

CHAPTER V

THE CONCEPT OF INNATE PURITY

The purification of one's mind is one of the core teachings in Buddhism. This chapter is dedicated to study this concept in the *Sutta Nipata* and the Lotus Sutra, to find what and how Theravada and Mahayana speak of this concept.

The Concept of Innate Purity in the *Sutta Nipata*

In the *Anguttara-Nikaya*, it is stated that:

“Thus have I heard: on a certain occasion the Exalted One was staying near *Savatthi*, at *Jeta Grove*, in *Anathapindika's Park*. Then the Exalted One addressed the monks...

“This mind, monks, is luminous (*pubhassara*), but it is defiled by taints that come from without (*agantukehiupakkilesehi*). But this the uneducated manyfolk understands not as it really is. Wherefore for the uneducated manyfolk there is no cultivation of the mind, I declare.

“That mind, monks, is luminous, but it is cleansed (*vippamutta*) of taints that come from without. This the educated *Ariyan* disciple understands as it really is. Wherefore for the educated *Ariyan* disciple there is cultivation of the mind, I declare.”⁵

And in another text, it is said as well that:

At *Savatthi*. ... Then the Exalted One said:—

‘Incalculable, brethren, is this round of rebirth. No beginning is made known of being wrapt in ignorance, fettered by craving, who run on, who fare on the round rebirth.

Just like a dog, brethren, tied up by a leash to a strong stake or pillar—if he goes up, he goes up to that stake or pillar; if he stands still, he stands close to that stake or pillar; if he squats down, he squats close to that stake or pillar; if he lies down, he lies close to that stake or pillar.

⁵ In the beginning of § 1-10 The finger-snap of Chapter VI on Part I.—The Ones

Even so, brethren, the untaught many folk regard body (thus): “This is mine; this is am I; this is the self of me.” They regard feeling, perception, the activities and consciousness thus: “This is mine; this am I; this is the self of me.”

If they go, it is towards this fivefold grasping-group that they go. If they stand still, it is close to this fivefold grasping-group that they stand still. If they sit, it is close to that they sit. If they lie down, it is close to that they lie down.

Wherefore, brethren, again and again must one regard one’s own mind thus: “For a long, long time this mind has been tainted by lust, by hatred, by illusion.” By a tainted mind (*cittasamkilesa*), brethren, beings are tainted. By purity of mind (*cittavodana*) beings are made pure.

Brethren, have ye ever seen a picture which they call “a show-piece?”’

‘Yes, Lord.’

“well, brethren, this so-called show-piece is thought out by mind. Wherefore, brethren, mind is even more diverse than that show-piece.

Wherefore, brethren, again and again must one regard one’s own mind thus: “For a long time this mind must has been tainted by lust, by hatred, by illusion.” By a tainted mind (*cittasamkilesa*), brethren, beings are tainted. By purity of mind (*cittavodana*) beings are made pure.⁶

Two passages from *Anguttara-Nikaya* and *Sanyutta-Nikaya* are quoted as the source of which the aspiration to enlightenment (*bodhicitta*) and the buddha-nature (*buddhatta*) or *tathagata* embryo (*tathagata-gabbha*, *tthagata-garbha*)—that is, the potential for attaining buddhahood inherent in all sentient beings—as the source of this aspiration in Mahayana-Buddhism. Back to purity of mind, the teachings say that this mind has been tainted by lust, by hatred, by illusion. The reason why is that no beginning is made known of beings wrapped in ignorance, fettered by craving, who run on, who fare on the round of rebirth incalculable, and that the untaught many folk regard body, feeling, perception, the activities, and consciousness thus: “This is mine; this am I; this is the self of me.” And that If they go, it is towards this fivefold grasping-group that they go.

⁶ At the first half of § 100 (8). The Leash (II). Sanyutta Nikaya, Part III.

Therefore, again and again must one regard one's mind thus: "For a long, long time this mind has been tainted by lust, by hatred, by illusion."

"This mind is luminous, but it is defiled by taints that come from without, but the uneducated many folk understands this, not as it really is. Therefore for the uneducated many folk there is no cultivation of the mind." the Buddha declares.

