

# ***Ambalaṭṭhika Rāhulovāda Sutta: The Significance of Reflection (paccavekkhana) for Spiritual Development***

**By Venerable Aggadhama**

## **Introduction**

*Ambalaṭṭhika Rāhulovāda Sutta* is one of the important *suttas* found in the *Majjhima Nikāya* where the Buddha instructed young *Rāhula* who was then seven years old on reflection (*paccavekkhana*)<sup>1</sup> before, during, and after performing a physical, verbal, and mental action. The *Sutta* offers a simple and systematic way for training one's conduct, to be skillful, to prevent mental defilements, and for spiritual development.

This *Sutta* emphasizes repeated reflection in order to suppress bad habits which are a natural inclination in human beings. Through repeated reflection one will be able to understand the way to right performance of an action (*kamma*) for spiritual development. The Buddha started to instruct the young Venerable *Rāhula* by using similes to make him become more reflective before committing any action.

As said in the *Dhammapada*, everything is mind made:

“Mind precedes all mental states, mind is their chief, they are all mind-wrought. If one speaks or acts with pure mind, happiness follows him like never departing shadow.”<sup>2</sup>

Whatever one does, thinks, or speaks is all mind made, it arises from the mind, hence, the Buddha instructed one to reflect before and after one acts, speaks, or thinks; thus - “Will it harm me, harm others, or harm both?”<sup>3</sup> The *Sutta* although taught to the seven-year-old Venerable *Rāhula*, the advice, however, is applicable to all human beings regardless of age.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> *paccavekkhitvā paccavekkhitvā kāyena kammaṃ kattabbaṃ, paccavekkhitvā paccavekkhitvā vācāya kammaṃ kattabbaṃ, paccavekkhitvā paccavekkhitvā manasā kammaṃ kattabbaṃ. Yadeva tvam, rāhula, kāyena kammaṃ kattukāmo ahoṣi, tadeva te kāyakammaṃ paccavekkhitabbaṃ. MN.61.2.1.*

<sup>2</sup> Acharya Buddhārakkhita, trans., *Dhammapada: The Buddha's Path of Wisdom* (Kandy: Buddhist Publication Society 1985), p.23.

<sup>3</sup> *Attabyāpadhaya, parabyāpadhaya, ubhayopadhaya saṃvatteyya MN.61.2.1.*

<sup>4</sup> Piya Tan, trans., “*Ambalaṭṭhika Rāhulovāda Sutta: Advice to Rahula at Ambalaṭṭhika*” Web, 9 August. 2015. <<http://dharmafarer.org/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2009/12/3.10-Ambalatthika-Rahulovada-S-m061-piya.pdf>>

The Buddha has used the term ‘*paccavekkhana*’ (reflection) extensively in this particular *Sutta* whereby ‘*paccavekkhana*’ can also be referred to as meditative concentration. This is especially so while reflecting on the nine *vipassanā ñāṇa* (insight knowledge) as mentioned by *Ācārya Buddhaghosa* in the *Visuddhimagga*.<sup>5</sup> *Paccavekkhana* or reflection is one of the basic bhikkhu trainings for those who have the earnest wish to cultivate and maintain their pure spiritual life in the dispensation as advised in the *Dasadhammā*- “These ten essentials (dhammas) must be reflected upon again and again by one who has gone forth (to live the holy life).”<sup>6</sup> Furthermore, it is explicitly stated that a *bhikkhu* should reflect wisely while using his four basic requisites, i.e. robe, alms food, shelter, and medicine for deeper understanding.<sup>7</sup> Stringent practice with wise reflection restraint our mind which could be overcome by greed, hatred, and ignorance. One could easily be deviated from his or her spiritual path if undertaken with defilements (*kilesa*) or afflicted mind, and one will be far away from the ultimate goal of *Nibbāna*, the *summum bonum* of the Buddha’s teaching.

Continuous and habitual reflection<sup>8</sup> enables one to purify one’s bodily, verbal and mental action with unblemished conduct. Eventually, one progresses in his or her spiritual path. Buddhist spiritual path is no mere religious rites, rituals, or devotion. It is in fact a psychological transformation from the ordinary mind to the enlightened mind imbued with inner peace, morality, and wisdom leading to the final eradication of all defilements.

