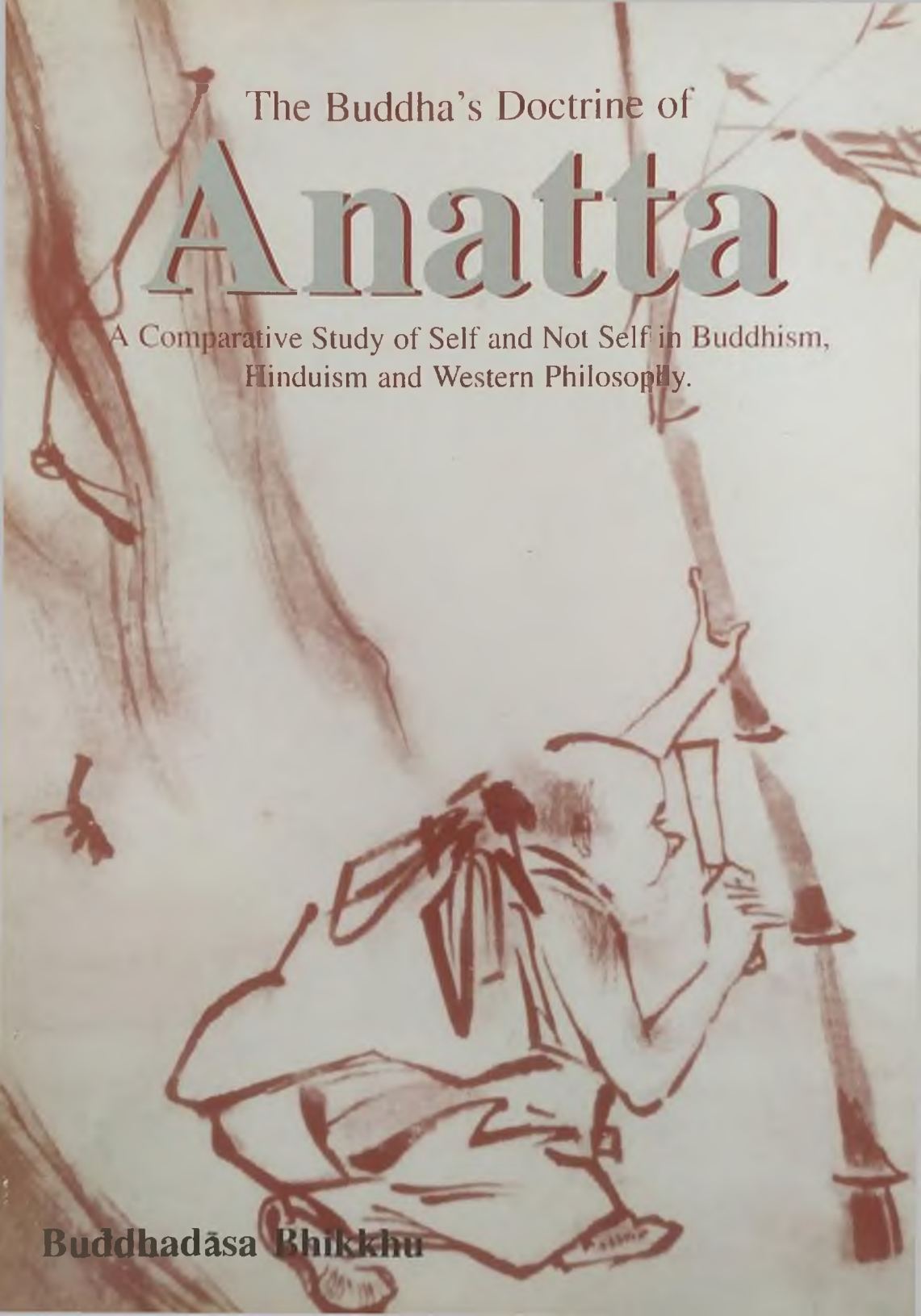

The Buddha's Doctrine of

Anatta

A Comparative Study of Self and Not Self in Buddhism, Hinduism and Western Philosophy.

Buddhadāsa Bhikkhu

THE BUDDHA'S DOCTRINE OF

ANATTĀ

by

BUDDHADĀSA BHIKKHU

Translated and published
to preserve the original Thai edition

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ANATTĀ

Buddhadāsa Bhikkhu
Translated by Suny Ram–Indra, et al.

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Dhammadāna Foundation
c/o Suan Mokkhabalārāma
Chaiya, Surat Thani 84110
THAILAND
Fax: +66-7743-1597

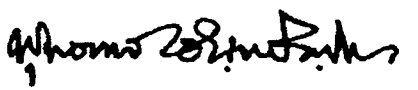
website: www.suanmokkh.org
e-mail: dhammadana@indiainfo.com
dhammadana@hotmail.com

ANUMODANĀ

(To all Dhamma Comrades, those helping to spread Dhamma:)

Break out the funds to spread Dhamma to let Faithful Trust flow,
Broadcast majestic Dhamma to radiate long living joy.
Release unexcelled Dhamma to tap the spring of Virtue,
Let safely peaceful delight flow like a cool mountain stream.
Dhamma leaves of many years sprouting anew, reaching out,
To unfold and bloom in the Dhamma Centers of all towns.
To spread lustrous Dhamma and in hearts glorified plant it,
Before long, weeds of sorrow, pain, and affliction will flee.
As Virtue revives and resounds throughout Thai society,
All hearts feel certain love toward those born, ageing, and dying.
Congratulations and Blessings to all Dhamma Comrades,
You who share Dhamma to widen the people's prosperous joy.
Heartiest appreciation from Buddhadāsa Indapañño,
Buddhist Science ever shines beams of Bodhi longlasting.
In grateful service, fruits of merit and wholesome successes,
Are all devoted in honor to Lord Father Buddha.
Thus may the Thai people be renowned for their Virtue,
May perfect success through Buddhist Science awaken their hearts.
May the King and His Family live long in triumphant strength,
May joy long endure throughout this our word upon earth.

from



Mokkhabalārāma
Chaiya, 2 November 2530
(translated by Santikaro Bhikkhu, 3 February 2531 (1988))

PREFACE

Together with a reply letter from Suan Mokkhabalārāma, Chaiya, Surat Thani, Than Achan Buddhadāsa sent me a bundle of his Dhamma books, among which there is one entitled อนัตตาของพระพุทธเจ้า (The Buddha's Doctrine of Anattā). He expressed his wish for me to consider translating this book into English and added in his letter, "if you are able to."

In his letter, the Than Achan also advised: "This book will make people understand better the word 'anattā' (not-self) as meant by the Buddha, since there have been too many doctrines which are so ambiguous as to confuse people in general. Or, if you are not in a position to translate the book, I would suggest that you try to study and discuss it with your friends who are interested in this topic."

Then the Than Achan explained the associated terms:

"Attā" means fully having self.

"Nirattā" means having nothing whatsoever.

"Anattā" means "self" that is not-self, which is righteous.

Next, he added: "This means that the 'self' we perceive is a borrowed one, but we must treat it rightly in order to benefit from it. Otherwise, it will bite us. Eventually, attachment to self in everything will naturally be eliminated. So try your best to have 'self' that is not self."

Having read the book, I found myself unable to translate it mainly due to my deteriorating health. But with firm determination to have this work done in response to the Than Achan's wish, and to symbolically express my gratitude for his contribution to liberation of mankind from blind ignorance to the light of Buddhism and to better understanding of true happiness, I tried to contact several translator friends and asked them for help. First among them was Achan Mongkol Dejnakarintra of Chulalongkorn University, who kindly assisted me before in the translation of the Than Achan's book, *The 24 Dimensions of Dhamma.* Willingly, Achan Mongkol pledged his contribution to help together with kind cooperation of Achan Supaphan Na Bangchang, also of Chulalongkorn University, the late Dr.Witt Siwasariyanon, and Dr.Wariya Chinwanno. Their achieved translation is now in your hand. I am very grateful to them all.

Also for the successful publication of this book, I wish to express my deep appreciation to The Dhamma Study & Practice Group for their kind help in taking care of the artwork and the printing.

Last and least is myself who could play a very little part by contributing to the publication of this book as a token of gratitude to Than Achan Buddhadāsa on the occasion of his 84th birthday anniversary, May 27, 1990.

Suny Ram–Indra
Bangkok, May, 1990.

SUGGESTED READING

Other books by Buddhadāsa Bhikkhu:

Buddha-Dhamma For Students
Christianity and Buddhism
Dhamma – The World Saviour
Gesänge und Sprüche zur Verehrung und Andacht in Dhamma
Handbook For Mankind
Heartwood From The Bo Tree
Handbuch für die Menschheit
Keys to Natural Truth
Life Should Be Harnessed By Two Buffaloes
Mindfulness with Breathing: Unveiling the Secrets of Life
No Religion
Paticca-Samupāda: Practical Dependent Origination
The First Ten Years of Suan Mokkh
The A, B, C of Buddhism
The Prison of Life
Towards Buddha-Dhamma
Zwei Arten der Sprache

For more information, please contact:

The Dhammadāna Foundation
c/o Suan Mokkhabalārāma
Chaiya, Surat Thani
Thailand 84110
Fax: +66–7743–1597

Or visit the Suan Mokkh website:

http://www.suanmokkh.org

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Introductory Explanation
The Reason for Writing This Book

Explanation on not-self (anattā) is a hard work because its essence is comparable to the heart of Buddhism. This induced me to doubt whether I could do it profoundly in keeping with its profundity. If the quality of my work was too low, then some people might understand that the Buddha-dhamma was on par with it. And this would be as harmful to the religion as would my wrong explanation. But now I gain confidence more and more. This is because I received ideas from many friends who expressed so many opinions and doubts that I realize that, if I do it, it will be somewhat better than not to do it. Or at least it may eliminate the dispute on this matter.

"To do is better than not to do" means that there still are some people who are confused or do not understand various aspects that are complementary reasons. Therefore, an explanation, even just enough to answer the questions, will bring good results and greatly satisfy myself without needing to expect that it has to be perfect. But if the explanation brings more beneficial results than what is expected, or if it happens to be perfect, that can be counted as an additional gain.

Self vs. Not-Self Is Not An Unsolvable Riddle

The problem whether there is self or there is no self may

be seen by some people as a perpetually unsolvable riddle—one whose solution cannot be agreed upon and whose dispute circularly goes on and on to the end of the world–like other ones of the same category. Actually this is not an unsolvable riddle at all; rather, it is the most limited question, and a very profound one. Its profundity, as it turns out, prevents people from understanding it thoroughly. Therefore, there is difference of viewpoints on this matter.

Let's take as an example the question of whether killing animals is sinful. Some may consider that it is not sinful; and we can see that priests of some religions use guns to shoot birds. Buddhists, however, consider it as sinful. People have different views on this question even in cases unassociated with religions. Will we take this question as an unsolvable riddle? For Buddhists, we never take it so and understand that killing animals is sinful. For most people, if they have pity for animals even just a little bit, they will consider that killing animals is sinful. Therefore, we will see that if we consider only in our Buddhist circle, then this kind of problem cannot be an unsolvable riddle. It is really a question with a decisive answer in itself. So is the question of self and not-self. If we consider only in our Buddhist circle, this will be a question that should be scrutinized, and we will see its decisive meaning. *It will become an unsolvable riddle only when it is compared with the principles of other religions that have such lower or shallower teachings that their followers do not know the meaning of not-self,* just as when the question of killing animals is considered together with those who see animal lives as having no value.

The Pair of Disputants

Nevertheless, we find that this problem occurs almost always among Buddhist groups only. Now, let's try to bring the pair of disputants into consideration. To speak most precisely in accordance with the fact, we should say that this problem, namely, the problem of whether there is permanent self in Buddhism, occurs between some Mahayanist sects and some Hinayanist, or Theravadist, sects rather than among ourselves Hinayanists. Thai Buddhists are Hinayanists or Theravadists who normally hold a view that there is no self or ego in Buddhism. But it is not strange that some of us happen to hold the same view, that there is self, as do some Mahayanist sects. One reason is that they do not adequately understand their own doctrine. Another is that they got some bits and pieces of concepts from Mahayanists, secretly spread what they got to some others among themselves, and finally hold such concepts as the truth since they correspond to their viewpoints, which they have already believed in. So *the pair of disputants in this case consists of some Mahayanists and ourselves Theravadists* only.[1]

It is normal that some of our Theravadists have different concepts that correspond to those of some Mahayanist sects. The same is true even for the Mahayanists themselves, among whom there are so many different views that they separate

[1] A reason why some Mahayanist sects talk about the existence of self is of certain necessity, namely, the necessity to compete with Brāminism many hundred years after the Buddha's Great Decease. This point will be discussed later.

into small sub-sects. Therefore, in any particular group, there are unavoidably some who have different views that conform to those of other groups. But we can know which group holds which views by generally studying both the historical events and the principal teachings of all the groups. Looking back particularly to our Thai Theravadists, we find that only a very small number of followers have views that incline towards those of the Mahayanist. Nevertheless, they blindly think that such views are particularly their new concepts, even though the Mahayanists have already declared them for a long time.

Some people first seriously insist that there is self in Buddhism, that is, nibbāna or *asaṅkhatadhamma* (the unconditoned). Later, when they saw a poor prospect for such a view, they then sidestepped by saying that it was merely what they would like to call or suppose. Other say inconsistently that nibbāna is neither self nor not-self nor anything at all, although previously they confirmed in their own books that it was self. Finally, some got themselves off the hook by giving an excuse that they said that nibbāna was self just for persuading lesser people to be more enthusiastic. However, there are still some who always hold the view that Buddhism has self (namely, nibbāna; and this is evident from the essays they wrote to confirm their views in the *Buddhasāsanā* and in other publications.

The Issue of Dispute

Once we have accepted both the Mahayanist and the Hinayanist as Buddhists, we have to divide the pair of disputants

into two groups by taking the issue of dispute as the criterion. It is not quite justifiable to mark down which view as particularly pertaining to which group or sect because Mahayana Buddhism has many sects, and the views they hold are not the same for all sects. Moreover, in our Hinayana Buddhism, there are some who hold the Mahayanist view as mentioned above. Therefore they can be divided into two groups. One of them holds the view that, even when referring in terms of absolute truth, that is, the truth not on the wordly or superficial level, there is real self, namely, nibbāna or *asaṅkhatadhamma.* This group also insists that their view is in line with the Buddha's true teachings but the other group misunderstands the true teachings and, therefore, holds the view that there is no self. This is one group. The other group insists that there is no self in Buddhism. Everything, from the lowest to the highest, nibbāna, is not-self or has no self. According to them, the word "self" used in the Buddha's sayings is merely a conventional term that is commonly understood in accordance with the one used in the society for the sake of understanding. To conclude once more, we are left with the following:

— One group holds that there is self in Buddhism, and the Buddha teaches us to seek it for our refuge. (From now on, this group will be called the *attavādī.*)

— Another group holds that there is no self in Buddhism, and the Buddha does not teach us to find it but to eliminate our perception of self or all feelings concerning self; then we will be free from sufferings without having to take any refuge. (From now on, this group will be called the *anattavādī.*)

Finally, we can identify the pair of disputants: *those who hold the view of self or ego are having* vivāda *(dispute) with those who hold the view of not-self.* (The term *vivāda,* or dispute, here means having different views, not a quarrel.) What reasons these two groups have will be discussed in detail later when we bring that issue into consideration. In this introduction, I would like to say a little bit more about the importance of considering this confusing problem.

How the Dispute Expands

As mentioned above, not-self is the essence, as important as the heart, of Buddhism. It is a favorite issue of pursuers of freedom from sufferings and thinkers in every era and place without exception. Even the European scholars who do not like to hold a particular view cannot refrain from studying it as a delicate food for their thought. They consider that *the issue of not-self is the only particular characteristic of Buddhism that is different from those of other religions.* Nevertheless, some Western students are misled into misunderstanding the concept of Buddhism. For example, some of them incline heavily to the Mahayana view, and some regard that the Hinayana Canon is not the text of the Buddha's actual sayings. Moreover, some misunderstand to the extent of inadvertently taking other views, such as the Vedānta of the Upanishad, as the teachings in Buddhism. As those students are famous, having high educational backgrounds, holding high academic degrees, or being lecturers in important universities of the world, there are lots of people who believe them

and follow their views. This creates more disputes. Finally, it causes confusion and chaos for those who are going to study this issue in the future.

