Chapter Two

THE BUDDHIST CONCEPT OF LIBERATION
IN THE PĂLI CANONICAL SCRIPTURES

It is a fact that Buddhism is one of the oldest religions of the world. It represents a very profound philosophical system of central and eastern Asia.\(^{86}\) It has been known as one of the most peaceful religions, which brings out the message of love, wisdom, and liberation of the Buddha for all living beings. Buddhism retains more or less the influence of the previous currents of thought and culture, especially the Samaṇa (Sanskrit, Śramaṇa).\(^{87}\) According to Y. Masih, Buddhism is truly a non-Vedic Indian religion accepting the fourfold pillar of karma-saṁsāra-jñāna-mukti.\(^{88}\) Buddhism revolves around the life and teachings of Lord Buddha and is widely known to hold that liberation can be achieved through one’s efforts without appealing to any supernatural agency.\(^{89}\)

For forty five years, the Buddha taught a doctrine of friendliness and charity, of renunciation and concentration, of wisdom and compassion, of morality and purity. His basic doctrine is known as the “Middle Path” (Majjhimā Paṭipadā) which consists of morality (Sīla), concentration (Samādhi), and wisdom (Pāññā), and which denies self-mortification in austerities and self-indulgence in sensual pleasures. The Buddha is known as one of the greatest religious propounders and reformers in the history of the


mankind. He strongly rejected the authority of the gods, scriptures and priests and condemned and denied the efficacy of rituals. He vehemently criticized the Brahmanical system of castes and creeds and opened the doors of spiritual progress to all, high and low, men and women.90

During the long history of its propagation, Buddhism always promoted and established peace and happiness for the mankind, and never utilized its power to suppress others for the purposes of its expansion. The Buddhist art of living discourages blind faith in external powers, but urges people to cultivate their internal capacity through the practice of morality, meditation, and wisdom. The Buddhist concept of liberation is really a comprehensive and interesting term that should be landed time and again.

The Buddhist concept of liberation may be deeply illustrated through the life of The Buddha and His teachings (Dhamma). In order to highlight it the present chapter is subdivided into four parts, namely, (1) the Enlightenment of the Buddha, (2) The Buddhist concept of liberation, (3) Three Characteristics of Buddhism, and (4) the Doctrine of Dependent Origination.

I. The Enlightenment of the Buddha

1. The Social Condition Before the Arising of Buddhism

In order to understand the Enlightenment that the Buddha attained, the understanding of the social condition is necessary. During the sixth century B.C., Indian society, politics, and especially religions faced certain changes

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that paved the path for the rise and development of Buddhism. The events of changes are reported to have created the interaction between the Indus valley civilization and the Vedic culture as well as the religious turmoil.\textsuperscript{91} The interaction brought about many social, economic, and religious changes. The harsh system of four castes held by the Brāhmaṇism became rigid and lacked rationale. While the people belonging to the lowest castes were looked down upon and lost all human rights, on the other hand, those belonging to the highest castes (the Brahmins) became rich and powerful and consequently dominated all the society. According to B.V. Rao, Brahmanism had lost its hold on the common people due to its insistence on the performance of meaningless rituals and sacrifices, with its vague spiritual speculations.\textsuperscript{92}

The opposition and struggles against the monopoly of the Brāhmaṇism became stronger by the rise of several currents of thought. The striking feature in which Jainism and Buddhism arose was the prevalence of confraternities or religious communities known as Paribājaka-s or Samaṇa-s. The growth of the wandering groups or communities known as samana-movements were opposed to the Brāhmaṇism. They probably belonged to the warrior caste living in woods, either in huts or in the open air and even wandering. It is not easy to say how many organizations such communities possessed before the time of the Buddha. In the Brahmajāla Sutta,\textsuperscript{93} the Buddha himself criticized sixty two


\textsuperscript{92} Ibid.

erroneous views prevailing at that time. Some scholars are of the opinion that Buddhism originated as a heretical ‘off-shoot’ of Brāhmaṇism; and Lord Buddha has been considered a great reformer or a maker of modern Hinduism.\(^94\) However, some other scholars, on the other hand, insist that Buddhism cannot be called the ‘off-shoot’ of Brāhmaṇism but an independent religion. According to Y. Masih, “even when Buddhism disappeared in India, its many contributions have been used and fully assimilated in Hinduism of today.”\(^95\)

According to L.M. Joshi, “the ascetic thought of the Buddha has been traced to the Yoga practices of pre-Vedic India,” and “Gautama Buddha, also called Sākyamuni, himself claimed to have expounded the old path of previous Buddhas”.\(^96\) But this view has been rejected by many scholars on the ground that the Buddha claims to have followed old path of the Buddha-s is nothing but a simple case of trans-historicity that confronts every powerful religion. Buddhism is no exception.

2. The Buddha’s life

According to the Pāli sources, Lord Buddha, also known as Prince Siddhattha, or Sākyamuni, was born of King Shuddodana and Queen Mahā Māyā in 623 B.C.\(^97\) in the Lumbinī Park at Kapilavatthu, Indian border of the present day Nepal. After seven days of his birth, Queen Māyā passed away;

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\(^96\) Joshi, op. cit., pp. 2-3.

and he was nursed by his step mother, Mahā Pajāpati Gotamī. There seems to have other sources which suggest that the time of the Buddha is 566-486 B.C.  

However, some recent pro-west explorations reveal that the Buddha lived in the fifth century B.C. i.e. about 480-400 B.C. But this view does not find supposed among sincere scholars of the ancient Indian history as it is based on pro-west bias. He got married to his beautiful cousin, Princess Y asodharā, and had a son named Rāhula.

As an intelligent child, he soon realized the real nature of human life, i.e. sufferings of old age, sickness, death, etc. It seems that he had a contemplate nature while he was only a child of eight. He used to meditate on the existential problems of life. It is said that the picture of a serene recluse became a great inspiration for him to find out the way out of such sufferings. One day when he was twenty nine years old, he secretly left his kingdom against his parent’s will, and became a wandering ascetic monk.

