is not set free; nor can insight defiled by ignorance be developed. Indeed, monks, the freedom from lust leads to release of the tranquility of mind, the freedom from ignorance leads to the release of the insight.<sup>420</sup>

The word *vipassanā* comes from the prefix ‘*vi*’ plus *passanā*. The verb *vipassati* stands for ‘discerns’ (quoted text). The word *Vipassanā* means analytical knowledge or introversion since ‘*vi*’ means diffuse, manifolds, different and hence, *vipassanā* is seeing in different ways. What are those ‘different ways’? They are to see phenomena as impermanent

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<sup>420</sup> A.I. p. 58

(*anicca*), unsatisfactory (*dukkha*) and non-substantial (*anatta*).<sup>421</sup>

Returning to the previous *suttas* that mention the art of living happily in the present, it must be noted that they do not mean indulgence with a nihilistic attitude. This is a very important point which differentiating the Buddhist practitioners from hedonists. As the above qualifications of the verb ‘*vipassati*’ imply, one can not really see the past as it’s gone and one can not really visualize the future as it’s not yet come. What is in the present also does not stand still as it is passing away, too, being part of a process, a dynamic state that is constantly undergoing change (*anicca*). When we see its true nature, we know it is unstable (*dukkha*) and non- substantial (*anatta*). The knowledge of this discernment is termed ‘*vipassanāñāṇa*’, or ‘*paññā*’. This direct vision helps the practitioner to keep *chandorāgo*- or narcissism under control because narcissism is the result of a blindness of the true nature of phenomena.

### ***Vipassanā Ñāṇa* or Insight Knowledge**

Post canonical texts such as Paṭisambhida Magga, the Path of analytical Discernment and Visuddhi Magga, the Path of

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<sup>421</sup> Dhp.....: *Sabbe saṅkhārā aniccā ’ti; yadā paññāya passati...*

*Sabbe saṅkhārā dukkhā ’ti; yadā paññāya passati...*

*Sabbe dhammā anattā ’ti. Yadā paññāya passati.*

*Atha nibbindati dukkhe. Esa maggo visuddhiyā.*

All formations are impermanent; thus one sees with wisdom..

All formations are unsatisfactory; thus one sees with wisdom...

All things are non- substantial. Thus one sees with wisdom.

Seeing thus one becomes fed up with suffering. This is the way of purification.

Purification mention many stages of insight knowledge. Herein, my concern is not with the numerical accounts which can be gleaned from these books. The realization is, after all, personal and subjective experiences, therefore, the variation of the stages is possible. It is meaningless to argue on the number of the insight knowledge as it is with the number of *dukkha* in life. Each time one experiences *dukkha* one recognizes that it is a *dukkha* experience, the knowing is insight knowledge. Knowledge is of many varieties such as sensory knowledge as we have discussed in the section on *vedanā*, *saññā* and *viññāṇa*, and learning (*suta*), thinking (*cinta*) and also through systematic development called *bhāvanā*. Therefore, the last stage of the knowledge is called the ‘true knowledge of deliverance’ and according to M. 112, Chabbidhodhana sutta, this knowledge can be tested as regards to:

- (1) The insight into the four dimensions of personal perception:
  - Telling the seen as it is seen;
  - Telling the heard as it is heard;
  - Telling the sensed as it is sensed; and
  - Telling the cognized as it is cognized.

“As regard the seen, one abides unattached, unrepelled, independent detached, free, dissociated, with a mind rid off barriers.” The same statement applies also to experiences through other channels, which has been lived by saints spontaneously and naturally.
- (2) Insight into the five aggregates of clinging;
- (3) Insight as regards the six elements (*paṭṭhavi*, *apo*, *tejo*, *vāyo*, *okāsa*, and *viññāṇa*);
- (4) Insight into this body with its consciousness and external signs (i.e., *nāma-rūpa*) to end I-making

(*ahaṃkāra*), mine-making (*mamaṃkāra*) and the latent tendency to conceit (*mānānusaya*).

When one's concentrated mind is purified, bright, unblemished, rid of imperfections (*upakkilesa*), malleable, wieldy, steady and attained to imperturbability (i.e., having emerged from fourth *jhāna*), one directs it to the knowledge of the destruction of taints (*āsavaṅkhayañāṇa*). One directly knows as it has come to be (*yathābhūtaṃ ñānadassanaṃ*) "this is suffering... this is the cause of suffering... this is the end of suffering, this is the way to end suffering."<sup>422</sup>

### ***Sammāñāṇa* or Right Knowledge**

Right knowledge is the knowledge relating to deliverance (from the round of *samsāra*). In many discourses, it is referred to as *pariññā* (*pari* + *-jñā*) meaning complete knowing. In M.I. 11:17, true knowledge is defined as the knowledge that comprehends four kinds of clinging (*upādāna*). And in one who "no longer clings to sensual pleasures, no longer clings to views, no longer clings to rules and observances, no longer clings to the doctrine of self (*sakkāyadiṭṭhi*), he is freed from clinging. In whom without clinging not agitated and he personally attains *nibbāna*."<sup>423</sup>

However, a person who says 'I am at peace, I have attained *Nibbāna*, I am without clinging' is actually still

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<sup>422</sup> M. III, 908; M.112.

<sup>423</sup> M.I. 163.

clinging”<sup>424</sup>. Liberation, in this light, is without clinging to anything (*sabbe dhammā nālaṃ abhinivesāya*).<sup>425</sup>

There three facets of the complete knowledge (*pariññā*): (1) *ñātapariññā* is the realization (of what should be realized) by knowledge; (2) *tiranapariññā* is the realization (of what should be realized) through practice; and (3) *pahānapariññā* is the realization (of what should be realized) by actual eradication (of defilements). ‘What should be realized’ here refers to the Four Noble Truths<sup>426</sup>. The first truth, the fact of unsatisfactoriness should be understood by knowledge or by personal experiences. The second truth, the cause of unsatisfactoriness should be abandoned. The third truth, the lasting inner peace of *nibbāna*, literally the extinction of all burning forces, should be realized. The fourth truth is the Path which should be followed or practiced. When the practitioner has gone through these three stages of realization, his / her knowledge has completed its functions. Then one personally knows that there is nothing more to be done, the burden (five aggregates) has been laid down, his liberation is true and real (*sammāvimutti*) and *samsāra* has ended.

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<sup>424</sup> M.I, 102.

<sup>425</sup> MN., 1255; ref. *Concept and Reality* by Ven Ñāṇananda, BPS 1997, p. 57.

<sup>426</sup> M.III, Saccavibhanga Sutta defines *sammādiṭṭhi* as the knowledge of the four Noble Truths.

