

Aspects of Early Buddhism

K.R. Norman

Cambridge

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As is well known, the *attā* is specifically denied as a permanent entity in Theravāda Buddhism, although the word is of course widely used in Pāli¹ in the everyday sense of “oneself”. The question then arises: If there is no permanent *attā*, then what transmigrates in the course of rebirths in *saṃsāra*? In the Mahātaṇhāsankhayasutta of the Majjhimanikāya² we read of the bhikkhu Sāti, who so misunderstood the Buddha’s teaching that he thought it was *viññāṇa* “consciousness” which continued in *saṃsāra* (*tad ev’ idam viññāṇam sandhāvati saṃsārati, anaññam*).³ This would appear to be a recollection by Sāti of some such statements found in the Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad that *viññāna* continues: *idam mahad bhūtam anātam apāram viññānaghana eva*⁴, “This great being, endless, unlimited, consisting of nothing but intelligence”; *sa viññāno bhavati, sa viññānam evānvavakrāmati*⁵, “He becomes one intelligence; what had intelligence departs with him”; *sa vā eṣa mahān aja ātmā yo ’yaṃ viññānamayaḥ prāṇeṣu*⁶, “Verily, he is the great unborn Self who is this (person) consisting of knowledge amongst the senses.” Radhakrishnan’s note on Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad IV.4.1 states that “the principle of intelligence (*viññāna*), after having absorbed all functions of consciousness, proceeds to continue in a new life”⁷

When Sati’s view was made known to the Buddha, he refuted it by pointing out that he had frequently taught that *aññartra paccayā n’ atthi viññāṇassa sambhavo*⁸ “Apart from condition there is no origination of consciousness”. He rejected the idea of a permanent *viññāṇa* which could transmigrate, by stressing the place of *viññāṇa* in the twelve-fold chain of the *paṭicca-samuppāda* “dependant origination”, where *viññāṇa* is caused by *saṅkhāras* “compounded formations” or “conditioned things”, and is itself the cause of *nāmarūpa* “name and form”. According to the account of the Buddha’s *bodhi* in the Vinaya-piṭaka, the Buddha examined the twelve-fold *paṭicca-samuppāda* backwards and forwards immediately after *bodhi*⁹, but elsewhere we read of the Buddha rehearsing a shorter form with only ten links, before his *bodhi*¹⁰, and the longer chain is probably only a later extension of an earlier idea. The Pāli commentators analyse the twelve-fold version as being spread over three existences,¹¹ but it seems more likely that it was in its original formulation a simple empirical assertion, with no reference to more than one birth. There are, in fact, many other examples of chains of cause and effect mentioned in the Pāli canon,¹² and it is probable that the *paṭicca-samuppāda*, of however many links, was simply a development of earlier, less elaborate, statements of conditionality. There is no reason to suppose that the Buddha was the first to think of a cause and its effect.¹³

We may deduce that the *paṭicca-samuppāda* chain was first reasoned out by the Buddha in what we may describe as reverse order, in the way in which the ten-fold chain mentioned above is given, starting from the end i.e. the position in which the Buddha found himself. He was alive and destined to suffer old age and death (*jārāmaraṇa*) like other people who were alive. He was so destined because he had experienced birth (*jāti*); birth is caused¹⁴ by existence (*bhava*); existence is caused by clinging (*upādāna*); clinging is caused by craving (*taṇhā*); craving is caused by feeling (*vedanā*); feeling is caused by contact (*phassa*); contact is caused by the six senses (*saḷāyatana*); the six

senses are caused by name-and-form (*nāmarūpa*); name-and-form are caused by consciousness (*viññāṇa*). This is the starting point of the ten-fold chain. In the twelve-fold chain consciousness is caused by the compounded formations (*saṅkhāra*); the compounded formations are caused by ignorance (*avijjā*). The destruction of any link in the chain would lead to the destruction of any links dependant on it. The destruction of craving would lead to the destruction of clinging, existence, birth and old age and death. The destruction of *avijjā* would lead to the destruction of the whole chain of conditional origination, and therefore to the end of continued existence in *samsāra*. The destruction of *avijjā* by *vijjā* would therefore lead to *nibbāna*, which was release (*mokkha*) from *samsāra*.¹⁵