On the way searching for the truth, he used to train himself in the premise of the hermitage of two famous religious teachers of the period, namely Ālāra Kālāma (Ārāḍa Kālāma) and Uddaka Rāmaputta (Udraka Rāmaputra). It has been said that Sākyamuni attained the sphere of nothingness (Ākiñcaññayana) in the company of Ālāra Kālāma, and the sphere of neither perception nor non-perception (Nevasaññā nāsaññāyatena) in the

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hermitage of Uddaka Rāmaputta. Both these absorptions were believed to be the higher steps of mental concentration at that point of time. Nevertheless, he was not satisfied with these practices, because he felt that his quest for the highest truth was not complete; and thus, he turned to look for the other way, i.e. the higher way of his own.\textsuperscript{101} The Buddha’s comments on these practices are depicted in the Majjhima Nikāya such as “This dhamma does not conduce to disregard nor to dispassion nor to stopping nor to tranquility nor to superknowledge nor to awakening nor to nibbāna...”\textsuperscript{102} According to Charles Eliot, no sources have shown where these religious teachers lived and how long he (Siddhattha) remained with them.\textsuperscript{103}

3. The Enlightenment of the Buddha

The Buddha is reported to have said that after leaving them he wandered around Magadha and finally settled at a place called Uruvelā, the market town of Senāni for a new spiritual trip. Here he made up his mind to devote himself to the severest forms of asceticism that had been generally believed to be the best way to attain liberation. The Buddha’s practices of asceticism were described in his teachings as controlling eating, breathing, status, behavior, etc. in such a way that he became as if a “living skeleton”. However, during six years of self mortification, he did not attain his desired goal.\textsuperscript{104} He said: “But I, by this severe austerity, do not reach states of further men, the excellent

\textsuperscript{101} Narada, The Buddha and His Teachings, 2\textsuperscript{nd} ed., pp. 9-10.
\textsuperscript{102} I.B. Horner, tr., The Collections of the Middle Length Sayings, vol.1, pp. 207, 213.
\textsuperscript{104} Narada, The Buddha and His Teachings, 2\textsuperscript{nd} ed., pp. 13-17.
knowledge and vision befitting the Ariya-s. Could there be another way to awakening?" Accordingly, he realized that liberation could not be reached with an exhausted body, and physical fitness was essential for spiritual progress. Finally, he gave them up by following the middle path; and afterwards, he became the Enlightened One, the Buddha at the foot of the Bodhi-tree (Assattha) on the full moon night of May on the bank of the River Nīranjāna in Gaya District at the age of thirty five. In Japan and some other Mahāyāna countries, the day of the Buddha’s enlightenment is said to be on the eighth day of the twelfth month of the Lunar Calendar.

It has been said in the Buddhist texts that the Buddha won a deadly battle with Māra before he became a Buddha. There are five kinds of Māra as described in the Buddha’s teachings, namely (i) Deity (devaputta), (ii) Passion (kilesa), (iii) Kammic activities (abhisamkhāra), (iv) Aggregates (Khandha-s), and (v) Death (Maccu) along with their ten armies of sense-desires, aversion, hunger and thirst, etc. According to some scholars most of the battles with Māra were really a psychological struggle with secular temptations. Every genuine Buddhist must realize the fact that the path of liberation is likened to be the struggle against the forces of one’s own evil desires. The Buddha ever taught in the Dhammapada no. 103 that “One who conquers himself is greater than another who conquers a thousand times a thousand men in the battlefield.

107 Hirakawa Akira, A History of Indian Buddhism: From Śākyamuni to Early Mahāyāna, tr., Paul Groner, p. 27.
Be victorious over yourself and not over others. When you attain victory over
yourself, not even the gods can turn it into defeat.”

It has been said that the Buddha attained Enlightenment either by
observing the Four Noble Truths (Ariya-saccāni), realizing the twelve links of
Dependent Origination (Paṭicca-samuppāda), or mastering the Four Trances
(rūpa-jhāna) and attaining the Three Superhuman Powers (te-vijja). Among
these three teachings, according to Hirakawa Akira, the simpler version of the
theory of the Paṭicca-samuppāda can be found in the early sources, and it
might properly be a real technique that the Buddha used in His meditation at
the bodhi-tree before His Enlightenment. The theory of the Ariya-sacca was
officially proclaimed by the Buddha in his First Sermon entitled “The Wheel of
Truths” (dhammacakkappavattanasutta) to the group of five bhikkhu-s at the
Deer Park in Isipatana near Benares (Varanasi).

It has been said that the Buddha got serious illness before his death.
However, he continued walking and overcame the pain by the power of His
meditation. Kusinārā has been known as His termination where he attained the
Parinibbāna on the full moon day of May in 544 B.C. (some other sources, 486
B.C.) at the age of eighty. There are several stories around the Buddha’s
Nibbāna that are described in the Mahā Parinibbāna Sutta. The last words of
the Buddha can be summarized as follows:

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Dhammapada, ed. & tr. Sanghasen Singh, Dept. of Buddhist Studies, Delhi University, 1977, p.25.
110 Hirakawa Akira, A History of Indian Buddhism: From Śākyamuni to Early Mahāyāna, p. 28.
(1). The Dhamma as well as the Vinaya are the masters of His followers.\textsuperscript{112} The Dhamma would be treated as ‘guide,’ ‘refuge,’ or ‘island.’\textsuperscript{113}

(2). Some of the lesser and minor precepts may be abolished by the Saṅgha if expedient.\textsuperscript{114}

(3). He asked the monks if they have any doubt or perplexity about the Buddha, Dhamma, Saṅgha. He even asked three times but no reply responded.

