



THE TERM SADDHĀ (FAITH) BASED ON COMMENTARIE**Nguyen Thi Bich Quyen****Research Scholar, Centre for Mahayana Buddhist studies,
Acharya Nagarjuna University, Nagarjuna Nagar Guntur, AP, India.****ABSTRACT:**

The Buddha said that his teaching was Ehipassiko which means come and see. Few of the great teachers in history have made such a bold and confident claim. His teachings not only withstand methodical examination, they demand it. Because of this, the role of the faith faculty in Buddhism may be difficult to grasp. We should clarify that by faith I mean the enlightenment factor and spiritual faculty of saddhā.



KEYWORDS: *The meaning of Saddhā, Classification of Saddhā, Resoluteness of Faith, Characteristic, Function, Manifestation and Proximate Cause of Saddhā, The Importance of Saddhā for Practising Vipassanā.*

INTRODUCTION:

The present work is an attempt to treat the term of *Saddhā* based on commentaries. The Dhamma of the Buddha is not a religion of blind faith. It is far more demanding than that. It is a religion of experience; of exploration and discovery.

This is often translated confidence or conviction and both of these words are very good, but I still prefer the straightforward faith precisely because it is a loaded word which challenges us to deal with the implications. Faith is a key factor in the list of wholesome states. It is one of the uplifting enlightenment factors, together with the related states of joy and energy.

It is also one of the spiritual faculties, to be balanced with discriminating wisdom. Without wisdom, faith becomes superstition just as without faith wisdom is only a low cunning which justifies the defilements. This essay shows the way of life in Buddhism to understand what is the meaning of *saddhā* and how to practice *saddhā* in life to the liberation of suffering. This is the aim of author.

The meaning of Saddhā

The concept of *Saddhā* plays an important role in Buddhism. It is completely different from the concepts of faith in other religions. The word *saddhā* can be translated into English as faith, trust, respect, and confidence. In Buddhism the confidence also refers to *saddhā*. Some scholars give the explanation of *saddhā* as not faith because of its emphasis on understanding. The understanding (knowledge) destroys faith and faith destroys itself. Confidence cannot be obtained by faith, since it places less emphasis on reason, but only by understanding. The confidence is product of reason, knowledge and experience. When it is developed, confidence can never be blind faith that becomes a power of the mind. Referring to the un-intelligible and blind nature of faith, *Voltaire* said: "Faith is to believe in something which your reason tells you cannot be true; for if your reason approved of it, there could be no question of blind faith."

Blind faith is foreign to Buddhism that is here rational and intensely practical which system cannot contain mysteries or esoteric doctrines. Where there is no blind faith, there cannot be any coercion or persecution or fanaticism.² The term faith is synonym with belief, *Walpola Rahula* says: “The question of belief arises when there is no seeing – seeing in every sense of the word. The moment you see, the question of belief disappears. If I tell you that I have a gem hidden in the folded palm of my hand, the question of belief arises because you do not see it yourself. But if I unclench my fist and show you the gem, then you see it for yourself, and the question of belief does not arise. So the phrase in ancient Buddhist texts reads. Realizing, as one sees a gem in the palm.’ According to Buddhist philosophy, it is a purifying mental factor in the mind and has a deeper philosophical meaning than that of mere confidence. Firstly, it is a confidence born out of understanding or conviction of the Four Noble Truths. Secondly, it is a feeling of reverence or esteems which a follower accords to a personality, or a set of doctrines. Thirdly, it implies an earnest hope of execution and realizes ethical principles of developing one’s innate morality.

The faith is essential for progress in mundane as well as in supra-mundane things. This point is brought out by Buddha in several discourses. Buddha said to *Āḷavaka*: “Faith is the most excellent treasure possessed by man in this world” affirming the words of his predecessor the Buddha *Kassapa* in order to set forth the two-fold value of faith, the spiritual and the material or the mundane and the supra-mundane. The confidence begins with a temporary conviction of a morally wholesome object: but gradually it develops to a form of unshakeable trust in the Noble One. Buddha has denounced blind faith and pointed out that it cannot help the follower in any way in his self-purification. He always emphasized that one should believe in *Dhamma* only after having understood it. Also he often praised the one who is endowed with confidence based on knowledge. So confidence is called *saddhā* in Buddhist terminology. *Saddhā* is well-established in the Triple Gems (*Buddha, dhamma, saṅgha*), Noble Eightfold Path, *kamma* and its results (*phala*)

