

A Study of Vicikicchā in Theravāda Buddhism

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Abstract

This research article is about a study of Vicikicchā in Theravāda Buddhism. Specifically, it was to study Vicikicchā as a factor of five Hindrances and a method for overcoming them systematically. It was for achieving knowledge and understanding about Vicikicchā and clear up some doubts about the subject.

This study focuses on skepticism about Vicikicchā on eight topics: the Buddha, the teaching of Dhamma, the society of Sangha, the training, the past, the future, the past and the future, and the law of dependent origination. The objects of doubt can be the Triple Gems (Buddha, Dhamma, and Saṅgha), the discipline, Kamma, or the law of dependent origination. All involve the Buddha's methods of liberation. Factors of Vicikicchā are unanalytical reflection (Ayonisomanasikāra), ignorance (Avijjā), and false view on the Dhamma (Micchādiṭṭhi). These factors make people uncertain about following the Buddha's teaching, that is, Vicikicchā are the obstacles to Enlightenment.

General doubts can cause problems to a person both at the spiritual level and at a physical level. In a society they can lead people to suspect each other and try to break off relationships with other people. It can be considered that Vicikicchā are unwholesome doubts, which are different from philosophical doubts. Philosophical doubts concern the search for knowledge or a theory. A primary cause of Vicikicchā is the opportunity to own self. If you want peace in your life it is important to try to live without doubts among friends and relations. A stream-enterer can have general doubts but cannot have Vicikicchā anymore. When beings reach the final emancipation by getting to be an Arahanta they will have no doubts like Vicikicchā at all.

Keywords: Theravāda, Buddhism, Vicikicchā, Doubt.

Introduction

After the demise of the great Buddha the doctrine of the Buddha has been channeled through many generations and adjusted to many traditions and cultures in various societies. As time went on many Buddhist schools would come into existence. According to a story in Theravāda tradition during the second Buddhist council (i.e. 100 years after the demise of the Buddha) some disputing monks got expelled from the Sangha, which led to a formation of a new order named Mahasanghika. Thus, a splitting of Sangha occurred in Buddhism.¹ Further it has been recorded that about 250 years after the Buddha's Parinibbana 18 Mahasanghika schools were scattered over Northern India.

A lot of Buddha's teachings were explained differently such that much confusion ensued up until now regarding which are the authentic teachings of the Buddha. Therefore, many followers and new truth seekers are reluctant to study and practice some teachings of the Buddha.

In Theravāda Buddhism Vicikicchā² is one of the obstacles that hinder a person from progressing along the Path of Enlightenment. It is also regarded as an unwholesome mental factor and one of the unwholesome fetters. Vicikicchā is one of the five hindrances and is also included in the ten fetters of existence. It disappears completely and forever at Stream-entry. The term Vicikicchā does not mean doubting something. According to the Cetokhila Sutta³ it is explained that this term Vicikicchā means doubtful, uncertain, undecided and unconfident about the teacher, thus the mind does not incline to ardour, devotion, perseverance and striving.

Furthermore, it is also regarded as one among several mental barrennesses⁴ that is very perplexing in terms of doctrine, community, and training; thus, leading to people's decline in effort, perseverance and striving. Fellow monks are irritated by the ones who have developed perplexity in these terms. Moreover, one gets stuck in the cycle of rebirth.

¹Buddharakkhita, Acharya, **History of Pali Language and Literature**, Bangalore: Sreeranga Printers Pvt Ltd, 2005, p. 37.

²Mon, Tin Mehn, **The Essence of Buddha Abhidhamma**, Yangon: Mehm Tay Zar Mon, 1995, p. 84.

³Nanamoli, Bhikkhu, & Bodhi, Bhikkhu, (trs.), **The Middle Length Discourses of the Buddha** (Majjhima Nikaya), Boston: Wisdom Publications, 2009, p. 194.

⁴Bodhi, Bhikkhu, (trs.), **The Numerical Discourses of the Buddha (Anguttara Nikaya)**, Boston: Wisdom Publication, 2012, pp. 1328-29.