(4). Then He said: “All conditioned things are subject to change. Work out your salvation with diligence.”\textsuperscript{115}

The Buddha then made his exit from the world, in the fearless, calm, and self-controlled states of meditation. Several Sutta-s reported this process that the Buddha passed through first four form states of absorption. Passed by the first four states, he entered into the four formless states of absorption, and then the ‘cessation of cognition and feeling’. He then gradually descended back to the first state of absorption, moved back to the fourth state and attained the Parinibbāna.

\textsuperscript{112} D. II. p. 154.
\textsuperscript{113} Ibid., p. 100.
\textsuperscript{114} W. Rahula, What the Buddha Taught, 2\textsuperscript{nd} ed., p. 163.
\textsuperscript{115} D. II, p.16.
II. The Buddhist Concept of Liberation

1. Definition

The Buddhist concept of liberation is derived from the Pāli terms: vimutti, vimokkha, or nibbāna. According to the Buddhist Dictionary, the word vimutti means deliverance, release, liberation, or freedom; and there are two kinds of liberation: (1) liberation of mind (ceto-vimutti) and (2) liberation through wisdom (paññā-vimutti). The first kind is in the highest sense bound up with the path of Arahantship (arahatta-magga); the second is the knowledge (ñāna) bound up with the fruition of Arahantship (arahatta-phala).

According to C.A.F. Rhys Davids, the word vimutti or vimokkha (Sanskrit, mokṣa or mukti) means ‘release,’ ‘deliverance,’ ‘emancipation,’ ‘liberation,’ or ‘freedom’. There are two general way-marks concerning to these terms: (1) in the negative side they mean ‘having got loose from, or rid of,’ (2) in the positive side they mean calm, security, attainment, etc. Thus the concept of liberation in this sense may be considered as the essence of most religions in the world. As a matter of fact all religions have nearly the same purpose, viz. being freed from evils and attaining peaceful happiness.

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117 Ibid.
Buddha taught that suffering and the way to stop suffering are the fundamentals in his teaching.\textsuperscript{119}

Besides, according to \textsuperscript{\textit{Ny\=an\=atilo\=ka}}, the word \textit{vimokkha} means ‘liberation or deliverance’. There are three kinds of liberation, namely, (1) Conditionless liberation (\textit{animitta-vimokkha}); (2) Desireless liberation (\textit{appa\=n\=ihita-vimokkha}); and (3) Emptiness liberation (\textit{su\=n\=aat\=a-vimokkha}). These are called ‘the triple gateway to liberation’ (\textit{vimokkha-mukha}) as they are ‘three different approaches to the paths of holiness’.\textsuperscript{120} In \textit{The Path of Purification (Visuddhimagga)} Buddhaghosa wrote:

Whosoever being filled with determination considers all formations as impermanent (\textit{anicca}), such a person attains the conditionless liberation; whosoever being filled with tranquility, considers all formations as painful (\textit{dukkha}), such a one attains the desireless liberation; and whosoever being filled with wisdom, considers all formations as not-self (\textit{anatta}), such a one attains the emptiness liberation.\textsuperscript{121}

These three liberations do exist in the \textit{Abhiddhamma-pi\=taka} (The Higher Dhamma) such as “... if one contemplates on no-soul, then the path is known as ‘void-emancipation;’ if one contemplates on impermanence, ‘signless-emancipation;’ if one contemplates on sorrow, ‘un-hankering-emancipation.”\textsuperscript{122}

\textsuperscript{121} Ibid., p. 192. (Cf. Vis. XXX, 70).
The Buddhist concept of liberation is often considered in most cases as to be similar to nibbāna. The state of nibbāna is ascribed to the attainment of an Arahanta whose cankers are totally destroyed without remainders. For example, when the Buddha or any one attains full enlightenment he reaches the state of nibbāna; and when the Buddha passed away he was considered to have entered the state of great nibbāna (parinibbāna).

According to Buddhist Dictionary, the term ‘nibbāna’ (Sanskrit, nirvāṇa) literally means ‘extinction’ (ni + vā, to cease or blowing); it also means ‘freedom from desires’ (ni + bāna). According to the Encyclopedia of Buddhism, ‘nibbāna’ is “an action noun signifying the act and effect of blowing (at something) to put it out or to extinguish, but the noun also signifies the process and outcome of burning out, becoming extinguished...” The Pāli authors have explained the term nibbāna in a simple way. According to them, bāna means desire, hence nibbāna (ni+bana) means desirelessness.

In the early canonical script the concept of nibbāna was likened to the flame that is blown out in order to emphasize the cooling down of craving, aversion and delusion. However, in this context, according to Luis O. Gomez, extinguish means relief, calm, rest, and not the annihilation of being. In fact, nibbāna is “one of those words that also embody the struggle to understand the possibility of perfection, inner peace and of freedom from the

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125 Suttanipāta 4: 251-52.
turmoil of our own desires and the conflicted views of ourselves”. The concept of nibbāna was held by Theravāda Buddhism to be positive, experienceable, indescribable and supreme. Thus nibbāna constitutes the highest and ultimate goal of all Buddhist aspirations.

There are two aspects of nibbana: (1) kilesa-parinibbāna, the full extinction of defilements or sa-upādi-sesa-nibbāna, nibbāna with the groups of existence still remaining, this takes place at the attainment of Araha, or perfect holiness; and (2) khandha-parinibbāna, the full extinction of the groups of existence, or an-upādi-sesa-nibbāna, ‘nibbāna without the groups remaining. This takes place at the death of the Arahant. The Buddha said in the Anguttara Nikāya that: “This, O monks, truly is the peace, this is the highest, namely the end of all formations, the forsaking of every substratum of rebirth, the fading away of craving, detachment, extinction, nibbāna.”

