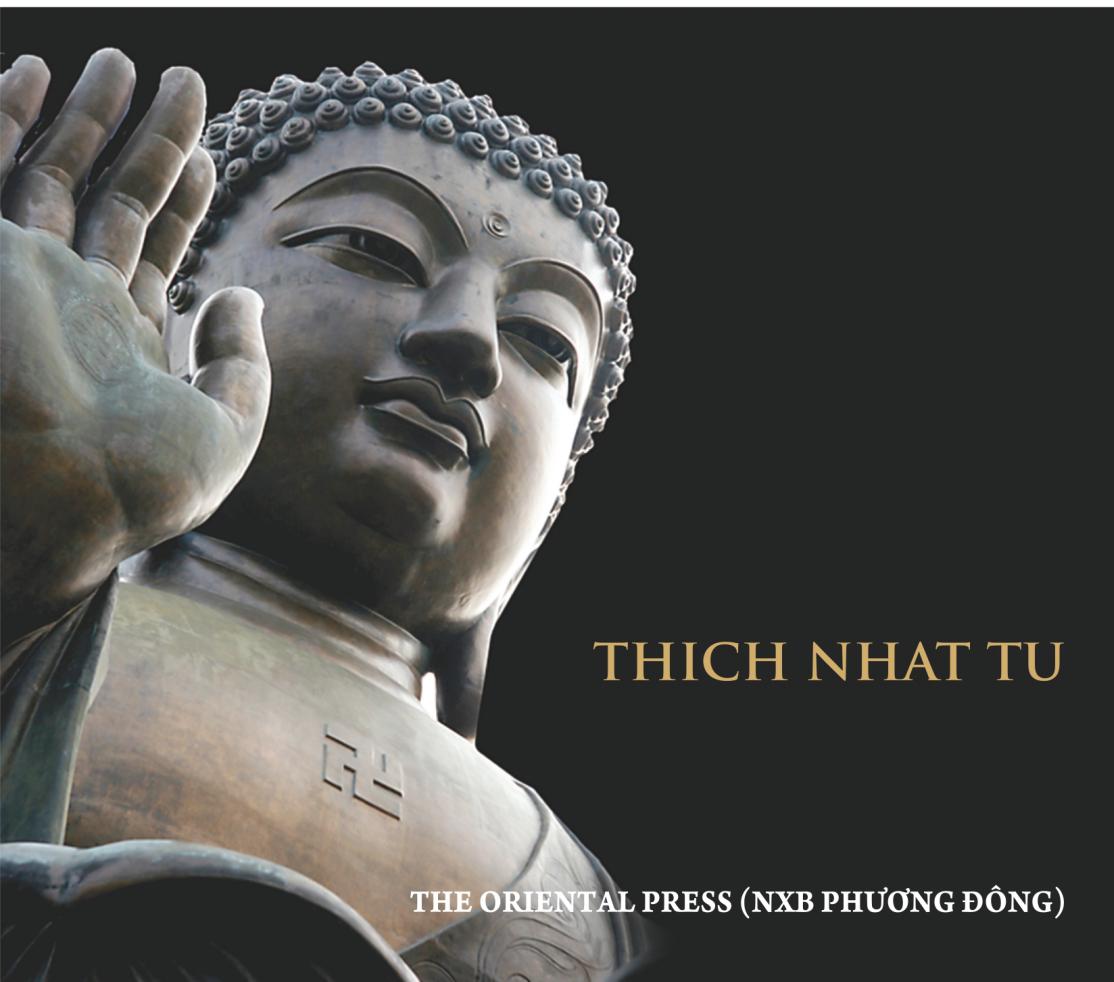


VIETNAM BUDDHIST UNIVERSITY SERIES
9

BUDDHIST SOTERIOLOGICAL ETHICS
A Study of the Buddha's Central Teachings:
FOUR NOBLE TRUTHS
(SECOND EDITION)



THE ORIENTAL PRESS (NXB PHƯƠNG ĐÔNG)

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**BUDDHIST
SOTERIOLOGICAL ETHICS**

*A Study of the Buddha's Central Teachings:
Four Noble Truths*

(Third Edition)

THICH NHAT TU

Foreword by Prof. LOKESH CHANDRA

HONG DUC PUBLISHER

Nama tassa Bhagavato Arahato Sammā-sambuddhassa
Homage to the World Honored One, the Arahat,
the Perfectly Enlightened One!

DEDICATED
to
my *Upajjhāya*,
the late Most Ven. THICH THIEN HUE,
with reverence and gratitude,
Who has brought me up in the *Buddhadhamma*,

May any merit (*puñña*) generated by writing this book
be for the benefit of my parents, sponsors, supporters, well-wishers,
all who read this book and indeed all sentient beings.

NOTE

Translation and publication of this book is encouraged. However, the author may kindly be informed. To obtain a paginated version of this book please send an email to the author: thichnhattu@gmail.com

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CONTENTS

Preface	vii
Foreword	ix
List of abbreviations	xiii
A note on translations	xvi
I INTRODUCTION	1
II THE FACTUAL TRUTH OF SUFFERING	9
Translation and nature	9
Variety of <i>dukkha</i>	15
Threefold division of <i>dukkha</i>	17
Ethical Implication of <i>Dukkha</i>	20
III THE ORIGIN OF DUKKHA	25
Eight theories of the origin of <i>dukkha</i>	25
<i>Dukkha</i> in the scheme of Four Noble Truths	26
<i>Dukkha</i> in the scheme of Dependent Origination	28
Negative functions of ignorance	33
IV NIBBĀNA: SOTERIOLOGICAL GOAL OF BUDDHISM	39
<i>Nibbāna</i> : Its meaning and synonyms	39
Negative expressions of <i>nibbāna</i>	44
Misinterpretations on <i>nibbāna</i>	45
Non-transcendental interpretation of <i>nibbāna</i>	49

<i>Nibbāna</i> in life or <i>nibbāna</i> with remainder	52
The first <i>Udānic</i> description of <i>nibbāna</i>	54
The second <i>Udānic</i> description of <i>nibbāna</i>	57
The third <i>Udānic</i> description of <i>nibbāna</i>	58
The fourth <i>Udānic</i> description of <i>nibbāna</i>	61
Sensual happiness, <i>jhānic</i> happiness and <i>nibbānic</i> happiness ...	71
Contact and feeling in <i>nibbāna</i>	80
Cognition in <i>nibbāna</i>	88
<i>Nibbāna</i> and cessation of feelings and perceptions	95
<i>Nibbāna</i> as cessation of <i>samsāra</i>	98
<i>Nibbāna</i> and <i>anattā</i>	102
 V THE PATH LEADING TO NIBBĀNA	
Right view	109
Right thought	114
Right speech	116
Right action	119
Right livelihood	123
Right effort	124
Right mindfulness	126
Right concentration	131
 VI CONCLUSION	
Bibliography	139
About the author	153
By the same author	155

PREFACE

Ven. Thich Nhat Tu, born during turbulence of war, represents the voice of the new Buddhist community of Vietnam that has emerged from a period of atrophy to become a major movement. He has, at an early age, had to assume a position of leadership when the revival of Buddhism in his country is most in need of restoration of vigor and freshness. Nowhere is this expansion of the tradition more evident than on the campus of the Vietnam Buddhist University. Hundreds of young monks and nuns have turned to that campus to seek training and guidance as they prepare themselves to provide the leadership needed for the future. Ven. Thich Nhat Tu serves as Vice Chancellor of the University, in charge of the administration, teaching, and expansion of the institution. In many ways, the future direction of Buddhism in Vietnam is dependent upon his abilities and wisdom.

We are fortunate to have a volume that provides a clear statement of his approach to the religion and its application to the lives of monks and nuns as well as lay people. From the most basic teaching of the Four Noble Truths, he articulates how these thoughts can best be used in real life situations. His language is moving and in some instances fervent as he seeks to express not only what he feels and thinks but also his experiences as a practicing Buddhist.

In this volume, he writes in such a way that he goes beyond explaining intellectual difficulties. His attempt is marked by an individual and particular interpretation of special knowledge that is inferred from his personal practice and resulting insight. We see in Ven. Thich Nhat Tu, a leader whose determination is motivated by the immediate conditions that he observes. Thus, his teaching does not ask the listener to ignore the knowledge that comes as a result of one's normal way of life; instead, he urges that this knowledge take on a new function that enriches.

Lewis Lancaster

Emeritus Professor, University of California, Berkeley
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FOREWORD

Bhiyyobhāva “becoming more (*bhūyas*),” the Faring in the grand between of the universes, was the greatest potential, the long “Way of Becoming,” the *Yāna*, from which there was no more turning back, as we saw ourselves as further-farers. The *Dīgha-nikāya* 33. 1. 11 says, “that good values may persist, may be clarified, for their becoming More, for their expansion, for the making of them “Become,” for the protection of them, he brings forth will, he endeavours, he stirs up energy, he makes firm the mind, he struggles.”¹

Venerable Thich Nhat Tu articulates this “more” in the manifold interpretations of the Buddha’s teachings on the Four Noble Truths and the soteriological ethics arising therefrom. The realization of the statement of *dukkha*, its arising, its ceasing, and the path leading to its ceasing, make an ordinary person an enlightened being. Ven. Nhat Tu clarifies from the Pali tradition that the Teaching is neither nihilist nor pessimist, but a way to reach the highest happiness (*nibbānaṁ paramaṁ sukham*).

The Tibetan renders *nibbāna* as *mya.ñan.las.hdas.pa* “transcending sorrow / śoka.” *Dukkha* is an analogy formation after *sukha*: *du* is an antithetic prefix implying perverseness, badness, with *kha*=ākāsa “sky, space”: the unpleasant and painful causing misery. No word in English

¹ Tr. by C.A.F. Rhys Davids, “A Hallmark of Man and of Religion,” *New Indian Antiquary*, vol. 1, No. 1, April 1938.

covers the same ground as *dukkha*. It is a central term in early Buddhism as the very first sermon of the Buddha deals chiefly with *dukkha*. Buddhaghosa says in the *Visuddhimagga* 494, “*idha du iti ayam saddo kucchite dissati, kucchitam hi puttam dupputto ti vadanti. Kham-saddo pana tucche. Tuccham hi ākāsam khan ti vuccati*,” which means “*du* is used in the sense of despicable, since they speak of a despised son as *dupputto*. The word *kham* means empty, as the empty space is spoken of as *kham*.” *Dukkha* as a philosophical category is a contribution of Buddhism to human thought, which has to be transcended into the highest happiness of *nibbāna*. The word *dukkha* does not occur in the *Rigveda* and other *Śāṅhitas*, though we find it in the *Śatapatha-brāhmaṇa* 14.7.2.15 or in the *Chāndoyoga-upaniṣad* 7.26.

Ven. Nhat Tu presents a succinct account of its factual nature and varieties, theories of its origin and its cessation in *nibbāna*. The presentation is lucid and categorized in clear terms. The eight theories of the origin of *dukkha* prevalent during the lifetime of the Buddha are negated by the Bhagavān as leading to *sassatavāda* “eternalism” or *ucchedavāda* “annihilationism.” Lord Buddha explains *dukkha* in terms of the Middle Path and Dependent Origination.

Ven. Nhat Tu gives a precise and definite formulation of this central tenet and also analyses the ignorance (*avijjā*) of the Four Noble Truths as a negative function, a hindrance on several levels: mental and ethical, social and individual, physical and methodological. To sunder ignorance is to comprehend wisdom, that leads to *nibbāna*.

Ven. Nhat Tu discusses various etymologies of the word *nirvāṇa* to find its underlying semantics. The *Ratana-sutta* explains it as the blowing out of the lamp (*nibbanti dhīrā yathāyam padipo*), or the extinguishing of the fires in *nibbāna* without residue when all illusions are destroyed

(*indhana-kṣayād ivāgnir nirupadhi-śeṣe nirvāṇa-dhātau parinirvṛtah*), or the end of all desires (*vāṇa*=*tanhā*), or to go beyond the path of rebirth (*vāṇa* “path of rebirth”). *Nibbāna* is a many-splendoured metaphysical phenomenon which is the quiescence of the transitory, wherein illusion is destroyed, which extinguishes all *karmas*, and effects detachment from the things of this world (*Majjhimanikāya* 24).²

Ven. Nhat Tu sums up this complex trans-phenomenon as the “psychologically free state of mind” (*cetovimutti cetaso vimokkho*), the highest happiness, the timeless ending of *dukkha*. He discusses the wrong interpretations of *nibbāna* conditioned by the theistic background of scholars and gives its non-transcendental interpretation. Buddhism disowned both transcendentalism and nihilism, which were heresies to it. *Nirvāṇa* is one of the three *dharma*s (C. *sān fǎ yìn* 三法印) that distinguish Buddhism from heresy: (i) all conditioned things are impermanent (*anityatā*), (ii) all elements are non-substantial (*śūnyatā*), (iii) and *nirvāṇa* is quiescence. The Chinese did not translate the word *nirvāṇa*, but transliterated the Sanskrit word as *niè-pán* (涅槃), in which the first character is explained as “not to be born,” (C. *bù-shēng* 不生), the second as “not to die” (C. *bù-miè* 不滅).

Ven. Nhat Tu details the two forms of *nibbāna*, one in life with remainder and the other after death without remainder. The first is described from the *Udāna* in four categories which are supplementary to one another. *Nibbāna* is neither eternal (*nicca*), nor substantial (*attā*). He ends with the eightfold path as leading to *nibbāna*.

Reading this book of Ven. Nhat Tu has been for me a theoretical culmination, being led from the vortex of life to

² *Ibid.*

the ineffable serenity of Becoming, a cooler picture of existence. A leap from *samsāra* to *nibbāna* in the pure and crystalline brilliance of the Pali texts as envisioned by a monk of Vietnam with centuries of the maturation of Buddhist thought and purity of practice. Intellection, spiritual expansion, intuitive and active elements transcend into *nibbāna*: Being in itself of which no predicate is possible. Ven. Nhat Tu leads us to this maturation. He is the *ehi-sāgata-vādin* who tells us “come, you are welcome” to this *ehi-passika Dhamma* of Lord Buddha, which invites every sentient being to come and see for himself. He lifts the evil of the flux of forms and formulations.

New Delhi,
Prof. Lokesh Chandra
14-10-1999

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

This list includes abbreviated titles of Pali Texts, their translations and commentaries, journals, dictionaries and encyclopedias. References to Pali Texts and their Commentaries are to the standard Pali Text Society's editions, unless otherwise noted. In the case of the primary sources, the Roman and Arabic figures, following abbreviated titles, are the volumes and pages respectively of the editions published by the Pali Text Society. Exclusively, the abbreviated titles in the case of *Dhammapada*, *Suttanipāta*, *Itivuttaka*, *Udāna*, *Theragāthā* and *Therīgāthā* refer to the number of the verse. In the case of secondary sources, the Arabic number in bracket followed by a hyphen indicates the year of publication whereas the same following a hyphen, the pages.

- A. *Ānguttara-Nikāya*, I-V, ed. R. Morris, E. Hardy, C. A. F. Rhys Davids. (London: PTS, 1885-1900)
- AA. *Ānguttaranikāya Aṭṭhakathā*, (Manorathapūraṇī), I-V, ed. M. Walleser, H. Kopp, (London: PTS, 1924-56)
- Abhs.* *Abhidhammatthasaṅgaha*, ed. T. W. Rhys Davids. (London: JPTS, 1884)
- Asl.* *Aṭṭhasālānī* ed. F. Müller. (London: PTS, 1979), *The Expositor*, tr. P. Maung Tin and Mrs. Rhys Davids. (London: PTS, 1920-1)
- BD.* *Buddhist Dictionary*, by Nyānatiloka. (Colombo: Buddhist Publication Society, 1988; 1st Ed. 1952)
- BMPE.* *A Buddhist Manual of Psychological Ethics*, (*Dhamma-saṅgāni*), tr. by C.A.F. Rhys Davids. Oxford: PTS, 1993, 1st Ed. 1900.

CPED. Concise Pali-English Dictionary, by A. P. Buddhadutta Mahathera.

D. Dīghanikāya, I-III, ed. T. W. Rhys David and J. E. Carpenter, (London: PTS, 1889-1910)

DA. Dīghanikāya Aṭṭhakathā, I-III, ed. T. W. Rhys David and J. E. Carpenter, W. Stede. (London: PTS, 1886-1932)

DB. Dialogues of the Buddha (PTS translation of the *Dīgha Nikāya*)

Dhp. Dhammapada, ed. K. R. Norman and O. von Hinuber. (London: PTS, 1931)

Dhp. Dhammapada.

Dhs. Dhammasaṅgaṇī, ed. E. Müller. (London: PTS, 1885)

DhsA. Dhammasaṅgaṇī Aṭṭhakathā, ed. E. Müller. (London: PTS, 1897)

DPL. Dictionary of Pali Language, by. R. C. Childers. (Delhi: Cosmo Publications, 1979)

DPPN. Dictionary of Pāli Proper Names, I-II, by. G. P. Malalasekera. (Delhi: Oreintal Reprint, 1983)

EB. Encyclopaedia of Buddhism, I-V, ed. G. P. Malalasekera. (Ceylon: 1945-1994)

ERE. Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics, I-XIII, ed. J. Hastings. (Edinburg: 1908-26)

Expos. The Expositors (PTS translation of the *Atthasālinī*)

GS. Gradual Sayings (PTS translation of the *Ānguttara Nikāya*)

Iti. Itivuttaka, ed. E. Windisch. (London: PTS, 1890)

ItiA. Itivuttaka Aṭṭhakathā, I-II, ed. M. M. Bose. (PTS, 1934-36)

J. Jātaka with Commentary, I-VI, ed. V. Fausböll, (London: PTS, 1877-1896)

JIP. Journal of Indian Philosophy

Khp. *Khuddakapāṭha*, ed. Mrs. C.A.F. Rhys Davids. (London: PTS, 1931)

KhpA. *Khuddakapāṭha Aṭṭhakathā*, ed. H. Smith. (PTS, 1915)

KS *Kindred Sayings* (PTS translation of the *Samyutta Nikāya*)

M. *Majjhimanikāya*, I-IV, ed. V. Trenckner, R. Chalmers, Mrs. Rhys Davids. (London: PTS, 1888-1902)

MA. *Majjhimanikāya Aṭṭhakathā*, I-V, ed. J. H. Woods, D. Kosambi, I. B. Horner. (London: PTS, 1922-38)

Milin. *Milindapañha*, ed. V. Trenckner. (London: PTS, 1962)

MLS. *Middle Length Sayings* (PTS translation of the *Majjhima Nikāya*)

MNPC. *The Minor Anthologies of the Pali Canon* (PTS translation of the *Khuddaka-Nikāya*)

PB. *Psalms of the Early Buddhists: II-Psalms of the Brethren.*

PED. *Pali English Dictionary*, ed. T. W. Rhys Davids and W. Stede. (London: PTS, 1921-25)

PEW. *Philosophy East and West*, ed. Eliot Deutsch. Honolulu: The University Press of Hawaii.

PTS. *Pali Text Society*

S. *Samyuttanikāya*, I-V, ed. L. Feuer and Mrs. Rhys Davids. (London: PTS, 1884-1898)

SA. *Samyuttanikāya Aṭṭhakathā*.

SBB. *Sacred Books of the Buddhists*

SLJBS. *Sri Lanka Journal of Buddhist Studies*, ed. by Buddhist and Pali University of Sri Lanka.

Sn. *Suttanipāta*, ed. D. Andersen and H. Smith. (London: PTS, 1913)

SnA. *Suttanipāta Aṭṭhakathā*, ed. H. Smith. (London: PTS, 1916-18)

Thag. *Theragāthā*, ed. H. Oldenberg. (London: PTS, 1883)

ThagA. *Theragāthā Aṭṭhakathā*, I-III, ed. F. L. Woodward. (London: PTS, 1940-59)

Tăng *Tăng Chi bộ Kinh*, 3 tập, HT. Thích Minh Châu dịch. (Ho Chi Minh: Viện Nghiên cứu Phật học Việt Nam, 1988)

Thīg. *Therīgāthā*, ed. R. Pischel. (London: PTS, 1883)

ThīgA. *Therīgāthā Aṭṭhakathā*, ed. M. Muller. (PTS, 1893)

Ud. *Udāna*, ed. P. Steinthal. (London: PTS, 1885)

UdA. *Udāna Aṭṭhakathā*, ed. F. L. Woodward. (London: PTS, 1926)

Vbh. *Vibhaṅga*, ed. and tr. by S. K. Mukhopadhyaya. (Santiniketan: 1950)

VbhA. *Vibhaṅga Aṭṭhakathā*, ed. A. P. Buddhadatta. (London: PTS, 1923)

Vin. *Vinayapiṭaka*, I-V, ed. H. Oldenberg. (London: PTS, 1879-83)

VinA. *Vinayapiṭaka Aṭṭhakathā*, ed. J. Takakusu, M. Nagai. (London: PTS, 1924-47)

Vism. *Visuddhimagga*, ed. H. C. Warren and D. Kosambi. *HOS.41.* (1950).

A NOTE ON TRANSLATIONS

The translations from the Pāli texts are my own, except where indicated. I, of course, have been benefited by consultation of the translations of Pāli Text Society, as well as, of the others, if available. I, some times, used the translations of PTS and of others, on altered occasions, where I judged them to be adequate and concise, especially for the sake of terminological consistency and appropriateness.

I

INTRODUCTION

(1.1) The greatest contribution of the Buddha was his discovery and declaration of the four undeniably noble truths (*Cattāri Ariyasaccāni// Catvāri-ārya-satyāni*)¹ about human existence and all other animate beings. The four noble truths are ① the truth or statement of suffering (*dukkha-ariya-sacca*) ② the truth of the arising of suffering (*dukkha-samudaya-ariya-sacca*), ③ the truth of the ceasing of suffering (*dukkha-nirodha-ariya-sacca*), and ④ the truth of the path leading to the cessation of suffering (*dukkha-nirodha-gāminī-paṭipadā-ariya-sacca*).² They are so called undeniably noble truths (*Ariyasaccāni*) because they are absolutely true (*tatha/saccam/ tatha-bhāvo*), not subject to falsity (*avitatham*), and not alterable (*anaññatham*).³ In addition to this, because the realization of these four noble truths makes an ordinary man

¹ *S. V.* 433, *KS. V.* 366: “Monks, whatsoever recluses or brahmins understand not, as it really is, this is suffering, this is the arising of suffering, this is the state of cessation of suffering, and this is the practice leading to that state, such are not reckoned as recluses among recluses, nor as brahmins among brahmins, nor have those worthies, in this very life, or themselves realized by their own knowledge the reality of recluseship or of brahminhood.” Translation altered. At *A. IV.* 382, Sāriputta tell us that the four noble truths are not known, seen, attained, realized or mastered earlier and that just for the knowledge, insight, attainment, realization and mastery of these noble truths, the holy life is lived under the Buddha, who first discovered and taught it.

² *M. I.* 230; *S. V.* 421; *Vin. I.* 9; *Vbh.* 99.

³ *S. V.* 430. This recurs at *S. V.* 435; *KS. V.* 368. For other related references, see *KS. V.* 365, n. 1.

(*assutavant puthujjana*), become enlightened being (*ariyasāvaka / Arhat*), as in the case of the Buddha, they are so called.⁴ Thus, the concept of truth (*sacca*) as in the compound “noble truth” (*ariya-saccāni*) here is not only empirical and rational but also universally factual truth, for it involves value judgement, with reference to moral concern in human context.⁵

(1.2) In this fourfold noble truth there is a twin aspect of causality involved. The first is the causality in the level of *saṃsāra*, referred to the first two noble truths, while the second is the causality in the *saṃsāra*-freed level, referred to the last two noble truths. The structure of description of two levels of causality is to be noted: the effect is shown first, followed by pointing out the cause. Each truth is elaborated in three ways (*ti-parivatṭa*), and then becoming thrice revolved twelvefold noble truth. Firstly, the Buddha points out the fourfold undeniably factual truth (C. *shì zhuǎn* 示轉) by the use of the relative pronoun “this” (*idam*): this is undeniably truth of suffering, this is its cause, this is the state of cessation of suffering, and this is the path leading to the state of cessation of suffering. Secondly, he encourages mankind to realise the four noble truths with wisdom (C. *quàn zhuǎn* 勸轉) by prescribing the ‘should’: suffering or unsatisfactoriness should be realised as an undeniable fact, which every unenlightened is facing with; its arising should be put away for physically and mentally peacefulness; the state of cessation of suffering should be realised for freedom from *saṃsāra*; and the path leading to this effect should be understood with wise insight. Thirdly, he shows the best

⁴ S. V. 435; KS. V. 368.

⁵ For interesting discussion in this regard, see, D. J. Kalupahana (1994): 85.

possibility of realisation of these four noble truths (C. *zhèng zhuǎn* 證轉) by illustrating his own example: the noble truth about suffering has been understood (by me); the noble truth about its arising has been put away; the noble truth about the state of ceasing of suffering has been realised; and the noble truth about the practice leading to this ceasing has been cultivated.⁶

(1.3) For the sake of convenient understanding, the four noble truths can be summed up in the following simple form: suffering is a fact or phenomenon in life, which everyone that wants to be free from it should realise with wisdom; the realisation of this factual suffering is, primarily, aimed at pointing out its causes and, therefore, putting it away; whenever the arising of suffering is cut off, the state of cessation of suffering, or *nibbāna*, is realised; and to this effect, the path leading to the state of cessation of suffering must be cultivated. In other words, “the noble truth of suffering is to be comprehensively understood, the noble truth of its arising is to be abandoned, the noble truth of ceasing of suffering is to be realised, and the noble truth of the practice that leads to its ceasing is to be cultivated.”⁷

(1.4) In this highly possible process, if an effort is to be made,⁸ an ignorant ordinary man (*assutavant puthujana*), definitely, becomes enlightened being (*ariyasāvaka / Arhat*). Thus, in the scheme of the four noble truths, a mere statement of suffering would obviously amount to the expression of pessimism. The Buddha’s analysis of *dukkha* in wedded relationship with other three noble truths, viz., its

⁶ S. V. 422-3; KS. V. 358-9.

⁷ S. V. 435; KS. V. 369.

⁸ This is the advice the Buddha repeatedly gives to his disciples at the end of the discourses in the *Saṇīyutta Nikāya* (e.g. S. V. 427-466).

causes, its cessation and its path leading to the cessation clearly establishes a contrary position. The first and the second truths describe the *dukkha* and point out its cause of origin respectively, whereas the third and the fourth show the greatest bliss in complete absence or end of suffering (*anto dukkhassa*) and the path leading to its cessation. With this fourfold undeniable truth, Buddhism is beyond the charge of pessimism, for it does not merely describe the fact or phenomenon of suffering but pragmatically points out the way to escape from it, reaching the state of highest happiness (*nibbānaṁ paramaṁ sukham*).⁹

(1.5) Those who mistakenly distort the four noble truths by reducing them into, or identifying them with the fact of suffering, always charge the Buddha as a nihilist (*venayika*) and then, his teachings as pessimism. In the *Alagadduāpama Sutta*, the Buddha faces out this distorted charge, stating that:

Though I am who affirms and teaches thus,¹⁰ there are some recluses and brahmans who mistakenly, wrongly, erroneously and falsely charge me, not in accordance with the fact, saying, “The recluse Gotama is a nihilist (*venayika*) preaching the cutting off, the destruction and annihilation (*vibhava*) of the existing creatures. But as this is what I am not, what I do not say, these charges are mistakenly distorted . . . Both in the past and as well as now, I have consistently taught [both] suffering and the ending of suffering.¹¹

According to this statement, the Buddha’s teachings on suffering have twofold aspect, namely, (i) describing the fact

⁹ S. I. 125, S. IV. 371-2; M. I. 508-9; *Dhp*. 202-4, *Ud*. 10; *Thag*. 35.

¹⁰ In this context, it means “the fact of suffering and the path leading to the cessation of suffering.

¹¹ M. I. 140; *MLS*. I. 180.

of suffering and pointing out its cause, (ii) showing the way to cure it, which leads the state of cessation of suffering. Seeing the Buddha's teachings narrowly only through his description of suffering, divorced from the other three noble truths is a distorted vision or an ill-description of the Buddha's soteriologically comprehensive outlook. What we can learn from the Buddha's description of suffering and its cessation is that pointing out the human suffering is the wise way to cure it. Unless and until you master your own problems, you fail to solve, to cure, or to transform it, whatever the term you may alter. In the analogy of medicine, the four noble truths can be expressed as (i) there is disease, (ii) every disease has its etiology, (iii) perfect health or freedom from disease, and (iv) there is medicine or prognosis for that perfect health. This medical model is the best analogy to describe the pragmatically ethical value of the four noble truths, which are often seen only as the factual "disease" by anti-Buddhist writers and interpreters. Thus, the four undeniably noble truths are, evidently, soteriological by nature, as the following statement remarks: "Both formerly and now, O Anurādha, I declare only suffering and its cessation."¹²

(1.6) Before turning to the discussion of each and every of the four noble truths, it is necessary to note here the wedded relationship between them and their position in Buddha's teachings. According to the Buddha the full realisation of each truth does not stop at itself for its own sake. The understanding of the noble truth of suffering definitely entails the understanding of the other three, too:

Monk, who really realises the noble truth of suffering, sees also the arising and cessation of suffering, and the

¹² S. IV. 384: *Pubbe cāham Anurādha etarahi ca dukkhañceva pāññapemi dukkhassa ca nirodham*. See also M. I. 140; S. III. 119.

path leading to that state of cessation of suffering thereof. Who fully realises the noble truth about the arising of suffering, sees also suffering as a fact, its cessation and the path leading to that cessation too. Similarly, who really realises the state of cessation of suffering, sees also suffering, its arising and the path leading thereto. Who really sees the path leading to the state of cessation of suffering sees also suffering, its arising and the its cessation.¹³

According to this statement, the concept of “understanding” or “seeing” in Buddhism is, always, based on the causal knowledge, otherwise, the observation of suffering would amount to pessimism. In other words, those who approach suffering without the understanding of its causality in two levels, as noted above, will suffer from it in many forms and intensities, including committing suicide, self-murder, or indulging in extremely sensuous satisfaction leading to moral degeneration, as we witnessed in this world. The Buddha further clarifies that the pessimistic attitude of life, such as sorrow and woe could not lead to the realisation of the four noble truths, but rather with joy and gladness, the four noble truths are to be won.¹⁴ This teaching of the four noble truths is, therefore, the most important and fundamental among other teachings of the Buddha. “This teaching is concerned with the profitableness, conduced to the holy life, leading to revulsion, to dispassion, to cessation, to tranquillity, to full understanding, to the perfect wisdom. This does conduce to *nibbāna*. Whatever I have declared to you is just for this purpose.”¹⁵ It is this uniquely important teaching, the illustration (*sañkāsanā*) or enumeration (*pakāsanā / vivaraṇā /*

¹³ S. V. 436.

¹⁴ S. V. 441; KS. V. 373.

