

Concept of Avijja in Buddhism and its Importance in Contemporary Era

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Abstract:

In-depth discussion, the word “*Avijja*” is one of the puzzling yet interesting *Pāli* technical expressions in Theravada Buddhism has been provided in this paper. Students studying Buddhism may occasionally find the term confusing and perplexing. It is challenging to tell in what sense; it is used throughout the *suttas* since its meanings change depending on the context. Even though the word “*Avijja*” has many meanings depending on the context, it usually refers to “objects, either tangible or immaterial, which are prone to change.” This paper has been analysed the meaning of the word and, to some extent, to provide Buddhist students with useful knowledge. The argument is built around the *Pāli* Canons, comments, and sub-comments. Therefore, the main objective of this paper is to analyse the concept of *Avijja* in Buddhism.

Keywords: *Avijja*, Ignorance, Buddhism, Society, and Contemporary Era.

Introduction:

According to the early Buddhist analysis of reality, *Avijja* or ignorance is the root cause of human misery. Such ignorance is defined as lack of understanding of the Four Noble Truths; therefore living beings are subject to impurity and hence eternal existence in *samsara*.

Ignorance:

In the context of the standard presentation of *Pratityasamutpada*, one of the major teachings of early Buddhism, the *Pratityasamutpada*, and *Avijja* has the dubious honor of standing at the first of a series of twelve episodes. This position posits ignorance as the fundamental factor responsible for all manifestations of *Dukkha*, a term that can mean anything from barely noticeable unhappiness to outright suffering as an inherent characteristic of human existence. The iconographic representations of the twelve episodes portray the *Avijja* as blind people. In other words, ignorance actually blinds, blocks the vision of reality because it actually.

Concept of *Avijja* in Buddhism:

In Buddhist literature, the word “ignorance” is sometimes rendered as “*Avijja*.” The phrase alludes to misunderstandings or ignorance regarding the nature of metaphysical reality, specifically with the *Anatta* and impermanence teachings. According to Buddhist phenomenology, it is the fundamental cause of *Dukkha* (suffering, misery, and unhappiness) and the initial step in a chain reaction that results in

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recurrent birth. In many circumstances, the Buddhist teachings refer to *Avijja* as ignorance or misunderstanding.

The *Pāli* word “*Avijja*” is made up of the terms “*Na*” and “*Vijjā*”. *Vijjā* and *Na* both refer to knowledge or wisdom.

The word *Avijja* is made up of the letters “*na + vid + ya*, *na-not*, where the root “*vid*” signifies “to know.” Philology states that the letters “*d*” in “*vid*,” “*y*” in the suffix “*ya*,” and “*na*” became “*jj*” and “*a*,” respectively. The “*Visuddhimagga*” offers a number of definitions for this term based on distinct word formations. It operates as follows:

1. Because, it discovers things that shouldn’t be discovered, it is *Avijja*, or ignorance (*tan avindiyavindatitiAvijjā*). In this context, “*vindiyav*” refers to “excellent bodily behaviour, etc.,” while “*avindiyav*” is the reverse.

2. It inhibits understanding the significance of the aggregates’ accumulation, the bases’ activating, the elements’ voidness, the faculties’ preponderance, and the actuality of the Truths. Thus, it is known as “*Avijjā*” or “ignorance”. “*Khandhānanrāsathan*,” “*Āyatanānanāyatanathan*,” “*Dhātūnansuññathan*,” “*Indriyānanadhipatīyathan*,” and “*Saccānantathathan aviditan karotitiAvijjā*”.

3. The “*Avijjā*” forbids all creatures from associating the *Four Noble Truths*’ definitions with their traits (*Dukkādinan pīlanādivasena catubbidhan atthan aviditan karotitiAvijjā*).

