THE CONCEPTS OF SELF AND FREEDOM IN BUDDHISM

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Conception of Self

One of the most controversial views expressed by the Buddha is said to be that regarding the nature of the subject, the self or the human person who experiences the objective world. It is generally assumed that he, as a strong advocate of what is popularly known as the doctrine of "no-self" (*anattā*, *anātman*), is unable to give a satisfactory account of human action and responsibility, not to speak of problems such as knowledge and freedom. Such criticisms were directed at him by his contemporaries as well as by some classical and modern writers on Buddhism.

For some of his contemporaries, the continuity in the human personality can be accounted for only by the recognition of a spiritual substance different from the physical body (*aññaṃ jīvaṃ aññaṃ sarīraṃ*).[1] For some others, it required only a sensibly identifiable physical body (*taṃ jīvaṃ taṃ sarīraṃ*).[2] Those who opted for a spiritual substance could not depend upon the ordinary events or occurrences such as continuity in perceptual experience and memory in order to speak of a self because such events are temporal and changeable. Their search culminated in the conception of a permanent and immutable spiritual substance. Others who assumed the self to be identical with the physical body were not merely claiming that the self survives recognizably from birth to death and not beyond, but, like the behaviourists, also were denying the reality of conscious life. When the Buddha himself rejected the self as a spiritual substance, he was perceived as someone who, like the latter, advocated the annihilation of an existing conscious person.[3]

The Buddha had a difficult task before him, especially when he realized that the negation of a subjective spiritual entity will produce great anxiety in ordinary human beings.[4] However, he also felt that the appeasement of such anxieties had to be

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[1] *Majjhima-nikāya* (abbr. *M*), 1.485 ff.

[2] Ibid.

[3] Ibid., 1.140.

[4] Ibid., 1.136.

R. W. Perrett (ed.), Indian Philosophy of Religion, 93–113.

effected without doing violence to critical thinking or without sacrificing significant philosophical discourse. The method adopted by him in dealing with the spiritualist as well as materialist views is evidently *analytical*. His teachings therefore came to be popularly known as a "philosophy of analysis" (*vibhajjavāda*). A truly analytical philosophy is generally believed to advocate no theories. Analysis is intended as a means of clarifying the meaning of terms and concepts without attempting to formulate alternate theories even if such theories were meaningful. However, the Buddha seems to have perceived analysis as a means, not a goal. It will be necessary to keep this in mind when we proceed to examine the Buddha's response to the Spiritualists as well as the Materialists. The response to the Spiritualists is more popular in the early discourses, for theirs was the more widespread view in pre-Buddhist India.

The Doctrine of Aggregates (*Khandha*)

To the question as to what constitutes a human person, the Spiritualists' answer was almost always: "There exists a spiritual self, permanent and eternal, which is distinct from the psychophysical personality." The Buddha therefore concentrated on the analysis of the so-called psychic personality in order to discover such a self. Every time he did so he stumbled upon one or the other of the different aspects of experience such as feeling (*vedanā*), perception (*saññā*), disposition (*saṅkhāra*) or consciousness (*viññāṇa*). If there was anything other than these psychic elements that constituted the human personality it was the body (*rūpa*).[5] Yet, none of these factors can be considered permanent and eternal. They are all liable to change, transformation and destruction. In brief, they are impermanent (*anicca*). As such, whatever satisfaction one can gain from them or through them will also be limited. Often such satisfaction can turn into *dis*satisfaction. Hence the Buddha looked upon them as being *un*satisfactory (*dukkha*).[6]

Arguing from the impermanence and unsatisfactoriness of the five aggregates, the Buddha was led to the conception of "no-self" (*anattā*) which represents the culmination of the analytical process. Even though his treatment is very analytical, its interpretation by some of the classical and modern scholars appears to take an absolutistic turn. Let us first examine the Buddha's conception of "no-self". His assertion regarding "no self" is presented in three separate sentences. Referring to each one of the five aspects of experience or aggregates (*khandha*) mentioned above, he says:

> "It is not mine. He is not me. He is not my self."
> (*N' etaṃ mama. N' eso aham asmi. Na m' eso attā*).[7]

All three statements do not necessarily refer to the aggregates. Only the first one does. Hence the subject is in the neuter form.

> "It is not mine." (*N' etaṃ mama.*)

What is denied in this first statement is the existence of a mysterious entity to

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[5] *Saṃyutta-nikāya* (abbr. *S*), 2.3 ff.

[6] Ibid., 3.21 ff.

[7] Ibid., 3.19.

which each of the aggregates are supposed to belong. Thus, the Buddha's argument begins with the question of *possession* or *ownership*. The Buddha discovered that as a result of over-stretched emotions (*vedanā*), a natural process of sense experience gets solidified into a metaphysical subject that is henceforward taken to be the agent behind all experiences.[8] A feeling of possession arises not simply on the basis of one's interest, but as a result of one's desire. The Buddha is here arguing that in order to explain the functioning of body, feeling, perception, disposition and consciousness, it is not necessary to posit such a mysterious entity which is perceived as the *owner* of such experiences. Therefore, the statement that follows:

"He is not me," (*N' eso aham asmi*),

refers directly to that mysterious owner negated in the first statement. This explains the use of the masculine pronoun (*eso*) instead of the neuter (*etaṃ*) of the previous sentence. It also makes a significant difference to his claim. He is not denying each and every conception of "I" (*ahaṃ*) which is associated with the aggregates but only the metaphysical presupposition behind the statement: "Such and such aggregate belongs to such and such self." The assumption that a certain term has one meaning only and no other was contrary to the Buddha's conception of language.[9] This is why the Buddha, after rejecting the *conception* of "I" adopted in the Brahmanical system, continued to use the very same *term* throughout his discourses.

Equally important for him was safeguarding the use of the term "self" without rejecting it altogether as absolute fiction. Hence the necessity for repeating the previous sentence replacing "I" (*ahaṃ*) with "self" (*attā*),

"He is not my self," (*na m' eso attā*).

This accounts for the constant use of the term "self" (*attā*) in a positive sense in the discourses along with its negation, "no-self" (*anattā*). It seems appropriate to say that there are two different meanings or uses of the terms "I" and "self," one metaphysical and the other empirical. The metaphysical meaning cannot be accounted for by any one of the aggregates, and this is the thrust of his argument in the above context.

If a metaphysical self cannot be explained in terms of the aggregates, can a non-metaphysical or empirical self be accounted for by them? The general tendency among Buddhist scholars is to assume that the aggregates serve only the negative function of denying a metaphysical self. However, a careful reading of the early discourses will reveal that these five aggregates explained in terms of the principle of dependence (*paṭiccasamuppāda*) also perform a positive function of clarifying what an empirical self is. Thus, while the analytical process leads to the negative conception of "no-self", it is to be supplemented by the positive description in terms of dependence which provides meaning for the empirical conceptions of "I" and "self".

