

LINGUISTIC APPROACH
TO BUDDHIST
THOUGHT

GENJUN H.
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PREFACE

The idea for this short treatise is drawn from several previous articles published in various journals, papers read at a number of international conferences and a collection of articles written especially for publication in this volume.

Owing to a vast amount of creditable works in the field of Buddhism, especially during the last half century, a remarkable contribution has been added to our knowledge of the parts as well as the whole. Yet further investigation remains to be done on the linguistic, epistemological, and doctrinal points of difference that have developed over the long span of centuries. The eighteen different schools of Abhidharma Buddhism, for example, cultivated a vocabulary and labyrinth of philosophical concepts found in much earlier teachings, though often clothing them with new and amended implications. Moreover, these implications were seldom worked out until after the conclusions arrived at were in general favor among scholastic contemporaries.

Through the use of linguistic and epistemological methods of research the author has sought to establish a connection with Sarvāstivāda on the one hand and the multitude of meanings provided by Mahāyāna texts on the other. Notwithstanding the author's intentions, however, much yet remains to be done. Indeed many problems connected with Buddhist thought, with the doctrines peculiar to the various Abhidharma schools, and with the multitude of technical terms still await further research.

In consummating the realization of this work a word of acknowledgement is in order. The late Professors I.B. Horner (The Pāli Text Society, London) and E. Conze (Lancaster University) were kind enough to encourage me with especial interest and care in carrying out my endeavors. Indeed without their gracious encouragement this present work might not have been realized. Also, I owe a special debt of gratitude to Professor P.V. Bapat (Poona, India), who offered his unfailing help and inspiration in pursuing a linguistic approach to the study of Buddhist thought.

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II. Indische Grundlage des japanischen Buddhismus 166

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

- A. *Āṅguttaranikāya*, The Pāli Text Society (PTS), London
- A. Com. *Āṅguttaranikāya-Aṭṭhakathā*.
- AKBH. *Abhidharmakośabhāṣyam*, ed. P. Pradhan, Patna, 1975
- AK. Chinese tr. *Abhidharmakośabhāṣyam*, Taisho Edition
- AAV. *Abhisamayālaṅkāra-loka*, ed. U. Wogihara, Tokyo, 1932-35
- Asl. *Aṭṭhasālinī*, ed. P.V. Bapat, The Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute, Poona, 1942
- AKV. *Abhidharmakośavyākhyā*, ed. U. Wogihara, Tokyo, 1932-34
- ASP. Chinese tr. *Abhidharmasamayapradīpikā*, Taisho Edition
- BSOAS. *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies*, London University
- BHSD. F. Edgerton, *Buddhist Hybrid Sanskrit Dictionary*, New Haven, 1953
- CPD. *A Critical Pāli Dictionary*, Copenhagen, 1948-82
- Dhp. *Dhammapada*, PTS
- Dhp. Comm. *Dhammapada-Aṭṭhakathā*, PTS
- Dhs. *Dhammasaṅgaṇī*, PTS
- Divy. *Divyāvadāna*, Cowell and Neill, Cambridge, 1886
- D. *Dīghanikāya*, PTS
- D. Com. *Dīghanikāya-Aṭṭhakathā*, PTS
- J. *Jātaka*, PTS
- JPTS. *Journal of the Pāli Text Society*, PTS
- Kvu. *Kathāvatthu*, PTS
- Kvu. Com. *Kathāvatthu-Aṭṭhakathā*, PTS
- Lañk. *Lañkāvatāra-sūtra*, ed. B. Nanjio, Kyoto, 1923
- M. *Majjhimanikāya*, PTS
- M. Com. *Majjhimanikāya-Aṭṭhakathā*, PTS
- MVP. *Mahāvīyutpatti*, ed. Sakaki, 2 vols., Kyoto, 1916-25
- Netti. *Nettipakaraṇa*, PTS
- Ny. Chinese tr. *Abhidharmanyāyānusāra-śāstra*, Taisho Edition
- P. *Pañcaviṃśatisāhasrikā Prajñāpāramitā*, ed. N. Dutt, London, 1934
- Pā. Pāli
- SN. *Suttanipāta*, PTS
- SN. Com. *Suttanipāta-Aṭṭhakathā*, PTS
- SED. Monier-Williams, *Sanskrit English Dictionary*, Oxford, 1899
- SWT. S(Sung Dynasty), W(Wei Dynasty), T(T'ang Dynasty)
- T. Taisho Edition (*Taisho-Shinshu-Daizo-Kyo*, ed. J. Takakusu and K. Matanabe), 55 vols., Tokyo, 1924-29
- Th. *Thera-Therīgāthā*, Pāli Text Society, PTS

- Th. Com. *Therigāthā Aṭṭhakathā*, Pāli Text Society, PTS
U. *Udāna*, Pāli Text Society, PTS
Vism. *Visuddhimagga*, 2 vols., Pāli Text Society, PTS
Vibh. *Vibhaṅga*, Pāli Text Society, PTS
Vibh. Com. *Vibhaṅga-Aṭṭhakathā*, Pāli Text Society, PTS

LINGUISTIC APPROACH TO
BUDDHIST THOUGHT

CHAPTER I

EARLY BUDDHIST CONCEPTS

I. THE SIGNIFICANCE OF NEGATION IN BUDDHISM *nekkhamma* and *naiṣkramya*

India had many schools of philosophy which developed their own systems of thought, based on the logic of negation. Buddhism was one of these schools of thought.

The purpose of Buddhist negation is not merely negation as such, but the positive goal of pointing towards the Absolute. In other words, the Absolute is approached through the logic of negation. Negation is simply an expression of the Absolute.

The how and why of the Absolute, which can not be expressed directly in words, can be expressed by the philosophy of negation. Generally, negation presupposes observation of the world with two perspectives: first, to deny the already known; and second, to give a positive expression by means of the opposite concept.

The first category, or the negation of the already known, can be found in Abhidharma philosophy in various words which reflect negation by the use of three prefixes, namely *a*, *na*, and *vi*. This negation refers to the negation of the experimental.

The second category means the positive expression of the super-experimental (the religious experience) by means of negation of the experimental (the mundane world). This positive expression of the opposite comes late in the development of Buddhism. At that time the positive expression was in the form of negation with the prefixes *nir*, *vi*, and *sama*.

The development from *a* to *nir* may be traced not merely in this Abhidharma school, but also in the historical development of Buddhist philosophy. This is clearly shown in the development of *nekkhamma* in Pāli and its evolution of meaning from Abhidharma to Mahāyāna Buddhism.

Evidence clearly indicates that the term *nekkhamma* and *akāma* are one and the same; only the implication is different. Both terms are derived from the common root *kam*, meaning "to desire," according to Pāli literature.

In Sanskrit Buddhist literature, *nekkhamma* is Sanskritized as *naiṣkramya*. For example:

*kāmeṣu bhayam okāraṃ sankilesaṃ naiṣkramyānsisaṃsāvyava-
dānaṃ prakāsayati* (Mahāvastu III. 357).

*kāmānaṃ ādīnaṃ kāraṃ sankilesaṃ nekkhamme ānisaṃsaṃ
pakāsesi* (D.I.110, Ambatthasutta. I.148. etc.).

Here *naiṣkramya* corresponds to *nekkhamma* in Pāli. Again in Mahāvastu:

*nāpi ye dharmāḥ gṛhāśritās te naiṣkramyāśritā iti deśayāmi;
nāpi ye dharmā naiṣkramyāśritās te gṛhāśritā iti deśayāmi* (MV.
I.173.13).

The Sanskrit compound *naiṣkramyāśritās* again corresponds to the Pāli term *nekkhammasita*, meaning ‘based on (a holy life) free from desire,’ which is contradictory to the term *gehasita*, meaning ‘connected with a worldly life’ (S. IV.233).

Naiṣkramya is derived from *nis-kram*, meaning ‘not to approach’ or ‘not to go towards,’ whereas *nekkhamma*, is derived from *nis-kam*, meaning ‘not to desire’; hence, etymologically neither term can be used interchangeably.

As for the etymology of *nekkhamma*, Childers gives an unconvincing and hypothetical interpretation. He takes into consideration two different etymologies: *naiṣkāmya* and *niṣkram*.

