



A STUDY OF VICIKICCHĀ IN THERAVĀDA BUDDHISM

Venerable Acchariya

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

Graduate School
Mahachulalongkornrajavidyalaya University
C.E. 2017



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The Graduate School Mahāchulalongkornrajavidyalaya University has approved this thesis of “A Study of Vicikicchā in Theravāda Buddhism” in partial fulfillment of the requirement of the Master of Arts in Buddhist Studies.

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Abstract

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

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

The way to dispel them is that one should have faith (Saddhā) and practice analytical reflection (Yonisomanasikāra). Practical ways to destroy doubt are concentration or mindfulness of the four elements, (Catudhātuvavatthāna), contemplation of mind-objects and mindfulness in breathing (Ānapānasati). To get rid of Vicikicchā one should purify morality (Sila), practice contemplation (Jhāna) and develop insight (Vipassanā). When a person reaches a level of purity that transcends doubt (Kankhāvitarana), Vicikicchā would be cleared up, but liberation may not be achieved yet.

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

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Venerable Acchariya

List of Abbreviations

Primary Sources

AN	Anguttara Nikāya
ANa	Aṅ guttara Nikāya Aṭ ṭ akathā
DN	Digha Nikāya
MN	Majjhima Nikāya
SN	Samyutta Nikāya
Sn	Sutta Nipata
SD	Sutta Discovery
Ud	Udana

Another Abbreviations

Ed.	Edited by
e.g.	For example
etc.	Et cetera
ibid	Ibidem
p.	Page
trs.	Translated by
i.e.	That is so say
Vol.	Volume
Ven.	Venerable

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Chapter I

Introduction

1.1 Background and Significance of the Study

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

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

In Theravāda Buddhism Vicikicchā² is one of the obstacles that hinder oneself from progressing along the Path of Enlightenment. It is also regarded as an unwholesome mental factor and one of the unwholesome fetters. Vicikicchā is one of the five hindrances and is also included in the ten fetters to existence. It disappears absolute completely

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

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

and forever at Stream-entry. The term Vicikicchā does not mean doubt something. According to the Cetokhila Sutta (MN 16)³ it is explained that this term Vicikicchā means doubtful, uncertain, undecided and unconfident about the teacher, and thus his mind does not incline to ardour, devotion, perseverance and striving.

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

According to the explanation of Abhidhammā text⁵ the term Vicikicchā denotes being skeptical about the following kinds of doubts: doubts about the Buddha, Dhamma, Saṃgha and training; doubts about the past and future lives; doubt about kamma; and finally doubt about the Four Noble Truth⁶. Vicikicchā can be further categorized into one fetter among the Mohamula Cittas (consciousness rooted with ignorance) named Upekkhasahagatam Vicikicchā-sampyuttamekam (one consciousness, accompanied by indifference, and connected with skeptical doubt). For example, a person who is having doubts about kamma and rebirth. However, when the practitioner attains the stage of

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

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

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

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

sotāpanna, the stream-winner, one of the lowest among 8 nobles' disciples.⁷ One would be able to completely remove the three fetters⁸. Thus, one would shut the doors to lower realms and would be destined to reborn into a happy state and within 7 lives would attain the highest bliss.⁹

In the Sabbasava Sutta (MN 2)¹⁰ the Buddha mentioned 16 types of doubts one can encounter. They can be categorized into three groups. The first five types of doubts concern past life; the next five types of doubt concern the future, and the rest 6 types of doubts concern the present life.

(A) Relating to the past are five types of doubt:

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

(B) Five doubts are related to the future:

1. Shall I be in the future?
2. Shall I not be in the future?
3. What shall I be in the future?
4. How shall I be in the future?

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

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

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

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

5. From what state into what state will I change in the future?

(C) Six doubts are related to the present:

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

The Avarana Sutta (AN 5. 51)¹¹ elucidates that Samādhi (concentration), the mental state of being firmly fixed or one-pointedness¹² can help overcome the 5 hindrances: sensual desire, ill-will, sloth and torpor, restlessness and remorse, and skeptical doubts¹³ temporarily. Had these 5 hindrances not been overcome one who practice insight would lack the strength and power to realize what is good for oneself, good for others and good for both. Thus, one will not be able to realize the superhuman state and achieve super knowledge and vision.

The purpose of thesis research was to study the Theravāda concept of Vicikicchā. With the widely-varied interpretations of the teachings of the Buddha many new followers may get reluctant and develop Vicikicchā. It is very important to understand the danger of holding on to Vicikicchā and missing the opportunity to study and practice Dhamma.

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

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

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

Moreover, in the Theravāda tradition, Vicikicchā is considered negative unlike being positive in the modern concept of doubt. It is a mental defilement which is considered to be rooted with Ignorance or lack of understanding. The term Vicikicchā is understood as obstruction to a truth seeker or practitioner. It demotivates and develops hesitation to study and practice the Four Noble Truths (Dhamma). Every individual possesses this mental defilement until one has realized the stage of stream-enterer. Once Stream-entry has occurred one will completely uproot Vicikicchā and firmly develop confidence in the master, doctrine, community, training, past and future lives, etc.

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

1.2 Objectives of the Study

1.2.1 To study the concept of Vicikicchā in Theravāda Buddhism.

1.2.2 To study Vicikicchā as a Factor of five Hindrances and a method for overcoming it.

1.3 Statement of the Problem

1.3.1 What is the concept of Vicikicchā in Theravāda Buddhism?

1.3.2 How is Vicikicchā a factor of five Hindrances and what is a method for overcoming it?

1.4 Definitions of the Terms Used in the Research

Vicikicchā: the Pāli term Vicikicchā is translated as skeptical doubt, confusion or indecision. It is one among the 5 hindrances that obstruct one on the path to enlightenment and among the 10 Fetters. It can be completely destroyed at the stage of Stream-enterer.

Generally, the term Vicikicchā refers to doubts about the teacher, doctrine, community, past and future lives. Ultimately, they can be doubts about the Four Noble Truths.

Theravāda: The term **Theravāda** means [**Thera:** elder + **vāda:** teachings] the teachings of the Elders. It referred to those senior monks who conducted the first Buddhist council after the passing away of the Buddha.

Nivarana: The Pāli term **Nivarana** is translated as hindrances or obstructions. It means obstructing one's progress on the path to Enlightenment.

Social Conflict: Here **Social Conflict** means a conflict or argument between two or more parties. There are several reasons for **Social Conflict**—Vicikicchā is also a cause of **Social Conflict**.

1.5 Review of Related Literature and Research Work

1.5.1 Buddharakkhita, Acharya, **Mind Overcoming its Cankers**, Kandy: Buddhist Publication Society, 2004.

This book reports the Buddha's explanation on overcoming the Cankers (Āsava) focusing on the Sabbasava Sutta as a basic theme. It elucidates the nature of the Cankers (Āsava) and a proper method for eliminating the Cankers (Āsava) found in the Pāli Cannon. The Cankers (Āsava) encompass certain unwholesome mental qualities. With

eradication of the Cankers (*Āsava*), all mental defilements including *Vicikicchā* are destroyed and one reaches the land of deathless.

Scattered data were collected from various sources such as Pāli Cannon and commentaries in order to provide a clear understanding of the Cankers (*Āsava*) and a destruction of the Cankers (*Āsava*) which has kept one going through a long run of Samsara as enunciated by the Buddha.

1.5.2 *Ānalayo*, Bhikkhu, **Satipatthāna: The Direct Path to Realization**, Malaysia: Buddhist Wisdom Centre, 2006.

This book is a comprehensive study the *Satipatthāna* by Bhikkhu *Ānalayo*. It is not only an interpretation on the basis of meditation practice but also a deep explanation at the level of modern scholar's point of view.

In the ninth chapter of this book it is clearly mentioned that *Vicikicchā* is a mental quality that hinders proper functioning of the mind. It draws one into too much confusion to take further steps. *Vicikicchā* hinders the distinction between what is wholesome and unwholesome; it hardens overcoming of lust, hatred and ignorance. Further explained *Vicikicchā* is not only a deterrent to development of Insight but also a hindrance to Calmness meditation.

The text *Upakkilesa Sutta* (AN 4. 50) points out that *Vicikicchā* is a mental obstruction to attainment of absorption. This whole book deals with complete explanations of the *Satipaṭṭhāna* from Canonical, commentarial and modern scholar's point of views.

1.5.3 *Vinai Ussivakul*, Ajahn, **An Introduction to Buddhist Meditation for Results**, Bangkok: Tipayawisuit Ltd., Partnership, 1996.

This book deals with a proper undertaking of Samatha and Vipassanā meditation practices for effective results. It illustrates how through a developing mind one can attain peace and happiness that people are seeking in the midst of a worldly lifestyle. People often misunderstand and look for happiness in their material possessions. Buddha Dhamma rightly points out that in order to discover happiness one has to look into oneself and understand the nature of the mind.

Furthermore, it goes on to clearly demonstrate the complete genuine practice of Samatha and Vipassanā meditation and to explain how to tackle the arising hindrances during training sessions. Overall this book develops an understanding and needed answers to meditators' problems from the author's experience in teaching meditation for several years.

1.5.4 Pasanno, Bhikkhu, & Amaro, Bhikkhu, **The Island: An Anthology of the Buddha's teaching on Nibbāna**, Penang: SukhihotuSdnBhd, 2010.

This book consists of academically collected Buddha's teachings and quotes on Nibbāna from Pali Canon, commentaries, sub-commentaries and teachings from the contemporary forest meditation masters. This book came into existence to explain the concept of Nibbāna to meditators. It appears that many Buddhists developed fear of Nibbāna, the highest happiness in Theravada Buddhism, due to not properly understanding the concept of Nibbāna in Pāli canon of Theravāda Buddhism. Beside this problem; many still consider nibbāna as something unobtainable and inject their own imagination without realizing it.

It also mentioned that eradication of first three fetters (Saññojana) including Sakkāya-diṭṭhi (Identity view), Vicikicchā (Doubt) and Sīlabbata-Parāmāsa (Attachment to rituals) results in arising of Dhamma-eye in a truth seeker. Thus, with eradication of Vicikicchā, one develops firm confidence in the Buddha, His teaching and Saṅgha.

Therefore, Bhikkhu Pasanno & Bhikkhu Amaro penetrated into the Buddhist scriptures to extract the exact explanation of Nibbāna from Pāli Cannon, commentaries, sub-commentaries and teachings from contemporary forest meditation masters.

1.5.5 Mon, Tin Mehm, **The Essence of Buddha Abhidhamma**, Yangon: Mehm Tay Zar Mon, 1995.

In this book are explanations of the profound teachings of the Buddha. It contributes to the knowledge of Buddhist Psycho-ethical-Philosophy which is known as Abhidhammā (The higher teachings of the Buddha). The author has penetrative insight on a deep level of mind and body that even science and philosophers were not able to reach. So far science and philosophy has accepted the existence of mind and body but find it problematic to explain the nature of the mind.

This book systematically explains the mind and its mental concomitants in minute details. The Abhidhammā teachings deal with explanations of ultimate realities such as mind, matter, and Nibbāna.

1.5.6 Nyanaponika, Thera, Compiled & trs, **The Five Mental Hindrances and Their Quest: Selected Texts from Pāli Canon and the Commentaries**, Kandy: Buddhist Publication Society, 1993.

The author has put his wholehearted effort to collect the scattered information on Five Mental Hindrances from the Pali Canon and Commentaries. Venerable Nyanaponika has stated that with a

complete removal of the Five Mental Hindrances one reaches an unshakable state of mind. The explanation on the Five Mental Hindrances is precise and the interpretation is detailed with reference to the Pāli Canon and Commentaries.

A temporary suppression of the Five Mental Hindrances paves the road to Mental Absorption. Furthermore, among the Five Mental Hindrances, Vicikicchā that clouds the mind and develops confusion in oneself is eliminated at the first stage of Enlightenment. The cause of nourishment to Vicikicchā is that unwise attention is given. With proper attention or Mindfulness, one can eliminate Vicikicchā. Overall this work brings out a textual explanation of the Five Mental Hindrance and a method for overcoming it.

1.5.7 Janakābhivamsa, Sayādaw, U Venerable, **Vipassanā Meditation**, Taipei: The Corporate Body of the Buddha Educational Foundation, 1997.

This book is a compilation of the lectures delivered on the significance of practicing Insight meditation for practitioners. It covers a brief explanation of the Four Noble Truths and Eight-Fold Noble Path, highlights the different stages of Insight knowledge of the practitioners with reference to the discourses taught by the Buddha and touches certain areas of the commentary especially Visuddhimagga.

Vicikicchā is the one of the hindrances that block the path of spiritual progress. This text highlights a proper method for dealing with arisen hindrances. Besides explaining the importance and results of Insight meditation it also explains the roles of and the differences between Samatha Bhavana (tranquility meditation) and Vipassanā Bhavana (Insight meditation). Sayadaw U Janakābhivamsa also

emphasizes that deeper level of concentration to help practitioners to see the true nature of Nāma-Rupa (mind and body). It concentration of mindfulness to peace for practice meditation; the mind become very calm and peaceful. It is very nice to see you coming to practice meditation, learning Dhamma.

1.6 Method of the Study

This work is a documentary research and its methodology consist of 4 stages.

1.6.1 Collecting the data to analyze and draw a systematic interpretation of Vicikicchā from the Pāli Canon, commentaries and sub-commentaries.

1.6.2 Analyzing and comparing the collected data in a way that suits the modern environment.

1.6.3 Constructing a discussion of encountered problems.

1.6.4 Drawing conclusion and suggestion for further studies.

1.7 Advantages of Study

1.7.1 Knowing the concept of Vicikicchā in Theravāda Buddhism.

1.7.2 Clearly understanding Vicikicchā as a factor of five Hindrances and method for overcoming it.

Chapter II

The Concept of Vicikicchā in Theravāda Buddhism

2.1 Definition of the Term Vicikicchā

According to the Pāli–English Dictionary Definition Vicikicchā is derived from the verb Vicikicchati which means doubt, perplexity, or uncertainty.¹⁴

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

Vicikicchā (f) literally means “the desire to discern or think over” (Vicikicchā) where the prefix vi- has a sense of duality or separation, and Cikicchā comes from the verb Cikicchāti (“he thinks

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

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

over, reflects, aims at, intends). Hence the verb Vicikicchati, “he doubts.” As such it is usually understood as “doubt, perplexity, or uncertainty.”¹⁶

The Abhidhammattha Vibhāvinī Ṭīkā, a sub-commentary to the Abhidhamma’-atthaSaṅgaha commenting on Vicikicchā notes that there are two etymologies for Vicikicchā, namely:

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

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

More specifically Vicikicchā is a spiritual doubt, that is, in terms of moral virtues and the teachings, it clouds up our psychological thinking preventing us from focusing mentally. It is the fifth and the last one of the five hindrances. On a deeper level Vicikicchā is an uncertainty of the truth of reality and of our capability for self-awakening. It is one of the three fetters that prevents us from becoming a stream winner who truly understands doubts.

Vicikicchā is doubt or indecision: that which is devoid of a remedy from wisdom, Vicikicchā (Vi- devoid; Cikicchā-wisdom). It is also explained as vexation due to perplexed thinking (Vici –seeking; Kicchā – vexation).¹⁸

Here it is not used in the sense of doubt with regard only to the Buddha the Dhamma and the Saṅgha, etc., for even non-Buddhists exhibit Vicikicchā. Vicikicchā is a doubt about the Buddha the Dhamma

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

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

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

and the Saṅgha etc., but as a hindrance it denotes unsteadiness in a particular thing that is being done.

In the Vimāna, Vatthu Commentary Ekaṃsika (“I am certain”) states that, “I was without doubt about the Buddha Dhamma and Saṅgha (the Three Jewels). That is, one possesses the certainty that the Blessed one is a fully self-awakened one, that the Dhamma is well taught, that the Saṅgha is well conducted.”¹⁹

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

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

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

One more etymological definition and its meaning will be mentioned here. It is “*Sabhāvaṃ vicinanto etāya kicchati kilamatīti*

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

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

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

Furthermore, a non-Buddhist does not truly understand about the Buddha, the Dhamma, the Saṅgha, Kamma. It is a result of his or her Kamma. His or her ultimate knowledge cannot be reached. It is beyond him or her. At that time, although he or she may try again and again to understand about them it may be in vain because it is beyond his or her knowledge. Eventually his or her brain and mind become tired. That is why doubt, confusion, complication and entanglement come into his or her mind. Such a kind of situation is called “Vicikicchā”.

There are many synonyms for Vicikicchā, including: “*Kaṅ khā, Vimati, Dveḷ aka, Dvedhāpatho, Saṃsayo, Anekaṃsaggāgo, Asappanā, Parisappanā, Apariyogāhanā, Thambhitattam* and *Manovilekho*”.²²

Although they are of different sounds and spellings, the meanings are basically the same as ‘doubt’ but the etymological definitions are different because of different sounds according to Pāḷi grammar. For example, the definitions on the etymology of Kaṅ khā is

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

²² Rhys Davids, & Caroline. A. F., (ed & trs), **Buddhist Manual of Psychological Ethics (Dhammasangani)**, London: Pali Text Society, 1978, p. 102.

