Sri Lanka Journal of Social Sciences 2006/2007 ***29/30*** *(1&2): 51-69*

CRITICAL THINKING AND LOGIC: A VIEW FROM THE PERIPHERY

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Introduction

Critical thinking and logic (hereafter abbreviated as CTL) have acquired near canonical status in Western philosophical discourse. The turn from metaphysics to logic that took place at the turn of the last century in the English speaking world marked the beginning of what is known as `analytical philosophy' , with its central emphasis on the principle of verification and linguistic analysis. In his *Language Truth and Logic* (1952) A.J. Ayer brushed aside – or at least he thought he did so- all the traditional so-called metaphysical problems by making use of these tools. The emphasis on verification came mainly as a result of the development of natural sciences. Scientific knowledge based on empirically obtained data was open for verification, and the early admirers of science, among whom were the philosophers who came to be known at the turn of the 20th century as the "Vienna Circle", were most impressed by this and they thought that anything that is not verifiable did not deserve to be considered knowledge proper. Everything that is not considered knowledge was relegated to what early Wittgenstein called "Unsinnig" – non-sense - and was kept away from philosophical discourse. Areas of human interest such as ethics and aesthetics were not considered on the ground that they were matters of one's personal inclinations. Metaphysics was rejected on the ground that it was beyond verification.

Subsequently, the status of Logical Positivism and the principle of verification itself underwent changes. In the field of scientific discourse verification was abandoned in favour of Karl Popper's idea of falsification. Wittgenstein's later philosophy, with its emphasis on language games and resultant pluralism of realities, deprived science of its privileged status and relegated science to one among many other language games. In this situation, what was considered philosophical virtues were logical consistency, coherence and logicality of statements made. The function of the philosopher was to make sure that these virtues prevail in any form of language game. This is to reaffirm the belief that analysis was the sole legitimate

An earlier version of this paper was presented at the Conference to celebrate the `World Philosophy Day' organized by the NSF Research Committee on Social Sciences on 21st to 22nd November 2006 at the SLFI ,Colombo.

role of the philosopher. It is under these circumstances that critical thinking and logic became the trade mark of modern philosophy.

The purpose of telling this story of western philosophy is to show that the modern emphasis on CTL arises from a particular social, scientific and philosophical context. In emphasizing CTL one does not need to subscribe to the widely accepted belief that CTL can come only within the context of modernity. In the course of this presentation I will adduce evidence to support the view that CTL can arise in different contexts serving different proposes. The very concept of CTL as governed by rigid rules will be questioned in the course of this investigation.

Logic and Logicality in Indian Context

It is a well known story today after Edward Said (*Orientalism: Western Conceptions of the Orient*, London, Penguin, 1991) and others demarcated how the East was defined as mystical, mysterious, occult oriented and unbound by rational and logical discourse. The idea behind this is that there is only one form of rationality and logicality and anything that cannot be captured within that conception of rationality and logicality is a matter of wonderment, a thing to be studied as `mysterious other' . A classic case is the western reaction to *catuskoti* or four-cornered logical proposition. The standard accusation was that the Indians never understood the Principle of Non-Contradiction. [1]

In India, logical thinking seems to have begun in the practice of the art of debate (*vaada*). The wide-spread practice of debate promoted not only an ethics but also an epistemology and logic. The rules were developed for the proper practice of debate and such works were known as *Sambhasa-vidhi* or *vada-vidhi*. As Satishchandra Vidyabhushana[2] has shown in a masterful manner, in India, the initial stage of logic and philosophy was called `anvikshiki' a feminine form word in the Sanskrit language connoting `(act of) seeing minutely' . *Anvikshiki* was bifurcated subsequently into `atma-vidya' (science of soul) and `hetu-vidya' (science of reasons), which were gradually developed into philosophy and logic respectively. At this initial stage of development of Indian thinking, reasons to support the existence of *atma* were articulated in logic. The *Nyayasutra* of *Aksapada* and *Gautama* is believed to be the first logical treatise of the *brahmana* tradition. Among the main subjects discussed in the treatise is `vada' or debate. According to Vidyabhushana, the Brahmin tradition classified *vada* (discussion) into three

parts, namely, *vada* which aims at ascertaining the truth, *jalpa* (wrangling) which aims at gaining victory, and *vitanda* (cavil) which is aimed at merely finding faults. This classification indicates a well developed art of debate with its own ethics and logic. Discussion on fallacy *(hetvabhasa)* came under this theme, highlighting the need for proper procedures for drawing appropriate conclusions.