The *Mahāsaropama Sutta* of *Majjhima Nikāya* explains the purpose of ‘spiritualism’ in the Buddhist dispensation. It is *brahmacariyaṃ pakaseti* - for the perfection of the holy life. Venerable Acharya Buddhārakkhita writes in his *Dhammpada* footnotes thus:

“... Holy man” is used as a makeshift rendering for brahmaṇa, intended to reproduce the ambiguity of the Indian word. Originally men of spiritual stature; by the time of the Buddha, the Brahmins had turned into a privileged priesthood by which define itself by means of birth and lineage rather than by genuine inner sanctity. The Buddha attempted to restore to the word Brahmana its original

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<sup>5</sup> Bhikkhu Ñānamoli, trans., *The Path of Purification (Visuddhimagga)* (Kandy: Buddhist Publication Society 1975.), p.755.

<sup>6</sup> Thanissaro Bhikkhu, trans., “*Dasadhamma Sutta: Ten Things.*” Web, 15 August. 2015. < <http://www.accesstoinsight.org/tipitaka/an/an10/an10.048.than.html>>

<sup>7</sup> Bhikkhu Ñānamoli, p.17.

<sup>8</sup> *Paccavekkhitvā paccavekkhitvā* is used for the repeated or constant reflection. MN 61.2.1.

connotation by identifying the true “holy man” as the Arahāt, who merits the title through his inward purity and holiness regardless of family lineage. The contrast between the two meanings is highlighted in the verses 393 and 396. Those who led a contemplative life dedicated to gaining arahatship could also be called Brahmins, as in verses 383, 389, & 390.”<sup>9</sup>

This statement shows the ultimate purpose of the spiritual life in this dispensation is to purify one’s own defilements, conduct, and morality through reflection of bodily action, verbal action, and mental action, whereby, one will be caused for spiritual development, finally attaining the ultimate transformation of mind; surpassing all worldly suffering, going beyond both unwholesome and wholesome actions, and achieving the final liberation, *Nibbāna*.

### **Is Buddhist Kamma a Fatalism?**

Do Buddhists view *kamma* as fate? *Kamma* is a fundamental teaching and philosophical doctrine in Buddhism which is difficult to explain in a simple manner to make people understand its profound meaning. It is not a destiny that one experiences in life, otherwise, everything is predetermined which would be a wrong interpretation in the Buddhist perspective. *Kamma* plays a significant role in the life of every being as one experiences suffering, pain, peace and happiness. This word ‘*kamma*’ is being used by many people to mean fate or predetermined destiny, that which is unchangeable for any reason, a certainty which is sure to happen now or in future.

During the time of the Buddha and pre-Buddhist era, the usage of karma was common among people. It is found in the *Sāmaññaphala Sutta* (DN 2) the views of the six famous teachers of those days on *kamma*. Among the six pre-eminent teachers, the founder of Jainism, *Mahavira’s* doctrine was based on *karma* and *vipāka* (cause and effect). (MN14).<sup>10</sup> His methodology of getting rid of past karmas was by self-mortification. His teaching on *kamma* is that when one does an unwholesome action, one is destined to be born in hell. According to *Makkali Ghosala’s* doctrine, everything is predetermined, beings experience suffering and happiness according to fatalism (*ahetukavāda*). In the case of *Puraṇa Kassapa’s* views on

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<sup>9</sup> Acharya Buddharakkhita, p.82.

<sup>10</sup> Bhikkhu Ñāṇamoli and Bhikkhu Bodhi, p. 188.

*kamma*, there is no-doer of evil or good actions (*akiriyavāda*) as nobody suffers or experiences happiness. The philosophical view of *Kesakambali* was based on materialism and annihilation.<sup>11</sup> However, The Buddha refuted this by saying that one is capable of refraining from unwholesome actions by the three doors and can do wholesome actions.<sup>12</sup> The Buddhist explanation of *kamma* is different from the other views, the present moment is determined by the past *kamma* force as well as the present actions, the present moment will not only determine the future but also the present moment. Moreover, the present moment is not pre-determined by the past *kamma*.<sup>13</sup> In the *Devadaha Sutta* of *Majjhima Nikāya*, the Buddha directly refuted the theory of *kamma* of Jainism that whatever one experiences either pleasure or displeasure or pain or happiness in the present moment is the cause of past *kamma*, and for the ending of new *kamma* is the practice of asceticism.<sup>14</sup> If the present result is determined entirely by past *kamma*, then present actions have no effect on the present pleasure. It might not be appropriate to reject the power of past actions that do not play any role in the present situation. Thanissaro Bhikkhu states in his introduction to *Devadaha Sutta* translation:

“The first point concerns the Buddhist teaching on action, or *kamma* (*karma*). The general understanding of this teaching is that actions from the past determine present pleasure and pain, while present actions determine future pleasure and pain. Or, to quote a recent book devoted to the topic, “Karma is the moral principle that governs human conduct. It declares that our present experience is conditioned by our past conduct and that our present conduct will condition our future experience.” This, however, does not accurately describe the Buddha’s teaching on *karma*, and is instead a fairly accurate account of the *Nigantha* teaching, which the Buddha explicitly refutes here.”<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> Maurice Walshe, trans., *The Long Discourses of the Buddha* (Massachusetts: Wisdom Publication, 1995.), p. 94-98.

<sup>12</sup> Thanissaro Bhikkhu, trans., “Sankha Sutta: The Coch Trumpet,” Web, January 19, 2016. <<http://www.accesstoinight.org/tipitaka/sn/sn42/sn42.008.than.html>>

<sup>13</sup> Thanissaro Bhikkhu, “Karma” (Legacy Edition 8<sup>th</sup> March 2011). Web, October 28, 2015. <<http://www.accesstoinight.org/lib/authors/thanissaro/karma.html>>

<sup>14</sup> Bhikkhu Ñāṇamoli and Bhikkhu Bodhi, trans., *The Middle Length Discourses of the Buddha* (Kandy: BPS, 1995), p.827-834.

<sup>15</sup> Thanissaro Bhikkhu, trans., “Devadaha Sutta: At Devadaha” Web, November 7, 2015. <<http://www.accesstoinight.org/tipitaka/mn/mn.101.than.html>>

The Buddhist view of *kamma* has the potentiality to liberate the mind from all taints, defilements through proper reflection (*paccavekkhana*) of bodily, verbal and mental actions.<sup>16</sup> Reflection is one way of avoiding unwholesome actions as it has the ability to see the bad consequences of an action which is done with a polluted intention. The *Aṅguttara Nikāya* says “*cetanāhaṃ bhikkhave kammaṃ vadāmi, cetayitvā kammaṃ karoti kāyena vācāya manasā’ti* (AN 6.63) - "Intention, I tell you, is *kamma*. Intending, one does an action by way of body, speech, & intellect.”<sup>17</sup> The statement firmly says intention is the *kamma*, if there is no intention, there is no *kamma*. When one performs an action either with a good or bad intention, eventually, one bears the result (*vipāka*) according to the actions that had been performed. It is a will without which no action is performed. However, the result of *kamma* bears fruit when it is fully matured as per the potentiality of *kamma*. It is the law of cause and effect, like a seed of the fruit, ‘as one sows, so one reaps’ somewhere or sometime in this very life or in a future birth. What *kamma* one experiences today is the interactive effect of both present and past *kamma*. *Kamma* is a law which operates by itself without depending on external intervention.<sup>18</sup> Acariya Buddhaghosa wrote:

“*Kamma*-result proceeds from *kamma*, Result has *kamma* for its source, Future becoming springs from *kamma*, and this is how the world goes round”<sup>19</sup> (Vsm. XIX.19).

According to Buddhism inequality does not only depend on heredity, genes, environment, nature or nurture, but also due to *kamma*. In other words, it is the consequences of present and previous *kamma*.<sup>20</sup> We are the creator of our own destiny, our suffering, and happiness. The *Cūḷakammavibhaṅga Sutta* says the causes of being born as inferior or superior is due to *kamma*. *Kamma* is the one that accompanies one forever until one goes beyond it, “*kammassakā, māṇava, sattā kammadāyādā kammayonī kammabandhū kammappaṭisaraṇā kammaṃ satte vibhajati yadidaṃ — hīnappaṇītātāyāti.*” (MN 135) - "Monks, beings are owners of their

<sup>16</sup> Bhikkhu Ñāṇamoli and Bhikkhu Bodhi.p.524-526.

