ABSTRACT

AN ANALYTICAL STUDY OF THE CONCEPT OF ANUSAYA IN EARLY BUDDHISM WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO FREUDIAN PSYCHOLOGY

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Two thousand six hundred years ago, the Bodhisatta came to sit under the Bodhi-tree in Uruvela and vowed not to move until he attained enlightenment and eradicated all the sufferings. But Māra, the lord of misfortune, sin, destruction and death, tried to usurp his plans by sending his three daughters Taṇhā (desire), Rāga (lust), and Arati (aversion), to seduce him and break his concentration. However, the coming Buddha was stronger than Māra, defeated him and attained Sambodhi.

Mythically this is the fight between the Bodhisatta and Māra, but psychologically it is a fierce struggle between the two forces, the wholesome force and the evil force, or between wisdom (paññā) and mental defilements (kilesa). It was this mass of mental defilements within oneself that makes one suffering and imprisoned in the jail of death and rebirth. So in order to solve all the problems of life, one need to recognize these inner enemies that are the real cause of all sufferings. The Buddha gave these “trouble-makers” the name “kilesa” (mental defilements) and taught us the way how to uproot them. There are three levels of kilesa, viz.:

- *Vitikkama kilesa*: Coarse defilements that are manifested through unwholesome courses of action such as killing, stealing, etc. This kind of kilesa can be opposed by observing moral precepts (sīla).
• **Pariyutthāna kilesa**: Medium defilements that arise and disturb the mind. This kind of *kilesa* can be subdued by concentration (*samādhi*).

• **Anusaya kilesa**: Latent tendencies, or subtle defilements that lie dormant in the mind and can arise any time when there is an appropriate condition. This kind of *kilesa* can be eradicated only by wisdom (*paññā*) through the practice of *vipassanā*.

Thus Anusaya is the deepest level of defilements, which is hard to see, difficult to eradicate but very important to do it if we want to get rid of all kinds of suffering.

Anusaya is a *Pāli* term, derived from the prefix *anu*, following or subsequent, and the root √*si*, to lie, to sleep. It is often translated into English as “latent tendencies”, “obsession”; “inheritance”, “proclivities”, etc. This concept denotes the latent defilements lying dormant in oneself until an opportune moment arises for them to come to the surface as they have not been eradicated. “Every worldling, who has reached the topmost *jhāna* plane, when born amongst mankind, may give vent to these evil tendencies as they are latent in him.”

The seven *anusayas* are: latent attachment to sensual pleasures (*kāmarāgānasayo*), latent hatred (*pāṭighñanusayo*), latent pride (*mānānusayo*), latent wrong view (*diṭṭhānusayo*), latent doubt (*vicikicchānusayo*), latent attachment to existence (*bhavarāgānasayo*), and latent ignorance (*avijjānusayo*).

The commentary to the *Abhidhammattha Saṅgaha* gives the following etymological explanation: "The latent defilements (*anusaya*) are what lie (*senti*) persisting (*anu*) in the mental continuum in the sense of not having been abandoned by the Path; what is meant is that when they obtain an appropriate condition they arise."

Anusaya influences the ignorant mind and gives rise to an unwholesome consciousness. The previous *anusaya* gives rise to new *anusaya*. The new

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anusaya accumulatively returns to the old stock of *anusaya*. So the old *anusaya* successively gives rise to new *anusaya*. This is an on-going phenomenon continually arising within less time than it takes to snap one's fingers; so this process repeats itself endlessly. So long as latent tendencies have not been eradicated we are like sick people, because they can condition the arising of unwholesome minds when there are appropriate conditions at any time.

Realizing the importance of *anusaya* in human mental life, this thesis is an attempt to study this concept analytically and intensively, its nature, its position, its conditions, its impact and the methods to eradicate *anusaya*. Moreover, to give the investigation a modern nuance and relevant to the secular interest, a special reference is made to Freudian psychology, a branch of Western psychology which has a very unique resemblance with Buddhist psychology in both theory and practice, though there are of course some differences between the two systems.

The present work comprises five chapters and a conclusion.

**Chaper I: A general survey of Buddhist psychology and Freudian psychology**

It can be said that Buddhism is a fully developed system of psychology even long before this branch of science was born. Many *suttas* from the *Pāli* Canon are examples of precise psychological descriptions and assumptions. Especially, the *Abhidhamma Piṭaka* contains a highly systematized psychological account of human mind (*citta*) and behavior (*kamma*). “It classifies consciousness into a variety of types, specifies the factors and functions of each type, correlates them with their objects and physiological bases, and shows how the different types of consciousness link up with each other and with material phenomena to constitute the ongoing process of experience”\(^2\).

