AN ANALYTICAL STUDY OF THE CONCEPT OF DHAMMA AS NATURAL LAW IN THERAVĀDA BUDDHISM

by

PHRAMAHA SOMPHONG SANTACITTO PHAENGCHAROEN

A Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of
the Requirement for the Degree of
Master of Arts
(Buddhist Studies)

International Master's Degree Programme
Graduate School
Mahachulalongkornrajavidyalaya University
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The Graduate School, Mahachulalongkornrajavidyalaya University has approved this thesis as a part of education according to its curriculum of Master of Arts in Buddhist Studies.

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(Phramaha Somjin Sammāpañño)

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Abstract

The aim of this thesis is to attempt an analytical study of the concept of the Dhamma in Theravāda Buddhism, both as non-moral natural law, as well as moral natural law.

In its former aspect, it consists largely of the *paṭiccasammupāda* and *tilakkaṇa*, in its latter as the *ariyaṭṭhaṅgikamagga* and the *tisikkhā*, both which lead to the ultimate goal of Buddhism, the cessation of dukkha.

The present work is a textual study, which begins with an exploration and examination of the background and concept of the term Dhamma, including the pre-Buddhist period and its usage on the part of wanderers contemporary with the Buddha. The term Dhamma is a profound term, having many different connotations, depending upon the context in which it is encountered. For instance, the term is used to refer to nature, natural law, as well as the Buddha's teachings, and the various practices that lead to nibbāna.

Finally, we examine the role that these laws play at the individual, social and environmental levels, and the manner in which those levels are interrelated as a result of those laws.

Acknowledgements

This thesis is submitted to the International Masters Degree Programme in the Gradute School of Mahachulalongkornrajavidyalaya University, in partial fulfillment of the requirement for the Master's Degree in Buddhist Studies. My deepest appreciation and thanks go to the University for its financial assistance in the form of a scholarship. I am also most grateful to the Most Ven. Phra Brahmagunabhorn (P.A. Prayut Payutto), whose works provided me with the initial inspiration to undertake this research.

My sincerest thanks and gratitude go to my beloved departed father Mr. Pha, Mrs. Mark, Mr. Phim, and Mrs. Phetch and Miss. Phen, for their financial support and encouragement during my studies in monastic life, as well as relatives, my spiritual preceptors, P.M. Phongjet who was my first spiritual guide, and monks related to me. My many thanks go to members of the Committee of the Graduate School, for offering me the opportunity to pursue studies in the field of Buddhist Studies in its international program, which have been very helpful in the course of writing this thesis.

My heartfelt thanks go to all lecturers, permanent or visiting, for their care and assistance, whilst special thanks must go to the Thesis Supervisory Committee consisting of Dr. Phra Suthithammanuwat (Chairperson and Dean of the Faculty of Buddhism), and its other members: Asst. Prof. Samniang Leurmsai, Ph.D. and Asst. Prof. Watchara Ngamchitcharoen Ph.D., for their having generously given most helpful suggestions, and to Dr. Peter Masefield for his kind advice.

Many others have lent friendship and support. A very special thank you goes to Phra Sithawatchemethi for inviting me to work for four months in the IMAP office whilst awaiting examination of the thesis, and my classmates—in particular, the Walmoruwe Piyarathana, Nguyen Tan Dung, Mrs. Pitiya Navanugraha, Miss Sirisook Paesuwan, Mr. Suwat Suriyasangpetch, Phra Sujan Sujano, P.M. Sathien Sathiro, P.M. Kanda Nagasiri, Phisit, Duangdee, Tay (Yongky), Phra Sanit and last, but not least, Mae Chee Amphai.

In the context of my work for the World Buddhist Sangha Youth, I would like also to express my deepest thanks to Dr. Suwat, Ven. M. Anuruddha and others for kindly inviting me to participate, and thus allowing me to gain a great deal of experience, not to mention fun, over the last two years.

May more and more humans have a good command of the Dhamma, both at the theoretical and practical level, for the sake of the happiness, benefit, and compassion of all sentient beings.

May the Buddhadhamma be upon you all! *Anumodana Sādhu Sādhu Sādhu*.

Yours in Dhamma

Phamaha Somphong Santacitto

March, 2006

List of Abbreviations

In quoting the Pāli sources, references are to the volume and page number of the PTS edition.

Primary Sources:

AN.	Aṅguttaranikāya
Ap.	Apadāna
Ap-a	Apadāna-aṭṭhakathā
As.	Atthasālinī (commentary on Dhs.)
Bv-a.	Buddhavaṃsa-aṭṭhakathā (Madhuratthavilāsinī)
Dhp.	Dhammapada
Dhp-a	Dhammapada-aṭṭhakathā
Dhs.	Dhammasaṅganī
DN.	Dīghanikāya
It.	Itivuttaka
It-a.	Itivuttaka–aṭṭhakathā (Paramatthadīpanī, II)
Jā.	Jātaka together with its commentary
Khu.	Khuddakanikāya
Kv.	Kathāvatthu
Mp.	Manorathapūraṇī (commentary on AN.)
Mil.	Milindapañha
MN.	Majjhimanikāya
Nidd I.	Mahāniddesa
Nidd II.	Cullaniddesa
Nidd-a I.	Saddhammapajjoṭika (commentary on Mahāniddesa)
Nidd-a II.	Saddhammapajjoṭika (commentary on Cullaniddesa)
Nett.	Nettipakaraṇa
Ps.	Papañcasūdanī (commentary on MN.)
Sn.	Suttanipāta
SN.	Saṃyuttanikāya
Sp.	Samantapāsādikā (commentary on Vin.)
Spk.	Sāratthappakāsinī (commentary on SN.)
Sv.	Sumaṅgalavilāsinī (commentary on DN.)
Th.	Theragāthā
Thi.	Therīgāthā
Th–a.	Theragāthā-aṭṭhakathā
Thi–a.	Therīgāthā-aṭṭhakathā

Ud.	Udāna
Ud–a.	Udāna-aṭṭhakathā (Paramaṭṭhadīpanī)
Vibh.	Vibhaṅga
Vbh–a.	Vibhaṅga-aṭṭhakathā (Sammohavinodanī)
Vin.	Vinayapiṭaka
Vism.	Visuddhimagga

Other abbreviations:

BPS	Buddhist Publication Society
EB.	Encyclopedia of Buddhism
PTS.	Pali Text Society

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Chapter I

Introduction

1.1 Background and Significance of the Problem

The present thesis will consist of an analytical study of the concept of Dhamma as natural law as it appears in the Pali canonical, and post-canonical, sources.[1] Dhamma is a profound term, creating difficulty for both Buddhists and non-Buddhists alike, since there is no equivalent term in English that fully covers all its various connotations. This thesis therefore presents an exploration of the early Buddhist concept of the Dhamma, as distinct from its usage elsewhere in the Indian religious tradition, both prior to, and concurrent with, the Buddha.[2]

The Buddha, after he became enlightened, devoted the remainder of his life to preaching the Dhamma. In so doing, he continued a mission that had been undertaken by the Buddhas of the past and that will be continued by the Buddhas of the future.

There are a number of reasons why I feel this subject is worthy of study. Firstly, certain confusion prevails as to the distinction that pertains between the Dhamma as natural law, which constitutes natural truth amongst Buddhists, and non-Buddhist uses. Therefore, attempts are made at understanding how the Dhamma made a difference religiously for men and women who became Buddhists, who decided that they would live in accordance with the Dhamma. This study begins with an overview and review of the concept of the Dhamma in Theravāda Buddhism, and the virtues, or attributes, of the Dhamma (*dhammaguṇa*), and the taste of Dhamma.

Secondly, no detailed exposition of the Dhamma as moral and non-moral natural laws has, to my knowledge, ever been carried out. In this regard, the Dhamma is classified into (a) moral natural law; and (b) non-moral natural law. The *tisikkhā* and the *ariyamagga* are moral natural

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[1] MN.I. 190-191; AN.I. 289; SN.II.25.

[2] John Ross Carter, **Dhamma: Western Academic and Singhalese Buddhist Interpretations**, (Tokyo: The Hokuseido Press, 1978), p.1.

law, unlike the general principle of the *tilakkhaṇa* and dependent origination (*paṭiccasamuppāda*), as expressed in the well-known statement: "When this is, this becomes; from the arising of this, this arises; when this is not, this does not become; from the cessation of this, this ceases."[3]

Thirdly, the interconnection between the Dhamma as natural law and the other aspects of the Dhamma, and its significance for individuals, society, and the environment require more thorough investigation, as does its relationship with the Dhamma as truth (*saccadhamma*), behaviour (*cariyadhamma*) and as prescribed (*paññattidhamma*).

Ultimately, we need not only to reflect on the interrelationship between Dhamma as moral and non-moral natural law, but also to see this clearly as one system of causal relationships within the whole natural order. The form of presentation of this argument is analytical, synthetic, and cumulative.

1.2 Objectives of the study

1.2.1 To identify the concept of the Dhamma in Theravāda Buddhism.

1.2.2 To analyse the Dhamma as natural law.

1.2.3 To study the interconnections between the Dhamma as both moral and non-moral natural law, and its significance for individuals, society, and the environment.

1.3 Statement of the problems

1.3.1 The manner of exposition of the Dhamma in Theravāda Buddhism?

1.3.2 How is the Dhamma to be considered as natural law?

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[3] AN.V. 184; MN.I. 262-264; MN. II. 32; SN.II. 65

1.3.3 What is the significance of the Dhamma as natural law for individuals, society, and the environment

1.4 Scope of the study.

1.4.1 To study the concept of the Dhamma in Theravāda Buddhism.

1.4.2 To study the Dhamma as natural law as it appears in the Tipiṭaka and post-canonical sources

1.4.3 To study the interconnection between the Dhamma as natural law and its significance for individuals, society, and the environment.

1.5 Definitions of the terms used.

Buddhism: refers only to Theravāda Buddhism**.**

Dhamma: refers only to the use of the term as found in the Theravāda Tradition**.**

***Saccadhamma* (truth):** means natural truth, uncreated and uninvented by anyone; it appears as it really is.

Sabhāvadhamma* (reality):** means nature—any phenomenon, event, property, or quality as experienced in and of itself, in other words, the *niyāmas.**

***Cariyadhamma* (ethics):** means the Dhamma that is to be practised and followed in order to attain the *saccadhamma* and *sabhāvadhamma*.

***Paññattidhamma* (prescriptions):** means the Dhamma as formulated and prescribed for the well-being of both the individual and the community.

Vinaya: means the rules and regulations of the monastic community.

Dhamma as natural law: the Dhamma in the form of fixed certainty (*niyāma*) throughout the cosmos which exists in its own right, and independently of any creator.

Dhamma as non–moral natural law: principally dependent origination (*paṭiccasamuppāda*) and the three characteristics of existence (*tilakkhaṇa*).

Dhamma as moral natural law: principally the ariyan eightfold path (*aṭṭhaṅgikamagga*) and the threefold training (*tisikkhā*)**.**

Moral law: the law of kamma which is one of the five *niyāmas*.

1.6 Review of related literature and research works

John Ross Carter, **Dhamma: Western Academic and Singhalese Buddhist interpretations**, Tokyo: The Hokuseido Press, 1978.

This book discusses interpretations of the Dharma/Dhamma in the western academic tradition, the Dhamma in the Pali suttas and commentaries, and recollection of the Dhamma in the Visuddhimagga, Dhamma as one and manifold, the Dhamma in Singhalese Buddhist literature prior to the nineteenth century, and the Dhamma in the ongoing tradition.

Payutto, Bhikkhu P.A.; **"Toward Sustainable Science,"** Bangkok: Buddhadhamma Foundation, 1993.

This work explains the relationship between science and Buddhism from a Buddhist perspective. The Ven. P.A. Payutto effectively integrates science and technology with Buddhism and includes explanations comparing pure science, applied science and technology with truth (*saccadhamma*), ethics (*cariyadhamma*) and prescriptions (*paññattidhamma*) respectively.

P.A. Payutto, tr. Grant A. Olson, translator, **Buddhadhamma: Natural Laws and Values for Life**, 1998.

This work discusses the importance of realising how interrelated and interdependent factors contribute to our understanding of life. It asks, for instance, what are the five *khandhas*, what the *tilakkhaṇa*, and what the *paṭiccasamuppāda*, and how we should approach the *aṭṭhaṅgikamagga*. In addition, it still gives more explanations on the concept of the Dhamma as natural law, divided into its non–moral and moral aspects.

Dr. Yashpal, **A Cultural Study of Early Pali Tipiṭakas, Vols. 1-2.** Delhi: Kalinga Publications, 1999.

This work deals with the early Pali literature, which is a very important heritage. Though the dates of such literature is uncertain, it nonetheless paints a picture of the cultural aspects of early India during the time of Buddha and helps us obtain a more exact picture of the people than was available hitherto. The author confines himself to a study of the Piṭakas, and its main aim is to see how close, or otherwise, the people of the northern Indian villages of today are from their ancestors circa the fifth century B.C. This book also embraces all aspects of the geography in the early Tipiṭakas, the cosmography, contemporary religious practices and belief systems, the social organisation, economics, politics and so on.

1.7 Method of study

This work will be a textual study. Its methodology can be divided into 5 stages as follows:

1.7.1 Collecting data analysed and categorised from primary sources, such as the Pali Canon, commentaries and sub-commentaries, and certain secondary sources.

1.7.2 Analysing the raw data as well as systematising the collected and analysed data to arrive at a clear and interrelated picture of the Dhamma and as natural law.

1.7.3 Constructing the work's outline.

1.7.4 Discussing problems encountered.

1.7.5 Presenting conclusions, and suggestions for further research.

1.8 Advantages of the Study: after completing this reseach, the following advantages and outcomes may be expected:

1.8.1 Understanding the concept of the Dhamma in Theravāda Buddhism.

1.8.2 Indentification of the Dhamma as natural law.

1.8.3 Understanding the interconnections within Dhamma as natural law, and their significance for the individual, society and the environment.

Chapter II

Concept of Dhamma in Theravāda Buddhism

2.1 An Overview of the Dhamma

Dhamma is a profound term having many different connotations, depending on the context. Dhamma was and still is employed by all the religious traditions that have arisen in India to indicate the basis of their religious beliefs and practices. In this sense, Dhamma broadly denotes what we understand by the term "religion". Dhamma also designates the universal order, the natural law or the uniform norm according to which the whole world (*saṃsāra*) runs its course. In the Buddhist context, Dhamma can represent the universal order contained in the doctrine of dependent origination (*paṭiccasamuppāda*), full details of which will appear in the next chapter. This natural law, which controls the sequence of events and the behaviour and acts of beings, has no cause or originator.

An account the Dhamma as understood in Buddhism is found in the Ariyapariyesanāsutta[1] in which the Buddha-to-be, or Bodhisatta, goes to the pleasure garden along with Channa and Kaṇṭhaka where he witnesses the four signs (*devadūta*) viz. an elderly man, a sick man, a dead man, and an ascetic monk[2] which resulted in the Buddha's decision to go forth. He realised that dukkha is a natural truth and law which should be understood if the origin of dukkha is to be eradicated. He renounced those dear to him and his property and embarked on the noble quest in order to seek the end of dukkha and the way leading to the end of the dukkha. He studied, but in vain, under many heretic ascetics, subsquently subjecting himself to a critical analysis using both normal, as well paranormal, faculties of perception. The noble quest begins with the sublime corpus of moral practices (*ariyasīlakkhandha*) accompanied by restraint of the senses (*indriyasaṃvara*), followed by the cultivation of mindfulness (*satisampajañña*). After that, he embarked on a course of

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[1] MN.I.163.

[2] Yashpal, Ph. D., **A Cultural Study of Early Pali Tipiṭakas. Vols. 1-2.** (Delhi: Kalinga Publications, 1999), p. 213.

self-mortification and became emaciated.[3] Then, finally, on the night of the full-moon, he rediscovered the Dhamma, the principle of Buddhism known also to previous Buddhas, and became a Perfectly Self-Enlightened One. By attaining enlightenment, he realized the middle way, that aspect of the Dhamma which brings dukkha to an end. Shortly after his enlightenment, he was invited to preach Dhamma by Brahmā Sahampati. At first, the Buddha reflected that the Dhamma won by him was so deep and difficult to perceive, that it would be wearisome to attempt to teach others. But, entreated so to do by Brahmā Sahampati, he through his great compassion decided to teach Dhamma.

Throughout whole of the forty-five years of his ministry, [4] he travelled from place to place dedicating his whole time to sharing his Dhamma with gods and men. In the early period of his ministry, he set the Dhammacakka in motion and subsequently taught the Anattalakkhaṇasutta, both of which are the central tenets of Buddhism. After that, he caused more and more people to become arahants whom he then sent to help propagate Dhamma. Even when he was close to parinibbāna, he still played the role of the great master by teaching Subhadda, his very last *sāvaka*.

At the beginning of the Buddha's ministry, the single term Dhamma was employed, He proclaimed that Dhamma and thereby set in motion the Dhammacakka (*anuttaraṃ dhammacakkaṃ*). As a result of

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[3] MN.I.77. Four of the major austerities practised by the Buddha himself include being an ascetic (*tapassī*), loathsome (*lūkha*), disgusting (*jegucchī*) and aloof (*pavivitta*). In those days, there were two techniques believed led to deliverance (*mokṣa*) namely, (*tapa*) austerities, self-mortification or self-torture, and *yoga*, the training of the mind.

[4]Here are details of the Buddha's rains retreats during his 45-years ministry:

1st year at Benares, 2nd, 3rd, 4th year at Rājagaha, 5th year at Kuṭagārasālā, Mahāvana Grove, Vesāli, 6th Year at Maṅkulapabbata Hill in Kosambi near Allahabad, 7th year at Tāvatiṃsa heaven, 8th Year at Bhesakala forest, near Sumsumara rock, in the Bhagga District, 9th Year at Kosambi, 10th year at Pārileyyaka forest, 11th year at Ekanala, Brahmin village, 12th year at Verañja, 13th year at Caliya rock, 14th year at Jetavana Monastery, Sāvatthi, 15th year at Kapilavatthu, 16th Year at the city of Āḷavī. 17th year at Rājagaha, 18th year at Caliya rock, 19th and 20th years at Rājagaha. From 21st to 44th years, at Sāvatthi either at Jeta's Grove or the Pubba Grove. Final year at Palava Vesālī.

this proclamation of the Dhamma, and the conversion of the five ascetics, the Deer Park at Isipatana became the birthplace of the Buddha's Dispensation (*Buddhasāsanā*) and origin of the Saṅgha, or monastic community.

It would seem that, in the beginning, it was Dhamma that formed the main theme of the Buddha's mission. Later, after an increase in the number of disciples, the Vinaya came into being, after which it became the fashion to speak of the Dhamma-Vinaya of the Buddha. Hence, when the Buddha delivered a sermon to monks or laypeople, he would always refer to his teachings as the Dhamma-Vinaya, a practice that continued up until his dying moment, when he established that same Dhamma-Vinaya as the authority subsequent to his death, saying: "Ānanda, what I have taught and explained to you as the Dhamma-Vinaya will, at my passing, be your teacher."[5]

When communicating the Dhamma to others, the Buddha made no distinction of caste, clan or class. Men and women from different walks of life—the rich and the poor, the lowest and the highest, the literate and the illiterate, brahmins and outcastes, princes and paupers, saints and criminals, listened to the Buddha, took refuge in him, the Dhamma and the Saṅgha, which were open to all. As the Buddha said, people are not outcastes by birth and are not brahmins by birth; they are outcastes owing to their kamma, and they are brahmins owing to their kamma.[6] A further passage states that when the four social classes—the *khattiya*, *brāhmaṇa*, *vessa* and *sudda*—are ordained in the Dhamma-Vinaya set down by the Tathāgata, they leave behind their former name and class and become recluses. We can say that they all become sons of Sakyan.[7]

The Dhamma was methodical. The four noble truths, which are the essence of Buddhist teachings, would not be taught to everyone the Buddha met. When the Buddha knew that a person was not sufficiently mature to grasp the deeper doctrine, he would instruct him only on the simpler aspects of the Dhamma, such as kamma and rebirth. However,

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[5] DN.II.156, Walshe, Maurice. tr., **The Long Discourses of the Buddha** (*Dīghanikāya*), (Kandy: BPS, 1996). p.270.

[6] AN.IV.202.

[7] DN.III. 97.

when he knew someone was sufficiently mature, he would give a progressive talk in which he woud speak on charitable almsgiving (*dāna*), on virtue or moral habits (*sīla*), and on heaven, followed by talk on the disadvantage, emptiness, and impurity of sensual pleasures and on the advantage of renouncing them.[8] When he knew that the person's mind was ready, pliable, devoid of hindrances, uplifted, and pleased, only then would he explain the Dhamma which the Enlightened Ones have themselves discovered, viz. dukkha (suffering), its arising, its cessation, and the path.[9]

His Dhamma is non-sectarian, accessible, universal, timeless, and belongs to everyone, regardless of whether they be king, prostitute, mendicant—everyone is equal under his Dhamma. Even the Buddha paid his respect to the Dhamma, honoured the Dhamma, that he had rediscovered. It is also that Dhamma that forms the true refuge, unlike the former, external things which people had, prior to the time of the Buddha, taken refuge in. As the Dhammapada says:

> Driven only by fear, do men go for refuge to many places, hills, woods, groves, trees and shrines. Such, indeed, is no safe refuge; such is not the refuge supreme. Not by resorting to such a refuge is one released from all suffering. He who has gone for refuge to the Buddha, Dhamma and Saṅgha, penetrates with transcendental wisdom the four noble truths of suffering, the origin of suffering, the cessation of suffering, and the noble eightfold path leading to the cessation of suffering. This, indeed, is the safe refuge, this is the refuge supreme. Having gone to such a refuge, one is released from all suffering. [10]

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[8] Vin.I.15; DN.I.148.

[9] Vin.I.10; SN.V.422.

[10] Dhp. vv. 188-92, Buddharakkhita, Acharya. tr., **The Dhammapada: The Buddha's Path of Wisdom,** (Kandy: BPS., 1985), p.52.

Bahuṃ ve saraṇaṃ yanti, pabbatāni vanāni ca
Ārāmarukkhacetyāni, manussā bhayatajjitā.
Netaṃ kho saraṇaṃ khemaṃ, netaṃ saraṇam uttamaṃ;
etaṃ saraṇam āgamma, sabbadukkhā pamuccati.

The Buddha taught and transformed the concept of a celestial deva or Brahmā[11] into a terrestrial one within oneself, by focusing on the potential inherent within the human to stand on own one's two feet. However, in so doing, he only shows the way, for as he himself said: "You yourselves must strive; the Buddhas only point the way. Those meditative ones who tread the path are released from the bonds of Māra."[12]

Dhamma, in the early period of the Buddha's ministry, then mainly denoted the natural law or truth governing the cosmos. Following the increase in the monastic community, onwards from the twentieth year of his ministry, he introduced the Vinaya in which there is laid down and prescribed the rules governing the Saṅgha. From this point onwards, it became the norm to speak of the Buddha's teachings as the Dhamma-Vinaya.

It is said that various heretical teachers, both before, and contemporary with, the Buddha proclaimed themselves as teachers, and travelled about teaching their own concept of Dhamma. Many of these were ascetics practising various forms of austerities, and often had large bands of disciples. According to the Brahmajālasutta, there were, at the

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[11] Kalupahana, David J. **Ethics in Early Buddhism**, (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press), pp.1-3.

It must be noted that, in its Buddhist sense, the term Brahmā is distinct from the *Brāhmaṇical* conception of the moral Absolute Brahman. In several discourses, the worlds of Brahmā form the highest of the worlds of gods and humans. They are not permanent and eternal abodes of existence, and beings there still reap the consequences of their *kamma.* They have reached this state as a result of their virtuous *kamma* as humans. They are neither creators nor representations of the Almighty.

There are two Brahmās that frequently appear in the early discourses.

First, Brahmā Sahampati, who often functions as a protector of the virtuous, is reported to have appeared before the Buddha after his enlightenment and pleaded with him to preach the Dhamma. At Brahmā's request, the Buddha decided to undertake his mission.

Second, Baka Brahmā, who was in search of the permanent, the eternal, and the immutable, which was, according to the Buddha, a "mission impossible" (*alabhanīyaṭṭhāna*). Baka is a term for a heron or a crane, symbolising a hypocrite, a cheat, or a rogue, for it is considered a bird of great cunning and deceit, as well as circumspection.

[12] Dhp. v 276, Buddharakkhita, Acharya. tr., **The Dhammapada: The Buddha's Path of Wisdom,** (Kandy, Buddhist Pulication Society, 1985), p.65.

time of Buddha, sixty-two "heretical" sects, including the six major rivals[13] of the Buddha: viz. Pūraṇa Kassapa,[14] Makkhali Gosāla,[15] Ajita Kesakambalī,[16] Pakudha Kaccāyana,[17] Niganṭha Nātaputta,[18] and Sañjaya Belatthiputta.[19] There were also many other important *brāhmaṇa* teachers

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[13] DN.I.51-9; II.150; MN.I.198, 250; SN.I.68; Vin.II.111. Of those six teachers, Nāṭaputta the Jain, and Makkhali Gosāla were considered the most powerful rivals the Buddha encountered. But the latter was a serious and dangerous rival of both the Buddha and Mahāvīra.

[14] DN.I.52-5; SN.III.208; IV.349-50. He did not believe in the result of karma. Robbery, adultery, murder, or telling a lie, whether done by oneself, or causing it to be done by another, results in no evil and no one comes to any harm. Similarly, sacrifice, charity, self-restraint and self-control, telling the truth, whether done by oneself, or causing it to be done by another, bring no merit. For him, there were no conditions; there were no causes, for the impurity or purity of human beings. Without conditions, without cause, did beings become impure or pure. His view has been called the *akiriyavāda* (non-action) and is referred to as *ahetu-appaccayavāda* (theory of non-causality).

[15] MN.I.407, 516-17; SN.III.210. The Bhāgavati Sūtra states that Makkhali Gosāla was born in the town of Saravaṇa (near Sāvatthi) in the cowshed of a *brāhmaṇa* and therefore was called Gosāla. His father was called Makkhali because he was a *maṅkha*, or mendicant, who went about begging alms by showing a picture which he carried in his hand. Once he came to Saravaṇa and took refuge during the rains in a cowshed, where his wife bore him a son. He asserted: "There is no cause, no reason, for the defilement of creatures. And there are these fourteen hundred thousand kinds of lives, sixty hundred and again six hundred."

[16] MN.I.287, 401; SN.IV.348; AN.I. 268-9. He was Ajita of the Hair-Blanket. Ajita was famous for his wearing a human hair blanket (*kesakambalin*), and this became a part of his name. His theory of negation is that he did not believe in anything good or bad, saying that there is no result of alms giving (*natthi dinnaṃ*), there is no (result of) offering (*natthi yatthiṃ*), no (result of) sacrifice (*natthi hutaṃ*). Such was called the doctrine of annihilation (*ucchedavāda*).

[17] DN.I.56; SN.III.210; MN.I.517. He asserted: these seven classes are not made or caused to be made, they are not created or caused to be created, there are barren, standing stable as a mountain, stable as a pillar. His doctrine was regarded as eternalism (*sassatavāda*).

[18] DN.I.57. Nāṭaputta the was leader of the Jains and head of a well-organised and flourishing community of monks, nuns, men and women householders. His theory, called the theory of fourfold restraint (*catuyāmasaṃvara*), is that a *niganṭha* (one free from bonds) is restrained with a fourfold self-restraint. He lives restrained as regards all water, all evil has he washed away; and he lives suffused with the sense of evil held at bay (*sabbavariphuṭṭho*).

[19] Vin.I.39. He was the wanderer surrounded by a group of two hundred and fifty pupils, including the famous Sāriputta and Mahāmoggallāna. He was the

who were usually house-holders and who preached Dhamma to the general public, including Pokkharasati,[20] Jānussoni,[21] Brāhmayu,[22] Brahmaṇa Bavari,[23] Sunetta,[24] and the three Kassapa brothers.[25] Amongst those who taught a similar path were Mugapakkha, Arnemi, Kuddalaka, Hatthipāla, Jotipāla, Ãraka.[26]

But the Dhamma taught in the form of the four noble truths, the Dhamma leading to the cessation of dukkha, is unique to the Buddha. Up until his passing away, he never became fatigued in teaching Dhamma. After his passing away, the Dhamma and Vinaya were recited by five hundred of his monks who were arahants, headed by Mahākassapa. Ānanda recited most of the Suttapiṭaka, with Upāli being responsible for reciting the Vinayapiṭaka. These two tipiṭakas, together with the Abhidhammapiṭaka, were then classified into the Tipiṭaka by a group of arahants at the third council. Out of compassion, and for the benefit and happiness of men and gods, the devout lay Buddhist king Asoka the Great spread the Dhamma and Vinaya far and wide by way of sending out

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resident of Rājagaha and an 'eel-wriggler'. His attitude has been called the "prevarication" (*vikkhepa*). See also DN. I.59.

[20] DN.I.87-8, 133; MN.II.167, 200-202. He lived at Ukkattha in Kosala, and King Pasenadi granted him a *jagir* of this town and he ruled here as a king. He enjoyed a luxurious life by putting on unguents, trimming his moustache and hair and wearing ornaments, finest clothes.

[21] SN.V.4. A very important *brahmaṇa* teacher lived in a very grand style at Sāvatthi. He also had a white turban, white clothes, white shoes, and white *camaras* were being waved about him.

[22] MN.III. 133-46. He is an old and aged man, one hundred and twenty years old, living at Mithila.

[23] SN.976-1009. Originally from Sāvatthi, he went south, and lived on the banks of the Godhāvari.

[24] AN.III.371; IV. 135-6. He is bright eyed and had several hundred pupils and is said to have taught the doctrine of fellowship in the Brahmā world. Some of his disciples were born in the different realms of the heaven of Brahmā and that of the gods. Others were born as rich *khattiyas*, or rich *brāhmaṇas*, or *vessas (gahapatimahāsāla*).

[25] Vin.I.24. Residing at Uruvelā, Uruvelākassapa Nadīkassapa and Gyākassapa, they were also great teachers and had a company of five hundred, three hundred and two hundred pupils living with them.

[26] AN.IV.135-7; III.371. He (a wheel-wright) added, "Short is the life of man, insignificant, trifling, and fraught with much ill, with much trouble. By mantras awaken (the people). Do good, live the Brahmā-life; for the born there is no freedom from dying (*natthi jatassa amaraṇaṃ*).

missionary monks, along with some lay people. Up until the present, the Dhamma instills itself in the human heart, making the world a better place, with no war in the name of the Buddha ever having occurred.