<sup>17</sup> Thanissaro Bhikkhu, trans., “Nibbhedika Sutta: Penetrative” Web, November 1, 2015. <<http://www.accesstoinsight.org/tipitaka/an/an06/an06.063.than.html>>

<sup>18</sup> Narada Mahāthera, *A Manual of Abhidhamma* (KL: Buddhist Missionary Society, 1979). p. 255.

<sup>19</sup> Bhikkhu Ñāṇamoli, *Visuddhimagga: The Path of Purification* (Kandy: Buddhist Publication Society, 2010.) p. 627.

<sup>20</sup> Narada Mahāthera, *The Buddhist Doctrine of Kamma and Rebirth* (Penang: The Penang Buddhist Association, 1997.) p.8.

actions, heirs of their actions; they originate from their actions, are bound to their actions, have their actions as their refuge. It is action that distinguishes beings as inferior and superior.”<sup>21</sup> *Kamma* is the only cause that differentiates the birth of human beings and depending on one’s own *kamma* beings are born into inferior or superior birth, poor or rich, ugly or handsome. The *Vasala Sutta* (Sn 1.7) says, “Not by birth is one an outcaste; not by birth is one a *brahman*.”<sup>22</sup> By deed one becomes an outcaste, by deed one becomes a *brahman*.”<sup>23</sup> This shows the essence and importance of *kamma* in Buddhism. *Kamma* is like a never separated shadow which follows wherever one goes. The *Dhammapada* says:

“*Na antalikkhe na samuddamajjhe, na pabbatānaṃ vivaraṃ pavissa na vijjatī so jagatippadeso, yatthaṭṭhito mucceyya pāpakammā.*” (Dhp 127). “There is no single spot on Earth an evil-doer can take shelter in to escape the results of his evil actions. No such place is seen out there in space, or in the middle of the ocean. Neither in an opening, a cleft or a crevice in a rocky mountain can he take shelter to escape the results of his evil action.”<sup>24</sup>

“*Na antalikkhe na samuddamajjhe, na pabbatānaṃ vivaraṃ pavissa. na vijjatī so jagatippadeso, yatthaṭṭhitam nappasaheyya maccu.*” (Dhp 128). “Not in the sky, nor in the ocean midst, not even in a cave of a mountain rock, is there a hiding place where one could escape death.”<sup>25</sup>

This is to show the workings of *kamma*, that which operates by itself without depending on any external force. Therefore, in Buddhism, no God as creator is found. In order to refute the concept of God-Creator, the Buddha explains in the *Āṅguttara Nikāya*:

“Whatsoever happiness or pain or neutral feeling this person experiences, all that is due to the creation of a Supreme Deity (*issara-nimmanahetu*).” So, then, owing to the creation of a Supreme Deity men will become murderers, thieves, unchaste, liars, slanderers, abusive, babblers, covetous, malicious and perverse in view.

<sup>21</sup> Bhikkhu Ñāṇamoli and Bhikkhu Bodhi. p.1053.

<sup>22</sup> Brahmin caste is highest among the four castes.

<sup>23</sup> Piyadassi Thera, trans., “Vasala Sutta: Discourse on Outcasts.” Web, January 9, 2016. <<http://www.accesstoinsight.org/tipitaka/kn/snp/snp.1.07.piya.html>>

<sup>24</sup> Weragoda Sarada Thera, *Treasury of Truth: Illustrated Dhammapada*. (Taiwan: The Corporate Body of the Buddha Foundation), p.433.

<sup>25</sup> Weragoda Sarada Thera, p.436.

