

by the Mahāvihāra monks. Later, during the time of Silākalā (518-531 A.C.), the Jetavana sect accepted the Vaitulyavāda. During this time, a Thera named Jotipāla came from India and worsted the Vaitulyavā dins in a controversy. The Vajiriyavāda was introduced during the time of Matvala Sen (Sena I, 833-852 A.C.) by a heretic who lived om tje Virānkura Vihāraya. This form of Vaitulya came to designed as Rahas bana (Esoteric Doctrine) by the author, probably Vajrayana teachings (UCHC, I, I p.384). The Ratnakūta teachings consisting of Maha-ya-nst incantations too were introduced during the same time. The Nilapatadarsana, a sub sect of the Sammiti-ya, which enjoined the substitution of women, wine and love instead of the Tiratana, too, was introduced at this time. Though these were ridiculed and suppressed, the author mentions that they got absorbed into the popular belief system. The next important incident is the revival of the Sa-sana, and especially reintroduction of the Higher Ordination by Vijayabāhu I (1055-1110), who invited monks from Aramana country for the occasion as Sāsana had deteriorated during the period of the Chola domination.

In the ninth chapter the social and religious activities of Parakramabāhu I (1153-1186) are summarised. He built 360 Pirivenas and in order to "purify the Sāsana of the heretical immoral monks who prevailed from the time of king Valagambā for a period of 1254 years with sectarian distinctions and to unify the Sa-sana" he besought the support of the Forest Dwelling sect of Udumbaragiri, headed by Ka-syapa Thera. It is said that monks loyal to the Dharmaruci, the Sa-galika and the Vaitulya sects were expelled. Another similar unification of the Sāsana was effected by Vāḥimi Vijayabāhu (Vijayabāhu III, 1232-1236) and a Katikāvata was instituted with the support of Sangharaksita Thera and Dimbulāgala Medhankara Thera. His son, Pandita Parākramabāhu (1236-1270), with the help of Dimbulāgala Medhanakara Thera, got both the Aranyavāsi and the Gamavāsi to unite and to be engaged in fulfilling their Vidarsānā and G ranthadhura practices. The last chapter is devoted to the purification of the Sāsana by Nissanka Alagakkonara (14th cent.), with the help of Sri Dharmakirti Thera of Pala-batgala descendants of the Dimbula-gala fraternity.

While tracing the vicissitudes that the Theriya sect underwent in Sri Lanka, the author also deals with the literary traditions. This work became so important that the Saddharamaratnākara includes its contents in one of the chapters and the later Katikāvatas too have drawn their material from it. Even the historians of today regard this as a major reliable historical source.

P.B. Meegaskumbura

NIMITTA is a 'sign', in the sense of being a characteristic mark of things. The *Potaliya Sutta* (M. I, 360), for example, refers to the outer appearance of someone as a householder as 'nimitta'. Similarly the *Ratthapālasutta* (M. II, 62) describes a slave woman recognizing the former son of the house, now a monk and returning after a long absence, by way of the 'nimitta'.

In other passages in the discourses, the word *nimitta* suggests the idea of cause, such as for example in the *Sanimitta Vagga* of the *Anguttara Nikāya* (A. I, 82), where it is synonymous with such terms as *nidāna* (reason), *hetu* (cause) and *paccaya* (condition). In the *Vesāraja Sutta* of the same *Anguttara Nikāya* (A. II, 9), the same nuance can be found, when the Buddha pointed out that he did not see any ground (*nimitta*) based on which others could accuse him of falsely claiming to be fully awakened.

This causal nuance in the word *nimitta* also underlies the earlier mentioned examples, where the *nimitta* has to do with outer appearance. The point here is that for the slave women to recognize someone whose hairstyle and dress were by then totally different from the way she had been used to see him earlier, she had to become aware of those aspects of his appearance that had remained unchanged. Exactly these aspects became her 'nimitta' in this situation, 'causing' her to be able to recognize him.