“kaṇ khativicikicchatītikaṇ khā”. One can keep a doubt. It is therefore called ‘Kaṇ khā’.

Doubt in the meaning of words and sentences or doubt as to which route to follow on a journey, etc., do not constitute Vicikicchā. Even Arahants sometimes have doubts on the meaning of Vinaya Rules, whether such as act is in accordance with the Vinaya or not. In this case it is not Vicikicchā. It simply is conjecturing or discursive thinking, Vitakka. Only skepticism on the Buddha, the Dhamma and the Saṅgha amounts to Vicikicchā. When skepticism or doubts arising, they should be dispelled by asking the learned. Only then can there be complete faith and reverence in the Three Jewels.

Vicikicchā is the Buddha’s definition of doubt as principally uncertainty and lack of conviction in regard to four items: the Buddha, the Dhamma, the Saṅgha, and the training.²³ Elsewhere he spoke of perplexity regarding the past, the present, and the future, and again about the removal of doubt as a dependent arising.

The Dhammasaṅgaṇī says: To doubt, to be perplexed about the master...the Doctrine the Order, about the Discipline, about the past, the future, about both the past and the future, as to whether there be an assignable cause of states causally determined- it is this kind of doubt, this working of doubt, this dubiety, puzzlement, perplexity, distraction, standing at cross-roads; collapses, uncertainty of grasp; evasion,

²³ Nanamoli, Bhikkhu, & Bodhi, Bhikkhu, (trs), **The Middle Length Discourses of the Buddha (Majjhima Nikaya)**, Kandy: Buddhist Publication Society, 1995, p. 101.

hesitation, incapacity of grasping thoroughly, stiffness of mind, mental sacrificing that is called perplexity (hindrance from doubt).²⁴

The Dhammasaṅgaṇi Atṭhakathā definition that doubt with regard to the Master is doubt as to whether or not any person has existed and endowed with the physical and spiritual qualities of a Buddha. Doubt regarding the Doctrine is doubt about the existence of the supramundane paths, fruits, and Nibbāna. Doubt regarding the Saṅgha is skepticism with respect to the existence of holy persons of fruitfulness gifts to the Order. Doubt regarding the discipline questions the effectiveness of morality, concentration, and wisdom in leading to the end of suffering. Doubt regarding the past, the future, and both applies to past lives, future lives, and both. Lastly, doubt regarding causally determined states is perplexity over the twelve-fold formulation of dependent arising.²⁵

It is evident from these definitions and descriptions that the species of doubt classed as a hindrance is skeptical indecision with respect to the fundamental tenets of Buddhist doctrine and practice. This doubt to be abandoned is not contradicting the freedom of philosophical inquiry which the Buddha openly encouraged in those who sought to gain personal conviction of truth. It is only a stubborn disbelief and perplexity regarding the principles needed for higher development. As long as such doubt persist the mind is too obstructed by confusion to embark on the path leading to higher attainment. As the Visudhimagga says, ‘doubt

²⁴ Rhys Davids, & Caroline. A. F., (ed & trs), **Buddhist Manual of Psychological Ethics (Dhammasangani)**, London: Pali Text Society, 1978, pp. 233-4.

²⁵ Buddhaghosa, **The Expositor (Atthasalini)**: translated by Pe Maung Tin, and edited by Caroline A. F., & Rhys Davids, London: Pali Text Society, 1921, pp. 388-9.

performs a function of wavering, is a manifestation of indecisiveness, and acts as an obstruction to practice.’²⁶

According to the (Nivaraṇa Bojjhaṅga) Āhāra Sutta (SN 46.51), “And what, monks, is food for the arising of arisen doubt (Vicikicchā) and for the growth and abundance of arising doubt? There are, monks, bases for doubt. Frequently giving unwise attention to them is food for the arisen doubt (Vicikicchā) and for the growth and abundance of arising doubt.”²⁷

These “bases for doubt” (Vicikicchaṭ ṭ hāniyadhammā) are phenomena (things that occur in and around us) that through our perception,²⁸ that is through unwise attention, are regarded as impermanent but pleasurable and having an abiding entity and thus one fails to see their true nature of impermanence.

Both the Sutta and the Commentaries are silent on the definition of “the bases for doubt” (Vicikicchaṭ ṭ hāniyadhammā). The reason for this I think is simple enough: as I have mentioned above they refer to any event we perceive within or without ourselves but fail to see its inherent impermanence.

We can deduce and summarize these 6 conditions as being conducive to doubt as mentioned in the commentaries:

- (1) Little learning,
- (2) Lack of question and investigation,
- (3) Ignorance of monastic or lay Vinaya practice,

²⁶ Buddhaghosa, **Visuddhimagga: The Path of Purification**, Nanamoli, Bhikkhu, (trs), Seattle: WA: BPS Pariyatti Editions, 1999, p. 398.

²⁷ Walshe, Maurice, (trs), **The Long Discourses of the Buddha (Digha Nikaya)**, Boston: [Wisdom Publications](http://www.wisdompublications.com), 1987, p. 102.

²⁸ Tan, Piya, **Sutta Discovery (SD)**, Vol. 31.8- “Vicikicchā: Doubt,” Singapore: Minding Centre, 2010, p. 174.

- (4) Lack of conviction to spiritual practice,
- (5) Evil friendship, and
- (6) Frivolous talk.

They can be countered as done in the *Aṅ guttara* Commentary by “the voice of another” (Paratoghasa), that is, by listening to the true teaching (Saddhammasavana) and conducting wise attention (Yonisomanasikāra), that is, considering all of our sense-experiences as impermanent.²⁹

“Unwise attention” (Ayonisomanasikāra) is the key condition for the arising of doubt. This is clearly stated in the fifth Sutta of the *Nīvaraṇ a Vagga* of the *Aṅ guttara Nikāya*:

“No other single thing, Bhikkhus, does that I can see on the account of which unarisen doubt would arise, and arisen doubt would heighten and become abundant, that is to say Bhikkhus, then unwise attention. On the account of unwise attention, Bhikkhus, unarisen doubt arises, and arisen doubt heightens and becomes abundant.”³⁰

Unwise attention, Ayonisomanasikāra, is a true condition par excellence for the arising of doubt. Its opposite, ‘wise’ or perhaps ‘radical’ attention, Yonisomanasikāra, should be directed to the distinction between what is wholesome or unwholesome, blamable or blameless, inferior or superior, dark or bright, since these constitute an antidote or ‘denourishment’ for doubt.

The consciousness accompanied by doubt is the first of the two *Mohamūla Cittas*. Doubt here signifies spiritual doubt. From a Buddhist

²⁹ Buddhaghosa. **Manorathapuri: A Commentary on the Ariguttara Nikaya**, translated by Edmund Hardy, London: Pali Text Society, 1973, p. 157.

³⁰ Bodhi, Bhikkhu, (trs), **The Numerical Discourses of the Buddha (Anguttara Nikaya)**, Boston: [Wisdom Publications](http://www.wisdompublications.com), 2012, p. 202.

perspective it is the inability to keep faith and confidence in the Buddha, the Dhamma, the Saṅgha, Kamma and it is a result of one's Kamma. It is a doubt about the Buddha, the Dhamma, the Saṅgha, and Kamma. It can be a result of Kamma and the training (Training means training of Sila, Samādhi and Paññā.) Also, it is a doubt about aggregates, bases, elements, both in the past and the future. It is a doubt about the teaching of Dependent Origination (Paṭ iccasamuppāsa) as well.

Its characteristic or its function is to make one waver. When doubt arises in one, he or she wavers, cannot choose, and is not sure about what to do. It is manifested as indecisiveness, so he or she cannot decide which is correct. It is like someone is at a crossroad and does not know which way to take. Its proximate cause is unwise attention (Ayonisomanasikāra). Here, doubt means doubt about the Buddha, the Dhamma, the Saṅgha and so on. Sometimes at the crossroads one is not sure whether to turn left or right. Such kind of doubt is not Akusala doubt. It is just a lack of understanding.

Even an Arahant can have such doubt. Sometimes even they don't know whether a particular action is allowable or not if they are not well versed in Vinaya. In a Buddhist perspective, it is doubt about the Buddha, the Dhamma and the Saṅgha. If doubt arises in one, about the Buddha whether there was a Buddha at all, whether the Buddha really possessed omniscience or whether the Buddha was really enlightened—this kind of thinking is called doubt (Vicikicchā).

Vicikicchā: indecision and uncertainty about an object of consciousness is a mental factor that accompanies only consciousness rooted in doubt. Doubt here only refers to immoral doubt, i.e., a skeptical doubt about the virtues of the Buddha, the Dhamma and the Saṅgha,

doubts about the Aggregates, the Spheres and the Elements in the past, present and future, and doubts about Dependent Origination. Other kinds of doubts, such as doubts about technical matters or a doubt about a street name are not regarded as immoral doubts but are false doubts or Paṭ irūpakavicikicchā.

If the consciousness of a Dhamma practitioner is associated with even one of these mental factors the doubt is regarded as immoral. An immoral mental factor that accompanies every immoral consciousness is delusion (Moha) which by nature is an ignorance of the truth of an object of consciousness. Particularly for one who practices insight concentration, if through ignorance his or her consciousness is distracted from Matter and mindfulness to a conventional mind-object or a thought then it is abstracted. Thus, we should know abstractedness well because it is a foe that comes to mindfulness most often in deep insight concentration. In any event it is true that abstraction may lead to thoughts about a subject matter that is moral but would be only a worldly moral at best. Insight development requires consciousness to be mindful of matter and mind as they truly are. The wording “mindfulness of matter and mind as they truly are” is intrinsically non-delusion (Amoha) or wisdom (Paññā).

This doubt is described in Visuddhi Magga and Dhamma Saṅ gaṇ ī as doing harm to the practice.³¹ The English translations of both Visuddhi Magga and Dhamma Saṅ gaṇ ī are a little inaccurate. The Pāli sentence used there is “Paṭ ipattiantayakara”, that means doing harm to Paṭ ipatti. What does Paṭ ipatti mean? Buddhists are very familiar with

³¹ Buddhaghosa, **Visuddhimagga: The Path of Purification**, Nanamoli, Bhikkhu, (trs), Seattle: WA: BPS Pariyatti Editions, 1999, p. 89.

this term Paṭ ipatti. Paṭ ipatti means the practice, the practice of meditation, the practice of duty, the practice of keeping the precepts. That is called Paṭ ipatti. Paṭ ipatti also means the practice of Vipassanā or the practice of meditation. Another person translated it as an obstruction to theoretical development. What it actually means is that doubt can harm the practice. If a meditator has doubts about practicing meditation he cannot go on practicing meditation easily. Doubt is a very damaging mental hindrance. When doubt arises in the mind it is very difficult to go on practicing meditation. It is said to be doing harm to practice but not doing harm to attainment, not being obstructive to theoretical development. Whenever there is doubt in the mind during meditation, while in meditation the meditator has no other thing that he or she can do but takes note in his or her mind that “doubt, doubt, doubt” has occurred until it disappears. This doubt is called Vicikicchā.

2.2 Two Aspects of Vicikicchā

Vicikicchā of mental factors Consciousness arises and falls away accompanied by groups of mental factors which vary, depending on the nature and function of the consciousness in which they arise. Vicikicchā, refers to the confused and perplexed state of mind that makes one skeptical and disbelieve what is true (in this case, the Triple Gem). When skepticism arise, they should be dispelled by asking to learn. Only then can there to complete faith and reverence in the Three Jewels.³²

The Buddha himself says that he sees no single factor so responsible for the arising of unwholesome states of mind as wrong view,

³² Bodhi, Bhikkhu, & Bomhard, Allan R, **A Comprehensive Manual of Abhidhamma**, Charleston: Charleston Buddhist Fellowship, 2007, p. 29.

and no factor so helpful for the arising of wholesome states of mind as right view. Again, he says that there is no single factor as responsible for the suffering of living beings as wrong view, and no factor so potent in promoting the good of living beings as right view.³³

2.2.1. Unwholesomeness of Vicikicchā

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

1. Is there the Omniscient Buddha?
2. Can one attain if one follows the Eightfold Path?
3. Is he a Bhikkhu if good conduct?
4. Can we get any benefits from observing wholesome moral precepts?
5. Do we have past existences?
6. Are there future lives?
7. Can one's moral and immoral deeds influence the forthcoming lives?
8. Can one enjoy the consequences of good deeds?

³³ Bodhi, Bhikkhu, **The Noble Eightfold Path The Way to the End of Suffering**, Kandy: Buddhist Publication Society, 1984, p. 15.

9. Is it true that due to ignorance there arise volitional actions or mental formations?³⁴

The (Nivaraṇā) Saṅgāra Sutta (SN 7. 21) compares spiritual doubt to our looking at our own reflection in a bowl of turbid, muddy water in the dark. It is interesting that this comparison parallels closely to the Tevijja Sutta (DN 1. 13) parable of a man with a shawl on the river bank. In both parables, there are the imageries of immobility (the man stuck on a river bank and the water was heavy with mud) and blindness (the shawl over the man and the bowl of muddy water was left in the dark).

In the Padhāna Sutta (SN 3. 2)³⁵ an early account of the Buddha's struggle for awakening we find a mythology of evil where doubt is personified as the "seventh army" (pañcamisenā) in these verses that allude to the mental Hindrances:

(1) Kāmātepaṭṭhamāsenādutiyārativuccati

Tatīyākhup, pipāsātecatutthīpavuccati

Sensual pleasures are your first army. Discontent is you're second called.

Your third is hunger-and- thirst. The fourth is craving called.

(2) Pañcamam̐thina, middham̐te chaṭṭhīhābhīrūpavuccati

Sattamīvicikicchātemakkhothambhoteṭṭhamo

Your fifth is sloth-and-torpor. The sixth is fear-called. Your seventh is doubt. Hypocrisy and obstinacy are the eighth.

³⁴ Janakabhivamsa, Ashin, **Abhidhamma in Daily Life: The Principle of Physical and Mental Processes**, Yangon: Chanmyay Yeiktha Meditation Centre, 1977, p. 27.

³⁵ Saddhatissa, H., (trs), **Sutta-Nipata**, London: Curzon Press, 1985, p. 96.

(3) *Labhosilokosakkāromicchā, laddhocayoyaso*

Yocattānaṃsamukkaṃse pare caavajānati

Gain, reputation, honour, and whatever fame ill-gotten, and whoever praises himself but belittles others.

(4) *Esānamucitesenākaṇ hassābhīppahārani*

Na naṃasūrojinātijetvācalabhatesukhaṃ

That, Namuci, is your army the strike-force of the dark one. Who is not a hero cannot conquer it, and having conquered it, he gains happiness.

Here mental cultivation is depicted as a battle or struggle against evil, a language familiar to the Buddha's audience who had witnessed wars between the Indian kings and the republican leaders of their times over territorial expansion and control.

The main actor whom the Buddha referred to in the Padhāna Sutta (SN 3. 2) is Māra the evil one, who also goes by another two titles: Namuci and Kaṇ ha. Namuci is originally the name of an aura (fierce war-like demon in the Veda) because he does not release (Namuñcati) his victims.³⁶ Māra is also called Kaṇ ha, the “dark one”, which is an ancient synonym for Pisāca.

Apparently as Buddhism spread over ancient India and the region became more unified and peaceful there was a shift in the kinds of imagery and parables used that reflected the prosperity and concerns of people in those days. The Majjhima Commentary for example, compares doubt to a traveler going through a dangerous territory.³⁷

³⁶ Saddhatissa, H., (trs), **Sutta Nipata**, London: Curzon Press, 1985, p. 386.

³⁷ Nanamoli, Bhikkhu, & Bodhi, Bhikkhu, (trs) **The Middle Length Discourses of the Buddha (Majjhima Nikaya)**, Kandy: Buddhist Publication Society, 1995, p. 54.

Under such circumstances doubt can have an uncertain impact on people which could be described as *kampana rasa*: “whose essence is to tremble”.³⁸

On a positive note according to the *Sāmañña phala Sutta* (DN 2. 1) and the *Mahā Assapura Sutta* (MN 39) reflecting a more prosperous sociopolitical situation, this parable of a merchant who arrives safely through the wilderness.

‘Now monks, let us say that a man carrying money and goods is journeying on a road through the wilderness. As time passes, he eventually emerges from the wilderness safe and sound with no loss of property. The thought would occur to him, “before, I was carrying money and goods in a journey on a road through the wilderness. Now I have emerged from the wilderness, safe and sound, with no loss of property.” Because of this, he would experience joy and happiness.’

A similar sentiment is said of a person who is cleared of the hindrance of doubt so that his mind would go on to focus in a calm and clear way and attain wisdom.

2.2.2 Wholesomeness of Vicikicchā

As we have already noted doubt is not always a bad thing, especially in a situation that merits doubt, or where it serves as a prelude to knowledge and understanding. In a number of discourses, we see the Buddha reassuring the people that their doubt was justified. In the *Pāṭ aliya Sutta* (SN 42. 13) for example, the Koliya headman *Pāṭ aliya* tells the Buddha that he has heard people claiming that the Buddha is an illusionist (*Māyāvī*) and asks the Buddha about the truth of the matter. In

³⁸ Buddhaghosa, *The Expositor (Atthasalini)*: translated by Pe Maung Tin, and edited by Caroline A. F., & Rhys Davids, London: Pali Text Society, 1921, p. 259.

the ensuing conversation Pāṭ aliya goes on to tell the Buddha that he is confused by the conflicting claims of the four sectarian teachers who have visited his residence.

