

Liberation from Lobha: Eradication of Craving (Lobha) from the Early Buddhist Analytical Perspective

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Abstract:

This analytical study of greed primarily focuses on the early Buddhist perspective. In this thesis, an attempt is made to share with the reader the researcher’s understanding about the Buddhist teaching’s regarding *Lobha* and its implication. The research points out how greed can affect the physical and mental wellbeing of individual. The study also reveals the techniques and methods of eliminating greed discussed in the canonical teachings. The wish to make the reader realize that one spends the whole life developing superficial things, improving the mind, making it more and more clear, more and more subtle, is actually reinforcing the craving mind to an ever-stronger state of desiring to becoming; is somehow the main aim of this thesis. Being a citizen of the human world and the follower of the Buddha, the researcher also wishes to draw the reader’s attention to the timeless teaching of the Buddha, detecting the root of cause of all sufferings in order to obtain a happy life free from suffering.

Keywords:Buddhist, Buddha, analytical study, method of eliminating greed, Suffering, a happy life.

I. INTRODUCTION

Lobha, in *Pāli* is a word which has multiple significance. It is rendered into English as greed, craving, and attachment. *Lobha* is desire and craving for sensual pleasure, money, wealth, fame, power, and all objects of the senses. However much one possesses things *Lobha* persists. The more we get, the more are our desires. Even the whole wealth on earth cannot make an end to *lobha*. It prompts a person to be always on the look-out for something new. *Lobha*-the powerful mental force latent in all worldly beings identified as the great root cause of suffering and recognized as the Second Noble Truth is clearly expounded in the

first sermon of the Buddha. This early Buddhist teaching is not difficult to comprehend intellectually, but the intuitive understanding of its significance requires investigation, study and meditation.

II. HOW CESSATION OF *LOBHA* IS BROUGHT ABOUT

Lobha, Craving can be coarse, medium, or subtle. Most people can recognize craving when it is obvious, but not when it is of a lesser degree. For example, we can recognize craving when we are inclined to eat too much of delicious meals, or when we are attached to alcoholic drinks and cigarettes. We are attached to our beloved ones and

desirable objects and we suffer when we lose them. Then we can see that attachment brings sorrow. These kinds of attachment are obvious but there are many degrees of craving and often we may not know that we have craving. *Citta* arises and passes away very rapidly that we may not be able to realize it when craving arises on account of what we experience in daily life through the six sense-doors, especially if the degree of craving is not as intense as longing or lust. Every time there is a pleasant sight, sound, odour, taste, touch or delightful thought, craving is likely to arise. It arises countless times a day with different facets which can be summarized into three kinds corresponding to three kinds of defilement (*Kilesā*);

1. craving that motivates physical and verbal actions
2. craving that excites the mind to revel in imagined delights and fantasies
3. craving which is lying dormant awaiting opportune moment to manifest itself.

Of these three, the craving that motivates physical and verbal actions is classified as *vitakkhamakilesa* which can be eradicated by *Dāna* and *Sīla*. In *Pāli*, *Dāna* means gift, donation, and generosity. The purpose of this practice is to become detached, on one hand from possessions, from our dependence on material things, and on the other from unrefined mental impurities, such as desire, greediness, and jealousy. What is stressed here is not so much giving for giving, or giving for pleasing or making ourselves pleased. It is rather about getting detached, training not to depend any more on, developing beneficial actions by materially supporting the needy. *Sīla* means morality. A person who is observing the *Sīla* respectfully does not steal anything belonging to others, he does not commit sexual misconduct, does not lie and does not take any intoxication drinks or

drugs. This is how the gross form of craving, the first of its kinds, is eliminated by means of *Sīla*. As craving in its real sense is the *lobhacetāsika*, therefore, only those immoral physical and verbal actions that motivated by craving associated with *lobhacetāsika* eliminated by *sīla* is meant here. In the case of five precepts (*pañcasīla*), as first *sīla* (abstaining from killing) is motivated by *dosacetāsika*, it is, therefore, left out of this elimination.

Craving that excites the mind to revel in imagined delight and a fantasy is classified as *pariyutthānakilesā* which can be eradicated by *Samādhi*, concentration. If one is constantly engaged in the practice of one of the meditation subjects such as loathsomeness (*asubha*), or breathing (*anāpānasati*), one keeps oneself free from thoughts of desire for and imagining about sensuous objects. Unless thus absorbed in one of meditation exercises, if the mind was left free on its own, it would engage itself in thinking about desirable sense-objects, yearning mostly for sensual pleasure. As a matter of fact, even when occupied incessantly with meditation, before the power of concentration gets strengthened, *kāma-vittakka*, thought of sensuous pleasure keeps on coming up. Only when *jhānic* concentration is attained through practice of concentration meditation that thought of grosser types of sensual pleasures are brought to cessation, but even then only for the duration of *jhānic* absorption. Even as a *Sotāpanna* winning the first *jhāna*, if one is not mindful, one may get caught in the allure of the five sense-objects of pleasure which can hinder one from higher attainment. The Buddha had reminded the bhikkhus about this on many occasions, out of which, the case of *Uṇṇābha*¹ should be cited here. During the Buddha's time, *Uṇṇābha* was a lay man. One day