Thus the *nimitta* is a central factor in the operational mechanics of memory and recognition, since it is with the help of such a *nimitta* that the aggregate of perception or cognition, *saññā*, is able to match information received in the present moment with concepts, ideas and memories.

The fact that perceptions and cognitions operate based on recognizing such *nimittas* in the world around us, however, is not unproblematic. In order to be able to recognize someone after a long absence, those of his or her *nimittas* that are least susceptible to change need to be taken into account. This need, however, leads to an emphasis on the most permanent aspects of experience in our perceptual appraisal of the world. That is, the very mechanism of perception, based as it is on recognizing *nimittas*, easily leads to a mistaken notion of permanence. Every successful act of recognition, unless counteracted by systematic attention to the truth of impermanence, can in this way add to the unconscious presumption that there is something in phenomena that does not change.

Not only that, but the *nimitta* can also lead to other mistaken notions. In the process of perception the *nimitta* can carry with it a first evaluation of sense data, since it is at this early stage of perceptual appraisal that the semiconscious decision takes place whether the perceived sense-object is sufficiently interesting to merit further attention. It is due to this first evaluative input that an object can appear to be, for example, "beautiful" (*subhanimitta*) or "irritating" (*paṭighanimitta*). For this very reason the *Mahāvedalla Sutta* (M. I, 298) speaks of the three root defilements lust, anger and delusion, as "makers of signs", *nimittakaraṇa*.

In order to counter the influence of these three "makers of signs", meditators practising the gradual path are to develop sense-restraint. According to the instructions for such sense-restraint, the practitioner should not dwell on the "sign" (*nimitta*) or the secondary characteristics (*anuvyañjana*) of sense objects, in order to avoid the flowing in of detrimental influences (e. g. at M. I, 273).

The same idea of restraint at the sense-doors underlies the famous *Bāhiya* instruction, where the Buddha taught a non-Buddhist ascetic during their first encounter to practice in such a way that "in the seen will be only what is seen, in the heard only what is heard, in the sensed only what is sensed, in the known

only what is known" (*Ud. 8*). Within minutes of this instruction, *Bāhiya* became an *arahant*. That this instruction was indeed concerned with the affective input provided by giving attention to unsuitable types of *nimitta* becomes evident from the elaboration of the same instruction by the monk *Mālunkya* (*S. IV, 73*), who explained that due to attending to the sign of affection (*piyanimitta*) one's mind becomes infatuated and affected by unwholesome reactions.

In the early Buddhist scheme of mental training, the systematic development of *satipaṭṭhāna* serves as a major tool to counter this tendency of the mind. Turning the full light of mindfulness on the initial stages of the perceptual process lays bare the evaluative input provided by the *nimitta* and thereby helps to rectify its repercussions.

The development of *satipaṭṭhāna*, as described in the *Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta* (M. I, 56), includes also directing awareness to the impermanent nature of all phenomena, by contemplating them as "arising" (*samudaya*) and "passing away" (*vaya*). Insight into the impermanent nature of all phenomena has the potential to culminate in full awakening, in realizing *animitta*, "signlessness".¹ With full awakening, all misleading notions and 'signs' of permanency are forever left behind.

The absence of any signs is also characteristic of a high level of meditative practice called *animitta samādhi*. Such "signless concentration of the mind", according to the explanation given by *Moggallāna*, is based on a high degree of concentration and requires the ability to withdraw attention from all signs (*S. IV, 269*).