**Vimuttiñāṇa the knowledge of liberation from:**  
(According to Paṭisambhida magga. I. 13, 32)

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*Samyojana*

*Anusāya*

*Upakkilesā*

*Āsava*

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<b><i>Sotapattimagga</i></b> eliminates:	<i>sakkāyadiṭṭhi</i> (1) <i>vicikicchā</i> (2) <i>sīlabbataparāmāso</i> (3)	<i>Diṭṭhānusāvo</i> (1) <i>Vicikicchānusayo</i> (2)	5 factors of defilements.
<b><i>Sakadāgami</i></b> <i>magga</i> makes weaken	Gross- <i>Kāmarāga</i> (lust) and <i>Paṭigha</i> (aversion)	<i>Kāmarāgānusayo</i> (3)  <i>Paṭighānusayo.</i>	4 factors of defilements
<b><i>Anāgami-</i></b> <i>magga</i> eliminates:	Subtle <i>Kāmarāga</i> (4) And <i>Paṭigha</i> (5)	<i>Kāmarāgānusayo</i> <i>Paṭighānusayo</i> (4).	4 factors of defilements associated with 5 lower fetters.
<b><i>Arahattamagga</i></b> eliminates:	<i>Rūpārāgo</i> (6) <i>Arūpārāgo</i> (7) <i>Māno</i> (8) <i>Uddhacca</i> (9) <i>Avijjā</i> (10)	<i>Bhavarāga-</i> <i>anusayo</i> (5) <i>Mānānusayo</i> (6) <i>Avijjānusayo</i> (7)	8 factors of defilements associated with 5 upper fetters.

## Chapter VIII Conclusion

As we have seen throughout the thesis, Buddhist analysis do not serve the purpose of metaphysical enquiries, but rather for a better understanding of human natures through empirical observations. The analytical and synthetic methods applied in

Buddhist path is to help to get beyond ordinary perceptions which only reveal the ‘veiled reality’<sup>427</sup>. These methods help to see the reality (*dukkha*) and to identify the cause(s) of unsatisfactory experiences (*dukkhasamudaya*), thereupon to transcend them by practicing the ‘Middle Way’ (*magga*) which enables us to be at peace (*nibbāna* or *niroddha*) with whatever there is (*yathābhūtaṃñānadassanaṃ*). The systematic trainings in Buddhist ways serves only the purpose of crossing over the ocean of *samsāra* or the predicament of existence by seeing correctly and by discerning the true nature of experiences which will result in a power to remain imperturbable in the midst of changes and uncertainties of life. This purpose is succinctly expressed by the Buddha in a sermon named “*The Parable of Water Snake*”. In this discourse, the Buddha said “my teaching is comparable to a raft for the purpose of crossing over, not for holding on”<sup>428</sup>. This famous statement proves that Buddhist ways in their pristine forms are free from dogmatism.

## I. *Suññatā* in Daily Living and in Relationships

A Mahāyana commentary on the Heart Sutra writes: In order to become accustomed to viewing persons and phenomena as selflessly, one (should) become accustomed to not finding any abiding self by investigating or examining

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<sup>427</sup> The expression is borrowed from a French physicist Bernard d’Espagnat, *Veiled Reality*, Addison- Wesley, 1995.

<sup>428</sup> M 22. P.188:Kullūpamaṃ vo bhikkhave dhammaṃ desessāmi nittharaṇatthāya, no gahaṇatthāya...Evameva kho bhikkhave kullūpamo mayā dhammo desito nittharaṇatthāya, no gahaṇatthāya. Kullūpamaṃ vo bhikkhave dhammaṃ desitaṃ ājānantehi dhammāpi vo pahātabbā, pageva adhamma [Chaṭṭhasaṅgīti Tipitaka edition. Penang 2000]; The same expression is found in the *Diamond Sūtra*, a famous Mahāyana text.

the minute particles<sup>429</sup> of all internal and external phenomena. As a result, when the mind is concentrated (lit. is placed in meditative equipoise – *samāhita*), it does not observe or conceive of any thing. When one has developed the technique of cultivating the mind for a prolonged period, one is said to be in a state of meditative equipoise capable of observing the clear and joyous mind<sup>430</sup>. At the time of subsequent attainment, all phenomena are observed to be like illusions, like dreams, like mirages, like echoes, like the reflection of the moon in water...Hence it is said in the Heart Śūtra: “Form is emptiness, emptiness is form. Emptiness is none other than form; form is none other than emptiness.” The wisdom that enables one to see in this way is termed *Vajrapāṇi* or a diamond-cutter-wisdom in the text, implying that only this most capable of cutters can cut off the most tenacious tendency of clinging to self-identity in all experience, whether to the internal personal components (*pudgala*) or to the external objects of experiences (*dharmā*).<sup>431</sup>

However, in daily living, merely grasping at the empty nature of phenomena does not necessarily prevent one from reacting in an egoistic way. We have seen in Chapter II and III how personality and ego have come about through interaction with one’s environment. If there is really emptiness of an

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<sup>429</sup> It is interesting to note a similar expression of E. Schrodinger, *Science and Humanism* (Cambridge University Press 1951), p. 47: “It is better not to view a particle as a permanent entity, but rather as an instantaneous event. Some times these events link together to create the illusion of permanent entity.” Is this an influence of Buddhist philosophy of **sanñkhārā dhammā, viparināma dhamma and vayadhamma**?

<sup>430</sup> This description is very similar to the account on meditative attainment narrated in Dhātuvibhanga Sutta (M.140); the passage we have quoted in the section on viññāna or consciousness, Chapter V.

<sup>431</sup> *The Heart Sūtra explained...*P.67-8; Taisho Vol. 94, p 5219.

unchanging self in one's personality, why does one constantly think, feel and act as though one has a self to protect and preserve? Egomaniacs react to the slightest disturbance and are aroused by fear and anger due to the slightest sign of external threatening. They jump up with hope and feel flattered by gain, praise, fame, pleasure, etc., which are different forms of self-enhancement. "Such impulses are instinctual, automatic, pervasive, and powerful. They are completely taken for granted in daily life."<sup>432</sup> In Chapter IV, we see how Buddhism analyses personal components into different groups and shows that they are constructed and conditioned (*sāṅkhārā*); however, mere intellectual knowledge of this no-self nature of phenomena would not exempt one from irritation or greedily grasping on to one's very own human experience. Intellectuals have, as we have seen in chapter on "soul theory", got around the dilemma of an abiding and integral self or soul in changing and conditioning personality by proposing various definitions, but none of these accounts would in any way explain or solve our very basic reactionary behaviors and prejudicial tendencies in our daily life. This is observed by a modern meditation master as follows:

Introspection shows us the difficulties in making the self solid and secure. In fact, this is such a burden that we cannot be deeply happy. We can be pleurably excited but complete happiness is not possible with a view which needs constant reinforcement. We are not satisfied with telling ourselves how wonderful and clever we are. We need another person to reinforce and support this view.