Now, there are many Buddhist books and journals, of both the Hinayanist and the Mahayanist, printed in foreign languages. Each group says according to their views; and the most disputed issue is the concept of not-self. The Mahayanist takes the leading role as usual. Besides timely advertisements and explanations, they also have the notion of self that appeals to the feeling of the general public. Therefore, we should not be surprised by the fact that there are split views among high-level students and thinkers, both Buddhists and foreigners, who study this issue merely as the food for thought of thinking-happy people.

Four Principal Issues of Religious Study

In studying any religion, it is popularly accepted that there are four principal issues as follows:

(1) *The life and teachings* of the master of the religion. For example, Buddhists study the historical life of the Buddha and his discourses.

(2) *Exoteric doctrines* that all followers of the religion snould know and practice. This includes the moral codes of the religion which are really for all followers to practice until they can free themselves from sufferings.

(3) *Esoteric doctrines or philosophy,* such as the *Abhidhamma Pitaka* in Buddhism. They are the essences formed in accor-

dance with logics and classified in detail under the guideline of reasons, but not associated with pratice, since they are theoretical principles for contemplation only. The practitioners need not know these, but they can still practice to the extent of freeing themselves from sufferings.

(4) *Mysticism,* for example, that the actual religion is the truth not created by anybody, but is the truth of nature. The theme of most mysticisms is the same for all religions. For example, when one does good deeds to the highest level, he will attain the unchangeable, eternal state of happiness, which may be Nibbāna, God, the Highest-Self, Heaven, or whatever it is called. The goal of every religion is at this level, the eternal state of happiness. Regarding this principle, we should consider that, in this world or in any world, there is only one religion, that is, the religion of the truth or the religion of the truth of nature. When we practice rightly in accordance with this truth, we will attain the ultimate and eternal happiness.

Not-self on the Philosophical Level

The problem of self and not-self under discussion here can be regarded to be on the third level, which is a philosophical one, and overlaps with the fourth level. It is on the third level because it is purely theoretical, indicating delusion or void of the real self of human beings, animals, and things that are composed from other things by the power of nature. It lets us know how to decompose these entities into the tiniest components that constitute the whole of each of them. It also tells

us, for example, what they arise from, how they arise, how they change, and why they have been so. It overlaps with the fourth level because its weight or meaning of not-self encompasses nibbāna, the state of eternal peace and happiness. This state is the same goal of all religions, although there is a difference: other religions consider that a person has self or ego that attains the state of eternal happiness, which is the big self referred to as the world's self or the God's self, whereas Buddhism denies all of such selves: all the entities exist but they are not selves, for some of them are only illusion and the one that is not illusion is only a kind of dhamma or nature. They should not be grasped at and made into selves, for they will entangle our minds, get us stuck in them forever, and torment us neatly or inconspicuously.

What has been mentioned so far indicates how delicate and profound the problem of not-self is and how important it is as the central point or the inner core of Buddhism. If we have insight about the truth of not-self, we will extensively and thoroughly know truth of things, no matter whether they are corporeal or incorporeal, mundane or ultra-mundane. This will make us feel that there is nothing unusual, nothing to cling to or get fascinated with; and we will be unmoved by anything. In other words, if we focus on finding out whether there is any philosophical notion that can be our spiritual guide and can lead us to true deliverance, we will find that, indeed, the philosophy of not-self is that spiritual guide which will ultimately lead us to deliverance and complete freedom. How this philosophy can do so will be mentioned at the end of this topic, for the notion of not-self has to be discussed first.

Buddhism Goes Beyond Other Religions Due to the Not-Self Principle

As far as the cryptic and deepest meaning is concerned, all religions have the same principle, that is, they all aim at eternal happiness. In spite of this, a question can still be asked: Why are some religions regarded as higher or lower and deeper or shallower than other? The answer is because the founders of the religions differently realized the state of eternal happiness. For example, Christianity and Islam say that eternal happiness means God's heaven, but the Brāhmins in the Upanishad era regarded it as *paramātman* (the Highest Self), or what others call *Brahma*. For this same issue, Buddhism says that it is nibbāna or the state which the mind will attain once it has completely eliminated the notion that ātman, Brahma, heaven, God, and all the like are entities to be clung to or eyed at as selves for possession or for uniting with.

Regarding this, we have to know that in the beginning man had an instinct of wanting progressively ever better things up to the best. Then a question arose about what condition or state could be called the best or happiest. Whoever could best answer this question or teach about it at that time was later respected as the master. Among those who inclined to materialism, some fixed their eyes on the condition under which they would get what they desired most. This led to the

notion of a deity's or God's heaven which offered everything one wanted, and there were religious masters who taught about God's heaven, which was later explained as the eternal or immortal state. Then, after thinking and education had deepened, some among those who inclined to spiritualism found more profoundly that the happiest or best state of mind had to be one that consists of the kind of insight or knowledge that does not cause the mind to be disturbed, blemished, or obscured. Among these people, there existed teachers who discovered knowledge at various levels, some high and some low. But most of them, no matter how highly their minds were purified, still felt being or having self or felt self happiness. Finally, the Buddha discovered the superior and supreme truth that *only the state of mind that is free from the feeling of or attachment to having self, or even purity, can be considered the most peaceful, purest, and most completely suffering-free.* As long as the mind perceives being self in any particular thing, it still attaches to that thing; and this is not liberation of the mind. This point will be explained in detail later.

As it is a long subject, the readers should try to remember the substance of every section one by one progressively. Otherwise, they will be confused and gain nothing.

The Substance of The Buddha's Not-Self[1]

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, no 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 an 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 *asaṅkhatadhamma* (the unconditioned state), which is opposite to *saṅkhatadhamma* (a conditioned thing). The latter is conditioned or formed by other things and depends on them, hence being illusory and temporary. Examples are all the worlds and mundane things, both physical and mental. For the unconditioned state, or, to be specific, the state of truth, that is, nibbāna, it tempts us to think of it most definitely as self or ego because it exists and appears in an unchangeable manner. However, it is not itself or anything else in spite of its existence and appearance that are not illusory as other things. And it should not be regarded or held as self of its own or of some other things either. Regarding this principle,

[1]Not-self (anattā) means not being self (attā).

there is a Buddha's saying, *sabbe dhammā anattā,* which means *all entities are not self.* To elaborate, all are just dhammas or entities, being wholly natural. They can be divided into two categories, namely, the conditioned and the unconditioned 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. Dhammas or entities in this category are all illusion, for they consist of many things in aggregation, fall under the power of time, and have shapes and sizes that are bound to change ceaselessly. We call all of them *saṅkhatadhamma,* which is comparable to a phenomenon.

Asaṅkhatadhamma is opposite to *saṅkhatadhamma* in every way. It appears neither materially nor mentally, so it cannot be perceived through a mere contact. It is not created by anything; it does not fall under the power of time; it does not have any shape or size whatsoever, and hence cannot be measured or calculated by any phenomenal principle. The only way to know it is by intelligent inference, that is, having insight as the sense base for perception.

Even when it is said that the mind takes hold of nibbāna as an object of consciousness, or profoundly perceives the quality of nibbāna, we should understand that the mind cannot grasp at nibbāna in any form of self. This means only steadiness of the mind or decisive settlement of the inference, whatever the case is. And since one's mind is definitely set, one is enabled

to see particularly by himself that nibbāna is such and such. However, one cannot describe it to others, for he does not know what to say. As for the taste of nibbāna, it is a complete mistake to think of it as something like the taste of, for example, sugar. This is because nibbāna has no taste, color, shape, or any other sensory qualities. To have tasted nibbāna means only that, when the mind has been free from defilements or has attained the state called nibbāna, a taste spontaneously arises in the mind. This is just like the comfort that arises after we have taken a bath and have got rid of all the sweat and dirt from our bodies. But we cannot say that such comfort is the taste of cleanliness—it just relates to cleanliness—for cleanliness does not have any taste at all. However, when the body is clean, it brings about a new taste in itself. The completely purified mind that has attained nibbāna can be explained similarly. An abstract state like nibbāna does not exist materially and does not have any explicitly phenomenal taste. Therefore, we cannot perceive it through sensory contact. There are certain things that we can perceive wholly with our mind, for example, feeling, memory, and contentment. We can even perceive the taste of nibbāna-derived happiness. However, the taste is only a matter of the mind, being at the mind and varying with time. It can be touched upon and caused to change by certain factors. The unconditioned state, or nibbāna, is deeper than that; it is not that taste. In conclusion, the unconditioned state is difficult to explain. We have to study and observe it gradually until we clearly understand it by ourselves. At this point, let's say only that it is not phenomenal and is opposite to conditioned entities in every way. Specifically, it neither changes nor dies; it is

immortal. It can exist even though it is not created and maintained; its existence is stable and not illusory. We refer to the state with these characteristics as the unconditioned or noumenon.

Having pointed out that all entities can be divided into two groups, namely, the conditioned and the unconditioned, the author would advise the readers to understand further that the two neither are self-entities nor have such a self as that of its own or ours. They exist as wholly abstract entities; the only difference is that one is illusory whereas the other is not. And both are only *natural* entities. The author points this out to enable a person to decline or reject anything that would otherwise occur to his mind, so that his mind will not grasp at or cling to anything as its own. *The conditioned entities that the mind may grasp at and cling* to include, for example, the body, the mind itself, merits that one has made and sins that one has committed, properties, honor and prestige; defilements such as desire, love, anger, selfishness; and results from the attachment such as birth, aging, pain, death, rise and fall in everything; and, finally, the cause of misconception and the subsequent holding on to it, namely, attachment[1], which results in rebirth and transmigration and is inherent and always present in the minds of all worldly creatures. *About the unconditioned entity that the mind may grasp at and cling to,* it is the state the mind attains after it has let go of or has passed up the conditioned entities. After having found this new state without attachment, or nibbāna, which can be perceived by inference, the mind may grasp at and cling to it as self

[1]This includes loveliness, wrong view, strong sticking to what one's has been doing absurdly, and ignorance.

because of its characteristic of habitually having done so in the past.

About the merit, sin, goodness, or evilness that we perform or abstain from performing, what actually wants to do and does the deed and what is afraid of doing it? For this point, if we do not see not-self clearly, it will be difficult for us to understand. The fact is that the body and the mind are the doers and the recipients of the results, which accompany them to next lives. All the results stay with the body and the mind. But the body and the mind are not self; they are nature that rolls on by the power of factors within themselves, by themselves, for themselves, and in accordance with their own instinct as long as both of them cooperate or stay together, and as long as there are causes and contributory factors that condition them. Both of them are not self, for they are only illusion. If we can withdraw our mind from attachment to itself, it will instantly find for itself that itself does not exist. What exists is only a puppet or something similar to a puppet that nature conditions into an entity which can perceive and think; and that entity, in return, takes the puppet of nature as itself. This results in the notion of "we" and "they," this person and that person, gain and loss, love and hatred, and so on, all of which are illusory, for they originate from the mind, which is an illusion itself as already mentioned.

Worldly men are normally conscious of what is "in front of the curtain." No one among them has ever looked "behind the curtain" or ever thought that that side exists. So they naturally assume that all that exists is just what they

perceive. They take the body and the mind in combination as self, with the mind as the center or, more specifically, the soul. There is nothing outside or beyond self. Therefore, self attachment has become our most intimate instinct and has dominated the aggregation of body and mind, which is necessarily governed by the power of its own thoughts and feelings. This is why all that the mind naturally perceives is just the conditioned; it never looks "behind the curtain" to see the unconditioned. It is the same reason why a talk about the unconditioned is incomprehensible. And saying that the body and the mind are not self makes it most difficult for one to listen to. This is because one knows only half of the whole story as already mentioned.

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 the mind are not-self, the merit or sin is also 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 (which he

grasps at and clings to) with happiness, enjoyment, and comfort will become unpreventably common just as it is unpreventable for one to regard himself as his own self.

Therefore, we can see that those who are actually worldly cannot avoid the notion of self. The Buddha then taught them to *get away from sins and make merits.* He also said that *self is self's own refuge,* which means that the very self that anyone grasps at and clings to as his own essence must be taken as his refuge until he is through with it (that is, free himself from self attachment), and no longer has self or needs to depend on self. One then has only two kinds of thing or nature, one kind rolling on and the other staying peacefully.

After a person has freed himself from self attachment, that is, he has learned not-self, he will transcend self, merit making, and sin committing. This is in keeping with a saying that an *arahat* (a perfected one) is above and beyond merit and sin, or beyond goodness and evilness, for he has transcended his self attachment. But as one has gotten away from self, will he still have self at the liberation? This is impossible. Previously one had a combination of body and mind as one's entity. Then he clearly knew that it was not self, eliminated it, and attained the state that is void of self. To take this state as one's self again is possible for those who still have some trace of ignorance or misconception, which must be further eliminated. But if one has really attained the ultimate state, or the complete extinction of sufferings, one will not have such entity. For this reason, *regarding nibbāna as a self entity is not the Buddha's view* but is a view of other doctrines which

existed a little before the Buddha's time. This wrong view was reclaimed as that of the Buddha's by some Buddhists after His decease. Even at present, there are some people who hold a view that agrees with that old view or express that view in order to include the Buddha's for some interest.

In conclusion, the Buddha's principle of not-self denies self in all respects, both the conditioned and the unconditioned, or, in other words, both that side "in front of the curtain" and that "behind the curtain," as well as both knowledge and ignorance. What He said in conformity to the worldly language, namely, the self for doing good and not for doing evil, is limited only to that which people misunderstand and hold on to before they have vision of truth. What the author has explained so far is just a summary of the main principle. Its detail will be dealt with specifically in individual sections to be followed later.

In the coming chapter, the author will first consider not-self principles of various doctrines other than Buddhism. The purpose is to compare them with the true view of not-self in Buddhism and to know the latter better. This will be a preventive measure which can keep the not-self principle of our Buddhism from being so much deviant that we ourselves unknowingly, and very shamefully, become teachers or disseminators of other doctrines.

Views of Not-Self in Other Doctrines

Views of not-self in un-Buddhistic doctrines should be listened to in order to prevent confusion. The views can be divided into two groups, namely, those which can be classified as world-destroying wrong views according to the principles of Buddhism and those which are not regarded as wrong views but do not belong to Buddhism and do not correspond with the principles set up by the Buddha.

Wrong Views of Not-Self

Views of not-self, or those implicitly expressing not-self, that are classified as wrong views according to the principles of Buddhism are the following three: view of inefficacy of action *(Akiriyadiṭṭhi),* view of non-causality *(Ahetukadiṭṭhi),* and view of nihilism *(Natthikadiṭṭhi).* Philosophical views which rivaled Buddhist view during the Buddha's time were those of the Six Teachers who were also called the Heretical Teachers *(aññatitthiyas),* or the teachers who have different doctrines from Buddhism. In these teachers' viewpoints, we find concepts of extreme not-self scatter throughout. Some of the viewpoints are so subtle and profound as to have been accepted by high-class people, such as kings, as was Buddhistic viewpoint, and have become rivals of Buddhism even nowadays.