Furthermore, "that mind is luminous, but it is cleansed of taints that come from without. The educated *Ariyan* disciples understand this as it really is. Therefore, for the educated *Ariyan* disciple there is cultivation of the mind." The Buddha adds.

This principle is given concrete details everywhere in *Sutta Nipata*. Buddhism concerns itself with both the actual state of people's spiritual development and the ideal state they can attain. Buddhism's ultimate purpose is religious practice that helps people attain the ideal state of development. Much of the contents of suttas concern methods of practice, since Sakyamuni taught many courses of practice, according to what best suited the environment and personality of each listener in terms of both faith and practice.

Regarding this, there is the famous sermon titled 'Lesser Discourse to *Malunkya* where it is stated as follows:

Thus have I heard: At one time the staying near *Savatthi* in the Jeta Grove in *Anathapindika* monastery. Then a reasoning of mind arose to the venerable *Malunkya* as he was meditating in solitary seclusion, thus: "Those (speculative) views that are not explained, set aside and ignored by the Lord: The world is eternal, the world is not eternal, the world is an ending thing, the world is not an ending thing; the life-principle is the same as the body, the life-principle is one thing, the body another; the *Tathagata* is after dying, the *Tathagata* neither is nor is not after dying—the Lord does not explain these to me... If the Lord will not explain to me... then will I, disavowing the training, revert to secular life.

The following is the outline of this *sutta*.

Malunkya asked the Lord these questions. The Lord did not answer these questions and preached the purpose of the Lord's teachings by 'the simile of poisoned arrow.' That is, 'if a man were pierced by an arrow that was thickly smeared with poison and his friends and relations, his kith and kin, were to procure a physician and surgeon. But he have declined the treatment and drawing out this arrow, and sought for what kind of man who pierced him, what kind of the bow which pierced him,

what kind of arrow which he was pierced, this man might pass away, or ever this was known to him.

‘In the same way, whoever seek for the question whether the world is eternal or not, this man might pass away, or ever it was explained to him by the *Tathagata*.

‘Whether the world is eternal or not eternal, there is birth, there is ageing, there is dying, there are grief, sorrow, suffering, lamentation and despair, the suppression of which I lay down here and now.’

After the Buddha taught thus, He said, ‘what has been explained by me are that “this is anguish,” “this is the arising of anguish,” “this is the stopping of anguish,” and “this is the stopping course leading to the stopping of anguish me.” And why has this been explained by me? It is because it is connected with the goal, is fundamental to the Brahma-faring, and conduces to turning away from, to dispassion, stopping calming, super-knowledge, awakening and *nibbana*.’

The Buddha said to *Malunkya*putta, ‘wherefore understand as not explained what has not been explained by me, and understand as explained what has been explained by me.’⁷

Buddhism teaches useful things for enlightenment and does not teach useless for it. Purity of mind is very useful for enlightenment. Cleansing a tainted mind is given concrete details everywhere in *Sutta-Nipata*, for example, in I .1 The Snake of I . The Snake Chapter’ as follows:

1. That *bhikhu* who subdues his anger when it has arisen, as [one subdues] with herbs snake-poison when it has soared [through the body], leaves this shore and the far shore as a snake leaves its old worn-out skin.

2. That *bhikkhu* who has cut off passion in its entirety, like one picking a lotus, both flower and stalk [together], (and so forth).

3. That *bhikkhu* who has cut off craving in its entirety, like one drying up a fast-flowing stream, (and so forth).

4. That *bhikkhu* who has plucked out conceit in its entirety as a great flood [plucks away] a very weak bridge of reeds, (and so forth).

5. That *bikkhu* who has not found any essence in existences, as one searching among fig-trees [does not find] a flower, (and so force).

⁷ At 63. Chula-Malunkyasutta of Majjhima Nikaya.

6. That *bhikkhu* in whom there are no angers inwardly and [who] has gone beyond the state of [being reborn in] such and such an existence, (and so forth).