Venerable Bhante, we are uncertain and in doubt: which of these good recluses speak the truth and which speak falsehood?”

*“It is fitting that you, headman, are uncertain, that you doubt. Doubt has arisen in you over that is doubtful.”*³⁹

In the Kutūhala Sālā Sutta (S 44. 9) the wanderer Vaccha tells the Buddha that he has heard about the various teachings and claims on rebirth by the six sectarian teachers and is confused about them:

“There is uncertainty in me, Master *Gotama*; there is doubt in me. How should the *Dhamma* of the recluse *Gotama* be understood?”

*“It is fitting that you are uncertain, that you doubt, Vaccha. Doubt has arisen in you over what is doubtful.”*⁴⁰

And in the Kālāma Sutta (AN 3. 65) the Kālāmas complain to the Buddha that various recluses and Brahmins have come to them proclaiming their own doctrines and reviling those of others leaving them confused as to who is speaking the truth:

Venerable Bhante, we are uncertain about that and in doubt: Which of these good recluses speak the truth and which speak falsehood?”

*“It is fitting that you are uncertain, that you doubt, Kālāmas. Doubt has arisen in you over what is doubtful.”*⁴¹

³⁹ Bodhi, Bhikkhu, (trs), **The Connected Discourses of the Buddha (Samyutta Nikaya)**, Boston: [Wisdom Publications](#), 2000, p. 104.

⁴⁰ Ibid, p. 180.

⁴¹ Bodhi, Bhikkhu, (trs), **The Numerical Discourses of the Buddha (Anguttara Nikaya)**, Boston: [Wisdom Publications](#), 2012, p. 305.

Furthermore, it is recorded in the Mahāparinibbāna Sutta (DN 2, 16) that even on his death-bed, the Buddha allows the wanderer Subhadda to approach him and have his doubts resolved. Sometime later the Buddha goes on to encourage the assembly to voice any doubt (Vicikicchā) they might have, so that it could be clarified while he was still alive.⁴² All of these show that although doubt (Vicikicchā) may hinder meditation and insight, it still has its proper role if it leads to an investigation of what should be investigated to understanding about doubt.

As regards Vicikicchā, doubt, there are many kinds of doubt. One may have doubts about the Buddha, the Dhamma and the Saṅgha, or doubt about the Eightfold Path. Doubt is Akusala and a hindrance to the performing of Kusala. All of the hindrances are obstructions to the performing of Kusala. There is a degree of calm with each Kulasa Citta but it is hard to know the characteristic of calm precisely.

2.3 Canonical Description of Vicikicchā

The Canonical texts offer two basic approaches to the preliminary overcoming of the Hindrances. One is the suppression of the Hindrances by development of serenity (Samatha); the other is their elimination during the course of developing insight. The former is described in the discourses of the Buddha expounding the states of

⁴² Walshe, Maurice, (trs), **The Long Discourses of the Buddha (Digha Nikaya)**, Boston: [Wisdom Publications](http://www.wisdompublications.com), 1987, p. 179.

‘gradual training,’ the latter described in the discourses on the practice of Satipaṭṭhāna, ‘the foundation of mindfulness’.⁴³

Two different approaches are offered because of the differing mental dispositions of disciples. Disciples of a contemplative bent generally incline to first attain concentration by suppressing the hindrances through the process and then move on to develop insight. These are called practitioners of the vehicle of serenity (Samathayānika) who develop “insight preceded by serenity.” Other disciples of another intellectual bent, are generally disposed to strive immediately for insight, leaving until later the task of deepening the state of concentration.

These are called practitioners of the vehicle of insight (Vipassanā-yānika) who develop “serenity preceded by insight. “Both types must eventually cultivate insight by practicing the foundation of mindfulness, since insight-wisdom is needed to reach the supramundane path. They differ, not with respect to the inclusion of insight, but in the sequence that they follow to develop insight. They who are practitioners of serenity attain then cultivate insight, and finally reach the path. The practitioners of insight reach the path directly by cultivating insight, without prior reliance on a foundation of mindfulness.”

We will now think, in turn, about each of the two approaches to the overcoming the Hindrances, taking first the approach of gradual training in which, the attainment of serenity is emphasized, and then the approach of the foundations of mindfulness, which emphasizes direct

⁴³ Nanamoli, Bhikkhu, & Bodhi, Bhikkhu, (trs), **The Middle Length Discourses of the Buddha (Majjhima Nikaya)**, Kandy: Buddhist Publication Society, 1995, p. 198.

development of insight. Finally, we will briefly note the way the Hindrances are eradicated by the four supramundane paths.

According to Abhidhamma there are four Ultimate Realities. They are consciousness, mental factor, matter, and nibbāna. Among them Vicikicchā is a kind of mental factor. Combining with the word “Vicikicchā” some technical terms are expressed in several Buddhist literatures like “Vicikicchānīvaraṇa”, “Vicikicchākilesā”, “Vicikicchā-saṃyojana” and “Vicikicchānusaya” etc. It was, therefore, the above said Vicikicchā is one of the mental Hindrances (Nīvaraṇa). There are five kinds of Hindrances. They are the hindrance of sensual pleasure (Kāmacchanda), the hindrance of ill-will (Byāpāda), the hindrance of sloth and torpor (Thina-Middha), the hindrance of restlessness and brooding (Uddhacca-Kukkucca), and the hindrance of skeptical doubt (Vicikicchā).

Skeptical doubt also can hinder or prevent the meditator from obtaining the higher knowledge of meditation: Magga, Phala and Nibbāna. It is, therefore, put in the group of Hindrances (Nīvaraṇa). It is named not only as a hindrance (Nīvaraṇa) but also as a latent defilement (Vicikicchānusaya), fetter (Vicikiccha-Saṃyojana), and defilement (Vicikiccha-Kilesa).

Furthermore, Vicikicchā is doubt or skepticism about the Buddha, the Dhamma, and the Saṃgha. It is a wavering between belief and disbelief. There are eight kinds of skeptical doubt. They are as follows:⁴⁴

⁴⁴ Rhys Davids, & Caroline. A. F., (ed & trs), **Buddhist Manual of Psychological Ethics (Dhammasangani)**, London: Pali Text Society, 1978, p. 208.

(1) Doubt in the Buddha and His omniscience; whether there was an Omniscient Buddha or not (Satthari Kaṅ khati Vicikicchati),

(2) Doubt about the Eightfold Noble Path; whether one can attain Nibbāna if one follows the Eightfold Path or not? (Dhamme Kaṅ khati Vicikicchati),

(3) Doubt about Saṅgha; whether there is a Bhikkhu of good conduct or not? (Saṅghe Kaṅ khati Vicikicchati),

(4) Doubt about training rules whether we can get any benefits from observing wholesome moral precepts or not? (Sikkhāya Kaṅ khati Vicikicchati),

(5) Doubt about past existences; “Do we have past existences or not?” (Pubbante Kaṅ khati Vicikicchati),

(6) Doubt about future lives and existences and whether death is the termination of everything? (Aparante Kaṅ khati Vicikicchati),

(7) Doubt about both past and future existences (Pubbantāparante Kaṅ khati Vicikicchati),

(8) Doubt about the Law of Dependent Origination (Paṭ iccasamuppannesu Kaṅ khati Vicikicchati).

Therefore, only the skepticism about the Buddha and the other seven should be understood as Vicikicchā.

In other words, there are another eight kinds of doubt described in the Mahā Niddesa and the Cuḷ a Niddesa commenting in Pāli Text. They are as follows:⁴⁵

(1) Doubt about the Truth of Suffering (Dukkhe Kaṅ khā),

⁴⁵ Tan, Piya, **Sutta Discovery (SD)**, Vol. 32.8- “Vicikicchā: Doubt,” Singapore: Minding Centre, 2010, p. 98.

(2) Doubt about the Truth of Cause of Suffering (Dukkha,Samudaye Kaṅ khā),

(3) Doubt about the Truth of Cessation of Suffering (Dukkha,Nirodhe Kaṅ khā),

(4) Doubt about the Truth of the Path to Cessation of Suffering (Dukkha,Nirodhagāminiyā Kaṅ khā),

(5) Doubt about past existences (Pubbante Kaṅ khā),

(6) Doubt about future existences (Aparante Kaṅ khā),

(7) Doubt about both, the past and the future existences (Pubbatāparate Kaṅ khā),

(8) Doubts about the Law of Dependent Origination (Paṭ iccasamuppa-nnesu Kaṅ khā).

2.4 Vicikicchā according to Commentaries

Vicikicchā or ‘skeptical doubt’ is one of the 5 mental Hindrances (Nīvaraṇ a), one of the 3 Fetters (Saṃyojana) that will disappear forever at Stream Entry, the first stage of holiness (Ariya Puggala). As a fetter, it refers to skeptical doubt about the Master (the Buddha), the Teaching, the Saṃgha, and the training and about things past and future as well as conditionality.

It also applies to uncertainty whether things are wholesome or not, to be practiced or not, or of high or low value. Vicikicchā is the lack of desire to think things out, i.e., to come to a conclusion. Vigata-cikicchā is the desire to think things out. Vicikicchā has the nature of wavering, and its manifestation is indecision and divided attitude. Its proximate cause is unwise attention to matters of doubt. It is associated with one of the 2 classes of unwholesome consciousness rooted in delusion.

The commentarial explanation of Vicikicchā is the inability to decide anything definitely that it is so or not. In other words, it is an indecision.

“Who is the doer of Kamma?” “Who reaps the fruit?” “Is it a sort of ascension of a soul?” In answering these subtle questions, Venerable Buddhaghosa Thera stated in the Visuddhimagga as follows:

Everywhere in all realms of existence the noble disciple sees only mental and corporeal phenomena keep going through concatenation of cause and effect. No producer of volitional act, or kamma, is seen apart from the action. No recipient of the kamma-result is seen apart from the result. Moreover he is well aware that wise men are merely using conventional language when, with regard to a karmic act, they speak of a doer, or with regard to a karmic result, they speak of the recipient of the result.

*No doer of the deeds is found,
 No one who ever reaps their fruits;
 Empty phenomena roll on:
 This alone is the correct view.
 And while the deeds and their results
 Roll on and on, conditioning all.
 There is no first cause to be found,
 Just as it is with seed and tree...
 No god, no brahma, can be called
 The creator of this wheel of life:
 Empty phenomena roll on,*

*Dependent upon conditions of all.*⁴⁶

Comprehending the law of kamma and its result (Vipāka), realizing the cause of name and form (Nāma-Rūpa), disciples also put away all doubts belonging to the phases of time-past, present, and future. They know those aggregates (Khandha) that had been born through Kamma in the past ceased there already but a new group of aggregates were born in this existence because of past Kamma. Yet, there is nothing that has come over into this existence from the past. The aggregates in this existence, born through the result of past Kamma will cease here. By the power of present Kamma there will be born other aggregates in the next existence. But, there is not a single state that will go over to the future from this state.

Or else they visualize the origin of this group of aggregates of mind and body and put away doubts by meditation upon the formula of the twelve Links (Nidāna) of Dependent Origination (Paṭ icca-Samupāda) as follows:

“From the cause of ignorance (Avijjā) springs kamma-formations (Saṃkhāra); from kamma-formations spring consciousness (Viññāṇa); from consciousness springs name (Nāma, that is, sensation and perception) and form (Rūpa); from name and form spring the six sense organs (Saḷ āyatana); from the six sense organs spring contact (Phassa); from contact springs feeling (Vedanā); from feeling springs craving (Taṇhā); from craving springs clinging, or grasping (Upādāna); from clinging springs becoming (Bhava); from becoming springs rebirth (Jāti); from rebirth springs old age, decay, death, sorrow, lamentation,

⁴⁶ Buddhaghosa, **Visuddhimagga: The Path of Purification**, Nanamoli, Bhikkhu, (trs), Seattle: WA: BPS Pariyatti Editions, 1999, p. 177.

pain, grief, and despair (Jarāmarañ a). Thus arises, once again, the whole episode of suffering (Dukkha).”⁴⁷

Reflection upon this chain of cause and effect they think, “Because this is, that exists; because this is not, that does not exist.” That is to say through the existence of ignorance, Kamma formations, or karmic activities take place. With the extinction of ignorance Kamma formations are extinguished. In like manner through the presence of cause the effect becomes present. In the absence of cause, effect is absent. Thus, understanding the law of cause and effect, disciples come to possess the knowledge of Reality (Dhammaṭ ṭ hiti-ñāṇ a) which is synonymous with the Right View (Sammā-Diṭ ṭ hi), whereby they comprehend (Paṭ isambhidāmagga,) kamma: “Conditioned by ignorance, karmic activities take place as a result, and both these states are also conditioned.”

As a consequence of this discernment all states (Dhamma)⁴⁸ are seen by disciples as impermanent (Anicca), as the cause of suffering (Dukkha), and as not self (Anattā). With this knowledge thus gained by the comprehension of name and form (Nāma-Rūpa), together with their real nature and conditions, they purify their mind from the eight kinds of doubt regarding the following: (1) the Buddha; (2) the Dhamma; (3) the Saṅgha; (4) morality (Sīla) (5) the method of training; (6) one’s previous existence; (7) one’s future existence; and (8) the law of causality (Dhammasasangaṇ ī).

⁴⁷ Bodhi, Bhikkhu, & Bomhard, Allan R., (ed), **A Comprehensive Manual of Abhidhamma: The Abhidhammatthasangaha of Ācariya Anuruddha**, Charleston: Charleston Buddhist Fellowship, 2007, p. 256.

⁴⁸ Nyanatiloka, Ven., **Buddhist Dictionary: Manual of Buddhist Terms and Doctrine**, Kandy: Buddhist Publication Society, 1988. p. 56.

Thus, the knowledge which once established transcends all doubts in the three phases of time, and in all states and conditions is the achievement described in the phrase “purification by overcoming doubt” (Kankhāvitaraṇa-visuddhi). Those who are endowed with this knowledge are said to have gained insight (Vipassanā), realized success, and secured a foothold in the teaching of the Buddha. They are assured of liberation and are known as “Culla Sotāppana”, “the junior Stream-Winner”.

Vicikicchā, according to commentaries, is doubt or skepticism about the Buddha, the Dhamma, and the Saṅgha. Actually, it is a wavering between belief and disbelief such as follows:⁴⁹

- (1) Is there an Omniscient Buddha?
- (2) Can one attain Nibbāna if one follows the Eightfold Path?
- (3) Can we get any benefits from observing wholesome morality precepts?
- (4) Do we have past existences?
- (5) Are there future next lives?
- (6) Can one’s moral and immoral deeds influence the forthcoming lives (Doubt about fortune.)?
- (7) Doubt about results of kamma.?
- (8) Doubt about the Law of Dependent Origination.

In the commentaries the doubts in the meaning of words and sentences or doubt as to which route to follow on a journey, etc., do not constitute Doubt. Even Arahants sometimes have doubts about the meaning of Vinaya Rules, whether an act is in accordance with the

⁴⁹ Buddhaghosa, **The Expositor (Atthasalini)**: translated by Pe Maung Tin, and edited by Caroline A. F., & Rhys Davids, London: Pali Text Society, 1921, p. 354.

Vinaya or not. In this case, it is not Doubt. It simply is conjecturing or discursive thinking. Only skepticism about the Buddha, the Dhamma and the Saṅgha amounts to Doubt.

When skepticism or doubt arises, they should be dispelled by asking the learned. Only then can there be complete faith and reverence in the Three Jewels. It is more important to believe on the Buddha the Dhamma and the Saṅgha about that. If you can doubt on Three Jewels, how to try disappear in the mind. After disappear doubt all you will be become very peacefully in the heart concentration of practice meditation a peace of mind.

2.5 Vicikicchā as Related to Doctrines

Vicikicchā is hindrance to the development of mental stillness, as well as to the cultivation of liberating insight. Vicikicchā more exactly, spiritual doubt, prevents the arising of letter (Saññojana), holding us on to Samsara. The latent tendency (Anusaya) that is the root of the fetter of doubt is present even in a new born baby, even though an infant would not even know anything from which spiritual doubt arise. Hence, to overcome and uproot spiritual doubt means that we ultimately need to remove the latent tendency of ignorance (Avijjā nusaya) from our minds.⁵⁰ The defilements afflict or torment the mindfulness or they defile beings by dragging them down to a mentally soiled and depraved condition.⁵¹

2.5.1 Vicikicchā as the Fetters (Saññojana)

⁵⁰ Tan, Piya, **Sutta Discovery** (SD), Vol. 32.8- “Vicikicchā: Doubt” Singapore: Minding Centre, 2010, p. 101.

⁵¹ Nandathitsa, Venerable, **Theravāda Buddhist Meditation Centre**, Yangon: Hantharwadi Press, 1995, p. 97.

