

LINGUISTIC APPROACH  
TO BUDDHIST  
THOUGHT

GENJUN H.  
SASAKI



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BUDDHIST THOUGHT

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## PREFACE

The idea for this short treatise is drawn from several previous articles published in various journals, papers read at a number of international conferences and a collection of articles written especially for publication in this volume.

Owing to a vast amount of creditable works in the field of Buddhism, especially during the last half century, a remarkable contribution has been added to our knowledge of the parts as well as the whole. Yet further investigation remains to be done on the linguistic, epistemological, and doctrinal points of difference that have developed over the long span of centuries. The eighteen different schools of Abhidharma Buddhism, for example, cultivated a vocabulary and labyrinth of philosophical concepts found in much earlier teachings, though often clothing them with new and amended implications. Moreover, these implications were seldom worked out until after the conclusions arrived at were in general favor among scholastic contemporaries.

Through the use of linguistic and epistemological methods of research the author has sought to establish a connection with Sarvāstivāda on the one hand and the multitude of meanings provided by Mahāyāna texts on the other. Notwithstanding the author's intentions, however, much yet remains to be done. Indeed many problems connected with Buddhist thought, with the doctrines peculiar to the various Abhidharma schools, and with the multitude of technical terms still await further research.

In consummating the realization of this work a word of acknowledgement is in order. The late Professors I.B. Horner (The Pāli Text Society, London) and E. Conze (Lancaster University) were kind enough to encourage me with especial interest and care in carrying out my endeavors. Indeed without their gracious encouragement this present work might not have been realized. Also, I owe a special debt of gratitude to Professor P.V. Bapat (Poona, India), who offered his unfailing help and inspiration in pursuing a linguistic approach to the study of Buddhist thought.

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## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

- A. *Aṅguttaranikāya*, The Pāli Text Society (PTS), London
- A. Com. *Aṅguttaranikāya-Aṭṭhakathā*.
- AKBH. *Abhidharmakośabhāṣyam*, ed. P. Pradhan, Patna, 1975
- AK. Chinese tr. *Abhidharmakośabhāṣyam*, Taisho Edition
- AAV. *Abhisamayālaṅkāra-loka*, ed. U. Wogihara, Tokyo, 1932-35
- Asl. *Aṭṭhasālinī*, ed. P.V. Bapat, The Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute, Poona, 1942
- AKV. *Abhidharmakośavyākhyā*, ed. U. Wogihara, Tokyo, 1932-34
- ASP. Chinese tr. *Abhidharmasamayapradīpikā*, Taisho Edition
- BSOAS. *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies*, London University
- BHSD. F. Edgerton, *Buddhist Hybrid Sanskrit Dictionary*, New Haven, 1953
- CPD. *A Critical Pāli Dictionary*, Copenhagen, 1948-82
- Dhp. *Dhammapada*, PTS
- Dhp. Comm. *Dhammapada-Aṭṭhakathā*, PTS
- Dhs. *Dhammasaṅgaṇī*, PTS
- Divy. *Divyāvadāna*, Cowell and Neill, Cambridge, 1886
- D. *Dīghanikāya*, PTS
- D. Com. *Dīghanikāya-Aṭṭhakathā*, PTS
- J. *Jātaka*, PTS
- JPTS. *Journal of the Pāli Text Society*, PTS
- Kvu. *Kathāvatthu*, PTS
- Kvu. Com. *Kathāvatthu-Aṭṭhakathā*, PTS
- Laṅk. *Laṅkāvatāra-sūtra*, ed. B. Nanjio, Kyoto, 1923
- M. *Majjhimanikāya*, PTS
- M. Com. *Majjhimanikāya-Aṭṭhakathā*, PTS
- MVP. *Mahāvīyutpatti*, ed. Sakaki, 2 vols., Kyoto, 1916-25
- Netti. *Nettipakaraṇa*, PTS
- Ny. Chinese tr. *Abhidharmanyāyānusāra-śāstra*, Taisho Edition
- P. *Pañcaviṃśatisāhasrikā Prajñāpāramitā*, ed. N. Dutt, London, 1934
- Pā. Pāli
- SN. *Suttanipāta*, PTS
- SN. Com. *Suttanipāta-Aṭṭhakathā*, PTS
- SED. Monier-Williams, *Sanskrit English Dictionary*, Oxford, 1899
- SWT. S(Sung Dynasty), W(Wei Dynasty), T(T'ang Dynasty)
- T. Taisho Edition (*Taisho-Shinshu-Daizo-Kyo*, ed. J. Takakusu and K. Matanabe), 55 vols., Tokyo, 1924-29
- Th. *Thera-Therīgāthā*, Pāli Text Society, PTS

- Th. Com. *Therigāthā Aṭṭhakathā*, Pāli Text Society, PTS  
U. *Udāna*, Pāli Text Society, PTS  
Vism. *Visuddhimagga*, 2 vols., Pāli Text Society, PTS  
Vibh. *Vibhaṅga*, Pāli Text Society, PTS  
Vibh. Com. *Vibhaṅga-Aṭṭhakathā*, Pāli Text Society, PTS



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## CHAPTER I

# EARLY BUDDHIST CONCEPTS

### I. THE SIGNIFICANCE OF NEGATION IN BUDDHISM *nekkhamma* and *naiṣkramya*

India had many schools of philosophy which developed their own systems of thought, based on the logic of negation. Buddhism was one of these schools of thought.

The purpose of Buddhist negation is not merely negation as such, but the positive goal of pointing towards the Absolute. In other words, the Absolute is approached through the logic of negation. Negation is simply an expression of the Absolute.

The how and why of the Absolute, which can not be expressed directly in words, can be expressed by the philosophy of negation. Generally, negation presupposes observation of the world with two perspectives: first, to deny the already known; and second, to give a positive expression by means of the opposite concept.

The first category, or the negation of the already known, can be found in Abhidharma philosophy in various words which reflect negation by the use of three prefixes, namely *a*, *na*, and *vi*. This negation refers to the negation of the experimental.

The second category means the positive expression of the super-experimental (the religious experience) by means of negation of the experimental (the mundane world). This positive expression of the opposite comes late in the development of Buddhism. At that time the positive expression was in the form of negation with the prefixes *nir*, *vi*, and *sama*.

The development from *a* to *nir* may be traced not merely in this Abhidharma school, but also in the historical development of Buddhist philosophy. This is clearly shown in the development of *nekkhamma* in Pāli and its evolution of meaning from Abhidharma to Mahāyāna Buddhism.

Evidence clearly indicates that the term *nekkhamma* and *akāma* are one and the same; only the implication is different. Both terms are derived from the common root *kam*, meaning "to desire," according to Pāli literature.







































































































































































































































































































































































































