1. Pūraṇakassapa

Among the Six Teachers, Pūraṇakassapa was the one who held the following view:

There is neither merit nor sin, neither goodness nor evilness. Killing, robbery, and adultery can be committed, and there are no sins due to such deeds. Even if one kills all animals, slice their fleshs, pile up the meats, and make the whole Jambu-land [the Indian continent] a field full of those sliced meats, there will be merely the act. There will be no sins on anybody. Even when one offers sacrifices or gives alms to all the recluses and brāhmaṇas *in the world, there will be only acts of the deeds, but there will be no merits on anybody. And no matter whether one performs such deeds on the left bank or the right bank of the sacred Ganges, there will be no merits or sins as people believe.*

This view regards that there is nothing except the act or the object in presence. To exemplify, slaughtering an animal is merely an act of, for example, putting a knife through the animal, which results in the animal being wounded or killed. Or, as a little bit more significant consequence, it's only that the meat is taken for food, but there are neither merits nor sins behind it. This is a view of the inefficacy of action. It denies both meritorious and sinful deeds. This principle agrees with views held by some people nowadays. For example, some groups of scientists see things only materially; they regard religious doctrines as obsolete. But they probably do not know that such a view has been established since the Buddha's time and has been opposing the Buddha's teachings since He was

still alive. This view indicates the characteristic of not-self and denies self as does Buddhism. It holds that everything is solely an object, a natural entity. There is no self of anybody that does good or evil. Compared with Buddhism, this view is an extreme, since it denies merits and sins for the people who still hold on to self. Even on the level of rejection of self, it merely looks at external parts. However, quite many people accepted this view, making Pūraṇakassapa a famous teacher.

2. Makkhaligosāla

Makkhaligosāla held the view which he taught to his congregation as follows:

This life is just a wholly natural lump which rolls by itself according to its nature. When it has to be in a certain state, it will be so on and on until it finally stops or becomes extinct by itself with nothing left. One can neither make it his own self which does good or evil nor change it; he needs not worry about accelerating purification of himself in order to quickly stop or extinguish his self. Even if one does this anyway, the resulf will be the same as when he does nothing. This can be compared to a ball of thread which one holds by the knot at one end. When one throws the ball away while holding on to the knot, it will roll unfolding, get smaller and smaller, and, finally when it runs out of its thread, stop rolling by itself. There is no need to make it stop. Life is similarly so. It rolls on in transmigration while unfolding itself and will become purified or completely extinct by itself; and no one can quicken or retard this. Hence, there is no cause or power

which can tarnish or purify it. A good deed, which is the cause of purity, and a bad deed, which is the cause of tarnish, are merely a playful hoax.

This view is favored by some people because they need not do anything and just let things run their courses. It is a philosophy which completely denies our selves and everything within our power. It is different from Buddhism in that Buddhism teaches that there are causes of purity and impurity. If we (body and mind) make any cause, we will become impure or virtuous more quickly in accordance with it, and the result will go to the body and mind that is the performer of the cause or, to use the worldly language, to ourselves. Although, on the supramundane level, Buddhism says that everything is not-self, it does not denies the fact that there are impurity and virtue and causes with power to bring about such conditions. Makkhaligosāla's view agrees with the evolution principle of modern science, for example, the concept that all organisms evolve and change sequentially to higher states by themselves What differs from this principle is only whether, in the process, there is a cause or power which we can produce in order to obstruct it and slow it down or to promote it and accelerate it. Even though we have a belief in Buddhism that nibbāna is the destination all of us will eventually reach, there is an exception: we accept those causes which we can develop in order to attain nibbāna within this life, or even immediately, and those causes which, if we do not produce them, will delay our attainment of nibbāna, for we may have to remain in low states of existence for ages. This means that Buddhism accepts power of the causes, which Makkhaligosāla's view denies

completely; and Buddhism does not consider that it cannot be changed. This un-Buddhistic view is referred to as *ahetukadiṭṭhi,* which means view of non-causality or, in other words, there is no self in the worldly sense which produces good or bad causes.

3. Ajita Kesakambala

Ajita Kesakambala taught the principle of *denying everything (which corresponds to what is nowadays called nihilism), namely, there is absolutely nothing. People are deluded to call this and that such and such; they say there are, for example, fathers, mothers, teachers, masters, respect, charity, this world, other worlds, deities, recluses and brāhmaṇas, who are in different positions and have to treat each other in such and such manners. Actually, there are only illusion and emptiness. A human being is simply an aggregate of elements. When it disintegrates, all the elements will segregate to their original nature. When a person is dead, he only ends up being cremated and turning into ashes; there is neither soul nor self which goes anywhere. Such a good deed as sacrifice is only burning of the offerings into ashes; there is neither merit nor its beneficiary. There is absolutely nothing. Charity is a thing that the coward set up and declare as what will bring results. Such declaration is false; it is only a vain talk. There is neither a good person nor a bad one, neither a ruffian nor a wise man. There is just an aggregate of elements. When a person dies, he becomes completely extinct or just silently ceases to exist.*

This view denies everything and declares that there is

nothing that is true to one's calling in this world or next worlds; and even the world itself does not exist. There are only elements which combine and separate repeatedly. This kind of doctrine makes its followers feel at ease because they neither need to get into trouble nor keep themselves restrained under any control whatsoever. They can let things run their courses and need not be sorrowful or glad when anything happens. This view is different from Buddhism in that Buddhism still accepts the existence of those things as they are called. At the stages where one still has defilements and attachment, those things all exist. And one should behave rightly in the way that will not bring troubles to himself and others. The body and mind is the doer and recipient of various conditions which are conceptualized. Not until the body and mind completely ceases to exist at last will these conditions become extinct together with the associated person. This means that Buddhism does not deny the conventional, assumed aspect of ordinary or worldly people, who are bound to hold a view and behave in accordance with what is known or taught. These are mundane states which have to be transcended in order to attain the supramundane state. Ajita Kesakambala's view is called *natthikadiṭṭhi,* which means the view that regards that there is nothing at all; there are no such things as we call them. It is the view of not-self that denies everything, most likely to satisfy one's desire to do as one likes. If it is not for a person to get lazy, it will be for him to do dirty things as he likes. This view can also be called *ucchedadiṭṭhi,* or nihilistic view, since it holds that everything absolutely ends at one's death.

4. Pakudha Kaccāyana

Pakudha Kaccāyana taught as follows:

This so-called life is only an aggregation of seven components, namely, solid, water, fire, air, happiness, misery, and vitality. Each of these cannot be further split into smaller parts; it is stable in itself. No one can make it feel pain or change in any way. It can neither hear nor listen, neither love nor get angry, nor do anything else whatsoever. Therefore, even though one cuts another's head or cut up another's flesh into big and small pieces, he is not counted as doing anything to anyone, since elements only penetrate or pass between their own kind (which no one can cut again). It is the same as when a knife cuts through water: atoms of elements that are combined into water only separate to let the knife pass. No one nurtures, suppresses, kills, or supports anyone. There are only forward and reverse displacements among elements of the same kind.

This view is different from that of Buddhism. Though both teach about the same subject of elements, Buddhism accepts the moral conducts that people base on in treating one another. As long as attachment still exists, it does not regard that actions are just elements that pass back and forth. And even when one has eliminated attachment, he still has a feeling that those actions which are defined as good or bad are indeed as such; he does not grasp at them for his own but regards that they belong to the groups of entities that are conventionally defined as men, animals, the doers, or those affected by the actions. This is like when we build a car: we are well aware that it is only various elements which we put

together, but we do not think much of any benefit it will give us. We use it in accordance with the situation, but we do not cling to it psychologically so much that, for example, we foolishly mistake it for this and that, think that it may even come alive, or particularly suffer from love and care for it. This view satisfies those who like to kill others. For example, bandits teach among themselves that killing is not sinful because no one is killed, but only elements are displaced. This can make them more heartened than usual. Some groups of warriors in India have even held this view since the ancient time.

5. Sañjaya Velaṭṭhaputta

Sañjaya Velaṭṭhaputta taught a doctrine which held the following principle:

Everything can neither be defined nor called by any names because it is not anything. Examples are given by the following questions and answers.

Is one reborn after death? No.

Is one not reborn after death? No.

Is one sometimes reborn and sometimes not reborn ? No.

Is one neither reborn nor not reborn? No.

Is one neither sometimes reborn nor sometimes not reborn? No.

These examples are to indicate that everything cannot be defined as anything whatsoever.

This view is called *vikkhepaladdhi,* or uncertainty-oriented doctrine. It is probable that those who hold this view do not have clear understanding to define it. In Buddhism, there are

also some individuals or groups of people who are uncertain like this. They say, for example, that nibbāna can be both self and not-self, that it is neither self nor not-self, nor anything at all. If we are to hold this view as a philosophy useful for freeing ourselves from sufferings, we should understand its meaning, namely, that anything should not be paid attention to; everything is uncertain and should not be taken as anything; and everything should be abandoned without fear or concern so that one's mind will be free from everything. It sounds quite easy. On the other hand, Buddhism accepts convention and promulgation as they are.

According to the popular acceptance in Buddhism, all the views mentioned above are considered extraneous. The commentators of the Pali Canon regarded them as severely wrong views. Even Niganṭhanāṭaputta's doctrine, which is mentioned in the Sāmaññaphala Sutta of the Pali Canon, itself Buddhist text, and has the teaching not much different from the principle of Buddhism except for that of the existence of ātman (individual self), is also classified as a wrong view by the commentators.

6. Niganṭhanāṭaputta

Niganṭhanāṭaputta's view, as it appears in the Sāmaññaphala Sutta of the Pali Canon, is as follows:

A person who can be a niganṭha *must try to ultimately attain the four important statures, namely, prevention of sins by sin-preventing dhammas, practice of the dhammas that are conducive to freedom from sins, elimination of sins by sin-*

eliminating dhammas, and attainment of the pinnacle of sublime life through the sin-eliminating dhammas. As he has done so, he is considered to have been reached ātman, completed his practice, reached immortality and eternality.

This view has rivaled Buddhism from the beginning up to the present. If we read a history book or take a look from the historical aspects with neutral, unbiased presentation, and not just read Buddhist books on the commentary level, we will find that this doctrine had as many followers as, or even more followers than, Buddhism. In the Buddha's time, such high-class people as kings esteemed both doctrines equally. Our own commentaries, in spite of their tendency to belittle other doctrines intentionally and overly, indicate in some places that there were more followers and disciples of this heretical doctrine in some towns than there were those of Buddhism.

Views About Not-Self Not Considered as False

Views about not-self that are not so heretical as to be outrightly false can be found from those of the ascetics, Āḷā ratāpasa Kālāmagotta and Uddakatāpasa Rāmaputta, who once were teachers sought after by Prince Siddhattha (the Buddha-to-be) when He had not reached His own enlightenment. Both were acknowledged by the Buddha as having a higher status than all others: After the Buddha had reached enlightenment, He considered whom He would teach first and thought of the two ascetics. This means that both of them were very close to being free from sufferings and, if taught by the Buddha, would immediately be so. Unfortunately, by then both had been dead.

The two ascetics' views, particularly about self and not-self, can be summarized as this: When the mind is "ultimately purified," a knowledge of having attained the extreme boundary or limit will arise. The "entity" that knows that boundary or limit is called *khettaññū* or boundary-knower; it is the *ātman* (self) that we all desire to reach, the end of all sufferings. To ultimately purify the mind, the ascetics had fixed rules. That of the first ascetic is what we now call the practice of *ākiñcaññāyatanajhāna,* and that of the second ascetic *nevasaññānāsaññāyatanajhāna.* Both practices are given detailed explanation in books particularly written on them. Here we will consider only the part concerning views about not-self, which, in turn, are the theories leading to such practices.

To easily understand the matter, we need to know that the two ascetics preached the principle of kamma as does the *Buddha, and both opposed yañña* (sacrifice) and other rites, which are also rejected by the Buddha. The Buddha, while still being a *Bodhisatta* (Buddha-to-be), went to see them in order to ask about "cessation of sufferings" or, in other words, the state being completely free from sufferings. Ālāratāpasa told Him that, once one had completely practiced what he taught (what we call akiñcaññāyatanajhāna) the practitioner will spontaneously develop *ñāṇa* or knowledge that the ultimate level of purity or freedom from sufferings exists only while the mind is existing or knowing at that moment. The thing that knows is the ātman. (According to such a concept, the ātman is not the mind or one that is accompanied by *ñāṇa,* because the ātman is an entity that is separate from the mind.) The ātman itself is cessation of all sufferings. The practitioner should then endeaver until he reaches the state just described.

The Buddha argued against this that, no matter whether such a thing is called the soul or something else, the very act of knowing it or perceiving it would prevent it from being considered ultimately or completely liberated. This is because where there is knowledge of a certain thing, there is attachment in the quality of such a thing; knowledge of a certain thing means perception of its quality and existence of attachment to the knowledge or the quality just the same. Even if it is real cessation of sufferings, it is not yet ultimate or complete. The Buddha aimed at something higher than this. Regarding Uddakatāpasa's view, although it consists of practice on a higher level than that of Āḷāratāpasa's, the final result is the same,

that is, the "knower" will appear and the state is regarded as cessation of sufferings. The only difference is that in this latter view the method for training the mind is more profound than in the former, to such an extent that the state of the mind at that moment can be considered neither living nor non-living. However, the result in both cases is the same, namely, the ātman, the entity which comes to know itself that it has reached the pinnacle of purity and will be eternally happy through such a state. In conclusion, the desirable point of the two ascetics was the ātman with the characteristics just described as the end of all sufferings.

According to what P. Carus says in his book, *Biography of The Buddha,* the Buddha-to-be argued with the ascetics by saying:

"... The creatures become enslaved because they have not rid themselves of this view of 'self.'

"In a man's view, an object and its inherent properties are different things. But, actually, it cannot be so. For example, heat in one's view is not the same thing as fire; but, as a matter of fact, you cannot separate heat from fire. Now you say that you can isolate the properties of an object[1] *and leave the object alone without any property. If you understand that this theory of yours is ultimately correct, you yourself will later find that it is not as you understand or insist now.*

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[1] This is explained by that the ascetic expected ātman to exist without consciousness, or the property people attach to, but with knowledge that 'one has a liberated self.' So the Buddha made a comparison that the ascetic said of fire without heat.–Buddhadāsa

"Are we not assemblages of various things that wise men call aggregates individually? We are composed of a physical body, feeling, consciousness, thought, and insight, which, altogether, constitute 'ourselves.' When we say that we are this and we are that, it is nothing other than those aggregates. 'Ourselves' result from combination of the aggregates ... There is no other self of ours apart from our thought. Those who believe that there is something as a distinctly separate entity are the ones who do not have the right view of all matters. A fanatical search to find the ātman is wrong. It is an aim and an inception that are wrong because they are not based on truth; it will lead you to a path that is just as wrong.

"... Your idea that there is 'self' is one which is put between reason and truth (so you do not find truth). Get rid of that idea, and you will see things as they really are. ...

"... Moreover, if there has been liberation but your self still remains to perceive its own entity, how can you really be liberated? ..."

Having said of the views of the two ascetics who took the purified entity and knowledge of cessation of sufferings as *ātman,* the destination that people have to find in order to be considered as liberated from all sufferings, I would like to tell you further that there are some others' views similar to these, but I will skip them to avoid repetition. However, I will say something about another view, the last one, namely, the *Vedānta* of the *Upanishad.* How this view was present in the Buddha's time was not found in the Buddhist scripture, but it can be supposed historically that it existed in the pre-Buddha

time. I learned about this view from some of the *Vedānta* scholars, who graciously explained it to me, and from reading books on this doctrine to the extent that I can get hold of its concept as follows:

The Vedānta View

The content of the Vedānta view goes like this:

When one has developed knowledge, having wisdom and purity at the ultimate level, and all the worldly states have disappeared from his mind, ātman will appear before him. Or in other, simple words, ātman can dislodge from the worldly states, which covered it all along in the past. Now ātman is liberated; hence, it is called moksha, *freedom from all sufferings. Ātman is the term used for calling an entity that exists everywhere but remains unseen as long as the mind is covered with worldly states. Whenever it is seen, it is further seen to exist everywhere. It exists as the same thing in all places, no matter whether it is ours, others', or the common, great one called* Brahma. *It pervades and stays in everything everywhere. Whatever we are, such are you, and such is Brahma. It can, therefore, be said that ātman, or self, is commonly the same for all. Why we are separated into individuals is because of the covering worldly states. If all the worldly states are banished, all ātmans become the same. Take air as a simple analogy: the air inside a bottle and that outside are actually the same air; this is obvious if we break the bottle up. But as the bottle, which is compared to the worldly states, is enclosing the air inside it, this air is perceived as the part belonging to the inside of the bottle. As*

long as we have attachment like this, we will see the air inside the bottle as a separate entity. The same is true for small ātmans, in relation to the great ātman, the great self, or paramātman, *of the universe.* Monksha *(nibbāna* in Buddhism) is the escape of small ātmans from the enclosing worldly states; and in the process, the mind also sees the ātman.

