

ISSN Print: 3059-944X
ISSN Online: 3059-944X
URL: research.lbu.edu.np



Dhammacakka

Journal of Buddhism and Applied Buddhism

(A Peer Reviewed Journal)

VOLUME 1

ISSUE 1

Jan-Jun 2025 (Biannual)



Lumbini Research Center
Lumbini Buddhist University
Parsa, Lumbini, Nepal

Dhammacakka

Journal of Buddhism and Applied Buddhism

(A Peer Reviewed Journal)

VOLUME 1

ISSUE I

Jan-Jun 2025 (Biannual)



Lumbini Research Center
Lumbini Buddhist University
Lumbini, Nepal
URL: research.lbu.edu.np
dhammacakka.journal@lbu.edu.np

Editorial Board

Patrons

Prof. Dr. Subarna Lal Bajracharya (Vice Chancellor)

Dr. Tilak Ram Acharya (Registrar)

Editor-in-Chief

Prof. Dr. Triratna Manandhar

Executive Editor

Prof. Dr. Gita Giri

Members

Prof. Dr. Bhoj Raj Kareriya

Prof. Dr. Ranjana Bajracharya

Prof. Dr. Bimalendra Kumar

Prof. Dr. Jiblal Sapkota

Prof. Dr. Gopal Pokhrel 'Biwas'

Layout

Mr. Shalikram Bhusal

Co-ordination

Asst.Prof. Dayaram Bhandari

ISSN Print: 3059-944X

ISSN Online: 3059-944X



Lumbini Research Center

Lumbini Buddhist University

Rupandehi, Lumbini, Nepal || Ph. 071-404088

URL: research.lbu.edu.np

Email: dharmacakka.journal@lbu.edu.np



Vice Chancellor's Message

I am very glad and excited to extend vote of thanks to the team behind the inaugural volume of the *Dhammacakka Journal of Buddhism and Applied Buddhism*, a peer-reviewed journal under the patronage of the Lumbini Research Center of Lumbini Buddhist University which aims at global peace, prosperity and harmony. The journal marks a significant milestone in our collective journey to promote academic excellence. It contributes to the global discourse on Buddhism and its practical applications in contemporary society. Rooted in the wisdom of the Buddha's teachings, the journal aspires to bridge the realms of spiritual insight and academic inquiry, offering a platform for scholars, researchers, and practitioners to explore the rich heritage of Buddhism and its relevance in addressing modern challenges.

As the Vice Chancellor of Lumbini Buddhist University, I am committed to promote a culture of rigorous research, dialogue, and dissemination of knowledge especially associated to Buddhism. The *Dhammacakka Journal* exemplifies our vision of integrating tradition with innovation, bringing together ancient wisdom and modern scholarship. Here, I express my sincere gratitude to the editorial team, contributors, and reviewers for their dedication to upholding the highest standards of academic integrity and for enriching this volume with their invaluable contributions. I am confident that this journal will serve as an enduring resource for researchers and a beacon of knowledge for those seeking to dive deep into the wisdom of Buddhism and its applications.

May this initiative inspire us to uphold the principles of compassion, wisdom, and mindfulness in all our endeavours!

With best wishes,


Prof. Dr. Subarna Lal Bajracharya



Editorial

Lumbini Buddhist University is situated at Lumbini, the birthplace of Lord Buddha, in Lumbini Province of Nepal. It is the Learning and Research center of Buddhist Philosophy, Literature, Education and Culture. It has been established to conduct teaching learning activities and research programs with a vision of promoting peace, harmony, brotherhood and goodwill across the world through Buddhist principles. LBU is committed to bringing global peace and harmony all over the world. The mission of LBU is to produce holistic communities devoted to peaceful world as well as global prosperity through application of Buddhist values and doctrines into the daily lives of the people of the communities. It focuses on producing amiable, honest, helpful, hardworking and well-disciplined graduates with sound knowledge and skills in hands who work for themselves and the societies as a whole. LBU has a noble vision of promoting peace and well-being of the societies through education and research whereas its goal is to promote key Buddhist doctrines and values throughout the world.

"Dhammacakka Journal of Buddhism and Applied Buddhism" is one of the research activities carried out by the University to meet its noble objectives. The Journal is committed to transforming human societies through Buddhist values, near and far, to its best. In this noble journey of journal publication, we feel proud to receive regular guidelines and support from Prof. Dr. Subarna Lal Bajracharya, the Vice Chancellor, and Dr. Tilak Ram Acharya, Registrar of the University as well as Prof. Dr. Triratna Manandhar, Chief Editor and former Vice Chancellor of the University. We sincerely extend our gratitude to them for their noble support. We appreciate the scholars for their contributions in journal publication with their noble articles. We are highly thankful to them for their hard work and goodwill for publishing the journal. However, it is noteworthy that the authors are responsible for the contents in their articles.

We extend our especial gratitude to our peer reviewers. Our gratitude is always there to the Editorial Board of the journal. Especial thanks go to Dayaram Bhandari, Assistant Lecturer, of Lumbini Buddhist University, for his coordination and strenuous effort in bringing this journal to the light. Sumanta Raj Neupane, Assistant Lecturer of the University, equally deserves thanks for his support to publish the Journal. It shall be injustice upon Shalikram Bhusal and Manju Pun if forgotten to extend vote of thanks for their contribution in typing, formatting and publishing the journal. Our appreciation is always there to those who have directly and indirectly helped us in this holistic mission of journal publication.


Prof. Dr. Gitu Giri
(Executive Editor)

Table of Contents

Volume 1	Issue 1	Oct-Dec, 2024
The Concept of Morality (<i>Sila</i>) in Buddhism	Venerable Professor Dr. Sankichcha Mahathero	1-8
DR. B. R. Ambedkar's Interpretation of the Doctrines of Karma and Rebirth	Prof. Dr. Bimalendra Kumar	9-14
Buddhism and South Asian Folklore	Prof. Dr. Todd T. Lewis	15-19
A Study of Health, Medicines, Hygiene and Etiquette in the Ancient India During 7 th Cent. A.D.	Prof. Dr. Siddhartha Singh	21-30
Buddhist Approach to Death and Its Lesson	Prof. Sanjib Kumar Das	31-39
Buddhism of Nepalmandala: Scope and Challenges in the Modern Context	Dr. Manik Ratna Shakya	41-48
An Analytical Study of Buddhist Arts and Symbols and How it different with Jain arts	Dr. Ramesh Rohit (Ratnasheel Rajwardhan)	49-55
Offences, Punishment and Rehabilitation in the <i>Vinay Pitak</i> : A Restorative Approach to Monastic Discipline	Dr. Deepak Prasad Acharya	57-62
Models of Cognitive Processes as Depicted in the Sutta Literature	Fanindra Kumar Neupane	63-74
Emperor Ashoka is the Chief Patron of Buddhism: A Review	Md. Ashikuzzaman Khan Kiron	75-79
Raj Gurujū of Srikhanda Tarumul Mahavihara: His Role in Buddhist Community of Kathmandu	Aakasha Bajracharya	81-88



The Concept of Morality (*sīla*) in Buddhism

Ven.Prof. Sankichcha Mahathero, Ph.D.
Visiting Professor of Lumbini Buddhist University
Shree Sumangala Vihara, Lalitpur, Nepal
nsankic@gmail.com

Date of Call for Article:

27 May, 2024

Article Received Date:

23 July, 2024

Date of sending article for peer review:

25 August, 2024

Date of receiving from peer review:

22 September, 2024

Date of Revision:

1 October, 2024

Date of Acceptance:

12 November, 2024

Date of Publication:

26 January, 2025

© 2025 The Author. All rights reserved.

For permissions,
Contact: research@lbu.edu.np

This work is licensed under
Creative Commons Attribution-Non
Commercial-No Derivatives 4.0

International License.

<https://creativecommons.org/choose/>

Licenses /by-nc-nd/4.0/



Abstract

Background: Virtue (*sīla*) is the fundamental foundation for achieving *Nirvana* in Buddhism. It is a set of moral conduct which is essential for the holistic life of an individual, a small unit of an ideal society. *sīla* also is a very essential factor for bringing transformation in the human societies. Practices of virtue (*sīla*) opens the door for *Samadhi* and *Panna* respectively.

Objective: This article explores the method of mental purification by means of Virtue, the code of ethical behavior.

Methodology: Expository or Descriptive approach is applied while writing this paper.

Result: *sīla* includes refraining from killing, taking what is not given, sexual misconduct, lying, slandering, harsh speech, talking nonsense, covetousness, malevolence and wrong view, which are regarded as unwholesome deeds. A thorough observance of *sīla* leads one to peace, prosperity, social reputation and happiness in this life. It also helps a person to have a tranquil exit from the world. It is directed to bodily, mental and verbal purity.

Conclusion: The benefits of practicing *sīla*, including ethical well-being, a favorable rebirth, and ultimate liberation, are discussed in the article. Besides, the article also emphasizes on *sīla* being safeguard to human being opining all golden gates leading one to spiritual progress or ultimate goal of human being i.e. enlightenment.

Keywords: *sīla*, Purification, *Nibbāna*, *Visuddhimagga*, Rebirth

Paper Type: Research Paper

Introduction to Morality (*sīla*)

Sīla in Buddhism, is translated into English as morality, virtue, good behaviour, attitude etc. (Dhamma Sāmi, *sīla*) and I prefer to use in this article, the term morality as I think, it conveys the sense well. The *pariyatti-sāsana* (the study of the scriptures), the *patipatti-sāsana* (the practice of *sīla*, *samādhi* and *paññā*: morality, concentration and insight) and the *pativedha-sāsana* (the attainments of the paths and fruits of awakening) are regarded as the threefold *Buddha-sāsana*. The study of the scriptures is the base for the practice of morality, concentration and insight. In the same way the practice of morality, concentration and insight is the cause for the attainment of the paths and fruits of awakening. As long as the *patipatti-sāsana* (the practice of *sīla*, *samādhi* and *paññā*: morality, concentration and insight) exists in this world other two *sāsanas* will also be existed. So the morality (*sīla*) which is based on the *patipatti-sāsana* is very much important constituent.

The base of the *patipatti-sāsana* is *Vinaya* (corpus of discipline) as it is mentioned ‘*vinayo nāma sāsana*’ *āyu* (*Vinayavinicchaya* *ṭīkā*, VRI 1.17) [the Buddhist *Vinaya* (corpus of discipline) is the life of the order] in the *Samantapāsādikā*, the commentary to *Vinaya Piṭaka*. The corpus of discipline causes the self-restraint, which prevents one from performing unskillful actions. So the *Vinaya* (corpus of discipline) could be regarded as the synonym for the *sīla* (morality).

It is very important to realize that what *sīla* (morality) is. In the *Paṭisambhidāmagga* the *sīla* (morality) is described as the volition, the consciousness-concomitant, the restraint and the non-transgression of one who is refraining from killing, taking what is not given, sexual misconduct, lying, slandering, harsh speech, talking nonsense, covetousness, malevolence and wrong view, which are regarded as unwholesome deeds and of one who fulfills the practice of duties (*Chhaṭṭha Saṃgāyanā CD*, VRI 38).¹

In the *Visuddhimagga* (The Path of Purification) the *sīla* (morality) is described as follows.

What is virtue² ? It is the states beginning with volition present in one who abstains from killing living things, etc., or in one who fulfils the practice of the duties. For this is said in the *Paṭisambhidā*: “What is virtue? There is virtue as volition, virtue as consciousness-concomitant, virtue as restraint, virtue as nontransgression” (Paṭi I 44). Herein, virtue as volition is the volition present in one who abstains from killing living things, etc., or in one who fulfils the practice of the duties. Virtue as consciousnessconcomitant is the abstinence in one who abstains from killing living things, and so on. Furthermore, virtue as volition is the seven volitions [that accompany the first seven] of the [ten] courses of action (kamma) in one who abandons the killing of living things, and so on. Virtue as consciousness-concomitant is the [three remaining] states consisting of non-covetousness, non-ill will, and right view, stated in the way beginning, “Abandoning covetousness, he dwells with a mind free from covetousness” (D I 71). Virtue as restraint should be understood here as restraint in five ways: restraint by the rules of the community (*pātimokkha*), restraint by mindfulness, restraint by knowledge, restraint by patience, and restraint by energy (*Chhaṭṭha Saṃgāyanā CD*, VRI 1.6; Ñānamoli 10-11).³

1 *Kim sīlanti cetanā sīlaṃ, cetasikaṃ sīlaṃ, saṃvaro sīlaṃ, avūttikamo sīlaṃ..... Pāñātipātāṃ saṃvaraṭṭhena sīlaṃ, avūttikamaṭṭhena sīlaṃ. Adinnādāṇaṃ saṃvaraṭṭhena sīlaṃ, avūttikamaṭṭhena sīlaṃ. Kāmesumicchācāraṃ saṃvaraṭṭhena sīlaṃ, avūttikamaṭṭhena sīlaṃ. Musāvādaṃ saṃvaraṭṭhena sīlaṃ, avūttikamaṭṭhena sīlaṃ. Pisuṇaṃ vācaṃ [pisuṇāvācaṃ (syā. ka.)] dī. ni. 1.9 passitabbā] saṃvaraṭṭhena sīlaṃ, avūttikamaṭṭhena sīlaṃ. Pharusāṃ vācaṃ [pharusavācaṃ (syā. ka.)] saṃvaraṭṭhena sīlaṃ, avūttikamaṭṭhena sīlaṃ, Samphappalāpaṃ saṃvaraṭṭhena sīlaṃ, avūttikamaṭṭhena sīlaṃ. Abhijjhaṃ saṃvaraṭṭhena sīlaṃ, avūttikamaṭṭhena sīlaṃ. Byāpādaṃ saṃvaraṭṭhena sīlaṃ, avūttikamaṭṭhena sīlaṃ. Micchādiṭṭhiṃ saṃvaraṭṭhena sīlaṃ, avūttikamaṭṭhena sīlaṃ. (2. Sīlamayañāṇaniddeso, Paṭisambhidāmaggaṭṭhena sīlaṃ, Chhaṭṭha Saṃgāyanā CD, VRI 38)*

2 The writer has used term ‘virtue’ instead of morality and, as this is the quotation, the same term is retained here.

3 *Kim sīlanti pāñātipātādīhi vā viramantassa vattapaṭipattim vā pūrentassa cetanādayo dhammā. Vuttañhetam paṭisambhidāyaṃ “kim sīlanti cetanā sīlaṃ, cetasikaṃ sīlaṃ, saṃvaro sīlaṃ, avūttikamo sīla”nti (paṭi. ma. 1.39). Tatha cetanā*

Furthermore in the same text, these fivefold restraints are described in detail. “Restraint by the *Pātimokkha*” (*pātimokkhasaṃvaro*) is described as one who is furnished and fully furnished, with this *Pātimokkha* restraint. Guarding the eye faculty, entering upon restraint of the eye faculty is regarded as “restraint by mindfulness” (*satisaṃvaro*). “Restraint by knowledge” (*ñāṇasaṃvaro*) is that stemming the currents in the world that flow, by means of mindfulness; and restraint of currents by understanding. Bearing cold and heat etc. is regarded as the “restraint by patience” (*khantisāṃvaro*). Non-endurance of a thought of sense desires when it arises is called “restraint by energy” (*vīriyasāṃvaroti*) (Ñānamoli 10-11). Including the fivefold restraint, the abstinence, in clansmen who dread evil, from any chance of transgression met with, should all be understood to be “morality as restraint.” Morality as non-transgression is the non-transgression, by body or speech, of precepts of morality that have been undertaken (*Chhaṭṭha Saṃgāyanā CD*, VRI 1.7).⁴

The Meaning of Morality (*sīla*)

It is very much important to know that in what sense the term *sīla* (morality) is used in the Pali canonical literature. Again in the *Visuddhimagga* (The Path of Purification) the morality (*sīla*) is described in the sense of composing (*sīlana*). The composing is either a coordinating (*samādhāna*), meaning non-inconsistency of bodily action, etc., due to virtuousness; or it is an upholding (*upadhāraṇa*), meaning a state of basis (*ādhāra*) owing to its serving as foundation for profitable states. For those who understand etymology admit only these two meanings. Others, however, comment on the meaning here in the way beginning. The meaning of morality (*sīla*) is the meaning of head (*sira*), the meaning of morality is the meaning of cool (*sītala*) (*Chhaṭṭha Saṃgāyanā CD*, VRI 1.7).⁵

The characteristic (*lakkhana*) of morality is composing (*sīlana*) even when analyzed in various ways, just as visibility is of visible data even when analyzed in various ways. Just as visible-ness is the characteristic of the visible-data base even when analyzed into the various categories of blue, yellow, etc., because even when analyzed into these categories it does not exceed visible-ness, so also this same composing, described above as the coordinating of bodily action, etc., and as the foundation of profitable states, is the characteristic of morality even when analyzed into the various categories of volition, etc., because even when analyzed into these categories it does not exceed the state of coordination and foundation.

Action to stop misconduct and achievement as the quality of blamelessness in virtuous men, are functions (*rasa*) of morality. So what is called morality should be understood to have the function (nature) of stopping misconduct as its function (nature) in the sense of action, and a blameless function (nature) as its function (nature) in the sense of achievement. For under [these headings of] characteristic, etc., it is action (*kipca*) or it is achievement (*sampatti*) that is called “function” (*rasa*—nature).

The morality is manifested (*paccupaṭṭhāna*) as the kinds of purity i.e. bodily purity, verbal purity, mental purity. It is manifested, comes to be apprehended, as a pure state. But conscience and shame

sīlaṃ nāma pāṇātipātādīhi vā viramantassa vattapaṭipattiṃ vā pūrentassa cetanā. Cetasikaṃ sīlaṃ nāma pāṇātipātādīhi viramantassa virati. Apica cetanā sīlaṃ nāma pāṇātipātādīni pajahantassa satta kammaphacetanā. Cetasikaṃ sīlaṃ nāma “abhijjhaṃ pahāya vigatābhijjheṇa cetasā viharatī”ti (dī. ni. 1.217) ādinā nayena vuttā anabhijjhābyāpādasam-mādiṭṭhidhammā. Saṃvaro sīlanti ettha pañcavidheṇa saṃvaro veditabbo pātimokkhasaṃvaro, satisaṃvaro, ñāṇasaṃvaro, khantisāṃvaro, vīriyasāṃvaroti. [1. Sīlaniddeso, VRI 1.6, Visuddhimaggo (Paṭhamo bhāgo)]

4 *yā ca pāpabhīrukānaṃ kulaputtānaṃ sampattavatthuto virati, sabbampetaṃ saṃvarasīlanti veditabbaṃ. Avitikkamo sīlanti samādinnaṣīlassa kāyikavācasiko anattikamo. [(1. Sīlaniddeso, VRI 1.7, Visuddhimaggo (Paṭhamo bhāgo))]*

5 *kenaṭṭheṇa sīlanti sīlanaṭṭheṇa sīlaṃ. Kimidaṃ sīlanaṃ nāma. Samādhānaṃ vā, kāyakammādināṃ susīlyavasena avippakiṇṇatāti attho. Upadhāraṇaṃ vā, kusalanāṃ dhammānaṃ paṭiṭṭhānavasena ādhārabhāvoti attho. Etadeva hettha atthadvayaṃ saddalakkhaṇavidū anujānanti. Aññe pana siraṭṭho sīlattho, sīlatṭho sīlatthoti evamādināpi nāyenettha atthaṃ vaṇṇayanti. [(1. Sīlaniddeso, VRI 1.7, Visuddhimaggo (Paṭhamo bhāgo))]*

are regarded to be its proximate cause (*padaṭṭhāna*); its near reason. For when conscience and shame are in existence, morality arises and persists; and when they are not, it neither arises nor persists. This is how morality's characteristic, function, manifestation, and proximate cause, should be understood (Ñānamoli 11-12; *Chhaṭṭha Saṃgāyanā CD*, VRI, 1.8).⁶

The Beginning of the Concept of Morality

The Buddha imposed *vinaya* (corpus of discipline) rules only after twenty years of the establishment of the order of disciples, which is also called *paṭhama saṃbodhi samaya* (the first period after the enlightenment). At the beginning, the disciples who had entered the order being ordained as a monk with a pretty realization of the truth, had adopted the monastic life with two factors i. e. Pleasing those who are not pleased (*appasannānaṃ vā pasādāya*) and pleasing more who are pleased (*pasannānaṃ vā bhīyyobhāvāya*). When these two factors are not accomplished the status of monkhood would be declined, which causes the decline of the order of disciples too. The monkhood depends on the good behavior and following the disciplinary codes is essential. The foundation of the morality is the bodily and verbal restraint and the Buddha had laid down *Vinaya* (corpus of discipline) in pursuance of the ten objectives. (1) For monastic community of disciples (*Samgha*) to accept and practise it (*saṅghasutṭhutāya*) ; (2) for the welfare of monastic community of disciples (*Samgha*) (*saṅghaphāsutāya*) : (3) for suppression of those who transgress the *sīla* (morality) (*dummaṅkūnaṃ puggalānaṃ niggahāya*) ; (4) for monastic community of disciples (*Samgha*) who love morality (*sīla*) to live in peace (*pesalānaṃ bhikkhūnaṃ phāsuvihārāya*): (5) for subjugation of cankers (*āsavas*) of the present (*diṭṭhadhammikānaṃ āsavānaṃ saṃvarāya*): (6) prevention of cankers (*āsavas*) in the future (*samparāyikānaṃ āsavānaṃ paṭighātāya*); (7) for those who have no faith to have faith or who are not pleased to please (*appasannānaṃ pasādāya*) (8) for those who have faith to have more faith or who are pleased to make more pleased (*pasannānaṃ bhīyyobhāvāya*): (9) for perpetuation of the noble *dhamma* (three *Sāsanas*) (*saddhammaṭṭhitiyā*) and (10) for the promotion of the rules of *vinaya* (corpus of discipline) (*vinayānuggahāya*) (*Pārājikā Pāli* 31; *Chhaṭṭha Saṃgāyanā CD*, VRI, 1).⁷ Later the imposing of rules of *vinaya* (corpus of discipline) could be seen as developing in various ways of definitions.

Benefits of Morality

The benefits of morality are five in number, are described in the *Mahā-parinibbāna sutta* and the *Visuddhimagga* (*Chhaṭṭha Saṃgāyanā CD*, VRI 2.2).⁸

1. Great increase of wealth through his diligence;
2. A favorable reputation;
3. A confident deportment, without timidity, in every society, be it that of nobles, *brāhmins*, householders, or ascetics;
4. A serene death;
5. At the breaking up of the body after death, rebirth in a happy state, in a heavenly world (*Mahā-parinibbāna sutta*, chap5-6).

Furthermore, many other benefits are also described in the *Visuddhimagga*. One becomes dear to the fellows in the life of purity and loved by them, held in respect and honoured by them, let him perfect the morality" (M I 33). This is how morality has as its benefits the several special qualities beginning with non-remorse (*Chhaṭṭha Saṃgāyanā CD*, VRI 1.9).⁹

⁹ *sabrahmacārīnaṃ piyo ca assaṃ manāpo ca garu ca bhāvaṇīyo cāti, sīlesvevassa paripūrakārī"tiādina (ma. ni. 1.65) nāyena piyamanāpatādayo āsavakkhayapariyosānā anekā sīlānisaṃsā vuttā. [(Visuddhimaggo (Paṭhamo bhāgo) , VRI 1.9)]*

Again it is described that clansmen have no footing in the dispensation without morality. Only the water of morality can wash out the stain in living things and the water of rivers of Ganges, *Yamunā*, *Sarabhū*, *Sarassatī*, *Aciravatī*, *Mahī*, is not able to wash out the stain in things that breathe here in the world. Breezes that come bringing rain, balm of yellow sandalwood, necklaces beside, or gems or soft effulgence of moonbeams are not able to calm and soothe the fevers of men in this world whereas the noble, supremely cool, well-guarded morality quells the flame. No scent is to be found that can be compared with the scent of morality, and that is borne against the wind as easily as with it. No such another stair can be found that climbs to heaven, as morality does. Except the door of morality, another door that gives onto the city of *Nibbāna* (emancipation) also can't be found. There are no kings adorned with jewelry and pearls that shine as does a man restrained adorned with the ornament of morality. Morality entirely does away with dread of self-blame and the like. The morality of those who are virtuous gives gladness always by its fame. It may be known from this brief sketch that how morality brings reward, and how this root of all good qualities robs of its power every fault (*Chhaṭṭha Saṃgāyanā CD*, VRI 1.10).¹⁰

Categories of Morality

In the *Visuddhimagga*, various types of morality are mentioned with various ways.

1. Firstly all the morality is of one kind by reason of its own characteristic of composing.
2. From the viewpoint of keeping and avoiding; that of good behaviour and that of the beginning of the life of purity; abstinence and non-abstinence; dependent and independent; temporary and lifelong; limited and unlimited; mundane and supramundane, it is of two kinds.
3. It is of three kinds as inferior, medium, and superior; as giving precedence to self, giving precedence to the world, and giving precedence to the Dhamma; as adhered to, not adhered to, and tranquillized; as purified, unpurified, and dubious; as that of the trainer, that of the non-trainer, and that of the neither-trainer-nor-non-trainer.
4. It is of four kinds as partaking of diminution, of stagnation, of distinction, of penetration; likewise as that of bhikkhus, of bhikkhunīs, of the not-fully-admitted, of the laity; as

10 *Sāsane kulaputtānaṃ, paṭiṭṭhā natthi yaṃ vinā;
Āṇisaṃsaparicchedaṃ, tassa sīlassa ko vade.
Na gaṅgā yamunā cāpi, sarabhū vā sarasvatī;
Ninnagā vāciravatī, mahī vāpi mahānadī.
Sakkuṇanti visodhetuṃ, taṃ malaṃ idha pāṇinaṃ;
Visodhayati sattānaṃ, yaṃ ve sīlajalaṃ malaṃ.
Na taṃ sajaladā vātā, na cāpi haricandanaṃ;
Neva hārā na maṇayo, na candakiraṇaṅkurā.
Samayaṇīdha sattānaṃ, pariṭāhaṃ surakkhitaṃ;
Yaṃ sameti idaṃ ariyaṃ, sīlaṃ accantasītaṃ.
Sīlagandhasamo gandho, kuto nāma bhavissati;
Yo samaṃ anuvāte ca, paṭivāte ca vāyati.
Saggārohaṇasopānaṃ, aññaṃ sīlasamaṃ kuto;
Dvāraṃ vā pana nibbāna, nagarassa pavesane.
Sobhantevaṃ na rājāno, muttāmaṇivibhūsitā;
Yathā sobhanti yatino, sīlabhūsanabhūsitā.
Attānuvādādibhayaṃ, viddhaṃsayati sabbaso;
Janeti kittihāsaṅca, sīlaṃ sīlavataṃ sadā.
Guṇānaṃ mūlabhūtaṃ, dosānaṃ balaghātino;
Iti sīlassa viññeyyaṃ, āṇisaṃsakathāmukhanti. .
[(Visuddhimaggo (Paṭhamo bhāgo) , VRI 1.10)]*

natural, customary, necessary, due to previous causes; as morality of *Pāṇimokkha* restraint, of restraint of sense faculties, of purification of livelihood, and that concerning requisites.

5. It is of five kinds as morality consisting in limited purification, etc.; for this is said in the *Paṭisambhidāmagga*: “Five kinds of morality: morality consisting in limited purification, morality consisting in unlimited purification, morality consisting in fulfilled purification, morality consisting in unadhered-to purification, morality consisting in tranquillized purification” (Paṭi I 42); likewise as abandoning, refraining, volition, restraint, and non-transgression (*Chhaṭṭha Saṃgāyanā CD*, VRI 125).¹¹

As a whole, the morality predominantly could be divided into two categories i.e. the morality of laity and that of the monastic life. The precepts of morality observed by lay people can be regarded as the morality of laity i.e. *pañcasīla* (five precepts), *brahmacariya pañcasīla* (celibate five precepts), *uposatha aṭṭhāṃga sīla* (sacred weekly day or Sabbath observance of eight precepts), *ājīva aṭṭhamaka sīla* (eight precepts with right livelihood), *gahaṭṭha dasasīla* (ten precepts of laity) and these are belonged to the keeping morality (*cāritta sīla*) as they should be followed well. *Pabbajjā dasasīla* (ten precepts of ordained), *upasampadā sīla* (morality of higher ordination) which are observed by the monks and nuns are regarded as the morality belonging to the monastic life. The *catusaṃvara sīla* (four restraint morality) i.e. the morality of *Pāṇimokkha* restraint (*pāṇimokkhasaṃvara sīla*), of restraint of sense faculties (*indriyasaṃvara sīla*), of purification of livelihood (*ājīvapārisuddhi sīla*), and that concerning requisites (*paccayasannissitasīla*), is called higher morality (*adhisīla*) as it is higher than the morality of *pañcasīla*, *uposatha aṭṭhāṃga sīla*, *ājīva aṭṭhamaka sīla* and *dasasīla*. Thus by observing the *catusaṃvara sīla*, one reaches the higher status of morality, which could be regarded as *upasampadā sīla*, the morality of higher ordination (Yasassi 3).

The way of practicing and protecting morality

The way of practicing and protecting morality is also described in the Pali canonical literature. In the *Mahāvagga Pāli* it is mentioned as follows.

Yo gavaṃ na vijānāti, na so rakkhati gogaṇaṃ;

evaṃ sīlaṃ ajānanto, kiṃ so rakkheyya saṃvaraṃ (*Chhaṭṭha Saṃgāyanā CD*, VRI 125)

(Who does not understand cattle does not guard the herd, so not knowing moral habit, how can he guard restraint? (Horner 127).

From this it becomes clear that to follow the moral disciplinary rules one should accurately realize the morality which should be observed by that person. In the *Visuddhimagga* with many similes it is described that how one should protect the morality. As a hen guards her eggs, or as a yak her tail, or as a mother her only darling child, or like a person who has an only eye, one who engaged one's morality to protect, should be prudent at all times and ever scrupulous (*Chhaṭṭha Saṃgāyanā CD*,

11 *Sabbameva tāva idaṃ sīlaṃ attano sīlanalakkhaṇena ekavidhaṃ.*

Cārittavārittavaseṇa duvidhaṃ. Tathā ābhisamācārikaādbrahmacariyakavasena, viratiavirativaseṇa, nissitānissitavaseṇa, kālapariyantaāpāṇakoṭikavasena, sapariyantāpariyantavaseṇa, lokiyalokuttaravaseṇa ca. Tividhaṃ hīnamajjhimaṇāvasena. Tathā attādhipeyyalokādhipeyyadhammādhipeyyavaseṇa, parāmaṭṭhāparāmaṭṭhapatiṭṭhapaṭipassaddhivaseṇa, visuddhāvisuddhavematikavasena, sekkhāsekkhanavasekkhanāsekkhavasena ca.

Catubbidhaṃ hānabhāgiyaḥitibhāgiyavisesabhāgiyanibbedhabhāgiyavaseṇa. Tathā bhikkhubhikkhunīanupasaṃpannagaḥaṭṭhasīlavaseṇa, pakatiācāradhammatāpubbahetukasīlavaseṇa, pāṇimokkhasaṃvaraindriyasaṃvaraājīvapārisuddhipaccayasannissitasīlavaseṇa ca. Pañcavidhaṃ pariyantapārisuddhisīlādivaseṇa. Vuttampi cetāṃ paṭisambhidāyaṃ “pañca sīlāni – pariyantapārisuddhisīlaṃ, apariyantapārisuddhisīlaṃ, paripuṇṇapārisuddhisīlaṃ, aparāmaṭṭhapārisuddhisīlaṃ, paṭipassaddhipārisuddhisīla”nti (paṭi. ma. 1.37). Tathā pahāṇaveramaṇīcetanāsaṃvarāvītikkamavaseṇa. [(Visuddhimaggo (Paṭhamo bhāgo) , VRI 1.11)]

VRI 1.33).¹² It is mentioned in the Buddhist literature that if one who is engaging in the protection of morality passes away, that person will be born in a heavenly world as above-mentioned.

The causes of the defiling of morality are also described in the *Visuddhimagga*. The defiling of morality may occur due to gain, fame, etc., as its cause, and under the seven bonds of sexuality. When one has broken the training course at the beginning or at the end in any instance of the seven classes of offences, the morality of that one is called torn, like a cloth that is cut at the edge. But when one has broken it in the middle, it is called rent, like a cloth that is rent in the middle. When one has broken it twice or thrice in succession, it is called blotched, like a cow whose body is some such colour as black or red with a discrepant colour appearing on the back or the belly. When one has broken it [all over] at intervals, it is called mottled, like a cow speckled [all over] with discrepantcoloured spots at intervals. This in the first place, is how there comes to be tornness with the breach that has gain, etc., as its cause ((*Chhaṭṭha Saṃgāyanā CD*, VRI 1.48).¹³ So one should be very careful from being defiled the morality which is protected by that person. In the *candana sutta* of *Samyutta Nikāya*, it is described that how one being perfect in morality, can overcome the flood which sweeps one away from emancipation. “One who is always perfect in morality, endowed with wisdom, well concentrated, energetic and resolute, crosses the flood so hard to cross” ((*Chhaṭṭha Saṃgāyanā CD*, VRI 1.64).¹⁴

Conclusion

In this article, the *sīla* (morality) is described as the volition, the consciousness-concomitant, the restraint and the non-transgression of one who is refraining from ten unwholesome deeds and of one who fulfills the practice of the duties; which is based on the *patipatti-sāsana* (the practice of *sīla*, *samādhi* and *paññā*: morality, concentration and insight).

In regard to the meaning, the morality (*sīla*) is described in the sense of composing (*sīlana*) which is its characteristic (*lakkhana*), of head (*sira*) and of cool (*sīlala*). The function (*rasa*) of morality is the action to stop misconduct and achievement as the quality of blamelessness in virtuous men. The manifestation (*paccupaṭṭhāna*) of morality is the kind of purity i.e. bodily purity, verbal purity, mental purity and the conscience and shame are regarded to be its proximate cause (*padaṭṭhāna*).

The Buddha laid down *vinaya* (corpus of discipline) rules only after twenty years of the establishment of the order of disciples as at the beginning imposing of rules is not needed due to no offences are occurred by the disciples. It was also done by the Buddha with 10 objectives.