The evolution of the Dhamma will be now discussed. The origin of Dhamma should, above all else, be clarified in order to make clear how the Buddhist standpoint is different, and contrary to, that of other religions. Buddhism was born from the desire to eliminate suffering (dukkha) or the fear of dukkha. Buddhism owes its origins to a fear of suffering, including all the problems experienced during life. Many other religions seem to have come ino existence owing to a fear of danger, an awareness of danger, stemming from the will of God, or supernatural forces, and a desire to pamper to the favour of God's grace. At other times the source of danger was thought located in natural phenomena, such as floods, earthquakes and so on, this awe of natural phenomena then resulting in religious positions aimed at minimising, or eliminating, these dangers.[27] In the ancient times, attempts were made at describing the universe, and the natural environment, which involved the notion that spirits and gods inhabit the natural environment, such as in the sea, in rivers, mountains and even celestial bodies like the sun and the moon. Their favours were sought in order to guarantee and ensure the fertility of the soil and the rotation of the seasons as well as human security. Gradually, it must have been noticed that there were certain regularities in nature, that the sun, for instance, always rose in the east and set in the west, whether or not a sacrifice had been performed in honour of the sun god.

The source of dukkha[28] lies in the natural process, which must be understood. Buddhism looks for the source of the problem within the entire process of causes and conditions, be they internal or external, material or immaterial, physical or mental. For most religions, the source of the problem is thought to lie in external factors, existing behind that natural world, in the form of spirits, deities, gods or other supernatural

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[27] P. A. Payutto, Bhikkhu, **Toward Sustainable Science,** (Bangkok: Buddhadhamma Foundation, 1993), p. 53.

[28] DN.III.216; SN.IV.259; SN.V.56. See also Vism. 499; Vibh–a. 93. *Dukkha*, in a Buddhist sense, is defined by the Buddha and the commentaries as being divided into the three types: *dukkhadukkhatā, vipariṇāmadukkhatā,* and *saṅkhāradukkhatā*.

forces. For external disturbances, such as lightning, earthquakes and so on, sacrifices and prayers are prescribed. For internal disturbances, such as sickness, mental disease or hysteria, mediums or spirit-healers perform mystic ceremonies.

Buddhism, on the other hand, has a special interest in the human condition, and does not see the source of problems to be located entirely within the external world. Suffering has its origin in the natural processes of cause and effect. Not knowing or understanding this natural cause and effect process is itself the cause of suffering. Buddhism delves into the origin of suffering by encouraging keen investigation of this law of cause and effect, or the law of nature.

Payutto mentions that the objective of Buddhism is nature and mankind. He emphasises that the prime object of Buddhist inquiry should be the nature of human beings. Normally, scientific research observes the external, physical world. When it examines the human being, it does so only as a physical organism in a biological sense, and not in relation to other human beings. The goal of Buddhism is to use knowledge to improve on life, to solve problems and attain perfect freedom, whereas the goal of science is to use knowledge to subjugate nature, in order to provide a wealth of material goods. Science is born from the desire to know nature's truths, whereas religion is born from the desire to escape danger. The desire for security is the motivating force in the birth of religion. Together with the fear of danger arose a sense of wonder at the marvels of nature, which led to the desire to know its truths. Buddhism was born from the desire to eliminate dukkha.

From this perspective, the Dhamma, in the form of the Buddha's teachings, is mainly concerned with the present life, the dukkha experienced therein, and the cessation of that dukkha (*dukkhanirodha*).[29] It is because the Bodhisatta realised that life is beset with dukkha that he set forth on his noble quest (*ariyapariyesanā*) for real freedom i.e. nibbāna. His attainment of enlightenment, or Buddhahood, epitomises the consummation of this noble quest here and now.[30] This attainment also

[29] MN.I.140.
[30] Ibid. p. 167.

represents his arahantship, his realisation of nibbāna, a goal attained not only by the Buddha himself, but also by a large number of his followers.

The Buddha is no more, but has left a legacy, the sublime Dhamma, which is no invention but rather a discovery. It is everywhere with everyone, man or woman, Buddhist or non-Buddhist, easterner or westerner. The Dhamma has no labels or logos and no temporal or spatial limitation. It is for all time. Each person who lives the Dhammic live brings it to light, sees and experiences it himself. For it has to be realised by oneself. What the Buddha discovered the Dhamma, as did his predecessors, the Buddhas of the past, was that the ancient path, the noble eightfold path, has to be followed by each individual.

2.2 Definitions of the Dhamma

2.2.1 Definitions of the Dhamma found in its pre–Buddhist sense

The Dhamma generally depicted by the Buddha differs radically from Vedic and Brahmanic teachings. However, whilst different, the Buddha nonetheless had to adopt and adapt certain beliefs, concepts and modes of expression that were in vogue among the Brahmins of his day, in order to put across his own teachings. Among such pre-Buddhist concepts that the Buddha adopted was the concept of Brahmā. The term Brahmā occurs frequently in the pre-Buddhist period, as well as in the Buddhist context, in a wide variety of senses.

The technical terms used in Buddhist literature can be classified into three groups:

1. Terms with the same form and meaning that were widespread and in common use in both the pre–Buddhist and Buddhist traditions.

2. Terms with the same form, but different meaning, that were widespread and in common use in both the pre–Buddhist and Buddhist traditions

3. Terms that had a uniquely Buddhist meaning. [31]

As will be shown in the following section, the term Dhamma, in accordance with this classification, falls into the second group. In Buddhism, many terms are used in a sense quite different from that in which they had been used in Brahmanism, or other belief-systems, whether predating, or contemporary with the Buddha.

Dhamma (Sanskrit Dharma) has had a long history in the various religions that have come into existence in India. So it is first necessary to examine some of the senses in which it was used in other belief-systems, both hitherto, as well as in the Buddha's day.

So, let us begin by considering the Dhamma (or Dharma) in its Hindu sense[32], which is used to denote ethical duty based on the divine order of reality, the standard by which individuals can judge the rightness or wrongness of their actions, Dharma is of central importance. The famous Indian epic, the Mahābhārata, in its introductory chapter makes the following observation concerning the four aspects of human life that the Hindus accepted as ultimate: dharma[33], practical life (*artha*), sensual-pleasure (*kāma*) and salvation (*mokṣa*). The term Dharma, then, is Hinduism's closest equivalent to what we understand by "religion". More than just a specific list of rights and wrongs, Dharma is the complete set of rules governing human existence. For every activity there is an appropriate type of conduct that conforms to the Dharma. Hindus look to four different sources when seeking guidance about Dharma in particular situations. These sources, in descending order of authority, are:

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[31] Samtani, N.H. **On Some Buddhist Terms**, (Bharati: Agravala Felicitation Volume, 1975), p. 136.

[32] Jeffrey Brodd, **World of Religions: A Voyage of Discovery**, (Minnesota: Saint Mary's Press Christian Brothers Publications, 1998), p.43.

[33] Ibid. Dharma*:* law and custom. Whenever Hindus strive to fulfill desires, Dharma provides limits to their pursuits. Dharma also shifts the focus from satisfying, private cravings to caring for others. In its ultimate effect of nourishing unconditional concern for the world, Dharma has much in common with the primary Christian ethical principle of unconditional love. The Hindu perspective on human destiny has, as we have seen, a significant effect on the lives of individuals. Individuals, however, are part of the larger social order.

1. Divine revelation, as expressed in the sacred scriptures

2. Sacred tradition, as passed on from generation to generation

3. The practices of, and examples set by, those who are considered the wisest members of society

4. Conscience[34]

The Dharma is very comprehensive and signifies different things in different contexts. The usage of the term Dharma differs with each philosophical system, though there are certain underlying common ways in which the word is used. However, the term Dharma retains its essentially ethical character throughout its various usages. This makes the Dharma a comprehensive category which incorporates a wide range of ethical ideals.[35]

In addition to its popular usage to denote justice and morality, the word Dharma is also used in a technical sense to signify the following six items:

1. The nature of a thing's being

2. The ethical order

3. Scriptural duties

4. The object of human pursuit

5. Religion; and

6. Righteousness.[36]

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[34] Jeffrey Brodd, Op. cit., p.44.

[35] Illa Ravi, **Foundations of Indian Ethics with special reference to Manu Smrti, Jaimini Sutras and Bhagavad-Gita,** (New Delhi: Kaveri Books, 2002), p.56.

[36] Ibid. p. 56.

In the Upaniṣads, the Dharma is sometimes equated with the *ātman*. This simple equation seems to be on the grounds that the *ātman* or *Brahman* is reality, the source of the universe. The three classes—the *kṣatriya*, the *vaiśya* and the *śūdra*, have all arisen from that source. *Ātman*, or *Brahman*, is not so much the source of the Dharma or Law, but rather identical with it. The Dharma is also the Truth (*satya*). Thus these terms, viz. *ātmā*, *Brahman*, *Dharma*, *satya*,[37] seem to be inter-related.

The above definition of the term Dharma in the Upaniṣads, and the philosophical justification for this conception of Dharma, is met with also in the Bhagavadgītā, which is probably subsequent to the arising of Buddhism.

The term Dhamma which, as we have seen, predates Buddhism, is given new content by the Buddha. The Buddha is the Omniscient One (*sabbaññū*) who is cognisant of everything, but does not teach all that has been realised by him; rather, he only teaches dukkha and the way leading to the ending of dukkha. In the Udāna we read as follows: "In sooth, when things grow plain to the ardent, musing Brahmin, his doubts all vanish, since he knows the wane of causes." [38]

As we know, Dhamma is a profound term, and gives rise to great difficulty for one trying to fathom the depths of its meaning. There is no single equivalent for the term in English. Western scholars have attempted many renderings of the term with the aid of an abundance of material aids. Lexical aids are at hand and interpretations and translations abound. According to John Ross Carter, Geiger, in his *Pali Dhamma*, gives more than fifty German words for Dhamma, whilst Rhys Davids and Stede offer over fifty English terms, including that of "law", which is central to this thesis.[39] The term Dhamma embraces all things in the universe, including what is known and what is unknown. Apart from the Buddha (the Enlightened One), nobody can really give a sufficient rendering or meaning of the word Dhamma. Although there is no single English term that exactly conveys the meaning of Dhamma, it denotes, in

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[37] EB. Vol. IV. p. 440.

[38] Ud.1. Woodward, F.L. M.A., tr., **Udāna: Verses of Uplift and Itivuttaka**: **As It was Said**, (Oxford: PTS, 1996), p.2.

[39] John Ross Carter, Op. cit. p.53.

an important sense, that which really is. It is the doctrine of truth; it is a means of deliverance from suffering, and deliverance itself. Whether the Buddha arises or not, the Dhamma nonetheless exists.

> The Dhamma I have attained is deep, difficult to perceive, difficult to follow for those who are still caught up in the world. This state of causality (*idappaccayatā*) and dependent origination (*paṭiccasamuppāda*) is difficult to perceive; this state of nibbāna is difficult to see.[40]

It lies hidden from the ignorant eyes of men, as the Buddha said:

> Monks, there are these three things which shine forth for all to see, which are not hidden. What three? The disc of the moon shines for all to see: it is not hidden. The disc of the sun does likewise. The Dhamma-Discipline of a Tathāgata shines for all to see: it is not hidden. These are the three things.[41]

Etymologically, Dhamma is derived from the root *dhṛ*, meaning "to uphold" or "to support", whilst one commentary[42] further explains that it is that which upholds or supports the practitioner (of Dhamma) and prevents him or her from falling into the states of loss (*apāyāsu*).[43]

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[40] Vin.I.1-5.

[41] AN.I.283: *Tathāgatappavedito bhikkhave dhammavinayo vivaṭo virocati no paṭicchanno ti.* Woodward. F.L. tr.**, The Book of the Gradual Sayings** (*Aṅguttaranikāya*). Vol. I. (London: PTS, 1995). p.244. The three reasons why the recitation of the *Paṭimokkha* was performed only in the presence of *bhikkhus* and why laymen were not privy to the *Vinayapiṭaka* are that (a) it was a custom of all previous Buddhas; and was intended as a mark of respect to (b) the *Vinaya*; and (c) the *bhikkhus*. Moreover, the *Vinaya* is venerable and profound. He who has reached proficiency in it may exhort others thus, "Let not this profound teaching fall into the hands of those who are unwise where it would be despised and condemned, treated shamefully, ridiculed and found fault with."

[42] Nidd.1.I.40; Nidd-a.I.146: *attano kārakaṃ apāyāsu apatamanaṃ dhāretī ti dhammo*.

[43] Sunthorn Plamintr, Ph D., **Getting to Know Buddhism,** (Bangkok: Buddhadhamma Foundation 1998), p, 63. Dharma, in the sense of "the course of conduct right for a man at this particular stage of evolution" is now well-known in the west through its use in Theosophical literature.

The term Dhamma has also been rendered in English by such terms as system, doctrine, religion, virtue, moral quality, righteousness, duty, law, standard, norm, ideal, truth, form, condition, cause, thing and cosmic order; it may mean any of these according to the context. We may trace its basic meaning in English as that which supports, as that which gives rise to a state or condition necessary for the orderly arrangement of parts, in other words, that which makes a thing what it is.

The term Dhamma is also used in the plural to refer to things or phenomena that appear to the mind. In this very broad sense, dhammas can be taken to denote ideas, which have mind as the forerunner or pre-condition (*manopubbaṅgamā*),[44] for the empiricism of Buddhism does not allow for the recognition of anything that is not presented to a perceiving mind. Dhammas as ideas need not necessarily be understood in the sense of mental constructions or fabrications of the mind; they are perceptions, rather than imaginative ideas, and thus denote certain phenomena.

2.2.2 Definitions of Dhamma found in certain commentaries

In this section, I would like to take a brief look at the commentaries (*aṭṭhakathā*), which provide valuable sources for understanding the traditional definitions of Dhamma. The procedure of referring word by word, phrase by phrase, or sentence by sentence, to canonical passages that serve as examples and the source of authority is discussed by John Ross Carter in his doctoral dissertation:

In the Sumaṅgalavilāsinī, the commentary on the Dīghanikāya,[45] Buddhaghosa gives a fourfold meaning of the word Dhamma in the senses of *guṇa*, *desanā*, *pariyatti*, *nissatta*.

> a. *Guṇa*; quality, in the sense of virtuous, moral quality; by no means are dhamma and adhamma of equal recompense, as in "Adhamma leads to hell; dhamma causes the attainment of a good birth."

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[44] Dhp.v.1, Buddharakkhita, Acharya. tr., **The Dhammapada: The Buddha's Path of Wisdom,** p.23.

[45] Sv.I.99.

b. *Desanā*; teaching, as in "O bhikkhus, I will teach you Dhamma, which is beautiful in its beginning" etc.

c. *Pariyatti*; authoritative teaching, texts which, before the formation of the Tipiṭaka were referred to as the *navaṅgasatthusāsana*, the nine limbs of the Teacher's dispensation, as in "Now then, a bhikkhu masters Dhamma, that is, the *suttas* (the discourses originating from the mouth of the Buddha and passed down orally), the *geyya* (sections to be chanted)," etc.

d. *Nissatta*; that which is devoid of a living being, as in "There is, in this connection, simply dhammas, simply aggregates (*khandhas*)."[46]

The Papañcasūdanī, the commentary on the Majjhimanikāya,[47] provides a more comprehensive list:

a) *Saccāni*; truths, as in *diṭṭhadhammo* (one who has seen dhamma), *viditadhammo* (one who has known dhamma).

b) *Samādhi*; contemplation, as in "They were of such a name, of such a lineage, of such a nature (*evaṃ-sīlā*), of such a state (*evaṃ-dhammā*), such wisdom (*evaṃ-paññā*)".

c) *Paññā*; wisdom, as in "For whom there are these four *dhammas*, O Lord of monkeys, as in your case, truth, *dhamma* (that is, *paññā*), courage, and liberality, he overcomes the visible (world).[48]

d) *Pakati*; natural condition, natural state, as in *jātidhamma*."[49]

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[46] John Ross Carter, op.cit., p.58.
[47] Ps.I.17.
[48] Ibid.
[49] John Ross Carter, op.cit., p.59.

In the Sāratthapakāsinī, the commentary on the Saṃyuttanikāya,[50] a similarly comprehensive explanation is given:

a) *Sabhāva*: inherent nature, as in such places where *kusaladhammā* (wholesome dhammas) appear.

b) *Suññatā*: voidness)

(c) *Puñña*: merit.

d) *Āpatti*: violation of the Vinaya, or an offence committed within the saṅgha.

e) *Ñeyya*: that which is knowable.[51]

In the Madhuratthavilāsinī, the commentary on the Buddhavaṃsa, an elaboration is made on the above interpretation:

Dhamma as *saccāni*; truths, *catusaccadhamma*; dhamma that pertains to four truths.[52]

In the Atthasālinī, the commentary on the Dhammasaṅgaṇī, we find:

Hetu: cause, root-cause.[53]

Here is the summary of the above definitions:[54]

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[50] Spk.I.159.

[51] John Ross Carter, op.cit., p.61-2.

[52] Bv–a.13, John Ross Carter, op.cit., p.62.

[53] As.38, John Ross Carter, op.cit., p.59.

[54] John Ross Carter, op.cit. pp. 138–140. This is a summary of *Abhidhānappadīpikā,* a Pali dictionary that probably preceded the *Dharmapradīpikā* by a few years, according to Carter.

Pali	English Translation	Com. Source
guṇa	quality, moral and virtuous quality	Sv., As., Dh.
desanā	teaching	Sv., Dh.
pariyatti	authoritative, texts, studying	Sv., As.
nissatta	that which is devoid of a living being	Sv., Dh.
nijjīvatā	that which is devoid of a soul	As.
suññatā	emptiness, voidness	Ps., Bv–a.
hetu	cause	As.
saccāni	truths	Ps.
catusacca –dhamma	the Dhamma that pertains to the four noble truths	Bv–a.
samādhi	concentration	Ps., Bv–a.
paññā	wisdom	Ps., Bv–a.
pakati	natural condition	Ps., Bv–a.
sabhāva	inherent nature	Ps., Bv–a.
puññā	merit, meritorious behavior	Ps., Bv–a.
āpatti	an offence committed within the saṅgha	Ps., Bv–a.
ñeyya	that which is knowable	Ps., Bv–a.

A further definition of Dhamma is to be found in the Vimuttimagga[55] in terms of nibbāna, the practice leading to nibbāna, and after which more synonyms for nibbāna are added, such as the destruction of all activity, the abandoning of all defilements, the eradication of craving, becoming stainless and tranquillized—such are known as nibbāna. And the practices leading to nibbāna are then given as the four foundations of mindfulness, the four right efforts, the five powers, the seven factors of enlightenment, and the noble eightfold path—such are known as the practices leading to nibbāna.

[55] Rev. N.R.M. Ehara, Soma Thera, Kheminda Thera, **The Path of Freedom (*Vimuttimagga*)** English Version translated from the Chinese, (Ceylon: Sole Distributors: M.D. Gunasena & Co., Ltd.-Colombo, 1898-1960), p.149.

In the later, and better known Visuddhimagga,[56] Dhamma, in *dhammānussati*, is said to denote both the Dhamma of the texts (*pariyattidhamma*) and the ninefold supramundane Dhamma (*navalokuttaradhammā*). Their special qualities will be clarified later.

2.2.3 Dhamma as defined by certain scholars

The meaning of the term Dhamma has been discussed by various scholars of the Theravāda. In this section, I would like to cite some of their definitions and interpretations.

2.2.3.1 Dhamma as technically defined by Christmas Humphreys:[57]

> 1. Dhamma: doctrine. Any teaching set forth as a formulated system; the guiding principles accepted or followed by a man; as applied to Buddhism, the Teaching of the Buddha.
>
> 2. Right, righteous conduct or righteousness, Law, Justice,
>
> 3. Condition, cause or causal antecedent. Cause and effect being practically identical, Dhamma is here viewed from its causal side.
>
> 4. Phenomenon. Dhamma as effect. It is always used in the plural and in this sense in first verse of Dhammapada: "All dhammas (phenomena) are mind-created"; and in the famous formula *sabbe dhammā anattā*—the whole of the phenomenal world is *anattā*, etc. and the application of word Dhamma to phenomena indicates orderly nature of existence; universe is expression of Law
>
> 5. Ultimate Reality. In the Mahāyāna, Dharma is sometimes synonymous with *Tathatā* or Ultimate Reality.

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[56] Ñāṇamoli, tr., **The Path of Purification, (***Visuddhimagga***)**, (Kandy: BPS, 1991), p. 209.

[57] Christmas Humphreys, **A Popular Dictionary of Buddhism,** (Illinois: Contemporary Publishing Company, 1997), p.65.

In addition to the above definition, the Dhamma also denotes the second gem or refuge, in that it is Buddha's teaching and thus represents the truth that helps us escape dukkha and gain happiness. The specific terms meant to denote the Dhamma are *sambodhiyāna*, *vibhajjhavāda*, *jhānayoga*, *diṭṭhijāla*, *aṭṭhajāla*, *brahmajāla*, *vibhajjavāda*, *ariyamagga*, and *ariyadhamma*.

We will now turn to some contemporary scholars of Theravāda Buddhism.

2.2.3.2 Dhamma as defined by Buddhadāsa Bhikkhu

The late Venerable Buddhadāsa,[58] one of the most influential thinkers and Dhamma-exponents in modern Thailand takes the meaning of the term to be fourfold viz.:

1. The state of nature as it is.

2. The laws of nature.

3. The duties that must be performed in accordance with the laws of nature, and

4. The results that are derived from the fulfillment of such duties.

In addition, he further explains the definition of Dhamma in terms of language. For instance, a child may understand the Dhamma as the actual books that contain the scriptures, the Dhamma in the bookcase or the word Dhamma spoken in everyday language, which belongs to the ignorant who have not yet seen the true Dhamma.

In terms of Dhamma-language, the Dhamma is one and the same as the Enlightened One. He also refers to a conversation in the Vakkali Sutta, in which the Buddha asks Vakkali:

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[58] Buddhadāsa Bhikkhu, **Keys to Natural Truth, Bangkok**, (Bangkok: Mental Health Publishing, 1999), p.20.

> Enough, Vakkali, why do you want to see this foul body? One who sees the Dhamma sees me; he who sees me sees the Dhamma, for in seeing the Dhamma, Vakkali, one sees me; and in seeing me one sees the Dhamma.[59]

In the original Pali language, the word Dhamma was used to refer to all phenomena that go to make up what it is called "nature," for it does not refer merely to texts, books, palm-leaf manuscripts, or the voices of Dhamma-preachers, which are only material. The term Dhamma in Dhamma language refers to non-material, abstract things. Dhamma has many meanings, but its essence is to be found in the concept of duty, dependent on the practitioner's particular situation and circumstances.

2.2.3.3 Dhamma as defined by Ajahn Chah[60]

According to Ajahn Chah, Dhamma is that which can cut through the problems and difficulties of mankind, gradually reducing them to nothing. That is what is called Dhamma and that is what should be studied throughout our daily lives so that, when some mental impression arises in us, we'll be able to deal with it and go beyond it. The word Dhamma refers to everything. There is nothing that is not Dhamma. His view of the world, then, is that the very mental state that is agitating you at the present moment is the world. Even the mere arising of a thought fearing death or pain is the world. Throw the world away! The world is the way it is. If you allow it to dominate your mind, it becomes obscured and cannot see itself. So whatever appears in the mind, just say "This is not my business. It is impermanent, unsatisfactory and not-self."

2.2.3.4 Dhamma as defined by P.A. Payutto

According to Payutto,[61] the eminent Thai Buddhist scholar, the Buddha's Dhamma is the teaching which is used to convey different

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[59] SN.III.119-20, Bhikkhu Bodhi, tr., **The Connected Discourses of the Buddha** (*Saṃyuttanikāya*), p.939.

[60] **Bodhiyāna, A Collection of Dhamma Talks by Ajahn Chah Teachings of Ven. Ajahn Chah**. *(*Bangkok: Fuengfah Printing*),* p.17.

[61] Rajavaramuni, Phra. **Dictionary of Buddhism,** (Bangkok: Mahachulalongkorn Buddhist University, 2529). Payutto proposes, in his **Dictionary of Buddhism**, several layers of meaning for the word Dhamma: 1. The Dhamma in

levels of truth, both relative and ultimate. He gives the two meanings of Dhamma:[62]

Firstly, Dhamma in the sense of ethical teaching (*cariyadhamma*) The truths concerning ethical behavior—both on a personal day-to-day basis, and at the social level, that are related to matters of good and evil are called *cariyadhamma*. The Dhamma centres upon the middle way known as the *majjhimapaṭipadā*. This is the principle for living for those who seek to train themselves and for those who know what is going on and do not wish to allow themselves to become foolishly caught up in the world. The goal of success for these people can be described as true happiness, purity, illumination, peace, and freedom, which can be realized in this life by practising the middle way. These aims will be related to other factors such as the conditions of the lives of ascetics and lay people. Buddhist ethics based on natural reality follow the natural law of cause and effect. So Buddhism does not propose an agent or arbitrating force that rewards or punishes good or evil actions. Rather, good and evil actions are seen as causes and conditions that unfold according to the natural flow of events.

Secondly, Dhamma in the sense of natural reality (*saccadhamma* or *sabhāvadhamma*) is Dhamma in its larger sense, and includes all things as they are and the laws by which they function, and it used to describe the entire stream of causes and conditions, the process by which all things exist and function. These focus on nature, or reality, itself, which are both beyond the concerns of good and evil. In this all-encompassing sense, Dhamma expresses the totality of natural conditions which the various branches of science seek to describe. And Dhamma deals mainly with the principle of the middle way of expressing the truth

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Pali; The Dharma in Sanskrit; The Doctrine; Buddha's teachings, 2. The Norm; the law; Nature. 3. The Truth; Ultimate Reality. 4. The Supramundane, esp. Nirvana. 5. Righteousness; virtue; morality; good conduct; right behaviour. 6. Tradition; practice; principle; rule; duty. 7. Justice; impartiality. 8. Thing; phenomenon. 9. A cognizable object; mind-object; idea. 10. Mental state; mind factor; metal factor; mental activities. 11. Condition; cause; causal antecedent.

[62] P.A, Payutto, **Buddhist Economics,** (Bangkok: Buddhadhamma Foundation, 1994), p.19. See also his famous work **Buddhadhamma** (tr. Grant A. Olson, **Natural Laws and Values for Life**), (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1995), pp. 43-4.

by way of that middle way (*majjhena dhamma*), or it can be called by its full name of *majjhena dhammadesanā*, which is a way of explaining the truth according to pure reason, as a natural process, for the sole purpose of bringing the benefits of practice to people in their daily lives. Furthermore, it does not encourage efforts to realize the truth (*saccadhamma*) by way of argument or by setting up, clinging to, and protecting various theories through philosophical speculations.

Thus, the Buddha's teachings give us more than just ethical guidelines for a virtuous life. His teachings offer a grand insight into the nature of reality. Dhamma expresses the totality of natural conditions, which the various branches of science seek to describe. The Dhamma, when used to denote the Buddha's teaching, has a range of meaning somewhat wider than it does for the Hindu, and is, in some respects, difficult to understand for an unenlightened one. The teachings are derived not only from mental reflection but also from insight gained through a profound meditative experience. Thus, full understanding of the Buddha's teachings requires an equal degree of insight gained directly through meditation. The Buddha, as we have seen, initially asked himself whether anyone would comprehend his teachings, and all along he seems to have advocated Buddhism only for the few whom he considered fit for the task.

2.2.3.5 Dhamma as defined by Rupert Gethin

Rupert Gethin gave the special lecture on the topic entitled "He Who Sees Dhamma Sees Dhammas: Dhamma in Early Buddhism"[63] He proposed 6 basic meanings, or definitions, identified by modern western scholars as follows:

Firstly, he explained about the concept of Dhamma by taking Buddhadhamma to denote the teaching of the Buddha as a whole, and quoted some sources from which a monk derives that teaching, viz. the

[63] Rupert Gethin, **"He who sees Dhamma sees Dhammas: Dhamma in early Buddhism**", Indian Philosophy, 2005.

discourses, chants, analyses, verses, utterances, sayings, birth stories, marvels, and dialogues'.[64]

Secondly, he took Dhamma as denoting good conduct or behaviour, and gave examples, such as kings who rule "righteously" or "justly" (*dhammena rajjaṃ kāreti*), who practise "justice" or "righteousness" (*dhammaṃ carati*), a person who acquires a possession "properly" or "lawfully" (*dhammena*) or "improperly" or "unlawfully" (*adhammena*), or the practice of sexual intercourse (*methunaṃ dhammaṃ paṭisevati*). In this connection, he quoted the following passage:

> So, monks, those practices that I have taught to you for the purpose higher knowledge—having properly grasped them, you should practise them, develop them, make them mature, so that the spiritual life might continue and endure long; this will be for the good of the many, for the happiness of the many, for the sake of compassion for the world, for the benefit, good and happiness of gods and men. And what are those practices…Just these—the four ways of establishing mindfulness, the four right endeavours, the four bases of success, the five faculties, the five powers, the seven factors of awakening, the noble eight-fold path.[65]

Thirdly, he put forward the truth realised by the practice of the Buddhist path called *anupubbīkathā*[66] in which the Buddha reveals the teaching of the truth (*dhammadesanā*) that is special to Buddhas, upon which the clear and spotless vision of the truth (*dhammacakkhu*) arises and one becomes one who has seen the truth, gained the truth, known the

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[64] MN.I.133: *Bhikkhu Dhammaṃ pariyapuṇāti suttaṃ geyyaṃ veyyakaraṇaṃ gāthaṃ udānaṃ, itivuttakaṃ jātakaṃ abbhūtadhammaṃ vedallaṃ.*

[65] DN.II.119-20: *Ye te mayā dhammā abhiññā desitā, te vo sādhukaṃ uggahetvā āsevitabbā bhāvetabbā bahulīkātabbā, yathayidaṃ brahmacariyaṃ addhaniyaṃ assa ciraṭṭhitikaṃ, tadassa bahujanahitāya bahujanasukhāya lokānukampāya atthāya hitāya sukhāya devamanussānaṃ. Katame ca te, bhikkhave, dhammā mayā abhiññā desitā, ye vo sādhukaṃ uggahetvā āsevitabbā bhāvetabbā bahulīkātabbā, yathayidaṃ brahmacariyaṃ addhaniyaṃ assa ciraṭṭhitikaṃ, tadassa bahujanahitāya bahujanasukhāya lokānukampāya atthāya hitāya sukhāya devamanussānaṃ. Seyyathidaṃ cattāro satipaṭṭhānā cattāro sammappadhānā cattāro iddhipādā pañcindriyāni pañca balāni satta bojjhaṅgā ariyo aṭṭhaṅgiko maggo.*

[66] DN.I.110.

truth, and penetrated the truth (*diṭṭhadhammo pattadhammo viditadhammo pariyogalhadhammo*).

Fourthly, he said that dhamma can also denote the nature of something, as in: "All that which is of a nature to arise, all that is of a nature to cease" (*yaṃ kiñci samudayadhammaṃ sabbaṃ taṃ nirodhadhammaṃ*).

Fifthly, he mentioned that it could also denote a natural law, as in the terms *dhammaṭṭhitatā* and *dhammaniyāmatā* .