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<sup>432</sup> *The Embodied Mind cognitive science and human experience* by Francisco J. Varela, Evan Thomson and Eleanor Rosch 1991 Massachusetts Institute of Technology, p. 62

The bigger our self-image is, the easier it gets knocked down [...] <sup>433</sup>

Some modern psychologists have the idea that Buddhist ways are trying to depersonalize this process. Western psychotherapy, beginning with Freud, analyses personality into three parts: the *id* (instinctual drives), the *ego* (I-consciousness) and the *super ego* (the ideal I). Suffering, according to the Freudian view, is caused by the conflicts between these three. To alter the suffering that is caused by not having coped well with one's life- circumstances, the western way tries to build up a solid personality, to make a strong ego, fortifying it and making it defensible even to the extent that it becomes aggressive and detestable. The limitations of western psychotherapy lie within the theory which sees that ego is something solid and needs to be strengthened; also in its methods, it looks for alternation between options.

A new school having a different approach to that of Freud has emerged within psychoanalytic theory, that of object relations theory. In this theory, for example, Fairbairn goes so far as to re-conceptualize the concept of motivation into object relations terms; for Fairbairn the basic motivating drive of humans is not the pleasure principle but the need to form relationships.<sup>434</sup> However, looking deeply, we can see that the need to form relationships is just an urge within to seek security and happiness through relationships; and the self, in this context, shaped itself while complying with the need for security. Does this method offer one the opportunity to realize that what we normally call "myself" or "me" is just a set of

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<sup>433</sup> Ayya Khema, *Within our own heart*; PTS 2006, p. 74

<sup>434</sup> Greenburg and Mitchel, *Object relations in Psychoanalysis theory*; Thompson, Rosch and Varela 1991, pp. 108

‘object relations’? It is observed and criticized by some modern psychologists as follows:

Troubled patients who see an object relation therapist learn to explore their minds, behavior, and emotion in terms of object relations – they come to see their reaction in terms of internalized agents. Does this, we wonder, lead them to question their basic sense of self altogether? [...] A succession object relations analysis, like any other analysis, is designed to lead him to question, “Isn’t it odd that I am so zealously pursuing *my* object relations and my comfort when all I am is a set of object relations schemes? What is going on?” In more general terms, it is apparent that in object relations analysis, like other contemplative traditions, has discovered the contradiction between the lack of a self that analysis discovers and our on going sense of self. It is not, however, apparent that psychoanalysis in the form of object relations theory has faced, or even fully acknowledged, this contradiction. Rather, object relations theory appears to accept the basic motivation (the basic grasping) of the on going sense of self at face value and employs analytic discoveries about the disunity of the self to cater to the demands of the on going sense of self. Because object relations psychoanalysis has not systematically addressed this basic contradiction – the lack of a unitary self in experience versus the on going sense of self-grasping – the open-end quality that is possible in analysis, though present in all psychoanalysis and particular in object relation therapy, is limited.<sup>435</sup>

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<sup>435</sup> Thompson, Rosch and Varela 1991: *The Embodied Mind...*, p. 109-110

Thus, psychoanalysis is just a young science attempting to seek a way out of the dilemma of the predicament of existence, though its insight has come very near to the Buddhist analysis. The limitation lies in the very view that a human being is an entity, and therefore, instigates the struggle to demonstrate the existence of that very self which one firmly believes in. For psychoanalysis, the aim is to set up a compromise, stabilization, a status quo, which is acceptable to the ego, and so to return to a so called “normal” state. It is a question of finding a balance between the impulses being played out in the ego and what is socially acceptable.<sup>436</sup> This struggle inevitably brings forth many discomforts and unsatisfactory outcomes as they have been depicted in Chapter III, “On *Dukkha*” in Buddhist terms.

On the contrary, Buddhist theory postulates that ego is something fabricated or constructed and it does not need to be built up, or to defend for. From a Buddhist perspective, the ego (*atta*) is a dart or a disease, and craving and clinging to the concept of an abiding ego is the cause of all suffering. From “I” a sense of ‘mine’ and ‘myself’ comes into being; and this self-consciousness gives rise to selfishness. Out of selfishness issue defilements (*kilesa*) which increase one’s latent tendencies or dispositions (*anusaya kilesa*). These dispositions ooze out into impure thoughts, speech and actions which are governed by an ego-centric attitude (*āsava*). Now *kilesas* are afflictions that are constantly burning and fuming within the person who carries them. *Āsavas* are *kilesa* in action: they are oozing out through mental, verbal and physical channels. *Anusaya kilesa* are germs or seeds that are waiting for a chance to be manifested, to come into being. They are all unnecessary

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<sup>436</sup> Ref. Matthieu Ricard & Trinh Xuan Thuan, *The Quantum and the Lotus*, p.249 (Random houses, New York) 2001.

burdens which an ordinary man involuntarily carries on without realizing as much. In short, the five clinging aggregates are the burdens that are the cause of all one's unsatisfactory experiences. A serious practitioner of Buddhism should be able to perceive the process of identification with experiences due to the clinging tendency that is governed by these unwholesome qualities. On realizing the futile attempt of the ego to solidifying one's experiences into an identity, one gives it up and thereby, can (at times or finally) be at peace with whatever there is. The text reads:

Bhikkhus, 'I am' is a conceiving; 'I am this' is a conceiving; 'I shall be' is a conceiving; 'I shall not be' is a conceiving; 'I shall be formless' is a conceiving; 'I shall be percipient' is a conceiving; 'I shall be non-percipient' is a conceiving... Conceiving is a disease, a tumor, a dart. By overcoming all conceiving, one is called a sage at peace. And the sage at peace is not born, does not die; he is not shaken and does not yearn. For there is nothing present in him by which he might be born. Not being born, how could he be aged? Not aging, how could he die? Not dying, how could he be shaken? Not being shaken, for what should he yearn?<sup>437</sup>

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<sup>437</sup> M. 140: 31: *asmīti bhikkhu maññitametaṃ. Ayamahamasmīti. Maññitametaṃ. Bhavissanti maññitametaṃ. Na bhavissanti maññitametaṃ. Rūpī bhavissanti maññitametaṃ. Arūpī bhavissanti maññitametaṃ. Saññī bhavissanti maññitametaṃ. Asaññī bhavissanti maññitametaṃ. Nevasaññīnāsaññī bhavissanti maññitametaṃ. Maññitaṃ bhikkhu rogo, maññitaṃ gaṇḍo, maññitaṃ sallaṃ. Sabbamaññitānaṃ tveva bhikkhu, samatikkamā muni santoti vuccati. Muni kho pana bhikkhu, santo na jāyati na jīyati na mīyati na kuppatti na vihesati. Tappissa bhikkhu natthi. Yena jāyetha, ajāyamāno kiṃ jīyissati, ajīyamāno kiṃ mīyissati, amīyamāno kiṃ kuppissati. Akuppamāno kissa vihessati.*