The five main benefits including other benefits of morality are mentioned in the Pali Buddhist literary works. Fivefold division of morality, is also found in the *Visuddhimagga*, among which *upasampdā sīla*, the morality of higher ordination is regarded as the highest one. The morality is the first of the 3 kinds of training (*sikkhā*) that form the 3-fold division of the 8-fold Path (*maggā*), i.e. morality,

12 *Kikīva aṇḍaṃ camarīva vāladhiṃ,
Piyaṃva puttaṃ nayanamīva ekakaṃ;
Tatheva sīlaṃ anurakkhamānakā,
Supesalā hotha sadā sagāravā .
[(Visuddhimagga (Paṭhamo bhāgo), VRI 1.33)]*

13 *So pana khaṇḍādibhāvo lābhayaśādihetukena bhedenā ca sattavidhamethunasamyogena ca saṅgahito.
Tathā hi yassa sattasu āpattikkhandhesu ādimhi vā ante vā sikkhāpadaṃ bhinnam hoti, tassa sīlaṃ pariyante chinnaśātakā
viya khaṇḍaṃ nāma hoti. Yassa pana vemajjhe bhinnam, tassa majjhe chiddasātakā viya chiddaṃ nāma hoti. Yassa paṭipāṭiyā
dve tīni bhinnāni, tassa piṭṭhiyā vā kucchīyā vā uṭṭhitena visabhāgavaṇṇena kālarattādīnaṃ aññatarasarīravāṇṇā gāvī viya
sabalaṃ nāma hoti. Yassa antaranāra bhinnāni, tassa antaranāra visabhāgavaṇṇabinduvidicitrā gāvī viya kammāsaṃ nāma
hoti. Evaṃ tāva lābhādihetukena bhedenā khaṇḍādibhāvo hoti. [(Visuddhimagga (Paṭhamo bhāgo), VRI 1.48)]*

14 *Sabbadā sīlasampanno, paññāvā susamāhito;
Āraddhavīriyo pahitatto, oghaṃ tarati duttaraṃ. (Samyutta Nikāya, Sagāthavagga, Candana Suttaṃ, VRI 1.64)*

concentration and wisdom; one of the ten perfections (*pāramis*), the second of the seven treasures (*saptaratana*), one of five sense faculties (*indriyas*), one of five strengths (*balas*). As morality is the foundation of the whole Buddhist practice, it is emphasized the way of protecting and practicing it with many similes.

Certain types of moral rules can be found in all religions in the world. In Buddhism, the disciplinary moral rules are called *sīla* (morality). Practicing and protecting the morality accurately, not only causes the welfare in this very life but also the welfare in next life and whole the cycle of existence and the attainment of the emancipation.

Conflict of Interest

The author declares that there is no conflict of interest regarding the publication of this manuscript.

Works Cited

- Dhamma Sāmi, Monk. *Pali English Glossary*. Translated by Thierry Lambrou, 2001, update: 2005 June 20. [dhammadana.org https://en.dhammadana.org/glossary.htm](https://en.dhammadana.org/glossary.htm)
- Mahā-parinibbāna sutta (Last Days of the Buddha)*. Translated by Sister Vajira & Francis Story. Alternately translated by Thanissaro (chapters 5-6). Buddhist Publication Society, 1998.
- Ñānamoli, Bhikkhu. Translator. *The Path of Purification (Visuddhimagga)* by Bhaddantācariya Buddhaghosa. Buddhist Publication Society, 2010 reprint.
- Pārājikā Pāli (Transgression of the disciplinary rules)*. Translated by Venerable Thumana. Department for the Promotion and Propagation of the Sasana, 2001.
- The Book of the Discipline, (Vinaya Piṭaka), vol. iv, Mahāvagga*. Translated by L.B. Horner. The Pali Text Society, 2007.
- Journal**
- Yasassi, Panahaduwe, Ven.. “The concept of *sīla* in Buddhist teaching”. *Nivanmaga (path to emancipation): Silaya (morality)*. Vol. 46. H.M. Gumatileke. Editor. Department of Sri Lankan Government Printing, 2015.

CD

Chhaṭṭha Saṃgāyanā Tīpiṭaka CD 4.0. Version 4.0.0.15. Vipassana Research Institute, 1995.

Dr. B.R. Ambedkar's Interpretation of the Doctrines of *Karma* and Rebirth

Prof. Bimalendra Kumar, Ph.D.
Banaras Hindu University, India
bimalendrakumar9@gmail.com

Date of Call for Article:

27 May, 2024

Article Received Date:

18 June, 2024

Date of sending for peer review:

6 August, 2024

Date of receiving from peer review:

1 September, 2024

Date of Revision:

9 September, 2024

Date of Acceptance:

11 November, 2024

Date of Publication:

26 January, 2025

Abstract

Background: This paper analyzes Dr. B.R. Ambedkar's interpretation on the doctrine of *karma* and rebirth in Buddhism. Dr. Ambedkar, obviously, accepts the traditional Buddhist concept regarding *karma* and rebirth but he forwards his different opinion that the body upon the dissolution gets its *Mahabhuts* (*Prithvi, Agni, jal, Vayu*) stored in the respective *Mahabhuts* in the Universe.

Objective: The paper is meant for clarifying Ambedkar's idea on *karma* and rebirth. It is to prove that the aggregates of a being get mixed into the mega aggregates in the universe during the time of death; and at the time of rebirth, the aggregates get reassembled with *karmic* consciousness, and there the being gets rebirth based on the past *karma*.

Methodology: Library based Interpretive or Analytical approach is adopted to carry out the research.

Result: Through the study it has been found that at the time of rebirth, the *Mahabhuts* including the elements like heat and consciousness come back to the mother's womb to get assembled and there the new being gets delivered on the planet together with the fruits of its old *karma*. Ambedkar relates *karma* and rebirth to modern science explaining 'Rebirth' as a cycle of physical elements, instead of the wandering soul. It is shown how Ambedkar re-interprets the traditional Buddhist ideas to fit with the conceptions of modern science and philosophy in the article.

Conclusion: The Paper forwards the idea of Ambedkar that there is no rebirth of the soul but regeneration of the matter or element. There is the possibility of the fruit or retribution of the moral or immoral actions done by a person as the new being gets its old elements assembled during the time of rebirth.

Keywords: *Karma, Rebirth, Anattavāda, Mahābhūtas, Lokāyatika*

Paper Type: Research Paper

© 2025 The Author. All rights reserved.

For permissions,

Contact: research@lbu.edu.np

This work is licensed under

Creative Commons Attribution-Non

Commercial-No Derivatives 4.0

International License.

<https://creativecommons.org/choose/>

Licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/



Introduction

Generally, it is understood that Dr. B.R. Ambedkar contributed a lot for the revival of Buddhism in India by embracing Buddhism himself in 1956 and also by initiating millions of his followers into Buddhist order. The significance of Buddhism which seems to have attracted Ambedkar are reflected in his famous book '*The Buddha and His Dhamma*.' Ambedkar has presented his new analysis of Buddhism by interpreting the concepts in his own way. The interpretation of concepts of Buddhism has been criticized by many scholars. The interpretation of the Buddhism by Ambedkar has brought Buddhism more relevant for the modern world. The writing and speeches of Dr. B.R. Ambedkar have been published by the Education Department, Government of Maharashtra, Mumbai in sixteen volumes out of which volume XI is *The Buddha and His Dhamma* and Volume XVI consists three works related with Pali language and grammar. They are namely (i) *The Pali Grammar*, (ii) *The Pali Dictionary* and (iii) *Bouddha Pooja Pāṭha*.

In the Introduction of *The Buddha and His Dhamma*, Dr. B R Ambedkar has raised some of the problems for discussion and to make people inquisitive about the problems. Among many metaphysical issues, he interpreted the third problem related to the doctrines of soul, karma and rebirth:

The Buddha denied the existence of the soul. But he is also said to have affirmed the doctrine of karma and rebirth. At once a question arises. If there is no soul, how can there be karma? If there is no soul, how can there be rebirth? These are baffling questions. In what sense did the Buddha use the words karma and rebirth? Did he use them in a different sense than the sense in which they were used by the Brahmins of his day? If so, in what sense? Did he use them in the same sense in which the Brahmins used them? If so, is there not a terrible contradiction between the denial of the soul and the affirmation of karma and rebirth? This contradiction needs to be resolved. (Introduction, Ambedkar 1977)

Concept of 'Karma and Rebirth' in Buddhism

During the Buddha's times, a set of ideological questions was very common. The most important and fundamental among them was: the Sassatavāda (Eternalism) and Uccchedavāda (Annihilationism). One of the earliest Indian materialists was Ajita Kesakambali, a contemporary to the Buddha. The *Sāmaññaphalasutta* of Dīghanikāya also records the view thus:

There is no such thing, O king, as alms or sacrifice or offering. There is neither fruit nor result of good or evil deeds. . . . A human being is built up of the four elements. When he dies the earthly in him returns and relapses to the earth, the fluid to the water, the heat to the fire, the wind to the air, and his faculties pass into space. The four bearers, on the bier as a fifth, take his dead body away; till they reach the burning-ground men utter forth eulogies, but there his bones are bleached, and his offerings end in ashes. It is a doctrine of fools; this talk of gifts. It is an empty lie, mere idle talk, when men say there is profit therein. Fools and wise alike, on the dissolution of the body, are cut off, annihilated, and after death they are not¹. (Davids 1899, 73-74)

The Upanishadic seers and many others believed in the former, while the Lokāyatika-s (Ancient Materialists) and others believed in Annihilationism. The Buddha had the option to go with any one of them and decided to reject both. He knew that joining the former would mean the path where there was no scope for emancipation, while in case of the latter there would be total annihilation or destruction. The Buddha knew fully well that in both cases no organization could be built up and no-body could be led to emancipation. He, therefore, sought the middle course where he taught Anicca and Anatta and thereby rejected eternalism and annihilationism. At the same time, significantly enough, another path

1 natthi, mahārāja, dinnam, natthi yittham, natthi hutam, natthi sukata dukkaṭānam kammānam phalaṃ vipāko, natthi ayam loko, natthi paro loko, natthi mātā, natthi pitā, natthi sattā opapātikā, natthi loke samaṇabrāhmaṇā sammaggaṭā sammāpaṭipannā, ye imaṃca lokam paraṃca lokam sayam abhiññā sacchikātvā pavedenti. cātumahābhū-

leading to Anattavāda (the doctrine of soullessness) open to the thinkers in those days was to arrive at Anattavāda through the belief in the supremacy of the four bhūta-s, popularly called as mahābhūta-s. These are *pathavī*, (earth), *āpo* (water), *vāyo* (air) and *tejo* (fire). The Lokāyatika-s unhesitatingly tread this path and declared their unequivocal faith in annihilation after death, The Buddha was not prepared to accept this position. He, therefore, rejected it as he did the former one i. e. the Sassatavāda.

Similarly, the Buddhist doctrine of karma holds that a person who dies here and is reborn elsewhere is neither the same person, nor another. The new being is neither absolutely the same since it has changed, nor totally different being the same stream of karmic energy. There is merely a continuity of a particular life-flux or a continuity of the same series. Individual life is comprehended by knowledge as a continuous course (*santati*) in which are linked the notions of individual forms (*nāma-rūpa*), one disappearing, another appearing; one subsiding another arising uninterruptedly (*apubbaṃ acarimam*).

The process of going of *nāma-rūpa* from one state of existence to another has been explained in Pali texts. Both *nāma-rūpa* are in perpetual flux. On the dissolution of the body, the physical gross form remains here and is disintegrated in the temporal process. The subtle form of the *rūpa*, more correctly the 'seed-residuum' submerged with the conscious continuum flow with the proceeding stream of physio-psychic amalgam activated and inspired by the force of accumulation of the impression of the moral and immoral actions. Material quality born of one's karma or previous action (*Kammajarūpa*) is called *Upādinna* i.e., those that are produced depending upon conscious relation to matter or grasped by craving.

Thus, the life is compared to a flame and rebirth is transmitting of this flame from one to another. The flame of the life is continuous although there is an apparent break at the time of death. The continuity between the lives is the subtlest level of consciousness. In *Milindapañho*, there is a description of the transmigrating of the mind and matter on rebirth. King Milinda asked "When someone is reborn is he the same who died or different?" Ācārya Nāgasena replied, "Neither the same nor different. When a lamp is lit for the whole night the middle or last flame is not the same as the last act of previous birth nor entirely different."² The *Milindapañho* states that none of the milk product such as butter, curd and ghee are neither milk nor entirely other than milk. Further the king asked, "If anything passes from body to body would we not be free from all immoral actions? Nāgasena asked in reply, "If someone steals mangoes and the owner charges him, can he argue that mangoes stolen are different from the one planted by the owner? So when someone dies with craving and enters another existence he will not be free of past deeds good or bad."³ It is also stated that one cannot escape the consequences of *kamma*. It is the *kamma* that amounts the difference in our births. "As a man himself sows, so he himself reaps; no man inherits good or bad action of another man." The fruit of the same quality with the action, and,

tiko ayaṃ puriso, yadā kālaṅkaroti, pathavī pathavikāyaṃ anupeti anupagacchati, āpo āpokāyaṃ anupeti anupagacchati, tejo tejokāyaṃ anupeti anupagacchati, vāyo vāyokāyaṃ anupeti anupagacchati, ākāsaṃ indriyāni saṅkamanti. āsandipaṇṇaṃ camā purisā matam ādāya gacchanti. yāvālāhanā padāni paññāyanti. kāpotakāni aṭṭhīni bhavanti, bhassantā āhutiyo. dat-tupaññattam yadidaṃ dānam. tesam tucchaṃ musā vilāpo ye keci atthikavādam vadanti. bāle ca paṇḍite ca kā-yassa bhedā ucchijjanti vinassanti, na honti param maraṇā'ti-Dīgha Nikāya Samaññaphalasutta

- 2 'Kiṃ nu kho, mahārāja, añño so ahosi purime yāme padīpo, añño majjhime yāme padīpo, añño pacchime yāme padīpo'ti? "Na hi bhante, tam yeva nissāya sabbarattim padīpito'ti. "Evameva kho, mahārāja, dhammasantati sandahati, añño uppajjati, añño nirujjhati, apubbaṃ acarimam viya sandahati, tena na ca so, na ca añño, purimaviññāṇe pacchimaviññāṇam saṅgaṇham gacchati'ti- *Milindapañho* (Ed.) Swami Dwarikadas Shastri, Bauddha Bharati, Varanasi, 1998, p. 52.
- 3 Rājā āha "bhante nāgasena, ko paṭisandahatī'ti? Thero āha "nāmarūpaṃ kho, mahārāja, paṭisandahatī'ti. 'Kiṃ imaṃ yeva nāmarūpaṃ paṭisandahatī'ti? "Na kho, mahārāja, imaṃ yeva nāmarūpaṃ paṭisandahati, iminā pana, mahārāja, nāmarūpena kammaṃ karoti sobhanaṃ vā pāpakaṃ vā, tena kammena aññaṃ nāmarūpaṃ paṭisandahatī'ti. "Yadi, bhante, na imaṃ yeva nāmarūpaṃ paṭisandahati, nanu so mutto bhavissati pāpakehi kammehī'ti? Thero āha "yadi na paṭisandaheyya, mutto bhaveyya pāpakehi kammehi. Yasmā ca kho, mahārāja, paṭisandahati, tasmā na mutto pāpakehi kammehī'ti – Ibid., p.58

good or bad, there is no escape from the action.

The closest associate of the life is the *jīvitindriya* (life-force). With the association of two, there emerges the heat (*usmā*), just like the arising of light depending upon the flame of the burning lamp. Thus, the continuity of *viññāṇa* with *jīvitindriya* is the surviving of life. In their absence it does not function at all.” Where three things are got rid of; life force, heat and consciousness, then does this body lie cast away, flung aside like unto senseless log of wood”⁴, says the Buddha. Life begins from the moment of *paṭisandhi*, which unites one state of existence with the other. It starts with the arising of a *paṭisandhi-citta* (uniting consciousness), due to the force of the accumulation of the resultants of moral and immoral actions. The same *kammic* force acts simultaneously in generating the seat of consciousness (*hadaya-vatthu*), the subtlest form of the material qualities the first atomic physical base. The two, though of diverse nature, are united together by the relation of co-born (*sahajāta-paccaya*) and being so, emerge into a physio-psyche from of personality of a man.⁵

There is a great role of *hadayavatthu* as a ground or base in the rebirth (*paṭisandhi*). *Hadayavatthu* is closely associated with *manodhātu* and *manoviññāṇadhātu*⁶. The tradition maintains that the *hadayavatthu* is the subtlest form of the material quality. The simile of touching the end of the fur of the newly born monkey on the surface of the cup of honey on the end of the fur is the simple indication of extremely subtle nature of the *hadayavatthu*. In the *Paṭṭhāna*, it is stated that “That material thing, based on which the mind-element and the mind-consciousness-element occur –that material thing is a condition by way of basis for the mind element and the mind-consciousness-element and what is associated therewith.”⁷

Interpretation of Dr. B. R. Ambedkar on ‘Rebirth

In view of the above facts, one has to examine the position taken by Baba Saheb Dr. B. R. Ambedkar. Dr. Ambedkar puts his stand in conformity with the modern scientific discoveries. He did not deny the doctrine of karma and rebirth but his interpretation amounted to denial of the doctrines in their traditional forms. While arguing under the titles ‘Rebirth of What’ and ‘Rebirth of Whom’ in his famous treatise ‘*The Buddha And His Dhamma*’, he arrives at the conclusion that after the dissolution of the body, i.e. death, the *mahābhūta*-s or the basic material qualities of which it is made of, the *mahābhūta*-s dissolve in their atmospheric store of *mahābhūta*-s and again at the time of conception in the mother’s womb and thereafter altogether separate set of the *mahābhūta*-s join together and form a new life in the form of a child. This process goes on and on. It means that the root cause behind the formation and dissolution of the body including consciousness (*citta*, *manas*) is the set of the *mahābhūta*-s, i. e. the material qualities. Thus Dr. Ambedkar reaches the same position as the Lokāyatika-s did.

Ambedkar’s concept of Rebirth, as discussed in his book “*The Buddha and His Dhamma*,” relates with the similar attitude as recorded in the *Mahāvedallasutta* of Majjhimanikāya (MN 43). The discourse mentions the basis of five faculties, heat, and vitality in order. It says heat and vitality depends

4 cf. *Majjhimanikaya* vol. I (Ed.) Bhikkhu J. Kashyap, Nalanda Edition, Nalanda, 1959, pp. 364-67.

5 “*Okkantikkhane nāmarupam aññamaññam sahajātapaccayena paccayo*”-*Patthana-pakarana* vol. I, (Ed.) Bhikkhu J. Kashyap. Nalanda Edition, Nalanda, 1961, p. 6.

6 “*Hadayameva manodhātumanoviññāṇadhātūnaṃ nissayattā vatthu cāti hadayavatthu. Tathā hi taṃ dhātuvayanissay-abhāvalakkhaṇaṃ, taṃca hadayakosabbhantare aḍḍhapasatamattaṃ lohitaṃ nissāya pavattati. Rūpakaṇḍe avuttassapi pan-etassa āgamato, yuttito ca atthibhāvo paṭṭhabbo. Tattha, taṃ rūpaṃ nissāya manodhātu ca manoviññāṇadhātu ca vattanti*”
“*yaṃ rūpaṃ manodhātuyā ca manoviññāṇadhātuyā ca taṃ sampayuttakāṇaṃca dhammānaṃ nissayapaccayena paccayo ti*”
- *Patthana-pakarana* vol. I, (Ed.) Bhikkhu J. Kashyap. Nalanda Edition, Nalanda, 1961, p. 6.

7 “*yaṃ rūpaṃ nissāya manodhātu ca manoviññāṇadhātu ca vattanti, taṃ rūpaṃ manodhātuyā ca manoviññāṇadhātuyā ca taṃsampayuttakāṇaṃca dhammānaṃ nissayapaccayena paccayo*” -*Paṭṭhāna*, Vol. I, p.7.

on each other.⁸

Dr. B.R Ambedkar and the Lokāyatika

The doctrine of Lokāyata dismisses all gods, devas, and supernatural beings (Hiriyanna 193). It believes that there is no such creator or ultimate reality, who nourishes us. The theory also says that no life can be understood in terms of rebirth. According to this school, the universe is constituted out of the four elements: earth, water, heat and air. All realities consist of combinations of these four, and consciousness is such a compound, or rather a property of the elements combined in a particular way a living body.⁹

It is very hard to justify the idea of a life after death. Perhaps this was the reason Charvaka rejects this theory. How can one perceive the Brahman through one's senses? All those four elements are destroyed in their respective elements after death. It can be understood by an example that as betel areca, catechu, betel nut, lime etc. are not showing redness individually but when these altogether are chewed in the mouth, they are showing redness. In the same manner, when the four basic material qualities (*mahābhūtas*) create the life in which the consciousness also comes.

Conclusion

It amounts to the fact that Dr. Ambedkar brought the Buddhist Sāsana to the same position which the Buddha and His associates had avoided having called it Uccchedavāda (Annihilationism). But at the same time, there is a difference. Dr. Ambedkar calls his stand in conformity with the modern scientific discoveries. Thus, there lies a justification in his stand. The release of the *mahābhūta*-s from the body at the time of death does not mean Uccchedavāda (annihilation) as it was understood during the Buddha's time. Here the *mahābhūta*-s or basic material qualities are believed to remain in the atmosphere and do not altogether perish. Now, the question arises that which are the elements, separated from the body after the death of a human being. Quoting from the dialogue of Venerable Mahākoṭṭhita and Dhammasenāpati Sāriputta, Ambedkar says that the elements are namely 'Heat' or energy and 'consciousness', which are not arising from the body of a human being after the death. The dead body does not create energy but the energy, which comes out from the body after the death, merges in the energy of whole world. Thus, there is no rebirth of the soul but regeneration of the matter or element. There is the possibility of the fruit or retribution of the moral or immoral actions done by a person.

Conflict of Interest

The author declares that there is no conflict of interest regarding the publication of this manuscript.

Works Cited

Primary Sources

Abhidhammatthasaṅgaho with Navanīṭaṭṭikā (Ed.) Dharmananda Kosambi, Maha Bodhi Society of India, Sarnath, Varanasi and Buddhist World Press, Delhi, 2017.

Abhidhammatthasaṅgaho and Abhidhammatthavibhāvanīṭikā (Ed.) Bhadanta Revatadharma, Bauddha Svadhyaya Satra, Varanasi, Fifth Edition, 1965.

Aṭṭhasālini, (Ed.) P.V. Bapat and R.D. Vadekar, Poona, 1940.

Aṭṭhasālini (Ed.) Ram Shankar Tripathy, Sampoornanand Sanskrit University, Varanasi, 1989.

8 "pañcimāni, āvuso, indriyāni, seyyathidaṃ — cakkhundriyaṃ, sotindriyaṃ, ghānindriyaṃ, jivhindriyaṃ, kāyindriyaṃ. imāni kho, āvuso, pañcindriyāni kiṃ paṭicca tiṭṭhanti"ti?

"pañcimāni, āvuso, indriyāni, seyyathidaṃ — cakkhundriyaṃ, sotindriyaṃ, ghānindriyaṃ, jivhindriyaṃ, kāyindriyaṃ. imāni kho, āvuso, pañcindriyāni āyuṃ paṭicca tiṭṭhanti"ti.

"āyu panāvuso, kiṃ paṭicca tiṭṭhati"ti?

"āyu usmaṃ paṭicca tiṭṭhati"ti.

"usmā panāvuso, kiṃ paṭicca tiṭṭhati"ti?

"usmā āyuṃ paṭicca tiṭṭhati"ti. (*Mahāvedallasutta* of Majjhimanikāya, vol.I, PTS, p. 295)

9 Warder, A. K., Indian Buddhism, Motilal Banarsidass Publishers, Pvt. Ltd., Delhi, 4th Reprint, 2017, p.40

Bodhicaryāvatāra of Śāntideva (Ed.) P.L. Vaidya, TheMithila Institute, Darbhanga, 1988.

Dhammapada, (Ed. & Tr.) Sanghasen Singh, Delhi University, Delhi, 1977.

Dhammasaṅgaṇi (Ed.) Bhikkhu Jagdish Kashyap, Nalanda Edition, Nalanda, 1960.

Dīghanikāya Vol. III, Vipassana Research Institute, Igatpuri, 1993.

Majjhimanikāya, Vol. I, Pali Text Society, London, 1948

Suhrillekha and its commentary (Ed.) Pema Tenzin, Central Institute of Higher Tibetan Studies, Sarnath, Varanasi, 2002.

Visuddhimagga (Paramatthamañjūsā sahita) Vol.I, II, & III, (Ed.) Revatadhamma, Sampurnanad Sanskrit University, Varanasi, 1969, 1972

Visuddhimagga, Vol. I & II, Vipassana Research Institute, Igatpuri, 1998.

Secondary Sources

Ambedkar, B.R., *The Buddha and His Dhamma*, reprinted at The Corporate Body of Buddha Educational Foundation, Taiwan, 1977.

Bodhi, Bhikkhu, *A Comprehensive Manual of Abhidhamma (The Abhidhammatthasaṅgaho of Ācariya Anuruddha)*, Buddhist Publication Society, Kandy, Sri Lanka, Third Edition, 2006.

Chattopadhyaya, Debiprasad, *Indian Philosophy: A Popular Introduction* (Delhi: People's Publishing House, 1972 [orig. 1964]), chapter 28, pp. 184-199; notes, pp. 221-223.

Dasgupta, S. N. *A History of Indian Philosophy*, People's Publishing House, Delhi, 1972

Dauids, Mrs. Rhys, *Compendium of Philosophy*, The Pali Text Society, Oxford, 1995.

Dauids, T. W. Rhys, *Dialogues of the Buddha*, Vol. I., Pali Text Society, London, 1899.

Dutta, Nalinaksha and Bajpai, Krishna Datta, *Development of Buddhism in Uttar Pradesh*, Publication Bureau, Government of Uttar Pradesh, Lucknow, First Edition, 1996.

Gethin, R. M. L., *The Buddhist Path of Awakening*, One world Publications, Oxford, England, 2001.

Hajime Nakamura *Indian Buddhism: A Survey with Bibliographical Notes* (Ed.), Motilal Banarsidass Publishers, Delhi, 1989.

Hiriyanna, M. *Outlines of Indian Philosophy*. 188.

Kalupahana, D. J., *A History of Buddhist Philosophy*, Motilal Banarasidass Publishers, Delhi, First Edition, 1994.

Maha Thera, Piyadassi, *The Seven Factors of Enlightenment*, Buddhist Publication Society, Kandy, Sri Lanka, 1980.

Ñāṇamoli, Bhikkhu, *The Path of Purification (Visuddhimagga by Bhadantācariya Buddhaghosa)*, The Corporate Body of the Buddha Educational Foundation, Taipei, Taiwan.

Pande, G. C., *Buddhism*, Centre for Studies in Civilizations, New Delhi, 2013.

Sayadaw, Ledi Mahathera, *Bodhipakkhiya-Dīpanī -The Manuals of Buddhism (The Exposition of the Buddha-Dhamma)*, Department of Religious Affairs, Rangoon, Burma, 1981.

Sharma, Brahmadeo Narayan Sharma, *Vibhajjavāda*, Sampurnanand, Sanskrit University, Varanasi, 2004.

Warder, A. K., *Indian Buddhism*, Motilal Banarsidass Publishers, Pvt. Ltd., Delhi, 4th Reprint, 2017.

Wijeratne, R. P. and Gethin, Rupert, *Summary of the Topics of Abhidhamma (Abhidhammatthasaṅgaho by Anuruddha) and Exposition of the Topics of Abhidhamma Abhidhammatthavibhāvanī by Sumaṅgala*, The Pali Text Society, Oxford, 2002.

Buddhism and South Asian Folklore

Prof. Todd T. Lewis, Ph.D.
College of the Holy Cross
Worcester, Massachusetts, USA
tlewis@holycross.edu

Date of Call for Article:

27 May, 2024

Article Received Date:

12 June, 2024

Date of sending for peer review:

8 August, 2024

Date of receiving from peer review:

1 September, 2024

Date of Revision:

8 September, 2024

Date of Acceptance:

29 November, 2024

Date of Publication:

26 January, 2025

© 2025 The Author. All rights reserved.

For permissions,

Contact: research@lbu.edu.np

This work is licensed under
Creative Commons Attribution-Non
Commercial-No Derivatives 4.0

International License.

<https://creativecommons.org/choose/>

Licenses /by-nc-nd/4.0/



Abstract

Background: This article examines interaction between Buddhism and South Asian folklore exploring the influences of Buddhist traditions over culture, traditions, beliefs and practices of the local people specifically in northern India since the origin of Buddhism in the region.

Objective: The objective of the paper is to focus the impacts of the Buddhist principles in various culture, custom and folklore in the South Asian region as the Dhamma gets expanded across South Asia and beyond.

Methodology: Interdisciplinary methodology is employed while going through the research work, drawing from historical, textual, ethnographic, and sociological approaches to analyze the relationships between Buddhism, folklore, and contemporary South Asian society.

Result: The paper depicts how the states were formed adopting the values of the *Dhamma* and how it brought a cultural integration becoming a popular religious practice in the region. There were people who preferred monastic life with Spiritual Practices and Meditations under the guidance of core Buddhist Philosophy whereas there were others, the householders, who were much more influenced by Buddhist rituals and local folklore. The role of Buddhist Monks and Nuns in facilitating the laities with ritual practices and Buddhist teachings is highlighted in the article. The article reflects the role of monastic folklorists in transforming folk traditions into an important part of Buddhist Practices by mixing up local deities, spirits and rituals into Buddhist cosmology. *Jatakas* and *Avadanas* stories of the Buddha's past lives are highlighted in the paper as the key sources of Teaching Buddhist ethics and doctrines to the common people.

Conclusion: The paper investigates how Buddhism, in South Asia, got flourished with its modest engagement with various cultures and traditions in the region with significant influences over the folklore of the contemporary societies.

Keywords: Buddhism, Folklore, *jātakas*, *avadānas*, *karma*

Paper Type: Research Paper

Introduction

Buddhism is a religious and civilization-wide movement that originated on the Gangetic plain in northern India about twenty-five centuries ago. The world's first missionary tradition, Buddhism – particularly its monastic elements – was visible in many of the court cultures of South Asian polities; its practices and institutions became embedded in the life of worldly power as that was known and practiced in the emerging regional states and cities of ancient South Asia. For reasons that are still not fully known, Buddhism disappeared entirely from most areas of the Indian subcontinent just after the turn of the second millennium of the Common Era, although it continued a vibrant cultural force in certain periphery regions of South Asia, notably Sri Lanka, Burma, Nepal, Ladakh, Sikkim, and Bhutan. Buddhism also has been reintroduced to India in the twentieth century, particularly among nominally Hindu and Muslim intellectuals, for whom it is conducive for thinking about "Indian identity" in a post-colonial context, and among Dalit communities, for whom it has been a powerful, inspirational counterculture for defending a social identity alternative to that given by upper-caste Hindu norms.

Popularity of Buddhism

As a religious movement, Buddhism was trans-local and Universalist in its vision, and generally Buddhist ideas, practices, and institutions were supported and promoted in particular regions by rulers and merchants who had worldly aspirations that went beyond the merely local. Institutional Buddhism evolved as a tradition abetting the expansion of Indic civilization. This was so in ancient South Asia proper in the early centuries as tribal peoples were integrated into the first expanding states. This same phenomenon continued somewhat later over the Southeast Asia frontier where Buddhism coexisted with brahmanical Hinduism, but was the dominant religion in most times and places there (and unlike its destiny of decline on the Indian subcontinent). Buddhism's alliance with state formation and expansion is one recurring trajectory in the faith's history (and it continues in the tribal areas of Thailand and Burma today). This was an interlocking socio-cultural process that integrated expansive monastic institutions, the charisma of forest monk saints, the power of rituals performed by monks, the tradition's missionary ethos, the appeal of karma and compassion doctrines for rulers and ruled, alliances between monastery and merchants, and the legitimacy the tradition offered kings. It was vernacular folklore that communicated these basic teachings and legitimated the popular Buddhist practices that won the loyalty of the masses.

Elite Buddhism and Popular Buddhism

For many in South Asia's socio-cultural elite, the grammar of cosmopolitan languages like Sanskrit and Pali was more important than knowledge of local lore about what was indicated, for example, by a gecko falling on one's head. Derived from a religious movement originating among ascetics, one stream of Buddhist philosophy was directed to a soteriology which Buddhists broadly understood as a transformation of the individual person through practices like meditation that ended in a freedom from suffering and ignorance for oneself and unbounded compassion for others. But elite-defined Buddhism, while it commanded patronage and prestige and so shaped a polity's identity, was the actual concern of only very, very few individuals. Only a small sample of men and women were ordained into the monastic order: since few among them could read the philosophical treatises, and even fewer still were thought to be in a position to pursue the strict practices that culminated in enlightenment, what we might call elite canonical Buddhism, was undertaken by a small minority. Thus, the splendors of Buddhist philosophy remained distant to even most monks and nuns, and further still from the pragmatic concerns of farmers concerned about crops, the health of loved ones, or ghosts disturbing their homes at night. Civilizationally, then, the folklore stories and pragmatic rituals done by Buddhists was more important than meditation or philosophical discourse.

As centrally-visible as the great Buddhist monastics were in the elite cultures of South Asia, many also participated in South Asia's folk traditions. In fact, an early text identifies "the folklorist" (*tirascakathika*) as one of six monastic specializations (Lewis 2000: 3). Indeed, their participation was key to the success of Buddhism as a distinctive religious movement. Buddhist folklorists, like Jains and others, adopted and adapted elements of the folk religion around them and connected them to their own system of religious reflection and meaning. This folk religion was only marginally different from the religious practices derived from later Vedic literature and its brahman-mediated practices. These rituals focused on local deities known as *yakṣas* and *nāgas* and included notably an emphasis on a sense of the 'divine' in a particular place and the approach to the 'divine' through directly-emotional and sensual forms of worship. Buddhist monastic discipline forbade direct involvement in such rituals, but householders were counseled in the Buddhist canons to respect all divinities in their midst, and make offerings to win their favors. Newar Buddhist traditions are emphatic on this norm.

Jātakas and Avadānas as the source of Buddhist Folklore

What made individuals distinctly Buddhist was their revering the Buddha above all beings in the universe, and holding that his path was the only true means to final salvation. The popular narratives recounting the life of Shākyamuni the Buddha, perhaps the most widely-spread Buddhist story, make these views plain through a wealth of incidents. Not only did Buddhists recognize the Indic deities, spirits, and ghosts and make offerings to them to seek local protection and aid from these resident supernaturals, they also incorporated these procedures to worship Buddha images and their distinctive memorial monuments, *stūpas* (Hardy, 29-36).

Central to a consideration of Buddhist folklore is the tradition of *jātaka* and *avadāna* stories about the Buddha's previous lives. In the canons, also appended to commentaries and ritual guides, and often redacted into individual anthologies, they are the form of Buddhist literature for which we have the earliest datable evidence: these stories are represented visually at the earliest stupas such as Bharhut and Sanchi from about the third century before the Common Era. *Jātakas* and *avadānas* provide the most popular media in Buddhist culture, having been used over the centuries for didactic purposes, especially for the teaching of Buddhist doctrines and ethics to novice monastics and householders.