The various accounts of the Buddha's *bodhi*, which led to his *nibbāna*, are not easy to reconcile together, since they appear in different forms in different parts of the Pāli canon, with quite large omissions and changes of emphasis in some versions. The shortest account is that found in the Ariyapariyesanasutta of the Majjhimanikāya,¹⁶ and for this reason some scholars believe that this is the earliest account available to us.¹⁷ It concentrates upon the gaining of *nibbāna*, but does not give any information about how it was attained. We read that after the Buddha had attained *nibbāna*, knowledge (*ñāṇa*) and insight (*dassana*) arose in him that his release was unshakable,¹⁸ that this was his last birth, and that there would be no renewed existence (*punabbhava*) for him.¹⁹

We may assume that in the shortest account of his *bodhi* the Buddha would deal with the most important part of the experience, and we can therefore see that this was the gaining of *nibbāna*. This view is supported by the fact that when he visited other teachers, before his *bodhi*, he found their teachings inadequate because they did not lead to *nibbāna* (*nāyam dhammo nibbidāya na virāgāya na nirodhāya na upasamāya na abhiññāya na sambodhāya na nibbānāya samvattati*).²⁰ We may deduce from this that the concept of the attainment of *nibbāna* existed, even though the Buddha (while Bodhisatta), and his teachers, were unable to achieve it. We may also deduce that the words in the Buddha's statement are in the order in which the various states mentioned in it are to be realised, starting with disgust with the world, and going on to *sambodhi* and *nibbāna*. This bears out the belief the Buddha's aim to free himself from *samsāra*, and all aspects of his teaching were concerned with the acquisition of means to do this, either in this life or a later one, and with finding how best to dwell in *samsāra* until release was obtained.

The account of the Buddha's *bodhi* given in the Mahāsaccakasutta of the Majjhimanikāya,²¹ however, gives more information. We read there that the Buddha realised that the various efforts he had made so far were not productive, and he wondered if there was another way to *bodhi* (*siyā nu kho añño maggo bodhāya*).²² He recalled an experience in his boyhood, when he had by chance entered into the first *jhāna*. He therefore entered into the first *jhāna* again, and from there moved into the second, third and fourth *jhānas*.²³ At that point he gained, in order, three knowledges (*ñāṇas*). The first was the knowledge of his previous existences; the second the knowledge of the arising and passing away of others, and their fates which depended upon their actions (*kamma*); the third was the knowledge of the destruction of the *āsavas*. He understood the existence, arising, stopping and path to the stopping of misery (*dukkha*), and then the existence, arising, stopping and the path to the stopping of the *āsavas*. He knew that he was released, and that birth has ended. There is no indication of how exactly release was obtained, and it may simply be that gaining knowledge of the destruction of the *āsavas*

was the destruction itself, i.e. the knowledge was efficacious, and the *bodhi* was the *nibbāna*. It is perhaps belief in such a view that has led Collins to translate *nibbāna* as both “enlightenment” and “liberation”.²⁴

The translation “enlightenment” is normally reserved for *bodhi* or *sambodhi*, but it is somewhat misleading in that the root *budh-* which underlies these words has no direct connection with “light”. The root means literally “to wake up”, or metaphorically “to wake up (to a fact), to know it”, and “awakening” would be a more literal translation of *bodhi*. The past participle Buddha is used actively to mean “one who has awakened, one who has gained knowledge”. In the Ariyapariyesanasutta account the Buddha refers to his *dhamma* as being *duranubodha*²⁵ and *na ... susambudha*,²⁶ and this implies that his *bodhi* consisted of gaining that *dhamma*, i.e. the knowledge of how to gain release. This accords with Buddhaghosa’s statement: *uparimagga-ttayasankhātā sambodhi*²⁷ “sambodhi is synonymous with the three higher paths (leading to *arahat*-ship)”.

In the account in the Vinaya-piṭaka, the Buddha specifically states that he gained *bodhi* (*anuttaraṃ sammāsambodhiṃ abhisambuddho*)²⁸ when knowledge and insight (*ñāṇadassana*) arose in him in respect of the four noble truths about misery, but in the account of his *bodhi* in the Mahāsaccakasutta the four statements about misery are not referred to as noble truths,²⁹ and since they appear to be subordinate to the four statements about *āsavas*, it is possible that the statements about misery are a later addition, which led to a parallel, but inappropriate, set of four statements being evolved about the *āsavas*, to provide symmetry.³⁰ If this is so, then something similar is probably true of the Buddha’s statement about the point at which he became Buddha. It should rather have been the point when he gained knowledge about the destruction of the *āsavas*.