Body or material form (*rūpa*) is the first of the five aggregates. Since the theory of aggregates was intended to replace the spiritualist conception of "self", it is not surprising that the first of the aggregates listed is the body (*rūpa*). Allowing the physical personality such a prominent role, the Buddha was simply insisting upon the importance of *sensible* identity as one of the requirements for maintaining the identity of a human person, the "I" or "self". Of course this physical identity does not involve

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[8] *M* 1.111-112.

[9] Ibid., 3.234-235.

any permanence even during the time the body survives, but it is a convenient way of individuating and identifying a person, even though it is not the only way, as it is for some modern philosophers.[10] In this connection it will be of interest to note that the early discourses do not speak of a human person without a body or material form (*arūpa*). *Arūpa*, the formless or the immaterial, is more often a state of contemplation that goes beyond the perception of materiality (*rupasaññānaṃ samatikkama*)[11] or a reference to one who has no idea of form (*arūpasaññī*).[12]

Feeling or sensation (*vedanā*) refers to the emotive content of human experience which is another important aspect or constituent of the personality. It accounts for emotions which are an inalienable part of a living person, whether he be in bondage or has attained freedom (*nibbāna*). Feeling consists of three types: the pleasant or the pleasurable (*manāpa, sukha*), the unpleasant or the painful (*amanāpa,dukkha*) and neutral (*adukkhamasukha*). Except in the higher state of contemplation (*jhāna*) characterized by cessation (*nirodha*) of all perception and the experienced or the felt, which is a non-cognitive state,[13] feelings are inevitable in experience. Such feelings can be twofold depending on how far they are stretched. In the most rudimentary form they can account for interest. If they are over-stretched they can produce continuous yearning or thirsting for the object.

Perception (*saññā*) stands for the function of perceiving (*sañjānātīti saññā*). As in the case of feelings, perceptions are also related to all other consituents of the human personality. Thus, they are not atomic impressions that are compounded into complex entities as a result of the activities of mind such as imagination. Each one of our perceptions constitutes a mixed bag of memories, concepts, dispositions as well as material elements. A pure percept undiluted by such conditions is *not* recognized by the Buddha or any subsequent Buddhist psychologist who has remained faithful to the Buddha. A pure percept is as metaphysical as a pure *a priori* category.

Dispositions (*saṅkhāra*) explain why there cannot be pure percepts. In the Buddha's perspective, this is *the* factor that contributes to the individuation of a person, and therefore, of his perceptions. Almost everything, including physical phenomena, come under the strong influence of this most potent cause of evolution of the human personality as well as its surroundings.

Indeed, the dispositions are responsible not only for the manner in which we groom our physical personality with which we are identified, but also in partly[14] determining the nature of a new personality with which we may be identified in the future. It is not merely the human personality that is moulded or processed by dispositions. Our physical surroundings, even our amenities of life, housing, clothing, utensils, and in a major way, our towns, cities, etc., our art and architecture, our culture and civilization, and in the modern world, even outer space come to be dominated by our dispositions. Karl Popper calls this the World Three.[15] For this very reason, the Buddha when describing the grandeur in which a universal monarch lived, with palaces, elaborate pleasure gardens and all other physical comforts, referred to all of them as dispositions

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[10] Strawson (1959).

[11] *M* 1.174-175.

[12] *Dīgha-nikāya* (abbr. *D*), 2.110.

[13] *M* 1.175 where it is distinguished from *paññā* or wisdom.

[14] Ibid., 1.389.

[15] Popper and Eccles (1985), pp. 38ff.

(*saṅkhāra*).[16]

Epistemologically, the dispositions are an extremely valuable means by which human beings can deal with the world of experience. In the absence of any capacity to know everything presented to the senses, that is, omniscience, dispositional tendencies function in the form of interest, in selecting material from the "big blooming buzzing confusion" of sensible experience[17] in order to articulate one's understanding of the world. The total elimination of dispositions would therefore be epistemological suicide. Furthermore, the recognition of the importance of dispositions prevented the Buddha from attempting to formulate an ultimately objective *view* of the world.

Consciousness (*viññaṇa*) is intended to explain the continuity in the person who is individuated by dispositions (*saṅkhāra*). Like the other constituents, consciousness depends upon them for existence as well as nourishment. It is not a permanent and eternal substance or a series of discrete momentary acts of conscious life united by a mysterious self. Thus, consciousness, when separated from the other aggregates, especially material form (*rūpa*), cannot function. It is said to act with other aggregates if thoughts were to occur.

When consciousness is so explained, it is natural for someone to conclude that it is a substantial entity. This was the manner in which the substantialists responded to the Buddha. Buddha's response was that consciousness is no more than the act of being conscious (*vijānātīti viññāṇaṃ*).[18]

Thus, the analysis of the human personality into five aggregates is intended to show the absence of a metaphysical self (an *ātman*) as well as the presence of an empirical self that is dependently arisen.

The Theory of Elements (*Dhātu*)

While the theory of aggregates remains more popular in the discourses, there is occasional reference to the conception of a human person consisting of six elements (*cha-dhātu*).[19] The six elements are earth (*paṭhavī*), water (*āpo*), fire (*tejo*), air (*vāyu*), space (*ākāsa*) and consciousness (*viññāṇa*). Unlike in the theory of aggregates, here we find a more detailed analysis of the physical personality, and this may have served as a refutation of the Materialist view of a human person.

While it is true that the first four represent the basic material elements (*mahābhūta*) to which is added space, there is here no attempt to deal with them as purely objective phenomena. They are almost always defined in relation to human experience. Thus, earth represents the experience of solidity, roughness, etc.; water stands for fluidity; fire refers to the caloric; and air implies viscocity.[20] The Buddha recognized space as an element that is relative to the four material elements mentioned above. The fact that space is not generally included in the list of material elements led to much misunderstanding and controversy regarding its character. The scholastics, like some of the modern day scientists, believed that space is absolute, hence unconditioned (*asaṃskṛta*).[21] On the contrary, the early discourses recognized the conditionality of

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[16] *D* 2.199.

[17] James (1979), p.32.

[18] *M* 1.292.

[19] Ibid., 3.239.

[20] Ibid., 1.421-423; see also Karunadasa (1967), pp. 16ff.

[21] See Karunadasa (1967), p. 93.

space, for the experience of space is dependent upon the experience of material bodies.[22] Just as much as the Buddha refused to recognize a psychic personality independent of the physical, he refrained from considering the physical personality independent of conscious life (*viññāṇa*) as constituting a complete human person.