According to Childers, if *nekkhamma* had been derived from *naiṣkāmya*, it would have been *nekkamma*, but not *nekkhamma*. Childers thus preferred *niṣkram* to *naiṣkāmya*. But it is just as possible that *nekkhamma* is derived from *naiṣkāmya*, as the syllable *k* is frequently transformed into *kh* in Pāli, e.g., *prakrānta* (Skt.)—*pakkanta* (Pā.) or *kānti*—*khanti* etc. There should be no doubt about the derivation from *naiṣkāmya* to *nekkhamma*. The above should suffice as examples showing the derivation of *nekkhamma*.

The Sanskritization of *naiṣkramya* for *nekkhamma* need not be a problem to us. It is only necessary to refer to the Pāli and Sanskrit Buddhist texts, where *naiṣkramya* is directly Sanskritized from *nekkhamma* (Pāli). Moreover, in the Pāli texts we have, in relation to *nekkhamma*, the word *nikkhamma*, meaning ‘going out of.’

Nikkhamma is obviously derived from *nis-kram*, which is common to the root of *naiṣkramya*.

Now, in what sense is *nikkhamma* employed in the Pāli canon? To answer that we need to understand the meaning of *nikkhamma* as expressed in the Pāli canon:

*nikkhamma gharā panujja kāme
kathaṃ bhikkhu sammā so loke paribbajeyya* (SN. 359).

‘How should bhikkhu, going out of the house, giving up desires, rightly wander about as a Buddhist mendicant in this world?’

Commenting on *nikkhamma* Buddhaghosa says: *vatthukāme panudīta gharāvasā nikkhamma* (SN. Com. I. 362).

From the above we see that *nikkhamma* means ‘going out of,’ derived from *niṣ-kram*, which should more accurately be Sanskritized as *naiṣkramya*. Hence, *nikkhamma* is different from *nekkhamma*, derived from *nis-kam*, meaning ‘not to desire.’ But we can, nevertheless, often find *naiṣkramya* used as equivalent to *nekkhamma*:

*dānakathaṃ śīlakathaṃ svargakathaṃ...naiṣkramyānusamṣavya-
vadānaṃ samprakāśayati* (MV, III. 375).

This Sanskrit passage is equivalent to that in the Ambatthasutta (D.I.110. 148), in which the Pāli term for *naiṣkramya* is not *nikkhamma*, but *nekkhamma*.

In other passages the same Sanskritization occurs, e.g., ‘*naiṣkramyam anuvarṇayanti kāmeṣu doṣadarśinaḥ*’ (MV. I. 107), and also ‘*adya te saphalaṃ janma lābhodya sumahams tava|yasya kāra-rasajñasya naiṣkramya astukaṃ manaḥ*’ (Saundarananda, XII.21).

According to Pāli Buddhist tradition there existed two terms differentiated from each other, *nekkhamma* and *nikkhamma*, which should rightly be Sanskritized as *naiṣkāmya* and *naiṣkramya*. In the Sanskrit Buddhist tradition, both terms are indistinguishably Sanskritized as *naiṣkramya*.

For the purpose of this article one needs to remember that *nekkhamma* retains its initial meaning derived from *nis-kam* (‘not to desire’), and not from *niṣkram* (‘to go out of’), according to the Pāli Buddhist tradition.

It should be pointed out that the confusion between *nekkhamma* and *nikkhamma* rests upon the problem of Sanskritization, and not upon the implications of these terms involved in the

Sanskrit *naiṣkramya*.¹ The following quotation from Abhidharma-kośavyākhyā of Yaśomitra should give evidence to the fact that *naiṣkramya* implies both senses, *nikkhamma* ('going out') and *nekkhamma* ('not desiring').

naiṣkramyaṃ s'āśravo'nāśravo mārgaḥ.
dhātoḥ saṃsārād vā niṣkrameṇaṃ vairāgyam ity apare (AKV. 96).

'Some say: *naiṣkramya* means the evil and non-evil paths. It means "going out of the transmigration of various realms of existence" and also "being free from lust."'

One can readily see how *naiṣkramya* may include both the meaning derived from *nis-kram* and the implication contained by *nekkhamma*, meaning 'being free from desire'. We can easily see that some Abhidharma scholars might take *naiṣkramya* to refer explicitly to the derivation from *nis-kram*, and implicitly to the involvement of *nis-kam*, meaning 'not to desire.'

Since our chief concern is with the development of the meaning of negation, we shall return to the distinction between *a* and *nir* in the Pāli literature.

Nekkhamma, as mentioned above, means the negation of *kam*, meaning 'to desire'. The connotation of *kāma* is felt in the connotation of *nir*. This is shown in various passages where a play of words exists between *nir* and *kāma* (cf. Rhys Davids, Pāli English Dictionary, 213), i.e., '*kāmānaṃ etaṃ nissaraṇaṃ yad idaṃ nekkhammaṃ*' (It. 61; Vin. I. 104; A. III. 245; M. I. 115). It means that *nekkhamma* denotes 'the giving up of desires'. A play of words with the prefix *nir* is also found expressed in Cullaniḍḍesa, 340, SNA. 605, meaning 'without desire'.

Now, the meaning of negation in relation to *kāma* is also shown by words with the prefix *a*, *akāma* ('without desire').

It is said in the Jātaka:

akāmaṃ kāmehi icchasi (J.V. 295).
akāmaṃ sakāmaṃ naro labhate piyaṃ (J.V. 295).

These passages represent the negation of *kāma* used in the noun form with the prefix *a*, namely, *akāma*. It is also used in the adverbial form *akāmā*, meaning 'unwillingly':

akāmā kāratabbaṃ (Vin. III. 205)
akāmā vyākātabbo (D. I. 94)

It is clear from these quotations that words with the prefix *a* mean simply 'lacking', 'devoid of', and 'deficient'; in other words, there is nothing positively implied in the prefix. Words with the prefix *a* represent the negation of the opposite.

Nekkhamma, however, does not always negate the opposite, as is the case with *a-kāma*, but also implies something positive. *Nekkhamma*, used in the same sense as *a-kāma*, is found in the Suttanipāta, e.g., '*nekkhamma daṭṭhu khemato, uggahitaṃ nisattaṃ vā mā te vijjittha kiṃcanaṃ.*' (SN. 1093). In this passage *nekkhamma* represents the negation of the opposite, as *a-kāma* does.

Nekkhamma carries the negation further; the five elements of deliverance (*nissaraṇīya dhātuyo*) are enumerated (D.III.239-240; A.III.245; A.III.290). *Kāmānaṃ nissaraṇaṃ* in the five *nissaraṇaṃ* (deliverance) means 'to settle in the state of non-desire' (*nekkhamme cittaṃ pakkhanti*). Further elaboration also occurs in the Dīghanikāya:

nekkhammaṃ kho paṇ'assa manasikaroto nekkhamme cittaṃ pakkhanti pasidati santiṭṭhati vimuccati, tassa taṃ cittaṃ sugataṃ subhāvitaṃ suvuṭṭhitaṃ visamyuttaṃ kāmehi, ye ca kāmapaccayā uppajjanti āsavā vighatā pariḷāha, mutto so tehi, na so taṃ vadaṇaṃ vedeti, idaṃ akkhātaṃ kāmānaṃ nissaraṇaṃ (D. III.239-240).

The different qualities of deliverance are defined by *nekkhamma*, the spiritual situation of non-desire, without any substantial difference in meaning. Such qualities as *suvuṭṭhita*, *suvimutta*, *visamyutta*, for example, depict one and the same spiritual situation, that of non-desire, modified by the prefixes *su* and *vi*. *Nekkhamma* refers to the spiritual situation being well-balanced (*subhāvitaṃ*), arising out of (*suvuṭṭhitaṃ*) and being separated from (*visamyuttaṃ*) the desires (*kāmehi*). The positive element in the spiritual situation of non-desire (*nekkhamma*) is apparent from these synonyms modified by the prefixes *su* and *vi*. The spiritual situation of non-desire (*nekkhamma*) is differentiated from the five other *nissaraṇa* (deliverance) according to what is regarded as spiritual tranquility, and whether *nekkhamma* is considered to be solely negative. And finally, according to how *nekkhamma* is to be conceived positively.