In the Sāmaññaphalasutta of the Dīgha-nikāya,³¹ the Buddha sets out the advantages of life for a *samaṇa*. These culminate in the practice of the four *jhānas*, leading to the three *ñāṇas*. In the account of the third *ñāṇa*, that of the destruction of the *āsavas*, we find the same insertion of the four statements about misery, once again not called noble truths. There then follow the four statements about the *āsavas* which lead on to the destruction of the *āsavas* and the attainment of *arahat*-ship.³² This is therefore a repetition of the Buddha’s own experience as related in the Mahāsaccakasutta, and again we may suspect the presence of the statements about misery.

It is noteworthy that when the Buddha begins to teach, he preaches the news about the four noble truths about misery, not about the *āsavas*. As part of the fourth noble truth he teaches the eight-fold path leading to the destruction of misery (*dukkha-nirodha*). The stages of the path are: *sammā-diṭṭhi*, *-saṃkappo*, *-kammanto*, *-ājīvo*, *-sati*, *-samādhi*.³³ This path is said to have been learned by the Buddha, and to lead to *nibbāna* (*cakkhu-karaṇī ñāṇa-karaṇī upasamāya abhiññāya sambodhāya nibbānāya samvattati*).³⁴ We are therefore presumably to regard *dukkhanirodha* and *nibbāna* as synonymous.³⁵ The path does not include any reference to the four *jhānas*, although it is possible that in the final element, *sammā-samādhi* “right concentration”, could be interpreted as including them.³⁶ If it does not, then the way to *nibbāna* along with the eight-fold path is a means which differs somewhat from the way in which the Buddha himself gained *nibbāna*.³⁷

Elsewhere in the Pāli canon, however, there is a list of the stages of an *asekha*, i.e. an *arahat*, who has finished his training and is now an adept. This path adds two further stages, *sammā-ñāṇa* and *sammā-vimutti*, to the usual eight.³⁸ This is an extension, rather than a contradiction, of any other teaching. The Buddha states that the eight-fold path

leads to *nibbāna*. *Nibbāna* (= *vimutti*) must therefore be a further stage upon the path, and the knowledge required to gain *nibbāna* must be the preceding stage. When one is an *asekha*, then one has practised the eight-fold path, gained *sammā-ñāṇa*, and then *sammā-vimutti*.

And just noted, the Buddha states that the eight-fold path leads to *nibbāna*. He uses *dukkha-nirodha* and a synonym of this, but does not speak of the destruction of the *āsavas*, which, as we have seen, is also a synonym of *nibbāna*. Schmithausen suggests that the question of *dukkha* is prior to the question of the *āsavas*,³⁹ but this is not necessarily so. It is clear that in early Buddhism the concept of the *āsavas* and their destruction was of great importance. The most common epithet of an *arahat* is *khīṇāsava* “one whose *āsavas* are destroyed”, not “one whose craving or ignorance is destroyed”. The list of the *āsavas* which we find in the Pāli canon is: *kāmāsava* “lust”, *bhavāsava* “becoming”, and *avijjā-sava* “ignorance”.⁴⁰ To these *diṭṭāsava* “wrong view” is sometimes added.⁴¹ It is clear that if this list is correct, then the *āsavas* as a whole are not part of the *paṭicca-samuppāda*, although *avijjā* and *bhava* are there as separate items, and it might be possible to take *kāma* as equal to *taṇhā*.

It is to be noted that the etymological meaning of the word *āsava* “influx”, the use of the terms *āsava* and *aṇhaya* by the Jains, and the use of the related word *āsinava* by Aśoka, suggest, as was proposed by Alsdorf,⁴² that the usual use of the word by the Buddhists is probably not the original usage. This view is also supported by the fact that the four *āsavas* in this list are identical with the four *oghas*,⁴³ suggesting that substitution has taken place at some time. Schmithausen points out⁴⁴ that the *āsavas* are glossed in pāli as *vighāta-pariḷāha*, which would give a meaning something like “afflictions”. In the *Sammādiṭṭhisutta* of the *Majjhima-nikāya*⁴⁵ the eight-fold path is said, unusually, to lead to the destruction of the *āsavas*.⁴⁶ This might be a relic of an earlier theory, but it is said in such a way that *āsava* might almost be taken as the equivalent of *dukkha*, which perhaps further explains the parallelism between the *āsavas* and *dukkha* in the account of the Buddha’s *bodhi*.

