

Buddhist Thought & Ritual

DAVID J. KALUPAHANA



Buddhist Thought and Ritual will appeal to anyone interested in acquiring an authentic grasp of Buddhism as it lives and functions in today's world. The wide spectrum of Buddhist practice is represented here by the men and women who contributed to this volume. The focus on thought and ritual captures the organic interrelationship of these religious components and moves away from the compartmentalization characteristic of much religious scholarship. The reader discovers the central tenets of Buddhism, Anatta, Pratityasamutpada, Sunyatta, Nirvana, and others, not as free-floating curiosities, but in terms of their contemporary relevance and active participation in the formation of society and culture. Likewise, commonly practiced rituals such as the Paritta Ceremony and Mantra Recitation are analyzed in terms of their role in living Buddhism.

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Dedication

To the late venerable (Dr.) Hammalawa Saddhatissa,
a monk who combined tradition and modernity in
Buddhist scholarship

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List of Abbreviations

- A* *Anguttara-nikāya*, ed. R. Morris and E. Hardy, 5 vols., London: Pali Texts Society (PTS), 1885–1900.
- D* *Dīgha-nikāya*, ed. T.W. Rhys Davids and J.E. Carpenter, 3 vols., London: PTS, 1890–1911.
- DA* *Sumaṅgalavilāsinī, Dīgha-nikāya-aṭṭhakathā*, ed. T.W. Rhys Davids, J.E. Carpenter and W. Stede, 3 vols., London: PTS, 1886–1932.
- Dh* *Dhammapada*, ed. S. Sumangala, London: PTS, 1914.
- DhA* *Dhammapada-aṭṭhakathā*, ed. C.R. Norman, 4 vols., London: PTS, 1906–1914.
- Khp* *Khuddakapāṭha*, ed. Helmer Smith, London: PTS, 1915.
- M* *Majjhima-nikāya*, ed. V. Trenckner and R. Chalmers, 3 vols., London: PTS, 1887–1901.
- Miln* *Milinda-pañha*, ed. V. Trenckner, London: PTS, 1928.
- Psm* *Paṭisambhida-magga*, ed. A.C. Taylor, 2 vols., London: PTS, 1905–1907.
- Pug* *Puggala-paññatti*, ed. R. Morris, London: PTS, 1883.
- S* *Samyutta-nikāya*, ed. L. Feer, 6 vols., London: PTS, 1884–1904.
- Sn* *Sutta-nipāta*, ed. D. Anderson and H. Smith, London: PTS, 1913.
- T* *Taishō Shinshu Daizōkyō*, ed. J. Takakusu and K. Watanabe, Tokyo: Daizo Shuppan Company, 1924–1934.
- Thag* *Theragāthā*, in *Thera-therī-gāthā*, ed. H. Oldenberg and R. Pischel, London: PTS, 1883.
- Ud* *Udāna*, ed. P. Steinthal, London: PTS, 1948.
- Vin* *Vinaya Piṭaka*, ed. H. Oldenberg, 5 vols., London: PTS, 1879–1883.
- Vism* *Visuddhimagga*, ed. C.A.F. Rhys Davids, 2 vols., London: PTS, 1920–1921.

INTRODUCTION

THE ESSAYS PUBLISHED HERE have been selected from a larger collection presented at three Buddhist Intrareligious Conferences held in Chiang-mai, Thailand and in Colombo, Sri Lanka. These conferences were sponsored by the Council for the World Religions. The two conferences held in Chiang-mai dealt with general philosophical and cultural themes relating to the various Buddhist traditions, while the last one held in Colombo was on a more specific topic, namely, "Religious Harmony Through Rituals." The first eight papers are from the conferences held in Chiang-mai, and the last five from the Colombo conference. The first part of the present volume, therefore, deals with facets of Buddhist thought, both early and late, while the second part examines some of the more significant rituals in the Buddhist tradition.

The essay on "The Buddhist Doctrine of Anatta" by Y. Karunadasa, the well-known author of *Buddhist Analysis of Matter* (1967), is presented as the lead paper for obvious reasons. *Anatta* (no-self, non-substantiality,) as the author argues, is the most radical of the Buddha's doctrines, for it "sets Buddhism off from the two main currents of Indian thought and sets itself on a new path." It is a doctrine that has baffled many classical as well as modern writers on Buddhism. When it was presented by the Buddha as a way of clearing the philosophical background containing two fossilized theories, eternalism and nihilism, and as a foundation of the middle path represented by the principle of "dependent arising" (*paṭicca-samuppāda*, Sk. *pratityasamutpāda*) most interpreters perceived it as a nihilistic doctrine. Karunadasa's paper provides a detailed treatment of this important doctrine indicating its epistemological, ethical, and social significance, as well as its relevance to the Buddha's conception of freedom.