2. **Kinds of liberation**

According to the Buddhist Dictionary, there are eight kinds of liberation (aṭṭha-vimokkha) corresponding to eight stages of meditation that frequently occur in the Buddhist texts:

1. Whilst remaining in the fine-material sphere (rūpī), one perceives corporeal forms: this is the first liberation.

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129 Ibid., p. 106; Cf. A.III, p. 32.
(2) Not perceiving corporeal forms on one’s own person, one perceives corporeal forms externally: this is the second liberation.

(3) By thinking of the beautiful, one is filled with confidence: this is the third liberation.

(4) Through the total overcoming of the corporeality perception, the vanishing of the reflex-perceptions and the non-attention to the multiformity-perceptions, with the idea “Unbounded is space’, one reaches the “Sphere of Unbounded Space” and abides therein.

(5) Through the total overcoming of the sphere of unbounded space and with the idea “Unbounded is consciousness’, one reaches the ‘Sphere of Unbounded Consciousness and abides therein.

(6) Through the total overcoming of the sphere of unbounded consciousness and with the idea “Nothing is there’, one reaches the ‘Sphere of Nothingness’ and abides therein.

(7) Through the total overcoming of the sphere of nothingness and with the idea “Unbounded is consciousness’, one reaches the ‘Sphere of neither perception nor non-perception’ and abides therein.
(8) Through the total overcoming of the sphere neither perception nor non-perception, one reaches the ‘Extinction of Perception and Feeling’.

B. Besides, for the Buddhist Dictionary there are also five kinds of liberation identical with the five kinds of overcoming (pahāna):\(^{131}\)

(1) Overcoming by Repression (temporary suspension of the five hindrances, nīvaraṇāni) during the absorptions,

(2) Overcoming by the Opposites (impermanence, suffering, and non-self),

(3) Overcoming by destruction (destruction of fetters, saniyojanani and evil things),

(4) Overcoming by tranquility (fetters from the moment of fruition are extinct and stilled), and

(5) Overcoming by escape (identical with the Extinction and nibbāna).

C. According to the Theravāda Buddhism there are four common fruits of recluse that has been considered as four stages of liberation: (1) Stream-winning (sotāpatti), (2) Once-return (sakadāgāmi), (3) Non-return (anāgāmi), and (4) Holiness, perfect sainthood (arahatta). Whoever attains the first stage is called Stream-winner (sotāpanna), one who is freed from the first three fetters (personality-belief, skeptical doubt, and attachment to rituals); whoever

attains the second is called Once-returner (sakadāgāmi), one who is nearly freed from the 4th and the 5th fetters of sensuous desires and ill-will; whoever attains the third is called Non-returner (anagami), one who is totally freed from above five fetters; and whoever attains the fourth is called the Holy One (arahaṅta), one who is further freed from five higher fetters of craving for fine-material existence, craving for immaterial existence, conceit, restlessness, and ignorance.\textsuperscript{132} In the Majjhima Nikāya the Buddha taught that one whose three first three fetters are got rid of is called a stream-attainer, one whose three poisons are reduced is once-returner, one whose five fetters are got rid of is non-returner.\textsuperscript{133} And finally one whose all fetters are totally and completely destroyed is called Arahanta.

3. Similes of liberation delivered by the Buddha

a. The Cloth (Vatthopamasutta):

The Buddha said:

As a cloth that is stained and dirty ... would be dyed a bad colour; [and] as a cloth that is quite clean ... would be dyed a good colour. Even so, a bad bourn is to be expected when the mind is stained; ... a good bourn is to be expected when the mind is not stained.\textsuperscript{134}

\textsuperscript{133} I.B. Horner, tr., The Collection of the Middle Length Sayings, vol.1, pp. 181-82.
\textsuperscript{134} Ibid., p. 46 (I: 36-37).
Thus, the most necessary condition for liberation (good bourn) is to keep the mind clean or purified from the dirt of craving, anger, delusion, etc.

b. The Parable of the Raft (Alagaddūpamasutta):

The Buddha said:

As a man going along the highway sees a great stretch of water; the hither bank is dangerous and frightening while the further bank is secure; but if there were not a boat for crossing by ... he, having collected grass, sticks, branches, tied a raft ... depending on that raft, he might cross over safely to the beyond ... dhamma is likened to be a raft ‘for overcoming not for retaining.'

For the Buddha, any attachment, even the attachment to the good things, becomes obstacles for liberation. In the beginning one should observe moral habits, concentration, wisdom, etc.; however, when one attains the state of liberation, as the Buddha said, “even right mental objects (dhamma) should be got rid, all the more of wrong ones” (I:136). Attachment is just the root of all sufferings.

c. The Pith of the Tree (Mahāsāropamasutta)

The Buddha said:

It is like a man seeking for the pith of a great pithy tree, passes by the branches ... the young shoot ... the bark ... the softwood, and takes the pith with him. Even so, a monk, by diligence, attains

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success in moral habit (Sīla), concentration (Samādhi), wisdom (Paññā), knowledge and vision, and finally liberation.\textsuperscript{136}

Being self-satisfied with what we got as well as the bad habit of “exalting oneself and disparaging others” is the root of all backwardness and defeat.

\textbf{III. Three Characteristics of Existence in Buddhism}

There are three characteristics (Ti-lakkhana) that certify the real Buddhist doctrines, also known as the three signs of Buddhism, namely (1) Impermanence, (2) Suffering, and (3) Non-self. Any theory that goes beyond these three characteristics must be carefully revised, even removed. As a known fact, most of the Buddha’s teachings were not written down till more or less four hundred years after the Buddha’s passing away. During that period they had been preserved by memorization and recitation and were handed down from the masters to their disciples. Historically, all the Buddha’s teachings were firstly written down during the reign of King Vattagīmiṇī Abhaya (103-77 BC) in Sri Lanka, more or less four hundred years after the Buddha’s passing away.\textsuperscript{137} Accordingly, the original teachings might have been mixed intentionally or unintentionally by local customs or unorthodox sources. With the reflection of these characteristics, all heretic theories added in real Buddhism may be quickly seen and got rid of. Moreover, these three signs have been particularly regarded as the fundamental points for improving insight into

\textsuperscript{136} I.B. Horner, tr., The Collection of the Middle Length Sayings, vol.1., pp. 238-45.

