

Abstract

Kathavatthu is the fifth of the seven books that form the third collection known as the Abhidhamma Pitaka of the Buddhist Canon. The text of Kathavatthu consists of controversy from the Theravada standpoint against the heretical and unorthodox views belonging to various early Buddhist sects on matters connected with important problems of Buddhist philosophy like controversy over the soul theory, the apotheosis of the Buddha, the problem of the Unconditioned and so on. The method of the discussion is that of argumentation between orthodox Buddhism and unorthodox Buddhism.

The method of argumentation in Kathavatthu can be compared with deductive arguments such as categorical syllogism, conditional argument, appeal to authority and argument by analogy.

The result of evaluating the argumentation can be summarized that one type of arguments, categorical syllogism, is invalid while other types of arguments, conditional argument i.e., modus tollens, appeal to authority and argument by analogy, are valid.

However, another important component of argumentation is the language that describes terms and statements. All the arguments have been concerned with the medium of natural language. But in natural language, words are ambiguous. It, therefore, should be given a precise definition of the ambiguous term.

The result of the study shows that a main problem of the argumentation in Kathavatthu is using ambiguous terms. For example, using the word "self" in the different meaning or there is a different assumption about the number of the Unconditioned. When we use the words or concepts in the different meaning, the argumentation is ineffectual. Argumentation can be evaluated if and only if the both sides argue by using the same meaning. At this point, the content of Buddhist doctrines becomes the central role to judge the argumentation between Theravada Buddhism and unorthodox Buddhism in Kathavatthu.