One of the characteristic of the Buddha’s teaching is the pragmatic approach of “come and see” (ehipassiko). It is an invitation to investigate with rational confidence (ākāravatí saddhā) rather than submitting to blind faith (amūlikā saddhā); there is no secret teaching and is opened to all; it is verifiable.

**Kālāmas Sutta**

In Kālāma sutta (A65), the instruction to the kālāmas is justly famous for its encouragement of free rational, critical inquiry; freedom of thinking. The sutta signifies a teaching that is exempt from fanaticism, bigotry, dogmatism, blind faith and intolerance.

The town Kesaputta in the kingdom of Kosala, is a hotbed of religious disputation in preaching different doctrine and condemning other doctrines. Here it indicates the freedom of expression, the right to dissent and religious tolerance is being exercised and practiced.

A group of Kālāmas who were perplexed by listening to a diversity of doctrines preached by the itinerant recluses and Brahmins who visited the town occasionally, approached the Buddha for clarification with their confusions, doubts, proliferation of conflicting perspectives and the uncertainties concerning the truth.

The Buddha assures the Kālāmas that under such circumstances it is proper for them to doubt and further encourages free inquiry. Buddha revealed to them how one should exercise one’s ability to critically investigate on practical grounds and to discover what is true and wholesome among the divergent religious and philosophical views. Ethical ground provides them a freedom of choice of moral value and fact over good and evil, autonomy of moral judgement is being exercised.

The Kālāma sutta demonstrates a general distrust of authority and logical reasoning as a valid means of ethical knowledge. Bearing in mind that the Buddha did not totally reject the teaching recommended on both the above basis, but rejects them as insufficient grounds by themselves to establish the validity of any proposed teaching. Therefore, one should suspend judgement until one can apply a more decisive means of personal testing of its validity and quality of the teaching.

**Ten Propositions**

The Buddha gave 10 propositions to beware of in order to avoid becoming the intellectual slave of anyone, even of the Buddha himself. It enables us to know how to choose the teachings, which are truly capable of quenching suffering.

The 10 propositions can be broadly divided into two main categories:-

**Traditionalists or Authority**

Views are not to be accepted & believed due to:-

1) Report / Revelation (anussavena) – according to hearing and should not be questioned

- In Cankí sutta (M95), the traditionalist derived their knowledge based on the sacred text which the brāhmana believed that authority of the divinely revealed Vedas were handled down through oral transmission and out of faith (saddhā) concluded that “only this is true, anything else is false” (idam eva saccam mogham aññam).

2) Tradition (paramparāya) – people tend to imitate what others do and then pass the habit alongh

- In Cankí sutta (M95), the Buddha rejects the absolute validity of Vedic scripture on the ground that none of those who handed down the tradition could claim direct personal knowledge of its truth. They are compared to a file of blind men leading the blinds. It may also suggest the notion of spiritual lineage.

3) Hearsay / Rumour (itikirāya) – reliance on what is heard from a source without any concern for the need for verification or exercise their own intelligence; rumour, gossip or simply interpreted as to any knowledge that is passed on.

- In Kosambiya sutta (M48), in settling a problem, the Buddha demonstrates his approach by clarifying and establishing the truth with the relevant person first before accepting the truth of a rumour.

4) Authority of religious/sacred texts (piţakasampadānena) – the acceptance of a doctrine on the authority of a scriptural text on the assumption that scriptural texts are beyond question

- This however also includes the Pāli canon. One accepts the entire contents of those scriptures as unquestionably true. Here it stresses the fact that being written down in the sacred texts alone is not sufficient to justify the feasibility of a view.

5) Considering competence (bhabbarūpatāya) – acceptance on the testimony of reliable or competence persons especially someone who has a charismatic personality.

6) By the idea: this is our teacher (samaņo no garu) – out of respect for our teacher that is acceptance of a statement on the prestige and reputation of the person uttering it

**Rationalists or Logical Reasoning**

7) Mere logic (takkahetu) – accepting a belief on the basis of reasoning or logic which can go wrong if its data or method are incorrect

- In Sandaka sutta (M76), there were teachers who based their doctrines solely on reasoning and speculation which maybe good or bad, true or false. But truth or falseness of a theory cannot be judged by the consistency of its reasoning. Sometimes a well-reasoned theory may be false and ill-reasoned theory may be true. Therefore, it is to be regarded as inadequate or unsatisfactory; and the soundness of reasoning should not be taken as the only criterion of truth.

- Reason is useful only to the extent that if functions as a tool to assist the process of spiritual life in realizing nibbāna. Buddha himself made use of some forms of reasoning but also makes it clear that his own approach (especially his direct experience in meditation) is not limited by reason, that is ‘beyond mere thought’ (atakkāvacarā).

8) Inference (nayahetu) – evaluating theories of reality on the basis of stand points or inference or seems rational

Brahmajāla sutta (D1, i:13) cited how the ascetic drawing from invalid inference based on their genuine experience of remembering past lives assume and conclude that “the self and the world are eternal”

9) Reflecting on mere appearance (ākāra parivitakkena) – not to be convinced by mere superficial similarity.

10) Delight in speculative opinions (diţţhinijjhāna khantiyā) – agreed or accept a proposition is true because it agrees with a theory that one is convinced of. That could also point towards an emotional attachment arising from familiarity with one’s own view on certain idea or belief.

Though Buddha rejects the claim of authority and rational as the sole means of acquiring

Knowledge, the proper attitude then is to neither completely accept nor reject them but seek

Independent grounds upon which to establish truth or falsity.

**Four Great References (cattaro mahapadesa)**

Mahaparinibbana Sutta has 4 guidelines known as the Four Great Reference (cattaro mahapadesa)

to determine the authenticity of a statement claiming to be original teaching of the Buddha made

by a person who claims to have heard it:-

1) Directly from a discourse of the Buddha

2) From the Senior Bhikkhus of a monastery

3) From the erudite Bhikkhus proficient in the Dhamma, Vinaya and Abhidhamma

4) From an erudite Bhikkhu proficient in the Dhamma, Vinaya and Abhidhamma

Ethical and Moral Implications

The ten propositions are to be scrutinized with reference to greed (lobha), hatred (dosa) and

delusion (moha) – the roots of evil. After careful rational considerations, “when you know for

yourself” (attanāva jāneyyātha) and found that those things are unwholesome (akusala),

blameworthy (sāvajja), censured by the wise (vińńugarahita); and when undertaken and observed,

these things lead to harm (ahita) and ill (dukkha), then one should abandon them. But if after careful

considerations and found them to be otherwise that lead to their benefit and happiness, then one

should abide in them.