

feeds on gross food, or with a divine mind-made body that is endowed with limbs and faculties. The final four grounds for annihilationist views in the *Brahmajāla Sutta* involve the four immaterial attainments, namely the attainment of boundless space, boundless consciousness, nothingness and neither-perception-nor-non-perception.

From the perspective of attempting to find a deeper meaning and a broader scope of implication for the term *vibhava-taphā*, the final four grounds for annihilationist views listed in the *Brahmajāla Sutta* are intriguing, since they suggest that non-existence or non-becoming may have been envisaged as a goal to be reached through meditation practice in ancient India, in particular through attaining any of the immaterial spheres. Since the experience of these immaterial spheres requires a considerable amount of meditative proficiency and practice, an annihilationist view related to the attainment or experience of these states could not reasonably assume that all beings are destined to such annihilation. That is, from the perspective of the upholders of such a view, annihilation would probably not have been considered as the inevitable fate of all beings, but rather as a goal to be attained through an appropriate form of conduct and meditation practice. The idea behind such an aspiration for annihilation could be a merger with a form of ultimate reality, held to be equivalent to boundless space, or to boundless consciousness, or to nothingness, or to neither-perception-nor-non-perception. Attaining such a merger at the death of the body any self-hood would be successfully annihilated.

Support for this interpretation could be gathered from the *Dhātuvibhaṅga Sutta*, which describes the development of insight and detachment in regard to the experience of the immaterial attainments (*M. III, 244*). In the concluding section of this description, just before turning to the attainment of final liberation, the *Dhātuvibhaṅga Sutta* indicates that at this high point of meditative development and mature insight one will be free from intentions and volitions in regard to existence or non-existence, *n'eva abhisaiṅkharoti nābhisañcetayati bhavāya vā vibhavāya vā*. In this context, intentions and volitions in regard to *vibhava* most certainly do not refer to any suicidal impulse. Instead, the implication of the passage seems to be that one who has reached this lofty stage of mental development is aloof from interest in any form of existence as well as in the type of merger with an

ultimate immaterial reality that involves a cessation of the self, such as appears to be implicit in the *Brahmajāla Sutta's* description.

That annihilation was by some contemporaries of the Buddha perceived as a goal to be attained through a particular mode of conduct and practice would also be implicit in the formulation of the aspiration "may I not be, may it not be for me, I shall not be and it will not be for me", *no c' assaṃ, no ca me siyā, na bhavissāmi, na me bhavissati*, which a discourse in the *Samyutta Nikāya* explicitly identifies as an expression of an annihilationist view, *ucchedadiṭṭhi* (*S. III, 99*; see also VIBHAVA). Since this formulation clearly involves an aspiration, here again it would not make much sense to assume that all beings are destined to annihilation. Nor does this formulation appear to be merely the expression of a suicidal intention, since a discourse in the *Aṅguttara Nikāya* reckons this aspiration as supreme among heterodox views (*A. V, 63*). Instead, what this aspiration most probably intends is a form of annihilation that requires effort and practice, such as would indeed be required for attaining the immaterial spheres.

From this perspective, then, *vibhava-tapha* could be understood to comprise craving for annihilation in a materialist as well as a spiritual sense, ranging from the wish to destroy the physical body by suicide to the aspiration for leaving behind the sense of selfhood through a mystic merger with an ultimate reality. The decisive factor that these different modes of craving share in common is the assumed sense of a self that lurks behind them. From a Buddhist perspective, all these forms of craving are but manifestations of ignorance, since however refined the experience they aim at may be, the truth of the matter is that there was never a self to be annihilated in the first place.

Anālayo

VICIKICCHĀ, "doubt", (Skt. *vicikitsā*) is reckoned in early Buddhism as a mental obstruction in regard to the development of mental tranquillity, *samatha*, as well as in regard to the development of liberating insight, *vipassanā*. The role of *vicikicchā* as an obstruction to the development of deeper states of concentration is reflected in its inclusion as the fifth among the five hindrances (e.g. *D. I, 246*; see also N\*VARAṆĀ). The debilitating effect of *vicikicchā* in relation to liberating

insight, its 'binding' force to *samsāra*, finds its expression in the fact that one of the three fetters that are to be eradicated with stream-entry is the fetter of doubt (e.g. *M. I*, 9; see also SAṂYOJANA). The same is also reflected in the circumstance that the removal of *kaṅkhā*, a synonym to *vicikicchā*, is a distinct stage in the series of purifications that lead up to liberation (*M. I*, 147; See also KAṆKHĀVITARAṄAVISUDDHI and RATHAVINĪTA SUTTA). In short, only after doubt has been overcome, will the eradication of lust, anger and delusion be possible (*A. V*, 147). Other advantages of overcoming doubt are that one will meet deadly disease with composure (*A. II*, 175), and will be able to live in secluded spots in a forest wilderness without fear (*M. I*, 18).