The tendency of conceiving or identifying with one's experience is a process that inevitably leads to stress. For example in the case of anger, according to the psychologists, anger is often a secondary emotion. Frequently it arises on the back of other emotions such as fear, hurt or grief. When the Buddha admonished someone to give up anger, most of the references are to anger that aroused out of personal pride or attachment to an idea of "myself" as a solid identity. This anger creates a strong resistance to criticism and makes it difficult for the person to change, or to be open to a more positive way of thinking and dealing with others or facing with undesirable events. Anger or resentment is used by the ego to protect its identity. People who are caught up in anger and resentment are described as being unwilling to be corrected. The *Vinaya* books of the *Tipitaka* and *Dhammapāda* commentary give many case studies of this kind of personality. Examples are Ven. Chanda, the former Prince Siddattha's charioteer, the monk Tissa, the son of the Buddha's maternal aunt, or the nun Candakāli and the nun Thullananda (Vin.iii). They all built a very strong sense of identity so that whenever something threatened (in their distorted imagination) their identity, it triggered an outburst of anger. The expression of anger is a means to protect one's self-identity, and it is the self protection against experiencing grief and pain associated with stress that produces by ego-centric attitude. If one lives in a troubled times, one builds one's identity as a protection against the hurtful feelings that arise from unavoidable events. At the same time, those very uncertainties of life make it inevitable that one's identity feels threatened and reacts in an angry or defensive way (*ayonisomanasikāra*).

In the chapter on motivation, we have seen how one generates *kamma* by one's reactions to different circumstances.

For instance, some times one feels humiliated by certain defects in one's appearance or one's character. With an intolerant attitude, one harbors feelings of shame, self-hatred and frustration and thus make one an angry person or someone with low-self-esteem. Thus one involuntarily adds more negative qualities to oneself (which is merely an assembling of constructed aggregates), and this tendency might also make a hostile, and uneasy impression on others who have deliberately or unintentionally caused one to be conscious of one's defects. This we have discussed under the theme of *ayonisomanasikāra* in Chapter VI.

According to Buddhist analysis, *taṇhā*, craving and *upādāna*, attachment is the main cause of unhappiness and discontentment in the world. With a deep penetration into the emotion of anger, we can see that anger also arises when one's greed or craving is not gratified. One feels hurt when the (animate) object of one's craving does not respond in the way one projected. Or one feels frustrated when one can not get the (inanimate) object of one's craving. The inability to get what one wants is the cause of most of one's frustration, fear and grief. Thus, anger is a secondary emotion springing up from *taṇhā* and *upādāna* when one's craving and attachment is obviously rejected. Many ordinary people can see anger as an unwanted feeling that causes stress, but most of them can not see its cause, that is craving. This craving, again, is rooted in the view of personality (*sakkāyadiṭṭhi*) that has been solidified by identifying with one's experience.

The self-centered tendency and an ambiguous feeling of an "I" that separates from the rest will still linger until the last stage on the path (*Arahanta magga*). The conceit implied in the expression: *ahaṃkāra* and *mamaṃkāra* has entirely

disappeared in the saint. In other words, in the purely experience of life (*suddha dhamma*), there is no ‘I-making’ (*ahaṃkāra*), nor is ‘mine-making’ (*mamaṃkāra*). However, this realization comes about due to systematic training in insight meditation.

A doctor’s prescription is not enough to cure a sick person, and, in just the same way, a purely theoretical approach will not make us better human beings. Any spiritual move we make should have two purposes: to perfect ourselves and to contribute something to others. The modalities of spiritual life vary greatly from one tradition to another, but both of these criteria need to be fulfilled.<sup>438</sup>

The inability to distance oneself as a functioning cognizing faculty from the observable events is a habit energy (*saṅkhāra*) that has ignorance as its root. This habit energy pushes one into actions and reactions (*kamma*) that further entangle one in *samsaric* experience. Seeing that ignorance is the beginning of the whole process (of becoming), the *khandha* doctrine proposes an analytical method through which one can objectively observe one’s own experience. Contemplation on *khandha* enables the practitioner to distance himself from the cognitive and emotive process at different stages of the interplay of his own personal components as well as in interaction with people, events and circumstances. To see one’s body in the body merely as a material object, to see feeling in feeling as sensation and emotion only, not ‘I’ or ‘me’, to see perception, dispositions and consciousness as

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<sup>438</sup> Mathew Ricard, *On the Relevance of a Contemplative Science, Buddhism and Science*; p. 278.

mere facets of one's mentality is not in any way depersonalization of personality. This is accurately articulated by an American psychologist as follows:

The teaching of non-self does not point the way to the martyrship self-sacrificing position. In the Buddhist paradigm, such behavior builds a negative identity and a negative world view. In this way it is just as much of the product of habit energy and attachment as the path of selfish indulgence. The Buddhist approach is neither to build nor to abase the self. It is to recognize the reality of our existential position in relationship with the world. It recognizes one's dependency on conditions, and especially upon the physical environment. Who you are depends upon the context in which you live. Humans are dependently originated and conditioned by events and circumstance. With events and circumstance, people change. The teaching of non-self is not a denial of the existence of the person as a complex entity functioning in a complex world. Non-self theory place people in dynamic encounter with one another and with the environment they inhabit.<sup>439</sup>

As we have seen in Chapter IV (*Khandha Doctrine*), the body component is '*upadinna* –born of *kamma*'- the result of one's actions and reactions in the past. The material part of one's personality is maintained by food called gross nutriment in Buddhist texts. The feeling component is derived from that very sentient body through the contact with the external world via sense-impressions. Although conditioned by the past *kamma*, however, at the same time feelings might arouse

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<sup>439</sup> Caroline Brazier 2003: *Buddhism on the Couch, from analysis to awakening using Buddhist psychology*; Ulyses Press. P.138

attachment or anger. The perception aggregate which depends on feeling, born of contact, from a process that prepares for reaction (*cetanā*) or volitional formation (*saṅkhārakkhandha*). Consciousness, at the core of personality is what makes the body animated and gives rise to a (false) sense of continuance. Solid food, contact, volition and consciousness are four kinds of nutriment sustaining a sense of ego or self.<sup>440</sup> The knowledge of aggregates (*khandha*) and their originations enable Buddhist practitioners to step aside in order to observe them objectively. This method is termed ‘contemplation on the five aggregates’, forming a part of *Dharmānupassanā*. Contemplation on the aggregates, according to the Buddhist texts, leads to the destruction of all taints (*āsava*), and ultimately to liberation from all burdens of life.<sup>441</sup>

