

The Role of *Saddhā* in the Noble Path: A Study Based on the Pali Canon

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Saddhā is an eminent term that is connected with each and every ritual and; also even the emancipation in Buddhism. It is evident that the *Sammāditṭhi-sutta* of the *Majjhima-nikāya* points that the firm connection between Dhamma and Nibbāna in the sense of *Saddhā*.¹ Therefore, it is difficult to find or argue that the Buddhist soteriology is beyond *Saddhā*.

Terminology of *Saddhā*

In Buddhist soteriology *Saddhā* does not render a concrete meaning that can be applied any kinds of contexts. So it is better to find the meaning with reference to the contexts there. It means that *Saddhā* presents a multiple meaning, as it is connected together with the events and purposes. Therefore, nobody can translate the term *Saddhā* into English as 'Faith or Confidence'. Why it is difficult to translate into English as Faith or Confidence? According to the Oxford Dictionary the term 'Faith' has various meanings which are based on the ideologies of theistic religions.²

As Prof. Asanga Tilakaratne points this out *Saddhā* in Buddhism, is clearly different from 'Faith' that described in Christianity in this way.³ It is proved that 'faith and confidence' are together meant by Christian perspectives. On the other hand, Dr. Gyomroi-Ludowyk based on the basis of a study of the Pali *Nikāyas* has observed: 'whatever the word *Saddhā* is met with in the early Pali texts a noteworthy difference between its importance and that of faith in Christianity will be observed'⁴.

Even in the *Advanced Learner's Dictionary*⁵ the term 'faith' has defined in the same way that the *Oxford Dictionary* renders. Here, when it is defined the term faith as its strong faith, it gets closer to Christianity, Judaism and Islam religions.

Prof. K.N Jayatilleke has collected '*Saddhā*' the terms depicted in early Buddhism in various contexts as thus:

- I. Having heard his doctrine he acquired faith in the Tathāgata (*taṃ dhammaṃ sutvā tathāgate saddhaṃ paṭilabhati*, M. I.179, 267, 344; M. III.33)
- II. To have faith in, appreciate (*satthari pasīda* M, M. I. 320)
- III. Would you, O monks, knowing and seeing thus say, "our teacher is respected, we say so out of respect for our teacher" (*Api nu tumhe, bhikkhave, evaṃ jānantā evaṃ passantā evaṃ vadeyyathā: satthā no garu, satthugāravena ca mayaṃ vademā ti*, M.I.264)⁶

Saddhā as an influence

If someone practises *Saddhā* in three ways such as gradual training (*anupubbasiikkhā*), gradual practice (*anupubbakiriya*) and gradual progress (*anupubbapaṭipadā*) he or she leads to the emancipation.⁷ This gradual process towards the *Nibbāna* can be illustrated thus:

He visits his (teacher) – '*upasaṃkamati*'

He pays respect to him- '*upasaṃkamanto pairupāsati*'

He gives ear- '*sotaṃ odahati*'

He gives ear and hears the Dhamma- '*ohita soto dhammaṃ sunāti*'

He memorizes it- '*sutvā dhammaṃ dhāreti*'

He examines the meaning of the teachings he has memorized- '*dhatānaṃ dhammānaṃ atthaṃ upaparikkhati*'

He gains a reflective acceptance of those teachings- '*atthaṃ upaparikkhato dhammā nijjhānaṃ khamanti*'

His zeal springs up in him- '*dhammanijjhānakkhantiyā sati chando jāyati*'

He applies his will- '*chandajāto ussahati*'

He scrutinizes- '*ussahitvā tuleti*'

He strives- '*padahati*'

He realizes with the body the ultimate truth and sees it by penetrating it with wisdom- *samāno kāyena ceva paramaṃ saccaṃ sacchikaroti; paññāya ca nam paṭivijjha passati*.⁸

According to the Upanisa-sutta of the Saṃyutta-nikāya happiness is a result of *saddhā* and *dukkha*⁹ (un-satisfactoriness) is conditioned with *Saddhā* in accordance with the *Paṭiccasamuppāda*. It is very important fact that here, *Saddhā* is factual, there is no *Saddhā* without in the context of factual reasons.¹⁰ It means that someone can not engage with *Saddhā* unconsciously. In the noble path it is as a resulted reason that directs the emancipation.