¹M III 217.

he came to the monastery to listen to the *Dhamma* taught by the Buddha himself and at once became a *Sotāpanna* winning the first *jhāna*. Seeing this, the Buddha said if *Uṇṇābha*, who has just left the monastery, did not die before reaching home, the bonds of fetters (*samyojana*) which entangle him to this sensual world (*kāmaloka*) will be severed. Before getting home he was abiding in the first *jhāna*, and if he died in that state of *jhāna*, he would be reborn in the world of Brahma where he could aspire to the higher state of *jhānaAnāgāmi* but if he reached home his *jhāna* might be disturbed by his home surroundings, his family affairs which are all sense objects of pleasure. This showed that *Samādhi* can only help to temporarily remove the craving for sensual pleasure by *vikkambhanapahāna*, putting it away to a distance.

The third level is the latent craving which is lying dormant awaiting opportune moment to manifest itself and is classified as *anusayakikesa*. Without the final attainment of wisdom (*paññā*), this craving cannot be completely eradicated, and its disposition will sooner or later resurface. *Vipassanā* can eradicate this latent stage of craving momentarily or temporally, but not altogether. Only the Path or enlightenment can eradicate it permanently. As there are three levels of craving corresponding to the three kinds of *kilesa*, the Buddha gave us three weapons to attack each level: stage of virtue, the stage of concentration, and the stage of wisdom. These are actually the eight factors of the Path: Right understanding, Right Thought, Right Speech, Right Action, Right Livelihood, Right Effort, Right Mindfulness, and Right Concentration. In these eight factors, Right Speech, Right Action, Right Livelihood, belong to the stage of moral purity or *Sīla*; Right Effort, Right Thought and Right Speech the stage of wisdom or *Paññā*. But since craving rooted so deeply, it can

only be eradicated step by step in different stages of enlightenment.

The *Sotāpanna* (Stream-enterer) who has realized the first stage of enlightenment has eradicated wrong view (*diṭṭhi*), he has developed the wisdom which realizes that all phenomena are *nāma* and *rūpa*, not self. Since he has eradicated *diṭṭhi*, only the craving motivated by the four *lobhamūlacittas* associated with *diṭṭhi* (*diṭṭhigatasampayutta*) which give rise to the rebirth in four woeful states (*Apāya*) do not arise. For him the craving motivated by the four types of *lobhamūlacittas* dissociated from *diṭṭhi* (*diṭṭhigatavippayutta*) still arise; he has not yet eradicated all kinds of attachment. The *Sotāpanna* still has conceit (*māna*). Conceit can arise with the four types of *lobhamūlacittas* which are without *diṭṭhi* (*diṭṭhigatavippayutta*). There may be conceit when one considers oneself is better, equal or less in comparison of achievement. Craving which is associated with these conceits can give rise to the rebirth in human and *Deva* planes and it is rooted so deeply that it can only be eradicated when one has become an Arahant.

The person who has realized the second stage of enlightenment, the *Sakadāgāmi*, (Once-returner), has less craving than the *Sotāpanna*. In *Sakadāgāmi*, the *Kāmatanḥā* associated with *māna* is still not eradicated but only attenuated.

The person who realized the third stage of enlightenment, the *Anāgāmi* (Non-returner), has no more craving to the objects which present themselves through the five senses (*kāmatanḥā*) in the sensual planes (*kāmabhava*). This completely eradicated sensual desire (*kāmatanḥā*) as can be seen in the lay devotee *Visākha*, one of the seven lay disciples in the time of the Buddha who had each five hundred followers, when he reaches the stage of *Anāgāmi*. *Visākha* was a husband of

Dhammadinna. He was a rich merchant of *Rājagaha* and accompanied *Bimbisāra* on his visit to the Buddha, who was then at *Rājagaha* for the first time after his enlightenment. *Visākha*, on that occasion, became a *Sotāpanna*, after hearing the Buddha's preaching. From then on, he frequently went to the monastery to listen to Buddha's sermon, and later he became a *Sakadāgāmi* and then an *Anāgāmi*. After he became an *Anāgāmi*, returning home, his behaviour to his wife completely changed. The presence of his wife was no more of interest to him. At bed time, *Visākha* retired to another room to sleep alone and when he explained to her the reason, offering her all his wealth and freedom to do as she wished; and from then regarded her as his own sister or mother. Then she asked his leave to join the Order. *Visākha* informed *Bimbisāra* of her wish, and, at his request, the king ordered that the city bedecked in her honor on the day of her renunciation and that she would be taken to the nunnery in a golden palanquin. *Dhammadina* then became an Arahant winning pre-eminence as the best preacher of the Law.