My own paper that follows is on “*Pratītyasamutpāda* and the Renunciation of Mystery.” It deals with the positive conception of “dependent arising” as formulated by the Buddha, and as understood by some of the outstanding philosophers of the Buddhist tradition. The mystery that the Buddha intended to renounce is none other than the “self” or “substance,” either in the subject or in the object, that is, the mysterious entity (*atta*) the negation of which is the theme of Karūnadasa’s essay. For this reason, the analysis presented here complements that of Karūnadasa. My analysis, however, is not confined to the first formulation of the doctrine by the Buddha. I have attempted to show that the Buddha’s statement of the doctrine is faithfully followed by the later disciples like Moggalīputta-tissa, Nāgārjuna and Vasubandhu.

R.D. Gunaratne, a philosopher of science by training, examines the three concepts: space (*ākāśa*), emptiness (*sūnyatā*), and freedom (*nirvāna*) in Buddhism, and makes a bold attempt to interpret them in terms of the insights gained from the discoveries of modern science. Leaning toward the more absolutistic conception of space presented by the scientists, Gunaratne argues for similar absolutistic conceptions of space, emptiness, and freedom in the Buddhist context, yet without denying the relativism implied in the theory of dependent arising. This, however, is achieved on the basis of certain dichotomies such as the two truths: conventional or relative (*samvṛti*) and ultimate (*paramārtha*), which indeed are susceptible to a variety of interpretations.

P.D. Premasiri, with his paper on “The Social Relevance of the Buddhist Nibbāna Ideal,” joins camp with the authors of the first two papers against Gunaratne and argues not only in favor of the social relevance of the conception of freedom (*nibbāna*), but also against any interpretation of it as an “absolute” or an “ultimate reality.” The major part of this essay is devoted to an analysis of a cliché, prominent among the early interpreters of Buddhism, that *nibbāna*, the goal of Buddhism, is a transcendental reality beyond any conceptualization, and therefore the person who has attained this goal has nothing to do with the empirical world, hence with the social life of human beings. Utilizing the epistemological and psychological material in the early discourses of the Buddha, Premasiri defines *nibbāna* as the psychological and moral transformation of a human being as a result of his adopting a right view or perspective regarding life in general, and human life in particular. He leaves no room for the introduction of any form of absolutism or transcendentalism.

Sanath Nanayakkara’s piece on “The Bodhisattva Ideal: Some Observations,” is a challenging one. Contrary to the widely accepted view that the *bodhisattva* ideal is a Mahāyāna innovation, Nanayakkara argues

persuasively that, in fact, it originated with Theravāda, and that the earlier versions found in both Theravāda and Mahāyāna represented a middle path between the two extreme forms of behavior: self-indulgence and self-mortification. It was a harmonious blend of self-interest and of the interests or welfare of others. That moderate ideal of *bodhisattva*, however, degenerated into an extremist view of absolute altruism in the hands of some of the later schools of Buddhism, both the Theravādin and Mahāyānist. A closer examination of the subject matter of Nanayakkara's paper will reveal that the controversy regarding the *bodhisattva* ideal is a reflection of the perennial philosophical problem relating to the conceptions of the "particular" and the "universal" and their application in moral discourse. The Buddha's middle path was intended to avoid sharp dichotomies in theory as well as in practice.

Interestingly, a problem similar to the one discussed by Nanayakkara in relation to the conception of *bodhisattva* reappears in the contribution by Shih Heng-ching, one of the leading Buddhist scholars from the National Taiwan University. This time it is presented in the form of "self-power" versus "other-power." It refers to the conflict between two Chinese Buddhist traditions—Ch'an, emphasizing "self-power," and Pure Land, underscoring "other-power." Her detailed treatment of the two traditions, as well as of the attempt by the later Chinese masters to syncretize Ch'an and Pure Land practices, clarifies for us the continued struggle by the later Buddhists to avoid extremes and to remain faithful to the middle path of the Buddha.

Yet another theme of integration of extremes is discussed in Masao Ichishima's work on "Integration of Sūtra and Tantra." Appeasement of thought (*ceto samatha*) or the freedom of thought (*ceto vimutti*) and freedom through insight (*paññāvimutti*) were complementary aspects of the freedom attained by the Buddha and his immediate disciples. Subsequent explanations tended to distinguish these two aspects as two entirely different means: appeasement (*samatha*) and insight or discernment (*vipāśyanā*), thereby generating absolute dichotomies that contributed to conflicts among various Buddhist schools. Ichishima's paper deals with an attempt to integrate one such dichotomy, that is, the dichotomy between exoteric (*sūtra*) and esoteric (*tantra*) forms of Buddhism by focusing upon the integration of the two aspects of freedom, namely, appeasement (*samatha*) and discernment (*vipāśyanā*).

