

Development of the Concept of Arahat in Theravāda Buddhism



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ABSTRACT

This paper explores the development of the concept of Arahat in Theravāda school of Buddhism. One who eradicated of all cankers (*āsavā*) such as desire for sensual pleasure (*kāmāsava*), desire for becoming (*bhavāsava*), and ignorance (*avijjāsava*) attained arahatship. A person who has reached the fourth and the highest stage of enlightenment, having eradication of all defilements (*kilesas*). In this paper discussed about the development of the concept of Arahat since pre-Buddhistic period till today. Theravāda school of Buddhism has three kinds of attainments can be reached such as *Sammāsambuddhas* (Supremely Enlightened Ones), *Pacceka-Buddhas* (Hermit Buddhas), and *Arahats* (Enlightened disciples) having fulfilled the ten (*pārāmitā*).

An Arahat also known as ‘*sāvaka*’ in Theravāda Buddhism. In Theravāda Buddhist tradition, one can become a Buddha, a *Pacceka-Buddha*, or an Arahat which based on to their wishes. Having fulfilled the ten perfections (*pārāmitā*) for one time, he become an Arahat. It is a gradual and systematic spiritual development for every individual endowment and clearly understands the way to the destruction of cankers (*āsavas*) and attain the highest bliss (*nibbāna*).

Keywords: Arahat, Development, Sāvaka, Theravāda Buddhism.

1. Introduction

The focus of this article is the development of the concept of an Arahant ideal and the path to arahatship based on Theravāda Buddhism. It has been discussed about the nature, the characteristics and the qualities of an Arahant. According to Theravāda Buddhist doctrines, an Arahant (worthy one) is a person who has reached the fourth and the highest stage of enlightenment, having eradicated all defilements (*kilesas*) and cankers (*āsavā*).¹ The concept of Arahant came to use in Buddhism since the Siddhattha Gautama Bodhisatta was enlightened. Having enlightened, he was named as “*Bhagavā, Araham*”. Having developed the mind up to the highest level, one achieved the knowledge on the destruction of craving (*taṇhā*)² and cankers (*āsavā*)³ and he realizes this is the suffering (*dukkha*), this is the cause of suffering (*dukkha samudaya*), this is the cessation of suffering (*dukkha nirodhā*), this is the path leading to the cessation of suffering (*dukkha nirodhā gāminipaṭipāda*).

In Theravāda Buddhist tradition can be a Buddha, a Pacceka-Buddha, or an Arahant according to their wishes, having fulfilled the ten perfections.⁴ The Buddha’s doctrine is a gradual process of practice which leads the things to insight and wellbeing. Hence, in Theravāda Buddhism is for all three paths can be followed and not for just the path of arahatship only.

¹ Nathan Katz, **Buddhist Images of Human Perfection: The Arahant of the Sutta Piṭaka Compared with the Bodhisattva and the Mahāsiddha**, (Delhi: Motilal Banarsiādass, 1989), p.3.

² In early Buddhism has analyzed the very root cause of the saṃsāric predicament is craving. The term ‘*taṇhā*’ literary means thirst that demands the satisfaction of sensual desires.

³ There are three cankers (*āsavā*) such as: The canker of sensual desire (*kāmāsava*), the canker of becoming (*bhavāsava*) and the canker of ignorance (*avijjāsava*).

⁴ Ten Perfections (*dasa-pārāmitā*) viz. generosity (*dāna pārāmi*), morality (*sīla pārāmi*), renunciation (*nekkhamma pārāmi*), wisdom (*paññā pārāmi*), effort (*vīriya pārāmi*), forbearance (*khanti pārāmi*), truth (*sacca pārāmi*), determination (*adiṭṭhāna Pārāmi*), loving-kindness (*mettā pārāmi*), and equanimity (*upekkhā pārāmi*).

2. What are the Definitions of an Arahant?

There are four pāli terms such as “*arahān, arahā, arahat and arahant*” comes from the root of “*√arh*” which means to be “worthy”, to be deserve or to be “value of”.⁵ In Buddhist literatures has found such suggestive etymologies as derived from the term “*ārakā*”, distance, whatever unskillful (*akusala*) states are far from Arahant; it is derived from “*ari* (enemy) +*han* (destroyer)” because an Arahant is one who has destroyed the enemies of *kilesas*. According to Rhys Davids, “the commentary on *Jātaka* III 305 mentioned that the man who has attained the highest fruit is called an Arahant”.⁶ An Arahant has defined ‘one who destroyed intoxicants’, is without greed (*lobha*), hatred (*dosa*) and delusion (*moha*)’ or ‘one who is free from all cankers (*khīṇāsava*)’.⁷ An Arahant is a fully enlightened person, one who “worthy of respect” ‘one who has nothing more to learn’ or ‘destroyer of bandits’. There is ‘no rebirth’ since an Arahant will not in theory be reborn into the cycle of *samsāra*.⁸

