

# Early Buddhist Meditation

## A Philosophical Investigation

Lecture 2

Māluṅkyaputta & Vacchagotta: the problem with *papañca* & *diṭṭhi*

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# Philosophical difference in the Pali Suttas

**Kaccāna:** ‘consciousness’ a construct depending on object and ‘pre-noetic sentience’ (*viññāṇa*)

***Brahmajāla Sutta*:** the Buddha’s body stands outside the ‘tree’ of being  
A body endowed with ‘sentience’: (*sa-viññāṇaka kāya*)

A ‘cadaver endowed with perception and mind’ (*kaḷevara sa-sañña samanaka*).

**Sāriputta:** *viññāṇa* corresponds to the feeling of being an observer  
Calm-insight (*samatha-vipassanā*) soteriologies:

- mind is to be carefully controlled
- bodily mindfulness unimportant

## What does Kaccāna identify as the cognitive problem which must cease?

- i) The notion of ‘conceptual proliferation’ (*papañca*), and
- ii) The notion of ‘latent tendencies’ towards view’ (*diṭṭhānusaya*)

Is the cessation of *papañca* and *diṭṭhi* consistent with calm-insight practice or not?

- iii) An analysis of calm-insight texts; are calm-insight practices forms of constructed mental activity; do they solve the problem of *papañca* and *diṭṭhi*?
- iv) Do the teachings on *papañca* and *diṭṭhi* suggest other soteriological possibilities?

# Papañca I

**Dhp v.254:** ‘...human beings delight in *papañca*, Tathāgatas are devoid of it.’

*ākāse va padaṃ n’ atthi samaṇo n’ atthi bāhire, papañcābhiratā pajā nippapañcā tathāgatā.*

**Upāli Sutta (MN 56):** ‘I am a disciple of that Blessed One, who is tamed and devoid of *papañca*.

*dantassa nippapañcassa bhagavato tassa sāvako ’ham asmi.*

**SN 43.14:** ‘I teach the state devoid of *papañca*, *bhikkhus*, and the path leading to it’.

*nippapañcañ ca vo bhikkhave desessāmi nippapañcagāmiñ ca maggaṃ.*

**SN 35.201:** ‘Therefore, *bhikkhus*, you ought to train as follows: We will abide with a mind devoid of *papañca*.

*tasmā-t-iha bhikkhave nippapañcena cetasā viharissāmā ti, evañ hi vo bhikkhave sikkhitabbaṃ.*

# Papañca II

***Dasuttara Sutta***, ‘eight thoughts of a great man’

The Dhamma is for a person who 1) has few desires, 2) is content, 3) is secluded, 4) has aroused vigour, 5) has established mindfulness 6) has attained absorption 7) has gained insight 8) and delights in the lack of *papañca*.

***Cūlasīhanāda Sutta (MN 11)***

Whichever ascetics or Brahmins, *bhikkhus*, understand as it really is the arising, fading away, danger in and release from these two views, they become devoid of passion, hatred, confusion, thirst and grasping, they gain vision and are without favouring or opposing; they delight in the lack of conceptual proliferation, and are released from birth...

# Papañca III

## SN 35.201

‘I am’, *bhikkhus*, this is conceptual proliferation; ‘I am this’ ... ‘I will be’ ... ‘I will not be’ ... ‘I will be embodied’ ... ‘I will not be embodied’ ... ‘I will be conscious’ ... ‘I will be unconscious’ ... ‘I will be neither consciousness nor unconscious’, this is conceptual proliferation.

Conceptual proliferation, *bhikkhus*, is a disease, a boil, a dart. Therefore, *bhikkhus*, in this matter you ought to train yourselves thus: ‘We will abide with a mind devoid of conceptual proliferation’

## ***Sabhiya Sutta (Sn 3.6)***

Discerning conceptual proliferation, name and form,  
internally and externally, as the root of ill,  
He is released from being bound to the root of all ill,  
that one is known to be ‘thus’,  
his nature is said to be ‘thus’.

**Sn 530:** *anuvicca papañcanāmarūpaṃ, ajjhattaṃ bahiddhā ca rogamūlaṃ /  
sabbarogamūlabandhanā pamutto, anuvidito tādi pavuccate tathattā //*

# The ten unexplained points (*abyākata-vatthu*)

1-2. Is the world eternal or not?

