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Comparing the Tibetan and Chinese Parallels to the *Cūḷavedalla-sutta*

Bhikkhu Anālayo*

Introduction

In this article I translate and compare section by section two parallels to the *Cūḷavedalla-sutta* of the *Majjhima-nikāya* (MN 44), which features a discussion on various intricate and deep aspects of the teachings between the *bhikkhunī* Dhammadinnā and the lay follower Visākha. The two parallels to this discourse are found in the *Madhyama-āgama* (MĀ 210) extant in Chinese translation and as a discourse quotation in Śamathadeva's *Abhidharmakośopāyikā-ṭīkā* (Up 1005) extant in Tibetan translation. As the former can, with a considerable degree of certitude, be identified as a collection transmitted by Sarvāstivāda reciters and the latter is a collection of quotations reflecting the Mūlasarvāstivāda tradition,¹ the comparison serves as a case study in exploring the relationship between Sarvāstivāda and Mūlasarvāstivāda oral transmission lineages of *Āgama* texts.

The *Madhyama-āgama* parallel to the *Cūḷavedalla-sutta* has already been translated and compared with the Pāli by Minh Chau (1964/1991: 269–278) as part of his comparative study of the *Madhyama-āgama* and the *Majjhima-nikāya*. A comparison of the Chinese and Tibetan versions has been undertaken by Schmithausen (1987: 338–343). In my comparative study of the *Majjhima-nikāya* in the light of its various

* Barre Center for Buddhist Studies, 149 Lockwood Road, Massachusetts, 01005 USA.

¹ Anālayo 2017 and Dhammadinnā 2020a and 2020b.

parallels, I compared all three versions (Anālayo 2011b: 276–286) and in an article published in the same year I translated the Tibetan version (Anālayo 2011a). Building on the ground work laid in this way, in what follows I provide a full comparison and translation of the Chinese and Tibetan versions (for ease of communication, I will refer to the three versions simply by the language in which they have been preserved). My presentation proceeds passage by passage, combining my earlier translation of the Tibetan version (marked as Up 1005)² with new translations of the corresponding part in the Chinese version (marked as MĀ 210),³ followed by comments. The abbreviated references to the two texts come with a paragraph numbering in brackets that corresponds to the numbering used by Nāṇamoli (1995) in his translation of the *Cūḷavedalla-sutta*, in order to facilitate a comparison with the Pāli version. For example, “(=MN 44.1)” intends to convey that the counterpart to the passage in question is found in the first paragraph of the English translation of MN 44.

Up 1005 (=MN 44.1)

The Blessed One was dwelling at Śrāvastī in Jeta’s Grove, Anāthapiṇḍika’s Park. At that time, the nun Dharmadinnā was residing in the nunnery Rājākārāma. At that time, the honourable Viśākha approached the nun Dharmadinnā.⁴ Having paid respect with his head at the feet of the nun Dharmadinnā, he sat down to one side. Sitting to one side, the lay follower Viśākha asked the nun Dharmadinnā:

“Noble lady, if you would have the time to explain questions, [I would]

² D 4094 *ju* 6b2 to 11a5 or Q 5595 *tu* 7a7 to 12b1.

³ MĀ 210 at T I 788a16 to 790b6.

⁴ D 4094 *ju* 6b3 or Q 5595 *tu* 7b1 speaks of *tshe dang ldan pa sa ga*, yet the next sentence introduces him as a lay-follower, *dge bsn̄yen sa ga*, an expression used throughout the remainder of the discourse. The qualification *dge bsn̄yen* makes it clear that *tshe dang ldan pa*, corresponding to *āyasma* in Pāli, in the present context cannot have the meaning of marking someone off as a monastic. In fact, the use of the corresponding *āyasma* to address laity can also be found in several regulations in the Theravāda *Vinaya*, see Vin III 216,15, 218,35, 220,2 and 259,11, where the parallel versions preserved in Sanskrit similarly employ *āyuṣma*, cf. the Mahāsāṅghika *Vinaya*, Tatia 1975: 14,11+19+27 and 18,3, the Mūlasarvāstivāda *Vinaya*, Banerjee 1977: 26,10, 27,2, 28,14 and 30,11, and the Sarvāstivāda *Vinaya*, von Simson 2000: 186,14, 187,11, 191,7 and 198,4. In the case of the Mūlasarvāstivāda *Vinaya*, the Tibetan version uses the corresponding *tshe dang ldan pa*; cf. Vidyabhusana 1915: 67,2+13, 69,17 and 73,3. In such contexts, the translation “venerable” would not fit and instead another term, like “honourable”, is required.

inquire about a few subjects.”

“Honourable Viśākha, I shall listen to know [your] questions.”

MĀ 210 (=MN 44.1)

Thus have I heard. At one time the Buddha was dwelling at Śrāvastī, staying in Jeta’s Grove, Anāthapiṇḍika’s Park.

At that time the female lay disciple Viśākhā approached the nun Dharmanandā, paid homage with the head at her feet, stepped back, and sat to one side. She said to the nun Dharmanandā: “Noble one, I would like to ask a question. Am I permitted to ask it?”

The nun Dharmanandā replied: “Viśākhā, ask what you wish to ask. Having heard it, I will consider it.”

Comment

A noteworthy difference is that the two versions disagree on both participants in the discussion. Whereas according to the Tibetan version (Up 1005) the respondent was the nun Dharmadinnā, corresponding to Dhammadinnā in the Pāli version, the Chinese (MĀ 210) speaks of the nun 法樂, “Delight in the Dharma”. Now the translation of the *Madhyama-āgama* was undertaken by an Indian, rather than involving a Chinese translator in collaboration with an Indian who just read out or recited the text, as is often the case elsewhere. This makes it highly probable that the reference to 法樂 is not the result of the translation process, but that the Indic original had indeed a different name, be it Dharmanandā or Dharmanandī or whatever else.⁵ A rendering reflecting an Indic original similar to the Pāli version would rather have been 法施, which occurs as the name of a nun in an otherwise unrelated discourse in the *Ekottarika-āgama*.⁶

A different Indic original seems also probable for the *Madhyama-āgama*’s reference to the female lay disciple Viśākhā, contrasting to the agreement between the Tibetan and the Pāli versions that the questioner was a male. The same difference recurs between the *Vibhāṣā* translations

⁵ Minh Chau 1964/1991: 24 suggests Dharmanandī. My adoption of the alternative Dharmanandā in the translation is not meant to convey any certainty about the Indic original, but is simply a matter of convenience.

⁶ EĀ 49.9 at T II 803c23.

by Xuánzàng and Buddhavarman. In a quote from the present discourse, the former speaks of the male Viśākha whereas the latter has the female Viśākhā.⁷ This confirms that the presentation in the *Madhyama-āgama* is not just a translation error. Judging from the way other discourses depict the female Viśākhā, she would not have been the kind of person to ask the profound questions formulated in the present discourse.⁸

According to the Pāli commentary on the *Cūḷavedalla-sutta*, the male Viśākha was the former husband of Dhammadinnā.⁹ The story which, according to the Pāli commentarial tradition, provides the context for the discussion between the two is that Viśākha had earlier progressed to non-return, the third of the four levels of awakening recognized in early Buddhism. In the course of the present discussion, he was trying to discern the depth of Dhammadinnā's wisdom who, unknown to him, had in the meantime reached full awakening. Such a scenario would fit the type of questions asked much better than the presentation in the Chinese version that the questioner was lady Viśākhā.

Alongside such disagreements on the identity of the two main protagonists, the Tibetan and Chinese versions agree that Viśākha/Viśākhā first politely asked permission to pose questions, which the nun Dhammadinnā/Dharmanandā granted. The Pāli account instead sets in right away with the first question (MN 44.2).

