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## THE PHILOSOPHICAL EXPOSITION OF THREE FOLD CHARACTERISTICS OF EXISTENCE

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### ABSTRACT

Buddhism does not recognize the whole world as mere suffering; it is Buddhism that teaches “**Rare is a birth of human being**” and values human life; it also educates how to earn a righteous livelihood and happily enjoy it in a proper manner in one’s daily life before the emancipation from the suffering of existence; mental and physical hygienic instructions are also not left aside for individuals.

**KEYWORDS:** Impermanence (*Anicca*), Suffering (*Dukkha*) and Insubstantiality (*Anatta*).

### INTRODUCTION

Buddhism does not recognize the whole world as mere suffering; it is Buddhism that teaches “**Rare is a birth of human being**” and values human life. Buddhism is a System of Self-reliance.” All formations are ‘transient’ (*anicca*); all formations are ‘subject to suffering’ (*dukkha*); all things are ‘without a self (*anatta*). Corporeality is transient, feeling is transient, perception is transient, mental formations are transient, consciousness is transient. This belongs to me; this am I; this is my Self.

Three characteristics (*ti-lakkhana*) of all is conditioned, which are dependently arisen. They are:

- (1) Impermanence of Change (**Anicca**)
- (2) Suffering of Un-satisfactoriness (**Dukkha**)
- (3) Not -self of Insubstantially (**Anatta**)

The Buddha further explains in the Samyutta Nikaya that “The five aggregates, bhikkhus, are *anicca*, impermanent; whatever is impermanent, that is *dukkha*, unsatisfactory; whatever is *dukkha*, that is without *anatta*, Self. What is without Self, that is not mine, that I am not, that is not my Self.

### The expositions of Impermanence (*Anicca*)

*Anicca* or impermanence is first characteristics of *Ti-lakkhana* in the Buddhist doctrine. *Anicca* is usually treated as the basis for the other two, though *anatta* the third, is sometimes founded on *dukkha* alone. The *anicca* or impermanence is derived in modern etymology from the negative prefix a + *nicca*, a convert to na, means no, *nicca* means permanent. “*naniccantianiccan*”. It is not permanent; thus, it is impermanent.

The word *Anicca* is a household word in every Buddhist country. It means impermanence. Another word often jointly used by the Lord Buddha is “*viparinamadhammo*” meaning “the nature of change.” Impermanence or change is a fundamental concept in Buddhism. Without a realization of it there can never be any rather true insight through which we can see things as they really are. The Buddha teaches that we can only understand *Dukkha* and *Anatta* through an understanding of *Anicca*. The Buddha however has chosen *Dukkha* as the central point of a realization of the truth. This choice is a very skillful method of explaining the realities of life. It is the knowledge of *Anicca*, impermanence, that

heals Dukkha, suffering. By understanding Anicca, we come to understand that there is no permanent entity underlying our life (*Anatta*).

Therefore, it is very important indeed for each and every of us to understand the nature of change or impermanence in order to face problems courageously in our daily lives; in order to learn how to compromise with one another; in order to reduce unnecessary tensions in our relationships; in order to be in harmony with nature and live a happy life; and in order to make ourselves more and more wise as time goes by. Principle definitions given in the Suttapitaka are as follows. "Impermanent, impermanent" it is said, Lord. What is impermanent?" Five aggregates are impermanent, "Materiality (*rūpa*) is impermanent, *Rādha*, and so are feeling (*vedanā*) and perception (*saññā*) and formations (*saṅkhāra*) and consciousness (*viññāna*).

Herein, the five aggregates are the impermanent. Why? Because, their essence is rise, fall and change. Impermanent is the rise and fall and change in those in same aggregates, or it is their non-existence after having been. Contemplation of impermanence is contemplation of materiality, etc., as 'impermanent' in virtue of that impermanence, one's contemplation impermanence processes that contemplation. Again 'All is impermanent. And what is the all that is impermanent?' The eye is impermanent, visible objects (*rūpa*)... eye consciousness... eye-contact (*cakkhu-saṅghassa*).

This body is impermanent, it is formed (*saṅkhata*), and it is dependently arisen (*paṭicca-samuppanna*). Lastly the Buddha addressed to his disciple and gave His final exhortation:

**'Handadānibhikkhaveāmantayāmivo:  
vayadhammāsaṅkhārā, appamādenasaṅpādeṭṭha'**

Indeed, Bhikkhus, I declare to you: All formations are subject to dissolution; attain perfection through diligence. In the Dhammapada also explained as follow;

**'Sabbesaṅkhārāaniccāti, yadāpaññāpassati;  
athanibbindatidukkhe, esamaggovisuddhiyā'.**

"The 'all' phenomena are impermanent; when this is seen by means of wisdom, one becomes disgusted with suffering. This is the path of clarity. What is revolutionary about the Buddhist doctrine of impermanence is that it is extended to include everything.