¹⁵ S. V. 437; KS. V. 370.

vibhājan / uttānī-karaṇa / paññatti)¹⁶ of the four noble truths has been pointed out by the Buddha in numerous shapes and variations of meaning (*vaṇṇā-byañjanā*),¹⁷ in order to bring about the soteriological benefit for mankind and other sentient beings.

¹⁶ *KS. V. 430, n. 1.*

¹⁷ *S. V. 430; KS. V. 364.*

8 • BUDDHIST SOTERIOLOGICAL ETHICS

II

THE FACTUAL TRUTH OF HUMAN SUFFERING

(2.1) Translation and Nature. In the common use, the term *dukkha* // *duhkha* can be differently rendered into English as “suffering,” “unhappiness,” “unpleasantness,” “painfulness,” “sorrow,” “ill,” “ill-fare,” or “misery,” as opposed to happiness or pleasure (*sukha*). Among these renderings, the term “suffering” has been the more or less popular translation of the term *dukkha* in English, although this English term does not, however, import the multidimensional range of meaning of the Pali *dukkha*. Rhys Davids and F.L. Woodward prefer the rendering “ill” for the term *dukkha*, in their translations of the *Dīgha Nikāya*,¹ and the *Samyutta Nikāya* and the *Anguttara Nikāya*,² respectively. Unsatisfied with the rendering “ill,” I.B. Horner, in her translation of the *Majjhima Nikāya*,³ favors “anguish” as the favorite translation. N. Smart suggests the term “ill-fare” as the standard translation, as it is opposed to

¹ E.g. *DB*. II. 337-346, etc.

² E.g. *KS*. V. 352-99; *KS*. V. 22, 27, 32, 43, 52, 95, 121, 172-3, 232; *GS*. I. 114, 200; *GS*. III. 2, 8, 13, 35, 53, 70, 76, 79-80, 102, 112, 222, 232, 285, etc.

³ E.g. *MLS*. I. 60-70; *MLS*. III. 295-9, etc.

sukha, welfare.⁴ In this usage, it represents the whole of undesirable or unpleasant feelings (*dukkha vedanā*), both mental (*mano*) and physical (*kāya*).

(2.2) In a wider sense, the term *dukkha* is associated with the psychological and philosophical connotations, as W. Rahula commendably notes that the term “has a deeper philosophical meaning and connotes enormously wider senses,” as “it also includes deeper ideas such as “imperfection,” “impermanence,” “emptiness,” “insubstantiality.”⁵ It is, therefore, noted that the rendering “suffering” for the Buddhist term “*dukkha*” is, sometimes, misleading, in some context.

Keeping this in mind, Nyanatiloka Mahathera suggests that the term “unsatisfactoriness” or “liability to suffering” would be more adequate renderings than any other English terms.⁶ Echoing this direction, D. J. Kalupahana convincingly writes: “The use of the term *dukkha* in describing the world of objectivity is more appropriately understood as “unsatisfactory” than as “suffering.” He further qualifies this contention by explaining that, “This is a more abstract use of the term *dukkha*, for it is an extension of a subjective attitude (namely suffering) to explain what may be called an objective experience.” He further gives reason for this qualification: “Very often, the reason for considering an object unsatisfactory (*dukkha*) is that it is impermanent (*anicca*) and subject to transformation or change (*vipariṇāma-dhamma*).”⁷

S. Collins notes the misleading of the rendering

⁴ PEW. 34. 4. (1984): 371-2.

⁵ W. Rahula (1978): 17.

⁶ BD. s.v. *dukkha*: 65.

⁷ D. J. Kalupahana (1994): 88. Cf. S. II. 272.

“suffering” for *dukkha*, saying that “The translation “suffering” for *dukkha* is in nonphilosophical contexts often best, but it is misleading conceptually. It is patently false, for Buddhist as for everyone except the pathologically depressed, that everything in life is suffering.”⁸ He explains his remark by stating that “only the first [*dukkha-dukkha*], and to a limited extent the second [*vipariṇāma-dukkha*], can sensibly be called suffering in the usual sense of the English word. This is why “unsatisfactoriness” is sometimes preferable as a translation: to predicate *dukkha* of conditioned things is not to describe a feeling-tone in the experience of them, but to prescribe an evaluation, one which makes sense only in relation to the opposite evaluation of nirvana, the Unconditioned, as satisfactory.”⁹ Christmas Humphreys observes that “suffering” is only one aspect and, therefore, one translation among other aspects and translations of *dukkha*. He explains that the term *dukkha* has a very wide range of meaning, “which covers all that we understand by pain, ill, disease—physical or mental—including such minor forms of disharmony, discomfort, irritation or friction, or, in a philosophic sense, the awareness of incompleteness or insufficiency.”¹⁰ In my opinion, neither “suffering,” nor “unsatisfactoriness,” nor any other English word can serve as the best rendering for “*dukkha*” in its varying contexts. It is, therefore, suggested, as in the present writing, that both the renderings “suffering” and “unsatisfactoriness” and so forth, should alterably be used in order to meet its contextual occurrences, for if “unsatisfactoriness” is unalterably used as a rendering for *dukkha* in all contexts, another

⁸ S. Collins (1998): 140.

⁹ S. Collins (1998): 140.

¹⁰ C. Humphreys *Budhism* (1972/1951): 81.

shortcoming arises like that of the rendering “suffering.” To escape this deficiency by indulgence in another deficiency is to commit the same category-mistake.

(2.3) According to Buddhaghosa, *dukkha* is a kind of feeling that makes beings suffer (*dukkhāyati*) and pain (*dukkha*).¹¹ Nyanatiloka Mahathera correctly observes that *dukkha* is not primarily confined to painful or unhappy feelings, but covers also the unsatisfactory nature and general insecurity of all dependently arisen phenomena, which, on account of their changing and impermanence, are subject to suffering, and this includes also all desirable or pleasurable experience (*sukha-vedanā*),¹² as we shall see later in the threefold classification of it. *Dukkha* is called the first universally factual truth of human experience, because it is one of the threefold characteristics (*tilakkhaṇa*) of all phenomena, or existence. It is stated that whether there be an appearance or non-appearance of a Tathāgata, [who first discovered it and then declared it], this causal law of nature (*dhātu-dhammaṭhitatā*), this natural law of things (*dhammaniyāmatā*) would still prevail, namely, all phenomena are impermanent (*sabbe saṅkhāra anicca*), all dispositions are subject to *dukkha* (*sabbe saṅkhāra dukkhā*), and all phenomena are non-substantial (*sabbe dhammā anattā*).¹³ It is this universal experience of uneasy feelings of varying intensity, being whether mentally unpleasant or physical pain, forming the first noble truth, as S.K. Nanayakkara very correctly points out:

This experience is so basic and universal that Buddhism points out that all unenlightened beings in

¹¹ *Vism.* 494; *PP.* 563; 605.

¹² *BD.* s.v. *dukkha*: 64-5.

¹³ *A. I.* 286; *GS. I.* 264; *Dhp.* 277-9.

their day to day activities of life are bound to undergo this experience on different occasions, due to different causes, in varying degree and forms. It is this aspect of *dukkha* that forms the content of the “First” of the Four Noble Truths.

According to the Buddha, in terms of space, all things or phenomena are insubstantial (*sabbe dhammā anattā*),¹⁴ while in terms of time, “all conditioned or compound things are impermanent” (*sabbe saṅkhārā anicca*).¹⁵ The twin aspect of the impermanent-and-insubstantial things is, as you can see, unsatisfactory (*dukkha*) to human being. This is clearly described in the following statement “whatever is conditioned is unsatisfactory” (*sabbe saṅkhārā dukkhā*).¹⁶ Thus, in the context of impermanence and non-substantiality of conditioned things and phenomena, the Buddha expounds and establishes his factual truth of suffering. The scope of universality of factual suffering or unsatisfactoriness is, nonetheless, confined to feelings or experiences in association with compound or conditioned things (*saṅkhārā*), rather than to everything (*sabbe dhammā*) in this world. It is, therefore, noted that any interpretation of the noble truth of suffering as the universal statement that “all things or phenomena are unsatisfactory” (*sabbe dhammā dukkhā*), or “everything is suffering” (*sabbam dukkham*) is, verily, a distorted understanding of the Buddha’s teaching on the same, which logically leads to the unfair charge of pessimism regarding the four noble truths. The discussion of the universal truth of *dukkha* with reference to three

¹⁴ *Dhp.* 279. It is stated in *M. I.* 380 that this contention constitutes the distinct teaching of the Buddha (*buddhānām sāmukkamisikā desanā*). Cf. *A. I.* 286; *GS. I.* 264.

¹⁵ *Dhp.* 277. Cf. *A. I.* 286; *GS. I.* 264.

¹⁶ *Dhp.* 278. Cf. *A. I.* 286; *GS. I.* 264.

14 • BUDDHIST SOTERIOLOGICAL ETHICS

characteristics of existence (*tilakkhaṇa*) above can be best illustrated in the following long passage:

Monks, body (*rūpa*) . . . feeling (*vedanā*) . . . perception (*saññā*) . . . dispositions (*saṅkhāra*) . . . consciousness (*viññāna*) are without self or non-substantial (*anattā*). If each of these five personality factors were to have a self, [or identical to self], it would not become sick, and on the basis of which, one could fulfil whatever one wished pertaining to body . . . feeling . . . perception . . . disposition . . . or consciousness, saying: “may my body . . . my feeling . . . my perception . . . my disposition . . . and my consciousness, be according to my wishes, and not be the contrary.” But in as much as the body . . . feeling . . . perception . . . disposition . . . or consciousness are not the self, they are liable to sickness, and no one can have his own wishes regarding to these five aggregates of personality.

So, monks, what do you think? Is the body . . . feeling . . . perception . . . disposition . . . or consciousness permanent or impermanent?

It is, certainly, impermanent, Lord.

Is whatever is impermanent *dukkha* or *sukha*?

It is, certainly, *dukkha*, Lord.

Then, is whatever is impermanent, subject to change and unsatisfactoriness by nature suitable for us to hold that “this is mine, I am this, and this is my self?”

It is, surely, not that way, Lord.

So, monks, because, each and every aggregates of

personality, namely, body, feeling, perception, disposition and consciousness, whether be it past, future or present; whether internal or external, gross or subtle, low or high, far or near, you must see them as they really are with right insight, “this is not mine, I am not this, and this is not my self.”¹⁷

(2.4) Variety of *Dukkha*. The Buddha declares that there is a factual variety of *dukkha* and its intensities, in empirical levels. Some *dukkha* is excessive and trifling, while some other is quick to change and slow to change.¹⁸ One of the most popular classifications of factual experience of *dukkha* is of nine aspects. They are ① the suffering of birth (*jāti pi dukkha//jāti-duḥkham*), ② the suffering of ageing (*jarā pi dukkha//jarā-duḥkham*), ③ the suffering of sickness (//*vyādhi-duḥkham*), ④ the suffering of death (*maraṇam pi dukkha//maraṇa-duḥkham*), ⑤ sorrow (*soka*), lamentation (*parideva*), pain (*dukkha*), grief (*domanassa*) and despair (*upāyāsa*), ⑥ separation from the liked is suffering (*piyehi vippayogo pi dukkha//priya-viprayoge-duḥkham*), ⑦ association or union with the disliked is suffering (*appiyehi sampayogo pi dukkha // apriya-samprayoge-duḥkham*), ⑧ the suffering that come from the fact that one can not have what one wants (*yam p'icchām na labhati tam pi dukkha // yad-apīcchayā-paryeṣamāṇo-na-labhate-tad-api-duḥkham*), and in brief ⑨ clinging to the fivefold personality-factors is suffering (*saṃkhittena pañcupādānakkhandhā pi dukkhā // saṅkṣepena-pañcopādānakkhandhā-duḥkham*).¹⁹

¹⁷ S. III. 66-8; KS. III. 59-60. Translation altered.

¹⁸ A. III. 416; GS. III. 295.

¹⁹ S. V. 421; KS. V. 357. This version gives the full list of suffering. However, the list of the factual suffering is enumerated differently in number in different *Sutta* versions. In *M*. III. 249; *MLS*. III. 296; *D*. II. 305; *DB*. II. 337, the list includes only

(2.5) This ninefold classification of suffering should be understood in the universally factual statement as discussed above. They can be grouped under three main categories, namely, physical, mental and wrong attitude-based suffering or attachment-oriented suffering. The physical suffering consists of the first four kinds, viz. birth, ageing, sickness and death. The mental suffering includes the sixth, seventh, eighth, viz., separation from the liked, or union with the disliked, or the feeling of unsatisfactoriness on things that are not fulfilled. To an unenlightened man (*assutavant puthujjana*), the physical suffering can become the object of mental sufferings, while to an enlightened man (*ariya sāvaka*), it stops at physical sensation, and not giving rise to mental torment, as we shall see later. These two categories are undeniable facts of suffering or unsatisfactoriness, which every unenlightened human being is facing without exception. The wrong attitude-based suffering is the suffering due to attachment to the fivefold aggregate of personality (*pañca-upādānakkhandha*). Being the most important aspect of suffering, it is this wrong attitude that constitutes the real sense of suffering,²⁰ which affects only

①, ②, ④, ⑤, ⑧ and ⑨, while ③, ⑥ and ⑦ are omitted. This version probably takes “⑧ not getting what one wishes” as a greater category to which “⑥ separation from the liked, and ⑦ association or union with the disliked” belong, whereas, it may include ③ sickness under the category ② ageing, for the fact that no one lives without falling sick once in his life. While, in A. III. 415; GS. III. 294, and M. I. 48; MLS. I. 60, only ⑥ and ⑦ are omitted, the *Vinaya* version (*Vin.* I. 9), on the other hand, omits the fivefold of ⑤ sorrow, lamentation, pain, grief and despair. In China and Vietnam, the list of suffering is known as eight in number (*asṭa-duḥkhatāḥ*, C. 八苦), which may base its source on the *Vinaya* version, with the understanding that the fivefold of ⑤ is not concerned with definition nor connotation of suffering, but with the terminology rather. For this, see Lama Govinda (1991): 50. For the exposition of these kinds of suffering, see M. III. 249ff; M. I. 50ff; D. II. 305ff.

²⁰ For further analysis, see the section on Fivefold aggregate of personality of chapter 4.

the unenlightened ordinary men (*assutavant puthujjana*), whereas the noble hearer (*ariya sāvaka*), or the enlightened (*Arahant*) is set free from its trap. The interesting discussion on the difference between the unenlightened and the enlightened regarding their reaction to unpleasant feelings (*dukkhavedanā*) and pleasant feelings (*sukhavedanā*) is mentioned in the *Samyutta Nikāya*.²¹ Here, the unenlightened man when dealing with unpleasant feelings (*dukkhavedanā*) reacts angrily, and tries to escape them by seeking indulgence in sensuous pleasures (*kāmasukha*) or lustful tendencies (*rāgānusaya*), while to pleasant feeling he is attached (*upādāna*), altogether leading him to further experience of *dukkha*. Unlike the ordinary man, the enlightened when undergoing unpleasant feelings, he feels only disagreeable physical sensations, not mental torment. He reacts calmly with full control over the senses and, therefore, effectively prevents himself from sensuous pleasures (*kāmasukha*) as well as from lustful tendencies (*rāgānusaya*). When pleasant sensations are felt, he feels without attachment toward them and is free from being bound by them.

(2.6) The threefold division of *dukkha* mentioned in the *Nikāya* is another aspect of suffering that should be studied in order to understand the Buddha's factual truth of unsatisfactoriness. They are ① suffering caused by physico-mental pain (*dukkha-dukkhatā*), ② suffering caused by diverse change of things (*vipariṇāma-dukkhatā*), and ③ suffering caused by psychological change (*saṅkhāra-dukkhatā*).²²

²¹ S. IV. 207-210; KS. IV. 139-41.

²² D. III. 216; S. IV. 259; S. V. 56. Cf. Vism. 499. Here my reading of *saṅkhāra-dukkhatā* as suffering due to psychological change is to borrow a phrase by B.

Dukkha-dukkhatā, literally meaning painfulness as suffering, or *dukkha* that really feels like *dukkha*,²³ or real *dukkha*²⁴ can be understood as undeniable factual suffering²⁵ in everything unsatisfactory. It includes unpleasant feelings (*dukkhavedanā*) of the body and mind with varying manifestations and intensities. In other words, all mental and physical sufferings in life such as birth, old age, sickness, death, grief, sorrow, pain, misery, despair, to be associated with the dislike, to be separated from the beloved, not getting what one wants are grouped under the category *dukkha-dukkhatā*.

It should be noted here that according to the second aspect of *dukkha*, i.e. suffering or unsatisfactoriness produced through the process of change or flux, or associated with fluctuations in *sukha* (*vipariṇāma-dukkhatā*), the happiness (*sukha*) or pleasant feelings (*sukha vedanā*),²⁶ both mental and physical, dependent on the temptation of material things (*āmisa*) or derived from sensory pleasure, which are, no doubt, associated with or not dislodged from unwholesome motivational factors (*akusalamūla*) can turn out to be unhappiness (*dukkha*) through change. This bitter

Matthews (1983): 7. Matthews' rendering is based on K.N. Jayatilleke's interpretation that if *saṅkhāra* in the mentioned compound means "component things" it would be identical to *vipariṇāma dukkha*; it, therefore, stands for purposive psychological activities.

²³ P. Payutto (1995): 88.

²⁴ P. Payutto (1995): 73.

²⁵ S.K. Nanayakkara reads the compound as "intrinsic *dukkha*." See *EB*. IV. 696b.

²⁶ Of course, except the another kind of *sukha* produced through mental development, which is free from all unwholesome forces (*akusalamūla*) or tendencies (*anusaya*) or mental obstacles (*kilesa / nīvaraṇa / samyojana*). This kind of *sukha* is known as spiritual happiness (*nirāmisa-sukha*), free of problems, worry, frustration, obstruction and attachments.

truth being so because pleasure and things that bring about pleasure are in state of constant flux and, therefore, cannot provide a real satisfaction, nor does it last for long. Its current of change is something out of our control. Flux and change cause further arising and passing away, which results in further state of disappointment, stress, anxiety, worry, frustration, gullibility, obstruction, attachments, etc. Thus, the whole mass of suffering may arise accordingly. Searching for sensory pleasure (*sukka*) or happiness of material things (*sāmisa-sukha*) is involved in other side of *dukkha*, which results in further problems when things change from health to sickness, from prosperity to poverty, from harmony to discordance, from association to separation, etc. Failure in business, decline of the body, degeneration of properties, running after the past (*pubbanta-atidhāvana*), loss of something, radical change in a worse direction, whether cultural, historical, political, physical or mental, etc., are good examples of this kind of *dukkha*.

Saṅkhāra-dukkhatā or sufferings caused by psychological change, or suffering related to dispositions/mental formations, or suffering inherent in conditioned existence, is the most important aspect of *dukkha*. It is this kind of *dukkha*, taken at temporarily face value, gives one “pseudo satisfaction,” like supplying ocean-water to the thirsty, which can further lead to deeper craving (*tañhā*) and attachment (*upādāna*). They are subject to dependently arising and ceasing. The dependability of things is dispositionally conditioned (*saṅkhata*). Thus, these dispositional forces with reference to the statement “all the compounds or dispositions are impermanent” (*sabbe saṅkhāra anicca*),²⁷ usually express itself in the form of greed (*lobha*), ill-will (*dosa*), or delusion

²⁷ *Dhp.* 277.

(*moha*). Greed (*lobha*) as a form of craving (*tañhā*) leads to further envy, fear, selfishness, and all kinds of emotional attachment (*upādāna*). Ill-will (*dosa*) leads to further conflicts, suppression, repression, aggression, violence, or destructive tendencies. Delusion (*moha*) as consisting of not knowing things for what they are, causes darkness, stubbornness, irrationality, narrow-mindedness, selfish desire (*lobha*) or sensuous pleasure (*kāmarāga*) and ill-will (*dosa*). Thus, *sañkhāra-dukkha* turns out to be mental and physical disturbance and disease.

(2.7) Ethical Implication of *Dukkha*. By representing the universally factual truth of *dukkha* the Buddha does not, however, commit himself to pessimistic view of life. He, otherwise, as an excellent physician, advises us to prepare ourselves in dealing with the undesirable puzzle of existence. According to him, the escape-attitude is the result of a feeble mind, failing to solve the problem face to face, purposively. It is rooted in ignorance (*moha/avijjā*) and leads to further suffering in the here and hereafter. In problem-solving, the Buddha teaches us to recognize the fact of suffering as it really is, and then to transform it. Unless the problem of suffering is recognized and specified, you can not live happily in life. Without running away from existence of suffering, one should, as a priority, learn how to resolve it. As an unenlightened ordinary man (*assutavant puthujjana*), one can not escape from birth, ageing, sickness and death. They are dependently arisen (*paṭiccasamuppanna*), one after another. Birth is subject to ageing, ageing to sickness, and sickness to death. One can not dissociate birth from the other occurrences. If sickness and death are the facts bringing suffering to us, our family, relatives, friends, well-wishers, etc., birth and ageing are conceived in the same manner. In this process of birth as the initial, ageing and sickness, the

medial, and death, the final, mankind and other sentient beings are liable to face with diversity of suffering experiences, such as separation from the liked, association with the disliked, and not having or fulfilling what one wants. Such unpleasant feelings and experiences are both psychological and mental. What the Buddha wants to tell us in this regard is that one should not throw himself to the trace of determinism, whatever the case may be, either God's will determinism (*issaranimmānavāda*), or past determination (*pubbekatahetu*), or consider every experience happening without causation-and-conditionality (*ahetu-apaccaya-vāda*);²⁸ but rather, on the basis of recognising its 'true face,' one should strive to minimise it and transform it with great effort and wisdom. Fortunately, when admitting the fact "there is suffering," the Buddha at the same time points out the positive fact, that is out of that suffering "there is also the cessation of suffering."²⁹ The Buddha's analysis of human suffering does not involve, nor entail any statement that the fivefold personality-factors (*pañca-kkhandha*) is suffering. He rather states that it is the clinging attitude to this fivefold aggregate of personality (*pañca-upādānakkhandha//pañcopādānaskandhah*) is suffering. Thus, the factor responsible for human suffering is the attitude of grasping (*upādāna*) the fivefold personality factors, such as body (*rūpa*), feelings (*vedanā*), perceptions (*saññā*), disposition (*saṅkhārā*) and consciousness (*viññāna*), as subsistent ego-entity.

(2.8) It is obvious from the above discussion that the Buddha's concern in scrutinising the factual suffering of human existence is the examination of man's problem and

²⁸ The Buddha considers these as wrong views. Cf. A. I. 173.

²⁹ M. I. 140.

giving a positive treatment to it. It is the recognition of undeniable fact of suffering that urged the Bodhisattva Siddhārtha to leave the precious kingdom and lovely family, going forth from home into homelessness, as a seeker of whatever is good, searching for the incomparable and matchless path to peace.³⁰ The peacefulness first discovered by him is not for his own sake, but for distribution to human fellows and other animate beings also.³¹ His pragmatically human-oriented teachings are stated clearly in the canonical passage, where its reads: “Tathāgata, having attained enlightenment, fully understands this truth. He declares it, teaches it and sets down it. He shows it forth, explains it and facilitates an understanding that all *saṅkhāra* are impermanent, whatever is changeably compounded is *dukkha*, and all phenomena are non-substantial.”³² In the same manner, he teaches us to react to *dukkha* with an understanding of what really is, and of what constitutes *dukkha*. This twin understanding helps one to counter *dukkha* in a direction to eliminate it or put it to an end.

(2.9) Knowing the nature of *dukkha* causing mental and physical disturbance, on the one hand, and the happiness derived from senses (*kāmasukha*) or from external causes or material things (*sāmisa-sukha*) causing further attachment (*upādāna*) is another side of the same coin of *dukkha*; on the other hand, one should strive for a higher true-valued happiness (*nirāmisa-sukha*), produced through mental development (*bhāvanā*), by cultivation of loving-kindness

³⁰ M. I. 163.

³¹ This attitude can be seen in the Buddha's first sermon (i.e. *Dhammacakkappavattana Sutta*) to his five fellows (*pañcavaggiyā bhikkhu*), namely, Konḍānā, Vappa, Bhaddiya, Mahānāma and Assajī. This historical *Sutta* occurs with minor change in *Vin. I.* 10ff. and *S. V.* 412ff.

³² A. I. 286; GS. I. 264-5.

(*mettā*), compassion (*karuṇā*), sympathetic joy in others' success and happiness (*mudīā*) and even-mindedness before all vicissitudes of life.³³ This transforming of *dukkha* into freedom from attachments is the greatest ethical implication of understanding the nature of *dukkha* in the first undeniably noble truth.

³³ *D.* II. 196; *D.* III. 220; *Dhs.* 262.

III

THE ORIGIN OF SUFFERING

(3.1) According to Buddhism the most effective way to treat a patient is to master the cause of his ailment. If the cause of illness is not found, the treatment has, definitely, no efficacy, and to some extent, causes side effect, leading to serious illness or causing death. Most the patients died, not because of lack of proper medicine, but due to the failure in correct diagnosis of the disease, and supplying wrong medicine to them. In the same manner, the suffering-disease of mankind is so complicated with various symptoms, and requires for proper treatment before it is too late. Unfortunately, due to complex symptoms of suffering-disease of mankind, most of non-Buddhist theories (*dīṭṭhi*) have mistakenly diagnosed it, giving wrong prescriptions, leading to the failure in curing it effectively.

(3.2) In the *Pāsādika Sutta*¹ eight theories of the origin of *dukkha* prevalent during the time of the Buddha are discussed, and then rejected by the Buddha as wrong diagnostics of suffering. They are ① suffering and happiness are eternal, ② suffering and happiness are not eternal, ③ they are both eternal and not eternal, ④ they are neither eternal nor not eternal, ⑤ they are self-caused, ⑥ they are externally caused, ⑦ they are both self-caused and externally caused, ⑧ they are neither self-caused nor externally caused,

¹ *D. III. 138.*

but are caused accidentally.² The Buddha rejects all these extreme theories, on the ground that they lead to either eternalism (*sassatavāda*), (referred to ① and ⑤), or annihilationism (*ucchedavāda*), (referred to ② and ⑥), or both (referred to ③ and ⑦), or neither (referred to ④ and ⑧), which are denial or obstacle of ethical cultivation and perfection. The Buddha explains the origin of dukkha, in terms of causation or dependent origination (*paṭiccasamuppāda*).³ This causally middle-way explanation of *dukkha* is numerously given by the Buddha according to varying contexts, such as craving (*tañhā*),⁴ desire for sense-pleasure (*chanda*),⁵ attachment (*upādāna*),⁶ wrong view of personality (*sakkāya-ditthi*),⁷ material possessions (*upadhi*),⁸ and in brief, all unwholesome motivational forces (*akusalamūla*).⁹ In the present study, I will discuss them in the schemes of the Four Noble Truths and of Dependent Origination.

IN THE SCHEME OF THE FOUR NOBLE TRUTHS

(3.3) Under this traditional formula of the four noble truths, craving (*tañhā*) as both cognitive error (as seen in *moha*) and emotional attachment (as seen in *lobha*) is stressed as the main force of all unwholesome motivations

² The last four are repeated in *S.* II. 19f. At *A.* III. 439, the fourth is extended into (iv) they are brought into being fortuitously, without the act of the self (v) they are brought into being fortuitously, without the act of another, (vi) they are brought into being fortuitously, neither by oneself nor another.

³ *S.* II. 19.

⁴ *S.* III. 190; *M.* I. 299; *A.* II. 34.

⁵ *S.* II. 174. *Chandas* arising with regard to residential world (*lokasmīm chando*, *Sn.* 866), to the body (*kāyasmīm chando*, *S.* V. 181), to the sense-objects (*rūpesu chando*, *S.* IV. 195), to sex (*methunasmiṁ chando*, *Sn.* 835), etc. are the origin of *dukkha*.

⁶ *M.* I. 299, 511; *S.* III. 47.

⁷ *D.* III. 230; *M.* I. 300; *S.* IV. 147.

⁸ *M.* I. 162, 454; *S.* II. 108; *Sn.* 34, 141, 364, 1051.

⁹ *Sn.* 139.

(*akusalamūla*), leading to suffering in the here and the hereafter:

It is craving (*tañhā*) that leads to rebirth, accompanied by the lure and the lust that finds fresh delight now here, now there, namely, the craving for sense-pleasures (*kāma-tañhā*), the craving for becoming (*bhava-tañhā*), the craving for annihilation (*vibhava-tañhā*). Such is the noble truth about the arising of suffering.¹⁰

This emphasis probably bases its ground on the active factors in the present (i.e. craving and clinging), for the first two noble truths concerning with the present symptoms of suffering and its past causes, whereas, in the series of dependent origination, because the stress is on the causes in terms of three dimensions of time, it comprehensively concerns with ignorance (*avijjā*), craving (*tañhā*) and grasping (*upādāna*). Grasping or clinging to the object of desire is a concomitant resultant of craving: whenever and wherever there is craving, grasping arises accordingly, and vice versa. It is, therefore, omitted in the text:

For beings who are hindered by ignorance (*avijjā*) and fettered by craving (*tañhā*), consciousness is established in lower worlds (*hināya dhātuyā/kāma dhātu*), . . . in intermediate worlds (*majjhimāya dhātuyā/rūpa dhātu*) and in more excellent worlds (*paññāta dhātuyā/arūpa dhātu*) . . . Thus there will be repeated birth in the future. In this way, there is becoming.¹¹

¹⁰ S. V. 421; *KS*. V. 357; *D* II. 308; *DB* II. 339: *Yāyāñ tañhā ponobhavika nandi-rāga-sahagatā tatra tatrābhinandini, seyyathidam kāmatañhā bhavatañhāvibhavatañhā*. For further, see, A. III. 445; S. I. 39; *Sn*. 4; *Dhp*. 216; *Vbh*. 365.

¹¹ A. I. 223-4.

This omission, however, does not amount to laying less emphasis on emotional factor “grasping,” but rather points out its undivorced relationship with craving.

IN THE SCHEME OF DEPENDENT ORIGINATION

(3.4) According to Buddhism, if there is a creator of entire world and creatures, it must be the natural law of conditionality (*idappaccayatā*) or dependent origination (*paṭicca-samuppāda*). This natural law objectively exists notwithstanding the appearance or non-appearance of a Tathāgata, who first discovered it and declared it to the mankind for their benefit and well-being.¹²

There are two kinds of world (*loka*), namely, external world and internally constructed world. Regarding the origin of the perceived or constructed world (*lokassa samudayo*), the Buddha gives a version of dependently relatedness series starting with the senses: eye-forms and visual consciousness, ear-sounds and auditory consciousness, nose-smells and olfactory consciousness, tongue-tastes and gustatory consciousness, body-tangibles and tactile consciousness, and mind-ideas and mental consciousness; containing cravings (*tañhā*) and ending at sorrow (*soka*), lamentation (*parideva*), pain (*dukkha*), grief (*domanassa*) and despair (*upāyāsa*).¹³ This constructed world is a production of man’s delusion (*avijjā*) accompanied with cravings (*tañhā*). The ending of this internally deceptive world is attained when delusion (*avijjā*) and cravings (*tañhā*) are driven out by insight wisdom (*paññā*).