The nature of *vicikicchā* has been illustrated in the discourses with the help of various similes. One of these introduces doubt as the seventh army of Māra, the Evil One (*Sn*. 437). One who successfully gives battle to this army and overcomes doubt is, according to a simile given in the *Sāmaññaphala Sutta*, comparable to someone who safely crosses a dangerous desert without any loss (*D. I*, 73). A nuance similar to the desert imagery in this simile is the depiction of doubt in relation to the teacher, the teachings, the community and the training as a "barrenness of the mind", *cetokhila* (*M. I*, 101). The theme of travelling that underlies the *Sāmaññaphala Sutta* simile of crossing a desert recurs in a discourse in the *Samyutta Nikāya*, which illustrates *vicikicchā* with the example of a man who stands at the junction of a forked path, *dvidhāpatha* (*S. III*, 108; see also *M. I*, 144), and hence is in need of another person who tells him which way to take. The imageries of having to cross a dangerous desert and of being unable to decide on one's own which way to take bring out the insecurity and vacillation caused by doubt, the uncertainty as to what is the proper thing to be undertaken. The desert imagery and the idea of a barrenness of the mind add to this the nuance of an almost sterile and infertile condition, since due to doubt the mind becomes unproductive and even profound teachings are like seeds that fall on stony ground.

According to the detailed explanation given in the *Visuddhimagga*, uncertainty is in fact characteristic of doubt, *samsaya-lakkhaṇa*, whose function is to waver, *kampana-rasa*, and which manifests as indecisiveness or inability to take a clear position,

*anicchaya-paccupaṭṭhāna anekamsagāha-paccupaṭṭhāna vā*, having unwise attention as its proximate cause, *ayoniso-manasikāra-padaṭṭhāna* (*Vism.* 471).

The nuance of lack of clarity and vagueness that underlies the imagery of a forked path recurs more explicitly in a simile that compares the effect of each of the five hindrances on the mind to attempting to see the reflection of one's own face in a bowl filled with water. Here *vicikicchā* is equivalent to using a bowl that is placed in the dark and filled with turbid and muddy water (*S. V*, 123 and *A. III*, 233). Obviously a bowl of water in such condition will be incapable of accurately reflecting the true condition of one's face, just as a mind under the influence of doubt will not be able to accurately know and see the true nature of reality. The imagery of turbid and muddy water to illustrate the clouding and blurring effect that doubt has on the mind has a counterpart in another simile that compares the five hindrances to various metals that corrupt the purity of gold. In the context of this simile *vicikicchā* corresponds to silver, as the presence of silver will render gold brittle and unfit for being employed by the goldsmith, since by being mixed with silver it loses its malleability (*S. V*, 92 and *A. III*, 16).

As a hindrance, *vicikicchā* can manifest in relation to internal as well as external phenomena (*S. V*, 110). Moreover, doubt could arise in regard to the past, the present or the future (*D. III*, 217; cf. also *S. IV*, 327). The underlying tendency responsible for the fetter of doubt is already present in a new-born baby, even though an infant would not even know things about which doubt could arise (*M. I*, 433). Hence to overcome and remove doubt requires working against a deeply ingrained tendency in the mind.

Giving unwise attention to phenomena that cause doubt is the main factor or 'nourishment' that leads to the manifestation of doubt, *vicikicchāṭṭhāniyā dhammā tattha ayoniso manasikāra-bahulīkāro ayam āhāro anuppannāya vicikicchāya uppādāya* (*S. V*, 103). Unwise attention, *ayoniso manasikāra*, is in fact the condition par excellence for the arising of doubt (*A. I*, 4). Its opposite, 'wise' or perhaps 'radical' attention, *yoniso manasikāra*, should be directed to the distinction between what is wholesome and unwholesome, blameable and blameless, inferior and superior, dark and bright, since this constitutes the antidote or 'denourishment', *anāhāra*, for doubt (*S. V*, 106).