### **The exposition of un-satisfactoriness (Dukkha)**

*Dukkha* is the second of the "Three Characteristics" (*ti-lakkhana*). It is sometimes treated in its own right thought more usually based upon the first (*anicca*) as consequence of that (*anatta*). The modern etymology of *dukkha* is derived either from the prefix *du-* + the termination *-ka*. The word *dukkha* is one of those Pali terms that cannot be translated adequately into English.

In fact, there is no equivalent in any other language. The word *dukkha* in ordinary usage means 'sufferings' 'pain' 'un-satisfactoriness', 'ill', 'sorrow' or 'misery'. The word *dukkha*, however, includes all that, and more. Nevertheless, the word *dukkha* in the first Noble Truth, represents the Buddha's view of life and the world, so that it means not only ordinary sufferings but also includes the deeper meaning of impermanence, imperfection, emptiness and un-translated, for convenience sake both the words suffering and *dukkha* will be wherever possible.

The Buddha is regarded as the peerless physician (*Bhisakka*) who is perfectly able to diagnose the illness of beings. He says: the world is established in suffering, is founded on suffering (*dukkhelo kopatitthito*) the suffering of life on one can deny have ignored, but one must understand the suffering of life (*parinnatabba*). The origin of suffering, craving (*tanha*) must be uprooted (*pahatabba*). The end of suffering, that is the cure, Nibhana (nirodha), should be released (*sacchikatabba*), in the remedy or the path (Noble eightfold Path) should be applied (*bhavatabba*). It is as physician that he first diagnosed the illness. So not understanding *Dukkha* in its true sense means not understanding Buddhism itself.

As a result, you could be cherishing a pessimistic attitude, not just towards Buddhism but probably towards your own life as well. The word Dukkha is not only keyword to the Four Noble Truths but to the other important teachings of the Buddha as well i.e. The Three Characteristics of the World (*Ti-lakkaṇa*) which is the Buddhist view of this world and The Philosophy of Dependent Origination (*Paṭicca-samuppāda*) which is the Buddhist understanding of how things work and relate to one another for their very existence.

Thus *Paṭicca-samuppāda* serves in the elucidation of the second and third noble truths about the origin and extinction of suffering, by explaining these two truths from their very foundations upwards, and giving them a fixed philosophical form.

### Threefold Dukkha

It will be appropriate to explain here the three aspects of dukkha, suffering, so that one may understand what dukkha really means in Buddhism. There are; -

1. Dukkha dukkha, ordinary suffering,
2. Viparināma dukkha, suffering experienced by change,
3. Saṅkhāradukkha, conditioned states.

The first aspect of suffering is *dukkhadukkha*; there are two *dukkhas*, the first *dukkha* implies life or being which is known as the five aggregates (*Pañcakkhandhā*) or *nāma-rupa-* mental and material forces. The Buddha defined dukkha as the five aggregates.

Here it should be understood that *dukkha* and the five aggregates are not two different things; the five aggregates themselves are *dukkha*. It is also meaning that life itself is dukkha. The second dukkha implies universal maladies. When mental and material forces or the five aggregates manifest or come into existence they are bound to be experienced as all kinds of suffering. They are, therefore, called *dukkha dukkha*. This *dukkha* includes all kinds of sufferings in life, such as birth, old age, sickness, death, association with unloved ones and unpleasant conditions, separation from loved ones and pleasant conditions, not getting what one wants, grief, lamentation, distress- all kind of physical and mental suffering, which are universally accepted as suffering or pain.

The second aspect of suffering is *Viparināmadukkha*. *Viparināma* means changing. It is the nature of the universe. A happy feeling, a happy condition in life is not everything, but impermanent. When it changes, it produces suffering, pain or unpleasant feelings. "Whatever is impermanent is suffering" (*yadaniccaṅgaṅgāpidukkhaṅgaṅga*) says the Buddha. Whenever one is faced with worldly vicissitudes and experience lots of suffering in life. These two kinds of suffering are easy to understand as they are common experience in daily life. In view of this they are generally explained as the First Noble Truth. This exposition of the First Noble Truth does not convey the full meaning of *dukkha* as the Buddha wanted us to understand it.

Third aspect of suffering, *saṅkhāra dukkha*, is conditioned states. Everything in the universe whether it is physical or mental is conditioned and conditioning. Third kind of *dukkha* will be clearly understood with direct experience through Vipassana meditation. One, who practices Vipassana, has to be aware of physical and mental phenomenon until one realizes the ever-changing processes, then one will understand *dukkha* as a sequel. To understand this form of dukkha, one will analyze a 'being' or an 'individual' as what we call "I".

### The exposition of Not-self (Anatta)

***Atta saranaṅgaṅga n as Arana***

"Soul as a refuge with none other as refuge"

***"Atta' ca me so saranaṅgaṅga gati ca"***

"The soul is the refuge that I have gone unto"

*Anatta* is the last of the Three Characteristics (*ti-lakkhana*) or General Characteristics (*sāmaṅga-lakkhana*). Like the 'teaching of four Noble Truths, it is the teaching particular to Buddhas' (*Buddhanaṅgaṅga samukkamsikadesana*).

