

# AN ANALYTICAL STUDY ON DIṬṬHI (VIEW) ACCORDING TO BUDDHIST LITERATURE

**Vasetha**

Research Scholar

Samrat Ashoka School of Buddhist Studies,  
Sawmi Vevekanand Subharti University,  
Meerut, Uttar Pradesh, India.

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## ABSTRACT:

*This research paper is “AN ANALYTICAL STUDY ON DIṬṬHI (VIEW) ACCORDING TO BUDDHIST LITERATURE”, which focuses on the scope of diṭṭhi (view), right view and wrong view and its consequences. During the time of the Buddha, there existed various views or ideas regarding the concept of diṭṭhi. Among them, the six majors ‘outside teachers’ (other view holders) (aññatitthiya) are described in Samaññaphala Sutta. Amidst the darkness of all these wrong views that shrouded the world, the Buddha’s appearance in this world was the sunshine that dispels comes out of the darkness and enlightens the world. It was the Buddha who with his supreme wisdom and enlightenment understood and explained the doctrine of view (diṭṭhi) properly and completely.*

## KEYWORDS:

*Diṭṭhi, Samaññaphala Sutta, Aññatitthiya, Tathāgata-bala.*

## Introduction

Understanding the concept of *diṭṭhi* (view) and its workings completely is one of the Buddha’s powers (*Tathāgata-bala*). After his enlightenment, he went on explaining this law in many ways. They have been recorded in *Tipiṭaka* and its commentaries. People, even Buddhists with superficial knowledge of Dhamma often bear misconceptions about the concept of *diṭṭhi*. The researcher shall therefore aim to examine and explain the doctrine of *diṭṭhi* (view) explained in *Tipiṭaka* and their commentaries in order to dispel some of the misconceptions. As *diṭṭhi* is one of the central doctrines of

Buddhism, without understanding this doctrine properly, one cannot understand the Buddha's teachings. Therefore, the researcher hopes that this research work will help to understand the doctrine properly. The Buddhist texts give a pure analysis of wrong-view and right-view as well as dhammas and determine skillful ways to deal with them properly. To avoid wrong-view and to crop right-view dhammas is the basic principle behind all these skillful ways. Basically, one should know about wrong-view and right-view with actions and be mindful and clearly comprehend them.

### An Analytical Study on *Diṭṭhi* (View) According to Buddhist Literature

There are many views or ideas concerning the concept of *diṭṭhi* at the Buddha's time. Of them, the six majors 'outside teachers' (other view holders) (*aññatitthiya*) are described in *Samaññaphala* Sutta. Here I would like to state about their views, as follows:

1. ***Purāṇa Kassapa*** was one of the famous six heretical teachers and contemporary with the Buddha. His family name (*gotta*) was *Kāssapa*. He belonged to a religious sect of asceticism called in the *Pāli* scriptures '*Ājivaka*'. *Purāṇa Kāssapa* is said to have been an exponent of the theory that there is no after-effect or result of action or karma. According to this, a person committing an evil act or causing someone else to do so, experiences no evil result. Similarly, no merit is obtained by the performance.
2. ***Makkhaligōsāla*** rejected both *kamma* and result (*vipāka*). He held the view of non-causality (*ahetukavāda*) or 'fate' (*niyati*). According to him there exists neither cause nor effect. Regarding liberation, he expounded the theory of 'purity by wandering from one life to another' (*samsārasuddhi*). He stated that: "There exists no cause or condition for beings to become defiled; they are defiled without cause or condition. They exist no cause or condition for beings to become absolutely pure; they are absolutely pure without cause or condition."
3. ***Ajita Kesakambala*** was the third heretical teacher mentioned by King *Ajātasattu* in the *Samaññaphala* Sutta. He is elsewhere called *Ajita Kesakambali*. Accordingly, to the records of the Sutta, *Ajita* was the profounder of the doctrine of annihilation (*ucchedadiṭṭhi*). His view clearly comes out in his answer to King *Ajātasattu*'s question is that "There is nothing given (no result of giving), nothing offered (no result

of offering), nothing sacrificed (no result of sacrifice). There is no fruit or result of good or bad actions. There is no this world, no next world, no mother (no result of good deeds done towards mother), no father (no result of good deeds done towards father), no spontaneously reborn beings; no priests or contemplatives who, faring rightly and practicing rightly, proclaim this world and the next after having directly known and realized it for themselves. A person is a composite of four primary elements. At death, the earth (in the body) returns to and merges with the (external) earth-substance. The fire returns to and merges with the external fire-substance. The liquid returns to and merges with the external liquid-substance. The wind returns to and merges with the external wind-substance. The sense-faculties scatter into space.”