According to the explanation of Abhidhamma text⁵ the term Vicikicchā denotes having the following kinds of doubts: doubts about the Buddha, Dhamma, Sangha and training; doubts about the past and future lives; doubts about kamma; and finally, doubts about the Four Noble Truths⁶. Vicikicchā can be further categorized as a fetter among the Mohamula Cittas (consciousness rooted with ignorance) named Upekkhasahagatam Vicikicchā-sampyuttamekam (one consciousness, accompanied by indifference, and connected with skeptical doubt). For example, a person who is having doubts about kamma and rebirth. However, when the practitioner attains the stage of sotāpanna, the stream-winner, one of the lowest among the 8 types of noble disciples,⁷ one would be able to completely remove the three fetters⁸. Thus, one would shut the doors to lower realms and would be destined to reborn into a happy state and within 7 lives would attain the highest bliss.⁹

In the Sabbasava Sutta¹⁰ the Buddha mentioned 16 types of doubts one can encounter. They can be categorized into three groups. The first five types of doubts concern past life; the next five types of doubts concern the future, and the rest 6 types of doubts concern the present life.

(A) Related to the past are five types of doubts:

1. Have I been in the past?
2. Have I not been in the past?
3. What have I been in the past?
4. How have I been in the past?
5. From what state into what state did I change?

⁵Mon, Tin Mehn, **The Essence of Buddha Abhidhamma**, Yangon: Mehm Tay Zar Mon, 1995, p. 28.

⁶The four noble truths are: - 1. The noble truth of suffering, 2. The cause of noble truth of suffering, 3. The cessation of noble truth of suffering, and 4. The path leading to the cessation of suffering. (SN 56, 11, Dhammacakkappavattana Sutta).

⁷Nyanatiloka, Ven., **Buddhist Dictionary: Manual of Buddhist Terms and Doctrine**, Kandy: Buddhist Publication Society, 1988, p. 321.

⁸The three fetters removed by Sotāpanna are 1. sakkāya-ditthi (belief in self), 2. vicikicchā (skeptical doubt) and 3. sīlabbata-parāmāsa (attachment to rites and rituals) (AN, 10, 13: Sanyojana Sutta).

⁹Pasanno, Ajahn, & Amaro, Ajahn, **The Island: An anthology of Buddha's Teachings on Nibbana**, Penang: An Abhayagiri Publication, 2010, p. 281.

¹⁰Nanamoli, Bhikkhu, & Bodhi, Bhikkhu, (trs.), **The Middle Length Discourses of the Buddha (Majjhima Nikaya)**, Boston: Wisdom Publication, 1995, p. 398.

(B) Five doubts are related to the future:

1. Shall I be in the future?
2. Shall I not be in the future?
3. What shall I be in the future?
4. How shall I be in the future?
5. From what state into what state will I change in the future?

(C) Six doubts are related to the present:

1. Am I?
2. Am I not?
3. What am I?
4. How am I?
5. When did this being come into?
6. Whether it will go?

The Avarana Sutta¹¹ elucidates that Samādhi (concentration), the mental state of being firmly fixed or one-pointedness¹² can help overcome the 5 hindrances: sensual desire, ill-will, sloth and torpor, restlessness and remorse, and skeptical doubts¹³ temporarily. Had these 5 hindrances not been overcome one who practice insight would lack the strength and power to realize what is good for oneself, good for others and good for both. Thus, one will not be able to realize the superhuman state and achieve super knowledge and vision. The purpose of this research article was to study the Theravāda concept of Vicikicchā. With the widely-varied interpretations of the teachings of the Buddha many new followers may get reluctant and develop Vicikicchā. It is very important to understand the danger of holding on to Vicikicchā and missing the opportunity to study and practice Dhamma.