***Saddhā* as a means of confidence**

In the Ariyapariyesana-sutta of the Majjhima-nikāya, it has reliable sources that prove *Saddhā* is in the Noble Way. It is evident here, that '*Saddhā mattakena*'¹¹ has been used with the sense of faith that was in the noble way. In the Ariyapariyesana-sutta itself, *Saddhā* has been mentioned in the sense of great confidence of the Buddha. Here, Buddha clearly pointed that

he was of *Saddhā* in his way to *Nibbāna*. In this context, this related to the Bodhisatta period of ascetic Siddhartha until the Enlightenment and it clearly defines that the confidence of ascetic Siddhartha in his period because he has immediately attained the levels those *Āḷāra Kālāma* understood and behaved with his own confidence. This is one of remarkable passages that depicts the great confidence of ascetic Siddhartha during his Bodhisatta period. There, *Saddhā* shows the idea of great confidence.

I considered: 'Not only Rāma had faith, energy, mindfulness, concentration, and wisdom. I too have faith, energy, mindfulness, and wisdom. Suppose I endeavor to realize the Dhamma that Rāma declared he entered upon and abided in by realizing for himself with direct knowledge.'¹² According to the above mentioned statement, it is believed that Siddhartha as an ascetic had faith on his endeavor of the final goal. The Tathāgatabala-sutta also points that the Blessed One is of greater confidence entitled the five-fold powers (*pañcabala*).

'Monks, I claim to have reached supreme mastery in things not heard of formerly.

Monks, for a Tathāgata these are the five powers of one who has won through to the truth, possessed of which a Tathāgata claims the chief place, roars the lion's roar among the peoples and sets rolling the Divine Wheel. What five?

The power of faith, the power of consciousness, the power of the fear of blame, the power of energy and the power of insight.¹³ This is very much clear that Tathāgata who had with these five powers was able to roared the lion's roar among the people (*parisāsu sīhanādaṃ nadati*) being the Buddha. All these powers are referred to powers of wisdom. As stated in Encyclopedia of Buddhism, commented on the power of

faith (*saddhā balaṃ*) as it was self-confidence of the Buddha.¹⁴ Here, it is wonder whether why it refers only ‘*saddhā*’ as self-confidence of the Buddha and can all the powers of a Tathāgata refer to kinds of powers of the wisdom?

It is evident that the Alagaddūpama-sutta of the Majjhima-nikāya points that the way to Nibbāna is guided by the faith or *Saddhā*.¹⁵ In this manner the followers should hear and practise the Dhamma toward the liberation that was well declared by the Buddha.¹⁶ In the sutta itself, at the end of the deliverance, ‘*Saddhā*’ has been rendered to the faith of the Buddha.¹⁷

Saddhānusārī and Dhammānusārī

Discussions on *Saddhānusārī* and *Dhammānusārī* can be found from the Rūpa and Cakkhu suttas of the Saṃyutta-nikāya, Okkaṃti-saṃyutta. The Cakkhu-sutta states that a person is of *Saddhānusārī* related to beyond the so-called ordinary stages, obviously in the Noble Way.¹⁸ When it is defined *Saddhānusārī*, the sutta illustrates reasoning facts on behalf of faith or confidence of the reality was to be understood.¹⁹ In this context *Saddhānusārī* is neither ordinary sense nor the noble sense. It is clear that he (a person who is called *Saddhānusārī*) is already aware the Dhamma with a realistic meaning and not subjected to reborn in the hell.²⁰

