

the entire gamut of the *puthujjana* society. The lotus flower in its different stages of growth and blooming in its journey towards light and freedom quite aptly represents the diverse categories and classes of men and women, all *puthujjana* type, some badly caught in *samsāra* and some struggling to achieve freedom very often under a Buddha's guidance.

In the Buddha's usage the term *puthujjana* always implies the lower level of the mundane life as also exemplified by his use of its adjectival form *puthujanika* in describing sensual indulgence (*kāmasukhallikā nuyoga*) as "low-class" in the first sermon, the *Dhammacakkapavattana Sutta*.

A.G.S. Kariyawasam

RĀGA means 'lust' or 'passion'. Together with anger (*dosa*) and delusion (*moha*), *rāga* is one of the fundamental defilements recognized in early Buddhism, a defilement similar in nature to 'greed' (*lobha*), 'longing' (*chanda*), 'delight' (*nandi*), 'craving' (*taṇhā*), and 'grasping' (*upādāna*).¹

Rāga features prominently in the second noble truth, according to which the entire range of the human predicament can be traced to craving, which is accompanied by *rāga* and delight (*S. V, 421: taṇhā nandirāgasahagatā*). *Rāga* has moreover received the dubitable honour of being reckoned as one of the daughters of *Māra* (*S. I, 124*), and is responsible for forming a distinctive character type, the *rāgacarita*, one whose predominant disposition is towards lust and passion (*Vism. 102*). All these instances highlight the importance and detrimental repercussions of this particular mental defilement.

When *rāga* arises in the mind, one becomes unable to discern what constitutes one's own and another's welfare, a predicament which only easily leads to evil conduct by way of body, speech and mind (*A. 1,215*). *Rāga* in the form of sensual passion (*kāmarāga*) causes householders to quarrel with each other, while *rāga* manifesting as passionate attachment to views (*ditthirāga*) will cause recluses to quarrel with each other (*A. 1,66*). Such passionate attachment stands at the back of much philosophical speculation, which in the final count can be traced to the presence of *rāga* in regard to the five aggregates (*S. IV, 387*)

The presence of sensual passion (*kāmarāga*) in the mind leads moreover to forgetfulness, making it difficult to keep things in mind even though they have been repeatedly memorized (*S. V, 121*). The debilitating influence of *rāga* not only impairs memory, but also perception. Beings not free from *rāga* in relation to sensual pleasures suffer from a perceptual distortion (*viparītasāññā*) which causes them to attribute happiness to what turns out to be the opposite (*M. 1,507*). The deluded notions resulting from the influence of *rāga* on the mind are as illusory as the images of a woman or a man created by a painter - however real they may seem, they remain artificially created images (*S. II, 101*). Though such notions are illusory, their repercussions are all too real, as *rāga* can set the whole mind on fire (*S. I, 188*). No other fire, indeed, is like the fire of passion (*Dhp. 202*).

A monk who goes begging food without sense-restraint, or who is given to excessive socialization, can easily be overwhelmed by *rāga*, tormenting him to such an extent that he might commit an offence or disrobe (*A. III, 95* and *A. III, 393*). The degree to which *rāga* can lead to mental distress can be inferred from the case of the nun *Sīhā*, who was driven to the verge of suicide because for years sensual passion (*kāmarāga*) had prevented her from getting any peace of mind (*Thig. 77-81*).

Such sensual passion (*kāmarāga*) is responsible for the arising of fear and dread not only in regard to the present, but also in regard to the future (*A. IV, 289*). Fear in regard to the present moment arises when one retires to a secluded spot in the forest with a mind under the influence of *rāga* (*M. I, 17*). Fear in regard to the future arises when one is afflicted by some disease and, due to the presence of *rāga* in relation to sensual pleasures and to the body, fear of death manifests (*A. II, 173*).