Doubt is a hindrance to the development of mental stillness, as well as to practicing meditation. Doubt is also a kind of Fetter known as Vicikicchā-Saññojana in Pāli. The Pāli word “Saññojana” is derived from Sañ+ yoja +na and the meaning is “fettering, binding and connection.” Man, who is fettered or bound by Doubt as a fetter cannot escape from cycles of rebirth (Saṃsāra). Furthermore, he cannot continue to practice meditation in an easy way. With regard to Fetter, the Buddha said, “Oh, monk, the matter (Rūpa) is a cause of Fetter. For one who longs for or desires in the matter, Fetter arises.”⁵²

Doubt, or more exactly, spiritual doubt, hinders the arising of liberating insight, by working as a fetter (Saṃyojana), holding beings firmly on to Saṃsāra. Spiritual doubt arises and grows in people when they do not pursue their minds wisely, that is, through “unwise-attention” (Ayonisomanasikāra). According to the Vibbaṅga, “unwise attention” is the take of what is impermanent as permanent, what is painful as pleasurable, what is not self as self, what is foul as beautiful. These are called the four “perversions (Vipallāsa)” which are psychological inversions of true reality. Whatever unwholesome state arises in a being an unwise-attention (Ayonisomanasikāra) is the main cause. Doubt, Fetter and doubt as a Fetter can arise in people because of that unwise-attention.

The definition of Vicikicchā can be one of the three Fetters which are self-identity view (Sakkāya, Diṭṭhi), attachment to rituals and vows (Sīla-bbataparāmāsa) and spiritual doubt (Vicikicchā).⁵³ There are

⁵² Bodhi, Bhikkhu, (trs), **The Connected Discourses of the Buddha (Samyutta Nikaya)**, Boston: [Wisdom Publications](http://www.wisdompublications.com), 2000, p. 135.

⁵³ Tan, Piya, **Sutta Discovery (SD)**, Vol. 15.1- “Vicikicchā: Doubt,” Singapore: Minding Centre, 2010, p. 87.

the first three of the ten Fetters (Dasasaññojana)⁵⁴ that bind one to samsaric life and self-identity view which is the notion that we are a fixed entity or that we cannot really change or even that we are destined to be what we are. There is a notion that clinging to rituals and vows as well as holding on to the view that merely keeping to rituals and vows can bring about purification to one. Our lack of wisdom fuels our doubts that in turn sustain such wrong notion. In fact, the first effective step on the path to awakening (as a stream winner) is for us to overcome these three fetters.

Spiritual doubt, (Vicikicchā) as such, is uncertainty over what wholesome or unwholesome deed is and whether a deed should be done or not. It does not augment the nature of moral virtue nor support personal development. It is the lack of desire to heal and help ourselves and it is an indecisiveness partially due to our unwise attention. Another way of putting this is that we need to at least give up fatalism, superstition and blind faith; in short, we need to make sustained efforts to clearly think things out for ourselves.

On the other hand, according to the Dhamma Saṅgaṇī and the Vibhaṅga dealing with philosophical speculation and emotional uncertainty as well as with spiritual doubts relating to the teachings and true reality one has doubts that are the following Fetters (Saññojana):

- (1) The Buddha or the great teacher (Satthā),
- (2) The Dhamma or the teachings of the Buddha,
- (3) The Saṅgha or the community of noble monk societies,
- (4) The training (Sikkhā) or the Vinaya discipline,

⁵⁴ Thiṭṭhila, Pahamakyaw, Ashin, (trs), **The Book of Analysis (Vibhaṅga)**, London: PTS, 1995, p. 377.

- (5) The past (Pubbanta),
- (6) The future (Aparanta),
- (7) Both the past and the future, and
- (8) Dependently arisen states (Paṭ icca, Samuppanesudhammesu).

Another definition of Vicikiccha according to the Atthasālinī and the commentary to the Dhammasaṅ gaṇ ī, are these eight doubts explained below:⁵⁵

(1) **Doubt about the teacher:** it is difficult to say about that because here it refers to uncertainty concerning the Buddha's body and the purity of his virtues. Doubt regarding the Buddha's body is such as an uncertainty whether he has the 32 marks or not. Doubt regarding the Buddha's virtue is an uncertainty whether he was omniscient about the knowledge of the past, the present and the future, or doubts about whether there was or was not a Buddha endowed with the exact number of marks and a glorious halo who attained omniscience, with knowledge of all things and is the world savior;

(2) **Doubts about the Dhamma:** here, the definition refers to the uncertainty whether there are Four Noble Paths and their fruitions in riddance of defilements or whether there really is Nivaraṇ a, the obstacles to the paths and fruitions, or whether it is true that the teaching brings us true salvation;

(3) **Doubt about the Sangha:** here it refers to the uncertainty as to whether the Saṅgha jewel really exists and can be categorized into 4 groups and their fruitions, whether there are eight of kinds sainthood, or

⁵⁵ Buddhaghosa, **The Expositor (Atthasālinī)**, translated by Pe Maung Tin, and edited by Caroline A. F., & Rhys Davids, London: Pali Text Society, 1921, p. 354.

whether such saints are well-conducted or not; or whether making offerings to the Saṅgha is fruitful or not;

(4) **Doubt regarding the training:** here it refers to the uncertainty whether there are the three stages of training or not;

(5) **Doubts regarding the past:** here it refers to the uncertainty of the existence of the aggregates, elements and sense-bases in the past.

(6) **Doubt about the future:** here it refers to the uncertainty whether there is a future or not.

(7) **Doubts about both the past and the future:** here it refers to uncertainty about both times.

(8) **Doubts about dependent arising:** here it refers to the uncertainty whether there is a cycle of the Twelve Links. ‘Specific Conditionality’ means how one link conditions another link.

The Saññojana Sutta (SN 41. 1) is a short discourse to some monastic elders from Cittas that clarifies the nature of mental fetter, that is, it is neither the sense-faculty nor is it the sense-object but “the fetter here is the desire-or-lust that arises that is dependent on both” (*Yañ ca tattha tad ubhayaṃ paṭ icca uppajjati chanda,rāgo taṃ tattha samyojanaṃ.*)

2.5.2 Vicikicchā as Latent (Anusaya)

All our actions- mental, verbal and bodily- are always conscious ones. In fact, an unawakened person is more likely to act so habitually that he is unconscious of his actions.⁵⁶ In early Buddhist psychology such actions are still said to be deliberate, that is, they are

⁵⁶ Tan, Piya, **Sutta Discovery (SD)**, Vol. 31.3- “**Anusaya: Latent tendencies**,” Singapore: Minding Centre, 2010, p. 12.

karmic ally potent. Such actions bear karmic fruit because they are rooted in greed, hate or delusion.

This level of mental activity is said to be on a pre-conscious level. They are deliberately done but without any wise attention (Yonisomanasikāra). On this level such actions are called “formations” (Saṅ khāra), karmically significant actions done through the mind, speech or the body. They in turn slavishly feed the latent tendencies.

Latent tendencies, as such, are the primordial roots of motivation lurking deep in the shadows and corners of our minds yet dictating and colouring our actions. According to Buddhaghosa they are called “latent tendencies” on account of persistence, they exist forever, as it were, life after life, and are the conditions for the arising of new and renewed greed, etc.

The Commentary to the Anusaya Sutta (AN 7. 11) says that a latent tendency (Anusaya) is a defilement itself but is a latent tendency in the sense that it has gained strength. The Porāṇa Tīkā adds it “has gained strength” by being firmly attached to a being’s mental continuum.

The Abhidhammattha Saṅ gaha says: “The latent dispositions (Anusayā) are defilements which ‘lie along with’ (Anusenti) the mental process to which they belong, rising to the surface as obsessions whenever they meet with suitable conditions”. The term “latent dispositions” highlight the fact that the defilements are liable to arise as long as they have not been eradicated by the supramundane paths.

The latent tendency of skeptical doubt (Vicikicchā) is when the latent tendency of doubt (Vicikicchā’Nusaya) appears as a mental hindrance (Saṃyojana), it can manifest in connection with internal or

with external phenomena.⁵⁷ Actually, and understandably a well-known imagery for doubt is a fork on the road. That may represent these two kinds of doubts but more commonly refers to the fact that we have to make important choices at some point in our life's journey. The choice will be difficult or wrong when we are spiritually ignorant; or worse having made the wrong choice we are convinced that it is the right one which is delusion.

The latent tendency of doubt often works closely with the latent tendency of views. In other words, doubts often arise in us on account of our views. The Mahātaṇhāsaṅkhaya Sutta (MN 38) for example records that a monk's mindfulness (driven by the view of self-identity) holds a wrong view that it is the same consciousness that continues after death. Another case of pernicious doubt recorded in the Alagaddūpama Sutta (MN 22), relates how the misguided monk Ariṭṭha thinks that sexuality is not an obstacle of the spiritual life despite having taken the monastic vows of celibacy. In the Kosambiya Sutta (SN 12. 68) the Buddha says that a mind that is troubled by doubts and speculations is said to be an "obsessed mind" (Pariyutthita, citta).

On various occasions when his audience complain that they have uncertainties and doubts the Buddha would answer that they rightfully doubt as "doubt has arising in you over what is doubt worthy."

⁵⁸ In other words, not all doubts are blameworthy.

The Mahāparinibbāna Sutta (DN 2, 16) said that even during his last moments, the Buddha resolves the doubts of the wanderer

⁵⁷ Tan, Piya, **Sutta Discovery (SD)**, Vol. 31.3- "Anusaya: Latent tendencies," Singapore: Minding Centre, 2010, p. 25.

⁵⁸ Bodhi, Bhikkhu, (trs), **The Connected Discourses of the Buddha (Samyutta Nikaya)**, Boston: [Wisdom Publications](http://www.wisdompublications.com), 2000, p. 143.

Subbadda so that he was the last candidate to go forth before the Buddha. Later the Buddha encourages the assembly to voice any doubt they have so that it could be clarified as long as he was still alive. Thus, although the arising of doubt is an obstruction to deeper concentration and insight, it is an occasion for investigation, leading to matters that should be investigated.

The commentary on the Āhāra Sutta (SN 46. 51)⁵⁹ explains the following six things that are conducive to the abandoning doubt, namely:

- (a) Great learning;
- (b) Counter-questioning (regarding the aggregates, elements, sense bases, etc.);
- (c) Knowledge of morality practice;
- (d) Conviction;
- (e) Spiritual friendship;
- (f) Suitable speech.

The Parileyya Sutta (SN 22. 81) explains that doubt is like other defilements. It is a formation (Saṅkhāra) and as such should be regarded as impermanent, thus; the understanding about latent tendency of Vicikicchā.

That uncertainty, doubt, indecision in regard to the true Dhamma is a formation—what its source is, what its origin is, from what it was born and produced? When the uninstructed ordinary person is touched by a feeling born or connected with ignorance, craving arises: from there was born that formation in the saturation kind of heart defilement.

⁵⁹ Bodhi, Bhikkhu, (trs), **The Connected Discourses of the Buddha (Samyutta Nikaya)**, Boston: [Wisdom Publications](http://www.wisdompublications.com), 2000, p. 198.

2.5.3 Vicikicchā as the Defilements (Kilesā)

The definition of Defilements (Kilesa) is something undesirable that really needs to be controlled. Actually, the Buddha said that the mind by nature is pure and radiant. It is however ordinarily tarnished by unwholesome visiting forces which are known as defilement (Kilesa). This is the cause of suffering and the cycle of birth and death.

Doubt in the Buddha, his teachings and the order of monks, doubt in cause and effect, doubt in other fundamental questions of life, doubt in past and future existence signify spiritual doubt. From a Buddhist perspective, the inability to place confidence in the Buddha, the Dhamma, the Saṅgha and the training is doubting.

Its function is to cause wavering. It is manifested as indecisiveness and takes many sides.⁶⁰

There is different classification of Kilesa. The most commonly mentioned is the ten kinds of Kilesa according to the Abhidhammā Buddhist psychology view.

- (1) Greed (Lobha),
- (2) Hate (Dosa),
- (3) Delusion (Moha),
- (4) Conceit (Māna),
- (5) Wrong views (Diṭṭhi),
- (6) Doubt (Vicikicchā),
- (7) Torpor (Thīna),
- (8) Restlessness (Uddhacca),
- (9) Shamelessness (Ahirika); and

⁶⁰ Nandathitsa, Venerable, ashin, **Theravāda Buddhist Meditation**, Yangon: Hantharwadi Press, 1995, p. 35.

(10) Lack of moral dread or unconscientiousness (Anottappa).⁶¹

Vicikicchā is also one of them. It can also defile the mind. Unpurified mind which is defiled by Vicikicchā leads to evil deeds. With regard to practicing mindfulness, a practitioner cannot easily and directly process his practicing work because he or she is possessed by Vicikicchā (doubt).

There are six kinds of conditions for eradicating Vicikicchā:

- (1) Being rich in knowledge (Vahussutatā),
- (2) Asking repeated question (Paripucchakatā),
- (3) Being expert in vinaya discipline (Vinayepakataññutā),
- (4) Being steady of mind (Adhimokkhabulātā),
- (5) Having a good friend (Klyāṇ amittatā); and
- (6) Speaking proper words (Sappāyakathā).⁶²

Actually, those six kinds of conditions point to having a good spirit and good friend. Having a good spirit and good friend are mutually interdependent. For example, it should be understood in the relationship between the great Buddha and his two chief disciples and the great Buddha and Venerable Devadatta, and the Buddha and King Ajātasattu.

The two chief disciples originally had a good spirit when they first met Venerable Assaji, the youngest one of the first group of five monks (Pañcavaggiya) and later on the Buddha. They were all good friends. Although Venerable Devadatta met the Buddha he could achieve only high Jāna through practicing concentration meditation, not Magga, nor Phala or Nibbāna because he was a greedy person. He considered the

⁶¹ Bodhi, Bhikkhu, **A Comprehensive Manual of Abhidhamma**, Kandy: Buddhist Publication Society, 1999, p. 269.

⁶² Walshe, Maurice, (trs), **The Long Discourses of the Buddha (Digha Nikaya)**, Boston: [Wisdom Publications](http://www.wisdompublications.com), 1987, p. 260.

dispensation (Sāsanā) as a royal kingdom so he wanted to get the dispensation from the Buddha. In this regard, he tried repeatedly with the help of King Ajātasattu but was in vain. This is an example, even though venerable Devadatta really had a good friend like the Buddha, he did not have a good spirit. That's why; eventually, the earth or ground could not bear Devadatta's weighty evil physical body and swallow him into its deeper level.

The two chief disciples, Venerable Sāriputtarā and Venerable Moggalāna, originally had a good spirit; they became good friends with Venerable Assaji and they were able to eradicate the skeptical doubt (Vicikicchā). That's why, although there were mentioned the six kinds of conditions in Dighanikāya Sub-commentary, it had been said that those six kinds of conditions point to having a good spirit and a good friend.

All Buddhist schools and temples teach that through Tranquility (Samatha) practice meditation the Kilesas are pacified, though not eradicated, and through insight meditation (Vipassanā) the true nature of the Kilesas and the mind itself are understood. When the empty nature of the Self and the mind is fully understood there is no longer a root for disturbing emotions to be attached to and they lose their power to distract the mind. Buddhism speaks of the three root causes of suffering (greed, hatred and delusion) and states that they must be rooted out from one's mind in order for one to live in peace. Actually, in general, Buddhism teaches that intentions are the root source of either good or bad karma (actions).

Thus, Aryadasa Ratnasinghe wrote, "There is nothing called 'sin' in Buddhism in which actions are merely termed as meritorious (Kusala) and demeritorious (Akusala). In fact, Vipāka the result of one's

karma, may create low quality living, hardship, destruction and all means of disharmony in life; but it may also create healthy living, easiness, and harmony in life. Good deeds produce good results while bad deeds produce bad results. Kamma and Vipāka are a person's own actions and results. The Defilements (Kilesa) are so called because they afflict (Kilissanti) or torment the mind, or because they defile beings by dragging them down to a mentally soiled and depraved condition.

Chapter III

The Study Vicikicchā as a Factor for Five Hindrances and the Method for Overcoming it

3.1 Absence of Vicikicchā as Factor for Stream-enterer

In the Dutiyasariputta Sutta (Sn 4. 16) or Second Discourse to Sariputta the Buddha confirmed the four factors for stream-entry as following:

- (1) Association with superior persons (Sappurisasamsevo),
- (2) Hearing the true Dhamma (Saddhammassavanam),
- (3) Careful or wise attention (Yoneso-manasikaro),
- (4) Practice in accordance with the Dhamma (Dhammanudhammappatipatti).⁶³

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

The Commentary to Sangiti Sutta (DN 3. 33) Explains wise attention (Yoniso-manasikara) in this context as paying attention to impermanence, suffering and non-self, which essentially means directing the mind to development of insight (Vipassanna) in contrast to development of tranquility (Samatha).

Dhammanudhammapati-patti: Explains the preliminary practice that is conducive to supramundance state (i.e. Magga, Phala,

⁶³ Bodhi, Bhikkhu,(trs), **The Numerical Discourses of the Buddha (Anguttara Nikaya)**, Boston: [Wisdom Publications](http://www.wisdompublications.com), 2012, p. 209.

Nibbāna). There are so many definition to practice factor of stream enterer absence of Vicikicchā, This preliminary practice is identified in the sub-commentary as devotion to insight, which is basically Vipassanā development.