Whatever else it means, *nekkhamma* is here thought of as the

spiritual end of Buddhist training and is thereby given a positive content.

The positive content of *nekkhamma* includes not merely the negation of *kāma* (*a-kāma*), but also the negation of all evils (*akusala*). The Dvedhāvitakkasutta, for example, reads:

kusalānaṃ dhammānaṃ nekkhamme ānisaṃsaṃ vodānapakkhaṃ
(M.I.115).

The connotation of *nekkhamma* is implied in *kusalānaṃ dhammānaṃ*, meaning 'meritorious qualities'; and means the deliverance from evils.² It is further stated in the Cariyāpiṭaka:

bhavaṃ disvāna bhayato nekkhammam abhinikkhammaṃ (Cariyā-
piṭaka, 2.4.1.2).

'Having seen a being, being devoid of, and getting rid of (eliminating) fear...'

Here the connotation of *nekkhamma* is implied in *abhinikkhamma*, which is derived from *abhi-nir-kram*, meaning 'to go out of'.

Nikkhamma is often used in parallel to the phrase showing the negation of *kāma* (desire). For example, in the Suttanipāta:

nekkhamma gharā panujja kāme
kathaṃ bhikkhu sammā so loke paribbajeyya (SN. 359).

'Having gone out of the household, given up all desires, how should Bhikkhu rightly lead life as a mendicant in this world?'

Both *nikkhamma* and *nekkhamma* refer to the fact that one gets out of his household and gives up all desires in order to lead a life as mendicant. *Nekkhamma*, here, means to give up all desires (*kāme*) completely, and not merely a desire (*kāma*).

In the Pāli commentaries, *nekkhamma* is exemplified in a broad sense, involving not only a *kāma*, but also various *kāmas*, which means evil (*akusala*) in contrast to meritorious (*kusala*).

In a broad sense *nekkhamma* in the Pāli commentaries probably represents three kinds of modification:

1. Identification between *nekkhamma* and *kusala*. This can be found in the Majjhimanikāya commentary which explains the phrase *nekkhamma-vitakka*,³ saying *kāmehi nissataṃ sabbaṃ kusalaṃ* (M.Com.II.79), and also *kāmato nissataguṇakammato nissataguṇe ʘhiteṇa puggaleṇa* (Ibid. IV. 197⁴), etc. These passages represent explicitly the identity between *nekkhamma* and *kusala*, which is implicitly noticeable in the Dīghanikāya (D.III.239-240; Vibh. p. 86).

2. Modification of *nekkhamma*.

Here the meaning of *nekkhamma* acquires a positive content. The Dīghanikāya Commentary reads:

nekkhamme ānisaṃsaṃ pakāsesi pabbajjāya guṇaṃ pakāsesi ti attho (D.Com.I.473).

‘To expound advantages of a state of non-desire means to expound virtues of a Buddhist mendicant.’

The identity between *nekkhamma* and *pabbajja* is also revealed in the commentary on the Aṅguttaranikāya (cf. an explanation on *pabbajja* in the passage ‘*nekkhamme cittaṃ pakkhandatī ti pabbajjāya cittaṃ ārammaṇavasena pakkhandatī*’ (A.Com.IV.204).

Nekkhamma also represents *anāgāmin* (one who does not return), i.e., ‘*ettha nekkhamman ti anagāmimaggo adhippeto, so hi sabbaso kāmānan nissaraṇaṃ*’. The identification with *anāgāmin* is found in the commentary on the Dhammapada 272, in which *nekkhamma* means *anāgāminsukha*.

Furthermore, *nekkhamma* is connected with *nibbāṇa*, meaning ‘liberation’, i.e., ‘*nibbāṇe khemabhāvaṃ disvā*’ (Vimānavatthu Cm., p. 348; A. Com.III.242), ‘*nibbāṇañ ca nibbāṇagāmiñ ca paṭipadaṃ khemaṃ ti disvā*’ (Suttanipāta Com.II. on SN. 1098), and ‘*nekkhammanti kilesūpasamaṃ nibbāṇaratīṃ pana sandhāy’etaṃ vutaṃ*’ (Dhammapāda Com. 181), etc.

Sometimes a distinction is drawn between *pabbajja*, meaning ‘to lead a life as a mendicant,’ and *nibbāṇa*, meaning ‘liberation.’ In this case *nibbāṇa* represents *nekkhamma*. But it does not represent *pabbajja*, i.e., ‘*ettha pabbajja nekkhamman ti na gahetabaṃ*’.

All of these interpretations quoted above refer to the positive content of *nekkhamma* given by Buddhaghosa, the brilliant commentator on Pāli canons.

According to another commentator Dhammapāla, *nekkhamma* includes three kinds of mental situation, viz, *nibbāṇa* (liberation), *samathavipassanā* (tranquility), and *pabbajja* (the leading of a life as a mendicant (Cariyāpiṭaka Com.2.4.1.2). Accordingly *nekkhamma* develops in Abhidharma literature a positive content, which is modified by such expressions as *anāgāmin*, *pabbajja* and *nibbāṇa*. We must not forget though that all of these positive elements are extended to *nekkhamma* (lit., *nis-kam*, meaning ‘not to desire’), but are not extended to *nikkhamma* (lit., *niṣ-kram*, mentioned before, is differentiated from *nikkhamma*).

It is important to note that the Tibetan translation employs *naiṣkramya*, incorrectly Sanskritized from *nekkhamma*. For example, *nes par ḥbyuñ ba la brten pa* = *naiṣkramyāśrita*, MVP. No. 6755; *spags pa* = *naiṣkramya*, No. 644; *mñon par ḥbyuñ* = *naiṣkramya*, No. 7554. The Tibetan *nes par ḥbyuñ ba*⁵ also stands for *niḥsaraṇa* ('coming forth') (cf. Prasannapadā nāma Mādhyamikavṛtti, XIII. 8). *Ḥbyuñ* clearly stands for *kram* ('to come out') (Lañkāvatāra, p. 307). An emphatic prefix *mñon par* stands here for *nir* (-kram), which means 'entirely' or 'clearly.' Thus *mñon par ḥbyuñ pa* stands for *naiṣkramya*. If one could reduce *mñon par ḥbyuñ pa* to the Pāli word, he would have modified *abhinikkhamma* with an emphatic prefix *abhi* (cf. J. I. 61; Petavatthu Aṭṭhakathā' p. 19). Now it is clear that the Tibetan translation follows the Sanskrit *naiṣkramya* and not the Pāli *nekkhamma*.

As for the Chinese translation we find two different renderings:

1. Chinese renderings, which seemingly stand for the Sanskrit *naiṣkramya* (*nikkhamma* in Pāli), are as follows:

Ch'u yao meaning 'getting out of' (Dīrghanikāya, fasc. 13. T. I. 82), *ch'u li* meaning 'being separated from' (Ibid. fasc. 8. T. I. 51b).

2. Chinese renderings, which stand for the Sanskrit *naiṣkāmya* (*nekkhamma* in Pāli) are as follows:

Wu yu meaning 'non-desire' (Madhyamanikāya, fasc. 25. T. I. 589); *ch'u yü* meaning 'getting out of desire' (Mahādharma-saṃgraha, fasc. 2. T. I. 230b).

Nissaraṇa is translated into Chinese words such as *ch'u yao* (D fasc. 8. T. I. 51b; M. fasc. 26. T. I. 591b) *ch'u li* (Mahādharma-saṃgraha, fasc. 2. T. I. 230b) and also *yüan* meaning 'condition' (Ibid.). All of these Chinese words stand for *naiṣkramya*.

Nissaraṇa and *naiṣkramya* together mean 'getting out of'. It seems reasonable, therefore, to reduce such Chinese words as *ch'u yao*, *ch'u li* etc., to *naiṣkramya* ('getting out of'), and not *naiṣkāmya* ('non-desire').

