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AN ANALYTICAL STUDY OF THE BUDDHIST CONCEPT OF  
NĪVARAṆA

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## Abstract

This research is a comprehensive investigation of the nature of mental hindrances (*nīvaraṇa*). Primary reason for undertaking this research is because of the important role in the Buddhist practice for liberation. As there is no comprehensive scholarly work written in English on the subject, it was felt that this undertaking is worthwhile.

According to Buddhism, the cause for beings being trapped in the cycle of birth and death is due to the ensnaring force of mental taints, and hence the escape from the cycle of birth and death, or else the realization of final liberation (*nibbāna*), is possible only by cutting off these taints permanently. The Buddha has pointed out various sets of mental taints. Of them, the set of five hindrances has been emphatically and frequently mentioned in his many discourses as mental taints which *directly obstruct* one's mind from making it the ground for the rise of liberating knowledge. This is the reason why these merit the special name "hindrance" (*nīvaraṇa*).

This present research which is based on the early as well as late *Pāli* literatures shows that all kinds of mental achievements, both mundane as well as supra-mundane, could be gained only by having abandoned these hindrances, at least temporarily in the case of mundane attainments, and permanently in the case of supra-mundane attainments. Thus, be it worldly achievements, such as mundane *jhāna* or other worldly higher knowledges, or the supra-mundane achievements, namely, *magga* and *phala*, are attained after getting rid of the five hindrances. In fact, the impact of these hindrances causes not only mental agitation, but consequently also could lead to social disorder. Thus, it is stated that one whose mind is overrun by these hindrances fails not only to understand one's own advantage but also advantage of others as well as both.

Thus, considering the important role of these five hindrances, the present study attempts to bring up all possible aspects related to the five hindrances, such as their natures, conditions for their arising, means for their removal and benefits of purifying one's mind from them, and analyzes them critically and comprehensively. Thus, it is finally hoped that this work would provide adequate information regarding the five hindrances to those who engage in the academic field as well as in their practical application.