That debate served as the means of conveying philosophical views defended in accordance with an accepted code of ethics is shown by the fact that both *brahmanic* and non-*brahmanic* authors did not fail to include a chapter on *vada* in their logical treatises. At times, separate treatises outlining the methods to be followed in debates were written by these authors. A case in point is the Buddhist logician Dharmakirti who wrote a separate treatise called `vadanyaya' (logic of debate) outlining both the logic and ethics of debate. Dharmakirti begins his discussion with the following statement: "The wicked persons defeat in debates by employing improper methods even the one who argues rationally. We start this (work on the logic of debate) for repudiating them."[3] In this work, there is a separate section called "chala-vyavahara-nishedha" or condemnation of cheating practices (section 37 in Gokhale's edition). In this manner, there is ample evidence of the development of critical thinking and logic within the Indian logical and epistemological tradition itself.

Furthermore the Brahmanic emphasis on purity of language, the skepticism of the materialists, the indeterminism and relativism of the Jains and the emphasis on knowledge by Buddhists proved to be fertile grounds for the development of logic and critical thinking. Logic, in the Indian context , became a study of the means of knowledge or *pramana-sastra*, (theory of knowledge) and syllogism, mainly in the hands of Buddhist logicians. The subsequent development of Navya-nyaya by later Brahmanic philosophers, the beginning of which was marked by the *Tatva-cintamani* by Gangesha Upadhyaya of the 13th century, established logic as the pure study of the means of knowledge. By this time, however, the art of debate had established its roots within the Indian religio-philosophical tradition so deeply that it had become an institution of its own.

Rationality, Logicality and Analysis in Buddhism

Buddhism, coinciding with the later middle Upanishads, clearly shows signs of an advanced mode of thinking and reasoning greatly surpassing the general Brahmanic Indian tradition. The Buddha had famously said that his teaching is for those who

are intelligent and not for those who are not[4]. In accordance with his own utterance, the Buddha seems to have addressed mainly, although not exclusively, the rational and intelligent group of people in society. The Dhamma, the teaching of the Buddha, is described, in the well-known formula occurring ubiquitously in the canon to describe its characteristics, as a thing "to be understood by the vinnu people individually" (*paccattam veditabbo vinnuhi*). Very often, whether some form of behaviour is praised by the vinnu (*vinnu-pasattha*) or despised by them (*vinnu-garahita*) has been given as the criterion of acceptability or otherwise. In the *Anguttara-nikaya* (II. 228) an immature person with wrong physical, verbal and mental behaviour and wrong views is described as "censured by the intelligent" (*sanuvajjo vinnunam*) and the person without those characteristics is described as "not censured by the intelligent" (*ananuvajjo vinnunam*). In discussing the character of the Venerable Ananda the following two factors have been mentioned: "that he has been praised by the Buddha, and that he has been revered and praised by the intelligent fellow-mendicants" (*satthu ceva samvannito sambhavito ca vinnunam sabrahmacarinam: Samyuttanikaya* III p.134). This shows that a distinction has been made even among the Sangha based on whether or not a member is a vinnu. Morality, the foundation of Buddhist religious practice, has been described using the following standard set of epithets: "unbroken and unaltered those rules of conduct that are spotless, leading to liberation, *praised by the wise*, unstained and conducive to concentration" (emphasis added).[4] In the well-known *Kalama– sutta*, by way of demonstrating how the three defilements, lobha, dosa and moha, are unwholesome, the following dialogue takes place between the Buddha and the Kalamas:

> Well, then Kalamas, what do you think? Are these things profitable or unprofitable? Unprofitable, sir. Are they blameworthy or not? Blameworthy, sir. *Are they censured by the intelligent or not? They are censured*, sir. If performed and undertaken, do they conduce to loss and sorrow or not? They conduce to sorrow and loss. … But Kalamas, when you know for yourself : These things are unprofitable, … *censured by the intelligent,* … then indeed you reject them (emphasis added).[5]

These mental characteristics praised by the intelligent people or despised by them have been taken as a criterion for judging them as ethically good or bad. It is important to examine whom the Buddha exactly meant by this term. The commentarial

tradition usually describes this term as synonymous with learned person (*pandito*) or clever person (*viyatto*). Going somewhat further, Cula-Niddesa defines the term in the following words: *vinnuti pandito, pannava, buddhima, nani, vibhavi, medhavi* - `vinnu' means learned person, wise person, intelligent person, one with knowledge, analytical person and wise person.[6]