Even the *Dhammānusārī* is referred to one who is beyond the ordinary world especially intelligent being who is aware of the Dhamma.²¹ Rūpa-sutta, the very next sutta of the *Okkaṃti Saṃyutta* also refers the discussion on the *Saddhānusārī* and *Dhammānusārī*. It also points that *Saddhānusārī* is one of firm beliefs on the Dhamma²² in the Noble Way and the *Dhammānusārī* is referred to a person who is having resolution towards the Sotāpanna-phala until his death.²³ According to the Kīṭāgiri-

sutta of the Majjhima-nikāya *Saddhānusārī* and *Dhammānusārī* are in the list of seven kinds of persons to be found existing in the world.²⁴

They are:

- I. One liberated-in both ways (*ubhatobhogavimutto*)
- II. One liberated-by wisdom (*paññāvimutto*)
- III. A body-witness (*kāyasakkhī*)
- IV. One attained-to-view (*ditṭhappatto*)
- V. One liberated-by-faith (*saddhāvimutto*)
- VI. A Dhamma-follower (*dhammānusārī*)
- VII. A faith-follower (*saddhānusārī*)

All these persons live in the world (*samvijjamānā lokasmim*) and reveal that the final goal is reachable within this very life. This is a remarkable process to be practised in the Noble Way. Out of these seven persons the last three is very much related with this topic. Here, *Dhammānusārī* has been described as the person who behaves in accordance with the Dhamma, does not associate with sensual pleasures.²⁵ For *Saddhānusārī* it believes that this stage in the Noble Path is something what purposely declares the way how we Buddhists behave in this very life and the results gained from the Buddhist Noble context. The sutta clearly pointed that *Saddhānusārī* is of having defilement but keenly forwarded to the Noble way.²⁶ Here it is available some controversial translations between Bhikkhu Bodhi and the Buddha Jayanti Tripiṭaka Series. In the Buddha Jayanti, *Saddhānusārī* and *Dhammānusārī* are quiet different from the Sinhala translation but similar with the Pali translation.

As Bhikkhu Nyanatiloka mentioned *Dhammānusārī* means the Dhamma Devotee, and he is one of the 7 Noble Disciples as well. Even for *Saddhānusārī*, Ven. Nyanatiloka has categorized under 7 kinds of Noble Disciples (*ariya-puggalā*) giving meaning to it 'the Faith-devoted'.²⁸ Anyway this is important to mention that both *Dhammānusārī* and *Saddhānusārī* come under the 7 kinds of Noble Disciples and the Noble Path which leads the Nibbāna. It is evident that the same sutta denotes *Saddhā* is to be practised in the spiritual way as bhikkhus who left the house –holder and entered the dispensation.²⁹ It is rare to find such a term like *Saddhā*,³⁰ apart from the term which the meaning is allied to the sense *Saddhā* of course. Even the term *Saddhāvimutta* is very much referred with the Faith or Confidence in the supreme way. *Saddhāvimutta* is much attracted than *Saddhānusārī* and *Dhammānusārī* with the Faith of the Tathāgata.³¹

When it is searched *Saddhā* in the Noble Path, *Amūlikā* is one of proof less ways of faith to be kept aside not to be associated obviously. The Caṅkī-sutta gives an advanced simile to the point raised here³² It is, of course alike a file of blind men (*Andhāvenūpamā*) who touch with the next. Buddhism does not emphasize so-called *Amūlikā-saddhā* in the spiritual practices. The answer for *Amūlikā-saddhā* can be found from the Vīmaṃsaka-sutta of the Majjima-nikāya, Cūḷayamaka-vagga. It is with the name of *ākāravatī-saddhā* (faith is said to be supported by reasons). This form of *saddhā* is also a permanent faith towards the Tathāgata accordingly the Dhamma.³³

