

Notes on the Concept of the Will in Early Buddhism

While recently researching the concept of *taṇhā* in early Buddhism,¹ I became increasingly aware of the paucity of studies that have specifically focussed on the issue of the will in the Nikāyas, and of the fact that many contemporary students of Buddhism have failed to see the crucial place a doctrine of the will plays in early Buddhist soteriology.² It is partly in response to these deficiencies that this paper is offered, but it should also be noted that rather than establishing a theory of the will, I am more interested here in raising a facet of Buddhism which up to this point has not been adequately discussed, in the hope of provoking or stimulating discussion on this topic.

Our first responsibility is to define what is meant by 'will' as it pertains to the Nikāyas. Only when this is done can we go on to demonstrate the soteriological significance of this doctrine, which we will argue forms the most general basis of Buddhist emancipation.

In the west, with its traditional psychological categories of cognition, conation and affection, the will has frequently been pigeon-holed as a problem of conation only. Recently, however, many theorists³ have argued that this classical structure is artificial, and that in fact cognition (perceiving, judging reasoning), conation (exertion, struggle, volition) and affection (mood, emotion, temperament), if they exist at all as separate categories,⁴ overlap in so many places as to make distinctions between them blurred. I am in essential agreement with this criticism, and in my investigation of a concept of will in the Nikāyas, I have found that the most meaningful and useful definition is one that straddles the traditional conative, affective and cognitive 'roles', that embraces such terms as *virīya* (energy, striving), *chanda* (desire, intention) and *dvārāni sūguttāni* (guarding the doors of the senses).

- 1 Matthews, V. B. *The Concept of Craving in Early Buddhism*. Hamilton: Unpublished Ph.D. dissertation. McMaster University, Ontario. 1974.
- 2 Soteriology means a doctrine of salvation. Although frequently found in a specifically Christian context, it is not a term confined only to that religion. G. Kittel (*Theologisches Wörterbuch Zum Neuen Testament*, Vol. 7; trans. G. W. Bromiley, Grand Rapids; W. B. Eerdmans. 1971. p. 965f) points out that *soter* and *soteria* were common words in the Attic Greek (pre-Christian) world. They had the general meaning of saving, benefiting and preserving. H. Liddell and R. Scott (*Greek-English Lexicon*, N.Y. Harper Co. 1855. p. 1462) also demonstrate many non-Christian applications of the term *soteria*. Soteriology has a definite religious focus then, and can be legitimately used to describe questions related to freedom or salvation in any religious tradition. It is in this sense that we apply the word to Buddhism in this article.
- 3 i.e. H. B. and A. C. English. *A Comprehensive Dictionary of Psychological and Psycho-analytical Terms*. N. Y. Longmans, 1958. "Historically, conation was co-ordinate with cognition and affection, and was often conceived as a mental faculty. It is now seldom used for a specific form of behaviour, rather for an aspect found in all (three categories)."
- 4 Perhaps the most celebrated critic of this specific arbitrary mental classification is Gilbert Ryle (*The Concept of the Mind*. Aylesbury: Penquin Books 1968) who argues that the 'will' is more of an "occurrence of processes or operations", and "not a Faculty, Immaterial Organ or Ministry". p. 62f.

I justify this definition by arguing that if 'will' is categorized as simply 'energy' or 'striving', much of its moral and essentially ethical nature is lost, and likewise if it is categorized only in ethical terms, it loses that sense of positive drive so apparent in much of the Buddhist *magga*, or soteriological path. Western students of early Buddhism have frequently failed to see that the concept of will has these dimensions, with sometimes disastrous interpretative results. The mischief begins with Arthur Schopenhauer (c. 1854), whose own celebrated doctrine of the will as an "unquenchable thirst"⁵ approximates the Buddhist concept of *taṇhā*. The fact that Schopenhauer was recognized to be at least partially indebted to the Buddhist *dhamma*, and the fact that he was responsible for introducing some idea of what the nature of Buddhist psychology was to a Europe still very much in the dark about the mysteries of eastern thought, helped to identify the Buddhist concept of the will with his own pessimistic doctrine of the will.