Presenting an explanation of the physical personality in terms of material elements all of which are understood from the perspective of human experience, the Buddha was able to avoid certain philosophical controversies generated by a more objective physicalistic approach. Prominent among them is the mind-body problem. It is true that the Buddha spoke of the human person as a psychophysical personality (*nāmarūpa*). Yet the psychic and the physical were never discussed in isolation, nor were they looked upon as self-subsistent entities. For him, there was neither a "material-stuff" nor a "mental-stuff", because both are results of reductive analyses that go beyond experience. On a rare occasion, when he was pressed to give a definition of the physical and the psychic components by an inquirer who had assumed their independence, the Buddha responded by saying that the so-called physical or material (*rūpa*) is contact with resistance (*paṭigha-samphassa*) and the psychic or mental (*nāma*) is contact with concepts (*adhivacana-samphassa*), both being forms of contact.[23] Interestingly, such an explanation of the psychophysical personality where conscious or mental life is analysed in terms of concepts (for *adhivacana* literally means "definition") brings into focus the relationship between language and consciousness.

The description of the human personality in terms of the five aggregates as well as the six elements is an elaboration of the knowledge and insight referred to in the *Sāmaññaphala-suttanta*.[24]

> With his thought thus serene, made pure, translucent, cultured, devoid of evil, supple, ready to act, firm and imperturbable, he applies and bends down his thought to knowledge and vision. He comes to know: "This body of mine has material form, it is made up of the four great elements, it springs from mother and father, it is continually renewed by so much boiled rice and juicy foods, its very nature is impermanence, it is subject to erasion, abrasion, dissolution and disintegration, and there is in this consciousness of mine, too, bound up, on that does it depend.

The explanation of that insight in positive conceptual terms required the avoidance of two extreme views prevalent during his day. The negative conception of "no-self" discussed above referred to the views of the Spiritualists as well as the Materialists which were not only substantialist but also deterministic. While the Materialist view appears more like hard determinism, the Spiritualist version is a form of soft determinism with emphasis upon the knowledge of the eternal and strictly determined self as constituting freedom. In the backdrop of these different versions of determinism was a theory of indeterminism referred to as *yadṛcchā-vāda*.[25] The term *yadṛcchā*, which means "whatever way [it] falls on or happens", is generally translated

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[22] *S* 2.150

[23] *D* 2.62.

[24] Ibid., 1.76.

[25] *Śvetāśvatara Upaniṣad* 1.2 (in Radhakrishnan (1953), p. 709).

as "chance occurrence". However, for the Buddha, whose philosophical explanation of events in terms of the principle of dependence (*paṭiccasamuppāda*) is based upon the experience of the "dependently arisen phenomena" (*paṭiccasamuppanna dhamma*), which in turn avoids any absolute guarantee of future events, the conception of "chance" is not something irrational and preposterous so long as it is not looked upon as something positive, comparable to the conception of "luck". The term *yadṛcchā* implied such a positive conception. However, in its Prakrit form, *yadicchā*, it could also mean "according to [one's] wishes", which, for the Buddha, did not necessarily mean indeterminism.[26] What was not acceptable to him was the positive conception of "chance" that implied indeterminism relating to the past as well as the present events. For this reason, he designated the conception of such occurrence as *adhicca-samuppanna* (lit. "that which has arisen, coming one on top of another", that is, causally unrelated).[27] Thus, the conception of the "dependently arisen" (*paṭiccasamuppanna*) is often presented as a middle standpoint between the fixed or the determined (*niyata*) and the undetermined *(adhiccasamuppanna*).

A human being who is dependently arisen is also referred to as a *bhūta* (literally, "become").[28] The Buddha refers to four kinds of nutriments that are essential for such human beings to remain human beings (*bhūtānaṃ vā sattānaṃ ṭhitiyā*) or for beings who are yet to come (*sambhavesīnaṃ vā anuggahayā*).[29] The four nutriments are as follows:

1. material food, gross or subtle (*kabaliṅkāro āhāro oḷāriko vā sukhumo vā*),
2. sensory contact (*phasso*),
3. mental dispositions or volitions (*manosañcetanā*), and
4. consciousness (*viññāṇa*).

These four nutriments, in fact, define what a human person is. The non-recognition of a human person independent of a physical personality is underscored by the Buddha's insistence that material food is the first and foremost nutriment. The second nutriment suggests that the human person is sensory-bound. Stopping of sensory contact for the sake of temporary rest, as in the state of cessation (*nirodha-samāpatti*), may be useful, but the elimination or suppression of it altogether would mean the destruction of the human person. The inclusion of mental dispositions or volitions or, what may be called, "intentionality" as a nutriment indicates the importance attached to the individual's decision-making or goal-setting capacity. It is this aspect of the human person that has led to much controversy among philosophers, and is generally known as the problem of the will. Tradition records that the Buddha abandoned the disposition to live (*āyu-saṅkhāra*) at a place called Cāpālacetiya almost three months before he passed away.[30] In other words, the continuity of human life is not a mere automatic process. The human disposition is an extremely relevant condition for its survival. Finally, consciousness, which is generally associated with memory (*sati*),[31] is needed to complete the human personality, for its absence will

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[26] *Aṅguttara-nikāya* (abbr. *A*), 3.28.

[27] *Udāna* (abbr. *Ud*), 69.

[28] *M* 1.260

[29] Ibid., 1.261.

[30] *D* 2.118.

[31] Ibid., 3.134.

eliminate the capacity on the part of the human being to co-ordinate his life. Without it, the human being will be a mere "vegetable". These four nutriments are founded upon craving (*taṇha*), hence contributing to suffering, a process that is explained in the popular theory of the twelve factors (*dvādasāṅga*).[32]

The Theory of Twelve Factors (*Dvādasāṅga*)

Having rejected the *substantial* existence of an individual self, the Buddha did not remain silent so as to give the impression that the real person is beyond description. The discourse to Kaccāyana lays down in no unclear terms that the middle way adopted by the Buddha in explaining the human personality is "dependent arising" (*paṭiccasamuppāda*).[33] That process is outlined in terms of twelve factors. This twelvefold formula in its positive statement represents an explanation of a person in bondage, while the negative statement that immediately follows explains the process of freedom.

Enlightenment is a necessary precondition for freedom. Therefore, it is natural to begin explaining the life of a person in bondage as one who is engulfed in ignorance (*avijjā*).

