

DIALECTIC IN EARLY BUDDHISM: AN EXAMINATION OF THE DHANIYA SUTTA OF THE SUTTA NIPĀTA

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§1. Dialogue (*saṃvāda*) giving rise to dialectic is a general method of teaching of the Buddha. Being derived from Gk. *dialogos* via Lat. *dialogus* (lit. between - word) the term conveys the sense of *conversation between two (or more persons)*.¹ Dialectic (Skt. *tarka/apoha*; Pali. *lakka*)² plays a very significant role in early Buddhism specially in its philosophy of education. Derived from Gk. *dialektike* (*dia*=between + *legein*= to talk) through the medium of Lat. *dialectic(a)* it means a logical argumentation. Both these methods genetically connected with one another are found in early Buddhism as enshrined in the Pali *Tipitaka*. The Buddha as a Master of discourse has used them effectually in his sermons (*dhamma-desanā*). Our purpose in this article is to discuss the part played by dialectic in the *Dhaniya-sutta*.

§2. The teaching of the Buddha took different forms according to the psychology and the reasoning capacity of different individuals for whom it was meant. Thus, for example, he would employ *ānupubbi-kathā*, the 'gradual instruction' with regard to certain human types. This means a 'sermon by degrees.' It is a kind of step by step exposition of the ever higher values of *four subjects*. The first of these is *dāna-kathā* or instruction on the efficacy of *dāna* or charity. The second is *śila-kathā*, instruction on righteousness of ethical morality. Thirdly, the Master would instruct on the results of the above two leading oneself to the *sagga* or the heaven (*sagga-kathā*). With this background the Buddha would preach on the *magga* or the path (*magga-kathā*) leading to *nibbāna*, the cessation of suffering. The story of Brahmāyu, for example, is relevant here. This sermon occurring in the *Brahmāyu-sutta* of the *Majjhima Nikāya* (2.5.1) clearly depicts the four stages referred to above. This method of teaching is found in many other places of the *Tipitaka*.³

1. While the concept of *dialogue* means a conversation between two parties, the idea of *saṃvāda* conveys the sense of speaking (sād) together (sam).

2. The term *tarka* derived from √ *tark*, to conjecture, reason etc., appears to go back to Indo-European **trick* (cp. Latin, *trixie, intricare* - trick, puzzle). Originally the word seems to have contained the idea of turning and twisting (*P.T.S. Dic.*, q.v.).

3. 'dānakatham śilakatham saggikatham kāmānamādinavayam obārayam sukāilesam nakkhamme ānissamsam pakāsesi. yadā bhagavā aññāsi brahmāyayam brahmanam. yā buddhānam sīnukkamāsilā dhammadesanā taya pakāsesi.