The precise readings of the Daśabhūmika-sūtra⁶ and its Chinese translations suffice to show us the fact that such words as *ch'u yao*, *ch'uli*, *yüan li* stand for *naiṣkramya*. On the other hand, *naiṣkramya* is rendered as *ch'u chia* meaning 'getting out of the household' by Dharmarakṣa (West Chin Dynasty, A.D. 265-316), *neng ch'u li* meaning 'completely getting out of' by Siladharmā (Tang Dynasty, A.D. 618-906), *ching ch'in hsiu hsing* meaning 'earnestly

to endeavor' by Buddhabhadra (East Chin Dynasty, A.D. 317-417) and Bodhiruchi (Northern Wei Dynasty, A.D. 386-534), and *ch'in hsiu ch'u li* meaning 'to practice to get out of' by Śikṣānanda (A.D. 695-699).

Naiṣkramya, however modified, is translated into all of the above Chinese words. The Tibetan translation of *naiṣkramya* in the Daśabhūmikasūtra is *ḥdaḥ byuñ* meaning 'getting out of', and has the same meaning as in Chinese.

To judge from this enumeration of Chinese words, the Chinese tradition seems to have confused *naiṣkramya* with *naiṣkāmya* or *nekkhamma* with *nikkhamma*. Those scholars who correctly translate *naiṣkāmya* into the Chinese words such as *wu yū* or *ch'u yū* are Saṅghadeva (East Chin Dynasty, 317-420 A.D.) and Dānapāla (Northern Sung Dynasty, 960-1127 A.D.), for the Chinese words correspond to the original meaning of *nekkhamma* i.e., 'non-desire'. Both scholars, Saṅghadeva and Dānapāla, distinguish *nissaraṇa* or *naiṣkramya* and *naiṣkāmya*, giving different Chinese words to each of the Sanskrit terms. Saṅghadeva renders *nissaraṇa* into *ch'u yao* and *naiṣkāmya* into *wu yūan*, while Dānapāla renders *nissaraṇa* into *ch'u li* or *yūan* and *naiṣkāmya* into *wu yūan*.

Scholars who misinterpret *naiṣkāmya* as *naiṣkramya* are Buddhayaśa and Chu Fu Nien (later Chin Dynasty). The original Sanskrit, which they render into Chinese words like *ch'u yao*, *ch'u li* and *yūan li*, meaning 'getting out of', 'being separated from' and 'being secluded from', would be *naiṣkramya*, meaning 'getting out of'. The first of these three renderings, i.e., *ch'u yao*, is given to *nissaraṇa*, meaning 'getting out of' as well. *Nissaraṇa* is a synonym of *naiṣkramya*.

In the Chinese tradition *ch'u yao*, *ch'u li* and *yūan li* often refer to *naiṣkramya*, in the same sense, representing 'getting out of'. Yet the concept of *naiṣkramya* is quite different from that of *naiṣkāmya*, an equivalent to *nekkhamma*, meaning 'non-desire'.

An even better example of incorrect Sanskritization occurs in one passage of the Laṅkāvatārasūtra (p. 307) and represents exactly the same passage as in the Pāli. The Pāli passage reads: 'nikkhamma gharā panujja kāma' (SN. 359). *Nikkhamma* in this passage means 'getting out of'. On the other hand, *naiṣkramya* in the Laṅkāvatāra-sūtra also means 'getting out of'. In this case, of course, *naiṣkramya* would be the correct Sanskritized word for the *nikkhamma*. Nevertheless, *naiṣkramya* is always misinter-

preted as the word corresponding to *nekkhamma*. The Chinese *ch'u chia*, meaning 'getting out of household' corresponds to *naiṣkramya*. It would be correct, if *naiṣkramya* always corresponded to *nikkhamma*. But in reality it corresponds to *nekkhamma*. Hence, the Chinese also would rightly be *li yü*, meaning 'getting out of desire'.

The Buddhist Sanskrit translators seem to disregard the importance of the Pāli original meanings of *nikkhamma* and *nekkhamma*. The primary concern is that *naiṣkramya* means the negation of all kinds of defilement or worldly things (cf. also a concept of *ch'u chia* in the Paramārtha's Chinese translation of Buddhagotraśāstra, fasc. 4. T. 31.810c).

In other words, the Sanskritized word *naiṣkramya* in the passage corresponding to the Pāli is an incorrect translation of *nekkhamma*. However, it should be remembered that, philosophically speaking, the meaning of *naiṣkramya* refers not only to a verbal word but also to the connotation of the word in wide perspective, and extends to the negation of all things profane inclusive of *kāma* (desire). The single word *naiṣkramya* includes, in its connotation, both the words *nekkhamma* (a negation of *kāma*) and *nikkhamma* (a negation of all things profane). The reference to the connotation of *naiṣkramya* in wide perspective is given in the Uttaratantra⁷ and its Chinese and Tibetan translations as follows:

Skt. *jantaḥpuraratikṛdāṃ naiṣkramya duḥkhacārikām*

Tib. *btsum moḥi ḥkhar gyis dgyes rol dañ, des ḥbyun dhaḥ bspyod pa dañ.*

Chin. "Being born in the Palace, giving up all kinds of desire, Kumāra (Buddha) gets out of the household to lead an ascetic life."

There seems to be no doubt here that *naiṣkramya* corresponds to *ḥbyun* and *ch'u chia*, meaning 'getting out of household', and that 'giving up all kinds of desire' (*yen li chu yü hsiang*) finds its equivalent neither in Sanskrit nor in Tibetan translation.

It seems possible that the Chinese term *yen li chu yü hsiang* could be a compound intentionally added by the Chinese translator to modify the word *ch'ü chia*. If so, the reason will have a double aspect:

1. *Yen li chu yü hsiang* is simply a modification of *ch'u chia*, added by the translator from the aspect of the literal comparison of different translations.

2. *Yen li chu yü hsiang* is formed by an extension of the original meaning of *nekkhamma*, which means 'non-desire'.

In other words, it is only by an extension of the original meaning that *ch'u chia* meaning 'getting out of the household' can be modified by *yen li chu yü hsiang* meaning 'giving up all kinds of desire'.

In general, though *ch'u chia* ('getting out of the household') stands for various terms such as *pravrajyā*, *naiṣkramya*, *naiṣkāmya* and *āraṇya*, *āraṇya*⁸ which literally means 'forest.' Connotatively *āraṇya* represents 'getting out of the household' (*ch'u chia*). Another verse in the Uttaratantra reads:

Skt. *ratikṛḍāraṇyapravicaraṇa (mārapramathanam)*

Tib. *dgyas ral pa dañ dben par sbyod (dañ bdud bcon dañ)*

Chin. *hsi lo chi yü hsian ch'u chia hsian ku hsian.*

Here *ch'u chia* stands for *āraṇya* meaning 'forest', but it also stands for *naiṣkramya* meaning 'getting out of' in the same Chinese translation of the Uttaratantra (p. 88). Thus, *ch'u chia* actually corresponds to *āraṇya*, *pravrajyā* and *naiṣkāmya*, but not to *naiṣkramya*. But *yen li chu yü hsian* meaning 'getting out of all kinds of desire' also means to deny desire (*kāma*). In other words, it represents the original meaning of *nekkhamma* (non-desire), which also stands for *ch'u chia*.

It is evident from the above that *ch'u chia*, meaning 'getting out of the household', is modified by the compound *yen li chu hsiang* meaning 'getting out of all kinds of desire', and that this modification is an extension of the original meaning of *nekkhamma*, meaning 'non-desire'. The most extra-ordinary confusion has resulted from the incorrect Sanskritization of *nekkhamma* into *naiṣkramya*.

We may generalize from the above and say that if *nekkhamma* is Sanskritized into *naiṣkramya*, or rendered into *ch'u chia*, *nekkhamma* means the abolition of all things profane. In other words, the relative negation in later Buddhism transposes into the negation of the whole. Pāli Buddhism referred to the simple negation of the opposite, as expressed in the form and meaning of *nekkhamma* derived from *nis-kāma* (non-desire), while later Sanskrit Buddhism refers to the positive expression of experience as is expressed in *naiṣkramya*, which represents not only 'getting out of',

but also 'getting out of the household', 'getting out of all kinds of desire', and even *nirvāṇa* meaning 'liberation'.

