

## **Buddhist analysis of revelation, reason and experience P2**

### The Experientialist

\* The Buddha asserted that anyone who follows the path prescribed by Him can realise truth by himself without the help of any external agency.

\* Buddhism advocates both sense perception and extrasensory perception as valid means of knowledge. Extrasensory perception is a result of the meditative absorption recommended in the Buddhist path to realisation.

### **\*Sabba Sutta SN 35.23.**

\* Here a philosopher named Janussoni questions him with what constitutes ‘everything’ in this universe. The Buddha’s immediate response is that ‘everything’ means the eye, form, ear, sound, nose, smell, tongue, taste, body, tangible objects, minds and mental objects or concepts.

In this connection, the Rohitassa Sutta (S 2.26) records the Buddha as saying, “In this very fathom-long body, endowed with perception and mind, I declare the world, the arising of the world, the ending of the world, and the way leading to the ending of the world.” This is, of course, a clear reference to the four noble truths, that is, suffering (the unsatisfactoriness of our body-mind world), its arising, its ending, and the way to its ending.

\* The Buddha goes on to say that there may be others who would not agree with him and who posit various other things as ‘everything’. But such speculations lead only to vexation and worry, because any such thing would be beyond the sphere of experience.

\* Its empirical approach is evident in the fundamental nature of the doctrine:

**Sanditthika/Akalika/Ehipassika/Opanaika/ Paccattam veditabbo vinnuhi**

\* Why is there difference between the Buddha and the other experientialists?

@ Whatever knowledge one obtains through extrasensory perception was looked by the Buddha as means to an end, not as an end in itself. Such knowledge, when coloured by one’s likes and dislikes, attachment or inclination, aversion, confusion and fear leads to all forms of dogmatic

beliefs that prevent one from seeing things as they are and attaining perfect freedom through nongrasping.

➔ the pre-Buddhist thinkers allowed their subjective prejudices to interfere with their interpretation of things.

@The development of extrasensory perception is always looked upon as a 'causal occurrence', through mental concentration.

➔ vs 'grace of God'

\* This analysis makes clear of the very important fact that the Buddha was aware of the limitations of all sources of knowledge. It was the realization of these limitations that prompted the Buddha to deny the kind of omniscience which was claimed by his predecessors. What he claimed was threefold knowledge: 1. retrocognition 2. clairvoyance 3. knowledge of the destruction of defiling impulses.

#### Buddhist theory of knowledge

\* Since Buddhism does not advocate the theory of an omnipotent creator God, the problem of belief in revelation has no place in Buddhism.

\* However, logic seems to have been accepted by Buddhism for a limited sense, not as a means of knowledge for arriving at the truth, but as a tool for presenting a view coherently, sequentially and consistently for better understanding.

\* Buddhist theory of knowledge begins with receiving information from the external world and subjecting that into thoughtful reflection.

➔ The testimonies of others were verified in the light of one's own experiences. Testimony alone could be either true or false. Proper reflection involves both experience and reflection or reasoning. Thus the Buddha recognized experience, both sensory and extrasensory, and reasoning or inference based on experience as source of knowledge.

➔ **Kitagiri Sutta MN 70:** 12 successive stages in the process of evaluation leading to realisation of truth.

1. He who has faith draws close.
2. Drawing close, he sits down nearby.
3. Sitting down nearby, he lends his ear.
4. Lending his ear, he hears the doctrine.
5. Having heard the doctrine, he remembers it.
6. He then tests the meaning of things he has borne in mind.
7. While testing the meaning, the things are approved of.

8. There being approval of the things, desire is born.
9. With desire born, he makes an effort.
10. Having made an effort, he weighs it up.
11. Having weighed it up, he strives.
12. Finally, being self-resolute he realises with his person, the Highest Truth.

\* To the seeker after Truth it is immaterial from where an idea comes.  
Dhatu Vibhanga Sutta MN 140.