

Do *Anāsavā Lokuttaramaggaṅgā* Fall in Formations (*Saṅkhārā*)?

Clarification of Research Problem

Is it correct to identify supra mundane practice of Noble Eightfold Path with mental formations (*saṅkhārā*)?

Saṅkhārā, the plural is generally translated as mental formations and they constitute of Aggregate of Formation of the Five Aggregates. We have seen that formations are quite often taken equal in meaning to *Saṅkhatā* (compounded phenomena) dependently arisen phenomena) and thereby to be a generic term to denote all mundane phenomena of empirical existence (*dhammā*). Thus, all the positive and negative mental phenomena are required to be included within the category of formations and they happen to be with following qualities-

- 1) They are impermanent, **unsatisfactory** and soulless (because compounded phenomena are always of that nature as revealed in such instances as *sabbesaṅkhārāniccā*, *sabbesaṅkhārādukkhā* and *sabbedhammānattā*)
- 2) They are conditioned by ignorance. (as formations are considered to **be** produced by ignorance as said in such instances as *avijjāpaccayāsaṅkhārā*).

Once we include all the wholesome and unwholesome mental phenomena among the formations none sensuous taintless practice leading to supra-mundane state (*anāsavālokuttaramaggaṅgā*), that is, the cultivation of Noble **Eightfold** Path inclined towards *nibbāna* are also essentially become not only impermanent etc. but also outcomes of ignorance. These path factors leading to *nibbāna*, the state totally devoid of ignorance are then naturally happen to be seen as empowered by ignorance. Though, wholesome mental phenomena can become objects of **impermanence** etc. **are** acceptable to Buddhism, it is always doubtful to hold the view that mental phenomena caused by higher mental culture of earnest follower are rooted in ignorance. This is totally contradictory to the Buddhist position that non-greed, non-hatred and non-delusion become the root causes (*mūla*) only for wholesome mental (*kusalā-dhammā*) thoughts to arise. This kind of interpretation of formations necessarily must be looked as inconvenient to Buddhist philosophy which is always found to have been discoursed on a sound logical ground. Moreover, if ignorance is accepted to enforce all good conducts of the individual, the moral life of the follower who **has** not yet come to path level signify a pessimistic and negative spectrum of Buddhist practice.