Avecca-pasāda is one of eminent terms in the Pali Canon related to the discussions of *Saddhā*. Unshaken Confidence (*avecca-pasāda*) in the Three Jewels is one of the characteristic qualities (*soṭāpannassa aṅgāni*) of the Stream-winner.³⁴ Prof. K.N Jayatilleke has denoted that '*avecca-pasāda*, 'faith based on understanding' is similar to 'rational faith' (*ākāravatī saddhā*)

which is said to be rooted, established, fixed and irremovable'.³⁵ According to the Dhammapada, an arahant is subjected to defeat blind faith and is the most excellent of men.³⁶

Saddhā in different forms and places

Saddhā has been interpreted as one of great qualities of a Sappurisa (true man) in the Cūḷapunnama-sutta of the Majjhima-nikāya.³⁷ The Bhīta-sutta refers that one who is of *Saddhā*, one of 8 qualities of them, does not remain with fear of the death.³⁸ In this context of the Bhīta-sutta *Saddhā* is annotated with the sense of worldly contentment but focuses on the deathlessness. In the Pali Tipiṭaka, *saddhā* under the context of ethical way could be found in the Sampasādaniya-sutta of the Dīgha-nikāya regarded with the bhikkhus' ethical conduct in this very life. From this remark it is understood that *Saddhā* is not only for the Nibbāna, in this present situation also.³⁹ *Saddhā* as a prominent quality of a devotee is endowed with king Mahāvijita with reference to the Kūṭadanta-sutta of the Dīgha-nikā. There the great king Mahāvijita had eight qualities being a faithful giver and here *Saddhā* explains with the intention of giving something to someone.⁴⁰ This fact is much illustrated in the Aṅguttara-nikāya, describes that a clansman is able to gain merits out of these three.

- I. Faith (*saddho*)
- II. Gifts (*deyyadhammaṃ*)
- III. Worthy recipients there of (*dakkhiṇeyyaṃ*)

Having all these a faithful giver is contained with under mentioned characteristics.

- I. He desires to see the virtues (*sīlavantānaṃ dassanakāmo hoti*)

II. He desires to hear *Saddhamma*; with heart free from the taints of stinginess (*saddhammaṃ soto kāmo hoti*)

III. He dwells at home, generous giver, clean handed, delighting in giving up, one to ask a favor of, and one who delights to share gifts with others. (*vigatamalamaccharena cetasā agāraṃ ajjhāvasati muttacāgo payatapāṇi vossaggarato yācayogo dānasaṃvihāgarato*)⁴¹

At the end of the discourse a faithful believer has fundamentally been considered by this way.⁴²

Even in the Theragāthā, there are number of utterances of the Elders in terms of their faithful beliefs on the monkhood which they received recently.⁴³ There *Saddhā* was an influence to the monkhood and remaining with that mentality they could able to continue it together for a proper sainthood. Ven. Sāṭimattiya gives an important account of *Saddhā* of ordinary beings that is called ‘cala’ (wavering) to be impermanent.⁴⁴ But according to the Aṅguttara-nikāya⁴⁵ *Saddhā* can be absorbed by wrong views, this is something assumed that *Amūlikā-saddhā* that was discussed earlier.

Conclusion

It was discussed on ‘*Saddhā*’ that has been occurred in the Noble Path and various statements that brought *Saddhā* giving various meanings relevant to the contexts there. With this regard it is believed that *Saddhā* is one of great characteristics in Buddhist Dispensation. Without *Saddhā* nobody can make his awareness of the Three Jewels. Even for a monk, at his ordination he should be faithful as imposed by the Buddha.⁴⁶ It is a remarkable fact that should be practised by the teacher-monks. With these references, it concludes that *Saddhā* or faithfulness is highly appreciated in Buddhism and any type of *Sadhhā* category

is helpful to get even an influence on the Buddha, Dhamma and Saṅgha, the Triple Gems. *Saddhā* plays an important role in the Noble Path than *pema*, *bhatti* and, *pasāda* that play with a minor attention in Early Buddhism.

