

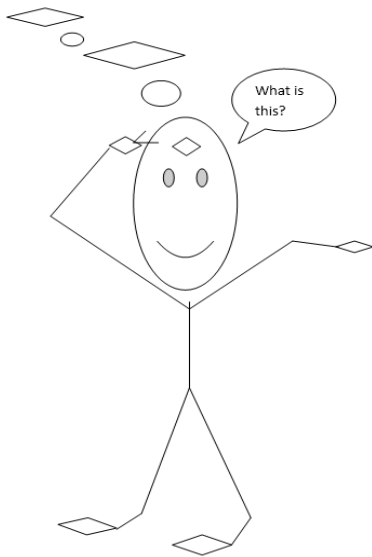
Vicikicchā - One of The Five Impediments

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Introduction

When we are travelling by the train and the train is moving towards its destination at high speed, at that time if we are sitting at a window and also looking outside through the window then we observe that the trees, the hills, standing-trains, edifices situated nearby railway tracks etc. which are coming into the way of the moving train, give impression that all of these things are moving rapidly instead of the train in which we are travelling. Similarly when clouds are gathering in the sky and moving from one direction to the other, then if we see in the sky that either the Sun or the Moon or mountains tops etc. are being observed that the Sun or The Moon or mountains tops, as the situation is, running in the sky rather than the clouds are moving. Such types of situations are creating doubts in our minds. We are living with the myth for thousands of years that the Sun rises in the morning and downs in the evening; however, the Sun is never rising and never downs. It is always at its place and shining, emitting light rays from its body and illuminating the whole of the galaxy. Only the Earth is moving around its axis that causes days and nights, not the movement of the Sun. And mirage is also a similar example of such type of confusions. We are confused about which one is true and which one is false. When we are in perplexity and such type of condition arises around us then it is known as Vicikicchā ¹(Doubt) in Pāli².



Vicikicchā is the strongest impediment among the five impediments as The Buddha, The Enlightened One preached to the Monks and made aware them to abandon and overcome the same as soon as it arises during the period of meditation. Vicikicchā has no boundaries, no dimensions and no measurement in all the way. If it has not been abandoned, then it grows by leaps and bounds in day and night. In this material mundane world not only the laypeople but also the noble beings are overpowered by Vicikicchā. The Thatagata Buddha preached about the five impediments- Sense Desire (Kāmacchanda), Ill-Will (Vyapāda), Sloth and Torpor (Thin-Mida), Restlessness and Drowsiness (Udaccā- Kokuccā) and Doubt (Vicikicchā), those are creating obstacles during the period of meditation training (Vipassanā- Sadhanā) in

achieving Nibbāna, the Arhatahood. Māra is always active to overpower all the meditators who are meditating to achieve Nibbāna or get rid-off miseries. However the meditator must know how to overcome over Māra and progress in meditation moment by moment, in achieving suffering free material human life. He must be aware of each and every moment

¹ Vicikicchā is one of the five Nivarna, Discribed in Dhammanupassnā, Mahāsttipaṭṭhāna Sutta

² Pāli is the Language in ancient India particularly at the time of Buddha.

that now the particular impediment arises, then it passing away and again un-arisen impediment arises and passing away and thereafter no impediments remains any more. It completely washes away by practising Vipassanā meditation, dividing it into pieces and pieces by passing of time.

Vicikicchā³ is the last but one of the five impediments or obstacles preached by the Tathāgata Buddha to Nuns and Monks, lay disciples -Females and Males and also the ascetics and seers of various sects. Siddhartha Gautama had gone through the teachings and preaching of Ācārya Alāra Kālāma and Ācārya Rāmaputta Udareka honestly and meticulously in forest of Rājgrah and Urevellā. But he was not contented with the teachings and practise taught by them. Thereafter he proceeds towards the dense forest of Urevellā where He had meditated with strong determination impulsively, consistently and spontaneously to achieve Perfect Enlightenment. Siddhartha Gautama overpowered the Māra who attacked him again and again and he disrupt him when he was meditating at the root of The Bodhi Tree and in the periphery of the Bodhi Tree near Mucalinda Pond on the bank of river Niranjana in the dense forest of Urevellā⁴. However, several of hard core and protagonist meditators were succumbed by the hands of Māra so he was confident that he must defeat the Gautama but he was unsuccessful in his ambition. He again attacked with his three daughters and the battery of his army create stormed there too where the Mucalinda Serpentine came out of his hole and made seven coils around the Buddha and kept his hood over the head of the Enlightenment one.