Finally, he cited the use of dhamma to refer to a mental or physical state. A monk attains and remains in the joy and happiness of the first meditation:[67]

> A monk…endeavours so that bad, unwholesome dhammas that have not arisen do not arise...he endeavours so that bad, unwholesome dhammas that have arisen are abandoned…he endeavours so that wholesome dhammas that have not arisen will arise...he endeavors so that wholesome dhammas that have arisen remain constant, are not lost, increase, grow, develop, are complete.[68] A monk…dwells watching dhammas as dhammas [69].

In the conclusion of the discussion on the definition of Dhamma, I would like to propose the division of Dhamma into the following two senses:

> 1. Dhamma in general, meaning the teachings of the Buddha, irrespective of how it is rendered by commentators and scholars.

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[67] DN.I.73: *So vivicceva kāmehi, vivicca akusālehi dhammehi savitakkaṃ savicāraṃ vivekajaṃ pītisukham paṭhamaṃ jhānaṃ upasampajja vihārati.*

[68] DN.III.221: *bhikkhu anuppannānaṃ pāpakānaṃ akusalānaṃ dhammānaṃ anuppādaya…padahati. Uppannānaṃ pāpakānaṃ akusalānaṃ dhammānaṃ pahanāya…padahati. Anuppannānaṃ kusalānaṃ dhammānaṃ uppādāya…padahati. Uppannanaṃ kusalānaṃ dhammānaṃ ṭhitiya asammosāya bhiyyobhāvāya vepullāya bhāvanāya paripūriyā…padahati.*

[69] DN. II 290: *bhikkhu...dhammesu Dhammanupassī viharati*'

2. Dhamma in its specific meaning of that same Dhamma when interpreted and defined by commentators, scholars who wish to clarify the exact meaning in accordance with a specific context.

2.3 Classification of Dhamma

Dhamma can be understood as: (a) the Dhamma of the texts, or *pariyatti*; and (b) the paths, fruits and nibbāna. It is worth noting that this interpretation forms a central doctrine in the Sinhalese Buddhist tradition.[70]

2.3.1 Dhamma (*saddhamma*)[71] classified as twofold:[72]

1. Religious texts (*āgama*), or the sayings of the Buddha.

2. Attainment (*adhigama*), that is, the paths, fruits and nibbāna.

Buddhavacana constitutes *saddhamma* in the form of religious texts. The paths, fruits and nibbāna constitute *saddhamma* as attainment.

2.3.2 Dhamma classified as threefold:

A threefold classification is mentioned in the commentary on the Aṅguttaranikāya:

1. *Pariyatti*, or the authoritative teaching which is understood as the Buddhavacana;

2. *Paṭipatti*, or practice, in the form of *sīla*, *samādhi* and *paññā*; and

3. *Adhigama*, attainment, which refers to the ninefold Dhamma that transcends the world.[73]

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[70] John Ross Carter, op.cit. p. 131.

[71] Ibid. *Saddhamma* is the Dhamma of the good (ones) and also Dhamma in that it is good.

[72] Dhp–a.V.2.

[73] Sp.225; Mp.V.33.

Here is a table of threefold classification[74]

Authoritative teaching or religious texts	Practice	Realisation or attainment	Sources
pariyatti	*paṭipatti*		Nidd.1.;
pariyatti		*paṭivedha*	Mp., Ud–a., Spk., Th–a.
pariyatti	*paṭipatti*	*adhigama*	Mp.
pariyatti	*paṭipatti*	*paṭivedha*	Sv., Dhp., Dh..
āgama		*adhigama*	Dh..

2.3.3 Dhamma classified as ninefold or tenfold:

The ninefold Dhamma that transcends the world (*navalokuttaradhamma*) consists of:

1. Four paths

2. Four fruitions

3, Nibbāna[75]

whereas the author of the Upāsakajanalaṅkāra subsequently considered it to be tenfold through the addition of the authoritative teaching (*pariyatti*).[76]

2.4 Two main characteristics of the Dhamma in Theravāda Buddhism

The two most distinct characteristics[77] of the Dhamma are as follows:

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[74] John Ross Carter. op.cit., pp. 132–3.

[75] Dhs.1094.

[76] P.129.

[77] Sunthorn Plamintr, Ph. D., **Getting to Know Buddhism**, (Bangkok: Buddhadhamma Foundation, 1998), pp. 65-66.

1. Universality[78], which implies the Dhamma is universally applicable that all people, animals, deities, and things, without exception. This is the omnipresent quality of the Dhamma, and it is important to understand this clearly in order to be convinced of our unity with the Dhamma. It is non-sectarian, and open to all.

2. Timelessness[79], which implies that the Dhamma is not limited by factors of space and time. It is practical and applicable to all places and times, although it requires understanding and wisdom to put its principles into practice and to apply it to real life situations.

Dhamma was not something that the Buddha formulated for his disciples. It was revealed and proclaimed in accordance with the truth he had himself re-discovered. Thus it requires neither abrogation nor modification to suit later opinions or philosophical developments.

2.5 Virtues or attributes of the Dhamma (*dhammaguṇa*)

In the seventh chapter of the Visuddhimagga there is a discussion of the six recollections, namely the recollections of the Buddha, Dhamma, Saṅgha, morality (*sīla*), generosity (*cāga*), and deities (*devatā*), Of these, we are here concerned only with recollection of, or reflection upon, the Dhamma, which Buddhaghosa tells us is mindfulness, being immediately aware, of the virtues or qualities (*guṇa*) of the Dhamma. He explains this in a word-by-word analysis of the following quotation:

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[78] Ibid. Universality implies three fundamental characteristics:
1. The inclusion of all things and phenomena, collectively or individually;
2. An all-embracing nature that transcends limits without exception; and
3. Being in existence or operation everywhere and under all conditions.

[79] Ibid. Timelessness of the Dhamma implies three characteristics:
1. It implies an eternal state of being without beginning and end.
2. Freedom from restrictions of time.
3. Its validity and consistency can be proved under all temporal conditions, according to its own laws.

> Well proclaimed by Bhagavā is the Dhamma that is visible, timeless, characterised by (the imperatives) "Come! Look!", leading on, to be known personally by the wise.[80]

2.5.1 *Svākkhāto bhagavatā dhammo* (the Dhamma is well–Proclaimed by the Bhagavā)

His detailed exposition of the recollection of the Dhamma maintains that the Dhamma is classified into the two headings of *pariyattidhamma* and *navalokuttaradhamma*[81] for one who wants to go into solitary retreat and develop such qualities.

There follows an account of the detailed explanation given in the Visuddhimagga.

2.5.1.1 The Dhamma of the scriptures (*pariyattidhamma*)

In the first place, in the enumeration of the *Dhammaguṇa*, or the special qualities of the Dhamma through the scriptures (*pariyattidhamma*), it is said that the Dhamma should be recollected as being well-proclaimed due to its twin virtues of being good at the beginning, in the middle, and at the end, and of its announcing a life of purity that is utterly perfect and pure, and of its possessing meaning and detail. [82] It is well-proclaimed, because of its being good at the beginning, in the middle and at the end in the following manner.[83]

There are four classifications of *pariyattidhamma*, namely by way of:

1. A single stanza of the Blessed One's teaching

2. A sutta with a single sequence of meaning

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[80] MN.I.37; AN.III.285: *Svākkhāto bhagavatā dhammo sandiṭṭhiko akāliko ehipassiko opanayiko paccattaṃ veditabbo viññūhi.*

[81] Dhs.1094, Dhamma is tenfold, if *pariyattidhamma* is included.

[82] MN.I.179.

[83] Vism.VII.176, Ñāṇamoli, tr., **The Path of Purification,** (*Visuddhimagga*), p.209.

3. A sutta with several sequences of meaning

4. The entire Dhamma of the Dispensation (*sāsanadhamma*) [84]

Firstly, *pariyatti* by way of a single stanza of the Blessed One's teaching is good at the beginning with the first word, in the middle with the second, and third words and so on, and the end with the last word; *pariyatti* by way of a sutta with a single sequence of meaning is good at the beginning in its introduction, good at the end in its conclusion, and good in the middle with what is inbetween; *pariyatti* by way of a sutta with several sequences of meaning is good at the beginning by way of the first sequence of meaning, good in at end by way of last sequence of meaning, and good in the middle by way of the intervening sequences of meaning; just as it is also good at the beginning in its introduction which gives the place of its origin and the reason for its utterance, good in the middle because it suits those susceptible of being taught since it is unequivocal in meaning and reasoned with cause and examples, and good at the end in its conclusion since it inspires faith in the hearers.

Pariyatti by way of the entire Dhamma of the Dispensation (*sāsanadhamma*) is good because:

1. It is good at the beginning by way of virtue, good in the middle by way of serenity and insight and by way of path and fruition, and good at the end by way of nibbāna.

2. Also, it is good at the beginning by way of virtue and concentration, good in the middle by way of insight and the path, and good at the end by way of fruition and nibbāna.

3. And it is good at the beginning because of the good discovery made by the Buddha, good in the middle because of the well-regulatedness of the Dhamma, and good at the end because of the good way entered upon by the Saṅgha.

4. It is good at the beginning by way of the discovery of what can be attained by one who enters upon the way of practice in

[84] Ibid.,p.177.

> conformity after hearing about it, good in the middle by way of the unproclaimed enlightenment (of Paccekabuddhas), and good at the end by way of the enlightenment of disciples.[85]

When listened to, it brings that which is good for those hearing it, because it suppresses the hindrances—thus it is good at the beginning; and when made the way of practice it brings that which is good as a result of the way having been entered upon, because it brings the bliss of serenity and insight—thus it is good in the middle; and, when it has thus been made the way of practice and the fruit of the way has been attained, it brings that which is good through the fruit of the way because it brings (unshakable) equipoise—thus it is good in the end. Secondly, it is well-proclaimed, because of the life of purity, viz. the life of purity of the Dispensation and the life of the purity of the path, which are utterly perfect and pure, with meaning and detail.

There are two kinds of *pariyattidhamma* namely:

1. *Pariyattidhamma* that is with meaning,[86] by way of seven aspects classified in the Visuddhimagga.

a) With meaning, because of perfection of meaning.

b) With meaning, because it conforms to the words pronouncing, clarifying, revealing, expounding, and explaining that meaning.

c) With meaning. owing to its profundity of meaning and profundity of penetration.

d) With meaning, because it is the province of the discriminations of meaning and of perspicuity.

e) With meaning, since it inspires confidence in persons of discretion, being experienceable by the wise.

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[85] Vism.VII.177, Ñāṇamoli, tr., **The Path of Purification, (***Visuddhimagga***)**, p.210.

[86] Ibid.

f) With meaning, because its intention is profound.

g) With meaning, because it provides the particular distinction of achievement through practice of the way.

2. *Pariyattidhamma* is with detail,[87] by way of seven aspects classified in the Visuddhimagga.

a) With detail, because of the perfection of its detail.

b) With detail, because it of the perfection of its syllables, words, details, style, language, and descriptions.

c) With detail, owing to the profundity of the law and the profundity of its teaching.

d) With detail, because it is the province of the discriminations of law and of language.

e) With detail, since, being a fit object of faith, it inspires confidence in worldly persons.

f) With detail, because its words are clear. It is 'utterly perfect' and with complete perfection, due to the absence of anything that can be added. It is pure and immaculate, due to the absence of anything to be subtracted.

g) With detail, because it provides the particular distinction of learning through mastery of the texts. It is utterly perfect, because it is connected with the five *Dhammakkhandhas*, beginning with virtue (*sīla*). It is pure, because it has no imperfections, and because it exists for the purpose of crossing over (the round of rebirths' flood), and because it is not concerned with worldly things.

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[87] Ibid. pp.210-11.

At the end of the Dhamma of the scriptures, it is well-proclaimed in comparison with the Dhamma of others, because it has been proclaimed with no perversion of its meaning. The Dhamma of the other sectarians suffers perversion, and is ill-proclaimed, because there is no obstruction in the things said to be obstructions and because there is no outlet in the things said to be outlets; whereas the Dhamma of the Buddha is with meaning and without perversion because the things said to be obstructions are obstructions and because the things said to be outlets are outlets.

2.5.1.2 The Supramundane Dhamma (*lokuttaradhamma*)

The supramundane Dhamma[88] is well-proclaimed because of the following two aspects:

1. The way accords with nibbāna; and

2. Nibbāna accords with the way.

It is said that the way leading to nibbāna has been properly declared by the Blessed One to his disciples, and that nibbāna and the way meet: just as the water of the Gaṅges meets and joins with the water of the Yamunā, so too does the way meet and join with nibbāna.[89]

The noble path, which is spoken of as a middle way because of its approaching neither of two extremes, is well-proclaimed by being proclaimed to be the middle way. The fruits of asceticism, in which the defilements are tranquillized, are also well-proclaimed by being proclaimed as having tranquillized defilement. Nibbāna in its individual essence is eternal, deathless, a refuge, a shelter, and so on, and is also well-proclaimed by being proclaimed as having an individual essence that is eternal, and so forth.

Its exposition by the Buddha, who realised it through his direct experience, is comprehensive and all-embracing. The Buddha's omniscience and boundless compassion guarantee the validity and value

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[88] Ibid.

[89] DN.II.223.

of his teachings, which the Buddha told others to propagate, saying: “Go forth, monks, for the welfare of the many, for the happiness of the many, out of compassion for the world, for the good, the benefit, and bliss of gods and men." The Buddha also said:

> You have been released from bondage, both human and divine. To the world, therefore, should you teach that good Dhamma, which is beautiful at the beginning, beautiful in the middle, beautiful at the end, complete with meanings and principles for living a noble life and which leads to purity and complete freedom. There are beings with little dust in their eyes that will be lost through not hearing the Dhamma. There are beings who will understand the Dhamma. I also shall go to Uruvelā, to Senānigāma, to teach the Dhamma.[90]

2.5.2 *Sandiṭṭhika* [91]

Buddhaghosa states that the Dhamma is *sandiṭṭhika*, because it is:

1. visible here and now

2. a proper view

3. worthy of being seen.

2.5.2.1 Visible here and now[92]

The noble path is visible here and now, since it can be seen by a noble person himself when he has done away with greed, etc., in his own continuity, just the ninefold supramundane Dhamma is also visible here and now, because of its being able to be seen and practiced by a noble person himself, and because of its being able to be seen by anyone. It is visible by way of reviewing knowledge (*paccavekkhaṇa*), without one having to rely in faith on another.

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[90] Vin.I.21.

[91] Vism.VII. 178, Ñāṇamoli, tr., op.cit. p.212.

[92] Ibid.

2.5.2.2 A proper view[93]

The noble path conquers the defilements by means of the proper view associated with it, the noble fruition does so by means of the proper view that is its cause, and nibbāna does so by means of the proper view that is its objective field. So the ninefold supramundane Dhamma has proper view, since it conquers by means of proper view, just as a charioteer (*rathika*) is so called because of conquering by means of a chariot (*ratha*).

2.5.2.3 Worthy of being seen[94]

The supramundane Dhamma arrests the fearful round as soon as it is seen by means of penetration consisting in the development (of the path) and by means of penetration consisting in the realisation (of nibbāna). So it is visible here and now, since it is worthy of being seen, just as one who is clotheable is so called because he is worthy of clothes.

The Dhamma is realisable through its practitioners' own effects. Those who practise the Buddha's teachings will see the Dhamma for themselves. They will derive the full benefits of their own commitment and will thereby be convinced of the truth of the Dhamma. Thus, there is no need to blindly believe in what is said by others.

2.5.3 *Akāliko*[95]

Buddhaghosa provides two interpretations:

1. It is not delayed (*akāla*) in the matter of giving its own fruit;[96]

2. And it is without delay (*akālika*) because its fruit comes immediately afterwards.

It is described either as "timeless" or "yielding immediate results." The Dhamma is timeless because it transcends all temporal

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[93] Ibid.
[94] Ibid.
[95] Vism.VII.178, Ñāṇamoli , tr., op.cit. p. 213.
[96] Sn.226.

limitations; its truth is eternal. The Dhamma is said to yield immediate results because its effects can be experienced at each and every moment.

2.5.4 *Ehipassika*[97]

It invites one to come and see, since it is both capable of being found, and also pure.

The ninefold supramundane Dhamma is capable of being found because it possesses an individual essence, and it is as pure as the full moon's disk in a cloudless sky, and as gem of pure water on bleached cloth. So, because of its being of being found, and pure, it invites inspection, as if saying "Come and see this Dhamma".

This means that the Dhamma is completely open to investigation and verification. Because the Dhamma is truth, its worth and value do not depend on belief or faith, but are open to thorough examination and reexamination by all truth-seekers. The Buddha himself strongly advised his disciples not to blindly believe in him, but rather to question and re-question him until they were fully convinced of the teacher and the teachings (Dhamma). He further encouraged them to put the Dhamma to test by practising it "just as a goldsmith tests the purity of his gold by cutting, rubbing, and burning it." Buddhism is always a matter of knowing and seeing, and not one of believing. The teaching of the Buddha is qualified as *ehipassika*, inviting you to come and see, but not to come and believe.

2.5.5 *Opanayika* [98]

The four paths and four fruitions are worthy of being induced in one's own mind by means of development, without any question of whether or not one's clothing or one's head is on fire. Thus it is onward-leading (*opanayika*). But the unformed Dhamma is worthy of being induced in one's own mind, and is also one that is "leading onwards." The meaning is that it is worth treating as one's shelter by way of realising it. The noble path induces the noble person to reach to nibbāna,

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[97] Vism.VII.178, Ñāṇamoli , tr., op.cit. p. 213.

[98] Ibid.

just as the Dhamma consisting of fruition and nibbāna can be reached through realisation.

The Dhamma is said to lead to higher knowledge and the realisation of nibbāna. This quality makes the practice of Dhamma highly rewarding, for the ultimate realisation (of Dhamma) means the highest bliss and complete freedom from all suffering.

2.5.6 *Paccattaṃ veditabbo viññūhi*[99]

All kinds of wise men, beginning with the acutely wise, can experience it in themselves as follows, viz. the path has been developed, fruition attained, and cessation realised, by me. For it is not the case that when a preceptor has developed the path, his co-resident abandons his defilements, nor does that co-resident dwell in comfort owing to the preceptor's attainment of fruition, nor does he realize the nibbāna realized by the preceptor. So this is not visible in the way that an ornament on another's head is, but rather it is visible only in one's own mind. It can be undergone by wise men, and is not the province of fools.

The Pali term *paccattaṃ* means that the Dhamma as an experience is directly known through intuitive insight, and is thus a matter of personal knowledge. It is true that it can be heard from others, but to really know the Dhamma, such secondhand knowledge is insufficient. A direct experience is the most crucial factor in the realisation of the truth.

Each subesquent *dhammaguṇa* is caused by the former.

At the end of this exposition, I would like to refer to the ten benefits of recollection of the Dhamma, as mentioned in Visuddhimagga, viz.

1. being respectful and deferential towards the Master

2. entertaining great reverence for the Dhamma and attaining the fullness of faith and so on

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[99] Vism.VII.178, Ñāṇamoli, tr., op.cit. p. 214.

3. having much happiness and gladness

4. conquering fear and dread

5. being able to endure pain

6. feeling as if one were living in the Dhamma's presence

7. one's body, upon recollection of the Dhamma's special qualities, dwells in it, becomes as worthy of veneration as a shrine room

8. one's mind tends towards the realisation of the peerless Dhamma

9. when one encounters an opportunity for transgression, one has vivid awareness of conscience and shame, upon recollecting the well-regulatedness of the Dhamma

10. if one penetrates no higher, one is at least headed for a happy destiny. [100]

The following verse summaries the benefits of recollecting the Dhamma:

Now when a man is truly wise,
His constant task will surely be
This recollection of the Dhamma
Blessed with such mighty potency.[101]

2.6 Taste of the Dhamma

This section will be confined to the supreme level of the Dhamma. As a whole, the Dhamma denotes both the means and the goal.

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[100] Vism.VII.180, Ñāṇamoli, tr., op.cit. p. 214.
[101] Ibid.

First of all, I would like to quote some of the Buddha's sayings:

> Pahārada, just as the ocean has but one taste, the taste of salt, even so does this Dhammavinaya have but one flavour, the flavour of release."[102]

> Pahārada, just as the ocean has many and diverse treasures—the pearl, the crystal and so forth—even so does this Dhammavinaya have many and diverse treasures, that is to say, the four arisings of mindfulness, the four right efforts, the four bases of psychic power, the five faculties, the five powers, the seven parts in awakening and the ariyan eightfold way.[103]

Āsavakkhaya, or the destruction of the *āsavas*, is the freedom and the insight that are brought about by *paññā*. *Paññā* therefore becomes synonymous with the knowledge of the destruction of the *āsavas* (*āsavakkhayañāṇa*). The Ariyapariyesanasutta is unequivocal with regard to what the Buddha discovered as a result of his attainment of *paññā* or *āsavakkhayañāṇa*. The description runs as follows:

> I considered: "This Dhamma that I have attained is profound, hard to see and hard to understand, peaceful and sublime, unattainable by mere reasoning, subtle, to be experienced by the wise…Considering thus, my mind inclined to inaction rather than to teaching the Dhamma."[104]

This is the clearest definition of Dhamma that the Buddha claims to have discovered. The Dhamma is here identified with two things: dependent co-arising (*paṭiccasamuppāda*), and nibbāna. All other uses of the term Dhamma can be subsumed under one or other of these two, and will be discussed in the next chapter.

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[102] AN.IV.203. Hare, E.M. tr. **The Book of the Gradual Sayings** (*Aṅguttaranikāya*). Vol. IV. London: PTS, 1995. pp. 139-40.

[103] Ibid. p.205.

[104] MN.I.167, Ñāṇamoli and Bhikkhu Bodhi, tr., ed., **The Middle Length Discourses of the Buddha** (*Majjhimanikāya*), p.260.

A verse in Dhammapada reads as follows: "All things are not-self—when one sees this with wisdom, one turns away from suffering. This is the path to purification."[105]

It is obvious that the aim of Buddhism is to reach the end of dukkha here and now. There does, however, appear to be a trend persisting from very early times, which considered that some of the Buddha's teachings were for the purpose of securing well-being in the hereafter.[106] At the very beginning, the goal was one, and was denoted by such terms as *sambodhi*, nibbāna, arahantship, and so on. One who genuinely strives to put an end to dukkha has only one goal, the goal of *sambodhi*.

The genuine strivers who fail to achieve this goal here and now are certain of attaining the lesser stage of non-returner (*anāgāmī*) with the definite prospect of attaining freedom.[107] But the path is difficult to tread. This may have prompted the necessity of a lesser goal. The prevalent religious beliefs in rebirth, in the Buddha's time, and the spread of Buddhism, necessitated numerous concessions to popular demands.

The Dhammapada says that some are born in the womb, the wicked are born in hell, the devout go to heaven, whilst the stainless pass into nibbāna.[108] This goal (*sagga*), which one had to attain after death, was never held to be on a par with the attainment of nibbāna here and now. On the contrary, the Buddha himself looks down upon those who lead the religious life (*brahmacariya*) for the purpose of securing birth in heaven.[109]

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[105] Dhp. v.279: *Sabbe dhammā anattā ti yadā paññāya passati atha nibbindati dukkhe esa maggo visuddhiyā*. Buddharakkhita, Acharya. tr., **The Dhammapada: The Buddha's Path of Wisdom,** p.65.

[106] Vin.I.179. This belief may be due to the influence of certain religious beliefs that prevailed at that time.

[107] MN.I.63.

[108] Dhp.v.126, Buddharakkhita, Acharya. tr., **The Dhammapada: The Buddha's Path of Wisdom,** p.42.

[109] AN.I.115.

The doctrine that supreme bliss is capable of being attained in this very life is referred to as the *diṭṭhadhammanibbānavāda.*[110] There is a way in which one can look at ultimate freedom. The complete elimination of greed, hatred, and confusion is not an easy task. In this sense, freedom is a personal achievement and experience. Cultivation of the morals requires enormous effort and commitment and involves the cultivation of virtues through the intermediary stage of practising the eightfold path, and so on.

Renunciation can come about only after a proper understanding of the nature of existence, namely dependent co-arising, which is the foundation of the Buddha's conception of freedom has been gained. Nonetheless, an enlightened person is not above the Dhamma; he still respects the Dhamma. He continues to tread the noble path, perfectly enlightened, being one who has tamed himself, is concentrated and delighting in the appeasement of thought.[111]

Even the Buddha himself, who had attained enlightenment and freedom, had to continue to tread the moral path because it is not an absolutely fixed blueprint valid for all time. Neither is freedom a static state, like the Brahmanical moral absolute; it is one of continuous challenges.

Thus, even the Buddha had to be constantly vigilant (*appamatta*). The goal of Buddhism can be seen from three separate, though related, standpoints:

1. It is the attainment of emancipation (*vimutti*) which, from the individual point of view, has the consequence of delivering a person from the condition of dukkha.

2. It is the attainment of a kind of understanding, or insight, which in itself has an ethical value. This insight is called right knowledge (*sammāñāṇa*), wisdom (*paññā*), the knowledge or insight into things as they really are (*yathābhūtañāṇadassana*),

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[110] DN.I.36.

[111] AN.I.3, 122.

the knowledge of the destruction of the *āsavas* (*āsavakkhayañāṇa*).

3. It is the attainment of moral perfection, a moral transformation of personality which entitles one to be described as an arahant. Freedom from suffering, insight and perfection are concomitant and simultaneous attainments.

From the Buddhist sense, the summum bonum is nibbāna. It is the destruction, on one's part, of lust, hatred, and delusion, and is also spoken of as that nibbāna-element that is with substrate-remnant (nibbāna),[112] saying that the highest Dhamma is nibbāna.

Nibbāna is a dhamma, an experience that cannot be explained because of its subtlety. It is known as supramundane (*lokuttara*), and unconditioned (*asaṅkhata*), for it is beyond words, logic and reasoning (*atakkāvacāra*). It is easier and safer to speak of what nibbāna is not, for it is impossible to express it in words. We may attempt to explain it by using words with limited meanings, connected with cosmos, but nibbāna, the unconditioned which is realised through the highest mental training and wisdom, is ineffable.

The Buddha stated that nibbāna is deep, hard to see, hard to understand, peaceful and sublime, beyond mere reasoning, subtle and intelligible to the wise. [113]

The third noble truth, is explained by the Buddha in his first sermon, as follows:

> Now this, bhikkhus, is the noble truth of the cessation of suffering: [114] it is the remainderless fading away and cessation of that same craving (*nirodho*), the giving up (*cāgo*) and relinquishing of it

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[112] It.38. Peter Masefield, tr., **The Itivuttaka**, Oxford: PTS, 2000, p.35.

[113] MN.26; SN.I.136.

[114] Ibid. In this definition the word *nibbāna* is not mentioned, but the complete cessation of craving implies *nibbāna.*

(*paṭinissaggo*), freedom from it (*mutti*), non-reliance on it (*anālayo*).[115]

Elsewhere the Buddha states: "For the destruction of craving, Rādha, is nibbāna"[116], and "Craving is what one must forsake (*taṇhāya vippahānena*) in order to attain nibbāna".[117]

One reads in the Suttanipāta:

> There is only one truth; there is no second, about which an intelligent man might dispute with an (other) intelligent man. Ascetics themselves proclaim various truths, therefore they do not say one (and the same) thing; [118]

or, in the words of the Buddha's chief disciple, named Sāriputta: "The subduing and abandoning of passionate desire (*chandarāga*) for these five aggregates of attachment is the cessation of dukkha."[119]

Here are some statements about nibbāna appearing in the Tipiṭaka.

"There is no more for this state of being in nibbāna."[120]

"It is called nibbāna because of the getting rid of craving."[121]

"The steadfast go out (*nibbanti*) like this lamp."[122]

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[115] SN.V.421. Ñāṇamoli and Bhikkhu Bodhi, tr., ed., **The Connected Discourses of the Buddha** (*Saṃyuttanikāya*), p.1844.

[116] SN.III.190. Ñāṇamoli and Bhikkhu Bodhi, tr., ed., **The Connected Discourses of the Buddha** (*Saṃyuttanikāya*), p.985.

[117] SN.I.39. Ñāṇamoli and Bhikkhu Bodhi, tr., ed., **The Connected Discourses of the Buddha** (*Saṃyuttanikāya*), p.131.

[118] Sn.884: *Ekaṃ hi saccaṃ na dutiyaṃ atthi.*

[119] MN.28.

[120] SN.III.117, Ñāṇamoli and Bhikkhu Bodhi, tr., ed., **The Connected Discourses of the Buddha** (*Saṃyuttanikāya*), pp.936-7.

[121] SN.I.39.

[122] Sn.235.

> "I will pull the wick right down (into the oil)—the going-out (nibbāna) of the lamp is itself deliverance of the mind.[123]
>
> "The going-out of the flame itself is deliverance of the mind."[124]
>
> "For Rādha, the holy life (*brahmacariya*) is lived with nibbāna as its ground, nibbāna as its destination, nibbāna as its final goal."[125]

Next we come across the terms *cetovimutti*[126] and *paññāvimutti*,[127] the freedom of mind and wisdom respectively. In the Tevijjasutta, statements suggest that the *brahmavihāras* are brought about by *cetovimutti*. This discourse states that a young brahmin named Vaseṭṭha inquired into the way of union with Brahmā. The Buddha speaks of *sīla* and *samādhi* in the Sāmaññaphalasutta and, in conclusion, states that in the abolition of the five hindrances and the consequent joy, there is no identity between the Brahmanic goal and any stage on the Buddhist *magga* (path).

Paññāvimutti is found independently of the attainment of *cetovimutti* in the Mahānidānasuttanta. *Paññāvimutti*, and its relationship with the noble eightfold path will be discussed in the next chapter.

The four paths (*magga*) represent four stages in the process of salvation, the first being that of the *sotāpanna*, or stream-winner. The second path is that of the *sakadāgāmī*, or once-returner, the third that of the *anāgāmī*, or non-returner, whilst the fourth path is that of the *arahant*, or worthy one.

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[123] Thi.116.

[124] DN.II.157.

[125] SN.III.189.

[126] AN.I.60. The results of the practical method of *samatha* are called *cetovimutti*, meaning liberation of the mind (freedom from the power of unwholesome tendencies due to the power of *samādhi*).

[127] Ibid. The results of *vipassanā* practice are called *paññāvimutti*, meaning liberation (emancipation and the elimination of mental intoxicants, *āsava*) by means of wisdom.

