

**SAKKĀYADITṬHI.** Is usually translated as 'personality view'. The term *sakkāya* is made up of *sat* 'existing' and *kāya*, 'body'. *Kāya* in the present context has a more general sense and goes beyond its usual meaning as the physical body, so that the entire term *sakkāya* stands for 'embodiment', 'identity' or 'personality'.

According to the *Sakkāya Sutta* (S. III, 159), the five aggregates of clinging are what make up *sakkāya*. Such *sakkāya*, shows the same discourse, arises due to craving and will cease if craving is overcome. Hence the path leading to the cessation of *sakkāya* is none other than the noble eightfold path.

The same definition of *sakkāya* recurs in the *Cūḷavedalla Sutta* (M. I, 299), which elaborates this definition by pointing out that clinging (*upādāna*) is not identical with the five aggregates, nor something apart from them, but simply refers to desire and lust in regard to them. Since the five aggregates of clinging feature as the summary statement of the nature of *dukkha* found in the standard definitions of the first noble truth<sup>1</sup> *sakkāya* is closely related to *dukkha* and thereby of eminent importance in early Buddhism. Thus it comes as no surprise when another discourse identifies the way leading to the cessation of *sakkāya* as the way leading to the cessation of *dukkha* (S. III, 44).

The *Āneñjasappāya Sutta* offers a complementary definition, taking *sakkāya* to cover present and future sensual pleasures and material forms, together with experiences of deep concentrative absorption (M. II, 265). This passage is a restatement of the above definition, undertaken from the perspective of different types of experiences.

Such *sakkāyaditṭhi* involves a conversion of the instinctive sense of an 'I' at the core of subjective experience into a substantial and possibly even metaphysical entity, an act of 'embodiment' or 'personification' yielding the notion of a self and from this notion evolving into a full fledged view. According to the standard definition of *sakkāyaditṭhi*, the genesis of such a full fledged personality view operates based on one or the other of altogether twenty possible modes, arrived at by considering any of the five aggregates to either correspond to the self, or else taking the self to be endowed with the aggregate, or

else by presuming the aggregate to be part of the self, or else by taking the self to be within the aggregate (M. I, 300). This twenty-fold matrix sets the paradigm for whatever manifestations of *sakkāyaditṭhi* can be found.

Instances of these twenty modes of personality view make their appearance in several discourses, a short selection of which will help to illustrate the implications of *sakkāyaditṭhi*. The *Mahātaṇhāsankhaya Sutta* reports the monk *Sāti* assuming that the selfsame consciousness continues through the round of rebirths, this consciousness being what speaks and feels and experiences karmic retribution (M. I, 256). In reply to this thorough misunderstanding, the Buddha spoke of the dependent arising of consciousness, thereby indicating that *Sāti*'s mistaken view implied a causally independent self. Such notions of causal independence and mastery are the soil in which *sakkāyaditṭhi* grows. Yet neither body nor feelings, perceptions, volitions or consciousness are in the final account amenable to full control, (M. I, 231 and S. III, 66), so that to take any of these to be an independent self turns out to be a thorough illusion.

The monk *Sāti* was not the only monk falling prey to erroneous self notions. The *Mahāpuṇṇama Sutta* reports another monk wondering who will be affected by karmic retribution, as all five aggregates are not self (M. III, 19). Just as the monk *Sāti* had fallen into the error of not taking the dependent origination of consciousness into account, this monk mistakenly believed the denial of self to imply a denial of karmic retribution and empirical continuity. Both these mistaken conceptions are off springs of the same *sakkāyaditṭhi*.

Another discourse depicts *Māra* challenging the nun *Vajirā* by asking her who had created the 'being' and where the 'being' had come from (S. I, 135). Unlike the two monks mentioned above, the nun *Vajirā* had developed a deeper understanding of the *Dhamma* and was thus quick to point out that *Māra* was under the sway of views, a reference indicating that his notion of a 'being' was an instance of *sakkāyaditṭhi*. Just as a chariot is merely a functional assemblage of parts, she explained, so too the expression 'being' refers merely to the functional assemblage of the five aggregates.

Just as the term 'chariot' is simply a convention, so too the superimposition of the notion of an 'I' on

experience is nothing but a convention. Yet, the above example from the *Mahāpuṇṇama Sutta* shows that disclosing the merely conventional nature of 'I' notions can lead to misunderstandings. In terms of the chariot simile: to reject the existence of an independent, substantial chariot does not render it impossible to ride in the functional assemblage of conditioned and impermanent parts to which the concept 'chariot' refers. In a similar way, to deny the existence of a self does not imply a denial of the individual person, being but the conditioned and impermanent interaction of the five aggregates.