It is possible that, whatever the original meaning of the word *āsava*, it was noted that the destruction of the *āsavas* led to the destruction of *kāma*, *bhāva* and *avijjā*, which might have suggested the identification of the *āsavas* with the things which were destroyed at the same time. If, however, we believe that the *āsavas* are to be identified with any one link of the twelve-fold *paṭicca-samuppāda*, then the most likely candidate for identification would be the *saṅkhāras*. It is not impossible that there was some earlier meaning of *āsava* which was approximately synonymous with that of *saṅkhāra*. It is to be noted that the cause of the *āsavas* is *avijjā*,⁴⁷ which is also the cause of the *saṅkhāras*. We read that the stopping of *avijjā* leads to the stopping of the *āsavas*. This does not prove that the *āsavas* and the *saṅkhāras* are the same, but it does show that the *āsavas* cannot be *avijjā*, for they can scarcely be their own cause, as is pointed out by Schmithausen.⁴⁸ It may be that *avijjā* and the *saṅkhāras* were originally a separate cause-and-effect, which were prefixed to the chain of causation beginning with *viññāṇa*. It seems possible that at some early stage of Buddhist thought there was a view that the *āsavas* were very similar in effect to the *saṅkhāras*, the active “formulating factors”, or “formative influences” or “karmic formulations”, as Nyanatiloka translates.⁴⁹ In the individual there was the passive version of the *saṅkhāras*, the “formed factors”, as one of the group of *khandhas*. The idea of the active *saṅkhāras* as the karmic formations, and

then the passive formed *saṅkhāras* as part of the individual, would not be inconsistent with the idea of *āsava* in Jainism as the process by which *kamma* flowed into the soul.

If this was so, then it is possible that the older meaning of *āsava* was forgotten in Buddhism⁵⁰ when the emphasis in the Buddha's teaching was placed upon the idea that the world was *dukkha*. This may have been the result of the change of emphasis from what has been called the *jhānic* side of Buddhism, where stress was on *jhāna* "meditation" as a means of gaining *nibbāna*, i.e. the destruction of the *āsavas*, to the *kammic* side of Buddhism, whereby the emphasis was on the entry into the stream, whereby the entrant could hope, by successfully following the teaching, to rise higher and higher in successive rebirths towards the goal of *arahat*-ship. In these circumstances, the main need was to convince followers that the world was *dukkha*, but that there was a way of release from it which did not demand special ability in meditation. The fact that *nibbāna* of *mokkha* could be attained in various ways led to a situation where there was different terminology employed to denote what was basically the same concept. So one who had gained *arahat*-ship could be described as *khīṇāsava*, *nibbuta*, or *dukkhassa antakara* "one who has put an end to misery". We also find references in the Pāli canon⁵¹ to those who have put an end to misery by breaking the seven fetters (*saṃyojanāni*). Since these fetters include ignorance (*avijjā*) and lust for existence (*bhavarāga*, which is perhaps a synonym for *taṇhā*), it may be that there is no inherent contradiction between this teaching and the idea of breaking the chain of dependant origination by destroying one of the links.

There is an interesting point which arises in connection with the four *jhānas* which the Buddha practiced at the time of his *bodhi*. As noted above, one version of the occurrence relates that the Buddha recalled a boyhood experience in which he had entered upon the first *jhāna*. Repeating his boyhood experience, he entered the second, third and fourth *jhānas*. We have, however, an account of the Buddha's pre-*bodhi* visits to two teachers, Ālāra Kālāma and Uddaka Rāmaputta. With these teachers he practiced meditation and reached with them the states of *ākiñcaññāyatana*⁵² "the state of nothingness" and *nevasaññā-nāsaññāyatana*⁵³ "the state of neither perception nor non-perception", respectively. As already stated, he rejected both of these as not leading to *nibbāna*, but in his own teaching after his *bodhi* he included them as stages on the way to *nibbāna*. If, as taught by the Buddha, they are the third and fourth of the *arūpa-jhānas*, which are the seventh and eighth of the *samāpattis* "attainments", since they come after the four *rūpa-jhānas*, then the Buddha had already attained the first four *samāpattis* with those teachers before he gained the seventh and eighth. We have the statement of the commentator Buddhaghosa to this effect.⁵⁴ This would make the story of his boyhood memory seem very strange, and we should perhaps follow the view that the four *rūpa-jhānas* and the four *arūpa-jhānas* were originally two quite separate sets of states of meditation.⁵⁵