Dr. Sigmund Freud was the founder of psychoanalysis. His model of the thinking mind was surprisingly parallel to the Buddhist understanding of the

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mind. He developed a method of investigation of the mind and the way one thinks; a systematized set of theories about human behavior; and a form of psychotherapy to treat psychological or emotional distress, especially unconscious conflict. Freud's psychoanalytic theory was largely based on interpretive methods, introspection and clinical observations. It became very well known, largely because it tackled subjects such as sexuality, repression, and the unconscious mind as general aspects of psychological development. These were largely considered taboo subjects at the time, and Freud provided a catalyst for them to be openly discussed in polite society.

**Chapter II: The concept of Anusaya as reflected in the Sutta texts**

In this chapter, the etymology, definition, nature, classification, and function of Anusaya and its relations to other groups of unwholesome dhammas are described. Then many suttas were quoted from the Sutta Piṭaka to clarify the many aspects of the concept of Anusaya. For example, in the Mahā Māluṅkyaputta Sutta (M 64) the Buddha states that the five lower mental fetters (saññojana) are latently present even in an infant. Mind arises and passes away, but latent tendencies remain forever, as least as long as we are unenlightened. We are born in to this world with nothing other than our latent tendencies; we take nothing with us when we die, except for our latent tendencies. Our latent tendencies relentlessly follow us, every moment of our successive lives, whether we are conscious of it or not. This idea was reflected in the Aññatara Bhikkhu Sutta 1 (S 22.35).

The Cetanā Sutta 1 (S 12.38) clearly states that when our conscious minds intend (ceteti) and plan (pakappeti), this feeds our karmic or existential consciousness, which means we will be reborn in due course. However, even when we neither intend nor plan, we are still reborn - this is on account of the momentum of our latent tendencies. When we die with the latent tendencies of ignorance and of craving still intact, our intentions and plans become the basis for consciousness and continue on, and initiate the production of a new existence. This is the event of birth, followed by death, and other types of suffering between birth and death.
Chapter III: The concept of Anusaya as reflected in the Abhidhamma texts

This chapter is an attempt to give a thorough and detailed description of Anusaya as treated in the Abhidhamma texts. Each text in the Abhidhamma has a specific way to deal with the dhammas. For example, in the Dhammasaṅganī the latent tendencies have not been classified as a group; only lobha as "latent bias", anusaya, has been specifically mentioned among the many aspects of lobha. But in the Yamaka, a whole chapter is devoted for anusaya and is called Anusaya Yamaka. In this chapter, the seven anusayas are first enumerated and explained as to which everyone adheres to. Then follow the questions such as with whom an anusayo occurs and what it adheres to, who is afflicted with an anusayo and why, who eliminates an anusayo and why, who cognizes an anusayo and why, who has eliminated an anusayo and in what respect, and finally with whom it arises. The questions are always presented in pairs in the usual form, for example, whether when the kāmaragānusayo arises in a person the patighānusayo also arises and so forth. The same is always asked of all anusayas, and in a variety of combinations. Again, every group of questions is followed by corresponding questions in the negative form. Finally, a separate section discusses how many anusayas arise in someone who passes away from one sphere and is reborn in the same or another sphere.

Chapter IV: Eradication of anusaya

This chapter deals with the method of eradicating anusayas. There are many types of spiritual practice but even the best, except for vipassanā, only suppresses the outward signs of defilements, they do not even touch the anusaya. As anusayas lay latent in the feelings; some in pleasant and neutral feelings (kāmarāga, bhavarāga, māna), some in unpleasant feeling (paṭigha) and some in all three kinds of feeling (diṭṭhi, vicikicchā, avijjā), it is very important to contemplate feelings (vedanānupassanā). This method is described very clearly in the Mahāsatipatthānasutta of the Dīgha Nikāya, which is a very important sutta for practice.
Chapter V: A Special Reference to the Fundamental Concepts of Freudian Psychology

This chapter made a reference to Freudian psychology and draw out the similarity as well as the difference between the two systems. If *anusaya* is latent tendencies that lie dormant in the *citta* without our awareness, the unconscious, a concept developed by Sigmund Freud is that part of the mind we are unaware of. He maintains that guilt, shame and a strong sense of propriety push unwanted desires, drives or memories into the unconscious where they become unknown.

