UTTARAVINICCHAYA. The Uttaravinicchaya is one of the two Pali treatises wherein the Vinaya Piṭaka is summarized in verse, to be used as mnemonic verses. It is always coupled with the first part of the Vinayavinicchaya, of which it is the supplementary volume. Both the Vinayavinicchaya and the Uttaravinicchaya were written by the same author, Ven. Buddhaddatta of Uragapura, a contemporary of Buddhaghosa as recorded in the colophons of the two books. The colophon of the Uttaravinicchaya giving the name of the author says:

Tambapanniya paramavaya karapena uragapure na Buddhaddatthassa racito uttaravinicchayo nīthito! “Here ends the Uttaravinicchaya written by Buddhadda, the supreme grammarian of Uragapura.”

According to the Vinayasūrattipāti, the Tiṅki on the Vinayavinicchaya of Vācissara Mahāsāmi and also the Buddhaghosupatti, Ven. Buddhaddatta who was returning from Lanka and Ven. Buddhaghosa proceeding to Lanka met on the way on the high sea. When Ven. Buddhaddatta learnt that Buddhaghosa was going to Lanka to translate the Sīhagara commentaries to Pali, he requested Buddhaghosa to send the commentaries he was writing to him in order to summarize them. Thus the tradition says that the Vinayavinicchaya and the Uttaravinicchaya have been written by Buddhaddatta, summarizing Buddhaghosa’s Samanapāsādikā, the Vinaya Commentary. Though there is a great similarity between the Samanapāsādikā and the Vinayavinicchaya, scholars do not accept the view that they were based on the Samanapāsādikā. Scholars believe that the similarity has occurred as a result of both Buddhaddatta and Buddhaghosa were basing their works on the Mahāvihāra sources (Sīhagara attabhākāṭha).

Scholars point out that Buddhaghosa’s name is not mentioned in Buddhaddatta’s work at least once. They say that Buddhaddatta had never seen commentaries written by Buddhaghosa. Buddhaddatta did not live till Buddhaghosa returned to Jambudīpa after writing the commentaries.

The colophon of the Uttaravinicchaya says that Ven. Buddhaddatta wrote it, on an invitation of Ven. Saṅghapāla of sublime virtues. It is thought that this Saṅghapāla Thera who invited Ven. Buddhaghosa to write the Visuddhiṭhānagga is the same Thera who invited Ven. Buddhaddatta to write the Uttaravinicchaya.

The Vinayavinicchaya consists of three main sections, Bhikkhuḷvīḥāna, Bhikkhunīvīḥāna and the Khandaḷakas, while the Uttaravinicchaya has bhikkhu-bhikkhuni ṛvīḥāṅga only. The Vinayavinicchaya covers the first four books of the Vinaya Piṭaka Pārājikā, Pacittiya, Mahāvagga and Cullavagga and the Uttaravinicchaya covers Parivāra. As per the colophon the Uttaravinicchaya should have only 950 verses. But the present Uttaravinicchaya has 969 verses.

The Vinayavinicchaya and the Uttaravinicchaya have been published in one volume by the PTS, in 1927 under the title “Buddhaddatta’s Manuals, Part II, the Vinayavinicchaya and the Uttaravinicchaya” were edited by A.P. Buddhaddatta.

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References

1 Scholars think Tambapanni does not refer to Sri Lanka but to a province in the basin of the river Tāmrarpanī in South India.