3-4. Is the world finite or not?

5-6. Is the soul/life principle the same as the body or not?

7-8. Does the Tathāgata exist after death or not?

9. Does the Tathāgata both exist and not exist after death?

10. Does the Tathāgata neither exist nor not exist after death?

## SN 44, *abyākata-vagga*

**SN 44.7:** Moggallāna explains that others answer the questions because of identification with the sense faculties; the Buddha lacks this identification and does not.

**SN 44.8:** Moggallāna says the ten questions are answered by those who see the five aggregates in terms of self (as self, or self as possessing them, or the aggregates in the self or self in the aggregates).

**SN 44.3:** the four questions about the Tathāgata are bound up with the five aggregates (e.g. *rūpagataṃ*). They do not apply to a Tathāgata who is beyond the five aggregates.

- the questions occur when there is attachment to the aggregates
- they are the concern of those whose reality is defined by five aggregates
- the ten points are ***dependent*** on the five aggregates, a dependency transcended by the Buddha

# The dependent origination and limitations of view

**SN 24.9:** ‘When what is, *bhikkhus*, dependent on what and with what inclination does the view ‘the world is eternal’ arise?’

**SN 41.3:** ‘these views, venerable sir, come about when there is what, and do not come about when what is not?’

**SN 44.5:** the questions about the Tathāgata occur due to attachment to the aggregates

**SN 44.4, 6:** the questions occur to those who do not understand of the aggregates, their arising, cessation and the way thereto.

**SN 33:** Why do the ten questions arise in the world? Because of not understanding the five aggregates, their arising, cessation and the way thereto.

- A view based on the aggregates is circumscribed; this reality can be altered and a person set free from its limitations.

# *Aggivacchagotta Sutta (MN 72)*

Vacchagotta questions the Buddha about his failure to explain the ten points.

Does the Buddha have any view?

The Buddha says that view has been 'put away', because of seeing the rise and fall of the five aggregates.

The Buddha claims to be released through the cessation of all thoughts, 'churnings', and every underlying tendency towards the thought 'I' and 'mine'.

The Buddha tells Vaccha that he has 'annihilated' the five aggregates.

A *knowledge* about view formation precedes the cessation of conceptualisation.

Instead of having a 'view', the Buddha claims to have understood **view formation** - the contingency of views on the five aggregates - and gone beyond it.

# The five aggregates as epistemology

The five aggregates denote not what a person is, but the way experience works.

The five aggregates is close to Kaccāna's philosophy:

	<b>FORM</b>	<b>SENTIENCE/ CONTACT</b>	<b>SENSATION</b>	<b>APPERCEPTION</b>	<b>VOLITION</b>
<b>Aggregates</b>	rūpaṃ	viññāṇaṃ	vedanā	saññā	saṅkhārā
<b>Kaccāna</b>	rūpaṃ, e.g. cakkhu	viññāṇaṃ, phassa	vedanā	saññā	vitakka, papañca, saṅkhā

- To get out of 'view formation', an understanding of the cognitive conditions under which it occurs required.
- Spiritual practice must bring about the cessation of the underlying cognitive conditions.

# The insight critique of meditative states

## ***Aṭṭhakanāgara Sutta* (MN 52, AN 11.16)**

The *bhikkhu* ... abides having attained the first *jhāna*. He reflects thus: 'This first meditation is mentally constructed and volitionally produced, but whatever is mentally constructed and volitionally produced is impermanent and subject to change'...

## ***Cūḷasuññatā Sutta* (MN 121)**

He understands thus: 'This signless concentration of the mind is mentally constructed and volitionally produced, but whatever is mentally constructed and volitionally produced is impermanent and subject to change'. Knowing and seeing thus, his mind is released from the corruptions of sensual pleasure, being and ignorance.

## Poṭṭhapāda Sutta (DN 9)

From the point at which, Poṭṭhapāda, the *bhikkhu* becomes conscious by his own means, from there to there, gradually, he touches the pinnacle of perception. While remaining at the pinnacle of perception, this occurs to him: ‘It is worse that I intend and better that I do not intend. If I were to intend and construct, these states of perception would cease, and other, grosser ones, would arise. Why don’t I stop intending and constructing?’ He neither intends nor constructs, and in doing so those states of perception cease, and other grosser ones do not arise. He touches cessation.