The term ‘Brāhmin’ is a synonym for the Arahant, who crossed over, gone beyond, stands on dry land, is fully quenched of greed, hatred and delusion, one who has banished wrong”. In the Dhammapada, there is a series of verses 396 – 423 of that identify an Arahant as ‘Brāhmaṇa’.⁹ He is one of the greatest ones who destroyed the cankers, he bears this last body, he has laid down the burden, reached his goal and destroyed the fetter of becoming, he is rightly liberated with final knowledge and worthy of the highest offering of the world and its deities.¹⁰ Here some pāli terms has given which are found in the pāli Canon attributes to an Arahant as follows:

- i. *Anuppatta-sadattha*: one who has achieved one’s own good.
- ii. *Arahant*: ‘worthy one’; a person far from mental defilements.
- iii. *Asekha*: one who has finished training; a person not requiring training.
- iv. *Kata karaṇīya*: a person who has done what had to be done.

⁵ Nathan Katz, **Buddhist Images of Human Perfection**, p.1; I.B. Horner, **Early Buddhist Theory of Man Perfected**, (London: Williams and Norgate Ltd., 1936), p.52. T.W. Rhys Davids. *PED*. (London: PTS, 1921), pp.87-88.

⁶I.B. Horner, **Early Buddhist Theory of Man Perfected**, p.82.

⁷I.B. Horner, **Early Buddhist Theory of Man Perfected**, p.44.

⁸Edward A. Irons, **Encyclopedia of Buddhism**, (New York: Facts On File, Inc.,2008), p.21.

⁹S.IV.175; Dhp.388.

¹⁰Buddhaghosa, **Visuddhimagga**, (tr.). Nāṇamoli, (Kandy: BPS, 2010), p.707.

- v. *Khīṇāsava*: a person who freed from mental taints/cankers (*āsavā*).
- vi. *Mahā-purisa*: a person having great in virtue; one who acts for the welfare of the many folk; one who has self-mastery.
- vii. *Ohitabhāra*: one who has laid down the burden.
- viii. *Parama-kusala*: a person possessing superior wholesome qualities.
- ix. *Parikkhīṇa-bhava-samyojana*: one who has destroyed all the fetters.
- x. *Sammadaññā-vimutta*: a person released through consummate knowledge.
- xi. *Sampanna-kusala*: a person who perfected in wholesomeness.
- xii. *Uttama-purisa*: a supreme person; a most excellent person.
- xiii. *Vusitavanta*: a person who has fulfilled the holy life.¹¹

3. Qualities of an Arahat

The Holy Order (*Saṅgha*) of the supremely enlightened Buddha's noble disciples is established on the right path (*supatipanno*), because it has transcended all mundane (*lokiya*) dichotomies and paradoxes. "Just as a rock of one solid mass remains unshaken by the wind, even so neither forms, nor can sounds, nor odors, nor tastes, nor contacts of any kind, neither the desired nor the undesired, cause such a one to waver. Steadfast is his mind, gained is deliverance."¹² They established the direct path (*ujupatipanno*), because it avoids the two extremes¹³ and takes to the Middle Way¹⁴ that leads one directly towards nibbāna. They established the just path (*ñāyapatipanno*) because it has transcended all wrong, unjust means. And they established the proper path (*sāmīcīpatipanno*) because it is most perfect and sure path, reflecting the security and perfection of nibbāna. The noble disciples of the Buddha are worthy of offerings, worthy of hospitality, worthy of gifts, worthy of veneration, and is the incomparable field of merit for the world".¹⁵ Arahats are

¹¹ S.A.III.114; S.22.110; D.III.83, 97; M.I.139; A.III. 84; PTS Dict. p.89.

¹² A.VI.55.

¹³ Two Extreme referred here i) Sensual pleasures (*kāmasukhālikānuyogo*) and ii) Self-mortification (*attakilamathānuyogo*).

¹⁴ Middle Way means the noble eightfold path which constitutes *sammadiṭṭhi*, *sammāsaṅkappa*, *sammavācā*, *sammākammanta*, *sammājīva*, *sammavāyama*, *sammāsati* and *sammamādhi*.