In the Buddha's accounts of the eight *samāpattis*, however, we read of a ninth state, that of *saññāvedayitanirodha*⁵⁶ "cessation of feelings and perceptions" or "cessation of feeling⁵⁷ of perceptions". In this state, for one with seeing with perceptive knowledge, the *āsavas* are destroyed (*paññāya c' assa disvā āsavā parikkhīṇā honti*).⁵⁸ This would seem to imply that, if we equate *āsavakkhaya* with *nibbāna*, this was another way of attaining *nibbāna*, and Schmithausen quotes Nagasaki⁵⁹ as believing that *saññāvedayitanirodha* and *nibbāna* were originally identical. It is not entirely clear, however, how one could see

by knowledge when in such a state, and it is possible that the seeing with *paññā* refers to something which happens after attaining this ninth state, not while one is in it. Without further information about the nature of *paññā* it is difficult to come to any firm conclusions about this, but if we equate *paññā* with *ñāṇa*, then this could be another reference to *bodhi* leading to *nibbāna*.

We must, however, note that there is no reference to the four *arūpa-jhānas* in the accounts of the Buddha's own attainment of *nibbāna* at the time of his *bodhi*. In the story of his death, in the Mahāparinibbānasuttanta of the Dīgha-nikāya,⁶⁰ we read that the Buddha went through all the stages of the *rūpa-jhānas* and the *arūpa-jhānas*, and then entered *saññāvedayitanirodha*. He was then thought by Ānanda to have attained *nibbāna*.⁶¹ Anuruddha, however, pointed out that he had only attained *saññāvedayitanirodha*.⁶² From there the Buddha went back, in due order, to the first *jhāna*, and then up to the fourth *jhāna*, from which he died, and presumably attained *nibbāna*. It is therefore noteworthy that it was also from the fourth *jhāna* that the Buddha gained *bodhi* and *nibbāna* on the earlier occasion, and it may be relevant that in the Saṃyutta-nikāya⁶³ we read of a bhikkhu going from the fourth *jhāna* to *saññāvedayitanirodha*,⁶⁴ passing beyond *nevasaññā-nāsaññāyatana*, without any mention of the other *arūpa-jhānas*.

It would seem from the account of the Buddha's death that *saññāvedayitanirodha* was probably some sort of death-like trance, and we may wonder how Anuruddha, seeing the Buddha in this condition, nevertheless knew that he was not in *nibbāna*. It is clear that as far as Anuruddha was concerned the state was not identical with *nibbāna*, but it does not reveal how anyone in this death-like trance could make use of *paññā* to attain *nibbāna*. It may well be that the statement that the Buddha was in *saññāvedayitanirodha* was merely the result of later theorising. This perhaps supports the suggestion that it was after gaining *saññāvedayitanirodha*, not while one was in the state, that one was able to use *paññā* and gain the destruction of the *āsavas*.

The object of the Buddha's teaching was to gain release from the beginningless and endless *samsāra*. There is a reference in the Pāli canon to two varieties of release in *nibbāna*.⁶⁵ One is attained in life and is called the element of *nibbāna* with a remnant of clinging (*sa-upādisesā nibbānadhātu*). In this the defilements (*kilesas*) are destroyed, and lust, hatred and delusion (*rāga, dosa, moha*) are annihilated. The remainder of physical life is perfect bliss and peace. The second form of *nibbāna* is that without a remnant of clinging (*anupādisesā nibbānadhātu*). It coincides with death, and is not followed by rebirth, for the elements of existence (*khandhas*) have been destroyed.