Moreover, in the Theravāda tradition, Vicikicchā is considered negative unlike being positive in the modern concept of doubt. It is a mental defilement which is considered to be rooted in ignorance or lack of understanding. The term Vicikicchā is understood as obstruction to a truth seeker or practitioner. It is demotivating and develops hesitation to

¹¹Hare, E. M., (trs.), **The Books of the Gradual Sayings (Anguttara Nikaya)**, Vol. III, London: Pali Text Society, 1973, p. 51.

¹²Nyanatiloka, Ven., **Buddhist Dictionary: Manual of Buddhist Terms and Doctrine**, Kandy: Buddhist Publication Society, 1988, p. 289.

¹³Bodhi, Bhikkhu, (trs.), **The Numerical Discourses of the Buddha (Anguttara Nikaya)**, Boston: Wisdom Publication, 2012, p. 1150.

study and practice the Four Noble Truths (Dhamma). Every individual possesses this mental defilement until one has realized the stage of stream-enterer. Once Stream-entry has occurred one will completely uproot Vicikicchā and firmly develop confidence in the master, doctrine, community, training, past and future lives, etc.

The researcher would like to stress that Vicikicchā is a factor that leads to social conflicts and to report a proper method advised by Theravāda Buddhist doctrine for overcoming it.

Definitions of Vicikicchā in the Research

Vicikicchā: the Pāli Vicikicchā is translated as skeptical doubt, confusion or indecision. It is one among the 5 Hindrances that obstruct one on the path to enlightenment and one among the 10 Fetters. It can be completely destroyed at the stage of Stream-enterer. Generally, the term Vicikicchā refers to doubts about the teacher, doctrine, community, past and future lives. Ultimately, they can have doubts about the Four Noble Truths. Theravāda: The term Theravāda means [Thera: elder + vāda: teachings] the teachings of the Elders. It refers to those senior monks who conducted the first Buddhist council after the passing away of the Buddha. Nivarana: The Pāli term Nivarana is translated as hindrances or obstructions. It means obstructing one's progress on the path to Enlightenment. Social conflict: Here social conflict means a conflict or argument between two or more parties. There are several reasons for social conflict—Vicikicchā is one of them. According to the Pāli–English Dictionary Definition Vicikicchā is derived from the verb Vicikicchati which means doubt, perplexity, or uncertainty.¹⁴

The meaning of Vicikicchā is doubt or skeptical doubt. Actually, the word 'vicikicchā' is divided into two parts "Vi+Cikicchā". Although there are several etymological definitions, only the main one will be explained here. Its etymological definition is 'Vigatācīkicchātivīkicchā'.¹⁵ The meaning of Cīkicchā is 'cure or remedy', and the meaning of prefix 'vi' is 'lack of, being without, or not able to'. Combining these two meanings Vicikicchā becomes 'lack of cure'. However, the specific meaning should be that 'it cannot be cured or it is not able to cure' according to the aforesaid etymological definition. Vicikicchā

¹⁴Rhys Davids, T. W. and William Stede. **Pali-English Dictionary**, Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass Publishers, 2003, p. 1120.

¹⁵Rhys Davids, Caroline. A. F., (ed & trs). **Buddhist Manual of Psychological Ethics (Dhammasangani)**, London: Pali Text Society, 1978, p. 380.

literally means “the desire to discern or think over” (Vicikicchā) where the prefix vi- has a sense of duality or separation, and Cīkicchā comes from the verb Cīkicchāti (“he thinks over, reflects, aims at, intends). Hence the verb Vicikicchati, “he doubts.” As such it is usually understood as “doubt, perplexity, or uncertainty.”¹⁶

The Abhidhammattha Vibhāvīnī Tīkā, a sub-commentary to the Abhidhammattha Saṅgaha commenting on Vicikicchā notes that there are two etymologies for Vicikicchā, namely:

(a) “vexation due to perplexed thinking” = Vici- (i.e. Vicinanto), “inquiring” + Kiccha, “being vexed”;

