SOME THOUGHTS ON EARLY BUDDHISM

WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO ITS
RELATION TO THE UPAŅIṢĀDS

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PREFACE

It was actually eight years ago that Professor Dandekar did me the honour of inviting me to deliver these two lectures. For various reasons, this could not materialize. Recently, on two occasions when I visited him, he reminded me that I had to accomplish that task; and, the last time, I promised him that I would do it a few months later when I would have to return to India for another purpose. I am most grateful to him, indeed, for his kind attention, and for giving me the opportunity to take up for a while studies that I had long given up to concentrate on more technical matters.

I am also grateful for their kindness to Professor Ghatage, the present Honorary Secretary of the Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute, all the scholars associated with the Institute, and the staff of the Institute.

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Kamaleswar Bhattacharya
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Acharya Dharmananda Kosambi was a pioneer of Pāli studies in India. His name is particularly associated with the Visuddhimagga, which he edited using the material left by the American scholar Henry Clarke Warren. Among other works on Pāli and Buddhism in general, he wrote a lucid commentary, in Pāli, on the Visuddhimagga as well as on the manual of Theravāda Abhidhamma, the Abhidhammatthasamgaha. I therefore thought, when Professor Dandekar kindly invited me to give these lectures in his memory, that I should talk on something related to Pāli. And I have brought in the Upaniṣads, because there is on-going debate on the question.1

It is not, of course, today that scholars have become interested in the subject. For obvious reasons,—spatial and temporal contiguity between these two most significant moments of Indian thought, certain stylistic and structural affinities between the Upaniṣads and the Pāli Canon, certain doctrinal affinities too, the doctrine of karman of course, but also certain affinities between the Upaniṣadic brahman and the Buddhist Nirvāṇa/Nibbāna,—great scholars of the past generations took keen interest in it. Among them may be mentioned in particular T. W. Rhys Davids, Mrs. Rhys Davids, the great Vedic and Pāli scholar Hermann Oldenberg, F. O. Schrader, the great Pāli scholar Wilhelm Geiger, historians of philosophy such as Helmuth von Glasenapp and, nearer to us, Erich Frauwallner. Over the past thirty years or so,

1 Unless otherwise specified, the editions of Pāli texts quoted are those of the Pāli Text Society. For the Upaniṣads with Śaṅkara's commentaries have been used the editions of the Ānandaśrama Sanskrit Series, Poona, second edition, 1902.
there has been a renewal of interest in the subject. But, if there seems to be a general agreement on the points just mentioned, it has not been possible to reach a consensus on the question of whether the Buddha accepted or rejected the basic metaphysical standpoint of the Upaniṣads.

The key Upaniṣadic term brahman is used in the Pāli Canon; and, as I have tried to show elsewhere, the authors of the commentaries and sub-commentaries (Abhākathā-s and Tilak-s), very much disturbed by the occurrence of this term, had to concoct various devices to explain it away. Modern scholars in general, since T. W. Rhys Davids, have settled at the idea that by brahman is meant in the Pāli Canon the masculine Brahman, and in that they run into inconsistencies. Wilhelm Geiger, after an exhaustive study of the occurrences of the terms dhamma (Sanskrit dharma) and brahman in the Pāli Canon, in two fundamental works, Pāli Dhamma and Dhamma und Brahman (both of which are now available in the Kleine Schriften), showed that the neuter brahman is used in the Pāli Canon as a synonym for dhamma (e.g., tathāgatassa h' etain adhivacanam: dhammakāyo iti pi brahmakāyo iti pi, dhammabhūto iti pi brahmabhūto iti pi, Digha-Nikāya III, p. 84), and that both the terms are borrowed from the Upaniṣads, where also dharma appears sometimes as a synon-

nym for brahman. But even he was reluctant to admit that the term brahman has the same meaning in the Pāli Canon as in the Upaniṣads: on one side eternity; on the other, change. This objection can be easily disposed of, as it rests on a confusion. The Buddha does condemn "eternalism" (saśsatavāda/ saśvatavāda or sāsataidiṣṭhi / saśvatadvādit). But this eternity is not the real eternity. It is only a temporal eternity, let us say "time extended". On the other hand, the Buddha does admit the real, timeless eternity as much as the Upaniṣads do: the Nibbāna / Nirvāṇa is "eternal", nīca, dhūva, sassata, and so on, in this sense. As Buddhaghosa says in the Visuddhimagga, appabhatavā ajarāmaranāni, pabhavajarāmaranānaṁ abhāvato nīcāṁ.

But what about anattā? By simple logic, if the doctrine of anattā implies also a negation of the Upaniṣadic ātman, identical with brahman, then the term brahman in the Pāli Canon cannot have the same meaning as in the Upaniṣads.

Now, the so-called doctrine of anattā has more often been misunderstood than understood. A delicious example of misapprehension is furnished by a tenth-century Buddhist writer in Sanskrit from Greater India:

Buddho bodhiṁ vidathyaṁ vo yena nairātmyadarśanam | viruddhasyaṁ pi sādhuktaṁ sādanaṁ paramātmanāḥ //

Modern scholars, with a few exceptions, have only retained the idea of contradiction (virodha); they do not realize that...
Some Thoughts on Early Buddhism

nairātmya can be a "means to paramātman", because they do not realize that there is a world of difference between the conceptions of ātman prevalent in the time of the Buddha and after him, in different philosophical systems of India, Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika, Mīmāṁsā, Sāṅkhya and Jainism, on the one hand, and the Upaniṣadic conception of ātman on the other. A prestigious Buddhist of our time, the late Professor André Barel, was fond of writing and saying that the pudgala/puggala, "individual", whose ultimate reality is denied by Buddhism, is the same as the Upaniṣadic ātman-brahman!