(3.5) As to the origin of the external world, the Buddha explains that it is the very natural law of conditionality

¹² S. II. 25; KS. II. 21.

¹³ S. II. 73.

(*idappaccayatā*): “because this being, that becomes; from the arising of this that arises; because this not being, that becomes not; from the ceasing of this, that ceases.”¹⁴ So far as the origin of mankind and other animate beings in terms of suffering and happiness is concerned, the Buddha conceives of a series of specific dependent origination (*paticcasamuppāda//pratityasamutpāda*), that everything is conditioned (*paticcasamuppanna//pratityasamutpanna*):

In dependence on ignorance arise mental formations (*avijjāpaccayā saṅkhārā*); in dependence on mental formations arises consciousness (*saṅkhārapaccayā viññānam*); in dependence on consciousness arises psycho-physicality (*viññānapaccayā nāmarūpam*); in dependence on psycho-physicality arise six senses (*nāmarūpapaccayā saḷāyatanaṁ*); in dependence on six senses arise contact (*saḷāyatana-paccayā phasso*); in dependence on contact arises feeling (*phassapaccayā vedanā*); in dependence on feeling arises craving (*vedanāpaccayā tañhā*); in dependence on craving arises grasping (*tañhāpaccayā upādānam*); in dependence on grasping arises becoming (*upādānapaccayā bhavo*); in dependence on becoming arises birth (*bhavapaccayā jāti*); in dependence on birth arises decay and death (*jātipaccayā jarāmarañam*); sorrow, lamentation, pain, grief, despair all arise accordingly (*sokaparidevadukkhadomanassupāyāsā sambhavanti*). Thus is the arising of the entire mass of suffering (*Evam etassa kevalassa dukkhakkhandhassa samudayo hoti*).¹⁵

¹⁴ S. II. 27f, 64f, 95; KS. II. 23, 45, 66: *imasmiṁ sati idam hoti, imassupādā idam uppajjati; imasmiṁ asati idam na hoti, imassa nirodhā idam nirujjhati*. Vide also M. III. 63; MLS. III. 107; and Ud. 2.

¹⁵ S. II. 2, 77; KS. II. 2, 53;

This specific principle is again explained in terms of practice (*patipatti*) in reverse order, to show the cessation of the whole mass of suffering:

Because of ceasing of ignorance mental formations are extinguished (*avijjāya tveva asesavirāganirodhā saṅkhāranirodhō*); because of ceasing of mental formations, consciousness is extinguished (*saṅkhāranirodhā viññāṇanirodhō*); because of ceasing of consciousness, the psycho-physicality is extinguished (*viññāṇanirodhā nāmarūpanirodhō*); because of ceasing of the psycho-physicality, six senses are extinguished (*nāmarūpanirodhā saṅyatananirodhō*); because of the ceasing of six senses, contact is extinguished (*saṅyatananirodhā phassanirodhō*); because of the ceasing of contact, feeling is extinguished (*phassanirodhā vedanānirodhō*); because of the ceasing of feeling, craving is extinguished (*vedanānirodhā tañhānirodhō*); because of the ceasing of craving, grasping is extinguished (*tañhānirodhā upādānanirodhō*); because of the ceasing of grasping, becoming is extinguished (*upādānanirodhā bhavanirodhō*); because of the ceasing of becoming, birth is extinguished accordingly (*bhavanirodhā jātinirodhō*); because of the ceasing of birth, decay and death are extinguished (*jātinirodhā jarāmarañam*), sorrow, lamentation, pain, grief and despair are extinguished accordingly (*sokaparidevadukkhadomanassupāyāsā nirujjhanti*). Thus is the ceasing of the entire mass of suffering (*Evam etassa kevalassa dukkakkhandhassa nirodhō hoti*).¹⁶

According to these two lengthy quotations, the human law of dependent origination involves both the origin and the

¹⁶ S. II, 2; KS. II. 2; *Tööng* II. 10. Also see M. I. 261ff; MLS. I. 318ff; *Trung* I. 38. 572ff.

cessation of suffering (dukkha) as they are referred to the arising and disintegration of the world, respectively: “this is the arising of the whole world . . . this is the disintegration of the world.”¹⁷ The process of dependent origination beginning with ignorance (avijjā), however, does not mean that ignorance is considered as the first cause. Being taken as first in order, ignorance (avijjā) is the most important factor responsible for continual existence in saṃsāra, in terms of three dimensions of time. The law of dependent origination, as taught by the Buddha, may begin with any intermediate link of the twelvefold chain, such as with psycho-physicality,¹⁸ or birth.¹⁹ It may also be retraced in reverse back to ignorance, as in the passage quoted above.

(3.6) Dividing into three dimensions of time, namely, past, present and future, the twelve links are grouped accordingly, as seen in the following table.

Time Dimensions	Twelve Links as Causes and Effects
Past	(causes) ignorance and mental formations.
Present	(effects): consciousness, psycho-physicality, six sense-bases, contact and feeling (causes): craving, clinging and becoming.
Future	birth, decay-and-death (consequently entailing sorrow, lamentation, pain, grief and despair)

¹⁷ S. II. 73-74; KS. II. 51: *ayañ kho bhikkhave lokassa samudayo; ayañ kho bhikkhave lokassa atthañgamo*. Cf. S. II. 78-9: “[because of these conditions], this world, thus arises; and thus ceased” (*evam ayañ loko nirujjhati*).

¹⁸ S. II. 77; KS. II. 54.

¹⁹ S. II. 52; KS. II. 39.

① Past (causes): the first two links—ignorance, mental formations.

② Present (effects): the next five links—consciousness, psycho-physicality, six sense-bases, contact and feeling; (causes): the next three—craving, clinging and becoming.

③ Future: the last two—birth, decay-and-death (consequently entailing sorrow, lamentation, pain, grief and despair).

(7.22) On the basis of twofold cause and effect, the twelve links, again, can be assigned as follows:

① Past causes: consisting of five links—ignorance, mental formation, craving, attachment, and becoming.

② Present effect: comprising of five links—consciousness, psycho-physicality, six sense-bases, contact, feeling.

③ Present causes for future existence: including five links—ignorance, mental formation, craving, attachment, and becoming.

④ Future effect: covering five links—consciousness, psycho-physicality, six sense-bases), contact, feeling.

(3.7) In both the present effects and future effects, five links mentioned are the same as birth, decay-and-death (the first three stand for birth, the last two including in process of decay, while death as their contemporary stopping of function).

(3.8) According to their function, the twelve links can be grouped under three headings, unwholesome motivational

forces (*akusalamūla/kilesa*), cause-activities (*kamma*), and the resultants (*vipāka*), as below:

① Unwholesome motivational forces (*akusalamūla/kilesa*): including three factors—ignorance (*avijjā*), cravings (*tañhā*) and attachments (*upādāna*).

② Activities (*kamma*): consisting of two factors—mental formations (*saṅkāra*) and becoming (*kamma-bhava*).

③ The resultants (*vipāka*): comprising of seven factors—birth, consciousness, psycho-physicality, six sense-bases, contact, feeling, and decay-and-death.

What can be pointed out from the above discussion is that ignorance (*avijjā*), craving (*tañhā*) and clinging (*upādāna*) are the three unwholesome emotional factors, causing suffering and rebirth, as seen in the series of dependent origination.

The following is account of negative functions of ignorance, the basis of the three motivational forces of unwholesomeness or the vices.

Negative Function of Ignorance

(3.9) In the *Nikāya*, ignorance (*avijjā*) is concisely defined as the lack of understanding of the four undeniably noble truths, namely, the fact of suffering or unsatisfactoriness, its causes, its state of cessation and the path leading to that state.²⁰ In other words, it is the distorted knowledge of the nature of reality (*micchāditthi*), which is dependently arisen without first cause, or unmoved mover. Any judgment or statement not in accordance with the natural law of

²⁰ M. I. 54; MLS. I. 68-9; S. II. 4; S. IV. 256; S. V. 429.

conditionality (*idappaccayatā*) or of dependent origination (*paṭicca-samuppāda*) is considered as grounded in ignorance (*avijjā*) and, therefore, false. According to this conception, the whole cosmos is causally conditioned, for its establishment, continuity, change, destruction and becoming. In an ethical sense, ignorance consists in not understanding what is wholesome and unwholesome, right and wrong, beneficial and disadvantageous, etc., leading to suffering (*dukkha*) in this life and rebirth in a state of unhappiness (*duggati*).

In an epistemological sense, it is a cognitive attitude involved in a belief in an eternal ego-entity (*attavāda*) or eternalism (*sassatavāda/diṭṭhi*),²¹ in annihilationism or annihilationist view of the self (*ucchedavāda/diṭṭhi*),²² in dual view of self and body as distinct (*aññam jīvam aññam sarīram*) outlasting death, or in materialist view of self and body as identical (*tam jīvam tam sarīram*) annihilating at death,²³ in admitting that everything exists (*sabbam attīti / attikavāda / sabbathikavāda*) or nothing exists (*sabbam natthīti / natthikavāda*),²⁴ in past determination (*sabbam pubbekatahetu*), or theistic determination (*issaranimmānavāda*), or non-causality-and-non-conditionality (*ahetu-apaccaya-vāda*),²⁵ in self-generationism (*attakāravāda*) or in other-generationism (*parakāravāda*),²⁶ in identifying the doer and the receiver of action (*kārakavedakādi-ekattavāda*) or in differentiating the doer and

²¹ S. II. 20

²² S. III. 98.

²³ M. I. 246; S. IV. 375ff.

²⁴ S. II. 16-7, 76; S. III. 134-5. These are known in modern terms as extreme realism and nihilism respectively.

²⁵ A. I. 171ff.

²⁶ S. II. 22-3.

the receiver of action (*kārakavedakādi-nānattavāda*),²⁷ in sensuous gratification (*kāmasukhāllikānuyoga*) or self-mortification (*attakilamathānuyoga*),²⁸ or not realizing the three characteristics of existence or phenomena (*tilakkhaṇa*), viz., impermanent nature (*aniccā*), subject-to-unsatisfactoriness nature (*dukkha*) and non-substantial nature (*anattā*),²⁹ etc. In brief, ignorance (*avijjā*) is a distorted understanding (*micchādīṭṭhi*) of reality, in one form or another.

(3.10) In analyzing ignorance (*avijjā*) as the most important distortedly cognitive factor causing suffering, the Buddha, however, prevents himself from admitting it as the first cause. He points out that “the arising of ignorance is due to the arising of mental cankers (*āsava*). Ignorance is, therefore, extinguished when the mental cankers are eliminated.”³⁰ As to the origin of cankers, the Buddha traces it from ignorance: “from the arising of ignorance is the arising of the cankers. Whenever, ignorance is eliminated, the cankers are extinguished accordingly.”³¹ In the *Ānguttara*

²⁷ *S.* II. 75. The former is known as the monistic view of subject-object unity, while the latter as the dualistic view of subject-object distinction. Cf. P. Payutto (1995): 140-1.

²⁸ *Vin.* I. 14f; *S.* V. 420f.

²⁹ *S.* IV. 1; *Dhp.* 277-9.

³⁰ *M.* I. 54; *MLS.* I. 69.

³¹ *M.* I. 55; *MLS.* I. 70. It is interestingly helpful to quote here Buddhaghosa’s argument in defense of the mutual origin of ignorance and cankers, as translated by I.B. Horner in *MLS.* I. 69, n. 2.: “*MA.* I. 223 f. says “Here the cankers of sense-pleasures and becoming are, through co-nascence, the cause (or conditions) of ignorance.” And again, “Ignorance is the cause, through co-nascence, of the cankers of sense-pleasures and becoming . . . This exposition of the cankers is spoken of as an explanation of the conditions of that chief ignorance which is among the clauses of ‘dependent origination.’ Through the exposition made known thus, the fact that the end of samsāric existence is inconceivable is proved. How? From the arising of ignorance is the arising of the cankers; from the arising of the cankers is the arising of ignorance. Having made the cankers the cause of ignorance and ignorance the

Nikāya, the arising of ignorance begins with the five hindrances (*nīvaraṇa*) and ends at not associating with good men (*sappurisa*). The process, involved in many factors, is described as follows:

Ignorance has sustenance or nutriment (*āhāra*), its sustenance is the five hindrances (*nīvaraṇa*); five hindrances have threefold improper conduct (*duccarita*); threefold improper conduct has lack of control of sense-organs (*indriya*); lack of control of sense-organs has lack of mindfulness (*sati*) and clear comprehension; lack of mindfulness and clear comprehension has lack of systematic reflection (*yoniso manasikāra*); lack of systematic reflection has lack of confidence (*saddha*); lack of confidence has not paying attention to wonderful truth (*saddhamma*);³² has not paying attention to wonderful truth has not-associating with good persons (*sappurisa*).³³ The act of not associating with or not following good men does amount to not listening to the wonderful truth, nor having it for your support. The act of not listening to the wonderful truth amounts to not having the energy of confidence. Not having foundation of confidence amounts to lack of systematic reflection. Lack of systematic reflection amounts to lack of mindfulness and clear comprehension. Lack of mindfulness and clear comprehension amounts to lack of control of sense-organs. Lack of control of sense-organs amounts

cause of the cankers, the earliest point of ignorance is not perceptible, therefore the fact that the end of samsāric existence is inconceivable is proved.”

³² It represents the distinctly middle-path teaching of the Buddha, which is far beyond all extreme theories.

³³ Identical with ethically good friend (*kalyāṇamitta*).

to threefold improper conduct. Threefold improper conduct amounts to the five hindrances. And having the five hindrances as your support amounts to having ignorance as your foundation. This is the way ignorance gets sustenance and support.³⁴

(3.11) What the canonical passage aims at showing is that ignorance has multidimensional sustenance, ethical, mental, physical, verbal, individual, epistemological, methodological, psychological, social or environmental. The five hindrances, such as, ① sensual desire (*kāmacchanda*), ② ill-will (*vyāpāda*), ③ sloth and torpor (*thīna-middha*), ④ restlessness and scruples (*uddhacca-kukkucca*), and ⑤ sceptical doubt (*vicikicchā*) are ethical nutriments of ignorance.³⁵ Threefold improper conduct, namely, ① misconduct of physical act (*kāya-duccarita*), ② misconduct of speech (*vacī-duccarita*) and ③ misconduct of thought (*mano-duccarita*) are physical, verbal and mental foundations of ignorance, respectively. Lack of control over the senses, such as, eye, ear, nose, tongue, body and mind (*mano*) is individual basis of ignorance. Lack of mindfulness or seeing things with bias, distortion, or not as they really are, is epistemological foundation of ignorance. Lack of systematic reflection is both psychological and methodological foundations of ignorance. Having no confidence in the good, the right, the truth, etc., is psychological foundation of ignorance. And not association with the ethically good men or spiritual friends, and not listening to the wonderful truth are social aspects of ignorance.

³⁴ A. V. 113-4; GS. V. 78-9.

³⁵ Cf. A. I. 4; A. III. 62; A. IV. 457; A. V. 193; D. I. 246; S. V. 96; Vbh. 378.

IV

NIBBĀNA

SOTERIOLOGICAL GOAL OF BUDDHISM

NIBBĀNA: ITS MEANING AND SYNONYMS

(4.1) *Nibbāna* // *nirvāṇa*¹ or the noble truth on the utter state of cessation of suffering (*dukkha-nirodha-ariya-sacca*) is the supreme goal of the Buddhist spiritual path in this very life. It is best understood in relationship with the first two truths, logically and soteriologically. If there is suffering and its causes then it follows that the destruction of the cause of suffering leading to the utter state of ceasing all suffering is *nibbāna*. As the third noble truth, *nibbāna* is the highest state of happiness (*nibbānam paramam sukham*),² in complete absence of human unsatisfactoriness or total freedom from suffering (*sabbadukkhapamocanam*).³ The realisation or attainment of *nibbāna* is, therefore, defined as the total end of suffering (*anto dukkhassa*).⁴ It is attained within one's

¹ It is sometimes used as equivalent as *pari-nibbāna* and *pari-nibbuta* to means to state of *nibbāna* in life, though according to some specific contexts, the latter two refer only to the state of *nibbāna* after death. For detailed discussion, see, S. Collins (1998): 147-51, 193-8.

² *Dhp.* 203.

³ *S. II.* 278.

⁴ *Ud.* p. 80.

lifetime⁵ through the perfection of morality and wisdom.⁶

(4.2) Etymologically, the Sanskrit *nirvāṇa*, equivalent to *nibbāna* in Pali, is derived from the prefix *nis/nir* and the verbal root *vā*, which mean “negative” and “to blow”, respectively. *Nibbāna / Nirvāṇa* thus means to blow out, quenching, or “cooled by blowing.” In a soteriological metaphor, *nibbāna // nirvāṇa* is compared with the extinguishing of the fire because of lack of fuel, rather than by external agents who put out the fire by, say, blowing or covering it up, etc.⁷

According to *Pali English Dictionary*, in application of to the extinguishing of fire, which is the prevailing Buddhist conception of the term, the root *vā* is fused with *vr*. Thus for the Pali etymologist, the main reference is to the root *vr* (to cover) and not to *vā* (to blow).⁸ In sum, *nibbāna/nirvāṇa* means “the going out of a fire through lack of fuel.” Its ethical meaning is, therefore, the going out of the fires of lust (*rāgaggi*), hatred (*dosaggi*) and ignorance (*mohaggi*).⁹ Another way of reading *nibbāna/nirvāṇa* as a combination of *ni/nis* and *vāna/vāṇa* is to take the former as the negation or absence, and the latter as desire or forest, and then the whole as “absence or without desire,” or “absence of forest [of craving], as the ethical meaning of this soteriological term.

Some derive it from three components, to wit, “*Ni-vā-na*” and then explain that “*ni*” means “out,” the root “*vā*” means

⁵ D. I. 156, 167; S. II. 18, 34, 115; III. 163; IV. 141; M. III. 286.

⁶ Cf. A. I. 8: *bhikkhu panīhitena cittena avijjam bhecchati vijjam uppādessati nibbānam sacchikarissati*.

⁷ Cf. M. III. 245; S. IV. 213.

⁸ PED. s.v. *Nibbāna*: 362a.

⁹ S. IV. 19f.

“to go or to blow” and “*na*” is a sufix used in auxiliary sense.¹⁰ Such readings, as S. Collins points out, are “imaginative rather than historically accurate.”¹¹ *Nibbāna*, as the *samsāra*-fire’s going out due to lack of fuel of craving (*taṇhā*) and grasping (*upādāna*), is a state of complete transformation of human psychology and personality, or the state of ethical perfection, attained in this very life, through proper practices of morality, meditation and wisdom. In other words, *nibbāna* is psychologically free state of mind (*cetovimutti cetaso vimokkho*), the state of the highest freedom and prefection, the highest happiness attained through wisdom and moral perfection.

(4.3) *Nibbāna* is not a state of death (*maraṇa*), nor non-existence (*abhava/vibhava*), nor annihilation, nor a transcendental place, nor heaven-like sphere. It also should not be understood in terms of transcendentalism with reference to *Brahman/ātman* of the *Upaniṣads*, or God of the theistic religions. Because, the understanding *nibbāna* in terms of the ideas of theistic traditions such as equivalent of *brahman/ātman* in the *Upaniṣads*, or God-like of religions, or the Chinese Tao, etc., would lead to misinterpretations on *nibbāna*, as transcendence. *Nibbāna* is distinct from these things, for *nibbāna* is not the origin of the universe and attainment of *nibbāna* is, therefore, not to unite with that origin of universe. *Nibbāna* is simply the state of timelessly (*akāliko*) ending of suffering (*anto dukkhassa*).¹²

(4.4) By means of synonymous expressions (*vevacana*),¹³

¹⁰ H. S. Sobti (1985): 18.

¹¹ S. Collins (1998): 193; see pp. 198-201 for more references.

¹² *Ud.* 80.

¹³ S. IV. 368-73 lists more than thirty synonyms of *nibbāna*. They are the end, the state in absence of corruptions, the truth, the further shore, the subtle, the-very-

nibbāna is described by the Buddha in different ways, positive, negative, psychological, and metaphorical.¹⁴ Among metaphorical expressions of *nibbāna*, well-known are the island (*dīpa*), the cave (*leṇa*),¹⁵ the refuge (*saraṇam*),¹⁶ the further shore,¹⁷ and the delightful stretch of level ground (*samo bhūmibhāgo ramaṇīyo*).¹⁸ Psychologically, *nibbāna* is also defined as a purified state of mind, such as freedom from sorrow (*asokam*),¹⁹ security (*khenam*),²⁰ a state of stability (*accutam padam*),²¹ peacefulness (*santam*),²² without any fear from any quarter (*akutobhaya*),²³ perfect peace (*paramā santi*),²⁴ kindness (*avyāpajjo*),²⁵ the unwavering (*acalam*) and firm (*akuppa*),²⁶ the unshakable (*asamihīram*), the immovable

difficult-to-see, without decay, firm, not liable to dissolution, incompatible, without differentiation, peaceful, deathless, excellent, auspicious, rest, the destruction of craving, hatred and delusion, without affliction, without trouble, dispassion, purity, freedom, without attachment, the island, shelter (cave), protection, refuge and final end.” References to synonyms of *nibbāna* are also found at *D. I.* 36; *M. I.* 163, 173; *A. II.* 247; *It.* 38-9; *Sn.* 1149; *Ud.* 80. The positive and negative expressions cover the other kinds of expressions, such as transformed, psychological and metaphorical. I, however, do not treat positive expressions in a separate section, as in the case of negatives, for the latter’s special importance in describing the nature of *nibbāna*.

¹⁴ I am thankful to R. E. A. Johansson, whose initial discussion (1969: 106) on the point provides great help to the present section.

¹⁵ *S. I.* 125, *S. IV.* 371-2; *M. I.* 508-9; *Dhp.* 202-4, *Ud.* 10; *Thag.* 35.

¹⁶ *S. IV.* 371-2.

¹⁷ *S. I.* 48; *S. IV.* 174; *It.* 57.

¹⁸ *S. III.* 109.

¹⁹ *M. I.* 167; *MLS I.* 211.

²⁰ *It.* 122; *S. IV.* 369-70.

²¹ *Sn.* 1086.

²² *S. IV.* 370.

²³ *S. I.* 192; *A. II.* 24; *It.* 122; *Thag.* 289, 510, 831, 912; *Thīg.* 135, 333.

²⁴ *It.* 122.

²⁵ *S. IV.* 370.

²⁶ *Thag.* 264.

(*asamkuppam*),²⁷ the subtle (*nipunam*),²⁸ purity (*suddhi*),²⁹ perfect health (*ārogya*),³⁰ being cool (*sītibhūto*);³¹ in terms of feelings, it is defined as happiness (*sivam*),³² the highest happiness (*nibbānam paramam sukham*).³³

(4.5) As a perfect state of transformation, *nibbāna* is defined as freedom (*mutti*),³⁴ liberation (*vimutti*),³⁵ deliverance from every bonds (*nibbānam sabbaganthappamocanam*),³⁶ supreme security from bondage (*yogakkhema*),³⁷ the end (*antam*),³⁸ purity (*suddhi*),³⁹ the destruction of mental cankers (*āsavānam khayo / khīnāsavo*),⁴⁰ complete extinction of the defilements (*kilesa-parinibbāna*),⁴¹ the destruction of unwholesome motivation (*akusalamūla*),⁴² cessation of becoming (*bhavanirodho nibbānam*),⁴³ the end of birth and death (*jātimaraṇassa antam*),⁴⁴ freedom from impurities (*asankilittha*),⁴⁵ and freedom from attachment (*anālaya*),⁴⁶

²⁷ *Sn.* 1149; *M.* I. 167.

²⁸ *S.* IV. 369.

²⁹ *S.* IV. 372.

³⁰ *M.* I. 511; *S.* III. 32; *Sn.* 749, 788.

³¹ *It.* 38.

³² *S.* IV. 370.

³³ *Dhp.* 203-4.

³⁴ *S.* IV. 372.

³⁵ *S.* III. 189.

³⁶ *S.* I. 210.

³⁷ *M.* I. 511.

³⁸ *S.* IV. 368.

³⁹ *S.* IV. 372.

⁴⁰ *It.* 38.

⁴¹ *It.* 38-9.

⁴² *S.* IV. 359.

⁴³ *S.* II. 117.

⁴⁴ *Sn.* 467.

⁴⁵ *M.* I. 173.

⁴⁶ *S.* IV. 372.

etc. It is, sometimes, referred to as the sphere (*āyatanaṁ*) of string of negations,⁴⁷ the truth (*saccam*),⁴⁸ or the highest noble truth (*paranām ariya saccam*),⁴⁹ and the cessation of the world (*loka-nirodha*).⁵⁰

NEGATIVE EXPRESSIONS OF *NIBBĀNA*

(4.6) Due to its profound nature, *nibbāna* finds expressions in negative terms, such as extinction of craving (*tañhakkaya*), unconditioned (*asaṅkhata*), cessation or extinction (*nirodha*), and detachment (*virāga*).⁵¹ In its negative terminology, its synonyms are also known as unborn or freedom from birth (*ajāta*), unageing or freedom from ageing (*ajarā*), diseaseless or freedom from disease (*abyādhim*),⁵² sorrowless or freedom from sorrow (*asokam*) and undefiled or freedom from defilements (*asankiliṭṭham*),⁵³ deathless or freedom from death or immortality (*amata*),⁵⁴ not being reborn (*a-punabbhava*),⁵⁵ not-become (*abhūta*), not-made (*akata*), not-dispositionally-conditioned (*asaṅkhata*),⁵⁶ a total disinterest and cessation (*asesavirāganirodha*),⁵⁷ the absence of want (*aniccha*),⁵⁸ a state in absence of fear (*akutobhaya*),⁵⁹ absence of disturbance (*akhalita*), untroubledness (*nirupatāpa*),

⁴⁷ *Ud.* 80.

⁴⁸ *S.* IV. 368.

⁴⁹ *M.* III. 245.

⁵⁰ *S.* I. 62.

⁵¹ For discussion, see W. Rahula (1978): 36f.

⁵² *M.* I. 167, 173.

⁵³ *M* I. 167; *MLS* I. 211.

⁵⁴ *S.* II. 42-3, 57; *M.* II. 265.

⁵⁵ *S.* I. 174.

⁵⁶ *Ud.* 80-1.

⁵⁷ *Ud.* 33.

⁵⁸ *Sn.* 707.

⁵⁹ *A.* II. 24; *It.* 122.

uncrowdedness (*asambādha*), without hostility (*asapatta*), harmlessness (*abyāpajja*), freedom from mental cankers (*anāsava*), absence of illusion (*nippapañca*),⁶⁰ cessation of becoming (*bhavanirodho nibbānam*),⁶¹ the end of birth and death (*jātimaraṇassa antam*),⁶² freedom from impurities (*asankiliñtha*),⁶³ freedom from attachment (*anālaya*).⁶⁴ If all unwholesome mental dispositions or motivational forces (*akusala mūlāni*) are based on three cardinal defilements, to wit, lust (*rāga*), hatred (*dosa*) and ignorance (*moha*), the elimination of these three makes an end to other defilements. It is on this basis, *nibbāna* is defined as the total extinction of lust (*rāgakkhaya*), hatred (*dosakkhaya*) and ignorance (*mohakkhaya*),⁶⁵ and its nature is described by a metaphor of “being cool” (*sītibhūta*) or pacified (*nibbuta*).⁶⁶ It is the destruction of craving (*taṇhākkhayo*).⁶⁷

MISINTERPRETATIONS ON NIBBĀNA

(4.7) Negative descriptions of *nibbāna*, however, lead to much misunderstanding and misinterpretation, especially to transcendentalism. Such misunderstanding and misinterpretation can be best seen in G.R. Welbon’s *The Buddhist Nirvana and Its Western Interpreters*.⁶⁸ A careful analysis of this book helps us in grouping all misinterpretations on *nibbāna* under two main categories, namely,

⁶⁰ Quoted from R. E. A. Johansson (1969): 45-6.

⁶¹ *S. II.* 117.

⁶² *Sn.* 467.

⁶³ *M. I.* 173.

⁶⁴ *S. IV.* 372.

⁶⁵ *S. IV.* 251: “yo rāgakkhayo dosakkhayo mohakkhayo idam vuccati nibbānam.”

Cf. *S. I.* 359; *S. V.* 9; *A. V.* 9.

⁶⁶ *Vin. I.* 8; *Vin. II.* 156. Cf. *S. I.* 141.

⁶⁷ *S. III.* 190: *Taṇhakkhayo hi Rādha nibbānam*. Cf. *S. IV.* 368-72.

⁶⁸ G.R. Welbon (1968).

annihilationist interpretation of *nibbāna* and transcendental interpretation of *nibbāna*. The former wrongly identifies *nibbāna* with annihilation, while the latter with transemperical reality logically leading to eternalism, or *Upaniśadic* Brahman. Both interpretations are due to the failure in discerning the true nature of the four noble truths, generally, and of the Buddhist critique of eternalism (*sassatavāda*) and annihilationism (*ucchedavāda*), particularly.

(4.8) The annihilationist interpretation by modern scholarship can be traced back to H. Oldenberg's *Buddha: His Life, His Doctrine and His Order* (1882). According to Oldenberg, the Buddhist denial of an entity-ego naturally and logically lead to the conclusion that *nibbāna* is nihilism. Poussin in his *The Way to Nirvāṇa* (1917) maintained that “Nirvāṇa is annihilation.”⁶⁹ Among Western Scholars, Bigandet Burnouf and Paul Dahlke are but two examples, who favour a similar interpretation that *nibbāna* is “absolute nihilism.”⁷⁰ Such an annihilationist view of *nibbāna* was prevalent during the time of the Buddha, and even held by the Buddha's monk-disciple, known as Yamaka. The latter is reported to have had understood that “On the dissolution of the body at death, the monk who extinguishes all defilements (*āsava*) is annihilated, perishes and does not exist after death.”⁷¹ In response to this wrong conclusion, Sāriputta explains to Yamaka that the Tathāgata or an enlightened one can not be identified with nor differentiated from the fivefold personality-factors (*pañcakkhandhā*). It is, therefore, wrong

⁶⁹ L. V. Poussin (1982): “It may therefore be safely maintained that Niravāṇa is annihilation” (p. 117); “That Nirvāṇa is annihilation results-at least for us-but from the general principles of Buddhist philosophy and from clear statements” (p. 116).

⁷⁰ Quoted in H. S. Sobti (1985): 133.

⁷¹ S. III. 109-115.

to conclude that the enlightened comes to annihilation at death.⁷² To interpret *nibbāna* as annihilation is to interpret it in terms of *ucchedavāda*, the theory that identifies the self with physical body. From the very outset, Buddhism rejects such a view, the charge of *nibbāna* as annihilation is, therefore, untenable.