Visākha's case had proved to us that *Anāgāmi* is totally free from sensual desires. In him, there is no trace of craving for sensual pleasures through sense-objects. He never is beset with anxiety, never sad, has no trouble due to remorse. All *dosa* and all other passions have subsided in him. However, he still has conceit and clings onto rebirths in the *Rūpa* and *Arūpa* planes (*rūpabhava* and *arūpabhava*). Therefore, in him, there still exists the craving for existence (*bhavataṇhā*) dissociated from *diṭṭhi*. Thus, an *Anāgāmi* comes into being in the world of *Brahmās* in the form and formless spheres is enough to prove that he has not yet been able to get rid of craving for life of *Brahmā* in these realms.

The one who has realized the final stage of enlightenment, the Arahant, in him all kinds of craving, the root cause of suffering, is totally eradicated. In the brief introduction of the Third Noble Truth found in the first sermon, the total destruction of craving is emphasized with four terms of similar import, signifying the relation between craving and suffering:

“This, monks, is the Noble Truth of the Cessation of Suffering: the complete cessation (*nirodho*), giving up (*cāgo*), abandoning (*paṭinissaggo*), release (*mutti*) and detachment (*anālayo*) from that very craving.”²

Though in this definition the word *Nibbāna* is not mentioned, ‘complete cessation of craving’ implies *Nibbāna*. Elsewhere on different occasions this is made clear by the Buddha “Verily, *Rādha*, the extinction of craving is *Nibbāna*” (*Taṇhakkhaya hi Rādhanibbānan'ti*).³ “*Nibbāna* is the departure from craving” (*Vānatonikkhantantinibbānaṃ*).⁴ Replying to the deity he says “The abandoning of craving is *Nibbāna*” (*taṇhāyavippahānenanibbānaṃtivuccati*).⁵ And then in the words of Venerable *Sāriputta*: “The subduing and abandoning of passionate desire (*chandarāga*) for these five aggregates of grasping: that is the cessation of suffering”.⁶

It is clear from the above that *nirodha* or *Nibbāna* is the cessation, the extinction of craving. As we have seen in the analysis of the Four Noble Truths, craving is the cause of suffering. With the

²SIII 420.

³Ibid 430

⁴Mahā Thera Ledi Sayadaw (trans), (1957), *Paramatthaddīpanī*, p. 324.

⁵SI 39; Sn215.

⁶*Yoimesupañcasuupādānakkhandhesuchandarāgavinayo chan darāgappahānaṃ, so dukkhanirodha'ti*, (MI 190).

giving up of craving, sufferings and all that pertains to suffering also come to an end. *Nibbāna*, therefore, is explained as the extinction of suffering.

In the longer definition of the Second and the Third Noble Truths appearing in *AṅguttaraNikāya*, the arising and cessation of craving are, however, centered on Dependent Origination:

“And what, monks, is the Noble Truth of the Origin of Suffering? With ignorance as condition volitional formations come to be. With the volitional formations as condition, consciousness... (and so on)... such is the origin of this whole mass of suffering. This, monks, is called the Noble Truth of the Origin of Suffering.

And what, monks is the Noble Truth of the Cessation of Suffering? With entire fading away and cessation of ignorance, the volitional formations cease. With the cessation of the volitional formations, consciousness ceases... (and so on)... such is the cessation of the whole mass of suffering. This, monks is called the Noble Truth of the Cessation of Suffering.”⁷

It is cited here just to show how craving arises and how it can be brought to cessation by cutting off its preconditions. In another detail of the Third Noble Truth, found in *Vibhaṅga* and *Mahāsatipatṭhānasutta*, not only the total destruction of craving is mentioned but when and where it takes place is also emphasized:

“And where, when being abandoned, is this craving abandoned? And where, when ceasing, does it cease? Whatever is endearing and alluring in terms of the world: that is where, when being abandoned, this craving is abandoned. This is where when ceasing, it ceases.”⁸

Regarding whatever is endearing and alluring in term of the world (*kiñcilokepiyarūpaṃsātarūpaṃ*), sixty kinds are listed in accordance with the six sense doors and their corresponding objects, ie. six sense doors (*cakkhu*, sota, etc.), six sense objects (*rūpa*, *sadda*, etc.), six form of sense consciousness (*cakkhuvīññāṇam*, *sotavīññāṇam*, etc.), six feelings born of sense contacts (*cakkhusamphassajāvedanā*, *sotasamphassajāvedanā*, etc.), six perception of sense objects (*rūpasāññā*, *saddasaññā*, etc.), six intention for sense objects (*rūpasāñcetanā*, *saddasañcetanā*, etc.), six craving for sense objects (*rūpataṇhā*, *saddataṇhā*, etc.) and six thoughts directed at sense objects (*rūpavitakko*, *saddavitakko*, etc.), and six evaluations of sense objects (*rūpavicāro*, *saddavicāro*, etc.).