A great deal of work has been done on the subject over the past years, by three British scholars, all contemporary but belonging to three different generations: the great Middle Indic specialist K. R. Norman, his pupil Richard Gombrich, the present Boden Professor of Sanskrit at Oxford, and his pupil Steven Collins. And it will be useful to take a critical look at this work, in order to have a clear idea of the situation.

Neither Norman nor Collins seems to be active in the field nowadays. But Gombrich is continuing his investigations and making discoveries of specific Upaniṣadic texts alluded to in the

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6 See K. Bhattacharya, L'Ātman-Brahman dans le Bouddhisme ancien (n. 5 above). This misunderstanding has recently been clearly expressed by a devout Japanese scholar when he says, commenting upon my explanation of the compatibility of the ideas of ātman and anātman, that "it is not clear and rather ambiguous". He gives an English Translation of a passage of my book, which is not accurate. (Ryudo Yasui, Theory of Soul Theraavada Buddhism, Calcutta: Atisha Memorial Publishing Society, 1994, pp. 221-222.) Furthermore, Dr. Yasui is unfair when he writes (ibid., p. 229):

In this way the Anattā doctrine of the Buddha can be proved. So thanks to Professor Bhattacharya for his explanation of the Doctrine in a very simple way.

It was not my intention to deny anattā or explain it in every detail, but to explain its compatibility with ātman — a point to understand which a certain amount of Indological and philosophical culture is required!

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Some Thoughts on Early Buddhism

Pāli Canon. I shall start with his latest contribution to the subject.

Just a few months back, at the World Sanskrit Conference held in Bangalore, Gombrich read a paper entitled "Allusions to the Upaniṣads in the Saṅgha Vagga of the Saṁyutta Nikāya". All the details of this paper are not available to me; but the summary contains enough elements for consideration.

Of the two Pāli texts cited by Professor Gombrich, the first reads as follows:

kuto sarā nivattanti kattha vaṭṭanā na vaṭṭati |
kattha nāmaṁ ca rūpaṁ ca asesam uparujjhati ||
yattha āpo ca pathavi tejo vāyo na gādhati |
ato sarā nivattanti ettha vaṭṭāṁ na vaṭṭati ||
ettha nāmaṁ ca rūpaṁ ca asesam uparujjhati ||

Professor Gombrich comments:

This recalls yato vāco nivartante at Taittirīya Up. II, 4, 1 and II, 9, 1. Moreover the answer to the riddle, which has parallels elsewhere in the Canon, recalls Mūḍāka Up. III, 2, 8. This is not to say that the Buddhist answer to the question is the same as the Upaniṣadic one.

It is difficult for me to guess what exactly Professor Gombrich has in mind when he writes: "This is not to say ..." Nonetheless, it can be safely affirmed that the Pāli text has nothing to do with the Taittirīya passage.

The Buddhist text is well known. It is also preserved in

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8 Saṁyutta-Nikāya I, p. 15.
Sanskrit versions, as far as Turfan in Central Asia. All these were studied, not long ago, by Professor Lambert Schmithaunen of Hamburg. And neither the context nor the entire Buddhist tradition allows the interpretation suggested by Professor Gombrich, viz., sara = Sanskrit svara. The context suggests, and the commentary, the Sūratthakkāśini, says, that sara here means samsārasara. It is Nibbāna/Niravāga that is being talked about; and it is said that the “streams of samsāra” turn back from it, whereas the Tattirīya passage says: yato vāca nivartante, aprīpya manasā saha, “Whence (the Absolute) words return along with the mind, not retaining it”.

As a matter of fact, it is not the first time that this interpretation is being given. The well known Indian scholar Govind Chandra Pande gave it forty years ago. I was aware of it some thirty years back but took no account of it; and certainly I would have taken no account of it today, had it not come from such an eminent authority as Richard Gombrich.

Philology is the mother of our science. But, if this kind of philology is justified, then certain interpretations coming from those who seek to find Upaniṣadic doctrines adopted everywhere in the Canon should be equally justified. Take for instance the following stanza that occurs more than once in the Canon:

yo brāhmaṇo bāhitapāpadhammo
nihuhuniko nikaśāvo yatatto

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10. Sūratthakkāśini I, p. 52. (On sara in Jaina Āyāraṅga I, 5, 6, 3 — savasvo sarā niṣivānti — see W. Schubring, Ācārāṅga-Sūtra I, Leipzig, 1910. Glossar, s. v. sara.)