It is important to note that most of the stories preserved in the canonical languages had to be redacted for local audiences into a vernacular *lingua franca*. Most Buddhists until modern times were illiterate and so encountered *jātakas* and *avadānas* from the lips of monks or nuns, pondered them depicted as frescoes on monastery walls, or viewed them dramatically enacted by dancers or puppet performers. Students can miss the dynamism of this folklore by not having access to the vernacular context to note how artists can veer into modern political issues to re-contextualize old disputes, elaborate on some themes while foreshortening others in a particular recitation, and even invert the classical norms. Though some of the vernacular translations from the various South Asian regions have been written down, few have been translated into English.

Modern scholars, noting that among the *jātakas* are various tales, riddles, and anecdotes that are known from elsewhere in South Asian cultures, have generally read this literature more as sources about South Asian folklore than about the socio-cultural realities of living Buddhism. But as T.W. Rhys Davids, one of the founding fathers of Buddhist Studies, observed, "*Jātakas* are the most complete, the most authentic, and the most ancient collection of folklore in the world – a collection entirely unadulterated, as modern folklore stories so often are, by the inevitable process of passing through a Western mind." (1896: 78). The size and scope of this narrative literature conveys much about popular living Buddhism, sometimes conflicting with the views conveyed by modern reformers or Western exponents.

Practices of Buddhist Rituals

Creative engagement with and the local adaptation of South Asian folk traditions contributed strongly to the success of Buddhism as a religious movement that expanded outward to the ends of Asia. Monastic folklorists drew upon their rich story narratives to demonstrate how spirits can be integrated into a Buddhist world view, how tribal norms need to be reshaped to be compatible with karma doctrine, and how a seemingly remote territory might indeed have been already sanctified by a long-ago visit by a future Buddha or a more recent visit by a renowned saint (e.g. Brereton 1995; Strong 1992). It is indeed useful to look at the collection of popular narratives from early Buddhism as a vast resource suitable for redactors to adapt the tradition to new places and changing times. Such "domestications" were especially common across the Buddhist world throughout the faith's pan-Asian history; this flexibility was due to the fact that no central ecclesiastic authority or institution ever controlled the regional expressions of the faith's engagement with its householder communities. (This pluralism is evident in Newar Buddhism today as its leaders in different parts of the Valley adapt to modern circumstances with diverse, unconnected initiatives.)

The Buddha is remembered as saying that his teaching about suffering and the ending of suffering was key to understanding his career. Buddhists frequently turned to the materia and practices of folk traditions to extend the Buddha's intent to understand suffering, perceive its causes, and ultimately end it in the world. Although Buddhism holds that natural causality shapes human life, it is karma -- the causal mechanism that links intentional actions to this and future life consequences -- that must be reckoned with to live a moral life that leads to fruitful spiritual development. Most Buddhist popular narratives in fact are case studies in karmic retribution, giving the listener the chance to understand this foundational teaching through an almost endless variety of circumstances, from the animal world to the royal palace, from the ascetic's primitive hut to the materialism of trade route.

Quite often the intention of the Buddhist narrative was to convey how to end suffering in an immediate sense and what we see in canonical texts, such as those found in the sixth-century manuscript collection discovered at Gilgit in northwest Pakistan, is a sustained interest in how Buddhist rituals, particularly *bali* offerings to local gods and the copying of Buddhist texts themselves, can assist in warding off illness, natural disaster, poverty, untimely death, and human malevolence. In the same vein but at the opposite end of the South Asian Buddhist world in Sri Lanka is what is called *kem* in Sinhala; this includes such protective practices as the placing of written Buddhist verses in a kitchen to ward off flies. While one can say that there is nothing uniquely "Buddhist" about such practices, since they are generic versions of practices found in other folk traditions throughout South Asia, it is also crucial to note that passages from the canon find the Buddha asserting that his words can pacify and make auspicious any locality where they are chanted and ritually deployed. Indeed, it is in ritual manuals compiled by monks where additional didactic stories are found: these narratives that describe the proper Buddhist origins of these practices these are often recounted in the ritual itself. The stories associated with the *paritta* of the Pali Canon, and the *raṅṣā* literature from the Sanskrit Canons, connect the Buddha's teachings with the pragmatic needs of the great majority of Buddhists.

Generalizing from evidence found in contemporary communities in Sri Lanka and Nepal, we can also surmise specific local functions of folklore among Buddhists: to critique the pretensions of more elite men and women in the community, including monks; to promote the practice of certain favorite rituals; to criticize men or women for common character faults; and to promote ethnic solidarity, as local redactions support group loyalty over the universal ethics found in the canon. In the cycle of stories about jester figures like Andare in Sri Lanka, there are examples of the first: they mock the "wisdom" of this pundit by showing the disastrous effects of the impracticality that can be traced to his learning. Folklore in modern Nepal found in story collections and ritual texts provides a number of insights:

that Buddhist merit-making "cheats death" by reuniting married couples after death and reuniting the rich with their wealth; that karma is not strictly individualistic, as actions by husbands and wives, patrons and shipmates, monks and kings may affect the destinies of others. Finally, heavenly rebirth was recognized in numerous passages as an exalted religious goal for good Buddhists to strive for.

By focusing on folklore and recognizing its centrality in Buddhist politics, we can understand that for householders, being Buddhist has meant been focused on the karma of merit-making (often collective in practice and effect) and seeking heaven; showing respect for elders, ascetics, and local deities; and with seeing one's own homeland as having been blessed by the Buddha's powers through ritual.

Conflict of Interest

The author declares that there is no conflict of interest regarding the publication of this manuscript.

Works Cited

- Brereton, Bonnie Pacala. *Thai Retellings of Phra Malai: Texts and Rituals Concerning a Popular Buddhist Saint*. Tempe, Arizona: Arizona State University Press, 1995
- Cowell, E.B. *The Jataka or Stories of the Buddha's Former Births*. Oxford: Pali Text Society, 1990
- Dutt, Nalinaksha, editor. *Gilgit Manuscripts Vol. I*. Delhi: Satguru Publications, 1984
- Hardy, Friedhelm. *Viraha-Bhakti: The Early History of Krisna Devotion in South India*. Delhi: Oxford University Press. 1983
- Lewis, Todd. *Popular Buddhist Texts from Nepal: Narratives and Rituals of Newar Buddhism*. Albany: State University of New York, 2000
- Avadānas and Jātakas in the Newar Tradition of the Kathmandu Valley: Ritual Performances of Mahāyāna Buddhist Narratives," *Religion Compass* 9/8 (2015a): 233–253. [Online journal]
- Punya and Pāp in Public Health: Everyday Religion, Material Culture, and Avenues of Buddhist Activism in Urban Kathmandu," *Journal of Buddhist Ethics* 22, 2015b, 159-189. (<http://blogs.dickinson.edu/buddhistethics/2015/04/17/everyday-religion-and-public-health-in-kathmandu/>)
- Premaratne Geetha. *Andare: Folktales from Sri Lanka*. Upper Ferntree Gully, Victoria: Papyrus Publishing, 1999
- Rhys Davids, T.W. *Buddhism: Its History and Literature*. New York: G.P. Putnam, 1896.
- Strong, John S. *The Legend and Cult of Upagupta: Sanskrit Buddhism in North India and Southeast Asia*, Princeton University Press, 1992.

A Study of Health, Medicines, Hygiene and Etiquette in Ancient India

Prof. Siddhartha Singh, Ph.D.
Department of Pali and Buddhist Studies,
Banaras Hindu University, India
ssinghbhu@gmail.com

Date of Call for Article:

27 May, 2024

Article Received Date:

18 July, 2024

Date of sending for peer review:

6 August, 2024

Date of receiving from peer review:

15 September, 2024

Date of Revision:

24.09.2024

Date of Acceptance:

11 November, 2024

Date of Publication:

26 January, 2025

Abstract

Background: This paper explores health, hygiene, medicine, morality and social etiquette of the people in the contemporary societies in ancient India focusing on the accounts of Chinese pilgrims Yuan Chwang (629-645 A.D.) and I-tsing (671-695), the two pilgrims who visited India during 7th Century.

Objective: The paper aims to explore the travelogue of the Chinese visitors as the primary source of the article which is abound with the information in regard to health, hygiene and dietary habits including medicinal practices, moral practices and social etiquettes practiced by the monastic and non-monastic people in the contemporary societies in ancient India.

Methodology: Library based methodology of historical research, textual analysis, and comparative cultural study have been applied to complete this article.

Result: Yuan Chwang gives details of personal cleanliness, dietary rules, and measures for treatment of illness during 7th century India whereas I-tsing gives accounts of health practices - exercises, diet and medicine - in Buddhist monasteries. The paper compares the health practices of ancient India and contemporary China focusing on spiritual and physical discipline and their contribution in maintaining well-being of the people in the society.

Conclusion: The paper explores the prevalence of healthy characteristics in the societal people, like cleanliness, cultural values, morality, reverence and self-discipline, in both physical and spiritual world, in the societies of India during that time.

Keywords: Hygiene, Medicine, Manners, Buddhism, Monastic Life

Paper Type: Research Paper

© 2025 The Author. All rights reserved.
For permissions,
Contact: research@lbu.edu.np

This work is licensed under
Creative Commons Attribution-Non
Commercial-No Derivatives 4.0

International License.
<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/>



Introduction

The principal Chinese Pilgrims who visited India and wrote the accounts of their travel were Shih Fa-shien (400 A.D.), Sung Yun and Hwei Sang (500 A.D.), Yuan Chwang (629 A.D.) and I-tsing (670 A.D.). Out of these, only Yuan Chwang and I-tsing have left a detailed account of their travel which portrays every aspect of the life of ancient Indian people during 7th cent. A.D.

This paper is a humble attempt to understand the means of maintaining the health by keeping hygiene, showing good manners regarding the way of life inside the monastery and in the society by the common people in the ancient India during 7th cent. A.D. The centres which have been taken into consideration in this paper are the centres existent in India during 7th cent. A.D. The present researcher, having examined thoroughly the travel accounts of Yuan Chwang and I-tsing, the two illustrious Chinese pilgrims who depicted a splendid picture of the ancient India, renders an outlook of the general picture of the monk's and people's concerns regarding health in the ancient India, and more specifically Buddhist Centres.

Yuan Chwang's Account

Yuan Chwang, who stayed in India for 16 years during 629 - 645 A.D., is more concerned with practices of the common Indian people and briefly, as compared to I-tsing, illustrates the ancient Indian way of fooding, drinking, clothing, cleanliness, ablution and manners in his celebrated travel account known as Ta-t'ang-Si-Yu-Ki.

On Cleanliness and Ablutions etc.

Yuan Chwang writes about Indians in general that they are very particular in their personal cleanliness, and allow no remissness in their particular. All wash themselves before eating; they never use that which has been left over from a former meal; they do not pass the dishes. It was must to destroy the wooden and stone vessels after its use. After eating they cleanse their teeth with a willow stick, and wash their hands and mouth. Until these ablutions are finished they do not touch one another. Every time they perform the functions of the nature they wash their bodies and use perfumes of sandal-wood or turmeric. People also wash and bathe themselves before offering their religious services and petitions.¹

Use of Herbs, Foods and Drinks for Health

People were fond of edible herbs and plants like ginger, mustard, melons and pumpkins etc. Onions and Garlic were little grown and few persons ate them. Whosoever uses them for food, were expelled beyond the walls of the town. The most usual food was milk, butter, cream, soft sugar, sugar-candy, the mustard oil, and all sorts of cakes made of corn.² People would eat Fish, mutton, gazelle, and deer generally fresh and sometimes, salted. The flesh of the ox, the ass, the elephant, the horse, the pig, the dog, the fox, the wolf, the lion, the monkey, and all the hairy kinds of animals was forbidden to eat. Those who eat them were despised and scorned, and are universally reprobated. They live outside the walls of town and are seldom seen among men.³

The various kinds of wines and liquors were used. The juice of the grape and sugarcane by the Kshatriyas, strong fermented drinks by Vaishyas, a sort of syrup, but not of the nature of fermented wine, made by grape or sugarcane by the Sramanas and Brahmanas were used as drink. The mixed classes and base-born were not different from other castes as regards food and drinks but their vessels

1 Samuel Beal. *SI-YU-KI i.e. Buddhist Records of the Western World* (Tr. of Hiuen Tsiang or Yuan Chwang's Travel Account) (Delhi: Motilal Banarasidass, 2004), Vol. I, p.77

2 Ibid, p.88

3 Ibid, p.89

were very much different in the value and material. When people get sick, they use copper drinking cups.⁴

Sickness and Treatment

Everyone who falls sick would fast for seven days. During this interval many recover, but if the sickness lasts, they take medicine. The characters of the medicines were different depending on the disease. The doctors differ in their modes of examination and treatment.

In a house where there had been a death there was no eating allowed; but after the funeral they could resume their usual habits. Those who would attend a death were considered unclean; they all would bathe outside the town and then enter their houses.⁵

Clothing, Manners and Forms of Politeness

When ever ancient Indian people sit or rest, they all use mats. The royal family and the great personages and assistant officers use mats variously ornamented, in they size they were same. The clothing of the people was not fashioned and mostly was fresh-white coloured. Those using mixed colour or ornament on the dress were considered little in the society.⁶

Ordinary people, being upright and honourable, were without cunningness in money matters and considerate in administering justice. They were not deceitful or treacherous in their conduct, and were faithful to their oaths and promises, being fearful of reaping the fruits of their evil deeds of this life in another life.⁷

There were nine methods of showing respects to others:⁸

1. by selecting words of a soothing character in making requests
2. by bowing the head to show respect
3. by raising the hands and bowing
4. by joining the hands and bowing low
5. by bending the knee
6. by a prostration
7. by a prostration on hands and knees
8. by touching the ground with the five circles
9. by stretching the five parts of the body on the ground

Of these nine methods the most respectful is to make one prostration on the ground and then to kneel and laud the virtues of one addressed. When at a distance it is usual to bow low; when near, then it is customary to kiss the feet and rub the ankles of the person addressed.

I-tsing's Account

I-tsing is the only foreigner pilgrim among all, who has given us such detailed information regarding the etiquette being practiced by the monks as well as the common people in the 7th cent.A.D in India. I-tsing stayed in India for 25 years during 671 - 695 A.D. and gives a liberal account of the

4 Ibid

5 Ibid, p. 86

6 Ibid, p. 75

7 Ibid, p. 83

8 Ibid, p.85

advantages of the proper exercise to health, symptoms of illness, rules of giving medicine, variety of medicines used for different diseases as well as the kind of medicines which must be avoided. Moreover, at many stages, he narrates the practices of the Chinese people in the same situation, which not only throws abundant light on the way of treatment adopted by the monks of Buddhist centres and common Indian people but also encourage us to conduct a comparative study of the both way of healthiness in that age.

Regarding Food

Among the priests and laymen, it was customary to distinguish between clean and unclean food. If but a mouthful of the food had been eaten, it became uncleaned, and the utensils in which food was put were not to be used again. As soon as the meal was finished, the utensils used were removed and piled up in one corner. All the remaining food was given to those who legally ate such (i.e. the departed spirits, birds, and the like); for it was very improper to keep the food for further use.⁹

At a reception or any ordinary meals, no one was ought to touch another or taste any fresh food until he had rinsed his mouth with pure water and after each course, a mouthful of which would defile him, he repeated the rinsing. When a man had touched a dog he had to purify himself. Those who had partaken of a meal remained together on one side of the hall, and washed his hands and rinsed their mouths and also washed the things used during the meal and the soiled pots.¹⁰

In his twenty seventh chapter, I-tsing says that one should take a small meal according to the condition the four great elements of which one's body consists.¹¹ Lighter meals are allowed by the Buddha in addition to the ordinary meal; be it rice-water or rice itself, food is to be taken according to one's appetite.¹²

Day break is generally called 'the time of phlegm' when the juice of the night food is still hanging about the chest, being as yet undispersed. Any food taken at this time disagrees. He gives an example here- "If, for example, one add fuel when the fire is already flaming, the added fuel will be consumed, but if one put grass over a fire which is not as yet blazing, the grass will remain as it is, and the fire will not even burn".¹³

Food at an improper time was forbidden in the monastic system but, in the case of disease one may eat food at any unprescribed time if this be the physician's order. "In such case, the Buddha said, the food is to be given in a private place".¹⁴

Cleansing after Meals

I-tsing says, "When a meal is finished, do not fail to cleanse the hands. In getting the water, fetch a water-jar yourself or order others to do so...Chew tooth-wood in the mouth; let the tongue as well as the teeth be carefully cleansed and purified. If the (unclean) spittle be yet remaining in the mouth, the religious fast may not be observed, while the lips should be washed either with pea-flour or with mud

9 J. Takakusu. *A Record of the Buddhist Religion as practiced in India and the Malay Archipelago* (Tr. of I-tsing's Travel Account), (Delhi: Munshiram Manoharlal, 1966), p.24

10 Ibid, p.25

11 Ibid, p.126; I-tsing clearly endorses here the Buddhist concept of matter described in Abhidhamma Texts. For example, Abhidhammatthasangaho expounds that earth, water; fire and air are the essential Rupa-s.

12 Ibid, p.127

13 Ibid

14 Ibid

made by mixing earth with water, so as not to leave any taint of grease.”¹⁵

After wards the water was to be poured out of the clean jar into a conch-shell cup, which was to be held over fresh leaves or in the hands. If the cup touched the hand, it was necessary to rub it with the three kinds of cleansing material i.e. pea-flour, dry earth, and cow-dung, and washed it with water to take off the taint. In a secluded place water had to be poured right into the mouth from a clean jar, but this was forbidden in a public spot. After rinsing the mouth 2 or 3 times it was generally regarded as cleansed. Before doing this it was not allowed to swallow the mouth-water or spittle. Anyone Breaking this rule and so lowering his dignity was considered faulty.¹⁶

Two Jugs for Keeping Water

The cleaned water was kept separately from water for cleansing purposes, (touched) and there were two kinds of jars (*i.e. Kundli and Kalasa*) for each. Earthenware or porcelain was used for the clean jar and the jar for water for cleansing purposes was made of copper or iron. The clean water was ready for drinking at any time and the touched water for cleansing purposes after having been to the urinal. The clean water had to be carried in a clean hand and placed in a clean place, while the jar for the ‘touched’ water was to be grasped by the ‘touched’ (or unclean) hand and was to be put in an unclean place. The water in a pure and fresh jar could be drunk at any time; the water in any other jar is called ‘special water’ (water to be used at certain prescribed times).¹⁷

To drink from a jar holding it upright in front was no fault, but drinking in the afternoon was not permissible. A jar was made to fit one’s mouth; the top of the cover had to be two fingers high; in it a hole as small as a copper chopstick was made. Fresh water for drinking had to be kept in such a jar. At the side of the jar there was another round hole as large as a small coin, two fingers higher than the drinking mouth. This hole was used for pouring in water, 2 or 3 gallons could be put in it. A small jar was never used.¹⁷

A priest, who travels, carries his jar, bowl, necessary clothes, by hanging them from his shoulders over his cloak taking an umbrella in his hand.¹⁸ If his hand was not much occupied, a jar for unclean water, leather shoes in a bag etc. was also taken.

The Morning Inspection of Water

Water had to be examined every morning. Accordingly as it was found in different places i.e. in jars, in a well, in a pond or in a river examining was different. Early in the morning jar-water was first to be examined. After pouring about a handful of it, by inclining the jar, into a pure bronze cup, a ladle made of bronze, a conch shell, or a plate of lacquer-work, poured it slowly on a brick. Or, by means of a wooden instrument made for this purpose, observed the water for some moments, shutting the mouth with the hand. Insects, even as small as a hair point, should be avoided. If any insects were found, the water was again returned into the jar, and washed the vessel with other water twice until no insects were left in it.¹⁹

If there was a river or a pond in the neighbourhood, they took the jar there and threw away the water containing insects; then fresh filtered water was put in the jar. If there was a well, water was used

¹⁵ Ibid, p.26

¹⁶ Ibid, pp.26-27

¹⁷ Ibid, p.28

¹⁸ Ibid, p.29

¹⁹ Ibid, pp. 30-31

after filtering it.²⁰ For straining water, fine white cloth was used in India whereas in China, fine silk.

Use of Tooth-Woods

I-tsing says, “Every morning one must chew tooth-woods & clean the teeth with them and rub off the dirt of the tongue as carefully as possible.” Only after the hands have been washed and the mouth cleansed is a man fit to make a salutation; if not both the saluter and the saluted are at fault. Tooth-wood is Dantakāshtha in Sanskrit, danta-tooth and kāshtha – a piece of wood.”²¹ The rough root of northern Burr—weed is the most excellent, he further claims.

Then breaking the wood and bending it, they rubbed the tongue. In addition to the tooth-wood, some toothpicks made of iron or copper were used or a small stick of bamboo or wood, flat as the surface of the little finger and sharpened at one end could be used for cleaning the teeth and tongue; but had to be careful of not hurting the mouth. After the use, the wood was washed and thrown away.

“Tooth-wood hardens the teeth, scents the mouth, helps to digest food, or relieves heart-burning. If this kind of tooth-cleaner be used, the smell of the mouth will go off after a fortnight. A disease in the canine teeth or toothache will be cured after a month”, I-tsing declares.²²

The younger priest would chew as per their likeness, but the elders hammered the stick at one end and made soft; the best one which was bitter astringent or pungent in taste.²³

Advantages of Proper Exercise

In his 22nd and 23rd chapter, I-tsing describes the rules of sleeping and resting followed by monks, along with the note on the importance of exercise. Generally, monks and laymen would take a walk in the forenoon (before eleven o' clock) and late in the afternoon. I-tsing says, "If any one neglects this exercise he will suffer from ill health, and often be troubled by a swelling of the legs or of the stomach, a pain in the elbows or the shoulders. A phlegmatic complaint likewise is caused by sedentary habits".²⁴ But walking round a temple or a Caitya must be performed with special reverence for the sake of religious merit. Unfortunately, "This suitable practice has long since been discontinued at China" I-tsing laments. Senior monks while accepting the salutation by the junior monks would say ' Ārogya'. "This word implies one's praying that the one addressed may not have any disease"²⁵ I-tsing explains.

Concerning Evacuation

One had to put on a bathing skirt for the lower part of the body, a Saṅkakshikā robe for the upper part. One had to fill up a jar with water for cleansing purposes, went to the lavatory with that jar, and shut the door in order to hide one. 14 balls of earth were provided and placed on a brick plate, or sometimes on a small board, outside the lavatory. The size of the brick or board is one cubit long and half a cubit wide. The earth-balls were to be grounded into powder and made into two rows, the powder of each ball being placed separately. There had to be an additional ball placed there.

One took three balls in the lavatory and put them aside. Of these three, one had to be used in rubbing the body, another in washing the body. The manner of washing the body was.²⁶

20 Ibid, p. 31

21 Ibid, p. 33

22 Ibid, p. 34

23 Ibid

24 Ibid, p 114

25 Ibid, p 115

26 Ibid, pp. 92-93

One should wash the body with the left hand, and again purify with water and with the earth. There was still one ball left, with which one roughly washed the left hand once. If they had a piece of card (or peg) it was well to bring it in, but when it had been used, one threw it away outside the lavatory. But if an old paper was used, it was thrown away in the urinal. After the purification had been done, one adjusted the clothes, put the water-jar on one side, opened the door with the right-hand, and came out holding the jar in the right-hand. Again embracing the jar with the left arm but closing the left hand, one shut the door behind him with the right hand and left the urinal.

Now one came to the place where the earth-balls were kept and squat down on one side; if one used a mat, one placed it accordingly as the occasion demands. The jar was placed on the left knee and was pressed down by the left arm. First the seven earth-balls which were near one's body were used one by one in order to wash the left hand and then the other seven one by one was used to wash both hands.

The surface of the brick and wood (board) had to be cleanly washed. There was still another ball left with which the jar, arms, abdomen and feet (soles of feet) had to be washed. The water in the jar was not fit to be put in the mouth and to the lips. One came back to one's room and washed the mouth with water contained in a clean jar. When one touched the jar after having been to the lavatory, one had to wash the hands and rinse the mouth again, and then one was fit to touch any other utensils.

In winter one may use warm water, in the other three seasons one may use whatever he liked. Some kept water in their mouth and went out of the lavatory; this practice was against the rules of purification.²⁷

Bathing at Proper Times

I-tsing's concern towards health precautions followed by the monks begins with the depiction of bathing habit of them. There were more than ten great pools, with abundant water, near Nālandā monastery and there every morning a bell was sounded to remind the monks of the bathing hour.²⁸ Monks would always take meals after bath because it had two benefits. First, the body becomes pure and empty, being free from all dirt. Second, the food will be well digested, as the bathing makes one free from phlegm or any disease of the internal organs.²⁹ I-tsing presents here a Chinese concept of cleanliness quoting a Chinese saying: "Wash hair when hungry, but bathe after food". But, he says, "Bathing after a good meal is forbidden in the (Indian) science of medicine" (Cikitsā Vidyā).³⁰ The regulations instructed to build a bath-room, use of bathing-sheet, way of coming to bathing place and taking bath with the reference of medical bath and use of oil instructed by Buddha himself, is also expounded.

On Symptoms of Bodily Illness

The medical science, one of the five sciences (*vidyā*) in India, shows that a physician, having inspected the voice and countenance of the diseased, prescribes for the latter according to the eight sections of medical science. The first treats of all kinds of sores; the second, of acupuncture for any disease above the neck, the third of the diseases of the body; the fourth of demoniac disease, the fifth, of the Agada medicine (i.e. antidote); the sixth, of the disease of children; the seventh, of the means of lengthening one's life; the eight, of the methods of invigorating the legs and body.³¹

27 Ibid, pp. 94-95

28 Ibid, p.108

29 Ibid, pp.109 -110

30 Ibid, p.110

31 Ibid, pp.127-128

'Sores' (1) are of two kinds, inward and outward. The disease above the neck (2) is all that is on the head and face; (3) any disease lower down from the throat is called a 'bodily' disease. (4) The 'Demoniac' is the attack of evil spirits and the (5) The Agada is the medicine for counteracting poisons (6) By 'children' is meant from the embryo stage until after a boy's 16th year (7) Lengthening life is to maintain the body so as to live long, while (8) invigorating the legs and body means to keep the body and limbs strong and healthy. These eight arts formerly existed in eight books, but lately a man epitomized them and made them into one bundle. All physicians practice according to this book.³²

Regarding Medicines

I-tsing further describes the subdivision of the above mentioned diseases also. Having examined the classifications presented by I-tsing, one can easily understand that Monks would follow Ayurvedic method of treatment as these are the eight sections of Āyurveda, with a little difference that the I-tsing's fifth section 'Agada' is the sixth and sixth section 'Kaumārabhritya' is the fifth section of the Āyurveda.

I-tsing gives credit to 'a man' who epitomized these eight sections in one book, which formerly existed in eight different books. Takakusu, in his additional notes, states that "this epitomizer may be Susruta, a famous physician, disciple of Dhanvantari and contemporary of I-tsing or just before I-tsing".³³ I-tsing in this context gives a small account of his Divine Land's (China) herbs and Indian herbs also. Chinese herbs viz. "*Ginseng (Aralia Quinquifolia)*, *the Chinese fungus (Panchyma cocos)*, *the Tang-Kuei (Aralia Cordata)*, *the Yuan-chih (Polygala sibirica)*, *the tubers of Aconite (Aconitum fischeri)*, *the Fu-tsze (Aconitum variegatum)*, *the Ma-huang (Corchorus capsularis)*, *the Hsihsin (Asarum sieboldii)* and such like are best herbs in the China, and are never found in the West (i.e. India)"³⁴ he says.

Haritaka, Saffron, Assafoetida, Baroos camphor, three kinds of Cardamoms and two kinds of Cloves were used in India in the same way as in China. I-tsing repeatedly warns the people to be alert in their food habit. He is in full agreement with the way of life of Buddhist monks of Nālandā, stating that an established disease may be cured without expending much medicine, and that a fresh disease may be prevented by leading a life of abstinence and controlling the mind. "Each man is himself the king of physicians and any one can be the Jīvaka."³⁵ These words of him reminds us the words of the Buddha as said in the Dhammapada: "*attā hi attano nātho, attā hi attano gati*" i.e. self, indeed, is the saviour of self; self, indeed is the refuge of self.³⁶ I-tsing, despite attributing the past actions (*Karma*) as the cause of present suffering or happiness, does not forget to accept the importance of a free-will to make our life healthy or hell and, therefore, he suggests that one should try his best to avoid the situation that leads to disease in the present life.

I-tsing has devoted his twenty eighth chapter describing rules on giving medicine. He starts with the reference of a Sutra preached by the Buddha on the Art of Medicine, which asserts that the disharmony of the four elements of the body makes us diseased. Disharmony of the earth should be understood by the 'inflammation of the abdomen' or 'chronic enlargement of spleen'. Disharmony of the latter three elements represents what is called, Tri-Dosh, a disturbance of the three humours of the body i.e phlegm (*Kapha*), bile (*Pitta*) and wind (*Vāta*) in the Āyurveda. I-tsing has prescribed a certain rules of medication³⁷ which can be summarized as follows:

32 Ibid

33 Ibid, p.222

34 Ibid, p.128

35 Ibid, p.133

36 Narada Thera (Tr.). *Dhammapada*, (Calcutta: Maha Bodhi Society of India, 1992), p.285.

37 J. Takakusu. Op.cit, pp.132-137

1. One should examine himself the cause of illness in the morning.
2. If any disturbance in the four elements is found on inspection, abstaining from eating must be observed as first aid.
3. If one feel that there is food remaining in the stomach, one should drink hot water mixed with dry ginger. Putting the finger inside the throat to cause vomiting can also be a solution.
4. If someone is severely suffering from the problem of phlegm, fasting is an effective cure and is in accordance with the general rule of the science of medicine (Cikitsā Vidyā).
5. Take the bark of *Haritaka*, dry ginger and sugar in equal quantities, grind the former two and mix them with sugar by means of some drops of water, and then prepare them in pills. This pill is effective to cure a sudden rush of blood causing fever, a violent pain in the hands and feet, any injury or wound of the body by any cause, cholera, diarrhea, headache, heart disease, eye disease and toothache.
6. If one bite a piece of *Haritaka* every day and swallow its juice, one's whole life will be free from disease.
7. After disease is cured, one should eat newly boiled rice and drink a plenty of well boiled lentil water mixed with some pepper, ginger or the piper longum (*pippali*) to recover from weakness caused by disease.
8. If one feels cold, kashgarian onions or wild mustard must be applied.
9. Anything of acrid or hot flavour removes a cold, with the exception of dry ginger but if ginger is mixed with other thing, it is also good.
10. In the case of being troubled by cold or fever, medical decoction prepared by well boiling a bitter ginseng is the treatment. Ghee, oil and honey also help.
11. It is not good to force a sick person attacked by violent fever to take cooked rice or food. It can be a dangerous thing.
12. Fasting for a week can be fatal also if the body is not diseased. But if it is diseased, fasting for a long time also can be beneficial.

I-tsing, as Yuan Chwang also has mentioned, informs us that Indian people, generally, would not eat onions at that time. Having observed the Indian people's practice of fasting, he proposes that Chinese people should also adopt the same. As compared to Chinese people, who always would eat uncooked fish and vegetables, Indians eat well cooked food mixed with assafoetida, butter, oil and spice, he states. I-tsing is highly pained and grieved with some wrong practices existed on the name of the treatment in India. In the case of sickness, people would use urine and feces as medicine, sometimes the dung of pigs or cats, which was put on a plate or kept in a jar. People would call it the "Dragon Decoction".³⁸

I-tsing attacks on the foul practices and suggests some real medicinal substances to tackle the problems, like, stones of sulphur, flowers of sulphur and gamboge for snake-bite as antidote, decoction of liquorice root, wild tea and bitter ginseng for malaria and so on.³⁹ The people, who take 'Dragon Decoction' are doing grave offence to the noble teaching (of the Buddha), he says. Unfortunately, a lot of such kind of foul practices can still be traced in the many Indian villages. While on the other hand, he says, in the Buddhist monasteries, even onions were allowed in the case of illness only. A monk, who has eaten onions, had to keep himself in a separate room to be purified by washing and bathing for seven days.

³⁸ Ibid, p.138

³⁹ Ibid. p. 140

As is evident from the above sketch, Yuan Chwang and, especially, I-tsing gives a liberal account of the advantages of the proper exercise to health, symptoms of illness, rules of giving medicine, variety of medicines used for different diseases as well as the kind of medicines which must be avoided. Moreover, at many stages, they also narrate the practices of the Chinese people in the same situation. These descriptions not only throws abundant light on the way of treatment adopted by the monks and common people of India, but also encourages us to conduct a comparative study of the both way of treatments in that age on the ground of such evidences.

Conflict of Interest

The author declares that there is no conflict of interest regarding the publication of this manuscript.

Works Cited

- Beal, Samuel. *SI-YU-KI i.e. Buddhist Records of the Western World (Translation of Hiuen Tsiang or Yuan Chwang's Travel Account)*. Vol. 1, Motilal Banarasidass, 2004.
- Takakusu, J. *A Record of the Buddhist Religion as Practiced in India and the Malay Archipelago (Translation of I-tsing's Travel Account)*. Munshiram Manoharlal, 1966.

A Buddhist Approach to Death and Its Lesson

Prof. Sanjib Kumar Das
Department of Indo-Tibetan Studies
Visva Bharati University, India
sanjibkdas73@gmail.com

Date of Call for Article:

27 May, 2024

Article Received Date:

20 June, 2024

Date of sending for peer review:

7 August, 2024

Date of receiving from peer review:

12 September, 2024

Date of Revision:

22 September, 2024

Date of Acceptance:

14 November, 2024

Date of Publication:

26 January, 2025

© 2025 The Author. All rights reserved.

For permissions,

Contact: research@lbu.edu.np

This work is licensed under
Creative Commons Attribution-Non
Commercial-No Derivatives 4.0

International License.

<https://creativecommons.org/choose/>

Licenses /by-nc-nd/4.0/



Abstract

Background: Buddhism says that life is a confluence, a cycle of birth and death. This cycle is called *saṃsāra*. Such life and death of every living being as a continuum, believing that consciousness continue after death and will be reborn. The early four incidents occurred in Buddha's life that motivated him to renounce household life are the best examples to understand death.

Objective: The objective of the paper is to explain that human body is consisted of five aggregates. As long as we have these aggregates we have to undergo the sufferings including death.

Methodology: Library based analytical approach has been employed to carryout this research.