(4.9) It is against the annihilationist interpretation of *nibbāna*, some scholars try to interpret *nibbāna* as transcendental or transempirical reality. According to them, if the Tathāgata or the enlightened is neither identical with nor distinct from the fivefold personality-factors, and transcends the four possibilities, namely, existence (*hoti*), non-existence (*na hoti*), both existence and non-existence (*hoti ca na hoti ca*) and negation of both existence and non-existence (*neva hoti na na hoti*),⁷³ his enlightenment, namely, *nibbāna* would be a reality, which transcends this fourfold possibilities. The best three representatives of this type are Walpola Rahula (1959), N. Dutt (1960) and K. N. Jayatilleke (1963). W. Rahula is of the opinion that “The only reasonable reply to give to the question [what is *nibbāna*?] is that it can never be answered completely and satisfactorily in words, because human language is too poor to express the real nature of the Absolute Truth or Ultimate Reality which is Nirvāṇa.”⁷⁴ Advocating a similar interpretation, N. Dutt tries to attribute the inconceivability and inexpressibleness to *nibbāna* when he writes:

Nibbāna was inconceivable, and that any description of it could not be conventional, and so he [the Buddhism] said that Nibbāna, the highest truth, could

⁷² S. III. 110-1.

⁷³ M. I. 484-8.

⁷⁴ W. Rahula (1978): 35.

only be realised within one's own self (*paccattam veditabbo viññūhi = pratyātmyavedya*); it was inexpressible (*nippapañca*) and so no attempt should be made to describe it; it was so deep and subtle that it could not be communicated by one person to another.⁷⁵

(4.10) K. N. Jayatilleke although tries hard to show that early Buddhism does not accept any empirically unverifiable principle, finally admits some kind of transcendentalism, when he observes that the silence of the Buddha on the nature of the Tathāgata or the enlightened and his *nibbāna* is “not that there was something that the Buddha did not know, but that what he ‘knew’ in the transcendental sense could not be conveyed in words because of the limitations of language and of empiricism.”⁷⁶ Along with Upaniṣadic or Vedantic approach as attempted by Radhakrishnan,⁷⁷ transcendental interpretations of *nibbāna*, as stated above, are more or less the same as *sassadavāda*, the eternal theory of the subsistent metaphysical self, which is rejected by the Buddha at the very beginning. In other words, transcendental interpretation of *nibbāna* will fall in the trap of *sassadavāda*, in one form or another, which is against the original teaching of the Buddha.

(4.11) From the above discussion, we can come to the conclusion that the charge that the Buddha advocates nihilism or annihilation in description of *nibbāna* is, in fact, the failure in discerning his four noble truths, in the right direction. *Nibbāna* is the annihilation of all unwholesome states of mind (*akusalacitta-kkhaya*) and moral defilements

⁷⁵ N. Dutt (1980): 279. For a convincing comment on this approach, see R. E. A. Johansson (1969): 44f.

⁷⁶ K. N. Jayatilleke (1980): 476.

⁷⁷ S. Radhakrishnan (1977): 676ff.

(*kilesa-kkhaya*) and not of existence, though he who attains *nibbāna* is not subject to further rebirth. What is annihilated when one attains *nibbāna*, is suffering (*dukkha*) and unwholesome states (*akusala cetasika*), and not of life (*jīvitanirodha*), nor of individual, nor of the external world.

NON-TRANSCENDENTAL INTERPRETATION OF *NIBBĀNA*

(4.12) *Nibbāna* is best interpreted in terms of non-transcendental experience. That is the conclusion suggested by some scholars who see clearly the danger of transcendental interpretation of *nibbāna* in putting it on the track of eternalism or of the *Upaniṣadic* Brahman. The present writer strongly supports this tendency. Among the Buddhist scholars who are strongly against the transcendental interpretation of *nibbāna* by stressing the importance of non-transcendental interpretation of *nibbāna*, is R. E. A. Johansson (1969: 41-64). Reaching a similar conclusion is D. J. Kalupahana (1976: 82-9). Notably, advocating this interpretation are A. Tilakaratne (1993: 69-82) and Y. Karunadasa (1994: 1-14), etc.

The textual references for such an interpretation are statements pertaining to the nature of the Tathāgata or an Arahant after death. The well-known and most quoted passages are from the *Udāna* 80-1, the *Itivuttaka* 38,⁷⁸ and ten unanswered (*abyākata*) questions.

(4.13) R. E. A. Johansson points out four theses of the transcendent interpretation, and then disproves them. The first is the assumption that it is impossible to get in touch with anything transcendent without developing a special sense for this purpose. He argues that there is no evidence in

⁷⁸ See my interpretation on these passages at

the discourses that mentions of any special sense or mystic ability. The metaphysical entity of *nibbāna* is untenable. The second is the stress on the indescribable and inconceivable nature of the absolute and experiences of the absolute by mystics. He states that the profound nature of *nibbāna*, which is difficult to grasp, however, does not prove its metaphysical nature. The third is that due to negative descriptions of *nibbāna*, interpreters try to see the absolute aspect of *nibbāna*. For him, negative descriptions of *nibbāna* are to show ideal state of *nibbāna* as state of ethical perfection and a conscious state of higher knowledge and detachment. The fourth is the confusion in reading the content of description at the *Udāna* 80. One of such confusions is identifying the state of cessation of feelings and perceptions (*saññāvedayitanirodha*) with *nibbāna*.⁷⁹

(4.14) Kulupahana thinks that what is discussed in the passages is not something on the transcendental characteristics of *nibbāna*, but rather showing its contrasts to *samsāra*.⁸⁰ According to Kalupahana, all attempts and arguments to see transcendentalism in early Buddhism reveal their futility and untenability.⁸¹ He also disagrees with the interpretation that reaches “a form of transcendental consciousness ‘uncognizable by logical thought’ which E. Conze tries hard to prove.⁸² A. Tilakaratne argues that if non-transcendence is not the central characteristic of *nibbāna*, Buddhism is no different from Hinduism which believes in the transcendence of Brahman. According to him, both transcendent and nihilist interpretations of nivarna are

⁷⁹ R. E. A. Johansson (1969): 42-50.

⁸⁰ D. J. Kalupahana (1976): 75.

⁸¹ D. J. Kalupahana (1976): 82.

⁸² D. J. Kalupahana (1976): 82; E. Conze (1962): 76f

symptomatic of a malady, which is believed to disappear only with the realization of nivarna. He concludes that:

The experience of nirvana does not come out as a result of transcending the ordinary reality of the world. Neither does it derive from a transcendent God, nor does it lead one to the Transcendent. The exclusion of these possibilities indicates that nirvana does not involve, in principle, the kind of non-verbalizable knowledge usually associated with the other forms of religious experience. This shows that the Buddhist religious experience can not be taken to subscribe to the ineffability thesis.⁸³

(4.15) For Y. Karunadasa, the transcendental interpretation of *nibbāna* may have roots in a religious belief in a reality which is transcendental and immanent, and that belief has been brought into early Buddhism by some scholars who are in favor of a transcendently religious experience.⁸⁴ He argues if there is a concept of “transcendence” in early Buddhism, the concept could be referred only to the world (*loka*), that means the transcendence of the world,⁸⁵ which also means the pentad of personality-factors (*pañcakkhandhā*), but at the same time, implies the cessation of the process of dependent origination (*paṭicca-samuppāda*).⁸⁶

⁸³ A. Tilakaratne (1993): 81.

⁸⁴ Y. Karunadasa (1994): 7.

⁸⁵ Y. Karunadasa convincingly interprets that the concept of the world (*loka*) would mean the six-fold sphere of sense activity (S. IV. 39). This follows that the Buddha’s epithet “*loka-vidī*” (D. III. 76; S. I. 62; A. II. 48) would mean one who knows the world of sense experience. Similarly, the terms “*lokanirodha*,” and “*lokanta*” (A. II. 49) meaning the cessation of the world and the end of the world, respectively, should also be understood in its psychological sense (1994: 4).

⁸⁶ Y. Karunadasa (1994): 11.

(4.16) In fact, the position of the dead enlightened, according to the Buddha, can not be described in terms of either eternalism (*sassatavāda*) or innihilationism (*ucchedavāda*). The discussion of the dead enlightened in terms of existence (*hoti*) would lead to the metaphysical identification of the enlightened with the personality-factors, which he is free from, and then eternalism; while in terms of non-existence (*na hoti*), on the other hand, would lead to a physical identification of the enlightened with the body (*rūpa*), and then with nihilism. If both the methods are shown as untenable, the combination of existence and non-existence (*hoti ca na hoti ca*) as well as the negation of both (*neva hoti na na hoti*) becomes baseless. It should be noted here that the Buddha does not keep silent on these four predication. His answer to the case is that “fourfold possible question does not have relevance” (*na upeti*),⁸⁷ regardless that the question arises or not. When the question has no relevance, the answer naturally becomes meaningless. That is what is said about the Tathāgata, who is not comprehensible (*na upalabbhati*) in truth and reality (*saccato thetato anupalabbhiyamāne*).⁸⁸

NIBBĀNA IN LIFE OR NIBBĀNA WITH REMAINDER

(4.17) There are two forms of an enlightened person, one in living and the other after death, *nibbāna* can, therefore, be discussed in two forms (*dhātu*)⁸⁹, namely, *nibbāna* in life

⁸⁷ M. I. 486.

⁸⁸ At S. III. 111-2, Sāriputta also uses this statement to reject Yamaka’s reference to the Tathāgata in terms of four predication.

⁸⁹ The text reads “*dhātu*” literally meaning “element.” F. L. Woodward rendered it as “conditions” (MNPC, II. 143) while S. Collins prefers the literal rendering “elements.” (1998: 149).

(*kilesa-(pari)-nibbāna*)⁹⁰ or *nibbāna* with remainder (*sa-upādi-sesa-nibbāna/ upādi-sesa-(pari)-nibbāna*)⁹¹ and *nibbāna* after death (*khandha-(pari)-nibbāna*)⁹² or *nibbāna* without remainder (*an-upādi-sesa-(pari)-nibbāna*),⁹³ respectively. Let us now first consider the nature of a living Arahant or *nibbāna* in this very life.

What is *nibbāna* with remainder? Here a monk is an Arahant, who has destroyed all mental cankers (*khīnāsavo*), lived the holy life, done what was to be done, laid down the burden, attained the goal, extinguished the fetter of becoming, freed through right wisdom (*sammappaññā vimutto*). In him, *the five sense-faculties remain, and because of this remainder, he experiences sensations, pleasant or unpleasant, enjoyable or painful*. In him *the destruction of lust (rāga), hatred (dosa) and ignorance (moha)* is what is called the *nibbāna* with remainder.⁹⁴

(4.18) According to this passage, *nibbāna* with remainder is applied to the living Arahant, whose fivefold personality-factors are still remained between the time of his enlightenment and that of his passing away, without subsequent rebirth. He is, however, neither identical with, nor distinct from fivefold personality-factors, either individually or collectively.⁹⁵ Being alive, due to the force of past *kamma* in co-operation with sense faculties and personality-factors, his mental and physical processes still

⁹⁰ It literally means the total elimination of defilements.

⁹¹ It literally means *nibbāna* with the personality-factors remained.

⁹² It literally means the total dissolution of the personality-factors.

⁹³ It literally means *nibbāna* without the personality-factors remained.

⁹⁴ *It.* 38. Italics mine.

⁹⁵ *M. I.* 140; *S. III.* 109-115; *S. IV.* 383ff.

function, so long as he passes away from this earth. But because of his destruction of all mental cankers, defilements and fetter of becoming, he is not subject to further rebirth. In other words, an Arahant, whose *nibbāna* with remainder is one who has cut the fetters of lust (*rāga*), hatred (*dosa*), ignorance (*moha*), and freed from *saṃsāra*, through wisdom, in this very life.

There are, however, four important descriptions on the nature of *nibbāna* (*nibbāna-patisaṃyuttāya kathāya*), recorded in the *Udāna* 80, which are frequently quoted by various scholars who appear to discuss about *nibbāna*. What is important to note here before turning to discussion and interpretation of the four passages, is that these four quotations do not refer to the after-death position of the enlightened, but rather to the nature of *nibbāna* or *nibbāna* in this very life.⁹⁶

The First *Udānic* Description of *Nibbāna*

(4.19) The first *Udānic* description is as follows:

There is (*atthi*) that sphere (*āyatana*) wherein there is neither earth nor water nor fire nor air; there is neither the sphere of infinite space nor of infinite consciousness nor of nothingness nor of neither-perception-nor-non-perception; there is neither this world nor the world beyond nor both together nor moon nor sun; this I say is free from coming (*āgatīm*) and going (*gatīm*), from maintenance (*thitīm*) and decay (*cutīm*); there is no beginning (*upapattīm*) nor

⁹⁶ This conclusion can be justified by the sentence at the end of the *first* and *last* quotations “this indeed is the end of suffering,” which means *nibbāna* or *nibbāna* in this life, but not after death.

establishment, there is neither result nor cause; this indeed is the end of suffering.⁹⁷

(4.20) According to the law of causality, what is conditioned is caused by something. That something is, again, caused by other something. The causally inter-dependent process can not be traced to the first cause, for this first cause does not exist in reality or in objectivity. Unlike common inter-causal existents, *Nibbāna* is defined as unconditioned, it therefore can not be caused by anything. Here *nibbāna* is attributed as “the end of suffering” (*anto dukkhassa*), which can not be identified with any of the following twelve causal existents, such as, four elements of matters (*mahābhūta-rūpa*), four higher absorptions of the formless sphere (*ariūpaloka*), this world (*loka*), the world beyond (*paraloka*), the sun (*suriya*), or the moon (*canda*), for these attributed existents are conditioned and instrumental by inter-others. In other words, the absence of the physical elements and formless spheres indicates the absence of psycho-physicality or personality-factors in *nibbāna*. The so-called sphere (*āyatana*) of *nibbāna* is not the sphere in linguistic sense of the term, as applied to that of the twelve objects mentioned above. It is the “inner” sphere of the pure mind where facts and values of the objective world are left behind; where sense experience of the subjective world can not touch; where birth, death, rebirth and suffering find no footing; and where only timeless (*akāliko*) peacefulness in total absence of suffering prevails. If this is what is meant by *nibbāna*, then *nibbāna* can not be caused by

⁹⁷ Ud. 80: *Atthi bhikkhave tad āyatanaṁ, yattha neva paṭhavī na āpo na tejo na vāyo na ākāsānañcāyatanaṁ na viññānañcāyatanaṁ na ākiñcaññāyatanaṁ na nevasaññāsaññāyatanaṁ nāyam loko na paraloka ubho candimasūriyā, tad aham bhikkhave neva āgatim vadāmi na gatim na thitim na cutim na upapattim appatiṭṭham appavattam anārammaṇam eva tam, esevento dukkhassati.* Translation by R. E. A. Johansson (1969): 51 with minor change.

anything in this physical world (*rūpaloka*), such as earth (*pathavi*), water (*āpa*), fire (*teja*) and air (*vāya*), nor by anything in the formless world (*arūpaloka*), such as the realm of infinity of space (*Ākāsānañcāyatana*), the realm of infinity of consciousness (*Viññānañcāyatana*), the realm of nothingness of consciousness (*Ākiñcaññāyatana*) and the realm of neither-perception-nor-non-perception (*Nevasaññānāsaññāyatana*). As reaching the end of suffering (*anto dukkhassa*) through destruction of craving (*tañhākkhaya*), one who attains *nibbāna* is free from any trouble-maker in this world (*loka*) or the world beyond (*paraloka*), such as day or night, birth or death, coming or going, etc. He is totally free from any fear from any quarter (*akutobhaya*).⁹⁸ In other words, *nibbāna* can not be produced by any instruments, causes, conditions, though without proper conditions, *nibbāna* can not be achieved. This is what is beautifully described by W. Rahula, who convincingly states:

It is incorrect to think that Nirvāṇa is the natural result of the extinction of craving. Nirvāṇa is not the result of anything. If it would be a result, then it would be an effect produced by a cause. It would be *samkhata* ‘produced’ and ‘conditioned.’ Nirvāṇa is neither cause nor effect. It is beyond cause and effect . . . The only thing you can do is to see it, to realize it. There is a path leading to the realization of Nirvāṇa. But Nirvāṇa is not the result of that path. You may get to the mountain along a path, but the mountain is not the result, not an effect of the path. You may see a light, but the light is not the result of your eyesight.⁹⁹

⁹⁸ S. I. 192; A. II. 24; It. 122; *Thag.* 289, 510, 831, 912; *Thīg.* 135, 333.

⁹⁹ W. Rahula (1978): 40.

The Second *Udānic* Description of *Nibbāna*

(4.21) The second description recorded in the *Udāna* 80 is very concise, but contains the nature of *nibbāna* and its relation with non-substantiality, and path leading to realisation of *nibbāna*. Centred on craving, the origin of suffering, it in fact explicitly concerns with the four noble truths:

The realization of non-substantiality¹⁰⁰ is really difficult. The truth is certainly not easy to see. Craving is fully understood for one who knows; and there is nothing [grasped] for one who sees.¹⁰¹

The content of the description here is not clear-cut, if we separate it from the first utterance. This second description is, indeed, a supplementary explanation of the first. In the first two clauses, both the terms “non-substantiality” and “the truth” refer to *nibbāna*. In the third clause, it seems to imply that to fully understand craving, the second noble truth or the cause of suffering, is to understand the rest triad also, to wit, suffering, cessation of suffering and the path leading to this cessation. The concept of ‘nothing’ in the last clause, being very vague, should not be equated to “nothingness” or “non-existence,” for it would be leading to interpretation of *nibbāna* as annihilation. “Nothing” here should be paraphrased as “nothing grasped” or “nothing left of craving and suffering,” for one who attains *nibbāna* all craving and grasping are totally eliminated, putting an end to suffering.

(4.22) If this reading of the text is correct, the description

¹⁰⁰ I read *anattam*, instead of *anantam* as suggested by Woodward. This textual difficulty confuses scholars. See, R. E. A. Johansson (1969): 53; S. Collins (1998): 166-7.

¹⁰¹ *Ud.* 8: *Duddasam anattam nāma, na hi saccam sudassanam; paṭividdhā taṇhā, passato natthi kiñcananti.*

could be like this: “The realisation of *nibbāna* is really difficult, just like that of non-substantiality. For those who have realised *nibbāna*, craving is fully mastered, and therefore, nothing (zero) of craving and suffering is left.” That is to say the realisation or attainment of *nibbāna* is too difficult, not only because of its beyond-spatio-temporary nature, but also of the difficulty in bringing about the total destruction of craving from the experiential world of contact and feeling. When contact-cum-feeling and craving are totally mastered or destroyed, the realisation of *nibbāna* is immediately possible. Another way of reading the description would suggest that “if there is an attribute of *nibbāna* it would be non-substantiality (*anatta*). *Nibbāna* is *anatta*. This truth is difficult to realise and see. The only way to realise it, to see it is to master or eliminate craving, the cause of suffering and *samsāra*. For one who realises it, attains it, nothing is difficult.” If this is the case, then the content of the section would focus on the path leading to the realisation of *nibbāna*, which is described in the first utterance as the sphere beyond space, time, this world, the world beyond, both this world and the world beyond, physical world, formless world of higher *jhānas*. This path (the fourth noble truth) leading to the state of destruction of suffering, which is *nibbāna* (the third noble truth) lies dormant in the destruction of craving (the second noble truth), and realisation of non-substantiality of all existents, inter-causal or non-causal.

The Third *Udānic* Description on *Nibbāna*

(4.23) This is the most frequently quoted description on the nature of *nibbāna*. It is:

Monks, there exists that which is not-born (*ajātam*),

not-become (*abhūtam*), not-made (*akataṁ*), not-conditioned (*asañkhatam*). Monks, if that which is not-born, not-become, not-made, not-conditioned were not existing, no escape from that which is born, become, made and conditioned would be known here. But monks, since there really exists that which is not-born, not-become, not-made, not-conditioned, therefore an escape from that which is born, become, made and conditioned is known.¹⁰²

If *dukkha* is conditioned by the process of interdependent arising (*paṭicca-samuppāda*), *nibbāna* as the destruction of suffering is unconditioned (*asañkhatam*). In other words, in *nibbāna*, there is no conditioning, process of conditioning, and temporarily conditioned things do not take place in *nibbāna*. The attribute of unbornness of *nibbāna* also shows that *nibbāna* is free from passage of time. It is timeless (*akāliko*) or beyond the boundary of time, past, present or future. The arising and ceasing of the conditioned existents involves time, starts with time and ends with time. To the contrary, *nibbāna* does not involve in time at all. It has no beginning. There is no birth in it. It is free from birth, or in absence of birth. The birth of any conditioned existents, of which personality-factors are one, is constantly in causally generated process. *Nibbāna* as opposed to personality-factors is no longer subject to birth.

(4.24) With the quality of being no birth or unbornness (*abhūtam*), *nibbāna* has no growing old and no-dying.

¹⁰² Ud. 80: *Atthi bhikkhave ajātarāñ abhūtarāñ akatañ asañkhatarāñ, no ce tam bhikkhave abhavissa ajātarāñ abhūtarāñ akatañ asankhatarāñ, na yidha jātassa bhūtassa katassa sankhatassa nissaraṇarāñ paññāyetha. Yasmā ca kho bhikkhave atthi ajātarāñ abhūtarāñ akatañ asankhatarāñ, tasmā jātassa bhūtassa katassa sankhatassa nissaraṇarāñ paññāyati.* This also recurs at *It. 37*.

Whatever is subject to birth, it is subject to becoming. *Nibbāna* is unborn, it is therefore, not-become. There is no making or constructing activities in *nibbāna*. It is rather the stopping of these activities. It is not anything, which is compounded or constructed. It is unconstructed or unmade (*akata*). In other words, if *nibbāna* is not something born, become, it would logically follow that it is unmade of anything and by anything. In this sense, an Arahant is who realises the destruction of the conditioned and a seer of the unmade, i.e. *nibbāna*.¹⁰³ All the three attributes of *nibbāna* as discussed above lead to the formation of the important attribute, namely, the unconditioned (*asaṅkhata*). The attribute of unconditionedness (*asaṅkhata*) of *nibbāna* means that *nibbāna* is neither brought into existence through any conditions, nor sustained by any conditioned existents. This is so because, in its being unborn, unbecome and unmade, *nibbāna* would be unconditioned, the stopping of *saṃsāra* and all constructing activities.

(4.25) What should be taken into consideration here is that the third *Udānic* description is served as an argument to prove the existence of *nibbāna*, through the possibility-cum-reality of escape from *saṃsāra*. The argument takes this form: (i) *nibbāna* really exists, (ii) If it were not, there could be no escape from *saṃsāra* so far, (iii) because of its existence, there is an escape from *saṃsāra*. The first serves as the confirmation of *nibbāna*, the second as the proof and the third, the re-confirmation derived from the first two. In the whole argument, the nature of *nibbāna* is described in terms of unbornness (*ajātam*), unbecomeness (*abhūtam*), unmadeness (*akatam*) and unconditionedness (*asaṅkhatam*),

¹⁰³ *Dhp.* 383.

which are the complete transformation of causal existents which are born, become, constructing and conditioned.

The fourth *Udānic* Description of *Nibbāna*

(4.26) For one is attached there is unstability; for the unattached, there is no unstability. When there is no unstability, there is calmness; when there is calmness, there is no delight; where there is no delight, there is no coming-and-going; when there is no coming-and-going, there is no dying and being-reborn; when there is no dying and being-reborn, there is nothing “here” and “there” and “in between.” This, indeed, is the end of suffering.¹⁰⁴

Following an argument to prove the real existence of *nibbāna* in the third description, this description shows the way leading to that *nibbāna*. With the help of an inter-causal sequence, the description on the path leading to *nibbāna* starts with the problem of attachment and ends with the end of suffering or *nibbāna*. It aims at showing that the end of suffering or attainment of *nibbāna* can be achieved by being detached or making freed of attachment. Detachment leads to calmness or tranquillity → no-delight → no-coming-and-going → dying-and-being-reborn → no-here-and-no-there-and-in-between. In other words, freedom of attachment makes freedom of suffering possible. This is positive path to lead to *nibbāna*, the end of suffering.

(4.27) In brief, these four *Udānic* descriptions of *nibbāna*

¹⁰⁴ *Ud.* 80: *Nissitassa ca calitām anissitassa calitām natthi, calite asati passaddhi, passadhiyā sati rati na hoti, ratiyā asati āgatgati na hoti, āgati-gatiyā asati cutūpapāto na hoti, cutūpapātē asati nevidha na hurāni na ubhayamantare, eseavanto dukkhassāti.*

in life are as necessary as mutual supplementary to one another positively, in order to confirm the existence of *nibbāna* and the path leading to it. The first description is a confirmation on the state of *nibbāna*, which is expressed as beyond time and space. Describing the nature of *nibbāna* by contrasting the life in *samsāra* and in *nibbāna* is the best way to make it intelligible and understandable. If the physical world (*loka*) of *samsāra* is conditioned or constituted by earth, water, fire, air, bound to time, is subject to coming, growing, decay and going, the formless world (*arūpaloka*) is no better. It is the very *nibbāna*, which is beyond these conditions, is subject to no beginning and establishment. It is not the result nor effect of something in this causally conditioned world. It is the end of suffering. The second description is to show the path leading to this end of suffering. The path is simply described as the realisation of non-substantiality (*anatta*) of all conditioned existents of this world and the world beyond, as the way to destruction of all craving, the cause of suffering. This effectively simple truth is very difficult to see and realise. The third description is the re-confirmation of the first adding some attributes to *nibbāna*, such as, unbornness or freedom from birth (*ajāta*), unbecoming or freedom from becoming (*abhūta*), unmadeness or freedom from being made or constructed (*akata*) and unconditionedness or freedom from being conditioned (*asaṅkhata*). Besides, it serves as the argument to prove the positively real existence of *nibbāna* in parallel with the existence of *samsāra*. It is probably that the Mahāyānist has taken this for the assertion that *nibbāna* is not different from *samsāra*. In other words, wherever there is *samsāra*, there is also *nibbāna*. Suffering and the destruction of suffering can not be divorced from each other. And the last description is also the re-confirmation of the second,

showing the path leading to *nibbāna*. The path is shown as a causal sequence of transformation, starting from seeing the danger of attachment, proceeding with detachment → tranquillity → no-delight → no rebirth, and ending at freedom from suffering. All this shows that *nibbāna* is possible only with the complete transformation of mind from unwholesome states to destruction of mental cankers. The force of the four descriptions lies in using the second third-and-fourth noble truths, repeatedly confirm the possible attainment of *nibbāna* in this very life, if one wills to do so.

NIBBĀNA AFTER DEATH OR NIBBĀNA WITHOUT REMAINDER

(4.28) The most debated, misunderstood and then misinterpreted aspect of *nibbāna* is the after-death (*parammaraṇā*) position of the enlightened. As regards this state of *nibbāna* after death or the state of the dead enlightened (Arahant or Tathāgata), the passage of *Itivuttaka* 38, would be the standard reference:

What is *nibbāna* without remainder? Here a monk is an Arahant, who has destroyed all mental cankers (*khīnāsavo*), lived the holy life, done what was to be done, laid down the burden, attained the goal, extinguished the fetter of becoming, freed through right wisdom. In him, *in this very life, all sensations, no longer rejoiced in, have become cool*. This is what is called *nibbāna* without remainder.¹⁰⁵

According to this description, the dead enlightened is subject to no further becoming for all of his feelings or sense experiences (*vedayitāni*) are totally cooled (*sītibhūtāni*). This

¹⁰⁵ *It.* 38. Italics mine.

agrees well with the *Samyutta-Nikāya*, where it is stated that, “he knows that at the dissolution of the body at death, all that he experiences and all that lacked lure for him will become cool, and body will be left over.”¹⁰⁶ Here due to the coolness of all sensual experiences, the dead enlightened is really free from *dukkha* in its three forms, namely, ① suffering caused by physical pain (*dukkha-dukkhatā*), ② suffering caused by diverse change of things (*vipariṇāma-dukkhatā*), and ③ suffering caused by psychological change (*saṅkhāra-dukkhatā*).¹⁰⁷ While in the case of the living enlightened, he is freed from the last only,¹⁰⁸ and still subject to the first two, for his sense faculties and personality-factors are still conditioned up to his death, and to have been *dukkha*.¹⁰⁹

(4.29) In the discussion of *nibbāna* as cessation of *samsāra*, the conclusion arrived is that the enlightened is subject to no more rebirth in the future, due to his complete destruction of craving (*taṇhā*), grasping (*upādāna*) and ignorance (*avijjā*). To this a significantly popular question would be asked, “what is the after-death position (*parammaraṇā*) of the enlightened, the Tathāgata or an Arahant?” There are three possibilities as to the answer:

(i) It is annihilation.

(ii) It is a continuation, either of a different form or the same form.

(iii) The dead enlightened is beyond questions.

The first answer can be found in those who do not accept

¹⁰⁶ S. II. 83.

¹⁰⁷ D. III. 216; S. IV. 259; S. V. 56. Cf. *Vism*. 499.

¹⁰⁸ S. II. 274.

¹⁰⁹ It. 38; S. III. 112.

the conditioned continuity of the non-substantiality as undivorceable attribute of reality. This leads to annihilationist interpretation of *nibbāna*, as stated earlier.¹¹⁰ The second, contrary to the first, leads to eternalist interpretation of *nibbāna*,¹¹¹ which is more or less worse. This indeed is the interpretation of those who are being well-trained in *Upaniṣadic* tradition, or any tradition which believes in the immortal soul or self. The third would be the better alternative, but would lead to transcendental interpretation.

(4.30) This question was, indeed, the subject of many a dialogue between the Buddha and others, and among his disciples. One of a well-known dialogue is recorded in the *Discourse to Vacchagotta on the Simile of Fire*¹¹² of the *Majjhima-Nikāya*. The dialogue starts with ten questions put by Vacchagotta, known as unanswered (*avyākata//avyākṛta*) by the Buddha because of its epistemological meaninglessness and its pragmatic irrelevance to the immediate concern of human suffering and its cessation.¹¹³ The first four concern with the metaphysical notions of the world (whether the world is eternal, or not, or both, or neither); the next two with references to self (whether the soul is identical with the body or different from it), while the last four with after-deathposition of the Tathāgata. They are:

1. The Tathāgata exists after death (*Hoti Tathāgato parammaraṇā.*)

¹¹⁰ Cf. *D. I.* 34, 55; *M. I.* 140.

¹¹¹ Cf. *S. III.* 215-9.

¹¹² *M. I.* 484-8. These ten questions recur at *M. I.* 426-32; *M. II.* 228-38; *S. III.* 213-24; 257ff.; *S. IV.* 374-403; *Milin.* 144ff. For the fourteen questions of the same type, see *MK. XXVII, XXII* and *XXV*.

¹¹³ *M. I.* 429-32, 488-9.