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Some Thoughts on Early Buddhism

vedānta-gū vusitabrahmacariyo
dhāmmano so brāhmaṇa brhamavādāmi vadeyya ||

Here some respectable scholars, both Western and Indian, have found an allusion to the Vedānta doctrine and to brahma-vidyā. But, whatever the value of the traditional interpretation of the term vedanta, given by the commentators, it is sure that it has nothing to do with the Vedānta doctrine. The term vedānta occurs in the Mahābhārata as well as elsewhere in the Brahmanical literature, and in Mahābhārata XIII, 25, 63 Nila-kaṇṭha glosses it by jñātatatta. On the other hand, the context shows that the statement dhāmmano so brāhmaṇa brhamavādāmi vadeyya cannot mean anything but: only a brāhmaṇa possessing the qualities mentioned can rightly (dhāmmana = ṛāṣya) say “I am a brāhmaṇa” — brāhmaṇa ahan ti etam vādām vadeyya, as the commentators put it.

The second text of Professor Gombrich is:

sabbā disarm anupariγamma cetasa
n' ev' ajhāgā piyataram attānā kvaci |
evam piyo pushu attā paresam

tasmā na hīnāse param attakāmo ||

And he comments:

This alludes, I feel sure, to the conversation between Yājñavalkya and his wife Maitreyi at Brhadārā-
Some Thoughts on Early Buddhism

In this case the Buddha draws the conclusion opposite from the Upaniṣad: that one should care for others. More generally, the Buddha is (as so often) substituting for a philosophical speculation an ethical directive.

Here again, there is nothing novel. Other scholars had considered the Pāli text in relation to the famous words of Yājñavalkya to Maitreyī: na vā are patyuh kāmāya pathiḥ priyo bhavati, ātmanas tu kāmāya patiḥ priyo bhavati ... ātmanas tu kāmāya sarvamī priyam bhavati. Oldenberg had done so, but he was opposed by Carlo Formihi, who saw "no relation at all" between the two texts.

I have read the Pāli text several times but have failed to see any relationship between it and the Upaniṣad.

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15 Bṛhadāraṇyaka-Upaniṣad II, 4, 5; IV, 5, 6. For a discussion of this passage see K. Bhattacharya, L'Ātman-Brahman dans le Bouddhisme ancien (n. 5 above), p. 32, n. 2.

16 H. Oldenberg, Die Lehre der Upaniṣaden und die Anfänge des Buddhismus (second edition, Göttingen, 1923), Note 124.


18 Commenting on Mrs. Rhys Davids, M. Winternitz wrote in 1937:

I do not say why the Buddhist saying should "stick in the gullet" any more than the "Love thy neighbour as thyself" of the Old and the New Testament, or the "golden rule" (so little followed): "Do by others as you would be done by". M. Winternitz, "Self and Non-Self in Early Buddhism", in Jaina Commemoration Volume (Poona Oriental Series, 39, Poona, 1937), p. 463.


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Some Thoughts on Early Buddhism

On this view,—which is also met with elsewhere in the Canon, scholars such as Hermann Oldenberg and Helmuth von Glasenapp had commented, striving to find an exact Upanishadic parallel. Norman, ignoring these scholars and quoting only E. J. Thomas, whom he finds “too cautious”, writes:

...it is possible to find actual verbal echoes of the Upaniṣads in this passage.

And he refers to Chāndogya-Upaniṣad III, 14.24

As a matter of fact, those “verbal echoes” were already pointed out, in 1973, in a work which Norman ignores as well.23 Here is what we read in the Upaniṣad:

esa ma atmāntar ādhyātma, etad brahma, etam itah
pretābhisamābhavitāṃ (Chāndogya-Upaniṣad III, 14, 4).

Now, Professor Norman does not mention a most important fact, namely that the Upaniṣadic doctrine in question belongs to a stratum of thought which is earlier than that represented by the doctrines associated with such names as Yājñavalkya and Uḍālaka Aruṇī. Attributed to Śaṅḍilya, this doctrine already appears, almost in the same words, in the tenth Book of the Śatapatha-Brāhmaṇa (X, 6, 3), and bears the stamp of the period between the Brāhmaṇas and the Upaniṣads. And this omission on Norman’s part has had an interesting fate. In 1987, at the World

Sanskrit Conference held in Leiden, his pupil Richard Gombrich declared:

It was Mr. Norman, my teacher and fellow-contributor to the panel, who first demonstrated that it (the passage of the Alagaddūpama-sutta) contains a deliberate refutation of Yājñavalkya’s teaching in the Brhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad.25

However, this view has nothing to do with Yājñavalkya. As Paul Deussen observed long ago, the “attainment” of ātman it speaks of still appears, after of the analogy of the traditional (ritualistic) representations, as an access to heavenly regions,—as though the ātman were to be sought elsewhere than in ourselves. And Deussen asked: Who does not feel the inner contradiction of these words, and that, when the ātman is really myself, there is no need to attain it!26

In later Vedaṇa, this passage is supposed to speak of meditation on the “qualified brahman” (saguna-brahman); and Śaṅkara commenting on it says basically the same thing as Deussen:

...The word ātman [in this passage] does not mean the inmost Self itself. For the genitive mama, “my”, conveys the meaning of a relation, and in “this I shall attain” is mentioned the relation of the object and the agent [of the action of attaining]...It is without abandoning a little separation