The question posed above by *Māra* forms part of a whole set of confused types of thinking under the influence of *sakkāyadiṭṭhi*, described in the *Sabbāsava Sutta* (M. I, 8). According to this discourse, a worldlyling is prone to wonder: 'Did I exist in the past or not, and if I existed, what was I in the past?' 'Will I exist in the future or will I not exist?', 'Am I at present or am I not?' 'Where did this being come from, where will it go to?' Reflecting unwisely in this way, so the *Sabbāsava Sutta* explains, causes the arising of various types of views about a self. Among these views, one finds not only the view proposed by the monk *Sāti*, presuming that the self speaks and feels and experiences karmic retribution, but also the view 'no self exists for me', corresponding to the type of thinking occurring in the monk from the *Mahāpuṇṇama Sutta*. Leaving behind such unwise reflections, the *Sabbāsava Sutta* continues, and wisely attending to the four noble truths one will abandon the fetter of *sakkāyadiṭṭhi*.

The *Mahānidāna Sutta* takes up three modes of postulating a self in relation to feeling for closer examination. These three modes proceed by either identifying feeling as the self, or else taking the self to be without feeling, or by presuming that the self feels (D. II, 66). Yet to identify with feelings is unacceptable due to the impermanent nature of feelings, the Buddha explained, while to dissociate self from feelings is contradictory, since in the absence of any feeling, the notion 'I' would not arise in the first place.

Another set of three self notions, this time arisen due to speculating on the nature of perception, can be found in the *Poṭṭhapāda Sutta* (D. I, 186): a coarse self (*oḷarika*), a mind-made self (*manomaya*) and an immaterial self (*arūpa*). To identify with perception

in any of these three ways is however untenable, the Buddha pointed out, as all perceptions arise and pass away.

The altogether twenty possible modes of *sakkāyadiṭṭhi* form the basic matrix for the arising of all kinds of views. As the monk *Isidatta* explained to the householder *Citta* (S. IV, 287), the different types of views described in the *Brahmajāla Sutta* (D. I, 12) are but the outcome of *sakkāyadiṭṭhi*. If it were not for *Micchādiṭṭhi*, such views would not arise.

The same finds confirmation in another discourse, where the Buddha explained why he did not make a pronouncement concerning a set of current philosophical propositions about the nature of the world (eternal or not, boundless or not), the relationship of the soul to the body (identity or not) and the destiny of a *tathāgata* after death (exists, does not exist, both, neither). According to his explanation, such propositions only arise when one takes the aggregates to be a self in any of the above-mentioned twenty modes (S. IV, 395).

Though *sakkāyadiṭṭhi* as the root of all views is certainly wrong, it is not necessarily a 'wrong view' (*micchādiṭṭhi*) in the technical sense of the term. 'Wrong view', so the Buddha declared, necessarily leads to an evil rebirth, either in the animal realm or in hell (A. I, 60). The same cannot be said of all types of *sakkāyadiṭṭhi*.

One who falls prey to *Sakkāyadiṭṭhi*, and thereby to the erroneous presumption of a self, might still be one who performs wholesome deeds and believes in karmic retribution. Though the mistaken belief in a self would prevent him or her from awakening, it will not prevent a favourable rebirth. It may well be for this reason that the discourses do not explicitly identify *Sakkāyadiṭṭhi* as a *micchādiṭṭhi* and in one instance even list *micchādiṭṭhi* side by side with *attānudiṭṭhi* (a synonym of *Sakkāyadiṭṭhi*) as different types of views (A. III, 447). Similarly, the *Dhammasaṅgani*'s definition of *Sakkāyadiṭṭhi* employs a number of qualifying epithets, among them 'false path', 'wrong road' and 'wrongness'<sup>2</sup> but is careful to avoid the expression 'wrong view' (*micchādiṭṭhi*), quite probably because the implications of this expression do not allow including it as a synonym for *Sakkāyadiṭṭhi*.

