



## BUDDHIST ULTIMATE DESTINATION: THE KNOWLEDGE OF DESTRUCTION OF ĀSAVA (ĀSAVAKKHAYAÑĀNA)

Nar Ga Thay Na

Ph.D. Scholar, Acharya Nagarjuna University, Guntur, Andhra Pradesh.

### ABSTRACT

*In Buddhist teaching, we can find that there are two kinds of pleasure: worldly pleasure and ultimate one. Of them, the first one is needed by all living beings who live in the worldly abode, but it cannot be said the ultimate goal for Buddhist people. All religion has their admonishments for the way to the ultimate goal, but Buddhism may be different from other religions in the interaction for the way to its ultimate goal.*

**KEY WORDS :** Āsava, Āsavakkhaya Ñāna.



### INTRODUCTION:

The destination of all Buddhist people is to destruct the Āsavas (influxes) and, in another way, is to obtain Nibbāna. Even when we do some meritorious deeds, we pray to get it that may this wholesome action is done by us bring the Āsavakkhaya to me. There are two parts in the word of Āsavakkhaya; Āsava and khaya. That means the destruction or elimination of Āsava. When do they, Āsava, cease in Beings? When someone attains ArahattaMagga, ArahattaPhala and Nibbāna, Āsava ceases for him. Therefore, ArahattaMagga, ArahattaPhala and Nibbāna are called Āsavakkhaya. And then, ĀsavakkhayaÑāna means the knowledge of the destruction of Āsava. The final goal of the Buddha's teaching is the cessation of defilements and suffering, the attainment of success and freedom i.e., Nibbāna in pāli.

### THE BUDDHA AND THREE KINDS OF KNOWLEDGE

The Buddha, when he was a prince, he renounced the sensual life to get the knowledge of the destruction of Āsava or taints (ĀsavakkhayaÑāna). Having renounced the luxury life, he approached very famous teachers to penetrate truths. Furthermore, for six consecutive years, he practiced self-mortification and all forms of austerities called Dukkaraçariya. But, he did not get the knowledge that he wanted. When he thought that there might be some practice to get the knowledge of the destruction of Āsava and recognized the meditation of mindfulness that he practiced in childhood. After that, when he continued to practice it, he obtained the knowledge of the recollection of his past lives at the first length of night. And then, in the second watch of the night, he attained the knowledge of the divine eye. After attaining these two kinds of knowledge, he founded the practice that can get the knowledge of the destruction of Āsava (ĀsavakkhayaÑāna). Having gained knowledge of the recollection of past lives, he considered very deeply that there was full of suffering in the world. What is the reason for it? He contemplated very deeply as following. All beings in this world are subject to decay, aging, and death. This is suffering. From birth as a requisite condition, this suffering becomes. From becoming as a requisite condition, birth becomes. And then, when he continued to consider this process of Co-origination, he knew that because of ignorance of the noble truths, all beings were in suffering. Having contemplated the process of Co-origination, he knew

that there is ignorance of the noble facts because there is Āsava. Finally, he attained the knowledge of the destruction of Āsava in the last watch of the night and attained Buddhahood.

### DEFINITION OF ĀSAVA

All the Buddha's teachings are concerning with the destruction of Āsava in some ways. As long as someone has Āsava, he cannot liberate from the cycle of rebirth and cannot attain Nibbāna. Therefore, we need to know about Āsava. We need to know what Āsava is, how it arises, and how we protect it not to arise in our mind. Pāli term for the influx is Āsava. Āsava is also frequently translated as fermentations in the suttas. Other terms include effluents, pollutants, or cankers. They are also defined as in-flows, taint, influences, corruptions, intoxicant biases. The word Āsava means that which flows out. In Pāli, the word denotes both pus oozing from an abscess and intoxicants which have been fermented for a long time. The defilements classified as taints are called Āsava because they are similar to oozing pus and fermented intoxicants. The Commentaries state that the Āsava are so-called because they flow right up to the topmost plane of existence or because they flow up to change-of-lineage.