\textsuperscript{137} Hirakawa Akira, A History of Indian Buddhism, pp. 22-23.
the real nature of all phenomena, the necessary step for ultimate liberation. According to Peter Della Santina, “these three characteristics are always present in existence and help us understand what to do with existence.”

According to Y. Masih, “Buddhism is based on three philosophical tenets: (1) Momentariness, (2) Universal sufferings, and (3) Soullessness.” And among these tenets, the Momentariness is the most fundamental doctrine.

1. Impermanence (anicca or aniccatā)

According to the Buddhist Dictionary, “impermanence (aniccatā) is a basic feature of all conditioned phenomena, be they material or mental, coarse or subtle, one’s own or external. That the totality of existence is impermanent which is also often stated in terms of the Five Aggregates (khanda-s), Twelve Sense Bases (āyatana-s), etc.” It is also to be noted here that from the fact of impermanence itself, in most texts, the other two characteristics: suffering and non-self, are derived. The Buddha said in the Majjhima Nikāya and the other texts that “all formations are impermanent (sabbe sankhārā aniccā).” Before His Parinibbāna, the Buddha also gave the most important message in his last exhaustion: “Formations are bound to vanish. Strive earnestly! (vayadhammā

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138 Peter Della Santina, The Tree of Enlightenment: An Introduction to the Major Traditions of Buddhism, p. 106.
139 Y. Masih, A Comparative Study of Religions, p. 214.
141 M. 35, Dhp. 277.
The characteristic of impermanence can be seen by (1) phenomena, (2) body, and (3) mind.

The changing of all phenomena in this world is recognized by any common people, such as day and night, living and death, seasons, rainy or sunny, etc. However, the changing in every moment is seemingly realized by thinkers and philosophers, especially by the Buddha. The Buddha fully realized the fact of impermanence when he became an Enlightened One and proclaimed his Dhamma in which the conditioned genesis (Paṭicca samuppāda) is the mostly illustrated. The fact of impermanence was markedly realized by an ancient Greek philosopher Heraclitus as well who said: “One cannot take bath twice in the same river.” His observation is really corresponding to what the Buddha taught regarding impermanence. The first awakening among the eight awakenings in “Sūtra of Eight Awakenings of Great Being” is that: “The world is impermanent, countries are fragile and temporary; the four gross elements (our body, the homābhānta-s) are empty and cause of suffering...”

The fact of impermanence may be easily seen in human body; from birth to death, we have spent several stages of childhood, mature age, old age, and so on. Particularly, when one gets sick or old the sign of impermanence is seen very clearly and in several ways, i.e. wrinkle, lose teeth, white hair, etc. Moreover, the death may occur any time in one’s life, and nobody can escape.

142 D. 16.
from it. So, death is absolutely certain, yet the time of death is uncertain.\footnote{Peter Della Santina, The Tree of Enlightenment: An Introduction to the Major Traditions of Buddhism, p. 109.} Human life was likened to a burning candle in the wind or a bubble in floating in the river; the flame might be quickly extinguished, and the bubble may be broken anytime. The Buddha often used to remind His disciple of the impermanence of the body when he asked: “Is body permanent or impermanent?” “Impermanent, sir; they answered. Similarly, it was applied for feelings, perceptions, mental formations, and consciousness. The Buddha taught that all these five aggregates are impermanent, suffering and non-self.\footnote{I.B. Horner, tr., The Collection of the Middle Length Sayings, vol.3, pp. 69, 151, 266f.}

One of the most effective techniques of meditations the Buddha taught has been known as the contemplating on a dead body with ten stages of its dissolution which were named as Ten Putrescence.\footnote{Ibid., vol.1, p. 74; cf. The Path of Freedom (Vimuttimagga), tr., Rev. N.R.M. Ehara et al., Kandy: BPS, 1995, pp. 132f.} When a person observes a dead body and reflects it into his own body, he gets a good insight into the real nature of his body and other phenomena. By this insight he realizes the truth of impermanence, suffering, and non-self of all things.

According to Buddhism, human life is nothing but a collection of five aggregates (khandha-s) grouped in two parts, i.e. body (rūpa) and mind (viññāṇa), in which material shapes belong to the body; feelings, perceptions, mental formations, and consciousness belong to mind. These mental activities change every moment and are likened to be the stream of water flowing in the
living water-fall. In the Dhammapada no. 35 the Buddha said: “Hard it is to
train the mind, which goes where it likes and does what it wants. But a trained
mind brings health and happiness.”

2. Suffering (dukkha)

Suffering became the First Buddhist Truth in the Fourth Noble Truths,
viz. (1) Suffering, (2) Causes of Suffering, (3) the End of Sufferings, and (4)
the Path leading to the End of Suffering. According to Buddhist Dictionary,
suffering is derived from the term dукkha which means ‘pain’ or painful
feelings of both bodily and mental parts. Actually, the term dукkha is not
limited to painful experience, but refers to the ‘unsatisfactory nature’ and the
‘insecurity’ of all phenomena.

There are three kinds of suffering: (1) suffering as pain (dukkha-
dukkhatā), bodily and mental feeling of pain; (2) the suffering inherent in the
formations (sānkharā-dukkhatā), the oppressive nature of all formations of
existence; and (3) the suffering in change (vipariṇāma-dukkhatā), bodily and
mental feelings when the pleasant feelings change. There are also eight
common kinds of dukkha which frequently appear in Buddhist scriptures, i.e.
birth, decay, death, sorrow, lamentation, pain, grief and despair; or the five
groups of existence connected with clinging are all suffering.