Below are some important concepts of Freudian psychology.

**Id**, the largely unconscious structure of the psyche, is the portion of the virtual mind that is not reality based and lives totally by appetites and desires. The id acts according to the "pleasure principle", seeking to avoid pain or displeasure, ...contains everything that is inherited, that is present at birth..."³. This concept is similar to *moha* or *avijjāanusaya* in Buddhist psychology.

**Libido**, instinct energy or force, is contained in the *id*. The *libido* fixates on different erogenous zones - first in the oral stage (exemplified by an infant's pleasure in nursing), then in the anal stage (exemplified by a toddler's pleasure in controlling his or her bowels), then in the phallic stage, through a latency stage in which the libido is dormant, to its reemergence at puberty in the genital stage. This concept is similar to *kāmatānāhā* or *kāmarāgāanusaya* in Buddhist psychology.

**Eros**, life instincts, is the tendency toward survival, propagation, and other creative, life-producing drives. Eros is associated with positive emotions of love, and hence pro-social behavior, cooperation, collaboration and other behaviors that support harmonious societies. This concept is similar to *bhavatānāhā* or *bhavarāgāanusaya* in Buddhist psychology.

**Thanatos**, the death instinct, is the drive towards death, self-destruction and the return to the inanimate state. Thanatos is associated with negative

emotions such as fear, hate and anger, which lead to anti-social acts from bullying to murder (perhaps as projection of the death drive). This concept is similar to vibhavatānātha or paṭighānusaya in Buddhist psychology.

**Ego:** If the id is the selfish part of personality, demands immediate gratification or operates on the pleasure principal (I want it, I want it now mentality), the Ego operates on the reality principal (reality is you can't always get what you want, nor can you always give others what they want), its job is to balance the conflict between the id and super-ego. This concept is not similar to the concept of Atta (self, ego) in Buddhist psychology but rather similar to the mental factor vitakka (reflection, or thinking).

**Super-ego** is our incorporation with norms and values, sort of the giving part of the personality, encompasses our conscious and gives us that guilty feeling when we've done something wrong. This concept is similar to mānānusaya in Buddhist psychology.

Freud professed that it was only by making the unconscious conscious that the individual could become psychologically happy and mature. The investigation of unconscious needs resorting to the special investigation methods psychoanalysis has introduced: hypnosis, free associations, dream-analysis, work with slips and symbols, etc.

Freud said, "The poets and philosophers before me discovered the unconscious; what I discovered was the scientific method by which the unconscious mind can be studied." This was to be done, using the technique of free association, self-analysis, and work with slips and symbols, etc. with the guidance of a psychoanalyst.

Leon Hoffman, M.D., member of American Psychoanalytic Association said about Sigmuns Freud in an interview, “… he began to create a means of thinking and studying the mind. Compare it to Newton's discovery of the laws of gravitation, without them you have no way of studying much of physics, with them you can study everything from planets to quarks and gluons. With the work Freud began in "Dreams" there is a basis to study everything from war to a person's most secret fears and hopes.”
Conclusion: Freud, a representative of modern psychology, and Buddha, representing the ancient spiritual traditions, both discover the nature of mind and promote a relief from suffering through self-awareness. They use an increasingly refined attention to the stream of consciousness in the present moment to effect this liberation from pain.

However, the kind of suffering relieved and the depth of awareness of the flow of consciousness differ for each. Freud, using a “talking cure,” sought to relieve neurotic conflict, while Buddha aimed at freedom from the ordinary unhappiness of living.

Freud’s introspection focused on the material that emerges from the unconscious through the repression barrier. In contrast, Buddha taught a way of meditating that approaches the source and ground of the flow of consciousness. These intellectual giants point the way toward the integration of psychology and spirituality. Their insights about self-awareness suggest how a deepening introspection can prepare the way for a meditative experience and the ultimate realities of life.

Through this analytical study of *anusaya* we come to know the deep underlying motives of our actions, speech and thoughts. We often deceive ourselves as to the motives of our actions, speech and thoughts that seem to be wholesome. In reality they are mostly directed towards our own gain, they are motivated by selfish desire. With a growing understanding of the latent tendencies that are powerful conditions for all akusala cittas in our life, we will be urged to be mindful of all realities, *akusala* included. By reflecting and being aware of whatever reality appears we can learn to become more sincere and truthful with regard to the *cittas* that arise.

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