Among the modern Buddhist scholars, K.N. Jayatilleke is one who noticed the significance of this oft-recurring term in the canon. He says:

> The Buddha goes on to say that they [the learned men] more often than not praise him, after making comparative study of the doctrines and lives of different religious teachers. They seem to have been no other than the intelligentsia of the age, who made a critical study of the various theories prevalent at the time and cultivated what knowledge they could lay their hands on. The Buddha calls them `the intelligent' or rational ones (vinnu), and he seems primarily to have addressed this class of people and put his theories to the test at their hands. … The vinnu represented for the Buddha the impartial critic at the level of intelligent common sense and the Buddha and his disciples introduce the `vinnu puriso' or the hypothetical rational critic when it seems necessary to make an impartial and intelligent assessment of the relative worth of conflicting theories.[7]

Further discussing this group of people, Jayatilleke proposes that they represented an open-minded group of people who were not committed to any particular religious beliefs.

He cites the Apannakasutta of the Majjhimanikaya as an example. He says:

> Although there is little evidence that any of the basic doctrines of Buddhism are derived by reason, we sometimes meet with the Buddha recommending his doctrines on rational grounds. This is particularly evident where his sermons are addressed to the vinnu or the elite, who seem to represent the open-minded rationalist. Thus, in the Apannakasutta we find such an appeal to reason.[8]

This particular sutta was taught by the Buddha to the Brahmin householders of Saleyyaka who `did not have developed even a rational faith toward any teacher.' In this sutta, the Buddha does not present the idea of rebirth or life after death as something that is taken for granted; he presents it as something to be accepted only on examination of relative merits. The argument presented by the Buddha in this sutta is quite similar to Pascal's wager argument on the existence of God. A sutta of similar nature is the Kalama, referred to earlier, taught by the Buddha to a group called Kalamas, who were not committed to any particular religious view. Quite similar to the position adopted in the *Apannaka-sutta*, in the *Kalama-sutta* too the Buddha presents the idea of rebirth and the consequences of actions in the after-life, as something to be adopted only on rational grounds. The Buddha says that the person who opts to give up enmity, oppression and taints, experiences four comforts in this very life. The first two relates to the belief in after-life and the result of karma:

> If there be a world beyond, if there be fruit and ripening of deeds done well or ill, then, when body breaks up after death, I shall be reborn in the Happy Lot, in the Heaven World. This is the first comfort he attains.
>
> If, however, there be no world beyond, no fruit and ripening of deeds done well or ill, yet in this very life do I hold myself free from enmity and oppression, sorrowless and well. This is the second comfort he attains (Gradual Sayings I .p.175).

All these examples support the interpretation given by Jayatilleke to the term `vinnu' as denoting elite in society who did not believe in such ideas as karma and rebirth. Although the particular discourses referred to and some other instances seem to support this view the use of the term in a larger majority of instances suggest that it did not exclusively refer to such a group of people alone, but it represented the knowledgeable and intelligent members of the society. In one of the instances we quoted above, the term had been used not only to refer to the open-minded elite but also to refer to some members of the Sangha. What is, however, more significant is the fact that the Buddha mostly addressed the vinnu or the intelligent class of people in the society.

In the dialogue between the Buddha and Acela Kassapa (naked ascetic) the former always refers to `the wise' in society. The dialogue itself may be taken as a good example for an instance of the Buddha's addressing such a wise person. Kassapa's question to the Buddha was whether it is the case that the Buddha denounced all forms of asceticism.

The Buddha's answer was that it is wrong to attribute to him such a blanket denial of all forms of asceticism, and he explained his position further:

> Kassapa, there are some ascetics and Brahmins who are wise, skilled, practiced in disputation, splitters of hairs, acute, who walk cleverly along the paths of views. Sometimes their views accord with mine, sometimes they do not. What they sometimes applaud, we sometimes applaud, what they sometimes do not applaud, we sometimes do not applaud, what they sometimes applaud, we sometimes do not applaud, and what they sometimes do not applaud, we sometimes applaud. What we sometimes applaud, they sometimes applaud, what we sometimes do not applaud they sometimes do not applaud. What we sometimes applaud, they sometimes do not applaud, and what we sometimes do not applaud, they sometimes applaud.[9]

With this clear understanding of similarities and differences, the Buddha would take up what the two groups agree upon and carry on the investigation on such matters. Here the Buddha relies on the wise (vinnu) for this operation. The wise in this context are not necessarily those who have already followed the path of the Buddha, but those who possess an open mind, who can assess the situation objectively and factually. This shows that Buddhism, from a very early stage of its existence, operated with a very advanced sense of rationality.