The descriptions of *nibbāna* in the Pāli canon are set out in very general terms, and it is often defined in terms of negatives of opposites. It is "blissful" (*siva*) or "happy" (*sukha*) as opposed to the *dukkha* of existence. It is "unmoving" (*acala*) as opposed to the endless movement of *samsāra*. It is "undying"⁶⁶ (*amata*) as opposed to the repeated deaths of *samsāra*. It is "unborn" (*ajāta*), "unoriginated" (*abhūta*), "uncreated" (*akata*), and "unformed" (*asaṅkhata*) as opposed to the world, which is born, originated, created and formed. The last named epithet is the most important, for in Theravāda Buddhism *nibbāna* is the only *asaṅkhata* thing.⁶⁷

Buddhism denied the existence both of a permanent soul and a permanent individuality. An individual is merely a group of five "elements of existence" (*khandha*),⁶⁸ "form" (*rūpa*), "feeling" (*vedanā*), "perception" (*saññā*), "mental-formations" (*saṅkhāra*) and "consciousness" (*viññāṇa*). If the "compounded formations"

(*saṅkhāra*), the second link in the chain of dependant origination, are destroyed because their “ignorance” (*avijjā*), is destroyed by *vijjā*, then all compounded formations, including the passive “mental formations” (*saṅkhāra*) and other *khandhas* which go to make up the individual are destroyed and we are left only with the “uncompounded” (*asaṅkhata*), i.e. *nibbāna*, which is outside *saṃsāra*.

In these circumstances it is not surprising that the condition of being *nibbuta* or in *nibbāna* cannot be defined. The word *nibbuta* is also used of a fire which has gone out. Schrader long ago pointed out the Indian belief that an expiring flame does not really go out: *vahner yathā yonigatasya mūrtir na dṛśyate naiva ca liṅganāśaḥ*⁶⁹ “as the form of a fire ... is not seen nor its seed destroyed”. So it is with an individual who has gained *nibbāna*. His state cannot be described any more than the state of a fire which has gone out can be described. The only thing that is certain is that, because *nibbāna* is “not-self” (*anatta*), it cannot be reconciled with the views of those who think that the object of religious exertion is to re-unite the individual soul with Brahman or Ātman.

¹ Abbreviations of title of Pāli texts are as in the Epilegomena to the *Critical Pāli Dictionary*, Vol. I, Copenhagen, 1924-48. References are to the editions of the Pali Text Society.

² M I 256-71.

³ M I 256, 19-20.

⁴ II.4.12

⁵ IV.4.2

⁶ IV.4.22

⁷ S. Radhakrishnan, *The principle Upaniṣads*, London 1953, p. 270.

⁸ M I 258, 20.

⁹ Vin. I 1.

¹⁰ S II 104.

¹¹ See S. Collins, *Selfless Persons*, Cambridge 1982, p. 108.

¹² The *paṭicca-samuppāda* is described in the Pāli Canon with varying lengths and starting from various points. This probably represents its use in different contexts of teaching or instruction, i.e. in his sermons the Buddha would sometimes start from a specific cause or arrive at a specific effect in the chain, for various doctrinal reasons.

¹³ If the Sn does really contain pre-Buddhist material, then it is possible that some of the statements of cause-and-effect which occur there are older than the Buddha. Despite Aramaki (N. Aramaki, “On the formation of a short prose *Pratityasamutpāda* sūtra”, in *Buddhism and its relation to other religions (Festschrift for Dr. Shozen Kumoi)*, Kyoto 1985, 87-121), there is no reason for thinking that the earliest presentation of the *paṭicca-samuppāda* was in verse, although it may be that the oldest literary version we have is in a verse text.

¹⁴ Or “because of” (*-paccayā*). The meaning is that one link in the chain is a pre-requisite for the next, e.g. birth is a pre-requisite for death: a person cannot die unless he has been born.

¹⁵ These are simply different analyses of the same problem, i.e. suffering, old age, death, etc. which involves tracing them back to a cause. The Buddha then seeks a way to destroy that cause. Since the method of destruction depends upon knowing how to do it, the starting point for destruction must be knowledge (*vijjā*). It therefore follows that the starting point of *saṃsāra* must be *avijjā*.

¹⁶ M I 160-75.

¹⁷ See L. Schmithausen. “Liberating Insight and Enlightenment in Early Buddhism”, in *Studien zum Jainismus und Buddhismus (Gedenkschrift für Ludwig Alsdorf)*, Hamburg 1981, p. 207, quoting A. Bareau.