This impression that willing in Buddhism is always associated with 'thirst' or 'desire', and that 'desire' in turn is always deleterious, was also reinforced by the early translations of the Pāli texts into European languages. Mrs. Rhys Davids points this out in one of her best and most creative essays, "On the Will in Buddhism",⁶ when she observes in a comparison of various English translations with the originals "that the one English word "desire" is made to do duty for no less than seventeen Pāli words (for example, *taṇhā* (craving), *ākāsam* (space, "puffed-up state"), *visattikā* (dart of lust), *chātātā* (hunger), *sitū* (clinging) . . . not one of which means desire taken in its ordinary general sense, but rather in that of perverted, morbid, excessive desire".⁷ She also found that much was the same case with the French and German translations of Burnouf, Foucaux, Oldenberg, Max Müller, Fausböll and Neumann. For these translators, 'desire' in the context of the Pāli Nikāyas was always bad, though in the West it had not lost its neutral moral connotation. Mrs. Rhys Davids further emphasizes that the languages which have grown up with the traditions of western philosophy "do not afford equivalents for Oriental standpoints" and that this is especially serious when one approaches "the Buddhist attitude in relation to the volitional side of the human mind".⁸ Even for those who are familiar with the Indian languages, not enough care, she insists, is being exercised in distinguishing between psychological words which have closely parallel but not exactly synonymous meanings. She reminds us that when the Pāli Canon wishes to convey ethical values in terms of willing, either distinct and special words are used, or else the expression of willing is explicitly qualified as referring to an object of perverted desire or to "a morbid state of will". Thus want or wish (*ākaṅkhā*) becomes craving (*taṇhā*), desire (*chando*) becomes lust (*chandarāgo*), love (*kāma*) becomes lust (*kāmarāgo*) or sensual delight (*nandirāgo*).

By pointing out how complicated an issue "will" was in the Nikāyas, and how inconsistent most western interpreters of the Buddhist texts are when it comes to translating Pāli words related to the general concept of 'willing'

5 Schopenhauer, A. *The World as Will and Representation* II. N.Y.; Dover Press. 1966. pp. 311f.

6 Rhys Davids, C. A. F. "On the Will in Buddhism". *JRAS (GBI)*, London, 1898.

7 *Ibid.* p. 54, 57. It is recognized that *visattika* emphasizes the clinging aspect of desire and that 'attachment' is a superior translation to Mrs. Rhy Davids somewhat mellifluous 'dart of lust'.

8 *Ibid.* p. 48.

(*cetanā*, *viriyam*, *tanhā*, etc.), Mrs. Rhys Davids has made an important cautionary statement. From another point of view, however, the real contribution of her essay is in her argument that will as such, desire as such, are not to be repressed, but that the culture and development of them are "absolutely indispensable to any advance towards the attainment of Buddhist ideals".⁹ Here she lashes out against Schopenhauer and all other critics whom she suspects of imprinting Buddhism with the distasteful and misleading stamp of pessimism.¹⁰ By arguing that neither will, nor the "preciousness of life" can be said to be repressed in Buddhism, Mrs. Rhys Davids shows that as a soteriology, Buddhism seeks "to foster and strengthen aspiration and resolve in the effort to persevere towards complete attainment of what it held to be the noblest kind of life".

Scholars of Buddhism today would be well advised to reflect again on what Mrs. Rhys Davids proposes in this important article, for all too frequently what she has said has either been ignored or forgotten. The same negative attitude towards Buddhist volition that Mrs. Rhys Davids found in 1897 is still exhibited in more recent studies, for example when Arnold Toynbee asserts that "inward peace" in Buddhism looks "unattainable" since desires cannot be given up without cultivating the desire to give them up,¹¹ and that the Theravāda further taught "the suppression of desires that are ordinarily regarded as being altruistic, such as love and pity". Even in some of the most contemporary Buddhist scholarship, the position that the will has no significant place in the Buddhist soteriological system persists. Thus Dhammasuddhi observes "so long as there is will, freedom cannot exist. Will, itself, is conditioned by selfish desire, attachment, ignorance of truth and so on. . . freedom . . . means freedom from the will".¹² Likewise, when D. K. Swearer writes "where the biblical tradition focuses on man's will in its interpretation of the human situation Buddhism focuses on man's mind",¹³ he appears to emphasize only one aspect of the soteriological problem, and consequently of the soteriological solution.