The earlier teaching of the Buddha avoids discussing on metaphysical issues concerning human existence, instead, it offers an empirical solution called ‘insight’, an introspective observation that enables the practitioner to realize his or her personality as a constructed and conditioned process and seeks ways to amend, improve and refine it. We have also identified that attachment and clinging to the personal components or aggregates (*khandhas*) are the causes of suffering. *Khandhas* are unsatisfactory by themselves in the sense that they are artificially constructed; depending on many factors which in the absolute sense are uncontrollable. They are conditioned phenomena (*saṅkhārā dhammā*) and thereby have to undergo

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<sup>440</sup> M. 38: 15: Bhikkhus, there are four kinds of nutriment for the maintenance of being that already have come to be and for the support of those about to come. What four? They are: physical food as nutriment, gross or subtle; contact as the second; mental volition as the third; and consciousness as the fourth. Craving is their source, their origin; they are born and product from craving which originated in feelings that based on contact...

<sup>441</sup> A. IV. 41: Fourfold developments of concentration.

change which is stressful. Attachment and clinging to what is changeable and unstable intensify that actual unsatisfactoriness caused by change. Through meditation, we can see that most of our sufferings are unnecessarily created by our unwise reactions, for instance, by our will in wanting to change things or people that we do not like, or, on the other hand, by our not wanting to change things or people that we are pleased with. These are all emotional reactions. From these analysis, Buddhist way offers the gradual development, suggests an alternation of the object of attachment, from a gross to a more refined one. The method as it is proposed in the *jhāna* process is the evolution of consciousness that is described in many suttas such as *Poṭṭhapāda sutta* (DN).

In response to different human dispositions, the Buddhist texts offer different methods, each suitable for a particular tendency. A text in *Aṅguttara Nikāya* reads as follows:

There is a development of concentration that leads to a pleasant dwelling here and now; there is a development of concentration that leads to obtaining knowledge and vision; there is a development of concentration that leads to mindfulness and clear comprehension; and there is a development of concentration that leads to the destruction of the taints.<sup>442</sup>

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<sup>442</sup> A.IV. 41: Catasso imaṃ, bhikkhave, samādhībhāvanā. Katamā catasso? Atthi, bhikkhave, samādhībhāvanā bhāvitā bahulīkatā diṭṭhadhammasukhavihārāya saṃvattati; atthi, bhikkhave, samādhībhāvanā bhāvitā bahulīkatā ñāṇadassanappaṭilābhāya saṃvattati; atthi, bhikkhave, samā dhībhāvanā bhāvitā bahulīkatā satisampajaññāya saṃvattati; atthi, bhikkhave, samādhībhāvanā bhāvitā bahulīkatā āsavānaṃ khayāya saṃvattati.

The first device refers to *jhāna* attainments on the path of the gradual refinement of consciousness. The “pleasant dwelling here and now” corresponds to the four stages of *jhānic* absorption. This achievement is not a uniquely Buddhist technique but rather applicable as a tool to refine the mind from the gross occupations or disturbances known as the hindrances (*nīvaraṇa*) on the spiritual path. The second device, which in Pāli is termed *ñāṇadassana*, according to the commentary on the text (AA), is the divine eye which through meditating on light perception (*aloka saññā*) becomes a miracle thereby enabling one to see those objects normally invisible to the physical eyes. The third device is the contemplation on feelings, perceptions and thoughts as they arise, persist and fade away. The fourth method is the contemplation on the five clinging aggregates, a way of stepping aside to see the rise and fall of each phenomenon in an unemotional and non-reactive way. It is noteworthy to restate that only this last method leads to liberation from all suffering, whereas the three preceding methods offered as different means, and they might lead to some special attainment(s) but not to final liberation (*nibbāna*).

At the intellectual level, as we have discussed in the *saññākhandha* section and partly in the Chapter on Motivation, it is perception (*saññā*) which leads to view and the observer to be likely to get caught up in one or another dimension of his or her cognitive process. The more subjective evaluation, the narrower the view is. Holding fast to one’s view, thinking that what one perceives is the only thing and anything else is false (*idaṃ saccaṃ aññaṃ moghaṃ*) is the ground for futile arguments. Different views also lead to conflicts, disputes and wars. On one occasion, the Buddha said that if sensual pleasure is the cause of conflict among

householders, it is their particular view that causes conflict among the recluses (*samaṇā*) and priests (*brahmaṇā*). Householders are more inclined to sensations and emotions associated with feelings, however, the spiritual seekers, philosophers and intellectuals are more inclined to holding on to a certain view, either derived from metaphysical speculation or empirical observation. In order to counteract with the influence of a view, a right attitude (*sammādiṭṭhi*) and right intention (*sammā saṅkappa*) are offered in the Buddhist way to deliverance. In the last stage of the path, it is right knowledge (*sammāñāṇa*) and right liberation (*sammā vimutti*) which can facilitate the transcending of all false emotional as well as intellectual inclinations.

## **II. The Role of *Samatha* and *Vipassanā* in Buddhist Methods of the Mind's Training**

As we have seen in many classic discourses of the Buddha on meditation, *Vipassanā* is often prescribed after one has already achieved a certain degree of the stability of the mind through other techniques to obtain concentration. A *Kammaṭṭhāna* is a subject of meditation employing to attain calm and tranquility of the mind. *Kammaṭṭhāna* is literally translated as 'the ground for working' or 'the place to work'. The *Visuddhimagga* accounts as many of them as 40 *kammaṭṭhāna* traditionally used in Buddhist contemplative circles. In Chapter VII, we have mentioned a few of them such as Mindfulness of Breathing, the Four Sublime States, and contemplation on the repulsive aspects of the body, etc. Each *kammaṭṭhāna* serves a certain purpose, and as a tool to achieve inner calm, each leading to a certain level of meditative experiences. In relation to the different methods stated in the above quoted text (AN), the Calm-meditation or *samatha*

method is termed “happy abiding here and now” (*ditṭhadhammasukhavihāra*). There is, however, some controversy around the question whether or not *Vipassanā* or Insight meditation can be practiced without *Samatha*? This question has, indirectly addressed in the second part of this thesis, “*The Buddhist Way to Transcend Unsatisfactoriness*”, herein, some further documents will be presented to address the subject throughout.