When a Buddhist takes refuge in the Triple-gem, his faith should be reasoned and rooted in understanding, and he asks to investigate or test the object of his faith. Buddhist faith is not in conflict with the spirit of enquiry. Any doubt about dubious things is allowed and inquiry into them is encouraged. When one understands the virtues of the Buddha, the *Dhamma*, etc., in all aspects, one has faith that these things are real and that they can extinguish all suffering and bring eternal peace and happiness. When one has such faith and knows that one can rely on them, one is not hesitant to fight bravely against the hindrances. In fact, the Triple-gems are the greatest powers in the world. When one is sure that one can get the help of these powers, one is certain to achieve success. If faith is very strong, one can put the suffering or *saṃsāra* to end. In other words, the nature of faith with self-confidence on the nobility of the Triple-gems, the nobility of the three trainings, that is the training of morality, concentration, wisdom, the outlook of relationship of dependence-origination (*paṭicca-samuppāda*), the past five aggregates called anterior extremity of rounds of rebirth (*saṃsāra*), the future five aggregates called posterior extremity of rounds of rebirth, both past and future five aggregates called anterior and posterior extremities of rounds of rebirth, is called the faith (*saddhā*).

Classification of *Saddhā*

There are two kinds of *saddhā*:

- (1) Rootless faith (*amūlaka-saddhā*), baseless or irrational faith, blind faith,
- (2) Faith with a good cause (*ākāravati-saddhā*), faith founded on seeing; also called *aveccapāsāda*.

Therein, the rootless faith is explained in the texts as “not seen, not heard, not suspected.” Faith with a good cause is blind faith. The first kind of faith is essentially a sublimation of desire in its various forms; or more simply, faith is sanitized desire. Often faith in someone or something arises in one when one thinks. A person or a thing has fulfilled one’s desire or come up to one’s expectations. The greatest flaw in such a faith is the object of faith that is outside of oneself, which is easily controlled and manipulated by those who define. In fact, a faith system is neither religious nor spiritual; it is a political

system of sorts since it is power-based. Political systems are ephemeral and can provide only worldly benefits at best.

- I. The faith of *bodhisatta*, which is carried out successively from the time of wish in order to become the Buddha to the time of appearance of Buddha, is called *āgamanasaddhā* (successive fulfilled faith). The faith of *piccekabudha* is also called *āgamanasaddhā*.
- II. The faith of the Noble Ones (*ariya*) which is attained through the Path-and the Fruit-Knowledge, is called *adhigamasaddhā*. On the maturation of *okappanasaddhā*, leading to the establishment of *vipassanāñāna* and the seeing of *nibbāna*, unshakable faith accompanies *ariyamagga* and thus we call sanctified faith, the faith of the *ariyan* folk *adhigamasaddhā*, also called rational faith (*aveccapasāda*).
- III. When one hears about Triple gems, such kind of faith on the fact that “The Supreme One is real *saṃmāsambuddha* who is knowing and seeing; all *dhamma* called *ñeyya* which should be known by all the Buddha, by penetrative knowledge of himself without any teacher.” Ten kinds of *dhamma*, i.e., four Path-Knowledge, four Fruit-Knowledge, *nibbāna*, and scriptures that preached by the Buddha. *Dhamma* is able to deliver from suffering of rounds of rebirth. The eight kinds of Noble-Ones are real *bhikkhus* who have been practically tried to reach *nibbāna* with the great respect on three kinds of Noble,” etc., appears in him and that kind of faith is called *okappanasaddhā* (strongly faith without shaking by any disturbance).
- IV. The faith of ordinary one, which is occurring merely traditionally on three kinds of Noble, is called *pasādasaddhā*. *Pasādasaddhā* is serene faith, which arises at mere seeing or hearing a pleasant object. For a Buddhist, the examples are seeing a venerable image of the Buddha, hearing the *dhamma* or seeing a monk with a remarkable composure. However, this kind of faith is not accompanied with knowledge, because the object of faith (*saddheyyavattu*) has not been understood.

Among these four kinds of faith, *okappanasaddhā* is designated as essential factor for meditator because a meditator wants to attain the *nibbāna* must have *okappanasaddhā* with strong belief. *Dhammas* are able to liberate from suffering of rounds of rebirth (*saṃsāra*). Thus *okappanasaddhā* is essential factor in the meditation.