23 See references in K. Bhattacharya, L’Atman-Brahman dans le Bouddhisme ancien (n. 5 above), p. 10, n. 4 to p. 9.
22 Norman, loc cit., p. 20 (201).
21 K. Bhattacharya, L’Atman-Brahman dans le Bouddhisme ancien (n. 5 above), p. 10, n. 4 to p. 9.
26 “meine Seele” (my soul) in Deussen’s text.
27 Cf. Brahmagūtra I, 2, 4, with Śaṅkara’s bhāṣya.
that it is said: "I shall attain 'this', i.e. the ātman, after having departed from 'here', i.e. from this body".31

What is meant by loka in the Pāli passage under consideration, loka which is identified with ātman (so loka so attā)? Without entering upon a polemic concerning the so-called Upaniṣadic "identification of the world and the self"32 (everybody here knows what it means, and I have explained it elsewhere33), it can be said that similar expressions are found in the Upaniṣads. Thus, Bhāḍāraṇyaka I, 4, 15: ātmanam eva lokam upāsita; IV, 4, 22: kim prajayā kariṣyāno yeṣāṃ no 'yam ātmāyam lokaḥ. But, while in the Upaniṣads, this "world" is inner, and to be realized here and now by transcending the subject-object split, in our passage, as also in the doctrine of Śaṇḍilya, it is paradoxically conceived as the yonder world, to be attained after death.

This passage is perhaps the only one in the entire Pāli canon that can be pinpointed as containing a criticism of an Upaniṣadic doctrine; but, as we have seen, this doctrine is not yet the authentic Upaniṣadic doctrine.34

Now, from all we know of the attitude of early Buddhism toward the Vedic lore and ritualism34—a strong opposition,

30 na tu ātmaśabdaḥ pṛthyaśūnaiḥvocye, manevi śaṣṭhiḥ sam-
bandhūrthāpraṇāyakavatvād etam abhimaṁbhaviśmīti ca karmah-
kartāramindelād...antardhānam īḍad āpraṇāyayaiśvait ātmanān
ino 'śūla charāriti: pṛṣṭyābhābhimhaviśmity uktam. Chāndog-
yopaniṣadābhāṣya II, 14, 4, p. 174. (Sāyaṇa on Śaṭapatha-Brāh-
maṇa X, 6, 3 repeats Śākara.)
32 L'Ātman-Brahman dans le Bouddhisme ancien (n. 5 above), p. 36. Or, perhaps, there is in our passage no allusion to any Upaniṣad at all. Cf. Taittirīya-Brāhmaṇa III, 10, 11, where the contrast with Bhāḍā-
raṇyaka-Upaniṣad I, 4, 15 (a brief reference to which has been made above) is as obvious as the parallel.
33 See, e. g., K. Bhattacharya, L'Ātman-Brahman dans le Bouddhisme
34 (Continued on the next page)
And Professor Gombrich, in 1987, wrote:

It remains only to remind readers of the most important and closest parallel of all. The fifth wrong view is to identify with what has been dittham sutaṁ mataṁ (sic) viññātāṁ. What exactly is that? The answer is at BAû 4, 5, 6: ātmani khalve dṛṣṭe śrute mate viññāte idam sarvam viditam...

However, no sensible reader of the Upaniṣads will believe that in the Upaniṣads, and particularly with the great thinker Yājñavalkya, the ātman, the Absolute (and not the psychophysical being), can be seen, as you see, for instance, a cow, or shown as one shows a cow by holding it by its horns — as Śaṅkara expressively puts it while commenting upon the dialogue between Yājñavalkya and Uṣasta Cākṛāyā. This interpretation — if it should be called an interpretation at all — is contradicted by all statements of Yājñavalkya:

yatra hi dvaitam iva bhavati ... tad itara itaram paśyati, tad itaran śrūṇī ... tad itara itaram manute, tad itara itaram viñāntī. yatra vā asya sarvam ātmalabhāt ... tat kena kāṁ paśyet, tat kena kāṁ śrūṇī ... tat kena kāṁ manviṣa, tat kena kāṁ viñāṇyāt. viññātāram are kena viñāṇyāt.⁴⁰

⁴¹ Bhadāranyaka-Upaniṣad III, 4, 2.
⁴² Ibid., III, 7, 23.
⁴³ Ibid., III, 8, 11.

⁴⁰ Cfr. Deussen, op. cit., p. 73.

Der-Quellpunkt des ganzen Gedankens von der Unerkennbarkeit des Ātman liegt in den Yājñavalkyauren des Brhadāranyakam, und die Kühnheit und Schaffheit, mit der er hier auftritt, so wie die originelle Art seiner Begründung scheinen für einen individuell genialen Genius als Urheber desselben zu sprechen.