147 Peter Della Santina, The Tree of Enlightenment: An Introduction to the Major Traditions of
Buddhism, p. 107.
150 Ibid., p. 151.
The Buddha has said on different occasions that whatever is impermanent is suffering, and whatever is impermanent and suffering is not-self. All eighteen spheres of six sense organs, six sense-objects, and six consciousnesses are impermanent, suffering and non-self in Buddhism. According to Peter Della Santina, “impermanence is an occasion for suffering rather than a cause of suffering because impermanence is only an occasion for suffering as long as ignorance, craving and clinging are present.”

Suffering becomes a truth (sacca) in Buddhism when it is fully realized through the light of wisdom or insight. The truth of suffering does not merely occur in the outside phenomena but also happens in one’s own body and mind. As a fact, mental sufferings have been seen as more serious than physical sufferings; and among them, ignorance or delusion is just the most serious state. It is ignorance (avijjā) which is the silent and the root cause for all sufferings. Conditioned by ignorance, craving and clinging arise; and conditioned by clinging, decay, death, sorrow, lamentation, grief and despair arise. Thus the cycle of birth and death along with their corollary are becoming repeatedly and endlessly. To realize the truth of suffering means to comprehend the cause of suffering (craving and clinging) and the path leading to liberation (the Noble Eightfold Path).

3. Non-self (anattā)

152 Peter Della Santina, The Tree of Enlightenment: An Introduction to the Major Traditions of Buddhism, p. 110.
153 Horner, op. cit., pp. 60, 89, 236, 312, 317.
The characteristic of non-self has been known as the indispensable consequence derived from that of impermanence. In other words, it is non-self because it is impermanent. Non-self has been also regarded to be the most specific and central doctrine of Buddhism.\footnote{Peter Della Santina, The Tree of Enlightenment: An Introduction to the Major Traditions of Buddhism, p. 111.}

The concept of non-self is derived from the Pāli term, anattā that means “not-self,” “non-ego,” or “impersonality.” According to Buddhist Dictionary, “neither within the bodily and mental phenomena of existence, nor outside of them, can be found anything that in the ultimate sense could be regarded as a self-existing real ego-entity, soul or any other abiding substance.”\footnote{Nyanatiloka, ed., Buddhist Dictionary: Manual of Buddhist Terms and Doctrines, p. 12.}

According to Buddhism, all phenomena both physical and mental are non-self in their natures. Everything is composed by several components and likewise conditioned by the other things. For example, human body includes the collection of one head, two arms, two legs, etc. as well as four elements of earth, water, fire and wind. Any change in the components makes change in that thing. Thus there is no real self or entity in it.\footnote{Milindapanhal, ii. i. 1. Cf. C. Sharma, A Critical Survey of Indian Philosophy, p. 80.}

The Buddha used to exhort His disciples that all the six sense organs, viz. eye, ear, nose, tongue, body, and mind; the six sense objects, viz. material shape, sound, smell, taste, touch, mental object; and their corresponding consciousnesses are impermanent, suffering and non-self. Similarly, the four elements, five aggregates, three life-times of the past, the present and the
future, etc. are impermanent, suffering and non-self.\textsuperscript{157} The Buddha taught in the Majjhima Nikāya that:

Seeing thus, Rāhula, the instructed disciple of the Ariyans turns away from the eye ... In turning away from them he is dispassionate; by dispassion he is freed; in freedom is the knowledge that he is freed, and he comprehends: Destroyed is birth, brought to a close the Brahma-faring, done is what was to be done, there is no more of being such or so.\textsuperscript{158}

The Buddhist doctrine of non-self sometimes becomes confused for those who usually have inherent habits of permanent ‘I’, ‘mine’ and ‘myself’. Actually, according to the Buddha, there are nowhere in the body and in the mind to be found such a permanent self; and nowhere in the self to be found the body and mind. What we call ‘the self,’ is just a ‘convenient name’ for a collection of factors that are changing in every moment. As Peter Della Santina said, comprehending the doctrine of non-self one can benefit in two important ways, i.e. (1) one becomes more creative in everyday life, viz., overcoming conservative minds; and (2) one gets the key to enlightenment, removing craving for anything.\textsuperscript{159} The Buddha used to repeat a mindful maxim in his teachings that: “This is not mine, this am I not, this is not myself,”\textsuperscript{160} whenever

\textsuperscript{157} I.B. Horner, tr., The Collection of the Middle Length Sayings, vol.3, pp. 46, 48, 324, 329.
\textsuperscript{158} Ibid., vol.3, p. 330.
\textsuperscript{159} Peter Della Santina, The Tree of Enlightenment: An Introduction to the Major Traditions of Buddhism, p. 113.
\textsuperscript{160} Horner, op. cit., pp. 52, 174, 177, 231, 233, 235, 286, 288f.
he concerned with what are called body and mind or five aggregates of an individual.

IV. The Doctrine of Dependent Origination

1. Introduction

The doctrine of Conditioned Genesis, also called Dependent Origination is one of the most important and profound doctrines in Buddhism. The Buddha taught in Discourse on the Elephant’s Footprint (Hatthipadopama Sutta) that ‘whoever sees Conditioned Genesis sees Dhamma, whoever sees Dhamma see conditioned Genesis.’\(^\text{161}\) It is believed that the Buddha attained full enlightenment under the Bodhi tree by thoroughly reflecting this doctrine forward and backward.\(^\text{162}\) This doctrine explains clearly the process of cause and effect or the cycle of birth, death and rebirth as mutual chain of past, present, and future and shows the way to cut it for final liberation. Understanding the function of the Dependent Origination, we can clearly see how we do folly, how to break through this vicious circle. As it has been presented in the previous chapters, the law of cause and effect prevailed before the arising of Buddhism as the popular belief, however, the Buddha was the greatest investor of the doctrine of Dependent Origination that raised the law of kamma to the utmost. According to C.A.F. Rhys Davids, there are fragments of the linked form of exposition surviving in the aphorisms known as Yogasūtra and Saṅkhya sūtras, but, the compilation of them in commentarial works is


\(^\text{162}\) Hirakawa Akira, A History of Indian Buddhism, p. 53.
regarded to be relatively quite modern. He said, ‘It was the work of Buddhism, whether it anticipated or annexed, to render insight into natural laws a fruitful religious doctrine.’