Taints are basic defilements of the mind. There are three kinds of taints according to the suttanta: Taints of sensuality (kāmasava), Taints of re-existence (bhavāsava) and taints of ignorance (avijjāsava). Abhidhamma adds another taint called the taint of views (ditthāsava). Some indicate that taints flow in, whereas others say that taints flow out. There is yet another group that indicates taints can both flow in and out. However, all agree that taints are basic defilements of the mind. Of the four, the taint of sensuality and the taint of becoming (attachment to existence) are both modes of the cetasika greed (lobha), directed in the one case to sensual pleasure, in the other to continued existence. The taint of the wrong view is recognized as the cetasika wrong view (ditthi) and the taint of ignorance as to the cetasika delusion (moha). They all arise fundamentally because of the taint of ignorance (avijjāsava). This is confirmed in Sammāditthi sutta, and Ven. Sāriputta said that ignorance was the cause of all taints. In that sutta he stated, "With the emerging of ignorance there is the arising of the taints. With the cessation of ignorance, there is an end of the taints." This is also confirmed in the Nibbedhika Sutta.

### FLOWING IN AND THE WAYS TO ABANDON THE ĀSAVA

Taints have essentially flowed of information from the object mind through the sense of faculty. The flow will depend on our craving. More craving you have for the object, more taints will flow to the mind when the eye cognizes an object, we see the object. If it is pleasing to the eye, we then want to look at the object as craving arises. The stream of information which is brought into the mind about the object becomes the taints. These are actually accumulated memories that can be retrieved. If we continue to look at this gives rise to more cravings and thus, this will give rise to more taints. Eventually, we "lock on" or cling to the object with craving. The mind becomes hungry and is always trying to feed on the taints. If it is an unpleasant object, we crave for that in a different way. This time we crave to remove it. This, too, will give rise to unpleasant thoughts. These are persistent influx of thoughts, both pleasant and unpleasant conditions. They can also be considered as nutriment of mental volition that keeps feeding the mind. This continuous feeding of the thoughts can be regarded as mental proliferations (papañca) about the present (and even about the past and the future). This is maybe why some translate Āsava as "fermentation" of the mind.

When the eye meets the object, eye-consciousness arises. Meeting of the eye, the object and the eye-consciousness is called contact. Now, this information appears to flow into the mind from the sense. These are stored as the memory of previous events. These can be triggered by new information coming in and will add to the outflow of thoughts. This may keep the focus on the object you desire, causing more information and stored memories for future use. This may be the reason why some scholars translate that taints flow out. The first few cognitive series give us information about the perception, feeling, and previous memory about the object. If the object is pleasing to the eye, craving arises. If it is unpleasant, craving may

arise to get rid of it. As craving increases, more thoughts flow into the mind utilizing multiple cognitive series. These thoughts can also trigger previous dormant memories about the object and retrieve more thoughts from the mind and are added to the flow of thoughts. These dormant memories retrieved are the taints. When there is minimal external sensory stimulation mind feeds on its own food (mental objects), this is because the mind is able to retrieve thoughts. This can be observed well in meditation when our five senses are quiet. The mind will bring in new ideas from the past as memories and feed the mind as new taints.

The numbers of thoughts are amplified (mental proliferation) as we keep the attention on the object. All these thoughts are tainted with craving in the background of delusion. These become the taints of the mind. They all make kamma depending on which ones we attach to it will determine our future existence (bhava). This is the diversity of taints described in Nibbedhika sutta.