Result: Through the study human body is found to be consisted of five aggregates. Suffering is inevitable as long as we have these aggregates. Death is unavoidable. Meditation is key to lead humans free from death and suffering. Upon doing practice it in a precise and unmistaken way one is engaged in unmistaken *śamatha* and *vipaśyanā* to uplift humankind from the bondage of *Samsara*.

Conclusion: Death is certain to happen and it has three reasons for this certainty: one must die because there is no one who has not died before, the body is composite, and life ebbs from moment to moment. In addition to these three, the time of death is uncertain because some die in the womb of mother, some just after birth, some at young age and so on. This death has two main divisions, three main causes: Process of ceasing sense powers at the time of death and process of dissolutions of elements of the time of death. Similarly, the experience which beings have at the time of death varies. However, there is certainly a way to be free from this unwanted suffering of death and that can be possible upon following the prescribed path beginning with the mindfulness of death as expounded by the Buddha and his successors.

Keywords: *Bodhicaryāvatāra*, Death, Mindfulness, *Ratnāvalī*, *Saṃsāra*

Paper Type: Research Paper

Introduction

Buddhism says that life is a confluence, a cycle of birth and death. This cycle is called *saṃsāra*. Such life and death of every living being as a continuum, believing that consciousness continue after death and will be reborn.

Undoubtedly, Gautama the Buddha was an embodiment of skillful means, great compassion and wisdom. He deliberately descended to the human world with the sole purpose of liberating beings from the ocean of suffering by means of showering down the ambrosia of the sacred Dharma. It can rightly be said that his Dharma was like rain, and his disciples received and have still been receiving according to their own capacity and interest. He never gave any dharma-teachings just for showing his greatness, rather gave in accordance with their interest, disposition and capacity solely for the sake of welfare.

On the basis of general assertion, the Blessed One (*Bhagavān*) turned three Wheels of Dharma owing to having threefold trainee, and their threefold interest and capacity. His entire teachings given in the three Wheels are composited and preserved in the Three Baskets of Teachings (*Tripiṭaka*) and Four Classes of *Tantra*. The huge corpus of teachings may be systematized into two themes: doctrine and tenets or conduct and philosophy. *Siddhānta-Ratnāvalī* by Geshe Konchok Jigme Wangpo cites:

My *dharma* has two modes

Doctrine and tenets.

To children I speak doctrine

And to *yogis*, tenets.¹

The subject matter related to non-violence, ten virtuous actions, law of *karma* etc., are included in the former theme while the subject matter related to emptiness, selflessness, impermanence, momentariness etc., are included in the latter. Regarding the trainees who are to enter and hold the tenets assert the four seals. They are: all compounded things are impermanent, all contaminated things are miserable, all phenomena are empty and selfless, and *nirvāṇa* is peace. The proposed topic of discussion relates to the first assertion among the four, i.e., impermanence. It is probably the most important and essential doctrine that Buddha taught during the first Wheel of Dharma. The term ‘impermanence’ refers to that every phenomenon changes and disappears accordingly at every moment, and nothing lasts forever. It tells us that whatever we feel and see, it is liable to change next moment. Buddha very clearly mentioned, and even gave his last sermon to his disciples that everything composite is impermanent. *Udānavarga* states:

The end of every hoarding is spending,

Of every rising is falling,

Of every association is dissociation and

Of all living is dying.²

The essence the above verse is applied in both animate and inanimate things. Nevertheless, as said above, Buddhism teaches life and death of every living being as a continuum, believing that consciousness continues after death and will be reborn. In short, life is a confluence, a cycle of birth and death. This cycle is called *saṃsāra*. Regarding this death, it may be discussed through the given sub-themes:

1 (Trans.) Hopkins, Jeffery, *Practice and Theory of Tibetan Buddhism* (English), New Delhi: B.I. Publication, 1997, p. 2

2 *Jewel Ornament of Liberation*, p. 42

Death

For understanding death, I think, first of all we should go through and be familiarized with the life story of the Śākyamuni Buddha to understand how he was motivated and also became restless after witnessing the four sights: a sick person, an old person, a dead body and a mendicant or renouncer. What did strike his mind when he came across the sight of a dead body among the four? I think, when he was acquainted with the fact that once one was born was liable to die, he intended to find out the way how to transcend, how to escape the state of death bearing intolerable sufferings.

Regarding death, Buddhism says, it is a separation between mind and body; the intimate connection between mind and body collapses when it occurs. It means that when death occurs, no longer exists this body. It is the complete cessation of life processes that eventually occurs in all living organisms. Wikipedia explains: “The irreversible cessation of all biological functions that sustain an organism is called death.” It is also defined as the irreversible cessation of functioning of the whole brain, including the brainstem. Thus, each and everyone have to be dissociated from all the things that we developed some close connection to within this lifetime. Actually, we are part of nature, and so death is a nature of our lives; death is part of our lives. It is not something strange, something unusual. In fact, logically, if we see we will find that life definitely has a beginning and an end – there’s birth and death. Thus, death is not something strange. It occurs every single day, all over the world.

Actually our body is a biological shell as a guest-house in which the travelling consciousness sojourns but briefly, soon to go to another, quite different, place. This almost endless, age-old journey involves staying in hundreds, thousands, of such temporary residences until liberating truths finally release the weary traveller.

Besides, Buddhism also elucidates, human body is consisted of five aggregates (*pañca skandha*)-Form (*Rūpa*), Feeling (*Vedanā*), Perception (*Saññā*), Mental Formations (*Saṅkhāra*) and Consciousness (*Viññāṇa*). These five condensed into three: forms, consciousness and non-associated compositional factors. Until we have this body consisting the five aggregates we have to undergo four basic sufferings: birth, old age, sickness and death, although there are several other minor sufferings. These four sufferings, particularly death, is the inevitable part of our lives. So, as long as we have this body, no matter how much effort we do make, use our skill, tactics etc., we cannot escape from these sufferings including death. Therefore, when any major or minor suffering befalls on this body, we may sometimes think that the body is our enemy, it is the root of suffering, but it is not the fact.

So as long as we have this body consisting the five aggregates we have to undergo the above-mentioned four basic sufferings: birth, old age, sickness and death, although there are several other minor sufferings. These four sufferings, particularly death, is the inevitable part of our lives. So, as long as we have this body, no matter how much effort we do make, use our skill, tactics etc., nothing can protect us from these sufferings including death. Therefore, when any major or minor suffering befalls on this body, we may sometimes think that the body is our enemy, it the root of suffering, but it is not the fact.

In a nutshell, death is certain to happen and it has three reasons for this certainty. One must die because there is no one who has not died before, the body is composite, and life ebbs from moment to moment. In addition to these three, the time of death is uncertain because some die in the womb of mother, some just after birth, some at young age and so on. No lament of children, parents and wife can allure, no handsome bribe can tempt, no force can frighten, or no power can divert death when it comes. As it is mentioned in *Bodhicaryāvatāra*:

However, much one may have accumulated

And however long one may have enjoyed it with pleasure,
 Like a man who seems have split open,
 One departs naked and empty-handed. (6.59)
 When the hour of death comes,
 One's own children do not become one's refuge,
 Nether are father, mother or friends.³

Division of Death

In general, modern science divides death as brain death or biological death, neocortical brain death and total brain death. In other terminologies, these are called: clinical death and molecular death. Buddhist sources, on the other hand, say that death is basically divided into two kinds: untimely death and timely death. Untimely death is the result of violence, accidents, operation failure, abortion, miscarriage etc., while timely death is the result of the natural end of one's lifespan. In this concern, Padmasambhava mentions: "Human beings face two causes of death: ultimately death and death due to the exhaustion of their nature lifespan. Untimely death can be averted through the methods for prolonging life. However, when the cause of death is exhaustion of the natural lifespan, you are like a lamp which has run out of oil. There is no way to averting death by cheating it; you have to get ready to go."⁴ In other terminologies, it can also be used as sudden death and gradual death.

Causes of Death

Modern science presents that the causes of death can be grouped into three categories: communicable (infectious and parasitic diseases and maternal, perinatal and nutritional conditions), non-communicable (chronic) and injuries. On the other hand, Buddhism says that the causes of death may have many, but they are summarized into three: exhaustion of life span, exhaustion of delusions and exhaustion of action. Nāgārjuna says in *Ratnāvalī*:

The causes of death are many,
 Those of staying alive are few,
 These too can become causes of death,
 Therefore always perform the practices. (3.78)

Among the three, the first one simply refers to the cessation of biological functions that sustain an organism which may be natural death of someone or it may occur due to an accident etc. It may occur even in the womb of one's mother, at young age or before the natural lifespan. Though for the second one, we sometime use the term death, but it is actually quite different from the former one. Though for the second one, it is called death but for the person or animal who dies is not still free from the bondage of *karma* and *kleśa*. He is still to be born in the *saṃsāra* after a certain period of time of his death and survive with five contaminated aggregates which continue till he purifies himself by clearing away all his delusions and actions. According to *Abhidharmakośakārikā*, the contaminated aggregates are also called 'existence' because it circle from one birth and death to another. Regarding the second one, it is actually a state of an *arhat* which is obtained when one's *kleśas* and contaminated *karmas* are exhausted. It has two kinds: residual and non-residual. A residual *arhat* remains in the *saṃsāra* with his miserable aggregates which are supposed to have obtained as a result of this past lives, and these are liable to discard at the time of attaining the state of non-residual *arhat*. On the other hand, non-residual *arhat* exists with the five uncontaminated aggregates. For example, after attaining Buddhahood

3 Quoted. *Jewel Ornament of Liberation*, p. 48

4 Rinpoche, Sogyal. *The Tibetan Book of Living and Dying*, Calcutta: Rupa & Co., 1997, p. 244

Tathāgata Buddha survived for forty-five years with his miserable aggregates which he discarded at the time of attaining Mahāparinirvāṇa at Kuśinagara. It may be noted here that he already conquered death and prolonged his lifespan for another three months for the sake of his one disciple. Regarding the last one, sometimes question is raised by many people that if Buddha had already attained enlightenment being free from all negativities, why he left the human world at the age of eighty or eighty-one. In answer, we should know that when a holy being referring to a Bodhisattva abiding on the tenth ground he acquires the authority over age (*āyuvāśita*). As a result, he becomes able to appear in the world at any time and also can demonstrate the deed of leaving the world any time. However, his appearance occurs on account of the force of prayer and great compassion for the benefit of beings. The same thing also happened with the lifespan of Gautama the Buddha who prolonged his life for one of his disciples ‘Subhadra’ who were to train and tame by him. He was his last initiated disciple. After training and taming him, the Buddha decided to leave his contaminated body at Kuśinagara.

In some other sources, four causes of death have also been discussed: Exhaustion of the reproductive *karmic* energy (*karmakṣaya*), the expiration of life-term (*āyukṣaya*), exhaustion of both (*ubhayakṣaya*) and obstruction of the life-flow (*upacchedaka-karma*). The first three among the four are included in the timely death while the rest one comes under untimely death. Therefore, a death howsoever it occurs comes under any of these two or four. Nārada exemplifies these fourfold death with a wick, oil, both and gust of wind. He says: “An oil lamp, for instance, may get extinguished owing to any one of the following four causes, namely the exhaustion of the wick, the exhaustion of oil, simultaneous exhaustion of both wick and oil, or extraneous cause like gust of wind.”⁵

Ceasing of Sense Powers at the Time of Death

According to Buddhism, the whole universe is comprised of three realms: desire realm, form realm and formless realm. Among the three, at the time of death in the formless realm, three sense powers: the life□force power, mental power, and equanimity sense power cease simultaneously. At the time of death in the form realm, eight cease simultaneously: the five sense powers of the eye and so forth, the life□force power, the mental power, and the equanimity sense power. Finally, at the time of death in the desire realm either ten, nine, or eight sense powers cease simultaneously. When both signs are absent, eight sense powers cease: the five sense powers of the eye and so forth, sense power of the life force, the mental power, and the equanimity sense power. When a being of desire realm has both signs, ten powers cease simultaneously, whereas if a desire realm being has one sign nine sense powers cease simultaneously. This is from the point of view of sudden death. A gradual death is one that is accompanied by the successive dissolutions of the elements and so forth. In the case of the beings of the three birth□sources other than the miraculous – those born from a womb, from heat and moisture, and from an egg – four powers newly cease: the body sense power, life□force sense power, mental sense power, and equanimity sense power. When the mind of death is virtuous, an additional five sense powers also cease: the five sense powers of faith, mindfulness, effort, meditative stabilization, and wisdom. Its description is beautifully discussed in the second chapter of *Abhidharmakośakārikā* in particular. Similarly, regarding the description of death, *Bodhicaryāvatāra*, *Ratnāvalī*, *Udānavarga* and several other Buddhist texts also present its thorough description.

Dissolutions of Elements of the Time of Death

From Buddhist point of view, two kinds of dissolution take place at the time of death: outer dissolution and inner dissolution. Outer dissolution refers to the dissolution of sense organs and five elements whereas inner dissolution refers to the occurrence of ‘Appearance, Increase’ and ‘Full Attainment’. In this context, the great Tibetan Master Sogyal Rinpoche says: “With disappearance of the

5 Narada. *The Buddha and His Teachings*, Malaysia: Buddhist Missionary Society, 1988, p. 435

wind that holds it there, the white essence (*śukra*) inherited from our father descends the central channel towards the heart. As an outer sign, there is an experience of ‘Whiteness’ like “a pure sky struck by moonlight.” As an inner sign our awareness becomes extremely clear, and all the thought states resulting from anger, thirty-three of them in all, come to an end. This phase is known as “Appearance”.

The mother’s essence (*śoṇita/rakta*) begins to rise through the central channel, with the disappearance of the wind that keeps it in place. The outer sign is an experience of ‘Redness’ like a sun shining in the pure sky. As an inner sign, there arises a great experience of bliss, as all the thought states resulting from desire, forty in all, cease to function. This stage is known as “Increase”.

When the red and white essences meet at the heart, consciousness is enclosed between them...As an outer sign, we experience of a state of mind free of thoughts. The seven thought states resulting from ignorance and delusion are brought to an end. This is known as “Full Attainment”. Then, as we become slightly conscious again, the Ground Luminosity dawns, like an immaculate sky, free of clouds, fog or mist. It is sometimes called “The mind of clear light of death”.⁶

According to another Vajrayāna source, functions of two consciousness occur at the time of death. The two consciousnesses are: subtle consciousness and gross consciousness. Gross consciousness, also called ordinary mind, is based on the five senses and the functions of the body. So, when the body stops functioning, so does gross consciousness. This kind of consciousness is like energy, so once the body ceases, this consciousness ceases.

In *śamatha* (calm abiding) meditation, one can experience subtle consciousness and differentiate it from gross consciousness. If we try doing this without enough skills, there’s a chance we might not come back. A thorough understanding of emptiness is necessary, so that we don’t experience the ordinary self or the “I” that must be dissolved.

Inevitability of Death

It has already been mentioned above that death is a universal happening, not something unusual. It is a confluence, a cycle of birth and death. **It means, after death, there no longer exists the body.** It certainly happens because at the time of death the body's normal systems start to function slowly. Followed by it, the heart beats a little more slowly, or with a little less force, and so blood is moved around the body more slowly. This means the brain and the other organs receive less oxygen than they need, and do not function as well. Gradually, a time comes when the function of the five sense organs including brain totally stops. At that time, it is declared death.

Experience at the Time of Death

Regarding this sub-theme, I think we should be very clearly acquainted with the fact that man in particular is born with empty hand and also dies with empty hand.⁷ As at the time of birth, he is not required to take anyone’s permission, so at the time of death, particularly natural death, he does the same thing. Only time makes him wait for his last breath. No lament of children, parents and wife can allure, no handsome bribe can tempt, no force can frighten or no power can divert death when it comes. Except the collection of wholesome⁸ and unwholesome actions, nothing goes with him. His property, name and family, everything is left behind. So, if a holy being dies by accumulating wholesome actions and by purifying his negativities, he becomes very happy by thinking that he will have to take no more birth in the *samsāra* out of *karma* and *kleśa*. On the other hand, those who die after doing unwholesome

6 Rinpoche, Sogyal. *The Tibetan Book of Living and Dying*, Calcutta: Rupa & Co., 1997, p. 258

7 *Bodhicaryāvatāra*, 8.32

8 *Bodhicaryāvatāra*, 2.41

actions throughout his life or with attachment, he will experience many unwanted fears and miseries. The fears are summarized into four: fear of separation from loved ones, fear of leaving your possessions behind, fear of not being able to remain part of this world and fear of losing one's self or the 'I'. On the other hand, miseries referring to the miseries of various denizen hells, hungry ghosts, animals and so on.

Mindfulness of Death

This is the most important sub-theme of this topic. Mostly, we may think, each and everyone in the universe without any exception, one who is born has to die one day accordingly. If so, why should we be concerned with it? As answer of this question, life is, as it has already been mentioned above, that this *samsāra* is full of suffering. Birth is suffering, old age is suffering, sickness is suffering and death is also suffering. These four are called the primary suffering. In addition to these, there are countless secondary or additional sufferings. Although we are born with suffering, but there is a way to get rid of them. The appearance of the Buddha in this world was mainly for the purpose of showing the right path to get rid of the sufferings.

There is a popular proverb in Tibetan saying, "Happy is to get sick; Pleased to die." This proverb indicates the feeling of a siddha or noble being who have pleasant feeling when he dies because he thinks that he is going to be free from the appropriating aggregate consisting four primary sufferings: birth, old age, sickness and death. In fact, the Buddha himself called death as the 'the greatest of all teachers'. Why? The reason is, the awareness that sooner or later we will definitely die encourages us to lead a meaningful life. When we see that it could come at any time, we become much less likely to fight and argue over minor and perishable things. Instead, we become motivated to make the life meaningful by benefiting others as much as possible. Here meaningful life does not mean to the present life only, rather together with the present the future life also. It is because Buddhism describes life or birth as being beginningless and endless. Endless means, until the cause of this miserable body is not eradicated, life or birth will continue and suffering will follow as well like one's shadow⁹. Therefore, our main focus needs to eradicate the cause of suffering consisting *karma* and *kleśa*.

Now the question arises as how to get rid of the sufferings including death by eradicating their causes, and gain happiness instead. Does it fall down from the sky; is it transferred by some Almighty or some unknown and supernatural power; does it emerge from the earth? According to Buddhism, happiness or misery whatever it may be, everything come under the Law of Karma. Every happening in the *samsāra* has a specific cause behind it and it is interdependent too. Nothing is causeless and there is nothing that does not come under the law of dependent origination. This is the reason that the Buddha said:

All phenomena are produced from cause.

Its cause has been spoken by the Tathāgata.

Their cessation whatever it may be

Has been spoken by the great Śramaṇa.¹⁰

Actually, all sufferings in connection - wealth, property, name etc., befall upon us for not understanding the real meaning of the Dharma as well as our wrong identification. We have four wrong apprehensions: apprehending what is impermanent as permanent, apprehending what is suffering as happiness, apprehending what is selfless as having a self and apprehending what is impure as pure. Due to these four wrong apprehensions, we commit and amass many misdeeds resulting sufferings here and hereafter. As antidotes to the causes of all those sufferings, the Compassionate Master introduces eighty four thousand kinds: Twenty-one thousand aggregates of Dharma as antidotes to attachment,

9 Dhammapada, (1.17)

10 *Yedharmā hetuprabhavā hetuṃ teṣāṃ tathāgato hyavadat/teṣāṃ ca yo nirodhoḥ evaṃ vādī mahāśramaṇa//*

twenty-one thousand aggregates of Dharma as antidotes to hatred, twenty-one thousand aggregates of Dharma as antidotes to close-mindedness or ignorance, and twenty-one thousand aggregates of Dharma as antidotes to all the three root delusions in equal proportions.¹¹ In this way, the entire teachings of the Buddha incorporated into four groups of antidotes against eighty four thousand delusions. However, for getting rid of the suffering of death, the Buddha and his successors also introduce a path called mindfulness of death.

Regarding mindfulness of death, question may arise, why should a person in particular be mindful about death? The reason is that he perceives that death is really suffering and if death continues, birth will also do so. In this way, a bondage will be formed resulting him compelled to remain in the *saṃsāra* forever. Therefore, he seeks; he needs to get rid of it depending on the correct path. How should he begin? A person wishing to develop mindfulness of death should first cultivate wakefulness of its inevitability. Everyone who has ever lived has died, and there is no reason to suppose that anyone presently alive will be able to escape death. Even the Buddhas, Bodhisattvas, siddhas and sages of the past have all died, and so it should be clear to a person who thinks on this that the same fate awaits us all. Every moment should be viewed as being precious, and we should make the utmost effort to use our time to the best advantage. Similarly, a person wishing to develop mindfulness of death need not go to a cemetery or a funeral ground: death is occurring everywhere and at all times. Even the cells of our bodies are constantly being born and dying. All of us are inexorably moving toward physical death in every moment. Since every created thing is impermanent, everything we see, hear, touch, taste, love, despise, or desire is in the process of dying. There is nothing to hold onto, nothing that remains unchanged from moment to moment, and so anyone who tries to find happiness among transient created things is doomed to disappointment.

After making this decision, the practitioner needs to consider the uncertainty of the time of death and also to decide that it might occur at any moment, which should lead to a resolve to begin practising dharma immediately. Practice should not be put off until the future, but should begin right now. A person who thinks, “I’ll wait until the children are grown,” “After I finish this semester I’ll begin meditating,” or “I just don’t have enough time right now” will probably never get around to meditation, and even if he does, meditation will most likely be half-hearted. A person who wishes to make real progress must feel a strong, sense of urgency, like a person caught in a burning house looking, for a way out.

In this process, one will come to understand that at the time of death only spiritual accomplishments will be of any worth. Material possessions, friends and relatives, worldly acclaim and power all vanish at the time of death, leaving nothing behind. None of these can be his company for his next life. Moreover, one’s future birth will be determined by one’s actions in this life, and so one should resolve to practice meditation and other religious activities diligently.

Buddhist teachings on preciousness of human birth consisting freedom states (*kṣaṇa*) and endowment (*sampad*), concept of the existence of past and future lives etc., are very important for the practice of mindfulness. It teaches that if human rebirth does not happen, then one’s opportunities for becoming aware of the problems of *saṃsāra* and seeking a solution will greatly be diminished. Humans are uniquely situated in *saṃsāra*: they are intelligent enough to recognize the problems and sufferings of *saṃsāra* (unlike lower types of beings such as animals), and they are not so overwhelmed by either suffering or happiness that they are blinded to the realities of *saṃsāra*. A person who understands this situation should become aware of death and resolve to “extract the essence” of the present life.

Mindfulness is practised by focusing on its specific characteristics (*Svalakṣaṇa*) and meditating by focusing on its general characteristics (*Sāmānyalakṣaṇa*).

11 *dharmaskandhasahasrāṇi yānyaśītiṃ jagau munih* /, *Abhidharmakośakārikā*, 1.25a //

(i) Specific characteristics— It is meditated by remembering and understanding that the body is impure, feeling is miserable, mind is changeable at every moment or liable to disintegrate instantly and delusive phenomena are the objects to be abandoned whereas the purified phenomena are the objects to be adopted. (ii) General characteristics— It is meditated by thinking that all compounded phenomena are impermanent, all contaminated things are miserable, all phenomena are empty and selfless, and nirvāṇa is peace and virtuous. *Abhidharmakośakārikā* states:

*Niṣprannaśamathaḥ kuryāt smṛtyupasthānabhāvanām/
Kāyaviccittadharmāṇām dvilakṣaṇaparīkṣaṇāt//* (6.14)
(Through achieving calm abiding (*śamatha*),
Meditate on the close contemplation (*smṛtyupasthāna*)
By thoroughly investigating the two characteristics of
Bodies, feelings, minds, and phenomena.)

Thus, its commentary explains: “One meditates on the mindfulness on body, feeling, mind and phenomena by thoroughly investigating the specific and general characteristics of body, feeling, mind and phenomena. For example, with respect to the body one investigates its specific characteristics of heaviness and lightness and so forth, and investigates its general characteristics of being impermanent, suffering, selfless and empty.”¹² Upon doing practice it in a precise and unmistakable way one is engaged in unmistakable *śamatha* and *vipaśyanā*. Its unified practice leads him control his mind in particular from doing anything wrong. Gradually, he becomes free from death and other sufferings.

Conflict of Interest

The author declares that there is no conflict of interest regarding the publication of this manuscript.

Work Cited

- Dalai Lama. (Trans.) Tsepak Rigzin. *Opening the Mind and Generating a Good Heart*, Dharamsala: Library of Tibetan Works and Archives, 2007.
- Das, Sanjib Kumar. *Basic Buddhist Terminology*, Sarnath: Kagyud Relief and Protection Committee, 2009.
- Je Gampopa. *Ornament of Liberation* (Tibetan Version). U.S.A.: Institute of Tibetan Classics, 2009.
- Narada. *The Buddha and His Teachings*, Malaysia: Buddhist Missionary Society, Trans. Rinpoche, Sogyal. *The Tibetan Book of Living and Dying*, Calcutta: Rupa & Co, 1988.
- Hopkins, Jeffery, *Practice and Theory of Tibetan Buddhism* (English), New Delhi: B.I. Publication, 1997.
- (Trans. & Ed.) Negi, Wangchuk Dorje. *Dhammapada*. Sarnath: Central Institute of Higher Tibetan Studies, 2013.
- Vasubandhu. (Trans.) Deva, Acharya Narendra. *Abhidharmakośa*, Allahabad: Hindustani Academy, 1959

12 Translated into Tibetan by Thubten Sherab Sherpa, 2003

Buddhism of *Nepalmandala*: Scope and Challenges in Modern Context

Manik Ratna Shakya, PhD.
Deen, Faculty of Buddhist Studies
Lumbini Buddhist University, Nepal
manik.shakya@lbu.edu.np

Date of Call for Article:

27 May, 2024

Article Received Date:

26 July, 2024

Date of sending for peer review:

8 August, 2024

Date of receiving from peer review:

13 September, 2024

Date of Revision:

22 September, 2024

Date of Acceptance:

18 November, 2024

Date of Publication:

26 January, 2025

Abstract

Background: Buddhism of Nepalmandala is also known as Newar Buddhism. This Buddhism has carried a long history of Nepal; it can demonstrate Nepalese art and architecture, and it has been followed by the indigenous people of Nepal for a long time. The sacred Buddhist monuments of this Buddhism, such as Swayambhu and Baudha Stupa are listed in the world heritage. This Buddhism is preserving the ancient tradition of Nalanda and Bikramsila University which were world-renowned Buddhist universities in the world in the ancient period around 7-9 centuries.

Objective: This paper is meant to highlight the historicity and essential features of Buddhism of Nepalmandala as well as its challenges at present situation. Besides, in this paper, an attempt is made to address the cause of major challenges and its solution.

Methodology: Library-based research methodology has been used in this paper which involves historical and textual analysis to examine the historical tradition of Buddhism of Nepal Mandala.

Result: As recorded in history, renowned Buddhist masters of Buddhism of Nepalmandala named Silamanju, Kalyanmitra had established Buddhist lineage in Tibet. They had played an essential role in propagating Buddhist philosophy, logic, doctrine, contemplation etc in Tibet. Till now, there are 300 Buddhist monasteries of the Buddhism only in the Kathmandu valley, kingdom of Nepal. However, due to the different types of obstacles, this Buddhism is facing various types of challenges at present.

Conclusion: Most of the Buddhist monasteries are in critical condition because of the influence of modern construction. The number of followers and practitioners of this Buddhism is being minimized and the young generation are being far from the education of this Buddhism because of the influence of modernity.

Keywords: Buddhism, Nepalmandala, Buddhist Culture, Scope

Paper Type: Research Paper

© 2025 The Author. All rights reserved.

For permissions,

Contact: research@lbu.edu.np

This work is licensed under

Creative Commons Attribution-Non
Commercial-No Derivatives 4.0

International License.

<https://creativecommons.org/choose/>

Licenses /by-nc-nd/4.0/



Introduction

Nepāl is a sacred land on the lap of the Himalayan range. It is located in between of two countries: China and India. Kathmandu valley is the kingdom of Nepal. The Valley, once was a huge lake in the ancient time, is surrounded by the mountains. According to the Buddhist Text, *Svayambhu Purāṇa*, when the place was lake, self created light manifested on huge lotus flower which was blossoming on the lake, Later, a gigantic *Caitya* called *Svayambhu* was constructed by covering self created light using jewel stones¹. The inhabitants of the valley have been practicing Buddhism on the basis of the Philosophy of the *Svayambhu Caitya*. The Buddhism based on *Svayambhu Caitya* is being continued from generation to generation. Great Scholar named Hemrāj Śākya has said that the Buddhism based on *Svayambhu Caitya* is the Traditional Buddhism of Nepāl.² This Buddhism contained Philosophy of Five Transcendental Buddhas of *Svayambhu Caitya*.³

Foreign scholars seem to have given term 'Newār Buddhism' to the Buddhism of Nepalmandala. Because, the traditional Buddhism has been followed by *Newār* Communities since ancient period and that Buddhism is reflected by *Newār* culture.

Historically, Brian Hodgson, a pioneer naturalist and ethnologist worked in Nepal as a British Resident around 1830 A.D., seems to have used the term 'Newār Buddhism' to the traditional Buddhism which were prevailing in the Kathmandu valley at that time.⁴ Later, other scholars such as David Gellner, Michel Allen, Merry Slusser, Oldfiel, and Neils Gutcho have used the term wildly.

Significance of Buddhism of Nepalmandala

Buddhism of Nepalmandala is existing based on *Svayambhu Caitya*. Because of *Caitya*'s architectural as well as philosophical significances and historicity, the UNESCO has listed in the world heritage. Therefore, this *Caitya* now became not only national heritage of Nepal but also a world heritage. Similarly, Bauddha Stupa is also one of the essential monument of Traditional Buddhism. This is the gigantic buddhis monument of Nepal which seems to have been constructed in four century. This is also listed in world heritage. Based on these evidences, it can be said that traditional Buddhism is also recognized by UNESCO.

Buddhism of Nepalmandala is associated with Mahayan and Vajrayana Buddhism. The great masters of Buddhism i.e. Padmasambhava, Atisa Dipenkarshreegyan went to Tibet via Kathmandu Valley. They had practiced at different places of the valley. Besides, Vagiswarkirti, also known as Phamthinpa, studied from Nalanda University and established Chakrasambara Tradition in Nepal. Silmanju, called Bhalpo Silmanju in Tibet, resident of Kathmandu valley, disseminated Buddhism in Tibet. Many Indian Buddhist scholars entered in this Buddhism around 13 century after the Nalanda and Bikramsila University collapsed. Thus, it has influence of Nalanda Tradition. Besides, This Buddhism represents entire Buddhist art and architecture of Nepal.

Followers of Buddhism of Nepalmandala

The followers of Buddhism of Nepalmandala of can be classified into two groups as follows:

- 1 Min Bahadur Śākya and Shantaharsh Vajracharya, *Svayambhu Puran*, Lalitpur: Nagarjun Institute of Exact Methods, 2001.P. 16.
- 2 Hemraj Shakya, *Shree Svambhu Mahachaitya*, Kathmandu: Svayambhu Vikash Mandal, 2004, p. 6-7.
- 3 Bajraraj Shakya, "Nepal Mandalaya Bauddha Sanskritiya Visheshata" *Nepal Mandalaya Bauddha Sanskriti Sammelana 1119*, conference Volume, Lalitpur: Lotus Research Center, 1999, p. 30.
- 4 Surendra Man Vajracharya, *Monasticism in Buddhism of Nepal Mandala: Continuity and Changes*, A Ph. D. Dissertation submitted to Tribhuva University, 2013, p. 25.

Monastic Class

Śākya: śākyas are the chief followers of Buddhism of Nepalmandala. They are the clan of Shakyamuni Buddha. According to the history, Shakya dynasty ruled in Kapilvastu around 26 hundred years ago. They were massacred by king virudhaka then they came to Kathmandu valley.

The term śākya can be found in the inscription of the eight century. They have been following this Buddhism as household Buddhist monk. Buddhist ordination and initiations should be taken by Śākyas according to system of Buddhism of Nepalmandala and they perform daily ritual in Buddhist monasteries.

Vajrācārya

They have to take ordination and initiation of *Ācāryāviśeka*, then they are recognized as Buddhist priest. They are the leading figure of *Newār* Buddhism and give religious teaching and perform religious rituals as well as rites. Historically, the tradition of the *Ācārya* or the lineage of *Vajrācārya* goes back to the ancient Buddhist siddhas. Other historical sources show that the fifth Licchavi king BaskaraVarma authorised the Buddhist householder *Ācārya* to conduct the daily worship and other ceremonies.⁵

Lay Followers

There are different groups of caste following Buddhism of Nepalmandala as lay follower. The lay followers are categorized based on their occupation. They are as follows:

Sthāpit (Architecture), Silantha(clothes weaver for deities), Shikharākāra(Pinnacle constructor) , Kansākāra: (Bronze utensil maker), śilākāra (stone worker), Tulādhāra (Business experts), Vajrakarmi (plastering worker) , Madhikarmi (sweet bread makers), Sāyami (oil mker), Māli (nursery worker), Dangol (brick works), Rañjitrkār Coloring worker on clothes, Nakarmi (Iron Smith), Jośī (Astrologer) , Kumha (Potter), Nau (Barber), Jogi (Trumpet player), Tamrākār(copper smith) etc. are chief followers of Buddhism of Nepalmandala

The lay followers had been playing vital role for the preservation and promotion of Buddhism of Nepalmandala. Due to the kind co operation, co-existence, financial and moral support of different groups, the Buddhism of Nepalmandala is existing in the Kathmandu Valley from ancient time to present age.

Chief Features of Buddhism of Nepalmandala

Buddhism of Nepalmandala has carried out a long history of Nepāl. In course of time, the Buddhism has been changed with the infection of local environment, culture, custom and tradition. Then, the Buddhism became a blossomed flower of distinctive characteristics, which can be traced out as follows:

Mixed Practices of *Mahāsāṅghika* and *Sarvāstivāda*

The exiting four days monkhood tradition in traditional Buddhism is locally known as ‘Bare Chuyegu’. It is also called Pravajyasambar. The term ‘*Pravajyā*’ was used by Buddha first to give ordination to Yasa Kumar in Buddhist history. The term ‘*Pravajyā*’ is mostly applied in the śrāvakayān. Again, after consecration of Pravajya, the boys are given begging bowl and a staff (silāku), which has an effigy of the Buddha (or of a Stupa) at the top. It is also mentioned that the novice holding begging bowl and a staff is the influence of Sarvāstivāda.⁶ Chinese Pilgrim XuanXang mentioned in his travel accounts that the number of Hinayanī Buddhist monks were there. Some scholar illustrated that the four

5 Naresh Man Bajracharya, *Buddhism in Nepal*, Delhi: Eastern Book Linkers, 1998, p.17.

6 Gellner, f.n. 21.

days monkhood practice in traditional Buddhism seems to have been made impact of *Mahāsāṅghika*.⁷ An inscription of 8 century has also stated a presence of Bhikshunī Saṃgha belonging to the *Mahāsāṅghika* sect. Likewise, the *Sāṅkhu* inscription of Amśuvarmā period (606-621 A.D.) also mentions about the Mahāsāṅghika Bhikshunī Saṃgha. Historically, existence of celibate monks can be found during the seventh century.. The above mentioned practices and historical accounts suggests that there are practice of *Mahāsāṅghika* and Sarvāstivāda.