This extended formula, in its essence, makes the point that craving must be brought to cessation right at the objects where it arises. A careful examination of this formula reveals the close relation between senses and the cessation of craving. From here, it can be said the Buddha did not hold up as an example of emancipation an individual totally disengaged from all the sense activities but rather urged the recognition of how they may contribute to the nature of volitional response. When the operation of the senses has been

⁷Thera Nyanaponika & Bhikkhu Bodhi (trans), (2000) *Numerical Discourse of the Buddha* (An Anthological of *Sutta* from the *Aṅguttaranikāya*), pp 63-64.

⁸AshinPathamkyaotitthila (trans), (1969), *The Book of Analysis*, p. 136.

understood and properly developed, the cessation of craving is not out of reach.

III. SENSE CULTIVATION

From time immemorial living beings through indulgence in the five-fold pleasant things, had forgotten the eternal bliss. They have taken the sensual pleasures as the real happiness. Therefore, they have been undergoing the pangs of birth and death again and again since long. A sieve may be filled with water, but the thirst for sensuous pleasures can never be quenched. Man indulges in the sensuous pleasures provided to him by all the six senses day and night; therefore, he also cannot defend himself from the cruel clutches of death. The sensuous pleasures look extremely charming; but life of a living being that is dependent on these transitory enjoyments is ultimately ruined. Those, who are drenched in lust, and engrossed in sensual pleasures blindly, will, for want of self-control be deluded. Therefore, the Buddha gives us a wise counsel: “A man may conquer a million men in battle, but one who conquers himself is, indeed, the greatest conqueror.”⁹

To conquer oneself, one needs training. It is wise, however, not to think of this training as something imposed on us from outside. Rather, it is something we impose on ourselves because we realize that by conquering our own negative instincts and impulses, we will eventually conquer all the illusions that create suffering for us. This training mentioned here is the guarding of the senses. And to start up with this training, the individual must understand how the senses provoke unwholesome *lobha*, craving. *Aṅguttaranikāya*¹⁰ has pointed out how lust built upon excitation of all the senses affects the whole personality:

“Monks, I know of no other single form by which a man’s heart is so enslaved as it is by that of a woman. Monks, a woman form obsesses a man’s heart. Monks, I know of no other single sound by which a man’s heart is so enslaved as it is by the voice of a woman. Monk, a woman’s voice obsesses a man’s heart. Monks, I know of no other single scent, savour, touch by which a man’s heart is so enslaved as it is by the scent, savour and touch of a woman. Monks, the scent, savour and touch of a woman obsess a man a man’s heart.

Monks, I know of no other single form, sound, scent, savour and touch by which a woman’s heart is so enslaved as it is by the form, sound, scent, savour and touch of a man. Monks, a woman’s heart is obsessed by these things.”¹¹

Many other passages in *SuttantaPiṭaka* point out how necessary it is for one to cultivate and master the sense-doors. Various similes in *Visuddhimagga* reveals how important it is for one to watch over his sense doors by showing the grip that the senses can have over the mind. If one lets his sense doors open and unguarded, the result is that one’s mind definitely gets ruined like a crop not fenced in with branches, a village with open gate to the robbers and as rain leaks into a badly roofed house:

“Among the visible objects, sounds, and smells and tastes, and tangibles, guard the faculties; for

⁹Dhp, Verse 103

¹⁰A I 1.

¹¹F.L. Woodward (tans) (2006) *The Book of Gradual Sayings (Aṅguttaranikāya)*, Vol. I, pp. i-2

when these doors are open and unguarded, then thieves will come and raid as 'tweed a village' and just as an ill roofed house. The rain comes leaking in, so too will lust come leaking in for sure. Upon an undeveloped mind."¹²

As described in *Bhāradvājasutta*,¹³ king Udena approaches the Venerable Pindola Bhāradvāja and enquires the *Bhikkhu* of the means by which they have abandoned sensual pleasures and led the holy life. The *Bhikkhu* replies that they keep to the pure life by training themselves as instructed by the Buddha to regard a woman of the mother's age as their mother, a woman of their sister's age as their sister, and a girl their daughter's age as their daughter. The king is not satisfied with the answer. He argues that even if a *Bhikkhu* trains himself in the said manner, it is no guarantee for the non-arising of impure thought in him in connection with a female person. The Venerable Pindola Bhāradvāja explains further they practice meditation on the foulness of the body by contemplating on the thirty-two constituent parts of body. The king is still not convinced; he maintains that, for older *Bhikkhus* with more matured experiences, who are well established in mindfulness and concentration, contemplation on the thirty-two constituent parts of the body might prove to be salutary; but this type of meditation for younger *Bhikkhus* might have an adverse effect, exciting lust and passion instead of aversion for the human body. Only when the Venerable Pindola Bhāradvāja tells him that the *Bhikkhus* practise restraint of the six faculties keeping a close mindful watch on the doors of the six senses that

the king agrees that purity of the holy life is possible under such circumstances.