Everybody has six doors; eye door, ear door, nose door, tongue door, body door and mind-door. The objects flow into the mind through the six doors. Beings attach to the objects which are pleasant and hate the unpleasant objects, which come into the mind through the six doors. In that condition, beings try to get pleasant objects and try to get rid of unpleasant objects. That is called defilement. Therefore, that defilement can be called taint (Āsava). As long as we do not prevent the incoming of the taints, they will be arising and flowing into the mind and the defilements will be occurring in our mind. The defilement only itself does not come into the mind, but Kammās also come to the mind. The occurring of defilements is called ignorance and the arising of Kammās is called Sankhāra. Because of this situation, we have to get the next existence (bhava). Every worldly being attaches to the objects flowed through the six doors because of ignorance that cannot understand the nature of the objects. Because of ignorance of the nature of the objects as they are, there arises attachment to the objects. Ignorance and craving are the main roots of the cycle of birth and death. Because of those roots, there has to grow up as a plant, which is existence. Because of the combination of defilements and Kamma, they produce the round of Kamma resultant (Vipākavatta).

On the other way, because defilements and Kamma produce the suffering in the cycle of rebirth and death, in brief, they can be called Āsava (taint). Categorization Āsava as four kinds is a nomination of the main, but everything which can produce suffering in Samsāra can be called Āsava. In Sabbāsava sutta, the Buddha articulated seven methods of restraining or abandoning taints. The key to this is yonisomanasikāra (appropriate attention). Without removing the taints, there cannot attain the knowledge of ending of Āsava (ĀsavakkhayaÑāna). Without the destruction of Āsava, there cannot end suffering. The suffering which is being faced in the world is becoming because of taints (Āsava).

But the Buddha gave seven ways to obstruct and abandon Āsava completely. They are as following;

- (1) Abandoning Āsava through the Seeing (DassanaPahātabba)
- (2) Abandoning the Āsava through the Restraining (SamvaraPahātabba)
- (3) Abandoning the Āsava through the Using four requisites (PaṭisevanaPahātabba)
- (4) Abandoning the Āsava through the Tolerance (AdhivāsanaPahātabba)
- (5) Abandoning the Āsava through the Avoiding (ParivajjanaPahātabba)
- (6) Abandoning the Āsava through the Eliminating (VinodanaPahātabba) and
- (7) Abandoning the Āsava through the developing (BhāvanāPahātabba).

The taints can be destroyed, eliminated completely only through the Maggās. They are called the way of DassanaPahātabba and the way of BhāvanāPahātabba. But the Buddha gave the other five ways to obstruct them before destroying them completely.

Of them, some Āsava must be obstructed by restraint. Here, restraint means keeping under control through mindfulness. By restraining through the mindfulness, some Āsava must be obstructed not to arise into our minds. How? There are six doors; eye, ear, nose, tongue, body, and mind. The defilements or Āsava come into the mind through the six doors. Therefore, we have to restrain the six doors, but it does not mean that we have to close them. For example, if we see the pleasant objects, we attach to them. It is Kāmāsava. Being attached to the pleasant objects that we see, if we have the desire to be higher existence, it is called Bhavāsava. When we add "I," "mine," or permanence to the object that emerges through the six doors, and

then this condition is called *Dihāsava*. Whatever *Āsava* arise in our mind, *avijjāsava* flows in our mind. Therefore, we must have mindfulness not to flow defilements or *Āsava* through the six doors. Although there are many things that we want, we have to control, limit with mindfulness. Without limitation, we cannot keep the mind in peace. Hence, we have to follow the way given by the Buddha to obstruct some *Āsavas*. In another way, it is called *IndariyaSamvaraSīla*.

The next one is *Paṭisevana*. This is also important. There are things that we have to enjoy. We use mainly four requisites: food, clothes, residence, and medicine. When we use them, we should use them very carefully. Otherwise, *Āsava* or problems will arise. When we use them, we need control with knowledge not to arise *Āsava* because of using them. Here, we have to know the aim of using the four requisites. For example, we should wear clothes only for protection from cold, heat, gadflies, mosquitoes, wind, heat of the sun, snakes, scorpions, and lice, and just to cover up our nakedness. Without knowing the reason for using them, if we attach to them considering that this is very nice, very soft etc., there arises craving in our mind. That is *Kāmāava*. Being wanted better things than what we possess, if we want other higher existence, there become more *Āsava*. That is called *Bhavāsava*. If we consider them as "I", "mine", "permanence", then there flows another *Āsava* called *Diṭṭhāsava*. And then, ignorance, which does not know things, truly will arise in our mind. Therefore, when we use four requisites, we need to know the reason for using them and we need to use them with the right vision and awareness.