7. That *Bhikkhu* whose [wrong] thoughts are burnt up! Well cut-off internally, (and so forth).

8. That *bhikkhu* who has not transgressed nor even caused [another] to transgress, [and] has gone beyond all this diversified world, (and so forth).

9. That *bhikkhu* who has not transgressed nor even caused [another] to transgress, knowing in respect of the world that all this is unreal, (and so forth).

10. That *Bhikkhu* who has not transgressed nor even caused [another] to transgress, [knowing that] all this is unreal, with greed gone (and so forth).

11. That *bhikkhu* who has not transgressed nor even caused [another to transgress], [knowing that] all this is unreal with passion gone (and so forth).

12. That *bhikkhu* who has not transgressed nor even used [another] to transgress, [knowing that] all this is unreal, with hatred gone (and so forth).

13. That *bhikkhu* who has not transgressed nor even caused [another] to transgress, [knowing that] all this is unreal, with delusion gone (and so forth).

14. That *bhikkhu* in whom there are no latent tendencies, in whom evil roots are destroyed, (and so forth).

15. That *bhikkhu* in whom there is nothing born of distress, [which is] cause for return to this shore, (and so forth).

16. That *bhikkhu* in whom there is nothing born of desire, acting as a cause of bondage to existence, (and so forth).

17. That *bhikkhu* who having left behind the five hindrances [is] without affliction, has crossed over doubt, [and is] without barb, leaves this shore and the far shore as a snake leaves its old worn-out skin.

1-16. are the individual explanations on impurity, stain, affliction, or lust (*kilesa*) of every kind. Concerning 17., the first three words of barb, that is, greed, passion or lust, hatred or anger, and folly or ignorance, above mentioned, is explained in "The Pali Text Society's Pali-English Dictionary" that 'these three are again appear in manifold comb with similar terms, all giving various shades of the "craving for

existence” or “lust of life” (*tanha* etc.) or all that which is an obstacle to *nibbana*. Therefore the giving up of *raga* is one of the steps towards attaining the desired goal of emancipation (*vimutti*).’

The Concept of Innate Purity in the Lotus Sutra

In the Lotus Sutra, it is stated that:

‘*Shariputra*, the Buddhas preach the Law in accordance with what is appropriate, but the meaning is difficult to understand. Why is this? Because we employ countless expedient means, discussing causes and conditions and using words of simile and parable to expound the teaching. This law is not something that can be understood through pondering or analysis. Only those who are Buddhas can understand it. Why is this? Because the Buddhas, the world-Honored Ones, appear in the world for one great reason alone. *Shariputra*, what does it mean to say that the Buddhas, the World-Honored Ones, appear in the world for one great reason alone. *Shariputra*, what does it mean to say that the Buddhas, the world-honored Ones, appear in the world for one great reason alone? / The Buddhas, the world-Honored ones, wish to open the door of Buddha wisdom to all living beings, to allow them to attain purity. That is why they appear in the world. They wish to show the Buddha wisdom to living beings, and therefore they appear in the world. They wish to cause living beings to awaken to the Buddha wisdom, and therefore they appear in the world. They wish to induce living beings to enter the path of Buddha wisdom, and therefore they appear in the world. *Shariputra*, this is the one great reason for which the Buddhas appear in the World.⁸

This is the paragraph of revealing that the Buddhas make their advent for “one great reason,” namely, to enable all people to attain the same enlightenment they have. Concerning this “one great reason,” he goes on to say that the Buddhas appear in the world in order to open the door of the Buddha wisdom to all beings, to show it to them, to cause them to awaken to it, and induce them to enter into it.

‘To allow them to attain purity’ is the same meaning as ‘to open the door Buddha wisdom to all living beings.’



⁸ At the ‘Expedient Means’ (second) chapter of the Lotus Sutra.