(b) “being devoid of (Vi-) remedy (Cīkicchā) from knowledge.”¹⁷

More specifically Vicikicchā is a spiritual doubt, that is, in terms of moral virtues and the teachings, it clouds up our psychological thinking preventing us from focusing mentally. It is the fifth and the last one of the five hindrances. On a deeper level Vicikicchā is an uncertainty of the truth of reality and of our capability for self-awakening. It is one of the three fetters that prevents us from becoming a stream-winner who truly understands doubts. Vicikicchā is doubt or indecision: that which is devoid of a remedy from wisdom, Vicikicchā (Vi- devoid; Cīkicchā-wisdom). It is also explained as vexation due to perplexed thinking (Vici – seeking; Kicchā – vexation).¹⁸

Here it is not used in the sense of doubt with regard only to the Buddha, the Dhamma, and the Saṅgha, etc., for even non-Buddhists exhibit Vicikicchā. Vicikicchā is a doubt about the Buddha, the Dhamma, and the Saṅgha, etc., but as a hindrance it denotes unsteadiness in a particular thing that is being done. In the Vimāna, Vatthu Commentary Ekamsika (“I am certain”) states that, “I was without doubt about the Buddha, Dhamma and Saṅgha (the Three Jewels). That is, one possesses the certainty that the Blessed one is a fully self-awakened one, that the Dhamma is well taught, that the Saṅgha is well conducted.”¹⁹

¹⁶Tan, Piya, **Sutta Discovery** (SD), Vol. 31.8- “Vicikicchā: Doubt” Singapore: Minding Centre, 2010, p. 96.

¹⁷Wijeratne, R. P., and Rupert Gettin, (ed & trs), **Abhidhammatthasangaha: Summary of the Topics of Abhidhamma and Abhidhammatthavibhāvīnī: Exposition of the Topics of Abhidhamma**, Oxford: Pali Text Society, 2002, p. 429.

¹⁸Nārada, Venerable Mahāthera, **The Buddha and His Teachings**, Taipei: Buddha Educational Foundation, 1998, p. 229.

¹⁹Dhammapala, Paramattha-dipani: Vimanavatthu-atthakatha, translated by Peter Masefield; assisted by N.A. Jayawickrama, Oxford: The Pali Text Society, 2015, p. 85.

Actually, a number of lists of doubts is found in the Canon and Commentaries. The shortest list is perhaps that of the 3 kinds of darkness, found in the Saṅgīta Sutta (AN 4. 125): “One is uncertain or doubt about the past, the future, and the present”. Then we have the 5 kinds of doubt listed in the Cetokhila Sutta (MN 2), namely:

- (1) Doubt about the Teacher (the Buddha),
 - (2) Doubt about the Teaching (Dhamma),
 - (3) Doubt about the Sangha (Sainthood and Attainment of liberation),
 - (4) Doubt about the training (regarding moral virtue, mental cultivation and wisdom),
- and
- (5) Resentment towards our colleagues in spiritual training.

As a result, our minds are not inclined to spiritual effort and devotion and are lost in these five spiritual wildernesses.²⁰

One more etymological definition and its meaning will be mentioned here. It is “*Sabhāvaṃ vicinanto etāya kicchati kilamatīti vicikicchā.*”²¹. According to this etymological definition the word ‘Vicikicchā’ is also divided into two as ‘Vi+Cikiccha’. However, the meaning is different. Here the meaning of prefix ‘Vi’ is ‘investigating’ or analyzing and ‘Cikiccha’ is ‘tired’. If someone investigates about the Buddha he or she will try to understand the three characteristics of impermanence, suffering, non-soul, and Kamma but he or she may not reach a true understanding, or it is beyond his or her knowledge to get the exact answer and hence the person becomes tired.

Unwholesomeness of Vicikicchā

Doubt is often seen in world religions as enemy of truth since it prevents faith from arising. Early Buddhism however sees faith as spiritual, arising from wisdom, not blind belief. The vitality of wise faith in spiritual liberation is reflected in two well-known parables, which we shall now compare. Vicikicchā or skepticism on the Buddha, the Dhamma, and the Sangha is deciding immediately between belief and disbelief. Examples of skeptical doubts are followed:

²⁰Buddhaghosa, **The Expositor (Atthasalini)**: translated by Pe Maung Tin, and edited by Caroline A. F., & Rhys Davids, London: Pali Text Society, 1921, p. 354.