⁴⁰ Bṛhadāranyaka-Upaniṣad III, 4, 14; viṣpāṣṭaṁ śrīgaṁ gajānī darbhajñāti, Śaṅkara ad loc., p. 441.
⁴¹ Bṛhadāranyaka-Upaniṣad II, 4, 14 (cf. IV, 5, 15). Cf. Chāndogya-Upaniṣad VII, 24, 1. The passage has been discussed in K. Bhattacharya, L'Ātman Brahman dans le Bouddhisme ancien (n. 5 above), p. 52.
Some Thoughts on Early Buddhism

by Yājñavalkya are also found in the Pāli Canon, for instance:

... dhāmann suṇāti, suvitvā dhāmannā dhāreti, dhārītīnām dhāmannām attām upaparikkhati, attām upaparikkhato dhāmannā nījāhānā nāmarati dhāmannājīhānakkhantiyā sati chando jáyati, chando jāyati uṣahati, uṣahivā tuleti, tulayitvā padahati, paḥhitato samāno kāyena c' eva paramasacchān sacchikaroti paññāya ca tām ativijjha passati.46

Among Gombrich's other observations, mention may be made of the following. Speaking of the different characterizations of ātman by Yājñavalkya in the Bhadāranyaka-Upaniṣad, Professor Gombrich observes:

The third point of the tilakkhāṇa, dukkha, is not mentioned here, but is of course opposed to ānanda ... 47

But why should dukkha be mentioned as a characteristic of ātman? The Buddha only said: `What in dukkha is anattā'' (yam dukeham tad anattā), which is not the same thing as saying: "The ātman is dukkha"!

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Some Thoughts on Early Buddhism

We have seen so far how scholars have been prone to see criticisms of the Upaniṣads in the Pāli Canon, when the texts talk about different matters, or even when they say the same thing. Let us now take a closer look at the question of anattā.

The conceptions of ātman against which is taught the doctrine of anattā are clearly indicated in a passage of the Sāṁyutta-Nikāya:

ye hi keci, bhikkhave, samāṇa vā brāhmaṇa vā anekavivittan ajīnām samanupassanānā samanupassanti sabbe te pañcupādānakhandhe samanupassanti etesām vā apannatāna.48

Is it not also against the background of such views, held by men, gods and demons, that is to be understood the Upaniṣadic doctrine of ātman? If Asura Virocana goes away satisfied with the conception of ātman as the body, Indra and Maitreyi see the ātman in the most precious element of the individual, consciousness, and in the cessation of their consciousness they see the destruction of themselves. People of the latter kind are styled in the Pāli Canon ekacca-sassati ekacca-sassati: all that is material in the individual is, they believe, perishable, while the spiritual element, consciousness, is eternal.49

The ātman of the Upaniṣads, identical with the brahman, is not an individual substance, a “soul”, but the Being itself, the universal, absolute Consciousness beyond the subject-object split—the transcendent Impersonality which man realizes through the negation of his individuality.

In these circumstances, it is absurd to think, as Professor Norman does, that the Buddha’s rejection of the views identifying

48 Sāṁyutta-Nikāya III, p. 46.

49 See K. Bhattacharya, L’Ātman-Brahman dans le Bouddhisme ancien (n. 5 above), p. 13 with the notes 2, 3 and 4.
The so-called “negation of ātman” is usually expressed in the Pāli Canon as follows:

What is impermanent (anicca) is painful (dukkha); what is painful is anattā; and of what is anattā one should understand through right knowledge: “This is not mine, I am not this, this is not my ātman”. yakānavā tām dukkhā; yaśa dukkhān tād anattā; yaśa anattā tām n’ti etani mama, n’ti eso ‘ham asmi, n’m eso attā ti eva yathābhattati sammappaṭṭhāya dāṭhabhāmi.

There is here no negation of ātman as such, but merely what is not ātman is thought against the standard of the authentic ātman — as a great philosopher of our time, Karl Jaspers, said.

(Continued from p. 18)

the Upanisad itself, as the theories criticized represent fixed theories, while in the Upanisad what is talked about is a progression from one conception to another. the preceding — the more superficial — being superseded in the following — the more profound. See K. Bhattacharya, L’Ātman–Brahman dans le Bouddhisme ancien, pp. 27–28.

On nibbāna paññātā anattā (Pariṇāma) — often incorrectly interpreted — and sabbe dhamma anattā see K. Bhattacharya, L’Ātman–Brahman dans le Bouddhisme ancien, pp. 160–162; “Some Thoughts on Ātman–Brahman in Early Buddhism,” loc. cit. (n. 3 above), p. 73, n. 12. In nibbāna paññātā anattā, anattā is an adjective (bahuparipravardhīna) modifying paññātā, as the Vejojībhikṣuṭa on Buddhaghosa’s Samantabhadra (Burmes edition, 1960, p. 545, quoted in the article just referred to) makes clear. In the Nikāyas, by dhamma in sabbe dhamma anattā only the “conditioned” (asaṃkhaṭa) dhammas are meant (K. Bhattacharya, L’Ātman–Brahman dans le Bouddhisme ancien, p. 161; cf. Netipakaraṇa–Aṭṭhakothā, Colombo, 192; Simön Taewaisthe Bequest IX, p. 38). But this statement is not always said to include the “unconditioned” (asaṃkhaṭa) dhamma, the Nibbāna, as well (thus Upasena, Saddharmapokhiṭṭhā, p. 8). This would be acceptable to the Upaniṣadic thinkers, for whom the brahman–ātman is anāta. nirātama, the ātman being denied, of course, the so-called individual ātman (K. Bhattacharya, L’Ātman–Brahman dans le Bouddhisme ancien, p. 7).

See K. Bhattacharya, L’Ātman–Brahman dans le Bouddhisme ancien (n. 5 above), p. 12, n. 3.