Up 1005 (=MN 44.2–4)

“Noble lady, identity has been expounded, the arising of identity, and the cessation of identity. What is identity, what is the arising of identity, and what is the cessation of identity?”

“Honourable Viśākha, the five aggregates of clinging are reckoned as identity in the higher teachings of the noble Dharma. What are the five? The bodily aggregate of clinging, the feeling tone ... perception ... volitional formations ... and the consciousness aggregate of clinging.

⁷ T 1545 at T XXVII 780c7 and T 1546 at T XXVIII 337b7.

⁸ See in more detail Anālayo 2007: 32–34.

⁹ Ps II 355,29; see also Bode 1893: 562–566, Foley 1894: 321f, Rhys Davids 1909/1989: 12, Malalasekera 1937/1995: 1142f, Talim 1972: 117f, Murcott 1991: 62, Pruitt 1998/1999: 26–30, Krey 2010: 21, and Collett 2016: 23–25; and on the Mūlasarvāstivāda *Vinaya*'s account of Dhammadinnā's going forth see Panglung 1981: 197, Finnegan 2009: 156–162, 180–185, and 201–209, Muldoon-Hules 2010: 237–241, Clarke 2014: 48–50, and Yao 2015.

“The arising of ⟨identity⟩ is [due to] delight and attachment in relation to future becoming,¹⁰ together with ⟨craving⟩ that relishes here and there.¹¹”

“The cessation of identity is accomplished through the removal of delight and attachment in relation to future becoming, together with ⟨craving⟩ that relishes here and there; through their complete renunciation, exhaustion, fading away, cessation, and pacification.”

MĀ 210 (=MN 44.2)

The female lay disciple Viśākhā in turn asked: “Noble one, ‘identity’ is spoken of as ‘identity’. What is ‘identity’?”

The nun Dharmanandā replied: “The Blessed One has taught the five aggregates of clinging to be identity. The bodily form aggregate of clinging, the feeling tone ... perception ... formation ... consciousness aggregate of clinging, these are reckoned to be the five aggregates of clinging taught by the Blessed One.”

Having heard it, the female lay disciple Viśākhā praised it, saying: “It is well, it is well, noble one!” Having praised it, the female lay disciple Viśākhā delighted in it and received it respectfully.

Comment

The Pāli version takes up identity, its arising, its cessation, and the path to its cessation as separate question-and-answer exchanges (MN 44.2–5). Here the Tibetan parallel has counterparts to three out of these four topics, namely identity, its arising, and its cessation (hence it corresponds to MN 44.2–4). The Chinese parallel only has the first topic on *satkāya* itself (corresponding to MN 44.2). This seems to be the result of a transmission error, as at a later point a question about the cessation of identity occurs in

¹⁰ D 4094 *ju* 6b7 or Q 5595 *tu* 7b5 speaks of *'jig tshogs la lta ba*, “identity view”, instead of just mentioning “identity”. Since the inquiry was just about *'jig thogs* and afterwards the discussion continues speaking just of *'jig thogs*, the present reference to the corresponding view is probably a transmission error, caused by the circumstance that later on the subject of identity view will be broached. Hence the translation involves an emendation by deleting *la lta ba*.

¹¹ D 4094 *ju* 6b7 or Q 5595 *tu* 7b5 reads *srid par dga' ba'i 'dod chags dang lhan cig pa'i srid pa ste*, where in my rendering I follow the emendation of the second occurrence of *srid pa* to *sred pa*, proposed by Vetter 2000: 122f.

the Chinese version (see below MN 44.8).¹² This stands a little out of context and appears to be a remnant of an earlier examination of the arising and cessation of identity.

Up 1005 (=MN 44.7)

“Noble lady, how does identity view arise?”

“Honourable Viśākha, a foolish ordinary person, who is not learned, regards form as truly being the self, or the self as possessing form, or form as being in the self, or regards the self as truly abiding in form; and likewise regards feeling tone ... perception ... volitional formations ... consciousness as truly being the self, or the self as possessing consciousness, or consciousness as being in the self, or the self as abiding in consciousness. Thus identity view arises.”

MĀ 210 (=MN 44.7)

She asked further: “Noble one, how is there identity view?”

The nun Dharmanandā replied: “An unlearned ignorant worldling who does not visit good spiritual friends, does not know the noble Dharma, and is not disciplined in the noble Dharma, sees form as the self, or sees the self as possessing form, or sees form as contained within the self, or sees the self as contained within form; sees feeling tone ... perception ... formations ... sees consciousness as the self, or sees the self as possessing consciousness, or sees consciousness as contained within the self, or sees the self as contained within consciousness. This is reckoned to be identity view.”

Having heard it, the female lay disciple Viśākhā praised it, saying: “It is well, it is well, noble one!” Having praised it, the female lay disciple Viśākhā delighted in it and received it respectfully.

Comment

The Chinese version reports that Viśākhā praised each of the answers received and only then asked the next question. Whereas on the occasion of the first exchange this has a parallel in the Pāli discourse (MN 44.2), here such praise occurs only once and not throughout the discourse.

¹² MĀ 210 at T I 788b12: 云何滅自身耶.

In the Tibetan account, such praise is not even found once.

The somewhat unwieldy procedure in the Chinese version seems to reflect a recurrent pattern in the *Madhyama-āgama*, where repeated praising also occurs on other occasions.¹³ One such instance involves King Pasenadi in discussion with the Buddha. At a particular point in their discussion, the Buddha gave a reply that failed to provide an answer to what the king had in mind. Whereas in the relevant *Majjhima-nikāya* discourse and a parallel found in the *Bhaiṣajyavastu* of the Mūlasarvāstivāda *Vinaya* he directly informed the Buddha of this,¹⁴ in the corresponding *Madhyama-āgama* discourse he first praised the reply given by the Buddha in the same way he praised him throughout their discussion for other replies that did provide an answer to his inquiries.¹⁵ It seems fair to conclude that the praise of a reply that failed to address the king's question is the result of the insertion of a pericope without proper consideration of the context.

Up 1005 (=MN 44.8)

“Noble lady, how does identity view not arise?”

“Honourable Viśākha, a noble disciple, who is learned, does not regard form as truly the self, or the self as possessing form, or form as being in the self, or the self as abiding in form; and does not regard feeling tone ... perception ... volitional formations ... consciousness as truly the self, or the self as possessing consciousness, or consciousness as being in the self, or the self as abiding in consciousness. Therefore, identity view does not arise.”

MĀ 210 (=MN 44.8)

She asked further: “Noble one, how is there the absence of identity view?”

The nun Dharmanandā replied: “A learned noble disciple who visits good spiritual friends, knows the noble Dharma, and is well disciplined in the noble Dharma, does not see form as the self, does not see the self

¹³ An example is the next discourse in the collection, which also involves a question-and-answer exchange between two disciples (here both are monastics). The first instance of the praise is in MĀ 211 at T I 790b21.

¹⁴ MN 90 at MN II 128, 9 and D 1 *kha* 88b5 or Q 1030 *ge* 82a2.

¹⁵ MĀ 212 at T I 793c18.

as possessing form, does not see form as contained within the self, does not see the self as contained within form; and does not see feeling tone ... perception ... formations ... consciousness as the self, does not see the self as possessing consciousness, does not see consciousness as contained within the self, and does not see the self as contained within consciousness. This is reckoned to be the absence of identity view.”

Having heard it, the female lay disciple Viśākhā praised it, saying: “It is well, it is well, noble one!” Having praised it, the female lay disciple Viśākhā delighted in it and received it respectfully.

She asked further: “Noble one, what is the cessation of identity?”