There are some *Āsava* that should be protected through tolerance. We should be patient in everything. Because people are impatient, they have to face many problems. If we have no forbearance, many *Āsava* will flow into our minds. The Buddha pointed out that if someone wants to prevent *Āsava*, he has to be patient. He has to endure cold, heat, hunger, thirst, gadflies, and even ill-spoken and unwholesome words. He, reflecting properly, must have the nature of being able to endure severe, cruel, excruciatingly sharp, disagreeable, unpleasant, deadly, and painful sensations that arise in the body. In brief, we should have a limitation. If there is no limitation or end, our mind will become mad. We cannot be quiet and get satisfaction because we are moving toward. Therefore, we should keep the possible aims of our life. And then, the Buddha addressed that because of forbearance, wholesome *Kammās* can develop. There are also some *Āsava* that should be removed through avoidance. If one does not avoid something that should be avoided, he will be in suffering. If one does not avoid the wrong person, things and places then occur in him *Āsava*, as well as some other defilement. It is, therefore, necessary to remove some *Āsava* by avoiding it. And then, some *Āsava* must be obstructed through the rejection. We have to keep away something bad idea. That means keeping away not only external dangerous things but also dangerous ideas. We, reflecting properly, should forsake, reject, get rid of and prevent the repeated arising of sensual thought, thought of malice, and thought of injuring another and so on.

The taints (*Āsava*) can be destroyed completely only through the *Maggas*. Therefore, the first and last ways taught by the Buddha in *Sabbāsava Sutta* are the most important in the removal of *Āsava*. The first way is *DassanaPahātabba*. Here, *Dassana* means the first stream of *Maggas* (*SotāpattiMagga*). *SotāpattiMagga* can remove the taint of the wrong view, including the selfish view, doubt, and belief in purification by rights and rituals (*Sīlabbataparāmāsa*). Here, *Sota* means the path leading to *Nibbāna*. Therefore, if one attains the first *Magga*, he is sure to be able to destroy all taints, and he will achieve *Nibbāna* one day sooner or later. But, he must develop to attain higher *Maggas*. It is called *bhāvanā*. One who dwells devoting himself to development (*Bhāvanāpahātabba*) will know when the taints are abandoned, even though he cannot say how much taints are abandoned from day today. The Buddha says "it is equally as a carpenter or carpenter's apprentice sees his finger mark or thumb on the handle of his edge tool however doesn't recognize, 'Today my edge tool handle wore down this a lot of, or yesterday it wore down that a lot of, or the day before yesterday it wore down this a lot of,' however he is aware of its worn through once it's worn through." If one expects to abandon taints without developing, in *Nava sutta* Buddha says, "it is like a hen expecting the chicks to break through the eggs without incubating them rightly."