The Buddhist term *Anatman* (Sanskrit), or *Anatta* (Pali) is an adjective in suttra used to refer to the nature of phenomena as being devoid of the Soul, the ontological and subjective Self (*atman*) which is the “light (*dipa*), and only refuge” Of the 662 occurrences of the term *Anatta* in the *Nikayas*, its usage is restricted to referring to 22 nouns (forms, feelings, perception, experiences, consciousness, the eye, eye-consciousness, desires, lamentation, mental formations, ear, nose, tongue, body, lusts, things unreal, etc.), all phenomenal, as being Selfless (*anatta*).

Etymologically *anatta* consists of the negative prefix *an-* plus *atta* (*na-not+atta-self*), not self and soulless and egoless and impersonal are often used for it. There may be some who are surprised when a person speaks of “*the Buddha’s not-self*.” The reason why the Buddha is particularly specified here is that His not-self means differently from those of other doctrines, on matter how similarly some of them teach. What is all about not-self in other doctrines will be described in the sections following this one?

The Buddha’s not-self has a broad, general meaning of neither seeing self or ego in anything nor seeing that entity as self or ego. What should be seen most definitely as self is entity that is not illusory and exists by itself without being conditioned, touched, or done something upon. This is referred to in the religious term as *asaṅkhātadhamma* (the conditioned state), which is apposite to *saṅkhātadhamma* (the unconditioned things). Examples are all the worlds and mundane things, both physical and mental. Regarding this principle, there is a Buddha’s saying;

**“*Sabbedhammānattā*” ti, *yadāpaññāyāpassati*;  
*athanibbindatidukkhe, esamaggovisuddhiyā*”.**

“The ‘all’ dharmas are not the Soul; when this is seen by means of wisdom, one becomes disgusted with suffering. This is the path of clarity. *sabbedhammānattā*, which means all entities are not self. To elaborate, all are just dharmas or entities, being wholly natural. They can be divided into two categories, namely, the conditioned (*saṅkhātadhamma*) and the unconditioned (*Asaṅkhātadhamma*) as mentioned previously. Conditioned things are phenomenal. They can appear and let us perceive them through our eyes, ears, tongues, bodies, or minds. We are capable to communicate with or study them by a material or physical means. We call all of them *saṅkhātadhamma*, which is comparable to a phenomenal.

In this sense, we can see that, although the Buddha said that everything is not-self, or void of self, He did not deny the existence of such qualities as merit and sin, which are reactions of that entity comprising both body and mind. For those entities that have only the body, their manifestation is just a reaction, not a merit or sin. As the body and mind are not-self, the merit or sin is not-self together with them. If we clearly understand the point that the body and the mind are not-self, we shall also clearly understand in an instant that their merit or sin is not-self. Don’t forget that what is not-self is manifesting itself in birth, aging, pain death, making a merit, committing a sin, doing good, and doing evil.

As long as one has not opened his eyes to what is “behind the curtain,” knowing only what is “in front of the curtain,” that is, the side on which he regards himself as self, fear of sin and merit making to provide his self with happiness, enjoyment, and comfort will come unpreventable common just as it is unpreventable for one’s regard himself as his own self. Therefore, the Buddha said that self is self’s own refuge, *attāhiattanonatho*.

## CONCLUSION

Whether Buddha appears in the world, it remains a fact, an unalterable condition of existence and an eternal law, that all *Kammic* formations (*sankhara*) are impermanent (*anicca*). This fact a Buddha discovers and masters, and when he has discovered, he announces, proclaims, preaches, reveals, teaches and explains thoroughly that all *sankharas* are impermanent. Whether

Buddha appear in the world or whether Buddha do not appear in the world, it remains a fact, an unalterable condition of existence and an eternal law, that all *Kammic* formations are subject to suffering (*dukkha*). This fact a Buddha discovers and masters, and after having discovered and

mastered it, he announces, proclaims, preaches, reveals, teaches and explains thoroughly, that all *sankhara* are subject to suffering.

Whether Buddha appears in the world, it remains a fact, an unalterable condition of existence and an eternal law, that all that exists (*sabbedhamma*) is non-absolute (*anatta*, i.e., without unchangeable or absolute ego-entity). This fact a Buddha discovers and masters, and after having discovered and mastered it, he announced, proclaims, preaches, reveals, teaches and explains thoroughly, that all that exists is non-absolute (without a permanent ego)”

These three characteristics have to experience animate or inanimate and no one, anything cannot be avoided it. If one who understand the real nature of three characteristic by intuitive knowledge, he will be attain the final state of freedom. There has verity of sources in the Pitakabut I have to mention according to the level of my paper.

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