The nun Dharmanandā replied: “It is the remainderless abandoning of clinging to the form aggregate, its giving up, disgorging, eradication, non-pollution, cessation, appeasement, disappearance; it is the remainderless abandoning of clinging to the feeling tone ... perception ... formations ... consciousness aggregate, its giving up, disgorging, eradication, non-pollution, cessation, appeasement, disappearance. This is reckoned to be the cessation of identity.”

Having heard it, the female lay disciple Viśākhā praised it, saying: “It is well, it is well, noble one!” Having praised it, the female lay disciple Viśākhā delighted in it and received it respectfully.

Comment

The additional reference to the cessation of identity in the last part of the Chinese version appears to be the displaced remnant of the discussion found in MN 44.3 and the Tibetan parallel, mentioned earlier.

Up 1005 (=MN 44.6)

“Noble lady, the aggregates and the aggregates of clinging have been expounded. Noble lady, how is it, are the aggregates the same as the aggregates of clinging, or else are the aggregates different from the aggregates of clinging?”

“Honourable Viśākha, the aggregates of clinging are the very aggregates, [yet] the aggregates are not [necessarily] aggregates of clinging. How is it that the aggregates of clinging are the very aggregates, [yet] the aggregates are not [necessarily] aggregates of clinging?”

“Honourable Viśākha, form that is with influxes and clinging, feeling tone ... perception ... volitional formations ... consciousness that is with influxes and clinging, these are aggregates as well as aggregates of clinging. Form that is without influxes and without clinging, feeling tone ... perception ... volitional formations ... consciousness that is without influxes and without clinging, these are aggregates, but they are not reckoned aggregates of clinging.”

MĀ 210 (=MN 44.6)

She asked further: “Noble one, the aggregates are spoken of as ‘the aggregates that are clung to’ and the aggregates are spoken of as ‘the aggregates of clinging.’ Are the aggregates the same as the aggregates of clinging and are the aggregates of clinging the same as the aggregates? Or do the aggregates differ from the aggregates of clinging?”

The nun Dharmanandā replied: “Either the aggregates are the same as the aggregates of clinging or else the aggregates are not the same as the aggregates of clinging.”

“How are the aggregates the same as the aggregates of clinging? If there are influxes and clinging to form, if there are influxes and clinging to feeling tone ... perception ... formations ... consciousness, then the aggregates are reckoned to be the same as the aggregates of clinging.

“How are the aggregates not the same as the aggregates of clinging? If there are no influxes and no clinging to form, if there are no influxes and no clinging to feeling tone ... perception ... formations ... to consciousness, then the aggregates are reckoned not to be the same as the aggregates of clinging.”

Having heard it, the female lay disciple Viśākhā praised it, saying: “It is well, it is well, noble one!” Having praised it, the female lay disciple Viśākhā delighted in it and received it respectfully.

Comment

In the Pāli version the inquiry is whether clinging is the same as the five aggregates of clinging or else is different from them. In reply, Dhammadinnā rejects both options. Judging from the parallels, the placing of this exchange in the Pāli version could be the result of a shift of text. In the Chinese and Tibetan versions, the discussion of the arising and

cessation of identity has brought up the topic of the five aggregates of clinging, hence it would fit a natural flow of conversation if the precise relationship between clinging and the aggregates becomes the next topic. In the Pāli version, in contrast, the preceding topic is the noble eightfold path (MN 44.5). The transition from that to the distinction between clinging and the aggregates (MN 44.6) is rather abrupt and makes it fairly probable that some shifting around of text has occurred.

Up 1005 (=MN 44.10–11)

“Noble lady, regarding the [relationship between] the three aggregates—the aggregate of morality, the aggregate of concentration, and the aggregate of wisdom—and the noble eightfold path; how is it, noble lady, is the noble eightfold path encompassed by the three aggregates, or else are the three aggregates encompassed by the noble eightfold path?”

“Honourable Viśākha, the noble eightfold path is encompassed by the three aggregates; the three aggregates are not encompassed by the noble eightfold path. How is it that the noble eightfold path is encompassed by the three aggregates, and the three aggregates are not encompassed by the noble eightfold path? Honourable Viśākha, in this regard right speech, right action, and right livelihood have been assigned by the Blessed One to the aggregate of morality. Right mindfulness and right concentration have been assigned by the Blessed One to the aggregate of concentration. Right view, right intention, and right effort have been assigned by the Blessed One to the aggregate of wisdom. Honourable Viśākha, therefore it should be understood that the noble eightfold path is encompassed by the three aggregates, whereas the three aggregates are not encompassed by the noble eightfold path.”

“Noble lady, is the path conditioned or unconditioned?”

“Honourable Viśākha, it is conditioned.”

“Noble lady, is cessation of the same nature?”¹⁶

“Honourable Viśākha, it is not of the same nature.”

¹⁶ D 4094 *ju* 8a1 or Q 5595 *tu* 8b7: *'gog pa 'dra ba yin nam*; which corresponds to the *Abhidharmakośabhāṣya* quotation from this discourse, Pradhan 1967: 4,7, (1.6): *asabhāgo nirodha*.

MĀ 210 (=MN 44.9–11)

She asked further: “Noble one, what is the noble eightfold path?”

The nun Dharmanandā replied: “The noble eightfold path is right view ... *up to* ... right concentration; these are reckoned to be its eight [parts], these [together] are reckoned the noble eightfold path.”

Having heard it, the female lay disciple Viśākhā praised it, saying: “It is well, it is well, noble one!” Having praised it, the female lay disciple Viśākhā delighted in it and received it respectfully. She asked further: “Noble one, is the noble eightfold path conditioned?”

The nun Dharmanandā replied: “It is like this, the noble eightfold path is conditioned.”

Having heard it, the female lay disciple Viśākhā praised it, saying: “It is well, it is well, noble one!” Having praised it, the female lay disciple Viśākhā delighted in it and received it respectfully.

She asked further: “Noble one, how many aggregates are there?”

The nun Dharmanandā replied: “There are three aggregates: the aggregate of virtue, the aggregate of concentration, and the aggregate of wisdom.”

Having heard it, the female lay disciple Viśākhā praised it, saying: “It is well, it is well, noble one!” Having praised it, the female lay disciple Viśākhā delighted in it and received it respectfully.

She asked further: “Noble one, does the noble eightfold path encompass the three aggregates, or do the three aggregates encompass the noble eightfold path?”

The nun Dharmanandā replied: “The noble eightfold path does not encompass the three aggregates; [rather] the three aggregates encompass the noble eightfold path. Right speech, right action, and right livelihood, these three path factors are encompassed by the noble aggregate of virtue. Right mindfulness and right concentration, these two path factors are encompassed by the noble aggregate of concentration. Right view, right intention, and right effort, these three path factors are encompassed by the noble aggregate of wisdom. The noble eightfold path does not encompass the three aggregates; [rather] the three aggregates encompass the noble eightfold path.”

Having heard it, the female lay disciple Viśākhā praised it, saying: “It is well, it is well, noble one!” Having praised it, the female lay disciple

Viśākhā delighted in it and received it respectfully. She asked further: “Noble one, is there a counterpart to cessation?”

The nun Dharmanandā replied: “Cessation has no counterpart.”

Having heard it, the female lay disciple Viśākhā praised it, saying: “It is well, it is well, noble one!” Having praised it, the female lay disciple Viśākhā delighted in it and received it respectfully.

Comment

The Tibetan version lacks a request for a definition of the eightfold path, found in the Chinese and the Pāli discourses (MN 44.9). The Chinese and Tibetan versions agree in taking up the topic of cessation, not mentioned in the Pāli discourse. They also agree in placing right effort in the aggregate of wisdom, whereas the Pāli version allocates it to the aggregate of concentration (MN 44.11). These different categorizations are doctrinally significant,¹⁷ hence it is telling that in this respect the Chinese and Tibetan discourses concord with each other against their Pāli parallel.