¹⁵ D.16.241.

completely without egotism, friendly towards everybody, capable to teach other for the good and happiness of the many.¹⁶

Followed by the fourth and final stage, the path of arahatship eradicates all ten fetters (*samyojana*).¹⁷ It is said that “with the destruction of cankers here and now, enters and dwells with the cankers (*āsavā*)¹⁸ free liberation mind, liberated by wisdom, realizing it for himself with direct knowledge”.¹⁹ The mind-set round with intelligence is freed from the great evils, that is to say, from sensuality, from individuality, from delusion and from ignorance.²⁰ Another good simile to the nature of an Arahat as mentioned in the *Ratanasutta* of *Sutta Nipāta*:

“Khīnam purāṇam navam natthi sambhavam, virattacittā āyatike bhavasmim, te khīnavijā avirūlhicchandā, Nibbānti dhīrā yathā yam padīpo”²¹

Ācariya Buddharamkhita has translated his book, “*Manual of Buddhist Devotional Practice*” that with the past deeds fully wiped out, and no possibility of fresh accumulation, severed from future rebirths, their minds are free, where desire, like burnt-up seeds, sprout no more, these wise ones cease like a blown-out lamp. In *Mahāmaṅgalasutta* of *Sutta Nipāta* says that an Arahat is being sorrow-less, taint-free and secured²², having overcome all sensual desires, never in the womb is he born again (*kāmesu vineyya gedham, na hi jātu gabbhaseyyam punaretti’ ti*), holding nothing in the past, present and future.²³

¹⁶ Theragātha 648: *sabbamitto, sabbasakho, sabbabhūtānukampako*.

¹⁷ There are ten fetters as follows: personal identity (*sakkaya ditthi*), skeptical doubt(*vicikicchā*), attached to rites and rituals(*sīlabbataparāmāsa*), sensual desire(*kāmarāga*), ill-will(*patigha*), craving for material realms(*rūparāga*), craving for formless realms(*arūparāga*), conceit(*māna*), restlessness(*uddacca*) and ignorance(*avijjā*)

¹⁸ In the *Suttanta piṭaka*, has mentioned three cankers (*āsavā*) such as the canker of sensual desire (*kāmāsava*), the canker of becoming (*bhavāsava*) and the canker of ignorance (*avijjāsava*) whereas *Abhidhamma piṭaka* has mentioned four, which included the canker of wrong view (*ditthāsava*) along with three as mentioned above.

¹⁹ A.2:238.

²⁰ T.W Rhys Davids, **The Sacred Books of the East**, (tr.), Various Scholars and ed. F. Max Muller, vol. XI, Oxford: At the Clarendon Press, 1881, p.15.

²¹ Dines Andersen and Helmer Smith, **Sutta Nipāta**, (London: PTS, 1913), p.41.

²² *Ibid.*, p.47.

²³ Dhp.421.

4. Concept of Arahant in the Pre-Buddhist Period

Brāhmanical religious movement was mainly based on the Vedic religion which was introduced in India by the Indo-Āryan people who were originally belonged to Indo-European race. The Āryans entered India from the northwest about 1200 BCE. They had settled along the upper reaches of the Ganges river in Punjab. They have four collections of hymns known as *Vedas*²⁴ (*Veda* means knowledge) such as *Rigveda*, *Yayurveda*, *Sāmaveda* and *Atharvan*.²⁵ Their religious practice is based on the *Rigveda*.²⁶ Among these four, *Rigveda* is the main hymns (poem) which known as ‘*Sūkta*’ that which compiled with the gods.²⁷ The Vedic religion was based largely on offerings of sacrifice, and the ritual manuals gave detailed instructions for performance of the sacrifices, which grew more complex as the centuries passed. At first the sacrifices were made as offerings to the various Vedic gods such as Indra—commonly known in Buddhist sources as *Sakra* (pāli: *Sakka*) —Varuna, Agni, who was the god of the sacrificial fire, or the sun god (Surya), in the hope that the gods would reciprocate.²⁸ In this way, Brāhmanical religion had been developed purely to ritualism at the time of the Buddha.

An Arahant is used for the notion of ‘worthy persons for offerings. The concept of ‘*arahan*’ and of the verb ‘*arahati*’ has been used in pre-Buddhist literatures such as *Vedas*, *Upaniṣads* and in the *Bhagavadgītā*, ‘*arhati*’ is used but in the *Jaina sutras*, the term ‘*arhat*’ has been used.²⁹ At the very beginning, it was not used for a saintly person. In the *Rigveda*, the word ‘*Arhat*’ is sometimes applied to the ‘*God Agni*’, one who is worthy of being the sacrifice. But later in the pre-Buddhist period it was used to a saintly person than to a god.³⁰ In the period of Brāhmaṇa scriptures, the meaning has been changed as to the I.B. Horner, who has done an extensive research on this issue of an Arahant. In the *Upaniṣads*, the verb ‘*arhati*’ has been occurred.

²⁴ I.B. Horner, **Early Buddhist Theory of Man Perfected**, p.20.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, p.1.