As being inspired from this doctrine, the late Buddhism or Mahāyāna Buddhism represents the theory of conditionality of all physical and psychical phenomena. According to the Hua-yen school, one of the ten great schools of Mahāyāna Buddhism, there are four principal uses of the term: (1) under the influence of karma the conditions of reincarnation arise, (2) all arise from consciousness – Ālaya, (3) All arise from Buddhahood – Tathāgatagarbha, and (4) one is all and all are one. Since all things in the phenomenal world are brought into being by the combination of various causes and conditions, they are relative and without substantiality or self-entity. Thus Nāgārjuna identified the Dependent Origination with emptiness.

What is the doctrine of Dependent Origination? How does it function? What did the Buddha teach about it and what is the way of liberation by applying it? These are the points which form the contents of the present chapter.

The doctrine of Conditioned Genesis or Dependent Origination is derived from the Pāli term: ‘Paṭicca-samuppāda.’ Literally, ‘paṭicca’ means ‘because of’ or ‘dependent upon’; and ‘samuppāda,’ ‘arising’ or ‘origination’;

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165 The Seeker’s Glossary of Buddhism, pp. 150-51.
therefore, the term Paṭicca-samuppāda is the doctrine of ‘A rising Because of’ or ‘Dependent Origination’ or as simple as in the Majjhima Nikaya, ‘Conditioned Genesis’. According to the Encyclopedia of Religions and Ethics, Paṭicca-samuppāda (‘causally continuous’ or ‘collective uprising’) is the name of a central doctrine in early Buddhism and in all Theravāda Buddhism. It is also called the Nidāna (basic) Doctrine, or the Paccayākāra (related conditions).\(^{166}\)

According to Narada as explained in his famous work: The Buddha and His Teaching, this method of the Paticcasamuppāda should be understood as: “Because of A arises B; because of B arises C. When there is no A, there is no B; when there is no B, there is no C. In other words, ‘this being so that is; this not being so that is not’ (imasmīṁ sati, idaṁ hoti; imasmīṁ asati, idaṁ na hoti).”\(^{167}\)

According to the Buddhist Dictionary, Paticcasamuppāda or the ‘Dependent Origination’ is ‘the doctrine of the conditionality of all physical and psychical phenomena, a doctrine which, together with that of Impersonality, forms the indispensible condition for the real understanding and realization of the teachings of the Buddha.’\(^{168}\) According to Ñyānātiloka, the entire Abhidhamma Piṭaka, as a whole, really treats of nothing but just these

\(^{167}\) Narada, The Buddha and His Teaching, p. 280.
two doctrines: Phenomenality – implying impersonality, and Conditionality of all existence. The formula of Dependent Origination runs as follows:

1. *Avijjā-paccayā saṃkhārā*: through ignorance are conditioned kamma formations

2. *saṃkhāra-paccayā viññānaṃ*: through kamma formation are conditioned consciousness

3. *Viññāna-paccayā nāma-rupāṃ*: through consciousness are conditioned the mental and physical phenomena

4. *Nāma-rupa-paccayā saḷāyatanaṃ*: through the mental and physical phenomena are conditioned the six Bases

5. *Saḷāyatana-paccayā phasso*: through the six Bases is conditioned the sensory Impression

6. *Phassa-pacceyā vedanā*: through the Impression is conditioned Feeling

7. *Vedanā-paccayā taṇhā*: through the Feeling is conditioned Craving

8. *Taṇhā-paccayā upādānaṃ*: through the Craving is conditioned Clinging

9. *Upādāna-paccayā bhavo*: through the Clinging is conditioned the process of Becoming
10. Bhava-paccayā jāti: through the process of Becoming is conditioned Rebirth

11. Jāti-paccayā jarāmaranāṁ: through the Rebirth are conditioned Old Age and Death.¹⁶⁹

All these twelve components or links may be distributed in three lifetimes, i.e. ignorance and formations or volitions belong to the past life; consciousness, mental faculties and form, six bases, contact, feeling, craving, grasping and becoming, the present life; and birth and old age and death, the future life. It is said that ignorance and mental formations were the past causes; consciousness, mental faculties and form, six bases, contact, feeling are the present results; craving, grasping, and becoming are the present causes; birth and old age and death are the future results. However, there are several interpretations regarding these twelve components, i.e., three categories of inflictions, actions, and suffering; the twelve links of the universe, the twelve links of even every thought, etc. In order to understand the running of the doctrine of Dependent Origination, it should be better to comprehend exactly these twelve components.

2. Liberation through the Doctrine of the Conditioned Genesis:

With reference to the twelve links of the Conditioned Genesis in three lifetimes: the past, the present and the future, we can do nothing with what that happened in the past (ignorance and karma-formations). Moreover, we have to

accept what we are as the inevitable results of the past (consciousness, mental faculties-and-form, six sense organs, contact, and feeling). However, we can make change in our behavior or deeds in the present (craving, clinging, and becoming) that makes change our destinations accordingly (birth and old age and death). Therefore, there are three important things that we can do, namely, stopping of craving, cutting off clinging, and destroying becoming.

How to stop craving? The Buddha taught that whenever one perceives the objects of the sense-organs, one should control it in order to be freed from craving. Although craving for the three spheres or the six sense spheres, it is such craving that makes one to be enslaved for what we crave. Being enslaved by anything means the origin of afflictions and sufferings.