There is, however, a difference of emphasis. While the Upaniṣadic thinkers talk more about ātman than about what is not ātman, the Buddha talks more about what is not ātman than about ātman; while the Upaniṣadic thinkers talk more about the beatitude (ānanda) of the Infinite than about the misery of the finite (āto nyād ātman. "What is other than it [the ātman] is miserable"). The Buddha talks more about the misery of the finite than about the beatitude of the Infinite (Nībbāna: nibbānāparamānī sukhām). And this difference can be explained by the simple fact that more than by the Upaniṣadic thinkers emphasis is placed by the Buddha on Liberation. As the great ocean, says he, has one flavour, that of salt, so the doctrine and the discipline taught by him have one flavour, that of Liberation. seyyathāpi bhikkhave, mahāsammutto ekasama lopanā evam eva kho, bhikkhave, ayai dhammavinyo ekaraso vimuttirosa. Now, when somebody attaches himself to what is painful, saying: "This is mine, I am this, this is my ātman", can he understand his misery and liberate himself from it? yo nu kho dukkham allino dukkham upagato dukkham ajjhosito dukkham "etam mama, eso 'ham asi, eso me atta" ti samanupassati, api nu kho so sāmani vā dukkham pariññeyya dukkham vā pariññeyya vihareyya. The Buddha's purpose, therefore, is to liberate man from misery by leading him to the realization of the truth that what is painful is not the ātman.

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84 Bṛhadāraṇyaka-Upaniṣad III, 4: 2; 5: 1; 7, 23. See also K. Bhattacharya, L'Ātman-Brahman dans le Bouddhisme ancien (n. 5 above), p. 48 and n. 4.  
85 K. Bhattacharya, L'Ātman-Brahman dans le Bouddhisme ancien (n. 5 above), p. 25.  
88 See also K. Bhattacharya, L'Ātman-Brahman dans le Bouddhisme ancien (n. 5 above), pp. 74-75, 138-139.
the same, subject to arising and decay. This is an idea so manifestly untenable for the Buddha as to receive no comment. In the second place, where the self was held to be insentient, the Buddha asks, "where there is no feeling at all, is it possible that one might say "I am"?" Since this is not possible, the view is again "not fitting". In the third place, where the self is held to feel, or have the attribute of feeling, he asks a similar question: "where feeling is completely absent... might one be able to say "this (is what) I am"?" Here also, since this is not possible, the view is "not fitting".

In this text, too, the Buddha, while rejecting a theory concerning the self, shows what a self or the self should be: feeling (vedanā) cannot be a self because it is subject to the vicissitudes peculiar to all empirical things: we do not find there an invariable self. But all these theories relate to an individual self, to a self that is the "object of the notion of '1'" (aṅkāra- or aṅkārā-sattva) as will be said in later times. The third and last theory, namely that the atman is not feeling, nor is it without feeling; it feels, because it has feeling for its attribute (vedanā-dhamma), is particularly interesting, as it recalls the later Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika theory — especially if we assume with Claus Oetke that vedanā in this context does not designate the second khandha alone but refers to all states of consciousness, to all psychic events. We need not follow the commentary, which attempts to bring all the three alternatives into relation with the khandha-s somehow or other.

On the other hand, here is a good example of what is known as the "Human attitude" of the Buddha. Thus compare the famous passage:

For my part, when I enter most intimately into what I call myself, I always stumble on some particular perception or other, of heat or cold, light or shade, love or hatred, pain or pleasure. I never can catch myself at any time without a perception, and never can observe any thing but the perception. When my perceptions are removed for any time, as by sound sleep; so long am I insensible of myself, and may truly be said not to exist. And were all my perceptions removed by death, and could I neither think, nor feel, nor see, nor love, nor hate after the dissolution of my body, I should be entirely annihilated, nor do I conceive what is farther requisite to make me a perfect non-entity. If any one, upon serious and unprejudiced reflection, thinks he has a different notion of himself, I must confess I can reason no longer with him. All I can allow him is, that he may be in the right as well as I, and that we are essentially different in this particular. He may, perhaps, perceive something simple and continu'd, which he calls himself; tho' I am certain there is no such principle in me.

But setting aside some metaphysicians of this kind, I may venture to affirm of the rest of mankind, that they are nothing but a bundle or collection of different perceptions, which succeed each other with an inconceivable rapidity, and are in a perpetual flux and movement.

The Buddha says substantially the same, in his rejection of the second and third alternatives. However, this does not preclude the possibility that the Buddha went farther than Hume.

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63 Cf., e. g., Chachakkasutta: Majjhima-Nikāya III, pp. 282-283.
65 Śūnānagāluvilūsinī II, pp. 505-506.
Some Thoughts on Early Buddhism

And there are at least a couple of passages in the Pāli Canon which prove that he did. Both these passages have long been misunderstood by modern scholars. I propose, therefore, to consider them in some detail.