The interpretations which minimize the role of the will in Buddhist soteriology seem to have drawn a legitimate contrast with Christianity and then exaggerated it. From the Nikāyas, however, it can be readily demonstrated that the will does enter into the Buddhist soteriological path, and that it is regarded as a positive instrument on that path. It is this issue in particular that we want now to develop.

The Positive Characteristics of the Early Buddhist Concept of Will

Although there are doubtless several ways in which this theme is indicated in the Nikāyas, I have chosen to demonstrate it by looking at three situations in which the will plays a strategic soteriological role. First, we will look

⁹ *Ibid.* p. 50

¹⁰ "The stony, stultified, self-centred apathy we often hear ascribed to the Buddhist ideal is supposed to be the result of a Schopenhauerian pessimism as to the worth and promise of life and the springs of life. If, however, the critic would dwell more on the positive tendencies in Buddhist ethics, he might discern under the outward calm or mien of the Buddhist sage in literature and art, a passion of emotion and will not paralyzed or ex purgated, but rendered subservient to and diffused around deep faith and high hope." *Ibid.* p. 55

¹¹ Toynbee, A. *An Historian's Approach to Religion*. London: O. U. P. 1956, p. 64.

¹² Swearer, D. K. *Secrets of the Lotus*. N.Y.: MacMillan Co. 1971, p. 17.

¹³ Swearer, D. K. "The Appeal of Buddhism: A Christian Perspective". *The Christian Century*. November, 1971, p. 1290.

at the place of volition in the structure of the *magga* (path); secondly, we will see how the Nikāyas carefully distinguish between wholesome and unwholesome aspects of willing; and thirdly, we will demonstrate how the will is employed in the crucial development of the senses. This should provide a fairly wide scope of the use of the concept of will in early Buddhism, and allow us to come to some appropriate conclusions.

Initially, then, we want to emphasize that the whole perspective of the Buddhist *magga* (path) is based to a considerable degree on positive willing. This is hardly a novel idea, and the texts easily support it. In the Noble Eightfold Path (*ariyo aṭṭhangiko maggo*) the first factor in the meditation (*samādhi*) section is "right effort" (*samma-vayāma*), indicating that the mental energy of proper intention and desire undergird *samādhi*.¹⁴ Other factors of the Eightfold Path also point to actions that demand resolve and positive intention i. e. right speech, action and livelihood—*sammāvācā, kammanta, ājīva*). Nor is the Eightfold Path alone in stressing the importance of the will in the search for freedom. For example, in another list known as the thirty-seven "qualities belonging to awakening" (*bodhipakkhiya dhammā*) (D. 2.119f), the emphasis is evenly divided between the will to acquire enlightenment, and the method of meditation.¹⁵

A second way the Nikāyas point out the significance of positive willing is seen in the fact that they make a clear distinction between unwholesome (*akusala*) and wholesome (*kusala*) volition. The P.T.S. dictionary notes that *kusala* is especially applicable in a moral sense, and that *akusala* "is practically equivalent to *pāpa* (evil)".¹⁶ Even where the actual adjectives *kusala-akusala* are not used, the Nikāyas generally make clear in just what sense, wholesome or unwholesome the volitional term under discussion is to be understood. This is especially the case with such nouns as *chanda, rāga, pipāsa, lobha, upādāna, anusaya, parilāha, nandī*, synonyms which Johansson calls "the adhesive tape of *taṇhā*".¹⁷ Some of these synonyms, notably *rāga* (passion) and *parilāha* (fever of passion) are never used in a positive (*kusala*) volitional sense. There are examples, however, where the other synonyms are used positively to express a sense of the reformation and cultivation of will and desire. Let us look at some of these examples more closely.