²⁶ David J. Kalupahana, **The Buddha’s Philosophy of Language**, (41 Lumbini Mawatha Ratmalana: A Sarvodaya Vishva Lekha Publication, 1999), p.14.

²⁷ A.K. Warder, **Indian Buddhism**, (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidas, 2000), p.20.

²⁸ Paul Williams with Anthony Tribe, **Buddhist Thought: A complete introduction to the Indian tradition**, (New York: Routledge, 2000), p.9.

²⁹ I.B. Horner, **The Early Buddhist Theory of Man Perfected**, p.52.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, p.53.

In ancient India had two kinds of religious practitioners, one is Brāhmins and the other is Sāmanas. The Buddhists and Jains belong to the later period. The Brahmins studied the Vedic texts and their practices were involved with sacrificial rituals. They also believed in kamma, rebirth and liberation (*moksa*). The best is freedom from kamma, *naiskarmya*, leading to arahatship and consequently to attain nibbāna.³¹ They believed in an underlying principle called the Brāhmin and liberation was attained when the individual soul (*ātman*) was united with the Brāhmin. The Sāmanas, however, questioned the authority of the Vedas and of the Brāhmins as the superior caste. There were six heterodox teachers³² has been mentioned in the Buddhist texts, who had large following in the region of Magadha.³³ The path to liberation, according to all these teachers, did not just lie in the acceptance of the doctrine or in the understanding its logic. Each group emphasized the mystical and ascetic practices that would result in the realization of the doctrine in oneself but whose doctrine also Buddha refuted.

5. Concept of Arahat in the Pāli Canon

In sixth century B.C., the term ‘Arahat’ was mostly used for the religious leaders, who were considered to be greatly advanced in spirituality. Jaina leader Vardhamāna Mahāvīra one of the epithets was an Arahat.³⁴ In the history of Jainism, it is ascribed the same epithets to their teachers: Jina, Arhat, Mahāvīra, Sarvajña, Sugata, Tathāgata, Siddha, Buddha, Sambuddha, Parinibbutta, Mukta has noted by Jacobi”.³⁵

According to early *Nikāyas*, there is not much differences between the Buddha and Arahat which has been questioned and answered in the *Samyuttanikāya*. The *Tathāgata*, *Arahām*, and *Sammāsambuddho*, having weariness and disinterestedness of form, released without grasping, emancipated by wisdom calls him as *Sammāsambuddho* as well as

³¹ P.V Bapat, **2500 Years of Buddhism**, (New Delhi: Publication Division of Ministry of India, 1956), p.29.

³² There are six heterodox teachers in the contemporary of the Buddha. They are: Pūraṇa Kassapa, Makkhali Gosāla, Ajita Kesakambali, Pakudha Kaccāyana, Sañjaya Belatthiputta and Niganṭha Nātaputta, for detail see the *Sāmaññaphala sutta* of *Dīghanikāya*.

³³ Hirakawa Akira, **A History of Indian Buddhism From Sākyamuni to Early Mahāyāna**, Hawaii: University of Hawaii Press, 1990, p.16.

³⁴ I.B. Horner, **Early Buddhist Theory of Man Perfected**, p.64.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, p.63.

paññāvimutta.³⁶ In the *Dhammacakkappavattanasutta*, the Buddha introduced himself as ‘Arahat’ to the group of five monks.³⁷ The early disciples of the Buddha, seems to become an arahat immediately after hearing the discourse from the Buddha such as *Anattālakkhanasutta*. Another *sutta* describes the immediate attainment of arahatship by one thousand monks (*bhikkhus*) i.e. Fire Sermon (*Adittapariyiyasutta*).³⁸ The conditioned world was subject to the influence of fire of lust, hatred, ignorance, birth, decay, death, sorrow, lamentation, pain, grief and despair” on hearing this all monks became *ariya*. Buddha preached to his five ascetic companions who became Arahats on the spot after hearing the Dhamma.³⁹ An Arahat, who have freed himself from their karmic bondages by following the Buddha’s precepts⁴⁰, has described as one who has “nothing further to be done or to repeat what has been done, (*n’atthi khīṇāsavo arahato uttari karaṇīyam, katassa vā paṭicayo*)”.⁴¹ In early Buddhism, Arahats were considered as *asekha*, who are no need to anything for their further perfection. He directly knew that “birth has destroyed, the holy life has been lived, done what is to be done, there is no more for this state of being”.⁴² The ethical perfection of Arahats is such that they are incapable of deliberately depriving a living being of life, of stealing, of engaging in any form of sexual intercourse, of lying, and of enjoying sensual pleasures by storing things up as householders do.⁴³ The Arahats are often dwelling established in four foundations of mindfulness (*satipaṭṭhāna*) and delighted in seclusion.⁴⁴ Buddha has said in the *Mahāparinibbānasutta*, that only in this Dispensation (*sāsana*) can be found a first recluse, a second recluse, a third recluse and fourth recluse. All other systems are avoided of recluses but if the monks were to live following the noble path accordingly, the world would not lack for arahats.⁴⁵ It is said, “All men tremble at punishment, all are

³⁶ S.III.66.