4. In the never-ending cycle of rebirth, it propels beings through all kinds of generations, destiny, becoming, stations of consciousness, and dwellings. (*Antavirahite sansāre sabbayonigatibhava-viññānatthiti sattāvāsesu satte javāpetiti avijjā*)

5. It moves quickly among people who aren’t actually there, like men and women, but it doesn’t move quickly among things like aggregates that are real and exist. Thus, it is known as “*Avijjā*.” (*ParamatthatoAvijjāmānesuithipurisādisujavatiAvijjā, vijjāmānesupikhandhādisu na javatiti*)

6. It is ignorance because it hides the dependent origination and dependently-originated condition, as well as the physical grounds and objects of eye-consciousness, etc. (*Apicacakkhuvīññādinanvatthārammañānanpaticcasamuppādapaticcasamuppannānāñcachādantopiavijjā*) (VsmA Vol. II p. 1578). Unknowingness is a trait of ignorance. Its purpose is to perplex. It shows up as concealing. Cankers are the root cause of it.

In several *Nikaya*, like *KhandhavaggaSamyutta*, *MahāvaggaSamyutta*, *Aṅguttara Nikāya*, etc., the Buddha lectured about *Avijjā*. In *KhandhavaSamyutta*, the Buddha discussed *Avijjā* as follows: When the Buddha was alive, a particular monk approached him in *Sāvatti* and said, “What is ignorance and how far is one ignorant? The Buddha asserted that a person of ordinary intelligence (*Putthujjana*) is unaware of the existence of the body (*Rūpa*), the rise of the body (*Rūpasamudaya*), the cessation of the body (*Rūpanirodha*), and the path leading to the cessation of the body (*Rūpanirodhagaminipada*).

They are unaware of sensation, perception, actions, awareness, as well as the emergence, cessation, and path leading to the cessation of consciousness. This, monk, is what is meant by ignorance, and it has already occurred. The Buddha discussed *Avijja* in the *MahāvaggaSamyutta Avijjaavagga Avijjaa Sutta* in the following ways: According to what I’ve heard, the Lord Buddha previously resided close to *Sāvatti*, in Jeta Grove, in *Anāthapiṇḍika*’s Park. The Lord Buddha then addressed the monks by calling them “monks”.

These monks responded with “Yes, Venerable Sir” to the Buddha. “When ignorance leads the way, by achieving unprofitable states, shamelessness and recklessness follow in its wake,” the Buddha remarked. Wrong views might take hold in someone who lacks common sense and is persuaded by ignorance. The incorrect perspective opens the door for the wrong aim, the wrong speech, the wrong action, the wrong living, the wrong effect, the wrong effect for the wrong mindfulness, and the wrong mindfulness opens the door for the wrong concentration.

Sutta Avijja Visa like a cow with spectacles that are green. The cow wearing the green glasses consumes the dried grass as though it were moist. A specific monk then approached the Buddha and cried, "Ignorance! Ignorance", according to the proverb. What is ignorance, and how far off is the monk who told the Buddha this? "Monk, being ignorant of suffering, how it manifests, how it ends, and about the action that causes it to end is termed "ignorance," and one who is ignorant makes an effort to realize: this is this,"

The ultimate degree of ignorance is not obvious, according to *Avijja sutta* 'Monk, therefore one may assert: "Ignorance did not exist before; it has since arisen." And now, monk, this declaration is made. However, this is only an appearance; ignorance is influenced by this or that. I tell you, monks, ignorance has its nourishment. It has some nutrition. And what does ignorance feed on? The appropriate response is "the five obstacles." Monks, I thus announce that the five obstacles are not without nourishment and have their own nourishment. And what are the five obstacles' nutrients? The correct response should be "the three improper ways of practicing." They receive their nutrition as well. What? The appropriate response is "Not-restraint of the sense-faculties." They receive their nutrition as well. What? Lack of self-control and attentiveness should be the response.