In *Sallekkha sutta* (M.8), it is stated that the practice of calm abiding (*jhānas* or *samatha*) alone is not sufficient for getting beyond the predicament of existence<sup>443</sup>. The practice recommended in this discourse is the discernment of *kusalākusala kammā*, skillful and unskillful actions manifested in thought, speech and bodily actions, then, make a determination not to follow the unskillful course of living. This, certainly, is done with the assistance of insight knowledge, since meditative attainments alone might give way to unskillful karma such as conceit, arrogant and vanity. The text reads:

[...]He identifies with the different levels in *jhāna* up to *nevasaññā-na saññā*, and on account of these Dhamma he praise himself and disapproving others. He is called *asappurisa* or unwise person. The Blessed One has said we should not cling to even the sphere of space. Whatever we imagine it turns to be otherwise.<sup>444</sup>

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<sup>443</sup> M. I, *Sallekkhā Sutta* (M.8.82): Na kho panete Cunda ariyassa vinaye sallakkhā vuccanti, santā ete vihārā ariyassa vinaye vuccanti.

<sup>444</sup> M. III, 162 (*Sappurisa sutta* No 113): nevasaññānaṣaṅgāyatanaṁ upasampajja viharati. So iti pañisaṅgikkhati: 'ahaṁ khomhi nevasaññānaṣaṅgāyatanasamāpattiyā lābhā, ime panaṁ bhikkhā nevasaññānaṣaṅgāyatanasamāpattiyā na lābhino'ti. So tāya nevasaññānaṣaṅgāyatanasamāpattiyā attānukkaiṣeti, paraṁ vambheti. Ayampi

In another discourse of the *Majjhima Nikāya*, *Upakkilesa Sutta* (M.138), the Buddha warned venerable Anuruddha and his Dhamma Brothers not to attach to certain imperfect insight such as aura (*obhāsa*) and vision (*dassana*) of various shapes and form that they perceived in the course of their meditation. *Visuddhimagga* mention ten kinds of *upakkilesa* or subtle defilements that arise in the process of insight meditation such as seeing light, feeling un-weighted as if floating, etc. They are all considered as the obstacles on the right path. However, without acquiring a certain degree of concentration, insight knowledge is impossible, for an un-concentrated or a distracted mind is an unsuitable tool to examine itself. In general practice, *Vipassanā* is recommended after one has become acquaintance with other forms of meditation such as *Buddhanussati*, recollection of the excellent qualities of the Buddha, *Metta bhāvanā*, the cultivation of unbounded love for all beings, *Asubha bhāvanā*, the contemplation on the repulsive aspects of human body, and lastly, but not least important, a *kammaṭṭhāna* that give meditative experience(s), often the mindfulness of breathing. The first three themes of practice are called “protective meditation” hence it prepares the meditator’s mind to feel security and hence, more confidence in practice. The latter is for the purpose of establishing the mind in a more stable, concentrative state, making it more powerful tool for discernment. Thus *Vipassanā* practice needs a lot of requirement and assistance from other methods to make it more successful and effective.<sup>445</sup> In

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bhikkhave, asappurisadhammo. Sappuriso ca kho bhikkhave, iti pañisaꣳcikkhati: 'nevasaꣳnāsaꣳāyatanasamāpattiyāpi kho atammayatā vuttā bhagavatā. Yena yena hi maꣳanti, tato taū hoti aꣳathà'ti.

practice, these two methods should go hand in hand in order to achieve a desirable result.

Some texts<sup>446</sup> mention that there may be attainment of liberation purely through seeing correctly (*sukkha-vipassakā*), and the method leads to this state is termed *Vipassanā-yānika* or the Arahant hood through insight meditation. The other alternative method is termed *Samatha-yānika* or the technique that applies tranquility meditation as the basis for insight knowledge into reality of existence. This method enables the practitioner to attain different levels of *jhāna* (*jhāna-lābhi*) which allow him or her to master psychic powers.

When the Buddha was asked to give a shortest instruction for practice culminating in enlightenment here and now, he answered:

Herein you should practice: When you see something, there is only seen (*diṭṭha diṭṭhamatta*); when you hear, there is only heard (*sute sutamatta*) when you sense (smell, taste, and touch), there is only sensed (*mute mutamatta*); when you know, there is only known (*viññāti viññātamatta*).<sup>447</sup>

This instruction is considered an accomplished *vipassanā* practice in which each experience is lived up and made it ends there. It enables the meditator not to be caught up in or affected by what is being experienced. This is a way out of

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<sup>445</sup> M. I, (*Mahāgosinga* sutta) PTS p.217: Idh'āvuso Sariputta, bhikkhu paṭisallānārāmo hoti, paṭisallāmarato ajjhataṃ cetosamathamanuyutto anirākatajjhāno vipassanāya sammāgato.

<sup>446</sup> S.II, 12:70:10, Susima-Paribbajaka-Sutta.

<sup>447</sup> The Udāna, Bāhiya-sutta, Khuddaka Nikāya III, 1:10.

self-entangled, structured (*nippapañca*) experience in the *salāyatana* model of human experience.

### **III. The Integration of Wisdom and Compassion in Buddhist Practice**

There is currently a debate surrounding the idea that one must be ‘somebody’ before one can be ‘nobody’,<sup>448</sup>. This reminds of a Dhamma discussion in ITBMU, Yangon, Myanmar, when we posed a question on the *Anatta* doctrine, Ven. Dr Revata Dhamma answered: “Before you know what is *anatta*, you must know what is *atta* first!” The topic of “being somebody” we have discussed in the chapter ‘on Dukkha’, and “what is the Self?” in the chapter on ‘Soul Theories’. The question posed here concerns whether “there is a true compassion without breaking through the self-boundaries?” Actually, this question have partially and indirectly been answered in the chapter ‘on Motivation’, so now we will continue dwelling on the topic from a different perspective.

Wisdom is defined in the early Buddhist commentary works, is the analytical knowledge to discern the momentary

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<sup>448</sup> See Jack Engler: *Being Somebody and Being Nobody: A Reexamination of the Understanding of Self in Psychoanalysis and Buddhism; Buddhism and Psychoanalysis*, p 35-100.

of experience<sup>449</sup>, and thereby, the wise are disillusioned with the belief in a permanent and unchanging self or soul presiding over one's experiences of life. More than 2500 years ago, in the Brahmajalasutta (DN, 1), the Buddha had stated that theories, like self or selves, are constructions based on one's personal experience but misconstrued as universal principles. Due to the subjective contents of these kinds of constructions, they are useful in some contexts, but might prove harmful in another and therefore, whether there is self or not-self is a matter to be personally experienced wisely for oneself (*paccattam veditabbo viññūhi*). The analytical knowledge of discernment on the nature of dependent arising is experienced by a practitioner as follows:

This Wheel of Becoming consists in the occurrence of formation, etc., with ignorance, etc., as the respective reasons. Therefore it is devoid of a maker supplementary to that, such as a Brahmā conjectured thus, 'Brahmā the great, the highest, the Creator' (D.I, 18), to perform the function of maker of the round of rebirths; and it is devoid of any self as an experiencer of pleasure and pain conceived thus, 'this self of mine is that speaks and feels' (cf.M.I,3). This is how it should be understood to be without any maker or experiencer.<sup>450</sup>

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<sup>449</sup> Commentary on the Discourse on the Mindfulness of Breathing states as follows: Consciousness with in-breath as object is one consciousness, with out-breath as object is another; consciousness with the sign (a light produced by that contemplation) is a third. For one who has not these three states, the meditation subject reaches neither full absorption nor access. [See Bhikkhu Ñāṇamoli, Mindfulness of Breathing, BPS 6<sup>th</sup> Edition, p 34; also at Paṭisambhidā Magga, I, 170; also see 16 kinds of knowledge in the VisuddhiMagga XVII- XXII by the great commentator, Ven. Buddhaghosa].