UTTARĪMANUSSADHAMMA is a “state” (in the sense of an attainment or ability) that is “beyond [the power of ordinary] men”. A detailed listing of such states can be found in the Vinaya in the context of the fourth pārājika regulation (Vin. III, 91), which defines Uttarīmanussadhamma to stand for attainment of:

- a meditative absorption, jhāna;
- a deliverance, vimokkha;
- a concentration, samādhi, on emptiness, signlessness, or desirelessness;
- an attainment, samāpatti, of emptiness, signlessness, or desirelessness;
- knowledge and vision, ānāgadassana, where knowledge stands for the three higher knowledges;
The rationale for this detailed treatment of uttarīmanussadhamma in the Vinaya is to clarify the implication of the first-pārājika regulation, according to which a monk who falsely lays claim to any such state beyond the power of ordinary men irretrievably loses his status as a bhikkhu. The fact that falsely claiming uttarīmanussadhamma is thus treated on a par with engaging in sex, theft and murder, highlights the seriousness of such behaviour. According to the background narration to this regulation, at a time of famine some monks had resorted to such false claims in order to ensure that they would get sufficient alms.

The theme of claims to uttarīmanussadhamma comes up again in another Vinaya regulation of less grave consequences, namely in the eighth pācītiya rule (Vin. IV, 25). The background narration to this rule is the same as in the case of the first-pārājika regulation, the only difference being that here the monks who made claims in order to ensure food supplies had indeed attained a state beyond the power of ordinary men. Nevertheless, their behaviour was considered blameworthy and censurable.

These Vinaya regulations highlight two aspects of uttarīmanussadhamma, namely the high esteem that was accorded in ancient India to anyone who could claim or even display some kind of supernormal ability, and the early Buddhist disdain towards making such claims and displays for worldly purposes. A quite explicit instance of such disdain can be found in the Kevaddha Sutta, according to which the householder Kevaddha wanted Buddhist monks to display uttarīmanussadhamma and perform extraordinary feats of psychic power, uddhipādhāriya, in order to convert the inhabitants of Nāḷandā (D. I, 211). In reply to this suggestion, according to the Kevaddha Sutta the Buddha explained that he would not tell his monks to make any public display of supernormal abilities, followed by differentiating between three types of extraordinary feats that the Buddha had realized by himself: supernormal powers such as multiplying oneself, walking on water etc.; the telepathic ability to read the mind of others; and instructions on how to train one’s own mind.

According to the Kevaddha Sutta, the Buddha then clarified that in the case of the first two types of extraordinary feats, an account of such abilities might meet with sceptic remarks that cause a faithful believer to lose his or her faith. This possible outcome stands in contrast to the third type of extraordinary feat, which the Kevaddha Sutta illustrates with the help of a full account of the gradual path up to liberation. The implication of this presentation appears to be that instructions on how to develop and liberate the mind will enable faithful believers to come to realization by themselves. In this way the Kevaddha Sutta indicates that, instead of trying to amaze the multitude with exhibitions of supernormal powers, the way the Buddha wanted his teachings to impress themselves on the public was through the power of instructions that lead to self-realization.

In contrast to such self-realization, according to the Kevaddha Sutta the Buddha disapproved, rejected and disdained the other two types of extraordinary feats, atīyāmi horiyāmi jīvijñāyāmi (D. I, 213). Since according to the same Kevaddha Sutta the Buddha proclaimed to be himself endowed with all three of these extraordinary feats, the message conveyed by this passage would not be a wholesale rejection of supernormal powers and telepathy as such, but rather of their public display as a means to arouse faith.

The rationale behind the Buddha’s disapproval appears to be that faith based on any external display will always remain a type of faith that can be shaken by others. The third of the three extraordinary feats discussed in the Kevaddha Sutta leads to a different type of faith or confidence, however, as it is not based on external display by others, but on having realized within oneself the truth and efficacy of the instructions given by the Buddha. The point made in the Kevaddha Sutta is thus not a rejection of uttarīmanussadhamma as such, but only of their public display for ulterior motives. This much could also be
gleaned from the above-mentioned passages in the Vinaya. In fact, according to a discourse in the Aṅguttara Nikāya not only the Buddha himself, but a considerable number of his disciples were similarly endowed with all three of these extraordinary feats (A. I, 172). Other discourses proclaim that a monk endowed with ability in these three extraordinary feats deserves to be reckoned as supreme among gods and men (A. I, 292 and A. V, 327). These passages further support the impression that what is rejected are not such supernatural abilities in themselves, but only their public display for the sake of worldly benefits.

