

THE BUDDHA AND PHILOSOPHICAL MODELS

A philosophic understanding of some of the traditional stories, legends, fables, etc. which were woven around the Buddha and his disciples, makes explicit an unique characteristic. That is, the Buddha's remarkable ability and mental power to construct and manipulate multifarious models towards explaining human conditions. The Buddhist tradition, which was firmly established on commentaries, sub-commentaries, fable-writing, grammar-works, etc. it appears neglected this central conceptual area. The present communication attempts to make explicit this neglected territory, briefly, by way of drawing forth some of the models that the Buddha appears to have manipulated to explain away human misery, human conditions, etc. Out of numerous models that are recorded in the Nikaya literature we choose for demonstration four. They are (a) the model involving moral-causality; (b) the model envisaged as regards Angulimāla; (c) Akkosaka Baharadvaja and the model contemplated there; and (d) the model explicit as regards Kisāgotami.

A moral-causality

To begin with, we shall take up the key idea in the Buddha's first ever sermon, the *Dhammacakkappavattanasutta*,¹ and the men to whom it was addressed and explained.

His enlightenment, according to the Buddha, revealed to himself that human misery was something definitively caused. And if so, the removal of the cause must necessitate the removal of the effect, namely, human misery also.² He thought of 'rolling forth' this professed idea to the five hermits by way of a model which is called "truly morality-oriented causality" (*paticca-samuppada*).³ One may, however, argue that the *paticca-samuppada* itself is the Dhamma and therefore an issue pertaining to a model

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1. The *Dhammacakkappavattana Suttā*.
 2. The *Samyutta Nikāya*, ii. 20, 21.
 3. The *Samyutta Nikāya*, ii. 26 (see also my "Is the Buddhist Notion of 'Cause Necessitates Effect' (*paticca-samuppada*) Scientific?" in *The Journal of the International Association of Buddhist Studies*, Wisconsin, U.S.A. (1879) vol. I. no. 2, p. 7-22.

To unpack the issue, it is a morality oriented one-one necessary (causal) relation which holds valid in either direction. There is no space for exceptions; a kind of necessary causal relation which is neither true nor false empirically. It must be emphasized that the Buddha's causal model is different from commonsense causal models, or the Aristotelian causal model or the Newtonian causal model, or the quantum causal model or any other. Characteristically it is a kind of morality-oriented causality and not an empirically-oriented causality that the Master explained to the five hermits. The Buddha's words are as follows: *tathata avitathata anannathata idappaccayata ayam vuccati... patieccasamuppado*. The central idea here is as follows: "objectivity, necessity, conditionality, regularity, unassailability, sacrosanctity."⁵ The morality-oriented causal model is clearly seen here. If one does not understand this covert point, the exercise certainly amounts to a wrong pursuit. By way of this model, the Buddha successfully explained the origin and cessation of human suffering to the five hermits, namely, Kondanna, Baddiya, Vappa, Mahanama and Assaji. (ii) These hermits symbolised a psychological type similar to a reasoning type with a significant difference. That is, a reasoning-type-cum-faithful type. It is not clear whether modern psychology permits this kind of categorization. That is, the five hermits were once faithful to the Buddha during the latter's early struggle toward attainment of Buddhahood, though they disagreed afterwards and deserted him in the process. Accordingly, the five hermits represent a dual type, namely, a combination of a reasoning-type and a faithful-type. The five hermits certainly belong to the reasoning psychological type but with an important difference. That is, no sooner were they convinced as to the nature of reality of things taught by the Buddha than they gave up their own scepticism. Embracing the Dhamma is emphasized here. They were not worrying themselves too much over the issue. In this sense, the five hermits were differently placed in comparison with Culamalunkya⁵putta, who was worrying too much over ten empty issues (*ayvākata* theses).

Angulimāla

However, the Buddha worked out a different model to bring Angulimāla under control and order. Certainly, the Buddha did not preach the morality-oriented causality to Angulimāla towards

5. *ibid.* ii. 26.