<sup>450</sup> *The Path of Purification*, BPS 2000; p. 595-6.

In Chapter IV, we have dealt with the topics concerning human experiences in terms of *khandhas* and how the identification with these impersonal processes as “myself”, a permanent soul or an unchanging personality or the ego-consciousness, only resulted in unsatisfactory experiences. In other words, these stress, pain, and suffering ranging from personal conflicts to interpersonal conflicts are all due to attachment and clinging to a fabricated self that is conceived of in terms of the five aggregates (*pañcupādānakkhandhadukkhā*). In other passages, this fabricated self is also named *sakkāyadiṭṭhi* or the self-view.<sup>451</sup> Chapter V, the *Anatta* doctrine offers an intellectual approach on the main topic of doctrinal controversies. In Chapter VI we have also discussed of the self-motive and the process of becoming in relation to the Law of Dependent Arising (*paṭiccasamuppāda*). *Sakkāya diṭṭhi*- the belief in a permanent and unchanging self that abides in or presides over the five aggregates is eliminated at the first stage of sainthood (*sotapannamagga*) together with all the impulses that prompt one to commit gross offences that result in the rebirth in the lower worlds.

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<sup>451</sup> M 44: “How does the self view arise? Here, friend, Visākha, the not learned ordinary man who has not seen the noble ones and Great Beings, not skillful in their Teaching and not trained in their Teaching, considers matter in self, or a material self, or in self matter, or in matter self. Considers feelings in self, or a feeling self, or in self feelings, or in feelings self. Considers perceptions in self, or a perceiving self, or in self perceptions, or in perceptions self. Considers determinations in self, or a determining self, or in self determinations, or in determinations self. Considers consciousness in self, or a conscious self, or in self consciousness, or in consciousness self. Friend, Visākha, thus arises the self view (*sakkāyadiṭṭhi*).

A self-imposed boundary prevents us from acting promptly or in a spontaneous way when it comes to deal with others and even with ourselves in relationships. This state of rigidity due to a self-centered attitude and an egomaniacal habitual tendency is neatly described by a Buddhist practitioner, Mathew Ricard, in his recent article thus: “We get wrapped up in the game of attraction and repulsion, from which arise desire, anger, pride, jealousy, and lack of discernment. These detrimental states of mind destroy our serenity and prevent us from opening ourselves to others, enclosing us in a prison of self-centeredness.” [*Buddhism & Science*, p. 265]. The notion of a permanent and unchanging self presiding over the five aggregates or the ego-consciousness desperately inserting its controlling power into all activities is the result of an erroneous view that rooted in ignorance. Realizing this fundamental ignorance simultaneously breaks through the self-imposed boundaries, and the person is said to be liberated from ignorance, one of the three doors to enter *Nibbāna* via the wisdom of discernment (*paññāvimutti*).

Returning to my earlier statement “The main reason for this work is to present a proposal for a new approach to Buddhist studies inhering in the examination of doctrinal points from the psychological approach, while putting texts in their contexts to avoid dogmatism; the present work is also an attempt to bridge the gap between purely theoretical approach and actual practice.”, so far, my work has been providing as much as possible the textual evidences and analyses on these texts to certify my claim on the original contribution to the field. This is rather a very hard-taking work for these ideas are not in any way a new interpretation of early Buddhism. For example, the concept of *Anatta* and *Sunyāta* (on *Anatta*, Chapter V) should

be understood in the connection with the doctrine of Dependent Origination (*Paṭiccasamuppāda*). From these considerations, it compels me to incline on the practical approach, even at the risk of having some personal assertions in an academic work. And to avoid repeated other's works on the same subjects, my approach is distinctively psychological one (e.g., p. 76, 80-2, 112-4, 132, etc).

As we have seen in the introduction chapter, page 22, the complaints of two prominent writers, one as an authoritative meditation master and another, a well known scholar of Buddhism that the gap between the intellectual approach to Buddha's teaching and its ineffectiveness to reduce the suffering in one's daily life. Throughout this thesis, my concerns are this practical observation: how to make many invaluable ideas of the Buddha relevance to our daily life. Chapter IV, *Khandha Doctrine*, and Chapter VI, *on Motivation* are such attempts to analyze the doctrinal terms to see their relevancies on the framework of human mind and body. Another breakthrough is in Chapter VII, *Buddhist Ways to Transcend Unsatisfactoriness* and many points in the conclusion chapter have dealt with this matter in Buddhist circles.

To answer the question 'What is self or soul (atta) and why we need to know it?', in the second chapter, the '*Soul Theories*', has shown the futile attempts of many thinkers in their speculations on the nature of a permanent 'self' or soul that presiding and will its power over human experiences (p.35). The diversity and even conflicting descriptions on the ontological validity of such a soul or 'self' reflects the mere speculative and subjective nature of these theories. Beside, none of these theories offers an effective way to deal with the

problem of saṃsāra and the subject of dual notion in human experiences remains unsolved. This paves the way for the Buddha to articulate the doctrine of the Four Noble Truths in which human experiences are described in term of unsatisfactory facts while avoiding risking any speculation on a permanent self or soul. Two sections on the ethical value and the social application of the *Anatta* doctrine in chapter five also make a contribution to this search of practical approach in Buddhist studies.

The third chapter, on *dukkha*, is to examine what the Buddha, as presented in the Pāli Nikāyas, actually means about suffering. *Dukkhā* are closely link with the notion of a permanent self (*atta*) or the struggle to create and maintain an identity amidst the changing world. Through examining the concept of *dukkha* and its possible causes, we come to see that unsatisfactory experiences are due to a willful blindness that resists changes to protect one's misapprehended identity (p. 79-80). Herein we also realize that the Buddha did not make a theory of suffering as an inhering nature of existence and avoiding talking on the unnecessary 'original sin' or the ultimate cause of one's existence, but to reveal the nature of conditioned experiences as unsatisfactory (p. 71). My interesting finding in this topic is some oldest tests testifying the birth of a personality (*attabhava*) is within a thought of identification with conditioned experiences as "I" or "mine" (p. 65-6, 90). This explains why the Buddha explained human experiences in terms of five aggregates of clinging (*pacuppādānakkhandha*) as the fact of unsatisfactoriness (*sankhittena pañcuppādānakkhandha'pi dukkha*). This finding proves the correct Buddhist meditation practice, especially the Satipaṭṭhāna method we have seen in Chapter VII, p. 248, 251-4, and in the last chapter, p. 280-2, 285, 291.