One of the most versatile volitional words in Pāli is *chanda* (*skandh*—to jump: impulse, intention, desire). Although *chanda* is frequently used as a

14 *Kaṭamo c'āvuso sammāvāyamo. Idha... bhikkhu anuppannānaṃ pāpākaṇaṃ akusālānaṃ dhammānaṃ anuppadāya chandaṃ janeti vāyāmeti viriyaṃ ārabhati cittaṃ paggaṇhāti padahati. Majjhima Nikāya* ed. Robert Chalmers, London, 1899, Vol. III, p. 251.

"And what, your reverence, is right endeavour? As to this... a bhikkhu generates desire endeavours, stirs up energy, exerts his citta and strives for the non-arising of evil unwholesome states."

15 Of particular importance in that *bodhipakkhiya dhamma* are the Four Right Efforts (*sammapadhāna*), which, as the P.T.S. Dictionary points out, are *saṃvara*^o, *pahāna*^o, *bhāvana*^o *anurakkhana*^o, or exertion consisting in the restraint of one's senses, the abandonment of sinful thoughts, practice of meditation and guarding one's character (viz *Digha Nikaya*, ed. J. E. Carpenter, London, 1911, Vol. III, p. 225; *Aṅguttara Nikāya* ed. R. Morris, London, 1955, Vol. II, p. 16)

16 cf. *Itivuttaka*, ed. E. Windisch, London, 1948, Sec. 31; *Sutta Nipāta*, ed. D. Anderson and H. Smith, London, 1965, Sec. 591.

17 Johansson, R. *The Psychology of Nirvana*. London: Geo. Allen and Unwin, 1969 p. 212.

synonym for unwholesome *taṇhā* (S. 5.272), it is also often used as part of the path leading to *nibbāna* (M. 2.173). This ambivalency is everywhere apparent in the texts,¹⁸ a good example of which is S. 5.272, where *chanda* is first censured as gross craving, and then encouraged as that kind of desire that leads to arhatship. In this passage, Uṇṇābha the brahmin asks Ananda what the point of living the life of a brahmacariya is. Ananda replies 'chandapahānattham... Bhagavati brahmacariyam vussati ti' ('for the sake of abandoning desire...the holy life is lived under the Blessed One'). Ananda then goes on to develop the way (*maggo* leading to the abandonment of desire (*chanda*):

"Idha...brāhmaṇa bhikkhu chandasamādhīpadhānasaṅkhārasamannāgatam iddhipādam bhāveti viriyasamādhī cittasamādhī vīmaṃsā sāmādhīpadhānasaṅkhārasamannāgatam..."

"Herein, brahmin, a bhikkhu cultivates (the four bases) of *iddhi* (psychic power), of which the features are desire (*chanda*), together with the factors of meditation (*samādhī*) and struggle (*padhāna*), also that of energy (*virīya*) and 'thought' (*citta*) in meditation, and that of investigation (*vīmaṃsa*), together with the factors of meditation and struggle."

Uṇṇābha the brahmin is confused, and cannot see how one desire can be got rid of by means of another desire, but Ananda goes on to point out that desire is useful in provoking the *arhat* to attain *nibbāna*. Only when this state is achieved is this "desire which had arisen therein" as the P.T.S. translation prefers to put it, or, "appropriate desire", calmed (*yo tājjo chando so paṭipassaddho*). The most striking feature of this passage is that gross *chanda* has been channelled to a more acceptable kind of *chanda*, a desire which in the end is not described in terms of liquidation and expurgation, but as that which can be allayed, quietened and satisfied (*paṭipassaddho*). The fact is that the emotional and volitional features of *chanda* are not paralyzed. They are developed and refined until at last they are incorporated into the soteriological path.

