

Buddhist critique of Pre-Buddhist World Views P2

B) Eternalism (sassatavada) vs. annihilationism (ucchedavada)

* The eternalists held the view that the body and the life principle are absolutely distinct (annam jivam annam sariram).

* They believed that the body is a hindrance to the purity of the soul → manifested in the practice of attakilamathanuyoga.

Dhammacakkappavattana sutta, SN 56:11

The discourse criticizes attakilamathanuyoga. It is referred to as dukkha (painful), anariya (ignoble), anattasamhita (meaningless). The Buddha also discouraged the practice of kamasukhallikanuyoga. Self-mortification weakens one's interest or intellect and the self-indulgence retards one's spiritual progress. Rejecting both extremes as neither leads to perfect peace and enlightenment, he advocated a Middle Path, majjhimapatipada.

Mahasihanada sutta, DN 8

The Buddha criticized the practitioner of self-mortification that if his morality, heart and wisdom were not developed and brought to realization, then indeed he was still far from being a samana or a brahmana. He further explained to the naked ascetic Kassapa the futility of extreme self-mortification and said that only when a recluse practiced to be accomplished in sila, samadhi and panna; cultivated metta and dwelt in the emancipation of mind, and emancipation through knowledge that he would be entitled to be called a samana and brahmana.

Culadukkhakkandha sutta MN 14

~ tiresome and useless.

Cula-Assapura sutta, MN 40

It is stated that there were samanas who believed in purification through various extreme practices and the Buddha explained that "the way proper to the recluse" was not mere outward practice of austerities but the inward purification from defilements and the development of the four Brahma Viharas.

AN – Book of the Fours – Salha Sutta

Buddha criticized that the practice of self-mortification did not lead to internal purification, comparing to a boat maker who cleaned up the outside of a block of wood but did not clean up the inside.

Dhammapada 141 – *Not wandering naked, nor matted locks, nor filth, nor fasting, nor lying on the ground, nor dust, nor ashes, nor striving squatting on the heels, can purify a mortal who has not overcome doubts.*

Dhammapada 268 – *Not by silence does one become a sage.*

Kukkuravatika sutta MN 57

The practices of 2 ascetics who imitated the behaviour of a dog and an ox would after-life be reborn in the companionship with the respective animals. Buddha revealed to them the futility of their practices and gave them a discourse on kamma and its fruit.

~ The Buddha said that there would be 2 results for them: ended up in hell or reborn as animals.

Vinaya

Devadatta requested the Buddha to enforce on monks 5 strict rules but was refused by the Buddha.

Upali sutta, MN 56

The Buddha criticized Nigantha's teaching on the importance of bodily action. Buddha emphasized on mano-kamma as the most forceful of all. Buddha argued that mere bodily action without intention or volition of the mind could not become forceful in producing result.

Devadaha sutta, MN 101

Further criticisms are found for Nigantha's severe austerities practice. The entire sutta is a criticism of pubbekatahetuvada maintaining that all feelings experienced at present were caused by previous karma and hold that liberation is attained by the practice of severe self-mortification, as a means to expiate all past karma. If this is so, Niganthas who in this life undergo extreme form of suffering, practicing self-mortification, must have been of evil behaviour in their past lives.

~ Moreover, they experienced painful feeling only when they practiced austerity and did not experience these painful feeling when they did not practice with effort. Obviously, this cannot be due to previous kamma. The apparent strong painful feelings occurred because of the present effort. Buddha further argued that nobody could force kamma to bear fruit at his wish by the practice of severe austerities of self-torture. He further added that such exertion and striving is fruitless.

Samyutta Nikaya

Extreme asceticism is condemned on three grounds:

- 1) the ascetic tortures himself and goes to extremes in torturing himself
- 2) he comes to no profitable state.
- 3) he realizes no knowledge and insight.

~ Asceticism is not the only way to liberation. Also it might not lead to liberation.

Buddhism emphasized N8F, because he went through attakilamathanuyoga himself, he knew that extreme austerity was fruitless.

~ However, the Buddha did not condemn all austerity practices. In Buddhism, there are 13 dhutanghas. They are not compulsory but as a means for cultivating virtues, for letting go of attachments to worldly things.

~ Buddha said that a real ascetic is one who practiced self-discipline instead of extreme austerity. He should have these pre-requisites:

- 1) does not inflict injury on other living beings or approve of such actions.
- 2) does not steal or approve theft
- 3) does not lie or approve lying
- 4) does not approve indulgence in sense pleasure or approve others from doing such actions.

~ In **Sangiti sutta, DN 33**, Buddha divided people into 4 groups

- 1) torments self and subject to self-mortification
- 2) torments others
- 3) torments self and others
- 4) neither torments self nor others.

The fourth is the genuine ascetic.

* The nihilists held the view that the body and soul are identical (tam jivam tam sariram) and there is no future life, because when the body dies, the person also becomes extinct.

* Thus, one must make use of the only opportunity one has got to live as a human being to enjoy as much sense pleasures as possible → Kamasukhalikanuyoga.

* Such a lifestyle will never bring happiness because sense desires have no limit of satisfaction. Only contentment can bring happiness.

* According to the Buddha in the **Dhammacakkappavattana sutta**, these terms inferior, vulgar and worldly were referred to in the practice of self-indulgence that is associated with nihilist but were not referred to when representing the practice of self-mortification that is associated with eternalist view. This seems to suggest that Buddha was more sympathetic towards eternalist and more critical of the nihilist. This implication seems to be that

although eternalist does not lead to the cessation of dukkha, nevertheless, it does not lead to the breakdown of the moral life; whereas the nihilist indulging in satisfying their sense-pleasure, takes life for granted and do not take moral responsibility for his actions.

* Nevertheless, both positions maintained wrong views, wrong thought and wrong speech whereas Buddhism teaches the Middle Way, which is Paticcasamuppada. The Buddha rejected both positions and explained the body-life or body-mind relationship in terms of the principle of dependent origination.

* mind and body are interdependent, they are mutually related. Neither has an independent or self-existence.