This change in the process from the logical or relative negation (in Pāli Buddhism) to the positive expression of experience (in Sanskrit Buddhism)⁹ is significant. The metaphysical basis of Sanskrit Buddhism (Mahāyāna Buddhism) is thoroughly experimental. This may be seen in the dissatisfaction of Mahāyāna Buddhism with only the original meaning of words. The Sanskrit Buddhist tries to push further back, to explain the religious experience implied in the words.

To clarify the point let us note a few examples. The Vimalakīrtinirdeśa (trl. by Kumārajīva) reads:

Vimalakīrti said: "Then, you will give rise to the highest Enlightenment. It is nothing but 'getting out of the household (*ch'u chia*).'" (Śrīvimalakīrti-nirdeśa. fasc. 2.T.14. 541c).

Moreover the commentary on Daśabhūmi-sūtra by Hui yüan reads:

"As for *ch'u yao* (*naiṣkramya*), *ch'u* means 'result', while *yao* means 'important path' [to the Enlightenment]." (fasc. 10. *Dainippon Zoku Zokyo*, 71.244b)

And the Daśacakra-kṣitigarbha (trl. by Hsüan Tsang) says:

"*Ch'u yao* (*naiṣkramya*) of the three vehicles means the truth, such as the fourfold noble path (*catursatyā*), and so on." (T. 13.752a).

It is not the purpose here to determine whether *ch'u yao* and *ch'u chia* correspond to *naiṣkramya* and *pravrajyā* or not. However, on the basis of Chinese tradition we can assume that *ch'u yao* stands for *naiṣkramya* while *ch'u chia* for *naiṣkramya* or *pravrajyā*.

Ch'u yao literally means 'getting out of', and metaphorically it suggests an important path to the result (the Enlightenment) in the positive sense. Another Chinese word *ch'u chia* literally means 'getting out of the household' and metaphorically it suggests 'to give rise to the highest Enlightenment', again in the positive sense.

The interpretation of the above in China differs entirely from the original meaning of *nekkhamma* in India. The Chinese interpretation does not even suggest a negative expression. It actually transforms the negative into the positive.

What is perhaps more important is that negation in Chinese

Buddhism, developed in the widest perspective, is the concept *nekkhamma* with a prefix *nir*, and not *a*. The two aspects of the negation of *kāma* (desire), as we have examined earlier, are *nekkhamma* and *akāma*, of which the latter simply means the relative negation, or the negation of opposites. Hence, the latter is not a concept to represent the Mahāyānistic trend of thought, namely, the positive expression of experience.

In general, the prefix *nir* stands for an emphatic prefix inherited in the Buddhist tradition. The Abhidharmakośa reads:

Skt. *na te nirviśeṣā bhavanti* (AKV. p. 176. ed. by Wogihara)

Chin. *wu to ts'u pieh* (There are no various distinctions).

Nirviśeṣa in this passage is *viśeṣa* modified by *nir*, but not the negation of *viśeṣa*. Hsüan Chien endeavoured to render *nir* into *to* in Chinese, meaning 'various' as used in a positive expression.

We have so far seen that, in the Buddhist tradition, *nekkhamma*, meaning 'non-desire', whether Sanskritized as *naiṣkramya* or *naiṣkāmya*, has to express the positive content of experience. Therefore, it has been rendered into such words as *nieh p'an* meaning 'liberation', *ch'u chia* meaning 'getting out of (all things profane)'.¹⁰

In the Buddhist tradition *naiṣkramya* represents two aspects of negation.

First, *naiṣkramya* represents the relative negation of the opposite, as is the case with *nekkhamma*, meaning 'non-desire'. *Wu yüan* meaning 'non-desire' corresponds exactly to *nekkhamma* as discussed above.

Second, *naiṣkramya* represents the positive content of the religious experience, as it is found exemplified in such words as 'liberation',¹⁰ 'getting out of all profane things' etc.

An adequate comprehension of such a tradition will suffice to show us that *nir* is not only the relative negation of the opposite—the negation of the experimental (*kāma*)—but also the positive expression of the religious experience beyond the realm of the experimental.

This is to say that the negation indicated by the prefix *nir* positively points out the absolute religious experience; and yet it is not abstract from the realm of the experimental.

This concept of negation, expressed by the prefix *nir* implicitly denotes the positive content, and explicitly retains the negative form. It is simply because one can finally get the positive content,

i.e., the realm of super-experimental of the religious experience by and through the negation of the experimental.¹¹

In other words, negation in the Buddhist sense represents two dimensions, the negation of the realm of the experimental and the expression of the realm of the super-experimental (*nirvāṇa*).

II. A LINGUISTIC APPROACH TO THE BEGINNINGLESS CIRCLE OF LIFE : *anamataḡga* and *anādikālika*

A Survey of Etymological Analysis

We have a Pāli term *anamataḡga*, meaning 'without beginning', which is very often used in compound with *saṃsāra* (the human life). We shall examine its etymological analysis and its distinction from *anādikāla*, a Mahāyānist expression translated into the English 'without beginning'. The same English stands for a Pāli '*anamataḡge*'.

With regards to this term the Pāli Text Society's Pāli English Dictionary (PTSD) gives an etymology—*ana-mata-aggā* (pl.).

The prefix *ana* is here taken as a negative one. *Ana-mata* points to the denial of *mata*. However, there is no prefix like *ana* in Pāli.

Childers gives an interpretation. In his view, *anamataḡga* indicates a Sanskrit term *a-amṛta-agra*. It means that [*saṃsāra*] does not end in *nirvāṇa* (*amṛta*). (*Childers, Dictionary of the Pāli Language*. p. 32.) Childers could be right when he quotes Rogers's translation of the Pāli phrase *anamataḡge saṃsāra saṃsaranto*. This phrase is translated by him as follows: 'Revolving in a revolution of being in the countless existence that have no beginning'. (*Buddhaghosa's Parables*. 1870, London, p. 56.) Irrespective of Rogers's translation Childers takes *anamata* as *an-amata*. However, *anamata* could be a double negation of *mata*. It should mean 'non-unthinkable', i.e., 'thinkable'. If being so, *anamataḡga* denotes the beginning thinkable. 'It will be rightly opposed to its original significance.

Another etymology is given by Pischel in his *Grammatik des Prākṛit-Sprachen* (Strassburg 1900, Section 251).

Pischel takes it as *a-amata-aggā*. Further, he takes the root of *namat* as *nam*. This etymology, however, could be of no sense.

Further, A Critical Pāli Dictionary (CPD), the most exhaustive

Dictionary of Pāli, analyses it by *an-amat* 'agga (CPD, p. 156) just as it is the case with PTSD and DPL, giving thereby the meaning 'without top and bottom'. But, there is no word equivalent to 'top and bottom' in the compound *anamatagga* as such. Hence, this analysis indicates its implication, but not the etymological significance.

In relation to Ardhamāgadhi Edgerton reduces *anamatagga* in Pāli to *anavarāgra* (Buddhist Hybrid Dictionary), quoting ample of original sources such as Divy. 197.15 (*anavarāgro saṃsāro*) and Śikṣāsamuccaya 170.2 (*anavarāgre jātisaṃsāra*), etc.

According to Edgerton a Buddhist Hybrid Sanskrit term *anavarāgra* is derived from *an-avara-agra*. It means a negation of *avara* (bottom) as well as *agra* (top). It is translated into English as 'without top and bottom', which is also adopted by CPD, as mentioned before.

A Tibetan translation of it is also the same as this English rendering. That is, *thog ma dan tha ma med pa* ('without top and bottom').

However, all these English translations and a BHSD *anavarāgra* literally do not correspond to *anamatagga* in Pāli.

All we can say here is that whatever *anavarāgra* in BHSD or the English translation it is merely a connotation or an implication of *anamatagga*, but not an etymological meaning.

Edgerton offers another etymology in terms of Ardhamāgadhi. The Ardhamāgadhi term *anavarāgra* is, he presumes, a Hyper-Sanskrit for *anavadagga* (BHSD. New Haven, 1953, p. 21). He is inclined to connect *anavarāgra* with *anavadagga* or *anavayagga* rather than with *anamatagga* in Pāli.

Another attempt would be conceivable. Pischel's Grammatik (Section 251) indicates a phonetic change: A syllable *m* followed by *n* turns into *n*. If so, *anamatagga* in Pāli could closely be related to *anavadagga* in Ardhamāgadhi.