Thus for those who fall back on the creation of a God as the essential reason, there is neither the desire to do, nor effort to do nor necessity to do this deed or abstain from that deed.”<sup>26</sup>

The *Mahākammavibhaṅga Sutta* explains further, the ten unwholesome (*dasa akusala kamma*) and ten wholesome course of actions (*dasa kusala kamma*), three bodily, four verbally, and three mentally; that are performed rooted in greed (*lobha*), hatred (*dosa*), and delusion (*moha*), or non-greed (*alobha*), non-hatred (*adosa*), and non-delusion (*amoha*). Based on the roots one performs an action, one bears the fruits accordingly. The famous quote of Buddhism to denote the significance of *kamma* and *vipāka* is found in the *Samyutta Nikāya*:

“Just as the seeds are sown, so shall the harvest be; Good comes to the doer of good; evil to the evil-doer — He who has planted the seed shall taste the fruit.”<sup>27</sup>  
(SN 1.10)

The *Atthasālini* further explains, “By *Kamma* the world moves, by *Kamma* men live; and by *Kamma* are all beings bound as by its pin the rolling chariot wheel. By *Kamma* one attains glory and praise. By *Kamma* bondage, ruin, tyranny. Knowing that *Kamma* bears fruit manifold, Why say ye, ‘In the world no *Kamma* is’.”<sup>28</sup>

*Kamma* is also classified by fourfold actions; namely, ‘by way of function, by order of ripening, by time of ripening and by place of ripening.’ These fourfold *kamma* are the result of performing actions and accordingly the resultant consciousness will bear fruit. When any action of thought, word, or body, takes place, *cetana* (intention) orders its concomitants to perform their respective functions. Thus, all actions of beings are determined by this *cetana* which is also called *kamma*. *Cetana* arises when it comes in contact with external six sense objects: *rūpa* (matter), *sadda* (sound), *gandha* (smell), *rasa* (taste), *phoṭṭhabba* (physical contact), and *dhamma* (thought or mental objects); and motivates actions in connection with them.

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<sup>26</sup> Narada Mahāthera, *The Buddhist Doctrine of Karma and Rebirth* (Penang: Penang Buddhist Association, 1997), p.3.

<sup>27</sup> *Yādisaṃ vapate bījaṃ, Tādisaṃ harate phalaṃ. Kalyāṇakārī kalyāṇaṃ, Pāpakārī ca pāpakaṃ.* translated by Piya Tan, “Samuddaka sutta” (dharmafarer.org)

<sup>28</sup> Narada Mahāthera, *The Buddha and His Teachings* (Taiwan: The Corporate Body of the Buddha Educational Foundation Taipei, 1998). p. 260.

## Reflection (*Paccavekkhana*)

‘*Paccavekkhana*’ or *pratyaveksana* (sk) term is translated as ‘consideration, review, reflection, contemplation, looking at’<sup>29</sup> which is derived from *pati* + *ava*+*ikkh*+*a* (to consider or to contemplate)<sup>30</sup>. *Yoniso mānasikāra* is also a synonym of *paccavekkhana* which means wise consideration, contemplation and reflection. The *Dhammasangani* commentary says, “*dhammānaṃ sabhavaṃ pati na apekkhati*”; the characteristic of law is not to desire.

The term ‘*Paccavekkhana*’ is very important for the purification of mind and for the development of the holy life (*brahmācariya*)<sup>31</sup> in the *sāsana*.<sup>32</sup> It is to be reflected continuously without fail in performing or in using requisites for the growth of conduct, purity, mindfulness, concentration, and wisdom. Reflection plays the main role for the suppression of bad habits or conduct, and is the support for cleansing the impure mind; it enhances the increase of good moral conduct and purifies the bodily, verbal and mental actions. Purification of conduct is the purification of actions through reflection. The *Ambalaṭṭhikarāhulovāda Sutta* of *Majjhima Nikāya* explains the importance of *paccavekkhana*; that one has to reflect wisely before, during, and after performing either a bodily, verbal or mental action thus, “Is this action beneficial to oneself, to others, or to both, if this action brings unwholesome, painful result, then certainly, you should not do such an action.”<sup>33</sup> However, after proper reflection one knows the action is wholesome which will bring happy results, then one should certainly do such an action by three doors.”<sup>34</sup> It is not only the action that one has to reflect for spiritual development but one has to reflect repeatedly with regard to the basic necessities which are essential in daily life; otherwise, the mind will be over powered by defilements, as the *Dhammapada* says, “*Just as a storm throws down a weak tree, so does Māra*<sup>35</sup> *overpower the man who lives in pursuit of pleasure,*

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<sup>29</sup> A.P. Buddhadatta Mahāthera, *Concise Pāli Dictionary*, p.169.

<sup>30</sup> T.W. Rhys Davids and William Stede, p. 384.