From the viewpoint of the discourse as a whole, a case could be made for the Pāli version’s placement. In a subsequent section (MN 44.12), the three parallels present the four right efforts as the power or equipment of concentration. Such a presentation would support placing right effort in the aggregate of concentration, rather than in the aggregate of wisdom.

Up 1005 (≠MN 44; see MN 43.19)

“Noble lady, how many factors does the first absorption possess?”

“Honourable Viśākha, it possesses five factors: [directed] comprehension, [sustained] discernment,¹⁸ joy, happiness, and unification of the mind.”

Ā 210 (≠MN 44; see MN 43.19)

She asked further: “Noble one, how many factors does the first absorption have?”

¹⁷ For occurrences of this variation in other texts see Anālayo 2011b: 280 note 76.

¹⁸ D 4094 *ju* 8a1 or Q 5595 *tu* 8b8: *rtog pa* and *dpyod pa*, which in the present context function as counterparts to the absorption-factors *vitarka* and *vicāra*.

The nun Dharmanandā replied: “The first absorption has five factors: [directed] awareness, [sustained] contemplation, joy, happiness, and unification of the mind. These are reckoned to be the five factors of the first absorption.”

Having heard it, the female lay disciple Viśākhā praised it, saying: “It is well, it is well, noble one!” Having praised it, the female lay disciple Viśākhā delighted in it and received it respectfully.

Comment

The topic of the factors of the first absorption is not covered at all in the *Cūḷavedalla-sutta* and instead occurs in the *Mahāvedalla-sutta*, another question-and-answer exchange which instead has two male monastics as its protagonists.¹⁹ In the *Majjhima-nikāya* and the *Madhyama-āgama*, these two similar discourses occur adjacent to each other, making it easily understandable if during oral transmission a topic discussed in one of them might have migrated to the other.

Up 1005 (=MN 44.12)

“Noble lady, regarding concentration, the cause of concentration, the power of concentration, and the development of concentration; noble lady, what is concentration, what is the cause of concentration, what is the power of concentration, and what is the development of concentration?”

“Honourable Viśākha, wholesome unification of the mind is concentration; the four establishments of mindfulness are the cause of concentration; the four right efforts are the power of concentration; the undertaking of these very dharmas, their full undertaking, the abiding in them, practising and applying oneself to them is the development of concentration.”

MĀ 210 (=MN 44.12)

She asked further: “Noble one, what is concentration? What is the sign of concentration? What is the power of concentration? What is the achievement of concentration? What is the development of concentration?”

¹⁹ MN 43 at MN I 294,28.

The nun Dharmanandā replied: “If a wholesome mind attains unification, this is reckoned to be concentration. The four establishments of mindfulness are reckoned to be the sign of concentration. The four right efforts are reckoned to be the power of concentration. The four bases of success are reckoned to be the achievement of concentration. If one develops all of these wholesome states,²⁰ repeatedly and energetically cultivating them, then this is reckoned to be the development of concentration.”

Having heard it, the female lay disciple Viśākhā praised it, saying: “It is well, it is well, noble one!” Having praised it, the female lay disciple Viśākhā delighted in it and received it respectfully.

Comment

The Chinese version stands alone in taking up the topic of the four bases of success as the achievement of concentration. It thereby covers four aspects of concentration, whereas the Pāli and Tibetan discourses only have three such aspects.

Up 1005 (=MN 44.13–15)

“Noble lady, regarding formations, [what are reckoned to be] formations; noble lady, what are these formations?”

“Honourable Viśākha, there are bodily formations, verbal formations, and mental formations; these are the three.”

“Noble lady, what are bodily formations, what are verbal formations, and what are mental formations?”

“Honourable Viśākha, exhalation and inhalation are reckoned to be bodily formations; [directed] comprehension and [sustained] discernment are reckoned to be verbal formations; perception and intention are reckoned to be mental formations.

“Noble lady, why are exhalation and inhalation reckoned to be bodily formations; why are [directed] comprehension and [sustained] discernment reckoned to be verbal formations; and why are perception and intention reckoned to be mental formations?”

“Honourable Viśākha, exhalation and inhalation are bodily factors,

²⁰ The translation is based on adopting a variant reading without 服.

they depend on the body, are related to the body, depending on the body they completely enter its [domain]; therefore exhalation and inhalation are reckoned to be bodily formations. On having examined and discerned with [directed] comprehension and [sustained] discernment, one speaks; therefore [directed] comprehension and [sustained] discernment are reckoned to be verbal formations. Perception and intention are factors arisen from the mind, go along with the mind, depend on the mind, are related to the mind, and depending on the mind they completely enter its [domain]; therefore perception and intention are reckoned to be mental formations.”

Comment

The whole discussion about the three formations is not found in the Chinese discourse. The Pāli version proceeds similarly to the above-translated part of the Tibetan discourse, with the difference that for mental formations it mentions perception and feeling tone.²¹

Up 1005 (≠MN 44; see MN 43.24–25)

“Noble lady, at the time when the body has been abandoned by these factors, when it is like a log, bereft of the mind, how many are the [other] factors that have been abandoned at that time?”

“Honourable Viśākha, life [force], heat, and consciousness, these are the three. At the time when life [force], heat, and consciousness have been abandoned, the body is like a log, bereft of the mind.”

“Noble lady, the occasion of passing away and dying and [the occasion] of entry into the meditative attainment of cessation, are these to be considered as distinct, are they different?”

“Honourable Viśākha, the occasion of passing away and dying and [the occasion] of entry into the meditative attainment of cessation, these are considered as distinct, they have a number of differences. Honourable Viśākha, on the occasion of passing away and dying, the bodily formations have ceased, the verbal formations [have ceased], and the mental formations have ceased. Honourable Viśākha, the life [faculty] and heat leave [the body], the faculties become otherwise, and consciousness departs from the body. On entering the meditative

²¹ MN 44 at MN I 301,21: *saññā ca vedanā ca cittasaṅkhāro*.

attainment of cessation, the bodily formations have ceased, the verbal formations [have ceased], and the mental formations have ceased. Yet, the life [faculty] and heat do not leave [the body], the faculties [do not] become otherwise, and consciousness does not depart from the body. Honourable Viśākha, thus the occasion of passing away and dying and [the occasion] of entry into the meditative attainment of cessation are considered as distinct, they are different.”

MĀ 210 (≠MN 44; see MN 43.24–25)

She asked further: “Noble one, how many are the states of the living bod, with whose passing away the body will be discarded in a cemetery, insentient like a piece of wood?”

The nun Dharmanandā replied: “There are three states of the living bod, with whose passing away the body will be discarded in a cemetery, insentient like a piece of wood. What are the three? One: vitality, two: heat, and three: consciousness. These are reckoned to be the three states of the living body on whose passing away the body will be discarded in a cemetery, insentient like a piece of wood.”

Having heard it, the female lay disciple Viśākhā praised it, saying: “It is well, it is well, noble one!” Having praised it, the female lay disciple Viśākhā delighted in it and received it respectfully.

She asked further: “Noble one, what is the difference between one who is dead and one who has attained the concentration of cessation?”

The nun Dharmanandā replied: “The vitality of a dead person has completely ceased, the heat has dissipated, and the faculties have broken down. The vitality of a monastic who has entered the concentration of cessation has not completely ceased, the heat has not dissipated, and the faculties have not broken down. This is reckoned to be the difference between a dead person and one who has attained the concentration of cessation.”