As mentioned earlier, no concept becomes more important in a discussion of the human personality than the conception of dispositions (*saṅkhāra*). Following is the definition of dispositions available in the discourses:

> "Disposition is so-called because it processes material form (*rūpa*), that has already been dispositionally conditioned, into its present state." [This statement is repeated with regard to feeling (*vedanā*), perception (*saññā*), dispositions (*saṅkhāra*) and consciousness (*viññāṇa*).][34]

According to this description, while dispositions are themselves causally conditioned, they process each one of the five factors of the human personality thereby providing them with the stamp of individuality or identity. Thus, the most important function of individuating a personality belongs to the dispositions. The dispositions are an inalienable part of personality. They can function in the most extreme way, for example, in creating an excessively egoistic tendency culminating in the belief in a permanent and eternal self (*ātman*). This may be one reason why the Buddha considered the self (*ātman*) as a mere "lump of dispositions" (*saṅkhāra-puñja*).[35]

Thus, ignorance can determine the way human dispositions function (*avijjāpaccayā saṅkhārā*), either creating the belief in permanent existence (*atthitā*), or denying the value of the human personality altogether (*n'atthitā*).

The elimination of ignorance and the development of insight would therefore lead to the adoption of a middle standpoint in relation to dispositions. It has already been mentioned that the elimination of dispositions is epistemological suicide. Dispositions determine our perspectives. Without such perspectives we are unable to deal with the sensible world in any meaningful or fruitful manner. The Buddha realized that

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[32] *M* 1.261 ff.

[33] *S* 2.17.

[34] Ibid., 3.87.

[35] Ibid., 1.135.

subdued dispositions provide for enlightened perspectives. Hence his characterization of freedom (*nibbāna*) as the appeasement of dispositions (*saṅkhāra-samatha*).

Thus the dispositions, while carving an individuality out of the "original sensible muchness",[36] also play a valuable role in the continuity of experiences. The development of one's personality either in the direction of imperfection or perfection rests with one's dispositions. These, therefore, are the determinants of one's consciousness (*saṅkhārapaccayā viññāṇaṃ*).

Consciousness (*viññāṇa*), wherein dispositions function by way of providing an individuality, determines the continuity (or the lack of continuity) in the individual's experiences. Therefore, it is sometimes referred to as the "stream of consciousness" (*viññāṇasota*).[37]

The Indian philosophical tradition in general, and the Buddhist tradition in particular, uses the term *nāmarūpa* to refer to the complete personality consisting of both the psychological and physical components. Although this psychophysical personality comes to be conditioned by a variety of factors, such as the parents, the immediate associates and the environment, the Buddha believed that among these various factors consciousness stands out pre-eminent (*viññāṇapaccayā nāmarūpaṃ*).[38] It is this perspective that induced the Buddha to emphasize the capacity of the individual to develop one's personality, morally as well as spiritually *in spite of* certain external constraints. Dispositions and consciousness, in combination, are referred to as "becoming" (*bhava*).[39] When a person, including one who has attained freedom, like the Buddha, is referred to as "become" (*bhūta*),[40] it explains the manner in which dispositions and consciousness function together in order to form his personality within the context of the physical environment. In this sense, neither the psychic personality or its achievements, like freedom, need be looked upon as being anomalous phenomena, as it was in the case of some of the pre-Buddhist traditions or with some of the more prominent philosophers of the Western world such as Immanuel Kant[41] or Donald Davidson.[42] The Buddha's is another way of resolving the determinism/free-will problem.

The next five factors in the twelvefold formula explain the process of perception and the manner in which an ordinary unenlightened person may react to the world of experience. As long as there exists a psychophysical personality and as long as its sense faculties are functioning, so long will there be contact or familiarity (*phassa*) with the world and feeling or emotive response (*vedanā*) to that world. These are inevitable. However, because of the presence of ignorance and, therefore, of extreme dispositional tendencies, the unenlightened person can generate craving (*taṇhā*) (or its opposite) for the object so experienced. Craving leads to grasping (*upādāna*) both for pleasurable objects and ideas. Grasping conditions becoming (*bhava*) and, if this process were to be continued, one would be able, depending upon proper conditions, to attain whatever status one aspires for in this life or even be reborn in a future life.

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[36] James (1979), p.32.

[37] *D* 3.105.

[38] Ibid., 2.62-63.

[39] *A* 2.79.

[40] *D* 2.157.

[41] Kant (1985), p. 85.

[42] Davidson (1980).

This process of becoming (*bhava*), allowing for the possibility of achieving goals and satisfying desires, whatever they be, is not denied in Buddhism. Satisfaction (*assāda*) to be derived even from pleasures of sense (*kāma*) is admitted.[43] To begin with the lowest level of satisfaction, a person misguided concerning his goals may achieve the fruits (*attha*) of his action, say, by depriving another human being of its life. In his own small world, he may derive satisfaction (*assāda*) by doing so. But soon the unfortunate consequences (*ādīnava*) of that action could lead him to the greatest suffering and unhappiness. Instead of being a fruit (*attha*), it would now turn out to be "un-fruit-ful" (*an-attha*), hence bad (*a-kusala*).

At another level, a person may, without hurting himself or others, derive satisfaction from having a spouse, children, confortable lodging as well as being sufficient in food and clothing. These may be considered the satisfaction (*assāda*) derived from pleasures of sense (*kāma*). Indeed there is no unqualified condemnation of these satisfactions compared with the condemnation of the satisfactions derived from the destruction of human life mentioned above. However, the fact that these satisfactions are meagre and are not permanent and eternal and that they could eventually lead to dissatisfaction is recognized.[44] These are the satisfactions that one enjoys under great constraint. The nature of such constraints will be analysed in connection with the problem of freedom (*nibbāna*). The *final* result of all this is impermanence, decay and death, grief, suffering and lamentation. Constant yearning for this and that, thirst for pleasures of sense, as well as dogmatic grasping on to ideas - these are the causes and conditions of bondage and suffering. It is a life that will eventually lead to one's own suffering as well as the suffering of others, the prevention of which represents the highest goal of Buddhism.[45]

Through the understanding of this process, a person is able to pacify his dispositions and develop his personality (*nāmarūpa*) in such a way that, freed from grasping (*upādāna*), he would be able to lead a life not only avoiding suffering and unhappiness for himself, but contributing to the welfare and happiness of others as well. Getting rid of *passion* and developing a *dispassionate* attitude in life, the freed one will be able to cultivate *compassion* for himself as well as others. At the time of death, with ignorance gone and dispositions completely annihilated, his consciousness is described as ceasing without establishing itself in another psychophysical personality.[46]

Conception of Freedom

The analysis of freedom (*nibbāna*) and the happiness (*sukha*) associated with such freedom, independent of the conception of the human personality discussed above, as well as the problem of suffering, can lead to much misunderstanding. The first and the second noble truths relate to the problem of suffering and its cause, respectively. It is to be noted that even though all dispositions are considered to be suffering or unsatisfactory (*dukkha*), they are not looked upon as the cause of suffering. The cause of suffering is almost always referred to as lust (*rāga*), craving (*taṇhā*), greed (*lobha*), attachment (*ālaya*), grasping (*upādāna*) or hatred (*dosa*), aversion (*paṭigha*) and other

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[43] *M* 1.85.