³⁷ Soma Thera, *Dhammacakkappavattanasutta*, Kandy: BPS, 2010, p.3.

³⁸ S.IV.19; Vin.I.35.

³⁹ S. 35.28.

⁴⁰ S.III.83.

⁴¹ D.I.84.

⁴² D.8, 24/1:176 (Bodhi).

⁴³ D.III.133; D.III.235; M.I.523; A.IV.370.

⁴⁴ D.III.283; A.IV.224; A.V.175.

⁴⁵ D.16.268.

afraid of death but an Arahat is exception to that statement, for all cause for fear has been totally removed”.⁴⁶

6. Concept of Arahat in the Commentaries

In the commentaries some definitions were given along with those definitions given in the *Nikāyas* too. An Arahat is being worthy of requisites of robes etc. He is worthy of the distinction of being accorded homage because it is, he who is most worthy of offerings.⁴⁷ An arahat is freed indeed, whose cankers have been destroyed and is not attached to food, whose object is Void, fully awakened to the reality of selflessness, the unconditioned freedom his path cannot be traced, the like a bird in the sky, leaving no tracks.⁴⁸ According to Upatissa, “morality (*sīla*), meditative concentration (*samādhi*) and *anuttarā vimutti*” has explained in brief on the introductory stanza. *Sīla* means restraining the conduct (*sīla-saṃvara*), *samādhi* means one-pointedness of the mind (*avikkhepo*) through meditative concentration, *paññā* means enlightened through right understanding/insight/ wisdom (*sambodhiñāna*), *anuttarā* means absence of cankers and *vimutti* means escaping from all fetters.⁴⁹

In the *Visuddhimagga* clearly explained that “one who has destroyed greed (*lobha*), hatred (*dosa*) and delusion (*moha*) is known as an Arahat.⁵⁰ A person on the path must fulfill the precepts, living by compassion and nonviolence, living without stealing and depending on the charity of others, practicing chastity, speaking truth, and following all of the major and minor precepts”.⁵¹ An Arahat is fully human yet has reached a transcendent state of wisdom and liberation.⁵² “Having established well in morality develops and cultivates consciousness and understanding, then that ardent and sagacious bhikkhu succeeds in disentangling the tangle”,

⁴⁶ T.W. Rhys Davids, **The Questions of King Milinda**, Oxford: At the Clarendon Press, 1890, p.207.

⁴⁷ Buddhagosha, (tr.). Bhikkhu Nāṇamoli, **Visuddhimagga**, p.173.

⁴⁸ Dhp. 92-93; Theragāthā 92.

⁴⁹ P.V. Bapat, **Vimuttimagga and Visuddhimagga-a comparative study**, (Poona: Department of Sanskrit, University of Poona, 1937), p.1.

⁵⁰ Vism.p.731; S.IV.252.

⁵¹ Robert E. Buswell, **Encyclopedia of Buddhism**, Vol.1, (New York: Macmillan Reference USA, 2004), p.29.

⁵² *Ibid.*, p.28.

*“Sīle patiṭṭhāya naro sapañño, cittam paññāñ ca bhāvayam,
ātāpī nipako bhikkhu, so imam vijaṭaye jaṭan”ti.⁵³*

“One truly is the protector of oneself; who else could the protector be? With oneself fully controlled, one gains a mastery that is hard to gain”.⁵⁴ “Whoever being depraved, devoid of self-control surely not worthy of yellow robe but one who well-established in virtue, filled with self-control and truthfulness, he indeed is worthy of yellow robe; as worthy as a coin of refined gold”.⁵⁵ Therefore, the Buddha said, “striving should be done by yourself only; the Tathāgatas are only show the way”.⁵⁶

7. Concept of Arahat in the Contemporary Period

Examine yourself and see whether or not you know “WHAT IS WHAT”.⁵⁷ In the same way, one who knows his foolishness is wise at least to that extent”. That means one who sees the things as they really are.