‘Shariputra, in the worlds of the ten directions, there are not two vehicles, much less three! *Shariputra*, the Buddhas appear in evil worlds of five impurities. These are the so-called impurity of the age, impurity of desire, impurity of living beings, impurity of view, and impurity of life span. / *Shariputra*, when the age is impure and the times are chaotic, then the defilement of living beings are grave, they are greedy and jealous and put down roots that are not good. Because of this, the Buddhas, utilizing the power of expedient means, apply distinctions to the one Buddha vehicle and preach as though it were three.⁹

‘Five impurities’ is the same meaning as ‘five defilements.’ (1) ‘Impurity of the age’ includes repeated disruptions of the social or natural environment. (2) ‘Impurity of desire’ is tendency to be ruled by the five delusive inclinations, i.e., greed, anger, foolishness, arrogance, and doubt. (3) ‘Impurity of living beings’ is the physical and spiritual decline of human beings. (4) ‘Impurity of view’, or impurity of thought, is the prevalence of wrong views such as the five false views. According to ‘The Treaties on the Establishment of the Consciousness-Only Doctrine, the five false views that along with the five delusive incriminations, constitute the ten fundamental earthly desires. *T’ien-t’ai* (538-597) included these ten in the illusion of desire and view, the first of the three categories of illusion.

As a conclusion, the Buddha tell *Shariputra*, “if I described all the characteristics of those who seek the Buddha way, I could exhaust a *kalpa* and never be done. Persons of this type are capable of believing and understanding. Therefore for them you should preach the Lotus Sutra of the Wonderful Law.”

As the Book of the Gradual Saying (*Anguttara-Nikaya*) defines it to be luminous (*Pubhassara*), and to be cleansed (*Vippamutta*) of taints that come from without, we can understand that the mind of all sentient beings is inherently pure and free from defilement. Concentrating on the point to be cleansed of taints that come from without, not to be luminous, innately pure mind is the mind that has emerged from bonds of illusion and earthly desire by all the various practices.

The Mahayana Buddhism deepened this principle, and have called it (the innately pure mind) the Matrix of the Thus Come One (*Tathagata-garbha*). The Commentaries (Treatises) about the Buddhism in India were structured only after the development on the relevant doctrine has reached a certain phase of high degree. The theory of the Matrix of the Thus Come One (*Tathagata-garbha*) is, also, the same. The

⁹ At the ‘Expedient Means’ (second) chapter of the Lotus Sutra.

text of commentary called generally the Treatise on the Treasure Vehicle of Buddhahood (*Ratnagotravibhaga-mahayanottaratantra-shastra*) is said to treat, systematically, of the Matrix of the Thus Come One most, and make it to develop most logically. Today, it is said to become the tacit consent that we have to learn this Treatise as a basis in order to master the theory of the Matrix of the Thus Come One (*Tathagata-garbha*).

What is called “the matrix of the Thus Come One” finds the possibility of enlightenment in the mind of living beings with innate purity of one’s essential nature, and has been understood as the name referring to the cause (Matrix) of the Thus Come One inner the living beings. Mahayana people say, “It can be thought that the Buddhism was the teaching which was expected the same enlightenment as Shakyamuni in the starting point or at that time of Shakyamuni’s attainment of Buddhahood and turning the wheel of the Dharma.” And they say that Mahayana Buddhism opened to generally living beings the word “Bodhisattva” which had been the name given Shakyamuni before attainment of Buddhahood in conformity with the signification of the concept calling a sentient being who seeks *Bodhi* a bodhisattva.

We can understand that the Matrix of the Thus Come One is inside living beings, and is the cause to make them attain Buddhahood. When this cause has attained Buddhahood, it gains the name of “the Absolute free from all the stains, *nirmala tathata*”. This is called supreme enlightenment.

Comparison and Comment

Similar point:—

The concept of purities is very important matter for the practice in *Sutta Nipata* and the Lotus Sutra.

In *Sutta Nipata*, there are the verses titled ‘The Purified’.

In the one verse, it is described, ‘one, who has perfected the practice, does not say that purity comes from something else, [or is] in, what is seen [and] heard, in virtuous conduct and vows, or in what is thought. Not clinging to merit or evil, he abandons what has been taken up, and does not fashion [anything more] here.

It means; purity does not come from something else wisdom of *ariya-magga*. One, who has perfected the practice, is not attained by attachment of clinging to merit or evil.