[44] Ibid., 1.85-87.

[45] Ibid., 1.341.

[46] *S* 1.122.

psychological tendencies.

Epistemological Freedom

The distinction between the first noble truth and the second is very crucial. It was pointed out that the dispositions are necessary conditions for human knowledge and understanding. Abandoning all dispositional tendencies is tantamount to committing epistemological suicide. It is a condition not only for knowledge and understanding but also for the continuity of the life process that began with birth. The reason for this is that dispositions are not purely mental (*mano*), they are physical (*kāya*), as well as verbal (*vacī*), that is, habitual bodily behavior and similarly habitual verbal behavior. Complete annihilation of these dispositional tendencies would be to stop the functioning of the physical organs and make it almost impossible for a human being to continue to respond to the world. The Jaina practice of not performing any new actions, except those mortifications intended to expiate for past actions,[47] would come closer to such an elimination of bodily and verbal responses. When such practices are carried out to their conclusions they can mean actual suicide.

Thus, allowing the dispositions to have complete mastery over one's knowledge and understanding will end up in dogmatism, while their annihilation is equivalent to epistemological suicide. Similarly, allowing dispositions to overwhelm one's behaviour can lead to bondage and suffering and annihilating the dispositions would mean complete inaction or even suicide. The middle standpoint recommended by the Buddha is the appeasement of all dispositions (*sabbasaṅkhārasamatha*), which is equivalent to freedom (*nibbāna*).[48] This would mean that freedom pertains to both human knowledge and understanding as well as human behavior. For the Buddha, the first form of freedom is a necessary condition for the second.

The term *nibbāna* (Sk. *nirvāṇa*) has a negative connotation. It conveys the same negative sense associated with the conception of freedom whenever the latter is defined as "absence of constraint". Epistemologically, a view or a perspective becomes a constraint whenever it is elevated to the level of an absolute (*parama*) or when it is looked upon as embodying the ultimate truth.[49] It is such absolutizing of views that contributes to all the contention in the world where one view is pitted against another, where one perspective is looked upon as superior and another as inferior.[50] The Buddha carefully avoided formulating any eternal truths (*saccāni ... niccāni*)[51] and provided a definition of truth that is non-absolutistic, thereby leaving room for its modification in the light of future possibilities. Yet the body of knowledge, the variety of perspectives that has remained functional, is respected as the "ancient tradition" (*sanātana dhamma*),[52] and is not discarded altogether. The Buddha was emphatic in stating that one cannot hope to attain purity either by clinging on to one view (*diṭṭhī*) or by having no-view (*adiṭṭhī*).[53] If he were to assume that there can

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[47] *M* 1.193.

[48] Ibid., 1.167; *S* 1.136.

[49] *Sutta-nipāta* (abbr. *Sn*), 796.

[50] Ibid., 841.

[51] Ibid., 886.

[52] *Dhammapada*, 5.

[53] *Sn*. 840.

be one view that will lead to freedom and purity, then only those who lived in India during the sixth century B.C. could attain such freedom, for that one view cannot be applied to any other context where the content of human knowledge will be different. Since he did not believe that there is one absolutely true view, he could claim that his conception of truth is not confined to any particular time or is atemporal (*akālika*).[54]

Freedom is sometimes referred to as a state of stability (*accutaṃ padaṃ*)[55] and one in which there is no fear from any quarter (*akutobhaya*).[56] These definitions have more epistemological than behavioural significance. How often is one's stability disturbed by a shattering of one's perspective cherished for a whole life-time? Whence can there be a greater fear than to think of the sun not rising tomorrow? Analytical knowledge intended to get rid of dogmatic views was symbolized in the form of a "diamond" (*vajira*).[57] The fear that is driven into the hearts of the dogmatic philosophers as a result of such analysis was symbolized as Vajrapāṇi, "the demon with the diamond in hand" (or the demon with the thunderbolt in hand).[58] Disruption of cherished views can bring instability and fear worse than what one experiences as a result of a loss of one's property or of those that are near and dear. It is for this reason that freedom is considered to be release from excessive involvement (*yogakkhema*).[59] With no such excessive involvement in perspectives and being able to modify them in the light of new information or different interests, a person can remain at peace (*khema*) and without fear (*appatibhaya*).[60] With fear gone one can enjoy unswerving happiness (*acalaṃ sukhaṃ*).[61] It is a stable happiness, not one that fluctuates.

Behavioural Freedom

In terms of behaviour, freedom as "absence of constraints" means the ability to act without being constrained by unwholesome psychological tendencies such as greed and hatred. It is not the ability to function without any regard for each and every principle of nature, physical, biological or psychological. While those physical, biological or psychological principles that are wholly determined by human dispositions (*saṅkhata*) can be brought under control as a result of the enlightened person's appeasement of dispositions, he still has to function within the context of a world where the principle of "dependent arising" (*paṭiccasamuppāda*) prevails. Thus, he may be almost immune to disease and ailments because of his healthy way of living. In the case of the historical Buddha, the only ailments he suffered seem to have been the after-effects of his severe self-mortification that he practised before enlightenment. Yet, the Buddha was unable to prevent the onset of old-age and decay and final death. The principle of dependent arising that brought about his death was

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[54] *S* 2.58.

[55] Ibid., 3.143; *Sn* 1086.

[56] *A* 2.24; *Itivuttaka* (abbr. *It*), 122.

[57] *Thera-gāthā* 419.

[58] *D* 1.95; *M* 1.231.

[59] *M* 1.117, 347, 377, etc.

[60] *S* 4.175; *Sn* 454.

