

## The Buddha's Instructions to Katyayana

*"In the instructions to Katyayana, both 'it is' [= existence] and 'it is not' [= nonexistence] were demonstrated by the Buddha as causing the appearance of being and nonbeing."*  
 --Nagarjuna, MK 15:7 (in McCagney 1997 172; compare translations by Inada 1970 99 and Kalupahana 1996.)

The Buddha's instructions to Katyayana are recorded in the Pali *Kaccayanagottasutta* (Sanskrit: *Katyayanavavada*), which was the only Sutra Nagarjuna explicitly referred to in his *Mulamadhyamakakarika* (MK). Why Nagarjuna chose only this Sutra out of the "vast array of Buddhist literature before him" can only be surmised. There is, however, no doubt that this Sutra provided him with the means to "return to the source for an ideological foundation" regarding the Buddha's teaching of the middle (madhyama) path from which the Madhyamaka school gets its name. (Inada 1987 372) The Sutra also provided a succinct overview of the Buddha's doctrine of interdependency ("dependence on conditions") which was the primary focus of Nagarjuna's major work, the MK.

The "authority" of the Buddha's discourse to Kaccayana (Katyayana), as reported by Ananda in the Sutra, was recognized by most of the "major philosophical schools of Buddhism." The complete text of the Sutra is provided below (as translated in Kalupahana 1986 10-11).

### **The Kaccayanagotta-Sutta**

Thus have I heard: The Blessed one was once living at Savatthi, in the monastery of Anathapindlika, in Jeta's Grove. At that time the venerable Kaccayana of that clan came to visit him, and saluting him, sat down at one side. So seated, he questioned the Exalted one: "Sir [people] speak of 'right view, right view.' To what extent is there a right view?"

"This world, Kaccayana, is generally inclined towards two [views]: existence and non-existence.

To him who perceives with right wisdom the uprising of the world as it has come to be, the notion of non-existence in the world does not occur. Kaccayana, to him who perceives with right wisdom the ceasing of the world as it has come to be, the notion of existence in the world does not occur.

The world, for the most part, Kaccayana, is bound by approach, grasping and inclination. And he who does not follow that approach and grasping, that determination of mind, that inclination and disposition, who does not cling to or adhere to a view: 'This is my self,' who thinks: 'suffering that is subject to arising, arises; suffering that is subject to ceasing, ceases,' such a person does not doubt, is not perplexed. Herein, his knowledge is not other-dependent. Thus far, Kaccayana, there is 'right view.'

'Everything exists,'--this, Kaccayana, is one extreme. 'Everything does not exist,'--this, Kaccayana, is the second extreme. Kaccayana, without approaching either extreme, the Tathagata [= Buddha] teaches you a doctrine by the middle.

Dependent upon ignorance arise dispositions; dependent upon dispositions arise consciousness; dependent upon consciousness arises the psychophysical personality; dependent upon the psychophysical personality arise the six senses; dependent upon the six senses arises contact; dependent upon contact arises feeling; dependent upon feeling arises craving; dependent upon craving arises grasping; dependent upon grasping arises becoming; dependent upon becoming arises birth; dependent upon birth arise old age and death, grief, lamentation, suffering, dejection and despair. Thus arises this entire mass of suffering.

However, from the utter fading away and ceasing of ignorance, there is ceasing of dispositions; from the ceasing of dispositions, there is ceasing of consciousness; from the ceasing of consciousness, there is ceasing of the psychophysical personality; from the ceasing of the psychophysical personality, there is ceasing of the six senses; from the ceasing of the six senses, there is ceasing of contact; from the ceasing of contact, there is ceasing of feeling; from the ceasing of feeling, there is ceasing of craving; from the ceasing of craving, there is ceasing of grasping; from the ceasing of grasping, there is ceasing of becoming; from the ceasing of becoming, there is ceasing of birth; from the ceasing of birth, there is ceasing of old age and death, grief, lamentation, suffering, dejection and despair. And thus there is the ceasing of this entire mass of suffering." (in Kalupahana 1986 10-11)

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