Another verse says; ‘those, who has perfected the practice, do not form [view], they do not prefer, they do not say, “This is the highest purity.” Releasing the knot of grasping which has been tied, they do not form a desire for anything in the world

In short, 'purity' means no attachment to anything.

In one more verse, one who has perfected practice has gone beyond boundaries. Knowing or seeing anything, he has not grasped it. He is not impassioned by passion; he is not attached to the passionless. Nothing else is grasped by him here.

In briefly, purity is freedom from defilement of all kind of earthly desires.

By these discourses in *Sutta Nipata*, we can understand deeply the meaning of '24. Discourse on the Relays of Chariots' (*Rathavinitasutta*) of *Majjhima Nikaya*, 'purity of mind' (*citta-visuddhi*). This Discourse describes stage of practice from the level of the ordinary person to that of the *arahant*.

The sutra is questions and answers between Punna and *Sariputa*. Extracting the parts of their conversations:—

The venerable *Sariputa* spoke thus to the venerable *Punna*:

"Your reverence, is the Brahma-faring lived under our Lord?"

"Yes, your reverence."

"Your reverence, is the *brahma*-faring lived under the Lord for purity of moral habit (1)?"

"Not for this, your reverence."

And more, *Punna* answers *Sariputa's* questions, not for purity of mind (2), not for purity of view (3), not for purity through crossing over doubt (4), not for purity of knowledge and insight into the Way and what is not the Way (5), not for purity of knowledge and insight into the course (6), not for purity arising from knowledge and insight (7), lastly *Punna* answers *Sariputa*, "The Brahma-faring under the Lord, your reverence, is lived for utter *nibbana* without attachment."

After that, *Sariputa* asks *Punna*, 'utter *nibbana* without attachment' is purity of moral habit (1), purity of mind (2), purity of view (3), purity through crossing over doubt (4), purity of knowledge and insight into the Way and what is not the Way (5), purity of knowledge and insight into the course (6), purity arising from knowledge and insight (7) or not? *Punna* denies every.

Toward *Sariputa* who cannot understand the meaning, *Punna* tries to express the meaning by a parable. It is as though when King *Pasenadi* of *Kosala* goes urgently from *Savatthi* to *Saketa*, seven relays of chariots are arranged for him between *Savatthi* and *Saketa*. The king, having left *Savvati* by the palace-gate, might mount the first chariot in the relay, and by means of the first chariot in the relay he would reach the second chariot in the relay. In the same way, he would reach the palace-gate in *Saketa*.

Punna explains *Sariputa*, 'In same manner, it starts from purity of moral habit (1), and relay purity of mind (2), purity of view (3), purity through crossing over doubt (4), purity of knowledge and insight into the Way and what is not the Way (5), purity of knowledge and insight into the course (6), purity arising from knowledge and insight (7) reaches the purpose of utter *nibbana* without attachment.'

Sariputa known as a foremost in wisdom made good question, *Punna* as a foremost in preaching the Law explained appropriately. Afterwards, in the fifth century, *Buddhagosa* described on detail of the seven purities in the Path of Purity (*visuddhimagga*), the most important *Pali* Buddhist work on the philosophy of practice.

In the Lotus Sutra, one great reason is the ultimate reason for a Buddha appearance in the world.

The ultimate reason for a buddha is to open the door of Buddha wisdom to all living beings, to allow them to attain purity; to show the Buddha wisdom to living beings; to cause living beings to awaken to the Buddha wisdom; and to enter the path of Buddha wisdom.

More, the Buddha's preaching continues that the Buddhas simply wish to enlighten living beings to the Buddha wisdom.

Purity of 'to attain purity' above mentioned means Buddha wisdom, 'Buddha wisdom' means the state of Buddhahood. Namely, 'to open the door of Buddha wisdom to all living beings' means that living beings already inherently possess the Buddha wisdom. The reason living beings possess the Buddha wisdom is that they are essentially Buddha. Sakyamuni's words are in fact a great declaration that all living beings are worthy if supreme respect.