²¹Janakābhivaṃsa, Ashin, **Thingyobharthartika**, Yangon: New Burma Press, 2014, p. 134.

1. Is there the Omniscient Buddha?
2. Can one attain if one follows the Eightfold Path?
3. Is he a Bhikkhu of good conduct?
4. Can we get any benefits from observing wholesome moral precepts?
5. Do we have past existences?
6. Are there future lives?
7. Can one's moral and immoral deeds influence the forthcoming lives?
8. Can one enjoy the consequences of good deeds?
9. Is it true that due to ignorance there arise volitional actions or mental formations?²²

The (Nivaraṇā) Saṅgāra Sutta compares spiritual doubt to looking at our own reflection in a bowl of turbid, muddy water in the dark. It is interesting that this comparison parallels closely to the Tevijja Sutta parable of a man with a shawl on the river bank. In both parables, there are the imageries of immobility (the man stuck on a river bank and the water was heavy with mud) and blindness (the shawl over the man and the bowl of muddy water was left in the dark).

Canonical Description and Commentaries on Vicikicchā

The Canonical texts offer two basic approaches to the preliminary overcoming of the Hindrances. One is the suppression of the Hindrances by development of serenity (Samatha); the other is their elimination during the course of developing insight. The former is described in the discourses of the Buddha expounding the states of 'gradual training,' the latter is described in the discourses on the practice of Satipaṭṭhāna, 'the foundation of mindfulness'.²³ Two different approaches are offered because of the differing mental dispositions of disciples. Disciples of a contemplative bent generally incline to first attain concentration by suppressing the hindrances through the process and then move on to develop insight. These are called practitioners of the vehicle of serenity (Samathayānika) who develop "insight preceded by serenity." Other disciples of another intellectual bent are

²²Janakabhivamsa, Ashin, **Abhidhamma in Daily Life: The Principle of Physical and Mental Processes**, Yangon: Chanmyay Yeiktha Meditation Centre, 1977, p. 27.

²³Nanamoli, Bhikkhu, & Bodhi, Bhikkhu, (trs), **The Middle Length Discourses of the Buddha (Majjhima Nikaya)**, Kandy: Buddhist Publication Society, 1995, p. 198.

generally disposed to strive immediately for insight, leaving until later the task of deepening the state of concentration.

In commentaries Vicikicchā or ‘skeptical doubt’ is one of the 5 mental Hindrances (Nīvaraṇa), one of the 3 Fetters (Saṃyojana) that will disappear forever at Stream-Entry, the first stage of holiness (Ariya Puggala). As a fetter, it refers to skeptical doubt about the Master (the Buddha), the Teaching, the Sangha, and the training and about things past and future as well as conditionality. It also applies to uncertainty whether things are wholesome or not, to be practiced or not, or of high or low value. Vicikicchā is the lack of desire to think things out, i.e., to come to a conclusion. Vigata-cikicchā is the desire to think things out. Vicikicchā has the nature of wavering, and its manifestation is indecision and divided attitude. Its proximate cause is unwise attention to matters of doubt. It is associated with one of the 2 classes of unwholesome consciousness rooted in delusion. The commentarial explanation of Vicikicchā is the inability to decide anything definitely that it is so or not. In other words, it is an indecision.

“Who is the doer of Kamma?” “Who reaps the fruit?” “Is it a sort of ascension of a soul?” In answering these subtle questions, Venerable Buddhaghosa Thera stated in the Visuddhimagga as follows: Everywhere in all realms of existence the noble disciple sees only mental and corporeal phenomena keep going through concatenation of cause and effect. No producer of volitional act, or kamma, is seen apart from the action. No recipient of the kamma-result is seen apart from the result. Moreover, he is well aware that wise men are merely using conventional language when, with regard to a karmic act, they speak of a doer, or with regard to a karmic result, they speak of the recipient of the result.