The paper by Cheng-mei Ku, another prominent Buddhist scholar from Taiwan, on the "Mahāsāka View of Women," may appear to be out of place among the themes discussed above. Considering the issue addressed in her paper and its current relevance, however, the editor deemed it appropriate for inclusion here, especially as a concluding

statement on the problems relating to Buddhist thought. It clears up several misunderstandings regarding the way in which women were perceived in the Buddha's teachings and proceeds to identify the particular schools that downgraded their status. The importance of her paper lies in its attempt to trace the several doctrines which, when put together, were ultimately responsible for the emergence of a low profile regarding women.

The second set of papers deals with some of the prominent rituals in the Buddhist countries, especially Sri Lanka and China. The first two papers are on the *paritta* ("protection"), a ceremony little known outside the Sri Lankan Buddhist tradition. They represent the impressions of two authors, a Buddhist monk who would be involved in the performance of the ceremony, and a laywoman who would be a participant. Venerable H. Saddhatissa, a well-known Theravāda scholar-monk from England, provides an analysis of the text recited at the *paritta* ceremony, and on that basis explains the significance of *sūtra* recitation as a ritual for "protection" (*paritta*) of human life from evil forces. He argues that the *sūtra* recitation has a psychological impact on the listeners and thus provides for health and happiness. As such, it is not very different from the *mantra* recitation of the Tibetan or East Asian Buddhists.

The second paper, "The *Paritta* Ceremony of Sri Lanka: Its Antiquity and Symbolism," is by Lily de Silva, the editor of the monumental three-volume text of the *Dīghanikāya-attakathā-tīkā*. It presents a history of the *paritta* ceremony and, more importantly, a detailed analysis of its symbolism. The paper is an excellent summary of the research she has conducted on the subject for several years. It is difficult to make sense of any ritual unless we are able to understand the symbolism involved. De Silva makes a valuable contribution by indicating the symbolic significance of each and every object utilized in the ceremony and relating them in such a way that renders the whole ceremony meaningful in a Buddhist context. (A paper on the Tibetan *mantra*-recitation would have been an interesting companion for the two papers on the *paritta* ceremony, providing for a comparative study of the meaning and relevance of *sūtra*-recitation in the different Buddhist traditions. Unfortunately, the Tibetan representative was unable to participate at the conference devoted to rituals.)

The next essay, by Premasiri, is on the "Significance of the Ritual Concerning Offerings to Ancestors in Theravāda Buddhism." The author traces the history of this very ancient practice in the Vedas and Brahmanical literature of the period before the rise of Buddhism, but endeavors to distinguish the Buddhist version from the Brahmanical by highlighting the moral and psychological character of the former. (Even

though the essay is specifically on the ritual as practiced in a Theravāda country like Sri Lanka, considering the enormous popularity of the ritual in China and Japan, at least a brief reference to the nature of the ritual as practiced in those countries would have given a more complete portrayal of the subject matter.)

The ritual of self-sacrifice or self-immolation is one that can hardly be justified in a Buddhist context, especially in light of the very first discourse of the Buddha, “The Establishment of the Principle of Righteousness” (*Dhammacakka ppavattana*), where he condemned both self-indulgence and self-mortification. Even though self-sacrifice came to be looked upon as a noble ideal both in Theravāda and in Mahāyāna at a later period, actual suicide as a religious ritual is extremely rare in the South Asian Buddhist tradition. Cheng-mei Ku’s second essay included in this volume, “A Ritual of the Mahāyāna – Self-Sacrifice,” explains how the conception of offering or charity (*dāna*), when combined with the Mahāyāna evaluation of the physical human personality (*rūpa*) as a created body (*nirmāṇa-kāya*), can contribute to the ritual of self-sacrifice. Hence its popularity in the East Asian Buddhist countries.

The final essay on “Chinese Buddhist Confessional Rituals: Their Origin and Spiritual Significance” is by Hsiang-chou Yo of the Chinese Culture University of Taipei. It is a detailed treatment of the significance of “confession” in the Chinese Buddhist monastic life. His manner of relating the Mahāyāna conception of “emptiness” (*śūnyatā*) to the confessional ritual will be of absorbing interest to those who have difficulty in harmonizing speculative metaphysics and down-to-earth rituals. (Unfortunately, Yo does not have much to say about the important place accorded to confession in the Buddha’s own discourses. Even though he mentions that the great Chinese master, Tao An, who was the first to promulgate the confessional rituals in Chinese Buddhism, inherited this tradition from South Asian Buddhism, he makes no reference to the enormous popularity of the ritual in the monastic life of the South Asian Buddhists.)