Prominent teachers in some schools of Mahayana Buddhism maintained that ātman of the Vedānta was none other than nibbāna in Buddhism; and this is present in books of the schools. As we listen to this statement, we may see that the two are the same thing. The only difference is in the terms used to call them. This is because in Buddhism there is a principle that, when the mind is liberated from an enclosure such as ignorance *(avijjā)* and all that results from ignorance, it will be free, purified, calm, and cool due to extinction of sufferings; and such a mind also knows that state of cessation of sufferings, namely, nibbaña. Although the words nibbāna, as we call it, and ātman, as they call it, seem to indicate difference, they both mean the state or domain of extinction of sufferings.

But a question has arisen, or can arise any time, that, since the viewpoint of the Vedānta has been as such and has existed since the pre-Buddha time, there should be a reason why the Buddha did not become a follower of this school and let the matter stop there. Some Vedānta scholars answered this question in their own essay that *the viewpoint of the Vedānta was only explained and preached more clearly by the Buddha. Before then, the meaning was so profound that none could easily understand; people misunderstood that the two principles, one belonging to the Vedānta and the other to the Buddha, were different.*

Even if I would be accused of being obstinate, I still insist here that they are different. And how they are different will be deliberated further. At this point, we students should accurately remember the content of each un-Buddhistic viewpoint.

Comparison Among All Views

To summarize most briefly, all the views are divided into two groups: that (the *attavādī*) which proposes existence of self or ātman and that (the *anattavādī*) which denies it.

Among the atavādī, there are some who deny self of certain things, saying that such things are not-self, but consider other things as self. For example, the two ascetics mentioned above denied self of the world and all the worldly states, considering them as not-self, but regarded the knower of deliverance or the escaper from the worldly states as self. The Vedānta proposes similarly. The difference is that, in the latter view, ātman itself is not the knower, but the state resulting from insight after the mind has been liberated from the worldly states and commonly existing in all places. The Vedānta also holds the worldly states as not-self as did the two ascetics. Others, such as Pakudha Kaccāyana, also propose the existence of *jīva* (life), which is probably regarded as self, one that is immortal. Presumably, they consider everything else not-self too. As for Nigaṇṭhanāṭaputta, he was a real *attavādī* master; and we are induced to understand that his view was a form of the Vedānta's that existed in the Buddha's time. Such a view,

which emphasized the practical aspect, was different from that of the present Vedānta, whose explanation is more elaborate and emphasizes more of the philosophical aspect or emphasizes it more distinctly. To summarize, this group considers the entity that is an *asaṅkhatadhamma,* which neither arises nor ceases nor gets conditioned but maintains itself eternally, as the real self or ātman. Since the views of this group strongly emphasize ātman and look for it in the thing no longer subject to sufferings, and they also acknowledge that birth, aging, and death are sufferings, then at least their ātman should not be subject to birth and death. Āḷāratāpasa viewed that the state that knows itself as already mentioned is the entity that will be no longer subject to birth and death.

For the anattavādi, they completely deny everything. An example is Ajita Kesakambala's view, the so-called nihilism. This view does not accept anything that others speak of, that is, it denies both self and not-self. Since they consider that nibbāna, the state of being free from sufferings, does not exist, then whether nibbāna is self or not-self is irrelevant. Pūraṇa-kassapa's view is similar to this but it concedes a minor point that object of desire exists. For example, only such things as can be seen by the eyes can exist. In conclusion, this group considers that everything has no essence but has only a mirage-like illusion, which eventually disappears.

To summarize, we find that those who hold on to a view of permanent self have a sassatadiṭṭhi, *or an eternal-soul view, that is, they consider that a permanent entity exists; we also find that those who hold on to a view of having no self at all*

have an ucchedadiṭṭhi, *or the view that there is nothing as having been said of, but there is only lack of it, or in other words, there is nothing.*

Buddhism, however, does not accept that there is a permanent self as do those holders of *sassatadiṭṭhi.* What is *asaṅkhatadhamma,* even though it neither arises nor ceases but exists eternally, is not self. There is no such self, but there is only extinction or plane of cessation of all worldly states, or *saṅkhatadhamma. Asaṅkhatadhamma* is not attā, or self, that exists permanently as in view of the holders of *sassatadiṭṭhi.* Therefore, Buddhism is not a doctrine of *sassatadiṭṭhi* or, to exmphasize in another way, Buddhism does not have the concept of permanent self. A permanent thing exists, but it is not self. Rather, it is only the state of extinction or the condition after all the impermanent things have become extinct. Buddhism calls this state *nibbāna,* or *asaṅkhatadhamma,* not self.

On the other hand, Buddhism neither denies everything as do the holders of *natthikadiṭṭhi* (nihilistic view) nor considers that one's death is his complete end as do the holders of *ucchedadiṭṭhi* (annihilation view). Buddhism holds the following as definite principles:

(1) For all things, if any belongs to the group that results from causes, or has causes and contributory factors, it will remain in existence as long as the causes and the factors still exist. However, it is impermanent and always changes with its changing causes and factors. Even for what is said to have been dead, if its causes and contributory factors for its reappearance or rebirth still exist, it will reappear or will be reborn; but if

its causes and contributory factors no longer exist, it will become completely extinct. We, however, do not favorably consider these phenomena to be birth and death, for they occur in accordance with their causes and contributory factors; they cannot be born or de' ' by their own choice.

(2) But if anything belongs to the group that does not result from causes and contributory factors, it can exist by itself without having to arise, will never cease to exist, and will also be permanent. For example, the Buddha said that nibbāna exists. This is existence of the state of being free from causes and factors and what results from them. To speak in simpler words, after all the causes and effects have been taken out, what is left behind is neither a cause nor an effect, being completely free from causes and effects, and is the extinction zone for causes and effects. This means that, whenever the entities that are causes or effects enter this zone, they will become completely extinct. However, the state of this extinction zone exists eternally. It is the cessation zone of all sufferings because they are effects, or are classified as effects, arising from such causes as defilements and ignorance. As nibbāna is the extinction zone for all causes and effects as described, this means that nibbāna is also the zone or state of extinction of all defilements and sufferings.

In this sense, Buddhism accepts that there is an eternal entity, one being without causes and effects but not self or ātman. The religion also accepts that there are impermanent things, namely, those with causes which include defilements, good deeds and evil deeds, happiness and suffering, and all

mundane objects related to them. But these exist impermanently, that is, they always change. Therefore, Buddhism is not a nihilistic or an annihilation doctrine, which denies everything.

Let's summarize again that *Buddhism does not embody the eternal-soul view,* for the religion does not accept a permanent self. *Buddhism is not an annihilation doctrine,* for it maintains that things arising from causes and contributory factors depend on the causes and factors, and that the state existing without causes and factors is eternal. *Buddhism is not nihilistic* because it accepts existence of things in one of the two states mentioned above: that which is uncertain and impermanent characterizes the conditioned things, and that which is certain and permanent characterizes the unconditioned.

When we look for the distinction or uniqueness of Buddhism, we find it in that *Buddhism does not embody self.* Although the religion accepts the existence of both permanent and impermanent things, it views the two as having no self or being not-self. Otherwise, it will be one of the un-Buddhistic views already described. More importantly, if it embodies self, it cannot offer knowledge or state for attaining complete extination of all sufferings. This will be particularly described in detail later when we discuss whether nibbāna is self or not-self.

Looking into the matter of comparison among essences of doctrines, we will find that, *for those with self view, the attavadī, even though they go up as high as the supramundane level, they still have self.* Particularly, the Vedānta speaks of *moksha,* the state when ātman is seen to become free from

the worldly states, as the ultimate liberation from sufferings. *For those with not-self view, they are divided into two groups.* One of them, which includes holders of the nihilistic view, completely denies everything, no matter whether it is relatively spoken or absolutely spoken, and accepts nothing. (With deliberation, we will find that such a view concerns neither self nor not-self but single-mindedly aims at denying everything. However, the act of denying is, by pure co-incidence, seen as though it rejected self or not-self.) The other group, that is, Buddhism, accepts that everything is not-self, but at the same time it accepts the existence of things in one of two states: one state continually arising, ceasing, and changing, and the other state having neither origination nor cessation and being unchangeable. Things in these two states, such as the mind, when being referred to in wordly terms, can have the notion of self. This is due to the traditional style of language, which is instinctive for all creatures, since they naturally perceive everything in terms of self. For example, one call everything involving his own existence as "himself." However, if spoken in absolute terms or in accoradance with absolute truth, *Buddhism does not have self but has only the two kinds of "nature"* as mentioned above. If self is spoken in reference to either of the two things, even to the unconditioned which is free from origination, cessation, and change, the reference is in terms of relative truth, or is associated with relative truth, not the really or completely absolute truth. The Buddha tried His best to avoid using the word "self," or relative speaking, in describing the principles of Buddhism. However, when speaking in worldly terms, those which ordinary people use in their

conversation, He sometimes included *attā* or self; and this was when the talk involved morality or people who were still not enlightened.

As a brief concluding remark, *Buddhism, when spoken of on the level of absolute truth, does not embody self;* and this is opposite to *views of other doctrines which, even on their ultimate levels, still have self.* This very self is what they try to find but Buddhism tries to eliminate completely.

The Self That The Buddha Rejects

What is self?

Lexically, the term "self" *(attā* or *ātman)* that represents what the Buddha denies is mostly understood in the context of the term "not-self" *(anattā).* For example, when the Buddha said of the five aggregates as not-self in the Anattalakkhaṇasutta, He described that impermanent entities always change and never yield what we expect of them--and this is not-self. But He did not say that the opposite to this is self. Nevertheless, we logically accept that the opposite can be regarded as self. And this can cause confusion in some ways: Those who desire to have self immediately claim that things of the unconditioned category, such as nibbāna, are permanent and do not change, so they should definitely be classified as self. They also claim that the word "self" in the Buddha's teaching on self-reliance, for example, is possibly meant for this very self. This leads to grasping at nibbāna as self more and more. They forget that nibbāna cannot be under anybody's power. No matter how much one desires for it, one never gets it. It is even beyond anybody's wish. To regard nibbāna, or the unconditoned, as self by citing the principle in the Anattalakkhanasutta to contrast it is unacceptable. Up to this point, we still do not know the characteristics of the self that one should not attach to.

In the Khuddakanikāya and other places in the Pali Canon, the phrase "Sabbe dhammā anattā," which means all entities are not-self, also completely denies self. But it does not enable

us to know the characteristics of self, even in the worldly terms, or what people grasp at as self. However, if we raise a new, simple question: *What is meant by self according to the worldly saying and according to what the Buddha also said of as worldly saying?,* that is, whether self means the body or the mind or something else, then we can find a decisive answer to this question from the Buddha's saying in the Poṭṭhapādasutta, Sīlakhandhavagga, Dighanikāya, which should be studied in detail for easy and clear understanding. Here the author will quote the passages of the Buddha's sayings one by one. It may be rather lengthy, but please maintain your attention to its detailed scrutiny.

The content of the Poṭṭhapādasutta is about Poṭṭapāda, a mendicant, or an ascetic, who wandered to learn and teach a spiritual subject just like the Buddha. One day he met the Buddha and discussed with Him the cessation of *saññā* or, to be more precise, the cessation of consciousness[1] or, to use the term in meditation, the attainment of the cessation of consciousness and sensation. When this kind of consciousness of a person ceases, apparently he is dead but actually he is not.

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[1] The word *saññā* here does not mean remembrance as when someone remembers a song, for example, which is generally understood by most people. Such understanding is very narrow, for the word means consciousness which makes a human being different from a dead person, an unconscious one, or a soundly sleeping one. Also, the word simply means awareness. An unconscious or soundly sleeping person does not have consciousness or awareness. The word *saññā* in the Pali Canon has this particular meaning, which is different from that of the same word in the Pali term *saññākhandha* of the five aggregates, where it mostly means remembrance or recollection.

The wandering mendicant told the Buddha that, in a doctrinal debate assembly, there had been a dispute about this matter. A group of people said that this consciousness could not be controlled by anything; it arose and ceased to exist by itself; whenever it arose in a person, that person became conscious; whenever it ceased to exist, the person became unconscious; and this could happen sooner or later. Another group of people argued that it was not so; it was self that actually was a person's consciousness; whenever self entered us, we always became conscious; whenever self went away from us, we became unconscious and remained so until it returned to us. A third group of people argued that it was not so in both cases; actually there was in this world a certain person of great power and might who existed in a mysterious state; he dictated consciousness to arise or to cease to exist in all of us individually. Still another, and the last, group argued that it was not so in all the preceding cases; actually it was gods who dictated consciousness to arise or to cease to exist in all of us individually. Finally the mendicant said that he believed in the Buddha's enlightenment and expected that He knew about cessation of consciousness. So he asked the Buddha to explain it to him.

The Buddha replied to the mendicant by stating the following substance: Those who held that consciousness had no causes or factors that could control it were certainly wrong, for consciousness could also be caused to occur or to cease by a person's own action. The Buddha then explained how a monk developed *jhāna* (trance), starting from the first level upto *ākiñcaññāyatana jhāna* (trance in the realm of nothingness). Then He explained and exemplified each level separately. For example, when a

monk had attained the **first *jhāna***, his consciousness or feeling of thought disappeared and that of delight *(pīti)* and joy *(sukha)* born out of solitude appeared instead. This was how consciousness appeared and disappeaed under the power of *jhāna* development. So how could one say that it had no causes and factors for its appearance and disappearance? In the **second *jhāna,*** the consciousness of thought conception *(vitakka)* and discursive thinking *(vicāra)* disappeared, and that of joy born out of concentration *(samādhi)* appeared instead. In the **third *jhāna***, the consciousness of delight disappeared and only that of joy born out of equanimity appeared. In the **fourth *jhāna***, the consciousness of joy disappeared and only that of indifferent feeling, which was purified by equanimity, appeared. In the formless *ākāsānañcāyatana jhāna* (absorption in the realm of unbounded space), the consciousness of corporeality disappeared and only that void of form remained. In the *viññānañcāyatana jhāna* (absorption in the realm of boundless consciousness), the consciousness void of form disappeared but that of clear perception or that of the act of consciosness appeared. In the *ākiñcaññāyatana jhāna* (absorption in the realm of nothingness), the consciousness of the act of consciousness disappeared but that of nothingness appeared instead. Finally, in the *saññāvedayitanirodha,* which is the last level of *jhāna,* the consciousness of nothingness also disappeared, and no new consciousness appeared. Thèrefore, the complete cessation of consciousness existed continually in such a state. During the time, we could not say that there was consciousness, for the person has no feeling at all. But we could neither say that there was no consciousness, for the person could be conscious again

after he came out of the *jhāna.* Neither could he be declared dead nor could he be declared not dead. This is the complete cessation of *saññā* or consciousness which could be caused to occur by human's control power or action. The Buddha finally asked the mendicant whether he had ever heard a matter such as this before. The mendicant, feeling greatly in awe, replied that he had not and what the Buddha said was very true.

The meaning of this part of the story is that arising and ceasing of *saññā or consciousness are neither caused by self's entering or exiting the body nor by the working of a powerful person; neither are they caused by power of a god nor are they without causes and contributory factors.* This is evident from that it arises and ceases step by step until it is made to completely disappear by the action of the person who develops *jhāna.* And we can say that it is certainly under the power of causes and factors, namely, its practitioner's action and attempt. The issue in this part essentially is complete denial of self, which some people call *cetabhūta* or *jīvo* (soul) and think of as what enters and exits the body. The self that the Buddha meant implicitly in this case is, therefore, the one created by illusion or foolishness of those who believe that it exists, goes into, and comes out of the body, causing consciousness to appear and disappear in the process. At the same time, the Buddha denied self that is manipulated by a god with power to render a person unconscious or to revive him. We will wholeheartedly agree with Professor Rhys David, a Western scholar and expert of the Pali Canon, who said that, among all passages of the Pali Canon that mention denial of self, there is none that is

as decisive and profound as this Poṭṭhapādasutta, which we will consider further.