A Stream-Enterer: A Noble One Who Overcome Vicikicchā

In the Dutiyasariputta Sutta or Second Discourse to Sariputta the Buddha confirmed the four factors for Stream-entry as follows:

- (1) Association with superior persons (Sappurisasamsevo),
- (2) Hearing the true Dhamma (Saddhammassavanam),
- (3) Careful or wise attention (Yoniso-manasikaro),
- (4) Practice in accordance with the Dhamma (Dhammanudhamma-ppatipatti).²⁴

²⁴Bodhi, Bhikkhu,(trs), **The Numerical Discourses of the Buddha (Anguttara Nikaya)**, Boston: Wisdom Publications, 2012, p. 209.

In the Discourse on Half of a Holy life the Buddha emphasized that association with a good friend is the whole of a holy life. It is by associating with superior persons that one will be able to hear the true Dhamma and it is to be expected that one will develop and cultivate the Noble Eightfold Path.

The Commentary to Sangiti Sutta explains that wise attention (*Yoniso-manasikāra*) in this context is paying attention to impermanence, suffering, and non-self, which essentially means directing the mind to development of insight (*Vipassannā*) in contrast to development of tranquility (*Samatha*). *Dhammanudhammappati-patti* explains the preliminary practice that is conducive to supramundane states (i.e. *Magga*, *Phala*, and *Nibbāna*). This preliminary practice is identified in the sub-commentary as devotion to insight, which is basically *Vipassanā* development. A stream-enterer (*Sotāpanno*) is one who has entered the stream that leads to *Nibbāna* for the first time, developing into the path of stream-attainment, eradicating false views and doubt (*Diṭṭhi Vicikicchā*), and escaping from falling into woeful states. One who becomes a stream-winner will be reborn seven times at the most. Furthermore, a *Sotāpanna* (Stream-Enterer) who has realized the first stage of enlightenment has eradicated wrong views (*Diṭṭhi*).

Then What is the Way to Overcome Vicikicchā?

According to *Kankhāvitaraṇa-visuddhi* overcoming doubt (*Vicikicchā*) is the understanding of the causal relationship between the mind (*Nāma*) and body (*Rūpa*) when it is grasped in the manner described above. Disciples who wish to fulfill it set forth in search of those that condition and result in the combination of mind and body just as a physician seeks to diagnose the origin of a sickness. They begin with a reflection that this combination of mind and body is not without cause since it is everywhere conditioned at all times, in all cases. The *Satipaṭṭhāna Nīvaraṇa Sutta* states that the practice of the four *Satipaṭṭhānas* is a way of removing these same five mental hindrances. However, the result of *Satipaṭṭhāna* can also bring about wisdom or mental calm (*Samatha*), depending on our ability and choice during the cultivation of *Satipaṭṭhāna*.

During the time of the Buddha there were ascetics who had raised such skeptical doubts about life as: “From where this has been come?” “What is his destiny?” etc. Even among those who could recollect their previous lives there were still some who constructed misleading speculative theories. Owing to this diversity of views, skeptical doubt arises like a wavering in the mind of one who has reached a crossroad. The

speculative views serve only to perpetuate that doubt. Skeptical doubt arises in one who thinks beyond his ability to do so. The Dhamma is beyond logical reasoning that works on the conceptual level. As a result, such people end up confused and undecided. This paralysis the whole task of proceeding on the right way. The method of noting doubts mindfully when they arise will solve the problem in most cases. The more persistent ones can be sorted out by an interview with the meditation instructor.

We have clearly established that the practice of the tried insight method through Satipaṭṭhāna can lead all the way to Arahantship. Therefore, it is imperative to discuss the principles and practice of Satipaṭṭhāna so that the reader will understand and appreciate its prime role in the path of enlightenment. The Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta said that the Buddha declared the following: “this is the only way (Ekayano Maggo), O Bhikkhu, for the purification of beings, for the overcoming of Vicikicchā and lamentation, for the destruction of suffering and grief, for reaching the right path, for the attainment of Nibbāna, namely, the four Satipaṭṭhāna or foundation of mindfulness.” Further in the Discourse on Analysis the Buddha explained the following: “What, Bhikkhus, is the way leading to the development of the four foundations of mindfulness? It is this Noble Eightfold Path; that is, right view, right thought, right speech, right action, right livelihood, right effort, right mindfulness, and right concentration. This is called the way leading to the development of Satipaṭṭhāna (the foundation of mindfulness).