The above shows that the hindrance of doubt is in particular concerned with a lack of ability to clearly recognize what is skilful or wholesome, *kusala*, and what is unskilful or unwholesome, *akusala*. This is noteworthy in so far as the central factor or 'nourishment' for the awakening factor of investigation-of-phenomena, *dhammavicaya-sambojjhaṅga*, is precisely wise attention directed to the distinction between what is wholesome and unwholesome, blameable and blameless, inferior and superior, dark and bright (S. V, 104). This contrast between the hindrance of doubt and the awakening factor of investigation-of-phenomena, where the same factor that overcomes the former is responsible for the development of the latter, reveals that in early Buddhism doubt is not overcome through faith or mere belief. Rather, to overcome and counter doubt requires a process of investigation, and it is based on the clarity and understanding that arises through investigation that doubt is dispelled.

According to the detailed treatment of the awakening factors given in the *Ānāpānasati Sutta*, the awakening factor of investigation-of-phenomena arises based on the previous development of mindfulness (M. III, 85). This suggests the type of investigation required to overcome doubt to stand in close relation to mindfulness, in the sense of 'investigating' with awareness the true nature of 'phenomena'. In fact, *satipaṭṭhāna* is explicitly qualified to be a "straightforward" and "direct" path, *ekāyano maggo* (M. I, 55), an expression explained in the commentary to imply that *satipaṭṭhāna* is not a forked path, *ekamaggo ayaṃ, na dvedhā-patha-bhūto* (MA. I, 229). Thus the development of mindfulness would indeed be an appropriate method for overcoming the forked path of doubt.

Another facet of the same awakening factor would be a more theoretical type of inquiry. This can be seen from the definition given in the same *Ānāpānasati Sutta*, according to which the development of *dhammavicaya-sambojjhaṅga* requires one to examine with wisdom 'that Dhamma', *taṃ dhammaṃ paññāya pavicinati pavicarati parivīmaṃsaṃ āpajjati* (M. III, 85). The use of the singular form suggests that the inquiry is concerned with *dhamma* in the sense of the "teaching" or the "truth".

The role of theoretical inquiry and understanding for the removal of doubt is reflected in a discourse in the *Aṅguttara Nikāya*, which indicates that to overcome

doubt, *kaṅkhaṃ vitarati*, is a benefit to be expected when one listens to the *Dhamma* (A. III, 248). A specific instance for this potential is the *Sampasādanīya Sutta*, which concludes by noting that the topics it treats are of particular benefit for overcoming doubt in regard to the Buddha (D. III, 116). Familiarity with the Dhamma will even be of benefit in a future life, since one will without vacillation recognize the teachings if one comes across them again, just as someone who hears the sound of a drum or a conch would not have any doubt or uncertainty about the nature of the sound just heard (A. II, 185). Good knowledge of the teachings, together with clarification of these through questioning others, *bahusutatā paripucchakatā*, are according to the commentaries factors that indeed help in overcoming doubt, in addition to which one should be well versed in matters related to Vinaya and have a strong sense of commitment, *vinaye pakataññutā adhimokkhabahulatā*, and one should also associate with wise friends and engage in suitable types of conversation, *kalyāṇamittatā sappāyakathā* (MA. I, 286).<sup>1</sup>

The need to remove doubt in relation to Vinaya matters appears to have been the rationale for the title given to the commentary on the *pāṭimokkha* rules, the "dispeller of doubt", *Kaṅkhavitarāṇī*. The degree to which matters related to Vinaya might lead to the arising of doubts can also be seen from the name of the monk Kaṅkhārevata, "Revata the doubter", who was given this nick-name because he had been greatly worried and concerned about properly maintaining ethical conduct (UdA. 314). Kaṅkhārevata was successful in settling his doubts for good, as the *Udāna* reports him seated in meditation, reviewing his own purification through overcoming doubt, *kaṅkhāvitarāṇavisuddhi* (Ud. 60).

The procedure to settle doubts through inquiry is described in several discourses, which depict how junior monks approach experienced elders to get clarification of their questions in order to remove their doubts, *kaṅkhaṃ paṭivinodenti* (e.g. M. I, 223). A case that well illustrates how inquiry can lead to overcoming doubt is described in the *Sakkapañha Sutta*. This discourse reports how the king of the heaven of the Thirty-three, Sakka, approached the Buddha with a set of questions during what appears to have been their first personal meeting (D. II, 269).<sup>2</sup> After receiving a series of clarifying replies to his queries

from the Buddha, Sakka proclaimed that he had overcome and removed his doubts, *tiṇṇā m'ettha kaṅkhā, vigatā kathaṃkathā* (D. II, 283). The discourse concludes by indicating that Sakka's removal of doubt had been thorough indeed, as he attained stream-entry while listening to the explanations given by the Buddha (D. II, 288).