¹⁸ *akuppā me vimutti*. In other versions we find the phrase *vimuttasmiṃ vimuttam iti ñāṇaṃ hoti* (for references see Schmithausen, op. cit. (in n. 17), p. 219 n. 69). In some contexts this can be taken as referring to the word *cittaṃ*, which precedes it, and the phrase can be translated, “In (it) released there is the knowledge (‘I am) released’”. In some contexts, however, it is not *cittaṃ* but *ariyasāvako* which precedes *vimuttam*. Various explanations of this are possible: it is perhaps a pericope, with the standard

phrase being used in a context where it is not appropriate; since there is no verb to indicate who or what is released, it is possible to take *vimuttam* impersonally, meaning “(it is) released” (see T. Vetter, “The most ancient form of Buddhism”, in the *Festschrift for Dr. Shozen Kumoi* (see n. 13), pp. 67-85, (p. 70)). In such a context, however, it might seem preferable to take *vimuttam* as an example of a past participle being used as the equivalent of an action noun: “(there is) release”. Another explanation would be to assume that in an earlier form of this phrase in an eastern dialect the reading was *vimutte*, which could be either masculine or neuter. When this was converted into a Western dialect form the redactors had a choice between *vimutto* and *vimuttam*, and having decided in the majority of occurrences to have *vimuttam*, to agree with *cittam*, this was then extended to all occurrences, even though it was not appropriate with *ariyasāvako*. There is an extended version of the phrase including a verb: *vimuttam vimutt’ amhī ti ñāṇam hoti*, and the fact that this is not merely a scribal error in the Pāli tradition is proved by the (Mūla-?)Sarvāstivādin reading *vimukto ‘smīti*. This form of the past participle with the case ending elided, was applicable to both a masculine and a neuter subject. Schmithausen (ibid.) thinks that the form with *amhī* is a later reading, but the sandhi formation whereby –e or –o is elided before a-, rather than a- being elided after –e or –o, is not common in Pāli and seems to be early. I would suggest that this is, in fact, the earlier form of the phrase. I suspect that in some branches of the scribal tradition *vimutt’ amhī ti* was misunderstood as *vimuttam hī ti*, form which he was dropped as an unnecessary particle, leaving a neuter form *vimuttam iti* even when the context demanded a masculine.

¹⁹ M I 167, 27-29

²⁰ M I 165, 10-12 = 166, 29-31.

²¹ M I 237-51.

²² M I 246, 35.

²³ It is debatable whether the Buddha actually went through four stages of meditation as set out in the texts. It seems more likely that there was a single developing state of meditation, which (when he came describe it to his followers) could conveniently be broken down into four states. The problem which Vetter raises (Vetter, op. cit. (in n. 18), p. 80), is best explained by saying that the Buddha was trying to put into words something ineffable which had happened to him, and his words are really a later rationalisation (perhaps by his followers) of the irrational. All his views are simply ways of describing different aspects of the same experience, and are complementary, not contradictory. These various rationalisations are not necessarily of different dates, since they may be products of different environments and (preaching) needs.

²⁴ Collins, op. cit. (in n. 11), index, p. 319, s.v. *nibbāna*.

²⁵ M I 167, 31.

²⁶ M I 168, 6.

²⁷ Sv 313, 4.

²⁸ Vin I 11, 28.

²⁹ For a discussion of the formulation of the four noble truths see K.R. Norman, “The four noble truths: a problem of Pāli syntax”, in *Indological and Buddhist Studies (Festschrift for J.W. de jong)*, Canberra 1982, pp. 377-91.

³⁰ See Schmithausen, op. cit. (in n. 17), p. 205.

³¹ D I 47-86.

³² D I 85

³³ Vin I 10, 20-23.

³⁴ Vin I 10, 24-25.

³⁵ See Schmithausen, op. cit. (in n. 17), p. 214.

³⁶ We have to assume that at the very beginning of Buddhism, i.e. at the level of the Buddha’s own personal experiences, the meaning of technical terms was not rigorously fixed, and so *samādhi* could be used in the sense of *jhāna*, etc.

³⁷ In the exposition of the four noble truths, it does not seem to make sense to say, as Vetter does (op. cit. (in n. 18), p. 77), that the Buddha had actually practiced the fourth noble truth. Surely the Buddha had gained *nibbāna* by means of *jhāna*, but was holding out to others the possibility of following a different path leading to the destruction of *dukkha*?

³⁸ See D III 271, 5-9.

³⁹ See Schmithausen, op. cit. (in n. 17), p. 205.