Poṭṭhapāda then asked the Buddha: "Is consciousness indeed a person's self? Or is consciousness one thing and self another?"

To this the Buddha asked back: "What kind of self do you mean?"

Poṭṭhapāda replied, *"I mean the obvious one with form, composed of the four primary elements and nourished by food such as rice."*

The Buddha said: "In that case, the consciousness and the self as you mention are not the same thing. You should understand that, as the arising consciousness and the ceasing consciousness are not the same one (for, if one is defined as self, automatically the other must not be self), then the consciousness and the self that you mean are definitely not the same thing." (Pali, p. 231.)

Poṭṭhapāda said: "Then, if I mean the *self resulting from the mind-element, complete with major and minor parts and organs?"*

The Buddha answered: "Even so, the consciousness and the self that you mean are still different things. It's useless to talk about the self you describe. Since even the arising consciousness and the ceasing consciousness are not the same thing (by the same reason as mentioned above), the consciousness and the self that you mean are, therefore, not the same thing." (Pali, p. 231.)

Poṭṭhapāda said further: "Then, if I mean the *formless*

self resulting from the consciousness itself?" (For comparison, a wave results from windblown water. The question is whether the wave and water is the same thing.)

The Buddha answered: "Even so, they are not the same thing. It's useless to talk about your formless self resulting from the consciousness itself. Since even the arising consciousness and the ceasing consciousness are not the same (by the same reason mentioned above, that is, if one is counted off as self, the remaining other, which is not the same as it, cannot be self), the consciousness and the self that you mean, therefore, can never be the same thing." (Pali, p. 232). (For anlogy, as even water at one moment is not the same as that at a later moment, it is absurd to say that wave and water are the same thing.)

The subtle essence here is that, according to the Buddha's principle, even the arising consciousness and the ceasing consciousness (as explained in the section on the various steps of *jhānas)* are not the same thing; they succeed one another in accordance with the power of their conditioning causes and contributory factors, and are just continually and incessantly changeable things, without any part of the process as their own self. When He was asked *whether saññā or consciousness, is self, the Buddha could not answer, for, according to His view, there is no self whatsoever. For mutual understanding, however, He asked back what quality the self meant by Poṭṭhapāda possessed and let the mendicant explained briefly first what he meant by self. After it had been explained, He pointed out the consciousness and self could not be the same thing or, in other*

words, one could not call the thing under discussion, namely, consciousness, as self; and as even the consciousness which came first and that which came later were not the same one, how could it be our essential self? As Poṭṭhapāda could not find any characteristic of self that matched *saññā,* or a person's consciousness, it means that his understanding of self as what felt everything in a person was spontaneously abandoned. And as he could find neither an unfeeling self nor an essential one, it was useless for him to call them self. We should not forget that those mendicants had a preconceived belief that self was actually what felt, thought and did everything in a person. In this sense, and according to the Buddha's view, we cannot find in ourselves a self entity that feels and thinks; there is only an entity or a phenomenon that just changes continually in accordance with its causes and contributory factors.

In those mendicants' doctrines, there were three kinds of self: (1) *the whole body* as is generally understood to be one's own self, (2) *the astral body created psychically,* and (3) *consciousness.* But as the Buddha proved that appearance and disappearance of consciousness can be controlled by the power of *jhānas* as explained earlier, then consciousness could not be regarded as self, for it was unacceptable that self should become a powerless entity or one that could not become conscious or unconscious by itself. Even when the entity with such characteristics as mentioned by Poṭṭhapāda did exist, it could not be called self, for it did not qualify for such a name, that is, it could not become conscious or unconscious by its own power. As he could not find anything that proved to have such

a power and was the only one that was truly eternal, accordingly there was nothing that could be self. It was impossible to let *saññā,* or consciousness, become self, for it continually changed into a different entity. Even as a pair, arising and ceasing consciousnesses were not the same; they were entities that arose and ended in succession as will be explained later in the section on *paṭiccasamuppāda* (the Dependent Origination).

Poṭṭhapāda asked further: "Is there any way to enable me to know whether a person's consciousness and self are the same thing or different things?"

The Buddha answered: "Poṭṭhapāda, it's too difficult for you to understand because you have other views which you have been accustomed to. What you consider as right and proper is something else. You like other views. You attempt to understand in some other ways. You have had teachers in other doctrines."

Poṭṭthapāda changed the matter by asking: "Then, about what I have learned from other teachers who express different views such as that the world is eternal, that the world is not eternal, that the world is finite, that the world is infinite, and so on, which one is true or right?"

The Buddha answered: "These are not what I shall tell (or teach) you."

The mendicant asked why He did not talk about these matters, and the Buddha replied that they were of no use.

We should know that such a question as whether the world is eternal or not is directly concerned with self. But, according to the Buddha's view, self does not exist or cannot

be described. Emancipation from sufferings in His way has nothing to do with such questions or those which begin with the search for self. The Buddha's way requires only seeing things as they really are, that is, wholly dhamma or nature which revolves or rolls on and should not be grasped at or clung to at all, let alone held on to as self. Therefore, He said that such matters were of no use and did not lead to cessation of sufferings. And for that day, the Buddha parted with the mendicant at that moment because the conversation took place in the morning before He went for alms in the town.

A few days later, Poṭṭhapāda, the mendicant, accompained by an elephant trainer by the name of Citta, went for an audience with the Buddha again. He told the Buddha that he was reproached by his fellow mendicants for his having agreed to the Buddha's words even though He said nothing about whether the world was eternal and the like. The Buddha insisted once again that those matters were useless but the Four Noble Truths were directly beneficial for the religious life. Then He added,

"Poṭṭhapāda, some recluses and brāhmanas have a view and say that, after a person's death, his self will be fully happy and nothing can touch or step on it. I went to them and asked whether it was true that they had that view and said so. They said it was true. Then I asked, 'Have you ever seen and known the world that has only happiness (without sufferings).' They said, 'No.' So I further asked, 'Do you all clearly perceive self that is always happy? Even for a night, a day, half a night, or half a day?' To this they said 'No' too. Next, I asked, 'Does

the way of practice like this (which you are using) make the ever-happy world come true?' They declined again. I then asked whether they had ever heard the voices of gods in the ever-happy world who said, 'O men, do good and practice truthfully to attain the ever-happy world (without sufferings); we ourselves have already done so and have attained that ever-happy world.' To this they also declined. So just listen, Poṭṭhapāda, As such, are their words well founded?"

Poṭṭhapāda replied that their words were totally unfounded. And the Buddha additionally said:

"Poṭṭhapāda, this is just as a man says, 'I love and long for a beautiful girl in that family.' But when other people ask, 'Who is she? Does she belong to the warrior caste, the priestly, the common, or the low caste?,' he replies, 'I don't know.' And when they further ask, 'What is her first name? And her family name? Is she tall, short, or of medium height? Is she black, white, or yellow? What village, province, and country is she living in?,' he again replies, 'I don't know.' So they say, 'Young man, do you mean you love and long for a beautiful girl whom you haven't even seen?' and he says, 'That's right.' Now, Poṭṭhapāda, if you can see that what the man says has any substance in whatever point, then you can see the same for what those recluses and brāhmaṇas say (that there is self, but after being questioned, indicate that they do not know self)." (Pali, p. 238.)

"Poṭṭhapāda, or it is just as a man who made a ladder and brought it to a crossroads says that he wants to go up a castle wall. But when other people ask what castle he wants to scale up; where it is; whether it is in the east, west, south, or

north; and whether it is a tall, low, or medium-height one, he tells them that he does not know. So they further ask whether he wants to put the ladder up against a castle that he has not even seen before, and he says he does. Now, Poṭṭhapāda, do you see any substance anywhere in that man's words? It's the same for what those recluses and brāhmaṇas say (that they know the ever-happy self).

"Poṭṭthapāda, *there are only three places where one can find self. What are the three places? Self can be found at (1) the coarse, physical body that is composed of the four primary elements and nourished by food such as rice, (2) the astral body created by the mind element, completed with the same organs as those of the physical body but not of the coarse kind, and (3) the formless self created by consciousness itself.*" (Pali, p. 241.)

"Poṭṭhapāda, *I preach my doctrine for people to discard the three modes of self.*[1] My doctrine is the ḍhamma which, when practiced accordingly, will cause the blemished and gloomy things to disappear and cause the brilliant things to arise and grow greatly. You will clearly perceive the fulfilled state of wisdom and perfection (of mankind) with your own intelligence and stay in this state. Should you suspect that it will be a woeful state, Poṭṭhapāda, I would like to tell you that you should not view it that way, for it consists of joy, bliss, peace, mindfulness, complete awareness, and comfortable existence.

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[1] Actually, the Buddha said of the three modes of self one by one, in a common style of the Pali language. But since the three descriptions are almost identical, the author therefore combined them into one to save the readers trouble in the reading.

"Poṭṭhapāda, suppose other recluses and brāhmaṇas ask me, 'While you are preaching elimination of self, what self do you mean (now that you have said there is no self)?' To this question I shall say 'Whether it is this self or that self doesn't matter, but *the very one you grasp at and realize with your mind* is what to be discarded so that you will be happy.

"Poṭṭhapāda, this matter (that I tell them to discard the self which they hold on to and realize with their mind) is just as a man makes a ladder, brings it to the base of a castle, and prepares to put it up against the castle wall. When other people ask him, 'Which castle do you want to ascend with the ladder you have made?,' he says, 'It's this very castle, whose base I have brought my ladder to.' With this analogy, do you think what I have said is founded?"

Poṭṭhapāda replied that it was firmly founded.

At that moment, Citta, the elephant trainer, said: "When the coarse, physical self is acquired, the self created by the mind-element and the one created by consciousness are not obtained. When the mind-element created self is acquired, the coarse, physical self and the consciousness-created one are not obtained. And when the consciousness-created self is acquired, the coarse, physical self and the mind-element created one are not obtained. This is my view." (What he meant is that all the three modes of self cannot be held on to simultaneously. When a mode of self is attached to, only that particular mode will be seen as existing but the two other are lacking.)

The Buddha said: "Citta, if you are asked whether it will be correct to say that you existed in the long past, not that you never existed before; that you will exist in the future,

not that you will never exist; and that you are exisiting now, not that you are not existing now, what will you say?''

Citta replied that he had to accept the fact that he had existed in the past, would exist in the future, and was existing then.

The Buddha then said: ''Citta, if you are further asked whether it is correct to say that whatever self you held on to in the past is real, other selves are false; whatever self you will hold on to in the future is real, other selves are false; and whatever self you are holding on to now is real, other selves are false, what will you say?''

Citta answered that *whatever self is held on to in whatever time is real specifically for that time, and other selves regarded as false are actually so specifically for that time.* The past self was real only in the past. For the future self and the present self, which were false in the past, they were actually so only in the past. But when the due time comes, each of these two latter selves becomes real. Similarly, the self that was once real in the past will become false at present and in the future.

The Buddha then said: ''Citta, the same is true for the modes of self. *Whenever the coarse, physical self is acquired, the mind-element created self and the consciousness-created self are not obtained; whenever the mind-element created self is acquired, the coarse, physical self and the consciousness-created self are not obtained; and whenever the consciousness-created self is acquired, the coarse, physical self and the mind-element created self are not obtained.*

''Citta, this is just as fresh milk comes from a cow, milk

curd from fresh milk, butter from milk curd, ghee from butter, and junket from ghee. While it is fresh milk, nobody calls it milk curd, butter, ghee, or junket; and when it has become milk curd, nobody calls it fresh milk, butter, or any of the rest. The same is true for the acquired self: whenever a person holds on to the coarse, physical self, he does not consider the one created by the mind-element and that by consciousness as self; whenever a person holds on to the mind-element created self, he does not consider the coarse, physical one and the consciousness-created one as self; and whenever a person holds on to the consciousness-created self, he does not consider the coarse, physical one and the mind-element created one as self.

"Citta, these terms concerning self are used as worldly names in the worldly language, according to the worldly verbal style and worldly designation. Tathāgata [Himself] also uses them conformingly but never holds on to them." (Pali, p. 249.)

Finally, both Poṭṭhapāda and Citta praised this discourse as extremely pleasing. It was like righting up a turned-over vessel, uncovering a covered object, pointing the way for a person who is hopelessly getting lost, and lighting a lamp in the dark so that a person with normal sight can clearly see things. Poṭṭhapāda was converted from a wandering mendicant into a lay devotee to the Buddha's doctrine. Citta asked for and was granted ordination into a monk, and attained arahatship not long afterward.

We can sum up the above-mentioned Pali passage as follows:

(a) *The teachers of various doctrines* held that there was self, which, when a person was dead, would invariably be happy without being harmed by anything. But when they were asked whether they knew such a self, whether they knew the world in which self would go and invariably be happy, whether they could confirm that what they were practicing would enable them to reach the ever-happy world, or whether they heard the gods in that world assure them of such a state, they could neither answer positively nor confirm even one matter in question. Therefore, their views were just dreamy imaginations, and they were comparable to a young man who falls in love with a beautiful girl who does not exist, or a person who has made a ladder for climbing up to a house but does not know where it is.

(b) The Buddha Himself preached abandonment of each of such selves. When people asked the whereabout of the self to be abandoned, He replied that it was exactly where they were holding it, whatever they held on to as self was evident in their mind at that moment, and they should abandon it, never take it as self. Therefore, His request for abandonment had what to be abandoned as a really existing entity. This is unlike a young man who falls in love with a young girl who does not exist, or a person who has made a ladder for climbing up to a house but does not know its whereabout. The abandonment in view of the Buddha then has self to be abandoned, that is, whatever self the person is holding on to. For the teachers who taught that there was self, however, what they referred to as self could not be identified even through a rational principle, and was just a thing one held on to because of misconcep-

tion. This misconception always changed: at one time self was at the coarse, physical body, at another time it was at the astral body, and at still another time it was at *saññā* or consciousness, depending on the way or the time people considered it and on the profundity of the problem they had. Thus, self was incessantly changed like the style of the present-day women's dress, which is never considered as good or beautiful forever. To be more precise, what the Buddha called self and taught people to abandon really exists; it is none other than what ignorance or misconception creates.