The place of *chanda* in this path varies from text to text, however. In the above passage and in certain other contexts (i.e. S. 5. 268), *chanda* is closely involved with meditation. Elsewhere (M. 1. 480, M. 2. 173), *chanda* is part of a process leading to enlightenment which places far more stress on striving and energy than on meditation. This is best seen in M. 2. 173.¹⁹ There is nothing

18 cf. P. T. S. Dictionary references to *chanda* as impulse, excitement, intention, resolution, will, desire for (as virtue). Nyanaponika Mahathera, basing his observation on the commentaries, points out that *chanda* has the following application in the Nikayas: the desire or wish to do (intention), sensual desire and righteous desire.

19 "Saddhājāto upasāṅkamanto payirūpācāti, payirūpācāto sotarū odahati, chitasoto dhammāṃ suṇāti, sutvā dhammāṃ dhāreti, dhāritānāṃ dhammānaṃ attham upaparikkhāti, attham upaparikkhato dhamma nijjhānaṃ khamanti, dhammanijjhānakkhantiyā sati chando jāyati, chandajāto ussahati ussahitvā tūleti, tūlayitvā padahati pahitatto samāno kāyena c'eva paramasaccam sacchikaroti, paññāya ca tam ativijjha passati." *Majjhima Nikaya*, ed. R. Chalmers, London, 1951, Vol. II, p. 173.

"When trust (faith) is born, he, having approached and sitting (with the teacher), thus sitting he turns his ear, and after listening to the dhamma, and after having heard the dhamma he holds (in mind); he then examines the meaning of the dhamma which he has held (in mind); having examined the meaning of the dhamma and understanding it, he is able to approve (khamanti: endure) of it. (Then) desire is born when there arises patience of understanding the law. Desire being born, (such a man) makes an effort; having made an effort he considers; having considered, he strives; having striven, indeed with his own body he experiences the highest truth, and sees it having pierced it with his wisdom".

negative about the function and purpose of desire in the process of conversion outlined in this text. In this regard, chanda evidently plays a crucial role in Buddhist soteriology, and the fact that many early critics failed to recognize this understandably provoked Mrs. Rhys Davids to remark: "now we cannot afford to impoverish our ethical concepts by squandering this term (*chanda*) outright on (gross) *taṇhā*, and thereby, so to speak, make the devil a present of all desire—even of that dhammachanda that drove the Buddha from home to Bo-tree. Much harm has been wrought by translators, whose cheapening of the word 'desire' has justified the superficial criticism which perennially speaks of Buddhist ethics as the 'negation' or 'extinction' of all desire".²⁰

There are several other volitional words that have both positive and negative connotations. It could be argued that even *taṇhā* is on the rare occasion used in a positive sense, although it is admitted that there is little strong evidence for this position. However, in D. 3. 216, the use of *nirodha taṇhā* may reflect a craving for the cessation of *dukkha* (the commentary prefers a traditional interpretation, explaining *nirodha taṇhā* as lust (*rāga*) connected with the view of annihilation), and in Th. 1. 1091f, although *taṇhā* is not directly called *kusala* (as it is, for instance, in the later Nett. 87),²¹ Tālaputta's whole yearning for *nibbāna* is structurally tied to *virīya* (energy) and *taṇhā*. Other passages in the Nikāyas speak of rooting out gross *taṇhā* by using *taṇhā* as the instrument (i.e. A. 2. 144).²² These instances may suggest that *taṇhā* is not always outright evil (*pāpa*), but at the same time, there is not enough evidence to suggest that *taṇhā* was ever conceived to be karmically wholesome.

It is significant to point out, however, that *upādāna* (grasping), a close synonym of *taṇhā*, is not infrequently referred to as the positive though perhaps somewhat misdirected zeal that urges one to progress in meditation. Thus, in M. 2. 265, the "best of graspings" (*upādānaseṭṭham*) occurs in the eighth *jhāna* (*nevasaññānāsaññāyatam*). Only in the ninth and final *jhāna* are the *āsavā* and any hint of grasping at last eradicated (i.e. D. 2. 97). This kind of grasping is good in the sense that it is not perverted or unwholesome, but it is of course still part of man's inadequately developed insight into the finally transcendent experience of *nibbāna*.