In the Brahmanimantanika-sutta of the Majjhima-Nikāya, the following words are attributed to the Buddha:

viññāṇam anidassanam anantam sabbatopabhaṁ,\textsuperscript{66} tam paṭhaviyā paṭhavattana ananubhūtaṁ, āpassa āpattena ananubhūtaṁ, tejassa tejattana ananubhūtaṁ, vāyassa vāyattana ananubhūtaṁ, bhūtānāṁ bhūtattana ananubhūtaṁ, devānāṁ devattana ananubhūtaṁ ... sabbassa sabbattana ananubhūtaṁ.\textsuperscript{68}

V. Trenckner, while editing the first volume of the Majjhima-Nikāya in 1888, was conscious of the fact that the idea expressed in this passage is Upaniṣadic; so he attributed these words—at the risk of absurdity—not to the Buddha, but to his opponent, the Brahmā god Baka. In that he was followed by translators,\textsuperscript{69} as well as by the Japanese scholar Hajime Nakamura, who, in 1955, gave the following picture—not too glorious for the Omniscent:

According to the sūtra... the Buddha did not attack the concept of viññāṇa by polemics; he overpowered Brahmā in another way, namely by the use of supernatural powers.\textsuperscript{70}

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\textsuperscript{66} It appears to me strange that neither Pérez-Romón (n. 17 above) nor Oetke (n. 51 above) says a word about either of these passages. On Collin's treatment of one see below.


\textsuperscript{68} Majjhima-Nikāya I, pp. 329-330.

\textsuperscript{69} Including I. B. Horner.

\textsuperscript{70} Hajime Nakamura, “Upaniṣadic Tradition and the Early School of Vedānta as noticed in Buddhist Scripture”, \textit{Harvard Journal of Asia- tic Studies} 18, p. 79.

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Some Thoughts on Early Buddhism

Here is, however, what we actually read in the text:

Brahmā Baka claims that the condition of Brahmās is the highest reality, permanent (nicca), stable (duiva), eternal (sassa), absolute (kevala). It is not born, does not grow old, does not die; it does not disappear and does not return to existence (na jāyati na jīyati na mīyati na cavati na upapajjati). There is no other issue beyond this (ito pan aṁśam uttarin nissaranāṁ n' aththi). To this pretention of Baka the Buddha replies: The condition of Brahmās is only a phenomenal reality, impermanent (anicca) and not permanent (nicca), unstable (addhiva) and not stable (duiva)... It is born, grows old and dies; it disappears and returns to existence (jīyati jīyati mīyati cavati upapajjati). There is another issue beyond this (aṁśam uttarin nissaranāṁ), which surpasses the perception of all empirical realities whatsoever (sabbassa sabbattena ananubhūtaṁ). “If you do not perceive it by any means, sir”, retorts Baka, “let it not be for you merely empty and vain” (sace kho, mārisa, sabbattena ananubhūtaṁ, mā h' eva te rittakam eva ahości tucchakam eva ahości). No, says the Buddha; for the Reality he is speaking of is the viññāṇam anidassanam... At this point, the Brahmā, having no answer to offer, proposes to exercise his supernatural powers and disappear, but is not able to do so. The Buddha, however, does it. In other words, the Buddha proves his superiority both in knowledge and in the use of supernatural powers.

In the Kevaddha (Kevaṭṭa)-sutta of the Dīgha-Nikāya we read:

viññāṇam anidassanam anantam sabbatopabhaṁ\textsuperscript{71} ettha āpo ca paṭhavi tejo vāyō na gādhati |

ettha diṁgha ca rassaṁ ca aṇun-thūlam subbāsabhāṁ \textsuperscript{72}
ettha nāmaṁ ca rūpaṁ ca aśasaiṁ uparujjhati ||

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\textsuperscript{71} See n. 67 above.

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Some Thoughts on Early Buddhism

vinññānassa nirodhaṇa etth' etam uparijñhati \(17\)

Here the occurrence of the word vinññāṇa twice has posed a problem to modern interpreters. The great master of Buddhology in the 19th century, Eugène Burnouf, identified the two vinññāṇa-s.\(^2\) In 1896, Henry Clarke Warren translated:

Iti consciousness invisible
And infinite, of radiance bright,
O there doth water, there doth earth,
And fire and wind no footing find.
And there doth long, and there doth short,
And fine and coarse and good and bad,
And there do name and form both cease,
And utter nothingness become.
And then, when consciousness hath ceased,
This all hath turned to nothingness.\(^7\)

As we shall see later, there are still scholars who identify the two vinññāṇa-s. But there have been scholars, since Burnouf’s time, who have perceived their difference.\(^6\) Only they have not always grasped the meaning of the passage. Thus, in 1976, the most prestigious Buddhologist of our time, Étienne Lamotte, cited this passage to explain a view — recorded in the Mahāprajñāpāramitāśāstra (Upadeśa), preserved only in Chinese — which is similar to one attributed to the ekaca-sassatikā ekaca-asassatikā (p. 17 above) in the Brahmajāla-sutta of the Dīgha-Nikāya.\(^7\)

However, Buddhaghosa is quite explicit. As in the passage of the Brahmanimantaṇika-sutta he interprets vinññāṇa as Nibbāṇa, so in the Kevaddha (Kevala)-sutta passage, he interprets the first vinññāṇa as a “name for Nibbāṇa” (nibbānassa nāma). The second vinññāṇa, he says, is the phenomenal consciousness carmakavinññānam pi abhisamkhāraviññānam pi.).\(^7\)

The late Professor Nalinaksha Dutt drew attention to these passages with Buddhaghosa’s commentaries.\(^6\) But, contrary to what he believed, Buddhaghosa does not at all say that Nibbāṇa is “infinite consciousness”. Rather, aware of the fact that the doctrine set forth in the two passages is Upaniṣadic, Buddhaghosa seeks to isolate Buddhism from the Upaniṣadic tradition and thus gives the following interpretation of vinññāṇa: vinññātabban ti vinññāṇam, or vinññānam ti viññātabbān. Nibbāṇa is named vinññāṇa because it is “to be pre-eminent known”, or, as the Tīkā on the Sumanagāvalīśini puts it, it is “to be known through a pre-eminent means”, “i.e. by direct perception through the best of all knowledges — the knowledge of the Noble Path” (visññīhena


\(^{7}\) Pāṇinićāśaṅi, II, p. 413; Sumanagāvalīśini II, pp. 393–394.