achieving this goal. In this context it is tempting to note the change of conceptual technique to suit the person's own character and individual psychology. The change of model and technique can be stated as follows: Angulimāla's only aim was to complete the proposed garland of thousand fingers for his teacher. He needed only one more of such fingers to make a total of one thousand fingers, when he met the Buddha. Obviously he ran hurriedly and precipitately to vanquish the Buddha and obtain the finger he needed so that the garland would be complete. Surprisingly for rough Angulimāla, he failed to catch up with the Buddha, who appeared to be moving away faster than himself. Angulimāla, being very tired, as he was running all day long, brought himself to a halt and roared, "Stop, you monk." To which the Buddha replied, while himself in motion, "I have stopped; now you stop." The Buddha's reply baffled and confused Angulimāla. For the Buddha, while himself moving all the while, had uttered "I have stopped; now you stop." Ironically, it was Angulimāla who had stopped running himself, while the Buddha, moving all along, had expressed the view that it was he who had stopped. Only an intelligent person would understand the point that the Buddha was driving at. As Angulimāla was an intelligent man himself (*viññu*), he at once grasped it. That is that the Buddha had extinguished all craving (hence 'stopped') but Angulimāla himself had not extinguished all craving and therefore needed to do so (hence "you stop"). Interpreted in a modern psychological sense, Angulimāla symbolises a psychological type, a person endowed with incomparably great intelligence, and therefore, hardly needing much instructions to spark off understanding. It must be noted, however, that this anger-psychological-type is very different from the witty-psychological type represented to a great extent by the Buddha's chief disciples, namely, Sariputta and Mahamoggallāna. According to the Nikāya literature both of them were not only endowed with incomparably great intelligence but also wisdom dominated their total personality in the sense of wit, peace and good speech. Angulimāla, certainly lacked peace, wit and good speech. In respect of Angulimāla, the Buddha did not preach sermons involving morality-oriented-causality, as was the case with the five hermits. To say the least of it, now we see two significantly different techniques being made use of by way of two models by the Buddha regarding the five hermits, and Angulimāla.

Akkosaka Bharadvaja

When one's mentality is muddled up with anger, one does not see things in their proper perspective; and one becomes as restless as a night-fly before a lamp. Akkosaka Bharadvaja was plagued by this mentality. Moreover, this classic story shows how skillfully the Buddha used Bharadvaja's restlessness and anger to help him comprehend a doctrine which goes against his own anger-stream.

Akkosaka Bharadvaja, on hearing his brother's conversion to the Buddha-Dhamma, lost his temper and ran to Veluvana to take revenge from the Buddha. Having gone there, he rebuked and reproved the Buddha. However, once Bharadvaja ceased his bombardments, the Buddha calmly put the following question to him: "Akkosaka, if you invite a group of Brahmins to a meal at your house, and if they do not turn up, what would you do with your cooked meal?" Akkosaka replied that he would himself eat the entire cooked meal. Then the Buddha replied, "Akkosaka, in the manner that you yourself would relish alone what you had prepared for your invitees, who refused your meal, you should take back with you what you have uttered against me here just now. For nothing of what you said of me is applicable to me, nor would I accept any of it." No sooner were these words said than Bharadvaja calmed himself and felt regret over the vicious words he had flung against the Buddha. In modern psychological terminology, Akkosaka Bharadvaja symbolises the anger-type, similar to Angulimala. Bharadvaja's restless nature was cleverly manipulated by the Buddha to help him get rid his own anger-stream.

Kisagotami

The model that the Buddha manipulated regarding Kisagotami is very different from the models just mentioned. Having seen her only child dead at a tender age, Kisagotami suffered shock and developed a kind of loneliness and emptiness. With the dead body clutched to her breast, she wept and called for help to bring her son to life again. When people directed her to see Buddha, the great physician (*sallakatta*) she ran to him. Certainly, the Buddha welcomed her. Besides, a distinct prescription was given by the Buddha. That is that she should bring him some mustard seeds from a house in which no one had died. In the pursuit of this prescribed medicine to bring life back to her dead

son, Kisāgotami found no such life-giving mustard seeds in any hut, or house or mansion, though she travelled to and fro. For there was no house to which she went where someone had not died. Slowly but surely Kisāgotami realized the fact that the Buddha had wanted her to grasp through self-verification, namely, that death is implied in all human existence. There was no serious sermon delivered by the Buddha to Kisāgotami here; secondly, there was no intellectual discussion relating to the nature of a human person, suffering, misery, emptiness, alienation, etc. The technique simply involved self-grasp through self-verification. This model and the technique are different from the models and techniques which are noted earlier in the communication.

Conclusion

Having dealt with some of the conceptual models that the Buddha supposedly manipulated, we may conclude that there are other similar models yet to be noted and made explicit. Some such models are evidently found in fables and legends woven around such characters in the Nikāya literature as Ālavaka, Rājūmāla, Vasetti, Patacāra and Nandakumāra. These fables, legends etc. need to be understood and examined philosophically and it is timely that a comprehensive study of such be undertaken. Overtly or covertly, a dissimilar conceptual model appears to be embedded in every such story, legend or fable.

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