Moral Practice

Moral practice is one of the key factors in Buddhism. According to Buddhism, Moral practice is main gate to be eligible for Samadhi or contemplation. It is also said that Saṃgha, followers of Buddhism, should be fulfilled with Moral Practice. It is observed in *traditional* Buddhism through *Vrata* (Moral Practicing Observance). Among the various *Vratas* existing in *Newār* Buddhism, *Upośadha Vrata* is prominent one. *Pośadha Vrata* is the central purpose of the *Guṇakaraṇḍavyuha*; it is governed by *Karuṇamaya*, *Amoghapāśa* *Lokeśvara*.

Various *Caityas* and Their worship

Newār Buddhist people have sacred values of building a *Caitya* according to the Buddhist scriptures of Nepāl. Most of the lay Buddhists worship *Caityas* in the memory of demised people as their memento. Because of their strong devotion towards *Caitya*, numerous *Caityas* can be seen in the valley.

In the context of Nepāl, there was the practice of making simple clay models of *Caitya* in the beginning, but with the passage of time, developed into more complicated and artistic styles which became a distinct art of Nepāl.⁸ This progressive change in the *Caitya* style can be easily seen from the simple styles of the Lichhavi period and the still more decorative and complicated design of the Malla period.⁹

Various types of *Caitya* are found in Kathmandu valley. In the *Dighanikaya Sutra*, *Caityas* are classified into four groupssuch as (1) *śāiririk Caitya*¹⁰ or (2) *Paribhoga Caitya*¹¹. (3) *Dharma Caitya*¹²(4) *Udeshya Caitya*¹³. In the context of Kathmandu valley, historically, emperor Ashok is said to have constructed four Ashokan Stupas in Lalitpur City. Likewise, Gigantic Stupas, listed in world heritage, such as *Svayambhu*, Bauddha are worshipped in special occasion.¹⁴ These are huge *Caityas* of Kathmandu Valley. According to the records preserved in Lotus Research Center, there are more than 4200 Chitaya; big and small, in the Kathmandu Valley.

International Pilgrimage Sites

Buddhism of Nepalmandala contains the great pilgrimages site of *Svayambhu Mahācaitya* and Bauddha *Caitya* and the Red Lokesvara of Bungamati, Lalitapur. The date of construction of *Svayambhu*

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Karunakar Vaidya, *Buddhist Tradition and Culture of Kathmandu Valley*, Kathmandu: SajhaPrakashan, 1986, p.77.

⁹ Ibid

¹⁰ *Caitya* monuments containing some sacred objects belonging to the Buddha.

¹¹ Monuments which contain same articles used by the Buddha.

¹² *Caitya* monuments with some sacred religious manuscripts stored inside

¹³ *Chaityas* which are built with some objectives other than the preceding three purposes.

¹⁴ Vaidya, f.n. 45, p. 79

and Bauddha dates back to at least 500 A.D.¹⁵ and Red Lokeshvara to 800 A.D.¹⁶ Within the Nepālese landscape, these great pilgrimage sites include much of *Newār* mythologies and practical religion.

***Sukhāvati* Tradition**

Buddhism of Nepalmandala is entirely influenced by Mahāyān and Vajrayān Buddhism. The aim of the followers of this Buddhism is not only to achieve *Samyakasambhodi* but also to be born in *Sukhāvati* Heaven, the land of Amitābha Buddha. Therefore, the followers of this Buddhism wish their rebirth in *Sukhāvati* Heaven. When any person passed away, the followers of this Buddhism express: “*Sukhāvati bhūvanaye bāsa lāyemā.*” This means, may he be reborn in *Sukhāvati* Heaven.

Sanskrit Manuscript Based

It is said that Buddhist Doctrine were written in Sanskrit language in the council of Emperor Kanikṣka. After that, many Buddhist manuscripts seem to have been written Sanskrit language. In the context of Nepāl, Sanskrit language was once the official languages in Liccavi period. Almost all inscriptions and testimonies were inscribed in Sanskrit Language in the period. Therefore, the Sanskrit manuscript might have obtained space in Nepāl. Referring to the Sanskrit manuscripts, Dr. Suniti Kumar Catterji writes, "One great service of the people of Nepāl, particularly highly civilized *Newārs*, was the preservation of all the manuscripts of *Mahāyāna* Buddhist literature in Sanskrit."¹⁷ Most of the texts used in the Buddhism of Nepalmandala are written in Sanskrit language which were kept in national archive of Nepal.

Scopes

Svayambhu, Bauddha and Red *Lokeshvara* of *Bungamati* have been taken as International Pilgrimage Sites since long. Because, they are recorded not only in the Traditional Buddhism but also in Chinese, Tibetan and Indian sources.¹⁸ Sylvian Levi believed that *Svayambhu* is recorded in a fragment preserved from the account of Wang Hiuen-tse.¹⁹ William states that these sites are identified in illustrations found in 11th century manuscripts.²⁰ Tibetan pilgrimage guides and biographies similarly identify these two sites. Rospatt has mentioned that wealthy Tibetans and Indians were involved in late 12th century for restoration of *Svayambhu*. Hem Raj śākya explains: this is the pilgrimage sites and holy sites for Tibetans and Bhutanies contributed for its renovation. Lama Zhva-dmar-pa offered golden Torans for each shrine of *Caitya* in 1630 CE and offered a golden bell.²¹ Lama Thilendrahna repairs the old bell at *Svayambhu* in 1792 CE.²² Furthermore, the fifteenth renovation of *Svayambhu Caitya* was undertaken by Tibetan Nyigma Meditation center from America in 2010.

Similarly, the great stupa of Baudha is the principal center for Tibetan Buddhist and it has been a major destination of pilgrims for the entire Indian sub continent, south east and East Asia.²³ In the 14th century, a Tibetan renowned sage named Tongtang Gyelpo visited Bauddha. Since 16 century, successors of Śākya Zampo were appointed as the Tibetan government's residents at Bauddha and they

15 Shakya, f.n.18.

16 Locke, f.n. 13.

17 Min Bahadur Śākya, *Newār Buddhism : problem and Possibilities*, Lalitpur : Nagarjun Institute of Exat method.2006, p. 1

18 Vaidya, f.n. 45.

19 Will Tuladhar, *Remaking Buddhism for Medieval Nepal*, Canada: Routledge, 2006, p.161.

20 Ibid.

21 Ibid, p. 160.

22 Ibid, p. 263.

23 Saphlya Amatya, *Monument Conservation in Nepal*, Kathmandu: Vajra Book Shop, 2007,P.181.

undertook successive renovations to the fabric of the stupa.²⁴ From these all accounts, it is obvious that *Svayambhu*, *Bauddha* and *Red Lokeśvara* have been International sacred pilgrimage sites since long. At present, these monuments can be further developed as international pilgrimage center.

Challenges

In the 21 century, many foreign scholar have researched on the Buddhism. *Michen Allein* has cited that *Traditional Buddhism of Nepal is the Buddhism without monks, it is of Buddhist Ācāryas. Will Doglous's opinion is against of the manner; he strongly commented, "Saying Buddhism without monks is mistake on several calculation"*. He further writes in this issues: "*Śākya and Vajrācārya* undergo monastic initiation thus they can be said as monks".²⁵ David Gellner writes, Buddhism of *Nepalmandala* is of *Householder Buddhist Monks*. He further says: "*Newār Buddhism* is short for the traditional *Mahāyāna* and *Vajrayāna* Buddhism practiced by the *Newārs*; if the *Newār* Buddhists had not been preserving Nepalese culture through Buddhist practice, Nepalese culture would have disappeared from the revolution of history long ago."²⁶ Despite being facing various arguments of people, this Buddhism is surviving without monks. Therefore, this Buddhism nowadays being a unknown Buddhism in the world.

The lay followers have been changing their professions due to influence of modern profession. There was a lineage of profession, the profession was transfer generation to generation that's why they had intensive knowledge of skill but now those skill is being disappeared. When *swayambhu* renovation was undertaken in 2010, the difficult situation was created to search experts in the traditional works of stone, brick, wood etc.

Thousands of Buddhist Sanskrit manuscripts are preserved in the archive but modern Eurocentric education is influencing in Nepal. New generation does not interest to study Sanskrit language and they donot want to get Buddhist teaching, furthermore government didnot give preference to the Buddhist education even Nepal is the birth place of Buddha.

Traditional Buddhist monasteries concerned with the renowned arts are being disappeared due to the influenced of modern construction. Modern technology is followed by the people and construction of traditional artistic monument became expensive. Thus, people are rejecting to preserve traditional Buddhist art.

Conclusion

Buddhism of *Nepalmandala* has carried out a long history of Nepal from the period of Buddha. It is demonstrating Nepalese art and architecture. The most remarkable character of this Buddhism is that it has preserved the lost traditions of Indian Buddhism to this day. Nowadays, Buddhism of *Nepalmandala* is interpreted in Narrow Sense. It is taken as a Buddhism of *Newār's* only or Buddhism of a limited *Newār* Caste or Buddhism of an ethnic group. In facts, it is Buddhism of *Nepalmandala*.

Due to the modern technology, traditional art and architecture are facing problems and those arts are being disappeared. Similarly, focusing on modern education, the traditional moral and spiritual education of Buddhism is being underestimated. In the modern society, people donot want to follow the Buddhism in traditional way, thus the traditional ritual and practice system is loosing its originality. Besides, lay followers and loosing their expertise in their occupation. In addition, the huge amount of Sanskrit literature written in ancient scripts are being a matter of archive. Furthermore, the Buddhist

²⁴ Ibid, 182.

²⁵ Will Tuladhar Douglas, *Remaking Buddhism for Medieval Nepal*, Canada: Routledge, 2006, p. 119,123.

²⁶ David N. Gellner, *Monk, Householder and Tantric Priest*, Delhi: Manas Saikia for foundation Books , 1993, pp. 218-225.

art and architecture, which are also known as National Heritage of Nepal, are in critical condition due to lack of preservation and negligence of modern society; they are scattered here and there. Therefore, attention should be given towards those monuments.

Conflict of Interest

The author declares that there is no conflict of interest regarding the publication of this manuscript.

Works Cited

- Akira, Yuyama, *Prajñāpāramitā Ratna guṇa saṃcaya gāthā*, Hamburg: University of Hamburg, 1976.
- , *A History of Indian Buddhism*, Delhi: Motilal Banarasidas, 2007.
- Allen, Michael, *the Dashakarma Vidhi*, Kathmandu: Mandala Book Point, 2010.
- Amatya, Saphlya, *Monument Conservation in Nepal*, Kathmandu: Vajra Book Shop, 2007.
- Bangdel, Dina, *Manifesting the Mandala*, Ohio: Ohio State University, 1999.
- Barua, Dipak Kumar, *Vihars in Ancient India*, Calcutta: Indian Publication, 1969.
- Beer, Robert, *Tibetan Buddhist Symbol*, Chicago: Serindia Publication, 2003.
- Bhagachandra Jain, Hevajra Tantra, Baranasi: Sanmati Prachya Shodha Sansthan, 2000.
- Chandra, Lokesh, *Transcendental Art of Tibet*, New Delhi: Aditya prakashan, 1996.
- , *Nispanna-yogavali*, New Delhi: Aditya Prakashan, 2015.
- Chawdhry, Rajneesh, *Gemology: Chips of Brilliance*, India: Goodwill Publishing House, 2004.
- Douglas, Will Tuladhar, *Remaking Buddhism for Medieval Nepal*, Canada: Routledge, 2006.
- Dutta, Nalinaksha, *Buddhist Sects in India*, Delhi: Motilal Banarasidass Publishers, 2007.
- Gellner, David N., *Monk, Householder and Tantric Priest*, Delhi: Manas Saikia for foundation Books, 1993.
- Grunwedel, A., *Buddhist Art in India*. Delhi: Motilal Banarasidas, 1996.
- Niels Gutschow, *The Nepalese Chaitya, 1500 years of Buddhist Votive Architecture in the Kathmandu Valley*, London: Axel manages, Stuttgart, 1997, p. 20.
- Law, B.C., *A History of Pali Literature*, Delhi: Vasu Publication, 2012.
- Locke, John K., *Karunamaya, the Cult of Avalokitesvara-Matsyendranatha in the Valley of Nepal*, Kathmandu: Sahayogi Prakashan for CNAS, 1980.
- , *Buddhist Monasteries of Nepal*, Kathmandu: Sahayogi Press Pvt. Ltd. 1085.
- Manandhar, Tri Ratna, *A Study on Buddha's Approach to Business*, A Thesis submitted to Central Department of Buddhist Studies, T.U. , Kirtipur: 2006.
- Ram, Rajendra, *History of Buddhism in Nepal*, Patna: Jana Bharati Prakashan, 1977.
- Regmi, D.R., *Medieval Nepal*, Culcutta: Firma K.L. Mukhopadhyay, 1966.
- Shakya, Hemraj, *Shree Svambhu Mahachaitya*, Kathmandu: Svayambhu Vikash Mandal, 2004.
- Shakya, Min Bahadur, *Princess Bhrikuti Devi*, Delhi: Book Faith India, 1997.
- , *Hirnyavarna Mahavihar*, Lalitpur: Nagarjun Institute of Exact Methods 2006.
- , *Iconography of 108 Lokeshvaras*, Lalitpur: Young Men's Buddhist Association, 2011.
- , *The Iconography of Nepalese Buddhism*, Kathmandu: Federation of Handicraft Association of Nepal, 2011.
- Shrestha, Khadgaman, *History of Buddhism in Nepal*, Kathmandu: Kamala Devi Shrestha, 2008.
- Vajracarya, BadriRatna, *Buddhism of Nepal*, Anandakuti Vihar Trust, 1986.
- Vajracharya, Dhanavajra and Kamal Prakasha Malla (Ed.), *the Goplarajavamsavali*, Kathmandu: Nepal Research Center, 1985.
- Vajracharya, Manik Man, *Gurumandala Puja*, Nagoya: Ichi Gakuin University, 2006.
- Vajracharya, Nareshman, *A Brief introduction to Nepalese Buddhism* (A paper presented at the one day special talk program on Buddhism in china and Nepal.
- , *Buddhism in Nepal*, Delhi: Eastern Book Linkers, 1998.

- Vidyalankar, Harishchandra, *An Introduction to Precious Stones*, Delhi: Ranjan publications, 2010.
- Wright, Daniel (ed.), *History of Nepal*, New Delhi: Asian Educational Services, 1990.
- Yosizaki, *The Kathmandu Valley as a Water Pot*, Kathmandu: Vajra publication, 2012.
- ... *Diamond Essential*, America: Gemological Institute of America. 2014.

An Analytical Study of Buddhist Art and Jain Art

Ramesh Rohit (Ratnasheel Rajwardhan), Ph.D.
Assistant Professor-*Theravada*
Sanchi University of Buddhist-Indic Studies, India
rameshrohit14@gmail.com

Date of Call for Article:

27 May, 2024

Article Received Date:

17 June, 2024

Date of sending for peer review:

7 August, 2024

Date of receiving from peer review:

16 September, 2024

Date of Revision:

27 September, 2024

Date of Acceptance:

14 November, 2024

Date of Publication:

26 January, 2025

Abstract

Background: Buddhist and Jain artworks are rich manifestations of spiritual and cultural meaning. Buddhist art includes portrayals of Gautama Buddha, *Bodhisattvas*, narrative scenes, mandalas, and Buddhist-related things such as stupas and temple architecture. Buddhist art originated in the northern Indian subcontinent and changed as Buddhism expanded throughout diverse regions, influencing and being inspired by local creative traditions.

Objective: The objective of this paper is to explore both Buddhist and Jain artworks that have a lengthy history of creation and evolution, reaching back to the Maurya and Kushan eras highlighting the art forms that contain spiritual significance, serving as visual representations of Buddhist and Jain theories and beliefs.

Methodology: Library-based historical and textual analysis approach as well as has been applied to carry out this research and visual analysis of the art work and architectural features have been used for data collection to study the evolution and significance of Buddhist and Jain artworks.

Result: Buddhist art have been found evolved from early Buddha's sculptures to include Bodhisattvas reflecting Buddha's biography, His teachings and the Buddhist philosophy where as Jain art has been found marked by simplicity, serenity and beauty depicting Tirthankaras like Mahavira and Parshvanatha, reflecting Jain philosophy. Both art forms visually represent their respective beliefs and teachings and philosophy.

Conclusion: Buddhist art and Jain art have a long history reaching back to Mouryan and Kusan dynasty. Buddhist art began with devotional sculptures of Buddha and events from his life, but gradually expanded to include depictions of *Bodhisattvas* and other figures as prominent subjects. Jain art, on the other hand, is distinguished by its simplicity, elegance, and emphasis on symmetry and proportion, reflecting Jain philosophy and values.

Keywords: Buddhism, Jainism, Symbol, Religion, Art

Paper Type: Research Paper

© 2025 The Author. All rights reserved.

For permissions,

Contact: research@lbu.edu.np

This work is licensed under
Creative Commons Attribution-Non
Commercial-No Derivatives 4.0

International License.

<https://creativecommons.org/choose/>

Licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/



Introduction

In the early Buddhist art, Buddha is shown in the form of some symbols, especially stupas, instead of human figures. It is said that Buddha's body relics were divided into eight parts and stupas were built on each part, out of which 7 stupas were built by Kshatriyas and the eighth by Brahmins of Vethdeep. The elements in the birth of Buddha, that is, he was a symbol of both the ideals of Yogi and Chakravarti. Along with stupas, the worship of Buddha was symbolic. It was done through symbols such as lotus feet, empty throne, Triratna, anointing of the newborn by pouring water from a pot by two elephants after Maya Devi gave birth, etc. The importance of stupas was considered to be the strongest because these stupas were built on the remains of Gautam Buddha's bones, due to which it was the strongest centre of faith for the followers of Buddhism and culture.

Gradually, after Gautam Buddha, Buddhism and its culture started getting divided on the ideological level and after some time, this rift started increasing in various Buddhist Councils and Buddhism got divided into *Theravada* and *Mahayana* branches. This division in Buddhism arose from different interpretations of the thoughts of Gautam Buddha, in which a big reason was the depiction of Gautam Buddha in human form. *Theravada* were strong supporters of accepting his existence in the form of symbols only; but *Mahayana* wanted to worship him in human form through idols. Therefore, about 400 years after the death of Buddha, the question arose as to how to make the idol of Gautam Buddha, because in 400 years he was worshipped in the form of symbols only and he was present in everyone's mind in this form.

Pratima means replica, which means similar shape. The word Pratima is actually used for those idols which are related to some religion or philosophy. Idol is generally the shape of a worldly human or creature, whereas the word Pratima is used for gods, goddesses, Gautams or deceased ancestors etc. There are certain rules and regulations for the making of a statue, as a result the artist is not completely free to make a statue and at the same time the expression of the artist's inner art is also not completely possible in it. So now this question is natural that after 400 years of *Mahaparinirvana* of Buddha, what symbols should be used and what characteristics should be expressed in the construction of the statue of Buddha, because the symbols were alive which we were seeing in the form of Triratna, lotus feet, empty throne and stupa; in which for human symbols, only lotus feet was such a symbol that brought the human concept alive. Therefore, before the statue of Buddha, *Mahayanas* imagined *Bodhisattvas*. Bodhisattva is one who wishes to attain Bodhi; the life of a seeker who attains the state of Bodhisattva is very noble, great and wide. The last wish of Bodhisattva is that the virtuous world that I have earned by practicing the true path, should be used to end the sufferings of the creatures of the whole world. Thus, after Buddha was accepted as a divine being, the path to make his idols was paved. But earlier symbols were incorporated in the idols of these *Bodhisattvas* so that *Bodhisattvas* could be easily associated with Buddha. In the third year of Kanishka's reign, *Mahakshatrapa Kharapallan* of Varanasi installed an umbrella-*yashti* along with the Bodhisattva idol. If we connect the installation of umbrella-*yashti* with the idol of Bodhisattva with the umbrella-*yashti* installed on the stupa, then it can be said that this was an initial effort, through which the form of Bodhisattva was first identified with a part of the Buddha symbol stupa, so that the belief could be strengthened that *Bodhisattvas* are an integral part of Buddhism. After this, a debate starts among art connoisseurs as to where the Buddhist idols were made first, in Mathura or Gandhara.

In this research paper of mine, I will not say anything on this point but I will mention one thing which is of utmost importance and it is told by Mr. Fuchs, Grenbedle, Smith and Tarn that since no ideal picture of Buddha's form and body was available, the artists made the first statue of Buddha in the form of Greek god Apollo. Round face, luxurious smile, hair style with curved lines etc. are Indian subjects but are non-Indian. Now if we see, it is true that under *Mahaparinirvana Sutta*, when Anand asks

Tathagata that "how will the last rites be done", then Buddha gave permission to build a stupa on his remains like Chakravarti kings and since the physical description of Buddha is not available anywhere, it was a very difficult question as to how to make the statues of Buddha and how these statues can easily get recognition among the Buddhists. In the Kushan period, the work of making idols started by combining Buddha's personality and some earlier symbols and Buddha idols were made in both *Sthanak* and *Asana Mudras*. The ideal of the idols made in *Sthanak* Mudra were the earlier prevalent Yaksha idols and for the idol in *Asana* Mudra, the ideal of Yogi was kept in front and the ideal of Buddha idol characteristics must have been accepted on the basis of 32 characteristics of great men, in which Urna between the eyebrows, *Pralambakarnapaash*, *Ajanabahu*, *Vishalvaksha* etc. were prominent. Statues believe that in the idols of Buddha, there is a *Ushnisha* on his head which is a symbol of discipline and some scholars call it tied hair. But the question is whether we have been able to explain till date what was the relevance of this *Ushnisha* or tied hair and why it has been shown in all forms with uniformity in the idols of Buddha from the beginning to the end. So, in this context, I believe that "the upper part of the head of the Buddha is a replica of the stupa and it has always been shown as the head of the Buddha. If the picture of the stupa of Sanchi and Dhamekh is carefully observed, then is the head of the Buddha visible in this part and then if the statues of Buddha of Mathura and Gandhara are observed, then it is clear that this entire part of the stupa has been lifted and placed on the head, which we cannot see separately from the Buddha and if we imagine both of them together (Stupa and Buddha Statue), then we do not understand the difference between them. Now if the statues of *Bodhisatva Maitreya* and *Avalokiteshwara* are compared with the statues of Buddha, we find that the hair on Maitreya's head clearly appears to be tied hair, but till date we have only been speculating on seeing the statue of Buddha that these are hair, whereas it appears to be the stupa, the main symbol of Buddhist faith. In an artwork of Gandhara art, Buddha is shown meditating and, in the sculpture, there are subordinate *Yakshas* and *Yakshinis* in various postures all around him. Right above the statue, the *Shalabhanjikas* are planting a banyan tree on the head of the Buddha statue, which is a symbol associated with Buddha's attainment of enlightenment.

Therefore, here Buddha is being established with symbols only, so how is it possible that before the statue of Buddha was made a big symbol, the stupa, the biggest symbol of Buddhism, did not find a place in the construction of Buddhist statues. Therefore, my opinion is that the figure installed on the upper part of the head in Buddhist statues is a Buddhist stupa. If we look at the statue of *Tathagata's Mahaparinirvana* in conjunction with the early statues of Buddhist art, one similarity becomes clear, that is the stupa of the head. Even at the age of 80 years, the head is exactly the same as in the statues of the time of *Dharmachakrapravartan*. This leads to the conclusion that the *Ushnisha* is not related to the hairstyle. If we look at the Borobudur Buddhist Temple of Java carefully, we can easily understand that the top part of the temple and the head part of the installed idol give us a clear message that they all represent the sacred symbol of Buddhism, the stupa.

After all the above discussions, our opinion is that the symbols that we find on the top part of the idol were adorned on the head part of the Buddhist sculpture due to the sanctity of the stupa so that the Buddhist followers do not have any dilemma in accepting this human figure as the human figure of Gautam Buddha and if the *Theravada* branch of Buddhism also wants to adopt it, then they get all those symbols of Buddha which were a part of Buddhist art and culture from the beginning. This subject opens the doors to many new dimensions and discussions on which historians need to think. The earliest historical sculpture found in India is of the Mauryan period of the 4th-3rd century B.C. Its bold and colossal style was clearly inspired by foreign elements from Achaemenid Persia. The great Buddhist emperor erected monolithic pillars of sandstone. These pillars, 30 to 40 feet high, had bulls, lions and elephants on top and Buddhist teachings of morality, humanity and purity were inscribed on the pillars. Emperor Ashoka wanted his subjects to follow these teachings.

Famous Ashokan pillars have been found at Lauria Nandangarh, Sanchi, Sarnath and vaishali Bihar. The most remarkable of these is the polished monolithic capital found at Sarnath, which is now the emblem of the Government of India. It shows four roaring lions facing the four cardinal directions and with their backs to each other. The circular capital is decorated with four Dharmachakras between which an elephant, a bull, a horse and a lion are carved in succession with great skill. The base of the capital is bell-shaped with a lotus with Dharmachakra, possibly symbolizing the victory of truth over human force. The figures are well-sculpted, realistic and distinctive, besides exuding power and dignity, which throws light on the aristocratic and international character of Mauryan art. A close look at the capital will be of great use to the accomplished student of art. The four lions above it are carved in a very figurative and conventional style. This becomes clear by looking at the mane of the lion which is depicted as a tuft of hair in the shape of flames, which is not natural but in a conventional style. The upper lip of the lions is depicted by three engraved lines, which are again figurative and in a conventional style.

We must remember that it was Ashoka who introduced the extensive use of stone for sculptures and monuments while the past tradition was to work with stone and clay. On closer inspection of the animals on the capitals, it is evident that they are not static or rigid. They have been depicted in a very natural and lifelike manner, having been observed in nature with great care. The bull-shaped capital from Rampurva, Bihar, also belongs to the third century B.C. and is an interesting study because it is a mixture of Persian and Indian elements. The lotus capital is completely figural. The beautiful ornamentation on the capitals includes rosette, palmetto and acanthus-like ornaments, none of which are Indian. But the supreme element of the bull capital is the bull itself, which is a great example of Indian sculpture. In this, the bull with a hump has been given a very fine shape. Its soft flesh, well-shaped legs, sensitive nostrils and alert ears have been carved beautifully.

The finest examples of the Mauryan art of human sculpting are the huge statues of the deities of fertility and prosperity, the Yaksha and the Yakshi. The Yakshi of the Patna Museum is an impressive example of the third-second century B.C. which must have been carved by a talented sculptor. The figure is huge and bold in its structure, wearing very heavy ornamentation and a heavy antariya. The Indian ideal of female beauty is beautifully depicted through the full breasts, slender waist and wide hips of this figure. Indian sculptors preferred to create their beautiful creations in poetic or visual metaphors rather than in clear observation. The beauty of this statue is enhanced by the distinctive glossy polish of this period.

Another impressive example of Mauryan art in the third century BC is a beautiful male torso statue found from Lohanipur. The realistic carving of the figure gives it a wonderful vigour. This figure may have been that of a Jain Tirthankara or a savior of the Digambara sect.

Scholars have presented special studies on Jain sculpture. Dr. Hiralal Jain, in his famous book "Contribution of Jainism to Indian Culture", has briefly thrown light on this subject and said that the statues found in Mohenjodaro and Harappa during excavations in the Indus Valley have changed the history of Indian sculpture, and its tradition has been proved to be thousands of years before the said period. Since the script of the writings found on the coins of the Indus Valley is still unknown, nothing can be said with certainty about the culture there. However, as far as comparative study can be done on the basis of statue-making, shape and expression, a great similarity is found between the headless nude statue of Lohanipur and the headless nude statue found from Harappa, and on the basis of the northeastern tradition, the statue of Harappa is proved to be completely different from the Vedic and Buddhist sculpture system and completely in accordance with the Jain system. It is proved from the Hathigumpha inscription of the Kalinga King Kharvel of the 2nd century BC that during the reign of the Nanda dynasty i.e. 4th-5th century BC, Jina idols were installed. One such Jina idol was kidnapped

from Kalinga by Nandaraj, and Kharvel brought it back after two-three centuries. Many Jina idols of the Kushan period have been found from the excavation of Kankali mound of Mathura, which are preserved in the museum of Mathura. An ancient headless Jina idol is preserved in the Patna Museum, which was found from Lohanipur. Due to the shiny polish on this idol, it is assumed to be of the Maurya period.

Kushan Period Jain Idols

We get abundant material for the study of ancient Jain idols in the 47 idols collected in the Mathura Museum. All the idols of Tirthankara are found in two types - one standing, which is called Kayotsarg or Khadgasana and the other sitting in Padmasana. All the idols are naked and in a meditative posture, with the nose pointed towards the tip. Those symbols like bull etc. which differentiate between various Tirthankaras are not found on these, which are found in the statues of later period. Stone-made Jain statues of Gupta period. This era starts from the fourth century of Christ. 37 statues of this era have been introduced in the catalogue of the Mathura Museum. The following characteristics of this era can be known from it. The general characteristics of the Tirthankara idols are the same which had developed in the Kushan period, but some special features are now visible in their entourage. The ushniya (head portion) of the Pratimaas is found to be more beautiful and curlier. Special decoration is seen in the prabhaval. In this regard, the statue of Neminath of Vaibhar mountain of Rajgir is worth attention, in the middle of whose throne is a man holding the Dharmachakra on his back and figures of conches are found on both his sides. Many Jain statues have been found from many places like the fort near Gwalior, Besnagar, Budhi Chanderi and Devgarh. There is abundant material for the study of Jain sculpture of Gupta and post-Gupta period in the statues of Devgarh. The decoration of the Bhamandal and the beauty and expressions of the side gatekeepers are in accordance with the art of the Gupta period. A metal statue of Parshvanath is in the Prince of Wales Museum in Bombay. The statue is in the Kayotsarga posture, and its right hand and snake-hood are broken, but the curves of the body of the idol are clearly visible from the feet to the top on the back. Its shape bears a lot of resemblance to the headless statue of Lohanipur mentioned above and the headless statue of red stone of Harappa. Scholars are of the opinion that this statue must be of the Mauryan period, and it cannot be from this side more than 100 BC. The second metal statue is of Adinath Tirthankara, which was found from a place called Chaisa in Ara in Bihar, and is preserved in the Patna Museum. It is also in the Khadgasana posture and bears a resemblance to the above-mentioned statue of Parshvanath in form. From around the 14th century, brass statues of Jains are also found to be in vogue. At some places, huge, heavy, solid statues of brass are installed. According to the inscription, the brass idol of Adinath situated in Pittalhar temple of Abu weighs 108 maunds and was installed in 1525 AD. Statues of Bahubali, the Bahubali idol of Badami, is 7.5 feet high, built in the 7th century. The second idol is engraved on the southern wall of Indra Sabha in the Jain stone temple named Chhota Kailash in Ellora. The construction period of this cave is considered to be the 8th century. The third idol is in Shantinath temple of Devgarh (862 AD), the specialty of which is that apart from Vaami, Kukkut snake and creepers, crawling creatures like scorpions, lizards etc. have also been engraved on the idol and a couple of gods has also been shown relieving these troublesome creatures. But the biggest and most famous idol of these is the one situated on *Vindhyagiri* of *Shravanabelagola* under Mysore state, which is 56 feet 6 inches high and is visible from a distance on that mountain. The balance of her body parts, the calm and happy expression on her face, the wrappings of the Valmiki and Madhavi creepers, are of such beauty that they cannot be compared anywhere else.

Conclusion

The postures of Lord Buddha can be described with special attention and based knowledge. The postures of Lord Buddha are important to reveal his meditation and dialogue with his disciples. Here are some major currencies:

1. *Meditation Mudra*: In this mudra, Lord Buddha keeps his hands in his lap and remains engaged in meditation. This posture symbolizes his meditation and peace. In this posture, Lord Buddha is seen sitting in meditation with his fingers folded. This posture reveals focus and concentration.
2. *Bhumisparsha Mudra*: In this posture Lord Buddha is seen sitting with his right hand touching the ground. This posture means 'touching the ground' through which he realized the earth and marks the beginning of his path to bodhima.
3. *Abhaya Mudra*: In this mudra Lord Buddha is seen in the form of giving blessings. This mudra means 'do not be afraid' or 'fearlessness'.
4. *Dharmachakra Pravartana Mudra*: In this mudra, Lord Buddha activates the Dharmachakra with the finger of his right hand. This mudra is done at the time of their first conversation.
5. *Vitarka Mudra*: In this mudra, Lord Buddha joins his fingers and thumb to indicate the initiation of Dharmachakra. This posture represents the teachings of *Dharma*.

Through these mudras, Lord Buddha presented his teachings in the form of dialogues and gave guidance to his disciples.

While Statue postures in Jainism to express meditation and spirituality. Several postures can be seen in Jain sculptures, which are as follows:

Dhyana Mudra: In this posture the idol is sitting in meditation with its eyes closed, which represents meditation and spirituality.

Abhaya Mudra: In this posture the idol appears as giving blessings, giving the message of fearlessness and protection to the devotees.

Jnana Mudra: In this posture the fingers of the idol are usually placed in its lap, which represents knowledge and teachings.

Varada Mudra: In this posture the idol appears as giving blessings, conveying boons and blessings to the devotees.

These postures reveal meditation, spirituality, peace and blessings in Jain sculptures and convey the message to the devotees to lead them on the spiritual path.

Following this statue, two other huge stone statues, 41 feet 6 inches high, were installed in Karkal in 1432 AD and 35 feet high in Venur in 1604 AD. Gradually, this type of statue of Bahubali has spread in North India as well. Recently, statues of Bahubali have been installed in many Jain temples. Among them, the statues of Bahubali in Firozabad, Hastinapur, Ara, Udaipur etc. is famous.

Conflict of Interest

The author declares that there is no conflict of interest regarding the publication of this manuscript.

Works Cited

Dr. Hiralal Jain. *Contribution of Jainism to Indian Culture*. L.D. Institute of Indology, 1974

Gibson and Agnes C. Jas Burgess. *Buddhist Art in India (Revised and Enlarged Ed.)*. London: Bernard Quaritch. Tr. from the 'Handbook' of Prof. Albert Grunwedel. 1901.