Resoluteness of Faith

In the *Adhigama-saddhā* form, which belongs to the *ariyas*, faith becomes more resolute-unwavering, undaunted, undeviating and unshakable by any means. Once a leper by the name of *Suppabuddha* was listening to the Buddha’s teaching at the periphery of the audience. Training his mind on the arising objects, he was able to grasp the Truth, purified his mind, developed *samādhi* and *ñāṇa* and finally attained *sotāpanna*. Wishing to describe his unique experience to the Exalted One, he waited for the crowd to disperse so that he could have an opportunity to draw near to the Buddha. While he was making his way, he met by *sakka* (the king of the deity). Wishing to test the leper’s faith, *sakka* called on him to declare that the Buddha, *Dhamma* and *saṅgha* were false and worthless in exchange offering him life-long wealth, thus persuading him to lose faith in the Triple- gems. *Sakka* continued, in a tone of withering disparagement, that the leper was poor, wretched, miserable, of low class and a loner.¹⁶ Now how would you react in such a situation? Would you tolerate this kind of insult?

When asked who he was, *sakka* identified himself saying that he had come to help him. There upon the leper reported that *Sakka* was shameless, that leper was indeed not poor, wretched or miserable, because surely a possessor of *saddhā* could not be poor, wretched or miserable, that he was not of low class, because a possessor of *saddhā* could not be so and that he was far from being a loner for a devotee of the Exalted One has become his son and he could not be a loner. Hence the verse was spoken:

this raft...”

We should believe or have faith in each and everything. If a student has no faith in his teacher, it is difficult for him to learn his lessons from him. But then he should be intelligent enough to distinguish between a good teacher and a bad teacher. In the same way, if a patient has no faith in his physician, he cannot proceed with his treatment. But then he should be intelligent enough to make out a genuine physician from a quack. That is to say, we should not be so skeptical as to have no faith even in the treatment of a genuine physician and thus fall a victim to quackery. So we should avoid the two extremes of scepticism and credulity and follow the middle path.

Characteristic, Function, Manifestation and Proximate Cause of *Saddhā*

Characteristic of *saddhā* is having faith or trusting. Its function is to clarify or to enter into. It is manifested as non-fogginess or resolution. Its proximate cause is something to have faith in or the things beginning with hearing the good-teaching (*saddhamma*) that constitute the factors of Stream-entry. The first of the beautiful mental-factor is faith, which has the characteristic of placing faith or trusting. There are four aspects for each mental factor such as: characteristic, function, manifestation, proximate cause. If you cannot memorize that four, just try to memorize the characteristic, because it is important. So, *saddhā* has the placing faith in the *Buddha*, *dhamma*, *saṅgha*, and so on.

When *saddhā* arises in our minds, then our minds become clear. Its function is to clarify, to cleanse the mind like the water-clearing gem. That gem has the quality to clarify water. This is explained in the *Atthasālinī* and *Vibhaṅga* that a universal monarch has a precious gem. Or its function is to set forth which really means going right into, plunging into, or entering into. Here the Commentaries explain with simile like a brave man who takes people across the river which is full of crocodiles and others. In the same way when there is *saddhā* then you are able to perform meritorious deeds. When you have confidence, when you have faith in the triple gems, the training, in yourself then you can do things.

Manifested is as non-fogginess, when mind is clear, it is not foggy. That is the removal of the mind's impurities or as a resolution. A mental factor of *Adhimokkha* is occasional resolution and variable. It may accompany both wholesome and unwholesome types of consciousness. In faith there is an element of resolution. First we must understand that there is the ordinary *adhimokkha* which is common to both wholesome and unwholesome. When you have faith, you have this kind of resolution. This is it! This is the thing to have faith in! In such a way, you have this resolution and follow it. There is an element of resolution, an element of making up your mind, of making a decision in faith. *Saddhā* does not mean simply having faith. Here having faith is based on understanding. And when you understand the something is a real object of your faith, you will decide that it is good. Then you have faith in it or confidence in it. There is an element of resolution in *saddhā*.

The Importance of *Saddhā* for Practising *Vipassanā*

Every meditator is practicing *samatha* and *vipassanā* in order to attain *nibbāna*. The faith is one of the most important factors, both on the knowledge of omniscience of the Buddha and the way of practice leading to eternal peace which is the deliverance of *saṃsāra*, plays fundamental role in this stage. Therefore, five essential factors are presented here, as an excerpt from *Bodhirājakumāra Sutta*. The Buddha preached the royal devotee, *Bodhi* prince these five essential factors as follows:

I. Presence of faith (The first essential factor)

The royal devotee, *Bodhi* prince, there are five essential factors for every meditator who is practicing in order to attain *nibbāna*. The royal devotee, *Bodhi* prince... the monk, under this *sāsana*, has the faith on facts that The Supreme One is called *arahat* because deserving to homage and worship by all human beings, deities and brahmas. The Supreme One is called *Sammasambuddha* because knowing and seeing all *dhamma* called *ñeyya* which should be known by all the Buddha that is *saṅkhāra*, *vikāra*, *lakkhaṇa*, *nibbāna*, *paññatti*, by penetrative knowledge of himself without any teacher.