Logicality or logical thinking has been perceived as an important virtue in intelligent human behaviour, although the Buddha has not failed to see its limitations. The discourses of the Buddha refer to `takka' (Sk. tarka) in many instances. The *Dhamma* has been described as `*atakkavacara*' (that which is not within the scope of logic) while views have been referred to as `*takka pariyahatam*' (beaten by logic). In the well-known *Kalama-sutta,* referred to above, *takka* is one factor which must not be taken as a sure criterion of acceptability (*ma takka-hetu*). In this

context, it is very important to remember that the Buddha did not reject *takka* in toto. As has been amply demonstrated by K.N. Jayatilleke, the Buddha has used logical reasoning quite often. But at the same time he was quite aware of its limits. His attitude was that takka is not an exclusive criterion of acceptability. As explained in the Canki-sutta, conclusions drawn on logic may or may not be true. The Discourse refers to the following four possibilities:

> sutakkitam tatha well-reasoned truth
> sutakkitam annatha well-reasoned falsehood
> duttakkitam tatha ill-reasoned truth
> duttakkitam annatha ill-reasoned falsehood (M I p.520)

The ideas expressed and the attitudes adopted in such discourses as these betray a quite sophisticated understanding of the nature and limits of logic.

A virtue that goes hand-in-hand with logicality is consistency in thinking and statements. It is one of the oft-referred virtues of the statements of the Buddha. As has been highlighted by K.N. Jayatilleke, consistency referred to here is not merely a characteristic of statements; more importantly, it was considered a virtue of one's behaviour and what one said about it, i.e. one's behaviour. One of the well-known virtues attributed to the Buddha was that he said what he did and did what he said (*yathavadi tathakari, yathakari tathavadi).*[10]

A very important area related to logic and critical thinking is the concept of limits found in early Buddhist discourses. These limits are related basically to thought, and knowledge, and consequently to expression. The Buddha refers to some four phenomena as "cannot be thought and should not be thought" (*acinteyyo na cintetabbo*), `thinking of which one would be distraught and come to grief', namely, the range of the Buddha, that of one who is in jhana, fruit of action *(kamma-vipaka)* and speculation of world[11].

Of the two terms used to describe the nature of these phenomena, `cannot be thought' seems to refer to a limit of one's epistemological capacity, and the other, `should not be thought' seems to refer to some kind of ethical limit. The commentary, however, seems to take the first term in somewhat of an ethical sense when it says *acinteyyaniti cintetum ayuttani*[12]: acinteyyani means those that ought not be thought. Accordingly, it interprets the second as "should not be thought for they

ought not be thought" (*acinteyyatta yeva na cintetabbani*). Thus, in the commentator's view, both refer to some kind of ethical sense. If we assume that the two terms with the suffix `eyya' were used to mean what they usually mean, namely, capability, capacity etc., it is reasonable to give a broader interpretation to the two terms. It is further said in the discourse that if one were to try to think about these phenomena one would end up becoming insane *(ummada)* and frustrated. Insanity can be a result of one's trying to stretch one's capacity to an extreme extent. The resultant inability is ultimately bound to produce frustration. The underlying idea is the limits of one's knowledge or one's known ability.

While the Buddha has been listed as one of the four unknowables in the later Buddhist traditions including the Theravada, the Buddha himself was attributed with absolute, unhindered knowledge, which was denoted by the term `sarvajnatva' or omniscience. I do not plan to have a discussion on this often discussed issue which Jayatilleke has dealt with comprehensively. There are some passages in the canon suggesting, nevertheless, that there could be certain phenomena about which nobody, including the Buddha, knew. For instance, in a well-known statement the Buddha says that the end of the *samsara* is not known and that its first beginning is unseen (*anamataggo'yam bhikkhave samsaro pubbakoti na pannayati...*). In this statement there are two important terms, namely, `anamata' (na+mata), a past participle which means `not known', and `na pannayati' which means `not seen' or `not manifested'.[13] The important feature in this statement is that it does not clearly specify by whom it is not known and to whom it is not seen or manifested.