The relation of the *nimitta* to the development of concentration is also reflected in the expressions "sign of tranquility" (*samathanimitta*)², "sign of concentration" (*samādhinimitta*)³ and "sign of the mind" (*cittanimitta*)⁴, which occur on several instances in the discourses. The development of beneficial types of *nimitta* is particularly relevant to the beginning stages of *samatha* meditation. According to the

commentarial exegesis (*Vism.* 125), the progress of concentration proceeds based on the first apperception of the object to be used for such meditation by way of the *parikamma-nimitta*. Once one is able to perceive this object without needing to actually see it, i. e. by way of mentally remembering it, one has gained the *uggaha-nimitta*. When with further practice the mind reaches the level of "access-concentration" (*upacārasamāhi*), this till somewhat unclear mental perception transforms into an entirely clear and stable internal image, the *paṭibhāga-nimitta*, which is regarded as a prerequisite to attaining full absorption (*jhāna*). In these contexts, too, the *nimitta* has preserved its causal nuance, since it is the development of such *nimittas* that 'causes' the practitioner to reach deeper stages of concentration.

To sum up: the "sign" 'signals' what is 'significant' enough to merit closer attention. Often the forces responsible for 'assigning' such 'significance' are lust, anger and delusion. If this is the case, the mind tends to react to what it presumes to be aspects of the outer objects and thereby become entangled in unwholesome mental associations and reactions. The same dynamics of attracting attention underlying the *nimitta* can however be skilfully used in order to develop deep concentration. In relation to the development of insight, the problem posed by the *nimitta* is that it easily lends itself to the erroneous assumption of permanency inherent in experienced phenomena. The absence of any *nimitta* comes as one of the three qualities of the realization of the signless (*animitta*) desireless (*appaṇihita*) and void (*suññata*) - *Nibbāna*. see also ANIMITTA

Bhikkhu Analayo.

NIRAYA See HEAVEN AND HELL
NIRMĀNA BUDDHA See DHARMATĀ BUDDHA
NIRMĀNA KĀYA See TRIKĀYA
NIRODHĀNUPASSANĀ See ANUPASSANĀ
NIRODHASAMĀPATTI See SAÑÑĀ VEDAYITA
 NIRODHA
NIRUTTIPATISAMBHIDĀ See PATISAMBHIDĀ

NISSAGGIYA-PĀCITTIYA, a Buddhist Ecclesiastical Offence (*Āpatti*) involving forfeiture. This comes under the very broad category of offences called the *Pācittiya*. training (*Sikkhā*), culture and growth (*bhāvanā*) and discipline (*vinaya*) are key words in Buddhist religious life, which operate in the two major areas of (1) the lay community (*gihi*) at large and (2) the selected community of those men and women (*pabbajitā*) who have taken to a life of renunciation (through self-choice). As a term of very wide coverage, the word *sikkhā* is used to contain the entire gamut of development in Buddhism as a religion. The concept of *sikkhā* as training is carefully graded into three ascending stages of i. *sila*, 2. *samāhi* and 3. *paññā* which are collectively referred to as *tiṣṭhā sikkhā*

This training begins, for every Buddhist, whether monk or layman, with grounding in morality. It is primarily the regulation of conduct or behavioural pattern of life of all humans in society, including men, women and children. This preliminary stage is referred to as *sila-sikkhā*. It basically concerns itself with interpersonal relationships within the family, society or community, and finally with the state and the nation. Inter-state and international relations and harmony is not lost sight of.

The basis for this goodness on life for humans is self-example or *attūpanāyika*, i.e. behaving towards others in a way that one would like others to behave towards one. It has to grow out of an awareness of human nature, human needs and human feelings. It needs no external divine authority of command. This is the basis of the entire Buddhist concept of *mettā* (Skt, *māitri*) or universal loving kindness, which is

1. A correlation of the characteristic of impermanence with the signless emancipation can be found at *Patis.* II, 48 and *Vism.* 657.
 2. At *D.* III, 213; *S.* V, 66; *S.* V, 105.
 3. At *D.* III, 226; *D.* III, 242; *D.* III, 279; *M.* I, 249; *M.* I, 301; *M.* III, 112; *A.* I, 115; *A.* I, 256; *A.* II, 17; *A.* III, 23; and *A.* III, 321.
 4. E.g. at *S.* V, 151; *A.* III, 423; and *Thag.* 85.

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