2. The Tathāgata does not exist after death (*Na hoti Tathāgato parammaraṇā*.)
3. The Tathāgata both exists and does not exist after death (*Hoti ca na ca hoti Tathāgato parammaraṇā*.)
4. The Tathāgata neither exists nor does not exist after death (*N’eva hoti na na hoti Tathāgato parammaraṇā*).¹¹⁴

(4.31) The Buddha’s answer to these “unanswered” questions is that none of these fits (*na upeti*) the position of the enlightened after death. The attitude that there should be either existence (*hoti*), or non-existence (*na hoti*), or both existence and non-existence (*hoti ca na hoti ca*) or neither existence nor non-existence (*neva hoti na na hoti*) is rooted in the passion, affection, desire, craving, either for immortality of personality-factors, or annihilation, or combination of both, or negation of both.¹¹⁵ Such a desire is uprooted in the Buddha; he therefore has no difficulty in seeing its meaninglessness and irrelevance. But this, however, does not satisfy Vacchagotta’s yearning for “yes-or-no” type of answer. Vacchagotta was absolutely confused. The Buddha sees justification for Vacchagotta’s confusion, for he knows that his “*dhamma* is very deep, difficult to see, difficult to understand, peaceful, excellent, beyond logic, subtle and to be understood by the wise.”¹¹⁶ Vacchagotta indeed is not the wise in the sense of the term, and moreover it is difficult for him who presupposes a different guidance, holds a different point of view, and has a different allegiance,

¹¹⁴ *M. I.* 484-5; These repeatedly recur at *S. IV.* 373-90.

¹¹⁵ *S. IV.* 388, 390.

¹¹⁶ *M. I.* 487: *ghambhīro hayam . . . dhammo duddaso duranubodho santo pañīto atakkāvacaro nipuṇo paññitavedanīyo.*

different observation and different purpose.¹¹⁷ Vacchagotta, probably well-trained in the logic of an immortal self after death, can not accept any idea beyond this logic (*atakkāvacara*). In order to make him understand the *dhamma* that is profound, excellent and beyond the touch of logic, the Buddha illustrates with a simile of the “extinguished fire” (*nibbuto aggi*). Through illustrated conversation with the Buddha, Vacchagotta comes to know that if the fire is blazing because of a supply of, say, wick and oil, when the supply is finished, the direction in which the fire has gone to is untraceable, whether the eastern, the western, the southern or the northern. In the same manner, the Buddha explains the impropriety of the question as to the after-death position of the enlightened, who is freed from name-and-form:¹¹⁸

Even so, Vaccha, that material shape (*rūpa*) by which one recognising the Tathāgata, cut off at the root, made like a palm-tree stump that can come to no further existence and is not liable to arise again in future. Freed from denotation by material shape (*rūpa-saṅkhā-vimutto*) is the Tathāgata, Vaccha, *he is deep, immeasurable, unfathomable (gambhīro appameyyo duppariyogāho) as is the great ocean*, ‘Arises’ does not apply, ‘does not arise’ does not apply, ‘both arises and does not arise’ does not apply, ‘neither arises nor does not arise’ does not apply. (The same holds true with feeling, perception, habitual tendencies and consciousness).¹¹⁹

¹¹⁷ *Ibid: so dujjāno aññadīṭṭhikena, aññakhantikena, aññarucikena, aññatrayayogena, aññathācariyakena.*

¹¹⁸ M. I. 487; M. III. 245; Sn. 232.

¹¹⁹ M. I. 487-8. Translation by I. B. Horner, *MLS*. II. 166. Emphasis mine. This

(4.32) The analogy of the “extinguished fire” is also well expressed in the *Sutta-Nipāta*, where it runs: “Just as a flame tossed out by a gust of wind goes down and is beyond reckoning; so is the Arahant freed from name-and-form.”¹²⁰ In the early discourses, the status of the Tathāgata both in life and after death is said as untraceable. One of the passages of this assertion runs thus: “In this visible world, monks, I say that the Tathāgata is inscrutable (*anānuvejjo*).”¹²¹ The untraceability of the Tathāgata is due to the fact that he is described as freed from personality-factors and psycho-physicality, and in him the notion of a subsistent self-entity is totally eliminated; while the identity can be made only with reference to either physical trace (*nāma*) or psychological trace (*rūpa*) or both, or to its illusion of selfhood.¹²² This is explained well in the *Samyutta-Nikāya*, where it reads:

He has abandoned reckoning and did not attain measuring,

He has cut off craving, here, for the sentient body [*nāma-rūpa*]. . .

Gods and humans do not succeed when searching (for him)

Here or beyond, in heavens or in any dwelling.¹²³

According to the analogy in the above passages, the designation or understanding of the dead enlightened in terms of fivefold personality-factors on the basis of four

recurs at *S.* IV. 376f.

¹²⁰ *Sn.* 1074.

¹²¹ *M. I.* 139-40.

¹²² *S. I.* 112; *Sn.* 1119; *Dhp.* 46.

¹²³ *S. I.* 12. Translation by P. Harvey (1995): 230.

possibilities, as derived from the logic of the belief in the subsistent self-entity, is epistemologically meaningless, for the enlightened is freed from or beyond both identification with and difference from the fivefold personality-factors.¹²⁴ Not only that. The irrelevant designation of the enlightened with four possibilities is also due to the fact that the enlightened is “deep, immeasurable, unfathomable (*gambhīro appameyyo duppariyogāho*) as the great ocean,”¹²⁵ where logical reasoning (*atakkāvacara*) and means of knowing (*pamāṇa//pramāṇa*) are surrendered powerless or failed. In other words, the state of the after-death enlightened can not be known through logic or by means of knowledge. This could be the reason behind the silence of the Buddha, apart from the pragmatic irrelevant and epistemological meaningless aspects of the four possibilities or predication.

(4.33) On the basis of this interpretation, it is easy now to understand what is expressed in the *Sutta-Nipāta* regarding the limitation of logic and epistemology in describing the beyond-logic status of the dead enlightened: “There is no measuring of one who has achieved the holy life. There is nothing by which one may describe him. When all attributes are removed (*sabbesu dhammesu samūhatesu*), all ways of description are also removed.”¹²⁶

¹²⁴ Cf. *S. III. 35.*

¹²⁵ This idea is expressed well at *A. I. 266*. There are four qualities of *nibbāna* which can be compared to those of the ocean (*sāgara*). They are: (i) like the ocean empty of all corpes, *nibbāna* is devoid of defilements, (ii) Just as the ocean is not filled by all reivers flowing into it, *nibbāna* is not filled by those who attain it, (iii) Just as the ocean is the abode of great beings, *nibbāna* is the abode of great arahants, and (iv) just as the ocean is flowering with abundant ‘wave-flowers’, *nibbāna* is with the flowers of wisdom and freedom.

¹²⁶ *Sn. 1076.*

(4.34) In the *Anurādha Samyutta*¹²⁷ of the *Samyutta-Nikāya*, the fourfold possible question on the status of the after-death enlightened is asked by a heretic wanderer. To this, Ven. Anurādha replies that the condition of the Tathāgata after death can not be described with reference to any of four predication. He concludes that it could be described by other than those four predication, which explicitly means by means of transcendentalism. The answer does not satisfy the wanderer. To his shock as being abused as a novice or an ignorant fool, Anurādha comes to report the whole story to the Buddha. Having disproved the interpretation of the former, the latter goes on explaining the impermanence, unsatisfactoriness and non-substantiality of each and every five personality-factors, so that the former can realise the *anatta* truth “this is not mine, this I am not and this is not my-self.” The Buddha proclaims, “In this very life, a Tathāgata is not comprehensible in truth and reality” (*saccato thetato anupalabbhiyamāne*),¹²⁸ to help Arurādha come to the conclusion that, “It is improper to state that the status of the Tathāgata after death . . . could be described in other than the four predication.” To this understanding, the Buddha clarifies his position in the following line: “Anurādha, both formerly and now, what I declared is just suffering and the cessation of suffering.”¹²⁹ What should be noted here from the conclusion of the Buddha is that the after-death status of the enlightened can not be described in terms either of four possibilities, or of transcendentalism.

(4.35) From what have discussed what can be learned

¹²⁷ S. IV. 379-83.

¹²⁸ At S. III. 111-2, Sāriputta also uses this statement to reject Yamaka’s reference to the Tathāgata in terms of four predication.

¹²⁹ S. IV. 383.

about the nature of the enlightened is that both the living and dead enlightened have undergone a complete destruction of craving, where suffering is eliminated, for the grasping (*upādāna*) can not be arisen and then no further becoming. They have undergone a total transformation of dispositions, bodily, verbal and mental, in which all mental cankers, moral defilements, unwholesome motivations and attachment have been completely uprooted. The only difference between them is that the living has to undergo physical pain, for his personality-factors and sense faculties are still functioning up to his death, while the dead enlightened such a physical pain does not apply, for his body has been dissolved, sense experiences have become cooled. One thing should be borne in mind is that when the living enlightened is undergoing some physical pain, he has no emotional reaction and attachment as in the case of the ordinary worldling (*puthujjana*). This is one of the ethical values, which the enlightened deserve to have.

SENSUAL HAPPINESS, *JHĀNIC* HAPPINESS AND *NIBBĀNIC* HAPPINESS

(4.36) In Buddhism, the term for happiness is *sukha*.¹³⁰ *Sukha* can be rendered as happiness or pleasant feeling, or the root of bliss, either sensual, mental, spiritual or soteriological. In the early discourses, the common classification of happiness is of two kinds, to wit, happiness of the sense pleasure or sensual happiness (*kāma-sukha*), also known as five strands of sensual happiness (*pañca kāmaguṇa*)¹³¹ and happiness of *nibbāna* or *nibbānic*

¹³⁰ It also means agreeable, pleasant, pleased, ease, pleasure, joy, bliss, well-being, welfare, ideal and succeed. See *PED*. s.v. *sukha*: 726a.

¹³¹ *M. I.* 85, 92, 398, 454.

happiness (*nibbānam sukham*). Another popular twofold classification of happiness is, sometimes, known as worldly or material happiness (*āmisa-sukha*) and unworldly or spiritual happiness (*nirāmisa-sukha*). The former is derived from the satisfaction of the five sense organs, while the latter as opposed the former, from development of mental culture. Sensual happiness (*kāma-sukha*) can be bodily happiness (*kāyika sukha*) or mental happiness (*cetasika sukha*).¹³² Thus, happiness is either sensory or non-sensory. The general tendency of the ordinary worldling is to view sense pleasures as “highest” happiness.¹³³ Buddhism rejecting this view, on the contrary, teaches higher levels of happiness including *nibbāna*, the highest of the non-sensual kinds of happiness. Only *nibbāna* is considered by the Buddhist as the highest happiness (*nibbānam paramam sukham*)¹³⁴ one can achieve through personal efforts in this very life.

(4.37) Happiness, however, can be divided into three categories, namely, (i) rapture and happiness stimulated by sense objects (*sāmisā pīti sāmisam sukham*), (ii) rapture and happiness free from stimulation by sense objects (*nirāmisā pīti nirāmisam sukham*), and (iii) more refined rapture and happiness free from stimulation by sense objects (*nirāmisatarā pīti nirāmisatarām sukham*).¹³⁵ The first is known as sensual happiness, the second as *jhānic* happiness, and the third as *nibbānic* happiness. These three kinds of happiness are also called happiness of mankind, happiness of the world of gods and happiness of *nibbāna*, of which the

¹³² S. IV. 231.

¹³³ M. II. 42-3.

¹³⁴ Dhp. 203-4; S. I. 125, S. IV. 371-2; M. I. 508-9; Ud. 10; Thag. 35.

¹³⁵ S. IV. 235.

mankinds is the lowest while *nibbānas* is the highest.¹³⁶ Happiness of mankind is meant for happiness derived from sense faculties; happiness of gods from meditations and happiness of *nibbāna* from practising eightfold path. This classification is based on the levels of content and quality of happiness one may have according to one's source or channel. According the Buddha, in evaluating the quality of the three, the happiness of the senses and happiness of the gods are not worth one sixteenth of the bliss of *nibbāna*, which is the end of craving.¹³⁷

(4.38) The happiness of mankind as sensory happiness is also known as the five strands of sensual happiness (*pañca kāmaguṇa*), derived from material objects cognizable by the eye, desirable sounds by the ear, smells by the nose, tastes by the tongue and tangibles by the body. Whatever happiness, joy or pleasure arises in consequence of these five strands of sense-pleasure is called sensual happiness.¹³⁸ The ordinary worlding considers these agreeable, desirable, enjoyable, pleasant, liked, and enticing sensual happiness as the highest form of happiness (*sukha*), one can experience in this world. Some regard them as the ultimate goal of life, as in the case of materialism (Cāvārka or Lokāyatika).¹³⁹

(4.39) The Buddha rejects this conception by introducing nine levels of happiness derived from meditation, grouped under three main categories, namely, four kinds of happiness associated with four higher meditations of the form world (*rūpajjhānāni*), four kinds of happiness with the formless world (*arūpajjhānāni*) and happiness in the state of cessation of

¹³⁶ *Ud.* 11.

¹³⁷ *Ibid.*

¹³⁸ *M. I.* 398.

¹³⁹ See chapter I.

feelings and perceptions (*saññāvedayitanirodha*), as recorded in the *Bahuvedaniya-Sutta*¹⁴⁰ of the *Majjhima-Nikāya*, and other early discourses.¹⁴¹ According to the Buddha, sensual happiness leads to *samsāra*, while happiness of meditation is a step leading to attainment of happiness of *nibbāna*, which is far beyond sense pleasures. The *jhānic* happiness as a higher value is attained by means of full understanding of the transient satisfaction of, the constant danger of and the necessary escape from sense pleasures. This naturally leads to a substitution between the two, by means of comparatively wise thinking or understanding:

But when an ariyan disciple thinks, “sense pleasures give little satisfaction but much suffering and much trouble, and the danger from them is great,” and he comes to see this, as it really is, through perfect understanding, and he attains zest and happiness apart from sense-pleasures, apart from unskilled processes, and something better than that, then he is not seduced by the sense-pleasures.¹⁴²

The substitution of sense pleasures by *jhānic* happiness is also clearly expressed in the following line: “The wise who practices *jhāna* concentration and Insight Meditation takes delight in the peace of liberation from sensual pleasures and moral defilements.”¹⁴³

¹⁴⁰ M. I. 398-400.

¹⁴¹ See, for instance, D. III. 265, 290; A. IV. 410.

¹⁴² M. I. 91: *Yato ca kho Mahānāma ariyasāvakassa: appassādā kāmā bahudukkhā bahupāyāsā, ādīnavo ettha bhiyyoti evam-etaṁ yathābhūtam sammappaññāya sudiṭṭham hoti, so ca aññatreva kāmehi aññatra akusalehi dhammehi pītisukharī adhigacchati aññañca tato santatarāṇi atha kho so anāvati kāmesu hoti.*

¹⁴³ Dhp. 181.

(4.40) In sensual happiness, emotional defilements (*upakkilesā*),¹⁴⁴ and mental cankers (*āsavā*)¹⁴⁵ are increased, in *jhānas* they are gradually decreased, while only in *nibbāna* they are totally eliminated. This is expressed clearly in the following passage: “psychological activities (*citta*), when thoroughly cultivated through wisdom (*paññā*), are set freed from mental cankers, namely, cankers of sensuality, becoming, views and of ignorance.”¹⁴⁶ In other words, *nibbānic* happiness is attained through a psychological transformation into knowledge (*aññā*) and wisdom (*paññā*), whereas, sensual happiness gives rise to emotional attachment (*ālaya/upādāna*). The knowledge of destruction of all psychological unwholesomeness is constantly persisted in the state of *nibbānic* happiness. This is what is expressed in the *Āṭhakanāgara-sutta* of the *Majjhima-Nikāya*, where it reads, “for him [who attains *nibbānic* happiness], whether he is walking or standing or asleep or awake, the mental cankers are destroyed, and when he thinks of it he certainly knows, “my mental cankers are destroyed.””¹⁴⁷

(4.41) In other words, sense pleasures can be the source or the condition for the arising of a lump of dispositions (*saṅkāra-puñja*), mental, verbal and behavioural, which probably are harmful to oneself and to others, and to both. The search for lust (*rāga/kāma*), craving (*tañhā*) as the highest pleasurable objects are dominating in those who are slave of sense experiences. Sensual happiness thus becomes obstacle for getting knowledge (*aññā*) and wisdom (*paññā*).

¹⁴⁴ M. I. 36.

¹⁴⁵ D. I. 84.

¹⁴⁶ D. II. 81: *Paññāparibhāvitam cittam sammadeva āsavehi vimuccati seyyathidaṁ kāmāsavā bhavāsavā dīṭhāsavā avijjāsava.*

¹⁴⁷ M. I. 532: . . . *tassa carato ceva tiṭṭhato ca suttassa ca jāgarassa ca satataṁ samitāṁ khīṇā vā āsavā, api ca kho naṁ paccavekkhamāno jānāti: khīṇā me āsavāti.*

One's attitude and reaction to sensual pleasure shows different levels of mind, whether it is transformed or not. The tendency to attach to pleasurable sense objects and to repulse by the unpleasurable (*sukha-kāma hi sattā dukkhapaṭikūlā*)¹⁴⁸ is different from one person to another, as to how they view, evaluate and react to it. It is believed that due to the realisation of the limitation and side effect of sensual pleasures in bringing more trouble and suffering to human existence, the Buddha sought for, cultivated and taught the higher kinds and the highest kind of happiness, (as mentioned above), which are beneficial to mankind and other sentient beings.

(4.42) Training in the four higher meditations of the form world (*rūpajjhānāni*) constitutes the initial steps of highest happiness. Entering four *arūpajjhānāni* is a higher stand. Sustaining oneself in the states of cessation of feelings and perceptions is a further advance. According to the Buddha, the sensual happiness is not the highest one, as mankind has misperceived, for there is happiness more excellent and sublime than this, that is the happiness of the first level of meditation. The happiness of the first level of meditation is surpassed by the second, the third and then, by the fourth. The same is true with four levels of formless meditation (*arūpajjhānāni*) and finally the state of cessation of feelings and perceptions, the culmination of the *jhānic* happiness. Attainment of *nibbāna* is the highest happiness (*nibbānam paramam sukham*),¹⁴⁹ the happiness of freedom (*vimuttisukha*) one could enjoy in this very life.¹⁵⁰ *Sukha* as pleasant feeling is confined to the ordinary sensual pleasure

¹⁴⁸ M. I. 341; S. IV. 172.

¹⁴⁹ Dhp. 203-4; S. I. 125, S. IV. 371-2; M. I. 508-9; Ud. 10; Thag. 35.

¹⁵⁰ S. II. 18, 34, 115; III. 163; IV. 141; M. III. 286.

and the first three levels of meditation of the form world (*rūpaloka*) only. As to the former, pleasant feeling is contemporary, transient and can be turned into suffering at any time, while in the case of the latter, pleasant feeling in a subtle and excellent form is prevailed. The highest kind of pleasant feeling among these is that of the third meditation level (*tatiya-jhāna*). Entering and sustaining in the fourth level of meditation, although there is no feeling, pleasant or unpleasant, but since there is a state of equanimity (*upekkhā*), peaceful and tranquil, this level of meditation can be seen as a category of happiness, a sublime one. In other words, happiness in ordinary levels is confined to feeling or a matter of feeling, while happiness in higher levels is no longer a matter of feeling. This means that whatever is non-suffering can be assigned to happiness, of which the state of equanimity is one.¹⁵¹ This is what is repeatedly confirmed by Sāriputta in the *Ānguttara-Nikāya*: “the absence of feelings itself is happiness.”¹⁵²

(4.43) As regards the different levels of happiness of meditation of the form world (*rūpajjhānāni*), the early discourses¹⁵³ describe as the following. The condition for entering the first meditation level (*paṭhama-jhāna*)¹⁵⁴ is being aloof from sense desires, from unwholesome states of mind. Here sensual desires end, where applied thought (*vitakka*) and sustained thought (*vicāra*) works, which is born of solitude and is full of rapture (*pīti*) and happiness (*sukha*). In the second meditation level (*dutiya-jhāna*), which has

¹⁵¹ M. I. 400; S. IV. 228.

¹⁵² A. IV. 415-6: *Etadeva khvettha sukham yad ettha natthi vedayitam..* Cf. S. IV. 228; Sn. 739 for more references.

¹⁵³ A. IV. 408-18; D. I. 37, 74-6; M. I. 247-9, 398-400.

¹⁵⁴ For the similes of the four *jhānic* happinesses, see D. I. 74-6.

internal confidence (*ajjhattam sampasādanam*) and unification of mind (*cetaso ekodibhāvam*), only rapture and happiness remain while applied and sustained thoughts end (*avitakkam avicāram*), wherein the mind becomes calm (*passaddhi*) and one-pointed (*cittass ekaggatā*). Here the rapture and happiness suffuse the entire body and are felt in all of one's organs. In the third meditation level (*tatiyajhāna*), with the detachment for rapture (*pitiyā ca virāgā*), the meditator experiences only the happiness of the whole body with equanimity (*upekkhā*), mindfulness (*sati*) and clear discernment (*sampajañña*). In the fourth level, all feelings such as mental joy (*somanassa*) and sorrow (*domanassa*) as well as physical happiness (*sukha*) and suffering (*dukkha*) are abandoned. This is a state, which has neither-suffering-nor-happiness (*adukkhamasukha*), and where equanimity, mindfulness and purity (*upekkhāsatipārisuddhi*) prevail, the states grouped under the category of “higher” happiness.

(4.44) Following the attainment of the fourth meditation level (*catuttha-jhāna*), four formless meditations (*arūpajjhānāni*), or four peaceful formless attainments transcending material form (*santā vimokkhā atikkamma rūpe āruppā*) arise.¹⁵⁵ The first formless meditation level, which is infinity of space (*ākāsanāñcāyatana*), is described thus. With the complete surmounting of perceptions of matter (*sabbaso rūpasaññānam samatikkamā*), with the disappearance of perceptions of resistance (*paṭigha saññānam atthagamā*), with non-attention to perceptions of variety (*nānattasaññānam amanasikārā*), aware of infinite space (*ananto ākāso*), the meditator enters upon and dwells in the

¹⁵⁵ M. I. 33.

base consisting of infinity of space. In the second formless meditation level known as infinity of consciousness (*viññāṇañcañcāyatana*), the meditator by completely surmounting the infinity of space, and aware of infinite consciousness, enters upon and dwells in the infinity of consciousness. In the third formless meditation level known as sphere of nothingness (*ākiñcaññāyatana*), the meditator by completely surmounting the infinity of consciousness, and aware of the non-existence (*abhāva*) and emptiness (*suññata*) enters upon and dwells in the sphere of nothingness. And the process of attainment of the fourth formless meditation level is described as by completely surmounting the sphere of nothingness, the meditator enters upon and dwells in the sphere of neither-perception-nor-non-perception (*nevasaññā nāsaññāyatana*).¹⁵⁶

(4.45) The attainment of these high levels of happiness requires some restraints (*saṁvara*), such as control over the sense faculties, purifying one's vision of the world in terms of non-substantiality, practising non-attachment (*anālaya*) to sense data, seeing things as they are, eliminating all mental cankers (*āsava*), such as lust (*kāma*), becoming (*bhava*), views (*ditthi*) and ignorance (*avijjā*). Destruction of these cankers is the attainment of *nibbāna*. This is, indeed, a complete state of transformation of personality, both physical and psychological. As regards physicality, the enlightened is in the state of relaxation and appeasement (*kāya-passaddhi*). Though faced with ageing, decay and death, he is freed from emotional reaction and attachment, which may arise from it. Referring to psychology, the enlightened is freed from all mental cankers and defilements, and any other constraints.

¹⁵⁶ D. I. 183-4; A. IV. 415-6;

CONTACT (*PHASSA*) AND FEELING (*VEDANĀ*) IN *NIBBĀNA*

(4.46) The realisation or attainment of *nibbāna* is defined as the total ending of suffering (*anto dukkhassa*).¹⁵⁷ In this very life, since the time of his enlightenment to that of his passing away, there can be no *dukkha* for the enlightened. After his death, at the quenching of the fivefold personality-factors, there can be no *dukkha* in its three forms, namely, ① suffering caused by physical pain (*dukkha-dukkhatā*), ② suffering caused by diverse change of things (*vipariṇāma-dukkhatā*), and ③ suffering caused by psychological change (*saṅkhāra-dukkhatā*).¹⁵⁸ This, however, does not amount to saying that the *nibbāna*-attainer exempts from physical pain. The attainment of *nibbāna* is, in fact, a cognitive, an affective and a behavioural transformations into perfect wisdom, moral qualities and behaviours. There is no mental suffering (*cetasika-dukkha*) and fears for those who have destroyed all cankers and fetters.¹⁵⁹ This is so because, by definition, suffering is caused by craving (*taṇhā*) in the scheme of Four Noble Truths and by attachment (*upādāna*) and ignorance (*moha*) in the scheme of Twelve-Linked Dependent Origination, and by all unwholesome motivations (*akusalamūla*) in later texts, an Arahant who is without craving, attachment, ignorance, and all unwholesome motivations is not subject to further suffering. An important question is asked as to what contact and feeling produced by such a contact the enlightened has with his environment are.

(4.47) After enlightenment, the Buddha and the Arahant can not escape from contact with the external world, as

¹⁵⁷ *Ud.* p. 80.

¹⁵⁸ *D.* III. 216; *S.* IV. 259; *S.* V. 56. Cf. *Vism.* 499.

¹⁵⁹ *Thag.* 707.

stated in the *Itivuttaka*,¹⁶⁰ and as a logical result of that contact and because of their sense faculties remaining unimpaired, they still experience what is physically pleasant (*sukha*) or unpleasant (*dukkha*), enjoyable (*manāpa*) or painful (*amanāpa*). The difference between the enlightened (*arahat*) and the ordinary worldling (*puthujjana*) in the process of contact is not quantitative, but qualitative, or the way they view and react to it.¹⁶¹ The experiential process of the ordinary worldling as recorded in the *Madhupinḍikasutta* of the *Majjhima-Nikāya* consists in (i) contact (*phassa*) as the coming together of the sense faculties, its correspondent objects, and sensory consciousnesses, (ii) conceptualization starts with feeling (*vedanā*) and ends at tendency of perception, confined to subject, object and time. The passage runs thus:

Depending upon the eye and the visible object arises visual consciousness. The meeting (*saṅgati*) of these three is contact (*phassa*). Depending upon contact arises feeling (*vedanā*). What one feels one perceives. What one perceives, one reasons about (*vitakketi*). What one reasons about, one is obsessed with conceptually. What one is conceptually obsessed with is the origin of the number of perceptions and obsessions, which assail a man in regard to visible object cognizable by the eye, belonging to the past, future and present. (This holds

¹⁶⁰ *It.* 38.

¹⁶¹ Kalupahana thinks that, “there is no qualitative difference between the feeling of someone who is in bondage and someone who is freed” (1994: 95-6). But in explanation, he seems to admit such an qualitative difference between the two, when he asserts, “in the case of a person who has attained freedom, there is an absence of the greed, hatred, and confusion that are generally consequent upon sense experience.” (p. 96).

true with the other five triads).¹⁶²

(4.48) The common tendency of identification of oneself with what is given in sense experience is due to the failure in realising the true nature of non-substantiality in our personality-factors and things (*dhammā*) in this world. One takes for granted that personality-factors, either individually or collectively, are one's own self. What arises out of the contact between sense faculties, sense objects and sensory consciousness is wrongly taken as self-identification. At such, suffering finds footing and arises therein. The way to prevent it from arising is to train oneself in such a way that “in what is seen there will be only seeing, in what is heard only hearing, in what is imagined only imagining, in what is cognised only cognising.”¹⁶³ This does not mean that one has to become blind or abandon the sense of seeing, become deaf or abandon the sense of hearing, become inanimate thing or abandon the sense of reflecting and cognising. As long as one is alive, due to the function of sense faculties and personality-factors, one can not escape from them. The only thing one has to do is to avoid any kind of emotional interpretation-cum-reaction of the conditions and occurrences of reality. Unmoved by the conditions and occurrences of things through the coming together of senses, sensory objects and sensory consciousness, one becomes

¹⁶² M. I. 111-2: *cakkhuñcāvuso paṭicca rūpe ca uppajjati cakkhuviññānam tiṇṇam sañgati phasso, phassapaccayā vedanā, yani, vedeti tam sañjānāti, yam sañjānāti tam vitakketi, yam vitakkheti tam papañceti, yam papañceti tatonidānam purisam papañcasaññāsañkhā samudācaranti atitānāgata-paccupanannesu rūpesu.* Translation after MLS. I. 145, L. D. Silva (1987): 13, D. J. Kalupahana (1987): 32, and EB. IV. 236.

¹⁶³ *Ud.* 8: *tasmatiha te Bāhiya evam sikkhitabbam: diṭṭhe diṭṭhamattam bhavissati, sute sutamattam bhavissati, mute mutamattam bhavissati, viññāte viññātamattam bhavissati.* This method of cognitive and emotional training also recurs in full at S. IV. 72; KS. IV. 11.

detached from them. When there is detachment, there is stability. When there is stability, there is calmness; when there is calmness, there is no delight; where there is no delight, there is no coming-and-going; when there is no coming-and-going, there is no dying and being-reborn; when there is no dying and being-reborn, there is nothing ‘here’ and ‘there’ and ‘in between.’ This, indeed, is the end of suffering.¹⁶⁴

(4.49) What is of great importance is that, for the ordinary worldling, contact is involved in the emotional and deliberative reactions, and as a result of such reactions, it leads to desire for, and then, attachment to various kinds of possessions (*upadhi*), such as pleasurable objects (*kāmūpadhi*), fivefold personality-factors (*khandhūpadhi*), passions (*kilesūpadhi*) and volition (*abhisaṅkhārūpadhīti*).¹⁶⁵

(4.50) Such contacts give rise to different kinds of feeling (*vedanā*), namely, physical feeling (*kāyika-vedanā*), mental feeling (*cetasika-vedanā*).¹⁶⁶ These two are again divided into three each, to wit, pleasant feeling (*sukha-vedanā*), unpleasant feeling (*dukkha-vedanā*) and indifferent feeling (*adukkhamasukha-vedanā*).¹⁶⁷ In the ordinary worldling, there is always a reaction or tendency to different feelings. It is recorded in the early discourses that a desire or the tendency to lust (*rāga*) lies in pleasant feeling (*sukha-vedanā*), a desire or the tendency to aversion, in unpleasant feeling (*dukkha-vedanā*), and a desire or the tendency to

¹⁶⁴ *Ud.* 80: *Nissitassa ca calitāni anissitassa calitāni natthi, calite asati passaddhi, passadhiyā sati rati na hoti, ratiyā asati āgatgati na hoti, āgati-gatiyā asati cutūpapāto na hoti, cutūpapātē asati nevidha na hurāni na ubhayamantare, eseavanto dukkhasātī.*

¹⁶⁵ *SnA.* p. 30.

¹⁶⁶ *S. IV.* 231.