<https://jainworld.com/library/jain-books/books-on-line/jainworld-books-in-indian-languages/antiquity-of-jainism/contribution-of-jainism-to-indian-culture/>

Krishan, Yuvraj, Tadikonda and Kalpana K. *The Buddha Image: Its Origin and Development*, Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan. 1996.

ISBN 9788121505659,

Myer, Prudence R. "Bodhisattvas and Buddhas: Early Buddhist Images from Mathurā". *Artibus Asiae*.

1986. doi:10.2307/3249969. ISSN 0004-3648. JSTOR 3249969.

Rowland Benjamin. *The Art and Architecture of India: Buddhist, Hindu, Jain* (Third ed.). Pelican History of Art. Penguin.

1967. ISBN 0140561021

अग्रवाल, वासुदेवशरण, भारतीय कला, पृथ्वी प्रकाशन, वाराणसी, १९७७

Kumarswami A.K. *History of Indian and Indonesia Art*. London. 1927

श्रीवास्तव बृजभूषण। प्राचीन भारतीय मूर्तिकला एवम् प्रतिमा विज्ञान/ विश्वविद्यालय प्रकाशन, वाराणसी, १९९८

Offences, Punishment and Rehabilitation in the *Vinaya Pitaka*

Deepak Prasad Acharya, Ph.D.
Asst. Professor,
Lumbini Buddhist University, Nepal
drdeepakprasadacharya@gmail.com

Date of Call for Article:

27 May, 2024

Article Received Date:

21 July, 2024

Date of sending for peer review:

21 August, 2024

Date of receiving from peer review:

22 September, 2024

Date of Revision:

6 October, 2024

Date of Acceptance:

11 November, 2024

Date of Publication:

26 January, 2025

Abstract

Background: The *Vinaya Pitaka*, a comprehensive Buddhist scripture, contains a rich repository of ethical and moral guidelines.

Objective: This research paper explores the descriptions of criminal and other offences within the *Vinaya Pitaka* and the associated penalties. This paper explores the significance of discipline and ethical conduct in the *Vinaya Pitaka*, analyzing the categorization of offences, the purpose of punishments, and the emphasis on rehabilitation. The study also aims to shed light on the socio-ethical aspects of the *Vinaya Pitaka* and its potential relevance in contemporary ethical discourse.

Methodology: Library based textual analysis of the *Vinaya Pitaka*, focusing on the division of offences and their respective punishments within the Buddhist monastic context has been applied to carryout this research.

Result: Through the detailed study, it has been found that the detailed account of offences and punishments provides valuable insights into the *Saṅgha's* emphasis on maintaining order, harmony, and adherence to the Buddha's teachings. Through a systematic analysis of the text, this paper provides insights into the understanding of criminal behaviour and sanctions within the Buddhist monastic context. The *Pātimokkha*, a crucial text within the *Vinaya Pitaka*, outlines the code of conduct for Buddhist monks and nuns. Its detailed system of offences and punishments reflects a unique approach to monastic discipline, emphasizing rehabilitation and restoring harmony within the monastic community.

Conclusion: This paper examines the purpose of punishments in the *Pātimokkha*, highlighting its restorative nature and its alignment with Buddhist principles of compassion and non-violence.

Keywords: *Vinaya Pitaka*, Buddhist monastic discipline, Buddhist ethics, criminal offences, *Pātimokkha*

Paper Type: Research Paper

© 2025 The Author. All rights reserved.

For permissions,

Contact: research@lbu.edu.np

This work is licensed under
Creative Commons Attribution-Non
Commercial-No Derivatives 4.0

International License.

<https://creativecommons.org/choose/>

Licenses /by-nc-nd/4.0/



Introduction

The *Vinaya Pitaka*, a fundamental component of the Buddhist *Tripitaka*, is a canonical collection of texts that govern the ethical and disciplinary aspects of monastic life within the Buddhist tradition. While primarily focused on regulating the conduct of monks and nuns, it also contains valuable insights into the concepts of criminal and other offences, along with the corresponding penalties. This paper aims to delve into *Vinaya Pitak's* teachings on criminal offences, the ethical principles underlying them, and the penalties associated with offences. Furthermore, it seeks to examine the relevance of these teachings in contemporary ethical discourse and their potential applicability in wider societal contexts.

Vinaya Pitaka is depicted by Buddhist scholars as the constitution of the *Saṅgha*. It has a high place in the Buddhist tradition. After the *Mahāparinibbāna* of Gautama Buddha, the *Vinaya Pitaka* became the only standard of unity, purity and discipline of the *Saṅgha*. Therefore, its place in the *Saṅgha* is respected and proud. *Saṅgha* is also known as Buddha's rule. Because as long as the *Vinaya* rules are being practised, Buddhism will remain eternal. The rules governing the monks and nuns are found in the *Vinaya Pitaka*, in which there are separate rules for the monks and nuns. Therefore, it is also called the ethics of monks and nuns. In the *Vinaya Pitaka*, it is mentioned in detail why and under what conditions each rule was made, while the monks and nuns from different backgrounds are advised to achieve their spiritual goals in an environment of love and harmony. The *Vinaya Pitaka*, meaning "basket of discipline" in *Pāli*, is the first and oldest section of the *Tripitaka*, the canonical collection of Buddhist scriptures (Prebish, 1975). It contains the rules and regulations for the Buddhist monastic community, known as the *Saṅgha*. In the Theravada tradition, the following five texts are included under *Vinaya Pitaka* – (a) *Mahāvāgga*, (b) *Chullavāgga*, (c) *Pācittiya*, (d) *Pārājika* and (e) *Parivāra*.

In *Sthaviravāda Vinaya*, there are 227 *Shikshāpada* or rules for monks and 311 *Shikshāpada* or rules for nuns. The *Khandhaka* provides additional rules and regulations for the *Saṅgha*, while the *Parivāra* is a commentary on the *Suttavibhaṅga* and *Khandhaka*.

The *Vinaya Pitaka* is a valuable source of information about offences and punishment in early Buddhism. It provides a detailed account of the types of offences that were considered to be punishable, as well as the punishments that were meted out for those offences.

The *Pātimokkha*, meaning "to be freed" in *Pāli*, serves as a comprehensive guide to monastic discipline within the early Buddhist tradition (Tambiah, 1984). It outlines a detailed set of rules and regulations for monks and nuns, categorized into four levels of severity: *pārājika*, *saṅghādisesa*, *pācittiya*, and *dukkata* (Wijewardhana, 2018).

While the *Pātimokkha* clearly defines offences and their corresponding punishments, its approach to discipline stands out for its emphasis on rehabilitation and restoring harmony within the monastic community (Keown, 2005). This paper delves into the purpose of punishments in the *Pātimokkha*, exploring its restorative nature and its alignment with Buddhist principles.

Statement of the Problem

The *Vinaya Pitak*, while primarily a guide for monastic life, addresses the issue of criminal and other offences systematically. However, these teachings are often overlooked in contemporary discussions on ethics and justice. This research paper aims to identify and analyze the descriptions of criminal and other offences and penalties in the *Vinaya Pitaka* and evaluate their potential relevance in contemporary society.

The *Vinaya Pitaka's* detailed account of offences and punishments raises questions about the purpose of punishment in early Buddhism. Was punishment intended to be punitive or rehabilitative?

What were the Saṅgha's goals in establishing a system of offences and punishments?

Objectives of the Study

This paper aims to explore the significance of discipline and ethical conduct in the *Vinaya Pitaka*. It will analyze the categorization of offences, the purpose of punishments, and the emphasis on rehabilitation.

Research Methodology

The study is based on secondary sources and library methods to conduct an extensive review of scholarly articles, books, and academic journals related to the *Vinaya Pitaka* and Buddhist ethics. This paper is a qualitative research approach, using textual analysis of the *Vinaya Pitaka* to examine the concepts of offences, punishments, and rehabilitation.

Discussions

The *Vinaya Pitaka*, the first and oldest section of the Tripitaka, serves as a comprehensive guide to monastic discipline and ethical conduct within the early Buddhist community (Horner, 1938). Its detailed account of offenses and punishments provides valuable insights into the Saṅgha's emphasis on maintaining order, harmony, and adherence to the Buddha's teachings (Tambiah, 1984).

Categorization of Offences

The categorization of offences into four distinct levels – pārajika, saṅghādisesa, pācittiya, and dukkaṭa – reflects the varying degrees of severity attributed to different transgressions (Wijewardhana, 2018). This nuanced approach demonstrates the Saṅgha's recognition of human fallibility while upholding the high standards expected of those who have renounced worldly pursuits to pursue spiritual liberation (Keown, 2005).

Pārajika Offences: Protecting the Integrity of the Saṅgha

Pārajika offences, considered the most serious offences, warrant expulsion from the monastic community (Harvey, 2013; Sankrityayan, 2008). These offences include sexual intercourse, stealing, killing a human being, and falsely claiming spiritual attainments (Anālayo, 2016; Sankrityayan, 2008). Their severity stems from their direct contradiction of the core principles of monastic life – celibacy, non-violence, honesty, and humility (Gethin, 1998; Sankrityayan, 2008). Pārajika Offences were the most serious offences, resulting in expulsion from the monastic community.

Parajika Offences Include:

Sexual intercourse

Stealing

Killing a human being

Falsely claiming to have attained a higher level of spiritual attainment

By imposing expulsion as the punishment for pārajika offences, the *Vinaya Pitaka* underscores the importance of preserving the integrity of the Saṅgha (Prebish, 1975). These offenses threaten to undermine the community's foundation of trust, respect, and shared commitment to the Buddha's teachings. Expulsion serves as a reminder of the Saṅgha's unwavering commitment to its core values and the serious consequences of violating them (Wijayaratna, 1990).

Saṅghādisesa Offenses: Maintaining Harmony and Respect

Saṅghādisesa offences, while less severe than pārājika offences, still necessitate a period of probation (Bhikkhu Bodhi, 2012). These offences include actions that disrupt the *Saṅgha*'s harmony and potentially harm its reputation, such as causing a schism, making disparaging remarks about the Buddha or the *Saṅgha*, or engaging in inappropriate physical contact (Skilling, 2009). Saṅghādisesa Offences are less serious offences, leading to a period of probation and requiring a formal meeting of the monastic community to restore the offender's status. Examples include: ejaculating semen, touching a woman with lustful intent, making disparaging remarks about the Buddha, the *Dharma*, or the *Saṅgha*, Causing a schism in the *Saṅgha*.

The probationary period imposed for *saṅghādisesa* offences serves as a time for reflection, repentance, and restoration of harmonious relations within the community (Kieschnick, 2003). This approach reflects the *Saṅgha*'s belief in the potential for individuals to learn from their mistakes and reaffirm their commitment to the monastic path (Ray, 1994).

Pācittiya and *Dukkaṭa* Offenses: Cultivating Self-Awareness and Accountability

Pācittiya and *dukkāṭa* offences, while considered minor transgressions, still require confession and acknowledgment (Tambiah, 1984). These offenses address actions that may not cause significant harm but still deviate from the ideal conduct expected of monks and nuns (Wijewardhana, 2018).

Pācittiya Offences

Minor offences requiring confession and a light punishment, often involve a specific act of repentance. Examples include: eating after midday, storing food for later consumption, accepting money or valuables, sleeping in the same room as a woman.

Dukkaṭa Offenses

The least serious offenses, do not require formal confession but are still considered transgressions. Examples include: eating at an improper time, wearing improper clothing, using improper language, and engaging in idle chatter.

The requirement for confession and acknowledgement for *pācittiya* and *dukkāṭa* offences emphasizes the importance of self-awareness and accountability among monastic members (Keown, 2005). By openly admitting their offences, monks and nuns demonstrate their commitment to personal growth and adherence to the *Saṅgha*'s ethical standards (Harvey, 2013).

The *Pātimokkha* rules aim to maintain order and discipline within the monastic community, fostering an environment conducive to spiritual development. They emphasize ethical conduct, self-awareness, and accountability, guiding monks and nuns on the path to enlightenment.

Restorative Justice in the *Pātimokkha*

The concept of restorative justice, which focuses on repairing harm and restoring relationships, aligns closely with *Pātimokkha*'s approach to punishment. Rather than solely imposing punitive measures, the *Pātimokkha* emphasizes the offender's rehabilitation and reintegration into the monastic community (Anālayo, 2016).

This restorative approach is evident in the handling of *pārājika* offences, the most serious transgressions. While expulsion from the monastic community might seem harsh, it serves a dual purpose: protecting the integrity of the *Saṅgha* and providing the offender an opportunity for introspection and potential renunciation (Harvey, 2013).

For *saṅghādisesa* offences, a period of probation and a formal meeting of the monastic community is required for the offender's restoration. This process emphasizes confession, repentance, and reconciliation, allowing the offender to acknowledge their wrongdoing and seek forgiveness from the community (Kieschnick, 2003).

Pācittiya offences, considered minor transgressions, involve confession and a light punishment, often involving a specific act of repentance. These measures aim to guide the offender towards self-reflection and behavioral correction, reinforcing the importance of ethical conduct (Ray, 1994).

Finally, *dukkata* offences, the least serious offences, do not require formal confession but are still considered breaches of the monastic code. Monks and nuns cultivate mindfulness and self-awareness by acknowledging these minor offences and preventing more serious ones (Skilling, 2009).

Alignment with Buddhist Principles

The *Pātimokkha*'s restorative approach to punishment aligns with core Buddhist principles, particularly compassion and non-violence. Rather than seeking retribution, the *Pātimokkha* prioritizes the offender's rehabilitation and the restoration of harmony within the *Saṅgha* (Gethin, 1998). This compassionate approach reflects the Buddhist belief in the potential for individuals to change and grow. By providing opportunities for repentance and reconciliation, the *Pātimokkha* encourages offenders to learn from their mistakes and progress on the path to enlightenment (Prebish, 1975).

The emphasis on non-violence is evident in the absence of corporal or capital punishments in the *Pātimokkha*. Instead, the focus lies on addressing the root causes of offences, fostering self-awareness, and promoting ethical conduct (Horner, 1938).

Conclusion

The *Vinaya Pitaka*'s comprehensive system of offences and punishments highlights the early Buddhist community's commitment to upholding ethical standards and fostering a harmonious monastic environment. The emphasis on rehabilitation rather than punitive measures reflects the Buddhist belief in the potential for individuals to learn from their mistakes and progress on the path to enlightenment.

The *Pātimokkha*'s restorative approach to punishment stands as a testament to the early Buddhist community's commitment to compassion and non-violence. By emphasizing rehabilitation and restoring harmony within the monastic community, the *Pātimokkha* reflects a unique and humane approach to monastic discipline.

The *Vinaya Pitaka*'s detailed guidelines served as a crucial foundation for maintaining order and discipline within the *Saṅgha*, ensuring its continued existence and ability to transmit the Buddha's teachings across generations. The text's enduring relevance highlights the importance of ethical conduct and self-discipline in the pursuit of spiritual liberation.

Conflict of Interest

The author declares that there is no conflict of interest regarding the publication of this manuscript.

Works Cited

- Anālayo, B. (2016). The Legal Consequences of *pārājika*. *Shri Lanka International Journal of Buddhist Studies (SIJBS)*. Vol. V, 2-22.
- Bhikkhu Bodhi. (2012). *The Buddhist monastic code: The Pātimokkha training rules translated and explained*.
- Gethin, R. (1998). *The foundations of Buddhism*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Harvey, P. (2013). *An introduction to Buddhism: Teachings, history and practices*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

- Horner, I. B. (1949). *The book of the discipline (Vinaya-Pitaka)*. UK, London: Pāli Text Society for Luzac & Company.
- Keown, D. (2005). *Buddhist ethics: A very short introduction*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Kieschnick, J. (2003). *The impact of Buddhism on Chinese material culture*. USA, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- Prebish, C. S. (1975). *Buddhist monastic discipline: The Sanskrit Prātimokṣa Sūtras of the Mahāsāṃghikas and Mūlasarvāstivādins*. Pennsylvania: University of Pennsylvania Press.
- Ray, R. A. (1994). *Buddhist saints in India: A study in Buddhist values & orientations*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Sankritiyayan, R. (Tr.). (2008). *Vinay Pitak*. Publication. New Delhi: Samyak Publication.
- Skilling, P. (2009). *Samantapāsādikā: The Buddha's rules*. Pāli Text Society.
- Tambiah, S. J. (1984). *The Buddhist saints of the forest and the cult of amulets: A study in charisma, hagiography, sectarianism, and millennial Buddhism*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Wijewardhana, G. D. (2018). *Buddhist monastic discipline: Vinaya rules for monks and nuns*. Thailand: Orchid Press.
- Wijayaratna, M. (1990). *Buddhist monastic life: According to the texts of the Theravāda tradition*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Models of Cognitive Processes as Depicted in the *Sutta* Literature

Fanindra Kumar Neupane
Associate Professor
Lumbini Buddhist University, Nepal
fanindra.neupane@lbu.edu.np

Date of Call for Article:

27 May, 2024

Article Received Date:

25 July, 2024

Date of sending for peer review:

27 August, 2024

Date of receiving from peer review:

22.09.2024

Date of Revision:

02 October, 2024

Date of Acceptance:

14 November, 2024

Date of Publication:

26 January, 2025

Abstract

Background: Buddhism renders all the miseries and sorrows in human beings to the evils inherent in the cognitive process. In the *Pāli* Commentaries and Sub-commentaries, a comprehensive model of cognitive process is discussed in the terminology of *Citta-Vīthi*, however, this concept is depicted in the original *Sutta*, *Vinaya*, and *Abhidhamma* Canonical texts at the very basic level. In such teachings, knowledge acquired through sense perception is taken as the phenomena leading towards sorrow and misery.

Objective: The objective of the study is to explore the models of five aggregates, six *āyatana* and eighteen *dhātus*, dependent origination, and thought proliferation in *Sutta* teachings.

Methodology: this research work has adopted the critical thinking skill research method to explore the cognitive process models depicted in the *Sutta* Literature.

Result: From such study, it has been found that in *Sutta* teachings cognitive process is depicted as the models of five aggregates, six *āyatana* and eighteen *dhātus*, dependent origination, and thought proliferation

Conclusion: The teachings of the Buddha always focus on the rational understanding (*sammā-diṭṭhi*) of the subject matter how the senses work and how the misery entails in these processes. Thus, it is important to explore the models of cognitive processes depicted in the original *Sutta* literature. For that purpose. At the end of this research, a conclusion is drawn that every event of the cognitive process begins from a simple sensation process and proceeds by degrees to a discriminative apprehension of the sense object.

Keywords : *Āyatana*, *dhātus*, *Pañcakkhanda*, *Paṭiccasamuppāda*, *papañcasāṅkhā*

Paper Type: Research Paper

© 2025 The Author. All rights reserved.

For permissions,

Contact: research@lbu.edu.np

This work is licensed under
Creative Commons Attribution-Non
Commercial-No Derivatives 4.0

International License.

<https://creativecommons.org/choose/>

Licenses /by-nc-nd/4.0/



Background

Buddha's teachings are found revolutionary against the existing concept of soul or self (*Ātman*) in understanding the perceptual process during his time. Instead of assigning the abstract concept 'soul' for its role in operating the cognitive process, Buddha describes this process as a law of consciousness (*citta-niyāma*) (Muller 272). Attribution of the cognitive process to the substantial agent is represented by the *Upanishadic* philosophy in contemporary India. According to this philosophy, an inherent permanent agent residing in beings carries all the mental activities like thinking, feeling, memory, and other relevant mental processes (Sarachandra 3). Buddhist teachings arise as a counter to this idea where cognitive process is taken as a natural process as there are law of seed (*bija-niyāma*), law of season (*utu-niyāma*), law of action (*kamma-niyāma*), law of nature (*dhamma-niyāma*) and law of *citta* (*citta-niyāma*)- "*bhījanīyāmaṃ utunīyāmaṃ kammanīyāmaṃ dhammanīyāmaṃ cittanīyāmantia*" (272). Thus, in Buddhism, the cognitive process as a distinct natural law emerges against the contemporary *Upanishadic* doctrine of permanent soul for the process of cognizing the outer world (Karunadasa 138).

The Buddhist concept of cognitive process (*citta-vīthi*) is a unique contribution to human knowledge. In Buddhism, this concept is enumerated as a systematic and formulated theory of sense perception which comprehensively explains the workings of the mind when a physical or mental object appears at the six sense doors. It is a core Buddhist teaching for mental purification where the tendency of the mind to generate defilements during this process can be dictated and lead to a rational understanding of how the process of mental impurities can be eradicated. The cognitive process model distinctly appears in the *Theravādin* sources with the terminology of *citta-vīthi*, the pathway of consciousness literally.

The comprehensive and systematic enumeration of cognitive process (*citta-vīthi*) appears for the first time in the *Pāli* works such as the *Visuddhimagga*, the *Abhidhammāvatāra*, and the *Abhidhamma* commentarial literature that are rendered in the 5th century A.D. The idea is further developed and elaborated in the literary works like the *Visuddhimagga Mahā-ṭīkā*, and the *Abhidhamma Mūla-ṭīkā* that were written during the 7th-8th century A.D. In the compendium of *Abhidhamma*, the *Abhidhammatthasaṅgaha* and its commentarial work, the *Abhidhammatthavibhāvinī-ṭīkā*, the idea is discussed more comprehensively. These works were composed during the time of the 8th -12th century A.D. The concept appears as a final attempt along with some alternative and comprehensive ideas in the late *Pāli* texts like *Paramatthadīpanī* and *Abhidhammattha Navanīta-ṭīkā* that were rendered during the 19th -20th century A.D.

Although the comprehensive concept of the cognitive process was formulated during the commentarial period led by the Buddhaghosa and Buddhaddatta and further enumerated in the sub-commentarial period, the concept originated in the earlier canonical texts like *Sutta* and *Vinaya*, the *Abhidhamma* canonical texts that were written before 2nd century B.C. According to the *Theravāda* tradition, the teachings of the Buddha that are discussed in the commentaries and sub-commentaries should have their base and root in the *Sutta* literature. With this proposition, this research work seeks to find the origin of the comprehensive and systematized concept of cognitive process (*citta-vīthi*) in the *Sutta* literature.

In *Sutta's* teachings, the concept of cognitive process is depicted as the process that begins from a sensory contact and gradually leads to the complicated process, the discriminative apprehension of the sense object. The entire process is depicted as resulting in *papañcasāññāsāṅkhā* i.e. the process of complication and proliferation related to the sense object. These teachings are focused on eradicating all sorts of miseries that arise during the mode of sense-perception and encourage the complete cessation of those sufferings through cessation of the activities of the sensual contact. Thus, in *Sutta* literature, such pattern of the cognitive process can be detected in the different models like five aggregates, six āyatana

and eighteen *dhātus*, *paṭiccasamuppāda* and the thought proliferation (*papañcasāṅkhā*) (Gethin 35-53).

Statement of the Problem

The cognitive process model is comprehensively and systematically discussed in the *pāli* commentary and sub-commentary literature. Commentaries and sub-commentaries are the further enumeration of the fundamental ideas expressed in the *Sutta* literature. So, the systematic discussion of the concept of cognitive process should have its roots in the *Sutta* literature. With this assumption, the present research work has set the following research problem.

- a. What are the cognitive process models depicted in the *Sutta* literature ?

Research Objectives

To meet the research problem as stated above, the following study objectives have been adopted for this research work.

- a. To explore the cognitive process models that are depicted in the *Sutta* literature.

Methodology

This research work aims to find out the basic cognitive factors rooted in the *Sutta* literature and to analyze how the different models of cognitive process are depicted variously in the *Sutta* literature. For this purpose, the researcher has taken a position of interpretivism research paradigm and inductive reasoning approach. To align with these research philosophies, this work has applied exploratory research methods for the collection and interpretation of the related data. According to this method, this research work aims to explore specific aspects of the research problem and to investigate and understand the reality related to that problem.

In this work, the relevant *Suttas* from the *Dīgha Nikāya*, *Majjhima Nikāya*, *Aṅguttara Nikāya*, *Saṃyutta Nikāya*, *Khuddaka Nikāya* have been collected applying the purposive sampling technique for the selection of required data. These data have been analyzed to find out the answer to the research question. In the process of data analysis, the collected data were processed to identify the common patterns in them, and finally, they were critically analyzed to reach the research objectives. Qualitative analytical processes such as coding of the information, its classification, comparison, and interpretation have been carried out during the analysis of the collected data. The critical thinking skill method has been applied to explore the pattern of cognitive process that is depicted in the collected data.

Analysis

Analysis of Five Aggregate Model of Cognitive Process

In Buddhist literature, the five-aggregate model of cognitive process has been presented as the experience that we generate in every moment about material and mental factors like feeling (*vedanā*), perception (*saññā*), mental formation (*saṅkhāra*), consciousness (*viññāṇa*), and material form (*rūpa*) (Gethin 35-53). These five aggregates are described as the constituents of a personality and the cognitive factors for the first-person subjective experience. Among these constituents, the material form (*rūpa*) represents the physical body, the sensory consciousness (*viññāṇa*) functions as cognizing the sense object, the feeling (*vedanā*) shows the subjective-affective effects related to that object, the perception (*saññā*) represents being aware of attributes related to that object and the faculty of volition (*saṅkhāra*) shows reaction or the purposive aspect of the mind. These five aggregates are interpreted as the constituents of the personality (Bronkhorst 28).

In this system of perceptual experience, *rūpa* represents a material form with the five senses of sight, hearing, smell, taste, and touch; *vedanā* feels the sense-object as pleasant, unpleasant and neutral subjective experience; *saññā* perceives the object on account of its old memory; *saṅkhāra* reacts to the sense-object by provoking attachment, aversion and delusion; and *viññāṇa* is a faculty of awareness towards the sense-object (Harvey 56). According to this model of cognitive process, suffering arises when one cling to these five aggregates (*pañcupādānakkhandhā*), and the way of coming out of the suffering is by relinquishing attachments to these aggregates.

In the *Khandha Sutta* of *Samyutta Nikāya* Buddha enumerates the five aggregates as follows and their role in generating suffering is depicted as follows:

Pañca, bhikkhave, khandhe desessāmi...rūpaṃ ... ayaṃ vuccati rūpakkhando... yā kāci vedanā ... vedanākkhandho ... yā kāci saññā ... saññākkhandho... ye keci saṅkhārā ... saṅkhārakkhandho... yaṃ kiñci viññāṇaṃ ... viññāṇakkhandho. Ime vuccanti, bhikkhave, pañcakkhandhā. Katame ca, bhikkhave, pañcupādānakkhandhā? rūpaṃ... upādāniyaṃ, ayaṃ vuccati rūpupādānakkhandho...vedanā ... upādāniyā...vedanupādānakkhandho.. saññā ... upādāniyā...saññupādānakkhandho...saṅkhārā ... sāsavā upādāniyā... saṅkhārupādānakkhandho. Yaṃ kiñci viññāṇaṃ ...upādāniyaṃ...viññāṇupādānakkhandho. Ime vuccanti, bhikkhave, pañcupādānakkhandhā”ti (Feer 47-48).

According to this model of cognitive process, when any one of the six sense doors comes into contact with its concerned sense object, the respective consciousness arises as a bare cognizing faculty. In this process, the mental faculty *viññāṇa* simply cognizes that, for instance, a sound has come in contact with the ear. Now the second part of the mind, *saññā* functions as recognizing the sound, perhaps as words of abuse, or as words of praise. It not only recognizes but also evaluates: the abuse is bad, or the praise is good. In the process, at the moment when a sound touches the ear sense door, there is a vibration, a neutral vibration. If the *saññā* (perception) says that it is bad, this vibration changes into unpleasant physical sensations or vibration. If the *saññā* says that it is a word of praise, then immediately this neutral vibration becomes very pleasant. These sensations comprise the third part of the mind, the *vedanā*. The *vedanā* feels the object either with pleasant, unpleasant, or neutral sensations. Depending on this sensation, a mental factor of *saṅkhāra* reacts to that sensation either with craving, aversion, or with neutral volition. In this process, the faculty of *saṅkhāra* is responsible for the formation of good, bad, or neutral *karma*. These four mental elements always function in association with the *rūpa* element that ultimately makes five aggregates (“10 Day Vipassana Course-Day 4” 1:08:24). The Five aggregate model of cognitive process is as follows:

Five Aggregate Models of Cognitive Process

Viññāṇa → *Saññā* → *Vedanā* → *Saṅkhāra*

Analysis of the Six *Āyatana* Impingement Model of Cognitive Process

In *Sutta*'s teachings, the continuity of the cognitive series is shown as the rapid flow of sense consciousness that arises due to the impingements of the sense bases (*āyatana*) with their respective sense objects. The six sense bases like eye (*cakkhu*), ear (*sota*), nose (*ghāṇa*), tongue (*jivhā*), body (*kaya*) and mind (*mano*) are known as internal bases (*ajjhakkāni āyatanāni*) and their respective sense objects like form (*rūpa*), sound (*sadda*), odor (*gandha*), taste (*rasa*), tangible (*phoṭṭhabba*) and mental phenomena (*dhamma*) are known as external bases (*bāhirāni āyatanāni*). In *suttas*, these sense bases are shown in pairs such as the eye and visible objects, the ear and sounds, the nose and odors, the tongue and tastes, the body and tactile objects, and the mind and mental phenomena. In *Saḷāyatanasaṃyuttaṃ* the idea is depicted as “*dvayaṃ vo, bhikkhave, desessāmi. taṃ suṇātha. kiñca, bhikkhave, dvayaṃ?*

cakkhuñceva rūpā ca, sotañceva saddā ca, ghānañceva gandhā ca, jivhā ceva rasā ca, kāyo ceva phoṭṭhabbā ca, mano ceva dhammā ca — idaṃ vuccati, bhikkhave, dvayaṃ” (Feer 67).

In *Dutiyaadvaya Sutta*, Buddha describes the functions of these bases (*āyatana*) as causing the arising of the sense consciousness (*viññāṇa*) which is the first stage in the cognitive processes. According to this sutta, eye-consciousness arises due to the impingement of the eye with the forms, ear consciousness arises due to the impingement of the ear with the sound, the nose consciousness with the smell, the tongue consciousness with the taste, body consciousness with the touch and mind consciousness with the mental phenomena. This process is depicted in the sutta as follows.

cakkhuñca paṭicca rūpe ca uppajjati cakkhuviññāṇaṃ...sotañca paṭicca saddecupajjati sotaviññāṇaṃ ... ghānañca paṭicca gandhecupajjati ghānaviññāṇaṃ jivhañca paṭicca rase ca uppajjati jivhāviññāṇaṃ... kāyañca paṭicca phoṭṭhabbe ca uppajjati kāyaviññāṇaṃ manañca paṭicca dhamme ca uppajjati manoviññāṇaṃ (67-69).

In *suttas*, thus, six sense bases are resorted to the perceptual process. These are depicted as the plate-form for receiving and transforming the stimuli. Each sense base is supposed to receive such stimuli from its corresponding sense object and not from the others. For example, a form cannot be received by the bases of the ear and sound cannot be received by the eye. Hence, the six senses are like receptors that accept stimuli or raw data from their objects. Similarly, after receiving these stimuli, the six sense bases transmit them in the form of sensor information for further complex perceptual processes like contact (*phassa*), feeling (*vedanā*), thinking (*saññā*), and others.

Six *āyatana* impingement model of cognitive process is as follows:

Six *Āyatana* Impingement Model of Cognitive Process

Sense faculty + sense object —————> sense consciousness

Analysis of Dependent Origination Model of Cognitive Process

Buddha is purported, upon his enlightenment, to have discovered not only the fact that experience consists of a series of discrete moments but also an understanding of the causal processes responsible for the formation and transition of such states. The most referenced definition for *paṭiccasamuppāda* comes from the *Paṭiccasamuppāda Sutta* from *Samyutta Nikāya*. In the *sutta*, *paṭiccasamuppāda* is defined as an arising process of the whole mass of *dukkha* which is encapsulated in the twelve links as follows.

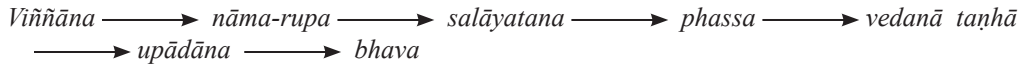
Anuloma- Avijjāpaccayā sankhārā; sankhārapaccayā viññāṇaṃ; viññāṇapaccayā nāma-rupam; nāma-rupa paccayā salāyatanam; salāyatanāpaccayā phasso; phassapaccayā vedanā; vedanāpaccayā tanhā; tanhāpaccayā upādānam; upādāna paccayā bhavo; bhavapaccayā jāti; jātippaccayā jarāmaranam soka-parideva-dukkha-domanassa upāyāsā sambhavanti; Paṭiloma- Avijjāya tveva asesavirāga-nirodhā saṅkhāranirodho, saṅkhāranirodhā viññāṇanirodho, viññāṇanirodhā nāmarūpanirodho, nāmarūpanirodhā salāyatananirodho, salāyatananirodhā phassanirodho, phassanirodhā vedanānirodho, vedanānirodhā tanhānirodho, tanhānirodhā upādānanirodho, upādānanirodhā bhavanirodho, bhavanirodhā jātinirodho, jātinirodhā jarāmaranaṃ sokaparidevadukkhadomanassupāyāsā nirujjhanti — evametassa kevalassa dukkhakkhandhassa nirodho hoti”ti (1-2).

[Forward Order: With ignorance as condition, volitional formations arise; with volitional formations as condition, consciousness; with consciousness as condition, mind-body; with mind-body as condition, the six sense bases; with the six sense bases as condition, contact; with contact as condition, feeling; with feeling as condition, craving; with craving as condition, clinging; with clinging as condition, becoming; with becoming as condition, birth; with birth as condition, aging-and-death, sorrow, lamentation, physical and mental sufferings, and despair arises. Reverse Order: With the

complete cessation of ignorance, volitional formations cease; with the cessation of volitional formation, consciousness ceases; with the cessation of consciousness, mind-body cease; with the cessation of mind-body, the six senses cease; with the cessation of the six senses, contact ceases; with the cessation of contact, feeling ceases; with the cessation of feeling, craving ceases; with the cessation of craving, clinging ceases; with the cessation of clinging, the process of becoming ceases; with the cessation of the process of becoming, birth ceases; with the cessation of birth, aging and death cease, together with sorrow, lamentation, physical and mental sufferings and despair ceases.]