Having heard it, the female lay disciple Viśākhā praised it, saying: “It is well, it is well, noble one!” Having praised it, the female lay disciple Viśākhā delighted in it and received it respectfully.

Comment

This is another case where a topic covered by the Chinese and Tibetan parallels to the *Cūḷavedalla-sutta* has, in the Pāli tradition, its

placing rather in the *Mahāvedalla-sutta*.²²

Notably, the Tibetan version is the only one to take a position on what happens with consciousness during cessation attainment.²³ It also differs from its Chinese counterpart by bringing in the cessation of the three formations.

MĀ 210 (≠MN 44)

She asked further: “Noble one, what is the difference between one who has attained the concentration of cessation and one who has attained the concentration of [neither-perception-nor-]non-perception.”

The nun Dharmanandā replied: “[When] a monastic enters the concentration of cessation, perception and knowing cease; [when a monastic] enters the concentration of [neither-perception-nor-]non-perception, perception and knowing do not cease. This is reckoned to be the difference between one who has attained the concentration of cessation and one who has attained the concentration of [neither-perception-nor-]non-perception.”

Having heard it, the female lay disciple Viśākhā praised it, saying: “It is well, it is well, noble one!” Having praised it, the female lay disciple Viśākhā delighted in it and received it respectfully.

She asked further: “Noble one, what is the difference between one who emerges from the concentration of cessation and one who emerges from the concentration of [neither-perception-nor-]non-perception?”

The nun Dharmanandā replied: “A monastic who emerges from the concentration of cessation does not think at that time like this: ‘I am emerging from the concentration of cessation.’ A monastic who emerges from the concentration of [neither-perception-nor-]non-perception thinks at that time like this: ‘Do I have perceptions or do I not have perceptions?’ This is reckoned to be the difference between one who emerges from the concentration of cessation and one who emerges from the concentration of [neither-perception-nor-]non-perception.”

Having heard it, the female lay disciple Viśākhā praised it, saying: “It is well, it is well, noble one!” Having praised it, the female lay disciple Viśākhā delighted in it and received it respectfully.

²² MN 43 at MN I 296,11.

²³ See also Schmithausen 1987: 339.

Comment

This topic is not covered in either the Pāli or the Tibetan versions.

Up 1005 (=MN 44.16&18)

“Noble lady, how does the attainment of cessation take place?”

“Honourable Viśākha, a monastic who enters the attainment of cessation does not think: ‘I enter the attainment of cessation’. His mind has previously been developed in such a way that, having been previously developed in that way, he will fully dwell in [entering] it.”

“Noble lady, how does the emergence from cessation take place?”

“Honourable Viśākha, a monastic who emerges from the attainment of cessation does not think: ‘I emerge from the attainment of cessation’. Yet, the mind has previously been developed in such a way that, having been previously developed in that way, one will fully dwell in [emerging from] it.”

MĀ 210 (=MN 44.16&18)

She asked further: “Noble one, does a monastic who enters the concentration of cessation think at that time like this: ‘I am entering the concentration of cessation?’”

The nun Dharmanandā replied: “A monastic who enters the concentration of cessation does not at that time think like this: ‘I am entering the concentration of cessation.’ Instead, it is because the mind has previously been cultivated in this way that it proceeds accordingly.”

Having heard it, the female lay disciple Viśākhā praised it, saying: “It is well, it is well, noble one!” Having praised it, the female lay disciple Viśākhā delighted in it and received it respectfully.

She asked further: “Noble one, does a monastic who emerges from the concentration of cessation think at that time like this: ‘I am emerging from the concentration of cessation?’”

The nun Dharmanandā replied: “A monastic who emerges from the concentration of cessation does not think at that time like this: ‘I am emerging from the concentration of cessation.’ Instead it is because of the body, the six senses, and the life faculty that one emerges from this concentration.”

Having heard it, the female lay disciple Viśākhā praised it, saying: “It is well, it is well, noble one!” Having praised it, the female lay disciple Viśākhā delighted in it and received it respectfully.

Comment

The Pāli discourse agrees with its Tibetan parallel in simply asking how emergence from the attainment of cessation takes place, rather than querying what an attainer of it thinks. These two versions also agree in indicating that such emergence depends on previous development, rather than attributing it to the body, the six senses, and the life faculty, as proposed in the Chinese version.²⁴

Up 1005 (=MN 44.17&19)

“Noble lady, when a monastic enters the attainment of cessation, which factors will cease first: the bodily formations, the verbal formations, or the mental formations?”

“Honourable Viśākhā, when a monastic enters the attainment of cessation, the verbal formations will cease first, then the bodily and mental formations.”

“Noble lady, when a monastic emerges from the attainment of cessation, which factors will arise first: the bodily formations, the verbal formations, or the mental formations?”

“Honourable Viśākhā, when a monastic emerges from the attainment of cessation, the mental formations will arise first, then the bodily and verbal formations.”

Comment

This topic is not covered in the Chinese parallel to the *Cūḷavedalla-sutta*, although it is taken up in the Chinese parallel to the *Mahāvedalla-sutta*. This Chinese discourse differs from the *Cūḷavedalla-sutta* and its Tibetan parallel, as it stipulates that bodily formations cease first on entry into cessation and also arise last on emergence from it.²⁵ The **Mahāvibhāṣā* quotes this topic as a discussion from the discourse that in

²⁴ See also Schmithausen 1987: 342.

²⁵ MĀ 211 at T I 792a9 and 792a15.

the Pāli tradition is known as the *Cūlavedalla-sutta* and agrees with the Pāli and Tibetan versions on the sequence in which the three formations cease.²⁶

Up 1005 (=MN 44.21)

“Noble lady, when a monastic comes out of the attainment of cessation, where does the mind incline to, where does it flow to, where does it move to?”

“Honourable Viśākha, when a monastic comes out of the attainment of cessation, the mind inclines towards seclusion, flows towards seclusion, moves towards seclusion; it inclines towards liberation, flows towards liberation, moves towards liberation; it inclines towards Nirvāṇa, flows towards Nirvāṇa, moves towards Nirvāṇa.”

MĀ 210 (=MN 44.21)

She asked further: “Noble one, [when] a monastic has emerged from the concentration of cessation, in what does the mind delight? Where does it tend to? Where does it incline to?”

The nun Dharmanandā replied: “[When] a monastic has emerged from the concentration of cessation, the mind delights in seclusion, it tends towards seclusion, it inclines towards seclusion.”

Having heard it, the female lay disciple Viśākhā praised it, saying: “It is well, it is well, noble one!” Having praised it, the female lay disciple Viśākhā delighted in it and received it respectfully.

Comment

The Pāli version just mentions seclusion and thus agrees with the Chinese discourse.

Up 1005 (=MN 44.20)

“Noble lady, when a monastic comes out of the attainment of cessation, what contacts does he contact?”

²⁶ T 1545 at T XXVII 780c25; see also Schmithausen 1987: 340.

“Honourable Viśākha, [he contacts] imperturbability, nothingness, and signlessness.”

Comment

The Pāli version mentions emptiness instead of imperturbability. The present topic is not covered in the Chinese parallel to the *Cūḷavedalla-sutta*, but instead in the Chinese parallel to the *Mahāvedalla-sutta* (which has imperturbability instead of emptiness).²⁷ A quotation of this discussion in the *Karmasiddhiprakaraṇa* agrees in allocating this topic to the discourse known in the Pāli tradition as the *Mahāvedalla-sutta*.²⁸

Up 1005 (≠MN 44)

“Noble lady, to enter the attainment of cessation, how many factors does a monastic develop?”

“Honourable Viśākha, this question should have been asked first. I will nevertheless reply to it now. To enter the attainment of cessation, a monastic develops two factors: tranquillity and insight.”