¹⁶⁷ *D. III.* 216, 275; *S. IV.* 216, 331.

ignorance, in neutral feeling (*adukkhamasukha-vedanā*).¹⁶⁸ That means that there is often emotional attachment reaction to each and every kinds of feeling arisen from contact between sense faculties and sense objects. Pleasant feelings give rise to attachment (*ālaya / upādāna*), to possessions (*upadhi*), for a human being will not be satisfied with his possessions, and would want to have more and more of them. Unpleasant feelings give rise to dislike, disinterest, dissatisfaction, aversion, hatred, destruction, and revolt against them. Neutral feelings give rise to indifferent attitude, and then to ignorance. Thus, greed or lust (*rāga/lobha*), hatred (*dosa*) and ignorance (*moha*) lie dormant in the base of all feelings, pleasant, unpleasant and neutral, respectively. It is in this sense that the Buddha declares that “whatsoever is experienced as a feeling is associated with suffering.”¹⁶⁹

(4.51) The contact and feeling, which the enlightened establishes with his environment, is different from that of the ordinary worldling, for his mind is mastered (*cetovasippatta*) and his sense faculties controlled (*samāhit indriyo*),¹⁷⁰ by exercise of wise reflection (*yoniso manasikāra*).¹⁷¹ For the enlightened, feeling is seen as merely feeling, without any emotional judgement and reaction arisen therein. He has full understanding of the nature of feeling, and due to this understanding, enlightenment is established.¹⁷² He knows the phenomenon of feeling (*vedanā*), the arising of feeling (*ayam vedanāsamudayo*), the cause leading to the arising of

¹⁶⁸ S. IV. 205.

¹⁶⁹ S. IV. 216: *yam kiñci vedayitam tam dukhasminti*.

¹⁷⁰ A. II. 6, 36.

¹⁷¹ S. V. 2-30; A. I. 11-31; It. 9.

¹⁷² S. IV. 233.

feeling (*ayam vedanāsamudayagāminī*), the ceasing of feeling (*ayam vedanānirodho ti*), the path leading to the ceasing of feeling (*ayam vedanānirodhagāminī paṭipadāti*), the danger of feeling (*ayam vedanāya ādīnavoti*) and the escape from feeling (*ayam vedanāya nissaraṇanti*).¹⁷³ That is to say for the enlightened, all feelings arise, persist and pass away with his full mindfulness (*sati*), clear discernment (*sampajañña*) and wisdom (*paññā*).¹⁷⁴

(4.52) However, in the experiential process, because of total absence of craving (*taṇhā*), lust (*rāga*) and attachment (*upādāna*), all forms of mental pain are rooted out, the enlightened only experiences bodily pleasantness (*sukha*) or painfulness (*dukkha*), comfort (*manāpa*) or discomfort (*amanāpa*).¹⁷⁵ As to experiencing painful feelings, the enlightened does not grieve, lament, moan, beat his breast or faint. He feels only physical feelings and mental feelings.¹⁷⁶ All kinds of feelings rooted in or conditioned for lust (*rāga*) and craving (*taṇhā*) in the enlightened are destroyed. *Nibbāna* can be attained only when all feelings as conditions for arising of craving are eliminated.¹⁷⁷ The difference between the enlightened and the common folk is that in the former there is total absence of greed or lust (*lobha/rāga*), hatred (*dosa*) and ignorance (*moha*) involved in the process of sense experience,¹⁷⁸ whereas, in the latter, this tendency is obviously too strong that it is out of his control. Another

¹⁷³ *S.* IV. 233.

¹⁷⁴ *M.* III. 124; *A.* IV. 32.

¹⁷⁵ *It.* 38. Cf. *S.* IV. 209.

¹⁷⁶ *S.* IV. 209: *So ekām vedanām vediyati kāyikām na cetasikām.*

¹⁷⁷ *Sn.* 739: *vedanānām khayā bhikkhu nicchāto parinibbuto.*

¹⁷⁸ *S.* V. 8: *Yo kho . . . rāgakkhayo dosakkhayo mohakkhayo idam vuccati amataṁ* (that which is the destruction of lust, hatred and of delusion, is called the deathless [i.e. *nibbāna*].)

difference is that the former fully overcomes the dual world of experience (*ajjhalaokadhamma*), such as gain (*lābha*) and loss (*alābha*), good depute (*yasa*) and disrepute (*ayasa*), praise (*pasāmsā*) and blame (*nindā*), happiness (*sukha*) and suffering (*dukkha*),¹⁷⁹ while the latter is subject to and overwhelmed by such experiences. This, however, does not amount to saying that he does not experience or becomes insensitive towards the world. The early discourses deal with painful feeling in an arahant due to physical changes, such as Buddha's pain caused by a stone splinter,¹⁸⁰ or indigestion,¹⁸¹ etc. The distinction of the enlightened is that he experiences the world of feelings with mindfulness (*sati*) and without any emotional reactions. This is clearly explained in the *Dhātuvibhaṅga-sutta* of the *Majjhima-Nikāya*. If he experiences a feeling, pleasant, unpleasant or neutral, he understands that it is impermanent (*sā aniccā ti pajānāti*), it is not indulged in (*anajjhositā ti pajānāti*), it is not an object of enjoyment (*anabhinanditāti pajānāti*). He is detached to the feelings experienced (*visamyutto nām vedeti*). Experiencing a feeling partakes to the body, he knows that he is experiencing a feeling partakes to the body. Experiencing a feeling so long as the body lasts, he knows he is doing so.

On the dissolution of the body at death, he knows that all feelings will become cooled.¹⁸² In him, "a tendency to attachment is to be got rid of in pleasant feeling; a tendency to repulsion is to be got rid of in unpleasant feeling; and a tendency to ignorance is to be got rid of in neutral

¹⁷⁹ A. IV. 157; D. III. 260.

¹⁸⁰ *Vin.* II. 193.

¹⁸¹ D. II. 127.

¹⁸² M. III. 244-5. Cf. D. I. 46; D. II. 128; S. II. 83; A. II. 198.

feeling.”¹⁸³ The way of refraining him from attachment is arisen from pleasant feeling, from repulsion caused by unpleasant feeling and from ignorance conditioned by neutral feeling, makes an Arahant distinct from an unenlightened ordinary worldling (*puthujjana*).

The way the person who attains *nibbāna* experiences the world is best illustrated by the simile of the lotus (*puṇḍarīka*).¹⁸⁴ Here, like a lotus, though born in the muddy water, grows in it and rises above it, remains unstirred by it, so the Tathāgata or an Arahant, though born in the world and remaining in it, having overcome the world, abides unsoiled by the world (*lokena anupalitto*). This means that in experiential world of the enlightened, there is no attachment, emotional, cognitive or behavioural. This is what is exactly expressed in the *Udāna*, where it reads: “Then, Bāhiya, thus must you train yourself: In what is seen there will be only seeing, in what is heard only hearing, in what is imagined only imagining, in what is cognised only cognising.”¹⁸⁵ Here, there is only mere factual experience without any value judgement. It is absolutely objectivity, and no epistemological and psychological reactions are arisen therein, for there is no sense data to be grasped, when sense organs are controlled. This way of control over emotional and cognitive attachment is believed to end the whole mass of suffering.¹⁸⁶

¹⁸³ M. I. 303: *Sukhāya . . . vedanāya rāgānusayo pahātabbo, dukkhāya vedanāya paṭighānusayo, adukkhamasukhāya vedanāya avijjānusayo pahātaboo.*

¹⁸⁴ A. II. 37.

¹⁸⁵ *Ud.* 8: *tasmātiha te Bāhiya evam sikkhitabbarā: diṭṭhe diṭṭhamattam bhavissati, sute sutamattam bhavissati, mute mutamattam bhavissati, viññātē viññātamattam bhavissati.* This method of cognitive and emotional training also recurs in full at S. IV. 72; KS. IV. 11.

¹⁸⁶ *Ud.* 8; S. IV. 72-3.

(4.53) In other words, if egocentricity, attachment (*ālaya*) and grasping (*upādāna*) are conditioned by unwholesome emotional forces (*akusala-cetasika*), *nibbāna* is the freedom from such emotions. In the *nibbāna*-attainer, anxiety or grief is totally driven out: “having overcome all anxiety, he is free from it, and has attained *nibbāna*.¹⁸⁷

When all anxieties are uprooted, he is free from fear: “There is nothing to fear anywhere in one who has reached the highest place, *nibbāna*.¹⁸⁸ *Nibbāna* is the total absence of unwholesome motivations (*akusalamūla*). Where *nibbāna* prevails, cravings (*taṇhā*) is uprooted: “By the destruction of cravings, there is a total disinterest and cessation, which is *nibbāna*.¹⁸⁹ In him, only wholesome motivations (*kusalamūla*), such as loving-kindness (*mettā*), compassion (*karuṇā*), awareness, mindfulness (*sati*), clear discernment (*sampajañña*), wise reflection (*yoniso manasikāra*) and wisdom (*paññā*) are constantly prevailed.

COGNITION IN *NIBBĀNA*

(4.54) Cognitive transformation is one of the attributes of the enlightened who attains *nibbāna* in this life. All emotional and cognitive unwholesomenesses such as greed or lust (*lobha/rāga*), hatred (*dosa*), view (*diṭṭhi*) and ignorance (*moha*) are totally destroyed in the enlightened.¹⁹⁰ The knowledge in realisation of *nibbāna* through the four noble truths is described as “the dawn of the dustless and stainless vision of phenomena” (*virajam vītamalam dhamma*

¹⁸⁷ *Sn.* 593: *sabbasokaṁ atikkanto asoko hoti nibbuto.*

¹⁸⁸ *It.* 122: *phuṭṭhassa paramā santi nibbānari akutobhayari.*

¹⁸⁹ *Ud.* 3: *sabbato tanhānaṁ khayā asesavirāganirodho nibbānam.*

¹⁹⁰ *Vbh.* 373; *Dhs.* 1448.

cukkhum upapādi),¹⁹¹ and “the arising of the eye, knowledge, insight, wisdom and light” (*cakkhum udapādi nāṇam udapādi paññā udapādi vijjā udapādi āloko udapādi*).¹⁹² This knowledge in *nibbāna* is also defined as the attainment of higher knowledge (*nibbānassa sacchikiriyā nāyassa adhigamo*),¹⁹³ a vision born on phenomena that is unheard of before (*pubbe ananussutesu dhammesu*).¹⁹⁴ A number of terms is used to denote the cognitive aspect of *nibbāna*, such as, knowledge (*aññā/nāṇa*¹⁹⁵/*nāya*¹⁹⁶), complete knowledge (*pariññā*), higher knowledge (*abhiññā*), wisdom (*paññā*) or insight (*vipassanā*).¹⁹⁷ This is the knowledge of the true nature of phenomena as they really are (*yathābhūtadassana/nāṇa*).¹⁹⁸ That is what is called perception of impermanence in what is impermanent (*anicce aniccasaññā*), of suffering in what is suffering (*dukkhes dukkhasaññā*), and perception of non-substantiality in what is soulless (*anatte anattasaññā*).¹⁹⁹

(4.55) In *nibbāna*, consciousness (*viññāṇa*) ends (*viññāṇassa nirodha*). The end of consciousness is to bring about the non-generation of suffering.²⁰⁰ The concept of “end” (*nirodha*) referred to consciousness is to imply to “calming down” of its content and function in relation with

¹⁹¹ S. V. 423.

¹⁹² S. V. 422-6.

¹⁹³ M. I. 10

¹⁹⁴ D. V. 422.

¹⁹⁵ See, e.g. M. I. 175: *āsavakkhayañāṇa*, the knowledge of destruction of mental cankers.

¹⁹⁶ See, e.g. M. I. 10: *Nāyassa adhigamāya nibbānassa sacchikiriyāya*.

¹⁹⁷ D. III. 230; M. I. 10; S. III. 26.

¹⁹⁸ S. V. 144.

¹⁹⁹ A. II. 51-2.

²⁰⁰ Sn. 734: *viññāṇassa nirodhena natthi dukkhassa sambhavo*.

grasping (*upādāna*),²⁰¹ which is different from the state of a dead person. It is said that by calming consciousness one is satisfied and attains *nibbāna*.²⁰² Thus, the end of consciousness here should be understood as being transformed into wisdom (*paññā* / *aññā* / *ñāṇa* / *ñāṇadassana*). In *samsāra*, consciousness (*viññāṇa*) enters the mother's womb, giving rise to psycho-physicality (*nāma-rūpa*).²⁰³ In *nibbāna*, consciousness becomes unestablished (*asañthite*)²⁰⁴ or goes to rest (*viññāṇam attham agamā*),²⁰⁵ which means no kammic process can be taken place in *nibbāna*, whether present or future. The transformation of consciousness (*viññāṇa*) into wisdom (*paññā*) is, therefore, to free mind from mental cankers (*āsavehi cittāni vimuccimūsu*). When mind is freed from mental cankers, its content becomes knowledge (*ñāṇa*) or wisdom (*paññā*), the knowledge of being freed: "in liberation comes the knowledge I am free" (*vimuttasmim vimuttamhīti ñānam hoti*).²⁰⁶

(4.56) In the *Mahā Vedalla Sutta* of the *Majjhima-Nikāya*,²⁰⁷ being asked the question, "that which is wisdom (*paññā*) and that which is discriminative consciousness (*viññāṇa*), are associated or dissociated? And is it possible to lay down a difference between them?" Sāriputta is represented as replying in the negative. He goes on saying that discriminative consciousness (*viññāṇa*) is to be apprehended (*pariññeyya*), while wisdom (*paññā*) is to be

²⁰¹ See, e.g. *M.* III. 223; *M.* II. 265, for the role of consciousness in grasping and its unsettledness (*asañthite*) is to bring about detachment.

²⁰² *Sn.* 734: *viññāṇūpasamā bhikkhu nicchāto parinibbutoti.*

²⁰³ *D.* II. 63.

²⁰⁴ *M.* III. 223; *S.* II. 66.

²⁰⁵ *Ud.* 93.

²⁰⁶ *S.* IV. 20.

²⁰⁷ *M.* I. 292.

cultivated (*bhāvetabba*).²⁰⁸ According to Buddhaghosa, wisdom (*paññā*) is a highly transformed state of both perceptual knowledge (*saññā*) and discriminative knowledge (*viññāṇa*).²⁰⁹ It is defined as comprehending higher knowledge (*abhiññā*), complete knowledge (*pariññā*), knowledge-and-vision (*ñāṇa-dassana*) and elimination (*pahāṇa*).²¹⁰ It is the knowledge of seeing things as they really are (*yathābhūta-dassana*), a means to the destruction of mental cankers (*āsavakkhaya*)²¹¹ and attainment of enlightenment (*bodhi*).²¹²

(4.57) The nature of consciousness and cognition of the enlightened is beautifully expressed in the canonical passage of the *Majjhima-Nikāya*.²¹³ As regards the external world, his consciousness is undistracted and not disfused (*bahiddhā viññāṇam avikkhittam avisatam*). The effect of this undistracted and undiffused consciousness is brought to home due to the full control over the senses in relation with their objects. When he has seen the visible with the eye, heard the sound with the ear, felt the odour with the nose, tasted the flavor with the tongue, touched the tangible with the body, he does not run after these sense objects, is not tied by satisfaction in them, and is not fettered by the fetter of satisfaction in them. Referring to what is internal, his consciousness is not established (*ajjhattaram asaṇṭhitam*). He does not run after the four meditation levels of the form world (*rūpajjhānāni*), is not tied by satisfaction in them, and

²⁰⁸ *M. I.* 293.

²⁰⁹ *Vism.* 369-70.

²¹⁰ *M. I.* 293.

²¹¹ *D. I.* 83-4; *M. I.* 175.

²¹² *S. IV.* 231.

²¹³ *M. III.* 223-8.

is not fettered by the fetter of satisfaction in them. He remains undisturbed without grasping (*anupādāya na paritaseyya*). This is possible because he does not identify each and every personality-factors, such as physical body (*rūpa*), feeling (*vedanā*), perception (*saññā*), habitual tendencies (*saṅkhāra*) and discriminative consciousness (*viññāna*) with self (*attā*), nor self with personality-factors. He does not regard personality-factors in self, nor self in personality-factors. Due to this attitude, his personality-factors alter and otherwise. With the alteration and otherwiseness in personality-factors, his consciousness is not occupied with the alteration in his personality-factors, no disturbance arises. Because of non-disturbance, non-obsession of his thought arises. Because of non-obsession of his thought, he is neither afraid nor annoyed or full of longing, and he is not disturbed by grasping. In other words, in the *nibbānic* knowledge, the world of reality is seen in the “mere” (*matta//mātra*) “in what is seen there will be only seeing, in what is heard only hearing, in what is imagined only imagining, in what is cognised only cognising.”²¹⁴

(4.58) It is of great importance to note here that at the stage of the fourth meditation level (*catuttha-jhāna*) of the form world (*rūpajjhānāni*), there are options open to a meditator. They are (i) four meditation levels of the formless world (*arūpajjhānāni*), (ii) fivefold supernatural power (*pañcābhiññā*), and (iii) the threefold knowledge (*tevijjā*) or the sixfold higher knowledges (*chal-abhiññā*). The attainment of the first two is not extremely crucial for

²¹⁴ *Ud.* 8: *tasmātiha te Bāhiya evam sikkhitabbam: dīṭhe dīṭhamattam bhavissati, sute sutamattam bhavissati, mute mutamattam bhavissati, viññāte viññātamattam bhavissati.* This method of cognitive and emotional training also recurs in full at *S.* IV. 72; *KS.* IV. 11.

attainment of *nibbāna*, while the last concerns with the completely cognitive transformation of *nibbāna*, which is frequently mentioned in early discourses.²¹⁵ The best option for the meditator, at this stage of meditation level, is to apply his mind to the realisation of the destruction of mental cankers (*āsavānam khyaññāṇāya cittam abhininnāmesim*).²¹⁶ With this direction, he realises the true nature of cankers, its causes, its end and the way leading to this end. Thus knowing and thus seeing, this mind of mine became freed from cankers of sensuality (*kāmāsavo*), canker of becoming (*bhavāsavo*) and canker of ignorance (*avijjāsavo*). The knowledge, “this is being freed,” arises in the enlightened. He knows: “birth is destroyed, the holy life is lived, what has to be done is done, there is no more future rebirth.”²¹⁷ The knowledge of the destruction of mental cankers (*āsavakkhaya-ñāṇa*) is indeed the knowledge of the four noble truths, and to attain it is to attain threefold knowledge (*tevijjā/tisso vijjā//tisro-vidyāh*).

(4.59) The three forms of knowledge are (i) retrocognition or reminiscence of the past lives (*pubbenivāsānussati-ñāṇavijjā // pūrva-nivāsāṇusmṛti-jñāna-sākṣātkriya-vidyā*), (ii) clairvoyance or knowledge of passing and reappearing of beings (*cutūpapāta-ñāṇa-vijjā // cyutu-upapāda-jñāna-sākṣātkriya-vidyā*), (iii) knowledge of the destruction of mental intoxication, or knowledge of liberation (*āsavakkhaya-ñāṇa-vijjā // āsarava-kṣaya-jñāna-sākṣātkriya-vidyā*). This threefold list of knowledge is

²¹⁵ *D.* III. 220, 275; *M.* II. 105; *A.* I. 163-5; *A.* V. 211.

²¹⁶ *M.* IV. 23.

²¹⁷ *M.* IV. 23: *Khīṇā jāti vusitarām brahmacariyām kataṁ karanīyām nāparam itthattāyāti.*

extended, according to some texts,²¹⁸ to the fivefold knowledge (*pañcabhiññā*), while in some others,²¹⁹ it is the sixfold (*chal-abhiññā*). The six consisting of the three additional ones, preceding the original three, are (i) the knowledge of supernatural powers (*iddhividhā-ñāṇa* // *rddhividhi-jñānam*), (ii) divine ear or claudience (*dibbasotadhātu-ñāṇa* // *divya-śrotram-jñānam*), (iii) telepathy or the knowledge of other's mind (*cetopariyañāṇa* // *paracitta-jñānam*), (iv) clairvoyance or divine eye (*dibbacakku-ñāṇa* // *divya-cakṣus-jñānam*), (v) retrocognition or recollection of past lives (*pubbenivāsānussati* // *pūrvanivāsānusmṛti*), and (vi) knowledge of the exhaustion of all mental intoxicants (*āsavakkhayañāṇa* // *āsravakśaya-jñānam*).

(4.60) These are kinds of “direct knowledge which has left behind the physical world of space and time, or perception, of ideation, of causality, of logical reasoning, and is, therefore, psychic in the fullest sense.”²²⁰ The first five are the mundane modes of higher knowledge (*lokiya abhiññā*), attainable through perfect cultivation of concentration (*saṃādhi*), while the last, the supra-mundane mode of higher knowledge (*lokuttara abhiññā*), attainable through meditative insight (*vipassanā*) or destruction of all mental cankers (*āsavakkhaya*), the attainment of Arahant. Thus, only the knowledge of the exhaustion of all mental intoxicants (*āsavakkhayañāṇa* // *āsravakśaya-jñānam*) is concerned with the path of holiness (*ariya-magga*) or path of the supramundane (*lokuttara-magga*) of an Arahant. The destruction of all mental cankers (*āsavakkhaya*), namely, (i)

²¹⁸ S. II. 216.

²¹⁹ D. III. 281; A. III. 280.

²²⁰ EB. I. s.v. *abhiññā*: 97a.

canker of sensuality (*kāmāsavo* // *kāmāsrava*), (ii) canker of becoming (*bhavāsavo* // *bhavāsrava*), (iii) canker of views (*dīṭṭhāsava* // *dṛṣṭāsrava*), canker of views, (iv) the canker of ignorance (*avijjāsavo* // *avidyāsrava*),²²¹ is to attain *nibbāna*. This is concisely expressed thus, “Having destroyed all mental cankers, one enters and abides in the freedom of mind (*ceto-vimuttim*) and freedom through wisdom (*paññā-vimuttim*), which is freed from mental cankers and which is realised by one’s own knowledge in this very life.”²²²

NIBBĀNA AND CESSATION OF FEELINGS AND PERCEPTIONS (SAṄṄĀVEDAYITANIRODHA)

(4.61) An identification of *nibbāna* with the highest level of meditation, known as state of cessation of feelings and perceptions (*saṄṄāvedayitanirodha*) or in short, state of cessation (*nirodha-samāpatti*), was often seen among Brahmanical thinkers during the time of the Buddha.

It is of significance to note here the omission the state of cessation of feelings and perceptions (*saṄṄāvedayitanirodha*) in the first passage of the *Udāna* 80, in relation with the nature of *nibbāna*, while the four states of higher *jhānas* preceding it are mentioned. This omission would mean that there is no identification of *nibbāna* with the state of cessation of feelings and perceptions. However, there is some significant similarity between the two. One of the differences is that in both there is no craving (*taṇhā*), although in the former it is non-existent forever, while in the latter, contemporary, or time-bound. It is so because, as stated earlier, as regards the former, *nibbāna* is total

²²¹ *D.* III. 230, 276; *M.* I. 9; *S.* IV. 257; *S.* V. 59; *Vbh.* 373; *Dhs.* 1448.

²²² *D.* III. 281; *A.* III. 19: *āśavānaṁ khayā anāśavaṁ cetovimuttim* *paññāvimuttim* *dīṭṭhe* *va* *dhamme* *sayaṁ abhiññā* *sacchikatvā* *upasampajja* *viharati*.

destruction of craving (*tañhā*),²²³ and as to the latter, because craving (*tañhā*) finds footing only in feeling (*vedanā*) and perception (*saññā*), it logically follows that it is not exist in the absence of feelings and perceptions.²²⁴ Another contrast between the two is that the state of cessation is to be experienced by the body (*kāyena sacchikarañiyā dhammā*), whereas *nibbāna* is to be realised through wisdom (*paññā*).

(4.62) While there is similarity between two states in having no craving (*tañhā*), there is another significant point of difference. In the case of the state of cessation of feelings and perceptions (*saññāvedayitanirodha*), there is completely no sense experience, happy (*sukha*) or unhappy (*dukkha*), pleasant (*manāpa*) or unpleasant (*amanāpa*), because there is no contact (*phassa*) to and awareness of the outside world. His unmovedness before internal and external worlds is a natural process, which this state of highest meditation can give. On the other hand, the person who attains *nibbāna* with sense faculties remaining unimpaired do not escape from the contact with external world, and he, therefore, experiences it with a constant mindfulness (*sati*) and wisdom (*paññā*) on the nature of its impermanence, danger and escape, and hence he is unmoved by them. In other words, in the case of the person who attains *nibbāna*, he has full control over his sense faculties, contacts, feelings so that no craving can be able to be re-arisen out of this, while in the case of cessation of feelings and perceptions, the person is believed not come to contact with, and thus, is not aware of the external world,

²²³ S. III. 190; Vin. I. 9.

²²⁴ As in the natural order of series of dependent origination, craving is conditioned by feeling or sensation (*vedanā paccayā tañhā*), while in reverse order, from the ceasing of feeling arises the ceasing of craving (*vedanānirodhā tañhānirodho*).

so the problem of being unmoved or moved dose not arise.

(4.63) Another difference is that while walking, standing, sitting, lying, etc., the one who attains *nibbāna* is fully aware and mindful of all activities of the sense faculties, having a control over them, whereas the one who attains the state of cessation of feelings and perceptions has no such awareness, because of his sense being temporarily suspending. In the former, all dispositions, bodily, mental and verbal, still function under his control in mindfulness (*sati*), clear discernment (*sampajañña*) and wisdom (*paññā*) without attachment (*ālaya*) and grasping (*upādāna*), while in the latter, all dispositions cease to exist as long as he emerges from this highest meditation. Remaining in this state, he enjoys the peace and tranquillity. All the trouble by impressions arisen through the sense faculties is ceased. However, this sort of peace and tranquillity is temporary.

(4.64) There is another difference between the two, based on the discussion of a kind of *nibbāna* in this very life in the *Itivuttaka* 38f (quoted above).²²⁵ An arhant or the Tathāgata who has attained *nibbāna* in this life is still subject to the feelings, happy (*sukha*) or painful (*dukkha*), pleasant (*manāpa*) or unpleasant (*amanāpa*) due to the function of his senses, while such a sensory experience finds no footing in the one who attains the state of cessation of feelings and perceptions. Therefore the problem of how to control the physically painful sensations does not apply to the latter, while for the former, he should enter into this state of cessation of feelings and perceptions for a temporary purpose, say controlling physical discomfort. This was the way the Buddha did before his re-emerging to

²²⁵ Cf. S. IV. 209.

the normal state, and then finally passing away.²²⁶

NIBBĀNA AS CESSATION OF SAMĀSĀRA

(4.65) As recorded in the Buddhist texts, the condition for the survival of human life and that of other sentient beings is grasping or craving for life (*bhava-tanhā*). *Nibbāna* to the contrary, is the cessation of such craving and grasping. One of the most attributes of *nibbāna* is, therefore, the ending of the continuity of rebirth (*samsāra*) or becoming (*bhavacakka*). If suffering (*dukkha*) is constituted of, or defined as birth (*jāti*), ageing (*jarā*), death (*maraṇam*), sorrow (*soka*), lamentation (*parideva*), pain (*dukkha*), grief (*domanassa*) and despair (*upāyāsa*),²²⁷ the ending of this whole mass of suffering (*anto dukkhassa*)²²⁸ is *nibbāna*. In other words, *nibbāna* is cessation of becoming (*bhavanirodho nibbānam*),²²⁹ or the end of cycle of birth and death (*jātimaraṇassa antam*). According to the theories of *kamma* and rebirth, a being is born is due to the fetters of ignorance (*avijjā*), craving (*tanhā*) and attachment (*upādāna*). The attainment of *nibbāna*, to the contrary, consists in destruction of these three fetters by development of knowledge (*vijjā*) and wisdom (*paññā*), or in other words, in destruction of *samsāra*. The Buddha as well as many other Arahants beautifully express the destruction of *samsāra* in the following spirited joy utterance (*udāna*): “birth is destroyed, the holy life is lived, what has to be done is done, there is no more future rebirth.”²³⁰

²²⁶ *D.* II. 156.

²²⁷ *D.* II. 305.

²²⁸ *Ud.* 80.

²²⁹ *S.* II. 117.

²³⁰ *M.* I. 4: *Khiṇā jāti yusitam brahmacariyam katarū karanīyam nāparam itthattāyāti.*

(4.66) It should be noted here that the concept of cycle of birth and death in that context is understood in terms of future, not of present. That is to say, the Buddha, the Tathāgata, an Arahant or the enlightened, who attained *nibbāna* can not save himself from ageing, decay and finally, physical death in this life. The process of his death was initiated when he was born in this world, as an unavoidable principle of dependent origination, he had no control over it. But he is distinct from us in a sense that he fully cuts off a new birth, ageing, decay and death following upon that birth, in the future. That is to say, if one's desire for becoming (*bhava-taṇhā*) is one of factors to rebirth, then with the complete elimination of such a desire, he is certainly on the way to be freed from future becoming. What should be noted here is that knowing death is an unavoidable by mankind, who has come to be born as a result of his previous dispositions and desire for survival (*bhava-taṇthā*), the Buddha or an Arahant does not waste his time worrying about death, nor attempt fruitlessly to avoid it. He rather shows us the way out of this problem of immediate suffering, by practicing awareness and mindfulness.

(4.67) According to Buddhism *saṃsāra* is but a corollary to the law of *kamma*. The status of one's present life is dependent upon the intentional actions (*cetanā*) performed both in the present and in the past. The force of *kamma* will determine the status of man in present as well as his future birth. Therefore, beings are heirs to their deeds.²³¹ The cycle of becoming (*bhavacakka*) is described in series of Dependent Origination (*Paṭiccasamuppāda*), which consists in twelve links beginning

²³¹ The Buddha taught: “Deeds are one's own, O brahman, beings are heirs to deeds, deeds are matrix, deeds are kin, deeds are arbiters (*kammapatisarana*). Deeds divides beings, that is to say by lowness and excellence.” (*M. III. 203; MLS.III.249*).

with ignorance (*avijjā*) and then activities (*sankhāra*), consciousness (*viññāṇa*), name-and-matter (*nāma-rūpa*), six sense-organs (*salāyatana*), contact (*phassa*), feeling (*vedanā*), craving (*tañhā*), grasping or clinging (*upādāna*), becoming (*bhava*), birth (*jāti*), decay and death (*jarā-maraṇa*).²³² The origination of these series can be traced to other inter-factors, of which consciousness (*viññāṇa*) is one. In Buddhism, consciousness (*viññāṇa*) contributes a state of becoming (*bhava*) in the next life, although Buddhism does not admit a substantial agent of transmigration. Consciousness as food (*viññāṇahāro*) is cited as the direct cause of renewed becoming in *samsāra* in the future.²³³ It is this survival consciousness (*samvattanika viññāṇa*) that is responsible for becoming.²³⁴ However, in the process of becoming (*bhava*), consciousness (*viññāṇa*) does not function alone. It is accompanied by ignorance (*avijjā*), intentional forces (*kamma/cetanā*), and craving (*tañhā*), grasping (*upādāna*).

Thus *samsāra* is conditioned by the five factors, to wit, ignorance (*avijjā*), consciousness (*viññāṇa*), intentional forces (*kamma*), craving (*tañhā*) and grasping (*upādāna*), of which the second, the third and the fourth are important, as the following passage runs: “action (*kamma*) is the field (*khettaṁ*); consciousness (*viññāṇa*), the seed (*bijam*) and craving (*tañhā*), the moisture (*sineho*). For beings that are hindered by delusion (*moha*), fettered by craving, consciousness is established in lower worlds (*hināya dhātuyā*).”²³⁵ Here *kamma*, consciousness

²³² S. II. 2ff.