[61] *Therī-gāthā* 350.

initiated when he was born in this world over which occurrence he had no complete control. However, his recognition that if there were to be survival of the human person after death, and the individual's desire for survival (*bhava taṇhā*) being one of the contributory factors for such survival, compelled him to recognize the possibility of overcoming future rebirth. This is the result of his spewing out craving in the present life. It is primarily in the sense of being not reborn (*a-punabbhava*) that the conception of immortality (*amata*) is explained in the early Buddhist tradition.[62] Seen in the light of the above information, it would be necessary to reconsider the implications of the famous discourse in the *Udāna* used by almost every modern interpreter of Buddhism as evidence for an absolutistic conception of freedom (*nibbāna*). The discourse reads:

> Monks, there is a not-born, not-become, not-made, not-dispositionally conditioned. Monks, if that not-born, not-become, not-made, not-dispositionally-conditioned were not, no escape from the born, become, made, dispositionally-conditioned would be known here. But, monks, since there is a not-born, not-become, not-made, not-dispositionally-conditioned, therefore an escape from the born, become, made, dispositionally-conditioned is known.[63]

It is to be noted that the negations pertain to concepts referred to by the past participles *a-jāta*, *a-bhūta*, *a-kata* and *a-saṅkhata* indicating that they involve events that have already occurred. Their nominal forms: birth (*jāti*), becoming (*bhava*), making or doing (*kamma*) and dispositions (*saṅkhāra*) explain the world of bondage and suffering. Therefore, their negation is simply a negation of the bondage and suffering that a person experiences as a result of the process that has already taken place. Since part of that process involved human dispositions, the opportunity to restrain that process by the appeasement of dispositions is also recognized. In other words, it is an explanation of the possibility of freedom, not in an absolutistic sense, but in a limited sense of "absence of constraint". The fact that the passage refers only to those events which are predominantly conditioned by dispositions and not to those that are "dependently arisen" (*paṭiccasamuppanna*) seems to indicate that this is a reference to the freedom and happiness one can attain in the present life contrasted with bondage and suffering.

Behaviourally, freedom finds expression most clearly in the attitude one adopts towards life in the world. This is best illustrated by the simile of the lotus (*puṇḍarīka*).[64] Like a lotus that springs up in the muddy water, grows in it, and rises above it remaining unsmeared by it, so does one who has spewed out greed and hatred, even though born in the world, has remained in the world, yet is unsmeared by the world (*lokena anupalitto*). This world of experience is sometimes described in couplets: gain and loss, good repute and disrepute, praise and blame, happiness and suffering.[65] A person who has attained freedom is not overwhelmed by such experiences; hence he remains unsmeared by them, is freed from sorrow, is taintless

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[62] *S* 1.174.

[63] *Ud* 80-81.

[64] *A* 2.37-39.

[65] *D* 3.260.

and secure.[66] This is not to say that he does not experience that world.

In order to remain unsmeared by the world of present experience (i.e., the third noble truth) by the elimination of the cause of suffering, which is greed or craving (i.e., the second noble truth), it is necessary to understand the problem of suffering (i.e., the first noble truth). Thus, the behaviour of the person who has attained freedom can be understood only in terms of the conception of suffering.

The Buddha's discussion of suffering focused on the immediate experiences without, at the same time, ignoring the past and the future. Therefore, his explanation of happiness should also concentrate on the immediate experiences without disregarding the past and the future. The general tendency, it was noted, is to look upon the birth of a human being as an event to be rejoiced over and the death as something to be bemoaned. However, the Buddha perceived both birth and death as suffering. Yet, the solution is neither to rejoice in both birth and death, nor to bemoan them both. The elimination of craving and the appeasement of dispositions enabled the Buddha to adopt a more sober attitude towards death. This attitude is expressed in the words of one of his chief disciples:

> Neither do I take delight in death nor do I rejoice in life. I shall discard this body with awareness and mindfulness. Neither do I take delight in death nor do I rejoice in life. I shall discard this body, like a hireling his earnings.[67]

It is possible to interpret this attitude as one of reckless abandon, bordering on pessimism. But the statement simply expresses fruitlessness of any attempt to avoid death when birth has already occurred. If death is unavoidable by a human being who has come to be born, either as a result of a previous craving for survival or due to circumstances beyond his control, what he ought do is neither to waste his time worrying about death and trying to find a way out of death in the present life nor to commit suicide, but rather to deal with the problem of immediate suffering with compassion for himself as well as others.

It is this attitude that is also reflected in the Buddha's advocacy of fearlessness in the service of humanity. Yet, it is necessary to distinguish this from conscious and deliberate self-immolation. Self-sacrifice or unrestrained altruism is neither a means nor a goal. However, if in the process of helping oneself and others to attain happiness, a person were to face unforeseen death due purely to circumstances, that is, due to dependent arising, and if it is *not something sought after (apariyiṭṭha)*, the Buddha's conception of life and death would allow for that form of death to be hailed as noble.[68] This qualification would necessarily rule out any decision on the part of someone to take a course of action knowing that it will certainly lead to death either of oneself or of others. This would be in complete contrast to the ideal presented in the *Bhagavadgītā*, as well as in some of the later Buddhist texts like the *Jātakas*[69] and the *Saddharmapuṇḍarīka-sūtra*.[70]

Thus, it is not only the abandoning of greed (*lobha*) and hatred (*dosa*) that

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[66] *Sn.* 268.

[67] *Thera-gāthā*, 1002-1003.

[68] *S* 4.62.

[69] *Jātaka*, 3.51-56.

[70] *Saddharmapuṇḍarīka-sūtra*, XII.15.

constitutes freedom, but also overcoming confusion (*moha*). A clear understanding of the nature of life, even according to the limited sources of knowledge available to human beings, is a necessary condition for freedom and happiness. Thus, an enlightened person is one who has overcome the perversions of knowledge and understanding (*vipallāsa*).[71] The four types of perversions are mentioned and these pertain to perception (*saññā*), thought (*citta*) and views (*diṭṭhi*). They constitute the identification of

1. the impermanent with the permanent (*anicce niccan ti*),
2. the not unsatisfactory with the unsatisfactory (*adukkhe dukkhan ti*),
3. the non-substantial with the substantial (*anattani attā ti*), and
4. the not pleasant with the pleasant (*asubhe subhan ti*).

Here the subject represents the impermanent, the not unsatisfactory, the non-substantial and the not pleasant about which permanence, unsatisfactoriness, substantiality and pleasantness are predicated as a result of confusion. If the subject stands for what is experienced, and this would include the cognitive as well as the emotive aspects of experience, the so-called world of fact and value, bondage (*saṃsāra*) and freedom (*nibbāna*), then the predication that renders the identification a perversion (*vipallāsa*) would make it impossible for freedom (*nibbāna*) to be considered permanent, unsatisfactory, substantial and pleasant. Most interpreters of Buddhism would refrain from asserting *nibbāna* as a permanent and substantial entity at least as far as its cognitive aspect is concerned. However, often they would insist upon the permanence and substantiality of its emotive character. Thus, even if *nibbāna* is not an ultimate reality (*paramattha*) in an ontological sense, there is a tendency to look upon it as ultimate reality in the sense of permanent and eternal happiness, hence a sort of transcendental emotional experience that has nothing to do with the feelings and sensations of ordinary human beings.

The evidence that *nibbāna* does not constitute a permanent and eternal cognitive reality has been presented above. What remains to be discussed is the nature of the emotive experience, namely, the sort of happiness that is associated with the attainment of freedom or *nibbāna*.