But, this attempt seems not to be fair unless the relationship between *an* and *aṇ* will sufficiently be explained. Moreover, a particle *an(aṇ)* is wrongly taken as a negative particle as seen in all other etymological expositions.

Anamatagga and its Etymology in Pāli

At first it may be given as a conclusion that a Pāli term *anamatagga* is adequately derived from *anu-a-mata-agga*, but not

from *an-a-mata-agga*, and that a prefix *anu* indicates an emphatic particle, which means 'complete' or 'absolutely'.

The prefix *anu* followed by a vowel *a* (*amata*), in here *u* being deleted due to the vowel *sandhi*, has turned into *an*, ample examples of which will be found in compound with verbs.

They are: *anoloketi* ('precisely observes') is rightly derived from *anu-ava-loketi* (Cf. Sammohavinodanī, PTS, Ed. p. 355), which is wrongly Sanskritized by *avalokayati*. *Anu* ('complete') is replaced by *ava* ('above'). This Sanskrit term *avalokayati* is often intermixed with *apaloketi*.

It may here be remarked that the intermixed use of *apa* and *ava* is found in such examples as *apalokiteśvara—avalokiteśvara*, *apavāda—avavāda*, etc. The meaning of *ava* is probably not important.

Regarding *anu* and *an* we have another example: *anosīdati*, which means 'to settle down'. It comes from *anu-ava-sad* (Sammohavinodanī, p. 108).

For these reasons, a particle *an* in a term of *anamatagga* is not a negative particle.

A particle *anu* in Pāli has also an emphatic meaning. It will be proved by the following examples.

In general the prefix *anu* is fertile in Sanskrit compounds, most of which make the following meanings clear: 'after', 'along', 'in consequence', 'near to', 'behind', 'gradually', 'beneath', 'less than', and 'according to'.

In a complex of meanings, as enumerated above, is an emphatic meaning of *anu* missing. The emphatic meaning, however, plays an important role in terms of *anamatagga* in question.

We have ample examples of Pāli terms formed with *anu*, indicating the emphatic meaning. They are:

<i>anupakkhadati</i>	'(He) eats into'
<i>anupabbajati</i>	'(He) gives up the world'
<i>anupariyāti</i>	'(He) goes round and round'
<i>anuparidhāvati</i>	'(He) runs up and down'
<i>anusañcarati</i>	'(He) goes round about'
<i>anusañgīto</i>	'changed together'

Clearly does Buddhaghosa, great Pāli commentator, comment on *anu* as an emphatic particle, when he refers to *anusaya*, one of the most important Buddhist terms. In his *Aṭṭhasālinī*, the commentary on *Dhammasaṅgani* defines *anusaya* and says:

*Thāmagataṭṭhena anusetṭi anusayo.*¹

(Because of harping on [an idea] persistently it is termed the 'latent bias'.)

Other commentaries also read:

*Anusayo bhavuppattiyā mūlam.*²

(The latent bias is a basis to give rise to life)

*Anusayā akusalamūlāni.*³

(The latent bias is a basis of the unwholesome)

Thus, the prefix *anu* is to be taken as an emphatic particle meaning 'strongly', 'persistently' and 'completely'.

Further, it is also not fair to take *anu* as *ana*; Otherwise the original meaning will be negated, as for example, *anappameyya* and so on.

Anappameyya in turn comes from *anu-appameyya* ('complete unmeasurable'), but never from *ana-appameyya*, which means a negation (*ana*) of immeasurable (*appameyya*), i.e., 'the measurable' which negates its original implication.⁴

There is one example, which has a correct English rendering, but not an etymological basis. It is the term *anabhāva* translated into English as 'the utter cessation of becoming', which can hardly be traced back to its own etymological analysis, for this English translation has no Pāli word equivalent to 'utter'. 'Utter' in English could not be equivalent to *ana*.

Supposing a prefix *ana* being a negative, the meaning of *anabhāva* will become the reverse say, 'the not-cessation of becoming'.

Moreover, it is a problem to be solved in the future that *ana* could be in itself a negative prefix. That is beyond the present issue.

In a similar manner, *anu*, the prefix expressing completeness, plays certainly a prominent part in the analysis of *anavaya* which remained unexplained in PTSD, in which it has been given no etymological analysis.

In regard to *anavaya* Childers gives its derivation from *a-avaya*. However, *avaya* being a negation of *vaya*, *a-avaya* could be the doubled negation of *vaya*, namely, 'privatio', which is rightly opposed to its original meaning 'non-privatio' or 'completeness'.

Strange enough is the fact that, his English rendering, despite the wrong etymology, seems to be quite adequate. He rightly

renders it: 'perfectly acquainted with'. Probably he translated it in view of its implication.

Because of the vowel *sandhi*—*anu+a=an*—this term *anavaya* clearly can be taken as derived from *anu-a-vaya*, literally meaning 'complete non-want' or 'completely no-lacking'.

The same is the case with *anavajja* rendered into non-fault, the etymology of which also is found neither in PTSD nor in DPL at all. In this case also its etymology is not *an-a-vajja*, which indicates the doubled negation of *vajja* (fault), but *anu-a-vajja* rightly meaning 'complete', 'faultless'.⁵

So we must say that these interpretations are based on a misunderstanding of the prefix *anu*, as even in cases where the emphatic meaning of *anu* is clearly used in Pāli, the interpreters take it in the sense of *an* or *ana*.

But, fortunately there exists a passage, also, where the prefix *anu* is interpreted as 'complete' by Buddhaghosa. He gives his interpretation in his commentary on Saṃyuttanikāya. It runs:

*anamataggo'ti anu-amataggo, vassa-sataṃ vassa-sahassam ñā-
ñena augantvā pi amataggo aviditaggo, nāssa sakkā ito vā eto
vā aggam jānitum, aparicchinna-pubbāpara-koṭiko'ti attho.*⁶

(Complete cessation of beginning means 'complete unthinkable beginning'. Even if one thinks of it one hundred years or one thousand years long, its beginning is unthinkable and unknown. It is impossible to know the beginning here and there, its beginning and end cannot be determined.)

We clearly have here *anu-amata-aggā* for *anamatagga*, thus, leaving no doubt at all about the 'complete cessation of beginning'.

Anamatagga and its implication in Pāli

The Pāli term *anamatagga*, literally meaning 'the complete cessation of the beginning', acquires not only a negation of the beginning (*aggā*), but also a special shade of implication from '*amata*' (*a-man*).

Amata in itself represents a negation of thinking (*amata* derived from *a-mata*). Beyond the range of thinking is the beginning (*aggā*). *Aggā* being not a sort of ultimate principle, its negation does not mean the mere denial of the process of inference. In other words, *aggā* is not the object of inference. What is to be

denied, that is the way of 'thinking' *agga* as a real entity. It is 'thinking' (*man*, pp. *mata*) that counts.

Whether *agga* exists in reality or not is a problem far beyond the range of Buddhist inquiry. In contrast, important is whether 'thinking', the reasoning power, will succeed in finding an ultimate principle (*agga*) from which all things well commence.

According to the fundamental thesis of Buddhism any sort of thinking power is to be denied in its nature. This thesis is applied also to the Pāli compound *amatagga*, meaning 'the beginning unthinkable', being different from *an-agga* (a merely logical negation of *agga*). The Pāli conception of *amatagga*, we might say, corresponds in a sense to a Mahāyānist concept of a negation of *vikalpa*, which is also the discriminative thinking or the discriminative knowledge.

Thus, *amata* being used in compound with *samsāra* it means that *agga* of *samsāra* cannot become even the object of thinking, not to mention 'not exist' as an entity. This is the reason why Pāli Buddhism lays emphasis upon the word *amata* prefixed with the emphatic particle *anu*.

In other words, the term *anu-a-mata-agga* does not represent the inferential inquiry into *agga* as entity, but the fully dynamic meaning on the empirical level. This is an attitude towards *agga* slightly different from the Mahāyānist approach to *agga* (*ādi* in a Mahāyānist terminology), to which I will refer in the section on *ādikāla*.