(c) *The self to be abandoned* was that which people held on to, namely, the three entities mentioned above. The first was the coarse, or normal, body that was clung to. The second was the astral body that was clung to. This kind of body appears during meditation development or appears by itself sometimes; it is, for example, a greatly mystifying thing that enables us to communicate with our friend who is far away by hearing and seeing within our mind. The other was what was conscious or what created unconsciousness, such as when we are asleep, senseless, or dead, and this was held on to as what alternately entered and exited the body. Whenever there was attachment to self, it would never go beyond the three modes. But the Buddha preached abandonment of all three of them, for then the mind would become pure and wisdom would become complete, consequently leading to happiness. At this point, some people or some individuals turn to grasp at the purity or the happiness as self and call it the real self that the Buddha taught to search for. Grasping at this new self corresponds to the

view in Hindu philosophy that teaches to look for *ātman.* This is well accepted by some Buddhists to the point of insisting that it is really so and the new self is what the Buddha taught to look for, namely, nibbāna. In short, they mean to say that nibbāna is none other than the self that the Buddha taught to look for by abandoning the three kinds of self mentioned above. This point will be considered later. Here let's vividly remember that the Buddha said that, to find self, one needs not look beyond the three modes of self. This means that there are only three bases of foolish attachment for holders of self, namely, *the physical body, the astral body,* and *the mind.*

(d) *Aspects that can perplex some people* exist in the Buddha's words. For example, Citta, the elephant trainer, doubted how, as views of self differed for different persons and different times, self could then be abandoned. Regarding this, the Buddha said that, when a person held on to something as self, he could not take another as a secone self. Even though he might grasp at many things as self during his lifetime, each of them would come at different times. He definitely knew whatever he was holding on to and should abandon it. This is comparable to various kinds of milk and butter, all of which originate from a cow and are successively changed by different processings. When one of the things is considered, it should be meant particularly and then abandoned. The process should be continued until there is no self left for grasping at, that is, *until there is no attachment to self, or nothing that is regarded as self within one's mind.*

(e) Finally, we get the specific definition that *self is just a term which refers to a thing people in the world hold on to as personal identity.* Therefore, *self can never be referred to at the supramundane level,* except when elimination is concerned, that is, only when one wants to dispel misunderstanding about it. It is thus a word referring to an illusion or a mirage, which exists as long as it is attached to. When attachment is over, it spontaneously disappears. Just as pictures in a dream appear to a person only when he is dreaming, self exists only when it is grasped at. *Worldly naming, worldly language, worldly expression, and worldly definition*--these four phrases are used by the people of the world who are induced to speak by their ignorance or their instinct. Suppose that we use the worldly word on nibbāna, making nibbāna become self. This may be applicable but should be limited only to teaching children or those people who still desire to have self just as people in the world naturally tend to do. In general, however, this will not do, for it actually does not allow any benefit. With attachment or desire to attach to self still remaining in a person's mind, even for just a tiny bit of it, he cannot know nibbāna, for nibbāna occurs only when he has eliminated his attachment to self. Therefore, it is inconceivable that a child or a person who is deceived to hold nibbāna as self would be able to know the real nibbāna and still grasp at it as self. If they say that they hold on to something, that thing must only have been born out of a kind of their ignorance. And it is still their duty to abandon it once more before they can attain the nibbāna of the Buddha, which is different from those nibbānas of the doctrines that allow a trace of self to remain in the mind.

To summarize one more time here, *the self often referred to by the Buddha is only a thing that an ignorant person naturally grasps at as his ego.* When it is identified in concrete terms, it can appear, as already described, in three modes which people generally grasp at. The term, or what is addressed as, 'self' is expressed by people of the world in accordance with what their ignorance makes them desire to call. No matter whether it is at a higher or lower level, it is still ignorance just the same. Therefore, the characteristic of self is uncertain; it depends on who regards what as self. But there is one common feature of various modes of self: being the only basis of attachment due to ignorance. This means that what is called self can always change in accordance with the knowledge level of the holder, which varies from person to person and from time to time. It is comparable to a cow-milk product or a delicious food-stuff produced from a cow. At a certain time the product is called milk, but another time it is called curd, butter, ghee, or junket. And finally, the cow-milk product merely means elements that are naturally combined and continually vary according to the circumstances. What elements they are and what changes they have undergone can be best explained by chemistry. Nevertheless, we should not regard them as a cow-milk product or a specially wonderful thing.

After quite enough has been explained for the characteristic of self meant by the Buddha when He mentioned this word sometimes, for example, in His saying "self is self's own refuge,' while the word actually is a worldly one He borrowed for a talk without holding on to how the people of the world who used the word existed, we can say that we have known *self*

of the worldly people which is meant by those who ordinarily grasp at it. However, there is self at another level: the *supra-mundane self* which some people grasp at and hold on to. This is *"purity"* or perfection of *ñāṇa* (insight) which occurs when all of the three modes of self mentioned previously have been eliminated, or when this state is meditated upon when the three modes of self are being eliminated.

Self of Ultimate-Dhamma Practitioners

The readers may be able to recall that, in the previously described Poṭṭhapādasutta of the Pali Canon, the Buddha at one time said to Poṭṭhapāda: "Poṭṭhapāda, I preach elimination of (the three modes of) self. This practice, when followed by anybody, will lead to subsidence of his blemish and to extremely good growth of his *'purified state.'* You will be able to realize perfection of wisdom and achieve fullness (of the spiritually elevated human being) with your own intelligence and remain in such a state. ... It will be filled with bliss, joy, tranquillity, mindfulness, complete awareness, and happy existence."

(Sīlakhandhavagga, Dīghanikāya, 9/242.)

What is referred to as the *'purified state'* has been the obsession of ultimate-dhamma practitioners before. They turn back to grasp at self once again after they have previously denied it on three levels. They hold on to purity as nibbāna or self and teach others to take it as a refuge. They also persistently teach further that, in the Buddha's saying of *attā hi attano nātho–self is self's own refuge,* the word 'self' that comes first actually is purity, not the self entity that suffers and has to help itself as generally said of. For this kind of self, the author would like to give a specific name here (out of necessity for prevention of confusion and for simplicity in referring to a particular meaning) as the "ultimate dhammists' self," or

simply "ultimate self," in connection with the ultimate-dhamma practitioners who are attached to self just as opium addicts are drawn to opium.

One more thing, we should note that *this ultimate self is what doctrines other than Buddhism have taught for a long period since before the Buddha's time,* and extremely similar or close to the viewpoint of Buddhism. Their explanation, which is on the same tract as ours, is that, when a person has abandoned attachment to the world or all things that arise, change, and die out, the real self, the so-called ātman in the Sanskrit language, will appear to him. The self on this level is permanent, eternally happy, and extremely pure. It belongs to every individual and is a part of the whole self of the world. It is what some of us Buddhists are misled to grasp at and hold on to, and teach others to do the same, saying that it is a principle of Buddhism. Therefore, it is called here as the ultimate dhammists' self. The reason for using this name is that it is only a trace of self that still remains, like an exhaled cigarette smoke, with the ultimate-dhamma practitioners who have been tightly attached to self but have progressed almost to the pinnacle of their practice. Without being deluded to hold on to the self, or by discarding it for one more step, they would get themselves free from the bondage of self.

Such attachment to the ultimate self is only slightly remaining delusion in the last stage of practice. If not stubbornly held on to, it is not counted as a wrong view. This is because it is just like a straying arrow of wisdom, or a slightly remaining "trace of smoke" of ignorance, which needs to be discarded

for one more, and the last, time in addition to the previous, three successive abandonments of the coarse, physical self, the astral self, and the consciousness self. *Actually, this kind of self does not occur to everyone but occurs only to those who have previously attached too tightly to self,* or those whose doctrine develops through the search for an answer to *"what is the real self?,"* particularly, the Hindu philosophy. But for a doctrine develops through the search for an answer to *"what is the ultimate cessation of sufferings?,"* this kind of remnant cannot occur, and there is no need for the practitioner to discard self for one more time at this stage. For example, when the Five Ascetics who followed the Buddha were able to discard self in the five aggregrates and did not grasp at freedom from attachment to them as the real self instead, they attained arahastship immediately. For this, there is a Buddha's saying: *"As you have put down your old burden, do not take up anything else as a new burden again* (nikkhipitvā garuṁ bhāraṁ aññaṁ *bhāraṁ anādiya)."*

You will never find this *"ultimate-dhammists' self"* in *our Buddhist scriptures,* for the Buddha did not said of it. But some people in only certain eras were deluded to disguise it as the Buddha's verbal expression and taught it to the self-loving people, who easily took it because, as common humans, they were naturally inclined to self. Such a damage as this could occur because those people were either inadequately educated or never tutored in the academic principle of the religion. Therefore, they claimed that what they said popped up from their own insight, which was unlike the memorized knowledge of the scripture scholars. They also taught their

students never to believe the scripture scholars, even when the scholars had practiced *vipassanā* (insight development) before. In brief, this kind of self can occur in our Buddhist circle because of *insufficient knowledge of certain persons who are not all-around learners, their lowering dhamma to their convenience or desire, and their speculative claim based on their strong inclination to self. This is done so that their teaching will please the worldly audience whose instinct has already been filled with self. Or else both the teachers and disciples are severely "dhamma-drunk," blindly and incessantly pulling down dhamma to the level of their self.* This is only about our Buddhist circle, whose members have different viewpoints.

Among non-Buddhist people, such as some Upanishad sects which have their own philosophy, they certainly have already held on to this kind of ultimate self since the pre-Buddha time, for it is the most important part of their doctrine. They undertook their study by asking the question: *What is ātman, the actual self?* As described earlier, they differ from us Buddhists who follow our doctrine by asking the question: *What is cessation of sufferings?* Although the associated Hindu philosophy has been expanded and updated more and more even after the Buddha's time, such as the newest viewpoints of the Vedānta which was improved in the Saṅkarācāriya's time, it is, as before, still one with ātman or self as its objective. This is because their philosophy is as such, and they desire and are contented with it, seeing nothing beyond the existing level. And this has resulted in the various philosophies of the world.

(I would like to declare my intention here that the discussion does not aim at comparing Buddhist philosophy with other philosophies to determine which is better or higher, for each side has one for its own and is contented with it. Rather, the necessary inference is intended for contrasting and seeing how they are different, for preventing a mix-up and preventing one from mistaking another's doctrine as one's own. Or, more particularly, I would like to maintain my viewpoint that the Buddhist view differs from the Hindu view as described; and therefore my fellow Buddhists should not falsely take theirs as ours, for it would be damaging to both sides. Or, to be still more particular, I insist that the Buddhist view is like this, not like that as some have maintained, which matches the Hindu or the Brāhminist view.)

Actually some doctrines which are generally known as *wrong views should not have come to this world; their existence should not have lasted.* But they do exist; and we may sometimes believe that, when all their minor sects are also counted, they even outnumber the right ones. Therefore, it is by no means strange if the philosophy of a certain doctrine is different from ours, for it is their own doctrine. But since *Buddhism has been established by passing up philosophical viewpoints of some doctrines and denying such doctrines one by one*--for example, it denies the doctrines of the Six Teachers, Āḷāratāpasa's Sāṅkhaya doctrine, and Uddakatāpasa's dotrine which is very similar to it--then, to discuss and clearly understand the principle of Buddhist philosophy, one must turn to bring up those doctrines

to compare with it and to see the difference. And in particular, one must see how strongly the Buddhist view has denied or opposed those other views and how it got past them (according to one's viewpoint) one by one until it is evidently seen as right or having reached the end of sufferings.

All of you readers should know that, when the Buddha-to-be, as a Bodhisatta, rejected Āḷāratāpasa's views, He did not denounce it as wrong but only denied that it had reached the end of sufferings, for this end must be higher, that is, to be reached by abandoning *khettaññū* or ātman in one more step. It will also be all right if you take ātman as the end of sufferings, but in so doing, it will turn out that what Āḷāratāpasa described cannot be counted as ātman, for holding on to ātman means that there is still some suffering left. However, in reality the ascetic or his disciples were contented with that level of liberation or stopped at that point, and it was his own doctrine, there was nothing unusual about this. On the other hand, it would be very strange if a disciple of a teacher takes up another teacher's viewpoint and claims it as his own teacher's, or if he claims that such a viewpoint is what he himself has realized by his own insight and is exactly the same as what the Buddha has taught or is right according to the Buddha's wish.

In order to know that *holding on to such an ultimate self as mentioned above is not in line with the Buddha's viewpoint,* for the latter requires the self to be discarded once more before the mind can be really and definitely purified, it is necessary to bring in the view, which existed even before the Buddha's time, to compare with the Buddha's and to see what it is on

each side. It is this purpose that causes the discussion in this section, which is concerned with the remnant of self, or the "ultimate-dhammists' self," to become rather long. As mentioned before, the remnant of self or the ultimate-dhammists' self in Buddhism is the same as the ātman of a sect of Hindu philosophy. How are they the same? This can be answered by just bringing into consideration their philosophical viewpoint. And if you believe that the Buddha's view is different from the Hindu one, I hope you will carefully scrutinize the latter. The reason why Brāhminism and Buddhism are two separate religions is that they differ from each other mainly at this point. Otherwise, it would never be necessary to have different religions.

For this concept of ultimate self in Hindu philosophy, I believe that the *Bhagavadgītā* is the scripture that we can best understand, and the most widely known too. The ātman in the Bhagavadgītā agrees well with almost every important sect of Hindu philosophy, except for those without an ultimate state. (Please note that there are also some Hindu sects without an ultimate philosophy. The trouble about this is that we call their various sects altogether as Hinduism.) The ātman mentioned here is immortal; it has no birth, no death; neither it is created by anybody. They teach people to grasp at this state as self after having discarded the body and mind and all the mundane entities. This is suitable for encouraging or heartening people, *for they hold on to the new self which is more valuable or more genuine than the old one;* it also goes well with soldiers.[1]

[1] A Hindu friend of mine told me that Hitler's Nazi government distributed this book in tens of thousands of copies among their soldiers.

As this book explains ātman or the genuine self very clearly, I think that we should rather quote its passages for discussion than explain them in our own words. But if, of necessity, any passage needs help of a footnote because, for example, it is explained in the part that is not quoted (due to its undue length), then a footnote will be given. For extremely important principles, the original passages in Sanskrit will also be broght in so that interested readers can consider it more precisely.

Ātman in the Bhagavadgītā

The following are some verses which indicate the characteristics of ātman in the Bhagavadgitā:

a. *It* (the ātman) *is never born nor dies; It neither exists nor comes into being. It is unborn, eternal, everlasting, and primeval. It is not slain even when the body is cut up.* (Chapter II, Verse 20.)

b. *Weapons cannot cut It, nor can fire burn It. Water cannot drench It, nor can wind make It dry up.* (Chapter II, Verse 23.)

c. *It is incapable of being cut; It is proof against fire, impervious to water, and undriable as well. It is eternal, omnipotent, immovable, constant, everlasting.* (Chapter II, Verse 24.)

d. *It is spoken of as unmanifest, unimaginable, and immutable. Therefore, knowing It as such, you will never grieve.* (Chapter II, Verse 25.)

e. *Know It as indestructible and pervasive in all things. None can bring about destruction of this imperishable substance.* (Chapter II, Verse 17.)

f. *Just as we* (by convention) *in this body go from boyhood to youth, and from youth to old age, ātman goes from this body to another.* (Chapter II, Verse 13.)

g. *Just as a man discards worn-out clothes and takes other new ones, this "embodiment" likewise casts off worn-out bodies and enters into others which are new.* (Chapter II, Verse 22.)

h. *They are both ignorant, he who understands the "entity" as capable of killing and he who thinks of It as killed, for verily It neither kills nor is killed.* (Chapter II, Verse 19.)

i. *From It is the emanation of all creatures, and It pervades all of them. By worshiping It through the performance of his own duty, man attains perfection.* (Chapter XVIII, Verse 46.)

j. *For a person who has conquered* (low-level or conventional) *self, his "self" (ātman) will be the same no matter whether it is amidst cold or heat, joy or sorrow, honor or ignominy.* (Chapter VI, Verse 7.)

k. *Or if you would regard "It" as constantly taking birth and constantly dying* (in conventional sense), *you should not grieve with it.* (Chapter II, Verse 26.)

The author would like to additionally expalin here the verses above: What is represented by "It" or the "embodiment" in all the associated verses means ātman. The ātman here means the self which is considered as not undergoing birth, death, change, etc., the characteristics known among us Buddhists as *asaṅkhatadhamma* (the unconditioned) or nibbāna. What they say, that ātman pervades everything in general, is similar

to what we accept, that the element of nibbāna is omnipresent or *asaṅkhatadhamma* pervades all things. That ātman changes the embodiment, as they say, means that it does not perish with the body and the mind, for it neither arises nor dies out, being always the same in all lifetimes and remaining so until it gets free from the body or all the worldly things. This state is called *moksha* (liberation), in which the ātman becomes genuine. Having gotten free, it is referred to as the genuine self or the higher self and is different from the conventional self, which is held on to by one's natural instinct, such as when one grasps at the body or the mind as self.