The essays included in this volume provide for the reader the diverse and various facets of Buddhist thought and rituals. Not only does the work facilitate an understanding of the nature of Buddhist theory and practice but furthermore reveals the continuity in such theory and practice as Buddhism spread throughout the length and breadth of the vast continent of Asia.

1

THE BUDDHIST DOCTRINE OF ANATTA

Υ. Karunadasa

THE INTELLECTUAL MILIEU in which Buddhism originated in northern India in the 6th century B.C. is fairly well known. In fact the prevailing mood of the times is very well reflected in the Buddhist discourses themselves. A wide variety of mutually conflicting theories on the nature and destiny of man and his place in the cosmos dominated the scene. Despite their wide variety they can be subsumed under three main categories. The first includes all forms of religion current at the time, the second all forms of materialism which arose in direct opposition to religion, and the third all forms of skepticism which arose as a reaction against both.

Of the various forms of religion, some represented a linear development of the Vedic thought; others arose in direct opposition to it. Generally speaking, while the former movement was confined to the Brahmins, the latter was confined to the Samanas. In the former the trend is more towards theism and monism, but in the latter the trend is more towards non-theism and pluralism. Both groups in common advanced an array of metaphysical views which were at variance with each other. Questions pertaining to the nature and destiny of man, whether the cosmos is finite or otherwise in terms of time and space, the relationship

between the soul and the physical body, the post-mortal condition of the liberated saint and what constituted spiritual purity and impurity became the subject of polemical discussions and this, in turn, gave rise to a bewildering mass of metaphysical views, each sure of its supreme excellence. Scriptural authority, divine revelation, the omniscience of the teacher, knowledge gained through yogic experience and arguments based on *a priori* reasoning were the main epistemological grounds on which these views were sought to be justified.

Although they represented a wide spectrum of views which were at variance with each other, they all subscribed to a common belief: the belief in a metaphysical self, a self which is immutable and distinct from the body (*aññam jīvam aññam, sarīram*).¹ Their thinking thus proceeded on a duality, on the duality between the metaphysical self and the physical body. It is the self that is in bondage. Hence salvation means salvation of the self, to be realized either by being absorbed with the macrocosmic soul or by gaining separate immortality for each self. The other point on which there was general agreement was that since the self is something immutable, unlike the physical body, it survives death as a separate entity. Now it was this belief in an immutable spiritual substance variously called an *atta, jīva, purisa*, a metaphysical belief more or less common to religions contemporaneous with the birth of Buddhism, that came to be referred to in Buddhist literature as *sassatavāda* (eternalism).² Accordingly, all religious views which subscribe to an eternal, self-subsisting spiritual entity—no matter under what term it is introduced—are but different species of *sassatavāda* and, as such, are subsumable under this generic term.

For *sassatavāda* the physical frame in which the elusive self is encased is not an instrument but a veritable obstacle for the self's deliverance, for what prevents its upward journey is the gravitational pull of the body (sense-pleasures). Hence deliverance of the self—in other words, its perpetuation in a state of eternal bliss—requires the mortification of the flesh (*attakilamathānuyoga*)³ to restrain its influence over the self. It was this belief that led to a plethora of ascetic practices as a means to self-liberation.

The materialist tradition which arose in direct opposition to spiritualist religions had many votaries and more than one school of thought. Taking their stand on the epistemological ground that sense-perception was the only valid means of knowledge, they questioned the validity of theological and metaphysical assumptions which do not come within the ambit of sense experience.⁴ From this it should not be concluded, as it has been sometimes, that the materialist view of existence was free from a belief in a self. For although it denied the religious version of

ātmavāda according to which the self is different from the body, it also had its own version of *ātmavāda*, according to which the self is identical with the body (*taṃ jīvaṃ taṃ sarīraṃ*).⁵ The line of argument which led it to this conclusion seems to be as follows: there is no observable self apart from the body, and since only the observable exists, the self must be identical with the body. Hence in its view the self is material and is a product of the four material elements (*ayaṃ attā rūpi cātummahābhūtiḥ*).⁶ Thus for materialism the question at issue is not whether the self exists or not, but with what it should be identified. Since it identified the self with the body, it necessarily follows that at death, with the break-up of the body, the self itself gets annihilated without any prospect of post-mortual survival. Because of this inevitable conclusion to which the materialist view of existence led, all forms of materialism came to be referred to in Buddhist literature as *ucchedavāda* (annihilationism).⁷ For what is called *ucchedavāda*, therefore, there is no duality within man, for it believes in the identity of the body and the self. In its view, man is a pure product of the earth; after death there is no more. Hence all pleasures must be enjoyed here and now, in this life itself. The aim of life is not the suppression of the senses in search of an elusive eternal bliss but the indulgence in sense pleasures (*kāmasukhallikānuyoga*).⁸ Thus what are called *attakilamathānuyoga* and *kāmasukhallikānuyoga* represent the spiritualist and the materialist views of existence, what Buddhism refers to as *sassatavāda* and *ucchedavāda*.