Having seen a material shape with the eye, he is not entranced by the general appearance; he is not entranced by the detail... He fares along controlling it, he guards the organ of sight, and he achieves control over the organ of sight. Having heard a sound... a smell... a taste... a touch... a mental object with the mind, he is not entranced by the general appearance, he is not entranced by the detail. He, possessed of this ariyan control over the sense-organs, inwardly experiences the bliss of being unaffected.\(^{170}\)

How to cut the clinging? There are four kinds of clinging: sensual, views, rules and rites, and personality. Because of craving thus arises clinging. The Buddha taught in regard to ‘sensual clinging’ that pleasures of the senses

were likened by the Buddha to ‘a skeleton,’ ‘a flesh,’ ‘a grass torch,’ ‘a pit of glowing ember,’ ‘a dream,’ ‘what is borrow,’ and ‘the fruits of a tree’ that are ‘of little satisfaction, much ill, much pain, of much tribulation, wherein is more peril.’\footnote{I.B. Horner, tr., The Collection of the Middle Length Sayings, vol.1, pp. 84-85, 120.} Having seen this thus as it really is by means of perfect wisdom, all grasping after or clinging to them are stopped entirely without remainder.\footnote{Ibid.} The Buddha taught in the Discourse on the Simile of the Quail that, ‘clinging is the root of anguish,’ and having understood it so, he is without clinging, free by the destruction of clinging.\footnote{Ibid., p. 126.}

According to the law of cause and effect, because of clinging arises becoming, that may be seen as new karma formations or habits accumulated in the present life. The remaining karma-formations incorporated with becoming create one’s attitude and dispositions that bring about appropriate results in the next lives. Thus the arising of becoming is the arising of birth, the stopping of becoming is the stopping of birth. Those who want to stop becoming must stop clinging and crave for sensual pleasures or objects of the minds related to fine-material or immaterial worlds.

With regard to the three categories of afflictions, actions and sufferings, afflictions are seen as the origin of actions; and actions, the condition of sufferings. Sufferings can be stopped by the stopping of actions; and actions can only be stopped by the stopping of afflictions. In order to burn away afflictions one has not only to obverse morality, concentration, and wisdom
(Sīla, Samādhi, and Paññā), but also to perform several good deeds such as giving, effort, loving kindness, compassion, equanimity and so forth.

Besides, according to Buddhism, all sufferings arise in clinging to the body as real as self. By the perfect wisdom through investigation and contemplation of the Buddha’s teachings one gives up such peculiar clinging. The Buddha taught the four applications of mindfulness, contemplation of the body, feeling, mind and the mind’s objects with the purpose to remove clinging or grasping for the body, feeling, mind and mind’s objects. He said: “this is the only way for purification of beings, for overcoming of sorrows and grieves, for the going down of suffering, for winning the right path, for realizing Nibbāna.\textsuperscript{174} All components of what are called body, feeling, mind, and mind’s objects are subject to the law of conditioning, i.e., impermanent (anacca), suffering (dukkha) and non-self (anatta).\textsuperscript{175} The Buddha taught on many occasions that, whenever the wrong views relating to the self or the world arise, obsess or current, it is by seeing them with perfect wisdom as they really are, thus: “This is not mine, this am I not, this is not myself” that these views are to be ejected.\textsuperscript{176} In the Discourse on the Parable of the Water Snake (Alapadddumasutta), the Buddha taught that an instructed disciple regards five aggregates of existence as well as their objects as: ‘this is not mine, this am I not, this is not myself’.\textsuperscript{177}

\textsuperscript{174} I.B. Horner, tr., The Collection of the Middle Length Sayings, vol.1, p. 71.
\textsuperscript{175} Ibid., p. 281.
\textsuperscript{176} Ibid., vol.3, p. 52.
\textsuperscript{177} Ibid., vol.1, pp. 175, 288.
With reference to the conditioned genesis of the mind, the way to escape from sufferings is the way to stop karma formations, i.e. volitional habits and tendencies both in the past and the present. As it is presented above human mind is the extreme complicated machinery system with flow of perceptions, thoughts and ideas running perpetually and repeatedly. There are some solutions to control such jungle of mind. Morality, concentration and wisdom are the common therapies for most cases. However, daily mindfulness of bodily activities may be regarded to be the most appropriate solution for it. As the Buddha taught, whenever one is walking, he always awakes he is walking, as such, whenever standing, sitting, lying, speaking, keeping silence, even wearying cloths, going for rest room, etc. he always alerts he is doing such and such along with mindfulness of love compassion, joy, and equanimity. The Buddha said, ‘when walking, he comprehends: I am walking; when standing still... sitting, asleep, awake, talking, silent... he is one acting in a clear conscious way.’\footnote{I.B. Horner, tr., The Collection of the Middle Length Sayings, vol.1, pp.72-73.} The Buddha taught, ‘whether he is looking down or looking around... whether he is bending back or stretching out... whether he is munching, drinking, eating, savouring... whether he is obeying the calls of nature..., he is one who comforts himself properly.’\footnote{Ibid., vol.2, pp.11-12.} On another occasion, ‘intent on vigilance’ is applied for bodily mindfulness as described in the Discourse for Learners. Buddha said:
While pacing up and down and while sitting down, he cleanses his mind of obstructive mental states during the first watch as well as the last watch of the night; he lies down on his right side in the lion posture, foot resting on foot, mindful, clearly conscious, resting on the thought of getting up again during the middle watch.\(^{180}\)

Dependent of such mindfulness, habitual thoughts or tendencies are stopped running as wild animals; and at least, they are led to another direction by one’s constant mindfulness. Whenever inherent habits are changed by one’s right mindfulness, one begins controlling and constructing his destiny in a glorious way: the way out of sufferings; and all karma formations and becoming that bring about sufferings of birth and death are destroyed. The path of liberation is just the path of destroying all cankers without remainders.