Comment

This discussion is without a parallel in the Pāli and Chinese versions.

Up 1005 (=MN 44.22)

“Noble lady, how many [types] of feeling tone are there?”

“Honourable Viśākha, there are three [types]: pleasant, painful, and neutral.”

MĀ 210 (=MN 44.22)

She asked further: “Noble one, how many feeling tones are there?”

The nun Dharmanandā replied: “There are three feeling tones: pleasant feeling tone, painful feeling tone, and neutral feeling tone. Because of what do they exist? Because of contact they exist.”

²⁷ MĀ 211 at T I 792a19.

²⁸ Lamotte 1936: 195 (28a) and T 1609 at T XXXI 784b4.

Having heard it, the female lay disciple Viśākhā praised it, saying: “It is well, it is well, noble one!” Having praised it, the female lay disciple Viśākhā delighted in it and received it respectfully.

Comment

The Chinese version is the only one to relate feeling tone to contact.

Up 1005 (=MN 44.23&25)

“Noble lady, what is pleasant feeling tone, what is painful feeling tone, and what is neutral feeling tone?”

“Honourable Viśākha, bodily and mental pleasure or happiness that arises from contact experienced as pleasant is reckoned as pleasant feeling tone. Whatever bodily and mental displeasure or pain that arises from contact experienced as unpleasant is reckoned as painful feeling tone. Whatever bodily and mental neutral or equanimous experience that arises from neutral contact is reckoned as neutral feeling tone.

“Noble lady, what increases with pleasant feeling tones, what increases with painful feeling tones, and what increases with neutral feeling tones?”²⁹

“Honourable Viśākha, desire increases with pleasant feeling tones, aversion increases with painful feeling tones, and ignorance increases with neutral feeling tones.”

MĀ 210 (=MN 44.23–25)

She asked further: “Noble one, what is pleasant feeling tone? What is painful feeling tone? What is neutral feeling tone?”

The nun Dharmanandā replied: “What arises born of being touched by a pleasant contact and is felt as bodily or mental pleasure and wellness, such feeling tone is reckoned to be pleasant feeling tone. What arises born of being touched by a painful contact and is felt as bodily or mental pain and unwellness, such feeling tone is reckoned to be painful

²⁹ D 4094 *ju* 9b4 or Q 5595 *tu* 10b6: *rgyas par 'gyur*, whereas the parallel versions MN 44 at MN I 303,7 and MĀ 210 at T I 789c7 speak of an “underlying tendency”, *anusaya*/使.

feeling tone. What arises born of being touched by a neutral contact and is felt as bodily or mental neutrality and neither wellness nor unwellness, such feeling tone is reckoned to be neutral feeling tone.”

Having heard it, the female lay disciple Viśākhā praised it, saying: “It is well, it is well, noble one!” Having praised it, the female lay disciple Viśākhā delighted in it and received it respectfully.

She asked further: “Noble one, with pleasant feeling tone, what is pleasant? What is painful? What is its impermanence?³⁰ What is its danger? What is its underlying tendency? With painful feeling tone, what is pleasant? What is painful? What is its impermanence? What is its danger? What is its underlying tendency? With neutral feeling tone, what is pleasant? What is painful? What is its impermanence? What is its danger? What is its underlying tendency?”

The nun Dharmanandā replied: “With pleasant feeling tone, its arising is pleasant, its persistence is pleasant, its change is painful, its danger is impermanence, and its underlying tendency is desire. With painful feeling tone, its arising is painful, its persistence is painful, its change is pleasant, its danger is impermanence, and its underlying tendency is aversion. With neutral feeling tone, not knowing it is painful, knowing it is pleasant,³¹ [its danger] is impermanence, which is change, and its underlying tendency is ignorance.”

Having heard it, the female lay disciple Viśākhā praised it, saying: “It is well, it is well, noble one!” Having praised it, the female lay disciple Viśākhā delighted in it and received it respectfully.

Comment

The Tibetan version has the topic of what is pleasant or painful in the case of each of the three feelings tones at a later point. It agrees with the Chinese version in taking into account also the arising of the respective feeling tones, whereas the Pāli discourse only covers their persistence and change.

³⁰ The query after “its impermanence” appears to be a transmission error; in fact it does not receive a reply, as only the subsequent query after “its danger” leads to the clarification that it is precisely its impermanence that is the danger.

³¹ The translation is based on an emendation that disregards the negation in the second case; according to the original reading, not knowing neutral feeling tone would be pleasant. The formulation makes little sense and can safely be attributed to a textual error.

Up 1005 (=MN 44.26&28)

“Noble lady, do all pleasant feeling tones increase desire, do all unpleasant feeling tones increase aversion, and do all neutral feeling tones increase ignorance?”

“Honourable Viśākha, not all pleasant feeling tones increase desire, not all unpleasant feeling tones increase aversion, and not all neutral feeling tones increase ignorance. There are pleasant feeling tones with which desire does not increase, but [instead] is abandoned; there are unpleasant feeling tones with which aversion does not increase, but [instead] is abandoned; and there are neutral feeling tones with which ignorance does not increase, but [instead] is abandoned.”

“Noble lady, with which pleasant feeling tones does one not increase desire, but [instead] abandons it?”

“Honourable Viśākha, here a noble disciple, being free from sensual desire and free from bad and unwholesome states, with [directed] comprehension and [sustained] discernment, and with joy and happiness arisen from seclusion, dwells having fully attained the first absorption. With the stilling of [directed] comprehension and [sustained] discernment, with complete inner confidence and unification of the mind, free from [directed] comprehension and [sustained] discernment, with joy and happiness arisen from concentration, [the noble disciple] dwells having fully attained the second absorption. With the fading away of joy, dwelling equanimous with mindfulness and comprehension, experiencing just happiness with the body, what the noble ones reckon an equanimous and mindful dwelling in happiness, [the noble disciple] dwells having fully attained the third absorption. With such pleasant feeling tones one does not increase desire, but [instead] abandons it.”

“Noble lady, with what unpleasant feeling tones does one not increase aversion, but [instead] abandons it?”

“Honourable Viśākha, here a noble disciple generates an aspiration for supreme liberation: ‘When shall I dwell fully realizing that sphere, which the noble ones dwell in, having fully realized it?’ With the mental displeasure and painful feeling tone [due to] that aspiration, that pursuit, and that longing one does not increase aversion, but [instead] abandons it.”

“Noble lady, with what neutral feeling tones does one not increase ignorance, but [instead] abandons it?”

“Honourable Viśākha, here a noble disciple, leaving behind happiness and leaving behind pain, with the earlier disappearance of mental pleasure and displeasure, with neither happiness nor pain, and with completely pure equanimity and mindfulness, dwells having fully attained the fourth absorption. With such neutral feeling tones one does not increase ignorance, but [instead] abandons it.”

MĀ 210 (=MN 44.26&28)

She asked further: “Noble one, do all pleasant feeling tones have the underlying tendency to desire? Do all painful feeling tones have the underlying tendency to aversion? Do all neutral feeling tones have the underlying tendency to ignorance?”

The nun Dharmanandā replied: “Not all pleasant feeling tones have the underlying tendency to desire. Not all painful feeling tones have the underlying tendency to aversion. Not all neutral feeling tones have the underlying tendency to ignorance.

“What pleasant feeling tone does not have the underlying tendency to desire? When secluded from sensual desires, secluded from evil and unwholesome states, with [directed] awareness and [sustained] contemplation, with joy and happiness born of seclusion, a monastic dwells having attained the first absorption. This is reckoned a pleasant feeling tone that does not have the underlying tendency to desire. Why is that? Because desire is being abandoned by it.