With stream-entry doubt is eradicated for good, *kaṅkhā pahīnā* (S. III, 203), and the stream-entrant can be qualified as one who has overcome doubt, *tiṇṇavicikiccho* (D. I, 110). This removal takes place at the moment of stream-entry itself (A. I, 242 and Sn. 231), when the deathless element is seen and realized through wisdom (S. V, 221). Such direct realization is the arising of the dustless and stainless eye of the Dhamma, *virajaṃ vītamalaṃ dhammacakkhuṃ udapādi*, due to which the stream-entrant sees, attains, understands and fathoms the Dhamma, *diṭṭhadhammo pattadhammo veditadhammo pariyogāḥhadhammo*; and by having removed doubt and overcome perplexity has gained intrepidity and become independent of others in regard to the teacher's dispensation, *tiṇṇavicikiccho vigatakathaṃkatho vesārajjappatto aparappacayo satthusāsane* (e.g. M. I, 380). It is based on such total removal of doubt through the experience of stream-entry that the noble disciple is henceforth endowed with unwavering confidence or faith, *aveccappasāda* (S. V, 357). Coming back to a point already made above, faith and confidence, instead of being required to overcome doubt, are the result of the successful removal of doubt through investigation.

In the same context, it is noteworthy that on occasions the Buddha approved of doubt, telling his auditors that they were entertaining doubt in regard to matters that are indeed perplexing, *kaṅkhaniye ca pana te thāne vicikicchā uppannā* (S. IV, 350; S. IV, 399; A. I, 189; see also KĀLĀMA SUTTA). In fact, according to the *Mahāparinibbāna Sutta* even during the last moments before his passing away the Buddha encouraged the assembled monks to voice any doubt they had, so that it could be clarified as long as he was still alive (D. II, 155), and just a few moments earlier he had resolved the doubts of the wanderer Subhadda (D. II, 149). This goes to show that the arising of doubt, though an obstruction to deeper concentration or insight, has its rightful place in as much as it leads to investigating matters that should be investigated.

Anālayo

## References

- 1 In the context of *jhāna* attainment in particular, according to *Vism.* 141 the *jhāna* factor of sustained mental application, *vicāra*, is responsible for keeping doubt at bay.
- 2 D. II, 270 reports that Sakka had already come on an earlier occasion, but had not been allowed to disturb the Buddha who was in deep meditation.

**VIDYĀLĀNKĀRA PIRIVENA:** The Vidyālankāra Pirivena is one of the foremost seats of oriental studies and a centre of National and Religious Renaissance in the 19<sup>th</sup> century in Sri Lanka. It was established in 1875; two years after the establishment of the Vidyodaya Pirivena. It is important to note that it was founded by Ven. Ratmalāne Dhammāloka, who studied under Panditācārya Walāne Siddhārtha, along with Ven. Hikkaduwe Sumaṅgala, who established the Vidyodaya Pirivena. Thus it should be clear that the Vidyālankāra Pirivena too was established at a time, when the Sinhala nation and Buddhism were facing a severe catastrophe from the Christian Missionaries and other colonial forces, as described at the beginning of the article on Vidyodaya Pirivena (q.v. Vidyodaya Pirivena). Before long Vidyālankāra Pirivena too joined Vidyodaya Pirivena in its noble effort to revive the declining nation and the religion in the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

**The establishment of the Pirivena:** The Vidyālankāra Pirivena, appear to have had a modest beginning. As per the records, Ven. Ratmalāne Dhammāloka and his pupil Ven. Ratmalāne Dhammārāma, on an invitation from the Buddhists of the area, spent their "Rainy Retreat" (*vassāna*) at Peliyadgoda in Kelaniya near the "Torana Junction", on the Colombo – Kandy road, in the year 1875. The idea of commencing a school for Oriental Studies had occurred to the *dāyakas* during the said "vassāna" period. The *dāyakas* conveyed the idea to Ven. Dhammāloka, who readily agreed to the proposal. They formed themselves into an organization called the "Dāyaka Sabhā" and made necessary arrangement within a month. Accordingly the proposed school was commenced by Ven. Ratmalāne Dhammāloka and his pupil Ven. Ratmalāne Dhammārāma in a temporary building roofed with cadjan, at Peliyadgoda, on the 1<sup>st</sup> of November 1875, in a small scale. At the beginning it was named "Vidyālankāra Sāstra Sālāwa" and was popularly called "Sālāwa". The names of the

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VOLUME VIII

**FASCICLE 3 : Vācā – Z hong a-han**



2009