Psychological Freedom

The term for happiness is *sukha* (etymologically explained as *su-kha*, meaning "having a good axle-hole", that is, a vehicle moving smoothly without any constraints). The early discourses refer to two forms of happiness. The first is worldly or material happiness (*āmisa sukha*); the term *āmisa* (derived from *āma*, meaning "raw") expressing the sense of raw sensual appetite.[72] The second is expressed by the negative term *nir-āmisa*,[73] hence understood as the mental or the spiritual happiness, which is to be contrasted with the happiness derived from the satisfaction of the five physical senses. For this reason there has been a general reluctance to associate this form of happiness with any feeling or sensation (*vedanā*) which is inevitable in sense experience.[74] The happiness of freedom is perceived as being outside the pale of sense

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[71] *A* 2.52.

[72] *S* 4.235.

[73] Ibid.

[74] See de Silva (1987), pp. 13-21.

experience and, therefore, of any satisfaction relating to the senses. In this case the so-called worldly or material happiness (*āmisa-sukha*) becomes identical with whatever happiness is derived from following one's desires (*kāma-sukha*).

Yet, the Buddha does not seem to advocate the view that feelings (*vedanā*), and even sense experience (*saññā*), are necessarily evil and conducive to unhappiness. The suppression of all perceptions and whatever is felt (*saññā-vedayitanirodha*) was intended as a deconstructive method, never to be considered a goal in itself. Once the deconstruction process has taken effect, feelings and perceptions can serve their proper functions without running the risk of reifying either their cognitive content or their emotive component.

The fact that the person who has attained freedom continues to have experience through the same sense faculties that he possessed before, and that he continues to have agreeable (*manāpa*) and disagreeable (*amanāpa*) as well as pleasurable (*sukha*) and painful (*dukkha*) experiences is clearly admitted by the Buddha.[75] This means that there is no qualitative difference between the feelings of one who is in bondage and one who is freed. All that is asserted is that in the case of one who has attained freedom there is an absence of greed, hatred and confusion that is *generally* consequent upon sense experience. For this reason the distinction that is normally made between the material happiness (*āmisa-sukha*) and spiritual happiness (*nirāmisa-sukha*) needs to be reconsidered.

In fact, the Buddha does not appear to be condemning the so-called material happiness indiscriminately. The discussion of material inheritance (*āmisa-dāyāda*) and spiritual inheritance (*dhamma-dāyāda*) in the early discourses seem to support this view.[76] A disciple of the Buddha is represented as experiencing great physical discomfort as a result of fasting and refusing to eat some of the food left over by the Buddha, because he believes that a true disciple is one who should not be an heir to the material possessions of the Buddha. The Buddha does not consider this to be appropriate behavior. Material or physical comfort is not in itself to be abandoned nor condemned. Physical deprivation, according to the Buddha, is as disruptive of moral and spiritual development as is indulgence in physical comfort.

Thus, the so-called spiritual happiness (*nirāmisa-sukha*) need not be qualitatively distinct from material comfort or happiness. It is the cognitive and emotional slavery to the objective world that constitutes suffering and it is this slavery that is referred to as bondage, whereas freedom from such slavery constitutes the highest happiness (*paramaṃ sukham* or *nirāmisaṃ sukhaṃ*) that a human being can enjoy so long as he is alive.

To assume that this happiness is permanent and eternal would mean that there is a being, a person who is permanent and eternal who continues to have such experience. This is to admit a Supreme Being who, even if he is not the creator and preserver of the universe, is at least present during the past, present and future, for without him one cannot account for the experience of permanent and eternal happiness. The Buddha or his disciples cannot deny George Berkeley's conception of God and still continue to speak of permanent and eternal happiness. There cannot be the experience of such happiness unless one admits the existence of an experiencer who is permanent and eternal. All that he can assert without contradiction is that if a person were to follow such and such perspective and adopt such and such forms of behavior, he would be

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[75] *It* 38.

[76] *M* 1.12-13.

able to experience such and such happiness comparable to that experienced by the Buddha and his enlightened disciples. The concepts of previous Buddhas and those of the future Buddhas can be meaningful only in such a context. Thus, non-substantiality (*anattā*) pertains not only to the world of bondage (*saṃsāra*) but also to freedom (*nibbāna*). The Buddhists were therefore prepared to admit that freedom as well as conception (*paññatti*) are undeniably non-substantial (*anattā*).[77] One of the discourses relating to freedom underscores this characteristic of freedom:

> Non-substantiality is indeed difficult to see. Truth certainly is not easily perceived. Craving is mastered by him who knows, and for him who sees there exists no something (*akiñcana*).[78]

Freedom is an experience. As an experience it can find expression in language, as any other human experience does. Hence it is a truth (*sacca*), or more specifically, a noble truth (*ariyasacca*), which also makes it a noble view (*ariyā diṭṭhi*).[79]

However, those who adopt a substantialist perspective regarding truth are prone to distinguish freedom from the person who experiences it. Attributing ultimate objectivity to freedom they create an elephant of enormous size about which they are unable to provide a reasonable description. Obsessed with their extremely restricted views and unable to touch the fringes, one person will explain the animal only as a huge pot and *nothing else*, for he has touched the animal's head. Another person insists that it is *none other* a winnowing basket, because he has felt only the animal's ear. Still another defines it as a plough share and *nothing else*, since he confined his experience to the animal's tusk. The search for ultimate objectivity has blinded them completely.[80] After creating something *more* they struggle with their descriptions whereupon language fails them. The inevitable result is the assertion that freedom is beyond linguistic description. The Buddha was striking at the root of the problem when he insisted that freedom, as any other phenomenon, is non-substantial (*anattā*).

Unanswered Questions

There are two sets of unanswered questions relating to the person who has attained freedom. One relates to the living person and the other pertains to the dead person. In both cases the term used is *tathāgata*, meaning the "thus-gone one". Unfortunately, it is this notion of the "thus-gone" that led to the emergence of many metaphysical issues relating to the conception of freedom because it is when a freed person is so described that questions such as "Where did he go?" can arise. It raises questions regarding the destiny of a person who has attained freedom. If he is living, then his life must be different from that of anyone else. If he is dead and is not reborn like anyone else, then he must be surviving in a totally different form of existence.

The two sets of questions are posed in the form of six propositions to which the Buddha does not provide answers. They are:

1. The soul is identical with the body. (*Taṃ jīvaṃ taṃ sarīraṃ.*)

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[77] *Vinaya Piṭaka*, 5.86, *nibbānañ c'eva paññatti anattā iti nicchayā.*

[78] *Ud* 80.

[79] *D* 3.246.

[80] *Ud* 66-69.