Anādikāla and its implication in Mahāyāna

Anādikāla compounded with *samsāra* is not found in earlier stages of Pāli Buddhism except a few instances in later stages of Pāli Abhidhamma.⁷ Moreover, *ādi* is not discussed even in later Pāli Abhidhamma from the ontological angle.

In contrast, Mahāyāna Buddhism has to treat a problem of *ādi* from the standpoint of realism in revolt against the heretic view, in which *ādi* is in the form of existence or entity (*dravya*).

In line with this antagonistic orientation Mahāyāna Buddhism also follows tentatively the realistic view of the heretics. *Ādi* taken as an entity by Mahāyānist as well as heretics denotes a finite period of time from which all events will take place in succession up to the end.

Anādi, the negation of *ādi*, means consequently a logical nega-

tion of *ādi* as an entity. Mahāyāna Buddhism, holding its own view of non-reality (*śūnyatā*), has to deny the reality of *ādi* also. For this reason the existence or the non-existence of *ādi* has been discussed by both, Mahāyānist and heretics, from the viewpoint of realism. This realistic implication is indicated by the term *anādikāla* (beginningless).

The purpose of setting the *anādikāla* conception is described in a Mahāyāna text as follows:

[A theory of] *anādikāla* is for the purpose of denying a realistic view of *hetu* (*sahetuvāda*) and also for the purpose of destroying a realistic view of *non-hetu* (*ahetuvāda*).⁸

Hetu in this passage is equated with *ādi* as far as the latter is considered as a real entity; both *sahetuvāda* and *ahetuvāda* are of the realistic view. The denial of *hetu* denotes the denial of *ādi*, both of which are based on the theory of non-reality of Mahāyāna Buddhism. Thus, *ādi* is considered as an entity on the ontological level.

Ādi and Abhidharmic interpretation

Anamatagga in Early Buddhism being a negation of 'thinking' of *agga*, the term *agga* should not be taken as a *prima causa*, but a dynamic condition, upon which our present life (*saṃsāra*) develops.

This ideation has been preserved up to the time when the Abhidharmic interpretation takes place in terms of *ādi*. Buddhaghosa, the Pāli commentator, for instance, interprets *ādi* as a term *paṭṭhāna*, which means 'importance', being quite different from 'beginning' (*ādi*). He, differentiating *ādi* (*paṭṭhāna*) from *ādimatta* (a time period), gives a detailed exposition as follows:

"*avijjāpaccayā saṅkhārā saṅkhārapaccayā viññānan ti evaṃ hetuphalaparamparāya pariyosānaṃ n'atthi.*"

(Depending on ignorance karmic formation [form-energies] will take place; depending on karmic formation, consciousness will take place. This fact represents the endless series of the cause-effect relationship.) (Vism. II. p. 577.)

In connection to *ādi*, which is set forth at the beginning of the twelvefold Dependent Origination, is *avijjā*. What does *ādi* mean in terms of the Dependent Origination? Should it be a realistic

concept of prima causa? In response to it, Buddhaghosa proposes:

“The objection might be raised: If being so, this theory that depending on ignorance (*avijjā*) karmic formulation will take place would be opposed to [the realistic concept] of prima causa (*ādimatta*). But, this is not a theory of [realistic or heretic] prima causa. Because among three circles [*kamma-vaṭṭa*, *kilesa-vaṭṭa*, *vipāka-vaṭṭa*] the important is ignorance. Namely, when ignorance will be acquired, then, the other circles such as defilement, desires, [results], also will draw back efficiency.” (Ibid.)⁹

Ādi, as described in this passage, is taken by Buddhaghosa not as prima causa, but as ‘the important’ (*paṭṭhāna*), for *ādi*, as represented here by *avijjā*, is rightly the fundamental basis, upon which the human life (as illustrated by the twelvefold links of *paṭiccasamuppāda*) develops. If one, otherwise, takes it as a prima causa, this would lead him to a prima causa of prima causa and that to another ad infinitum.

Buddhaghosa, for this reason, objecting to *ādimatta*-conception of the heretics, clearly interprets *ādi* as *paṭṭhāna*.

A concept of *ādi*, as Buddhaghosa presumes, is considered as the period of time or a real entity. This way of understanding is common to both Buddhism, Abhidharma and Mahāyāna, the system of which is formulated in line with the negation of *ādi* as entity.

Ādi and Paṭiccasamuppāda

A concept of *ādi* is inclined to be taken as an entity, for it usually represents a realistic idea of the heretics. For this reason, Buddhism, whether Abhidharma or Mahāyāna, does not employ at all or critically use it, discriminating itself from the heretic concept of reality (*dravya*).

To Pāli Buddhists the twelve fold links of *paṭiccasamuppāda* aims at the mutual dependency of any mental or physical phenomenon for its own object, being thereby not interested in any sort of reality of *ādi*. For this purpose is a specific term employed to define the unthinkability of *samsāra*. It is a Pāli term *anama-tagga* at issue. They do not use *anādikāla*, for *ādi* easily could be confused with a real entity.

Instead of a real *ādi*, Pāli Ābhidharmikas insist on the func-

tional relationship of the twelvefold links in view of *paccaya* (condition). *Samsāra* can be found only in a way that it would pass from one moment to the next moment, so also there is no enduring entity.

“[No consciousness] passed from the former life to this life, and yet this present embryo could not have entered into existence without the preceding causes.”¹⁰

Thus, everything whatever in the world is said to be determined by conditions. Further, it is allegorically illustrated as follows:

“Many things may serve to illustrate this fact, as for example, the echo, the light of a lamp, the impression of a seal, or the image produced by a mirror. On account of continuum of *khandha* (the individual existence) neither single nor multiple causes exist.”¹¹

According to Pāli Abhidharma (the Theravādins), everything mental or physical happens in accordance to laws and conditions (*hetupaccaya*): If it were otherwise, there would reign a realistic entity, i.e. the Creator or *ādimatta* (the period of time.).

As far as the critical attitude toward a realistic concept of *ādi* is concerned, there would not be any distinction between Pāli Abhidhamma and Mahāyāna Buddhism.

Moreover, the same idea as that of Mahāyāna is expressed in a definite form in the following lines:

“Who understands the [twelvefold] Dependent Origination, understands the Law (*dhamma*); and who understands the Law, understands the Dependent Origination.”¹²

This idea of the Pāli Abhidhamma is also found in a Mahāyāna text. The Śālistamba runs:

“*yo bhikṣavaḥ pratīyasamutpādaṃ paśyati, sa buddhaṃ paśyati, yo buddhaṃ paśyati sa dharmam paśyati.*”¹³

Thus, there would not be any distinction between Mahāyāna and Hīnayāna in a point that the realization of both doctrines, *pratīyasamutpāda* and *dharma*, could be unified into one.

It is the same with the interpretation of *ādi*, which points to an entity. As Hīnayāna takes *ādi* as a real entity, just so Mahāyāna also interprets it as a reality to be denied.

The Mahāyānistic logic of negation, however, concerns itself

not only with *ādi*, but also *anādi* as well, for both *ādi* and *anādi*, as they presume, are merely the constrictions, which our concept have put on. This is called the absolute negation or *śūnyatā* going far beyond the range of dualism or the two extremes of assertion –*ādi* or *anādi*–.

In contrast, Pāli Ābhidhammikas, rejecting also *ādi* as entity like the Mahāyānist, do not, however, deny the *anādi*. Because to them the *anādi*, meaning ‘without beginning’, is rightly that which they imply.

To the Pāli Ābhidhammikas is it sufficient to show how the present suffering, but not the epistemological inquiries, has come about, and how through extinction of ignorance no more rebirth will follow, and thus the process of existence will have been realized and therewith the extinction of the human suffering.

Ādi, therefore, is not an object of epistemological concern, but simply a concept to imply an ‘important’ (*paṭṭhāna*) factor upon which other mental or physical phenomenon, being dependent¹⁴ on conditions, will arise.

In this manner, to the Pāli Ābhidhammikas the issue of *ādi*, going beyond the epistemological concern, has been turned into the problem of human existence in suffering. Hence, *anādi*, a negation of *ādi*, has not been set forth by them unlike the Mahāyānist.

Having supposed conditions (*paccaya*), they have realized how the twelvefold factors—from *avijjā* to *jarāmaraṇa*—are conditioned by each other, and how through non-ignorance the standstill of suffering existence will have been realized.