Elsewhere, in the Discourse on fire (*Ādittasutta*),¹⁴ the guarding of the sense doors is reminded again by the Buddha. Here he emphasized that restraint of the sense doors should be undertaken with mindfulness for when functions of the sense doors are governed by mindfulness, there is no liability to invasion by covetousness and the rest.

The mind is like a magician who could produce a magic show at any time. The minute we go past the sense objects without mindfulness, we shall find ourselves drawn to either hate or greed. The Buddha mentions *Māra*, the tempter. *Māra* is constantly with us, waiting for an opening. Hence the Buddha constantly emphasized to his followers to be vigilant and alert in controlling evil thoughts by mindfully guarding the senses. Even just before this *Parinibbāna*, at the request of *Ānanda*, his long-term attendant, with regard to monks' behavior towards women, the Buddha still kept on reminding His disciples to guard over their senses:

"How are we to conduct ourselves, Lord, with regard to womenkind? As not seeing them, *Ānanda*. But if we should see them, what are we to do? No talking, *Ānanda*. But if they should speak to us, lord, what are we to do? Keep wide awake, *Ānanda*."¹⁵

Buddhism teaches the overcoming of pathogenic responses to evil intentions by means of mindfulness and a proper development of senses. This indicates the need for a right volitional attitude in coming to grips with senses:

¹²Bhikkhu Ñānamoli (trans), *The Path of Purification*, p. 37.
¹³S II 112.

¹⁴S II 14.

¹⁵T.W. Rhys Davids (trans), (2007) *Dialogue of the Buddha (Dīghanikāya)*, Vol. II, p. 154.

“Come you monks, be guarded as to the doors of the sense organs; Having seen a material shape with the eye, do not be entranced with the general appearance, do not be entranced with the detail; for if one dwells with the organ of sight uncontrolled, covetousness and dejection, evil, unskillful states of mind, may flow in. So fare along controlling it; guard the organ of sight, achieve control over the organ of sight. Having heard a sound with the ear...Having smelt a smell with the nose...Having savored a taste with the tongue...Having felt a touch with the body...Having cognized a mental state with the mind, do not be entranced with the detail. For if one dwells with the organ of mind uncontrolled, covetousness and dejection, evil, unskillful states of mind, may flow in. So fare along controlling it; guard the organ of mind, achieve control over the organ of mind.¹⁶

Once the senses have been analyzed and their dangers marked out, one has a responsibility to recognize the need to struggle against the forceful but ill-directed current of craving, which has been excited by the senses. It is important to point out here that there is no suggestion that the aim of the struggle is to deaden the senses. The very analogy of a struggle has to do with cultivation and development rather than neutralization. Certainly, this should not be interpreted to mean that life must be devoid of all sense pleasures.

¹⁶I. B. Horner (trans), (2004), *The Collections of the Middle Length Sayings (Mijjhīmanikāya)*. Vol. III, p. 52.

*Araṇavibhaṅgasutta*¹⁷ of *Majjhimanikāya*, for example, points out that even for monks not all sense pleasures are to be considered dangerous:

“Whatever is happiness in association with sense pleasures and intentness on a joy that is low, of the villager, of the average man, unariyan, not connected with the goal-this is a thing that has anguish, annoyance, trouble and fret; it is a wrong course. But whatever is happiness in association with sense pleasures but not intentness on a joy that is low, of the villager, of the average man, unariyan, not connected with the goal-this is a thing that without anguish, annoyance, trouble and fret; it is the right course.”¹⁸

The Enlightened One (Arahant) has a new attitude towards the use of the senses and the kinds of satisfaction they give. An Arahant still acts from positive motivation such as loving-kindness and compassion, he still is active (*āṭāpin*), but because he is without craving, he is emotionally cool (*sītabhūta*). Such a person never deliberately destroys or represses sense functions but refines them and uses them as instruments to see behind the world of ignorance.

It is true that our senses need food that they should not starve, but it is vital to give them the proper food and to lessen the greed of each sense faculty. Above all, the individual learns to separate cognition from thirst and to liberate the senses from servitude to craving. One does not let his senses fall away but perceives that when the senses stimulate egocentric craving, they present a counterfeit world

¹⁷M III 229.

¹⁸I. B. Horner (trans), op.cit, p. 278.

which ignores the characteristic of the world's impermanence. Thus, the way of liberation is also the way of right cognition and orientation of the senses.