DN I.184: *yato kho poṭṭhapāda bhikkhu idha sakasaññī hoti, so tato amutra tato amutra anupubbena saññaggam phusati. tassa saññagge t̥hitassa evam hoti: cetayamānassa me pāpiyo, acetayamānassa me seyyo. ahañ ce va kho pana ceteyyam abhisañkhareyyam, imā ca me saññā nirujjheyym, aññā ca oḷārikā saññā uppajjeyym. yamñunāham na c’ eva ceteyyam na ca abhisañkhareyyan ti. so na c’ eva ceteti na ca abhisañkharoti. tassa acetayato anabhisañkharoto tā ceva saññā nirujjhanti, aññā ca oḷārikā saññā na uppajjanti. so nirodham phusati.*

## Problems with the *Poṭṭhapāda Sutta* and calm meditation

Can one intend a state of non-intention? Is the thinker is able to stop thinking?

Why should conditioning *not* resume after emerging from such a state?

*samatha* does not offer a coherent way of bringing about the cessation of *papañca* and *ditṭhi*.

It is a state in which thought is temporarily suspended.

Does non-thinking solve the problem of the dependent origination of cognition?

This is not a response to problem of view formation via cognitive conditioning.

# Problems with insight meditation

There is no indication that words are symbols to describe a transconceptuality.

***Aṭṭhakanāgara Sutta:*** *so iti paṭisañcikkhati: idam pi paṭhamam jhānam abhisankhataṃ abhisañcetayitaṃ...*

***Cūlasuññatā Sutta:*** *evam pajānāti: ayam pi kho animitto cetosamādhī abhisankhato abhisañcetayito...*

***Mahā-Māluṅkya, Jhāna Suttas:***

*so ... te dhamme aniccato dukkhato rogato gaṇḍato sallato aghato ābādhato parato palokato suññato anattato samanupassati, so tehi dhammehi cittaṃ paṭivāpeti ... amatāya dhātuyā cittaṃ upasaṃharati.*

***Kāyagatāsati Sutta (MN 119)***

A charioteer takes the reins in one hand, the goad in another, and then goes wherever he wishes. The mind can be directing toward any object of understanding, once mindfulness is established.

*yassa kassaci kāyagatāsati bhāvitā bahulikatā, so yassa yassa abhiññāsacchikaraṇīyassa dhammassa cittaṃ abhininnāmeti abhiññā-sacchikiriyāya...*

## Insight in the *Dhātuvibhaṅga Sutta* (MN 140)

He understands thus: **'If I were to focus** this equanimity, so pure and cleansed, on the sphere of the infinity of space, my mind would conform to that, and this equanimity of mine might thus remain for a long time dependent on and supported by that. **This is construction ...**

**He neither constructs nor intentionally (directs)** that (equanimity) towards being or non-being. Neither constructing nor intentionally directing towards being or non-being, he does not grasp at anything in the world, not grasping he does not tremble, not trembling he is fully quenched within.

MN III.243: *so evaṃ pajānāti: imaṃ ce ahaṃ upekkhaṃ evaṃ parisuddhaṃ evaṃ pariyodātaṃ ākāsaṇṇācāyatanaṃ **upasaṃhareyyaṃ**, tad anudhammaṃ ca cittaṃ bhāveyyaṃ, evaṃ me ayaṃ upekkhā taṃnissitā tadupādānā ciraṃ dīghamaddhānaṃ tiṭṭheyya ... **saṅkhatam etaṃ ... so n' eva taṃ abhisaṅkharoti, na abhisaṅcetaṃ** bhavāya vā vibhavāya vā. so anabhisaṅkharonto anabhisaṅcetaṃ bhavāya vā vibhavāya vā na kiñci loke upādiyati, anupādiyaṃ na paritassati, aparitassaṃ paccattaṃ yeva parinibbāyati.*

## *Mahā-cunda Sutta (AN 6.46)*

But here, sir, meditating *bhikkhus* abuse *bhikkhus* ‘devoted to the Dhamma’: ‘but these (*bhikkhus*, claiming) ‘we are devoted to the Dhamma, we are devoted to the Dhamma’, are haughty, arrogant, fickle, chatty, with loose words, confused mindfulness, not practising wakefulness, not attaining absorption, with roaming minds, uncontrolled in their sense faculties. What are these devotees of the Dhamma, why these devotees of the Dhamma, how are these devotees of the Dhamma?’