The Pāli Ābhidhammikas, for this reason, carefully keeping away from the Mahāyānist usage of *anādi*, would have substituted *anamataḡga* (–*saṃsāra*) for *anādikālika* (–*saṃsāra*).

Anamatagga differentiated from *anādi* does not simply mean a logico-epistemological negation of ‘beginning’ (*agga*), but it implies ‘the complete cessation of thinking (*anu-amata*)’ of what soever beginning or end in terms of *saṃsāra*.

However, the Mahāyānist logic of negation, going to its farthest extent, denies both *ādi* and *paccaya* (conditions) as entity on one and the same basis of *śūnyatā*. The Mādhyamika system, as for example, equates *pratītyasamutpāda* with *śūnyatā*—the conventional validity of entities (i.e., Hīnayāna view) and their absolute non-entity (i.e., Mahāyāna view).

In Hīnayāna tradition of Pāli and Sanskrit literature the twelve-fold Dependent Origination (*paṭiccasamuppāda*) occupies an important place but Mahāyānists do not attach much prominence to it. The reason will be in a fact that *paccaya* (*pratyaya*) has been re-interpreted by the Mahāyānists on an epistemological level, having been denied as a real entity.¹⁵

III. KAMMA AND ANATTA THOUGHT IN EARLY BUDDHISM

I

In this article, I will examine one of the most vehemently debated questions in connection with Buddhist Philosophy, viz. whether or not there is an inconsistency between the theories of *anatta* (not-self) and *kamma* (action). Dr. M. Falk refers to this problem also saying that the real antinomy is *ātman-karman*. “(*Nairātmya and Karman*”, Indian Historical Quarterly, 1940, p. 429-64).

When we consider the thought of *kamma* in Oriental Philosophy as indicating a continuum after death or the law of causality between good and evil actions, such a way of thinking has never been indigenous to Oriental Philosophy. This has many elements in common with the thought of transmigration, which had prevailed ever since the Orphis Order or Pythagorean philosophy. As compared with Buddhist thinking, however, the latter referred transmigration to its ethical meaning.

In the Orient, as we shall discover to the contrary, transmigration had never been restricted to its ethical meaning, but had been much more deeply considered from the religious viewpoint, and this is the theoretical construction which will be presented here in detail. Since Buddhism began with clarifying wisdom towards the reality of the worldly beings, it is naturally true that the Buddhistic theories are founded not only upon the investigation of human beings, but also upon objective reality binding those human beings.

II

In this respect, some scholars admit of an incongruity between nonself (*anatta*) and action (*kamma*) in doctrine, while others say that the Buddha preached his *dhamma* by adopting the *kamma*

doctrine prevailing at that time because of the mental tendencies, spiritual aspirations, and general behaviour characteristic of the people.

Concerning the importance of the historical background with respect to the *kamma*-doctrine's introduction into Buddhism, little need be said here.

However, by taking the further development of the *Abhidhamma* theories into consideration, we shall find a more deeply underlying relation between the two theories.

Now, the concept corresponding to "substance" and in use in the Pāli canon is the five-aggregates (*khandha*)¹. The five aggregates are transitory and not real, as properly understood. A substance as five aggregates in reality is merely a stream of thought. It contains nothing permanent or substantial; it is nothing but non-self (*anatta*). This definition of five aggregates takes away the presupposition of a deep-rooted, permanent entity, and shows that there is nothing in the world which we can cling to as real and permanent. If there is no permanent entity in the world, such as creator, substance, or agent of action, etc. then who is it that performs action and receives its results? Or does the not-self receive the results of his own action? This is meaningless. Such a conception has no meaning apart from a specifically formulated theory of *kamma*, having developed in the *Abhidhamma*-philosophy ever since the very beginning of the introduction of the *kamma* doctrine into early Buddhism. And what then is the specifically formulated concept of *kamma*?

In the *Nikāya* it is stated thus: "So then you say that body is not the self; that feeling is not the self... Then what self can those acts affect which are not self-wrought?"²

As this passage indicates, the question, "If *kamma* from the Buddhist point of view should take place, then what is the substance of this *kamma*?" has been answered by saying that "The five aggregates are not-self". That is to say that "what" has been answered by "how", but not by a substance of some sort. The question as to the incongruity between the not-self and *kamma*-doctrines has never been answered in the true sense of the word, but only by the reiteration of the meaning of not-self, as it is. If this is the case, what bearing does this argument have upon the unique relationship between the *anatta* and *kamma* doctrines?

We have the same argument concerning the incongruity bet-

ween them in the *Milindapañha*, which says that if these five aggregates should not transfer to another world, or, that they should not transfer as they are, then does not transmigration take place? In response to this question, Nāgasena replies by saying:

“Thus, O King! These five aggregates do not come into existence, and also the natural aggregates do not go to another world. Relying on these five aggregates, the beings are born in the mother-womb in their qualification of good and evil, just like the shadow in the round mirror.”³

In this answer it is implied that if substance or the five aggregates should be admitted, evil would necessitate evil, and good necessitate good without the merit of religious purification whatever, and thus the basic reason for religious practice would be denied. If this were so, Nāgasena refutes the affirmation of substance with respect to transmigration as it would end in negation of moral values. The negation of moral values would be contrary to the right view of life, which is repeatedly preached by the Buddha. Thus the relation between the two doctrines, *anatta* and *kamma*, is to be interpreted positively rather than negatively.⁴

III

Those who affirm that the Buddhist view is non-self (*anatta*) are more or less incorrect if they are referring merely to the negative standpoint, in which one may consider the non-self as having no positive contents, “in vain” and “non-real” alone; but they are quite correct if the implication of non-self has reached a much more positive standpoint in which both doctrines, i.e. *anatta* and *kamma*, will be co-related, integrated, and positively interpreted.

It is to be noted that such an implication has found expression in the following passage in the *Milindapañha*:

“O Great King! These five aggregates do neither transfer to another world, nor do the five aggregates take place in themselves. By *kamma*, good and evil, shall sentient beings be born in the womb, depending upon these five aggregates just like the image in the mirror.”⁵

This explanation given by Nāgasena implies that there is no valid reality in any way but for the five aggregates, and that it is not due to a substance which can transmigrate, but only to the nature of *kamma*. That there is no substance by which transmigration will be possible has been repeatedly argued, as above

stated. However, what is meant by the idea that transmigration depends upon the nature of *kamma*, instead of depending upon substance? What are the positive components? The image in the mirror is nothing but sentient beings themselves, nothing but the five aggregates which are transitory and unreal. The subject of the image has already been characterized by the term *rujjati* or "to be decayed"⁶. The mirror in this simile corresponds to the "womb" of the mother. Thus the explanation which ended with an emphasis upon the not-self theory in relation to transmigration has come to mean that the five aggregates depend upon the five aggregates and come into existence in "the womb of the mother". In other words, "energy forces (*sañkhāra*) observe only energy forces".⁷ We may well say then that "the five aggregates observe only the five aggregates".

This explanation, however, refers only to the possibility of substance in relation to transmigration, but not to the positive determination of the relation between the *anatta* and *kamma* doctrines.

Therefore, we must direct our attention to the carefully formulated expression "by *kamma*" in the above quoted passage. It is not only due to the five aggregates but also according to *kamma* that birth takes place in the womb of the mother. Here we have two important factors:

1. "depending upon" the five aggregates, and 2. "according to" *kamma*. The first of these concerns the relation between the not-self and transmigration. This has already been explained. An examination of the evidence relevant to this first factor forces one to make a negative formulation, that is to say, the question "What is the substance of transmigration?" was answered by the postulation of the not-self doctrine: "There is only the five-aggregates" (and no valid reality as substance). This seems to be reduced to the following argument; we may say that the "what" had been answered by the "how". In this case, there was no argument on substance whatever, but only the way of transmigration of sentient beings.

On the contrary to all this, the second factor, "by *kamma*", seems to point out the positive and effective relation between the not-self and action doctrines. This effective relation between both becomes clear if certain very elemental considerations concerning the nature of questions in Buddhist Philosophy be noted. Before entering into the discussion on the implication of "by *kamma*",