Through the Path of Stream-Winning (Sotāpatti-Magga) one ‘becomes’ free from the first 3 fetters (Saññojana) that bind beings to existence in the sensuous sphere: (1) Personality-belief (Sakkāya-Diṭṭhi;), (2) Sceptical Doubt (Vicikicchā;), (3) Attachment to mere rules and rituals (Silabbataparāmāsa; Upādāna).

So far, the discussion has focused on those who have reached the highest stage, of complete realization of Nibbāna. It is worthy however, to recognize the many individuals, especially householders, who have ‘entered the stream’ to Nibbāna or have caught a glimpse of Nibbāna. These individuals often have spouses and children, conducting their lives virtuously in the wider world.

Concerning doubts regarding the life of a stream-enterer it does not appear alien or frightening to contemporary people; rather it appears admirable. Many stream-enterers at the time of the Buddha were lay disciples and were exemplary people. They were virtuous, led contented family lives and were fully engaged in society, helping their community and the Buddhist religion. Although stream-enterers have reached a level of realization they still possess a subtle degree of defilement. They still grieve and lament when encountering separation. They still have preferences and aversions like other unawaken people although these are attenuated and do not lead to serious misconduct. Their suffering is minor compared to the suffering they have abandoned. They are firmly established and secure in a happy, wholesome and faultless life.

Vicikicchā are doubts and uncertainty about the Buddha, the Dhamma, the Saṅgha, and the training. These doubts prevent the mind from being active and advancing on the path.

Insight meditation gives rise to attainment of the four Maggas and leads to four kinds of noble person. They are stream-enterer, once-enterer, non-returner and Arahant. However, only the path of stream-attainment (Sopāpatti-Magga) will be expressed because the skeptical doubt (Vicikicchā) can be totally eradicated by it.

A stream-enterer (Sotāpanno) is one who has entered the stream that leads to Nibbāna for the first time, developing into the path of stream-attainment, eradicating false views and doubt (Diṭṭhi-Vicikicchā), and escaping from falling into woeful states. One becomes a stream-winner will be reborn seven times at the most. Furthermore, a Sotāpanna (Stream-Enterer) who has realized the first stage of enlightenment has eradicated wrong views (Diṭṭhi). He or she has developed wisdom and realized that all phenomena are Nāma and Rūpa, not self. Since he or she has eradicated Diṭṭhi, the cravings motivated by four Lobhamūla cittas associated with Diṭṭhi (Diṭṭhi-higatasampayutta) that give rise to a rebirth into four woeful states (Apāya) do not arise. However, for him or her, the cravings motivated by four types of Lobhamūla cittas dissociated from Diṭṭhi (Diṭṭhi-higatavippayutta) can still arise; he or she has not yet eradicated all kinds of attachment. The Sotāpanna still has conceit (Nāna). Conceit can arise from four types of Lobhamūlacittas which are without Diṭṭhi (Diṭṭhi-higatavippayutta). There may still be conceit when one considers oneself better than or equal to Sotapanna in comparing his or her achievement. Craving which is associated with these conceits can give

rise to a rebirth in human or deva planes and it is rooted so deeply that it can only be eradicated when one has become an Arahant.

Moreover, the path towards insight of stream-attainment (Sotāpatti maggañāṇa) totally eradicated skeptical doubt (Vicikicchā). It is described in Pāli in this way; - “*Cattāro diṭṭhihiṅgatasampayutta cittuppādā, vicikiccasahagata cittuppādo- ime dhammā dassanena pahātabbo*”.⁶⁴

Stream-enterer (Sotapanna): the first stage is that of Sotāpanna (sotāpanna) literally means “one who enters (Āpadyate) the stream (Sotas),” with the stream being the Noble Eightfold Path regarded as the highest Dhamma.

Alliteratively it has been speculated that one enters by way of the ear (Sota), that is one hears the Dhamma with a joyful and well-concentrated mind and is thereby liberated. Although this definition is not advocated in the commentaries of the Pāli Canon it is apparent in countless discourses whereupon simply hearing what the Buddha preached one suddenly gained realization. The heart was freed, knowledge and vision arose, Nivarana was glimpsed, and the auditor became part of the Savaka Sangho (the Noble Saṅgha).

The Buddha himself explained that he gave “gradual discourses” preparing the minds of his audience (his hearers) before leading them to insight.

A stream-enterer is guaranteed enlightenment after no more than seven successive rebirths, and possibly fewer. The stream-enterer can also be sure that he or she will not be reborn in any of the unhappy

⁶⁴ Rhys Davids, & Caroline. A. F., (ed & trs), **Buddhist Manual of Psychological Ethics (Dhammasangani)**, London: Pali Text Society, 1978, p. 204.

states of existence. One can only be reborn as a human being or higher no more than seven times. So, Vicikicchā is a factor of stream-enterer that will be abandoned.

3.2 Overcoming the Vicikicchā through Satipaṭṭhāna Meditation

According to Kankhāvitaraṇa-visuddhi overcoming doubt (Vicikicchā) is the understanding of the causal relationship between the mind (Nāma) and body (Rūpa) when grasped in the manner described above. Disciples who wish to fulfill it set forth in search of those that condition and result in the combination of mind and body just as a physician seeks to diagnose the origin of a sickness. They begin with a reflection that this combination of mind and body is not without cause since it is everywhere conditioned at all times, in all cases.

The Satipaṭṭhāna Nīvaraṇa Sutta (AN 9. 64) that the practice of the four Satipaṭṭhānas a way of removing these same five mental hindrances. However, the result of Satipaṭṭhāna can also bring about wisdom or mental calm (Samatha), depending on our ability and choice during the cultivation of Satipaṭṭhāna.

During the time of the Buddha there were ascetics who had raised such skeptical doubts about life as: “From where has this being come?” “What is his destiny?” etc. Even among those who could recollect their previous lives there were still some who constructed misleading speculative theories. Owing to this diversity of views skeptical doubt arises like a wavering in the mind of one who has reached a crossroad. The speculative views serve only to perpetuate that doubt. Skeptical doubt arises in one who thinks beyond his ability to do so. The Dhamma is beyond logical reasoning that works on the conceptual level.

As a result, such people end up confused and undecided. This paralysis the whole task of proceeding on the right way. The method of noting doubts mindfully when they arise will solve the problem in most cases. The more persistent ones can be sorted out by an interview with the meditation instructor for experience.

The real trouble occurs with people who come to meditate with little or no faith in the Triple Gem and without fully realizing the purpose, practice and nature of the Dhamma. Proper theoretical understanding removes, to a large extent, all these skeptical doubts as well as provide adequate faith for one to practice long enough to acquire more lasting faith gained through Vipassanā meditation.

Vicikicchā skeptical doubts can be cast away by:

1. Being learned in the Buddha's teaching.
2. Inquiring about the Buddha, the teaching and the order of real saints.
3. Understanding thoroughly the nature of the discipline.
4. Being decided (in ones' faith) about the truth of the Triple Gem.
5. Sympathetic talk and helpful companionship.
6. Stimulating talk that helps to dispel skeptical doubts.⁶⁵

These non-Buddhist ascetics had neither a knowledge of Delimitation of mind-and-matter nor a purification by overcoming doubt. They had attained Jhāna by basing their thoughts on the soul theory. Due to their lack of understanding they misinterpreted their meditative experience and became entangled in doubts and wrong views.

⁶⁵ Sujiva, Venerable, **Essentials of Insight Meditation Practice**, Selangor Darul Ehsan: Buddhist Wisdom Centre, 1991, p. 263.

To gain freedom from all doubts concerning the nature and pattern of existence it is necessary to understand the law of cause and effect clearly revealed to the world by the Buddha. This understanding is called knowledge of discerning cause and condition (Paccayapariggahañāṇa). With the maturing of this knowledge, purification by overcoming doubt is brought to completion.

The Āvaraṇa Nīvaraṇa Sutta (SM 46.38) is teaching the overcoming of the mental hindrances and attaining dhyana for the cultivation of insight (Vipassanā, bhāvana), here called “wisdom” (Vijjā). However, Vijjā here has a broader sense than Vipassanā, whose sense is connoting, but it also refers to the various spiritual knowledge of the different level of sainthood, including “final knowledge” (Aññā), that is, liberating wisdom of the Arahan.

Owing to his or her purification of view the meditator goes beyond the perception of a “being” or “meditator”. Advancing to purification by overcoming doubt, he or she begins to understand that consciousness always arises depending on a particular sense faculty and a sense object that there is no consciousness in the abstract.

Mahātaṇhāsaṅkhaya Sutta (MN 38) explains overcoming Vicikicchā through satipaṭṭhāna meditation that a consciousness dependently arises from the eyes and forms is reckoned as an “eye-consciousness”; a consciousness dependently from the ears and sounds is reckoned as an “ear-consciousness”; a consciousness dependently arising from the nose and smells is reckoned as a “nose-consciousness”; a consciousness dependently arising from the tongue and flavours is reckoned as a “tongue-consciousness”; a consciousness dependently arising from the body and tangibles is reckoned as a “body-

consciousness”; a consciousness dependently arising from the mind and ideas is reckoned as a “mind-consciousness.”

In the case of doubt (*Vicikicchā*) a clear distinction between what is wholesome or skillful and what is unwholesome or unskillful serves to counter the obstruction caused by doubt (*Vicikicchā*).⁶⁶ This obstruction is of considerable importance since without clearly knowing what is wholesome and what is unwholesome one will be unable to overcome lust, anger and delusion.⁶⁷ The hindrance of doubt plays a role not only in relation to the development of insight but also in the context of calmness meditation. This can be inferred from the *Upakkilesa Sutta* (AN 4. 50), a discourse concerned mainly with the development of concentration, where doubt (*Vicikicchā*) heads a list of mental obstructions of the attainment of absorption.

The ability to distinguish between wholesomeness and unwholesomeness needed for overcoming doubt can be developed with the help of an investigation of Dhamma concerning the awakening factor (*Dhammavicaya*). This indicates that from a Buddhist perspective the task of overcoming doubt is not a question of belief or faith. Rather, overcoming doubt takes place through a process of investigation which leads to clarity and understanding.

The fourth is purification by overcoming doubt (*Kaṅ khāvitarāṇa visuddhi*). ‘*Kaṅ khā*’ means doubt, ‘*Visuddhi*’ means purification by overcoming doubt. When a meditator has attained the second stage of insight knowledge- knowledge of cause and effect

⁶⁶ Walshe, Maurice, (trs), **The Long Discourses of the Buddha (Digha Nikaya)**, Boston: [Wisdom Publications](#), 1987, p. 197.

⁶⁷ Bodhi, Bhikkhu, (trs), **The Numerical Discourses of the Buddha (Anguttara Nikaya)**, Boston: [Wisdom Publications](#), 2012, p. 159.

(Paccayapariggaha-ñāṇa), he no longer has doubts about his past existence. Thus, he overcomes doubt. This is purification by overcoming doubt.⁶⁸

Some meditators find it difficult to observe intention before every action because they are not patient enough. Meditators must be patient with their actions or movements so that they can observe the intention before every actions or movement. When they are able to observe the intention before lifting their foot they will come to realize how intentions is related to the lifting of the foot. Then again when they are able to observe the intention before the pushing of the foot they will come to realize how intention is related to the pushing movement of the foot. When they are able to observe intention before the dropping of the foot they will also come to realize how intention is related to the dropping movement of the foot and so on. When they come to realize this relationship of cause and effect they have almost completely realized the law of cause and effect. By this realization they overcome doubt as to whether there is any personality or entity which is everlasting in us. Then what really exists is just a process of cause and effect.

If meditators thoroughly realize the cause and effect relationship they will see that it is just a natural process. Then there is no “person” that became a president; there is no “person” that became a king. Then what existed in the past? In the past, there existed only a process of cause and effect. Then meditators have no doubt about their past existence. In this way they can overcome doubts about their past

⁶⁸ Janakābhivamsa, Sayādaw, U Venerable, **Vipassanā Meditation**, Yangon: Chanmyay Yeiktha Meditation Centre, 1995, p. 86.

existence. This is known as purification by overcoming doubt. (Kaṅ khāvitaraṇ a-Visuddhi).

The fifth hindrance is Vicikicchā or doubt. You may have doubt about the Buddha, the Dhamma, the Saṃgha, or about the technique of meditation. Whatever doubt arises, it must be very attentively observed, you must be mindful of it as it really is. This is known as Dhammanupassana Satipaṭ ṭ hāna - mindfulness of dhamma. So, these are the four Foundations of Mindfulness:

1. Kayanupassana Satipaṭ ṭ hāna- contemplation of the body or physical phenomena.

2. Vedananupassana Satipaṭ ṭ hāna- contemplation of feeling or sensation.

3. Cittanupassana Satipaṭ ṭ hāna- contemplation of consciousness together with its concomitants or associates.

4. Dhammanupassana Satipaṭ ṭ hāna- contemplation of dhamma or mind objects.⁶⁹

If you have not done the practice but only think about it there will of course be an endless number of questions. A lot of these experiences described come about only when you undertake the practice. Only when you have experimented, tried it out, and through the guidance of a teacher would you gain experience and progress as well as confidence in the practice and training.

All of these activities lead up to the teachings themselves. First, you must have confidence in yourself. You must have confidence in what is good and true. You must be able to look up to the teachings and try the

⁶⁹ Janakabhivamsa, Ashin, Sayadaw, **Vipassana Meditation Lectures on Insight Meditation**, Yangon: Chanmyay Yeiktha Meditation Centre, 1977, p. 97.

practice long enough to see the results. Once the results have been realized skeptical doubt will be put aside and you can go on wholeheartedly into the striving.

This skeptical doubt is really a stumbling block in countries which are not culturally and historically Buddhist. In Buddhist countries the devotion may be “blind,” but if the method is correct and is accepted with a pure heart the practice will give practitioners the concentration and understanding that follow. But as I have said it can be dangerous if you end up with the wrong teacher. Then you can get stuck for a long time.

You are not asked to have complete confidence in the Buddha, the Dhamma, the Saṅgha, and the Training. It is not expected that you should believe or swallow everything connected to them. Rather you are advised to carefully accept things and to carefully try things out. If one has a clear and open mind and if one really has the heart to progress and improve oneself spiritually without any preconceptions and without any prejudices, then it is not possible that when one tries out the real Dhamma one would not see the results.⁷⁰

Knowing more about the Buddha is a great way to spiritually strengthen ourselves. If we are faith-inclined it can inspire us to go on to learn more about the Dhamma so that we will grow wiser in our faith. Knowing the Dhamma is always beneficial because we will come across the Dhamma again and again in our lives no matter whether we ourselves are “Buddhist” or not. This knowledge gives us the vocabulary and the mental tools with which we can correctly identify what is troubling us and the skills with which to solve such troubles.

⁷⁰ Sujiva, Venerable, Ashin, **Essentials of Insight Meditation Practice**, Kuala Lumpur: Malaysia Buddhist Association, 2000, p. 225.

Like those familiar with the sounds of a drum or a conch-shell says the Sotānugata Sutta (AN 4. 191) that if we are familiar with the Dhamma we would have no doubt about it when we hear it again. The Dhammassavana Sutta (AN 5. 202) as we have noted says that we could overcome doubt (Kaṅ khaṃ Vitarati) by merely listening to the Dhamma, such as the wanderer Dīgha, Nakha, as reported in the Dighanakha Sutta (MN 74).⁷¹

Although listening to the Dhamma may occasion the attaining of stream winning in some (especially those who have the spiritual capacity to realize the truth) this is not always the case. Nevertheless, clearing our doubts prepares ourselves for the arising of the Dhamma-eye. A number of discourses record junior monks visiting elder monks to question them to clear their doubt (Kaṅ khaṃ paṭ ivinodenti) although such occasions did not always make stream winners of them.

The same goes for understanding moral virtue and the Vinaya just as lay followers need to well understand the precepts and the value of moral virtue. Monastics on their part need to remove ignorance and doubts regarding the Vinaya, which explains why the title given to the commentary on the monastic code of conduct (Pāṭ imokkha) is kaṅ khā vitarāṇ ī, the “Dispeller of Doubt.” Monastics who understand the Vinaya well and are diligent in practicing it will find it easier to direct their energies to their avowed spiritual life.

The Kaṅ khā Revata Sutta (Ud 5. 7) asks, “tells us how, while one is seated in meditation, one reviews his own purification through overcoming doubt (Kaṅ khā, Vitarāṇ a, Visuddhi).”

⁷¹ Nanamoli, Bhikkhu, & Bodhi, Bhikkhu, (trs), **The Middle Length Discourses of the Buddha (Majjhima Nikaya)**, Kandy: Buddhist Publication Society, 1995, p. 205.

As this reference shows the removal of Kaṅ khā, a synonym for Vicikicchā, is not only vital to the proper keeping of the Vinaya, but also in spiritual development which constitutes a distinct stage in a series of purification steps leading up to liberation.