In view of these manifold disadvantages, it comes as no surprise that the removal of *rāga* is a central concern of the Buddha's teaching. In contrast to the present and future predicament caused by *rāga* stands the happiness incumbent on gaining freedom from lust and passion. Such happiness, so the Buddha, constitutes the peak of unworldly happiness (*S. IV,*

237: *nirāmisā nirāmisataraṃ sukhaṃ*). This may not seem obvious at first sight, since from a worldly perspective a man might imagine happiness to be found in staying in a lavishly furnished dwelling place and in the company of beautiful women. Yet, as the Buddha pointed out, due to *rāga* such a man will experience bodily and mental torments and suffering (*A. I, 136*). One who has overcome *rāga*, however, will be free from such torments and live happily, even if he stays out in the open, subject to the vicissitudes of the climate and with only the hard ground to rest on.

A minute inspection of the Buddha's behaviour and way of acting, undertaken by a young brahmin in the *Brahmāyu Sutta*, resulted in the following telling observation: the Buddha took food experiencing its taste, yet without experiencing *rāga* for the taste.² This is in fact a crucial difference and at the same time indicates that the problem posed by *rāga* is not solved by simply avoiding experience, but rather needs to be tackled on a deeper level.

The important and variegated repercussions of *rāga* find their reflection in the inclusion of this term in various central categories of early Buddhism. One of these are the *saṃyojanas*, the 'fetters' binding beings to *samsāric* existence. Here *rāga* makes its appearance as 'sensual lust' (*kāmarāga*), the first of the five lower fetters (*M. 1,433*). Once such *kāmarāga* has been transcended, one's future rebirth will similarly surpass the sensuous sphere (*S. II, 99*). *Rāga* recurs in the context of the *saṃyojanas* again as lust directed to the material and immaterial spheres (*rūparāga* and *arūparāga*), two out of the five higher fetters (*D. III, 234*). Alternative enumerations of the fetters speak moreover of the 'fetter of lust for existence' (*A. IV, 7: bhavarāgasamyojana*).

The problem posed by the fettering force of *rāga* is of particular relevance to the process of perception. Just as when two oxen are yoked together, neither of the two oxen is responsible for the other being bound, so too neither the sense organs nor the sense objects are responsible for the worldling being in bondage to experience, but rather longing and lust (*chandarāga*) constitute the fettering factors (*S.IV, 163*).

The image of being bound recurs again with the four types of 'bonds' (*cattāro yogā*), where *rāga* underlies three out of altogether four such bonds (*A. II, 10*): the bondage to sensuality due to sensual lust (*kāmarāga*), the bondage to existence due to lust for existence (*bhavarāga*) and the bondage of views as a manifestation of lust for views (*dīṭṭhirāga*). The same image recurs again with the five types of mental bondages (*cetaso vinibandhā*), which undermine the inspiration to practice and thereby prevent growth in the *Dhamma* (*M. I, 101*). Three out of this set of five are manifestations of *rāga*, as lust in relation to sensual pleasures, to the body and to forms. Summing up these various perspectives on the bondage caused by *rāga* with the help of a metaphor found in the *Dhammapada*: to be under the influence of *rāga* is a predicament comparable to a spider caught in his own net (*Dhp. 347*).

Another important category in early Buddhism is concerned with the *anusayas*, the 'underlying tendencies' that lie latent in the mind and lead to the arising of defilements. Here *rāga* makes its appearance in two out of altogether seven occasions (*V. III, 254*): as the underlying tendency to sensual lust (*kāmarāgānusaya*) and as the underlying tendency to lust for existence (*bhavarāgānusaya*). The underlying tendency to sensual lust is already present in the case of a newborn baby, even though an infant would not yet be able to conceive even the idea of sensuality (*M. 1,433*).

The activation of *rāga* as an underlying tendency is closely linked to the arising of pleasant feeling. This relation, however, is not one of necessity, since some pleasant feelings, such as those experienced in meditative absorption (*jhāna*), do not activate this underlying tendency (*M. I, 303*). In relation to the more mundane types of pleasant feelings, however, a sustained effort has to be made to go beyond the influence of this underlying tendency. A manifestation of *rāga* which may not pertain to the realm of what is unwholesome could be *dhammarāga*, 'lust for the *Dhamma*'. This term makes its appearance on instances where someone fails to reach the full eradication of the influxes and, due to such *dhammarāga*, gains non-return (*M. 1,350*). The way

these instances are formulated seems to allow for two explanations, taking *dharmarāga* to be either the factor that has prevented the full eradication of the influxes, or else to be the factor that has ensured at least the gain of non-return. The commentarial explanation supports the first alternative, taking *dharmarāga* to represent *chandarāga*, 'lustful longing' in relation to one's meditative experiences (*MA*. III, 146). This interpretation did not remain unchallenged, and the same commentary records the argument being raised that on this interpretation an unwholesome mental factor is made responsible for leading to such sublime attainment as non-return and its consequent rebirth in the Pure Abodes.