Even though from a Buddhist perspective *Sakkāyadiṭṭhi* is certainly incorrect, as long as its practical implications are to encourage moral and wholesome conduct, *Sakkāyadiṭṭhi* will not have the same evil consequence as *micchādiṭṭhi*, with its denial of karmic retribution and of the validity of ethical values. *Sakkāyadiṭṭhi* is a fetter binding to continuous *samsāric* existence, but not a fetter that inevitably results in such future existence taking place in the lower realms.

*Sakkāyadiṭṭhi* as a fetter binding to continuous existence in *samsāra* is the first of the three fetters to be overcome with stream-entry (A. I, 242). Since *Sakkāyadiṭṭhi* in its twenty modes boils down to 'I'-identifying with the five aggregates, the cure required to gain freedom from *Sakkāyadiṭṭhi* is to contemplate the five aggregates as devoid of 'mine', 'I am', and 'my self' (S. III, 68). Such contemplation not only covers the last mentioned view 'my self', the *Sakkāyadiṭṭhi* proper, but also its foundations: the sense of 'I am' as a manifestation of conceit and the mode of craving underlying the attribution of 'mine' to phenomena.<sup>3</sup>

Concerning the notion 'mine', the *Mūlapariyāya Sutta* explains that this notion arises out of a basic pattern of conceiving (*maññanā*) in relation to experienced phenomena (M. I, 1). In the case of earth, for example, based on perceiving earth the process of conceiving typical for a worldling proceeds from forming the conception 'earth', via the creation of a subject-object relationship as 'in earth' and 'from earth', to the notion 'mine' in relation to earth and there- with to the arising of delight in regard to earth. That is, the sensory input of what is perceived first receives real object status and then is appropriated. With this act of appropriation, 'self'- ishness comes into being. To appropriate is to control, so that this act of appropriation as 'mine' enhances and confirms the sense of a substantial subject able to exert control.

Due to this sense of a substantial subject able to exert control, the five aggregates are experienced as embodiments of the notion 'I am'. From the worldling's point of view, the material body is 'where I am', feelings are 'how I am', perceptions are 'what I am' (perceiving), volitions are 'why I am' (acting), and consciousness is 'whereby I am' (experiencing). In this way, each aggregate offers its own contribution to

enacting the reassuring illusion 'I am'. Such 'I am' notions are but erroneous superimpositions on experience, conveying the sense of an autonomous and independent subject reaching out to acquire or reject discrete substantial objects.

It is this basic fundamental notion of an 'I' which in its rationalised form becomes the full- fledged *Sakkāyadiṭṭhi* as 'my self' and therewith the basis for all kinds of views. Even a new born baby, though not yet having even a sense of being an individual, nevertheless is already in the possession of the underlying tendency to such *Sakkāyadiṭṭhi* (M. I, 432).

This passage indicates that the problem posed by *Sakkāyadiṭṭhi* is not merely a matter of verbally articulating self notions. Expressions such as 'I' and 'mine' will still be used by an *arahant*, for conventional purposes (S. I, 14). Hence to go beyond *Sakkāyadiṭṭhi* is not a matter of rhetoric, but of overcoming and eradicating the craving, conceit and view forming process that in the case of the ordinary worldling accompany the use of such expressions.

With the attainment of stream-entry, the fetter of *Sakkāyadiṭṭhi* and therewith the view 'my self' are forever eradicated. The notion 'I am' as an expression of conceit, however, still lingers on and will only be abandoned with full awakening (S. III, 130). For this same reason, the *Mūlapariyāya Sutta* advises the *sekha* to avoid taking experienced phenomena as 'mine' and delighting in them (M. I, 4).

The notion 'I am' can only occur when there is clinging, so Puṇṇa Mantāniputta once explained to Ananda (S. III, 105) just as only when holding up a mirror will one be able to see one's reflection. Similarly only when clinging to any of the five aggregates will the notion 'I am' arise.

According to the early Buddhist analysis, clinging can be of altogether four types (D. III, 230): clinging to sensuality, to views, to rules and vows and to a doctrine of a self. The last of these four, clinging to a doctrine of self (*attavādupādāna*), is a type of clinging which according to the Buddha's analysis in the *Cūlasihanāda Sutta* is beyond the understanding of other religious teachers (M. I, 66). This fourth type of clinging is none other than a manifestation of *Sakkāyadiṭṭhi* (Vbh. 375).

On one occasion the Buddha humorously invited his monks to cling to a self doctrine, if they were able to find a self doctrine which would not result in the arising of *dukkha* (M. I, 137). Since however no self can be found, such clinging and its corresponding views and doctrines are but the prattle of fools.