The urgency of overcoming doubt is reflected in the fact that a number of important Commentaries list the following ways to overcome and prevent doubt:

- (1) A good knowledge of the discourses,
- (2) Clarification of the discourses through questioning,
- (3) Being well versed in the Vinaya,
- (4) Strong commitment (great resolution)
- (5) Spiritual friends, and
- (6) Conducive conversation.⁷²

Doubt (Vicikicchā) results when the mind is confused. We may be unsure of our practice or of meditation in general. Forms of doubt include uncertainty, resistance, murkiness, indecision and inability to commit. Perhaps more than the other hindrances doubt can derail a meditation process and lead the meditator to quit practicing altogether. Therefore, we have to be vigilant in order to recognize it and to be committed to working skillfully to abandon it. Self-doubt is rampant in our society and can be amplified in the early stages of practice. It is helpful to recognize self-doubt and the negative self-talk that accompanies it as just some thoughts. They do not have to be believed or

⁷² Ireland, John D., (trs), **The Udāna and the Itivuttaka**, Kandy: Buddhist Publication Society, 1998, p. 134.

taken seriously and can be let go of. All thoughts are impermanent and will dissipate. Doubt will always fade away.⁷³

There is a role for discernment of skillful doubt in practice. Rather than blindly accepting the teachings or a teacher the Buddha recommended that we practice and see the truth for ourselves. He commended using discernment and the wise counsel of other practitioners to determine if a practice of teaching results in harm to ourselves or others. If it causes harm it should be abandoned. If it is not harming and beneficial it should be pursued. Some antidotes to doubt include studying the Dhamma, reflecting on the teachings, discussing one's doubts with a teacher, reflecting on one's good qualities, acknowledging one's faith in practice and taking (or re-taking) the 3 refuges.

The hindrance of doubt (*Vicikicchā*), the final one in this classic list of obstructions to concentration, is likened to muddy water that is stirred up, turbid, muddy and set in a darkened room. In such a state one cannot see a reflection clearly. Doubt (*Vicikicchā*) as a hindering force is distinct from intelligent inquiry. The hindrance of doubt causes an exhaustion of mind that comes with excessive conjecture. It might take the form of doubt in your own ability, doubt in the teacher or doubt in the teachings. Doubt can manifest as indecisiveness; it can come cloaked as dogmatic opinions; and it may perpetuate the taking of a factional side in a conflict.

When mindfulness is not yet strong enough to penetrate the object of attention then the mind might do what it thinks. Habitual thinking rarely leads to revelation. Questions will inevitably arise as your

⁷³ Hardin, Jeff, **An Introduction to Insight Meditation**, California: Sacramento Insight Meditation, 2010, p.58.

practice develops since you cannot fully understand this process until you have genuinely experienced it. Yet it will help to suspend doubt (Vicikicchā), curb the tendency to intellectualize about the phenomena and stop the thoughts before they result in a conjecture. If agitation, perplexity, indecisiveness or excessive analysis occupy your attention, then exhaustion and doubt will often follow in its wake.

You must set aside the tendency to doubt in order to see the true nature of mind. Only then will you no longer have doubts (Vicikicchā) about it. The realization of the true nature of the objects of contemplation without exertion and without pursuing good or bad sensations in the course of the contemplation which lasts for a long time is called “Sankharupekkhaṇa”. While such realization is going on automatically extremely fast and active knowledge appears. This knowledge that advances in a big rush towards a noble path is known as “Vatthana-Magga” is called “Vatthana-Gamini.

In many Buddhist traditions, insight meditation is based on the Four Foundations of Mindfulness as mentioned in the Satipatthana Sutta. (MN 10), the main aim of Buddhist Meditation is to purify the mind of all negative tendencies such as greed, anger and delusion, through mind control.⁷⁴ When all negative tendencies are removed, the mind will be freed from suffering. The actual aim is very exalted, as it aims at the complete eradication of suffering. This process does not only happen in or cover one existence, it spans over limitless existences. Generally, there are two types of meditation tranquility meditation and insight meditation.

⁷⁴ Sujiva, Venerable, **Essentials of Insight Meditation Practice**, Selangor Darul Ehsan: Buddhist Wisdom Centre, 1991, p. 47.

Whichever one you practice, the main factor in mental development is mindfulness.

Insight meditation is different. It does not just involve holding the mind still. It also involves penetrative observation. This kind of penetrative observation, without any thinking, without any conceptualization, allows the mind to realize the true nature of things as they really are, things like the nature of our mind and body processes, the nature of the person and the nature of the world. With the realization of the nature of existence, the mind no longer has conflicts with the nature, the mind becomes together with nature, and the mind realizes the true nature of things. Consequently, the mind becomes purified. In the process, the mind transcends everything it transcends conceptual reality, it transcends conditioned reality and finally it goes into absolute reality, which is the unchanging state. After much practice, it is this that is experienced by the mind.

In meditation, we watch “rising” and “falling” of the abdomen. Beginners may find it very difficult to fix their minds on the “rising” and “falling” of the abdomen because it is not something they are used to observing. So, it would help if you put your hand on the abdomen, feel it as it goes up and down, or rising and falling. When the hindrances are less, you can follow it better. One has to bear in mind, not to expect this “rising” and “falling” to be constant.

It is not a constant object. It is not that easy an object to observe. Often, it can be very elusive. It comes and it goes. Sometimes it is fast, sometimes it is slow; sometimes it is there and sometimes it is not. Your aim is not to control the “rising” and “falling.” Your aim is to observe and follow the phenomena, the processes concerned with the

“rising” and “falling.” Usually the “rising” and “falling” is what we call the wind element, Vayo dhatu. Here, Vayo dhatu is the most prominent of the four elements earth, water, fire, and wind. It has the characteristics of tension, vibration, and motion.

There is one more object, which I need to elaborate for the sake of beginners. This is the pain. What we have been speaking of, all this while, comes under the mindfulness concerning body or the body activities and processes “rising” and “falling,” “sitting” and “touching,” walking, eating and so forth. This comes under *kaya* and this *kaya* comes under *rupa*, which comes under material qualities. It will eventually end up mainly on the four elements (earth, fire, water, and wind elements) and you will find that, largely, it is the wind element which is more prominent the element of motion, tension, vibration, and so forth. When you can single out that characteristic and watch it as a process, you may be mindful enough to comprehend the three universal characteristics of impermanence, suffering, and non-self; the clear experience and comprehension of which is insight.

In the beginning of the practice,⁷⁵ we may not be so aware of these mental states. We are more concerned with trying to hold the mind onto the “rising” and “falling,” the “sitting” and “touching,” on the walking and sitting and so forth. However, as we try to do this, we become very aware of the mind. That is so because we are trying to control it. In the past, we have been used to taking it for granted. We may know there is a mind but we do not really look into it. Now you have to

⁷⁵ Sujiva, Venerable, **Essentials of Insight Meditation Practice**, Selangor Darul Ehsan: Buddhist Wisdom Centre, 1991, p. 52.

control the mind, so finally you need to deal with it Concentration peace of mindfulness.

Tranquility meditation is the concentration of the tranquil and peaceful mind. It involves the very controlled or mindful action of holding the mind to an object, and does not allow the mind to wander. The mind remains completely still, like a stilled candle, neither flickering nor fluttering. This is the nature of tranquility meditation. When this happens, to take practice meditation concentration mindfulness the mind becomes very peaceful and powerful, because it is a concentration of pure states of mind and happiness fully position heart of mind.

3.3 Vicikicchā as a Main Factor of Social Conflict

Vicikicchā commonly translated as ‘Doubt’ from the Buddhist perspective is the doubt mostly concerning the Buddha, the Dhamma and the Saṅgha. The fetter of uncertainty is defined as doubt in the Awakening of the Buddha, the truth of his Dhamma, and the practice of his noble disciples.⁷⁶ Those leading a virtuous life in the quest to end all suffering should give all of their confidence and faith in the Buddha and his doctrine. A doubtful mind is always liable to distrust and disbelieve which could be the prime cause of deviation from his or her goal. Here this chapter concerns Doubt as a hindrance (it is the same for a Buddhist practitioner and non-Buddhist) denoting unsteadiness in a particular topic which could end up in a misunderstanding or dispute which in turn, causes conflicts in a society. It is without wish to cure (Vigatā Cīkicchā), thus it is uncertainty (Vicikicchā). It has the characteristics of doubt. Its

⁷⁶ Bodhi, Bhikkhu, (trs), **The Numerical Discourses of the Buddha (Anguttara Nikaya)**, Boston: [Wisdom Publications](http://www.wisdompublications.com), 2012, p. 196.

function is to cause wavering. It is manifested as indecisiveness, or as taking many sides. Its proximate cause is unwise attention. It should be regarded as obstructive to practice.⁷⁷

Among the five hindrances doubting the Blessed One is the cause of ignorance and suffering. Sensual desire, ill-will, stiffness and torpor, restlessness and regret, and doubt, the Buddha called these five hindrances “corruptions of the mind” and “weakness of wisdom.” He said that they lead to pain, blindness, and ignorance, and he compared them to debt, disease, imprisonment, slavery, and danger of a deserted journey.⁷⁸

When doubt is arising in an individual it blinds a person from faith in others, giving rise to unlawful thought and causing destruction to lives and nature. Even during the Buddha’s time there were kingdoms that were in constant doubt and fear of being attacked by other kingdoms, always their minds were unrest and without peace. A doubtful mind leads to the lack of right understanding. A mind with doubt is liable to suspiciousness and this tendency is a barrier to understanding. Today, the society that we live in is ripe with people who have a trust issue and the so called human value has been buried deep within, replaced by distrust and disbelief. As a result, it can be clearly seen that people today have lots of friends to talk to on an online site but barely know their neighbours; tend to trust a stranger easily but always doubting one’s own partner or family members and spend more time with a machine than speak to the person next door.

⁷⁷ Ehara N. R. M., Soma Thera, & Kheminda Thera. (trs), **The Path of Freedom (Vimuttimaggā)**, Kandy: BPS, 1995, p. 479.

⁷⁸ Bodhi, Bhikkhu, **Transcendental Dependent Arising: A Translation and Exposition of the Upanisa Sutta**, <http://www.accesstoinsight.org/lib/authors/bodhi/Whee-1277.html>, accessed on 20 December 2016.

It was clearly said by the Blessed One; “Brahman. When a man dwells with his heart possessed and overwhelmed by doubt-and-wavering... he cannot know or see ... Imagine a bowl of water, agitated, stirred up muddied and put in a dark place. If a man with a good eyesight were to look at the reflection of his own face in it, he would not know or see it as it really was. In the same way, Brahman, when a man dwells with his heart possessed and overwhelmed by doubt-and wavering... he cannot know or see it as it really is, what it is to his own profit, to the profit of others and to the profit of both. But an open mind will always be attentive of those barriers and thus not apt to intolerance. Brahman, when a man dwells with his heart not possessed, not overwhelmed by doubt-and-wavering... then he knows and sees it as it really is, what it is to his own profit, to the profit of others and to the profit of both himself and others.”⁷⁹

Further in the Kālāma Sutta (AN 3. 65) Buddha vividly describes when doubts arise and what has to be done and what not.

When there are reasons for doubt uncertainty is born. Therefore, according to Kālāmas Sutta (AN 3. 65), don’t go by reports, by legends, by traditions, by scripture, by conjecture, by inference, by analogies, by agreement through pondering views, by probability or by the thought that “This contemplation is our teacher.” When you know for yourself that, ‘These qualities are unskillful; these qualities are blameworthy; these qualities are criticized by the wise; these qualities,

⁷⁹ Bodhi, Bhikkhu, (trs), **The Connected Discourses of the Buddha (Samyutta Nikaya)**, Boston: [Wisdom Publications](http://www.wisdompublications.com), 2000, p. 205.

when undertaken & carried out, lead to harm and suffering’, then you should abandon them.⁸⁰

As every problem in the end can be solved so doubt can be cleared and ceases to be a problem. “No one in the world, Dhotaka, can I release from doubting. But knowing the most excellent Dhamma, you will cross over the flood.”⁸¹ And by listening and practicing the true Dhamma one achieves five rewards. The Blessed One said, “There are these five rewards in listening to the Dhamma. Which five? One hears what one has not heard before. One clarifies what one has heard before. One gets rid of doubt. One’s views are made straight. One’s mind becomes serene.”

The Blessed One had on many occasions guided many householders towards happy and peaceful living. The best example of them is given in the ‘Nakula Mātā and Nakula Pīpā’. The Singalovāda Sutta (DN 3. 31) clearly describes the proper ways of honouring parents, teachers, ascetics, friends and proper management of one’s earnings. The Parābhava Sutta (Sn 1. 6) also describes the ways through which one’s spirit may fall and above all the very basic five precepts are given by the monks to householders in order to purify one’s actions. Purified actions will always give rise to a peaceful mental state eventually resulting in upholding of the peace within oneself and establishing peace with others.

To be a part of any social group or even to share one’s life with another partner faith plays a vital role in upholding its very basic principles. It is the binding factor among two individuals or a group of

⁸⁰ Bodhi, Bhikkhu, (trs), **The Numerical Discourses of the Buddha (Anguttara Nikaya)**, Boston: [Wisdom Publications](#), 2012, p. 289.

⁸¹ Bodhi, Bhikkhu, (trs), **The Connected Discourses of the Buddha (Samyutta Nikaya)**, Boston: [Wisdom Publications](#), 2000, p. 196.

individuals. The gem of faith is set up in the heart, it causes the hindrances to disappear, the defilements to settle, and the mind to become clear, lucid, and serene.⁸²

Actually, the Buddha's teachings are meaningful (Satta), together with well do sounding letters (Sabyañjana), complete in its entirety (Kevalaparipuṇṇa), deep (Gambhīra), difficult to understand (Duddasa), just not a theory (Atakkāvacara), and known by the wise (Paṇḍitavedanīya). In fact, without knowing the right meanings of the words in the Sutta that one wants to study one cannot attain a right understanding. Hence it is very important to know the meaning of the words correctly and also one should be more careful on finding out the meaning of the teachings of the Buddha.

In Pāli literature the word “conflict” is used synonymous with Virodha, Viggaha, Sanghattana, Vivāda, herein the word “Raṇa” is used. In describing the ideological conflicts that were prevalent among various religious groups, three terms—Kalahā (contention), Viggaha (dispute), and Vivāda (debate) were quite often used.

The Vedic “Raṇa” means both enjoyment and battle. The word “Raṇa” in Pāli bears many meanings (Kilesā) (A + Raṇa).⁸³ It also means intoxication and desire. Besides, it can mean war, battle, sin, or fault.⁸⁴ Sometimes, it refers to papa and raga. In the Tika of Dhammasaṅganī aṭṭhakathā, it means dust, mist of dust, fight, war (against path), pain, anguish and distress, and cause of grief or harm. In

⁸² Conse, Edward, **Milindapañha: the Way of Wisdom** (The Wheel No. 65/66), Kandy: Buddhist Publication Society, 2000, pp. 30-31.

⁸³ Hote Sein, U, **Pāli-Myanmar Dictionary**, Yangon: Pitaka Byuhar Association, 1985, p. 124.

⁸⁴ Buddhadatta, A. P., Mahāthera, **Concise Pāli-English Dictionary**, Kandy: Motilal Banarsidass Publisher, 1957, p. 293.

the PTS Pāli dictionary, it bears the meanings of the cause of grief by Raga, Dosa and Moha, ten kinds of defilements and fourteen unwholesome mental factors (Akusala Cetasikas), the fruit of unwholesomeness, the waging of a battle, the dhamma such as raga, etc., that tortures beings, the fault of dispraise, the mist of defilements and a battle field.

In Pāli grammar when added with the negative prefix “a”, the meaning of “raṇ a” becomes its opposite. Therefore “Araṇ a” refers to the state of non-war or free from the mist of defilements.

Despite the miraculous achievements made by science and technology the suffering and sorrow of humanity have not decreased. On the contrary violence and aggression, manifested through wars and conflicts, as well as hatred and mistrust have increased at an alarming rate. Most people cannot live or move peacefully without fear and insecurity. Humans are responsible for creating the suffering, troubles and the tense situations of the present world. Most of the miseries in the world are created by human beings; therefore, every human being has to stand up and work to change the world by finding the sources of such conflicts and solving them. This is possible as humans are the captain or leaders of our own destinies.

Human beings are divergent basically according to their emotions, mental states, behaviors, wrong thinking and upbringing, etc., at the individual level. At the global or collective level, they differ in nationality, religions, belief systems, cultures, traditions, etc. Thus, it is not easy to search for a commonality in the diversity. Being drowned in egotism (Attadiṭ ṭ hi) however a person tends to forcefully make that

diversity into one's own identity or suppress the others' opposing thoughts. As a result of this several conflicts and wars have occurred.

Another conspicuous reason for conflicts and wars is the huge profit earned through sale of firearms and war's paraphernalia. This is a man-made conflict by dint of greed. The war industry with its large and powerful corporations all over the world is instigating conflicts between peoples, races, religions and classes, and in due course pocketing huge earnings. Apart from these are several conflicts with various causes in different areas both natural and man-made such as social, political, economic and religious conflicts.