Be that as it may, a mental factor entirely in the realm of what is unwholesome is *adhammarāga*, 'unlawful lust', an expression which the *Atthasālinī* explains to refer to incestuous passion (*DhsA*. 366). According to the *Cakkavattisihanāda Sutta*, such *adhammarāga* is characteristic of periods when human civilization is on the decline (*D*. III, 70). Another discourse describes the dire consequences of indulging in *adhammarāga*, which apparently not only causes the arising of quarrels and fighting, but can also lead to adverse climatic conditions and an increase in demonic forces (*A*. I, 160).

The task of recognizing the presence or absence of any form of *rāga* forms part of contemplation of the mind according to the *Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta* (*M*. I, 59). Such introspective recognition of the presence or the absence of *rāga* in one's own mind stands out as an example for the Buddha's teaching being a directly and immediately visible teaching, inviting one to come and see, leading onwards and to be experienced personally by the wise (*S*. IV, 41)

Compared with anger (*dosa*), *rāga* is less blameable, though it takes longer to overcome it (*A*. I, 200). The arising of *rāga* can be traced to two main conditions (*A*. I, 87): the sign of beauty (*subhanimitta*), often attributed to the physical body of the other gender, and unwise attention (*ayoniso manasikāra*). The obvious counter method, therefore, is wise attention to the less appealing aspects of the body, examining its anatomical constitution and the

unattractive nature of its parts (*A*. III, 323). Additional counter strategies are to develop restraint of the senses, contentment with food, wakefulness and mindfulness together with clear comprehension (*A*. IV, 166).

In order to ensure that one's mind is not overwhelmed by *rāga*, recollection of the Buddha, the *Dhamma* and the *Sangha* can be undertaken (*A*. III, 286). From among the four *brahmavihāras*, the meditative development of equanimity (*upekkhā cetovimutti*) stands out as an escape (*nissaraṇa*) from *rāga* (*D*. III, 249). These passages indicate that the development of mental tranquillity (*samatha*) can also function as an antidote to *rāga*.³ The rationale behind this is that the experience of deeper states of concentration is one of intense pleasure and happiness, brought about by purely mental means, which thereby automatically eclipses any happiness arising in dependence on sensual pleasures. Thus the development of mental tranquility can become a powerful antidote to *rāga* by divesting its objects of their former attraction.

The term *rāga* is derived from the root *raj*, to 'colour', and can also mean 'colour' or 'dye'. *Rāga* occurs in this sense in a passage in the *Vinaya* (*Vin*. II, 107), which reports a group of notoriously ill behaved monks using 'face colour' (*mukharāga*), apparently an ancient Indian type of make up.

The two meanings of *rāga* are to some extent interrelated, since *rāga* as passion or lust is a mental quality that 'colours' the mind. The discourses illustrate this colouring influence of sensual lust (*kāmarāga*) with the example of someone attempting to see the reflection of his or her face in water mixed with dye (*S*. V, 121). Due to the presence of the dye, the natural mirroring function of the water is distorted, making it impossible to properly see the reflection of one's face.

The alternative sense of *rāga* as colour becomes particularly evident with the term *virāga*, which depending on context can either mean 'fading away', derived from the sense of decolouration, or else 'dispassion', derived from the primary sense of *rāga*

as lust or passion. These two senses of *virāga* can to some extent be related to each other, since contemplating the 'fading away' and therewith the impermanent nature of phenomena will result in 'dispassion'. A play on both senses of the term can be found in such instances as when the Buddha proclaimed the purpose of his teaching to be *rāgavirāga*, the 'fading away of passion' (S. IV, 47).