It is fairly certain that it was this polarization of intellectual thought into two main traditions, with a number of contending sects and sub-sects within each tradition, that led to the birth of skepticism. That it also led, not as a linear development but in dialectical opposition to it, to the birth of Buddhism, too, is clearly suggested by the Buddha's very first sermon, the sermon on the Setting in Motion of the Wheel of Righteousness (*Dhamma-cakka-ppavattana sutta*).¹⁰ For herein it is against the contemporary intellectual background that the Buddha sets out his newly discovered (*pubbe ananussutesu dhammesu*)¹¹ path to deliverance. This newly discovered path to deliverance is called the *majjhimā paṭipadā* (*via media*) because it is said to avoid the two extremes of self-mortification and sense-indulgence. It is an avoidance of the two extremes *in toto* (*ubho ante anupagamma*)¹² and not a compromise between the two, for it transcends their mutual opposition. The avoidance of the two extremes does also mean the avoidance *in toto* of what serves as their *raison d'être*, i.e. *sassatavāda* and *ucchedavāda*, the metaphysical and the physical views of the self.

In fact, it was also through personal experience that the Buddha was convinced of the futility of sense-indulgence and self-mortification as a

means to self-perfection. If his life as Prince Siddhārtha exemplifies one extreme, his life as an ascetic practicing austerities exemplifies the other. And his attainment of enlightenment by giving up both extremes shows the efficacy of the Middle Path – the path that leads to self-perfection and deliverance.

In Buddhism's view, both the metaphysical and the physical versions of the self have a psychological origin: the former springs from man's excessive desire for the perpetuation of individuality in eternity (*bhava-taṇhā*), and the latter, from his equally excessive desire for sense-gratification (*kāma-taṇhā*) before his final annihilation at death. Since this latter view is accompanied by man's fear of moral retribution, it abhors any prospect of post-mortal existence (*vibhava-taṇhā*).¹³ Thus, according to Buddhism the conflict between *sassatavāda* and *ucchedavāda* represents not only the perennial conflict between the spiritual and materialist views of existence but also the human mind's oscillation between two deep-seated desires.

It must, however, be noted that although the Buddha rejects both the spiritual version of the metaphysical self and the materialist version of the physical self, he is more sympathetic towards the former and more critical of the latter. Hence it is that, although sense-gratification which represents the physical view of the self is described as lowly (*hīna*), vulgar (*gama*), and worldly (*pothujjanika*), the same description is not extended to self-mortification which represents the metaphysical view of the self.¹⁴ The implication seems to be that although the metaphysical version of the self does not lead to the realization of the ideal of liberation (*anattasambhita*), it, nevertheless, does not lead to the collapse of the moral life. It is not subversive of the higher ideals of human culture. For it recognizes moral retribution (*kamma-vāda*). On the other hand, the materialist version of the self leads to the erosion of the moral fabric of human society. It encourages a view of existence which takes sense-gratification as the ultimate purpose in life. It takes for granted that man's present existence is purely due to fortuitous circumstances and, as such, he is not responsible in any way for what he does during his temporary sojourn here in this world.

What we have introduced as Buddhism's unique doctrine of *anatta* amounts to a critique and rejection of both *sassatavāda* and *ucchedavāda*. Stated in brief, it amounts to the fact that none of the constituents of the empiric individuality can be considered as one's self: The physical form is transient (*anicca*); whatever is transient is unsatisfactory (*yad aniccam taṃ dukkham*); whatever is unsatisfactory is non-self (*yam dukkham tad anattā*).¹⁵ Whatever is non-self, that is not mine (*n'etam mama*), that I am not (*n'eso'ham asmi*), that is not myself (*n'eso me attā*).¹⁶