*“Yo bālo maññati bālyam, Pañdito vāpi tena so,
Bālo ca pañditamāñt, sa ve bālo ti vuccati”⁵⁸*

“Arahatship is explicitly condemned and Bodhisattship held up as the goal at which every good Buddhist has to aim. The whole exposition of this theory is trying to subversive of the original Buddhism which actually placed in the mouth of Gotama himself” says Rhys Davids.⁵⁹ Bhikkhu Buddhadasa said, “whose mind is devoid of ‘mental fermentations’(āsavā) such as the thought that there is one’s own individual ego and also devoid of defilements such as greed, anger and delusion, is much better suited to do all kinds of work than the mind that is still afflicted by the defilements. A person who has attained it will live on so long as his body keeps going, but thereafter not be reborn. Thus,

⁵³ S.I.13; **Vism.** (PTS) p.1.

⁵⁴ Dhp.160, 380.

⁵⁵ Dhp.9,10,230.

⁵⁶ *Tumhehi kiccam ātappam akkhātāro Tathāgatā.*

⁵⁷ Buddhadasa, **Handbook for Mankind**, (Bangkok: Thammasapa Press, 2005), p.28.

⁵⁸ Dhp.63

⁵⁹ P.A.Payutto, **Tipiṭaka in Buddhism**, p.284.

he will never have to suffer or die again. For Buddhists, religion is what is relevant to this quest for salvation, and nothing else".⁶⁰

According to the perspective of Theravāda, an Arahat has eradicated craving and ignorance from his mental continuum so lust cannot arise even while asleep, is absolutely freed from delusive ignorance and skeptical doubt.⁶¹ The earliest canonical scriptures are certain that the Buddha is incapable of releasing others from samsāra but by oneself must strive for one's own salvation, the Buddhas only points the way.⁶²

8. Meaning of Sāvaka in Theravāda Buddhism

The word 'sāvaka' come across in *Mahāvagga Pāli*, when Kolita and Upatissa came to see the Buddha. The word 'sāvaka' refers to the listeners. The sāvakā are those who become Arahats soon after hearing the Dhamma from their Teachers; *Sāvaka-bodhi* is the realization of the truth of disciples (*Satthu dhamma-desanāya savanante jātā ti sāvaka; sāvakānam saccābhisaṁyayo sāvakasambodhi*).⁶³ The sāvakā are serving as a living demonstration of truth and bearing their last body that is possible to free one-self from the stains of greed (*lobha*), hatred (*dosa*) and delusion (*moha*) in this very life. They are capable of rendering spiritual assistance to others for their liberation. In the *Samyutta* and *Aṅguttaranikāya* commentaries has suggested a very important aspects that was an interpretation given to, how one becomes *sāvaka*. The earlier *sāvakas* were referred as Arahats, but later when there many *sāvaka* were not an Arahat, in order to mention an arahat *sāvaka*, the word 'ariya-sāvaka' was come into existence. The Arahats are also known as 'sāvakā', the noble disciples of the Buddha.⁶⁴

⁶⁰ Paul Williams with Anthony Tribe, **Buddhist Thought: A complete introduction to the Indian tradition**, p.4.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, pp.280-281.

⁶² Toshiichi Endo, **Buddha in Theravāda Buddhism**, (Dehiwela: Buddhist Cultural Centre, 2002), p.96; Dhp.276.

⁶³ Vin.I.42.

⁶⁴ The 'hearer', i.e. 'disciple' of the Buddha, in a restricted sense, the noble disciple (*ariya-sāvaka*), which consists of eight kinds of noble disciples (*attha ariya-puggala*).

There are different kinds of *sāvaka* has been found in Theravāda Buddhism such as *Agga-sāvaka* (the best and high-ranking disciples), *Mahā sāvaka* (the great disciples) and *Pakatisāvaka* (the ordinary disciples). All of these are enlightened persons, but their qualities of enlightenment are different from one another. It has been mentioned different kinds of *sāvaka* such as *ariya sāvaka*, *agga sāvaka*, *mahā sāvaka*, *jīnā sāvaka*, *Tathāgata sāvaka*, etc. In the *Theragāthā Aṭṭhakathā* by Dhammapāla has mentioned three kinds of Bodhisatta: *Mahā-bodhisatta*, *Pacceka-bodhisatta* and *Sāvaka-bodhisatta*.

9. How an Arahant Disciple can be known as Sāvaka Buddha?

People were reluctant to use the word “*Sāvaka Buddha*” for an Arahant disciple, although the Buddha was an Arahant too. They may have thought it is not proper to use the word Buddha for an Arahant. But in the *Samyuttanikāya Aṭṭhakathā*, has found the term “*Catusacca Buddha*”⁶⁵ for an Arahant which has been used for the first time. In the commentary of *Theragāthā*, Dhammapāla Thera has been used the word “*Sāvaka Buddha*” (*tato param sāvaka-buddha nama honti*) for the first time for an Arahant.⁶⁶ An Arahant or the *Khināsavo*, one who have no more defilements, has realized the Four Noble Truths, called him Buddha.⁶⁷ There are four kinds of Buddhas which have been written there in reverse order (*Cattāro hi Buddhā: Sutabuddho, Catusaccabuddho, Paccekabuddho, Sabbaññubuddho ti*).⁶⁸ According to this analysis, not only *Sammāsambuddhā* and *Paccekabuddhā* even the noble disciples (*ariya sāvakā*) too can receive the title of ‘Buddha’ in Theravāda Buddhism.