Questioned to declare a cause for the purification of beings, the Buddha pointed to dispassion (*virāga*) as the path to purification (S. III, 70). The same dispassion forms also one of the epithets of *Nibbāna*.⁴ *Nibbāna*, the summum bonum of the Buddha's teaching, is but the destruction of *rāga* and its allied evils of anger and delusion (S. IV, 251), a destruction that similarly merits being reckoned as the unconditioned (S. IV, 359: *asañkhata*), the deathless (S. V, 8: *amata*), and the final goal of the religious life (S. V, 8: *brahmacariyapariyosāna*).

Hence it is no wonder to find the Buddha proclaiming to his foster mother *Mahāpajāpatī Gotamī* that whatever leads to dispassion (*virāga*) should be considered as his teaching (A. IV, 280). The central role of dispassion becomes also evident from the Buddha's reflection in regard to his two teachers, *Alāra Kālāma* and *Uddaka Rāmaputta*. Having reached the consummation of their teaching he realized that what they proposed as the ultimate goal was not conducive to dispassion, a reflection which motivated him to continue his quest for awakening (M. I, 165). Once he had gained awakening, the depth of his realization led the Buddha to wonder whether those 'dyed in lust' (*rāgaratta*) will be able to perceive this truth (M. I, 168).

To sum up, one who teaches the overcoming of *rāga* and its allied evils is a speaker of *Dhamma* (*dhammavādī*), one who practices for their overcoming is practising well (*suppaṭipanna*) and one who has overcome them is 'well-gone' (*sugata*) indeed (S. IV, 252). Of all things or phenomena, dispassion (*virāga*) stands out supreme (A. II, 34) See also ABHIJHĀ; DESIRE; KĀMA; LOBHA

References

- ¹ The similarity in meaning of these terms can be deduced from passages which mention them as near equivalents, cf. e.g. M. III, 32: *yo chando yo rāgo yā nandī yā taṇhā ye ca upāyūpādānā*.
- ² M. II, 138: *rasapaṭisaṃvedī kho pana so bhavaṃ Gotamo āhāraṃ āhāreti, no ca rasarāga paṭisaṃvedī*
- ³ A. I, 61: *samatho bhāvito... cittaṃ bhāvīyati. Cittaṃ bhāvitaṃ... yo rāgo so pahīyati.*
- ⁴ D. II, 36: *sabbasañkhārasamatho sabbūpadhi paṇinissaggo taṇhākkhaya virāgo nirodho nibbānaṃ.*

RĀHULA (1) An Arahant *Thera*. Rāhula was the son of Prince Siddhattha Gotama and was born on a Full Moon Day of *Āsaḷha* on which day Prince Siddhattha renounced household life (AA. I. 82). The news of Rāhula's birth was conveyed to Siddhattha who was enjoying himself in his pleasure on the bank of the royal pond after being decked by Vissakamma. When he received the news of the birth of Rāhula, he thought of renouncing the world as soon as possible, for he thought the birth of a son was a new bond attaching him to household life. There he uttered the words '*Rāhulo jāto bandhanaṃ jātam*' (Rāhula is born, a Bond is born). King Suddhodana, who was later informed by his men about the utterance, named the new born child as Rāhula (*Paramattha Dīpanī*. Vol. II p. 125).

When the Buddha visited Kapilavatthu for the first time after attaining Enlightenment accepting an invitation of King Suddhodana to do so, Rāhula's mother (Yasodarā) sent Rāhula to the Buddha to ask for his inheritance (*dāyajja*). Prince Rāhula who was seven years old by that time, approached the Buddha and said 'pleasant is your shadow, recluse' *sukhā te samaṇa chāyā* (Vin. I, 82) and asked for his inheritance. The Buddha who gave him no answer, left the palace after meals to Nirodhārāma where he lived at that time. Rāhula followed the Buddha repeating his request. There the Buddha asked Venerable Sāriputta to ordain the child, as the ordination was the only *dāyajja* the Buddha had to give him as there was no other wealth left with him. (*ibid*). When Venerable Sāriputta asked the Buddha how the Ordination should be carried out,

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