**AN III.335:** *idha pan’ āvuso jhāyī bhikkhū dhammayoge bhikkhū apasādentī: ime pana dhammayog’ amhā dhammayog’ amhā ti uddhatā unnaḷā capalā mukharā vikiṇṇavācā muṭṭhassatī asampajānā asamāhitā vibbhantacittā pākatindriyā. kim ime dhammayogā, kint’ ime dhammayogā, kathaṃ ime dhammayogā ti?*

## *Indriyabhāvana Sutta (MN 152)*

**The Buddha:** But how, Uttara, does Pārāsariya the Brahmin teach the cultivation of the senses to his disciples?

*yathā kathaṃ pana uttara deseti pārāsariyo brāhmaṇo sāvakānaṃ indriyabhāvanan ti?*

**Uttara:** Here, venerable Gotama, one does not see a form with the eye, or hear a sight with the ears.

*idha bho gotama cakkhunā rūpaṃ na passati sotena saddaṃ na suṇā ti.*

**The Buddha:** This being the case, Uttara, a blind man would have developed his senses, a deaf man would have developed his senses.

*evaṃ sante kho uttara andho bhāvitindriyo bhavissati, badhiro bhāvitindriyo bhavissati...*

# Anālayo's interpretation

[T]he point made in MN 152 is how to relate to everyday experience, in fact the expression “development of the faculties”, *indriyabhāvanā*, is an obvious counterpart to “restraint of the faculties”, *indriyasamvara*.

The exposition in MN 152 is not a criticism of deeper stages of concentration during which sensory experience is absent, but rather a criticism of attempting to deal with sensory impact during daily life by simply trying to avoid it, instead of developing equanimity toward whatever is experienced...

Anālayo, *Early Buddhist Meditation Studies*, p.138.

# The *Indriyabhāvana Sutta* on equanimity

Here, Ānanda, having seen a form with the eye, pleasure or displeasure or neither arises in the *bhikkhu*. He understands thus: arisen in me is pleasure or displeasure or neither. But that is constructed, gross, and dependently originated; this is calm, this is supreme, namely, equanimity. That pleasure or displeasure or neither of his ceases, and equanimity remains.

MN III.299: *idh' ānanda bhikkhuno cakkhunā rūpaṃ disvā uppajjati manāpaṃ, uppajjati amanāpaṃ, uppajjati manāpāmanāpaṃ. so evaṃ pajānāti: uppannaṃ kho me idaṃ manāpaṃ, uppannaṃ amanāpaṃ, uppannaṃ manāpāmanāpaṃ. tañ ca kho saṅkhatam oḷārikaṃ paṭiccasamuppannam, etaṃ santam etaṃ pañitam, yadidaṃ upekkhā ti. tassa taṃ uppannaṃ manāpaṃ uppannaṃ amanāpaṃ uppannaṃ manāpāmanāpaṃ nirujjhati, upekkhā saṅghāti.*

'Eschewing both that which is repulsive and that which is not, may I abide equanimously, mindful and fully aware'.

MN III.301: *sace ākaṅkhati, paṭikūlañ ca appaṭikūlañ ca tad ubhayaṃ abhinivajjetvā, upekkhako vihareyyaṃ sato sampajāno ti, upekkhako tattha viharati sato sampajāno.*

**3rd jhāna:** *bhikkhu pītiyā ca virāgā upekkhako ca viharati sato sampajāno...*

## *Sakka-pañha Sutta* (DN 21)

Therein, the state of equanimity one might know (as follows:) ‘as I resort to this state of equanimity, bad states are abandoned, and good states increase’; this kind of equanimity ought to be practised. Therein, (there is a distinction between) the (equanimity) with reasoning and reflection, and the (equanimity) without reasoning and reflection - **(but) those (states of equanimity) without reasoning and reflection are more exalted.**

DN II.279. *tattha yaṃ jaññā **upekkhaṃ** ‘imaṃ kho me upekkhaṃ sevato akusalā dhammā parihāyanti, kusalā dhammā abhivaḍḍhanti’ti, evarūpā upekkhā sevitabbā. tattha yaṃ ce savitakkaṃ savicāraṃ, yaṃ ce avitakkaṃ avicāraṃ, **ye avitakke avicāre, te pañītare.***