4. *Pakudha Kaccāyana* held the view of non-relatedness: There are these seven substances: unmade, irreducible, uncreated, without a creator, barren, stable as a mountain-peak, standing firm like a pillar that do not alter, do not change, do not interfere with one another, are incapable of causing one another pleasure, pain, or both pleasure and pain. He explained the meaning of killing thus: “When one cuts off another’s head with a sharp weapon, it does not mean that one killed the other. Actually, the weapon enters the space of the seven bodies.”
5. *Nigantha Nātaputta* Among the six famous teachers contemporary with the Buddha, *Nigantha Nātaputta* is the only heretical leader whose teachings has survived through the ages and remains a living religion of modern India. He was probably the founder of what is now called Jainism. ‘Karma’, according to Jainism is of material nature. Jains believe that the actions of mind, speech, and body produce subtle karma (infra-atomic particles of matter) which becomes the cause of bondage. The cause of the embodiment of the soul is thought to be karmic matter; and one can attain salvation only by freeing the soul of ‘karma’. According to Jainism, the concept of ‘karma’ and soul are inter-related to each other: “The soul by its commerce with the outer world becomes literally penetration with the particles of subtle matter. These become karma and build up a special body called *karmanāsari-ra*, which does not leave the soul till its final emancipation.”
6. *Sañjaya Belaṭṭhaputta* held no particular view. He was an eel-wriggler with “the view of evasion”. His doctrine is known as *viksepavāda*, a doctrine which diverts the mind from the right track. If asked, he would not say this way, neither that way, nor the other way; he would not say “No”, nor “Not no”.

Amidst the darkness of all these wrong views that shrouded the world, the Buddha's appearance in this world was like the sunshine that dispels comes out of the darkness and enlightens the world. It was the Buddha who with his supreme wisdom and enlightenment understood and explained the doctrine of view (*diṭṭhi*) properly and completely.

What is view? Misapprehending or misinterpreting mentalities and materiality as 'I', 'mine', myself, is view.

1. How many kinds of standpoints for view are there? There are eight kinds of standpoints for views i.e., five aggregates, ignorance, contact, perception, applied thought, careless attention and indoctrination by another.
2. How many kinds of obsession by views are there? There are eighteen kinds of obsession by views such as a recourse to views, thicket of views etc.
3. How many kinds of views are there? There are sixteen kinds of views such as hedonistic view (*Assāda-diṭṭhi*), views about self (*Attānu-diṭṭhi*) etc.
4. How many kinds of misinterpretation by views are there? There are three hundred kinds of misinterpretation by views. Actually, these three hundred misinterpretations are different aspects of the above-mentioned sixteen views.
5. What is the eradication of standpoints for views? The stream-entry path is the abolition of standpoints for views. However, in a few instances in *Pāli* literature the term *Diṭṭhi* is found to indicate right view, understanding or insight also for example *Diṭṭhi-visuddhi*, purity of insight; *Diṭṭhi-sampanna*, possessed of insight. Hence the term *Diṭṭhi* simply means view, theory, dogma etc. without making a distinction between right and wrong.

The importance of view (*Diṭṭhi*) can be gauged from the fact that our views on the crucial issues of reality have a bearing that goes beyond mere theoretical convictions. They preside over our attitudes, our actions, and our whole direction to existence. Our views might not be clearly formulated in our mind; we might have only an unclear conceptual grasp of our beliefs. But whether formulated or not, expressed or maintained in silence, these views have

a far-reaching influence. They generate our perceptions and crystallize into the ideational framework through which we interpret to ourselves the meaning of our being in the world.

This view (*Diṭṭhi*) then conditions action. The views lie behind our choices, goals and our efforts to turn these goals from our dream into actuality. The actions themselves might determine consequences, but the actions along with their consequences hinge on the views from which they spring. Therefore, Bhikkhu Bodhi eloquently comments that view (*Diṭṭhi*) implies an “ontological commitment.”

As to the distinction between what is right and wrong, view is (*Diṭṭhi*) divided into two classes, right view (*Sammā-diṭṭhi*) and wrong view (*Micchā-diṭṭhi*). The former corresponds to what is real; the latter deviates from the real and confirms the false in its place. These two different kinds of views, the Buddha teaches, lead to radically disparate lines of action, and thence to opposite results. Therefore, in *Āṅguttara Nikāya* the Buddha explains, “Monks, for him who has wrong view one of two destinies may be expected, - rebirth in a woeful state or in an animal state: monks, for him who has right view one of two destinies may be expected-rebirth as a deity or human being.”