The readers should understand clearly that the genuine self here does not mean the mind, for the mind still appears and disappears. For lack of proper terms, the author has to call it ātman as in the original scripture. Some of our Buddhist teachers teach that the unconditioned state or the unconditioned element is the core of conditioned states or conditioned elements, that is, the core which the conditioned elements take hold and grow on, leading to its appearance, disappearance, and change. They also call the unconditioned as our genuine self or nibbāna and teach us to search for this very self, which will show up after we have eliminated all defilements or worldly things. They maintain that this is a principle of Buddhism. Such a statement as this, if not intended as personification or worldly expression in conventional terms, is an extremely severe misinformation of the Buddha's words. The Buddha's words do not lead people to search for self or ātman as does the Hindu view. Nor do they form the principle of holding on to ātman or the genuine self as a refuge. On the contrary, they only teach

people to completely abandon all kinds of self attachment, until the mind is free, uninvolved in any self. About the Buddha's saying that *self is self's own refuge* (attāhi attano nātho), some people understand and explain the former self, which is the refuge of the latter. as ātman or nibbāna, and regard the latter as the conventional self that one grasps at. This understanding is apt to obliterate the Buddha's words to the extent that they can be absorbed into other doctrines. In truth, taking the genuine self or the "nibbāna" self as refuge is exactly a Hindu concept just the same, as can be seen from the following verses:

l. *One should lift oneself by the "higher self"* (the ātman) *and should never make oneself grieve, for the "higher self" is a true friend* (of the smaller or ordinary self), *but the "higher self" can become an enemy too.* (Chapter VI, Verse 5.)

(Uddhared ātmanātmānaṃ
nātmānam avasādayet /
ātmaiva hy ātmano bandhur
ātmaiva ripur ātmanaḥ //)

m. *The "higher self" is one's friend when one has allowed the "higher self" to govern, but the "higher self" is one's enemy when one has not been conquered by the "higher self."* (Chapter VI, Verse 6.)

(Bhandhur ātmātmanas tasya
yenātmaivātmanā jitaḥ /
anātmanas tu starutve
vartetātmaiva sātruvat //)

We should consider this point in order to clearly understand the view of this doctrine that *the higher self or ātman here is regarded as dhamma or law of the dhamma also,* and the same thing as what is meant by nibbāna. This self, or dhammic self, is friendly to everybody who accepts dhamma. Or, metaphorically speaking, the "dhammic self" will be friendly to those who yield to dhamma or subject themselves under the power of dhamma; for those who reject dhamma, however, the self will become their enemy. Therefore, when a person wants to take this self as refuge, he must yield to it first. The self means dhamma, and dhamma or its law is also included in ātman. In other words, they are the same thing, referred to as the same thing, and called by a common term of ātman.

Buddhism does not accept this self, or dhammic self, as our own self, but refers to it simply as dhamma, even though it is the unconditioned one. In His saying that self is self's own refuge, both of the word "self" here are meant by the Buddha as the ordinary one: whichever self is suffering has to help itself or take itself as its own refuge. But how can one help himself? One can help himself by practicing dhamma, particularly that dhamma specified in the Buddha's own words, namely, the Four Foundations of Mindfulness *(Satipaṭṭhāna),* in order to eliminate self or attachment to self. Being void of self, one no longer needs any refuge. Then he is left with dhammas only; the conditioned ones undergo change as usual, whereas the unconditioned remains tranquil in the same way as it started becoming so. At this stage, one has no self; he does not get help from dhamma by grasping at it as a possession and taking it as a refuge; he does not get help from nibbāna by

holding on to it as the self that can be his refuge, except when he misunderstands because of his ignorance, for nibbāna is just a kind of dhamma.

Next, the author would like to quote some more *verses from the Bhagavadgītā on the part that shows a principle so similar to that of Buddhism* that both are hardly differentiable from each other. Both sides have essences which are most alike; the only difference is that one side has ātman while the other side does not.

n. *The unreal has no real existence, and the real never ceases to exist. The truth about both can be perceived by those who see the "true self" of all things.* (Chapter II, Verse 16.)

o. *This coarse, physical self can never get away from the influence of actions. "He"* (the ātman) *who has completely got free from actions should properly be called the really liberated one.* (Chapter XVIII, Verse 11.)

p. *Good, evil, and mixed–these are the fruits of action hereafter for those who have not given up the action. But they are void for those who are really liberated.* (Chapter XVIII, Verse 12.)

q. *One who has liberated himself is imbued with purity and wisdom and completely free from doubts. "He" does not hate untempting actions and renounces tempting actions.* (Chapter XVIII, Verse 10.)

r. *He whose intelligence does not get stuck anywhere, who has subdued himself and has completely eliminated craving, has reached the supreme state of complete freedom from*

all bondages through his renunciation of actions. (Chapter XVIII, Verse 49.)

s. *O, thou, a Kuntī's family member, know from Me briefly how he who has reached the supreme state can take hold of the Eternal, which is the highest stage of knowledge.* (Chapter XVIII, Verse 50.)

t. *Attain union with wisdom, the knowledge for purifying oneself, steadily restrain yourself, renounce sound and other objects of the senses, and eliminate love and hatred.* (Chapter XVIII, Verse 51.)

u. *Stay calm in a secluded place, be contented and desire little, take control over the body, speech, and the mind, constantly meditate, and take those who are void of defilements as refuge.* (Chapter XVIII, Verse 52.)

v. *Eliminate selfishness, self-centeredness, hypocrisy, lust, anger, and greed. Instead, become unselfish and peaceful. He who has done these is ready to become "the Eternal."* (Chapter XVIII, Verse 53.)

w. *Having become the Eternal, and cheerful within ātman, one neither grieves nor desires anything any more. He is one with all creatures and is regarded as supremely devoting to Me.* (Chapter XVIII, Verse 54.)

x. *Through devotion, one comes to correctly understand who I am and what I am. As one correctly knows Me in essence like this, he immediately attains the supreme state.* (Chapter XVIII, Verse 55.)

From these verses, we can see that *they have a principle which is extremely similar to that of Buddhism* and is full of reason just the same. The only difference is that they have ātman, or the genuine self, as the consistent back-up whereas the viewpoint on our side regards that self has to be completely eliminated, only dhamma is left present, and the changeable dhammas can naturally change. Presentation of this discussion may be seen as irrelevant, but it is actually an important part which enables us to see clearly how much the Hindu and the Buddhist viewpoints are alike. And what we have to know as the difference between the two viewpoints is, of course, at the ātman: they aim at reaching for it and, when they have attained it, take it as deliverance and happiness. Their state of happiness is reached when insight or the mind has attained ātman, as evident from the following two verses to be presented finally:

y. *When one has abandoned all cravings and is contented in ātman through the influence of ātman, he is said to have a stable mind.* (Chapter II, Verse 55.)

z. *Yathā dīpo nivātasye*

neṅgate sopamā samṛtā /
yogino yatacittasya
yuñjato yogam ātmanaḥ //

Just as a light does not shake in a place sheltered from the wind, a yogi with a trained mind who is sitting and joyfully practicing the "ātman-aimed yoga" is likewise unwavering. (Chapter VI, Verse 19.)

We can see from the last verse that *their yoga or contemplation aims at ātman and ends with successfully finding ātman*. Then they are joyful in ātman, or "self," and contented with realization that it is indeed ātman or that ātman is what they have found, being the genuine self in place of a false self which they were previously misled to hold on to. Some of us Buddhists who hold on to nibbāna as the genuine self are just like the Hindu. They are deluded into taking something as nibbāna. Actually, as long as there is a notion of self, true nibbāna cannot appear. And when nibbāna really appears, perception of self will never remain at that moment.

Ātman in Jainism

Next we will discuss the principle of Jainism, or Niganṭha (Nigrantha) doctrine, to see why it is extremely similar to that of Buddhism. This doctrine has rivaled Buddhism, since the Buddha's time, when Mahāvira or, as he was also called, Niganṭhanāṭaputta was its first teacher. Although he gave only a short teaching, later his principle was greatly expanded to be easily comprehensible. Nevertheless, its essence is still the same, that is, in brief it has ātman as its goal. For example, one of their verses is as follows:

(a) *Jñāṇabhāvanayā siktā*
nibharṭenāntrātmanaḥ /
apramattaṃ guṇaṃ prāpya
labhante hitamātmanaḥ //

He who has meditated on insight is due to perceive ātman internally, and, having completely eliminated carelessness, attains the goal, that is, ātman.

(From Kulabhadrācāriya's *Sārasamuccaya,* Verse 218)

Moreover, *Jainism also has the word nibbāna for use,* although it is written in Sanskrit as nirvāṇa. And the pertinent message clearly shows that nirvāṇa and ātman are in the same thing altogether, as can be seen from the following verse:

(b) *Sravaddhandadhavinirmuktaṃ*
sthānamātmasva bhāvajaṃ /
prāptaṃ paramanirvāṇaṃ
yenāsau sugataḥ smarṭaḥ //

He is due to be called Sugata who has attained the supreme nirvāṇa, which is free from all evil things and is the natural state (characteristic) of ātman. (From Àpata Suvarūpa.)

From this verse of theirs, we can see that *what is called nirvāṇa in Sanskrit or nibbāna in Pali is what they refer to as ātman or attā,* and the state of being free from sufferings or all the evil things is nirvāṇa. This is the natural characteristic of ātman just as wetness is the natural characteristic of water. In brief, their view states that attaining nirvāṇa is attaining ātman and attaining ātman is attaining nirvāṇa as well; and this is the genuine self.

We can find further that *their notion of kamma and nibbāna is also extremely similar to our Buddhist one.* In their doctrine, *kamma is devoid of influence when ātman appears,* just as in our case there is a principle that *an old kamma loses its influence and a new one is deactivated when one attains nibbāna* or the highest supramundane plane. A Jainist scripture, namely, Kunadakunadācāriya's Samayasāra, Verse 198, goes as follows:

(c) *Rāgo doso moho ya āsavā*
ṇ'athi sammādiṭṭhissa /
tahmā āsavabhāveṇa viṇā
hedū ṇa paccayā honti //

Lust, anger, and delusion, which are defilements that cause kammas to be committed, do not occur in those who have right views. Therefore, kammas cannot cause severe suffering for those who have attained ātman, for their defilements have been eliminted.

Also Brahmacārī Sītāla Prasāda, a present-day Jainist master, said:

"According to Jainism, nirvāṇa is a state or characteristic of ātman that gets free from the influence of karma and from the perception that causes all kinds of karma to be committed. It is the state that is free from all kinds of body, coarse or fine; it is the extinction of all worldly sufferings, but full of happiness, peace, and brilliance; it is the Eternal, no longer subject to degradation."[1]

Regarding this statement, we can see that *even Jainism denies the coarse, physical body and the astral body, just as the Buddha did as described in the Poṭṭhapādasutta of the Pali Canon. It also denies the formless body, that is, consciousness, for it ultimately aims at the state beyond kamma.* Therefore, all of the students should correctly remember once again how closely the view of this doctrine is associated with our Buddhist view. If we just carelessly say according to what we are thinking for ourselves, we are apt to unknowingly transform the Buddhistic principle into that of another doctrine. What is said of here as close association means that the majority is the same for both of the principles. Only some aspects of the two are different, particularly that Buddhistic aspect of voidness of perception of ātman or self. What is to be regarded as nibbāna in Buddhism can be so done only when one has lost the perception of ātman. Even though this is only a small step beyond the other principle, we should carefully note that our doctrine becomes the direct opposite of the other doctrine, for it does not leave ātman

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[1] ***Comparative Study of Jainism and Buddhism, p. 22.***

within attainment of insight, whereas ātman still exists in the other doctrine. We cannot accept the insight which ātman still remains with as the right view.

The Jainist master said further that *this ātman in the purified state is the same as the one that was previously tainted, or enclosed within worldly states, and has been our genuine self all along.* However, when it was tainted, it could not recognize itself, for the worldly states or defilements took over as the "self." The genuine ātman characteristically fights for its freedom or liberation from the worldly states, and it always takes this as its direct duty or its nature, as described in the following verse of the Rāmāyaṇa: *"Just as birds are created to fly and rivers are created to flow by nature, ātman exists to follow its own duty."* This statement certainly indicates acceptance or consideration that one always has a self, both when he is liberated and when he is not, which is very opposite to the Buddhistic principle.

Turning back to consider *the philosophy of those in India who believe in God,* we will again see their superb ingenuity in their regard that *God is none other than ātman.* Ātman pervades everything, or is omnipresent, and is refered to as Brahma in the language of those who revere it as God. They say that taking Brahma as a personified God is an act of the lesser people, and it is necessary to let such people do so in the mean time before they come to know Brahma or ātman later when they have more intelligence. The acceptance of Brahma as a personified God is thus comparable to a fence or a chain that primarily encircles them for stronger faith.

This point suddenly makes me think about our own side: teaching people to take nibbāna as the genuine self or ego is, just the same, like setting up a fence or looping a rope to primarily draw them into the doctrine. It is better than leaving them alone without any self whatsoever as their refuge. Later on they may be able to discard this last self.

Supplementary View of A Scholar

Baij Nath Khanna wrote in his book, *Light of Bhagavad Gita,* as a guide for us to clearly understand the concept: *"Atman stays beyond material influence of karma; it is in the divine region. The corporeal world has nothing to do with it. Atman is thus what possesses true supremacy."* (Page 10.)

"God is eternal. In Him there is neither temporal nor spatial limit. What is not born cannot die. Ātman is completely free from destruction and death. It has no beginning and thus has no end." (Page 6.)

These statements are greatly heartening for the followers of the associated doctrine, for they help one feel that *one's self and God are the same thing;* one's true self is ātman; God is ātman, and both are the same one. Or, to say more definitely, God is the whole and each individual creature is a part. But since ātman is beyond the restriction of time and space, ātman cannot be measured in size or time, or anything else whatsoever. Hence, there is neither small nor large ātman; it is actually the same one. One who sees ātman will become one with God, who is the Universal Self. It can be said that people in the whole world are the same one. And so are all kinds of creatures. This one, and only one, *"Soul" is the core or essence of the world or the people. Whoever sees this truth will become united with the Soul, just as the Christian view states that he*

becomes united with God. Eventually, there is "self" forever, that is, the Eternal Self.

At this stage, the students should first try to size up how ultimate (or profound) the self or ātman of this kind of ultimate dhammists is. This will enable them to anticipate one more step further how profound a philosophy, if any, which goes beyond this will be. And, particularly, that one is none other than the Buddhist philosophy.

Self in View of Western Scholars

Before returning to consider the Buddhist philosophy, let's cross over and look for some viewpoints in the Western philosophy to see whether there is anything different that can remain as self more beautifully than what was previously mentioned. However, we should note from history that, while India was brightly lit up with the ātman philosophy during the Buddha's time, Europe was not yet shined upon by the sunlight of this philosophy of the uncoditioned. It began to get some in the Roman era, a little after the end of the Buddha's lifetime (when the Buddha passed away), but what it got was mostly about society. Discoveries of secrets in meta-physics, which is concerned with the mind and a subtle nature, and progress in this field can be said of as having been made only recently. And, without doubt, our Eastern philosophical concepts have widely pervaded into the bases of Western thinking. This is because the Phoenecian, or Babylonian, had made contact with India

long before the Buddha's time, and land routes had been set up between India and Palestine, some reaching Rome, since the ancient times and before the formative period of the Western philosophy. However, we will now withdraw from the history, saying just that, whatever is the foundation of Western philosophy development from the beginning up to now, we want to know just what they say about the principle of ātman or self, and will concern ourselves with the currently available information.

For Western philosophers in all periods, we can classify them into two groups just like their Eastern counterpart, namely, that with self and that with not-self. The self group originated mainly from religions with moral principles and actions, or kammas. Therefore, they need self for performing actions or receiving the results of the actions and fear suffering. The not-self group originated from scientific concepts given by the materialist and later progressed to the psychic or spiritual level. The not-self concept of this group sometimes goes so far as to become nihilism. But here we will look for viewpoints about self only, and we will see how far they have gone.

The cloud of self can be seen to form from Cicero's words: *"Whatever that be, which thinks, which understands, which wills, which acts, it is something celestial and divine; and, upon that account, must necessarily be eternal."* Even though he did not call that entity as self or soul, he accepted that there was something which separated itself from heaven or a mysterious place. This thing was unimaginable and came to be the essence of our physical body. It was what thought, acted, felt, and received various results. It existed for such

purposes or could do so throughout eternity.