In fact, the first base in insight meditation is to establish an orientation of sense doors. The way to orientate oneself in this practice is to literally 'come to one's senses. This is, a strategy of being fully aware of all one's activities, in whatever posture or situation one happens to be in, through a conscious orientation to the five physical senses: eye, ear, nose, tongue, body and the 'sixth sense'- the mind. So, the practice is to be present and consciously attentive at the predominant door or sense base. For example, being on guard at the eye-door allows one to notice the effects of the contact between the eye and the visible objects and how one is relating to them. This orientation to any sense door brings awareness of what is happening during any sense impression and with it the ability to monitor the associated feelings and consciousness that arise without any preference or interference, as a witness. This is, just registering or noting the changing phenomenon without reaction be it sensation, sound, sight, smell, thought or mind base. However, if there is a reaction during the observation, as is natural for the untrained mind, then that too must be noted. This way of sense training has the potential to uncover the true nature of the phenomenon observed and thus a non-reactive awareness is acquired that brings insight knowledge and liberate the mind from the bondage of craving and sufferings of all kinds. And for this reason, what we could find in the Buddha's instruction to *Bāhiya*, for his long-term welfare and bliss, is a proper method of regarding all senses as experiences and no more:

"*Bāhiya*, you should train yourself in this way: with the seen, there will be

just the seen; with the heard, there will be just the heard; the sense (touched, tasted, smelt) there will be just the sensed; with the cognized, there will be just the cognized. When for you *Bāhiya*, there is merely the seen, heard, sensed and recognized, then you will not be therein. Then you, *Bāhiya*, will be neither here nor there nor within both-this is itself the end of suffering."¹⁹

This strategy of being present at a sense door ties in with the application and study of Dependent Origination (*Paṭiccasamuppāda*). As one experiences the series of causal events, one can intercept them at the linkage of sense impression, consciousness or feeling. The ability to do this gives one the potential to be free of the conditioned cycle of suffering consequent upon wrongly grasping that most people are unknowingly trapped in. And the one who is aware of this has a constant responsibility to keep watch on his senses. The reward is ultimate freedom from craving.

There is, however, one thing to remember: it is not easy to keep the senses guarded all the time and to keep unwholesome thoughts at bay. This takes time and energy and here again it is not the senses or sense-contact itself that satisfy us. It is what the mind makes of it. Thus, there is yet another side to sense cultivation, namely, its relation to the cultivation of the mind-meditation.

IV. *LOBHA* (CRAVING) AND MEDITATION

The aim of Buddhist liberation is to eradicate attachment by mastery both of consciousness and the thirsting forces that lie within and behind them.

¹⁹Dī, I, 319

Meditation taught by the Lord Buddha makes this liberation possible. And, liberation dissolves craving, egocentricity, and subsequent painfulness.

Therein, the method taught by the Lord Buddha emphasized the importance of ‘The Four Foundation of Mindfulness’. Besides, clear comprehension of and insight into the Dependent Origination (*Paṭiccasamuppāda*) is of prime necessity to the attainment of perfection.

Turning to the technique of meditation conducive to the liberation from the bondage of craving, one finds a wide variety of interesting methods. However, whichever method one may pursue, one has to start with morality (*Sīla*). It is not surprising that the initial emphasis of the Eightfold Path should be upon morality, or virtue (*Sīla*). It is taken to be essential for success in meditation and for pursuit of the final fruit of wisdom. Morality, as usually found in *SuttantaPiṭaka*, is the five precepts (*Pañcasīla*); eight precepts (*āthasīla*) for the lay persons; the ten precepts (*dasasīla*) and 227 rules (*Pātiokkhasaṃvarasīla*) reserved for *Sāmanera* (novice) and monks respectively. Certainly, virtue as described here refers to a wholesome connected attitude in the ordering of life. It supposes that one does not start with a good conduct automatically. But one must work at it with discipline and energy. It should be noticed that of much greater significance than the actual performance of virtue was the intention underlying virtuous conduct. By itself, however, virtue cannot produce wisdom, but can help in sense restraint which in turn causally conditions the development of concentration (*Samādhi*) and mindfulness (*Sati*) which culminates in wisdom (*Paññā*). Without the final accomplishment of wisdom or insight, meditation even at its highest level, cannot yield enlightenment, the cankers cannot be completely eradicated, and the craving disposition will sooner or later resurface.

Frequently, one will encounter two methods of meditation as the text remark: tranquility meditation (*Samthabhāvana*) and insight meditation (*Vipassanābhāvana*). And as taught by the Buddha, both ways are valid and meaningful, and one may choose a particular method according to one’s needs or temperament.

Samathabhāvanā is meditation on conceptual objects. For example, in developing an opposing mental state to sensual desire; one can do *asubhabhāvanā*, ie. meditation on the impure objects. Impure objects refer, in particular, to the corpses in the cemetery as given in *Mahāsatipaṭṭhānasutta*²⁰ and explained in the *Visuddhimagga*;²¹ but it also refers to the repulsive aspects of the body and sense objects in general. In Buddha’s time, *asubha* was made a standard or compulsory object of meditation (*kammaṭṭhāna*) especially for young monks. By giving wise attention (*yonisomanasikāra*) and constant meditation on these objects; one will be able to develop *asubhasaññā* (notion on loathsomeness) on the body which leads to dispassion and freedom from lust.²² Similarly, we can also contemplate on the loathsomeness of food and other objects to get rid of the craving for them. As recorded in the *Suttas*, in the Buddha’s time many monks and laity had attained Arahatsip by meditating on these impure objects, *Putigattatissathera* was one among them.