Chapter VII presents the traditional and formal approach termed the Noble Eightfold Path which falls into a systematic scheme named *Tisso-sikkhā*- The Higher Training in morality, concentration, and wisdom. This chapter also focuses on the *Vipassanā* technique- a unique approach termed *paññāvimutti* in Buddhism. The Buddha had, in many contexts, stated that the path of cultivation for a healthy personality to attain enlightenment is a gradual path. Although these are cases of sudden realization recorded in Buddhist literatures<sup>452</sup>, however, the practitioners must continue on their way, carrying on the spirit of awakening until achieving final realization. According to the *Theravāda* tradition, the initial awakening only frees one from three kinds of fetters, i.e., the belief in individuality or *sakkāyadiṭṭhi* in Pāli, doubt (*vicikiccha*) as regards to the path or the method leading to enlightenment, and the blind faith in dogmatic observances (*sīla-bbata-parāmāsa*). It is especially significant that this kind of awakening ideally has the effect of terminating the individual's tenacious tendency towards of egomania which drives men to act in the most unskillful ways and still blindly belief that it's alright for him/her to pursue his/her goal(s) even at the expense of others. When this unskillful tendency is finally eradicated, the partly enlightened ones (*sekkhā* or in

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<sup>452</sup> Such as to ascetic Bāhiya (Udana, 1:10 ,KN) , and Pukkusāti (M.140); there are many instances of sudden enlightenment recorded in Zen or Thien (Ch'an) tradition such as the sixth Patriarch Hue Nang , etc. ,Nevertheless Bāhiya and Pukkasāti had practiced meditation for years, and had been able to attain Jhāna at very high level before they met the Buddha who instructed them to break through the boundaries of meditative attainments, then directed their knowledge and vision to the on-going reality of life, thereupon being enlightened. In the case of Hue Nang and other Zen practitioners, they have to continue their practice in the spirit of awakening for many years, to make their realization and practice more maturity before they started to teach or instruct others.

this case, a *Sotāpanna*, the Stream-enterer) are not subject to the compulsive behaviors that incite a person to commit offences which lead to their downfall or to rebirth in a lower world or in subhuman states. To break through the *Sakkāyadiṭṭhi* or the personality-belief is to be disillusioned with what is normally belief in as ‘me’ or ‘myself’, a continuous and separate entity that accounts for all one’s experiences in life. This realization makes it possible to see that consciousness as well as other personal components are not a separate entities endowed with their own existence, which may correspond to a supervising “ego” or a “soul”, or a “person”. This discovery has a profound impact on one’s perception of the world; it turns one’s out-look to a different direction and enables one to experience in a new dimension. This phenomenon is expressed as “change of lineage – *gotrabhū* in Pāli literatures. The person no longer possesses an ordinary mind as s/he has entered into the lineage of the noble persons (*ariya puggala*).

A *Sotāpanna* (the Stream-enterer), or *Sakadāgāmi* (‘Once Returner), or a *Anāgāmi* (the non-returner), or an *Arahant*,<sup>453</sup> or even a *Pacceka Buddha*, or a *Sammāsam Buddha* is, by

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<sup>453</sup> People are classified as above according to the degree of their enlightenment. The first kind of noble persons (*sotāpanna*) have broken through three fetters (*sakkāyadiṭṭhi*, *vicikiccha*, and *Sīlabbataparāmāsa*); the second kind of noble persons (*sakadāgāmi*) have the same kinds of fetters eradicated, in addition, they have weakened greed and anger; the third kind of persons (*anagāmi*) have eradicated the five lower fetters; and the Arahants have done away with all the fetters [M. I, 249; Vism. 2. 270: Ten *Samyojanā* are: *kāmarāga*- sensuous greed, *Paṭigha*- aversion, *Mana*- conceit, *Sakkayadiṭṭhi* –personality view, *Vicikicchā*- doubt, *Sīlabbataparāmāsa*- clinging to rites and rituals, *Bhavarāga*- greed for a refined existence, *Issā*- envy, *Macchhariya* –selfishness, and *Avijj*- ignorance].

contrast, considered ‘somebody’, the *Prajñā paramitā* literatures agreed! For this reason, they stated, except the ‘all-round-Enlightened One’ (*Sammā sambuddha*), all the former are, too a certain extent, still acting out of selfishness. This criticism is not necessary a logical conclusion. How can one acts in a selfish way when one has realized that there is *not*, in any way, a persisting “I” or “me” to be served first? True compassion comes from the knowledge that the self or selves are relational experiences. This knowledge dispels the delusion of a separate self that struggles to prove its existence in a changing world. Another way to arouse compassion is to view the common characteristics of life, or of self-experience. Like oneself, every living being is fear of death, fear of pain and punishment, and therefore, one should not inflict these fears on others. Like oneself, everybody wishes to live a comfortable life, having happiness and security, and therefore, one should not injure or snatch away these desirable things from others. In the second kind of arousing compassion, it is not necessary that the person has done away with self-delusion, but only that selfish delusion has been transcended.

It is only the wisdom of seeing that there is no permanent self or soul in oneself as well as in others that will permit a true compassion. A beautiful early discourse in the *Majjhima Nikāya*, the *Cūlagosinga Sutta* depicts a simple but lofty ideal of the life of the noble persons. We have also discussed the moral criteria from an enlightened point of view in Chapter Five; this moral standard calls for the selfless service for all living beings without any discrimination. The Mahāyana philosophy renders this selfless service part of the Bodhisattva ideal in which the attitude of the practitioner becomes very important. For instance, in order to transform the emotion of disappointment or aversion, the practitioner reasons: “Where

could I ever find enough leather to cover the whole earth? But my leather sandal is enough to cover it wherever I go.”<sup>454</sup> As elucidated by the *Prajñāparamitā* literatures, the practitioner should let go of all (wrong) notions of “I” and “you”, “me”, and “the other”, “being”, and “not being”. Only when all of these (wrong) notions are transcended, is one said to be in the Buddha’s realm, wherein, all the dualistic notions have vanished.

The End.

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<sup>454</sup> Shantideva, *The Way of the bodhisattva* (Boston: Shambhala, 1996), chapter IV, verse 13.

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