End Notes

1. In that way too a noble disciple is one of right views, whose view is straight, who has perfect confidence in the Dhamma, and has arrived at this true, Bhikkhu Bodhi, The Middle Length Discourses of the Buddha, Wisdom Publications, USA, 1995, P.133.
2. Reliance, trust, belief founded on authority
 - Belief in religious doctrines
 - Spiritual apprehension of divine truth apart from proof
 - System of religious belief (the Christian and Jewish)
 - Things to be believed
 - Promise, engagement, loyalty, fidelity, acting by prayer, Oxford Dictionary, Oxford University Press, USA, 1911, P.426.
3. Kuala Lumpur Dhammajoti, Asanga Tilakarathne and others, Recent Researches in Buddhist Studies: Essays in honour of Y. Karunadasa, Colombo: Y. Karunadasa Felicitation Committee and Hong Kong: Chi Ying Foundation, 1997, P.34.
4. Gyomroi-Ludowyk, The Valuation of *Saddhā* in the Early Buddhist Texts, Ceylon: UCR, 1970, Vol.5, P.37.
5. Trust, strong, belief; in God or in an established religion, a strong faith, Oxford Advanced Learner’s Dictionary of Current English, USA: Oxford University Press, 1992, P.320.
6. KN Jayatilleke, Early Buddhist Theory of Knowledge, Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1963, PP.335-389.
7. Bhikkhu Bodhi...PP.582-3.
8. Bhikkhu Bodhi...P.582.
9. Kā ca, bhikkhave, saddhāya upanisā? Dukkhantissavacaṇīyaṃ. Dukkaūpāhaṃ, bhikkave, sa upanisaṃ vadāmi, no anupanisaṃ Upanisa-sutta, S.II, P.31.

10. Saddhampaham, bhikkhave saupanisam vadāmi, no anupanisam vadāmi. Upanisa-sutta, Ibid.
11. "It is not through mere faith alone that Ājāra Kālāma declares: "By realizing for myself with direct knowledge, I enter alone and abide in this Dhamma"., Ariyapariyesana-sutta, Bhikkhu Bodhi, P.257.
12. Ibid, P.258.
13. A.III, P.6.
14. Ed. GP Malalasekera, Encyclopedia of Buddhism, vol.ii. Government Press, Ceylon, 1966, PP.511-14.
15. '...Those bhikkhus who are Dhamma-followers or faith-followers are all headed for enlightenment.' Bhikkhu Bodhi...P.236.
16. ...the Dhamma well proclaimed by me thus is clear, open, evident, and free of patchwork. In the Dhamma well proclaimed by me thus, which is clear, open, evident, and free of patchwork...' Ibid.
17. '... those bhikkhus who have sufficient faith in me, sufficient love for me, are all headed for heaven.' Ibid.
18. '...Okkamto vīvatatto puthujjana bhūmiṃ'...S.III, Cakkhu-sutta, P.225.
19. 'Cakkhuṃ bhikkhave, aniccaṃ viparināmi aññatābhāvi, sotaṃ aniccaṃ viparināmi aññatābhāvi. Ghānaṃ aniccaṃ viparināmi aññatābhāvi, kayo aniccaṃ viparināmi aññatābhāvi. Mano aniccaṃ viparināmi aññatābhāvi.' ... Ibid, P.225.
20. Abhabbo taṃ kammam kātuṃ yaṃ kammaṃ katvṃ nirayaṃ vā tiracchāna yoniṃ vā pettivisayaṃ vā upapajjeyya, abhabbova tāva kālaṃ kātuṃ yāva na sotāpattiphalam sacchikaroti, Ibid.
21. ...ime dhammā evaṃ dhammāya paññāya mattaso nijjhānaṃ khamanti, ayaṃ yuccati dhammānusārī...Ibid.
22. ...ime dhamme evaṃ saddahati adhimuccati, ayam uccati saddhānusārī, S.III, Rūpa-sutta, P.226.
23. ...abhabbova tāva kātuṃ yāva na sotāpattiphalam sacchikaroti, Ibid.
24. Bhikkhu Bodhi..P.580.