Nevertheless, the many folk delight in *sakkāya* and thus remain in the bondage of *Māra* (It. 92). Fettered, obsessed and enslaved by *Sakkāyaditthi*, the worldlying is unaware of the possibility to escape from it (M. I, 433). 'See this world with its gods' the Buddha proclaimed, 'conceiving what is not self to be a self' (Sn. 756). In fact, not only men are under the sway of *Sakkāyaditthi*, but even gods. Among gods endowed with a long life span the mistaken belief in a permanent self can easily arise. On hearing the Buddha proclaim the impermanent nature of *sakkāya*, such gods are struck with fear, realizing that they too are caught up in the predicament of *sakkāya* (A. II, 33).

A monk whose mind does not feel inspired to give up *sakkāya* is like a weak man who attempts to swim across the *Ganges* river but is unable to do so (M. I, 435). Lack of inspiration for the relinquishment of *sakkāya* may sometimes be due to attachment to deeper stages of concentration (A. II, 165). More mundane reasons for delighting in *sakkāya* can be taking pleasure in activity, in chattering, in sleeping, in company and in conceptual proliferation (A. III, 292).

Once the mind has however gained the inspiration to relinquish *sakkāya*, it can be reckoned as a mind that is well developed and free, gone beyond the underlying tendency to delight in *sakkāya* (A. III, 246). The giving up of *sakkāya* is happiness indeed, so the noble ones proclaim. What the many folk take to be happiness, they see as misery, but what the many folk call misery, the noble ones know to be happiness.<sup>4</sup>

Once *Nibbāna* is experienced, the Buddha explained in the *Māgandīya Sutta* (M. I, 511), the much cherished 'I' is seen for what it is: an act of cheating and deluding oneself. Such cheating and deluding oneself through clinging to *sakkāya* is like being on the near shore of a water expanse (S. IV, 175), a shore beset by danger and fearful, while the other shore, safe and free from danger, is *Nibbāna*, the cessation of *sakkāya*.

See also ANATTĀ, ĀTMAN, ATTADITTHI, ATTAVĀDA, UPĀDĀNA

Anālayo

#### References

1. D. II, 305: *saṅkhittena pañcupādanakkhandhā dukkhā*.
2. Dhs. 182: *kummagga, micchāpatha, micchatta*.
3. SA. II, 98: *etaṃ mamāti taṃhāgāho... esohamasmāi mānagāho... eso me attāti ditthigāho*.
4. S. IV, 127: *Sukhaṃ dittham ariyehi, sakkāyassa nirodhanaṃ... yaṃ pare sukhato āhu, tad ariyā āhu dukkhato, yaṃ pare dukkhato āhu, tad ariyā sukhato vidū*.

ŚAKRA See SAKKA

**SAKYA.** The clan name of the Buddha Gotama with the alternative form *Sākiya* is found in canonical and post-canonical Pāli works. Individuals of the Sakya clan are generally referred to by the name Sakka. In Buddhist Sanskrit the terms used are *Śākya* and at times *Śākiya*. The form *Śākiyāni* with the alternatives *Śākyayāni*, *Śākyāyāni* are used in referring to Sakya females. *Sakyaputtiyā*, 'Sons of the Sakya' in Pāli and *Śākyaputriyā* in Buddhist Sanskrit are commonly used with reference to the disciples of the Buddha. The Buddha also came to be referred to as *Śākyamuni* (Pāli *Sakyamuni*) 'the Sakya Sage' and also as *Sakyasimha*, 'the Sakya Lion'. The Buddha was commonly referred to as *Samaṇo Gotamo* by non-Buddhists. In introducing himself to the king *Bimbisāra* of Magadha, the recluse Gotama says-

On Himavant's snow -slopes  
Yon dwells a people, king  
Of wealth and energy  
Settlers in Kosala  
Lineal kin of the Sun (Ādiccagotta)  
Sakyans (Sākiyā) by birth (*jātiyā*) gone forth  
Have I, king, from that clan<sup>1</sup>

From this it is clear that the Sakya territory was on the foothills of the Himalayas and, at least in the time of the Buddha, they were included within the Kosala kingdom. In one instance the king *Pasenadi* Kosala claims both himself and the Buddha to be Kosalas (*Bhagavāpi Kosaliko ahampi Kosaliko M.*).

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VOLUME VII

FASCICLE 4 : Saddhammapakāsinī – Sāsanavamsa



2006