10. Classification of Noble Disciples (*Ariya-Sāvaka*)

Theravāda Buddhism provides the gradual path to the householder that leads from the stage of an ordinary person, characterized by ignorance, to that of enlightened person endowed with wisdom. There are four stages of enlightenment the noble disciples of the Buddha as follows:

⁶⁵ *Catusacca Buddha* means there are four kinds of Buddhas such as *Sutabuddho*, *Catusaccabuddho*, *Paccekabuddho*, *Sabbaññubuddho*.

⁶⁶ *Theragāthā*; A.I.10.

⁶⁷ S.A.I.25.

⁶⁸ A.A.1.115.

i) Stream-Enterer (*Sotāpanna*)

To attaining the stream-entry, one has to be developed and cultivated the four things. They are: Association with superior persons, hearing the true Dhamma, careful attention, practice in accordance with the Dhamma.⁶⁹ According to the commentaries, it would be impossible for a Stream-winner to do any of these things. The precepts are: 1) Not to kill any sentient being; 2) Speak only the truth and never lie; 3) Not to steal or take anything which is not freely offered; 4) Not to engage in sexual misconduct; 5) Not to take substances which dull the consciousness.⁷⁰ The path of stream-entry having abandoned the first three fetters⁷¹ will not be born eighth time in any realms, not liable to be born in the four hells, fixed in destiny, with enlightenment.⁷² Not commit five heinous crimes, unshakable faith in the Four Noble Truths, whatever evil deed, is incapable of hiding.⁷³ The first is the view that the five aggregates (*pañca-khandhā*)⁷⁴ can be identified with a self.⁷⁵ The following as impossibilities for a stream-enterer: killing one's mother, killing one's father, killing an arahat, wounding a Buddha, and causing a schism in the monastic community.⁷⁶ The *Sotāpanna*, eventually entered the stream of the Dhamma, the noble path, which will take him to nibbāna as surely as the waters in a stream will be carried to the ocean.⁷⁷ In the *Dhammapada* has mentioned that “Stream-enterer is far better than sole sovereignty over the earth, better than reborn in heavenly realms and even than lordship over all the worlds”.

“*Pathavyā ekarajjena, saggassa gamanena vā
Sabbalokādhipaccena, sotāpattiphalam varam*”⁷⁸.

⁶⁹ S.55:5, p.1836. (Bodhi).

⁷⁰ William L. Hamilton, **Saints and Psychopaths Part II**, (San Jacinto California: Dharma Audio Network Associates, 1995), p.62.

⁷¹ Identity view (*sakkāyaditthi*), doubt (*vicikicchā*) and ritual attachment (*sīlabbataparāmāsa*).

⁷² M.I.33; D.16.241; S.2:68; S.22:109; S.55:8.

⁷³ For *Sotāpanna*, there are five benefits has been mentioned in *Ratana Sutta* of *Sutta Nipāta* and *Alagaddupama Sutta* of *Majjhimanikāya*.

⁷⁴ The aggregate of form or matter (*rūpa khandha*), the aggregate of feeling (*vedanā khandha*), the aggregate of perception (*saññā khandha*), the aggregate of kamma formation (*saṅkhārā*) and the aggregate of consciousness (*viññāna khandha*).

⁷⁵ M.I:300.

⁷⁶ M.III.64.

⁷⁷ S.5:347.

⁷⁸ Dhp.178.

ii) Once-Returner (*Sakadāgāmi*)

The “Once Returner” destroys the first three fetters completely and reduces the power of the two fetters, the fetter of sensual desire (*kāmarāga*) and the fetter of ill-will (*paṭigha*).⁷⁹ He will come back to this world once only, and then attain to the Arahantship. *Kāmarāga* defined as the lust for sex and therefore he connected to the realm of pleasures (*kāmabhava*) as mentioned in the Commentary of *Paṭisambhidāmagga*. There are five kinds of *Sakadāgāmi* such as:

1. Those who attain *Sakadāgāmi* here (in this world) and *parinibbāna* here itself.
2. Those who attain *Sakadāgāmi* in a heavenly realm and attain *parinibbāna* there.
3. Those who attain *Sakadāgāmi* here and attain *parinibbāna* in a heavenly realm.
4. Those who attain *Sakadāgāmi* heavenly realm and attain *parinibbāna* in this human plane.
5. Those who attain *Sakadāgāmi* here and having been born in heavenly realm seek birth in this human plane and attain *parinibbāna*.⁸⁰

iii) Non-Returner (*Anāgāmi*)