The twelve links of the chain of dependent origination are divided into three traditional categories- past, present, and future. The first two cognitive factors (*avijjā* and *saṃkhāra*) belong to the past category, the middle eight factors like *viññāna*, *nāma-rupa*, *salāyatana*, *phassa*, *vedanā*, *tanhā*, *upādāna* and *bhava* belong to the present category and the remaining two factors (*jāti* and *jarā-maraṇa*) belong to the future categories. The eight elements linked in this second group can be seen working as causal factors in the cognitive process. The first link in the middle group of dependent originations is *viññāna*, the rebirth consciousness. As soon as the rebirth consciousness arises, the mind-matter factor emerges. The third link of this middle group is the six sense doors (*salāyatana*), usually described as the six organs of cognition; namely, the visual, auditory, olfactory, gustatory, tactile, and thinking organs. In the cognitive process, the six sense doors as condition, and the fourth link of the dependent origination, the *phassa* (contact) arises which is a cognitive factor of bare sensory experience devoid of any subjective content. Contact conditions the fifth link of the middle group, *vedanā* arises. The sixth and seventh links which follow the *vedanā* link are craving (*tanhā*) and clinging (*upādāna*), the intensified form of craving. Craving conditions for the arising of the eighth link i.e. becoming (*bhava*). The dependent origination model of the cognitive process is as follows:

Dependent Origination Model of Cognitive Process



Analysis of Thought Proliferation Model of Cognitive Process

In Early Buddhism, the cognitive process is depicted as the process that begins from the impingement between the sense faculty and the sense object. In the teachings in the *sutta*, Buddha teaches his disciples to guard their sense faculties whenever they come in contact with the sense objects. These teachings are intended to monitor the whole cognitive process to contemplate the dangers of resulting unwholesome mental activities that may arise during that course. In a few places in the *vinaya* and many places in the *sutta* literature, such teachings are found in much-diversified length and content. Cognitive factors that arise in such teachings follow particular patterns and the perceptual structure can be drawn.

The analysis of the cognitive process depicted in the *sutta* teachings is empirical and pragmatic. Moreover, the relationships between the cognitive factors are not found simply linear but sequential and simultaneous as well. So, the cognitive process depicted in early teachings should be interpreted as the complexity of these factors and their functions, which run repeatedly, continuously, and endlessly. The *Madhupiṇḍika Sutta* and *Dasuttara Sutta* can be taken as good examples to understand the complex series of cognitive processes constituting several cognitive factors after the stages of contact (*phassa*) and feeling (*vedanā*). The following excerpt from the *Madhupiṇḍika Sutta* depicts how the cognitive process of the eye sense operates leading to misery.

Cakkhuñcāvuso, paṭicca rūpe ca uppajjati cakkhuviññānaṃ, tiṇṇaṃ saṅgati phasso, phassapaccayā vedanā, yaṃ vedeti taṃ sañjānāti, yaṃ sañjānāti taṃ vitakketi, yaṃ vitakketi

taṃ papañceti, yaṃ papañceti tatonidānaṃ purisaṃ papañcasaññāsāṅkhā samudācaranti atītānāgatapaccuppannesu cakkhuviññāyesu rūpesu (Trenckner 111-12).

[Translation- for the arising of *cakkhuviññāṇa*, the eye needs to contact the visual forms. The meeting of the three conditions for contact. Due to the contact of these three phenomena, there arises feeling. In the cognitive process, the feeling conditions for cognizing (*Saññā*) and the cognizing conditions for the person to think about (*Vitakka*). In this process, one complicates (*Papañceti*) on what one thinks about and based on what a person complicates, the perceptions & categories of complication assail him/her (*Papañcasaññāsāṅkhā*) concerning past, present, & future forms cognizable through the eye.]

According to this *sutta*, the entire process is supposed to result in *papañcasaññā* i.e. desire or attachment, so, the arising of *papañca* in a person is related to the process of sense-perception and the cessation of *papañca* by the means of complete cessation of the activities of the six spheres of contact. This process can be shown in the following diagram:

Cognitive Process Model According to *Madhupiṇḍika Sutta*

Impingement of *Rūpa* & *Cakkhu* —→ *Cakkhuviññāṇa*; Meeting of *Rūpa*, *Cakkhu* & *Cakkhuviññāṇa* —→ *Phassa* —→ *Vedanā* —→ *Saññā* —→ *Vitakka* —→ *Papañca*
Papañcasaññāsāṅkhā

Similarly, in the *Dasuttara Sutta* of the *Dīgha Nikāya*, the feelings, perception, and thoughts are depicted arising in sequence leading to a miserable situation as expressed in the following lines:

“*Dhātunānattaṃ paṭicca uppajjati phassanānattaṃ, phassanānattaṃ paṭicca uppajjati vedanānānattaṃ, vedanānānattaṃ paṭicca uppajjati saññānānattaṃ, saññānānattaṃ paṭicca uppajjati saṅkappanānattaṃ, saṅkappanānattaṃ paṭicca uppajjati chandanānattaṃ, chandanānattaṃ paṭicca uppajjati pariḷāhanānattaṃ, pariḷāhanānattaṃ paṭicca uppajjati pariyesanānānattaṃ, pariyesanānānattaṃ paṭicca uppajjati lābhanānattaṃ saṅkappanānattaṃ*” (Carpenter 289).

[Translation- On account of difference in the sensory element, a different contact takes place, on account of difference in contact difference in feeling arises, hence difference in perception, hence difference in purposive thought, hence difference in active desire, hence difference in greed, hence difference in pursuit, hence difference in gain arises.] (Davids 263)

In this *sutta*, feeling (*vedanā*) is followed by perception (*saññā*) and after that mental state, cognitive factors like thinking (*vitakketi*), mental proliferation (*papañceti*), intention (*Chanda*), or obsession (*pariḷāha*) arise in the process. These *suttas* present a cognitive format beginning from the physical contact between the five senses and their respective objects which finally results in mental proliferation. This process can be shown in the following diagram:

Cognitive Process Model According to *Dasuttara Sutta*

Impingement of *Rūpa* & *Cakkhu* —→ *Cakkhuviññāṇa*; Meeting of *Rūpa*, *Cakkhu* & *Cakkhuviññāṇa* —→ *Phassa* —→ *Vedanā* —→ *Saññā* —→ *Vitakka* —→ *Papañca*
chanda —→ *pariḷāha*

Other descriptions in the *sutta* literature are similar as far as depicting the cognitive factor perception (*saññā*) and then branch off in different ways. In the *Pariyesanānānatta Sutta*, Buddha teaches how the cognitive process arises following the cognitive stage of perception (*saññā*). According to this *sutta*, as conditioned by the *saññā*, there arise thoughts related to form, sound, smell, taste, touch, and mind-object known as *saṅkappa*. After *saṅkappa*, dependent on the diversity of thoughts, there

arises the diversity of desires related to, sound, smell, taste, touch, and mind-object which is termed as *Chanda*. Again, dependent on those desires, there arises a diversity of passion related to those sense objects which is known as *parigraha*. Finally, dependent on the diversity of the passions associated with those objects there arises diversity of searching for those objects (*pariyesanā*). In this *sutta*, the idea is depicted as: “*dhātunānattam, bhikkhave, paṭicca uppajjati saññānānattam, saññānānattam paṭicca uppajjati saṅkappanānattam, saṅkappanānattam paṭicca uppajjati chandanānattam, chandanānattam paṭicca uppajjati pariḷāhanānattam, pariḷāhanānattam paṭicca uppajjati pariyesanānānattam*” (Feer 143). According to this *sutta*, the process can be shown in the following diagram:

Cognitive Process Model According to *Pariyesanānānatta Sutta*

Impingement of *Rūpa & Cakkhu* → *Cakkhuviññāṇa*; Meeting of *Rūpa, Cakkhu & Cakkhuviññāṇa* → *Phassa* → *Vedanā* → *Saññā* → *saṅkappa*
→ *chanda* → *parigraha*

Similarly, in *Āhuneyyavagga* from the *Aṅguttara Nikāya*, after the stage of contact (*phassa*), a series of cognitive faculties are shown as the feeling (*vedanā*), perception (*saññā*), volition (*cetanā*), craving (*taṇhā*), applied thought (*vitakka*) and examination of the object in the series (*vicāra*). The cognitive process is depicted as when the sense faculty (eye) comes in contact with its sense object the eye-consciousness arises. Meeting these three causes for the arising of the eye-contact (*cakkkhusamphassa*). After this, the succeeding cognitive factors arise as the feeling (*vedanā*) perception (*saññā*), volition (*cetanā*), craving (*taṇhā*), applied thought (*vitakka*), and examination of the object (*vicāra*) in the series one after the other. In this *sutta*, the process is depicted in the following lines:

puna caparam, bhikkhave, idhekacco puggalo cakkkhusmiṃ aniccānupassī viharati ... rūpesu ... cakkhuviññāṇe ... cakkkhusamphasse ... cakkkhusamphassajāya vedanāya ... rūpasaññāya ... rūpasāñcetanāya ... rūpataṇhāya ... rūpavitakke ... rūpavicāre ... pañcakkhandhe ... rūpakkkhandhe... vedanākkhandhe... saññākkhandhe... saṅkhārakkhandhe... viññāṇakkhandhe aniccānupassī viharati ... pe ... dukkhānupassī viharati... anattānupassī viharati... khayānupassī viharati... vayānupassī viharati... virāgānupassī viharati... nirodhānupassī viharati... paṭinissaggānupassī viharati ... pe ... lokassā”ti (Hardy 146-47).

[Translation- Bhikkhus, here, some person dwells contemplating impermanence in the eye ... in visible object...in eye consciousness... in eye-contact... in feeling born of eye-contact... in the perception of forms... in volition regarding forms... in craving for forms... in thought about forms... in an examination of forms... Here some person dwells contemplating impermanence in the form aggregate, feeling aggregate, perception aggregate, volitional activities aggregate, and consciousness aggregate.]

According to the *Āhuneyyavagga*, the process can be shown in the following diagram:

Cognitive Process Model According to *Āhuneyyavagga*

Impingement of *Rūpa & Cakkhu* → *Cakkhuviññāṇa*; Meeting of *Rūpa, Cakkhu & Cakkhuviññāṇa* → *Phassa* → *Vedanā* → *Saññā* → *cetanā* → *taṇhā* → *vitakka* → *vicāra*

The pattern of cognitive process is also supported by the *Cūḷarāhulovādasutta* with slight variation. In this *sutta*, the cognitive factors like feeling (*vedanā*), cognition (*saññā*), constructing activities (*saṅkhāra*), and discernment (*viññāṇa*) all are shown to arise from the stimulation (*phassa*).

Buddha teaches his son Rahula that feelings (*vedanā*), perceptions (*saññā*), determinations (*saṅkhāra*), and consciousness (*viññāṇa*) arise on account of sense contact in a particular sequence. According to this *sutta*, the learned noble disciple while seeing the sense object turns away from the eye, the visible object, the eye-consciousness, the eye contact, and all feelings, perceptions, determinations, and the conscious things born of that eye contact. In the *sutta*, it is depicted as “*evaṃ passam, rāhula, sutavā ariyasāvako cakkhusmiṃ nibbindati, rūpesu nibbindati, cakkhuviññāṇe nibbindati, cakkhusamphasse nibbindati, yamidaṃ cakkhusamphassapaccayā uppajjati vedanāgatam saññāgatam saṅkhāragatam viññāṇagatam tasmimpi nibbindati*” (Chalmers 279). According to this *sutta*, the process can be shown in the following diagram:

Cognitive Process Model According to *Cūḷarāhulovādasutta*

Impingement of *Rūpa* & *Cakkhu* → *Cakkhuviññāṇa*; Meeting of *Rūpa*, *Cakkhu* &
Cakkhuviññāṇa → *Phassa* → *Vedanā* → *Saññā* → *saṅkhāra*
viññāṇa

Thus, analyzing various *sutta* and *vinaya* literature, sense consciousness (say *cakkhuviññāṇa*) can be interpreted as attention or state of awareness of the visual sense-faculty since this faculty is shown arising before the state of *phassa*. In the process, *saññā* and *viññāṇa* both have been rendered to mean consciousness, and *saññā* is supposed to succeed the state of *viññāṇa* and is considered to recognize and evaluate the sense object. *Vedanā* is taken as an emotional aspect of the cognitive process and is supposed to be a base for the arising of *saññā*. *Saññā* cognizes the object and plays the role of the subjective and intentional aspects in the perceptual process. After the *Saññā*, *Vitakka* argues about the object, and then the process of proliferation occurs (*Papañceti*). Then in the process, one starts to think about a lot of things about the present, past, and future things related to the objects.

In the early rendering of *sutta* and *vinaya*, the cognitive process is illustrated in terms of the cognitive factors that arise in the cognitive series with their specific functions. The common cognitive factors that often occur in these texts are sense consciousness (*viññāṇa*), contact (*phassa*), feeling (*vedanā*), perception (*saññā*), thinking (*saṅkappa/vitakka*), mental proliferation (*papañca*), craving (*taṇhā*), *upādāna* (clinging), volition (*cetanā*), examination of the object in the series (*vicāra*), desire (*chanda*), diversity of passion (*parigraha*), obsession (*parilāha*) etc. These factors are always in accord with a causal relationship largely so that all *puthujjana* have similar reactions and experiences in a particular situation (Tao 42). So, these factors are depicted following a similar pattern in *sutta* and *vinaya*. Thus, the general order of the perceptual process can be synthesized as follows:

Synthesizing the Cognitive Process Model from *Sutta* Literature

Impingement of *Rūpa* & *Cakkhu* → *Cakkhuviññāṇa*; Meeting of *Rūpa*, *Cakkhu* &
Cakkhuviññāṇa → *Phassa* → *Vedanā* → *Saññā* → Various Constructing
Activities

Analysis of Cognitive Process Depicted in the *Paṭisambhidāmagga*

The text *Paṭisambhidāmagga* (The Path of Discrimination) which was composed in the 2nd century A.D. is collected under the *Khuddhakanikāya*, however, it is taken as a forerunner of *Vimuttimaggā* and *Visuddhimaggā* (Hinüber 60). A.K. Warder opines that a substantial part of the *Paṭisambhidāmagga* was written during the same period of *Dhammasaṅgaṇī* and some part of it is written even earlier (Warder XXXV). *Paṭisambhidāmagga* represents a doctrinal progression parallel to *Dhammasaṅgaṇī* and *Vibhaṅga* (Ronkin 91). So, despite being of *Sutta* text, *Paṭisambhidāmagga* presents patterns similar to

the *Abhidhamma* texts in terms of subject matter and presentation style.

In the section of *Cariyānānattañāniddeso* of the first book i.e. *Mahāvagga* of *Paṭisambhidāmagga*, there is a description of three kinds of behavior: behavior of consciousness, behavior of unknowing, and behavior of knowledge. Basic factors of cognitive process (*citta-vīthi*) are depicted in such enumeration of cognitive behaviors. For instance, while defining the behavior of the eye-consciousness process, *Paṭisambhidāmagga* illustrates several basic cognitive factors as performing the function of advertizing (*āvajjana*), sense consciousness (*viññāṇa*), receiving (*vipākamanodhātu*), investigating (*vipākamanoviññāṇadhātu*), etc. In this process, the functional indeterminate consciousness performs the function of advertizing to the visible object, eye consciousness arises at the eye door, the resultant mind element receives the object, and the resultant mind consciousness element investigates the object- “*katamā viññāṇacariyā? Dassanaṭṭhāya āvajjanakiriyābyākatā viññāṇacariyā rūpesu, dassanaṭṭho cakkhuvīññāṇaṃ viññāṇacariyā rūpesu, diṭṭhataṭṭā abhiniropanā vipākamanodhātu viññāṇacariyā rūpesu, abhiniropitattā vipākamanoviññāṇadhātu viññāṇacariyā rūpesu*” (Taylor 79).

The commentary to the *Paṭisambhidāmagga*, the *Saddhammappakāsinī* clarifies the meaning of the terminologies *āvajjanakiriyābyākatā*, *cakkhuvīññāṇaṃ*, *vipākamanodhātu*, and *vipākamanoviññāṇadhātu* that appear in this passage. According to the *Saddhammappakāsinī*, *āvajjanakiriyābyākatā* is the function of consciousness that disrupts the *bhavaṅga* mind stream and adverts towards the sense object - “*āvajjanakiriyābyākatāti bhavaṅgasantānato apanetvā rūpārammaṇe cittasantānaṃ āvajjeti nāmetīti āvajjanaṃ*” (Joshi 292). The *cakkhuvīññāṇaṃ* is interpreted as wholesome or unwholesome resultant consciousness (*cakkhuvīññāṇanti kusalavipākam vā akusalavipākam vā*), the *vipākamanodhātu* is interpreted as wholesome and unwholesome resultant receiving consciousness (*ubhayavipākā sampaticchanamanodhātu*), and the *vipākamanoviññāṇadhātu* is interpreted as wholesome and unwholesome resultant investigating consciousness - “*vipākamanoviññāṇadhātūti ubhayavipākā santīraṇamanoviññāṇadhātu*” (Joshi 292) - arising in the sense door cognitive process.

In the mind-door process, the functional indeterminate consciousness performs the function of advertizing for cognizing ideas. Here, the process of cognizing ideas as mind-consciousness is defined as the behavior of consciousness. The resultant mind element performs the function of advertizing onto the object of cognition as a behavior of consciousness, and the resultant mind consciousness element occurs in the thought process which directs onto the ideas as a behavior of consciousness - “*vijānanatṭhāya āvajjanakiriyābyākatā viññāṇacariyā dhammesu, vijānanaṭṭho manoviññāṇaṃ viññāṇacariyā dhammesu, viññāṭattā abhiniropanā vipākamanodhātu viññāṇacariyā dhammesu, abhiniropitattā vipākamanoviññāṇadhātu viññāṇacariyā dhammesu*” (Taylor 79). According to the *Saddhammappakāsinī*, *āvajjanakiriyābyākatā* is interpreted as the mind-door advertizing consciousness (*āvajjanakiriyābyākatāti manodvārāvajjanacittam*) and then after, the *javana* consciousness succeeds by apprehending that mind-door object in the cognitive process - “*vijānanaṭṭhoti tadanantarajavanavasena ārammaṇassa vijānanaṃ eva attho, na añño*” (Joshi 292).

In *Paṭisambhidāmagga*, the term ‘*javana*’ appears in the meaning of impulsive consciousness for the first time before its systematic renderings in the commentarial literature (Cousins 43). The concept of *javana* consciousness is depicted in the enumeration of the behavior of unknowing (*aññāṇacariyā*). In *Paṭisambhidāmagga*, the behavior of unknowing is explained by showing the cognitive process where the consciousness performing the function of five-door or mind-door advertizing (functional indeterminate advertizing consciousness) precedes the impulsive consciousness that is rooted in greed or hatred, or delusion or other different kinds of mental factors arises in the process. For instance, the impulsion of greed for agreeable visible objects or hatred for disagreeable visible objects, or delusion for an object which is irrespective of either greed or hate is defined as the act of impulsion of greed or the act of impulsion of hatred or the act of impulsion of delusion and such mental processes are

the behaviors of unknowing (*aññānacariyā*) - “*katamā aññānacariyā? Manāpiyesu rūpesu rāgassa javanattāya... amanāpiyesu rūpesu dosassa javanattāya... tadubhayena asamapekkhanasmim vatthusmim mohassa javanattāya āvajjanakiriyābyākatā viññānacariyā; rāgassa ... dosassa... mohassa javanā aññānacariyā*” (Joshi 294).

In *Paṭisambhidāmagga*, there is a detailed enumeration of the act of apprehension consciousness (*javana citta*) associated with different types of mental factors and that originated from the six sense doors. Behavior associated with greed, hatred, delusion, conceit, wrong view, agitation, uncertainty, and the underlying tendency is enumerated as the behavior of unknowing. Opposite of these behaviors, the behaviors that are dissociated with such defiled mental factors such as non-greed, non-hatred, non-delusion, etc. are depicted as the behavior of knowledge. Similarly, the act of functional indeterminate adverting consciousness that performs the function of adverting to attain the stream-entry path, the fruition of stream-entry, the path of once-return, the fruition of once return, the path of non-return, the fruition of none-return, the path of *arhat*, and the fruition of *arhat* are the behavior of knowledge (Taylor 80-82). All such behaviors are enumerated as the act of impulsion (*javana*) that is preceded by the functional indeterminate adverting consciousness either in the five-sense door or the mind-door which has paved the way for the upcoming developed theory of cognitive process (*citta-vīthi*) during the commentary and sub-commentary period. Thus, *Paṭisambhidāmagga* seems to present the model of the cognitive process as a pre-mature form before it is fully developed during the Buddhaghosa period.

Conclusion

There is no uniformity in the cognitive process models that are depicted in the *Sutta literature*. Various models have been found depicted in the original *Pali suttas* and the *Paṭisambhidāmagga* which is collected under the *Khuddhakanikāya*, but composed later than other *Suttas*. However, the pattern of cognitive process that is depicted in the entire *Sutta literature* is found conditioned to the *papañcasaññāsaṅkhā*, the process of complication and proliferation related to the sense object.

Generalizing the various cognitive process models in the *Sutta literature* some countable cognitive factors are found to play a role. These cognitive factors are consciousness (*viññāṇa*), contact (*phassa*), feeling (*vedanā*), perception (*saññā*), thinking (*saṅkappa/vitakka*), mental proliferation (*papañca*), craving (*taṇhā*), clinging (*upādāna*), volition (*cetanā*), examination of the object (*vicāra*), desire (*chanda*), diversity of passion (*parigraha*) and obsession (*parilāha*). Of them, factors such as consciousness (*viññāṇa*), contact (*phassa*), feeling (*vedanā*), and perception (*saññā*) are shown to commonly arise in every process, and the rest of the factors arise in the process of accomplishing the required mental functions. These factors are always in accord with a causal relationship largely so that all *puthujjana* have similar reactions and experiences in a particular situation.

It is found from studying the relevant *Suttas* that every model of mental process is the process of acquiring knowledge of the outer world and generating mental defilements in such processes as attachment, aversion, and illusion in this process. All these teachings are to encourage a rational understanding of the manner in how this process works and how a person can come out of the shackles of miseries that are entailed in this process. Each act of cognition is enumerated as a process beginning from a simple sensation and resulting in a discriminative apprehension of a sense object through the proceeding stages of cognition. Thus, the general order of the perceptual process from this study can be synthesized as follows:

Impingement of *Rūpa & Cakkhu* → *Cakkhuvīññāṇa*; Meeting of *Rūpa, Cakkhu & Cakkhuvīññāṇa* → *Phassa* → *Vedanā* → *Saññā* → Various Constructing Activities

Conflict of Interest

The author declares that there is no conflict of interest regarding the publication of this manuscript.

Works Cited

Original Sources

- Carpenter, J. Estlin, editor. *The Dīgha Nikāya (Vol. 3)*. Pāli Text Society, 1976.
- Chalmers, Rebert, editor. *Majjhima Nikāya (Vol.3)*. Pāli Text Society, 1977.
- Davids, T.W. Rhys and J. Estlin Carpenter, editor. *The Dīgha Nikāya (Vol. 2)*. Pāli Text Society, 1966.
- Feer, M. Leon, editor. *Samyutta Nikāya (Part 2)*. Pāli Text Society, 1989.
- Hardy, E., editor. *The Aṅguttara Nikāya (Part IV)*. Pāli Text Society, 1958.
- Joshi, C.V., editor. *Saddhammapakāsinī (Vol. 1)*. Pāli Text Society, 1979.
- Muller, Edward, editor. *The Aṭṭhasālinī*. Pāli Text Society, 1897.
- Taylor, A.C., editor. *Paṭisambhidāmagga (Vol. 1)*. Pāli Text Society, 1979.
- Trenckner, V, editor. *Majjhima Nikāya (Vol.1)*. Pāli Text Society, 1979.

Secondary Sources: Books

- Bronkhorst, Johannes. *Buddhist Teaching in India*. Wisdom Publications, 2009.
- Harvey, Peter. *The Selfless Mind: Personality, Consciousness and Nirvana in Early Buddhism*. RoutledgeCurzon, 2004.
- Hinüber, O.Von and K.R. Norman, editor. *Dhammapada*. Pāli Text Society, 1995.
- Karunadasa, Y... *The Theravada Abhidhamma: Its Inquiry into the Nature of Conditioned Reality*. University of Hong Kong, 2010.
- Ronkin, Noa. *Early Buddhist Metaphysics: The Making of a Philosophical Tradition*. RoutledgeCurzon Taylor & Francis Group, 2005.
- Sarachchandra, E.R... *Buddhist Psychology of Perception*. Buddhist Cultural Center, 2009.
- Warder, A.K... *Indian Buddhism*. Motilal Banarasidss, 1970.

Secondary Sources: Research Journal Articles

- Cousins, L.S... "The Paṭṭhāna and the Development of the Theravādin Abhidhamma". *Journal of the Pāli Text Society*, vol. 9, 1981, pp. 22-46.
- Gethin, Rupert. "The Five Khandhas: Their Treatment in the Nikāyas and Early Abhidhamma". *Journal of Indian Philosophy*, vol.14, no. 1. 1986, pp.35-53.

Unpublished Sources: PhD Thesis

- Han, Tao. *Cognition in Buddhist Psychology: A Study of the Cognitive Functions in the Teaching of Causality in Early Buddhism*. 2017. The University of Hong Kong, PhD thesis, <https://hub.hku.hk/bitstream/10722/261579/1/FullText.pdf>. Accessed June 30, 2021.

Web Sites

www.youtube.com/watch?v=UvKl0Wpwbn0

Emperor *Ashoka*, the Chief Patron of Buddhism: A Review

Md. Ashikuzzaman Khan Kiron
Assistant Professor

Department of Pali and Buddhist Studies, University of Dhaka, Bangladesh
kiran@du.ac.bd/kiran@bhu.ac.in

Date of Call for Article:

27 May, 2024

Article Received Date:

25 July, 2024

Date of sending for peer review:

27 August, 2024

Date of receiving from peer review:

22.09.2024

Date of Revision:

02 October, 2024

Date of Acceptance:

14 November, 2024

Date of Publication:

26 January, 2025

Abstract: The role of Emperor *Ashoka* is the main reason behind the position Buddhism has reached in the present world. He is one of the patrons of Buddhism. It was under his auspices that the third Buddhist council was held that Buddhism was able to establish itself in the position it has in the world today.

Objective: The purpose of this study is to present a holistic assessment of how Emperor *Ashoka* was able to reach the present position by patronizing Buddhism. The article is presented in total three phases. Namely:

1. To present a brief introduction to Emperor *Ashoka*;
2. To assess and present the context of Emperor *Ashoka's* closeness with Buddhism;
3. To evaluate Emperor *Ashoka's* contribution to Buddhism

Methodology: This research employs a library-based analytical approach with a thorough review and critical analysis of associated historical texts and scholarly articles. The study explores the life and contributions of Emperor *Ashoka*, focusing on his patronage of Buddhism and its healthy impact on the global society.

Result: Biography of Emperor *Ashoka*, his closeness and expansion of Buddhism has been explored in the article. Emperor *Ashoka* has been found to be able to reach the present position by patronizing Buddhism through the study.

Conclusion: The *Tripiṭaka* was perfected by the third Buddhist council. He played an important role in propagating Buddhism in nine countries at that time, so this religion stands on a strong foundation in the world today. His son *Mahendra* and daughter *Sanghamitra* were among the Buddhist monks and nuns sent by Emperor *Ashoka* to the nine countries. Due to that continuity, the spread of Buddhism has been hindered in the world till today. The next successors are carrying on its continuity. As a result, a strong foundation of Buddhism is created.

Keywords: Asoka, Third Buddhist Council, *Dīpavaṃsa*, *Mahāvamsa*, Chandagupta Maurya.

Paper Type: Research Paper

© 2025 The Author. All rights reserved.

For permissions,

Contact: research@lbu.edu.np

This work is licensed under
Creative Commons Attribution-Non
Commercial-No Derivatives 4.0

International License.

<https://creativecommons.org/choose/>

Licenses /by-nc-nd/4.0/



Introduction

Gautama Buddha was a preacher of Buddhism. He tried to impart the knowledge he acquired to the people. But after his *Mahāparinirvāṇa* three Buddhist councils were held respectively. Emperor *Ashoka* patronized the third Buddhist council. Emperor *Ashoka* achieved fame by patronizing Buddhism in the same way that he gained worldwide fame politically. All the great people who have done good deeds over time have become immortal in history like Emperor *Ashoka*. Because his important contribution to the welfare of Buddhism or to the preservation of Buddhism surpasses his other works. He changed from griefless to '*dharmashoka*'. As a result, he is immortal in history. Besides, his other karma also made him immortal. This is evaluated in the continuity of era or time or history. Hence the research paper is completed in three steps; which is mentioned in abstract.

Ashoka

Nothing much is known about *Ashoka's* early life. His father's name was *Bindusara*. It is said that *Bindusara* had sixteen wives and 101 sons. *Bindusara's* eldest son was named *Sushima*. *Ashoka* was the second and *Tishya* was the youngest son. *Ashoka's* mother was named '*Dharma*' according to South Indian legend and '*Subhadrangi*' according to North Indian legend. Names of five wives of Emperor *Ashoka* are found. Namely: *Mahadevi*, *Asandhimitra*, *Karubaki*, *Padmavati* and *Tishyarakshita*. The exact number of *Ashoka's* sons is not known. However, the names of some of his sons are known. Namely: *Mahendra*, *Tibur*, *Kunal* and *Jalauk*.

Ascension to the Throne

After the death of his father *Bindusara*, his son *Ashoka* inherited the Magadha Empire in 273 BC. But *Ashoka's* coronation took place four years later. After the death of *Bindusara*, 'there was a very bloody conflict and in this conflict *Ashoka*, with the help of a minister named *Radhagupta*, killed 98 brothers and ascended the throne (Weiger 98). That is why *Ashoka* is called '*Chandashoka*'. Later he got attracted to Buddhism and became known as '*Dharmashoka*' for his great public welfare activities (Weiger 98). The events of the first few years of *Ashoka's* reign are not documented. After ascending the throne, he continued to live and rule the kingdom like his predecessors. Prince *Yuvraj (Ashoka)* naturally loved fun, games, war. During the first thirteen years of his reign, he adopted a policy of imperial expansion and maintaining friendly relations with foreign countries. '*Ashoka's* kingdom ranged generally from the Syrian border in the west to the Brahmaputra valley in the east and from *Kāshmir* in the north to the *Pennar* River in the south (Majumdar 71).

Historical Evidence

Considerable historical material is available about the reign of Emperor *Ashoka*. Following are the evidences detailing his reign. Namely: 1. *Ashoka's* script; 2. Buddhist scriptures *Divyavabdana*, *Dīpavamsa* and *Mahāvamsa* Among these elements the inscription is the most important. They were propagated by Emperor *Ashoka*. Inscriptions were modern state documents. The inscriptions were essentially permanent and immutable.

Title of *Ashoka*

In ancient India, the kings of each state tended to take the title of regional king. A king assumed a title when he came to power. His true status was determined by that title. But even though it was in ancient India, it has remained in the present day society in a different way. The measure or measurement of power is still practiced by rank or title. But those who use these titles try to convey their own power or measure of respect; they may not even know its history. But it is there - sometimes in hidden form or in open form. However, Emperor *Ashoka* also took the same title and presented history on a larger scale. Because if

people at the highest level of the society, country or state did karma, it is easily focused. Basically, '*Ashoka* became king and assumed the titles '*Devanam Piya*' and '*Devanam Piya Piyadasi* (Oldernburg 25)

Kalinga War

Kalinga War was the most important political event during Emperor *Ashoka's* reign. *Kalinga* kingdom was formed in ancient times with parts of present day *Orissa* and *Ganjam* districts. During the reign of the Nanda kings, *Kalinga* became part of Magadha. *Kalinga* probably became independent after the fall of the Nanda dynasty. During the time of *Chandagupta Maurya*, *Kalinga* was a powerful kingdom and under this kingdom there were 60,000 infantry, 1000 cavalry and 700 war elephants. 'A new era in the history of Magadha and India began with the *Kalinga* war. In fact, the phase of *Digvijay* ends and the phase of religion begins (Chawdhuri 288)

State Policy

Ashoka inherited a vast empire. The conquest of *Kalinga* further expanded his empire. *Ashoka* took effective measures for the good governance of this vast empire. *Mauryan* rule during the time of his grandfather *Chandragupta Maurya* was highly centralized. *Ashoka* changed this situation and implemented patriarchal state ideals. He used to compare the subjects of the state to his own children. This philanthropic interpretation of royal duties was a key principle of *Ashoka's* regime. According to this ideal of royal duty, *Ashoka* made various reforms in the administrative field.

Ashoka's Attraction and Adoption of Buddhism

According to legend, after hearing '*Appamada Vagga*' recited by his niece *Nigrodha Sramana*, *Ashoka* was very pleased and attracted to Buddhism and became a devoted devotee of Buddhism (Malalassekhara (217-19). *Ashoka* accepted Buddhism in the eighth year of his reign (Chattapadhyaya 219). He was originally attracted to Buddhism and accepted Buddhism after receiving initiation from the Buddhist monk Upagupta. *Ashoka's* conversion can also be seen in his personal life. Emperor *Ashoka's* devotion to Buddhism initiated him to practice of pilgrimage. Basically, Emperor *Ashoka's* pilgrimage and such benevolent actions are truly commendable. Devotion to elders, kindness to relatives and servants, kindness to all living beings, *Brahminism*, charity to the poor, purity in life, truthfulness and charity etc. were the main focus of *Ashoka's* thought. That the Dhamma can benefit human life is clearly understood from *Ashoka's* thoughts. Every religion has echoed that tone.

Ashoka's Dharma Victory Policy

Sometimes, a king has to adopt some liberal policies in order to run the kingdom successfully. As a result peace prevails in the state. However, in many cases it may interfere with interests in some matters. So it is seen by many that, 'The interests of the *Mauryan* Empire were undermined by *Ashoka's* religious conquest policy (Thapar 34). Sometimes, certain policies undermine the driving force of the state. It may be adopted for noble reasons, but it creates exactly this kind of situation. This, sometimes, brings good long term results. It can be felt after getting that result. In fact, this empire was weakened militarily as a result of his policy of religion and internal governance. *Kalhan's 'Rājataranginī'*, *Abul Fazl's 'Ain-e Akbari'* record the contribution of Emperor *Ashoka* in spreading Jainism in *Kāshmir*. Human freedom is a very important issue. If it is religious freedom then it becomes even more important. Because if they can follow their own religion, there is peace in the state. However, in case of exception, it is necessary to take that action. Emperor *Ashoka* was able to adopt the system. It is known that, 'in his empire all the people of all castes lived in peace and he had no fear of personal affairs. It is very clear that Emperor *Ashoka* was able to show his religious magnanimity. If he had failed to show that doing so, then people wouldn't have enjoyed their religious freedom in his kingdom. Basically, it depends largely on the will of the king or government of the state.