Does that mean that it is not known or seen only by ordinary people or that it is so for any person? If it was not seen by the ordinary people and the Buddha could see it, then he would have said that clearly. The Buddha has never indicated that it is so either in this instance or anywhere else. Therefore, it is reasonable to assume that this particular phenomenon is beyond the reach of any and every person, including the Buddha. As Jayatilleke[14] has demonstrated, this conclusion is not contrary to the position adopted regarding the alleged omniscience of the Buddha in the early strata of the Canon, although later this position was radically changed. The position adopted by the later Buddhist tradition, including the *Theravada,* is quite absolute. The following statement articulates this later tradition when it is said:

> *Na tassa addittham – idha'atthi kinci = atho avinnatam ajanitabbam*[15] – there is nothing that was not seen by the Buddha; nor is there anything that is not known or cannot be known by him.

The type of all-knowing status attributed to the Buddha can be considered as a result of devotionalism that grew up in the Buddhist tradition subsequently. What is significant, nevertheless, is the early Buddhist awareness of the limits of thought (thinkability), which ultimately applies to the limits of knowledge (knowability) and the limits of language (sayability).[16]

Another example for the sophistication of Buddhist thinking is the importance it lays on proper handling of questions. It also has clear implications for the limits we just discussed. The discourses refer to four types of questions: the questions which ought to be explained categorically (*ekamsa-vyakaraniya*), questions which ought to be replied with counter-question (*patipuccha-vyakaraniya*), questions which ought to be explained analytically (*vibhajja-yakaraniya*) and questions that should be set aside (*panho thapaniyo*). Recent scholars have found the last category in particular very interesting philosophically and religiously. We will not plan to go into this discussion though it is very important.[17] Being mindful of the fact that a right question is a pre-condition for a right answer, the Buddha sometimes corrected the question before he attempted to answer it. For instance, as recorded in the *Samyuttanikaya* (II p.13), a bhikkhu called Moliya Phagguna asks the following question: *ko nu kho vinnanaharam ahareti*: who feeds on the food of consciousness? The Buddha's initial response was: *no kallo panho*: `the question is not proper' . Subsequently the Buddha gives the following explanation: The kind of question rejected by the Buddha in this context is what is called a `loaded' question, which contains an assumption that is not appropriate.

> I do not say `one feeds on' . If I were to say so then the question `who feeds on' would be proper. But I do not say so. Since I do not say so, if one were to ask `for which the consciousness-food takes place' that would be a proper question.

In discussing the sophistication of Buddhist thought we cannot by-pass the stress it lays on evidence and verification which also form very important ingredients of contemporary empiricist tradition. It is well-known how the principle of verification

was highly valued by Logical Positivists at the turn of the last century, and how it was subsequently dropped giving way to falsification proposed by Karl Popper. This story of the vicissitudes of the verification principle is not applicable to Buddhist philosophy for its use and the context of evidence and verification are quite different from those of Logical Positivism.

As we discussed earlier in the context of the *Kalama-sutta*, the Buddha emphasized the need for `seeing it for oneself' (*attanava janeyyatha*) as a prerequisite of accepting something to be a fact (an assertion, in philosophical parlance). A classic example for the actual practice of this freedom for inquiry is the case of a young Brahmin called Uttara, a pupil of the elderly teacher called Brahmayu, who asked his student to examine whether the good things said by people about the Buddha were really so or not so. The student followed the Buddha closely (obviously for a considerable period of time, so as to get a good idea of his behaviour) and gives the following report to his teacher:

> We have seen Master Gotama walking, sir, we have seen him standing, we have seen him entering indoors, we have seen him indoors seated in silence after eating, we have seen him giving blessings after eating, we have seen him going to the monastery in silence, we have seen him in the monastery teaching the Dhamma to an audience. Such is the Master Gotama; such he is, and more than that.[18]

One could still argue that this requirement was only for the `free thinker' and not for the committed followers. That it is not so is clear from what the Buddha says to his monastic disciples as recorded in the *Vimamsaka-sutta* of the *Majjhimaniakaya* (47). The Buddha says:

> Bhikkhus, a bhikkhu who is an inquirer, not knowing how to gauge another's mind, should make an investigation of the Tathagata in order to find out whether or not he is fully enlightened.