I assert that has nutrition as well. What? It should be "Lack of thorough effort of mind" in response. And what is that's nutrient? The response should be "Lack of trust." What exactly does that nourish? Ignoring the genuine Dhamma. Monks, I declare that ignoring the real Dhamma has benefits and is not without them. What is the benefit of ignoring the actual Dhamma? The correct answer should be, "Not following after the particular man."

So, monks, the act of not following after the very man, when completed, completes not listening to true Dhamma; lack of listening to true Dhamma, when completed, completes lack of faith; lack of faith, when completed, completes lack of through work of mind; lack of through work of mind, when completed, completes lack of mindfulness and self-faculties; and that, the three wrong ways of practise; and that, the five hindrances, the five hind Such is the nourishment and such is the fruition of this ignorance.

Just as, monks, when rain falls heavily on a mountain, the water flowing down the slope fills up the mountain clefts, rifts, and gullies, and when they are full, they fill up the small pools, which in turn fill up the big pools, which in turn fill up the small rivers, which in turn fill up the large rivers, which in turn fill up the sea, the mighty ocean. This is how the mighty ocean is nourished, and this is how its fulfillment is when all five of the obstacles have been removed, ignorance will have been eradicated, as will not following in the footsteps of the very man and not paying attention to the actual Dhamma. This is how this ignorance feeds, and this is how it feeds itself.

As a result, the primary source of *Akusala* is *Avijja*. It was described by the *Buddha* in *Paṭiccasamuppāda* as the source of all occurrences. The cycle of birth and death will end for the one who can get rid of *Avijja*. The progression from ignorance to wisdom is as follows: Mind whoever owns it to become humble mourning prayer you ought to go after the ungrateful Mind, knowing from listening and reading, I should have taken it, thirsty for information. Mind whoever owns it. Teachers who need to get education should look for it, knowledge transfer from ignorance. A wonderful crossing, really. They must move quickly and not slowly from ignorance to mysticism from ignorance that is ignorance. Being alert is just a human obligation.

Importance of Avijja in Buddhism:

In two teachings regarding the nature of reality, found in several Buddhist traditions, *Avijja* is a central topic of discussion. One has to do with the *Anatta-Anatman* (non,ego) theory, which refers to ignorance or misperceptions regarding the "Self" while, in Buddhism, there is only non-Self. The second is related to

the *Anicca*(impermanent) philosophy and refers to misunderstandings regarding “permanence” when reality is impermanent.

Different Buddhist traditions

Avidya appears as a major object of discussion in the two doctrines about the nature of reality in various Buddhist traditions. Pertains to an Anatta (Anatman) principle, which is ignorance or misconception about the “self”, while in reality there is only a non-self-according to Buddhism. The second is related to the Anicca principle, which is ignorance or misconception about “permanence” when the nature of reality is temporary.

Theravāda Buddhism

Bhikkhu Bodhi states that Avidya is an important part of the Theravada Abhidhamma’s teachings about the conditions that perpetuate the cycle of birth and death. One such situation is the creation of karma which arises out of ignorance. In other words, says Bodhi, ignorance (*avijja*) “obscures the perception of the true nature of things just as a cataract obscures the perception of visible objects”. In the Sutta literature, this ignorance refers to non-knowledge of the Four Noble Truths. In the Abhidhamma literature, in addition to the Four Noble Truths, it is ignorance of one’s ‘pre-birth pre-life’ and ‘post-mortem future life’ and dependent origination

Mahayana Buddhism

The Mahayana tradition regards ignorance about the nature of reality and past lives as a fundamental force, which can only be broken through the insight of emptiness (*Sunyata*). However, in comparison to other Buddhist traditions, states Jens Braarvig, there is not so much emphasis on Avidya; instead the emphasis is on the “creation of illusory reality” based on the concept when the ultimate reality is emptiness. Avidya is the greatest impurity and suffering is the primary cause of rebirth. Garfield and Adelglass, *Insight into Emptiness*, that “the lack of the inherent nature of all phenomena, including ourselves, cuts off impurities”, an insight into emptiness produces a full awakening.