A passage in the Dīghanikāya says of the one who has attained the stage of the *sotāpanna*: "Mahāli, in this case, a monk, having abandoned three fetters, becomes a *sotāpanna*, one not liable to states of woe, one firmly set on the path to enlightenment.'[128]

This attainment is not limited to those who have gone forth into the Saṅgha, since it is also achievable by a householder who has trained himself properly, and can say of himself:

> Destroyed is hell for me; destroyed is the animal-rebirth; destroyed is the realm of ghosts; destroyed for me is the wayward way, the ill way, the abyss; I am he who has won to the stream, not subject to any falling away, sure and bound for enlightenment.[129]

In the Dhammapada, it said that the state of the *sotāpanna* is:

> Better than sole sovereignty over the earth,
> Better than going to heaven,
> Better even than lordship over all the worlds
> Is the supramundane fruition of stream-entrance.[130]

A person who has attained the second path is called a "once-returner" (*sakadāgāmī*). A further passage in the same Nikāya reads:

> Again, a monk who has abandoned the three fetters, and has reduced his greed, hatred and delusion, becomes a once-returner who, having returned to this world once more, will make an end of suffering;[131]

just as:

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[128] DN.I.156, Walshe, Maurice. tr., **The Long Discourses of the Buddha** (*Dīghanikāya*), p.145. The three fetters are "preoccupying opinions about the reality for one's individuality" (*sakkāyadiṭṭhi*), "doubt" (*vicikicchā*) and "doting on precepts and practices" (*sīlabbataparāmāsa*). The three fetters are listed at D.III. 216.

[129] AN.III.213, Hare, E.M. tr. **The Book of the Gradual Sayings** (*Aṅguttaranikāya*). Vol. III. London: PTS, 1995. p.156.

[130] Dhp. V.178.

[131] DN.I.156, Walshe, Maurice. tr., **The Long Discourses of the Buddha** (*Dīghanikāya*), p.145.

> A once-returner is one who, having cultivated the path here, comes into the world of gods; having remained there a life span, having arisen again right here, attains parinibbāna.[132]

A person who has attained the third path is called a "non-returner" (*anāgāmi*). A further passage reads:

> Again, a monk who has abandoned the five lower fetters takes a spontaneous rebirth [in a higher sphere] and, without returning from that world, gains enlightenment.[133]

The *anāgāmi* appears along with *sotāpanna*, *sakadāgāmi* and arahant in several canonical passages.

The fourth path is the *arahattamagga*, the path leading to the state of a worthy one. Frequently listed with the previous three *maggas*, the fruition of arahantship (*arahattaphala*) is listed in several passages along with the first three *phalas* and when the various paths and fruits are listed together, they total eight.

A further passage reads:

> Again, a monk through the extinction of the corruptions reaches in this very life the uncorrupted deliverance of mind, the deliverance through wisdom, which he has realized by his own insight. That is another thing higher and more perfect than these, for the sake of which monks lead the holy life under me.[134]

What the Buddha rediscovered is the Dhamma; what he taught is the Dhamma; that which has to be mastered is the Dhamma; the paths and fruits are the Dhamma, and, of course, nibbāna is the Dhamma.

The reason why the concept of the Dhamma as nibbāna or *vimutti* is spoken of the conclusion of the Dhamma is discussed in this section because even the end of dukkha can be spoken of as the Dhamma.

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[132] Ps.I.163.
[133] DN.I.156, Walshe, Maurice. tr., op.cit., p.145.
[134] DN.I.156, Walshe, Maurice. tr., op.cit., p.146.

When one knows and sees one's own mind has become emancipated from the outflow of sensuous gratification (*kāmāsava*), from the outflow of becoming (*bhavāsava*) and from the outflow of ignorance (*avijjāsava*), there arises the knowledge that emancipation has been attained and one will understand that:

> Birth has been destroyed; the noble life has been led; what had to be done has been done; there is nothing further for existence in these conditions.[135]

The Buddha's conception of freedom (nibbāna) has been the subject of innumerable disquisitions by both classical and modern scholars. Thus, the attempt to depict the state of freedom as a non–dual absolute comparable to that of the Upaniṣads has continued among both Buddhist and non-Buddhist scholars for nearly 2,500 years.

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[135] S IV 2: *Khīṇā jāti, vusitaṃ brahmacariyaṃ, kataṃ karaṇīyaṃ, nāparaṃ itthattāyā ti.*

Chapter III

Dhamma as Natural Law

3.1 Meaning of Natural Law

In the preceding chapter, we considered use of the term Dhamma in a number of different contexts both generally and more specifically. In the present chapter, I would like to concentrate solely on the Dhamma as natural law, which forms the main theme of this thesis. To this end, we should first turn our attention to what is meant by the expression "natural law".

The English term "law" is found used in a number of different contexts and senses, and has many layers of meaning, just as it also frequently appears in conjunction with some adjective restricting its meaning to a specific area of discourse—for example, moral law, judicial law, constitutional law, natural law, civil law, criminal law, and so on.

Before proceeding further, it may be noted that the term "law" is found used in both a general, and more specific sense:

> 1. The term "law", in its general sense, denotes one of a number of different principles observed to hold in the world, or universe, as a whole. Such laws are not devised by humans, but rather exist independently of the observer. Our knowledge of such laws is at best partial—there are always new laws out there waiting to be discovered.
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> 2. The term "law" in its more specific sense denotes one or more regulations devised by humans and imposed on some society by some body or authority. [1]

Both may change over time. The difference is that any change in the former type of law is not due to any human agency; whereas, the

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[1] Thai Royal Academy, **Dictionary of Philosophy (Thai version)**, (Bangkok: Arunkarnpim Press 1997), p.56.

latter may be, and frequently are, changed by the authority overseeing them.

In its second sense, the term "law" is found to have two distinct applications:

1. To denote the entire body of rules that governs a particular society.

2. To denote some individual member of that body of rules, such as an Act of Parliament. [2]

The ancient comprehensive meaning of the term law is also reflected in the terminology of Thomist philosophy,[3] in which eternal law, signifies "the plan of the Divine wisdom as directing all actions and movements", and has two aspects: physical law and moral law.

In the case of moral law, the following subdivisions may be distinguished:

1. Natural law, which constitutes "the participation of the eternal law in the rational creature." It is universal, perpetual, immutable, and easily known to any being endowed with reason.

2. Divine law, which is inaccessible to human reason and has therefore to be revealed to man by God in his infinite goodness and mercy. [4]

Finally, civil law consists of a rule of conduct, mandatory in form and freely established, and promulgated by human superiors for the common good. It is this latter category alone to which present day lawyers apply the term law. The systems of law presently enforced in

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[2] Elizabeth A. Mathin. **Dictionary of Law,** (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), p.304.

[3] Vergilius Ferm, Ph.d. **The Encylopedia of Religion**, (USA: Poplar Books), p.435.

[4] Vergilius Ferm, Ph.d. op.cit. p.435.

various countries of the world are usually distinguished as belonging to either the group of common law or that of civil law. [5]

Theories as to the nature and origin of law vary with the different schools of jurisprudence.

1. The natural law school

2. The analytical school

3. The historical and comparative school[6]

Law in its specific (juridicial) sense denotes the aggregate of those rules of conduct which the governing power of a community recognizes as those which it will enforce or sanction, and according to which it will regulate, limit, or protect the acts of its members.

In its terminology, the term "law" is confined to those rules of human conduct which are manipulated and enforced by the state.

Law in its most general sense, especially as it was used by the Hebrew and Greek philosophy, signifies every observed regularity of nature as well as that of human conduct, such regularity being thought of as taking place in obedience to divine command. Hebrew law means that system of ritual practices, observances and jurisprudence followed by Hebrews. The Laws of Manu is the greatest of ancient Hindu codes, the chief of the Dharmaśāstras. It is thought to contain the laws laid down by Manu, the mythical first man. In this he shares honour with Yama in the Vedas. In the Brāhmaṇic flood story, it is the Noah-figure Manu who is rescued from the great flood and who becomes the father of mankind.

3.1.1 The meaning of natural law according to general views

For more than two millennia, the idea of natural law or the law of nature, has played a prominent part in philosophical thought and political theory. So I would like to classify natural law into two different

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[5] Ibid. p.436.

[6] Ibid.

senses: natural law in its general sense and natural law in its specific sense.

The former is referred to as that natural law which governs universe that is neither created nor invented by anyone, but which exists of its own accord. Natural law provides the permanent, underlying basis of all law, which the philosophers of ancient Greece considered was a kind of perfect justice with which the laws of man should conform as closely as possible. The theory of natural law has formed an important part of jurisprudence throughout legal history. Natural law is distinguished from civil law, which is the body of law imposed by the state.[7]

Some philosophers[8] hold that natural law embraces all moral law which a human-being is capable of perceiving and comprehending, whether or not they are prepared to follow it. Civil law, on the other hand, is considered to be just and fair law. Some philosophers[9] of civil law hold that this refers to rules and regulations enacted and formulated by the highest civil authority for the benefit and advantage of the whole society.

In physical science, natural law means the body of generalisations reached by empirical study or, in the plural, those generalisations themselves.

In scholastic theory, part of the divine law known to man comes through reason: the notion of an eternal law of nature constituting the standard of evaluation of all man-made law was taken from Stoic philosophy.[10] It has maintained a prominent place in political philosophy in post-medieval times. Conservative, liberal, revolutionary and collectivist schools of political thought have all equally claimed for their respective basic postulates the transcendental validity of natural law.

Liberalism,[11] which was developed by the philosophers and jurists of the Enlightenment and which is often referred to a natural law,

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[7] Elizabeth A. Martin, op.cit. p.304.
[8] Thai Royal Academy, op.cit. p.70.
[9] Ibid. p.71.
[10] Ibid.
[11] Ibid.

pure and simple, became of particular importance as constituting an effective check to monarchical absolutism, as providing the guiding principles of modern individualistic liberalism and democracy, including the doctrine of inalienable rights.

This natural Law has the following three characteristics:

1. Universality, because its precepts are always the same in all times and among all peoples.

2. Necessity, because it is a demand upon man's rational nature.

3. Immutability, because it is independent of all human authority. [12]

3.1.2 Meaning of natural law according to pre–Buddhist views

In the concept of *ṛta*,[13] the natural law governing the order of the cosmos and causing various phenomena to arise and vanish, including man, beasts and plants, preserves the balance of nature and is controlled by a supreme being. In pre-Buddhist India, people searched for a universal dharmic principle that could serve as a foundation for a harmonious community life conducted within a framework that recognised a distinction between the celestial[14] and the terrestrial.[15] This concept was referred to as *ṛta.* It is true that ātman and brahman were generally understood to be interchangeable terms which came to be used as such after the recognition that ultimate feedom is schieved through the reaalisation of oneness or identity of the two.

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[12] Ibid. p.769.

[13] Thai Royal Academy, op.cit. p.72.

[14] Kalupahana, David J. op.cit., p.3. Those like Indra, Vāruṇa, Soma, Rudra, Parjaṇya, Yāma, Mṛtyu, and Iṣāna were regarded as celestial gods which were individual gods worshipped at different times or occasions depending upon the needs and aspirations of the worshipper. Thus, even though there was a plurality of gods, at the time the favour of any one of the gods was invoked, that particular god was looked upon as the one unitary god.

[15] Ibid. p.4. Those like Vasus, Rudras, Ādityas, Viśvadevas, and Maruts. were regarded as terrestrial gods, some of whom were already enjoying celestial status represented by a singular god Pūṣan, who is feminine.

The conception of law replaced that of divine beings, which were now looked upon as mere embodiments of that law. The transition from the polytheism of the early Ṛgveda to the monotheism and monism of the later hymns is therefore marked only by a change in language rather than content. *Ṛta* became the inexorable law that governs the universe, including gods. Originally this *ṛta* was probably understood as a physical law, but soon gained moral, religious as well as social dimensions. Varuṇa became the custodian of moral law, sacrificial ritual assumed the form of a religious law and the four classes, or *varṇas*, made up the social law. In the Upaniṣads, *ṛta* came to be replaced by the concept of a permanent and eternal *ātman*, and in the Bhagavadgītā, *ātman* gave way to the conception of Dharma.[16]

3.1.3 Meaning of natural law according to the Buddhist view

Now let us examine the Buddhist view of natural law. That which is considered as natural law is spoken of *idappaccayatā* (conditionality) or *paṭiccasamuppāda* (dependent co-arising). This is a natural truth that exists of its own accord, and presents things as being dependent on one another as a result of causes and conditions, without reliance on a supernatural power.

Dhamma as natural law in Theravāda Buddhism is spoken of as *dhammadhātu*, enduring causes and effects as *dhammaṭṭhiti*, and natural restrictions as *dhammaniyāma*. All of these exist independently of a Creator or mysterious power; their existence is discovered by religious teachers[17]. The Buddha was the one who discovered this truth. At funerals, Buddhist monks chant a sutta known as the Dhammaniyāmasutta. The essence of this sutta is that the this truth exists as a matter of course, whether a Buddha arises or not.

In the fourfold definition of the Dhamma given by Buddhadāsa Bhikkhu, the first meaning given is that of *sabhāva*, or having an own-nature, whilst nature itself can be referred to as *sabhāvadhamma*, even if it is rather difficult to define what nature is. In the *Advanced Learners*

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[16] EB. Vol. IV. p.439.
[17] AN.III.414.

Dictionary,[18] the meaning given for "Nature" is that of all forces that produce the world and everything in it, and that keep all things in their proper order. It would mean the power underlying the qualities of the material and as well as the mental world.

For Buddhadāsa, *sabhāvadhamma* embraces all things because it is reality. Whatever is nature or natural belongs to the Dhamma, and this Dhamma should be studied, practised, and realised. *Sabhāvadhamma* should also be understood as the system of forces connected therewith.

The second meaning is that of *saccadhamma* which Buddhadāsa takes as natural law, despite the fact that *sacca* means truth or reality. He adds that truth or law is really the same, because we speak of "the law of conditions", "the natural law", "the law of things", and these are that truth.

Law is not a human invention but is rather something which exists of its own accord. It is our duty to discover that law like a scientist discovering the law of things. If there is no law existing of its accord, it is not possible for us to discover it. The Buddha re-discovered the Dhamma, but he did not invent it.

As mentioned in a former chapter, Payutto proposes two meanings for Dhamma:[19] Dhamma in the sense of ethics (*cariyadhamma*), and Dhamma in the sense of natural reality (*saccadhamma*). The latter Dhamma in its larger sense includes all things as they are and the laws by which they function. The term is used to describe the entire stream of causes and conditions, the process by which all things exist. It focuses on nature or reality itself, which is beyond concerns of good and evil. In this all-encompassing sense, Dhamma expresses the totality of natural conditions, which the various branches of science seek to describe. Moreover, Dhamma deals mainly with the principle of the middle way of expressing the truth known as *majjhena Dhamma* or, more fully, *majjhena Dhammadesanā*, which is a way of

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[18] A.S. Hornby, **Advanced Learner's Dictionary,** (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), p.884.

[19] P.A. Payutto. Ven., Grant A. Olson, tr., **Natural Laws and Values for Life,** op.cit., pp. 43-4.

explaining the truth as a natural process, for the sole purpose of bringing the benefits of practice to people in their daily lives. It does not encourage efforts to realise the truth (*saccadhamma*) by way of argument or by setting up, clinging to, and protecting various theories through philosophical speculations.

Payutto adds that the Buddha's teachings give us more than merely ethical guidelines for a virtuous life. His teachings offer a grand insight into the nature of reality. The teachings have a wider range of meanings than those of the Hindus, and are in some respects difficult to understand by an unenlightened one. They are derived, not only from mental reflection, but also from insight gained through a profound meditative experience. Thus, full understanding of Buddhist teachings requires an equal degree of insight gained directly through meditation. The Buddha himself questioned whether anyone would comprehend his teachings, and all along he seems to have advocated Buddhism only for the few who considered themselves fit for the task.

3.2 The Buddhist classification of natural laws

In the commentaries, natural laws are sub-divided into five groups:

1. *Utuniyāma*: physical inorganic order; physical law; the natural law dealing with the events in the natural world or physical environment.

2. *Bījaniyāma*: physical organic order; biological law; the natural law dealing with animals and plants, in particular, heredity.

3. *Cittaniyāma*: psychic law; the natural law dealing with the workings of the mind and thinking.

4. *Kammaniyāma*: order of deed and result; the law of kamma; moral law; the natural law dealing with human behaviour, specifically intention and the actions resulting from it.

5. *Dhammaniyāma*; order of the norm; the general law of cause and effect; causality and conditionality; the natural law dealing with the relationship and interdependence of all things, phenomena. [20]

A further term used in Pali that could be seen as denoting natural law is *niyāma*, meaning certainty, the fixed order of nature, the fact that specific determinants inevitably lead to corresponding results.

Let us know take each of the above five groups one by one.

3.2.1 Physical law or inorganic order (*utuniyāma*).

This concerns physical phenomena that take place on account of natural conditions, such as seasonal cycles, heat and cold, rain or snow, flowers blooming in spring and drying up in time of drought, and wax melting with heat and hardening with cold. *Utu*[21] is that which manifests, brings forth, generates what is ingenerated, and develops that which is generated. *Utu* is the primal form of fire. This law is the fixed process that determines the four–fold succession of evolution, the evolved state, dissolution, and dissolved state. It is the process that determines the ordered succession of the three seasons viz. winter, summer and rainy season. It is again the same process that determines the specific season in which trees, creepers, shrubs and grasses bring forth flowers and bear fruit. None of this has been created by some "maker" whatsoever, whether human, celestial, or divine. Inasmuch as it is accomplished entirely by the fixed or natural order that is known as *utu*, it is called *utuniyāma*, or physical law or inorganic order. Thus, one Pali text states:

> There comes a time, Vaseṭṭha, when, sooner or later after a long period, this world contracts. At the time of contraction, beings are mostly born in the Ābhassara Brahmā world. And there they dwell, mind-made, feeding on delight, self-luminous, moving through the air, glorious—and they stay like that for a very long time. But sooner or later, after a very long period, this world begins to expand

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[20] Sv.II.432; As.272.

[21] Mahathera Ledi Sayadaw, **The Manuals of Buddhism,** (Rangoon: Department of Religious Affairs, 1981) p.103.

> again. At a time of expansion, the beings from the Ābhassara Brahmā world, having passed away from there, are mostly reborn in this world. Here they dwell, mind-made, feeding on delight, self-luminous, moving through the are, glorious—and they stay like that for a very long time.[22]

3.2.2 Physical organic order; biological law (*bījaniyāma*)

This refers to the natural law pertaining to heredity, the transmission of hereditary character and the genetic processes. The natural law of physical organic order can be observed in such phenomena as how a particular kind of tree grows from a certain seed, how fruits taste according to their species, how children bear physical resemblances to their parents, and how animals, birds, and insects, look, live, reproduce, and behave in certain ways according to their species. Germ (seed, *bīja*)[23] is that from which trees, etc. spring and grow in varying forms. In its common acceptation the word "germ" denotes the five kinds of *bīja* "seed", etc. from the philosophical point of view it is just a form of "physical inorganic energy" (*utu*). Thus, it consists of the vegetable kingdom, embracing trees etc., "seedlings and plants". The form of "caloric energy" which tends to manifest itself in plant-life is also included as a seed or germ. The *bījaniyāma*[24] signifies that from which sprouts, shoots, trunks, branches, twigs, leaves, flowers, and fruits spring. This, too, is not created by any "maker" whatsoever. Inasmuch as it is accomplished entirely by the fixed or natural order, it is known as *bījaniyāma*, or physical organic order; biological order. A further Pali text states:

"There are, bhikkhus, five classes of seeds, namely, those which are propagated from roots, from stems, from joints, from shoots and from the seed proper."[25]

The subject is treated in detail in the commentary on the Vinaya, in the section devoted to behaviour towards plant-life.

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[22]DN.III. 84-6, Walshe, Maurice. tr., **The Long Discourses of the Buddha** (*Dīghanikāya*), (Kandy: BPS, 1996), pp.409-10.

[23] Mahathera Ledi Sayadaw, op.cit., p.104.

[24] Ibid.

[25] SN.III.54.

3.2.3 Psychical or psychological law (*cittaniyāma*)

This concerns the nature and functions of the mind, such as the mental perception of sense–objects, the experience of sensations, the various mental processes that take place from moment to moment, the rising and cessation of consciousness, the attributes of mind and mental concomitants, hypnotic experience, and mental states in varying levels of development. "Thought"[26] (*citta*) means the workings of the mind, the process of cognition of sense-objects and mental reactions, that "one is thinking" (the act of thinking). It may also include investigating or exploring an object. Furthermore, thought is spoken of, figuratively, as "varied" (*citta*), owing to the varying forms that thought takes:

> Monks, I see no other thing which is so very varied as thought (mind). I see, monks, no other group (*nikāya*) which is so varied as the beings of the lower order (beasts, birds, etc.). The beings of the lower order are varied only by mind (*citten' eva cittikatā*). But thought is said, monks, to be still more varied than those beings."[27]

3.2.4 Moral law (*kammaniyāma*)

Moral law (*kammaniyāma*) is that by which men execute deeds, good or evil, meritorious or demeritorious. This is the principle of kamma, or the law of action and result (*kammaniyāma*). It specifically refers to the process of volitional activities and explains how certain actions lead to corresponding consequences, why people are born with certain peculiarities of character, and human behavior in the context of mental construction and proliferation. The law of kamma is based on the axiomatic principle that all actions inevitably lead to results proportionate in nature and degree to the deed. It is volition (*cetanā*), wholesome or unwholesome. The Buddha says: "Monks! Intention (*cetanā*), I say, is kamma. Having willed, we create kamma, through body, speech and mind."[28]

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[26] Mahathera Ledi Sayadaw, op.cit., p.106.
[27] SN.III.152.
[28] AN.III.415: *Cetanāhaṃ bhikkhave kammaṃ vadāmi.*

Here volition is the act of willing. In carrying something, good or bad, meritorious or demeritorious, into effect, it deliberates and decides upon the steps to be taken, as the leader of all the mental functions involved in so doing. It provides the tendency of those functions to move towards and embrace the desired object. The expression "as the leader of all" implies that, in doing its own works as well as the works of all the other psychic processes involved, volition becomes the chief and supreme leader in the sense that it informs all the rest. Volition, as such, brings other psychical activities to tend in one direction. This is the explanation of our statement: "Kamma is that by which men execute deeds." It should, however, be borne in mind that the process of willing informs other psychical processes only in the case of one's own works, not in the case of the works of others. Accordingly, the latter cannot be brought within the definition of "volition as the act of willing". Hence B's actions cannot be called A's kamma, since there is as much difference between voluntary and non–voluntary actions as there is difference between a goat and a sheep.[29] Voluntary action alone is entitled to be spoken of as kamma.

3.2.5 Dhammic Law (*Dhammaniyāma*)

Dhammic Law (*Dhammaniyāma*) is the general law of cause and effect, causality and conditionality. This is the order of the norm, the all-encompassing law of causality and conditionality (*dhammaniyāma*) that regulates and controls all phenomena and governs the inter–relatedness and interdependence of all things. This order of the norm is manifest in how things change and decay, how life is characterized by birth, old age, disease and death, how all existential realities are marked by the three characteristics of impermanence, unsatisfactoriness, and non–substantiality, how the law of gravity operates, how the sun rises in the east and sets in the west, how the whole cosmic order exists and functions, and so on. A dhamma is that which bears (*dhāreti*) its own nature, e.g. its own hardness to the touch, its specific, individual mark as well as its universal characters, namely, growth, decay, dissolution, etc. The Dhamma, categorized under the causal relation *bears* the function of that relation, and those categorized under "effect" *bear* the function of the

[29] Mahathera Ledi Sayadaw, op.cit. p.105.

result or effect. This meaning applies to all dhammas as treated in the Suttanta and the Abhidhamma Piṭakas. It also embraces the things enumerated in the Vinayapiṭaka under the name "the body of precepts" (*sīlakkhandha*). They go under the given definition of dhammas. The principal treatment of all other of these dhammas and of all other dhammas, is in the Paṭṭhāna. Among the Suttanta texts, the whole of the Mahānidānasuttanta and the Nidānasaṃyutta is devoted to the *dhammaniyāma*: so, too, all other Suttantas which throw light on the conception of cause and effect. In one sutta, this *niyāma* is referred to as "the establishing, the fixity of things as effects" (*dhammaṭṭhitatā dhammaniyāmatā*).[30]

> Because of ignorance comes kamma: "Now whether, monks, Tathāgatas arise, or not, this element (*dhātu*) stands, namely, the establishment of dhamma as effects, the fixity of dhammas as effects. Because of kamma…(and so on through all the links of the causal formula). It is also referred to in the dictum: "All conditioned things are impermanent, full of ills and of the nature of 'not self' ".[31]

In some passages, this *niyāma* is called *dhammatā*:

> And so, monks, the Bodhisatta Vipassī descended from the Tusita heaven, mindful and clearly aware, into his mother's womb—this, monks, is the rule (*dhammatā*). It is the rule, monks, that when a Bodhisatta descends from the Tusita heaven into his mother's womb, there appears in this world with its devas…And this ten-thousandfold world-system trembles and quakes and is convulsed. And this immeasurable light shines forth. That is the rule (*dhammatā*).[32]

But the character of the *dhammaniyāma* is summarised in the following formula:

> When that exists, this comes to be. From the arising of that, this arises. When that does not exit, this does not come to be, when that

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[30] DN.II.12. *Dhammatā* is the abstract form of Dharma.

[31] Ibid.

[32] DN.II.12, Walshe, Maurice. tr., **The Long Discourses of the Buddha** (*Dīghanikāya*), p.203.

> ceases, then this ceases. Or again "These, monks, are the three characteristics of a conditioned thing: perceivable is its growth, perceivable is its decay, perceivable is its changing whilst it lasts. Three, monks, are the three characteristics of the unconditioned: growth is not perceivable, decay is not perceivable, changing and duration are not perceivable.[33]

In its Buddhist sense, Dhamma is deemed as one of five laws (orders) which cover the four other laws viz. physical, heretical, kammic, mental. While the first four laws are contained within, or based on, the fifth one and operate within their respective spheres, the law of Dhamma operates within each of them as well as between them.[34] In addition, science has complete confidence in the *dhammaniyāma*, while limiting its field of research to *utuniyāma* (physical law) and *bījaniyāma* (biological law).[35] On the other hand, Buddhism practically places an important emphasis on the last three natural laws: *kammaniyāma* (the law of moral action), and *cittaniyāma* (psychical or psychological law) and Dhammic law. The Abhidhamma stresses the study of the *cittaniyāma* (psychic laws), in relation to *kammaniyāma* and *dhammaniyāma*.[36]

3.3 Classification of Dhamma as Natural Law

Dhamma as Natural law is classified under two types:

1. Dhamma as non–moral natural law

2. Dhamma as moral natural law

Here is the table of Dhamma as natural law:

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[33] AN.I.152.

[34] P.A. Payutto op.cit. p.2.

[35] P.A. Payutto, **Toward Sustainable Science**, (Bangkok: Buddhadhamma Foundation, 1998), p.70.

[36] Ibid.

2 kinds of Dhamma	Dhamma terms
Dhamma as non-moral natural law	Dependent origination (*paṭiccasamuppāda*)
	The three characteristics of existence (*tilakkhaṇa*)
Dhamma as moral natural law	The noble eightfold path (*aṭṭhaṅgikamagga*)
	The threefold training (*tisikkhā*)

3.3.1 Dhamma as non–moral natural law

There are two major categories of the Dhamma as natural law taught by Lord Buddha: dependent origination (*paṭiccasamuppāda*)[37] and the three characteristics of existence (*tilakkhaṇa*),[38] which are the same principle looked upon from two different aspects in order to reveal the same truth.[39]

The principle of dependent origination reveals the natural truths that all things are impermanent (*anicca*), subject to dukkha, are without self (*anattā*) and follow a continual process of cause and effect. Dependent origination is intended to be understood in the same way as the three characteristics of existence, especially *anattā*, which is a concept unique to Buddhism among Indian religions. Moreover, the cycle of dependent origination is a description of a natural process, not a path of practice.[40]

The Buddha, after mastering all the religious traditions of the time, not only rejected the prevalent views on salvation, but presented a novel philosophy of emancipation, and also discarded such views as divine creation, belief in a permanent self (*attā*, *ātman*), determinism and annihilationism, and presented his teaching based on the fundamental doctrine of the *paṭiccasamuppāda* (dependent origination) and *tilakkhaṇa* (three common characteristic of existence). This fundamental doctrine

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[37] SN.II 25; DN.II.55; AN.II 92. Vin.I.1; S.II.1; Vibh.135; Vism.517; Comp.188.

[38] AN.I.285; SN.IV.I.

[39] P.A. Payutto. op.cit. p.61.

[40] P.A. Payutto, op.cit. p.91.

formed the foundation for his other basic teachings such a kamma, rebirth, and freedom. Even the theory and practice of Buddhist Dhamma is founded on this doctrine of *paṭiccasamuppāda*, and *anattā* in the scope of *tilakkhaṇa*, which is a central non–moral natural law of Buddhism.

Buddhism, both as religion and as a philosophy, is based on the "no soul" view. Therefore, the Buddhist attitude to the Upaniṣadic view of reality needs no examination. In the Vaseṭṭhasutta of the Dīghanikāya, the attempt to reach a Brahmā that no one has seen is compared to the effort of a line of blind men.[41] The Buddhist teaching that everything is impermanent rejects the belief in a permanent substance that underlines everything in the universe. The Buddhist theory of casualty shows that if there is a Brahmā, he cannot be uncaused, and thus also cannot be eternal. According to the Buddhist doctrine of the *paṭiccasampupāda*,[42] the universe is not the creation of a personal God or impersonal Godhead, but the outcome of causes and conditions.

3.3.1.1 Dependent origination (*paṭiccasamuppāda*)

In this context, Dhamma is regarded as a natural law, but as natural law that is not directly concerned with morality or ethics. It deals mainly with the characteristics, and the process, of existence or life. The Buddha himself stresses the importance of the *paṭiccasamuppāda* when he said: "One who sees dependent origination (*paṭiccasamuppāda*) sees the Dhamma; one who sees the Dhamma sees dependent origination (*paṭiccasamuppāda*)."[43]

The *paṭiccasamuppāda* is mentioned throughout the canon from which it is clear that it is regarded as a fundamental truth of the cosmos that exists independently of the arising of enlightened beings:

> Whether a Tathāgata appears or not, this condition exists and is a natural fact, a natural law: that is, the principle of conditionality. The

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[41] DN.III.239.

[42] SN.III.88.

[43] MN.I.191, Ñāṇamoli and Bhikkhu Bodhi, tr., ed., **The Middle Length Discourses of the Buddha** (*Majjhimanikāya*), p.283.

> Tathāgata, enlightened to and awakened to that principle, teaches it, shows it, formulates it, declares it, reveals it, makes it known, clarifies it and points it out, saying, "See here conditioned by ignorance are volitional impulses. This suchness, monks, this invariability, this irreversibility, that is to say, the law of conditionality, I call the principle of Dependent Origination."[44]

To understand the *paṭiccasamuppāda* is said to be one of the right views (*sammādiṭṭhi*) that will be discussed in the next section and is spoken of as the middle teaching (*majjhenadesanā*). Before a detailed elucidation of this *paṭiccasamuppāda* is given, the various extreme views should first be clarified, in order to clearly understand dependent origination as Dhamma as non–moral natural law. These views are grouped in pairs. as they were by the Buddha.

