

### *Buddhist critique of Pre-Buddhist World Views P3*

#### C) Pre-Buddhist Causal relationship

- \* Eternalist- things are caused by themselves (sayamkatam)
- \* Nihilist- things are caused by factors completely outside themselves (paramkatam)
  
- \* Buddha rejected both the views that it is the same self-identical person performing an act who reaps its consequence as well as the view that it is one person who performs an act and a totally different person who reaps its consequence.
  
- \* In the theory of kamma and rebirth, Buddhism rejects annihilationism.
- \* In rejecting the notion of a permanent soul, Buddhism rejects eternalism.

#### D) Wrong views

- \* All views that denied the moral responsibility, the reality of life after death, karmic retribution, the possibility of attaining to a higher knowledge which surpasses the ordinary mundane understanding of the nature of reality.
- \* They are the source of all unwholesome traits of mind and patterns of unwholesome behaviour. All akusala follows from wrong views.
- \* Thus, in addressing materialists, skeptics, determinists or indeterminist, he uses a “wager argument” reminiscent of Pascal.
- \* This is the name given to an argument by French mathematician, Blaise Pascal, in the 17<sup>th</sup> century.

\* **Apannaka Sutta, MN 60.** Here, it shows that on pragmatic grounds it is better to base one’s life on the assumptions of survival, freedom and responsibility; for otherwise, whatever happens, we stand to lose whereas on the other alternative, we stand to gain.

### E) Adhering dogmatically

\* K.N. Jayatilleke said that one of the reasons why Buddhism adopted a non-dogmatic attitude was that at its very inception it had to face a plurality of contending religio-philosophic theories about the nature and destiny of man. As a result, skepticism was rampant and the Buddha could not assume the truth of any particular religious philosophy in addressing the intellectual elite of his age. A claim to authority would not have been seriously considered or accepted.

\* The **Suttanipata** mentions about “all those people who tenaciously cling to their respective religio-philosophical theories and argue, ‘Here alone is the truth!’ (*ye kec’ime ditthi paribbassana, ‘idam eva saccan’ti vivadayanti*).” There is also a reference to people who claimed to dispense salvation: ‘Here alone is salvation’- thus do they proclaim; they do not grant salvation in the religious of others (*Idh’eva suddhi’ iti vadiyanti, nannesu dhammesu visuddhim ahu*).

\* The Buddha examined the psychological origins and the psychological consequences of clinging to one’s views dogmatically.

\* **Atthakavagga suttas**, sn: one of the most important causes for tension among human beings is dogmatic clinging to views.

~ the **Culaviyuha** and the **Mahaviyuha suttas** of the Atthakavagga

i) Show how various teachers who claimed themselves to be experts propounded their views and came into conflict with other teachers who did not approve of their views.

ii) Dogmatic clinging – consequence of one’s subjective inclinations of likes and dislikes or to one’s advantages.

iii) It is a latent unwholesome trait in the human mind, anusaya. It is also described as an upadana → origin in greed, hatred and delusion.

iv) Dogmatism prevents a person from being objective.

\* **Udana 68-69**: The Parable of the Blind men and elephant

\* **The Kalama Sutta**, AN 189 reinforces this message. The Kalamas were confused by all the often-times conflicting views of various teachers and each one's insistence that theirs was the Way. But the Buddha asked them not to believe anything because it was a 'revelation, tradition, report, product of mere reasoning, true from a particular position, superficial assessment of the facts, conformed with preconceived notions, authoritative or because of the prestige of the teacher.'

\* **Alagaddupama Sutta**, MN 22

\* The Buddha said that his teaching should be treated in the way a person handles a water snake. It should be studied not with a view to defend one’s own view or to find faults in the views of others.

*Quote: “He would see a large water-snake and grasp it by the coils or by the tail. The water-snake, turning around, would bite him on the hand, on the arm, or on one of his limbs, and from that cause he would suffer death or death-like suffering. Why is that? Because of the wrong-graspedness of the water-snake. In the same way, there is the case where some worthless men study the Dhamma... Having studied the Dhamma, they don't ascertain the meaning of those Dhammas with their discernment. Not having ascertained the meaning of those Dhammas with their discernment, they don't come to an agreement through pondering. They study the Dhamma both for attacking others and for defending themselves in debate. They don't reach the goal for which [people] study the Dhamma. Their wrong grasp of those Dhammas will lead to their long-term harm & suffering. Why is that? Because of the wrong-graspedness of the Dhammas.”*

\* The Dhamma should be treated as a raft to cross over, but not to carry on one's back.

*Quote: “In the same way, monks, I have taught the Dhamma compared to a raft, for the purpose of crossing over, not for the purpose of holding onto. Understanding the Dhamma as taught compared to a raft, you should let go even of Dhammas, to say nothing of non-Dhammas.”*

\*This critical attitude should be focused on Buddhism too:

\* **Brahmajala sutta DN 1**

*Quote: “If anyone should speak in disparagement of me, of the Dhamma or of the Sangha, you should not be angry, resentful or upset on that account. If you were to do so, that would only be a hindrance to you. If, on the other hand, anyone should speak in praise of me, of the Dhamma or of the Sangha, you should not on that account be pleased, happy or elated. If you were to do so, it would only be an obstacle in the way of forming a realistic judgement as to whether the qualities praised in us are real and actually found in us.”*

\*The Buddha rejected all authority except experience. However, this does not mean that faith is no requirement at all in Buddhism. One cannot test a theory unless one accepts it at least tentatively as one's basis of life.

\* **Kitagiri Sutta MN 70: 12 successive state of faith in Buddhism –**

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.  
➔ unshakeable faith

### Conclusion:

\* The Buddha did not attempt to reveal to the world any mysterious truth that only he discovered but others could not see. Buddhism is concerned not with some mystery, but with the existence of misery and its cessation.

\* He is not concerned with dogmatic positions like Eternalism and Annihilationism. He is concerned with the Four Noble Truths. The Four Noble Truths do not deal with any mystery. There is no metaphysics connected with these truths. They are concerned with common human experience.

\* The Buddha's pragmatic attitude did not allow him to be dragged on to affirm indefensible positions in trying to answer certain philosophical questions which were usually raised by philosophers during his time ➔ thapaniya

\* Buddhism accepts causality; do not deny effort, responsibility, and free will. Patikkasamuppada- given certain conditions, certain event will happen but not whatever the condition is, the event will happen.