2. The soul is different from the body. (*Aññaṃ jīvaṃ aññaṃ sarīraṃ.*)
3. The *tathāgata* exists after death. (*Hoti tathāgato parammaraṇā.*)
4. The *tathāgata* does not exist after death. (*Na hoti tathāgato parammaraṇā.*)
5. The *tathāgata* both exists and does not exist after death. (*Hoti ca na ca hoti tathāgato parammaraṇā.*)
6. The *tathāgata* neither exists nor does not exist after death. (*N'eva hoti na na hoti tathagato parammaraṇā.*)[81]

The first two propositions are generally considered to be references to the metaphysical notions of self (*ātman*) and not in any way related to the problem of the *tathāgata*, whereas the last four propositions refer specifically to the *tathāgata* "after death" (*parammaraṇā*). However, Sāriputta, one of the leading disciples of the Buddha, in response to the questions raised by a monk named Yamaka regarding the dead *tathāgata*, raises further questions and these relate to the first two propositions. They are as follows:

1. Is the *tathāgata* identical with the body? (This question is repeated in regard to the other aggregates, feeling, perception, disposition and consciousness.)
2. Is the *tathāgata* different from the body. (Same with regard to the other aggregates.)
3. Is the *tathāgata* in the body? (Same with regard to the other aggregates.)[82]

These questions, of course pertain to the living *tathāgata*. Yet the inquiry is not regarding the ordinary conception of *tathāgata*, but relating to one who exists in truth (*saccato*) and reality (*thetato*). In this latter sense, the explanation of the *tathāgata* goes beyond normal objectivity. It is an ultimately real *tathāgata*, one who is beyond change and impermanence, one who is permanent and eternal, that is sought for. In that sense, the *tathāgata* is not different from the soul or self (*ātman, jīva*) of the Brahmanical thinkers who believed that it is different from the ordinary human personality. The denial of such a *tathāgata* would be similar to the notion of self posited by the Materialists for whom the self is identical with the body.

Thus, the assumption of a metaphysical, yet living *tathāgata* is not radically different from the supposition of a *tathāgata* after death. For the Buddha, these are theories based upon the transcendence of all human perspective, hence views from nowhere. There is no way in which questions relating to them can be answered from the point of view of the human perspective. Therefore, he was not willing to make any statement, for any statement would commit him either to an assertion or to a negation relating to the content of the question. If the content of the question is such that it can neither be asserted nor negated, the Buddha finds the question itself to be metaphysical in the sense of being meaningless.

There is a belief that the Buddha observed "silence" on all these matters, the silence indicating his reluctance to make any statement because these are matters that transcend linguistic expression. While it is true that "whereof one cannot speak, thereof one must be silent", such silence is justified only if these questions continue to be raised in spite of the reasons given for not answering or explaining them (*a-*

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[81] *M* 1.426.

[82] *S* 3.109-115.

vyākata). However, it must be noted that the Buddha was not simply silent when such questions were raised. In fact, he was vehemently protesting against raising such questions, because the questions themselves were meaningless, let alone the answers. Not only are they epistemologically meaningless and unanswerable,[83] but pragmatically irrelevant, for answers to these questions do not in any way help to solve the problem of immediate human suffering.[84]

What then is the Buddha's own conception of the living *tathāgata*? This is the conception of freedom with substrate left (*sopādisesa-nibbāna*). The description runs thus:

> Herein, monks, a monk is a worthy one who has destroyed the defiling impulses, lived the [higher] life, done what has to be done, laid aside the burden, achieved the noble goal, destroyed the fetters of existence, and is freed through wisdom. He retains his five senses, through which, as they are not yet destroyed, he experiences pleasant and unpleasant sensations and feels pleasure and pain. His cessation of craving, hatred and confusion is called the freedom with substrate left.[85]

The Buddha recognized the possibility of the survival of human beings, the condition for such survival being the excessive craving and grasping for life. Therefore, when he spoke of fredom as the absence of constraints such as craving, hatred and confusion, the Buddha was compelled to explain what happens to the *tathāgata at* death, even though he was reluctant to answer the question regarding the *tathāgata after* death. The description of freedom without substrate (*anupādisesa-nibbāna*) is intended for this purpose.

> Herein, monks, a monk is a worthy one who has destroyed the defiling impulses, ... [as in the passage quoted earlier], is freed through wisdom. Monks, all his experience [lit. things he has felt], none of which he relished, will be cooled here itself. This is called freedom without substrate.[86]

Speculation regarding the after-life of a freed person is dominant among those who are still obsessed with survival in one form or another but not among those who have attained freedom. Unsmeared by such speculations the freed person leads a life conducive to the welfare of as many people as possible including himself, and through compassion for all the world.

A controversy between a monk named Udāyi and a carpenter named Pañcakaṅga recorded in a discourse called "Multiple Experiences" (*Bahuvedanīya*)[87] throws light on the Buddha's conception of happiness. The carpenter believed that the Buddha spoke of two kinds of feelings or sensations: pleasant and unpleasant (happy and unhappy, *sukha* and *dukkha*). He included neutral feelings under the category of the pleasant or happy. However, the monk argued that the Buddha spoke of three

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[83] *M* 1.438-489.

[84] Ibid., 1.426-432.

[85] *It* 38.

[86] Ibid.

[87] *M* 1.396-400.

varieties: pleasant or happy (*sukha*), unpleasant or unhappy (*dukkha*) and neutral (*adukkhamasukha*). When the matter was reported to the Buddha, he found fault with both for rejecting each other's views because both were right. In some instances, the Buddha has spoken of two categories, sometimes three, sometimes five, and so on up to one hundred and eight categories. These are all contextual (*pariyāya*).

The Buddha begins his explanation by referring to the normal forms of pleasant feelings or sensations, namely, the five strands of sense pleasure (*pañca kāmaguna*), for example, a material object cognizable by the eye, desirable, pleasant, liked, enticing, associated with the pleasures of sense and alluring. Yet the Buddha was not willing to accept these as the highest form of pleasantness or happiness (*sukha*). There are other forms that are more excellent and exquisite. He then proceeds to enumerate them one after another. These include the happiness or pleasant sensations associated with the higher comtemplations (*jhāna*) including the state of cessation of perception and what is felt (*saññā-vedayita-nirodha*). At this stage the Buddha anticipates that other teachers would recognize the state of cessation as "happiness in itself" and continue to speculate as to what it is and how it is. The Buddha was not prepared to identify happiness with one particular feeling or sensation. For him, happiness is contextual. Wherever (*yattha yattha*) it is obtained, through whatever source (*yahiṃ yahiṃ*) it is obtained, he was prepared to recognize happiness. In other words, he was not willing to speak of happiness in an abstract way. This was his anti-essentialist approach.

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