A distinction in regard to the motivation behind performing a supernormal feat can also be seen when comparing two other supernormal performances recorded in the Vinaya. In the first of these two cases, the monk Pāliṇḍakañca had changed a piece of grass into a golden chalpot in order to assuage the grief of a little girl in the house of his supporter, who due to poverty was not able to adorn herself like the other girls in the village (Vin. I, 208). When the king found out that the poor family was in possession of a golden chalpot he had the whole family arrested, suspecting them to be thieves. Pāliṇḍakañca then visited the king and changed the whole palace into gold in order to prove that the poor family could come to possess a golden chalpot without thievery. As a result of this display of supernormal abilities, the family was released. The Vinaya does not record any reproach by the Buddha of these two instances of exhibition of supernormal abilities, but rather tackles the problem of how his fellow monks should handle the abundant supplies that as a result of Pāliṇḍakañca’s displays had accrued to them.

The second case in the Vinaya, however, involves a display of supernormal feat for the sake of self-exhibition. Here the monk Pindolabhāravācchā had performed a feat of supernormal power that involved levitation in order to obtain a costly sandalwood bowl that was hanging at the top of a high pole (Vin. II, 111). The bowl had been set as a prize by a merchant for any recluse or Brahmin able to reach it through supernormal power. Pindolabhāravācchā’s act incurred the Buddha’s censure, who compared it to a woman who exhibits her private parts for payment. The difference in treatment between the magical feats performed by Pāliṇḍakañca and Pindolabhāravācchā further corroborates the impression that the criticism is levied at public exhibition for the sake of worldly benefits, not at magical feats per se.

In fact, the performance of wondrous and supernatural feats is a recurrent feature in the early discourses and other Vinaya passages. These depict how the Buddha performed a magical feat in order to hide Yasa from the sight of his father (Vin. I, 16); or how the Buddha miraculously hid himself from the sight of a Brahmin (M. I, 330). Through another supernormal feat the Buddha was able to keep Aṅgulimāla at bay, who was in hot pursuit intending to kill the Buddha (M. II, 99); and a whole series of miracles happened when the Buddha was staying with Uruvelakassapa (Vin. I, 24). Among the Buddha’s disciples, Mahāmoggallāna was apparently particularly gifted in this respect, able to shake the palace of the thirty-three gods as well as a monastic building with his toe (M. I, 253 and S. V, 247). A discourse in the Cūḷa-vaccha reports how another monk conjured up a cool breeze to enable his fellow monks to return comfortably to the monastery after a heavy dinner on a hot day (S. IV, 289). When the donor of the meal asked for further performances, the same monk produced fire that burnt grass piled on top of the donor’s cloth, without harming the cloth. Another monk by the name of Cūḷapāṇaka was apparently able to multiply himself (Thag. 563), and the Vinaya reports that Devadatta magically changed his appearance in order to impress king Ajātasutta (Vin. II, 185). These few examples already suffice to show the degree to which supernormal feats and wonders are an integral part of the thought world of early Buddhism.

In fact, the ability to perform various supernormal feats is part of the account of the gradual path given in the Sāmaṇāṇḍa Sutta and several other discourses in the Dīgha Nikāya (D. I, 77). The Mahāvīra-vāca Sutta similarly includes such abilities in its description of the Buddha’s teachings (M. II, 18), as does the Sāmaṇāṇḍa Sutta (D. III, 112). The same discourse also makes the pertinent point that, when contrasted to mastery over the mind’s tendency to react with likes and dislikes, such supernormal powers are clearly inferior.