⁴⁰ See M I 249, 14-15.

⁴¹ See The Pali Text Society’s *Pali-English Dictionary*, s.v. *āsava*.

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- ⁴² See L. Alsdorf, *Les études jaina: état present et tâches futures*, Paris 1965, p. 4.
- ⁴³ See *Pali-English Dictionary*, s.v. *ogha*.
- ⁴⁴ See Schmithausen, op. cit. (in n. 17), p. 248 n. ad 23.
- ⁴⁵ M I 46-55.
- ⁴⁶ M I 55.
- ⁴⁷ M I 55.
- ⁴⁸ See Schmithausen, op. cit. (in n. 17), p. 205.
- ⁴⁹ See Nyanatiloka, *Buddhist Dictionary*, s.v. *saṅkhāra*.
- ⁵⁰ The way in which the Buddha retained the use of the word *āsava* with a changed meaning was quite in keeping with his practice of taking over technical terms from other religions, but giving them new meaning, e.g. the term *tevijja* was explained as referring to three (special) types of Buddhist knowledge, not the brahmanical *vedas*. Having taken over the idea of the *āsavas* from the Jains, or some other source, he kept the term, with a changed meaning, even when it was not longer a matter of great doctrinal importance.
- ⁵¹ A IV 7-8.
- ⁵² M I 164, 15
- ⁵³ M I 165, 35
- ⁵⁴ *ākiñcaññāyatanapariyosānā satta samāpattiyo maṃ jānāpesi*, Ps III, 22-23.
- ⁵⁵ The four *arūpa-jhānas* were not originally Buddhist, and that is why they were included in the non-Buddhist teachers' views. If Bareau is correct in stating that the story of the Buddha being taught by these teachers has no historical basis, we must conclude that the inclusion of a mention of the *arūpa-jhānas* in the Buddha's life history was intended to show that they were inadequate when compared with the Buddha's method. They do, however, lead to a state which seems to be equal to *nibbāna*, which presumably means that some, at least, of these non-Buddhist teachers had succeeded in finding a way out of *samsāra*. It was presumably because the *arūpa-jhānas* were successful in gaining the desired end that they were incorporated into the Buddhist scheme of *jhānas*, not as simultaneous means (which would have been better, because they are really an alternative) but as consecutive.
- ⁵⁶ M I 165, 35.
- ⁵⁷ Although *saññāvedayita* is usually translated as a dvandva compound, this is not necessarily correct. Grammatically, it could as well be taken as a tatpuruṣa compound with the past participle *vedayita* being used as an action noun. This interpretation would depend upon the occurrence of *saññā* with the verb *vedayati*. This combination seems to occur in the Pāli canon as we have it now, but it is possible that it existed at an earlier date, when the precise signification of technical terms had not yet been fixed.
- ⁵⁸ M I 175, 3-4.
- ⁵⁹ See Schmithausen, op. cit. (in n. 17), p. 259 ch. H.
- ⁶⁰ D II 72-168.
- ⁶¹ D II 156, 17.
- ⁶² D II 156, 18-19.
- ⁶³ S V 215.
- ⁶⁴ See Schmithausen, op. cit. (in n. 17), p. 215 n. 54.
- ⁶⁵ See Nyanatiloka, *Buddhist Dictionary*, s.v. *nibbāna*.
- ⁶⁶ Vetter (op. cit. (in n. 18), p. 74) may not be correct in translating *amata* as "immortality". This translation perhaps gives the wrong impression, since the Buddha was presumably trying to gain release from *samsāra*, i.e. he was trying to find a state where there was no rebirth, and therefore no dying leading to rebirth. For this reason *nibbāna* is described as being without birth, without death, without *gati*, etc.
- ⁶⁷ The reference in the Milinda-pañha (268, 14; 271,11) to *ākāsa* being *akammaja* is taken to be due to Sarvāstivādin influence. See I.B. Horner, *Milinda's Questions*, Vol. I, London, 1963, p. xviii.
- ⁶⁸ Cf. *evaṃ khandhesu santesu, hoti satto ti sammuti*, S I 135, 21.
- ⁶⁹ Śvetāśvatara Upaniṣad I.13, quoted by F. Otto Schrader, "On the problem of nirvāṇa", in *JPTS* 1904-1905, p. 167 n. 2.