Let us now consider the four extreme views, which constitute the opposite of the *paṭiccasamuppāda*, as given by Payutto:[45]

The first pair is:

1. *Atthikavāda*: the view or theory which holds that all things really exist (extreme realism).

2. *Natthikavāda*: the view or theory which holds that all things do not really exist (nihilism).

The second is:

1. *Sassatavāda*: the view or theory which holds that all things are eternal (eternalism).

2. *Ucchedavāda*: the view or theory which holds that all things are annihilated (annihilationism).[46]

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[44] SN.II.15.

[45] P.A. Payutto, Ven., **Dependent Origination; The Buddhist Law of Conditionality,** (Bangkok: Buddhadhamma Foundation, 1999), pp.76–84.

[46] SN.III.97.

The third is:

1. *Attakāravāda* or *sayaṅkāravāda*: the view or theory which holds that happiness and suffering are entirely self–determined (kammic autogenesism).

2. *Parakāravāda*: the view or theory which holds that happiness and suffering are entirely caused by external factors (kammic heterogenesism).[47]

Finally, the fourth pair is that of:

1. *Kārakavedakādi–ekattavāda*: the view or theory which holds that the doer and the recipient of the fruit of actions are one and the same (the monistic view of subject–object unity).

2. *Kārakavedakādi–nānattavāda*: the view or theory which holds that the doer and recipient of the fruit of actions are separate things (the dualistic view of subject–object distinction).

The above-mentioned views or theories or schools of thought,[48] which have a special relation to the concept of kamma, also clash with the principle of dependent origination.

> From the arising of ignorance is the arising of the kammic formations; from the stopping of ignorance is the stopping of the kammic formations. This noble eightfold way is itself the course leading to the stopping of the kammic-formations, that is to say, right view…When a noble disciple comprehends condition thus, its arising, its end, and the course leading to its end thus, he is called an ariyan disciple who is possessed of right view, of vision, one who has come into this true Dhamma, who sees this true Dhamma, who is endowed with the knowledge and lore of a learner, who has attained

[47] P.A. Payutto, op.cit.,p.74. The second and third pairs are very important to the fundamental teachings of Buddhism. If studied and clearly understood, they can help prevent a lot of misunderstanding about the law of kamma.

[48] Ibid. 76-78.

> the stream of Dhamma, who is an ariyan of penetrating wisdom, and who stands knocking at the door of the Deathless.[49]

According to Buddhism there is no first Cause. Ignorance or craving are not regarded as a first cause. Things are neither due to one single cause nor are they causeless. Searching for a first cause, a Creator God and such, has little value from the Buddhist point of view, because it is not essential to a meaningful life. Such reflection can still be passed over, as the value of dependent origination in terms of life fulfillment already covers the desired benefits.[50]

As explained in the formula of dependent origination, things have multiple causes. Craving, like all other things, physical or mental, is also conditioned, interdependent and inter-relative with other things. It is neither a beginning nor an end in itself. Through craving is cited as the proximate cause of suffering, it is not independent, but interdependent. Dependent upon feeling or sensation, craving arises; feeling arises dependent on contact; and so forth.[51]

Conditionality is referred to as the view that an effect is brought about owing to conditions. The term *idappaccayatā* usually occurs in conjunction with that of the *paṭiccasamuppāda*, which provide the Buddhist canonical terms for both the idea of causation and the formula of the twelve factors (*avijjā*, *saṅkhāra*, *viññāṇa*, etc. illustrating or exemplifying the Buddhist law of causes and conditions). These two terms, *idappaccayatā* and *paṭiccasamuppāda*, are largely synonymous.

The *paṭiccasamuppāda* is regarded as the middle teaching (*majjhenadhammadesanā*) and taught as an impersonal, natural truth, a description of the nature of things as they are, avoiding the extreme theories or biased views. The cycle of dependent origination accounts for the problem of dukkha in two ways: the first deals with the *samudayavāra* (origination mode) which is a description of the arising of dukkha, corresponding with the second noble truth, the cause or origin of

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[49] SN.II.43.

[50] P.A. Payutto, op. cit., p.18.

[51] MN.I.51. Through the arising of feeling is the arising of craving, from the cessation of feeling is the cessation of craving; the way leading to the cessation of craving is the noble eightfold path itself.

dukkha, whilst the second deals with the *nirodhavāra* (cessation mode), and consists of a description of the cessation of suffering, corresponding with the third noble truth. [52]

3.3.1.1.1 The general principle

Buddhism teaches the interrelation and interdependence of all things:

> "When there is this, this is; when this is not, neither is this. Because this arises, so does this; because this ceases, so does this."[53]

This is a truth, a natural law. It is the natural law of cause and effect at its most basic level.

3.3.1.1.2 The principle in effect

The Buddha describes the constituent factors linked together in a chain. Two processes of *paṭiccasamuppāda* [54] are given:

1. *Samudaya*; the origination mode:

> What, monks, is the noble truth of the arising of suffering?
> Dependent on ignorance arise volitional formations;
> Dependent on volitional formations arises consciousness;
> Dependent on consciousness arise name and form;
> Dependent on name and form arise the six sensory bases;
> Dependent on the six sensory bases arises contact;
> Dependent on contact arises feeling;
> Dependent on feeling arises craving;

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[52] P.A. Payutto, Op. cit., pp.3–4.

[53] MN.III. 63. The general principle in its modern form is: When A is, B is. A arising, B arises. When A is not, B is no. A ceasing, B ceases

[54] Vin.I.1; SN.II.1; Vibh.135; Vism.517. The twelve links of the standard principle of dependent origination format are counted from ignorance to aging and death only, since sorrow, lamentation, pain, grief and despair are only by–products of aging and death. Ignorance turns the cycle once more because outflows (*āsava*) and defilement becoming the 'fertiliser' for the further arising of the *āsavas*.

Dependent on craving arises clinging;
Dependent on clinging arises becoming;
Dependent on becoming arises birth;
Dependent on birth arises ageing, death;
Dependent on ageing, death arise sorrow, lamentation, pain, grief and despair;
Thus does this whole mass of suffering arise. This, monks, is called the noble truth of the arising of suffering.

2. *Nirodha*; the cessation mode:

And what, monks, is the noble truth of cessation of suffering?
Through the complete cessation of ignorance cease volitional formations;
Through the cessation of volitional formations ceases consciousness;
Through the cessation of consciousness cease name and form;
Through the cessation of name and form cease the six sensory bases;
Through the cessation of the six sensory bases ceases contact;
Through the cessation of contact ceases feeling;
Through the cessation of feeling ceases craving;
Through the cessation of craving ceases clinging;
Through the cessation of clinging ceases becoming;
Through the cessation of becoming ceases birth;
Through the cessation of birth ceases ageing and death, sorrow, lamentation, pain, grief and despair;
Thus does this whole mass of suffering arise. This, monks, is called the noble truth of the cessation of suffering.[55]

The Buddha used to address his disciples in such a way that they could clearly see dependent origination and the interrelatedness of things with right wisdom (*sammāpaññā*), since without this, it is not possible to pursue such questions as, “In the past, did we exist or not? In the past, what were we? In the past, what were we like? In the past, what was it that made us the way we are now?”, or else pursue the question from the other extreme, “In the future, will we exist or not? In the future, what will we be? In the future, will we exist or not? In the future, what will we be? In the future, what will be like? And once we have attained

[55] AN.I.177.

that, what will we be like?", or even wondering about the present asking, "Do we exist or not? What are we? How are we? Where do we come from and where will we go?" Why is it that these are improbable questions ? Because the noble disciples with right wisdom have already clearly seen dependent origination and the interrelatedness of all things as it is.[56]

An uninstructed ordinary person does not comprehend, as it really is, that material shape, feeling, perception, the impulses, and consciousness are of the nature to originate, to decay, both to originate and decay; nor does he comprehend as it really is the satisfaction and peril in them or the escape from them.[57]

The Buddha cautions against understanding the profundity of the principle of dependent origination in the following exchange with venerable Ānanda:

> How amazing! Never before has it occurred to me, Lord. This principle of dependent origination, although so profound and hard to see, yet appears to me to be so simple!
>
> Say not so, Ānanda, say not so. This principle of dependent origination is a profound teaching, hard to see. It is through not knowing, not understanding and not thoroughly realising this teaching, that beings are confused like a tangled thread, thrown together like bundles of threads, caught as in a net, and cannot escape hell, the nether worlds and the wheel of saṃsāra.[58]

3.3.1.2 Three common characteristics of existence (*tilakkhaṇa*)

In the Aṅguttaranikāya, the Buddha says:

> Whether the Tathāgata were to appear in this world or not, this principle would still prevail as an enduring aspect of the natural order, that all compounded things (*saṅkhārā*) are impermanent. A Tathāgata, having achieved enlightenment, understands this

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[56] SN.II.27. This is the reason for the Buddha's resolute silence on the speculations of the various problems of 'higher philosophy'.

[57] SN.III.70-76.

[58] SN.II.92. P.A. Payutto. op.cit., p. 2.

> principle. He declares it, teaches it, and sets it down as a model to reveal, explain, and facilitate an understanding that all compounded things (*saṅkhārā*) are impermanent.
>
> Whether the Tathāgata were to appear in this world or not, this principle would still prevail as an enduring aspect of the natural order, that all compounded things (*saṅkhārā*) are dukkha. A Tathāgata, having achieved enlightenment, understands this principle. He declares it, teaches it, and sets it down as a model to reveal, explain, and facilitate an understanding that all compounded things (*saṅkhārā*) are dukkha.
>
> Whether the Tathāgata were to appear in this world or not, this principle would still prevail as an enduring aspect of the natural order, that all dhammas are not-self. A Tathāgata, having achieved enlightenment, understands this principle. He declares it, teaches it, and sets it down as a model to reveal, explain, and facilitate an understanding that all dhammas) are not-self.[59]

Impermanence (*anicca*) means that compounded things are constantly being born and dying, arising and passing away. Dukkha means that they are constantly being conditioned by conflicting and opposing forces, they are unable to maintain any constancy. Not-self (*anattā*) means that they are not a self or intrinsic entity, they merely follow supporting factors. Any form they take is entirely at the direction of supporting factors. This is the principle of conditioned arising, the most basic level of truth. *Anattā* is very controversial and difficult to understand and is unique to Buddhism.

The Buddha was enlightened to these truths, after which he declared and explained them. This first principle is a very important one, the basis of Buddhism. Buddhism regards these natural laws as fundamental truths.

The first two paragraphs above state *sabbe saṅkhārā aniccā*, and *sabbe saṅkhārā dukkhā*. The third verse, on the other hand states *sabbe dhammā anattā*. The difference is that the first two are concerned with *saṅkhārā*, the five aggregates, all conditioned, interdependent, relative things and states, both physical and mental, whereas the third is

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[59] AN.I.285f

concerned with dhammas, which include not only the conditioned things and states, but also the non-conditioned, viz. the absolute, nibbāna.

We will now turn our attention to a more detailed discussion the *tilakkhaṇa*, viz. *anicca*, *dukkha* and *anattā*.

3.3.1.2.1 Impermanence (*anicca*)

There are two ways in which to know things to be impermanent:

1. Empiricism; knowledge through observation.

2. Rationalism; knowledge through reasoning or logic.

Knowledge of the impermanent nature of things is arrived at through the former of these, in which the conditioned nature of things (*saṅkhatalakkhaṇa*) is observed. They are seen:

1. To arise (*uppāda*).

2. To persist for a brief moment (*ṭhitassa aññathatta*)

3. To disappear (*vaya*).[60]

All sentient beings are impermanent, just as all conditioned things are impermanent *(sabbe saṅkhārā aniccā* or *aniccā vata saṅkhārā*) because they continuously change. This is known as the perception of impermanence in impermanence.

Even the Buddha's last words place emphasis on impermanence (*aniccatā*): "Now, monks, I declare to you: all conditioned things are of a nature to decay—strive on untiringly."[61]

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[60] AN.I.152.

[61] DN.II.120,156: *Handa dāni bhikkhave āmantayāmi vo: vayadhammā saṅkhārā, appamādena sampādetha.* Walshe, Maurice. tr., **The Long Discourses of the Buddha** (*Dīghanikāya*), p.270.

3.3.1.2.2 Dukkha

The term dukkha is very important in Buddhism yet it is very difficult to find an English term fully conveying its wide range of meaning. It conveys a much broader sense than its English equivalent, "suffering." Dukkha is frequently encountered in most of the Buddha's teachings, such as the three characteristics (*tilakkhaṇa*), dependent origination (*paṭiccasamuppāda*), and the four noble truths (*ariyasacca*). In order to more clearly understand the Dhamma, it is indispensable to first understand this word dukkha. It is therefore essential to discard the narrow meaning that "suffering" has in the English language and view dukkha from the Buddhist perspective. Three types of dukkha are distinguished :[62]

> 1. *Dukkhadukkhatā*; the refers to all kinds of suffering in life in a general sense, such as birth, decay, disease and death, asscociation with what is unpleasant (*appiyehi sampayoga*), dissociation from what is pleasant (piyehi vippayoga), and not getting what one wants (*yaṃ picchaṃ na labhati tam pi dukkhaṃ*).
>
> 2. *Vipariṇāmadukkhatā*; the suffering that is inherent in change—a happy feeling, a happy condition in life, is not permanent, not everlasting. It changes sooner or later. When it changes, it produces pain, suffering, and unhappiness. This is the suffering that is caused by the changes within, and the cessation of, happiness.
>
> 3. *Saṅkhārādukkhatā*; the suffering that is inherent within all *saṅkhārā* and constitutes the most important aspect of the first noble truth. It requires some analytical explanation as to what is considered as a "being", as an "individual", or as "I". The grasping of the five aggregates (*saṅkhārā*) is suffering.
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> As the Buddha said:

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[62] DN.III.216; SN.IV. 259; SN.V. 56. See also Vism.499; Vibh–a.93.

> Now this, bhikkhus, is the noble truth of suffering: birth is suffering, decay is suffering, illness is suffering, death is suffering, union with what is displeasing is suffering; separation from what is pleasing is suffering; not to get what one wants is suffering; in brief, the five aggregates subject to clinging are suffering.[63]

These three can be summarized in the following table:

	Types of dukkha	Examples
1.	*dukkhadukkhatā*; *sabhāvadukkha*	*jāti* birth *jarā* decay *maraṇa* death
2.	*vipariṇāmadukkhatā*	*soka* sorrow *parideva* lamentation dukkha pain *domanassa* grief *upayāsa* despair *sampayoga* association with what is unpleasant *vippayoga* disassociation from what is pleasant *alabha* not to get what one wants is also suffering
3.	*saṅkhārādukkhatā*	The grasping of five aggregates is suffering (*pañca upādāna-kkhandhā dukkhā*).

The most important kind of suffering is the third type, which describes the nature inherent in all conditions, both physical and mental. The first two types of suffering mentioned above are easy to understand from experience of everyday life, and are commonly matters of concern in other religions too. The third type is unique to, and frequently stressed in, Buddhism. The five aggregates are constantly, yet invisibly, changing. Therefore, according to Buddhism, life itself is suffering. Buddhism holds that *saṅkhārā* involve everything seen, smelled, tasted, heard, touched,

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[63] SN.V.421, Bhikkhu Bodhi, tr., **The Connected Discourses of the Buddha** (*Saṃyuttanikāya*), p.1844.

and known. Both physical and mental suffering are experienced by all save the arahant, who is still subject to physical suffering, including decay and death, but immune to mental suffering.

The Buddha pointed out on many occasions that the Dhamma is mainly concerned with dukkha and its cessation. He says: "As I did formally, even now do I preach about dukkha and the cessation of dukkha."[64] Early Buddhism never denied the satisfaction that a man can derive from worldly things. But this satisfaction is generally short-lived, and followed by evil or harmful consequences (*ādīnava*). The nature of man is such that he craves for eternal or permanent happiness. But the things from which he hopes to derive such happiness are themselves impermanent. Happiness or satisfaction derived from impermanent things is itself temporary and therefore falls short of one's expectation, that is, permanent happiness.

We will now turn to the matter of *anattā*[65], the last factor of *tilakkhaṇa*, and one of the most outstanding contributions of Buddhism to understanding the human predicament.

3.3.1.2.3 Non–self; non–soul (*anattā*)

Before attempting to analyse of the concept of *anattā*, we should first seek to understand its opposite, *attā*. According to the Brahmajālasutta, there were, at the time of the Buddha, sixty-two prevailing views concerning the soul and the world. There were eighteen kinds of view concerning the past and forty-four kinds of view

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[64] MN.I.140, SN.III.119.

[65] EB.Vol.1. op.cit. p.318. Two schools were mentioned by the Indian philosophical texts in the later ages: *āstika* (orthodox) and *nāstika* (non-orthodox). *Āstika* schools inheriting the orthodox Brahmanism, share the same standpoint with the latter in asserting the existence of the *ātman*. In contrast to it, *nāstika* assert a non-self theory (*nairatmya-vada*), which is adopted by Buddhism, *Lokāyata* (or the followers of *Carvāka*), and *Barhaspatya* (followers of *Bṛhaspati*). The typical schools belonging to *āstika*, which admit the existence of *ātman* are *Saṅkhya, Vaiśeṣika, Nyāya, Vedānta* and *Mīmāṃsa.* These schools do not always agree in their interpretation of the *ātman*. In contrast to the former, Buddhism belongs to the *nāstika* (non-orthodox) group which asserts the theory of non-self (*nairatmyavāda*). As Buddhism denies fundamentally the *ātman*, the theory of self of *brāhmaṇic* beliefs and the theory of non-self of Buddhism confront each other throughout.

concerning the future. The *sassatavāda*, or the belief in an eternal soul, is found among the eighteen kinds of view concerning the past. This view asserts that both the self (*attā*, Skt *ātman*) and the world (*loka*) are eternal. Buddhism gives the general name of "the eternalist view" (*sassatadiṭṭhi*) to the assertion that all things are permanent and eternal. On the actual existence of the *attā*, or *ātman*, the Buddha gave no opinion, stating such to be unexplained (*avyākata*).

Apart from various beliefs about God and world, questions concerning the existence, and nature, of the soul have been the subject of religious and philosophical speculations from the earliest of times. It should be noted that a number of suttas in the Dīghanikāya draw attention to the various attitudes of the religious teachers of the day concerning the "soul". As is evident from these sources, almost all teachers, except the Buddha, accepted the existence of the soul. Some of the six heretical teachers contemporaneous with the Buddha[66] did not say anything positive about soul.

None of these problems is easy to answer. The Buddha himself dared to give no categorical answer one way or the other. When confronted with the question: "Is the body the soul, or is body one thing and soul another,"[67] he refused to answer it, claiming it to be *avyākata*.

We should therefore try to understand why the Buddha declined to reply to such questions[68] concerning with soul, the self, and the world. Firstly, such questions are, most importantly, based on wrong assumptions as to the nature of the self, the soul and the world. As the Buddha would say, "You have asked the question wrongly." Secondly,

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[66] DN.I.55, 56, MN.I.515, 517; SN.III.210; SN.IV. 348-49; III.206-7. *Ajita Kesakambali* taught that the human body comprises of only four elements, viz., earth, water, heat and air and thus integrally ruled out the existence of the soul as a part of the human body. But the next one Pakudha Kaccāyana taught that this body is constituted by seven factors i.e. the four elements, ease and pain and the soul (*jīva*) which is accepted to be eternal and a very handy instrument in the exposition of his theory of inaction (*akiriyavāda*).

[67] Ibid: *taṃ jīvaṃ taṃ sariran ti vā aññaṃ jīvaṃ aññaṃ sarīran ti vā*.

[68] AN.216. There are four ways of treating questions according to the Buddha: some should be answered 1. directly; 2. by way of analyzing them; 3. by counter-questions; and lastly 4. by putting them aside.

the matters that these questions seek to answer are not accessible to the logical mind, being beyond words and indescribable. It is as if one were wasting one's time by trying to look at a picture with one's ears. Thirdly, debating questions, which are inaccessible to rational thinking, would yield no practical results.[69] Fourthly, the Buddha was born at a time when these questions were the subject of intense interest, and the teachers and philosophers debating them did so heatedly all over the country. Whenever people approached religious teachers or philosophers, they would tend to ask them these questions. Such questions had become an obsession to the extent that people had lost touch with practical reality, so the Buddha would remain silent when consulted on such matters. His silence was not only a check on such discussion, but also a powerful jolt to the listener to force him to take heed of what the Buddha actually did have to teach.[70] And finally, one reason that the Buddha gave was that the question as to whether or not the *ātman* existed was not conducive to nibbāna.[71]

The Buddha objected to two aspects of the Upaniṣadic understanding of the *ātman*, one concerning its supposed permanence or eternal nature, and one the agency attributed to it. The Buddha's doctrine of *anicca* and dukkha (impermanence and suffering) was not new to the people of India. In the early Upaniṣads such as the Chāndogya, we come across such expressions as *tarati śokaṃ ātmavid* (knowledge of the Self ferries a person across (the world of) sorrow). But the Buddhist doctrine of *anattā* baffled Indian thinkers. The Buddha denied a self and spoke against it, which was a real shock to them, since it challenged their long-held, central belief in the existence of the *ātman*.

The Anattalakkhaṇasutta[72] is said to contain the second discourse of the Buddha, and the one in which he proclaimed his teaching

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[69] The Buddha's main interest was in giving teachings which would yield results on a practical basis, and so he swept aside the questions of metaphysics and instead guided the questioner to more practical concerns. If the question was one which could be answered by personal experience, the Buddha would explain how the questioner could experience it personally rather than prolonging the conjecture or debate, like the blind men groping the elephant.

[70] P. A. Payutto, op. cit. p.121.

[71] EB. Vol. IV. p.318.

[72] Vin.13; SN.III.66.

countering the prevalent theory of self or soul at that time. The Buddha delivered this discourse to the group of five ascetics who were at that time residing in the Deer Park at Isipatana, near Benares. It mainly concerned the five *khandhas*, viz. *rūpa*, *vedanā*, *saññā*, *saṅkhārā*, and *viññāṇa*, which are said to without self (*anattā*). He pointed out that if the *khandhas* constituted a self, they would be subject to our control, yet this is obviously not the case, since they are a source of dukkha.

The Buddha questioned monks, asking whether each of the five *khandhas* in turn were permanent or not, and whether that which is impermanent is a source of happiness. The reply was, in either case, that they were not. The Buddha then asked whether it was proper to view that which is *aniccā*, dukkha, and *anattā* as "This is mine; this am I, this is my soul," and then further asked whether all *khandhas*, be they past, present, or future, personal or external, coarse or subtle, low or high, far or near, should be equally so regarded. The answer was, in each case, in the negative. [73]

Here the Buddha explicitly states that an *ātman*, a soul, or self, is nowhere to be found in reality, and it is foolish to believe that there is such a thing.

Those who claim to find a self in the Buddha's teachings usually cite a few passages concerning the self which are wrongly translated or misinterpreted. Walpola Rahula, in his well-known work *What the Buddha Taught*,[74] takes careful notice of four occasions on which the Buddha's teaching on self appears to have been mistranslated or misinterpreted.

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[73] SN.II.94; III.18, 42, 43, 180, 204: *etaṃ mama, eso 'ham asmi, eso me attā.*

With craving (*taṇhā*) one wrongly thinks that this is mine.
With pride (*māna*) one thinks that this am I.
With false view one thinks that this is my soul.
These are the three misconceptions (*maññamāna*).

[74] Walpola Sri Rahula, **What the Buddha Taught,** (Bangkok: Haw Trai Foundation B.E. 2542 (1999)), pp.58-63.

Firstly, there is the well-known line *attā hi attano nātho* which some translate as "Self is the lord of self", and then misinterpret it to mean that the big self is the lord of the small self.

Another example of the attempt to introduce the idea of self into the Buddha's teaching is through the well-known words of *attādīpa vihāratha, attasaraṇā anaññasaraṇā*, which really means "Dwell making yourselves your island (support), making yourselves your refuge, not anyone else as your refuge."

Then, again, there is yet a further attempt at finding a self in the Buddha's teachings, based on the fact that when on his way to Uruvelā from Benares, he is reported as having asked thirty young princes "What do you think, young men? Which is better for you? To search after a woman, or to search after yourselves?"

Finally, there is the instance in which a certain wanderer named Vacchagotta asked the Buddha whether there were an *ātman* or not. The Buddha remained silent for the reasons stated above.

The doctrine of *anattā* is a natural outcome of, or corollary of, the analysis of the five *khandhas* and the teaching of dependent origination already mentioned above in the discussion of Dhamma as non–moral natural law.[75]

This is the reason for the Buddha's unequivocal denial of any hidden essence in dhammas, when he says: "All dhammas are non-self" (*sabbe dhammā anattā*).[76] And this is, at the same time, a vivid rejection of the conception of *ātman* as found in the teachings of both the Upaniṣads and the Bhagavadgītā.

3.3.2 Dhamma as moral natural law

First of all, I would like to distinguish between the Dhamma as moral natural law, and the moral law in the form of the law of kamma.

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[75] Walpola Sri Rahula, Op. cit. p.52.

[76] MN.I.228, 230; SN.III.132-33; IV. 401; AN.I.286; Dhp.v.279; Th. v. 678.

The former embraces the noble eightfold path (*ariya-aṭṭhaṅgikamagga*)[77] and the threefold training (*tisikkhā*).[78] The latter refers to law of kamma or law of cause and effect. In this regard, the noble eightfold path and threefold training are Dhamma as moral natural law, in the form of the path rediscovered by the Buddha, and provide the ethical basis of the Buddha's teachings in terms of the path as the way leading to the cessation of dukkha and one which should thus be developed or cultivated.

The law of kamma or moral law, on the other hand, is a natural law of cause and effect, of action and reaction. This is the principle of kamma,[79] or the law of action and result (*kammaniyāma*). It also falls under the fifth *niyāma*, that of the *dhammaniyāma*. It specifically refers to the process of volitional activities and explains how certain actions lead to corresponding consequences, why people are born with certain peculiarities of character, and human behavior in the context of mental construction and proliferation. The law of kamma is based on the principle that all actions inevitably lead to results proportionate in nature and degree to the deed.

The kammic law operates on its own, requiring no assumption of a God, and has nothing to do with the idea of reward or punishment.[80] The Buddha says: "Whatever sort of seed is sown, that is the sort of fruit one reaps; the doer of good reaps good; the doer of evil reaps evil; by you, dear, has the seed been sown; thus you will experience the fruit.'[81]

In addition, kamma is only one part of the process of dependent origination. It is divided into three parts: the defilements (*kilesa*), kamma, and the fruits of action (*vipāka*).[82] The principle of dependent origination

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[77] DN.II.312; MN.I.61; III.251; Vibh.235.

[78] DN.III.220; AN.I.229.

[79] SN.II.432; As.272. Etymologically, kamma means "work" or "action." But action is based on intention or deeds willfully done. Actions that are without intention are not considered to be kamma in the Buddha's teaching.

[80] Sunthorn Plamintr, Ph D. op.cit. p.111.

[81] SN.I.227; J.II.199; III.157: *Yādisaṃ vapate bījaṃ tādisaṃ labhate phalaṃ kalyāṇakārī kalyāṇaṃ pāpakārī ca pāpakaṃ.* Bhikkhu Bodhi, tr., **The Connected Discourses of the Buddha** (*Saṃyuttanikāya*), p. 328.

[82] Vism.581.

explains the complete process of action and the fruits of action, starting from the defilements that bring about kamma. When dependent origination is understood, kamma is also understood.[83]

In the Buddhist sense, the law of kamma and the law of the Dhamma are interrelated and interconnected. Kamma is the description of behavioural reality. In present thesis, the Dhamma as moral natural law is the detailed description and elaboration of a way of life or the way leading to the ending of dukkha.

3.3.2.1 The noble eightfold path (*ariya-aṭṭhaṅgikamagga*)

The *ariyamagga* is the path leading to nibbāna, to the end of dukkha. The *aṭṭhaṅgikamagga* is believed to be a way of life. It provides a detailed description of, or a guide to, the way to live, think, act, and speak, which will enable one to put this whole fivefold mass of dukkha to an end. The path is one, but is comprised of eight components.

The term *ariya*[84] was originally used to refer to the invading race, the Ariyans. Two important characteristics of the eightfold path are that it is at the middle of the moral life as well as a middle way.[85] Thus it is the middle part of the noble life. It advocates a middle way (*majjhimā paṭipadā*) between the two extremes (*anta*) of a life of indulgence in the pleasures of sense (*kāmasukhallikānuyoga*) and a life of indulgence in self-mortification (*attakilamathānuyoga*). The former is rejected for social reasons, because it is low, vulgar, and individualist. The Pāyāsisutta shows that materialism was a widely prevalent doctrine at the time of the Buddha. The Buddha's disciples had to contend with teachers

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[83] P.A. Payutto. op.cit. p.145.

[84] David J. Kalupahana, op.cit. p. 77. In the Buddhist texts, the term is used in a moral sense and does not carry racial implications, and is often translated into English as "noble". The criterion of nobility is therefore not race, color, or social status, but the achievement of safety, security or peace (*khema)*, well-being (*sovatthika, su-atthi-ka, svāstika*) and joy associated with such peace and well-being. The way of life pursued by the Buddha before his enlightenment is referred to as an "ignoble quest" (*anariyapariyesanā*), in comparison with the path and the goal discovered by him upon enlightenment, which are designated a "noble quest" (*ariyapariyesanā*).

[85] Ibid.78.

who put forward such teachings, and from the point of view of Buddhism such teachings were considered as extremely harmful to the well-being of the people, both here and hereafter. The latter is avoided mostly for psychological reasons. It is not characterized as low, vulgar, and individualist; it is simply painful. Both, however, are ignoble and unfruitful. Two suttas, namely the Kassapasīhanādasutta and the Udumbarikasīhanādasutta, denounce the practice of self–mortification. These two suttas make it clear that although it conduces to self–restraint, it has, through experience, to be rejected as futile, since its only outcome is pain. This implies that the path avoiding these extremes should be both noble and fruitful.

The various components of the path are all preceded by the term *sammā*. The term *sammā* (right) indicates that all such components are the opposite of their *micchā* (wrong, or false) counterparts. It also conveys a sense of comprehensiveness, which implies avoidance of shortcuts in deciding what is right and wrong. The eightfold path serves as a bridge between a life of virtues and ultimate freedom.[86]

Certain discourses by the Buddha, and his chief disciple Sāriputta, explain and set forth the noble eightfold path. The Buddha questioned Sāriputta as to what nibbāna might be, after which he then himself stated the destruction of lust, hatred, and delusion to be nibbāna. Sāriputta then asks whether there be any path to the realisation of nibbāna, whereupon the Buddha states that there is such a path, and that it is the ariyan eightfold, viz. right view, right thought, right speech, right action, right livelihood, right effort, right mindfulness, right concentration.[87]

Many metaphors are given to help deepen our understanding of the path. It is compared to an ancient path hidden in the jungle,[88] a divine vehicle,[89] an ancient city,[90] a crossing over,[91] a pot,[92] the river Ganges,[93] a

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[86] Ibid.
[87] SN.VI.170.
[88] SN.II.105.
[89] SN.V.4-5.
[90] Ibid., 6.
[91] Ibid.,22.
[92] Ibid.,19.

species of seed and vegetation,[94] a strong wind,[95] and a sea-faring vessel.[96]

The eightfold path (*ariya-aṭṭhaṅgikamagga*) has to be trodden gradually, during the course of which one eradicates within oneself all the defilements that keep one tied to saṃsāric existence. It is to the components of that path that we must now turn.