²³³ S. II. 13: *viññāṇahāro . . . punabbhavābhinibbattiyā paccayo.*

²³⁴ M. II. 262.

²³⁵ A. I. 223: “*Ito kho Ānanda kammanī khettaṁ viññāṇamī bijam tanhā sineho avijjāñīvaraṇanānāṁ satānāṁ sattānāṁ tanhāsaññojanānāṁ majjhimāya dhātuyā viññānamī patīhitamī.*”

and craving are triangle factors responsible for rebirth. Action (*kamma*) performed becomes one's own energy, sustained, carried and transformed by consciousness (*viññāna*).²³⁶ In order to attain *nibbāna*, one is, therefore, advised not to set his consciousness on becoming (*viññānam bhave na tiñthe*).²³⁷ Thus by means of cessation (*nirodha*) of these, birth, ageing and death will not come into existence in the future. This is what the Buddha expresses in the following passage, where it runs:

Being myself subject to birth, ageing, disease, death, sorrow and defilement; seeing danger in what is subject to these things; seeking unborn (*ajāta*), unageing, (*ajara*) diseaseless (*abyādhīm*), deathless (*amata*), sorrowless (*asokamī*), undefiled (*asankiliññhamī*), supreme security from bondage —*Nibbāna* I attained. Knowledge and vision arose in me; unshakeable is the deliverance of my mind. This is the last birth. Now there is no more becoming.²³⁸

In brief, for the enlightened, who has attained *nibbāna*, the twelve-linked series of dependent origination (*paṭiccasamuppāda*) is disjoined. Here ignorance (*avijjā*) as its matrix though not first cause, is transformed into wisdom (*vijjā/paññā*), the other eleven links of the saṃsāric chain are powerless to hold it together. In him, contact (*phassa*) is a mere experience without any emotional and volitional attachment, based on wise reflection (*yonisa manasikāra*) and mindfulness (*sati*). Feeling (*vedanā*) followed is transformed. Craving (*tañhā*) is destroyed. Grasping (*upādāna*) finds no more footing.

²³⁶ S. II. 97; S. IV. 86.

²³⁷ Sn. 1055.

²³⁸ M I. 167; MLS I. 211.

NIBBĀNA AND ANATTA

(4.68) According to Early Buddhist literature, *nibbāna* is not a permanent (*nicca*) and substantial (*atta*) entity. Rather it is timelessly (*akāliko*) highest bliss (*nibbānam paramam sukham*).²³⁹ But there is a strong tendency to consider *nibbāna* as ultimate reality in the sense of permanent and eternal happiness or a sort of transcendental experience. To consider *nibbāna* as a permanent and eternal happiness would amount to asserting that there is a permanent and eternal experiential agent, who continues to have such experience. This logically leads to admitting an eternal agent or a Supreme Being, due to him one can account for the experience of permanent and eternal happiness. If it being the case, the assertion that *nibbāna* is permanent is contradictory to the Buddha's teaching of non-substantiality (*anatta*), which applies not only to the world of bondage (*samsāra*), but also to *nibbāna*. Although there is no direct evidence for such a conclusion, we can derive it from three popular statements of the Buddha, “*sabbe sañkhārā aniccā, sabbe sañkhārā dukkhā, sabbe dhammā anattā*”²⁴⁰ which mean that “all conditioned things are impermanent, all conditioned things are unsatisfactory, and all phenomena (*dhammā*) are non-substantial,” respectively. Now the problem is whether *nibbāna* is included in the category of *dhammā*?

Commenting on this statement, Ven. Narada Thera correctly writes: “Dhamma can be applied to both conditioned and unconditioned things and states. It embraces both conditioned and unconditioned things including *nibbāna*. In order to show that even *nibbāna* is free from a

²³⁹ S. I. 125, S. IV. 371-2; M. I. 508-9; *Dhp.* 202-4, *Ud.* 10; *Thag.* 35.

²⁴⁰ *Dhp.* 277-9; A. I. 286; S. III. 133.

permanent soul the Buddha used the term *dhamma* in the third verse. *Nibbāna* is a positive supramundane state and is without a soul.”²⁴¹ The significant point of notice here is that the term “*dhamma*” is not used in the first two statements may imply that although *nibbāna* is not impermanent and suffering, it is not a permanent state or self. Its supreme happiness is rather timeless (*akāliko*) and soulless or non-substantial (*anatta*).

Thus, all what can be said about the meaning of the last statement is that *nibbāna* like any other phenomenon (*dhammā*) is non-substantial (*anatta*).²⁴² In the early discourses, the concept of *dhamma* covers two main categories of phenomena, namely, conditioned or constructed things (*saṅkhata*) and unconditioned or unconstructed things (*asaṅkhata*); and *nibbāna* belongs to the latter category.²⁴³ This gets support from the *Ānguttara-Nikāya*, where the Buddha states that the meditative thinking on the nature of non-substantiality will help us in uprooting egoism, on one hand, and attaining *nibbāna* in this very life, on the other. The text run thus: “meditatively thinking, “there is no substantiality, essence or selfhood,” he attains freedom from the “I-am attitude,” *nibbāna* attained in this life.”²⁴⁴

(4.69) An Aharnat is said as one who is free from the notion of self-illusion or self-orientated thought (*maññati*). He is free from four possible expressions involving a self-illusion, such as, (i) I am *nibbāna*, (ii) I am in *nibbāna*, (iii) I

²⁴¹ Nārada Thera: 225.

²⁴² For discussion and reference, see D. J. Kalupahana (1994): 96-7.

²⁴³ A. II. 34; S. IV. 359-373.

²⁴⁴ A. IV. 353: *anattasaññī asmimānasamugghātarī pāpuṇāti diṭṭh eva dhamme nibbānam*.

am different from *nibbāna*, and (iv) *nibbāna* is mine.²⁴⁵ This means that *nibbāna* can not be identical with the conception of selfhood or substantiality (*atta//ātman*), and therefore, it is *anatta*.

The crucial relationship between *nibbāna* and *anatta*, as just quoted, is well expressed in the following passage of the *Majjhima-Nikāya*, where it reads:

Here a monk is an Arahant, who has destroyed all mental cankers, lived the holy life, done what was to be done, laid down the burden, attained the goal, extinguished the fetter of becoming, freed through wisdom . . . he knows *nibbāna* is *nibbāna*; because of this knowledge, he does not think of *nibbāna*; he does not think of himself in *nibbāna*, as *nibbāna*; he does not think ‘*nibbāna* is mine;’ he does not rejoice in *nibbāna*. The reason for this, I say, is because of his thorough understanding of it.²⁴⁶

(4.70) According to this statement, how to perceive *nibbāna* makes an Arahant distinct from the ordinary worldling (*puthujjana*). Due to the right knowledge of *nibbāna* as *nibbāna*, a real Arahant does not attach himself to the concept of *nibbāna* as well as *nibbāna* as the goal he achieves. He does not think of *nibbāna* as his, nor himself in or as *nibbāna*. With this perfect understanding, he is really free from all kinds of attachment, of which the attachment of

²⁴⁵ M. I. 4.

²⁴⁶ M. I. 4: *Yopi so bhikkhave bhikkhu arahām khīṇāsavo vusitavā katakaraṇīyo* *ohitabhāro anuppattasadattho parikkhīṇabhave sāmyojano sammappaññā vimutto*, *so pi . . . nibbānām nibbānato abhijānāti, nibbānām nibbānato abhiññāya nibbānām na maññāti, nibbānasmīm na maññāti, nibbānato na maññāti, nibbānām meti na maññāti, nibbānām nābhinandati; tam kissa hetu: pariññātām tassāti vadāmi.*

nibbāna he attains is one. What can be derived from this is that *nibbāna* is *anatta*. With the understanding of non-substantiality (*anatta*) of the personality-factors (*pañcakkhandha*) and every phenomena (*dhamma*) in this world (*loka*), the enlightened fully understands that he can not be identified with anything, with any of the fivefold personality-factors, or even that of *nibbāna*. This is not because he has no objects of thought, nor he fails to distinguish between himself and the objects. As stated elsewhere, in the state of *nibbāna*, the enlightened, due to his sense faculties and personality-factors remaining unimpaired, he still has contact, feeling, perception and consciousness in the radical state of transformation. Here, there is no difference between the enlightened and the ordinary worldling in relation to the fivefold personality-factors (*pañca-kkhandha*), for both do not have a subsistent self-entity (*natta*).

A noted difference between the two is that although there is no a subsistent self-entity, the ordinary worldling presupposes the notion of selfhood or imposes the delusion of self-identification on the fivefold personality-factors, whereas the enlightened sees no selfhood in these personality-factors. As a result of different attitude on the nature of personality-factors, another difference between the two arises, as our text implies, as to how they react to the world, and to the mental idea or concept (*dhammā*).

When the ordinary worldling considers himself as the self and things as substantiality (*atta//ātman*), the attachment would arise therein, in one of the three forms of self-identification or self-delusion (*sakkāya-ditthi*): “this is mine” (*etam mama*), “this I am” (*eso' ham asmi*) and “this is my-

self” (*eso me attā*).²⁴⁷ ‘All suffering exist’ is due to this self-identification-attitude, which the ordinary worldling is attached to in relation to the fivefold personality-factors (*pañcakkhandha*). The enlightened is different. The threefold self-identification-attitude has been transformed into the opposite attitude of non-selfhood: “this is not mine” (*netam mama*), “this I am not” (*neso 'ham asmi*) and “this is not myself” (*neso me attā*).²⁴⁸ What is to be brought home is that the attainment of *nibbāna* would amount to the complete cessation of the threefold attitude of self-identification. Therefore, in *nibbāna* there is no selfhood or substantiality. It is rather that *nibbāna* is *anatta*.

This interpretation is in harmony with the description of *nibbāna* at the *Udāna* 80, where it hints that the realisation of non-substantiality amounts to the attainment of *nibbāna*, though this truth is difficult to see.

²⁴⁷ S. IV. 2ff.

²⁴⁸ S. IV. 2ff.

V

THE SOTERIOLOGICAL PATH LEADING TO *NIBBĀNA*

(5.1) The newly discovered path (*pubbe ananussutesu dhammesu*) constituting the fourth noble truth which leads to the state of destruction of suffering (*dukkha-nirodha-gāminī-paṭipadā*) and its causes (*samudaya*) is the noble eightfold path (*ariya-aṭṭhaṅgika-magga* // *ārya-aṣṭāṅga-mārga*), or briefly the path (*magga* // *mārga*).¹ It should be kept in mind that the concept “noble” (*ariya* // *ārya*) does not denote any social status or racial meaning, as the literal meaning of the term, say, the invading race or the Āriyans, seems to be. Rather it carries ethical implication, such as “holy,” “noble,” or “sacred” in the sense that it would lead the traveller of this path to the enlightenment (*bodhi*) or it transforms the status of an ordinary worldling (*puthujjana*) to the enlightened (*Arahant*).

Left behind the social status, the nobility or holiness of the eightfold path lies in attributes of peacefulness (*khema*), well-being (*sovatthika*) and rapture (*pīti*) arising therein.² This is the only path (*ekāyano ayam maggo*) leading to the

¹ *Vin.* I. 9; *S.* V. 421; *D.* II. 312; *M.* I. 61; *M.* III. 251; *Vbh.* 235.

² *M.* I. 118.

purification of all beings, *nibbāna*,³ to higher knowledge (*abhiññā*), complete enlightenment (*sambodha*) and freedom (*nibbāna*).⁴ This path is also called the middle path (*majjhimā paṭipadā*) beyond the two extremes (*ubho ante anupagamma*)⁵ of self-mortification (*attakilamathānuyoga*) and sense indulgence (*kāma-sukhāllikānuyoga*). In terms of moral evaluation, sense indulgence, as the corollary of annihilationism (*ucchedavāda*), which denies the human continuity and moral retribution, is low, unprofitable, individualist, possessive and attached; whereas, self-mortification, which is the corollary of eternalism (*sassatavāda*) advocating a metaphysically subsistent self-entity (*atta//ātman*) remaining unchanged and eternal, lays too much stress on the unfruitful and unnecessary means, and therefore is painful, unworthy and ignoble. This path is, therefore, considered as the middle path of the moral life (*dhammacariya*) or the noble life (*brahmacariya*), which leads to vision and wisdom, tranquillity and enlightenment. The eightfold path is as follows:

1. Right view (<i>sammādiṭṭhi</i> // <i>samyagdrṣṭi</i>)	}	wisdom	
2. Right thought (<i>sammāsaṅkappa</i> // <i>samyaksankalpa</i>)		(<i>paññā</i>)	
3. Right speech (<i>sammāvācā</i> // <i>samyagvāk</i>)		}	morality
4. Right action (<i>sammākammanta</i> // <i>samyakkarmānta</i>)			(<i>sila</i>)
5. Right livelihood (<i>sammājīva</i> // <i>samyagjīva</i>)	}		mental culture
6. Right efforts (<i>sammāvāyāma</i> // <i>samyagvyāyāma</i>)			(<i>samādhi</i>)
7. Right mindfulness (<i>sammāsati</i> // <i>samyaksmyti</i>)		}	
8. Right concentration (<i>sammāsamādhi</i> // <i>samyaksamādhi</i>)			

Thus, the path (*paṭipadā/magga*) consists of threefold higher training (*tividhā sikkhā / tisso sikkhā*), or three groups

³ D. II. 290: *Ekāyano ayarī maggo sattānām visuddhiyā . . . nibbānassa sacchikiriyā*. Cf. S. V. 167, 185.

⁴ Vin. I. 9.

⁵ Vin. I. 9; S. V. 421.

(*tayo kkhandhā*), namely, the group of virtue or moral conducts (*silakkhandhena*), the group of mental culture or meditation (*samādhikkhandhena*) and the group of wisdom or higher insight (*paññākkhandhena*).⁶ The group of virtue or moral conduct consists of the third, fourth and fifth; the group of mental culture of the last three while the group of wisdom of the first two. Each factor of the path is prefixed by the term “right” (*sammā // samyak*) to denote that it is not only constituents of the undeniable truths, but also leads to the perfect enlightenment (*sammāsambuddha*).

RIGHT VIEW (*SAMMĀDITTHI // SAMYAGDRŚTI*)

(5.2) This is the most important factor for both its cognitive role and guiding principle of the moral life. Right view is described as the forerunner (*pubbaṅgamā*),⁷ the leading signal of wholesome motivations (*kusalamūla*), just as the sun is the signal of the dawn. One possessed of right view leads the life of right thought, right speech, right action, right livelihood, right efforts, right mindfulness and right meditation.⁸ In other words, the presence of right view brings about the presence of the rest sevenfold rightness. The life with right view is full of absolute security, devoid of all possible suffering, conductive to holy life, and worthy of being honoured by mankind and heavenly beings.⁹

(5.3) With reference to ethics, right view is metaphorically compared with the person with two perfect eyes [here means vision], who can clearly see and differentiate what is good (*kusala*) from what is evil (*akusala*), what is black from what

⁶ M. I. 301; M. III. 71-8; D. II. 292ff.

⁷ M. III. 71.

⁸ Tāng. III. 516-7. Cf. M. III. 71f.

⁹ Tāng. I. 340.

is white.¹⁰ The comprehension of the evil consists in avoiding killing, stealing, sexual misconduct, false speech, tale-bearing, harsh speech, gossip, greed, hatred and ignorance; whereas the understanding of the good in cultivation of the opposite of these unwholesomenesses.¹¹ Thus, right view is the cognitive criterion of ethical evaluation. Here ethical evaluation is done in accordance with their true nature. What is good is regarded as good, evil as evil, white as white, black as black; what should be done as what should be done, what is not worthy of holiness as unworthy of holiness. All this evaluation should be judged by wisdom.¹²

(5.4) In the *Mahācattārīsaka-Sutta*,¹³ right view is understood at two levels, namely, the right view with moral defilement (*sāsava*) or mundane (*lokiya*) level, and right view of a man whose mind is without defilements (*anāsavacitta*), or supramundane (*lokuttara*) level. The mundane right view is the comprehension of moral result of giving gifts, offering, sacrifice, of moral retribution of intentional deeds, of continual life in this world and the world beyond, of mother, father, beings of spontaneous birth as well as religious people who achieve higher knowledge through practice, but it is only on the side of accumulation of merit (*puñña-bhāgiya*) for a better rebirth (*upadhivepakka*). The supramundane right view (*lokuttaramaggaṅga*) (of course including the mundane level but does not stop at accumulation of merit) is the comprehension of the four noble truths, strengthening wisdom (*paññā*), the cardinal

¹⁰ A. I. 129. Cf. M. I. 47f.

¹¹ D. III. 269, 290; M. I. 287; A. V. 264-66, 275-8.

¹² Tāng. III. 196-7.

¹³ M. III. 71-3.

faculty of wisdom (*paññindriya*) and the power of wisdom (*paññā-pala*).¹⁴

(5.5) With this knowledge as the guiding principle, the man of right view will not commit any of the fivefold deadly deeds (*pañca-anatariyakamma* // *pañcānantaryāṇi*), physical, verbal or mental. The five deadly deeds are (i) parricide or killing one's father (*pitughāta* // *pitrghātah*), (ii) matricide or killing one's mother (*mātughāta* // *matrghātah*), (iii) killing the enlightened (*Arahantaghāta* // *Arhadvadhaḥ*), (iv) causing schism in the order (*saṅghabheda* // *sanghabheda*), (v) doing physical harm to a Buddha sufficient to cause confusion (*lohituppāda* // *Tathāgatasyantike-duṣṭacittarudhirotpādanam*).¹⁵ He does not believe in the rituals or rites¹⁶ as means for attainment of purity. He rather goes for the purification of the mind (*citta*), the guiding agent of all deeds, behaviours, tendencies, etc.¹⁷ He lives in respect of the enlightened, of his insightful teachings, and of the ethical Order, of the ethical training, in order to work out an ethical society.¹⁸ All his behaviours, whatsoever of body, speech, thought, of intentions, aspirations, resolves and all activities whatsoever, conduce to the pleasant, the agreeable, delightful, the profitable and in short to happiness.¹⁹

(5.6) As regards knowledge, right view is conducive to right knowledge and freedom.²⁰ Right view, as stated above, is the comprehension of the four noble truths, and of things

¹⁴ M. III. 72.

¹⁵ A. III. 438; GS. III. 306.

¹⁶ For reference, see, GS. III. 151, n.4.

¹⁷ A. III. 438; GS. III. 306.

¹⁸ A. III. 438; GS. III. 306.

¹⁹ A. I. 31-2; GS. I. 28-9.

²⁰ Tāng. I. 340.

in terms of these undeniable truths.²¹ This is the knowledge of suffering (*dukkha*), of main causes of suffering (*dukkha-samudaya*) such as craving for sense pleasures (*kāma-taṇhā*), for existence (*bhava-taṇhā*) and for annihilation (*abhava-taṇhā*), of the destruction of all suffering (*dukkha-nirodha*), and of the noble eightfold path leading to that destruction (*ariya-aṭṭhaṅgika-magga*). Right view is the understanding of the nature, the origin, the cessation and the path leading to the cessation of the fivefold personality-factors of grasping (*pañcupādānakkhandhā*) as well as the twelve-links of inter-dependent origination (*paṭicca-samuppāda*).²²

Right view is the knowledge of true nature of existence as they really are (*yathābhūta-dassana/ñāṇa*).²³ Right view is the realisation of the impermanence (*anicca*), non-substantiality (*anattā*) and unsatisfactoriness (*dukkha*) of the fivefold personality-factors (*pañcakkhandha*) and phenomena (*dhammā*) in this world.²⁴ In terms of space, right view is the knowledge that all things or phenomena are insubstantial (*sabbe dhammā anattā*),²⁵ while in terms of time, it is the knowledge that “all conditioned or compound things are impermanent” (*sabbe saṅkhārā aniccā*).²⁶ The twin aspect of the impermanent-and-insubstantial things is, as you can see, unsatisfactory (*dukkha*) to human being. This is clearly described in the following statement “whatever is

²¹ *D.* II. 312.

²² *M.* I. 55.

²³ *S.* V. 144.

²⁴ *A.* III. 438; *GS.* III. 306.

²⁵ *Dhp.* 279. It is stated in *M.* I. 380 that this contention constitutes the distinct teaching of the Buddha (*buddhānām sāmukkaiśikā desanā*). Cf. *A.* I. 286; *GS.* I. 264.

²⁶ *Dhp.* 277. Cf. *A.* I. 286; *GS.* I. 264.

conditioned is unsatisfactory" (*sabbe saṅkhārā dukkhā*).²⁷

(5.7) So far as the origin of happiness and suffering is concerned, the man with right view does not uphold any of the following causally wrong theories,²⁸ such as (i) happiness and suffering are self-wrought, (ii) they are wrought by another, (iii) they are wrought by both oneself and another, (iv) they are brought into being fortuitously, without the act of the self (v) they are brought into being fortuitously, without the act of another, (vi) they are brought into being fortuitously, neither by oneself nor another. He clearly understands that the theory of self-causation leads to eternalism, while theory of external causation to annihilationism.

Rejecting theories of self-causation and external causation as well as their derived forms, the person of right view advocates the causally dependent origination (*paṭiccasamuppāna*) of suffering and happiness.²⁹ In the discourse to Kaccāyana,³⁰ the Buddha states that the world is generally inclined toward two views, namely, existence (*atthitā*) and non-existence (*natthitā*). The former is the eternalist view that every thing exists absolutely (*sabbam atthi*), while the latter, to the contrary, is the nihilist view that absolutely nothing exists (*sabbam natthi*). These two extremes will not occur to the man of right view: "for one who sees with

²⁷ *Dhp.* 278. Cf. *A.* I. 286; *GS.* I. 264.

²⁸ *A.* III. 439; *GS.* III. 307. At *D.* III. 138, the theories regarding the causation of happiness and suffering are eight in number. They are (i) suffering and happiness are eternal, (ii) suffering and happiness are not eternal, (iii) they are both eternal and not-eternal, (iv) they are neither eternal nor not-eternal, (v) they are self-caused, (vi) they are caused by another, (vii) they are both self-caused and external caused, (viii) they are neither self-caused nor external caused.

²⁹ *S.* II. 19.

³⁰ *S.* II. 15-7.

wisdom the uprising of the world as it comes to be, the notion of non-existence of the world does not occur; for him who perceives with wisdom the ceasing of the world as it really is, the notion of existence in the world does not occur.”³¹ The man of right view, opposed to the world which is bound by approach, grasping and inclination, does not cling to any of these three forms of the self-illusion (*sakkāya-ditṭhi*): “this is mine” (*etam mama*), “this I am” (*eso ham asmi*) and “this is my-self” (*eso me attā*).³² But rather he perceives happiness and suffering in this world in terms of inter-dependent origination (*paṭicca-samuppāda*). Thus the right view of man and his world consists in understanding it in terms of inter-conditionality, without the first-cause causer, the unmoved mover, or the first beginning. This is the right view of the world in this direction leads to the ceasing of the whole mass of suffering.³³ It is in this context that when the concept of right view is considered as the criterion of ethical and intellectual life of mankind, the man of right view born in this world is, therefore, for the benefit of the multitude, for the happiness of the multitude, for the profit and happiness of the world (*bahujanahitāya bahujanasukhāya lokānukampāya*), because of his leading them from and planting them in righteousness.³⁴

RIGHT THOUGHT (SAMMĀSAṄKAPPA // SAMYAKSAṄKALPA)

(5.8) The concept of right thought or right motive (*sammāsaṅkappa*) is interchangeably used as right thinking

³¹ S. II. 16. Cf. S. III. 135.

³² S. IV. 2ff.

³³ S. II. 17.

³⁴ A. I. 32.

(*sammā-vitakka*).³⁵ In a derived meaning, similar to the definitions of right view we have the definitions of right thought or motive. Whatever the thoughts offer on the basis of the four noble truths, of dependent origination, of impermanence, unsatisfactoriness and non-substantiality of personality-factors and phenomena in this world and the world beyond, are right thoughts. The contrary is considered as wrong thought or intention (*micchā saṅkappa*). In contrast description, right motives or thoughts are opposite to the negative quality of wrong thoughts or wrong motives (*ti-akusala-vitakka // tayo-akusalasaṅkappā*), such as thought of sensual pleasures (*kāma-vitakka / saṅkappa*), thought full of hatred or ill-will (*byāpāda-vitakka / saṅkappa*), and thought of violence or cruelty (*vihimsā-vitakka / saṅkappa*).³⁶ Buddhist psychology reveals that feelings (*vedanā*) can give rise to different kinds of emotional reactions. The desire or the tendency to lust (*rāga*) and craving (*tañhā*) is arisen from the pleasant feeling (*sukha-vedanā*), the tendency to aversion, destruction, and revolt against them from the unpleasant feeling (*dukkha-vedanā*), whereas the tendency to indifference and ignorance toward them from the neutral feeling (*adukkhamasukha-vedanā*).³⁷ This means that to each and every kind of feeling arisen from contact between sense faculties and sense objects, there is always some kind of attachment (*ālaya/upādāna*), emotional or cognitive. Thus, greed or lust (*rāga/lobha*), hatred (*dosa*) and ignorance (*moha*) lie dormant in the base of pleasant, unpleasant and neutral feelings, respectively. It is in this connection that the man without right thought or conception is easily attached to

³⁵ A. III. 446.

³⁶ A. III. 446.

³⁷ S. IV. 205.

feelings and subject to suffering due to arising of evil motives (*akusalamūla*) associated to these feelings, while the man of right thought, being well aware of the little satisfaction but much suffering and trouble, and the danger from them³⁸ gets escaped and detached from them with full control, and then he is free from suffering.

(5.9) However, there are two levels of right thought, to wit, mundane (*lokiya*) and supramundane (*lokuttara*). At the mundane level, the threefold right thought or motive (*ti-kusala-vitakka / tisso-kusala-saññā*) consisting of thought of renunciation (*nekhamma-vitakka / sañkappa*), thought free from aggression (*abyāpāda-vitakka / sañkappa*), and thought of non-harming (*avihimsā-vitakka / sañkappa*),³⁹ is utilised for the purpose of accumulation of merits in this life, and as a result, it leads to a better rebirth. At the supramundane level, right thought is a logical reasoning (*takka*), a reflection (*vitakka*), a conception (*sañkappa*), a complete focus (*appanāvyappanā*), an application of mind (*cetaso abhinihāro*) and is of noble thought, cankerless thought and is conversant with the holiness, and is not applied for accumulation of merit in this world and a better rebirth in the world beyond, but rather for leading to the destruction of unwholesomeness.⁴⁰ Thus with different goals and purposes, the end of right thought reached is also different, accordingly. Only the highly right intention for soteriological purpose can lead one to the detachment (*virāga*) and attainment of *nibbāna*.

RIGHT SPEECH (*SAMMĀVĀCĀ // SAMYAGVĀK*)

(5.10) Whatever one thinks (*sañkappa / vitakka*) or

³⁸ M. I. 91.

³⁹ D. II. 312; A. III. 446.

⁴⁰ M. III. 73.

theorizes (*dīṭṭhi*), speech or statement (*vācā*) will follow. If one is guarded with right view (*sammā dīṭṭhi*) and right thought (*sammā saṅkappa*), his statement or speech (*vācā*) would be true (*taccha / bhūta*) and relevant (*anukūla*). Right speech plays an important part in social life and communication. If social communication is not based on truth and relevance, distrust, disbelief, disinterest and indifference will arise among mankind. The encouragement and cultivation of right speech is, therefore, ethically important for social inter-relationship. The pragmatic criterion of truth is thus the most important factor in making ethical statement. This is what is expressed in the *Abhayarājakumāra-Sutta*.⁴¹ According to our text, there are eight kinds of statement⁴² of which some are asserted, some are not asserted by the Buddha. The classification of these statements can be made in terms of their truth-value, pragmatic soteriology and emotive content, and according to six values in three pairs, such as, true (*taccha / bhūta*) or untrue (*ataccha / abhūta*), connected with the goal (*atthasamīhita*) or disconnected to the goal (*anatthasamīhita*), agreeable (*piya / manāpa*) or disagreeable (*apiya / amanāpa*) in relation to the hearer.

1. Untrue	directed to the goal	disagreeable	no statement
2. True	not directed to the goal	disagreeable	no statement
3. True	directed to the goal	disagreeable	statement made
4. Untrue	not directed to the goal	agreeable	no statement
5. True	not directed to the goal	agreeable	no statement
6. True	directed to the goal	agreeable	statement made

⁴¹ M. I. 393-6.

⁴² In stead of eight, the Buddha deals with only six propositions, for there are two propositions have no application or relevance. They are (i) the statement untrue, but connected to the goal and agreeable, and (ii) the statement untrue but connected to the goal and disagreeable

(5.11) Among these six propositions, only the statements 3 and 6 should be made, because of its pragmatically goal-directness in accordance with truth, regardless of the fact whether the hearer is agreeable or disagreeable. All this means that any statements which are not relevant to truth and goal-directness should be avoided. In other words, truth and goal-directness are moral criteria for avoiding fourfold wrong speech (*cattāro-anariyavohāra*), such as falsehood (*musāvādo*), slanderous speech (*pisuṇā-vācā*), harsh speech (*pharusā-vācā*) and gossip (*samphappalāpa*).⁴³ The abstention from, refraining from, avoidance of and restraint from the fourfold wrong speech⁴⁴ are possible with co-operation of right effort (*sammā vāyāma*) and right mindfulness (*sammā sati*). The endeavour for the riddance of wrong speech is right effort. This effort is entertained only when one is mindful.⁴⁵ However, the statement which is fact, true, directed to the goal, should be made in awareness of time and space with reference to the audience. This means that the pragmatic purpose of the truth can be obtained only when the speaker delivers it to the right person at right time and right place. When the right time and right place are found unavailable, keeping “noble silence” should be observed or substituted. This is what we can learn from the *Discourse on the Ariyan Quest*: “When you are gathered together, monks, there are two things to be done: either talk about the *dhamma* or observe the noble silence.”⁴⁶

(5.12) There are, however, positive aspects of the right

⁴³ M. III. 73; D. J. Kalupahana (1994): 105.

⁴⁴ Cf. M. I. 286; Dhs. 299.

⁴⁵ M. III. 74.