<sup>31</sup> The one who has gone forth from home into homelessness is the one who practices celibacy under the Buddha’s Doctrine and discipline (Dhamma-vinaya).

<sup>32</sup> Dispensation of the Buddha.

<sup>33</sup> *paccavekkhitvā paccavekkhitvā kāyena kammaṃ kattabbaṃ, paccavekkhitvā paccavekkhitvā vācāya kammaṃ kattabbaṃ, paccavekkhitvā paccavekkhitvā manasā kammaṃ kattabbaṃ. Yadeva tvaṃ, rāhula, kāyena kammaṃ kattukāmo ahoṣi, tadeva te kāyakammaṃ paccavekkhitabbaṃ.* MN.61.2.1. Translated by Bhikkhu Bodhi.

<sup>34</sup> Bhikkhu Ñāṇāmoli and Bhikkhu Bodhi, p. 524-525.

<sup>35</sup> Five kinds of *Māra*: i. *Devaputtamāra* (as deity), ii. *Kilesamāra* (as defilement), iii. *Khandhamāra* (as aggregates) iv. *Kammamāra* (as kamma formations) and v. *maccumāra* (as death). Nyanaponika, p. 97.



*who does not control over his senses, no moderation in eating, indolent and dissipated.*”<sup>36</sup> It is through reflection that one is capable of conquering *Māra*, the defilements.

The *Sabbāsava Sutta* explains the importance of wise reflection thus: “When one attends unwisely, unarisen taints arise and arisen taints increase. When one attends wisely, unarisen taints do not arise and arisen taints are abandoned.”<sup>37</sup> It is very important to reflect on what we do, what we speak and what we think in order to remove our three kinds of defilements (*kilesa*), thereby, purifying our own conduct and developing morality, concentration and wisdom which will be supportive for our final destination, for the ending of suffering. When it comes to the practical aspect of reflection, one has to contemplate on one’s own conduct constantly without fail.

### **Spirituality in Buddhism**

The term ‘Spirituality’ is usually defined as to be connected to a higher spirit or higher being. In Buddhism spirituality is to be understood differently from other religious spiritual practices as Buddhist emphasis is on inner transformation and transcendence. In Buddhism, it is true that there is no specific term for spirituality to mention or to refer to. Some scholars usually translate *brahmacariya* as spiritual life or life of celibacy which refers to particular sangha communities only; however, in Buddhism, it is not denied that ordinary lay people cannot lead a spiritual life in tandem with their happy household life. There are many instances in the Buddha’s time where thousands of lay people led household lives while developing their spiritual lives.

The word spirituality has become wide spread and is commonly used by people to let others know that they are spiritual persons which means they are not materialistic, lead simple lives for happiness and inner peace. In its usual usage it refers to religion and is concerned with religious activities.

*Nibbāna* is the goal of spirituality in Buddhism. It begins with the analysis of dependent origination which is the endless bondage for all beings. Depending on ignorance, one accumulates *kamma* formations and depending on formations, there arise consciousness, name

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<sup>36</sup> Acharya Buddharakkhita, p.23-24.

<sup>37</sup> Bhikkhu Ñāṇamoli and Bhikkhu Bodhi, p. 91.

and matter. Existence is filled with pleasure and pain, love and hate, craving and striving for worldly happiness. However, these things are not everlasting happiness, they all have the fleeting nature of impermanence, suffering and non-self. The eightfold path is a systematic method for spiritual development which reverses the cycle of dependent origination and leads to the perfection of the spiritual life. Takeuchi Yoshinori writes in his introductory note on *Buddhist Spirituality* in this way:

It aims at cleansing the mind of impurities and disturbances, such as lustful desires, hatred, ill-will, indolence, worries and restlessness, skeptical doubts and cultivating such qualities as concentration, awareness, intelligence, will, energy, analytical faculty, confidence, joy, tranquility, leading finally to the attainment of the highest wisdom which sees the nature of things as they are, and realizes the ultimate truth, Nirvāṇa.<sup>38</sup>

In other words, it can be said, spirituality in Buddhism is the transformation of impure conduct to pure conduct, impure mind to pure mind. It is going beyond the endless *samsaric* suffering that entangles all beings with ignorance, *kamma* and repeated births. It is not deniable that one can attain the transcendental through constant spiritual practice. The purpose of taking the path of the spiritual life, is not merely for worldly happiness or to be reborn in the heavenly world but it is going beyond, to reach where no suffering is encountered, no repeated birth takes place, to achieve the ultimate happiness, the final goal of the spiritual path, *Nibbāna*.