If we hold a wrong view, even if that view is vague, it will lead us towards courses of action that eventuate in suffering. On the other hand, if we adopt a right view, that view will steer us towards right action and thereby towards the world which might seem innocuous and inconsequential, when looked at closely it reveals itself to be the decisive determinant of our whole course of future development. The Buddha himself says that he sees no single factor so responsible for the arising of unwholesome states of mind as wrong view, and no factor so helpful for the arising of wholesome states of mind as right view.

Again, he says that there is no single factor so responsible for the suffering of living beings as wrong view, and no factor so potent in promoting the good of living beings as right view.

Concerning the *Sammādiṭṭhi*, the Buddha asks, what at that time is right view? “that which at that time is wisdom, thorough un-

derstanding, scrutiny (of impermanence, etc. of phenomena), comprehensive scrutiny, investigative knowledge of the *Dhamma* (i.e. the Four Noble Truth), right observation (of impermanence, etc.), close observation, direct observation, erudition proficiency, refinement in knowledge, discriminative knowledge, reflection (on impermanence, etc.), comparative examination, breadth of knowledge, wisdom that destroys defilements, penetrative wisdom, insight, clear comprehension, wisdom like a guiding goad, wisdom as the faculty of power of wisdom, wisdom like a sword (for destroying defilements), wisdom like tower, wisdom like radiance, wisdom like a torch, wisdom like a jewel, nonbewilderment, investigative knowledge of the *Dhamma*, right view – this at that time is right view”.

Concerning wrong view (*Micchā-diṭṭhi*), the *Dhammasaṅgaṇī* mentions that eternalism and nihilism as two wrong and imperfect views. The first one is a doctrine or belief concerned with eternal life or with eternal things. Before the Buddha’s time, it was taught that there is an abiding entity which could exist forever, and that man can live the eternal life by knowing the soul in order to be in union with Supreme Being. In Buddhism, this teaching is called *Sassata-diṭṭhi*, ‘the view of eternalists.’ Such views still exist even in the modern world owing to man’s craving for eternity.

Why did the Buddha deny the teaching of eternalism? Because when we understand the things of this world as they truly are, we cannot find anything which is permanent or which exists forever. Things change and continue to do so according to the changing conditions on which they depend. When we analyze things into their elements or into reality, we cannot find any abiding entity, any everlasting thing. This is why the eternalist view is considered wrong or false.

The second one is the view held by the nihilists who claim that there is no life after death. This view belongs to a materialistic philosophy which refuses to accept knowledge of mental conditionality.

To subscribe to a philosophy of materialism is to understand life only partially. Nihilism ignores the side of life which is concerned with mental conditionality. If one claims that after the passing

away or ceasing of a life, it does not come to be again, the continuity of mental conditions is denied. To understand life, we must consider all conditions, both mental and material. When we understand mental and material conditions, we cannot say that there is no life after death and that there is no further becoming after passing away.

This nihilist view of existence is considered false because it is based on incomplete understanding of reality. That is why nihilism was also rejected by the Buddha. The teaching of *Kamma* is enough to prove that the Buddha did not teach annihilation after death; Buddhism accepts 'survival' not in the sense of an eternal soul, but in the sense of a renewed becoming.

Throughout the Buddha's long period of teaching the *Dhamma* to his followers, he actively discouraged speculative arguments. During the 5 century B.C. India was a veritable hive of intellectual activity where scholars, yogis, philosopher, kings and even ordinary householders were constantly engaged in the philosophical arguments pertaining to human existence. Some people engaged in arguments at great length about all manner of subjects were more concerned about proving their powers in mental gymnastics than seeking genuine solutions to the problems that beset humanity.

The Buddha refused to get involved in speculations regarding the universe. He stated very clearly that "the problem facing mankind is not in his past or his future but in the immediate."

Knowledge about Eternalism or Nihilism can in no way help man to break the present fetters which bind him to existence and which are the source of all his feelings of discontent which arise from his inability to completely satisfy his cravings. The Buddha rejected both extremes of eternalism and nihilism and introduced right view and its indispensability to the attainment of *Nibbāna*. It is because only when one knows clearly what one is seeking will one be able to attain it. According to the Buddha, one must first seek to understand one's own mind. This was to be done through concentration which gives one a profound inner wisdom or realization. And this insight is to be gained not by philosophical argument or worldly knowledge but by the silent realization of the illusion of the Self.

## Conclusion

The aim of the path is the cultivation of right-view and the abandoning of wrong-views. Wrong-view is a form of craving and attachment, right-view is the cessation of craving and attachment. In this world, there are many problems. Therefore, the Buddha said that each and every problem is because of craving. But He found the solution of these problems as the path of Dhamma.

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