The same situation is true of the other constituents of the empiric individuality, namely sensations (*vedanā*), perceptions (*saññā*), mental formations (*samkhāra*) and consciousness (*viññāna*). The application of the characteristic of non-self even to *viññāna* (consciousness) which includes all forms of innermost mental experience, is very significant. For this shows that any state of consciousness, even the consciousness that I am I, is also subject to the three characteristics of sentient existence.¹⁷ “Hence the learned and noble disciple does not consider corporeality, sensations, perceptions, mental formations, or consciousness as the ego, nor the ego as the owner of these factors, nor these factors as included within the ego, nor the ego as included within these factors.”¹⁸

The non-identification of any of the constituents of the empiric individuality with self has given rise to the question whether there is a self over and above the constituents.¹⁹ As far as Buddhism is concerned, the question has no relevance. For Buddhism explains the totality of conditioned existence and deliverance therefrom in such a way that it simply rules out the very necessity of raising the question. In the first place, none of the Buddhist doctrines presupposes such a self and, in the second, none of the Buddhist doctrines becomes more meaningful by such an assumption. What is more, if there is such a self, it is certainly not attested to by what in Buddhism is called *abhiññā* or higher knowledge realized through the higher stages of mental culture. Even the states of jhanic experience, where consciousness has attained a sublime level of refinement, do not provide evidence for the existence of such an entity. In fact Buddhism recognizes the likelihood of interpreting the content of jhanic experience in a manner not warranted by the facts. This seems to be the reason why the meditator is advised to review the content of jhanic experience in the light of the three marks of conditioned existence, namely impermanence (*anicca*), unsatisfactoriness (*dukkha*), and absence of a substance persisting through the phenomena (*anatta*).²⁰ Such a practice has the salutary effect of precluding the possibility of erroneously interpreting the content of jhanic experience as some kind of absorption with, or as manifestation within, the meditator of a transcendental reality.

It is in man's suffering—suffering understood in its broadest sense—and its complete elimination that Buddhism is mainly interested: “Both formerly and now, Anurādha, I declare only suffering and its cessation.”²¹ “As the vast ocean, O disciples, is impregnated with one taste, the taste of salt, even so this doctrine and discipline is impregnated with one taste, the taste of deliverance.”²² But the realization of this deliverance does not depend on the solution of the metaphysical question—whether it is solvable or not is another question—whether the soul and the body

are identical or different: "The religious life, O Mālunkyaputta, does not depend on the dogma that the soul and the body are identical, nor does it depend on the dogma that the soul and the body are different. Whether the dogma obtains that the soul and the body are identical or that the soul and the body are different, there still remain birth, old age, death, sorrow, lamentation, grief and despair, for the extinction of which in this present life itself, I am prescribing."²³ If the purpose of religious life is to attain a state of perfect freedom in which all worldly imperfections have vanished forever, a freedom from all limitations, a state of being unconditioned by anything empirical or trans-empirical, the realization of such freedom and the path that leads thereto, does not require the assumption of an elusive, unverifiable, transcendental entity that serves as a background to, and by implication, as *raison d'être* of the world of experience: "Verily I declare to you, my friend, that within this very body, mortal as it is and only a fathom high, but conscious and endowed with mind, is the world and the waxing thereof and the waning thereof and the way that leads to the passing away thereof."²⁴

What is most radical about the Buddhist doctrine of *anatta* is that through it Buddhism sets itself off from the two main currents of Indian thought and sets itself on a new path. In fact it forms the very basis of the Buddha's scheme of salvation and, therefore, all its attendant concepts flow from it. It serves as a rationale not only for Buddhism's practical doctrine and discipline which has the realization of nirvana as its goal but also for its social ethics and social philosophy.

If the belief in an ego-entity is a wrong view, how it comes to be and why it prevails at all is another question to which Buddhism has given much attention. This forms the main subject of discussion particularly in those aspects of Buddhist thought which come under Buddhist psychology and epistemology. It is an issue that has been approached from many points of view and over which many arguments are adduced. In brief, they seek to inquire into the psychological mainsprings of this belief and also the epistemological grounds over which it is sought to be justified. The Buddhist view is that this belief in an ego-entity is the result of an incorrect interpretation of the data of psychological experience and that the tenacity with which men cling to the ego-notion prevents them from seeing the truth of egolessness. It is also maintained that the epistemological grounds on which this belief is sought to be justified such as scriptural authority (*amussava*) and *a priori* reasoning (*takka-vimamsa*) are not valid.²⁵ It is not proposed here to go into all the relevant details, for this is a subject that has been discussed in a number of modern works, particularly in K.N. Jayatilleke's monumental work on the *Early Buddhist Theory of Knowledge*.