So far the concept that we have been developing of wholesome and unwholesome desire, and its place in a general concept of volition, agrees substantially with the early judgement of Mrs. Rhys Davids. Nor is this argument

20 Rhys Davids, C. A. F. (Ed.) and Aung, S. Z. (*Compendium of Philosophy*. London: P.T.S. 1920. p. 245.

21 "Tattha taṇhā duvidhā: kusalā pi akusalā pi. Akusalā saṃsāragāminī, kusalā apacaya-gāminī pahāṇataṇhā." *Netti-pakarana*, ed. E. Hardy, London, 1961, p. 87.

"Here, craving is of two kinds: wholesome and unwholesome. While the unwholesome kind goes with saṃsāra, the wholesome kind leads to the giving up of craving."

22 Writes K. N. Jayatilleke concerning this issue: "the self-centred desires are to be eliminated by depending on desire (*taṇham nissāya taṇham pahātābbam* A. 2.146)—namey the desire for *Nirvāna*. But this latter master-desire, it is pointed out, is not on the same footing as the first-order desires, for unlike the self-centred desires, which continually seek gratification from time to time without being permanently satisfied, the master-desire would achieve final satisfaction and be extinguished with the eradication of the self-centred desires and the attainment of *Nirvāna*, which coincides with it". *Buddhism and Peace*. Kandy: P.B.S. 1969. p. 12.

It should be noted that the commentary to the *sutta* points out that the first mentioned *taṇhā* is to be made an object of reflection with the aim of abandoning it, and that although this *taṇhā* is *akusala* (unskillful), it still should be made use of.

without support in contemporary Buddhist scholarship. Thus Malalasekera observes "it is not (a) freedom from desire as such, but freedom from enslavement to blind and shifting desires".²³ In a similar vein, Jayatilleke remarks that it is a freedom "which consists in changing the basis of our motivation from greed, hatred and ignorance to selfless service, compassion and understanding".²⁴ A careful reading of the Nikāyas justifies these opinions, and indicates that the Buddha did not hold up as an example of emancipation an *arhat* totally devoid of all volitional response or desire. Nor was the way to enlightenment a way of repression. Unwholesome desires were to be understood and then eradicated, but the energy of desire was not to be expurgated. It was rather to be directed from gross aims towards higher and more positive ethical and intellectual objectives, thus directly contributing to the attainment of enlightenment.

This leads us directly into a third way of analyzing the soteriological role of the will in early Buddhism, for at the same time as volition is purged of its moral impurities and redirected to higher purposes, the Nikāyas also urge that the senses should not be atrophied, but brought under control and developed. The teaching of the Nikāyas urges the cultivation of a new attitude towards the senses, a recognition of how they contribute to the nature of volitional response. Once the operation of the senses have been understood, one undertakes an attempt to master one's reaction to the stimulation of the senses and thus regulate the quality of volition.

Initially, then, the individual must understand how the senses provoke unwholesome volition. The Nikāyas are very explicit about the close relationship that exists between the senses and volition. A good example is A. 1.1. where lust, built upon excitation of all the senses, is said to affect the whole 'mind' (*citta*, or, as Johansson prefers to translate it, 'personality').²⁵ Many other passages from the Nikāyas also point out the grip that the senses have over the mind and consequently over the nature of willing (D. 1.26, S. 4. 15, M. 1. 15, 85, 2. 253). But once the senses have been analyzed and their dangers marked out (Dhm. 362f), the next responsibility is to recognize the need to struggle against the forceful but ill-directed volitional current of unwholesome desire, which is excited by the senses. The bond that exists between the senses and this unwholesome volition, and the urgent necessity of overcoming their control over the individual is clearly set forth in the well-known Parable of the Man in the River (Itv. 114). In this passage, a man is said to be carried along in a river by a current. In his ignorance, he does not pause to think that sooner or later the current will turn into rapids and whirlpools. The Buddha as an observer on the bank calls out a warning about the hazards ahead, and the need to struggle against the current in order for the individual to save his life. The whole sequence is then developed as an analogy thusly:

"Upamā kho me ayam bhikkhave katā atthassa viññāpanāya. Ayam cetta attho: Nadiyā soto ti kho bhikkhave taṇhā' etam adhivacanam; piyarūpasātarūpam ti kho bhikkhave channetaṃ ajjhattikānaṃ āyatanānaṃ adhivacanam, heṭṭhā rahado ti kho bhikkhave pañcanam orambhāgiyānaṃ samyojanānaṃ adhivacanam; saummiti kho

23 Malalasekera, G. P. "Some Aspects of Buddhism". (*Buddhism and Culture*, ed. by S Yamaguchi, Kyoto: Nokano Press. 1960. p. 62.

24 Jayatilleke, K. N. *Buddhism and Peace*. *op. cit.* p. 12.

25 It is recognized that the translation of 'personality' for *citta* may not appeal to many interpreters. Johansson has already spoken exhaustively to this topic, and I fall back on his excellent discussion in "A Psychosomatic Investigation: Citta, Mano and Viññāṇa" *University of Ceylon Review*. Vol. 23. 1965. p. 178.

bhikkhave kodhūpāyāsassetam adhivacanam; sāvatto ti kho bhikkhave pañcannetaṃ kāmāgunānaṃ adhivacanam; sagāho sarakkhaso ti kho bhikkhave mātuḡāmass'etaṃ adhivacanam; patisoto ti kho bhikkhave nekkhammasetaṃ adhivacanam; hatthehi ca pādehi ca vāyāmo ti kho bhikkhave viriyārambhasetaṃ adhivacanam; cakkhumā puriso tīre t̥hito ti kho bhikkhave Tathāgatassetam adhivacanam arahato sammāsambuddhassā ti."

"This simile, bhikkhus, I use to make my meaning clear. And in this case the meaning is: "A river current" is a name for craving; "looking delightful and charming", bhikkhus, is a name for one's own sphere of perception; "the pool lower down", bhikkhus, is a name for the five fetters belonging to this lower world. "With waves", bhikkhus, is a name for anger and trouble. "With whirlpools", is a name for the five pleasures of sense. "With monsters and demons", bhikkhus, is a name for women. Bhikkhus, "against the stream" is a name for freedom from craving. "Struggle with hands and feet", bhikkhus, is a name for the exercise of energy. Bhikkhus, "The sharp-sighted man standing on the bank" is a name for the Tathāgata, the arhat, the perfectly enlightened one".

In this strategic analogy, the emphasis is upon the "struggle of energy" (*virīya*)²⁶ needed to overcome misdirected desire and its reliance on the senses. What this terminology seems to indicate is the need for a right volitional attitude in coming to grips with the senses. It is important to point out that in this text there is no suggestion that the aim of the struggle is to deaden the senses. On the contrary, the very analogy of a 'struggle' presupposes cultivation and development rather than neutralization.

The individual above all learns to separate cognition from thirst, to liberate all his senses from service to gross desire. He does not let his senses shrivel up, but perceives that when the senses stimulate egocentric craving they present a counterfeit world which pays no attention to the three characteristics of reality (*anicca, dukkha, anattā*). Thus the way of salvation is also the way of right cognition, a cognition that sees not only transience and painfulness, but likewise how the senses contribute to all notions of egocentric volition, and how this kind of volition is a potential spiritual hazard. One who is aware of this has a constant responsibility in keeping a watch on his senses, but his reward is freedom from unwholesome volition.

"Cakkhu sotañca ghānañca jivhā kāyo tathā mano etāni yassa dvārāni suguttāni—dha bhikkhuno, bhojanamhi ca mataññu indriyesu ca samvuto kāyasukhaṃ cetosukhaṃ sukhaṃ so adhigacchati. Adayhamānena kāyena adayhamānena cetasā divā vā yadi vā rattim sukhaṃ viharati tadiso ti." *Itv.* 24.