Subsequently, the Buddha explains how one should do this inquiry: a disciple who really wishes to verify whether or not the Buddha is enlightened should examine him on two states, namely, states cognizable through the eye and through the ear to find any defiled states in him. Failing this he should examine whether the Buddha has any mixed states cognizable through eye and ear. Having done this he should look for cleansed states. Finding such cleansed states he should further examine to see whether these states are temporary or they have been for a long time with the Buddha. Discovering that these qualities have been in him for a long time, he should next examine whether or not the Buddha `has acquired renown and attained fame so whether the dangers (connected with renown and fame) are found in him. Not finding such dangers, finally, he should examine the Buddha for whether he is restrained due to fear or he avoids lust because he has destroyed lust. Having found that the Buddha is without fear and without lust, he must not stop at that; he should question the Buddha himself to verify what he found through his own observations, from the Buddha himself. The process of this verification leads one to listen to the Dhamma taught by the Buddha and consequently to become convinced in the Teacher, his Teaching (Dhamma) and the Sangha, the followers of that teaching. This account shows that one who does not have access to others' minds should first trust one's eyes and ears and then verify what one saw and heard against the words of the person concerned, before one makes up one's mind to approach and listen to him.

One may argue here that the bhikkhus who were addressed by the Buddha were already among the Sangha and hence the admonition is pointless for they have already made their commitment to follow the Buddha. Although it is true that the bhikkhus have already made a commitment, the real commitment to the Path has to arise from one's first-hand experience, whether or not one is a monastic disciple. Therefore the admonition is meant for everybody including the insiders. As an admonition to one's own followers, what the Buddha does in this discourse must be unprecedented in the history of religion. This shows that evidence and verification play a crucial role in the Buddhist path.

Another discourse indispensable in discussing verification in the Buddhist sense is the *Culahatthipadopama-sutta* (the junior discourse on the simile of the elephant's footprint) of the *Majjhimanikaya* (27). In this discourse the Buddha, by making use of the analogy of a woodsman who tries to track down a big bull elephant following its footprints, explains how a disciple arrives at complete certainty. The analogy, which the Buddha explains to Brahmin Janussoni, (pp.272-2) is as follows:

> Brahmin, suppose an elephant woodsman were to enter an elephant wood and were to see in the elephant wood a big elephant's footprint, long in extent and broad across. A wise woodsman would not yet come to the conclusion: `Indeed this is a big bull elephant.' Why is that? In an elephant wood there are small she-elephants that leave a big footprint, and this might be one of their footprints.
>
> He follows it and sees in the elephant wood a big elephant's footprint, long in extent and broad across, and some scrapings high up. A wise elephant woodsman would not yet come to the conclusion: Indeed, this is a big bull elephant.' Why is that? In an elephant wood there are tall she-elephants that have prominent teeth and leave a big footprint, and this might be one of their footprints.
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> He follows it further and sees in the elephant wood a big elephant's footprint, long in extent and broad across, and some scrapings high up, and marks made by tusks. A wise elephant woodsman would not yet come to the conclusion: `Indeed, this is a big bull elephant.' Why is that? In an elephant wood there are tall she elephants that have tusks and leave big footprint, and this might be one of their footprints.
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> He follows it further and sees in the elephant wood a big elephant's footprint, long in extent and broad across, and some scrapings high up, and marks made by tusks, and broken-off branches. And he sees that bull-elephant at the root of a tree or in the open, walking about, sitting, or lying down. He comes to the conclusion: `This is that big bull elephant.[19]

Like the wise elephant woodsman who would not draw a definite conclusion until he sees the big bull elephant itself, a wise follower of the Buddha, would not draw the conclusion that "the Blessed One is fully enlightened, the Dhamma is well proclaimed by the Blessed One, the Sangha is practicing the good way" until one attains the final emancipatory knowledge of the destruction of defilements *(asavakkhaya-nana)*. Like the wise woodsman the follower of the Buddha too

sees signs suggesting and supporting the above conclusion, such as the attainment of *jhanas* and the forms of higher knowledge. He would not yet draw the conclusion definitely till he has obtained first hand evidence.