However, one important aspect that deserves mention here is that according to Buddhism even our linguistic habits can sometimes lead to the erroneous belief in a self-entity. For there is a tendency on our part to interpret the nature of reality according to the structure of language. In Buddhism's view this can lead to many a wrong conclusion, because the human mind has an inveterate tendency to imagine ontological entities corresponding to linguistic expressions. Thus, for example, when we say, "It rains" or "It thunders," we dichotomize a single process by the use of the word "It." In the same way, when we say, "I think," we tend to believe that there is an I-entity in addition to the process of thinking. How such a way of thinking can lead to the wrong belief in an elusive self is very well illustrated by the Buddha's answer to the question: "But who, Venerable One, is it that feels?" Buddha says in reply: "This question is not proper. I do not teach that there is one who feels. If, however, the question is put thus: 'Conditioned through what does feeling arise?,' then the right answer will be: 'Through sense-impression is feeling conditioned.'" Again when the Buddha is asked: "But what are old age and death and to whom do they belong?";²⁶ the Buddha says in reply: "I do not teach that there is one thing called old age and death and that there is someone to whom they belong." That although language is necessary to convey the nature of reality, the structure of the language does not necessarily picture the nature of reality is also brought into focus by the well-known statement of the Buddha: "These, O Citta, are names, expressions, turns of speech, designations in common use in the world. And of these a *Taiḥāgata* makes use indeed, but is not led astray by them."²⁷

Now, this Buddhist view of existence, expressed through the doctrine of *anatta*, invests the concept of man with a new dimension. In accordance with this view there is no spiritual substance in man which relates him to some kind of transcendental reality. His is not a microcosmic soul emanating from, and awaiting to be absorbed with, the macrocosmic soul. Nor is he, as materialism (*ucchedavāda*) asserts, a product of fortuitous circumstances awaiting to be annihilated at death. For although Buddhism does not subscribe to the metaphysical view of the self, unlike materialism, it does not deny continuity (*punabbhava*) and moral responsibility (*kammavāda*). Thus the Buddhist view of human personality cannot be explained either in terms of a soul that outlasts death or in terms of a soul that gets annihilated at death. Avoiding the two extremes of idealism and materialism, it explains human personality as a process of psycho-physical phenomena interconnected by causal relations, as a process of alimentionation (*āhāraṭṭhitiika*) feeding itself on four kinds of nutrients, namely, material food (*kabalīkāra-āhāra*), sensory

impression (*phassa*), mental volition (*mano-sañcetanā*), and consciousness (*viññāna*).²⁸ However, this way of explaining human personality does not deprive it of the possibility of perfection, for within the human personality there is the necessary potential and the wherewithal to reach the highest levels of perfection, as we find this ideal translated into actual experience in the lives of the Buddhist saints.

If the doctrine of *anatta* gives a new dimension to the concept of man, the four Noble Truths provide a statement, in consonance therewith, of man's present predicament (pathological), the causes thereof (diagnostical), deliverance therefrom (ideal) and the path that leads to its realization (prescriptive). Man's present predicament, as Buddhism understands it, is not due to his fall from an original state of perfection, for Buddhism speaks of no such original state of perfection. Nor is it due to his estrangement from his true self because no such self is assumed. Nor is it due to his habit of identifying his true self with what is not the self, because the very idea of the self is an unnecessary assumption. On the contrary, in Buddhism's view man's present predicament, which is characterized by suffering (*dukkha*), is directly traceable to the belief in an illusory self, because it leads to the equally illusory duality between the self and the non-self plus all that it presupposes and entails. Hence Buddhism's interest in self is not to develop it or to make it more healthy, but to eliminate it completely. What is emphasized here is not deliverance of the self, but deliverance from the self-notion.

If the self is not assumed, how can man's perfectibility and deliverance become possible is a question that has often been raised. The Buddhist answer is that it is the very assumption of a self, both in its spiritual and materialist versions, which makes perfectibility and deliverance impossible: "Verily, if one holds the view that the self is identical with the body, in that case there can be no holy life. Again, if one holds the view that self is one thing and the body another, in that case, too, there can be no holy life. Avoiding both extremes the Perfect One teaches the doctrine that lies in the middle."²⁹

The middle doctrine alluded to here is Buddhism's explanation of empirical existence through its empirical doctrine of dependent co-origination (*paṭicca-samuppāda*). Just as the Noble Eightfold Path is called the Middle Way (*majjhima-paṭipadā*) because it avoids the two extremes of self-mortification and sense-indulgence, even so the doctrine of dependent co-origination is called the Middle Doctrine (*majjhena dhammam deseti*)³⁰ because it avoids, in the self-same manner (*ubho ante an-upagamma*) the philosophical views which serve as their *raison d'être*. The significance of the Middle Doctrine is due to the fact that it avoids not only the eternalist view that everything exists absolutely (*sabbam*

atthi), but also the opposite nihilist view that absolutely nothing exists (*sabbam natthi*). It also avoids not only the monistic view which reduces the diversity of phenomenal existence to a common ground, to some sort of self-existing substance (*sabbam ekattam*), but also the opposite pluralistic view which analyses existence to a concatenation of discrete entities (*sabbam puthuttam*).³¹ Avoiding all these extremes, the doctrine of dependent co-origination explains that phenomena arise in dependence on other phenomena, without assuming, however, a persistent substance behind the phenomena.