\(^{15}\) N. Dutt, Aspects of Mahāyāna Buddhism and its Relation to Hinayāna (London, 1930), pp. 148–149. Unjust criticism, based on misapprehension, in Mrs Rhys Davids, The Birth of Indian Psychology and its Development in Buddhism (London, 1935), p. 246. Dutt, on the other hand, inspired Schayer for his “precanonical” Buddhism (see below), and was literally followed by H. Günther, Der Buddha und seine Lehre nach der Überlieferung der Theravādins (Zürich, 1956), pp. 451–452.
Let us now see how the youngest of the British scholars mentioned above interprets the *Kevaddha* (*Kevaṭṭa*)-sutta passage. As in the case of the statement that occurs several times in the Canon (so anattanatapo aparantapo diṭṭhe va dhamme nicchāto nibbuto sīthbhuto sukhopaśīsamivedi brahmabhūtena attānā viharati), he interprets this passage in such a way as to exclude all connection with the Upaniṣads:

Although an enlightened man’s consciousness is a karmic result, it is not limited by usual sanātīka constraints. It is ‘indescribable, infinite, radiant on every side’. We should not misinterpret this kind of consciousness as a ‘cosmic consciousness’, in the manner of the Vedānta picture of ultimate reality as

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> When an individual reaches *nirvāṇa*, for the rest of his lifetime he lives ‘without craving, quenched, become cool, experiencing bliss, having become himself like Brahmā’. The Pali of this last phrase is *brahma-bhūtāna attānā*, which could bear the literal translation ‘with self become brahma’, as if in Upaniṣadic style. In fact, in Pali the prefix *brahma-* often simply means ‘excellent’. If we wish to look for an interpretation which includes a reference to some ‘divine’ state, it is best here to see an analogy with the *Divine Abidings* (*brahma-vihāra*), those meditative states where the monk suffuses himself and the rest of the universe imaginatively with loving-kindness, compassion, sympathetic joy, and equanimity. By doing this, the monk can become equal to the gods of the *Brahma*-heaven in happiness, for as long as the meditation lasts. When a liberated saint ‘becomes himself like Brahmā’, he attains such happiness throughout the rest of his life, as a continuous state of personality rather than temporarily acquired ‘experience’.

To me at least, the inconsistencies involved in this imaginative interpretation are glaring. See *L’Atman-Brahman dans le Bouddhisme ancien* (n. 5 above), especially ch. II: “Some Thoughts on Ātman-Brahman in Early Buddhism” (n. 3 above).
to state the following. For Buddhaghosa, the first word viññāna in the passage does not mean "consciousness" at all, "constructed" or not; it is a "name for Nibbāna" in a special sense, as we have seen. Buddhaghosa clearly distinguishes between the two viññāna-s, and he does not say carimaka-viññānami pi abhisamkhāra-viññānami pi to comment upon the first viññāna, which is anidassanānim anantaṃ sabbatopabham. He says it to comment upon the second viññāna. It is when this phenomenal consciousness has ceased that all the empirical realities — the four elements, the antinomies, individuality—cease in Nibbāna:

... tattha viññātabban ti viññānam. nibbhānassata ti nāmaṃ...

ettha āpo ca 'ti ettha nibbāne, idaiṃ nibbānam āgamama sabbāṁ etaiḥ āpo tićdīnā nayena vuttaṁ upādinnaṃ-dhammajātaṁ nirujjhati appavattati hoti. idāni tassa nirujjhanupāyaṁ dasseto viññānassa nirodhena etth 'etaiḥ uparujjhattaṁ āhu. tattha viññānam ti carimaka-viññānāni pi abhisamkhāra-viññānāni pi...

An author may have the right to say what he wishes; but certainly he has no right to distort a text to found his own opinion (assuming that he has been able to understand the text).

For my part, I shall conclude these lectures with the canonical words:

yassa n' atti idaiṃ me ti paresam vāpi kīcchanaṁ |
... mamattain so asamvindain n' atti me ti na socat! [87]

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80 Sumaṅgalavilāsinī II, pp. 393-394. At the end Buddhaghosa refers to the Mahāniddesa : see Collins, op. cit., pp. 206, 207 with the notes 15 and 21 (pp. 295, 296); also my review of Scherrer-Schaub (n. 76 above). Note that, contrary to what Collins says, abhisamkhāra-viññāna is not a gloss of carimaka-viññāna, but refers to a different type of consciousness — "constructed-consciousness"!

81 Suttaṅgā 951.