“What painful feeling tone does not have the underlying tendency to aversion? When, on seeking the joy of supreme liberation, that seeking and aspiration worries one again and again, giving rise to sadness and affliction. This is reckoned a painful feeling tone that does not have the underlying tendency to aversion. Why is that? Because aversion is being abandoned by it.

“What neutral feeling tone does not have the underlying tendency to ignorance? [When] with the cessation of pleasure and the cessation of pain, and with the earlier cessation of joy and displeasure, with neither-pain-nor-pleasure, and with purity of mindfulness and equanimity, one dwells having attained the fourth absorption. This is reckoned a neutral feeling tone that does not have the underlying tendency to ignorance. Why is that? Because ignorance is being abandoned by it.”

Having heard it, the female lay disciple Viśākhā praised it, saying: “It is well, it is well, noble one!” Having praised it, the female lay disciple

Viśākhā delighted in it and received it respectfully.

Comment

A noteworthy difference is that the Tibetan version brings in the second and third absorption when discussing pleasant feeling tone, whereas the other two parallels agree in only mentioning the first absorption.

Up 1005 (=MN 44.24)

“Noble lady, what is pleasant, what is unpleasant, and what is the danger in regard to pleasant feeling tone? What is pleasant, what is unpleasant, and what is the danger in regard to unpleasant feeling tone? What is pleasant, what is unpleasant, and what is the danger in regard to neutral feeling tone?”

“Honourable Viśākha, the arising of pleasant feeling tone and its abiding is pleasant, its transformation [into another feeling tone] is unpleasant. Upon [manifesting] its impermanence, because of that, then the danger in regard to it [manifests]. The arising of unpleasant feeling tone and its abiding is unpleasant, its transformation [into another feeling tone] is pleasant. At the time when it [manifests its] impermanence, then the danger in regard to it [manifests]. Being unaware of neutral feeling tone is unpleasant, the arising of awareness of it is pleasant. Whenever it [manifest its] impermanence, then the danger in regard to it [manifests].”

Comment

This is the part that was earlier missing in the Tibetan version. As its placement in the parallels is more natural, it appears to have been accidentally shifted to the end of the discussion.

Up 1005 (=MN 44.29)

“Noble lady, what is the counterpart to pleasant feeling tone?”

“Unpleasant feeling tone.”

“What is the counterpart to unpleasant feeling tone?”

“Pleasant feeling tone.”

“What is the counterpart to pleasant and unpleasant feeling tone?”

“Neutral feeling tone.”

“What is the counterpart to neutral feeling tone?”

“Ignorance.”

“What is the counterpart to ignorance?”

“Knowledge.”

“What is the counterpart to knowledge?”

“Nirvāṇa.”

“Noble lady, what is the counterpart to Nirvāṇa?”

“Honourable Viśākha, you are going too far, you are really going too far, this is the end of it, it is not possible [to go further]. Following the Blessed One is for [the sake of] Nirvāṇa, the final goal of the pure holy life is Nirvāṇa and the eradication of *duḥkha*.”

MĀ 210 (=MN 44.29)

She asked further: “Noble one, what is the counterpart to pleasant feeling tone?”

The nun Dharmanandā replied: “The counterpart to pleasant feeling tone is painful feeling tone.”

Having heard it, the female lay disciple Viśākhā praised it, saying: “It is well, it is well, noble one!” Having praised it, the female lay disciple Viśākhā delighted in it and received it respectfully.

She asked further: “Noble one, what is the counterpart to painful feeling tone?”

The nun Dharmanandā replied: “The counterpart to painful feeling tone is pleasant feeling tone.”

Having heard it, the female lay disciple Viśākhā praised it, saying: “It is well, it is well, noble one!” Having praised it, the female lay disciple Viśākhā delighted in it and received it respectfully.

She asked further: “Noble one, what is the counterpart to pleasant feeling tone and painful feeling tone?”

The nun Dharmanandā replied: “The counterpart to pleasant feeling tone and painful feeling tone is neutral feeling tone.”

Having heard it, the female lay disciple Viśākhā praised it, saying: “It is well, it is well, noble one!” Having praised it, the female lay disciple Viśākhā delighted in it and received it respectfully.

She asked further: “Noble one, what is the counterpart to neutral feeling tone?”

The nun Dharmanandā replied: “The counterpart to neutral feeling tone is ignorance.”

Having heard it, the female lay disciple Viśākhā praised it, saying: “It is well, it is well, noble one!” Having praised it, the female lay disciple Viśākhā delighted in it and received it respectfully.

She asked further: “Noble one, what is the counterpart to ignorance?”

The nun Dharmanandā replied: “The counterpart to ignorance is knowledge.”

Having heard it, the female lay disciple Viśākhā praised it, saying: “It is well, it is well, noble one!” Having praised it, the female lay disciple Viśākhā delighted in it and received it respectfully.

She asked further: “Noble one, what is the counterpart to knowledge?”

The nun Dharmanandā replied: “The counterpart to knowledge is Nirvāṇa.”

Having heard it, the female lay disciple Viśākhā praised it, saying: “It is well, it is well, noble one!” Having praised it, the female lay disciple Viśākhā delighted in it and received it respectfully.

She asked further: “Noble one, what is the counterpart to Nirvāṇa?”

The nun Dharmanandā replied: “You are wanting to ask without limit about matters. Regarding the matter you are asking about, however, you cannot reach a limit on my side. Nirvāṇa is without a counterpart. Nirvāṇa, being without bonds, transcends bonds. It is the complete cessation of bonds. For its sake one practices the holy life under the Blessed One.”

Comment

The Pāli version does not have an inquiry after the counterpart to pleasant and unpleasant feeling tone, and it presents deliverance as the counterpart to knowledge and then Nirvāṇa as the counterpart to deliverance. Whereas in these two respects the Tibetan and Chinese agree,

the Chinese version has a statement not found in any of the other versions, according to which *Nirvāṇa*, being without counterpart, is also without bonds and transcends bonds.

Up 1005 (=MN 44.30–31)

At that time the lay follower *Viśākha* rejoiced in the exposition given by the nun *Dharmadinnā*. He paid respect to the nun *Dharmadinnā* by prostrating and left. Not long after the lay follower *Viśākha* had left, the nun *Dharmadinnā* approached the Blessed One. Having approached him, she paid respect with her head at the feet of the Blessed One and sat down to one side. Sitting to one side, the nun *Dharmadinnā* reported to the Blessed One the whole conversation she had been having with the lay follower *Viśākha*.

The Blessed One said to the nun *Dharmadinnā*: “Well done, *Dharmadinnā*, well done! If the lay follower *Viśākha* had asked me these matters in such words and with such expressions, I would have answered on these matters in just such words and expressions as you did, explaining it just like this.”

The nun *Dharmadinnā* fully rejoiced and delighted in what the Buddha had said.

MĀ 210 (=MN 44.30–31)

Then, having heard what the nun *Dharmanandā* said, the female lay disciple *Viśākhā* received it well and retained it well. Having memorized it well, she rose from her seat, paid homage with her head at the feet of the nun *Dharmanandā*, circumambulated her three times, and left.

Then, not long after seeing that the female lay disciple *Viśākhā* had left, the nun *Dharmanandā* approached the Buddha, paid homage with her head at the Buddha’s feet, stepped back, and sat to one side. She told the Buddha the whole conversation with the female lay disciple *Viśākhā* and, extending her hands with palms together towards the Buddha, she said: “Blessed One, speaking like this and answering like this, have I not misrepresented the Blessed One? Have I spoken what is true? Have I spoken what accords with the Dharma, speaking what is Dharma in accordance with the Dharma? In what accords with the

Dharma, have I created no contradiction? Is there anything to be criticized, anything to be blamed?”