3.3.2.1.1 Right view (*sammādiṭṭhi*)

The Brahmajālasutta records sixty–two wrong views adhered to by persons contemporary with the Buddha, a good number of which can be reduced into the two views that the Buddha found most pernicious—the view of eternalism and the view of annihilationism.

The former, known as the *sassatavāda*, or eternalist view, holds that there is an abiding entity within man which transcends each rebirth and which persists eternally throughout time, a view not dissimilar to the held by some of the monotheistic religions today. Such a view may have a place for a supreme being, though not necessarily.

The latter, known as the *ucchedavāda*, or annihilationist view, holds that there is no life beyond the present one, and that beings are annihilated upon death. This view is therefore one of all out materialism, and is, again, very similar to that presently held by many today—that this life is all that there is, with nothing beyond. This view has no place for a supreme being.

The Buddha rejects both views, in favour of a middle way between both views in the form of dependent origination. called the middle doctrine. For the Buddha, right view, or *sammādiṭṭhi*, avoids both of these two extremes.

It is said that there are two conditions[97] that can cause right view to arise: either hearing the Saddhamma from others (*paratoghosa*),[98]

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[93] Ibid.,32.
[94] Ibid.,37.
[95] Ibid.,40.
[96] Ibid.,40-1.

or paying methodical attention (*yoniso-manasikāra*).[99] The first condition is an external condition, the second an internal one.

Hearing[100] the Sadhamma brings about food for thought and steers one's own views in the right direction. Paying methodical attention, on the other hand, is harder to cultivate, and entails constant awareness of the things that one meets with in everyday life.

Sammādiṭṭhi is the first factor in the noble eightfold path. In the Sammādiṭṭhisutta, Sāriputta mentions four things resulting in *sammādiṭṭhi*:

> The first is moral causation, the wholesome and unwholesome states of mind that have to be clarified.
>
> The second is nourishment or nutriment.
>
> The third is the four noble truths.
>
> The fourth is by way of dependent origination (*paṭiccasamuppāda*).[101]

In the Mahāsatipaṭṭhānasutta, the Buddha says:

> And what, monks, is right view? It is, monks, knowledge of suffering, knowledge of the origin of suffering, knowledge of the cessation of suffering, and knowledge of the path leading to the cessation of suffering. This is called right view.[102]

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[97] SN.V.2–30; AN.I.14–18; It.10.

[98] As in the case of Upatissa hearing from the arahant Assaji.

[99] *Manasikāra* literally means "doing-in-the-mind" *yoniso* "by-way-of-womb". These terms are frequently combined into *yoniso-manasikāra*, which is often used to denote seeing things deeply, instead of on the surface.

[100] SN.V.2–30; AN.I.14–18; It.10.

[101] MN.I.46-55, Ñāṇamoli and Bhikkhu Bodhi, tr., ed., **The Middle Length Discourses of the Buddha** (Majjhima Nikāya), pp.132-144.

[102] DN.II.311–312, Walshe, Maurice. tr., **The Long Discourses of the Buddha** (*Dīghanikāya*), p.348.

Once right view has been well-established, it continues to evolve towards the final goal with the support of various factors:

"Bhikkhus, right view, when assisted by five factors, brings about *cetovimutti* and *paññāvimutti*.

Those five factors are:

1. Proper conduct (*sīla*);

2. Knowing how to study, read a text, and make further interpretations of what has been heard (*suta*);

3. Discussing, debating, and exchanging views, being able to answer other people's questions (*sākacchā*);

4. Attaining tranquility and peace of mind (*samatha*), not being deluded; and

5. Using insight (*vipassanā*) to consider various phenomena and circumstances in accordance with their conditions, that is, in accordance with reality or their true nature.[103]

3.3.2.1.2 Right thought (*sammāsaṅkappa*)

Right thought (*sammāsaṅkappa*) is the second factor in the eightfold path, consisting first of thoughts that are free from lustful attachment or greed, or thoughts associated with renunciation (*nekkhammasaṅkappa*). Secondly, it involves thoughts that are free from hatred or malevolence (*avyāpādasaṅkappa*); and, thirdly, it consists of thoughts that are free from violent intent (*avihimsāsaṅkappa*). Right thought is considered to provide the psychological basis for benevolent moral action:

"And what, monks, is right thought? Thought of renunciation, thought devoid of ill-will, thought that is harmlessness. This, monks, is called right thought.'[104]

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[103] AN.III.20,

There are two different forms of *sammāsaṅkappa*:

(1) That which is mundane (*lokiya*), still with *āsavas*, still on the side of merit, and still produces substrates;
(2) That which is supramundane (*lokuttara*), which is ariyan, free of the *āsavas*, and a limb of the path.[105]

Right view and right thought together form the *paññākkhandha*, or insight-division, of the eightfold path.

The next three factors, viz. right speech, right action, and right livelihood constitute the *sīlakkhandha*, or morality-division.

3.3.2.1.3 Right speech (*sammāvācā*)

Right speech (*sammāvācā*) consists, in the first instance, of abstention from lying speech (*musāvādā*) and the cultivation of truthfulness and trustworthiness. Secondly, it involves abstention from slanderous speech (*pisuṇavācā*) intent on causing dissension among people and the cultivation of speech that promotes harmony among those who are divided and strengthens the bonds of those who already united in friendship. Thirdly, it involves avoidance of harsh speech (*pharusavācā*) and the cultivation of speech that is pleasant, lovely and delightful to hear. Fourthly, it consists of abstention from frivolous or vain talk (*samphappalāpa*) and the cultivation of meaningful, purposeful, useful and timely speech.

In the Mahāsatipaṭṭhānasutta, the Buddha states:

"And what, monks, is right speech? Refraining from lying, refraining from slander, refraining from harsh speech, refraining from frivolous speech. This is called right speech."[106]

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[104] DN.II.311–312; MN.III.251; Vibh.104, 235. Walshe, Maurice. tr., **The Long Discourses of the Buddha** (*Dīghanikāya*), p.348.

[105] MN.III.73; Vibh.106, 237.

[106] DN.II.311–312, Walshe, Maurice. tr., **The Long Discourses of the Buddha** (*Dīghanikāya*), p.348.

It is also worth noting the Buddhist attitude to speech. Moderation in speech is considered a virtue, as one can avoid four unwholesome vocal activities, namely, falsehood, slander, harsh speech and frivolous talk. In its positive aspect, moderation in speech paves the way to self-awareness. Buddhism commends speaking at the appropriate time, speaking the truth, speaking gently, speaking what is useful, and speaking out of loving-kindness; the opposite modes of speech are condemned.[107] The Buddha's general advice to the monks regarding speech was either to discuss the Dhamma or else maintain a noble silence.[108]

3.3.2.1.4 Right action (*sammākammanta*)

Right action (*sammākammanta*), as the fourth factor in the eightfold path, involves abstention from wrongful bodily action and the cultivation of right modes of bodily behaviour. It consists, first of all, in abstention from injury to life, abstention from violence and acts of terrorism, the laying aside of all weapons used to cause injury to living beings and the positive cultivation of a mind full of love and compassion leading to compassionate action. Secondly, it recommends abstention from theft and fraudulent behavior and the cultivation honesty. Thirdly, it involves abstention from unchastity and wrongful gratification of sensuous desires, especially with respect to sexual behaviour.

In the Mahāsatipaṭṭhānasutta, the Buddha states:

"And what, monks, is right action? Refraining from taking life, refraining from taking what is not given, refraining from sexual misconduct. This is called right action."[109]

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[107] MN.I.126.

[108] MN.I.161.

[109] DN.II.311–312, Walshe, Maurice. tr., **The Long Discourses of the Buddha** (*Dīghanikāya*), p.348.

3.3.2.1.5 Right livelihood (*sammā-ājīva*)

Right livelihood (*sammā-ājīva*) is the fifth item of the middle path, and emphasises a moral and noble means of livelihood by way of avoiding those occupations which might be materially rewarding, but morally reprehensible. This means any wrong means of livelihood (*micchā-ājīva*), such as engaging in any occupation resulting in harmful consequences. Lay Buddhists are expected to avoid trading in weapons, animals, flesh, intoxicants and poisons.[110] In the case of the Buddhist monk, conditions for right livelihood are much more stringent than those for the layman. Right livelihood for the monk is determined by the consideration that his life should be in conformity to a life of detachment and renunciation.

In the Mahāsatipaṭṭhānasutta, the Buddha states:

"And what, monks, is right livelihood? In this case, monks, the ariyan disciple, having given up wrong livelihood, keeps himself by right livelihood. This is called right livelihood."[111]

3.3.2.1.6 Right effort (*sammāvāyāma*)

Right effort (*sammāvāyāma*) is the sixth factor in the eightfold path and, together with right mindfulness and right concentration, constitutes the *samādhikkhandha*, or concentration-division, of that path.

According to the Aṅguttaranikāya, right effort (*sammāvāyāma*) consists in four types of right endeavour (*sammāpadhāna*):

1. To give birth to a desire for the non-arising of any unskilled states that have not yet arisen.

2. To give birth to a desire to abandon any unskilled states that have already arisen.

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[110] AN.III.208.

[111] DN.II.311–312, Walshe, Maurice. tr., **The Long Discourses of the Buddha** (*Dīghanikāya*), p.348.

3. To give birth to a desire for the arising of skilled states that have not yet arisen.

4. To give birth to a desire maintain, cultivate and increase any skilled states that have already arisen.[112]

The Buddha puts much emphasis on right effort which, he says, is of utmost importance and vital factor in the path: "This Dhamma is for those who are industrious, not for those who are lazy. And proper effort is one of three central factors." [113]

Moreover:

> Bhikkhus, I clearly understand two valuable things about the Dhamma: I am not merely content with the good things I have already done; and I do not allow any backsliding in the course of ceaseless efforts. Therefore, all of you should know that we will establish effort that will not cease, even if only skin, sinew, and bones remain. Even though our tissue and blood may dry up, yet we will still continue to seek the fruit that can be attained via human energy, hard work, and struggle. There is no slackness in our efforts—all of you should know this and carry on in this way.[114]

3.3.2.1.7 Right mindfulness (*sammāsati*)

Right mindfulness (*sammāsati*) is the seventh factor of the path and second member of its *samādhikkhandha*. The stock description runs as follows:

> And what, monks, is right mindfulness? Here, monks, a monk abides contemplating body as body, ardent, clearly aware and mindful, having put aside hankering and fretting for the world. He abides contemplating feelings as feelings, ardent, clearly aware and mindful, having put aside hankering and fretting for the world. He abides

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[112] AN.II.15.

[113] AN.IV.229.

[114] AN.I.50. Woodward F.L, tr.**, The Book of the Gradual Sayings** (*Aṅguttaranikāya*). Vol. I. p.12.

> contemplating mind as mind, ardent, clearly aware and mindful, having put aside hankering and fretting for the world. He abides contemplating mind-objects as mind-objects, ardent, clearly aware and mindful, having put aside hankering and fretting for the world.[115]

The Dhamma lays emphasis on the importance of *sati* at every level of ethical conduct. *Sati* is synonymous with *appamāda*, or diligence, which is of central importance to making progress in the Buddhist system of ethics. The role and importance of the practice of *appamāda* at various levels of moral practice can be gleaned from the words of the Buddha:

> Bhikkhus, just as the footprints of all living beings that walk fit into the footprint of the elephant, and the elephant's footprint is declared to be the chief among them, that is, with respect to size, so, too, are all wholesome states rooted in diligence, converge upon diligence, and diligence is declared to be the chief among such wholesome states. When a bhikkhu is diligent, it is to be expected that he will develop and cultivate the noble eightfold path.[116]

> Monks, as a matter concerning the self, I know not of any other single factor so conducive to great gain as diligence. Diligence indeed conduces to great gain. Monks, I know not of any other single thing so conducive to the establishment, to the non-disappearance, of the true Dhamma, as diligence.[117]

Even the Buddha's final instructions to the monks, just before he passed away, encouraged them to be diligent:

"Now, monks, I declare to you: all conditioned things are of a nature to decay. Strive on with diligence." [118]

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[115] DN.II.313; MN.I.62; Vibh.105, 236.

[116] SN.V.43; AN.V.21, Bhikkhu Bodhi, tr., **The Connected Discourses of the Buddha** (*Saṃyuttanikāya*), p.1551.

[117] AN.I.16-7. Woodward F.L. tr. **The Book of the Gradual Sayings** (*Aṅguttaranikāya*). Vol. I. pp.1,2.

[118] DN.II.156, Walshe, Maurice. tr., **The Long Discourses of the Buddha** (*Dīghanikāya*), p. 270.

3.3.2.1.8 Right concentration (*sammāsamādhi*)

Right concentration (*sammāsamādhi*), the eighth factor of the path, stands for the clear, mental condition which brings about the dawning of wisdom heralding the final elimination of all evil dispositions and the culmination of perfection of moral character.

Samādhi can be divided into three levels:

1. Momentary concentration (*khaṇikasamādhi*)

2. Neighbourhood concentration (*upacārasamādhi*)

3. Absorption concentration (*appanāsamādhi*)[119]

The noble eightfold path (*ariyaṭṭhaṅgikamagga*) is a further aspect of the Dhamma as moral natural law, and is also praised by the Buddha by saying:

> In whatever doctrine or teaching the noble eightfold path is not found, there will neither be found those who have become a *sotāpanna*, *sakadāgāmī*, *anāgāmī* or *arahant*. But in those teachings where the noble eightfold path is found, there also you will find the *sotāpanna*, the *sakadāgāmī*, the *anāgāmī* and the *arahant*. In this teaching of mine, O Subhadda, is to be found the noble eightfold path, and in it alone the *sotāpanna*, the *sakadāgāmī*, the *anāgāmī*, and the *arahant* are found, in no other schools of religious teachers can such ariyans beings be found. And if only my disciples live rightly and follow my precepts or training rules, the world will never be without genuine arahants.[120]

The Buddha also says:

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[119] As.117; Vism.144.

[120] SN.II.92. Bhikkhu Bodhi, tr., **The Connected Discourses of the Buddha** (*Saṃyuttanikāya*), pp. 603-04.

"Monks, as compared with things compounded the ariyan eightfold way is reckoned best of them."[121]

3.3.2.2 Threefold training (*tisikkhā*)

The *tisikkhā* and *tividhā sikkhā*[122] denote the threefold division of the Buddha's teaching. The term *sikkhā* means training, studying, learning. The practical aspects of Buddhism are divided into the *tisikkhā* and will definitely lead to the successful attainment of the ultimate goal of nibbāna. The *tividhā sikkhā* are not ends in themselves; each is a cannot function separately or independently, but rather mutually supports the other two, as in the case of a tripod which falls to the ground if a single leg gives way.[123]

As the Buddha says:

> It is, monks, through not understanding, not penetrating, four things that I, as well as you, have for a long time fared on round the cycle of rebirths. What are the four? Through not understanding the ariyan morality, through not understanding the ariyan concentration, through not understanding the ariyan wisdom, through not understanding the ariyan liberation, have I, as well as you, for a long time fared on round the cycle of rebirths. And it is by understanding and penetrating the ariyan morality, the ariyan concentration the ariyan wisdom and the ariyan liberation, that the craving for becoming has been cut off, the tendency towards becoming has been exhausted, and there will be no more rebirth.[124]

The following is the threefold training, namely:

1. Training in morality (*sīlasikkhā*)

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[121] AN.II.34, Woodward, F.L. tr. **The Book of the Gradual Sayings** (*Aṅguttaranikāya*). Vol. II. p.39.

[122] DN.III.220; AN.I.229.

[123] Piyadassi Thera, **The Buddha's Ancient Path,** (Sri Lanka: Buddhist Publication Society Inc. 2001), p.79.

[124] DN.II.123, Walshe, Maurice. tr., **The Long Discourses of the Buddha** (*Dīghanikāya*), p.254.

2. Training in mentality (*cittasikkhā*)

3. Training in insight (*paññāsikkhā*)[125]

The *tisikkhā* are based on a moral natural law or truth and, when practised, lead to *vimutti* (liberation), the ending of dukkha. No other way can be found.

In many suttas, the *tisikkhā* are, for the most part, taught and addressed to monks rather than laymen. *Sīla* is the first of the three trainings and involves a conscious and voluntary transformation of one's patterns of bodily and verbal behavior. It is believed to be the foundation on which the other two trainings are to be developed. This formulation of the trainings reveals not only the pragmatic character of Buddhism, but also the psychological insight on which the practical aspects of the Buddhist moral system are based. *Samādhi* is the development of mental composure, whereas *paññā* is the cultivation of the insight that leads to moral perfection.

At the social level, constraint through rules and regulations and laws, including punishment for lawbreakers and so on, must be exercised, if the social order is to be preserved. [126] This is the social equivalent of the Vinaya, or monastic discipline, which preserves order in the Saṅgha.

Payutto speaks of the *tisikkhā* as follows:

1. The basic or surface level of behaviour

2. The intermediate level of the mind

3. The advanced level of understanding[127]

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[125] DN.III.220; A.I.229, Walshe, Maurice. tr., **The Long Discourses of the Buddha** (*Dīghanikāya*), p.486.

[126] P.A. Payutto, **Toward Sustainable Science,** *(*Bangkok: Buddhadhamma Foundation, 1993), p.130. Payutto states that intention in most cases arises from religious faith. If, for example, there is belief or confidence in religion, there is a readiness and willingness to restrain behaviour.

[127] Ibid., p.130.

According to Buddhism, moral natural law in terms of the *tisikkhā* operates on three negative levels of defilements namely, *vītikkama*, *pariyuṭṭhāna*, and *anusaya*, in which *vītikkama* is eradicated by *sīla*, *pariyuṭṭhāna* by *samādhi* and *anusaya* by *paññā*.

1. At the most deep-rooted level, there are found dormant or latent dispositional traits (*anusaya*). Even a person who does not exhibit violent behaviour at particular moment in his life has the tendency to do so when he meets with a certain situation. *Anusaya* means "latent", because they represent dormant moral evils operating in our mind in the form of laziness, resentment, evil tendencies, and jealousy, and so on. They are latent in evil dispositions. These stay latent in the depths of the mind.

2. At the second level, defilement manifests itself in the form of excitement, feelings and emotion. One often feels turbulence, discomfort, or the heat of anger and passion, yet such do not rise to the surface in the form of observable overt behaviour. *Pariyuṭṭhāna* means to rise up all around like robbers on the highway.

3. At the third level is that evil that is manifested in the form of overt action through word and deed, leading to the transgression (*vītikkama*) of the moral norms of society. At this level, human action has a great deal of social significance. Vīti is a contracted form of *vi* + *ati*, and is thus an emphatic form of *ati*. *Vītikkama* thus means "going beyond, or too far", and thus "transgression". The *pariyuṭṭhāna* and *anusaya* are considered personal or private forms of tendencies, because they do not directly disrupt social harmony.

3.3.2.2.1 Virtue or morality (*sīla*)

Sīla is one of the members of the threefold training (*tisikkhā*). *Sīla* is a volitional state in the mind manifested in right action and right speech, and not merely the external bodily and verbal manifestations of same, which have to be considered only as physical phenomena.

Buddhism begins at the preliminary stage of *sīla* since violence or destruction are the easiest, and most dangerous, types of deed we can commit. *Sīla* leads us to control verbal and physical actions. Moreover, morality is not, as it might appear from the negative expressions in the texts, which are often couched in terms of abstention, something negative or passive, consisting in the mere avoidance of certain actions. On the contrary, it is intentional restraint based on a simultaneous arising of a noble volitional state in the mind. The morality of the eightfold path is the true or natural morality (*pakatisīla*), in contradistinction to prescribed rules (*paññattisīla*) in the form of the five precepts,[128] the eight precepts,[129] or the ten precepts.[130] *Sīla* is the rudiment of all dhammas.[131] Virtue represents the beginning of the path, and is the first item mentioned in the Brahmajālasutta,[132] which provides the most comprehensive description of *sīla*.[133]

The Brahmajālasutta lists the ingredients of *sīla* under three categories: minor (*cūḷa*), middling (*majjhima*), and major (*mahā*). This gradation is not based on the relative significance of the *sīla* concerned, but on the status of the persons who cultivate them. Thus, the minor virtues include the ten precepts discussed throughout the discourses, both negative and positive, and are recommended for all, while the middling and major ones, although being of lesser significance in terms of moral

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[128] DN.III.235; AN.III.203, 275; Vibh.285. The *pañcasīla*, binding on all Buddhists, are: abstaining from killing, stealing, unlawful sexual intercourse, lying and from intoxicating drink.

[129] AN.IV.248. Many devotees observe the full-moon, new-moon, the first and last quarter of the moon, the so-called fasting days (*uposatha*).

[130] Khu.I.1. Those binding on all novices are: abstaining (1) from killing, (2) from stealing, (3) from unchastity, (4) from lying, (5) from intoxicant drink, (6) from eating after noon, (7) from dance, song, music and shows, (8) from garlands, perfumes, cosmetics, etc., (9) from high and luxurious couches, and (10) from accepting gold and silver.

[131] SN.I.23.

[132] DN.I.4-9. The contents of the *Brahmajālasutta* are: the net of meaning or welfare *(atthajāla*); the net of morality (*dhammajāla*); the net of Brahmā (*brahmajāla*); the net of views (*diṭṭhijāla*); and the incomparable victory in war (*anuttarasaṅgāmavijaya*).

[133] K. N. Jayatilleke, **Eary Buddhist Theory of Knowledge,** (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1963), pp.1-168.

gravity, are for ascetics and brahmins who live on the faith-inspired support provided by laypeople.

Sīla, besides occupying first place in the threefold trainings, also occupies first place among other lists of spiritual qualities, such as the seven stages of purification (*sattavisuddhi*),[134] and second place in the ten perfections of a person aspiring to become a Buddha (*bodhisattapāramī*).[135]

The function of *sīla* is to deal with immorality at the level at which it manifests itself. Immorality becomes more tangible at this level than at the concealed levels of the mind. Hence Buddhism advises a person to make *sīla* the starting point of moral progress. One is not expected to move from one stage of the path to the next only after one has attained absolute perfection in that preceding stage.

The practice of *sīla* is a preparatory stage for the attainment of the final emancipating knowledge. The kind of conduct mentioned under *sīla* does not require any voluntary effort after the final emancipating knowledge has been attained. Buddhism speaks of the person who is in the process of fulfilling the requirements of the path as a trainee (*sekha*) and one who has fulfilled all those requirements, as a person in need of no further moral training (*asekha*).

The function of the *pāṭimokkha* rules of the Vinaya was to restrain the bodily and verbal behaviour of the monk with a certain degree of legal coercion exercised by the collective authority of the monastic community. In the case of the Buddhist lay person, *sīla* usually consists of five abstentions, namely, abstention from killing, stealing, unchastity, lying speech and the taking of intoxicating drinks.[136]

The ultimate aim of both monk and lay person alike in the practice of *sīla* is to lay the foundation for moral perfection by cultivating new patterns of bodily and verbal behavior.

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[134] MN.I.149; Visuddhimagga, passim.
[135] Bv.6.
[136] DN.III.235; AN.III.203,275; Vibh.285.

The monk's life is also expected to be governed by a set of institutional rules called the *sikkhāpada*. These rules came to be recited by the Buddhist community of monks at fortnightly meetings on *uposatha* days to ensure the moral purity of their conduct and to provide remedial action if any member of the community was found guilty of any transgression. As the Milindapañha[137] has it: "Just as all forms of animal and plant life flourish with the earth as their support, so does the recluse, with virtue as the support, develop the five controlling faculties and so on."[138]

3.3.2.2.2 Concentration (*samādhi*)

The intermediate training is that of mentality, since the mind is one of the major factors involved in causing problems.

In the Visuddhimagga, *samādhi* is examined as follows:

> What are its characteristic, function, manifestation and proximate cause? Concentration has distraction as its characteristic. Its function is to eliminate distraction. It is manifested as non-wavering. Because of the words "being blissful," the proximate course of concentration is bliss.[139]

In the Milindapañha,[140] Nāgasena states that the characteristic mark of concentration is that of leading, for all good qualities have concentration as their chief. They incline towards it, lead up towards it. just as the rafters of a house incline towards and lead up to the ridge-pole,

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[137] Bhikkhu Pesala, **The Debate of King Milinda,** (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass Publishers Private Limited 1998), p.7. These are the five controlling faculties, the five moral powers, the seven factors of enlightenment, the eight factors of the noble path, the four foundations of mindfulness, the four right efforts, the four bases of success, the four absorptions, the eight freedoms, the four modes of absorption, and the eight great attainments. Each of these has *sīla* as its support and in him who builds on it as the foundation all these good conditions will not decrease.

[138] SN.V. 45.

[139] Ñāṇamoli, **The Path of Purification**, op.cit. p.4.

[140] Bhikkhu Pesala, op.cit. p.9

the ridge-pole being the highest point of the roof. So, too, all good qualities incline and lead up to concentration.[141]

The function of *samādhi* is to deal directly with evil at the more subtle level of the human mind. In *samādhi*, there is an attempt made to bring about one-pointedness and composure of the mind, so as to prevent the excitement of unwholesome emotions. By means of *samādhi*, certain unwholesome emotions are suppressed, at least temporarily, so that certain wholesome emotions, such as compassion, mindfulness and equanimity, can be cultivated.

3.3.2.2.3 Wisdom (*paññā*)

Paññā is the last factor of the three trainings. According to the Pali-English Dictionary, *paññā* denotes wisdom or insight.[142] Etymologically, the term *paññā* is derived from *pa* + *(j)ñā*. *Pa* is a prefix probably having an intensive sense of "extreme", whilst the root *(j)ñā* that of knowledge, understanding etc. Thus, the literal meaning of *paññā* is that of intense, extremely perceptive, knowledge. In the Buddhist usage, *paññā* means to know, to understand or to comprehend fully and thoroughly.

In the Visuddhimagga, *paññā* is examined as follows:

> What are its characteristic, function, manifestation and proximate cause? Understanding (*paññā*) has penetrating the individual essences of states as its characteristic. Its function is to abolish the darkness of delusion, which conceals the individual essences of states. It is manifested as non-delusion. Because of the words "One who is concentrated knows and sees correctly" (AN.V. 3), its proximate course is concentration.[143]

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[141] SN.III.13, V.414; cf. As.162: *Samādhiṃ bhikkhave bhāvetha, samāhito bhikkhave bhikkhu yathābhūtaṃ pajānāti.*

[142] T.W. Rhys Davids & William Stede, **Pali-English Dictionary,** (Delhi: Motital Banarsidass, 1993), p.389.

[143] Ñāṇamoli, **The Path of Purification**, op.cit. p.4.

In the Milindapañha,[144] it is said that *paññā* has the characteristic mark of illuminating; when wisdom springs up in the mind, it dispels the darkness of ignorance, causes the radiance of vision to arise, makes the light of knowledge shine forth and makes the noble truths plain. Thus does the meditator perceive with the clearest wisdom, the impermanence, unsatisfactoriness and soullessness of all formations.

Shortly after the Buddha's parinibbāna, Subhaddha approached Venerable Ānanda saying: "You, Ānanda, were for a long time the attendant of Gotama, intimate with him, keeping near him. You would know what were the doctrines he extolled, which doctrines were aroused by him and in which ones he established them." Ānanda then replies, saying what those doctrines are. He replied there were three groups that the Buddha extolled: the noble group relating to *sīla*, the noble group relating to *samādhi*, and the noble group relating to *paññā*. Ānanda finally quoted the *sīla*, concluding the section with the remark: "And after that there is certainly more to be done." He then described *samādhi*, concluding with the same remark, but after describing the *paññā* sections he stated that after this, there is nothing further to be done.[145]

Paññā is believed to deal with the problem of the *āsavas* at their source and it is through *paññā* that the eradication of *āsavas* (*āsavakkhaya*) comes about, since the *āsava*s are conditioned by ignorance (*avijjā).*

The Buddha compares *paññā* to a lion:

> Monks, just as among animals the lion, the king of beasts, is declared to be their chief, that is, with respect to strength, speed, and courage, so too, among the states conducive to enlightenment, the faculty of *paññā* is declared to be their chief, that is, for the attainment of enlightenment. [146]

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[144] Bhikkhu Pesala, op.cit. p.10.

[145] DN.I.206,208,209. Walshe, Maurice. tr., **The Long Discourses of the Buddha** (*Dīghanikāya*), pp.171-73.

[146] SN.V.227. Bhikkhu Bodhi, tr., **The Connected Discourses of the Buddha** (*Saṃyuttanikāya*), p.1695.

3. 4 Characteristics of the Dhamma as natural law

3.4.1 Four characteristics of the Dhamma as non-moral natural law

There are four characteristics of the Dhamma as non-moral natural law:

> 1. Dhamma as non–moral natural law is a natural process, not a humanly formulated technique.
>
> 2. Dhamma as non–moral natural law is timeless and universal is subject to only the relationship between causes and conditions.
>
> 3. Dhamma as non–moral natural law describes the arising and cessation of suffering in terms of impersonal causes and conditions. It is not concerned with the questions of good and bad.
>
> 4. Dhamma as non–moral natural law is only a principle, not a technique, method or tool. [147]

3.4.1.1 Dhamma as non–moral natural law is a natural process, not a humanly formulated technique.

Dhamma as natural law is known as *dhammadhātu*, enduring causes and effects as *dhammaṭṭhiti*, and natural restrictions as *dhammaniyāma*. It is independent of any creator or mysterious power, and also of any religion or religious teacher,[148] and is only discovered through the inward reflections of a man. It is something that naturally exists. The Buddha was the one who discovered this truth. As the Buddha says:

> Whether a Tathāgata appears or not, this condition exists and is a natural fact, a natural law: that is, the principle of conditionality. The Tathāgata, enlightened to, and awakened to, that principle, teaches it,

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[147] P.A. Payutto, Ven., **Dependent Origination,** op.cit. pp.88–9.

[148] AN.III.414.

> shows it, formulates it, declares it, reveals it, makes it known, clarifies it and points it out, saying, "See here, conditioned by ignorance is volitional impulse." This suchness, monks, this invariability, this irreversibility, that is to say the law of conditionality, I call the principle of dependent origination.[149]

At funerals, Buddhist monks chant a sutta known as the Dhammaniyāmasutta. The point of this sutta is that the Dhamma exists, whether or not a Buddha arises to discover it. The monks chant *uppādā vā bhikkhave tathāgatānaṃ anuppādā vā tathāgatānaṃ* (whether there is an arising of the Tathāgatas, or whether there is no arising of the Tathāgatas)."[150]

Dhamma as natural law does not depend on a revelation from some God, or Supreme Being for its truth, nor even a Tathāgata.