II. Presence of health (the second essential factor)

It is lack of any disease and bodily pains. It is presence of ability to digest foods, the heat produced by vital nomad inside the stomach, which is neither extreme cold nor extreme hot but suitable degree of heat for digestion in him. Health (*ārogya*) here refers to equable state of both body and mind. It comprises freedom from illness (*appābādha*) and freedom from fatigue and suffering (*appātaṅka*). Suitable food must be taken for bodily health. So long as meditator can digest his food, he can be said to be healthy.

III. Absence of guile and boast (the third essential factor)

The misdeed by which non-real nobility of such kind is boasted by himself is called *sātheya*. The indeed, by which real fault of such kind is pretended to be clear him, is called *māyā*. The misdeed of lying to the supervisor in meditation can be called the characters of *māyā* and *sātheya*. The meditating monk has neither pretending nor boasting to be a good one and confesses whatever he has done something wrong in front of either the Exalted-One or wise friendship. Sincerity refers to honest presentation about the progress of *dhmma* practice. It is the relationship between the meditator and the meditation teacher and is compared to that of the patient and the physician. As the patient correctly reports his complaint to the physician, the latter prescribes and instructs what to take and abstain from. The practicing practitioner should on no account be deceitful.

IV. Presence of strenuous effort (the fourth essential factor)

The meditating monk always has strenuous effort (*sammappadhānaviriya*) in order to remove unwholesome *dhmma* and to fulfill wholesome *dhmma*. The ability to strenuous practice present in the wholesome *dhmma* would be never irrespective. Energy or effort (*vīriya*) is the root of all achievements. It is of three kinds:

1. The element of putting forth effort or initial attack (*ārambhadhātu*),
2. The element of stepped-up effort or exertion (*nikkamadhātu*), and
3. The element of striving towards success (*parakkamadhātu*).

V. Presence of vipassanā knowledge (the fifth essential factor)

It is wise. The knowledge which is able to know the arising and passing away of corporeal and mental *dhmma*, is also present. The *vipassanā* knowledge which is able to break down the bulk of defilement (*kilesa*); able to lead *nibbāna* which is cessation of suffering, has been fulfilled. According to above phrase preached in the fifth essential factor, the Buddha preached with the reference of insight knowledge. It is all right! Unwise person is unable to fulfill the practice of tranquility (*samatha*) and insight (*vipassanā*), called the essential factor (*padhāna*). These all kinds of essential factors should be known as mundane *dhmma*. It means the fact that those *dhmma* must be fulfilled previously before the Noble Path-knowledge occurs. Among these five essential factors, *saddhā* is the first factor and it is also important one.

CONCLUSION

It is neither a religion in the sense in which that word is commonly understood, for it is not “A system of faith and worship owing any allegiance to a supernatural being.” Buddhism does not demand blind faith from its adherents. In this essay on faith (*saddhā*), it means faith in the *Buddha*, the *dhmma*, the *saṅgha*, *kamma* (action) and its results. It is a combination of two words ‘belief’ and ‘clarity.’ Belief is belief in the triple gems, *kamma* and the results of *kamma*. Clarity is clarity of the process of the mind. When you pay homage to the triple gems, when you are doing meritorious deeds, such as *dāna*, etc; your mind is clear and feel delighted. That is because of faith.

Thus people who have faith in the three-gems will pay homage to the *Buddha*, the *dhmma* and the *saṅgha* respectfully, perform meritorious deeds regularly and practice insight meditation. So they accumulate good *kammās* everyday and these good *kammās* will bear good fruits in many existences

starting from this very life. People who have not faith in the *Buddha*, the *dhamma*, the *saṅgha*, *kamma* and its results will not pay homage to the *Buddha*, the *dhamma*, the *saṅgha* respectfully and never perform meritorious deeds such as *dāna*, *sīla*, and *bhāvanā*. They always commit the evil deeds and will go into the darkness (*duggati*) after death because of their bad actions.

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