According to the Buddhist perspective all the chaos and destruction that we witness around the world are the direct result of polluted human minds from excessive greed, hatred and delusion, and the false notion that we are different from others. The greater importance placed by Buddhism upon inner reflection stems from its doctrinal basis that the roots of violence and conflict are within the mind. Thus, in the Araṇ avibhaṅ ga Sutta (MN 139) the Buddha instructed that the origins of various conflicts were in the psyche of ten defilements (Kilesā).⁸⁵ They are known as 'Raṇ a' which causes the conflicts. When one is able to remove these defilements, it is called 'Araṇ a', free of conflict. Hence the cause of any conflict lies internally in the mental operations within each human being.

3.4 Destruction of Vicikicchā as a Pre-requisite for Enlightenment

⁸⁵ Nanamoli, Bhikkhu, & Bodhi, Bhikkhu, (trs), **The Middle Length Discourses of the Buddha (Majjhima Nikaya)**, Kandy: Buddhist Publication Society, 1995, p. 253.

The Noble Eightfold Path is also referred to as the mundane path (Lokiya) when pertaining to those still unliberated. When followed diligently it leads to the supramundane path (Lokuttara) and the final extinction of suffering. Here we are concerned with the mundane path and the difficulties we may encounter as we tread this path and how we can look to the Dhammapada as a fountain of encouragement. The mundane path consists of the above three Trainings at the mundane level, the six mundane purifications and the Requisites for Enlightenment as far as they are associated with that mundane purification. The supramundane Dhamma heritage consists of the three Trainings on the supramundane level, the supramundane seventh Purification, and the supramundane Requisites for Enlightenment. There are eight factors in this path which are traditionally described as belonging to three groups:

- (1) Wisdom = Right view and right thought;
- (2) Morality = Right speech, right action and right livelihood;
- (3) Concentration = Right effort, right mindfulness and right concentration.

When one follows this path, one has to go step by step according to the given sequence. If that were not the case one may be able to gain wisdom and concentration before morality is established which is not possible. Morality is an essential prerequisite for concentration which in turn promotes wisdom.⁸⁶ All of these eight Path Factors are present in the “supramundane Purification by knowledge and vision” (Lokuttara-Nānadassana-Visuddhi). In the preceding mundane purifications, Right Speech, Right Action and Right Livelihood are

⁸⁶ Mendis, N. K. G., Dr., **Inspiration from the Dhammapada**, Kandy: Buddhist Publication Society, 1980, p. 3.

present only in the Purification of virtue (Sīla-Visuddhi). They are now present in purification of Mind (Citta-Visuddhi) and the rest.

Hence within the context of the Requisites for Enlightenment (Bodhipakkhiya Dhamma) purification of virtue (Sīla-Visuddhi) is of the nature of “dependent of detachment” (Viveka-Nissita), etc., in accordance with the following text (from the Maggana Vibhange):

“He develops Right Speech, dependent on detachment, dependent on absence of lust, dependent on cessation, culminating in relinquishment. He develops Right Action, right livelihood, dependent on detachment.”

Actually, it may not refer to the virtue (Sīla) that has a leaning towards happy forms of existence (Bhava-Sampatti) and is dependent on the round of rebirths (Vatta-Nissita). The Sīla-Visuddhi of those who have consciously given-up attempts to attain the Holy Paths and Fruits in this life is not genuine Ādibrahmacariyaka-Sīla. “Virtue belonging to the essence of the holy life” and thus is not of the genuine Bodhipakkhiya class. If effort be made however towards the attainment of Nibbāna in the next life it can be Pārami-Sīla which is part of Vicattanissita Sīla “Virtue tending towards the ending of the round of rebirth”. In actual fact as, one progresses along this path there is a simultaneous association between the different links in varying degrees.

Having given up doubt he dwells as one who has passed beyond doubt. Being free from uncertainty about wholesome things he has cleansed his mind from doubt.

While attempting to follow the Noble Eightfold Path skeptical doubts (Vicikicchā) may arise in the mind of the disciples. There may be doubts (Vicikicchā) about the teachings of the Buddha, about the past and

future, about the conditionality of existence, and whether there is any purpose served by leading a virtuous, wholesome life. These doubts (Vicikicchā) form the fifth of the five mental hindrances to spiritual progress and the second of the ten fetters that bind beings to the wheel of existence. These doubts arise from time to time, in varying degrees in all humans regardless of the faith (Saddhā) in the threefold gems because the faith is still shake able.

It becomes unshakeable only when the first stage of the supramundane path is attained. It is only then that skeptical doubt (Vicikicchā) is eliminated forever. Until we reach this stage we should always be mindful both when there is doubt (Vicikicchā) and when doubts (Vicikicchā) are not present. Furthermore, the moment doubt arises it should be mindfully noted.

Otherwise a train of unwholesome thoughts will follow. The mere awareness of the arising of doubt (Vicikicchā) at the moment it arises will dispel the doubt (Vicikicchā) because the awareness has now replaced the doubt (Vicikicchā), i.e., a thought and only one thought can exist in the mind at one time. With this practice of mindfulness supported by wise attention, investigation of reality, noble friendship and suitable conversation fewer and fewer doubts (Vicikicchā) will arise and less and less frequently. The householder in a non-Buddhist environment where suitable friendship and conversation are not available can overcome lack of these blessings by resorting to quiet contemplation and reading of the Buddhist texts. If the disciples, living in accordance with Buddhist principles, get the feeling of being different because all of the others around are conducting themselves in ways contrary to the Buddha's teachings it would perhaps help to remember the following verse:

*Few are those among all men
who to the further shore will go.
The rest of mankind truly,
Just runs along this hither shore.*⁸⁷

There may be times when the disciple who is leading a virtuous way of life in accordance with the past will experience rather bitterly the vicissitudes of this existence. At the same time the disciple may find others who are not leading wholesome lives being spared these harsh experiences. They are enjoying comforts and are apparently happy. These seeming injustices could have a disturbing influence on the disciple in the earlier stages. In situations like this while cultivating the four sublime virtues of loving kindness, compassion, sympathetic joy and equanimity, one should recall to mind the following two verses which in themselves lend strong support for the belief in kamma and rebirth:

*Even an evil-doer meets with good
as long as evil ripens not.
But when that evil bears its fruit
the evil-doer will with the evil meet.*⁸⁸

*Even a good man meets with evil,
as long as goodness ripens not.
But when his goodness bears its fruit,
the good man reaps the good result.*⁸⁹

At all times when we need encouragement the following verse will provide just that. In this context the word “Bhikkhu” which is the

⁸⁷ Mya Tin, Daw, (trs), **The Dhmmmapada: Verses and Stories**, Yangon: Myanmar Pitaka Association, 1986, p. 85.

⁸⁸ Mya Tin, Daw, (trs), **The Dhmmmapada: Verses and Stories**, Yangon: Myanmar Pitaka Association, 1986, p. 119.

⁸⁹ Ibid, p.120.

Pāli for a monk is applicable to one who is dedicated to the practice of the Teachings.

*He who dwells in Dhamma and delights in it,
on Dhamma thinks again and again.*

*Remembering the Dhamma well,
such Bhikkhu will not fall sway from Dhamma.⁹⁰*

This is an essential prerequisite for progress along the path. The disciple will, as progress is made, feel the disturbing effect of even the slightest lapse in *Sīla*. Even the Noble Eightfold Path which can be reduced down to morality, concentration, and wisdom, or *Sīla*, *Samādhi*, and *Paññā*, all start from the mind. *Sīla* is the normal state of the mind which is unaffected by conditioning. *Samādhi* is the mind that is firm and stable. And *Paññā* is the mind that has gained wisdom. Each of these will be noted mindfully as they occur and every effort will be made to avoid their reappearance. May all Buddhists find this path to enlightenment, the path that the Buddha has so carefully paved for us.

The task of dispelling *Vicikicchā* (skeptical doubt) is comprised in the task of destroying *Sakkāya-Diṭṭhi*. *Sacchikiriya-Siddhi* means the completion of the task of realizing *Nirodha Saccā* (the Noble Truth of the Cessation of Suffering) both bodily and mentally. This task consists of the suppression and destruction of the *Kilesas* (defilements). *Bhāvanā-Siddhi* means the development of the three *Sikkhās* of *Sīla* (morality), *Samādhi* (mental concentration) and *Paññā* (wisdom) until the attainment of *Lokuttara Magga Saccaā* (supramundane path leading to the cessation of suffering).

⁹⁰ Ibid, p. 364.

Also, the seven purifications beginning with morality and their sub-divisions constitute as many kinds of iddhi in the sense of potencies in their respective fields.

3.5 The Characteristics of Stream-enterer

Stream enterer is clearly defined in the Suttas and that definition is based upon abandoning of the 3 fetters of self-identification, doubt, and grasping to rites and rituals. It is also defined in a number of different Suttas regarding the arising of the characteristics of the stream enterer. Stream enterer is nowhere defined on the basis of an experience. It would be far more accurate to say that an Enlightenment experience is defined as such on the basis of its results rather than the other way around. If stream enterer is the result of a particular event then by definition the precipitating event was Magga-Phala because the Path has been attained and the Fruits realized. If on the other hand, evidence of Stream enterer is not subsequently apparent then the Path and Fruit have not been realized and no matter how wonderful or exalting the event was it was not Magga-Phala.

There are three possible cases regarding so-called enlightenment experience:

(1) An identifiable experience following which the *yogi* who has meditated becomes a stream entrant as demonstrated by the abandoning of fetters and the manifestation of the characteristics. The stream enterer validated the experience as genuine.

(2) An apparently supramundane enlightenment event that is not followed by the lasting transformation corresponding to stream enterer. The apparent Magga-Phala event is invalidated.

(3) No identifiable Magga-Phala event, but stream enterer as evidenced by the abandoning of fetters and the manifestation of the characteristics.

The life of a stream-enterer does not appear alien or frightening to contemporary people; rather it appears admirable. Many of the stream-enterers at the time of the Buddha were lay disciples and were exemplary people. They were virtuous, led contented family lives, and were engaged in society, helping their community and the Buddhist religion. Although stream-enterers have reached a level of realization they still possess a subtle degree of defilement. They still grieve and lament when encountering separation.⁹¹ They still have preferences and aversions like unawaken people although these are attenuated and do not lead to serious misconduct. They are firmly established and secure in a happy, wholesome and faultless life. The Buddha once said:

Bhikkhus, those for whom you have compassion and those who are receptive to friends, colleagues, relatives or kinsmen, those you should exhort, settle and establish in the four factors of stream-entry.⁹²

Association with people of integrity is a factor for stream-entry.

Listening to the true Dhamma is a factor for stream-entry.

Appropriate attention is a factor for stream-entry.

*Practice in accordance with the Dhamma is a factor for stream-entry.*⁹³

⁹¹ Mya Tin, Daw, (trs), **The Dhmmapada: Verses and Stories**, Yangon: Myanmar Pitaka Association, 1986, p. 278.

⁹² Buddhaghosa, **Sumaṅ gāla-Vilāsinī: Commentary on the Dīgha-Nikāya**, Parts 2-3, edited by W. Stede, London: the Oxford University Press, 1931 (Part 2), 1932 (Part 3), pp. 363-4.

⁹³ Bodhi, Bhikkhu, (trs.), **The Connected Discourses of the Buddha (Samyutta Nikaya)**, Boston: Wisdom Publication, 2000, p. 298.

The attribute of a stream-enterer that was mentioned earlier is the abandonment of the first three fetters (Saṃyojana) personality-view, doubt, and attachment to rules and rituals. Freedom from these fetters is an absence of certain qualities. There is however much emphasis in the scriptures on positive, active qualities.

There are many of these active qualities but essentially, they can be put into a group of five qualities:⁹⁴ faith (Saddhā), moral conduct (Sīla), learning (Suta), generosity (Cāga), and wisdom (Paññā). Below is a description of the attributes of stream-enterers both in terms of active, present qualities and of abandoned qualities.

(A) Active qualities

(1) Faith: stream-enterers possess a firm trust in truth, goodness, and the law of cause and effect. They have confidence in wisdom: that it is possible for human beings to overcome suffering by realizing the conditioned nature of reality. They have faith in the virtuous people who follow this path of wisdom and have a profound respect for the “triple gem” (Ratanattaya). Their faith is secure and unshakeable because it is rooted in true understanding.

(2) Moral conduct: their behaviour through body and speech is appropriate and their mode of livelihood is honest and upright. Their conduct is ‘free’- it is not enslaved by craving. They act in accord with the truth to promote virtue, simplicity, compassion, peace and concentration. Generally speaking this means following the five precepts which is considered perfect moral conduct.

(3) Learning: ‘those learned in spiritual knowledge’ (Sutavant), they have studied the ‘noble teachings’ (Ariya-Dhamma).

⁹⁴ AN 5, 91: **Pathama Sampada Sutta**.

(4) Generosity: they delight in giving and sharing; they are not stingy.

(5) Wisdom: they possess the knowledge of a ‘learner’ (Sekha); they see very clearly into the four noble truths, dependent origination, and the three characteristics; they abandon all wrong views (Micchā-Diṭ ṭ hi); they have no doubt concerning the four noble truths; they know the world as it truly is.

(6) Social action: stream-enterers abide by the ‘virtues conducive to communal life’ (Sārāṇ īya-Dhamma) which engender social unity and concord. They can do this perfectly because they maintain the last virtue (of right view, below), which connects to all others. These virtues are as follows:⁹⁵

(1) Physical acts of loving-kindness (Mettā-Kāya-Kamma); mutual assistance and respect.

(2) Speech expressing loving-kindness (Mettā-Vacī-Kamma); well-intentioned advice and instruction; well-mannered speech.

(3) Thoughts of loving-kindness (Mettā-Mano-Kamma); thinking well of others; wishing to assist others; cheerful demeanor.

(4) Sharing lawful gains with others (Sādhāraṇ a-Bhogitā).

(5) To possess similar virtuous conduct as one’s companions (Sīla-Sāmaññatā); acting in an agreeable manner.

(6) To share right, noble views with one’s companions (Diṭ ṭ hi-Sāmaññatā), which lead to the end of suffering.

⁹⁵ Nanamoli, Bhikkhu, & Bodhi, Bhikkhu, (trs), **The Middle Length Discourses of the Buddha (Majjhima Nikaya)**, Kandy: Buddhist Publication Society, 1995, pp. 320-325.

In the scriptural passages that describe ‘noble views’ (of 6 virtues) there are two special characteristics mentioned of stream-enterers:⁹⁶

(1) If they have transgressed the discipline (Vinaya), it is their nature to confess this transgression without delay to their teacher or wise companions and show restraint in the future. This restraint is similar to that shown by a young child who has touched a burning coal and immediately retracts his hand.

(2) Although stream-enterers endeavor to assist their companions in various activities they have a keen interest for training in the higher virtue, the higher mind, and the higher wisdom, just as a cow with a new calf while she grazes watched her calf so too does a stream-enterer look to both the collective good and to personal progress on the path.

(7) Happiness: stream-enterers have begun to experience transcendent happiness which is profound and independent of material things. They have realized ‘noble liberation’ (Ariya-Vimutti).

A. Abandoned qualities

Three fetters⁹⁷

(1) Sakkāya-Diṭṭhi: the delusion of ‘self’; the mistaken belief in a ‘self’ which leads to selfishness, conflict and suffering.

(2) Vicikicchā: doubts and uncertainties concerning for example, the Buddha, the Dhamma, the Saṅgha, and the training. These doubts prevent the mind from activating its energy and advancing on the path.

⁹⁶ Buddhaghosa. **Manorathapuri: Buddhaghosa's Commentary on the Ariguttaranikaya**, translated by Edmund Hardy, London: Pali Text Society, 1973, p. 348.

⁹⁷ AN 10, 13, **Sanyojana Sutta**.

(3) *Sīlabbata-Parāmāsa*: the misapplication of moral precept, rules, observances, and traditions; these rules are not pursued as they are intended as tools for developing such qualities as tranquility and concentration. Instead they are tainted by craving and fixed views, by seeking personal reward, enhancing self-stature, or blindly following others.

Stream-entry is of great value to the person who has realized it and to society. The Buddha assigned stream-entry to the first stage of enlightenment; it is the point where life as an awakened being begins. Stream-enterers are ‘true disciples’; they are part of the ‘noble community’ (*Ariya-Saṅgha*) which is the ‘crucible’ in which humanity is refined.

The Buddha greatly emphasized the importance of stream-entry and urged his disciples to set it as a goal for their lives. He said that the realization of stream-entry is better than going to heaven, being an emperor, or attaining *jhāna*. A teacher who is free from sensual lust due to the power of concentrative attainments and who leads his many disciples to ‘merge with *Brahmā*’ in heaven is considered excellent but he is surpassed by the stream-enterer who still has some sensual lust. Better than ruling the whole world, better than going to heaven, better than lordship over the universe, is reaching the stream of awakening [the fruit of stream-entry.]⁹⁸

A *Sotapanna* is one who has attained *Sotapatti Magga* and *Sotapatti-Phala*. He (or she) can enjoy the peace of *Nibbāna* whenever he wishes by developing the ecstatic absorption corresponding to *Sotapatti-*

⁹⁸ Mya Tin, Daw, (trs), **The Dhammapada: Verses and Stories**, Yangon: Myanmar Pitaka Association, 1986, p. 178.

Phala Samapatti. He is called a stream-winner because he has entered the stream that leads to Nibbāna. The stream represents the noble Eightfold Path. He is no longer a worldling (Putthujjana) but an Ariya (noble person).