3.4.1.2 Dhamma as non–moral natural law is timeless and universal[151] is subject to only the relationship between causes and conditions.

The Dhamma as non–moral natural law is timeless. [152] Because the Dhamma is not bound by factors of space and time, it is practical and applicable in all places and times, although it requires an acquaintance with, as well as an understanding of, it to put its principles into practice and to apply same to real life situations. And it is universal,[153] and embraces, not only humans, but also animals, deities, and all else without exception. This is the omnipresent quality of the Dhamma, and it is important to understand this clearly in order to be convinced of our unity

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[149] SN.II.15.

[150] AN.I.286. *Dhammaniyāmasutta* or *Uppādasutta*,

[151] Sunthorn Plamintr, Ph D., op.cit. pp.65-66.

[152] Ibid. Timelessness of the Dhamma implies the three following characteristics: an eternal state of being without beginning and end; freedom from restriction in time; and the fact that the Dhamma can be proved in its validity and consistency under all temporal conditions, according to its own laws.

[153] Ibid. Universality implies the following three fundamental characteristics: the inclusion of all things and phenomena, collectively or individually; an all-embracing nature that transcends limits without exception; and being in existence or operation everywhere and under all conditions.

with the Dhamma. It is non-sectarian, and open to all. The principle of dependent origination describes the interrelation and interdependence of all things in the form of a chain: all things exist in relation to one another, have no enduring existence, not even for a moment, whilst all things have no intrinsic entity. All things are without first cause, or genesis.[154]

In brief, the law of *idappaccayatā* states:

"When this exists, that comes to be; with the arising of this, that arises. When this does not exist, that does not come to be; with the cessation of this, that ceases."[155]

This is a truth, a natural law. It is the natural law of cause and effect at its most basic level. As explained in the formula of dependent arising, things have multiple causes and conditions.

3.4.1.3 Dhamma as non–moral natural law describes the arising and cessation of suffering in terms of impersonal causes and conditions. It is not concerned with the questions of good and bad.

One of the four main characteristics of Dhamma as non-moral natural law is derived from the statement *majjhena dhammaṃ deseti* (he teaches Dhamma by way of the middle (path)), which occurs frequently throughout the Nidānavagga of the Saṃyuttanikāya.[156] The Dhamma as non–moral natural law is the middle teaching (*majjhena dhammadesanā*), an impersonal, natural truth, a description of the nature of things as they are in themselves, and one avoiding extreme theories or biased views that human beings tend to fall into as a result of their distorted or perverted perceptions of the world and their attachments to it. This can therefore be equated with *sammādiṭṭhi*, or right view, which is referred to as a neutral position, and not inclined in any particular direction. Dependent origination is therefore a principle or law that expresses or describes a neutral truth of the arising and cessation of suffering (dukkha) in terms of impersonal causes and conditions.

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[154] P.A. Payutto, op.cit. p.14.

[155] MN.III. 63; SN.II.28, 95, 64-5, Ñāṇamoli and Bhikkhu Bodhi, tr., ed., **The Middle Length Discourses of the Buddha** (Majjhima Nikāya), p.927.

[156] SN.II.17-77.

3.4.1.4 Dhamma as non–moral natural law is only a principle, not a technique, method or tool.

The Dhamma as natural law is a principle. This can be compared to the natural conditions which cause a fire to go out, such as a lack of fuel, or a lack of oxygen.

3.4.2 Four characteristics of the Dhamma as moral natural law

There are four characteristics of the Dhamma as moral natural law:

1. The Dhamma as moral natural law is merely a natural law re-discovered by the Buddha.

2. The Dhamma as moral natural law is applicable at all times.

3. Dhamma as moral natural law is a graduated system of practice of human invention, relying on the gradual accumulation of goodness.
4. The Dhamma as moral natural law is a technique, a method and a tool. [157]

3.4.2.1 The Dhamma as moral natural law is merely a natural law re-discovered by the Buddha.

The Dhamma as moral natural law is not formulated by the Buddha himself, for it is only the law of nature whose secret the Buddha re-discovered and revealed to the world.

Furthermore, Dhamma as moral natural law is indispensable and a prerequisite for human beings both on the individual and social levels. So we observe that Buddhist morality is completely different from that of the West or theism which it is called religion. It is contradictory to nature as it really is. In addition, it is still far distant from the natural

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[157] P.A. Payutto, op.cit. p.88–9.

sense or regularity or the things as they really are (*yathābhūtaṃ*). So Buddhism does not put forth absolute rules for ethical behaviour.

3.4.2.2 The Dhamma as moral natural law is applicable at all times.

The Dhamma as moral law conforms with the natural law of cause and effect, and has no human or divine author. Moreover, it remains constant and is applicable at all times and at all stages in the evolution and dissolution of the cosmos.

3.4.2.3 Dhamma as moral natural law is a graduated system of practice of human invention, relying on the gradual accumulation of goodness.

Dhamma as moral natural law means that everything must be regular or natural, whether we are speaking of a stone or a human being. If something happens to disturb that regularity, the natural equilibrium is upset and trouble ensues.

Thus, Dhamma as moral natural law is concerned with all spheres of human activity, be it the sciences, or politics, the army, economics, industry, agriculture, transportation, communication, education, and so on.

The more human beings are ignorant of morality and the more they do anything immoral, the more they are in unrest or turmoil. So, Dhamma as natural law is the law of cause and effect instead of rewards and punishments. According to the Buddha, the world is not so constituted, for Buddhists believe that the law of kamma operates automatically in terms of cause and effect, and not in terms of rewards and punishments which are merely conventionally formulated.

3.4.2.4 The Dhamma as moral natural law is a technique, a method and a tool.

The Dhamma as moral natural law is based on, and operates in accordance with, the other aspect of the Dhamma as non–moral natural law**.** It provides practical techniques for dealing with the human

predicament, in the same way that water provides a means for extinguishing fire.

Chapter IV

Interrelations between Dhamma as Natural Law and Its Significance for the Individual, Society, and Environment

4.1 The interrelationship and interconnection of the Dhamma as non-moral natural law with the Dhamma as moral natural law

In this chapter, I would like to describe the interrelationship of the Dhamma at each of its various levels, before moving on to a discussion of the benefits and advantages to be gained on the individual, social and environmental levels by those studying and practising it.

A description of the path itself begins with the Dhamma as non–moral natural law and progresses to the Dhamma as moral natural law, that is, its practical application to the human predicament.

In the Aṭṭhaṅgikasutta[1] it is stated that there are two kinds of practice:

1. *Micchāpaṭipadā*: wrong practice, or the wrong path, which leads to suffering (dukkha).

2. *Sammāpaṭipadā*: right practice or the right path, which leads to the cessation of suffering (dukkha).

Micchāpaṭipadā is directly opposed to the eightfold path, or *sammā–paṭipadā*,[2] and is defined as follows:

Micchāpaṭipadā consists of wrong view, wrong thought, wrong speech, wrong action, wrong livelihood, wrong effort, wrong mindfulness, wrong concentration.

Dependent origination in its forward mode can be looked upon as *micchāpaṭipadā*, whilst its reverse mode as that of *sammāpaṭipadā*.[3]

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[1] AN.II.220

[2] SN.V.18.

Let us take a look at the four pairs of interrelations that pertain between the Dhamma as moral natural law[4] and the Dhamma as non–moral natural law as advanced by Payutto.

The first pair:

1. Dhamma as non–moral natural law is a natural process

2. Dhamma as moral natural law is a formulated technique known as the way.

The second pair:

1. The Dhamma as non–moral natural law is a natural process from which knowledge is derived to formulate a method of practice. It is essential to know and understand this natural process.

2. The Dhamma as moral natural law begins with a particular view that is a technique formulated to bring result in accordance with that natural process.

The third pair:

1. The former is a natural process subject only to the relationship between causes and conditions.

2. The latter proposes techniques of practice which can be adapted to time and place.

The fourth pair:

1. The former illustrates the cessation of suffering in terms of impersonal causes and conditions, and the utter removal of

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[3] SN.II.4.

[4] P.A. Payutto, Op. cit. pp.88–9.

those conditions. It is not concerned with the question of good and bad.

2. The latter is a graduated system of practice of human invention, relying on the gradual accumulation of goodness in order to overcome the power of evil conditions which obstruct or hold back attainment of the goal. That is why the latter puts emphasis, especially at the earlier stages, on the avoiding of evil and the cultivation of the good.

The Dhamma as moral natural law, or the threefold training, explains the relationship that pertains between the three trainings:

> This is morality, this is concentration, this is wisdom. Concentration, when imbued with morality, brings great fruit and profit. Wisdom, when imbued with concentration, brings great fruit and profit. The mind imbued with wisdom becomes completely free from the corruptions, that is, from the corruptions of sensuality, of becoming, of false views and of ignorance.[5]

The relationship between these aspects of the threefold training can be seen even in the course of daily life. For example, when a person's behaviour is pure and people have confidence in this purity, he has no fear of fault; he has no dread of the bad intentions of his enemies. The mind is clear, calm, clean, and peaceful. The more the mind is untroubled, peaceful, the more one's contemplation and awareness can lead to clarity, competence, and the positive fruits of wisdom. In the end, this leads to insight, wisdom or true knowledge.

We now turn to the next section concerning the significance of the Dhamma as natural law for the individual, society, and the environment.

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[5] DN.II.82, 123, Walshe, Maurice. tr., **The Long Discourses of the Buddha** (*Dīghanikāya*), pp.254-55.

4.2 The significance of the Dhamma as natural law

First of all, I would like to take the purpose of the Dhamma into consideration, for, as we know, the Dhamma plays very significant role in life. All Buddhas preach the same Dhamma, including the Buddha Gotama, and all devote their whole life to preaching the Dhamma after attaining full enlightenment. In so doing, the Buddha Gotama continued the custom implemented by the Buddhas of the past, which custom will be continued by the Buddhas of the future. Of his preaching of the Dhamma (*dhammadesanā*), it is said: "He illustrated to him [his hearer] the very eminent preaching of the Dhamma of the Buddhas—dukkha, its origin, its cessation, and the path leading to that cessation."[6] These are the four truths (*catusaccadhamma*) and they form one of the most important summaries of the Dhamma.

In order to understand the purpose of the Dhamma, the Buddha puts forward the simile of the raft.[7] He teaches that the Dhamma is only for crossing over and not for retaining.

The significance of the Dhamma depends on the context in which is taught, to whom is taught, as the following illustrates. The Dhamma is preached for control (*saṃvara*) of the senses,[8] for destruction of the defilements (*āsavas*),[9] for the destruction of all dukkha,[10] for the attaining of nibbāna and the release from all bonds (*gaṇṭha*),[11] for the pulling out of latent, biased dispositions (*anusaya*),[12] for calming composure (*assāsa*),[13] for the tranquilising of all *saṅkhāras*,[14] for whatever is beneficial for someone,[15] for the abstinence from transgressing the five moral precepts,[16] for the suppressing of

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[6] Vin.I.16,18,19,23,37,181, II.156; DN.I. 110, II.41, 43, 44. In Pali, it is called *samukkhaṃsika.*

[7] MN.22.

[8] MN.I.503; MA. III.213; Nidd.1.I.243.

[9] DN.III.129-30.

[10] DN.III.4; 196; MN.I.72; AN.I.187, II.9.

[11] DN.III.272.

[12] MN.I.213.

[13] Vin.I.236.

[14] MN.I.136.

[15] SnA.I.368.

[16] DN.III.195.

unwholesome dhammas and the development of wholesome dhammas,[17] for the attainment of arahantship (*arahatta*),[18] and for the overcoming of birth and old age.[19]

> With full comprehension, Uttiya, I teach Dhamma to disciples for the purification of beings, for the overpassing of sorrow and despair, for the going to an end of grief and dejection, for reaching the method, for the realising of nibbāna.[20]

The Dhamma is preached not idly, not as form of speculation, but rather for salvation, with the assurance that it is not preached in vain. The Dhamma meant both for the monks and the layman aims at molding the character in such a way that it will be beneficial both for oneself and for society at large, here and now.

It is said that the Buddha spoke two discourses to Saccaka and yet the latter neither attained a deep understanding nor did he go forth, nor did he even seek to become established in the refuges (*saraṇesu*). The commentary on the Majjhimanikāya asks why, therefore, the Bhagavā preached the Dhamma to him, answering its own question with the explanation that he did so "for the sake of the impressions in future."[21]

The Buddha, the commentary continues, was aware that two hundred years after his parinibbāna, the *Sāsanā* would become established in Sri Lanka (Tambapaṇṇidīpa) and that there would be there at that time the man Saccaka who would attain arahantship and would be named Kāla-Buddharakkhita. "Having seen this, he taught the Dhamma for the sake of the impressions in future."[22]

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[17] DN.III.57; M.I.475.

[18] Ud.7.

[19] Thi. v.192; SN.I.132; Sn. vv. 1097, 1120, 1122.

[20] AN.V.19, Woodward, F.L. tr. **The Book of the Gradual Sayings** (*Aṅguttaranikāya*). Vol. V. p.133.

[21] Ps.II.293. John Ross Carter, op.cit., p.96.

[22] Ibid.

4.2.1 Significance of the Dhamma as natural law for the individual

According to Buddhism, human happiness, whether at the individual level or at the social level, depends on the inner purity and moral development of the individuals constituting a society. Buddhism places emphasis on the importance of self-reliance for the development of this inner purity. Early Buddhism, does not have the characteristics of a religion of grace. It repeatedly lays emphasis on individual effort. Even a Buddha can only be helpful as a good companion (*kalyāṇamitta*) and a guide having a beneficial influence. As the Buddha says: "You need to make an effort yourselves, for the Tathāgata only shows you the way,"[23] and also insists: "Therefore, Ānanda, you should live as islands unto yourselves, being your own refuge, with no one else as your refuge, with the Dhamma as an island, with the Dhamma as your refuge, with no other refuge."[24] Another thing is that faith in Buddhism is meant only as a starting point, for the higher spiritual attainments are not totally dependent on faith. One's claim to have realised the ultimate goal of Buddhism can be a genuine claim only if one has realised it oneself, and independently of faith. It is due to this self-reliant approach of Buddhism that in its early stages it rejected all ritual with a mystical significance as superstition.[25]

Buddhism rejected the view that purity results from clinging to various vows and rituals (*sīlabbataparāmāsa*) having no connection with the transformation of a person's inner mental nature. Bathing in sacred rivers, keeping to rituals of fasting and adhering to various kinds of taboos in connection with food, going about naked, wearing one's hair in a particular way or dressing oneself in a specified manner, performing various sacrificial rites in the forest praying to superhuman deities, have no value at all if a person who performs all these rituals and keeps all these vows has not eliminated the greed and ill-will in his or her heart and not cultivated a compassionate mind. The Buddha said:

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[23] Dhp.V. 276.

[24] DN.II.100, Walshe, Maurice. tr., **The Long Discourses of the Buddha** (*Dīghanikāya*), p.245.

[25] EB.Vol. I. p.161.

"It is in this way, bhikkhus, that a bhikkhu with a rightly directed view, with a rightly directed development of the path, pierces ignorance, arouses true knowledge and realizes nibbāna."[26]

The Buddhist precepts and the effects of their practice clearly establish this. The primary aim of the precepts is to control here and now the anti-social tendencies in beings and thus bring about individual and social welfare here and now, providing the ideal environment and paving the way for spiritual progress which gradually leads to freedom (*vimutti*).

Even in explaining the concept of kamma, the Dhamma lays emphasis on its effect here and now (*diṭṭhadhamma*). Thus, the Dhamma lays down that all human action should be performed in a way that conduces to the well-being of oneself and to the well-being of one's fellow beings.[27]

4.2.1.1 Significance of the Dhamma as moral natural law for the individual

The Buddha points out the aim of noble path (the Dhamma as moral natural law) as follows:

> The Blessed One is enlightened and he teaches the Dhamma for the sake of enlightenment. The Blessed One is tamed and he teaches the Dhamma for taming oneself. The Blessed One is at peace and he teaches the Dhamma for the sake of peace. The Blessed One has crossed over and he teaches the Dhamma for crossing over. The Blessed One has attained nibbāna and he teaches the Dhamma for attaining nibbāna.[28]

Buddhism offers the middle way, which has already been discussed in the preceding chapter, as a simple moderate lifestyle eschewing both extremes of self-deprivation and self-indulgence. Its

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[26] SN.V.50, Bhikkhu Bodhi, tr., **The Connected Discourses of the Buddha** (*Saṃyuttanikāya*), p.1555.

[27] MN.I.415.

[28] MN.I.235; DN.25. Ñāṇamoli and Bhikkhu Bodhi, tr., ed., **The Middle Length Discourses of the Buddha** (*Majjhimanikāya*), p.330.

important characteristics are contentment with basic human needs, and reduction of wants to a minimum, frugality and contentment.

The Dhamma as moral natural law at the basic level of virtue (*sīla*) deeply affects both individual and social life. It represents a course of training which one willingly undertakes, rather than a set of commandments willfully imposed by a God or Supreme Being, and is likely to have a positive bearing upon one's conscience and awareness.

The significance of the Dhamma as moral natural law in the form of virtue (*sīla*), concentration (*samādhi*) and wisdom (*paññā*) for the individual is more obvious than for the social and environment. Virtue (*sīla*) serves as the preliminary groundwork for the cultivation of higher virtues or mental development. Virtue (*sīla*) is the most important step on the spiritual path. Without morality, right concentration cannot be attained, and without right concentration wisdom cannot be fully perfected. Thus, morality not only enhances people's ethical values and fulfills their noble status a human beings, but it is crucial to their efforts towards the highest religious goal of nibbāna.

4.2.1.2 Significance of the Dhamma as non–moral natural law for the individual

The Dhamma as non-moral natural, and its transformation into the formulated technique of dependent origination, can be illustrated as follows:

Chart I

The Dhamma as non–moral natural law describes the arising and cessation of natural process	
Forward order or origination mode	Reverse order or cessation mode
avijjā *saṅkhārā* *viññāṇa* *nāmarūpa* *saḷāyatana* *phassa* *vedanā* *taṇhā* *upādāna* *bhava* *jāti* *jarāmaraṇa...soka parideva dukkha domanassa upāyāsa*	Cessation of *avijjā* Cessation of *saṅkhārā* Cessation of *viññāṇa* Cessation of *nāmarūpa* Cessation of *saḷāyatana* Cessation of *phassa* Cessation of *vedanā* Cessation of *taṇhā* Cessation of *upādāna* Cessation of *bhava* Cessation of *jāti* Cessation of *jarāmaraṇa ... soka parideva dukkha domanassa upāyāsa*
The cause of suffering (*dukkhasamudaya*).	The cessation of suffering (dukkhanirodha)

Chart II

This shows process of the Dhamma as natural law in leading to the cessation of suffering (dukkha):

The Dhamma as non–moral natural law	The Dhamma as moral natural law
Nirodha	Magga
Ignorance ceases ⇩ Volitional formations cease ⇩ Consciousness ceases ⇩ Name and form cease ⇩ Six sensory bases cease ⇩ Contact ceases ⇩ Feeling ceases ⇩ Craving ceases ⇩ Clinging ceases ⇩ Becoming ceases ⇩ Birth, death, sorrow, lamentation, pain, grief and despair cease ⇩	Right View ⇩ Right Thought ⇩ Right Speech ⇩ Right Action ⇩ Right Livelihood ⇩ Right Effort ⇩ Right Mindfulness ⇩ Right Concentration ⇩
The cessation of suffering	The cessation of suffering

Chart III

Faith / wise reflection / skilful conduct (*kusalasīla*). The latter refers to moral conduct based on skillful mental states, rather than unskillful ones, such as pride or wrong views.

Another process of individual liberation proceeds like this:

⇗ Knowledge of liberation

⇧ Dispassion

⇧ Disenchantment

⇧ Knowledge and insight into the way things are

⇧ Concentration

⇧ Happiness

⇧ Calmness

⇧ Rapture

⇧ Gladness

⇧ Absence of remorse

⇦ Faith[29] / skilful wholesome moral conduct[30] / intelligent reflection[31]

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[29] SN.II.31.

[30] AN.V.311. AN.V.1, the same passage occurs, except that it puts *nibbidā* and *virāga* together as one. Compare also AN.III.19.

[31] DN.III.228: *yoniso manasikāra*.

Now let us look at the sequence of the arising and cessation of individual suffering from start to finish.

Chart IV

⇗ Destruction of the outflows.
⇧ Liberation
⇧ Dispassion
⇧ Disenchantment
⇧ Knowledge and insight into things as they are
⇧ Concentration
⇧ Happiness
⇧ Calmness
⇧ Rapture
⇧ Gladness
⇳ Faith / skilful wholesome moral conduct/ intelligent reflection
⇧ Suffering
⇧ Birth
⇧ Becoming
⇧ Clinging
⇧ Craving
⇧ Feeling
⇧ Contact
⇧ Sense bases
⇧ Body and mind
⇧ Consciousness
⇧ Volitional impulses
⇖ Ignorance

The Buddha‘s answer is that a virtuous person is not remorseful, and does not regret his own behaviour. Lack of remorse or regret (*avippaṭisāra*) is one of the most significant fruits (*attha*) or benefits (*ānisaṃsa*) of wholesome virtues (*kusalāni sīlāni*).[32] The Buddha then proceeds to enumerate a series of further consequences of the absence of remorse or regret. These are, in order:

[32] AN.V.1-2.

Delight (*pāmujja*)
⇩
Joy (*pīti*)
⇩
Happiness (*sukha*)
⇩
Concentration (*samādhi*)
⇩
Knowledge and vision of things as they really are
(*yathābhūtañāṇadassana*),
⇩
Disenchantment and absence of lust (*nibbidāvirāga*)
⇩
Knowledge and insight of liberation (*vimuttiñāṇadassana*).[33]

This is said to be natural (*dhammatā*). Its naturalness is emphasised when it is said that a virtuous person need not make an effort (*na cetanāya karaṇīyaṃ*) to be non–remorseful or non–regretful.

4.2.2 Significance of the Dhamma as natural law for society

We will now analyse the social structure, or the origin of the social classes, as mentioned in the Puruṣa Śukta in the Ṛg Veda,[34] which divides society into four *varṇas* enumerated as *kṣatriyas*[35] (*khattiyas*) *brāhmaṇas*, [36] *vaiśyas* (*vessas*) and *śūdras* (*suddas*). [37] The *khattiyas* and

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[33] Ibid.

[34] Ṛg. Veda X. 6, 7.

[35] Yashpal, Dr. op. cit. p.266. It is noted that the *khattiyas* are placed at the top of the social in the Canon, and not the *brahmaṇas*, as was usual in the non-Buddhist Indian literature.

[36] Ibid. p.272. It is asserted by the Buddha that the ancient *ṛṣis* had divided the *brāhmaṇas* into five categories according to their standard of moral conduct, viz. the Brahmā-like (*Brahmasama*), the deva-like (*devasama),* the bounded one (*mariyado*), the breaker of bounds and filthy (*sambhinnamariyado*) and the *brāhmaṇa* outcaste (*Brāhmaṇacaṇḍāla*). The best of the *brāhmaṇas* was the one who became an ascetic after finishing his education and the worst was one who entered the householder's life, earned his livelihood by following any profession he chose, was neither particular about the class in matrimony, nor about the sex life.

[37] MN.II.147. It should be noted that this division of society into four classes or castes appears to have existed essentially in the Middle Lands and not outside. It was said that in the land of the Yoṇas and the Kambojas, there were only

the *brāhmaṇas* are looked upon as high births (*ukkhatthajāti*). Hence, birth plays a vital role in the constitution of the *varṇas* and gives the four classes their basic character.

Attempts are now made to explore the orthodox origin, and evaluation, of the classes claimed by the *brāhmaṇas*,[38] in that they held that they were Brahmā's legitimate sons, being born of his mouth, born of Brahmā, formed by Brahmā, and heirs to Brahmā.[39] And Brahmā was claimed as their kinsman, whilst other births were held to be inferior, menials, black, and born of their kinsman's feet.[40] In addition, the *brāhmaṇas* were considered to be the best of the four classes, for only the *brāhmaṇas* formed the best class (*seṭṭho vaṇṇo*, all other classes being low. Only the *brāhmaṇas* formed the fair class (*sukko vaṇṇo*); other classes were dark (*kaṇhā*). Only the *brāhmaṇas* were pure (*sujjhanti*), the others not."[41]

However, the Brāhmaṇic version of the origin of the four was not accepted by the Buddha, who pointed out that *brāhmaṇa* children were born in the same way that other children were born.[42] The *brāhmaṇic* version was then replaced by a Buddhist version. Sāriputta, one of the two most important disciples of the Buddha, is regarded as Buddha's own son, born of his mouth, born of the Dhamma, formed by

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two *vaṇṇas*, the masters (*ayya*) and the slaves (*dāsa*) and that the master could become a slave, the slave a master.

[38] Ibid. p.226. Some qualifications for a good *brāhmaṇa*. He had to be well-born on both sides of his parents, pure in descent as far back as seven generations, unchallenged and without reproach in point of birth. He was expected to be given to study (*ajjhayaka*), one who knew the hymns by heart (*mantadharo*), a past master in the three Vedas (*tinnaṃ vedanaṃ paragu*), versed in the indexes (*sanighandu*), together with rituals (*ketubhanam*), the treatise on phonology (*sakkharappabhedanaṃ*) and the legendary sayings as fifth (*itihāsapañcamam*). He should be a man learned in idioms and metre (*padako*) and grammar (*veyyākaraṇa*), and be one perfect in the science of the world speculations and the signs of a great man.

[39] DN.III.81; MN.II.84, 87, 148, 150, 154-155: *brahmuno puttā orasā mukhato jātā brahmajā brahmanimmitā brahmadāyādā*.

[40] MN.I.334; II.177; DN.I.90; III.81; SN.IV.117: *ibbha kiṇhā bandhupādāpacca*.

[41] DN.III. 81; MN.II. 84, 87, 148, 150, 154-155.

[42] DN.III. 81-82.

the Dhamma and heir to the Dhamma.[43] The Buddha's good disciples are often called Buddha's legitimate sons (*putto Buddhassa orasā*).[44]

4.2.2.1 Significance of the Dhamma as moral natural law for society

But the Dhamma in the sense of "dependent origination" and "righteousness" figures very prominently in the Buddha's explanation of social institution. The Aggañña sutta[45] deals mainly with the rejection of the Brāhmaṇical theory of the four-fold class system, and resorts to the theory of causal dependence in order to explain the evolution of society and social institutions. In the Buddhist explanation of the evolution of society and the responsibilities of its members, the Buddha provides a different account of the origin of the earth. After the earth had re-formed, after a period of dissolution, beings who managed to move to other worlds while the earth was being destroyed returned to earth. Vegetation of first low, and then higher, grades evolved. This brought forth an abundance of cereals, and agricultural life emerged. Dependent upon this agriculture were the human families, who formed into households. As households developed, food began to be stored and land divided between the individual owners. The setting up of boundaries gave rise to property rights. Anyone who was too lazy to develop his or her property, and of greedy disposition, encroached upon another's property. The others would accuse him or her of trespass; thus, strife and injustice entered the life of humans. As the situation deteriorated, people got together and selected as a ruler—someone from among themselves who could command the respect of the others. The selection was based upon the people's consent. Hence, the first ruler was named Mahāsammata.[46] He was to maintain justice, and others provided him with all the support necessary. The king was referred to as the lord of the "field" (*khetta*), with the result that the term *khattiya* (*kṣatriya*) came into being to denote

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[43] MN.III. 29; SN. II. 221.

[44] SN.III. 83.

[45] DN.III.80.

[46] Ibid. Literally, approved by the great population. The first king came to be appointed in order to enforce a moral standard (Dhamma) and his selection itself was done on the basis of his moral standing. Although selected by the majority, he was expected to rule the country in an impartial way, that is, according to the Dhamma, where suffering for oneself as well as others is to be avoided. "He pleases others by Dhamma, hence he is a king" *(dhammena pararañjetī ti kho...rājā*).

a ruler. Certain other humans, distressed at growing social crimes and evils, retired into the forest to live a life of isolation and devoted themselves to meditation and other religious rituals. These were the *brāhmaṇas*, or priests. Most others spent their lives in households becoming proficient in some productive vocation. They became the *vessa* (*vaiśya*), the ordinary citizens, with the remaining members of the society engaging themselves in minor or low vocations, such as serving others and came to be known as the *sudda* (*śūdra*).[47]

Of the righteous king, the Buddha speaks as follows:

> Therein, monk, the rajah, the wheel roller, the Dhamma man, the Dhamma rajah, relies just on Dhamma, honours Dhamma, reveres Dhamma, esteems Dhamma; with Dhamma as his standard, with Dhamma as his banner, with Dhamma as his mandate, he sets a Dhamma watch and bar and ward for folks within his realm…for warrior and camp follower for Brahman and householder, for town and country folk, for recluse and for godly men, for beast and bird alike.[48]

Meanwhile, other discourses such as Vasalasutta[49] and Vāseṭṭhasutta[50] frankly reject the Brāhmaṇic claims to superiority on the basis of birth. The social status of a person is not to be determined by his birth in a particular caste, having certain specific functions or duties (*svadharma*), but on the basis of his actions (*kamma*), which are in turn evaluated on the basis of the moral natural law (*dhamma*).

The Cakkavattisīhanādasutta clearly deliberates that poverty (*daliddiya*) is the cause of immorality and crimes such as theft, falsehood, violence, hatred, cruelty, etc. Kings in ancient times, like governmental bodies today, tried to suppress crime through punishment. The

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[47] DN.III.84-96.

[48] AN.III.149, Hare, E.M. tr. **The Book of the Gradual Sayings** (*Aṅguttaranikāya*). Vol. III. London: PTS, 1995. p.244. It is noted that this term Dhamma here is used to give any meaning other than "righteousness" in the above context and the "righteousness" is what has been explained above on the basis of the earliest Buddhist literature.

[49] Sn.21.

[50] Ibid.115.

Kūṭadantasutta[51] explains this method employed, but the Buddha suggests that, in order to eradicate crime, the economic condition of the people should be improved: grain and other facilities for agriculture should be provided for farmers and cultivators, capital for traders and businesspeople, and adequate wages for employees. When provided with opportunities for earning a sufficient income, people will be contented, will have no fear or anxiety, and consequently the country will be peaceful and free from crime.