For spiritual training, therefore, the Buddha advised his disciples thus: “one should not incline to desire, distress, or discontent with regard to robes, alms food, shelter or support for the sick and medicine; nor should one incline towards bad wishes or desires; nor should one arouse, strive, exert oneself in gaining recognition, wealth, honor, and praises. One should endure the touch of cold, heat, hunger, thirst, gadflies, mosquitoes, wind, sun, and creeping things. One should endure abusive and offensive manners of speech. One should patiently endure painful, sharp, piercing, afflicting, unpleasant, and disagreeable feelings that arise in one’s body; taxing on one’s breaths. Thus, *bhikkhus*, should you train yourselves”<sup>39</sup> (AN 4.25).

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<sup>38</sup> Takeuchi Yoshinori, *Buddhist Spirituality: Indian, Southeast Asian, Tibetan, and Early Chinese* (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1995). p. xiii.

<sup>39</sup> Bhikkhu Bodhi, p. 413.

Furthermore, it is advised to the *bhikkhus* that this spiritual life is not lived for the sake of deceiving people or flattering them; nor for the benefit of gain, honor, and praise; nor for the benefit of winning in debates; nor with the thought; Let the people know me thus / But rather, this spiritual life is lived for the sake of restraint, abandoning, dispassion, and cessation. The Blessed One taught the spiritual life, not based on tradition, but culminating in *Nibbāna*, lived for the sake of restraint and abandoning. This is the path of the great beings, the path followed by the great seers. Those who practice it as taught by the Buddha, acting upon the Teacher's guidance, will make an end of suffering<sup>40</sup> (AN 4.26). The *Mahāsāropama Sutta* (MN 29) gives a good explanation to the purpose of spirituality in Buddhism as many people have their own goal of leading a spiritual life, practicing spirituality but when some spiritual enthusiasts reach to certain stages, they do not try to progress further, and do not continue to exert to attain the final goal of spirituality.

## Conclusion

This article is written with special reference to the *Amballaṭṭhika Rāhulovāda Sutta* to elucidate the significance of reflection for spiritual development. Therefore, it is crucial to understand the meaning of reflection intellectually to prepare oneself for the pragmatic approach to attain the final goal of spirituality. The *Sutta* itself emphasizes the importance of reflection to see the blemishes of one's own bodily, verbal and mental actions. As long as one does not see and understand the cause and effect conditionality, one is incapable of going beyond it. Moreover, reflecting properly on *kamma* either as wholesome or unwholesome, one will be able to differentiate and be able to choose the right path that leads one to the eradication of all bad actions by good actions. It is not by mere belief in *kamma-vipāka* that one can understand it, however, it is by wise reflection that one can see and understand the philosophical doctrine of cause and effect of Buddhist *kamma*.

The Buddha advised in the *Kusala Sutta* to abandon unwholesome action as it is conducive to harm and pain; instead, he encouraged developing wholesome action as it bears benefits and happiness. One keeps in mind that one seeks the spiritual path to overcome all *dukkha*, to attain ultimate happiness and peace. The *Sāmaññaphala Sutta* gives good examples to

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<sup>40</sup> Ibid.

show the benefits of leading the spiritual life in the *Sāsana*. One needs to begin the spiritual life with basic duties and to develop them into full maturity, i.e., by avoiding evil, developing the wholesome, and purifying the mind<sup>41</sup> where one reaches to the final goal of the spiritual practice. The important beginning is to accentuate the attainment of the final goal. Therefore, one should commence the spiritual journey with wise reflection of one's own conduct, purify it, cultivate meditative concentration and develop intuitive wisdom where one is able to see the fleeting nature of life thus removing all kinds of defilements from the mind, and complete the spiritual journey by the attainment of *arahantship*.

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<sup>41</sup> *Sabbāpāpassa akaranaṃ, kusalassa upasampada, sacittapariyodapānam*. Dhṛ. 183.

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