Putigattatissathera was born in a good family in *Sāvatti*. After he joined the Order an eruption broke out on him which covered his whole body with sores. His fellow monks, unable to look after him, abandoned him. When the Buddha

²⁰D II 294

²¹*Asubhakkammaṭṭhāna* (Vism. I)

²²This is how the Venerable Ānanda taught Venerable Vaṅṅīsa in *Anandasutta* (S I).

discovered this, he boiled some water and washed *Tissa* with his own hands, cleaned and dried his garments. When *Tissa* felt comforted, the Buddha preached to him and asked him to contemplate on the useless of the loathsome body, and *Tissa* upon contemplating became an Arahant.

Other *Samatha* way of overcoming craving is to analyze the objects of passion and delight in such a way that they no longer seem worthy of interest. This second approach is the one recommended in *Sattasutta*:²³ when the Buddha, on replying to *Rādha*, talked of “smashing, scattering, and demolishing form (etc.) and making it unfit for play”²⁴ he is referring to the practice of analyzing form minutely into its component parts until it no longer seems a fit object for passion and delight. When all five aggregates can be treated in this way, the mind is left with no conditioned objects to serve as a focal point for its passion and so is released.

A part from the above mentioned, *Samatha* also taught another way of combating sensual desire called ‘*Dhutaṅga*’, the austerity. Under this practice, a monk ought to observe having only three robes, sleeping on the charnel ground or under a tree, a practice of contentment with regard to attire. There are altogether thirteen austerities (*Dhutaṅga*) for monks. Lay persons also can observe a certain degree of austerity by being contented, by association with the contented and dissociation from the greedy.

Even though right concentration claims the last place among the factors of the Noble Eightfold Path, concentration itself does not mark the path’s culmination. The attainment of concentration makes the mind still and steady, unifies its concomitants, opens vast vistas of bliss, serenity and power. But

by itself it does not suffice to reach the highest accomplishment, release from the bonds of craving. Reaching the end of suffering demands that the Eightfold Path be turned into an instrument of discovery, that is be used to generate the insights unveiling the ultimate truth of things. This requires the combined contributions of all eight factors, and thus a new mobilization of Right View and Right Thought. Up to the present point these first two path factors have performed only a preliminary function. Now they have to be taken up again and raised to a higher level. Right view is to become a direct seeing into the real nature of phenomena, previously grasped only conceptually; Right Thought, to become a true renunciation of defilements born out of deep understanding.

Before we turn to the development of wisdom, it will be helpful to inquire why concentration is not adequate to the attainment of liberation. Concentration does not suffice to bring liberation because it fails to touch the defilements at their fundamental level. The Buddha teaches that the defilements are stratified into three layers: the stage of transgression, the stage of manifestation, and stage of latent tendency. Wisdom alone can cut off the latent tendencies at their root because the most fundamental member of the set, the one which nurtures the others and holds them in place, is ignorance (*avijjā*), and wisdom is the remedy for ignorance.

A number of discourses (among them, *Koṭṭhikasutta*²⁵ and *Nibbedhikasutta*)²⁶ make the point that the mind is fettered, not by things like the five aggregates or the objects of the six senses, but the act of passion and delight for them. Cravings can be clearly seen when one takes note of them when they arise. When one does this, one should

²³S II 189.

²⁴*rūpaṃvikirathavidhamathavidhamsethaviḷāṇiyakarothata
nhākkhayāyapaṭipajjatha.*

²⁵A II 409.

²⁶A II 410.

have the right attention (*Yonisomanasikara*) that one is noting mindfully the mental state and not the object. For a *Vipassanā* meditator, one can first note the objects as *Vipassanā* objects ie. with the aim to purify the mind by understanding the true nature of the objects. If one can do this, he will find that craving is one thing, and the pleasure which may accompany it is another. The pleasure, which lasts only a brief moment and then passes away, creates an uplifting and exciting cover over the suffering state of which attachment is the governing mental state. When one's mindfulness is strong and continuous, one's wisdom will grow which in return enable one to see craving as it really occurs without any involvement or attachment, and by then the craving that arises will cease soon. The reason is, there cannot be mindfulness and craving at the same time. Watching craving directly with this right understanding whenever it arises, one will be freed from it.

“Whoever sees this as it really is by perfect understanding, his craving for becoming disappears... by the complete extinction of craving there is dispassion, cessation without remainder, *Nibbāna*.”²⁷

The mindfulness procedure of meditation is unique to Buddhism and is completely consistent with the Buddhist world-view, based as it is on insight into momentariness. Even though mindfulness (*Sati*) can lead by itself to *Nibbāna*, it is not uncommon to find it practiced along with concentration (*Samādhi*). *Visuddhimagga*²⁸ had pointed out that in fact both ways can work in harmony to provide the insight and balance necessary for ultimate freedom from craving as in

the case of *Mahātissathera* who lived at *Cetiya-pabbata* in Sri Lanka.