Etymology:-

Doubt (Vicikicchā)⁵ literally have several meanings such as preponderance or predominance of thinking, perplexity, confusion, suspicion, qualms, indecisiveness, puzzlement, mystification, bafflement, bewilderment, wavering, misguide, disbelief, stiffen in nature, not knowing the truth, non-believing, not able to decide any way, uncertainty, wandering mind, confound, lack of knowledge, anxiety, impatience, daze, tension, bother, harassment, obstacle, interruption, barricade, hold back, pause, embarrassment, dishevelment, feverishness etc. However, in short, it is said that the person who is under effects of delusion and elusion; craving and clinging the self grasping ignorance is considered under the golden wrap of doubt. All of these lead to the extreme of mental inertia or paralysis or blind believes. It is also listed as one of the seven basic natures of tendencies (anusaya)⁶-always in bad sense, obstinacy, bias, prejudice, ignorance, lust, hatred, delusion and craving for rebirth. Self grasping ignorance or lack of knowledge (Avijjā) is the mother of doubt (Vicikicchā). But herewith we discuss only sceptical doubt, that is, not being convinced about the (1) Tathagata Buddha, (2) Dhamma, (3) The venerable Saṅgha and (4) the path (training of meditation – Vipassanā Sadhanā).

³ Mahasattipatthāna Sutta, VRI, Nasik, India and Kālāma Sutta, Sutta Pitaka-Aṅguttara Nikāyas

⁴ The Buddha and His Dhamma by Dr. B.R. Ambedkar, Buddha Bhoomi Publication

⁵ The Pāli text Society's Pāli-English Dictionary (Digital Dictionaries of South Asia Pp 616)

⁶ The Pāli text Society's Pāli-English Dictionary (Digital Dictionaries of South Asia Pp 44)

Illustration

Just have a pot of water that one is turbid thickly, muddy and well stirred up and also then kept it into a dark place. A Bhikkhu or a lay person with best and sharp vision eyes should consider his own facial image into the water. Can he sees his facial image in it or could he recognise his posture in this pot? Not at all, he is unable to see or recognise his face in that water because the water is pervaded by mud and disturbed by turbid.⁷ Similarly a ship is moving in the sea and turbid the water, one who is sitting on board of the ship cannot see his image or even water creatures in that water of the sea because the water have so many impurities and over that well stirred by the ship. But when we move in a slow boat in clean and clear water at beach, we are able to see the coloured fishes or sea creatures moving from here to there and also corals at the sea bed. When the sky is thickly cloudy or foggy or smoggy (especially in winter season) and all clouds or fogs or smokes are roaming from one direction to the other, a noble person having sharp sight vision could see the Sun in the sky in day time? Everybody knows that he could not see anything in the sky except the thick clouds or fogs or smokes. Sometimes he is unable to see anything near to him say about hundred metres away because of thick clouds or fogs or smokes all around to him. But when all these removed from the space, everything is clearly visible to normal sight person. Just as the sky was perfectly clear after lock down period over when the pandemic arises in India.



Similarly a Bhikkhu or layman is pervaded by delusion and illusion that change his thoughts into perplexity or uncertainty. He possessed by perplexity then he cannot observe or know his benefits. But on the other hand, just as the pot have pure and clean water placed in the day light then a layman can see his face in this quite water clearly and recognize himself very well. In the same way when an arhat or a revered (Bhikkhu) monk transcendent himself free from delusion, illusion and overcome from the craving of self grasping ignorance then he can

⁷ Sanyukta Nikaya

overpower doubt and he can decide in a proper way that helps him in achieving enlightenment. He comes to know and observe his benevolence in the mundane material life.

