

The Connection Between *Atta* and *Dukkha*

**BUDDHIST ANALYSIS OF HUMAN EXPERIENCE AND
THE WAYS TO TRANSCEND UNSATISFACTORINESS**

**(A study based on Pāli Nikāya with some comparative points in
reference to the developed Buddhist Thought and other Traditions)**

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Abstract

This thesis is an attempt to discover the early Buddhist knowledge of human experience in different dimensions such the analysis of *Khandha*, *Āyatana* and *Dhātu*. What is considered as self or soul or ego-consciousness (*attā* or *ātman*) in different traditions are also presented in order to understand the Buddhist doctrine of *Anatta* more clearly. From a Buddhist perspective *Khandhas* or aggregates are the layers that cover different dimensions of human experiences: clinging, grasping at them causes pain, conflict and distress (*dukkha*). Relevant doctrinal points are being examined from a psychological perspective.

Out of five factors constituting a human, consciousness (*viññānakkhandha*), the factor that joins the different stages of experiences and makes sense of what is being felt and perceptions is a complex causal event based on the sense and its corresponding object. This analysis of human experience makes the Buddha's teaching a unique doctrine that not only denies the existence of an all- powerful- creator (God or Brahma) but also rules out the possibility of an independent and permanent self or soul that presides over and wields its power on human experiences. The assumption that one has a self, an identity that makes one's existence a separate unique entity is a problem: can we probe into that self? Many philosophers in different traditions, from the dawn of human civilization till now have tried to identify what that self truly is. In ordinary experience, the tension between the ongoing sense of self and the failure to find that self in reflection is the origin of human uncertainty and irritation (*dukkha*).

Buddhist Ways to Transcend Unsatisfactory Experiences are based on the knowledge of the human motivation which is governed by cognitive and emotive processes that intertwine in the human experience.

The methods applied to solve human predicaments are many and various. The *Anatta* doctrine is a device to educate people to get out of the boundary of self-delusion. A similar expression concerning the non-validity of the world as conceived via our senses is termed *suññatā* or *sūnyatā* in Sanskrit. Besides, a systematic training called the Noble Eightfold Path or Threefold Paths is a gradual course to reach right knowledge (see things as they have come to be) and right deliverance (no longer grasping at experiences). Other ways intended for transcending ordinary experiences are also discussed, such as *jhāna* attainment, the art of deduction to unburden the mind of mental activities, and a rational way to transform emotions termed the miracle of the noble ones (*ariya iddhi*).

Finally, Buddhist Path is not to build up, but to deconstruct the unnecessary burden that one involuntarily carries with oneself as a misapprehension of 'self' and 'the world'. This right understanding is termed *anāsava sammā diṭṭhi* which turns one's course of action to transcend all self-motive and be at peace with whatever comes one's way.