The Blessed One replied: “Nun, speaking like this and answering like this you have not misrepresented me. You have spoken what is true. You have spoken what accords with the Dharma, spoken what is Dharma in accordance with the Dharma. In what accords with the Dharma, you have not created any contradiction. There is nothing to be criticized or blamed.

“Nun, if the female lay disciple Viśākhā had come and asked me in these phrases and these words, I would have replied to the female lay disciple Viśākhā using this meaning, these phrases, and these words. Nun, as you have explained this meaning, you should remember it like this. Why is that? Because this explanation is the meaning of it.”

Thus spoke the Buddha. Having heard what the Buddha said, the nun Dharmanandā and the monastics were delighted and received it respectfully.

Comment

According to the Pāli version, it was rather Viśākha who reported the question-and-answer exchange to the Buddha. Whereas in this respect the Tibetan and Chinese agree, they differ insofar as only the Chinese account reports Dharmanandā expressing her concerns about having potentially misrepresented the Buddha and inquiring if anything she said could be criticized. Another minor difference is the depiction of Viśākhā circumambulating Dharmanandā three times, a recurrent pericope used in the *Madhyama-āgama* when describing respectful departures.³²

Summary of Comparison

The overall impression that emerges from the above juxtaposition of the Chinese and Tibetan versions is of a considerable degree of complexity. This in a way quite fittingly reflects the nature of oral transmission.

Nevertheless, from a structural viewpoint the Chinese and Tibetan versions agree closely. This is in fact what has enabled me to present both together without any shifting around of their respective passages. That is,

³² See Anālayo 2011b: 21.

although in my presentation I alternate between translating a passage from the Tibetan and a passage from the Chinese, with both discourses I have not altered the sequence of their respective passages in any way. The rare cases where this would have been opportune involve instances where a displacement of text appears to have happened within the respective discourse. In these cases, even without any recourse to a parallel, this can easily be detected because the passage in question occurs out of context.

The procedure I adopted for comparing the Chinese and Tibetan would not have worked with the Pāli version unless I were to shift some of its passages around. In order to convey an impression of this fundamental difference in sequence, below I list the sequential structure on which the Chinese and Tibetan versions agree, by way of providing the corresponding paragraph numbering of the Pāli version:

1–2, 7–8, 6, 10–11, (MN 43), 12, (MN 43), 16, 18, 21–23, 25–26, 28–31

The sequence above shows that, from the viewpoint of the Pāli version, after an initial agreement on the first two paragraphs, the two parallels jump to paragraphs seven and eight, then return to six, and after that have paragraphs ten and eleven. Then they go completely their own way by having instead something from the *Mahāvedalla-sutta* (MN 43), return to the *Cūḷavedalla-sutta* paragraph twelve, and again take up something from the *Mahāvedalla-sutta*. The remainder still involves several jumps and a point of agreement comes only with the final three paragraphs of the concluding section.

Just as it would not have been possible for me to include the Pāli version in my paragraph-wise presentation, due to the divergence in sequence, so it would also have been impossible for the reciters of the Indic originals of these three discourse versions to perform group recitation together. Attempting to do so would have resulted in chaos, as after the second paragraph they would have been reciting different portions of text.

The impression that the Pāli version differs substantially from the other two receives further support from considerations of content. The Pāli version stands alone in taking up the path to the cessation of identity (MN 44.5). Unlike the Pāli discourse, the Chinese and Tibetan versions allocate the path factor of right effort to the aggregate of wisdom and then proceed from the eightfold path to the topic of cessation (MN 44.11).

Both discuss the factors of the first absorption and the condition of being dead, which in the Pāli tradition are rather topics covered in the previous discourse (MN 43.19 and MN 43.24–25). The Chinese and Tibetan

versions also add the arising of feeling tones to a discussion that in all three versions covers their persistence and change (MN 44.24). Moreover, they inquire about a counterpart to pleasant and unpleasant feeling tones, not found in the Pāli discourse, which also differs from these two in presenting deliverance as the counterpart to knowledge (MN 44.29). They agree that the nun reported the discussion to the Buddha, whereas in the Pāli version this was done by her visitor (44.30).

Compared to the above cases where the Pāli version differs from the other two, there are only a few instances where the Tibetan version differs not only from the Pāli version, but also from its Chinese parallel. The Tibetan discourse lacks a request for a definition of the eightfold path, found in the Chinese and the Pāli versions (MN 44.9). It also stands alone in taking up the necessity of tranquillity and insight for entering the attainment of cessation; and it appears to have suffered from a displacement of a discussion of what is pleasant and unpleasant in relation to each of the three types of feeling tone (MN 44.24). In a discussion of pleasant feeling tones, the Tibetan discourse also mentions the second and third absorptions, in addition to the first absorption taken up in all three versions (MN 44.28).

So far, the situation seems fairly unsurprising. It is indeed to be expected that representatives of Sarvāstivāda/Mūlasarvāstivāda transmission lineages differ in several aspects from their Theravāda counterpart, be it in content or in structure. The instances where the Tibetan version goes its own way are too few to be really significant.

The situation changes, however, when cases are considered where the Tibetan and the Pāli versions agree, but the Chinese discourse differs. Already the first of these involves a substantial difference, as in the Chinese version the interlocutor has become a female and the respondent has a different name (MN 44.1). The Chinese discourse also appears to have suffered from a displacement of a reference to the cessation of identity; judging from the two parallels this should have been broached after identity had been defined (MN 44.4).

In a discussion of concentration, the Chinese version stands alone in referring to the four bases of success as the achievement of concentration (MN 44.12). It also does not cover at all the topic of the three formations (MN 44.13–15), which the Pāli and Tibetan versions list and explain (with a divergence between them in the definition of mental formations).

The Chinese discourse distinguishes between the attainment of cessation and of neither-perception-nor-non-perception, a topic not covered in its two parallels; it attributes emergence from cessation to the body, the six senses, and the life faculty, whereas the Pāli and Tibetan versions agree that such emergence takes place due to previous cultivation (MN 44.18). The Chinese discourse lacks a discussion of the sequence in which the three formations (bodily, verbal, and mental) vanish and arise again when entering and subsequently emerging from cessation attainment, a topic covered in the Pāli and Tibetan versions (MN 44.17&19). It also does not have a discussion of the type of contact experienced on such emergence (MN 44.20), a topic broached in both the Pāli and Tibetan discourses, although expounded in somewhat different terms by each. Instead, the Chinese discourse proceeds from a distinction of the three feeling tones to the topic of contact, a topic not taken up in the corresponding part of its two parallels (MN 44.22).

Conclusions

In view of the number and magnitude of differences that emerge in this way between the Chinese and Tibetan versions, it seems fair to conclude that they no longer represent the same transmission lineage. Although they clearly share a common ancestry, by the time they were committed to writing they must have been transmitted separately. Given that the *Madhyama-āgama* extant in Chinese translation appears to stem from a Sarvāstivāda transmission lineage and Śamathadeva's *Abhidharma-kośopāyikā-ṭīkā* can be taken to represent a Mūlasarvāstivāda lineage, the present study is of relevance to the question of the identity or difference between these two, a topic I discuss in more detail in Anālayo (2020).

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Abbreviations

D	Derge edition
EĀ	<i>Ekottarika-āgama</i>
MĀ	<i>Madhyama-āgama</i>
MN	<i>Majjhima-nikāya</i>

- Ps *Papañcasūdanī*
Q Peking edition
Up *Abhidharmakośopāyikā-ṭīkā*
Vin *Vinaya*
< > emendation
[] supplementation

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