25. What kind of person is a Dhamma-follower? Here some person does not contact with the body and abide in those liberations that are peaceful and immaterial, transcending forms and his taints are not yet destroyed by his seeing with wisdom, but with wisdom he has sufficiently gained a reflective acceptance of those teachings proclaimed by the Tathāgata, Bhikkhu Bodhi, The Middle Length Discourses of the Buddha, Wisdom Publications, USA, P.582.
26. What kind of person is a faith-follower? Here some person does not contact with the body and abide in those liberations that are peaceful and immaterial, transcending forms and his taints are not yet destroyed by his seeing with wisdom..., Ibid.
27. Buddhist Dictionary, Ed. Bhiku Nyanatiloka, Singapore: Buddhist Meditation Centre, 1946, P.47.
28. Ibid, P.155.
29. "I say of such bhikkhus who are in higher training, whose minds have not yet reached the goal, and who is still aspiring to the supreme security from bondage, that they still have work to do with diligence. Why is that? Because when those venerable ones make use of suitable resting places and associate with good friends and balance their spiritual faculties, they may by realizing for themselves with direct knowledge here and now enter upon and now abide in that supreme goal of the holy life for the sake of which clansmen rightly go forth from the home life into homelessness." Bhikkhu Bodhi...P.580.
30. The sutta has mentioned 'Samannāyamaṇā'.
31. ... His faith is planted, rooted, and established in the Tathāgata. Bhikkhu Bodhi...P.581.
32. Blind men each in touch with the next: the first one does not see, the middle one does not see, and the last does not see. Bhikkhu Bodhi... P.780.
33. 'bhikkhus, when anyone's faith has been planted, roote, and established in the Tathāgata through these reasons, terms, and phrases, his faith is said to be supported by reasons, rooted in vision, firm, it is invincible by any recluse or Brahmin or god or Māra or Brahmā or by anyone in the world', Ibid, P.418.

34. Buddhist Dictionary, Ed. Bhiikhu Nyanatiloka, Singapore: Buddhist Meditation Centre, 1946, P.154.
35. KN Jayatilleke, Early Buddhist Theory of Knowledge, Motilal Banarsidass, Delhi, 1963, P.386.
36. Dhammapada, Ven. Buddharakkhita, Bangalore: Buddha Vacana Trust, 1986, P.39.
37. ... a true man has faith, shame, and fear of wrongdoing; he is learned, energetic, mindful, and wise. That is how a true man is possessed of good qualities. Bhikkhu Bodhi...P.894.
38. Vācaṃ maṇaṃca paṇidhāya sammā, kāyena papain gharamāvasanto, saddho mudu saūvibhāgi vadaññu, etesu dhammesu ṭhito catusu, dhamme ṭhito paralokaṃ bhāye, S.I , P.42.
39. Also unsurpassed is the Blessed Lord's way of teaching Dhamma in regard to a person's proper ethical conduct. One should be truthful and faithful, not using deception..., D., P.420.
40. He is a faithful giver and host, not shutting his doors against ascetics, Brahmins and wayfarers, beggars and the needy. D., P.136.
41. A.I, PP.133-34.
42. Ibid, P.134.
43. Having departed from the world in faith, a novice newly gone forth should associate with good friends who are clean-living not relaxing,
Having departed from the world in faith, a novice newly gone forth, a wise bhikku living in the Order should learn the discipline
Having departed from the world in faith, a novice newly gone forth should wander undistracted, skilled in what is proper and not proper, Thga P.29.
44. ... I have seen that faith to be impermanent and wavering. Even though people are interested, they become disinterested. Why should a sage waste on that account? Ibid, P.29.
45. Monks, these two misrepresent the Tathāgata. What two? The wicked one is full malice and the believer by his wrong view. A.I, P.54.
46. 'Monks, if a monk is possessed of five qualities he may ordain... if he comes to have faith, if he comes to feel shame, if he comes to be cautious, if he comes to be of stirred up energy, if he comes to be of ready mindfulness, Vin. IV, P.82.