Canonical Record:-

Once, The Thatagata Buddha comes across the Kālāmas of Kesumutti⁸ who are suffering by the effects of Vicikicchā. Because of some Saramanas and Brahmanas come to their village and preach the same thing in different traditions with different meanings (abhiññā). They were confused with their teachings - Who is true and who is false? As it is a very difficult and complex situation arise there. They fail to decide which way they are suppose to go. Whether Sammanas or Bhikkhus all are right or Brahmanas are right. Whether this one Sammana or Bhikkhu (Monk) is true or that one is true. Whether this Brahmana is true or that Brahmana is true? Off course they were perplexed or Vicikicchā had been arisen due to perplexing issues.

They people, Kālāmās come where the Buddha, The Enlightened One, was staying and they pay respect and salutation to the venerable Tathagata Buddha who is known as Bhagavā Arhanta Vijjacarna Sampañño Sugato Lokvidhuanutro Purishdamasarthi Styadevamanusam and Smmāsamas Buddha. They put their doubts before The Awakened one and sat beside there. They believe that The Enlightened One always teaches the Dhammas which is benevolence at every time, every moment, in the beginning, in the middle and in the last, with the perfect and complete meaning of the words and phrases in simple language⁹ of the day which is easily understandable to every person.

They, the Kālāmās, asked the Enlightened One: Bhante! Some of the Samanas or Brahmanas come to the Nigam Kesumutti and they expound and eulogize their own doctrine but they were disparaging with the concept of others. They were not agreeing with one another over the same concept. They debunk the doctrines of others. Sometimes they were disparaging their own doctrines. Bhante, on account of that, there were perplexity or Vicikicchā for us. Which one of these is truth and who is speaking falsely?

This is the imbalancing and embarrassing situation among the Kālāmās of Kesumutti Nigam, Bhante.

The Awakened One preaches them –Off course, you Kālāmās are confused and bewildered by such type of confusing and perplexing concepts and thoughts are arisen in your Nigam.¹⁰

There after The Buddha taught them that:-

- (1) You do not agree with hearsay, nor believe that transfers from generations to generations.
- (2) Nor accept what you listen from your venerable or respectable person
- (3) Nor guided by a person who love you most

⁸ Kālāma Sutta, Sutta Pitaka-Aṅguttara Nikāya-Tikanipāṭa-Published by VRI, Nasik, Maharashtra

⁹ Pali was the language of common people of the country at the time of Buddha and centuries thereafter.

(Lok kalian ki Bhasa or jan- jan ki bhasa)

¹⁰ Anguttar Nikaya (Saṃyojna) 17- ten fetters (AV 17)

- (4) Nor abide by what you have been transmitted by general consensuses
- (5) Nor by pious collection of books handed down
- (6) Nor on the basis of logical interpretations
- (7) Nor by inferences nor by reflection nor by pacification or nor by agreement
- (8) Nor by thoughts of anyone so called supreme power
- (9) Nor by agreeing after evaluation of views
- (10) Nor by what is apparently probable.

Whenever such kind of situation arises, then you Kālāmās be acquainted with yourselves that these phenomenons are sāvajja or akusala, if yes then these phenomenon are overpowered by māra and lead to create damage and harm you. Your mind (citta) is under the possession of delusion, craving and clinging; you may destroy your life, due to lack of knowledge. You take what is not given to you, and you tell falsely, you go to the other woman for your sensual desires and also promote others to do so. In this way you become the torch bearers for others. This harms your life in the long run and also the others who fellow you. You suffer with various kinds of miseries. You show yourself to others that you are a well satisfied and

comfortable person but not so actually. You act like a person who is happiest in the world but not so in reality. This is not for the welfare of you as well as the others, who are promoted by you to do so. Then you, Kālāmās discontinue the entire phenomenon to safe guard yourselves and others. You abandon these harmful activities and also forbid others to do so. Then you meditate to abandon all of them. You make yourself free from delusion and illusion. You make yourself free from clutches of Māra.

Whenever, you Kālāmās sense yourselves that these phenomenons are beneficial for you and applauded by the sensible and prudent persons; undertaken and forwarded by others for the welfare and benefit of all sentient beings, then these are Kusala Kammā. These Kusala Kammās are favourable and benevolence for all sentient beings. You must have careful attention towards complementary mental qualities –virtual or non-virtual.