⁴⁶ M. I. 161; *Ud*. 31: *sannipatitānām vo bhikkhave dvayāni karaṇīyāni: dhammī vā kathā ariyo vā tuṇhībhāvo*. Cf. Sn. 721-3. For the implied meaning of “noble silence” see *MLS*. I. 205, n.2; *EB*. II. s.v. *atthaigika-magga*: 358a.

speech. When one performs four modes of noble speech (*cattāro-ariyavohāra*), such as, speech in absence of falsehood (*musāvādā-veramañī*), speech in absence of slander (*pisunāya-vācāya-veramañī*), speech in absence of harsh words (*pharusāya-vācāya-veramañī*), and speech in absence of gossip (*samphappalāpā-veramañī*), he, at the same time, utters something for the sake of benefiting people, not for the sake of his own advantage. He does not repeat informations, which cause dissension, disharmony and distrust among people, social groups and parties. He tries to speak things, which unite those that are divided. He encourages those that are united. It is concord that he delivers his speech and statement for their useful purpose. He speaks words, which are gentle, polite, pleasant, loving, soothing to the ear, going to the heart, dear, agreeable, helpful and profitable to the hearer. He speaks what is in accordance with facts, what is truth (*dhamma*) and ethics (*vinaya*), what is beneficial, useful, meaningful and leading to holy life or the goal of ethical perfection.⁴⁷

RIGHT ACTION (SAMMĀKAMMANTA // SAMYAKKARMĀNTA)

(5.13) Action (*kamma* // *karma*) as the result of mind (*citta*) is the womb from which we spring (*kamma-yoni*). Whatever one intents (*cetanā*), one finds expression in speech (*vācā*) and action (*kamma*). Action is, therefore, the creator of our world (*loka*) of personality-factors (*kkhandha*) and sense experience.⁴⁸ There are three forms of action (*ti-kamma* // *trīṇi-karmāni*). Action is performed through body called bodily action (*kāya-kamma* // *kāya-karmāni*), through speech called verbal action (*vacī-kamma* // *vākharmāni*), and

⁴⁷ M. I. 286-7; A. V. 267.

⁴⁸ S. I. 62.

through mind called mental action (*mano-kamma* // *manokarmam*).⁴⁹ According to their ethical nature, actions can be grouped under three categories, namely, good or meritorious deed (*puñña/kusala-kamma* // *puñya-karma*), evil or demeritorious deed (*apuñña/akusala-kamma* // *apuñya-karma*) and imperturbable or immovable deed (*aniñjya-karma*). Combining these two, we have another kind of classification of deed, namely, wrong action and right action. Wrong action consists of bodily evil conducts (*kāya-duccarita*), verbally evil conducts (*vacī-duccarita*) and mentally evil conducts (*mano-duccarita*). Right action covers bodily good conducts (*kāya-kalyāṇam*), verbally good conducts (*vacī-kalyāṇam*) and mentally good conducts (*mano-kalyāṇam*).

(5.14) Wrong actions of the body (*micchā /akusala-kāyakamma*) consist of destruction of life (*pāṇātipāta*), stealing (*adinnādāna*) and sexual misconduct (*kāmesumicchācāra*). Wrong actions of the speech (*micchā /akusala-vacīkamma*) are false speech (*musāvāda*), slanderous speech (*pisuñāvācā*), harsh speech (*pharusavācā*) and gossip (*samphappalāpa*). Wrong actions of mind (*micchā / akusala-manokamma*) consist of covetousness (*abhijjhā*), ill-will (*byāpāda*) and wrong view (*micchā-ditṭhi*).⁵⁰ Right actions, to the contrary, are abstension from, refraining from, avoidance of and restraint from killing (*pāṇātipātā veramaṇī*), from taking what is not given (*adinnādānā veramaṇī*), from sexual misconduct (*kāmesumicchārā veramaṇī*), from false speech (*musāvādā veramaṇī*), from slanderous speech (*pisuñāya vācāya*

⁴⁹ M. I. 206, 373; A. III. 415.

⁵⁰ D. III. 269, 290; A. V. 264.

veramaṇī), from harsh speech (*pharusāya vācāya veramaṇī*), from gossip (*samphappalāpā veramaṇī*), are non-covetousness (*anabhijjhā*), non-ill will (*abyāpāda*) and right view (*sammā-ditṭhi*).⁵¹

(5.15) Buddhism condemns any kind of denial of moral responsibility and freedom of will. Strict determinism or fatalism (*niyatīvāda*) as well as strict indeterminism or non-causality-non-conditionality (*ahetuappaccayavāda* / *adhiccasamuppannavāda*) are considered as wrong views, which are harmful to human moralism and ethical motivation. The belief that all human experience is determined by God's will (*issaranimmāṇahetu*) or by past *kamma* (*pubbekatahetu*) are rejected by the Buddha as amoralism. Free will plays the most important role in human experience and ethics. According to the Buddha, both intentionalism and consequentialism can be served as the relative criteria for determining what right action is. The mental attitude of the doer, in performing an act, should be out of compassion and benefit for others, while the consequence of the right action should be the well-being and happiness of oneself and others and of both. Any action sprung from good will and resulting in good end is called right action. This pragmatic criterion, which requires repeatedly mindful reflection (*satipaṭṭhāna*), as training and attainment, is expressed by the Buddha to his former son, Rāhula, in the *Ambalaṭṭhikā-Rāhulovāda-Sutta*.⁵² Our text says that a repeatedly mindful reflection (*sammā sati*) should be made against any deed, which is to be done, whether bodily, verbal or mental, in relation with its consequence. If the deed to be done conduces to the harm of oneself, of

⁵¹ D. III. 269, 290.

⁵² M. I. 414-20.

others and of both, is considered as unwholesome for it leads to suffering. Such a deed should be abandoned with mindfulness and effort.⁵³ But only the deed which one is desirous of doing with the body or speech or mind is a deed that would conduce neither to the harm of oneself nor to the harm of others nor to the harm of both, is considered as wholesome (*kusala*). The deed whose yield and result is happiness should, therefore, be performed with mindful reflection. Such behaviorism is, indeed, the desirable result (*kusala vipāka*) of the freedom of will (*cetanā*) out of compassion and wisdom for the benefit of others and society.

(5.16) The nature of right actions (*sammā kammanta*), can therefore, be determined according to free-will or intention (*cetanā*) of the person concerned and the effect or consequence (*vipāka*) produced. Performing the same ten good actions (*kusala-kammopatha*) as mentioned above can lead to different results, according to the level and quality of intention (*cetanā*) of the selfless doer. These meritorious actions (*kusala/puñña kamma*) can lead to attainment of a desirable end and then, are subject to further rebirth (*upadhivepakka*) in better form (*kusala vipāka*), if the doer intents only for accumulation of merit (*puññā-bhāgiya*).

As such, right actions become a good means to an end, and are, therefore, mundane (*lokiya*) in nature. In the same way, in abstaining from wrong actions, if the mental attitude of the selfless is not for merit and nor cling to rebirth, but his mind is directed to destruction of suffering (*dukkha-nirodha*), then right actions become an end in itself. As such, right actions are holy (*ariya*), totally free from defilements (*anāsava*) and

⁵³ On the interaction between right view, right mindfulness and right effort, see *M. III. 72-3.*

supramundane (*lokuttara*). This is indeed the development of holy thought (*ariyacitta*) and defilement-freed thought (*anāsavacitta*). In other words, right actions performed on the basis of legal obligation, fear of punishment and expectation for reward, give a very little result or a desired end. But to abstain from killing out of compassion for living, out of respect for life; to abstain from stealing out of generosity and respect for property; and to abstain from sense-gratification out of wisdom, etc., are right actions forming part of the path (*magganga*) and leading to freedom (*nibbāna*).⁵⁴

RIGHT LIVELIHOOD (*SAMMĀ-ĀJĪVA // SAMYAGĀJĪVA*)

(5.17) Right livelihood (*sammā-ājīva*) can be defined as those occupations and professions, which are lawful, through one's own right effort and not injurious to well being and happiness of mankind. It can be extended to include those means of livelihood, which do not bring about harmful social consequences, in terms of ethics and knowledge.

Whatever the occupations and professions connected with trickery, cajolery, insinuating, dissembling and rapacity for gain upon gain⁵⁵ are considered as wrong means of livelihood (*micchā ājīva*).⁵⁶ Thus wrong livelihood concerns with both harmful occupations and deceitful manner in business. As regards the former, trading in weapons (*sattha vanījjā*), trading in human beings (*satta vanījjā*), trading in animals (*mārīsa vanījjā*), trading in intoxicating drinks and unhealthy drugs (*majja vanījjā*), and trading in poison (*visa vanījjā*), etc., are to be avoided by the Buddhists.⁵⁷ Trading in

⁵⁴ For argument and reference, see *EB*. II. s.v. *atthaṅgika-magga*: 359-60.

⁵⁵ For reference to these five terms, see *MLS*. III. 118, nn. 1-5.

⁵⁶ *M*. III. 75; *A*. III. 111.

⁵⁷ *A*. III. 208.

slave, prostitution, exploitation of labour, and the work of hunter, fisher, slaughter are understood as included in this list.

Such occupations can lead to destruction of life in mass, or to the life of material worship and moral degeneration, which are equally harmful to social ethics and development. It should be realised here that Buddhism is strongly against wars, arms racing, and any kinds of social injustices. Referring to the latter, wrong means of livelihood also include the deceitful and cheating manner in business even the occupation not wrong in itself.

Thus, Buddhism stresses on the lawful, legal and ethical way of business. Business is considered as a means for survival, for an ethically better living or moral life (*dhammacariya*), not survival for business. In other words, right or ethical business can serve as the good means to sustain the good living of individuals, groups and societies. Any occupations which promote a healthy life, tranquillity of mind, purity, righteousness, well being, happiness and spiritual welfare of oneself, of others and of both are means of right livelihood (*sammā ājīva*).

Thus, in Buddhism, means of livelihood that are freed from lustful, selfish and harmful orientations are preferred. The right livelihood is, therefore, simple and content. The man of right livelihood does not care about whether more or less possessions he can get and how rich he is, but cares for how ethics of business he is doing is.

RIGHT EFFORTS (*SAMMĀ-VĀYĀMA // SAMYAGVYĀYĀMA*)

(5.18) Generally, right effort (*sammā-vāyāma*) is the effort which makes an end of wrong view (*micchā ditthi*), wrong thought (*micchā saṅkhappa*), wrong speech (*micchā vācā*), wrong action (*micchā kamanta*), wrong livelihood (*micchā*

ājīva), wrong awareness (*micchā sati*) and wrong concentration (*micchā samādhi*). Particularly, right effort can be grouped under four categories, according to their function and nature, such as, preventive effort (*saṁvara-padhāna*), the effort to abandon (*pahāna-padhāna*), the effort to develop (*bhāvanā-padhāna*), and the effort to maintain (*anurakkhanā-padhāna*).⁵⁸ It is the effort to lead to the moral life (*dhammacariya*), to holy life (*brahmacariya*) and to the life in absence of all suffering.

(5.19) Preventive effort (*saṁvara-padhāna*) is to generate energy for the non-arising of unwholesome and unprofitable dispositions that have not yet arisen.⁵⁹ This is indeed to train sense faculties and control over them. The process of training sense faculties is expressed like this. Seeing an object with the eye; hearing a sound with the ear; smelling an odour with the nose; tasting a savour with the tongue; contacting tangibles with the body; and cognizing mental ideas with the mind, one does not grasp its general and particular features. Due to non-grasping after conception of substance (*nimitta*) and qualities (*anubyañjana*), he dwells in restraint of the senses that prevent unwholesome and unprofitable dispositions.

(5.20) The effort to abandon (*pahāna-padhāna*) is the energy or will to suppress, to abandon, to make an end of, and to drive out of renewed existence of the already arisen evil thoughts and motives, such as thought of sensual pleasures (*kāma-vitakka / saṅkappa*), thought full of hatred or ill-will (*byāpāda-vitakka / saṅkappa*), and thought of violence or cruelty (*vihimsā-vitakka / saṅkappa*).⁶⁰

⁵⁸ A. II. 15-6; D. II. 120, 312; D. III. 225; M. II. 11

⁵⁹ A. II. 15.

⁶⁰ A. III. 446.

(5.21) The effort to develop (*bhāvanā-padhāna*) is the energy or will to cultivate wholesome motivations that are yet to arise by seven factors of enlightenment (*sattabojjhāṅga* // *sapta-bodhyaṅgā*), namely, mindfulness (*sati-sambojjhaṅgo* // *smṛti-bodhyaṅgā*), discrimination of the true and the false (*dhamma-vicayasaṃ-bojjhaṅgo* // *dharma-pravicaya-bodhyaṅgā*), energy (*viriyasaṃ-bojjhaṅgo* // *vīrya-bodhyaṅgā*), rapture (*pītisam-bojjhaṅgo* // *prīti-bodhyaṅgā*), calming of body and mind (*passadhisam-bojjhaṅgo* // *prasrabdhi-bodhyaṅgā*), concentration (*saṃdhisam-bojjhaṅgo* // *saṃdhi-bodhyaṅgā*), and equanimity in all vicissitudes of life (*upekkhāsaṃ-bojjhaṅgo* // *upekṣā-bodhyaṅgā*).⁶¹ The stress of the efforts is based on dispassion (*virāganissita*), conductive to cessation (*nirodhanissita*) and ends in self-surrender (*vossaggapariṇāmi*).⁶²

(5.22) The effort to maintain (*anurakkhanā-padhāna*) is the will or energy to sustain the already existing wholesome and profitable objects of concentration (*bhaddakam* *saṃdhi-nimittam*) by means of recognition (*saññā*) the dreadful facts of actuality, such as a skeleton or a decomposing corpse.⁶³

RIGHT MINDFULNESS (SAMMĀSATI // SAMYAKSMRTI)

(5.23) *Sammāsati* is not merely awareness or mindfulness, but right mindfulenss, a detached uninvolved mindfulness of the objects, both internal / subjective and external / objective. The internal or subjective mindfulness is more stressed here (three out of four, as we will see later), for it plays an

⁶¹ D. III. 251, 282; A. II. 16.

⁶² A. II. 16.

⁶³ A. II. 16; A. I. 115; S. V. 129.

extremely important part of behaviours and dispositions. It is the process of watching or reflecting (*anupassanā*) our world of sense experience and personality-factors without involvement in reasoning, speculation and discriminative activities. In the words of the discourse, right mindfulness is the uninvolved discernment of the functioning of the physical personality (*kāyānupassanā*), of sensation (*vedanānupassanā*), of thought (*cittānupassanā*) and of ideas (*dhammānupassanā*).⁶⁴

(5.24) Right mindfulness is radically present discernment of the world of sense experience, which is based on the called “present-ism,” or presentalism, if we can coin the term, as against accordingly both “past-ism” or pastalism and “future-ism” or futuralism. The knowledge which is based on pastalism and futuralism is knowledge beyond the limits of experience or unverifiable, and therefore epistemologically and pragmatically meaningless. There is also psychological reason for rejecting such knowledge, for pastalism leads to past-kammic determinism (*pubbekatahetuditṭhi*), a form of amoralism, while the futuralism to craving for existence (*bhava-taṇhā*), the cause of rebirth and suffering (*dukkha*). Right mindfulness is, therefore, of paramount importance for a highly ethical life (*brahmacariya*) of mankind.

(5.25) Right mindfulness is the best way of neutralising emotional reactions to the contacts (*phassa*) with both inside and outside worlds, to feeling and sensation (*vedanā*), to ideation (*saññā*), to mental dispositions (*saṅkhārā*) and to conscious process (*viññāṇa*) of behaviorism (*kamma*), so that one can be freed from attachment (*ālaya*) and grasping

⁶⁴ M. I. 56.

(*upādāna*). It is, therefore, regarded as the only path for the purification of beings, for the overcoming of anxiety and grief, for the destruction of sufferings and miseries, for the attainment of the right path and for realisation of supreme happiness (*nibbāna*).⁶⁵

(5.26) Mindfulness of the functioning of the physical personality (*kāyānupassanā*) includes mindfulness of in-and-out breathing (*ānāpāna-sati*), of four postures of body (*caturriyāpathā*), of formation of body (*paṭikkūlamānasikāra*), of its components (*dhātu-manisikāra*) and its decomposition (*navasīvathikāya*). Mindfulness of in-and-out breathing is fully aware of the motion of the breathing and the breath itself, whether short, long or medium. This is to establish mindfulness at very point of contact between breath and the body, in order to prevent mind from its timelessly habitual wanderness and attachment. Mindful observation of the postures of our body, such as walking, standing, sitting, lying, bending, stretching, etc., is an important method to control over them on one hand, and in order to have good characters and behaviours, on the other.

In addition to this, our pattern of behaviour, such as in talking, looking, dressing, eating, drinking, chewing, tasting, answering all calls of nature etc., should also be fully mindful. It is also to be mindful about the physical composition of the body, which is made of five great elements (*pañca-mahābhūta*) of extension (*paṭhavi-dhātu*), cohesion (*āpo-dhātu*), body temperature (*tejo-dhātu*), motion (*vāyo-dhātu*) and of space (*ākāsa-dhātu*).

Each of these five elements consists of two compositions, internal (*ajjhattika*) external (*bāhira*), and none is considered

⁶⁵ M. I. 63.

as “this is mine” (*etam mama*), “this I am” (*eso' ham asmi*) and “this is my-self” (*eso me attā*). The right attitude that “this is not mine” (*netam mama*), “this I am not” (*neso ham asmi*) and “this is not my-self” (*neso me attā*) is supported by mindful contemplation of corruptibility and decomposition of the dead body in different stages.⁶⁶ Thus, the practice of right mindfulness of the physical personality is to bring about a transformation of our habitually wrong attitude of identifying the body with selfhood, which gives rise to the body-worship in the present age.

(5.27) Mindfulness of sensations (*vedanānupassanā*) is to understand the nature of the arising (*udaya*) and the passing away (*vaya*) of feelings and sensations, pleasant, unpleasant and neutral, in order to prevent emotional reactions attached to them. With mindful reflection on them as mere feelings, one is freed from attachment or greed (*lobha/rāga*) for the pleasant feelings, from suppression (*dosa*) to the unpleasant feelings and from ignorance (*moha*) to the neutral feelings. With this practice of mindfulness of a sensation in the body, one becomes detached from the world of sense experience and its reactions.⁶⁷

(5.28) Mindfulness of thought (*cittānupassanā*) is the knowledge on the nature of thoughts and their arising as they really are. It is to be mindful of attachment (*rāga*) as attachment, detachment (*vīta-rāga*) as detachment, hatred (*dosa*) as hatred, freed of hatred (*vīta-dosa*) as hatred-freed, ignorance (*moha*) as ignorance, freed of ignorance (*vīta-moha*) as ignorance-freed, etc. It is also to be mindful of the mind, contracted or distracted, lofty or lowly, freed or

⁶⁶ M. I. 56-9.

⁶⁷ M. I. 59.

fettered, etc, without grasping anything in this world.⁶⁸

(5.29) Mindfulness of ideas (*dhammānupassanā*) is the knowledge of the mind in relation with the presence or absence of the five hindrances (*pañca nivaranāni*), of the arising of these states, their continuance and of their ceasing. That is to be mindful of the presence and absence of desire for sensuality (*kāmachanda* // *kāmachandah*), ill-will (*byāpāda* // *vyāpādah*), sloth and torpor (*thīna-middha* // *styānamiddhah*), restlessness and worry (*uddhaca-kukkucca* // *auddhatyakaukṛtyah*), doubt or uncertainty (*vicikicchā* // *vicikitsā*).⁶⁹ Next, the meditator is also to be mindful of fivefold personality-factors of grasping to existence (*pañcūpādānakkhandhā*), such as, physical body (*rūpa*), feelings (*vedanā*), perception (*saññā*), ideation (*saṅkhārā*) and discriminative consciousness (*viññāṇa*). He also is mindful of the presence and the absense of the six spheres of internal sense faculties (*saḍ-indriyāṇi* // *ajjhattiκāyatana*) and its corresponding six external sense objects (*saḍ-āyatānāni* // *bāhīrāyatana*), as they really are. They are the eye (*cakkhu* // *cakṣur-indriya*) and visible objects (*rūpa* // *rūpa*); the ear (*sota* // *śrotrendriya*) and sounds (*sadda* // *śabdah*); the nose (*ghāna* // *ghrāṇedriya*) and odours (*gandha* // *gandhah*); the tongue (*jivhā*, *jihvendriya*) and tastes (*rasa* // *rash*); the body (*kāya* // *kāyendriya*) and tangible objects (*phoṭṭhabba* // *sparśah*); the mind (*mano* // *manendriya*) and mental objects (*dhamma* // *dharma*).⁷⁰ He also is mindful of the seven factors of enlightenment (*sati-sambojjhaṅgo* // *smṛti-bodhyāṅgā*), namely, discrimination of the true and the false (*dhamma-vicayasam-bojjhaṅgo* //

⁶⁸ M. I. 59.

⁶⁹ M. I. 60; A. III. 62.

⁷⁰ D. III. 243; M. III. 216.

*dharma-pravicaya-bodhyaṅgā), energy (viriyasam-bojjhaṅgo // vīrya-bodhyaṅgā), rapture (pītisam-bojjhaṅgo // pīti-bodhyaṅgā), calming of body and mind (passadhisam-bojjhaṅgo // prasrabdhi-bodhyaṅgā), concentration (samādhisam-bojjhaṅgo // samādhi-bodhyaṅgā), and equanimity in all vicissitudes of life (upekkhāsam-bojjhaṅgo // upekkhā-bodhyaṅgā).⁷¹ Finally, the stage is now set for the mindfulness of the four noble truths (*cattāri ariya saccāni* // *catvāri-ārya-satyāni*), such as the phenomena of suffering (*dukkha-ariya-sacca*), the cause of suffering (*dukkha-samudaya-ariya-sacca*), the state of the destruction of suffering (*dukkha-nirodha-ariya-sacca*) and the path leading to that state of destruction of suffering (*dukkha-nirodha-gāminī-paṭipadā-ariya-sacca*).⁷² At this stage, right mindfulness is known as seeing things as they really are (*yathābhūta-dassana/ñāṇa*).*

RIGHT CONCENTRATION (SAMMĀSAMĀDHİ//SAMYAKSAMĀDHİ)

(5.30) Right concentration (*sammāsamādhi*), the eighth step of the path, which sets for the attainment of supreme happiness (*nibbāna*), is defined as one-pointedness of the mind (*cittass ekaggatā*).⁷³ As a distinct mental state, right concentration is the focusing stabilizer of the mind on meditation subjects to make the mind stable, non-distracted and tranquil. It is interchangeably used as serenity (*samatha*) or development of serenity (*samatha-bhāvanā*). Concentration (*saṁādhi*) can be good (*kusala*) or bad (*akusala*) according to its focus on the right (*sammā*) or wrong (*micchā*), respectively. Concentration present in

⁷¹ D. III. 251, 282; A. II. 16.

⁷² M. I. 62; Vim. I. 9; S. V. 421.

⁷³ M. I. 301.

unwholesome dispositions is called wrong concentration (*micchā samādhi*), while present in wholesome states is called right concentration (*sammā samādhi*). Thus, one-pointedness of the mind requires explanation. Here, one-pointedness of the mind is applied not to every object, but only to wholesomeness (*kusala-cittass ekaggatā*), which can set our mind in tranquillity, leading to attainment of wisdom and enlightenment. Such wholesomeness is known as the objects of the seventh step of the path, or those of the four foundations of mindfulness, such as mindfulness of the body (*kāyānupassanā*), of sensation (*vedanānupassanā*), of thought (*cittānupassanā*) and of ideas (*dhammānupassanā*).

The attainment of this right concentration is supported by practice of the sixth step of the path, or the four right efforts (*padhāna*), namely, the effort to prevent unarisen evil dispositions (*sañvara-padhāna / anuppannānam pāpakānam akusalānam dhammānam anuppādāya vāyāma*), the effort to abandon arisen unwholesome states (*pahāna-padhāna / uppannānam pāpakānam akusalānam dhammānam pahānāya vāyāma*), the effort to develop unarisen wholesome states (*bhāvanā-padhāna / anuppannānam kusalānam dhammānam uppādāya vāyāma*), and the effort to increase arisen wholesome states (*anurakkhanā-padhāna / uppannānam kusalānam dhammānam bhiyyobhāvāya vāyāmati*).⁷⁴

Thus, right concentration is confined only to one-pointedness of the wholesome states or objects. At this stage, one is said to have attained eightfold path of the learner (*aṭṭhāṅgasamannāgata sekha paṭipadā*). However, right concentration will continue to generate and lead to the attainment of perfect wisdom (*sammā-ñāṇa*) and perfect

⁷⁴ M. I. 301.

freedom (*sammā-vimutti*), making the tenfold perfect path (*dasañgasamannāgata-arahā hoti*).⁷⁵

(5.31) According to Narada Thera,⁷⁶ there are three levels of right concentration. The first is preliminary concentration (*parikamma-samādhi*), which is one-pointedness of meditation subjects. The second is the access concentration (*upacarā-samādhi*), where five hindrances (*pañca nīvaraṇāni*) are eliminated. The third is absorption concentration (*appanā-samādhi*), the complete state of purity of the mind. At this stage, right concentration immediately leads to the attainment of four meditation levels of the form world (*rūpajjhānāni*) and of four meditation levels of the formless world (*arūpajjhānāni*), and finally, the attainment of *nibbāna*.

⁷⁵ *M. III. 76.*

⁷⁶ Narada Thera (1979): 389-96; H. Gunaratana (1996): 10.

VI

CONCLUSION

(6.1) As stated earlier, the essence of the Buddha's teachings lies dormant in the four noble truths (*cattāri ariya saccāni*). The four noble truths are the statement of what is suffering (*dukkha*), discovering the cause of suffering (*dukkha-samudaya*), realisation of the state of the destruction of suffering (*dukkha-nirodha*) and showing the path leading to that state of destruction of suffering (*dukkha-nirodha-gāminī-paṭipadā*). They form the soteriological structure of the Buddha's ethical teachings. In a general structure, the four noble truths can be called the relatively factual truths in a fourfold formula: the statement of the fact (*sacca*), the source (*samudaya*), its end (*nirodha*) and the path (*magga*). In a medical analogy of their structure, they can be expressed in the following form: (i) diagnose a disease, (ii) determine its cause, (iii) set for perfect health, and (iv) prescribe a treatment to cure it. Each of these four truths should be realised in three aspects (*ti-parivatṭa*): the factual truth must become known (*sacca-ñāṇa*), its function must be realised (*kicca-ñāṇa*), and its accomplishment must be realised (*kata-*

ñāṇa).¹ The best response to the four noble truths is to realise the nature of unsatisfactoriness (*dukkha*) in phenomena, destroy the cause of suffering and experience the cessation of suffering by practice of the eightfold noble path.

(6.2) The phenomena as suffering can be seen in terms of: (i) birth, ageing, sickness, death, (ii) sorrow, lamentation, pain, grief, despair, (iii) association with the disliked, separation from the liked, not to get what one desires for, and fivefold personality-factors of grasping. The first set concerns with the biological aspect of suffering, or suffering derived from biological change. The third set refers to suffering arisen from the vicissitudes of life. The second deals with both mental and physical states of suffering, resulting from the first and the third. It is in this context that suffering is classified into three categories, namely, suffering as physical pain (*dukkha-dukkhatā*), suffering due to diverse change of things (*vipariṇāma-dukkhatā*), and suffering caused by psychological change (*saṅkhāra-dukkhatā*).²

(6.3) The statement of suffering thus does not lay stress on pessimistically unhappy aspects of life, but rather tries to find out its cause in order to cure it effectively. This constitutes the second noble truth. The cause and origin of suffering is shown as the grasping attitude to the fivefold personality-factors for existence (*saṅkhittena pañcupādānakkhandhāpi dukkhā // saṅkṣepena-pañcopādānaskhandhā-duḥkham*), not the personality-factors themselves. This wrong attitude is known as grasping (*upādāna*), derived from craving (*taṇhā*) in its three forms, namely, craving for sensuous satisfaction (*kāma-taṇhā*),

¹ EB. II. s.v. *ariya-sacca*: 85a.

² D. III. 216; S. IV. 259; S. V. 56. Cf. Vism. 499.

craving for existence (*bhava-taṇhā*) and craving for self-annihilation (*vibhava-taṇhā*). Besides grasping and craving, ignorance (*avijjā*) and wrong view (*micchā diṭṭhi*) are also important causes of suffering. The first refers to the cognitive factor constituting suffering, which gives rise to the second in formulation of wrong theories, unwholesome ideologies, wrong opinions, wrong views etc.

Ignorance finds expression in all kinds of unwholesome states of mind (*akusala cetasika*), mental cankers (*āsava*) and moral defilements (*kilesa*). There is, however, the positive aspect of life, that is the state of destruction of suffering (*dukkha-nirodha-gāminī-paṭipadā*) and of its causes (*samudaya*), which is called *nibbāna* in Buddhism. Thus, statement of suffering and its cause is to realise and experience the highest happiness (*paramam sukham*), that is *nibbāna*. *Nibbāna* is not a state of death, nor annihilation, nor heaven-like place, nor paradise. It is a totally transformed state of psychology and personality, where mind and its mental states are absolutely purified and become perfect wisdom, loving-kindness, compassion for the benefit, well being and happiness of mankind and other sentient beings. This highest state of happiness, where health is perfect not only in terms of physicality but also of mentally is possible by the practice of eightfold noble path. They are right view, right thought, right speech, right action, right livelihood, right effort, right mindfulness, and right action. They are grouped into three categories, namely, group of virtue (factors 3-5), group of mental culture (factors 6-8) and group of wisdom (factors 1-2). Each noble path-factor consists of two levels, one leads to the accumulation of merit for a good life in the here and the after, the other leads to destruction of continuance of rebirth. Depending upon the

purpose and the goal one is seeking the path either leads the ordinary worldling (*puthujjana*) to a moral life (*dhammacariya*) or to noble life (*brahmacariya*). In a moral life, he is morally good, desirable and happy, while in a holy life, he is a saint, an enlightened, who is perfectly good, ethical and profitable to mankind.

(6.4) Thus, the four noble truths are declared just “because they are profitable (*attha-saṁhita*), because they are characteristic of phenomena (*dhamma-saṁhita*), because they are the foundations of the holy life (*ādi-brahmacariyaka*), because they are conducive to total dispassion (*ekanta-nibbida*), to cessation of suffering (*nirodha*), to peace of mind (*upasama*), to direct knowledge (*abhiññā*), to complete enlightenment (*sambodha*) and *nibbāna*.³ This can be the reason why the Buddha repeatedly confirms his ethical teachings as purely pragmatic: “Both in the past and as well as now, I have consistently taught only suffering and the ending of suffering,”⁴ or “as the vast ocean has just one taste, the taste of salt, even so this truth (*dhamma*) and ethics (*vinaya*) is impregnated with one taste, the taste of [self-effort] soteriology.”⁵ This is the most important aspect of the Buddhist soteriological ethics, which the Buddha has kindly offered to mankind.

³ *D.* III. 137; *S.* II. 223.

⁴ *S.* IV. 384; *M.* I. 140: *Pubbe cāham Anurādha etarahi ca dukkhañceva pāññapemi dukkhassa ca nirodhanī.*

⁵ *A.* IV. 202; *Vin.* II. 235: *Seyyathāpi bhikkheva nahāsamuddo ekaraso loñaraso evameva kho bhikkheva ayam dhammavinayo ekaraso vimuttiraso.*

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On October 30, 2010 the Mahamakut Buddhist University, Thailand conferred on him the title of Doctor Honoris Causa in appreciation of his excellent contribution to Buddhist education, his works on Buddhist academic research and leadership in international Buddhist community.

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