The keen interest among ancient Indians in a display of supernormal abilities is also reflected in the Pāṭicca Sutta, according to which Sunakkhatta decided to leave
the Buddhist order because he thought that the Buddha had not shown him any *uttarimaṇṇasaṭṭhadhamma* (D. III, 3). According to the same discourse, the Buddha clarified that he had never promised to make any such display, and that his teaching leads to freedom from dukkha independent of any supernatural performances. The same discourse then continues by reporting several occasions when the Buddha did avail himself of supernatural abilities, culminating in an account of how the Buddha rose up into the air and emitted flames (D. III, 27; See also YAMAKAPĂṬHĂRIYA).

The importance given to the possession of supernatural abilities in ancient India is also reflected in the Susima Sutta, according to which a wanderer by the name of Susima had become a Buddhist monk in order to spy out the Buddha’s teaching. When other monks declared to have won final knowledge, Susima was surprised to find that they would make such claims in spite of being unable to avail themselves of supernatural powers; or of telepathic knowledge of the mind of others etc. (S. II, 123; See also VIMUTTI).

The attainment of *uttarimaṇṇasaṭṭhadhamma* was held by the Buddha’s contemporaries to require the undertaking of ascetic practices (M. I, 172). According to the Buddha, however, ascetic practices are not required for being able to realize an *uttarimaṇṇasaṭṭhadhamma* (S. IV, 337). In fact, in spite of undertaking a range of ascetic practices he had failed to reach the supreme type of *uttarimaṇṇasaṭṭhadhamma* that he had been searching for: total liberation (M. I, 246). Instead of asceticism and self-mortification, the six qualities that from the early Buddhist perspective are required in order to be able to attain *uttarimaṇṇasaṭṭhadhamma* are mindfulness; clear comprehension; sense restraint; moderation with food; honesty; and restraint in regard to speech (A. III, 430).

Though some contemporaries of the Buddha, like the Brahmin Pokkharasāti, apparently thought that humans are not able to reach any *uttarimaṇṇasaṭṭhadhamma* at all (M. II, 201), a discourse in the Hathavāra Nikāya indicates that even lay followers of the Buddha, like the householder Citta, had been able to reach a whole range of *uttarimaṇṇasaṭṭhadhammas*, comprising the four jhānas and realization of the first three stages of awakening (S. IV, 301).

These are in fact the types of *uttarimaṇṇasaṭṭhadhamma* that stand at the very heart of early Buddhism, and it would be these types of states or attainments that a discourse in the Aśguttara Nikāya has in view when listing altogether ten reflections that a monk or nun should regularly undertake (A. V, 88), the tenth of which is to question oneself if an *uttarimaṇṇasaṭṭhadhamma* has been attained, a distinction in knowledge and vision worthy of noble ones, alamariyāḥāpadaśīvakireṇa.

In sum then, early Buddhism recognizes the ability to perform supernatural feats and, according to the early discourses and the Vinaya, the Buddha himself and various disciples repeatedly availed themselves of such abilities. Yet, the public display of such abilities for worldly motives is censured as unbecoming. The same censure also covers public proclamation of attainment of *uttarimaṇṇasaṭṭhadhamma* in the more restricted sense of a jhāna or one of the stages of awakening, even though to attain such type of *uttarimaṇṇasaṭṭhadhamma* is central to the undertaking of the Buddhist path to liberation.

Anālayo

References

1. It is perhaps worthy of note that this listing does not include the attainment of cessation, an attainment apparently not mentioned in the Vinaya at all. A listing of *uttarimaṇṇasaṭṭhadhammas* in the Cūḷagosāra Sutta (M. I, 209), however, includes the attainment of cessation, together with the jhānas and the immaterial attainments.

2. In fact the Chinese counterpart passages at T. I, 101c22 and T. I, 102a7 do not mention any rejection of these two types of extraordinary feats, but only point out that because of the possible reaction by disbelievers, the Buddha would not tell his monks to make public displays of such abilities.

3. M. I, 68 then reports that after disrobing he would spread the rumour that the Buddha had not attained any *uttarimaṇṇasaṭṭhadhamma*. In reply to this allegation, according to the Mahākāśyapidda Sutta the Buddha then gave a detailed account of his abilities and powers.
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