Meditation

There is only and the only path to eradicate miseries and lamentation of human race in this mundane world. The path of purification is thought by The Perfect Enlightened Buddha. He thought the path at Kammāsdhamma Nigamo to the people of town “The Kurus” by the discourse of MahāSattipaṭṭhana Sutta.¹¹ The path leads the people of Kammāsdhamma Nigamo to overpower (Nivarna) all impediments including Vicikicchā. The Buddha preached the kurus that all (Saṃkharā) the composite things are impermanent, they are changing moment over moment and the character of every composite thing is suffering; all phenomena are the nature of (Anātama) selfless or egoless. There is no “I”, no “my” and no “myself”¹².

¹¹ Digha Nikaya - MahāSattipaṭṭhana Sutta-16

¹² Dhamma Pada , Maggavaggo (277,278,279)

So the kurus meditate accordingly and transcendent miseries into peace. They transcendent themselves free from miseries. Then they were on the path of Nibbāna.

Before a meditator proceeds to Vipassanā meditation, he first practices to observe natural breathing (Anāpāna Sati) to concentrate with his mind and body. Slowly—slowly he moves towards Vipassanā Sadhanā. He tries to concentrate his mind over his body and recognises or observes the sensations over his body. He recognises, particular sensation is arising then it goes out. Again he observes that unarisen sensation arise and passing out. Such type of process is going on until the mind become calm. The position of equanimity arises. Then there is no misery and no sufferings at all physically as well as mentally.

The path of Nibbāna is actually investigation and mindfulness meditation:-

When the meditator meditates to investigate the mindfulness of impediments including doubt (vicikicchā) he has to follow the followings steps in sequence:-

1. First of all recognize and accept the presence of it.
2. Investigate the nature of impediments (sensual desire, ill-will, sloth and torpor, anxiety and restlessness or doubt) physically, mentally, energetically, cognitively. The presence of sensation is either pleasant or unpleasant or neutral.
3. There is a condition to accept it or refuse it and then know that the absence of it mindfully. This process is going on until and unless the absence of sensation observes completely.
4. Identification of Non-self. “I” is neither a body nor mind nor my emotions and it is sufficient to remove miseries.

Conclusion:-

When anyone is suffering from anxiety then his nights are going longer and longer. When anyone tried to walk on a path of suchness his destination goes far and far away. His distance become longer and wider. Similarly the person who is ignorant of true Dhamma in this material mundane world, his life is going in miseries longer and longer. When anyone should not find out a better friend or similar to himself, then he should walk alone. It is better for him live alone than with a fool. Even if a person who have doubts about the Buddha, Dhamma, Sangha and the path, he worships or meditating whole life along with a wise man, he cannot understand anything just like a spoon which is used for preparing soup and it does not realize the taste of soup. However on the other hand a person who is intelligent and without self grasping ignorance, elusion and delusion as well as absence any kind of doubts about the Buddha, Dhamma, Sangha and the path, he understand easily and quickly the Dhamma just like a tongue taste the soup.

The Buddha taught the Bhikkhus and his lay disciples that never follow the path blindly without understanding its truthfulness through Kalāma Sutta and he clarified all the doubts of the people of Kesumatti Town before he preach him the path of Nibbāna, the way free from miseries.

Initially we must be mindful towards any kind of doubt and acknowledge that and clarify the same. When we acknowledge the same with some collectedness and clarify with unpleasant feelings, meditate the path to eradicate the same. When we find the irritation is going out and friendliness is being developing and encouraging within ourselves towards happiness. Then Dhamma is working to transform whole of our mind to reality and open our mind to all sentient beings. We must keep on working till our whole unpleasantness transform into pleasantness completely. Our irritation attitude removes, our frustration faded out, and misery transformed into pleasantness and cultivate friendliness towards all sentient beings.

In short Vicikicchā towards The Buddha, Dhamma, Sangha and the path is harmful and create hurdles in following the noble path that eradicating miseries. That does not give desired results. Anyhow if any iota of doubt towards any Dhamma, one should not follow that Dhamma without clarifying the doubts.

Bhavtu Sabbe Mangalam.

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