What is said in the context of the above discussion is supported by what the Buddha says in the *Cankisutta* of the *Majjhimanikaya* (95). Here the Buddha discusses foundations of the Brahmanic oral tradition with Kapathika, a young and learned Brahmin. When questioned by the latter on what the Buddha thought about the Brahmanic claim that their oral tradition of the scripture is absolutely trustworthy, the Buddha counter-questioned him whether there is even a single Brahmin who can say that he knows this and he sees this. To this Kapathika answered in the negative, but tried to defend his tradition on the basis of belief in divine revelation and faith. The Buddha answered by saying that five factors including revelation *(anussava)* and faith in the tradition *(saddha)*, approval *(ruci),* reasoned cogitation *(akara parivitakka)* and reflective acceptance of a view *(ditthi-nijjhan-khanti)*, are not fully trustworthy for they could be either true or false. When such a possibility is there, the Buddha said, one who is keen on preserving truth, must not depend solely on them for certainty. Subsequently, the Buddha described three steps in the process of acquiring true beliefs, namely, preservation of truth *(saccanurakkhana)*, discovery of truth *(saccanubodha)* and final arrival at truth *(saccanuppatti)*. The first step is characterized by a very basic acceptance of a proposition merely as one's belief and nothing more than that; he does not derive any definite conclusion to the effect that only his belief is true and the other beliefs are empty. The second stage is not different from what was described in the Brahmayu-sutta, referred to above, namely, to investigate the teacher in order to determine whether or not his behaviour is consistent with what he says. Once he discovers that the teacher's behaviour and word tally with each other, he goes on to the second step which is described in the following words:

> He has investigated him and has seen that he is purified from states based on [greed, hate and] delusion, then he places faith in him; filled with faith he visits him and pays respect to him, having paid respect to him, he gives ear; when he gives ear he hears the Dhamma; having heard the Dhamma he memorises it and examines the meanings of the teachings he has memorized; when he examines their meanings, he gains a reflective acceptance of those teachings; when he has gained a reflective acceptance

> of those teachings, zeal springs up; when zeal has sprung up, he applies his will; having applied his will, he scrutinizes; having scrutinized, he strives; resolutely striving, he realizes with the body the ultimate truth and sees it by penetrating it with wisdom. **In this way, there is discovery of truth; in this way one discovers truth**, … **But as yet there is no final arrival at truth** (emphasis added).[20]

The discovery of truth just described is a result of intellectual understanding supported by practice. The final arrival at truth, however, is a result of "repetition, development and cultivation of those same things" marking the complete realization of the path. It is only at this stage that one can claim that one's belief is true and those of other's are empty.

These early Buddhist discussions show the great importance it placed on evidence and having first hand experience as validating one's claims. This further shows that Buddhism operates within a strong conception of rationality and logicality.

Religion, Philosophy and Buddhism

The account of Buddhist rationality, logicality and critical thinking given above clearly marks a difference in Buddhism from other religious traditions. One might even be tempted to think that this effort is motivated by some sort of modernistic and `scientific' trend. The answer to this objection is that if what is presented looks modern and `scientific' it is only an accident. What is presented is what is in the texts and how exactly the Buddha wished others to perceive him and his teaching. Although it is true that a `religion' developed gradually around the person and teachings of the Buddha, Buddhism as a religion is quite different from the rest.

For example, the standard definition of religion involves a conception of the transcendental. In his well known work, *The Idea of the Holy*, Rudolf Otto defines religion as involving something "wholly other" inspiring a sense of awe the which he calls "*mysterium tremendum*". The Buddha took away mysticism and the mystical from religion. In rejecting the belief in a personal soul, the Buddha took away a key aspect of mysticism from human existence. In rejecting the possibility of a creator God he took away a source of universal mysticism. Although it is strange to talk about man without soul and universe without God, Buddhism does so quite self-

consciously and yet stays religious! There is a path to be followed and there is fruit to be achieved as a result. Neither in the path nor in the final fruit is there any mystical character. A good example is how the Buddha explained the clarity of the mind of the person who realizes the knowledge of the destruction of defilements *(asava)*, which marks the final stage in the realization of *nirvana*- the ultimate religious experience in Buddhism. In the *Samannaphala-sutta* of the *Dighanikaya* (2) the Buddha describes this emancipatory knowledge and its clarity in the following words:

> Just as if in the midst of the mountains there were a pond, clear as the polished mirror, where a man with good eyesight standing on the bank could see oyster-shells, gravel-banks, and shoals of fish, on the move or stationary. And he might think: This pond is clear, … there are oyster-shells …" Just so, he knows as it really is: "This is suffering; he knows as it really is: "This is the origin of suffering" he knows as it really is: "This is the cessation of suffering"; he knows as it really is: "This is the path leading to the cessation of suffering". He knows: "Birth is finished, the holy life has been led, done is what had to be done, there is nothing further here.[21]

Knowledge and clarity of vision are the hallmarks of the Buddhist ultimate experience. This Buddhist account may be contrasted with the well known idea of "cloud of unknowing" upheld in theistic traditions.[22]