NOTES

1. *M* 1.246; *S* 4.375 H.
2. *D* 1.13; 3.108; *S* 2.20; 3.99; 4.400; *Pug* 38; *Psm* 1.155.
3. *D* 3.113; *S* 4.330; 5.421; *M* 3.230.
4. See K.N. Jayatilleke, *Early Buddhist Theory of Knowledge*, London, 1963, 69 ff.
5. *M* 1.246; *S* 4.375 H.
6. *M* 2.56.
7. *D* 1.34; *S* 2.18; 4.401; *A* 4.174; *Pug*. 38.
8. *S* 4.330; 5.421; *D* 3.113.
9. See K.N. Jayatilleke, *op. cit.*, 109 ff.
10. *Vin* 1.14H; *S* 5.420 H.
11. *Ibid.*, *loc. cit.*
12. *Ibid.*, *loc. cit.*
13. *D* 3.216; *Vin* 1.10.
14. See note 10, above.
15. *Vin* 1.15; *S* 4.283; *M* 2.35.
16. *Ibid.*, *loc. cit.*
17. O.H. de A. Wijesekara, *The Three Signata*, Kandy, 1960, 10.
18. *S* 3.122.
19. See e.g. George Grimm, *The Doctrine of the Buddha*, Berlin, 1958; Edmond Holmes, *The Creed of Buddha*, London, 1957 (reprinted); Ananda Coomaraswamy, *Buddha and the Gospel of Buddhism*, Bombay, 1956 (reprinted).
20. *M* 1.350; *A* 2.43.
21. *S* 4.384. *Pubbe cabham Anurādha etarahi ca dukkhañ ceva paññāpemi dukkhassa ca nirodham.*
22. *Vin* 2.235: *Seyyathāpi bhikkhave mahāsamuddo ekaraso lonaraso evam eva kho bhikkhave ayam dhammavinayo ekaraso vimuttirasō.*
23. *M* 1.430: *Taṃ jīvaṃ taṃ sarīraṃ ti Mālunkyaputta diṭṭhiyāsati aññāṃ jīvaṃ aññāṃ sarīraṃ ti vā diṭṭhiyā sati attheva jāti atthi jarā atthi maraṇaṃ santi soka-paridava-dukka-domanassupāyāsā yesāhaṃ diṭṭhe va dhamme nighātaṃ paññāpemi.*
24. *S* 1.62. *Api khvāhaṃ āvuso imasmīññeva vyāmamatte kalebare saññimbi samanake lokāṃ ca paññāpemi lokasamudayaṃ ca lokanirodhaṃ ca lokanirodhagaminīṃ ca paṭipadaṃ.*
25. See K.N. Jayatilleke, *op. cit.*, 169 ff.
26. *S* 3.12.
27. *D* 1.202.
28. *M* 1.48; *S* 2.11; *D* 3.228.
29. *S* 2.61.
30. *Ibid.*, 5.421.
31. *Ibid.*, 2.17, 77.

2

PRATĪTYASAMUTPĀDA AND THE RENUNCIATION OF MYSTERY

David J. Kalupahana

WRITING ABOUT "ESCAPE FROM PERIL" in his popular and significant work, *The Quest for Certainty*, John Dewey writes: "Man who lives in a world of hazards is compelled to seek for security. He has sought to attain it in two ways. One of them began with an attempt to propitiate the powers which environ him and determine his destiny. It expressed itself in supplication, sacrifice, ceremonial rite and magical cult. In time these crude methods were largely displaced. The sacrifice of a contrite heart was esteemed more pleasing than that of bulls and oxen; the inner attitude of reverence and devotion more desirable than external ceremonies. If man could conquer destiny he could willingly ally himself with it; putting his will, even in sore affliction, on the side of the powers which dispense fortune, he could escape defeat and might triumph in the midst of destruction."¹

Interpreting the Buddhist philosophical tradition, Brahmanical scholars like S. Radhakrishnan seem to give the impression that the revolution brought about by the Buddha in the Indian religious tradition is no more than the abandoning of the "crude methods" (referred

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