In the Buddhist view, society is subject to three natural disabilities or diseases (*ābādha*): desire (*icchā*), hunger (*anāsana*), and decay (*jarā*).[52]

> 1. Desire is said to be the most potent human cause of social ill. For the so-called scientific sociologist, this is merely a psychological factor having no relevance to the evolution and function of society. For the Buddha, however, the effect of greed on the social life of human beings is devastating. It is the disease of mind (*cetasikaroga*). [53]
>
> 2. Hunger is a physical or an economic disease that can be alleviated, not by allowing the first kind of disease to prevail, that is, by permitting the overproduction of food items prompted by greed on the part of the producer, but by following a middle path of catering to the needs of a restrained society. The Buddha said: "Hunger is the worst disease."[54]
>
> 3. *Jarā* is an existential disease, that is, one that is part of existence, which is subject to arising and ceasing. Social institutions are not immune to decay and destruction. Continued restructuring or organizing of social institutions, taking into consideration the winds of change, provides for a healthy society.[55]

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[51] DN.I.101.

[52] DN.I. 3, 75.

[53] AN.II.143.

[54] Dhp.V.203. Buddharakkhita, Acharya. tr., **The Dhammapada: The Buddha's Path of Wisdom,** p.54.

[55] David J. Kalupahana, Op. cit. p.115.

The best account of this concept of society based on mutual human interest is found in the Sīgalovādasuttanta.

The Buddhist conception of society is not only confined to humans. In a profound ethical sense, it includes all living beings (*sabbabhūta*), animals as well as lower creatures. "As a mother who protects her own child as her own life, so should one develop thoughts toward all living beings."[56]

The Dhammapada, one of the principal texts presenting Buddhist moral ideas, maintains: "One should not abandon the well-being of oneself for the well-being of another."[57] This verse is clearly expounded upon in the Sallekhasutta, in which the Buddha, in addressing Cunda, says:

> Cunda, that one who is himself sinking in the mud should pull out another who is sinking in the mud is impossible; that one who is not himself sinking in the mud should pull out another who is sinking in the mud is possible. That one who is himself untamed, undisciplined, (with defilements) unextinguished, should tame another, discipline him, and help extinguish (his defilements) is impossible; that one who is himself tamed, disciplined, (with defilements) extinguished, should tame another, discipline him, and help extinguish (his defilements) is possible.[58]

While the Buddha's attainment of enlightenment and freedom constituted a personal experience and achievement, he did not remain docile and idle for the rest of his life. He worked assiduously for the welfare and happiness of all beings, through compassion for the entire world (*sabbalokānukampaka*). As such, he earned titles such as "the one of great compassion" (*mahākāruṇiko*), "the physician for the entire world" (*sabbalokatikicchako*), and "the incomparable surgeon"

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[56] Sn.149.

[57] Dhp.V.166, Buddharakkhita, Acharya. tr., **The Dhammapada: The Buddha's Path of Wisdom,** p.48.

[58] MN.I.45. Ñāṇamoli and Bhikkhu Bodhi, tr., ed., **The Middle Length Discourses of the Buddha** (*Majjhimanikāya*), p.130.

(*sallakatto anuttaro*). As we know, after attaining full enlightenment, the Buddha did not at all spend the time confining himself to self, but wandered from town to town and village to village through the highways and byways of Jambudīpa. He moved about more for the commoner than for the aristocrat. Kings and princes came to him for guidance and instruction, but the Buddha went to the poor, lowly lot to help them. He knew the people, from the lowliest walks of life to the highest, and was well aware of the political, social and economic conditions of society during his time. In so doing, he did not restrict his sermons and discussions of the Dhamma to obscure philosophy and advanced psychology. He was a practical master of infinite compassion and wisdom, and was mindful of the social and economic ills of the people, and saw that they lived without very much unhappiness. The Buddha's own life of dedication represented one of exemplary social service, with his way of formulating the moral life and its benefits; there was no need for his disciples to wait until they attained freedom to work for the welfare of others.

There are four basic physical requisites (*catupaccaya*)[59] for progress on the path to purity and freedom. Although the Buddha did not lay much importance to material progress in the modern sense, nor to mundane welfare, he did not entirely ignore it, because it is the basis for man's mental or spiritual progress. So the Dhamma is also concerned with certain aspects of material conditions and social welfare.

From the above exploration, the solidarity of society, the stability of economic welfare and the strength of the governmental setting are considered as pre-requisites for human happiness. But progress was an empty victory if only material, devoid of a spiritual and moral foundation. While encouraging material progress, Buddhism always lays great stress on the development of moral and spiritual progress for a happy, peaceful and contented society, with holistic and sustainable development and full integration.

[59] Clothes, food, a lodging and medicine.

The next set of socially significant values to be cultivated by a Buddhist goes by the name of the *saṅgahavatthu*, [60] which may be regarded as the behavioural expression of the *brahmavihāra*.[61] The latter stress the conscious cultivation of love and equanimity or impartiality at the mental or abstract level. The former emphasise their cultivation at the behavioural level. The Buddha maintains that there is a mutual process of feed-back and interaction between the purely inner mental, or thought plane, and the overt, behavioural, or action, plane.

The Dhamma as moral natural law at the basic level of *sīla* deeply affects one's personal and social life. On the social level, *sīla* contributes to harmonious and peaceful coexistence among community members and consequently helps to promote social growth and development. In a society where morality prevails and members are conscious of their roles, there will be general security, mutual trust, and close cooperation, all of which in turn lead to greater progress and prosperity. Without morality, there will be corruption and disturbance, and all members of society are adversely affected. Most of the problems that society experiences today are connected, directly or indirectly, with a lack of good morality.

4.2.2.2 Significance of the Dhamma as non–moral natural law for society

Let us examine the Dhamma as natural law in terms of dependent origination, which is normally intended only for the individual. In its fullest account in the Mahānidānasutta, the principle of conditionality is elaborated upon both on an individual basis, as it occurs within the mind, and also in the social context, as it occurs in human relationships. It describes the arising of social ills along the same lines as the arising of personal suffering, but from craving onwards it diverges into a description of external events:

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[60] DN.III.152, 232; AN.II.32, 248; AN.IV.218, 363. The bases of benevolence are comprised of four items; *dāna* (giving), *piyavācā* (good speech), *atthacariyā* (conduct that conduces to the well-being of others), and *sāmānattatā* (equal respect for all, or non-discriminatory behaviour).

[61] AN.III.226; Dhs.262; Vism.320. *Mettā* (loving-kindness), *karuṇā* (compassion), *muditā* (sympathetic joy), *upekkhā* (equanimity).

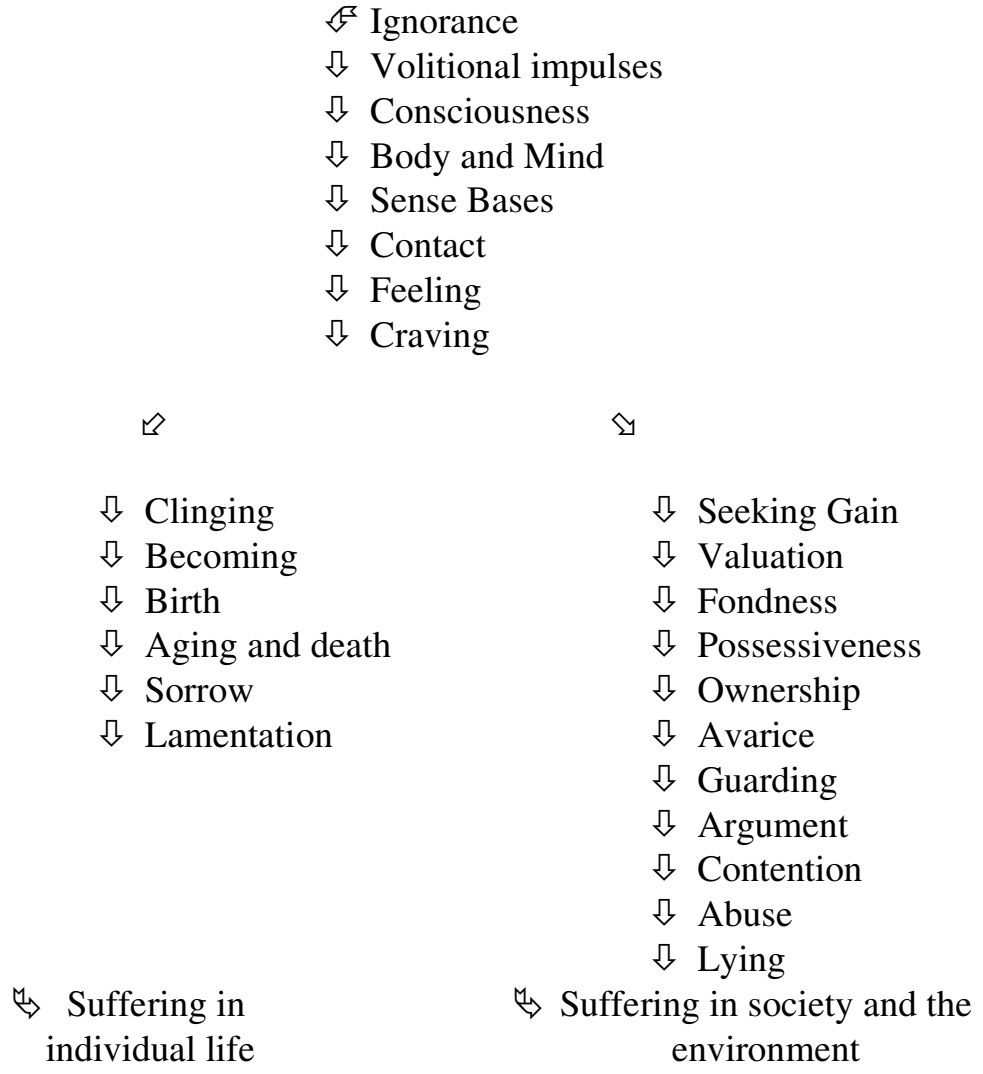
> And so, Ānanda, feeling conditions craving, craving conditions seeking, seeking conditions acquisition, acquisition conditions decision-making, decision-making conditions lustful desire, lustful desire conditions attachment, attachment conditions appropriation, appropriation conditions avarice, avarice conditions the guarding of possessions, and because of the guarding of possessions there arise the taking up of stick and sword, quarrels, disputes, arguments, strife, abuse, lying and other evil unskilled states.[62]

Below is a chart illustrating a comparison of Dependent Origination working at the individual and social levels.

[62] DN.II.58, Walshe, Maurice. tr., **The Long Discourses of the Buddha** (*Dīghanikāya*), p.224. These nine conditions occur elsewhere under the title of the nine conditions rooted in craving (*taṇhāmūlakadhammā*), such as at DN.III.289; AN. IV.400; Vibh.390.

Chart V.

Dependent Origination



The Aggaññasutta, the Cakkavattisīhanādasutta and the Vāseṭṭhasutta[63] provide working models of the principle of dependent origination at the social level.[64] They deal mainly with the development of events in human society, such as the arising of class structures, as a result of the interaction between people and the environment around them. These phenomena are a result of an interaction between three

[63] Sn.594–659.

[64] P.A. Payutto, Op. cit. p.73.

levels: human beings, human society and the whole of the natural environment.[65]

The aim of Aggañña sutta[66] is to enumerate the origin of the class system as a matter of natural development based on related causes, not as commandments from an Almighty God. All people are equally capable of good and evil behaviour, and all reap results according to the natural law; it follows that all beings are equally capable of attaining enlightenment if they practise the Dhamma correctly. This will be illustrated in the following chart:

Chart VI

Social evolution in the Aggañña sutta

- People become lazy and begin to hoard rice
- ⇩ This becomes the preferred practice
- ⇩ People begin to hoard private supplies
- ⇩ Unscrupulous people steal others' shares to enlarge their own
- ⇩ Censure, lying, punishment, and contention result
- ⇩ Responsible people, seeing the need for authority, appoint a king
- ⇩ Some of the people, being disillusioned with society, decide to do away with evil actions and cultivate meditation practice.
- ⇩ Some of these live close to the city and study and write scriptures; they become the *brāhmaṇas*.
- ⇩ Those who have families continue to earn their living by various professions; they become the artisans.
- ⇩ The remaining people, being vulgar and inept, become the plebeians.
- From among these four groups a smaller group breaks off, renouncing tradition and household life and take to the homeless life. These become the *samaṇas*.

But the purpose of Cakkavattisīhanāda sutta is to account for the arising of crime and social ills within a society, in accordance with the following sequence of cause and effect:

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[65] Ibid.

[66] DN.III.80–98.

Chart VII

Cakkavattisīhanādasutta[67]

- The ruler
- Poverty
- Theft
- The use of weapons
- Killing and maiming
- Lying
- Slander
- Sexual infidelity
- Abusive and frivolous speech
- Greed and hatred
- Wrong view
- Lust for what is wrong, greed, wrong teachings, disrespect for parents, elders and religious persons, disrespect for position
- Longevity and appearance.

Payutto notes that, in modern times, attempts to resolve social ills are rarely attuned to their genuine causes. They seek to provide stopgap solutions, such as establishing counselling for drug addicts and delinquents, but their attempt is not made to delve deeply into the social conditions which affect the emergence of such problems in the first place, such as consumerism and the mass media. In this respect, the Buddhist teaching of dependent origination on the social scale offers an invaluable precedent for intelligent and truly effective social analysis and reform.[68]

The Dhamma, as non–moral natural law, in the form of both the *paṭiccasamuppāda* and the *tilakkhaṇa*, is intended for all sentient beings and society as whole.

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[67] DN.I.58–79.

[68] Ibid. pp.74-5.

4.2.3 The significance of the Dhamma as natural law for the environment

Let us, then, consider the natural environment as the main factor leading to individual happiness and social welfare. The environment is praised by the Buddha in many suttas. Buddhism integrates concern for environmental welfare with that of individual humans and society, by recognising that both the individual human and society are essentially dependent upon, and interconnected with, their environments. Humans should therefore pay their respect to the natural environment. Although Buddhists believe humans have a unique opportunity to attain enlightenment, and that other creatures do not, they have never believed humanity is superior to the rest of the natural world.[69]

4.2.3.1 The significance of the Dhamma as moral natural law for the environment

Let us consider the significance of the Dhamma for the environment. There are, firstly, two aspects of the Dhamma that should be clearly understood in order a correct attitude towards environment:

> 1. *Chanda* (yearning) implies that culture is determined by human interest resulting from perceiving the world as being dependently arisen. The desire for well-being based on wisdom is thus part of the process of solving problems. The desire for true well-being is called *dhammacchanda* or *kusalacchanda*, or, in short, simply *chanda*.
>
> 2. *Taṇhā* (craving) implies that culture is determined by greed as a by-product of possessive individualism, the desire for pleasure-objects, and is based on ignorance. [70]

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[69] Martine Batchelor and Kerry Brown, ed. **Buddhism and Ecology,** (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass Publishers Private Limited), p.12.

[70] P.A. Payutto, **Buddhist Economics,** op.cit., p.34. The objective of *chanda* is *dhamma* or *kusaladhamma*, truth and goodness which must be obtained through effort, and so *chanda* leads to action, as opposed to *taṇhā*, which leads to seeking. *Chanda* arises from intelligent reflection (*yoniso-manasikāra*), as opposed to *taṇhā*, which is part of the habitual stream of ignorant reactions.

The Buddhist conception of society is not confined to humans alone. In a profound ethical sense, it includes all living beings (*sabbabhūta*), animals as well as lower creatures; and, just as a mother protects her own child as her own life, so should one develop thoughts toward all living beings.[71]

While the fundamental level of the Dhamma as moral natural law (*sīla*) serves as a springboard for ultimate freedom, it is not without immediate benefits. A person of a noble body of virtues (*ariyasīlakkhandha*) is said to enjoy unblemished subjective happiness. Such person does not experience fear (*uttāsa*) and trepidation (*chambhitattā*) in this life and has no fear of death in a future life (*samparāyika*). Ever-refraining from taking life is said to provide freedom from fear (*abhaya*), from hatred (*avera*), and from injury (*avyāpajjhā*) to countless beings. Hence, these are called the supreme charities (*mahādāna*).

Moral respect for nature is vividly revealed in an exchange between the Buddha and his disciple Mahāmoggallāna when the monks' custom of receiving their daily food as charity from local people was undermined by famine. The Buddha did not allow Mahāmoggallāna to turn the earth over because of the disturbance it would cause to the creatures living there.[72] Elsewhere the Buddha, in the Kūṭadantasutta, compares the kind of religious ceremony he approves of with those common at his time:

> In this sacrifice, Brahmin, no bulls were slain, no goats or sheep, no cocks and pigs, nor were various living beings subjected to slaughter, nor were trees cut down for sacrificial posts, nor were grasses mown for the sacrificial grass, and those who are called slaves or servants or workmen did not perform their tasks for fear of blows or threats, weeping and in tears. But those who wanted to do something did it, those who did not wish to, did not; they did what they wanted to do,

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[71] Sn.149,

[72] Vin.III.7.

and not what they did not want to do. The sacrifice was carried out with ghee, butter, curds, honey, and molasses.[73]

The natural environment, uninhabited by humanity, was also respected as the ideal place for cultivating spiritual insights.

Before his enlightenment, the Buddha, after leaving his two former teachers, Ālāra Kālāma and Uddaka Rāmaputta, whilst wandering around Magadha, arrived at a village called Uruvelā. There he found a pleasurable piece of land, a pleasant forest grove (*vanasaṇḍa*), with a river of clear water flowing by and surrounded by village where he could go out for alms (*gocaragāma*). He attained enlightenment and freedom here.

Retirement to the forest had two specific goals:

1. Therapeutic

2. Aesthetic[74]

As an example of the therapeutic value of retiring to the forest, mention may be made of a discourse delivered to a monk named Girimānanda. The Buddha was informed that he was seriously ill. Realising that mental ill-health can often degenerate into physical ailment, the Buddha advised Girimānanda to retire to a forest (*araññā*) or seek the shade of a tree (*rukkhamūla*) in order to develop a perception of impermanence, soullessness, impurity, ill effect, renunciation, passionlessness, cessation, non-delight, the impermanence of all dispositions, and the awareness of breathing in and out (*ānāpānasati*). These ten forms of awareness pertain to the nature of the world as well as to oneself.[75]

The forest was the ideal environment for the development of such awareness, not only because of its solitude, removed from the

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[73] Maurice Walshe, Tr., **The Long Discourses of the Buddha** (*Dīghanikāya*) (Boston: Wisdom Publications, 1988), p.138.

[74] David J. Kalupahana, Op. cit. p.139.

[75] Ibid.

humdrum of urban life, the so-called world, but also because it certainly exhibited the characteristics of becoming, such as impermanence and non-substantiality.

The Dhamma as the moral natural law of humanity not only influences the psychological make-up of the people, but also the biological and physical environment of the area as well. Thus the five laws illustrate that humanity and the natural environment are bound together in reciprocal relationship, with changes in one necessarily causing changes in the other.[76]

The Cakkavattisīhanādasutta[77] predicts the future course of events when human morals degenerate further. Gradually, people's health will deteriorate so much that life expectancy will decrease until the average human life-span is reduced to ten years and the marriageable age to five years. At that time, all delicacies such as ghee, butter, honey, etc. will have disappeared from the earth; what is considered the poorest, coarsest food today will become a delicacy.

Humanity will become demoralised[78]

1. Famine is the natural outcome of greed

2. Widespread violence is the ultimate outcome of hatred

3. Epidemics are the inevitable result of ignorance.

When humanity realises that the large-scale devastation has taken place as a result of its moral degeneration, a change of heart then takes place among the few surviving human beings. As morality is renewed, conditions improve over a long period , until humanity starts once more to enjoy gradually increasing prosperity and longer lifespans. The world, including nature and humanity, stands or falls with the type of moral force at work. If immorality grips society, people and nature deteriorate; if morality reigns, the quality of human life and nature improves. Thus

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[76] Ibid.21.
[77] DN.III.71.
[78] Sv.III.854.

greed, hatred and delusion produce pollution within and without. Generosity, compassion and wisdom produce purity within and without.[79] This is one reason the Buddha has pronounced that the world is led by the mind (*cittena niyati loko*).[80]

According to a discourse in the Aṅguttaranikāya, when lust, greed and wrong values grip the heart of humanity and immorality, *adhamma* becomes widespread in society, and rain ceases to fall at the right time. When timely rain does not fall, crops fall victim to pests and plant diseases. Through a lack of nourishing food, the mortality rate increases.[81]

The practice of compassion and non-violence toward all living beings and the natural environment is meaningful. We need to recognize that nature and the natural environment belongs to all living beings, not merely humans. It is not totally right for human beings to assume that nature or the bounties of the natural environment are primarily for their consumption and pleasure. The idea that whatever there is in the natural environment is for the use of human beings arises as a result of the sharp distinction we make between humanity and nature, or our inability to perceive a close relationship between them. It is said that we should not even break the branch of a tree that has given us shelter.[82]

The construction of parks and pleasure groves for public use is considered a great merit that gains much spiritual freedom.[83] Sakka, the lord of gods, is said to have reached this position as a result of service in the form of the construction of parks, pleasure groves, ponds, wells and roads.[84] The Buddha's constant advice to his disciples was to resort to natural habitats, such as the forests. There, undisturbed by human activity, they could devote themselves to meditation.[85]

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[79] Ibid.
[80] SN.I.39.
[81] AN.I.160.
[82] Pv. v. 260 (II 9 3).
[83] SN.I.33.
[84] J. I.199f.
[85] MN.I.118; SN.IV.373.

The Buddha considered morally and spiritually motivated beings to be a necessary component of society. as they are the most qualified to give moral direction to society. Although the Buddha and the Buddhist sages renounced the material bonds with society, they did not abandon society. The perfected person is expected to live in society, like the lotus flower which grows in the muddy water and rises and stays untainted above the level of the muddy water.

People need to resolve their inner conflicts in order to live in peace with society. When an increasingly large number of people having no mental composure, and no moral discipline, take up positions that require the fulfillment of certain social roles, they affect the community at large.

4.2.3.2 The significance of the Dhamma as non–moral natural law for the environment

Sensory impingements (*phassa*) conditioning feelings depend on social and environmental factors. Dependent on feeling, craving arises, resulting in the variations of human behaviour towards both other people and the world around them, within the restrictions specified by social or natural circumstances. The results of those actions further affect all other factors. Human beings are not the only factors in social or environmental development, and the natural environment is not the only determinant in conditioning human beings or society. Rather they all constitute an inter–dependent process of relationship.

Several suttas from the Pali canon show that early Buddhism laid an emphasis on the close relationship between human morality and the natural environment. In later commentaries, we also encounter the five natural laws (*pañcaniyāmadhamma*) enumerated above, viz. physical law (*utuniyāma*), biological law (*bījaniyāma*), psychological laws (*cittaniyāma*), moral law (*kammaniyāma*), and dhammic law (*dhammaniyāma*). [86] This means that the physical elements of earth, water, air, fire, and the conditions of any given area, affect the growth and development of its biological component, flora and fauna. This, in turn, influences the thought-patterns of the people who interact with such

[86] Sv. 845.

flora and fauna. These thought-patterns determine moral standards. The opposite process of interaction is also possible.[87]

The Dhamma as natural law at the human level should be transformed from over-consumerism or materialism into moderation and contentment. At the social level, competition should be transformed into co-operation. At the natural environmental level, the subjugation of nature should be transformed into harmony and sympathy with nature.

Ultimately, each and every individual has to order their life on Dhammic principles, exercise self-control in sensory pleasures, discharge their duties in their various social roles, and behave with wisdom and self-awareness in all activities. It is only when each person adopts a simple moderate lifestyle that humanity as a whole will stop polluting the environment. This is the way of overcoming eco-crisis and the problem of alienation. With such a lifestyle, humanity will adopt a non-exploitative, non-aggressive, caring attitude towards nature. We can then live in harmony with nature, using its resources for the satisfaction of our basic needs leading us to spiritual uplift. Just as the bee manufactures honey out of nectar without harming the flower, so should we be able to find happiness and fulfillment in life without harming and ruining the natural world in which we live, and reach the end of dukkha which is the final goal of life.

[87] Martine Batchelor and Kerry Brown, ed., op. cit. pp.20-1.

Chapter V

Conclusion and Suggestions

5.1 Results of study and conclusion

We have seen that the Dhamma as natural law, which the Theravāda takes as the main concept of its teachings, is clearly to be found in early Buddhism. The concepts of *dhammaṭṭhitatā* and *dhammaniyāmatā* are found in the Nikāyas, just as the five natural laws (*niyāmas*) are found in the commentaries.

In this thesis, our discussion has been confined to the five Nikāyas, their respective commentaries, the Vimuttimagga and Visuddhimagga. Neither the Vinayapiṭaka nor the Abhidhammapiṭaka have been consulted.

Buddhism does not consider material welfare as an end in itself; it is only a means to a higher and nobler end. The Dhamma is concerned with the every aspect of life as a whole, not only its ethical, spiritual, and philosophical aspects, but also all its social, economic and political aspects.

The Buddha's teachings did not pay attention to theoretical intricacies that contemporary philosophers with an academic interest might want to inquire into. Such interest was secondary to the achievement of practical results. As a consequence, there is no attempt to pursue philosophical issues with the strictness, rigour and argumentative zeal which is the main characteristic of the Western philosophical tradition.

Moreover, we have seen that the four noble truths are Dhamma; the noble way is Dhamma; morality or virtue (*sīla*), concentration (*samādhi*), and wisdom (*paññā*) are Dhamma; the *paṭiccasamuppāda* is Dhamma; the *khandhas*, *āyatanas*, and *dhātus* are Dhamma; the *tilakkhaṇa* are Dhamma. These terms representing Dhamma stem from

the mouth of the Buddha, the "One who has become Dhamma." The way to understand and realize the Dhamma is to study the general meaning of that Dhamma, understanding, practising, and at last achieving the specific meaning of Dhamma for oneself.

The major use of the term Dhamma in the early discourses is that of Dhamma as natural law, both moral and non-moral. The Buddha's teachings embodying those two conceptions of Dhamma also came to be spoken of as the Dhamma. It is that Dhamma that is said to be well-proclaimed (*svākkhāta*), empirical (*sandiṭṭhiko*), not confined to any particular time (*akāliko*), verifiable (*ehipassiko*), practical (*opanayiko*) and to be understood at first hand by the wise (*paccattaṃ veditabbo viññūhi*).

The central theme of this thesis is contained in the third chapter, which commences with a discussion of the Dhamma as natural law and then proceeds to a more detailed description of the Dhamma as both a non-moral and moral natural law.

We have found that right view is the main factor of the Dhamma as moral law, and provides the link between the mundane and supramundane, between the Dhamma as non-moral natural law and the Dhamma as moral natural law, which leads to the cessation of the whole mass of dukkha. The goal of the Dhamma is to realise that all things are unfit to be grasped at or clung to. This is what is meant by understanding both dukkha and the cessation of dukkha.

It is not fitting that there should be clinging to anything in the world. When one realises this, one attains to the Dhamma, because that is the realisation of the selfless nature of things. When we understand that things are without self, there is no conceit, no "I am someone" or "This is mine". When we penetrate into the true nature of things, we cannot find a self or an "I am" or a "This is mine". When this realisation arises in us, we then realise the Dhamma.

Our findings reveal that the Dhamma as natural law places stress, not only on the individual, but also on society and the environment, through the *paṭiccasamuppāda* as well as the *tilakkhaṇa*. Whilst we should not neglect the roles played by society and the

environment, we should realise that the most important role is played by the individual, who affects the other two greatly, and quite often disastrously.

5.2 Suggestions for further research

Many other aspects of the Dhamma still await thorough research. These include:

- A critical study of practising the Dhamma in modern society

- A comparative study of the concepts of the Dhamma and kamma in Theravāda Buddhism.

- A study of relationship pertaining between dukkha and the Dhamma in early Buddhism.

My utmost wish is that this thesis might stimulate and encourage its readers into pursuing such further aspects of the Dhamma.

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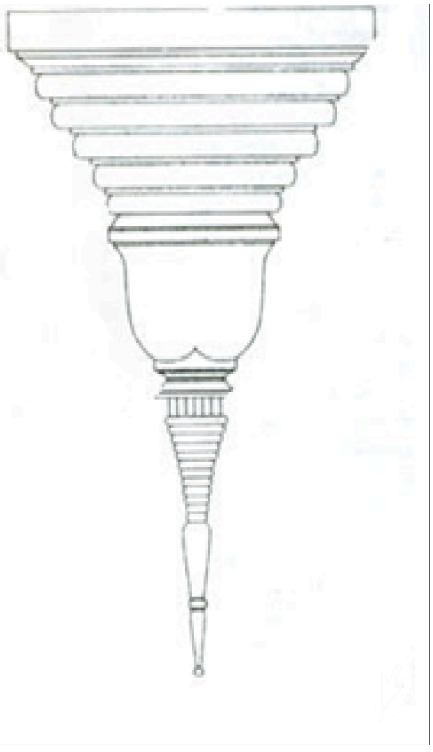
Appendix
The Interrelation of the Dhamma as Natural Law

The eightfold path is arranged into the three training groups: morality, concentration and wisdom:

The noble eightfold path	The threefold training
1. Right understanding	
2. Right thought	Wisdom group
3. Right speech	
4. Right action	Morality group
5. Right livelihood	
6. Right effort	
7. Right mindfulness	Concentration group
8. Right concentration	

A comparison between the Dhamma as natural law and the cetiya:

Moral	The Dhamma as Natural Law	Non –Moral
Vimutti the conclusion of the way (Sammāvimutti) Relating to the world above the ordinary (Lokuttara) Right understanding Right thought Relating to the ordinary world (Lokiya) The Middle Way (Aṭṭhaṅgikamagga) or the Threefold Training (Tisikkhā) Virtue (Sīla) The beginning of the way	Nibbāna the Absolute Truth 	The reverse order, or cessation mode, of the Paṭiccasamuppāda The cessation of suffering (Dukkhanirodha) Three characteristic signs (Tilakkhaṇa) The forward order, or origination mode, of the Paṭiccasamuppāda The cause of suffering (Dukkhasamudaya)

The whole process	*Paṭiccasamuppāda*	*Samudaya & Nirodha*
Destruction of the outflows. Liberation Dispassion Disenchantment Knowledge and insight of things as they are Concentration Happiness Calmness Rapture Gladness Faith / skilful Wholesome Moral Conduct/ Intelligent reflection		Cessation of *jāti* Cessation of *jarāmaraṇa soka parideva dukkha domanassa upāyāsa* Cessation of *bhava* Cessation of *upādāna* Cessation of *taṇhā* Cessation of *vedanā* Cessation of *phassa* Cessation of *saḷāyatana* Cessation of *nāmarūpa* Cessation of *viññāṇa* Cessation of *saṅkhārā* Cessation of *avijjā*
Suffering Decay & Death Birth Becoming Clinging Craving Feeling Contact Sense bases Body and mind Consciousness Volitional impulses Ignorance		Arising of *jarāmaraṇa soka parideva dukkha domanassa upāyāsa* Arising of *jāti* Arising of *bhava* Arising of *upādāna* Arising of *taṇhā* Arising of *vedanā* Arising of *phassa* Arising of *saḷāyatana* Arising of *nāmarūpa* Arising of *viññāṇa* Arising of *saṅkhārā* The arising of *avijjā*

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