In fact, in the case of a Sotapanna, his observance of the five precepts, morality, remains pure and unpolluted as a matter of course. For these reasons, a Sotapanna is liberated from the four Nether worlds and after being reborn in the world of human beings and devas for seven existences at the most he will attain Arahantship in his last seventh existence and pass into Nibbāna. If a Sotapanna practices Vipassanā meditation with a view to getting to the state of Phala, which he has once acquired, he will reach 'Phala-Sammāpatti' and remain in the state an adept in his practice of 'Phala-Sammāpatti,' he can easily get himself absorbed in that state for a whole day or a whole night or longer.

A Sakadagami is one who has attained Sakadagami-Magga and Phala. He (or she) can enjoy the peace of Nibbāna whenever he wishes by developing the ecstatic absorption corresponding to Sakadagami Phala-Samapatti. A Sakadagami will be reborn only once in the sense sphere. He will then become an arahant and, after that last life, will be in Nibbāna forever. The Cittas that arise in a Sakadagami are the same as those which arise in a Sotapanna with the only exception that a Sakadagami enjoy Sakadagami-Phala-Samapatti instead of Sotapatti-Phala-Samapatti.

Therefore, a Sakadagami will attain Arahantship and enter Nibbāna only after two existences at the most in the world of human beings and devas. When a Sakadagami carries out the practice of 'Vipassanā' with intention to reach the state of 'Magga and Phala' which

he has once accomplished in the same manner so as to realize the higher state of Magga-Phala he will attain Nibbāna with the insight of “Anagami-Magga-Phala” (Path and fruition leading to the state of ‘never-returner’ and become an “Anagami.”) An Anagami is absolutely free from ‘Kamaraga’ and ‘Byapada’ and will never be reborn in the world of human beings or of Devas but only in Brahma world of form or formless sphere from which he will attain Nibbāna after becoming an Arahant.

An Anagami is one who has attained Anagami Magga and Phala. He (or she) can enjoy the peace of Nibbāna whenever wished by developing the ecstatic absorption corresponding to Anagami-Phala Samapatti. Anagami literally means ‘no returner’. An Anagami will not be reborn in the sensual sphere. If he does not attain arahantship in the present life he will be reborn in a Brahma realm or pure above Suddhavasā, where he will attain Arahantship and pass into Nibbāna. If an Anagami wishes to get to the same Phala-Sammapatti and carries out the practice of Vipassanā he will reach his objective. If he continues Vipassanā meditation with a view to attaining higher states of Magga-Phala, the Vipassanā-ñāna’ will become developed stage by stage to achieve the realization of Nibbāna and will attain Arahantship.

An Arahant is one who has attained Arahatta Magga and Phala. He (or she) can enjoy the peace of Nibbāna whenever he wishes by developing the ecstatic absorption corresponding to Arahatta-Phala-Samapatti. Therefore an arahant will never be reborn in a new existence. At the end of the life-span in this existence he will enter into “Parinibbāna.” As there is no more rebirth for him after the Parinibbāna he will escape from all miseries and suffering of old age, sickness, death etc. The objective is to get the benefit of being liberated from these

miseries and sufferings. Meditation should be practiced so as to reach Nibbāna thereby escaping from all kinds of misery, such as old age, death, etc. May all those who want to be peacefulness in kindfulness for practice concentration mindfulness earnestly wish to get liberated from old age, death and other kinds of misery through realization of Nibbāna be able to practice meditation as duly instructed herein and speedily attain the Eternal peace of Nibbāna.

3.6 The Way to the Destruction of Vicikicchā

We have clearly established that the practice of the tried insight method through Satipaṭṭhāna can lead all the way to Arahantship. Therefore, it is imperative to discuss the principles and practice of Satipaṭṭhāna so that the reader will understand and appreciate its prime role in the path of enlightenment.

The Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta (MN 10) said that the Buddha declared the following: “this is the only way (Ekayano Maggo), O Bhikkhu, for the purification of beings, for the overcoming of Vicikicchā and lamentation, for the destruction of suffering and grief, for reaching the right path, for the attainment of Nibbāna, namely, the four Satipaṭṭhāna or foundation of mindfulness.”

Further in the Discourse on Analysis the Buddha explained the following: “What, *Bhikkhus*, is the way leading to the development of the four foundations of mindfulness? It is this Noble Eightfold Path; that is, right view, right thought, right speech, right action, right livelihood, right effort, right mindfulness and right concentration. This is called the way leading to the development of Satipaṭṭhāna (the foundation of mindfulness).

Actually, this is how the Noble Eightfold Path is the way leading to the development of Satipaṭ ṭ hāna. In a meditation retreat the three constituents of the morality group, namely, right speech, right action and right livelihood have been perfected when the meditator undertakes to observe the Precepts.

During the practice of Satipaṭ ṭ hāna Vipassanā meditation the meditator has to observe every object that arises. He or she must be ardent and mindful which means having the right effort and right mindfulness. In this way the mind will be fixed or concentrated on the object which is right concentration. These three factors form the concentration group.

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

*Vigata cikicchati vicikiccha. Sabhavam va vicinanto etaya kicchati kilamatiti vicikiccha. Vicikiccha samsaya lakkana, Ayonisomanasikara padatthana, (vicikicchayam ayonisomana-sikara padatthana.) Patipatti antara yakarati datthabba.*⁹⁹

⁹⁹ Buddhaghosa, **The Expositor (Atthasalini)**, translated by Pe Maung Tin, edited by Caroline A. F., & Rhys Davids, London: Pali Text Society, 1921, p. 255.

When there is a doubtful thought (Vicikicchā) of (8) things: such as “Real nature of the Buddha” (i.e., Perfectly Enlightened Omniscient One Sabbannu Samma-Sambuddha), that doubt is very difficult to be cured with the medicine of Wisdom. The difficulty to treat with wisdom is known as “Vicikicchā” (it does not mean totally non-treatable in nature. It means difficult to treat with wisdom.)

For another example, if someone else enquires about the nature of the real Buddha and actual Impermanence, Suffering, Not-self nature of Ultimate truth phenomena (Paramattadhamma Sabhava) he who is attempting to answer it will be very tired. This tiresome enquiry which causes fatigue in the mind is known as “Vicikicchā”.

Vicikicchā is a condition of;

(1) Being uncertain as to whether the Omniscient, Perfectly Enlightened one (Sabbannu Samma Sambuddha) really knew all natural phenomena;

(2) Being uncertain as to whether “Nibbāna Nirvana” can really be attained by the practice of the eightfold path (Attangika Magga); being uncertain as to whether the knowledge of path, knowledge of fruition, and Nibbāna (Magga ñāṇa, phala ñāṇa, Nibbāna) are really true, and whether the Buddhist scriptures (Pariyatti) are true or not;

(3) Being uncertain as to whether holy noble ones (Ariya samgha) who know and practice the path of liberation from rounds of suffering (Niyyanika Dhamma) really exist;

(4) Being uncertain as to whether the effect of the three trainings (Sikkha), such as morality, concentration and wisdom (Sīla, Samādhi, Paññā), really exists;

(5) Being uncertain as to whether previous existence and previous physical body known as the path round of rebirth really exist or the present life is created by the supernatural power of a god;

(6) Being uncertain whether future (5) aggregates known as future rounds of rebirth really exist, whether the existence of future lives before the attainment of Nibbāna is really true or whether the present life totally vanishes after death;

(7) Being uncertain as to whether past existence, past 5 aggregates (past rounds of rebirth) and future existence or future 5 aggregates (future rounds of rebirth) really exist;

(8) Being uncertain as to whether dependent origination (Paṭ icca Samuppāda), inexorable circle of defiling passion, active formation, and existence (Kilesa Vatta, Kamma Vatta, Vipaka Vatta) as described really exist; being uncertain as to whether good and evil conduct have an effect on the Aggregate continuum as wholesome or unwholesome; and being uncertain about the effects of these deeds.¹⁰⁰

Therefore, uncertain thoughts about the existence and occurrence of these 8 phenomenā according to the Abhidhammā scripture lead the mind to waver with emotion or indecision from skeptical doubt.

The questionable permanent and impermanent nature of a particular materiality and mentality (Rupa, Nāma) leading to indecision in taking up a phenomenon as permanence and impermanence (Nicca,

¹⁰⁰ Rhys Davids, & Caroline. A. F., (ed & trs), **Buddhist Manual of Psycho-logical Ethics (Dhammasangani)**, London: Pali Text Society, 1978, p. 209.

Anicca) and the unstable state of the mind that wavered with emotion in taking up that phenomenon are known as “Samsaya” doubt.¹⁰¹

So, skeptical doubt (Vicikicchā) has a character of doubt (Samsaya) and indecision. So, you noble meditator who want to practice the teaching of the Buddha through the Eightfold Path leading to the realization of supramundane Paths and Nibbāna have to discard skeptical doubt (Vicikicchā) temporarily by means of the wisdom gained through hearing from the teacher.

Proximate cause (Padaṭ ṭ hāna) wrongly taken up as Permanence, Bliss, Self and Unloathing (Nicca, Sukha, Atta, Subha) for all physical Mentality and Conditioned things (Rupa dhamma, Nāma dhamma, and Sankhāra dhamma) are included in the truth that suffering is inherent in all forms of existence (Dukkha Saccā), and whether the truth that attachment to the aggregates of existence is the cause of suffering (Samudaya Saccā) is true or not are caused by Adoption of wrongful attitude (Ayonisomanasikāra). That adoption of wrongful attitude is the proximate cause of skeptical doubt (Vicikicchā).

The concentration of about that, taking the sense of sight as permanence, impermanence (Nicca, Anicca), or, self, not-self (Atta, Anatta), or, self’s property or not-self’s property means not definite taking up of the sense. The nature of taking up of the sense is known as indefinite taking up of various natures. So, in insight meditation a meditator discerns the nature of skeptical doubt (Vicikicchā).

¹⁰¹ Buddhaghosa, **The Expositor (Atthasalini)**, translated by Pe Maung Tin, edited by Caroline A. F., & Rhys Davids, London: Pali Text Society, 1921, p. 301.

Chapter IV

Conclusion & Further Suggestions

4.1 Conclusion

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

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

Vicikicchā is not the same as what we mean by doubt in conventional language. Vicikicchā is not a doubt about someone's name or about the weather. Vicikicchā is a doubt about realities, about Nāma and Rupa, about cause and effect, about the four noble Truth, and about "dependent origination".

Here doubt means exclusion from the cure (of knowledge). One investigates the intrinsic nature and suffers pain and fatigue (Kicchati) from doubt. The characteristic of doubt is a shifting about, a mental

wavering, an indecision or uncertainty as a manifestation of grasping and an unsystematic thought as a proximate cause. It should be regarded as a danger to attainment.

Vicikicchā (doubt) is different from wrong view (Ditthi). When there is a Ditthi, one clings for example to the concept that phenomena are permanent. When Vicikicchā (doubt) arises, one wonders whether the mind is different from the body, whether phenomena are permanent or impermanent. There is no other way to eradicate doubt but by developing Paññā (wisdom) to see realities as they are. People who have doubts about the person and the teachings of the Buddha may think that doubt can be cured by studying historical events. They want to find out more details about the time the Buddha lived and about the places where he moved about; they want to know the exact time the texts were written down. However, they cannot be cured of their doubt by studying historical events; this does not lead to the goal of the Buddha's teachings which is the eradication of defilements.

The contrast between cognitive faith and affective faith can also be seen in the relationship between the hindrance of doubt (Vicikicchā Nīvarana) and the awakening factor of dhamma-discernment (Dhamma, vicaya Sambojjhaṅga). The same factor that overcomes the former is responsible for the development of the latter and this is very significant. This shows that in early Buddhism doubt is not truly overcome by faith or belief alone. Doubt can only be wholesomely and fully overcome and uprooted by the clarity and wisdom arising from the process of discernment and investigation of actions. This is pregnant in the verb Vicinati of which the noun is Vicaya.

This suggests that the type of discernment required for overcoming doubt is closely related to mindfulness in the sense of mindfully “investigating” the true nature of phenomena.

Actually, as implied in the commentary, Satipaṭṭhāna is not a forked path (Eka, Maggo Ayaṃ, Na Dvedhā, Patha, Bhūto). It is a direct path to realization explicitly qualified to be “straightforward” and “direct” (Ekāyana Magga), as such cultivation of mindfulness is clearly the appropriate method for overcoming the forked path of doubt.

Let me end this result section of the study of Vicikicchā stating the main points in overcoming of doubt in the spiritual path. When spiritual doubt is uprooted we attain streamlining (Sotāpatti). That is why a stream-winner (Sotāpanna) is described as “one who has overcome doubt” (Ti-na, Vicikicchā).

A stream winner has seen the truth, won the truth, knew the truth, plunged into the truth, crossed over doubt, abandoned uncertainty. Independent of others he or she has gained self-confidence in the Teacher’s Teaching about the way of the truth.

A stream winner is one whose spiritual doubt is fully uprooted, and is a noble disciple endowed with unwavering faith in the true teaching. The point here is to remind ourselves that faith is needed so that we will understand Vicikicchā. It is through understanding that a true and wise faith arises: it is the result of proper removal of doubt through discernment.

4.2 Suggestion for further study

Vicikicchā is skeptical doubt and uncertainty as to the true nature of the body and mind and the world. It is doubt about the

effectiveness of Dhamma practice and doubt about the Buddha whether he was truly fully Enlightened and whether what he taught was true or not.

One must develop a dispassionate and detached attitude toward Vicikicchā. When the seven factors of Enlightenment are fully developed there will come the first complete cutting off of the conditioned mind leaving only the unconditioned, unborn, and direct experience of Nibbāna that will probably last for only an instant but nevertheless the realization is such that it destroys the first three Fetters. This state of mental purification is called Sotāpatti, or stream-entry. It literally means “entering the stream,” the stream of a wise mind that flows towards and ends in the final Nibbāna or Liberation. The three Fetters that are destroyed will no longer be a binding hindrance to one’s Dhamma practice. The mind at that point will be assured that it is destined to attain the complete destruction of the remaining seven fetters and attain Enlightenment in a matter of time. That is said to require at the most seven more rebirths. However, it could occur even before the end of the present life if sustained effort was maintained.

The Pāli Vi + Cikkiccha literally means medicineless. One who suffers from perplexity is really suffering from a dire disease and until and unless one successfully sheds one’s doubts one will continue to suffer from it. As long as a person is subject to this mental itching he or she will continue to take a cynical view of things which is most detrimental to mental development. The commentators explain this hindrance as an inability to decide anything definitely. It also comprises doubt with regard to the possibility of attaining the Jhānas, concentrative thought. In this connection one may add that even non-Buddhists and yogis who are

not concerned with the Buddha-Dhamma and the Saṅgha at all can be affected by doubt (Vicikicchā Nivarana).

Skeptical doubt comes with thinking so mindfully note “thinking, thinking.” If it is identified as skeptical doubt note it mindfully as such. It is like a string of thoughts that goes around and round and gets entangled. Unable to dislodge the knot frustration and disbelief result. If one can look upon it as confusion based on one’s limitations and serving no purpose then one can let go, trust the loose ends to find their way knowing that one will still continue on one’s spiritual search.

Another way is to seek at least some rational or theoretical base to satisfy that intellectual curiosity or to provide a rational meaning to what one is doing. Having a trusted and experienced friend or guide to counsel with would be better because much experiential knowledge is still conveyed in the oral tradition.

The three evil roots of greed, hate, and ignorance and the five hindrances are made up of negative, unwholesome states. They can be regarded as “dark forces”, the basic causes of suffering. They do cause havoc and terror if uncontrolled and there is every reason to be wary of them for when interpreted in fortune terms their effects may span lifetimes and worlds. There may arise fear and hatred when one thinks of them as enemies.

There can be another way of looking at them; that is they are sicknesses and weaknesses that need to be remedied. There is a potential for them to be tamed and harnessed. In this way any self-hatred present will not be deepened and a more compassionate approach can be pursued.

One has to also bear in mind that they are totally eradicated when one can attain the Arahant-one perfected in wisdom. Surely it may

be some time before that happens: one needs to be patient. Think of it as keeping the house clean. That is the way to live if you are to be happy. It is better to live with the devil you know than one that you do not know. It is a continuous learning process. It brings more happiness.

Finally, even the contemplation of these forces brings some insight. They, too, are subjected to the three universal characteristics. In the suttas, one can find some interesting similes for each of the hindrances as well as the opposite force that counters it. A study of these is helpful to practice.

A suggestion for further study concerning (Vicikicchā) doubt can be a study towards the teaching, the teacher or towards yourself. My experience of the beautiful results of meditation allows me to strengthen my confidence that meditation is worthwhile. If teachers lead by example I will put my confidence in them. You have my encouragement that you can achieve whatever you may want. As soon as one attains that kind of knowledge he or she can be said to be a stream winner person (Sotāpannapuggala). In this case his cause to continue to be a worldly person will be cut off and he will never be reborn in woeful abodes.

In this state wrong View (Diṭṭhi) and skeptical doubt has been totally eradicated by a stream winner person (Sotāpannapuggala). These are the top results of this study.

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