Vajrayana Buddhism

The Vajrayana tradition regards ignorance as the bondage of *samsara*, and its teachings focus on a tantric path under the guidance of a teacher to overcome Avidya and achieve liberation in a single life.

Avidya is recognized as the first of the Twelve Links of Dependent Origination (Twelve *Nidanas*), a sequence of links that explains why a being takes rebirth and remains bound within *samsara*, again and again in the six realms of existence, the cycle of repeated birth and death. The Twelve *Nidanas* are an application of the Buddhist concept of *Pratityasamutpada* (dependent origination). This doctrine, presented in *Samyukta Nikaya* II.2-4 and *Digha Nikaya* II.55-63, claims that rebirth, re-aging, and re-death ultimately arise through a series of twelve episodes or *Nidanas*, which are ultimately rooted in Avidya, and the twelfth step *Jaramaran* triggers the dependent origination of Avidya, recreating an endless cycle of *Dukkha* (suffering, pain, dissatisfaction).

Importance of *Avijjā* in Contemporary Era:

Different Buddhist teachings or traditions provide different explanations of *Avijjā* on various levels or in various ways. Fundamentally, it is a lack of knowledge or a misunderstanding of the nature of reality, more notably the nature of the teachings of dependent origination and not-Self. According to Peter Harvey, *Avijjā* is a “more ingrained misconception of reality” rather than a lack of knowledge. Gethin

refers to *Avijjā* as a ‘good misperception,’ not just ignorance. It is a fundamental idea in Buddhism, where the nature of reality—rather than sin—is seen as the fundamental cause of suffering (*Avijjā*). The removal of this *Avijjā* results in the defeat of *Dukkha*. According to Alex Wayman, the term “*Avijjā*,” which appears in Buddhism and other Indian philosophies, is frequently mistranslated since it refers to more than just ignorance. He believes that a suitable title would be “unwisdom.” The phrase refers to a variety of errors, such as mistaken illusion for truth, impermanence for permanence, pain for happiness, and non-self for self, in addition to ignorance born of darkness (delusions). According to Wayman, incorrect knowledge is a different kind of *Avijjā*.

Other uses of the word “*Avijjā*” include ignorance or lack of comprehension of the Four Noble Truths, other Buddhist teachings, or the way to eliminate suffering. In reference to the twelve linkages, Sonam Rinchen says *Avijjā* that “The opposite of knowing that a person or other phenomenon lacks an essential being is ignorance”. Those who are afflicted by this ignorance take behaviours that propel them more into the material world. It is called *Avijjā* to not comprehend the Four Noble Truths or their ramifications.

Conclusion:

How monks can aware have their knowledge and their surroundings shed his ignorance and acquire wisdom? The ignorance of ignorance vanishes and the wisdom of knowledge might emerge for those who understand that the monk’s eyes are transient, like Body, tongue, ear, and nose. A monk can shed his ignorance and become aware if he is aware that the mind is transient (Iron, 2,276). For example, Greed is righteous and fair. I wish to obtain it improperly! If “greed” is substituted for “providing, distribution,” The benefits of “support” will grow!! The spirit of torture and murder is “anger”! You need to adopt a “loving” mindset! It’s possible to be ignorant and do well. Fair and unfair – You are under the ridiculous idea that you are unaware! Those are ignorant (delusions)!

A “blind world” is one where there is a lot of ignorance! A world without knowledge of the truth, according to the Buddha, is a “blind world”! Because of this, “ignorance” has to be replaced with “knowledge”! The transformation is the finest because, it is the most honorable. “The genuine noble Thingyan” is here! Watering the skin does not completely remove the dirt! They bathed in the Ganga and Yamuna, Silent Parvoz! They claim that passion fades away! No such thing as “passion” that has been purified of impurities exists! Therefore, in accordance with this term “Sankanta,” make the modification that will be most lucrative.

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