Conclusion: CTL as Tools and Means not as Ends

The above discussion should show that CTL are not quite new to the Indian tradition in general and the Buddhist tradition in particular. The attitude of Buddhism to these intellectual tools is that in Buddhism they are not taken as ends in themselves. They are meant to serve as tools, not[23] absolute but with relative merits, in the task of the realization of truth. They have to be taken in the context of the philosophy of life advocated in Buddhism. We find many discourses in the *Suttanipata* referring to various religious people who used these tools for destructive purposes. The Buddha shunned this type of practice and he was quite conscious of the limits affecting these tools. What is significant, however, is that logicality and analytical thinking are not things to be introduced to the tradition anew. The task for the philosophers of this country today is to find ways and means to input these epistemological virtues to the day-to-day practice in the life of the people.

Endnotes :

[1] For a comprehensive discussion see "Some Problems of Translation and Interpretation I and II" by K.N. Jayatilleke, in *University of Ceylon Review*, Vol.7, pp.212-23, and Vol.8 pp.45-55; and his *Early Buddhist Theory of Knowledge*, George Allen and Unwin Ltd., London, 1963, pp. 333-350.

2 *History of Indian Logic*, Motilal Banarsidass, Delhi. [1920] 1988.

3 Translation from *Vadanyaya of Dharmakirti: Logic of Debate*, critically edited and translated by Pradeep P. Gokhale, Sri Satguru Publications, India. 1993. pp

4 *Pannavantassa ayam dhammo na ayam dhammo duppannnassa* Dighanikaya III p.287 [1911 :Pali Text Society, London].

5 Dighanikaya II p. 80. Translation from *Thus Have I Heard*, Maurice Walshe, Wisdom Publications London, 1987. p.234.

6 Translation adapted from: The Book of the Gradual Sayings, vol.I F.L. Woodward, Pali Text Society, 1979. p.173.

7 *Cula-Niddesa* ed. S. Stede [1920] 2001. p.147 (Commentary to Khaggavisana sutta verse #5)

8 Jayatilleke (1963) p.229.

9 *Ibid*.p.405.

10 *Dighanikaya* Mahasihanada-sutta; translation from *Thus Have I Heard*, Maurice Walshe, Wisdom Pulications London, 1987. pp.151-2.

11 *Itivuttaka*: p.122.

12 *Anguttaranikaya* II p. (*The Book of the Gradual Sayings* vol. II. pp.89-90)

13 *Anguttaranikaya-atthakatha* III p.108.

14 There is a somewhat similar statement in the Anguttaranikaya (V. p.113) which runs in the following manner: "*purima bhikkhave koti na pannayati avijjaya `ito pubbe avijja nahosi atha paccha sambhavi'* Monks, the first beginning of ignorance

which can be stated as "ignorance did not exist before his point (of time) but started later", is not seen. The point here seems different from the statement on samsara under discussion. The context of the sutta shows that the Buddha was explaining the conditionality or the causally conditioned character of ignorance. The subsequent statement, *"atha ca pana pannayati idappaccaya avijjati"*: Nevertheless, there appears ignorance causally conditioned. The point is not exclusive to ignorance; in fact, we cannot talk of `thing-hood' of any phenomenon as having any independent existence. Although what is said on ignorance applies to the samsara too, the point there was different.

15 Jayatilleke (1963) pp.202-3.

16 *Patisambhidamagga* I. p.134 and II. p. 31 (ed. Arnold C. Taylor, PTS, 1979.)

17 This idea if `unsayability' has to be differentiated from what can be considered the classical thesis of religious ineffability. Read my *Nirvana and Ineffability: A Study of Buddhist Theory of Reality and Language* (Postgraduate Institute of Pali and Buddhist Studies, 1993, Colombo) for a comprehensive discussion on the issue.

18 See K.N. Jayatilleke (1963 pp.281-3) for a comprehensive discussion.

19 Translation from *The Middle Length Discourses of the Buddha*, Bhikkhu Bodhi, Buddhist Publication Society, Kandy, Sri Lanka, 1995.p.749.

20 Translation from Bhikkhu Bodhi (1995), pp. 271-2.

21 Translation from Bhikkhu Bodhi (1995) p.782.

22 Translation from *The Long Discourses of the Buddha*, Maurice Walshe, Buddhist Publication Society, Kandy, Sri Lanka. 1996. p.108.

23 See *Cloud of Unknowing*, ed. Justic McLann, Westminister: The Newman Press, 1952

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