"Eye, ear, nose, tongue and body and also the mind, if a bhikkhu keep these gates guarded well, in eating with restraint and control, in the sense faculties he meets with ease, with ease of body and with ease of mind (*ceto*). With a body that does not burn, with a mind that does not burn, he lives at ease by day and night."

26 Commenting on a somewhat similar passage (A. 2 115, the Parable of the Goad), H. V. Guenther writes "only by energy (*virīya*) can we obtain the goal. *Virīyam* is the behaviour and activity of the energetic man... energy is not just physical output, but that which permeates the whole attitude or mental outlook of man dealing with the problems to attain spiritual maturity... it is will-power", *Philosophy and Psychology in the Abhidhamma*. Lucknow: Pioneer Press Ltd. 1957. p. 200f.

This passage warrants a detailed exegesis of the phrase *dvārāni suguttāni* (guarding the 'doors', viz. the senses) in order to bring out its significance. Here, *dvāra* refers to the sense organs, what the P.T.S. dictionary describes as the "in-and outlets of the mind". *Suguttāni* (*su + gutta*, pp of root *gup*) means literally "well-guarded", "watchful", "constrained". The P.T.S. dictionary gives other references to texts where *gutta* is used specifically with *dvāratā* (i.e. D. 3.213), always in the sense of "control over the doors of one's senses". Certainly this passage should not be interpreted to mean that the bhikkhu's life must be devoid of all sense pleasure. There are texts which clearly point out that not all sense pleasures are considered dangerous, but only those other sense pleasures not necessarily associated with unwholesome states of mind are considered to be acceptable, as M. 3.231 indicates. In the final analysis, what we find in the *arhat*, then, is a new attitude towards the use of the senses and the kinds of satisfaction they give. The *arhat* never deliberately destroys or represses his sense functions, but refines them and uses them as instruments to see behind the world of ignorance. There are doubtless some critics who do not accept this interpretation, and appeal to certain texts in the Nikāyas which seem to indicate a sense of crushing the senses rather than developing them (an example might be Dh. 360f: 'cakkhunā saṁvaro sādhu...sabbathā samvuto bhikkhu sabbadukkhā pamuccati'. "Restraint in the eye is good etc.... a bhikkhu who is restrained in all things is freed from painfulness"). It would be a misinterpretation of one of the major focuses of Buddhist soteriology, however, to read into such a text any concept of "cutting off" of the senses. Even in enlightenment, the *arhat* still uses his senses, and still experiences physical pain and pleasure. But at this stage, being freed from egocentric craving, sensory stimulation of any kind has no real effect on his spiritual equilibrium and he is neither troubled nor excited by his senses because he is in complete control of their action and the volitional responses which stem from them (cf. Udāna 8).²⁷ In other words, he uses his senses but remains detached from them. At this point the senses are truly divorced from unwholesome volition, and the *arhat enters nibbāna* (Ivv. 38).

Up to this point we have looked at how Buddhism teaches the overcoming of deleterious responses to gross volition by the cultivation of wholesome volition and a proper development of the senses. We have seen how the *arhat* still acts with a positive will, how he is still active, but, because he is without unwholesome desires, he is emotionally 'cool' or 'tranquillized' (*sītabhūta*, Sn. 542,642), and how, therefore, his cognitive processes also become more objective and realistic (A. 3:378). We have argued that one of the principle soteriological aims in early Buddhism is the re-direction, and not the suffocation, of the energy of the will, whether it is seen from a cognitive, conative or affective point of view.*

Bruce Matthews.

27. Tasmātiha te Bāhiya evaṁ sikkhitabbam; diṭṭhe diṭṭhamattam bhavissati, sute sutamattam bhavissati, mute mutamattam bhavissati, viññāte viññātamattam bhavissati... es ev' anto dukkhasati.' *Udānam*, ed. P. Steinthal, London, 1885, p. 8.

'Then, Bahiya, so you must train yourself: in the seen there will be just the seen, in the heard only the heard, in the imagined thought only the imagined thought, in the cognized only the cognized. . . . even so that is the end of painfulness.'

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