Actually, this is how the Noble Eightfold Path is the way leading to the development of Satipaṭṭhāna. In a meditation retreat the three constituents of the morality group, namely, right speech, right action and right livelihood have been perfected when the meditator undertakes to observe the Precepts. During the practice of Satipaṭṭhāna Vipassanā meditation the meditator has to observe every object that arises. He or she must be ardent and mindful which means having the right effort and right mindfulness. In this way the mind will be fixed or concentrated on the object which is right concentration. These three factors form the concentration group.

Right thought is usually explained as thoughts of renunciation, thoughts of non-hate, and thoughts of non-cruelty. Right thought in Satipaṭṭhāna Vipassanā meditation means not thinking about various things but directing the mind towards the object to be observed or right application of the mind. With the support of the concentration group the mind will be able to “gain insight into the true nature of the object”, experiential knowledge that all physical and mental processes possess the three characteristics of impermanence (Anicca), suffering (Dukkha) and not-self (Anatta). This experiential

knowledge constitutes the right view. These two factors, right thought and right view, form the wisdom group.

*Vigata cikiçhati vicikiccha. Sabhavam va vicinanto etaya kicçhati kilamatiti vicikiccha. Vicikiccha samsaya lakkana, Ayonisomanasikara padatthana, (vicikicçhayam ayonisomana-sikara padatthana.) Patipatti antara yakarati datthabba.*²⁵

Conclusion

The facts to be avoided and to be observed with respect to doubt (Vicikicchā) have been mentioned in this research paper. Actually, the opposite of doubt is faith, Saddhā in Pāli. Faithfulness must be nursed through wisdom. If faithfulness becomes weak skeptical doubt (Vicikiccā) becomes stronger. The more skeptical doubt (Vicikicchā) becomes stronger the more the life of a being becomes darker. That is why this kind of skeptical doubt (Vicikicchā) must be overcome through meditation practice. Getting such kind of knowledge is one of the results of this study.

Doubt (Vicikicchā) is another unwholesome (Akusala) dhamma which is a hindrance. Doubt about the Buddha, the Dhamma and the Sangha, doubt about realities, all these kinds of doubt are hindrances to the development of wholesomeness (Kusala) and to the development of right understanding. Actually, we need courage to continue to develop Satipaṭṭāna so that doubt can eventually be eradicated.

Here doubt means exclusion from the cure (of knowledge). One investigates the intrinsic nature and suffers pain and fatigue (Kicçhati) from doubt. The characteristic of doubt is a shifting about, a mental wavering, an indecision or uncertainty as a manifestation of grasping and an unsystematic thought as a proximate cause. It should be regarded as a danger to attainment.

Vicikicchā (doubt) is different from wrong view (Ditthi). When there is a Ditthi, one clings for example to the concept that phenomena are permanent. When Vicikicchā (doubt) arises, one wonders whether the mind is different from the body, whether phenomena are permanent or impermanent. There is no other way to eradicate doubt but by developing Paññā (wisdom) to see realities as they are. People who have doubts about

²⁵Buddhaghosa, **The Expositor (Atthasalini)**, translated by Pe Maung Tin, edited by Caroline A. F., & Rhys Davids, London: Pali Text Society, 1921, p. 255.

the person and the teachings of the Buddha may think that doubt can be cured by studying historical events. They want to find out more details about the time the Buddha lived and about the places where he moved about; they want to know the exact time the texts were written down. However, they cannot be cured of their doubt by studying historical events; this does not lead to the goal of the Buddha's teachings which is the eradication of defilements.

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