Patronage of Third Buddhist Council

The third Buddhist council is the most important in the history of Buddhism. After the *Mahāparinirvāṇa* of the Buddha, he played a leading role in establishing and propagating Buddhism by patronizing the third council. Through this council the Buddhist holy book the *Tripitaka* is completed. The council was held mainly 236 years after Buddha's *Mahāparinirvāṇa* and *Moggaliputta Tishya Thera's* presidency of the council. *Moggaliputta Tishya Thero* wrote a book called '*Kathavatthu*'. To which the third part of *Tripitaka* '*Abhidharma Piṭaka*' is attached. That's why *Tripitaka* is evolved from '*Dvipitaka*'. 'Originally the council took place in the 17th year of Emperor *Ashoka's* reign (Smith 85). According to '*Sāmāntapāsādikā*', '*Kathāvatthuppakaraṇa*' and '*Sinhalese History*' the third Buddhist council was invoked by Emperor *Ashoka* to prevent Buddhism from being corrupted by infiltrators of different creeds. According to Sinhalese history 'at the end of the third Buddhist council he sent Dharma Ambassador to nine places. The purpose was to propagate Buddhism, as mentioned above. They are: '*Mahendra-Sinhalese, Majjhāntikā- Kāsmīra and Gāndhāra, Mahādeva-Mahismandala, Raksita-Vanvāsā, Dharmaraksitā-Aparantaka, Mahā-Dharma-Raksita-Mahārāstra, Mahāraksita-Greek, Majjhima-Himālaya, Sona and Uttara-Burma and Thailand*. It is said that, 'His preaching was not only limited to different parts of India, his preaching work also went on in the continents of far Asia, Africa, Europe etc. His son *Mahendra* and daughter *Samghamitra* were engaged in the propagation of Buddhism (Bondhapadhy 56). Basically, Emperor *Ashoka* set a great example by sending sons and daughters to spread Buddhism. As a result, Buddhism became popular very quickly.

Service to Buddhism

Ashoka's service to Buddhism was the most noteworthy event. As pillars and *stupas* hold the traditions of Buddhism, Emperor *Ashoka* built a number of *stupas* and monasteries to preserve the memory of Buddhism and set up pillars on which he inscribed his understanding of the religious doctrine. He took strong measures to preserve the order of Buddhism and suppress dissension within the *Samgha*. He realized that the study of scriptures is very important. For this and for the followers prescribed a course of study of the scriptures. As a result, it is possible for them to acquire correct knowledge through the study of real scriptures. It is natural that the knowledge of this assumption will enable them to move forward in the days ahead. Followers of any religion play a leading role in sustaining that religion. If followers do not practice and maintain that particular religion, there remains the possibility of misinformation being attached to it. So followers have to play an important role in this regard. Emperor *Ashoka* took this issue very seriously.

Conclusion

In the context of the above discussion it can be said that, karma makes people great or inferior in the pages of history. Emperor *Ashoka* is one of the kings who reigned in the Indian subcontinent and is remembered in history. The political history and the kingdom extended far. He was able to make a solid place in the political history of the Indian subcontinent in particular. Just as the history of the Indian subcontinent cannot be written without Emperor *Ashoka*, so it is not possible to write the history of Buddhism without him. Because he was the only king who was able to put Buddhism on a firm footing by patronizing the third Buddhist council by preserving the *Tripitaka* and sending Religion Ambassadors to different countries. So Emperor *Ashoka* is one of the few kings who will be remembered forever in the political history of Buddhism. With whose strong cooperation we see Buddhism in such a successful position in the modern world. Therefore, under the patronage of Emperor *Ashoka*, Buddhism became a world religion.

Conflict of Interest

The author declares that there is no conflict of interest regarding the publication of this manuscript.

Work Cited

- Bondhapādhāya, Anukul Chandra.. *Buddha and Buddhadharma*, Kolkata ,1989.
- Chattapādhāya, S. *Prācīn Vārater Itihās*, Kolkata, 1990.
- Chawdhuri, H. C. *Political History of Ancient India*, Calcutta: Discerpancies between Buddhist Tradition & Ashokan Iscriptions'. In *Anuradha Seneviranta* (edit.). *King Ashoka and Buddhism: Historical and Literary Studies*. Buddhist Publication Society, 1995.
- Geiger, W. (Edit & Trans). *Mahāvamsa*, Vol. V. London: Pali Text Society , 1950.
- Guruge, Ananda W. P. 'Emperor Ashoka and Buddhism: Unresolved *Discerpancies between Buddhist Tradition & Ashokan Iscriptions*'. In *Anuradha Seneviranta* (edit.). *King Ashoka and Buddhism: Historical and Literary Studies*. Buddhist Publication Society, (1995).
- Majumder, R. C. and Pusalker, A.D., *Age of Imperial Unity*, Bombay: Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, 1951.
- Malalasekera. *G. P. Dictionary of Pali Proper Names*, Vol. I., 1960.
- Oldenburg, H. (Edit and Trans).. *Dipavamsa*, Vol. VI. London: Pali Text Society, (1912).
- Robert E. Buswell Jr. *Encyclopedia of Buddhism*. Vol. II. 2003.
- Ray Chawdhuri H. C. (1972). *Political History of Ancient India*, Calcutta: Calcutta University, 1972.
- Smith.Vincent A., *Early History of India*, England: Oxford University, 1924.
- Thapar, Romila. *Asoka & the Decline of the Mauryas*, England: Oxford University Press.

Raj Guraju of Śrīkhaṇḍa Tarumūla Mahāvihāra: His Role in Buddhist Community of Kathmandu

Aakasha Bajracharya, Ph.D. Scholar
Lumbini Buddhist University, Nepal
aakashabajracharya@gmail.com

Date of Call for Article:

27 May, 2024

Article Received Date:

17 June, 2024

Date of sending for peer review:

11 August, 2024

Date of receiving from peer review:

13 September, 2024

Date of Revision:

26.09.2024

Date of Acceptance:

13 November, 2024

Date of Publication:

26 January, 2025

Abstract

Background: *Sikhamu Baha, Śrīkhaṇḍa Tarumūla Mahāvihāra*, is one of the prominent Buddhist monasteries of Kantipur with a history backed around 7th century CE. It is situated in a small, enclosed courtyard adjoining the *Kumari Baha* and just off of the Durbar Square. The importance of this *baha* is the fact that one of its members is the '*Raj Guru*', or *Raj Gubhaju*. This post is hereditary and is always held by a *Vajrācārya* of one of the lineages of *Sikhamu Baha*.

Objective: The objective of this article are to understand the different activities performed by *Rajguru* in the past and present, to highlight the facts regarding *Raj Guraju*, its history as well as his role in the buddhist community of Kathmandu and to showcase the linkage between *Kumari* and *Raj Guraju*.

Methodology: The study follows descriptive research methodology and interviews are conducted to meet the research objective.

Result: The findings of this study is that the *Raj Guraju* has been playing an eminent role in creating a balance in Buddhist community, working for benefit of *Vajrācārya* s of Kathmandu, fulfilling his duty as royal priest and also addressing the contemporary issues arose along with time.

Conclusion: *Raj Guraju* is a hereditary post held by *Vajrācārya* of "*Yuta kaval*" of *Śrīkhaṇḍa Tarumūla Mahāvihāra*. *Raj Guraju* being still a prominent and influential post amongst the *Bajracharya* of Kathmandu. He is the guardian of *Bajracharyas* in Kathmandu. He plays an eminent role in creating a balance in Buddhist community, working for benefit of *Bajracharyas* of Kathmandu. Along with the role towards *Bajracharya* community as a whole, *Raj Guraju* has special linkage with *Kumari* and *Kumari* chhen and thus has to follow his duties and specific roles in *Kumari Chhen* as well.

Keywords: *Śrīkhaṇḍa Tarumūla Mahāvihāra; Raj guraju, Lalmohar; Kumari, Mul-cakreswar; Raj Gubhaju*

Paper Type: Research Paper

Introduction

© 2025 The Author. All rights reserved.

For permissions,

Contact: research@lbu.edu.np

This work is licensed under
Creative Commons Attribution-Non
Commercial-No Derivatives 4.0

International License.

<https://creativecommons.org/choose/>

Licenses /by-nc-nd/4.0/



The dwelling place of Saṅgha members is called a vihara (Monastery) where they dedicate their life in the practice and propagation of the Dharma. There are two words used for the Newar Buddhist institutions of the Valley: baha (or bahal) and bahi (or bahil). The term baha is a corruption of the Sanskrit term vihara, the standard term for a Buddhist monastery.¹ It generally consists of a large Buddha image, a rectangular courtyard for assembly and display of Buddhist articles on occasions, long rooms for Dharma teaching or preaching on the ground floor and rooms for further extensive practice of Dharma, storeroom etc. in the first floor. Buddhist masters and Acharyas mostly dwell surrounding the monastery. Sangha means a group of practitioners of the Dharma, members of which follow a set of prescribed rules and regulations, synonymously known also as Vinaya or practimoksa.²

In Kathmandu, there are three sets of Buddhist institutions: the eighteen bahas of the Acarya Guthi plus their branches, ten purely Sakya main bahas plus their branches, and sixteen bahis. These eighteen principal monasteries and other monasteries were distributed in four regions from north to south and each region has one separate greater Saṅgha called Pui Ācā GU. The regions are called Pui. All the eighteen monasteries are associated with national umbrella Saṅgha, De Ācā GU.³ The four Pui are Thatu Pui, Dathu Pui, Lāyaku Pui and Kwathu Pui or Kvane Pui. Lāyaku Pui, Durbar square portion, equivalent to Kāsthāmandap Mahānagar. The region has only one main mahavihara i.e. Sikhombaha or Śrīkhaṇḍa Tarumūla Mahāvīhāra.

Sikhambu Baha is situated in a small, enclosed courtyard adjoining the Kumari Baha and just off of the Darbar Square. Sikhambu Baha has three functioning branches, one defunct branch and the Kumari Baha which has ritual connections to Sikhambu Baha.⁴ Līlāvajra was the founder of Sikhambu-bāhā of Lāyaku Pui. Sikhambu Bāhā, the only principal monastery of Lāyaku Pui comprises more than 600 saṅgha members. The importance of this baha is the fact that one of its members is the 'Raj Guru', or Raj Gubhaju or Raj Guraju. Raj Guraju is a hereditary post held by Vajrācārya of "Yuta kaval" of Śrīkhaṇḍa Tarumūla Mahāvīhāra. As of now, the eldest son of Yuta kaval's Bhajusi Bajracharya's family lineage is officially appointed as Raj Guraju as mentioned in the lalmohar given by Pratap Singh Shah.

Raj Guraju is an eminent figure in Buddhist community of Kathmandu. Raj Guraju is a key person responsible for the addressing the issues within Bajracharya community of Kathmandu. However, there are not many studies done about Raj Guraju. Thus, I have choose this topic to highlight about the facts and roles of Raj Guraju who is a sangha member of Sikhambu Baha.

Objectives

The objectives of this research paper is to understand the role of Raj Guraju of Śrīkhaṇḍa Tarumūla Mahāvīhāra. In the Buddhist community of Kathmandu. The research paper highlights the different activities performed by Raj Guraju in past and present. The paper shows the linkage between Kumari and Raj Guraju. This paper focuses on the interpretation of the history of Raj Guraju along with roles and duties of Raj Guraju during the course of time.

Literature Review

The information on the subject matter is scattered in different texts, journals, research articles etc. the Literature that has been reviewed for this study comprises books, e-books, dissertations and so on. The literatures reviewed are mentioned below:

- 1 John K. Locke, Buddhist Monasteries of Kathmandu Valley, -a survey of the Bāhās and Bahis of the Kathmandu Valley, (Kathmandu: Sahayogi Press Pvt. Ltd., 1985), P. 531.
- 2 Surendra Man Bajracharya, *Monasticism in Buddhism of Nepal-Mandala: continuity and changes*, Diss. 2018, P.9
- 3 Bajracharya, *Op. cit.*, f.n. 3, p. 320
- 4 Locke, *Op. cit.* (f.n. 1). P. 263

Michael Allen. *The Cult of Kumari: Virgin worship in Nepal* (1975): This book is written by Michael Allen. This book is about the kumari cult that highlights the major features of the kumari cult. The book mentions the Kumaris of Kathmandu, Patan and Bhadgaon. The book has the mention of Rāj Guraju of Sikhamu bāhā and his association with Royal Kumari. There is not much detail about the relation of Rāj Guraju and Kumari.

John Kerr Locke. *Buddhist monasteries of Nepal: a survey of the Bāhās and Bahīs of the Kathmandu Valley* (1985): The writer of this book is John K. Locke. This book deals on Buddhist monasteries, daily rituals, annual festivals organized in the bāhās and branch bāhās. This book contains details about the architecture of Sikhamu bāhā, its saṅgha and the description about the Rāj Guraju.

Dr. Surendra Man Vajrācārya. *Monasticism in Buddhism of Nepal-Maṇḍala: continuity and changes* (2018): A research work by Dr. Surendra Man Vajrācārya as an unpublished dissertation was written in 2018. This work has highlighted the monasticism in Nepalmaṇḍala. There is mention of Śrīkhaṇḍa Tarumūla Mahāvīhāra and Rāj-Guraju and paciha, hamu-Guraju of Śrīkhaṇḍa Tarumūla Mahāvīhāra in his work.

Methodology

This study investigates the role of Raj Guraju of Śrīkhaṇḍa *Tarumūla Mahāvīhāra*. By means of a descriptive research methodology. Qualitative research design is adopted. The survey research is applied as a descriptive type of research design. The information is collected by using both the primary and secondary method of data collection. For primary data, Interview and observation techniques are used. In depth interviews with concerned persons and Buddhist Scholars are conducted and for observation, field visits have been done. Secondary data is retrieved from books, articles, journals, reports, thesis and online sites. Among the published sources, newspapers, articles, books, chronicles and the internet had been consulted. Beside this, published books from abroad related to this research had also been another source.

Introduction to Raj Guraju

A Mul-cakreswar in Newar monasticism is equivalent to Sanghamahanayak, the supreme Sangha head of Buddhist sangha in current Theravada tradition. Thus, the monastics are first classed as Bhikṣus and Acarya (Pali Acariyo) among them are Sthavira, Pancasthavira, Mulasthavira/Cakresvar, Mula-cakresvar, De-thayepa (Mu thayepa) etc. Besides, Aajus, cakreswars and Mul-cakreswar, there is a provision of Raj-Guraju and other assisting monastic personnels like Paciha, Maa-Gubhaju, and Hamu Guraju in Kantipur. Raj Guraju who is also called Laya-Guraju means royal Buddhist master appointed by the king in the past.⁵

Presence of Raj-Guraju is compulsory during the making of Mul-cakreswars in Kathmandu. He is also authorized to take up the role of De Thayepa or Mul-cakreswar in absence of the latter. In this sense, he is like vice-president if Mul-cakreswar is to be assumed as president. It is his responsibility to oversee registration of Vajrācāryas of eighteen principal monasteries of Kantipur, to arrange seating of elders according to seniority, to look after the arrangement of annual gathering of Aac GU, to fix its turn holder, to conduct the activities as discussed and finalized by the council. Invitation to a religious performance which needs the presence of elders is often channeled through LayaGuraju. Thus, his role also resembles that of a general secretary of an organization.

The order of LayaGuraju seems prevalent in Kathmandu at least from the period before 1430 AD (Yaksamalla's time). Paciha, Ma-Gubhaju, and Hamu Guraju are the assisting personnel serving

5 Bajracharya, *Op. cit.*, f.n. 2, pp 348-349

the monastics through LayaGuruju. Paciha, derived from the word Pacimhica meaning fund keeper acts as accountant cum store keeper for the LayaGuruju when the religious events like De Aca Gu have to be arranged. He is also treated as an extra priest participating along with LayaGuruju and others in the religious activities. Ma-Gubhaju (perhaps derived from MahaGuruju) maintains the monastic activity records, to call and bring the needed person at the site for the needful. It is the duty of Hamu-Guruju to relay the messages and to make delivery of invitation cards to the right persons. His role seems significant when there was no invitation card distribution system as printing press was yet to be introduced, and invitees had to be informed personally. The order of LayaGuruju and his associates resembles the administrative secretariat.

At present the role of Raj-Guruju and paciha, hamu-Guruju falls under the prerogative of Vajrācāryas of Śrīkhaṇḍa Tarumūla Mahāvīhāra. There are lineages of Vajrācārya families from this monastery at present rendering such services. Rāj Gururu is a hereditary post held by Vajrācāryas of “Yuta kaval” of Śrīkhaṇḍa Tarumūla Mahāvīhāra. The eldest son of Yuta kaval’s Bhajusi Vajrācārya’s family lineage is officially appointed as Raj Gururu as mentioned in the lalmohar given by Pratap Singh Shah.

History of Raj Gururu

In Nepalese history, though there were many non-buddhist rulers ruling Nepalmandala, those kings did have faith in Buddhism and showed due respect towards Buddhism. As a result in order to conduct various Buddhist events and rituals, the rulers then gave the title of “Raj Gururu” to Vajrācārya priests and thus gave a strong position to vajrayani Buddhist tradition in the nation. The role of “Raj Gururu” is being performed by Vajrācārya of “Yuta kaval” of Śrīkhaṇḍa Tarumūla Mahāvīhāra. This post is hereditary and is always held by a Vajrācārya of one of the lineages of Sikhamu Baha.

This is an official post, similar to that of the present Raj Guru (who is always a 'Parvate' Brahman). It was a very important post in the time of the Malla kings and perhaps before their time, but evidently declined in importance in the late Malla period and has become little more than a historical relic since the coming of the kings of Gorkha. The post existed in Kathmandu and this Kathmandu Raj Guru seems to have performed many of the functions of the present royal guru. The origin of this post of Raj Guru is obscure. However, it is clear that it goes back at least to the early Malla period.⁶

The present Raj Gururu Manjushree Ratna Vajrācārya has stated that even though the period of time regarding the start of this tradition is unknown but the last Malla king Jaya Prakash Malla’s inscription and different Shah Kings like Pratap Singh, Ranabahadur, Rajendra Bikram Shah etc. have given lal mohars. A lal mohar states “राजगुरुजु या अधिकार परापूर्व कालनिसे सिखंमूबाहायापिनीगु खः थुकीयात परम्पराकथं निरन्तरता विया बौद्ध धर्मया ज्या न्ह्याका च्वै”⁷ which means that Raj Gururu’s rights have been reserved by people of Sikhamu Baha from ancient time, continue this as a tradition and keep up the work of Buddhism. A lal mohar was given by King Pratap Singh Shah to Bhajusi Bajracharya in 1833 B.S. states that the rights of Raj Gururu and panchabuddha was given to Sikhamugu baha from before so keep this on.

The Raj Gubhajas hold hereditary positions that date back to the Malla period when they carried the authority of the King to settle disputes amongst the Newar Buddhists and to carry out a number of ritual duties. Even today such disputes, mostly over rights to clients, are commonly heard by the 18 baha heads in a large meeting room on the top floor of Kumari Chen, The Sikhamu Raj Gubhaju is the senior most member of an agnatic lineage that currently has about 74 male members, most of whom reside at Rajkirtimahavihara in Maru tol.⁸

6 Ibid, P. 260

7 Yajya Man Pati Bajracharya, Rajgururu Ratnapani Bajracharya, (Kathmandu: Rajgururu Publication N.S. 1136)

8 Allen, Michael. "The cult of Kumari: Virgin worship in Nepal." (1975). P. 9

Roles of Raj Guruju

During the composition of book “Buddhist Monasteries of Kathmandu Valley, -a survey of the Bahas and Bahis of the Kathmandu Valley” author John K Locke (1985) had interviewed the then Raj Guruju, Pushpa Ratna Bajracharya. During the interview the following points were mentioned by the incumbent pointing out the roles of Raj Guruju:

It is his duty to select the girl who will function as the Royal *Kumari* or living goddess.

- a. It is his duty to act as *dya-pala* in *Kumari Baha*
- b. He is the head of a group of ten Vajrācārya s known as the *dasa-digacarya* ('the masters of the ten directions'). The group consists of the Raj Guru, his assistant (*upadhyaya*) and the eight senior-most *thakalis* of the *acarya guthis* of each of the eighteen *bahas* which make up the *Acarya Guthi* of Kathmandu.
- c. In the time of the Malla Kings, the Raj Guru acted as the main astrologer and *pandit* for the entire country.
- d. Until very recent times he functioned as the chief administrator and watchdog for the *Acarya Guthi* in its function as a union of priests.
- e. In the days of the Malla kings the fame and the authority of the Raj Guru extended all the way to Lhasa.
- f. Whenever the *Svayambhu Mahicaitya* had to be repainted it was the duty of the Raj Guru to perform a *puja* before the work began.
- g. The Raj Guru, and he alone (or his delegated proxy) is allowed to perform *puja* in the two *sikhara* temples to the sides of the *Svayambhu Mahacaitya*, i.e. *Pratapapura* and *Agnipura*.
- h. The Raj Guru is also the head of another group of five Vajrācārya s known as the *Panca Buddha*, 'the Five Buddhas', whose function it is to assist at certain rituals representing the five transcendent Buddhas. At the present time their only function seems to be to take part in the annual *Kumari Jatra*.
- i. Many of the Buddhist images in the *bahas* were originally made of clay. From time to time these images had to be repaired and repainted. Before this work could begin the image had to be de-consecrated, i.e. the spirit of the deity had to be removed. It was the Raj Guru's duty and his sole right to perform this ritual and to reconsecrate the image.
- j. If any Vajrācārya encroached on the territory of another Vajrācārya by performing rituals for another man's client or taking money from another man's client, the offended party could make a complaint to the Raj Guru. The Raj Guru would hear the case and if the complaint.
- k. If any quarrel arose among the members of any of the eighteen *bahas* of the *Acarya Guthi*, or if someone had damaged one of the *bahas* it was the duty of the Raj Guru to summon the concerned parties and settle the matter, inflicting a fine of thirty two *paisa* on the offender.
- l. The Raj Guru must be invited to any function held or ritual performed, by the local *Acarya Guthi* of any of the eighteen *bahas*.

Locke (1985) has mentioned that many of these functions were no longer current during the time

of his interview with the then incumbent Raj Gurujū. He further stated that Raj Guru still had some importance among the Buddhist community of Kathmandu and a few official functions such as his duties regarding the Royal Kumari. Furthermore, he still had the right to perform certain rituals in the Agam Chen of the Malla Kings at Hanuman Dhoka and on the death of a king of the present dynasty he had to go to Hanuman Dhoka for the ritual reception of the people who come to pay their respects at the time of a death in the royal family.

In addition to this he must keep himself ready to respond to any request which might come from the palace for his services. Because of this, if there should be a death in the family of the Raj Guru, he or one of his initiated male relatives must abstain from taking any part in the death rituals. Such participation would make him impure for the period of mourning and hence unable to perform any pujas. In such a case it is permissible to send any male member of his family to act as proxy. Whenever the eighteen elders of the Acarya Guthi meet or are called to take part in some official function the Raj Guru must also be summoned and he takes his place second to the Thakali of the entire Acarya Guthi.⁹

During the interview with the incumbent Raj Gurujū, the following points were derived as some new additions to the points above. These are the roles and duties which have been carried out by Raj Gurujū in current context:

The Acarya Guthi is the nationwide organization of Bajracharyas. It is the duty of Raj Gurujū to implement the suggestion of the chakreshwors of 18 mahavihara to manage the de acarya guthi well. It is also the duty of raj Gurujū to solve the problems of Bajracharyas who are members of De acarya guthi.

It is duty of Raj Gurujū to provide priest “Gurujū” to the Buddhist “Jajaman” who come from outside Kathmandu.

Another important role played by Raj Gurujū is to act as main priest of Kumari Chen’s secret “Aagam ghar” and do Nitya Parba Puja there.

Raj Gurujū is liable for doing nitya puja of panchabuddha which is instated in the Kumari chhen.

Raj Gurujū plays the role of “Mulacarya” during the annual puja and 12 years wise repainting and reconsecration of the image of Bhimsen of Kantipur.

Raj Gurujū plays the role of “mulacarya” during the renovation of Svayambhu Mahicaitya

When the head of the nation dies, then Raj Gurujū must fulfill the vajrayani ritual called “Bicha Phayegu” and also recite and make others recite Durgatiparisodhan dharani patha.

Similarly, if there is death of any member of Bajracharya family in Kantipur, the family of deceased may invite Raj gurju and other 18 chakreshors for *Dana*. In such event, raj Gurujū shows his presence, accepts *Dana* and recites durgatiparisodhan patha, pancharakshya patha etc.

When the post of “De thyapa” or mulchakreshwor is vacant, then in such case it is the duty of Raj Gurujū to reinstate the new De Thyapa by giving his mulchakreshoravisekha.

If any donor wishes to feed a feast “Sangha bhoje” or want to donate “sangha *Dana*” to “Chhenkhachi” i.e. one from a house and “bahalachi” i.e. one from the baha, then in such case the invitation must be sent through raj Gurujū. Raj Gurujū sends the invitation via Maha Gurujū who is like an assistant to Raj Gurujū. In such celebration, Raj Gurujū, maha Gurujū and chakreshwor of 18 mahavihara are invited. In the absence of Mulchakreshwor, all the responsibilities are to be fulfilled by Raj Gurujū. So, the based on the hierarchy, the post of Raj Gurujū is second after Mulchakreshwor.

9 Locke, *Op. cit.* (f.n. 1). P. 263

Raj Guraju and Kumari

Sikhamu Baha is closely linked to the goddess in its role as provider of four of the Pancha Buddha. The Pancha Buddha are five Buddhist priests of Vajrācārya caste who officiate during the annual Kumari jatra and have various other ceremonial duties in connection with the goddess.¹⁰

It is this Gubhaju who is most especially important in connection with Kumari, for in addition to the performance of both daily and special pujas in her agama, he plays a prominent part in the selection and installation of new Kumaris. He also personally selects as the three additional Pancha Buddhas whichever of his baha's members he regards as suitable. One of these three also acts as his assistant (*upadhyā*) in performing puja at Kumari chen.¹¹ The agam inside kumari Chhen is a secret agam where only Raj Guraju, maha Guraju, karmacharya priest and kumari can enter. Inside the secret agam, the vajrayani rituals related to kumari are performed under the supervision of raj Guraju.

According to the Vamsavalis it was Jayaprakasa, the last of the Malla Kings of Kathmandu, who instituted the royal worship of Kumari. Though some element of doubt must remain as to whether some of his predecessors may also have done likewise, it is certain that it was Jayaprakasa who first built her an official residence near the palace and also began the annual chariot festival.¹²

The official residence for Kumari was built by taking the property of Sikhamu baha and compensating it in form of another piece of land which is now currently known as Jama Baha located in Jamal. So, though the structure was taken for Kumari's residential purpose, the baha house still consisted of agam and gods of Sikhamu baha there. Raj Guraju, being the chief priest was responsible for conducting puja in the agam of Kumari Chen as well as worship of Kumari in Vajrayani method.

For the selection of new kumari, there is committee of five people i.e. Raj Guraju, Karmacarya priest of Taleju, caretaker of Kumari chhen, Joshi and a representative from Guthi Sansthan. Raj Guraju being the part of this committee is liable for selection of right child for the vacant post of Kumari. The major duty of Raj Guraju is to insure that the nominated girl children do belong only from specific 6 out of the 18 Mahavihara of Kathmandu where there is sanyukta Shakya sangha or from ten purely Shakya main bahas. No other Shakya girl child except from these 16 bahas is eligible to become kumari. Along with this, Raj Guraju has to look upon many other factors like the vihara of mother, lineage etc. and reconfirm the information as a part of kumari selection process.

After the selection of Kumari, the daily nitya puja is done by Karmacarya priest whereas Raj Guraju performs puja with Kumari on every month's Krishna Paksha Dasami, during Indra Jatra, Dashain, Kumari chhen busala, pancha Buddha busala, sakimila punhi etc. when incidences related to kumara takes place like sickness of kumari, menstruation during the reign etc. then in such situation, the decisions regarding what is to be by Raj Guraju.

Conclusion

Raj Guraju is a hereditary post held by Vajrācārya of "Yuta kaval" of Śrīkhaṇḍa Tarumūla Mahāvihāra. So, the based on the hierarchy, the post of Raj Guraju is second after Mulchakreshwor who is the head of Bajracharyas in Kathmandu. The time frame regarding the starting of this tradition is not known but clear evidences point out its advent from at least early Malla period. Then, Raj Guraju was a royal designation designated by royal authorities. This post was very influential as Raj Guru acted as the main astrologer and pandit for the entire country during Malla period. Being a royal priest, all the

¹⁰ Allen, *Op. cit.* (f.n. 6). P. 9

¹¹ Ibid

¹² Ibid, P. 8

vajrayani rituals in the royal family as well as in nation was done under the supervision of Raj Gururu. With the beginning of Shah Dynasty, the roles of Raj Gururu narrowed down a bit as Shah Kings were more inclined towards non Buddhist rituals. However, the Buddhist rituals which were performed since Malla period were continued. Nowadays, the scenario has changed and so has the thought and lifestyle of people. There is no monarch in the nation so there is no need of fulfilling statutory duty towards monarch by Raj Gururu but the nation rituals which have been performed since ancient times still have been performed. With the modernization, many new issues have emerged in Bajracharya community like inter caste marriage, inter caste pravajya, women pravajya, outer caste pravajya etc. Raj Gururu being still a prominent and influential post amongst the Bajracharya of Kathmandu is reliable for addressing these issues and also acting as guardian of Bajracharyas in Kathmandu. Raj Gururu has been playing an eminent role in creating a balance in Buddhist community, working for benefit of bajracharyas of Kathmandu and fulfilling his duty as royal priest. Along with the role towards Bajracharya community as a whole, Raj Gururu has special linkage with *Kumari* and *Kumari* chhen and thus has to follow his duties and specific roles in Kumari Chhen as well.

Conflict of Interest

The author declares that there is no conflict of interest regarding the publication of this manuscript.

Works Cited

- Allen, Michael. *"Buddhism without Monks: Newār Vajrayāna Buddhism of the Kathmandu valley"* South Asia: Journal of South Asian Studies (Series 1) Volume 3, Issue 1, published by Routledge, UK for South Asian Studies Association of Australia, 1973.
- Allen, Michael. *The Cult of Kumari: Virgin Worship in Nepal*. Institute of Asian Studies, 1975.
- Bajracharya, Surendra Man. *Monasticism in Buddhism of Nepal-Mandala: continuity and changes*. Ph.D. dissertation submitted to T.U. Buddhist Studies Department 2018
- Bajracharya, Yajya Man Pati. *"Rajgururu Ratnapani Bajracharya"*. Rajgururu Publication, N.S. 1136.
- Gellner, David N. *Monk, Householder, and Tantric Priest: Newar Buddhism and its Hierarchy of Ritual*. Cambridge Univ. Press, 1992.
- Locke, John K. *Buddhist monasteries of Nepal: a survey of the Bāhās and Bahīs of the Kathmandu Valley*. Sahayogi Press Pvt. Ltd., 1985.
- Slusser, Mary Shepherd. *"Nepal mandala: A cultural study of the Kathmandu Valley."* Princeton University Press, 1982.

Guidelines to the Authors

1. Content of the Paper should be related to Buddhist philosophy, literature, education, culture, archaeology, art, architecture, numismatic, epigraphy, comparative religion, law, management, tourism, applied Buddhism, modern technology and other innovative areas.
2. The article should contain Title, Authors' names, Affiliation, E-mail address, Abstract, Keywords, Introduction, Literature review, Research methodology, Results, Discussion, Conclusion, recommendation and references. Cited works and Endnotes should be applied in accordance with MLA current version.
3. Submitted articles will be selected by peer reviewers on the basis of clarity, originality, authenticity and correctness.
4. **Abstract**
The abstract must be concise in accordance with back ground, objectives, methods, result, conclusion and comprehensive reflection of the content. It must be self-contained, without abbreviations, footnotes, or references. The abstract should be between 200 -250 words and be written in one paragraph.
5. **Key words**
Enter 5 key words or phrases in order to reflect the core
Content in alphabetical order, separated by commas.
6. In the main text background, statement of problem, objective, methodology, analysis, conclusion of the subject must be included in accordance with content base and it should be 3,500 to 5,000 words including Cited Works. The manuscript inside each heading is Times New Roman, font size 12, justified alignment, and 1.15 line spacing. The first line of each paragraph is indentation by 0.14" tab space.
7. Define abbreviations and acronyms the first time they are used in the text, even after they have already been defined in the abstract. Do not use abbreviations in the title.
8. **Margin**
Margin of the page should be kept 1" at the top, bottom, right side and 1.5" on the left side of the paper.
9. **Figures**
These are meant to appear in color, or shades of black/gray. Such figures may include photographs, illustrations, multicolor graphs, and flowcharts. Figures are composed of only black lines and shapes. These figures should have no shades or half-tones of gray, only black and white.
10. **Tables**
Table should be created on MS Word using Table toolbar (Table should not be inserted in the form of image).
11. **Caption of Figures or Tables**
Place figure captions below the figures; place table titles above the tables. Both should be in Times New Roman, font size 12, center aligned, and sentence case. Please do not include captions as part of the figures, or put them in "text boxes" linked to the figures. Also, do not place

borders around the outside of your figures. Note that “Fig.” is abbreviated. There is a period after the figure number, followed by a space.

12. **Referencing a Figure or Table within the Paper**

When referencing your figures within your paper, use the abbreviation “Fig. 1” at the end of a sentence. Tables should be numbered with Roman Numerals. Use “Table I” for referring a table within text.

13. **Conclusion**

A conclusion reviews the main points of the paper but not replicate the abstract as the conclusion. It might elaborate the importance of the work or suggest applications and extensions. Interest of the study, aim of the study, major findings, policy implication of the findings, recommendation, limitation and further research areas must be incorporated in the suggestions.

14. In course of double blind peer review process, a separate page should be provide with the authors information,
15. The Editorisl \Board reserves the complete right about accepting or rejecting the received article on the basis of peer-reviewed report.
16. Style should be followed in accordance with the MLA current version.
17. Authors of articles published in Research Centre Journal are the copyright holders of their articles.
18. Ensure the manuscript is original, authentic, and free from plagiarism.
19. Follow the journal’s formatting requirements (e.g., font size, line spacing, margins, and citation style).
20. The manuscript should be submitted in Microsoft Word unless specified otherwise.
21. Include a title page with the authors' names, affiliations, email addresses, and corresponding author details.
22. Please submit your manuscript to "*dhammacakka.journal@lbu.edu.np*"



Lumbini Research Center

Lumbini Buddhist University

Parsa, Lumbini, Nepal

URL: research.lbu.edu.np

Email: dharmacakka.journal@lbu.edu.np