The first five lower fetters have been completely eradicated that binds the mind to the cycle of rebirth, and who after death. So, he never returns to this world again. He will attain enlightenment in *suddhāvāsa* brahma world. There are five *suddhāvāsa* brahma worlds such as *aviha*, *atappa*, *sudassa*, *sudassī* and *akanitthā* and sometimes called *pañca suddhāvāsa*. There are five divisions of *Anāgāmi* persons according to their enlightenment. The special feature of *Suddhāvāsa* Brahma world is all the *Anāgāmi* persons are born here and they will be Arahants there. Therefore, they have no time to come back again to this world.⁸¹ Will appear in one of the worlds called the Pure Abodes, eventually attain Nibbāna and thus never again to return to this world. Five *Suddhāvāsa* Brahma worlds are: *Aviha*, *Atappa*, *Sudassa*, *Sudassī* and *Akanitthā*.⁸²

⁷⁹ Nyanatiloka, Buddhist Dictionary, (Kandy: BPS, 1980) p.49.

⁸⁰ Ākaṇkheyya *Suttavanṇanā*, the commentary of *Majjhimanikāya*.

⁸¹ A.I.233.

⁸² *Ibid.*

iv) Perfected One (Arahat)

There are four ways to be become an Arahat as mentioned in the *Yuganaddhasutta*. Which are the four?

- (a) There is the case where a monk has developed insight preceded by tranquility.
- (b) Then there is the case where a monk has developed tranquility preceded by insight.
- (c) Then there is the case where a monk has developed tranquility in tandem with insight and
- (d) Then there is the case where a monk's mind has its restlessness concerning the Dhamma (the corruptions of insight) well under control. There comes a time when his mind grows steady inwardly, settles down, and becomes unified and concentrated. In him the path is born. He follows that path, develops it, and pursues it. As he follows the path, developing it and pursuing it — his fetters are abandoned, his obsessions destroyed.⁸³

This is the person who has destroyed all ten fetters and seven latent tendencies (*anusayas*) have to eliminate five higher fetters (*uddhambhāgiya samyojana*) are: Lust for material realm (*rūparāga*); Lust for formless realm (*arūparāga*); Conceit (*māna*); Restlessness (*uddhacca*) and Ignorance (*avijjā*).⁸⁴ According to Sāriputta, there are four floods such as the flood of sensuality (*kāmogha*); the flood of will to be (*bhavogha*); the flood of views (*ditthogha*); and the flood of ignorance (*avijjogha*). These four floods are referred to the four *āsavā* which an Arahat has been overcomed all and attained the Deathless (*amata*).⁸⁵ The mind of an Arahat does not tremble and vibrates with the eight worldly vicissitudes because he is freed from sorrow, freed from all defilements and so his mind attained peace as said by the Buddha in *Mahāmaṅgalasutta*. The enlightened person serves the humanity as a guide to the blind, showing them the right direction. He gives the deaf signals by hand gestures and in that way benefits them with good. He does the same with the dumb and strives to dispel the darkness of five mental hindrances (*nīvaraṇā*).⁸⁶ He strives to develop

⁸³ A.4.170; A.II.156.

⁸⁴ Nyanatiloka, **Buddhist Dictionary**, p.50.

⁸⁵ Nathan Katz, **Buddhist Images of Human Perfection**, p.41.

⁸⁶ There are five mental hindrances (*nīvaraṇā*) which not allow us to develop the spiritual path to liberation. Viz. sense desire (*kāmachanda*), ill-will (*vyāpāda*), sloth and laziness (*thīna-middha*), restlessness (*uddhacca-kukkucca*) and doubt (*vicikicchā*).

faith in the faithless, zeal in the lazy, mindfulness in the confused, concentration in those whose minds wander and wisdom in the dull.

11. Conclusion

Theravāda Buddhism emphasizes to become a Buddha, a Pacceka Buddha, or an Arahant according to their own choices having fulfilled the ten perfections (*pārāmitā*). In Theravāda Buddhism one can follow any one among all the three paths of practices and not only practice for the path to attain arahatship. Arahantship is considered as the ultimate goal and the highest achievement in early Buddhism. And it is easy to understand comparing to attain Buddhahood which is the supreme attainment in the Buddha's Dispensation (*Sāsana*). With reference to the textual evidences, probability seems the development of arahatship from an early notion can be attained immediate enlightenment however, it is a gradual process to attain it. We can see in the *Visuddhimagga*, there are seven stages of purifications by gradual practice of the Buddha's path to enlightenment even up to the contemporary period.

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