As it was said, one day *Mahātissathera* left his forest retreat early in the morning and on the way to *Anurādhapura* city for his alms round, he met a woman who had left her home after quarrelling with her husband. At the sight of the Thera, there arose in her a lustful desire and she laughed aloud seductively. On looking at her, the Thera noticed her teeth. Since he had been contemplating the skeleton, the whole body of the woman appeared as a heap of bones. He concentrated on this mental image and attained *jhāna*. Then, after contemplating the image of the skeleton in his *jhānic* state of mind, he attained Arahatsip. The Thera continued his journey and, on the way, met the woman's husband. The man asked him whether he had seen a woman. The Thera replied that he did see something but that he did not know whether it was a man or a woman. All that he noticed was a skeleton that passed by on the way. What he actually saw was the woman's teeth, but his practice of contemplation had turned his impression of her body into the image of a skeleton. Hence, in his mind, there was no room for lust or any other defilements arising from his sense-contact with the woman. Then, practising *Vipassanā* on the basis of his *jhāna* consciousness, he become free from defilements and attained Arahatsip.

This story might raise doubt among non-meditating people as regards to the arising of the image of a skeleton at the sight of a person's teeth, but without practice one cannot have any clear idea of what mind training (*bhāvanā*) can accomplish. The mere exercise of concentration without any training cannot help to create mental images for these depend on steadfast and prolonged practice of contemplation. Imagination is the power of perception. Repeated contemplation strengthens

²⁷Ud. 32.

²⁸Bhikkunānamoli (trans), op. cit, 23-24.

perception which then helps create any kind of image of oneself or other people. If *Mahātiṣṣaṭṭhā* had failed to regard the laughing woman as a skeleton, he might have become lustful and fallen a victim to temptation in the solitude of the forest. Even if he had no sexual desire at that time, any impression of the woman would have laid him open to temptation at other times. But thanks to his contemplation of the skeleton in the practice of *Vipassanā*, he was able to overcome defilements and achieve final liberation from *Samsāric* existence. Here the extinction of craving through *Vipassanā* practice is called *tadaṅganibbuti*, ‘partial extinction’, while extinction through Arahatsip is called ‘total extinction’.

Besides, methods involved in creating conditions conducive to pure states of mind such as moderation in eating, noble friendship, suitable conversation and even ignoring are also helpful in conquering sensual desire as taught by the Buddha:

“How is he moderate in eating? Herein, a monk takes his food after wise consideration: not for the purpose of enjoyment, for intoxication, for beautifying the body or adorning it (with muscles), but only for the sake of maintaining and sustaining this body, to avoid harm and to support the holy life, thinking: ‘Thus I shall destroy the old painful feeling and shall not let a new one arise’”²⁹

Noble friendship here, in particular, refers to such friends who have experience and can be a model and help in overcoming sensual desire, especially in meditating on impurity. But it applies also to noble friendship in general.

“The entire holy life, *Ānanda*, is noble friendship, noble companionship, noble association. Of a monk, *Ānanda*, who has a noble friend, a noble companion, a noble associate, it is to be expected that he will cultivate and practice the Noble Eightfold Path”³⁰

Suitable conversation here applies both to conversation about overcoming of sensual desire and to every conversation which is suitable to advance one’s progress on the path.

There will be the time when the attractive object is very dominating, if one keeps on watching it, one may become attached to it after sometime. At such times, it may be better to purposely ignore it and shift the attention to another object that is less attractive or that does not generate craving but mindfulness. To what extent we can apply these methods depends on the environment and individual temperaments.

And on the rare occasion, there is even reference to freedom being gained without any formal meditation practice. *Khemā*,³¹ *Kisāgotamī*,³² *Paṭācārī* and minister *Santati* are said to have been emancipated themselves from strong craving by listening to the *Dhamma* on the spot.

V. CONCLUSION

The researcher feels the urgency to remind the reader that the study of *Lobha* (Craving) affirmed the fundamental understanding of Buddhism which enables one to get along with practical Buddhism that leads to possible

²⁹S I 38.

³⁰Dhp-a I 57.

³¹Ibid 430

³²Ibid 431.

emancipation from the round of sufferings. Reviewing the contents of this paper, it is rather easy for the reader to know why this topic- *Lobha* is chosen and presented. So long as *lobha* is not fully understood and transformed from within, human beings have to face continued suffering even under the materially advanced conditions of the modern world.

Craving being one of the oldest and crucial teachings of the Buddha, has been selectively presented in this thesis intent on elucidation of the Buddhist path of deliverance. In this selective passage through the knowledge of *Theravāda* Buddhism, the researcher attempts to lead the readers through progressive levels of understanding and realization of the true nature of craving for their own well-being.

To conclude, the researcher believes that this article will find its way to those who are ready for such radical inner transformation, and hope that it will reach many others who will find its content worthy of consideration, although they may not be ready to fully live with or practice Buddhism.

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