The paragraph of 'in the worlds of the ten directions, there are not two vehicles, much less three!' and 'the Buddhas, utilizing the power of expedient means, apply distinctions to the one Buddha vehicle and preach as though it were three'.¹⁰ reveals that the three vehicles—Learning, Realization and Bodhisattva—are no more than expedient means, while the one supreme vehicle of a Buddhahood offers the only true way to enlightenment.

To Sakyamuni's followers, it seemed as if Sakyamuni had set forth three separate teachings, but to the Buddhas there is only one Buddha vehicle and no other. The one Buddha vehicle is a teaching that enables all people to attain Buddhahood; it is endowed with the function of opening and revealing the Buddha wisdom and awakening and guiding people to the realm of Buddhahood.

¹⁰ The 'Expedient Means' (second) chapter of the Lotus Sutra.

Treatise on the Treasure Vehicle of Buddhahood (*Ratnagotravibhaga-mahayanottaratantra-shastra*) describes, 'With regard to the Absolute (Innate Purity) mingled with defilement (= the Essence of Buddhahood in the living beings) it has been said:— All living beings are endowed with the Essence of the Buddha.—

About the meaning of this, The treatise places one verse:—

The Body of the supreme Buddha is all-pervading,
 The Absolute is (one) undifferentiated (Whole)
 And the Germ (of Buddhahood) exists (in every living being).
 Therefore, for ever and anon, all that lives
 Is endowed with the essence of the Buddha.

In short, the verse means all livings are possessed of the Essence of Buddhahood. The treaties take three senses; (1) the sense that the Buddha's Cosmical Body manifests itself in all living beings, (2) the sense that the Absolute (innate purity, the true essence) of the Buddha represent an undifferentiated whole, and (3) the sense that the germs of the Buddha exists in everything that lives. In meaning that each of 3 senses is the three points composing the true nature of the Buddhahood, the treatise calls the three senses as 'three kind of self-nature' (*trividhah svabhavah*).

The essence of 'Matrix of Thus Come One' made clear by the treatise is the framework that these three points of (1) Dharma body (*dharmakaya*), (2) True nature (*tathata*), and (3) Thus Come One's nature (*tathagatagotra*) are undifferentiated.

For the attainment of Absolute Purity, the four virtuous qualities are required.

The treatise says, 'It arises to life (1) through faith and the Doctrine, (2) through Highest Wisdom, (2) through concentrated trance, and (4) Great Commiseration'.

The two sources of the thought of the Matrix of the Thus Come One are regarded two sutras of Wisdom Sutra and the Lotus Sutra. In the Lotus Sutra, however, no word such Buddha nature, Buddhahood, or the Matrix of the Thus come One is not described. More, nevertheless there is no passage quoted from the Lotus Sutra in the treaties, only titles of the Lotus Sutra and the Wisdom Sutra are mentioned among the several sutras that the treaty quotes.

Some scholar says, "Rather, it may be a remarkable matter to be mentioned the title of the Lotus Sutra. He explains this matter by the contents of 'the Treaties on the Lotus Sutra' (*saddharma-pundarika-upasesha*) by *Vasubandhu* (around the forth or fifth century, India). One of the four points is the prophecies of future enlightenment. The passage for the prophecy of the future enlightenment is as follows. "*Sariputra*, in ages to come, after a countless, boundless, inconceivable number of *kalpas* have passed, you will make offerings to some thousands, ten thousands, millions of

Buddhas, and will honor and uphold the correct Law, You will fulfill every aspect of the way of the bodhisattva and will be able to become a Buddha.”

Here, ‘Honor and uphold the correct Law’ means ‘Faith’. ‘The way of the *Bodhisattva*’ means ‘Six Perfections (*sat-paramita*)’. That is, in the practice of the Lotus Sutra, the strong willpower to keep ‘Faith’ and the practice of ‘Six Perfections’ are required for the manifestation of ‘Purity.’

The different point between the *Sutta Nipata* and the Lotus Sutra is in final purpose by purity. To reach the purpose of utter *nibbana* without attachment, namely highest stage in the *Sutta Nipata* is to become *arahant*. Ultimate goal in the Lotus Sutra is attainment of Buddhahood.