Bhāvanā denotes the second, third, and fourth Magga. To achieve that state, one has to practice calm and insight meditation. It is the way that follows to remove taints (Āsava) completely escaping from the round of birth and death (Samsāra). Having developed concentration (Samādhi), one must remove hindrances (Nīvarana). Hindrance means something that obstructs the way to a heavenly rebirth and the attainment of Nibbāna. According to commentary, the hindrances are mental actors which prevent unarisen wholesome states from arising and which do not allow arisen wholesome states to endure. They can make knowledge weak. Therefore, they have to be removed through the development of concentration. Having removed them, one must set his mind on the four foundations of mindfulness. Setting his mind on the four foundations of mindfulness, he has to develop the seven factors of enlightenment (Bhojjhinga). The seven kinds of Bhojjhinga are so-called because they lead to enlightenment. Of them, the enlightenment factor of mindfulness is the most important one. Therefore, it was taught firstly by the Buddha. The remaining six can be divided into two groups according to the situation of mind. When the mind of the meditator is too active or agitated, he has to develop the three enlightenment factors: the enlightenment factor of tranquility, concentration, and equanimity. And when his mind is sluggish, he has to develop another three; the enlightenment factor of investigation of states, energy, and zest. In developing them, the meditator has to develop them alternatively according to his mind situation. At that time, the enlightenment factor of mindfulness makes them balance. While the meditator is developing the seven enlightenment factors, at the same, he is developing the noble eight-fold path simultaneously more or less. Eventually, he will be able to completely remove all Āsava and reach the final status of the meditator means Arahantship. And he can obtain the knowledge of ending of Āsava called ĀsavakkhayaÑāna. ĀsavakkhayaÑāna is the ability to clean out the mind, washing away all the ignorance, craving, and clinging inside it.

Not knowing about the four noble truths is called Avijjāsava (the taint of ignorance). Therefore, after removing all Āsava, including the taint of ignorance, he can penetrate the four noble truths through his knowledge.

#### DUTIES CONCERNED WITH THE FOUR NOBLE TRUTHS

We have now looked at the four Noble Truths. They are rational, open to investigation, and the path is to be practiced. There are no gods to be propitiated or priests to mediate. The Buddha said that we have a different function to perform with regard to each truth:-

- i. The nature of existence (life) is dukkha, unsatisfactory, imperfect, impermanent and suffering. Our task is to comprehend or understand completely that dukkha is a fact of existence (*Abhiññeyya*).
- ii. It is craving, desire or thirst, which is the Origin or Cause of dukkha. Our task is to eliminate or eradicate the Cause of dukkha (*Pahātabba*).
- iii. The Cessation or the End of dukkha is gaining Enlightenment, which is Nibbāna. Our task is to realize it (*Sacchikātabba*).
- iv. The Path leading to that realization of Nibbāna is the Fourth Noble Truth. Our task is to follow it, to practice it (*Bhāvetabba*).

Although there divides into four folds in a number concerning with our task on the truths, actually, the task we have to do is only one that is to follow the path leading to the cessation of dukkha, (the middle way). The truths are to be discovered by each of us personally. The Buddha said that “this fathom-long body, which is cognitive and endowed with mind-organ, contains the world, the origin of the world, the cessation of the world, and the way leading to the cessation of the world.” The world is filled with dukkha, but it is conditioned and can be transcended.

#### CONCLUSION

The final goal of Buddhism is to the destruction of Asava, or to attain Nibbāna. It can be attained only by destroying all Āsavas and defilements. The Buddha said that "He, who sees dukkha, also sees the arising of dukkha, the cessation of dukkha, and the path leading to the cessation of dukkha." Therefore, first

of all, one needs to know the suffering in our daily life as they are sufferings. If one does not see the suffering as suffering, he cannot do the end of it. Not knowing about suffering, the origin of suffering, the cessation of suffering, the way leading to the cessation of suffering - this is called ignorance. The Buddha, having seen dukkhas in daily life and the cause of them, followed the path leading to the ending of dukkhas. Finally, he attained Nibbāna. Craving links to ignorance. Ignorance and Craving are the roots of the round of Saṁsāra. Therefore, the Buddha, after attaining the Enlightenment, proclaimed the joyful utterance (Udāna) that; I, who have been seeking the maker of this body, failing to attain Enlightenment, which would enable me to find him, have wandered through innumerable births in Saṁsāra. To be born again and again is, indeed, dukkha! Oh, body-builder! You are seen, you shall build no Morehouse of the body (for me) again. All your rafters and your roof-tree are destroyed. My mind has reached the unconditioned (i.e., Nibbāna); the end of craving has been attained.

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