We can see a further clue from Bailey's words: *"The temples parish, but the God still lives."* This shows that he believed in what knows neither death nor destruction and accepted that such a thing would definitely exist. But since he could not properly call it otherwise, he had to name it God.

Epictetus said: *"I am a soul, dragging about a corpse."* By this he meant that his or our true self was not the physical body but a mysterious entity called self or soul. This soul carried along the body on its trip, the body being only a corpse or a frame. In this sense, he knew "self" deeper than what he would from his instinctive inducement, namely, the ordinary body which any savage or animal can know. He took this thing as the essence of what was referred to as human being. This view is not different from an old view of the Indian's or that which Poṭṭhapāda told the Buddha.

Goethe, another Western scholar, said: *"I am fully convinced that soul is indestructible, and that its activity will continue through eternity. It is like the sun, which, to our eyes, seems to set in night; but it has in reality only gone to diffuse its light elsewhere."* From this we can see that this scholar believed that self, or soul, does not perish as the physical body, and it can always actively perform its duty forever. Death, to him, was a camouflage, for only the body perished but the real body or self was "alive" on the other side just as it had been before. This was comparable to the sun, which, in reality, exists the way it does all the time, but we misunderstand it when we see it rise, brightly shine, and set or disappear. If we could

ride on the sun, we would see that it is the same all the time, never shining more brightly or dimly at times as we usually see it. Self, in Goethe's view, also behaved like this: whether the body was being born, growing into an adolescent, or dying, self was always the same and eternally remained so without change. We can see that his view goes well with the Hindu philosophy: he took a certain entity as self, which existed eternally and unchangeably. But we have to say that his view was really optimistic about the activity of self; he wanted self to "persistently work" forever, that is, wanted to have self for work indefinitely just as some doctrines wish to be happy and peaceful (without having to do any work) eternally. If, however, we interpret doing work as being happy, or being happy is the same as doing work, then it is quite all right.

Charles Wesley is another one who believed in this self that works incessantly. He said:

"A charge to keep I have,
A God to glorify;
A never dying soul to save,
And fit it for the sky."

Goethe said in another passage: *"To me, the external existence of my soul is proved from my idea of activity. If I work incessantly until my death, nature will give me another form of existence when the present can no longer sustain my spirit."* He believed in rebirth of self and eternality of self. He seemed to hold a principle that enthusiasm for work was an important factor of the existence of self. We do not find what he said of cessation of self. Perhaps he never thought about

the last act of self more than the unchangeable existence of happiness just like that of the Hindu philosophy.

Addison explained the characteristic of self most profoundly when he said that *there was no burden in its own existence.*[1] This is opposite to the fact that we human beings carry a heavy burden in our existence. At least we have to eat, to excrete, to perform other bodily functions, and to acquire the objects that would satisfy our craving. That statement of his indicates the characteristic of happiness very profoundly. It also mentions immortality and imperturbability, which show that this state or dhamma is deeper than or beyond the worldly sense. He also said:

"The Soul, secure in her existence, smiles
At the drawn dagger, and defies its point,
The stars shall fade away, the sun himself
Grow dim with age, and nature sinks in years;
But thou (the soul) shalt flourish in immortal youth,
Unhurt amidst the war of elements,
The wrecks of matter, and the crush of worlds."

Longfellow said:

"Ah, the soul of those that die
Are but sunbeams lifted higher."

He believed in not only immortality of self but also its never-ending progress or approach to unchangeable happiness. This view corresponds to the biological principle of animal evolution.

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[1] This kind of statement is applicable to the characteristic of the unconditioned in Buddhism.

The difference is that he took self as the same, persistent one, whereas the other side regards self as a continuation of the one at the start--which, in turn, agrees with the Buddhist principle.

Montgomery said: *"The soul, immortal as its sire, shall never die."* His statement enables us to vaguely see at the first step that he somewhat believed in the manifest region of self. This is just as the Hindu philosophy says that Brahma or the supreme Universal Soul is the creator of all things or, to speak colloquially, God creates everything. If the statement is not presented in personified terms like this, the view may agree with the Buddhist one--that both the so-called whole self and the so-called component self are merely a kind of dhamma or nature; the strict law of nature, as a certainty, commonly governs all things in general, causing them to exist or to undergo various kinds of change; even though all things change or perish, the law of nature does not change, it may just manifest itself or it may not.

From Wordsworth we find that there are people who believe in God of the supreme self, or the Universal Soul, kind. He said:

"Our birth is but a sleep and a forgetting;
The soul that rises with us, our life's star,
Hath had elsewhere its setting,
And cometh from a-far;
Not in entire forgetfullness,
And not in utter nakedness,

But trailing clouds of glory, do we come
From God, who is our home."

A view such as this believes that man directly comes from God, either being created by God or being the same as ātman of the Hindu. A person with this view holds on to and is reassured by self, or soul which directly succeeds in a long line from God. He goes so far as to denounce present life as a sleep or an indulgence. To say it outright, the present life is worse than the one after death: when self is attached to the body at the moment, it is enclosed and imposed upon, and does many unauspicious things, but when it abandons the body, it is clean and pure. To speak of Wordsworth's view in Buddhist terms, the center of life or life's star is most identical to what we call craving for existence *(bhavataṇhā).*

W.C. Somervilie separated a material form and the world completely apart from self. He said:

"What'er of earth is form'd to earth returns,
... ... The soul
Of man alone, that particle divine,
Escapes the wreek of worlds, when all things fail."

This belief went so far to the extreme that self, or soul, was a separate entity and could exist alone without even depending on a material form such as the body. It contradicts the Buddhist principle that *the mind can appear only when it has matter as its base just as a wave can occur only when water is present, and the entity that is understood as self is just a perception of the mind, or the thought that occurs instantaneously but rapidly in succession, and has to base on matter as its support too.*

Or, in other words, without matter as the base, mental perception cannot exist. For example, without the brain, we cannot think. But if Somervilie meant the so-called self as what neither appeared nor disappeared in itself, then his view agreed with the Hindu concept of ātman. In Buddhism, there is no man [on the supramundane level], and thus man's self cannot exist; what those people refer to as man or self is merely a kind of dhamma or nature.

Juvenal discovered self by renouncing the body just as we fold back the mat to see what is hidden under it. He said:

"Death only this mysterious truth unfolds,
The mighty soul, how small a body holds."

What he meant was that, without the body covering up the truth, we will find our real identity, or the so-called self, which is great both qualitatively and quantitatively and has the lowly body as a support. This view is extremely surprising in the following aspect; one previously saw or ordinarily sees the body as important, but when one has discovered self or soul, he comes to see the body as nothing more than a small piece of paper that records an invaluable message and immediately turns his love or attention from the body to self or soul. The view makes one have no fear of death and disregard the body. However, we should know beforehand that, no matter how subtle and profound this view is, it still does not offer final cessation of sufferings, which has to be higher or finer. And this requires the philosophy of not-self, which is finer than that of self, or at least as noble as the latter.

With this concept, their regard is directed to this inner body, or self, more and more. It looks as though one who does not know this entity did not know life, or he were not mature enough to understand human nature, and, ultimately, could not fully savor the taste of being born human. We can note from Jeremy Taylor's words that his interest of this kind was left with self, or soul, or the inner human only. Taylor said: *"It is not the eye that sees the beauties of heaven, not the ear that hears the sweetness of music, or the glad tiding of a prosperious accident; but the soul that perceives all the relishes of sensual and intellectual perceptions; and the more noble and excellent the soul is, the greater and more savory are its perceptions.*

Among later scholars was Lord Averbury, who wrote: *"We have bodies, we are spirits. The body is the mere perishable form of the immortal essence."* On the whole, these scholars had their own knowledge that was attached to self, or soul, which was believed to be immortal. Although some of them believed that self was born out of the Great Self, they still retained their freedom to do what they wanted to. This is different from the viewpoints of some doctrines which do not have self of their own but have one that is a God's servant or subject, His plaything, or what He created and put under His control forever.

Level Comparison of Views

Views or doctrines with God solely aim at subjugating their followers to behave themselves without protestation. The views are, therefore, suppressive, allowing no independent thinking and actions, for everything depends on God. They can be considered as doctrines of self that are low and suitable for people who are mostly uneducated barbarians, or doctrines that are limited and suitable for children or childish people. As people grow up, they free themselves from this bondage and even come to have *self of their own*, do their own things by themselves and for themselves, but not for God, and no longer depend on the good-for-children God. They may believe in kammas or deeds and may be reborn for any number of times so long as they have not been tired of rebirth. They are subject to the deeds they have performed in those lifetimes, but they are not subject to monopoly of the God who allows them to perform deeds in only one lifetimes and books them for later trial. This belief on the level of one's own self can be regarded as becoming one step higher or more independent. Moreover, the people with this belief can hope for a supremely happy and unchangeable self as they have performed good deeds or have purified themselves ultimately. We can see that self in this sense is the same for both Eastern and Western philosophies.

But even the second-level self, or one's own self but not God's, cannot be counted as ultimately independent, for one

still imprison himself by his self. *The prison is self-centeredness, self-promotion, self-drunkenness, self-obsession, and burning oneself unknowingly* with the fire of self-satisfaction, narcissism, and self-adoration. Therefore, the Buddhist view does not consider this level of self as the end of sufferings. Let's look at the following analogy:

A man goes into a forest and finds a tree full of fruits. Excited by seeing that they are good fruits, he picks them, fills up his sag with them, and carries the sag on his shoulder, perceiving no weight at first. After having walked for some time, he becomes less joyful but more tired and begins to feel the weight. So he begins to throw away the lesser fruits and keeps only the best ones until finally he has only a bunch left. Later one, he feels that even the bunch is still heavy, so he has to eat some and throw away some of it until it is gone. Even so he stills feels so heavy and tired as to think of lying down for a rest. A moment later he finds a place full of heaps of gold blocks. Therefore, he picks up the gold blocks, carries them on his shoulder, hoping to get home and bearing more weigh than that of the fruits he once carried. Where he gets his strength at the moment cannot be told exactly. But later on he feels the unbearable burden again and begins to throw some blocks away or hide them somewhere along the way until he is left with only a few which a nearly exhausted man can carry along. But not long later, he finds another cache of treasure which is full of more precious jewels. He then picks them up in more weight than that of the gold blocks he took at first. Again we cannot tell where he gets the strength. And again he has to throw some of them away because he gets tired more

and more after having been misled to run around by the excitement of collecting the fortunes. He discards them, one after another until they are gone, and is very happy with the feeling that nothing burdens him or makes his heart beat faster than usual. He can now breath comfortably and becomes cool and calm after he has thrown away the last piece of diamond, the best one so light and not incapacitating for him to carry it along. But he abandons it anyway, for it has "pinched" his mind instead of burdening his body. Actually a single best piece of diamond should not be a problem for him to keep or carry, for he can do so with ease, feeling none of its weight on his body. But what he cannot allow is that it "pinches" his mind, so he chooses to get rid of it eventually.

This tale is analogous to a person's having his own self, with which he can do anything as he likes and which can stay for any period of time, even eternally. But eventually he finds that *the longer his self stays, the longer it burdens him, and that he would rather perceive no self, for even there is anything left, nobody carries or is burdened with it.* This is indeed the path that he should follow further to get free from the bondage of self, one that he can proceed along for one more step to free himself from self. Then he would be left with happiness and peace that he does not have to shoulder any longer. But if anybody likes such happiness that has to be carried along, he will not progress; he will neither understand nor open his eyes to the benefit of progressing. He will stick to that state and shout for all other people to hear that it is the supreme happiness.

From what has been described, we can see in summary at this stage that having self, no matter how manageable it is, even to the point of invariably getting everything one wishes for, *means having a carrier of self, that is, satisfaction with one's own self.* A characteristic existing in one's self is considered as a quality. As one's mind has not transcended a quality, it has to carry the quality with attachment or appreciation, even when it is extremely pleased with so doing. But if there is no carrier, namely, no entity which feels that such is self, then what exists is only pure dhamma. And that is not-self, the final cessation of suffering that Buddhism wants to preach.

Therefore, self of the ultimate dhammists', no matter how supreme it is, is just a "trace of smoke" that remains and turns into an extremely elusive entity. It is no more valuable than deception for getting one to carry oneself; the carrying is inconspicuous, though, and not so obvious as the three kinds of self mentioned in Poṭṭhapādasutta. We should completely reject self (or perception of self) and leave only dhammas, whose conditioned part characteristically rolls on and whose unconditioned part remains characteristically free from all things and actions. That is cessation of sufferings, voidness of self, or not-self. How this can occur will be considered later on.

Dhammadāna Library
Chaiya, Surat Thani, Thailand
Visākhapūjā Day, 1939

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Buddhadāsa Bhikkhu (Slave of the Buddha) went forth as a *bhikkhu* (Buddhist monk) in 1926, at the age of twenty. After a few years of study in Bangkok, he was inspired to live close with nature in order to investigate the Buddha-Dhamma. Thus, he established Suan Mokkhabalārāma (The Grove of the Power of Liberation) in 1932, near his hometown. At that time, it was the only Forest Dhamma Center and one of the few places dedicated to *vipassanā* (mental cultivation leading to "seeing clearly" into reality) in Southern Thailand. Word of Buddhadāsa Bhikkhu, his work, and Suan Mokkh spread over the years so that now they are easily described as "one of the most influential events of Buddhist history in Siam." Here, we can only mention some of the more interesting services he has rendered Buddhism.

Ajahn Buddhadāsa has worked painstakingly to establish and explain the correct and essential principles of original Buddhism. That work is based in extensive research of the Pali texts (Canon and commentary), especially of the Buddha's Discourses *(sutta piṭaka),* followed by personal experiment and practice with these teachings. Then he has taught whatever he can say truly quenches *dukkha.* His goal has been to produce a complete set of references for present and future research and practice. His approach has been always scientific, straightforward, and practical.

Although his formal education only went as far as seventh grade and beginning Pali studies, he has been given five Honorary Doctorates by Thai universities. His books, both written and

transcribed from talks, fill a room at the National Library and influence all serious Thai Buddhists.

Progressive elements in Thai society, especially the young, have been inspired by his teaching and selfless example. Since the 1960's, activists and thinkers in areas such as education, social welfare, and rural development have drawn upon his teaching and advice.

Since the founding of Suan Mokkh, he has studied all schools of Buddhism, as well as the major religious traditions. This interest is practical rather than scholarly. He seeks to unite all genuinely religious people in order to work together to help free humanity by destroying selfishness. This broad-mindedness has won him friends and students from around the world, including Christians, Muslims, Hindus, and Sikhs.

Now he focuses his energies on his last project, establishing an International Dhamma Hermitage. This addition to Suan Mokkh is intended to provide facilities for:

—courses which introduce friends, foreign and Thai, to the natural truth explained in the Buddha's teachings and start them in the Buddha's system of mental cultivation

—gatherings of representatives from the different religious communities of Thailand (and later the world) in order to meet, develop mutual good understanding, and cooperate for the sake of world peace

—meetings among Buddhists from around the world to discuss and agree upon the "Heart of Buddhism"

Actual results must depend on Natural Law, as Ajahn Buddhadāsa and his helpers continue to explore the potential of mindfully wise actions within Nature according to the Law of Nature. He welcomes visitors.

... regarding nibbāna as a self entity is not the Buddha's view but is a view of other doctrines which existed a little before the Buddha's time. This wrong view was reclaimed as that of the Buddha's by some Buddhists after His decease. Even at present, there are some people who hold a view that agrees with that old view or express that view in order to include the Buddha's for some interest.

In conclusion, the Buddha's principle of not-self denies self in all respects, both the conditioned and the unconditioned, or, in other words, both that side "in front of the curtain" and that "behind the curtain," as well as both knowledge and ignorance. What he said in conformity to the worldly language, namely, the self for doing good and not for doing evil, is limited only to that which people misunderstand and hold on to before they have vision of truth. ...

Buddhadasa Bhikkhu