

Source Texts for the Five-fold Niyāma (*pañcavidhaṃ niyāma*)

Translated from the Pāli
by Jayarava
June 2012

Introduction

There are several mentions of the *pañcavidha niyāma* in the commentarial literature.

- *Sumaṅgalavilāsinī* (DA 2.431¹) – commentary on the *Mahāpadāna Sutta* (D 14)
- *Atthasālinī* (As 272-274) – commentary on the *Dhammasaṅgaṇi* (an *abhidhamma* text)²
- *Abhidhammāvatāra* (CST Abhi-av 66; vs. 468-473; PTS 54) – A summary of *abhidhamma*
- *Abhidhamma-mātikā* (CST Dhs-m 58) – internal commentary on the abstract of the *Dhammasaṅgaṇi*.
- *Abhidhammāvatāra-purāṇatikā* (Abhi-av-pt 1.68) – a sub-commentary on *Abhidhammāvatāra*.

In addition these suttas represent the way that *niyāma* is used in other contexts

- *dhamma-niyāmatā: Paccaya Sutta* (S 12.20); *Uppādā Sutta* (A 3.134)
- *niyāma*:³ *Āvaraṇa Sutta* (A 6.86)
- *sammatta-niyāma: Cakkhu Sutta* (S 25.1)

All Pāli texts from the *Chaṭṭha Saṅgāyana Tipiṭaka, Desktop Application*, 4th ed. published by the Vipassana Research Institute. This is based on the *Burmese Sixth Council* edition of the Tipiṭaka produced between 1954 and 1956.

These translations were produced with the *Triratna Buddhist Order* and the *Triratna Buddhist Community* in mind. These texts are referred to in passing as the source texts for the Sangharakshita's teachings on what are known in English as 'the niyamas'. Most have not previously been translated into English, and in any case no translation is easily accessible; so I felt it might be helpful to have something to refer to in our discussions.

Although these translations come with copious notes they are not intended to be a discussion of the way the texts have been used, only to provide access to the source texts for the *niyāmas*, and the language used in them. These are not easy texts to translate, a combination of the Commentarial idiom⁴ and Abhidhamma jargon make them quite esoteric. But they can almost always be comprehended with some effort. Where I am unsure of a reading I have indicated this in notes. Those interested in Abhidhamma terminology might like to consult Bodhi (1993) for more information.

I'm grateful to Dharmacārin Dhīvan for his pioneering efforts on these texts, for helpful comments on these translations, and his encouragement to pursue my Pāli studies. Any remaining errors or infelicities are down to me.

Please feel free to share this document with anyone who might be interested.

Jayarava, May 2012.

jayarava@gmail.com

¹ Page numbers for Pāli texts are given for the PTS editions, unless specified.

² Previously translated in Rahula (1974). I have not seen this article.

³ The word occurs rarely in the *Nikāyas* and mostly in the *Āṅguttara Nikaya*: A 3.22, 5.151, 5.152, 5.153, 6.86, 6.87, 6.88; also Sn v.55. All of the A texts combine *niyāma* with forms of *okkamati* and *sammatta* and so are in fact related to S 25.1 (*okkanto sammatta-niyāma*)

⁴ The commentaries are a literary, rather than oral genre; written by and for members of an educated elite, who often possessed a knowledge of the Sanskrit language and Classical Indian literature. They make much greater use of the agglutinating character of Pāli, constructing long, elaborate compounds that leave the uninitiated to puzzle over the implied grammatical relationships.

Abbreviations

| | |
|------------|--|
| A | Aṅguttara Nikāya |
| AA | Aṅguttara Nikāya Aṭṭhakathā |
| As | Atthasālinī |
| Abhi-av | Abhidhammāvatāra |
| Abhi-av-pt | Abhidhammāvatāra-purāṇatīkā |
| ATI | Access to Insight. http://www.accesstoinsight.org |
| BHSD | Buddhist Hybrid Sanskrit Dictionary |
| CST | Chaṭṭha Saṅgāyana Tipiṭaka, Desktop Application, 4 th ed. |
| D | Dīgha Nikāya |
| DA | Dīgha Nikāya Aṭṭhakathā |
| Dhp | Dhammapada |
| Dhs-m | Dhammasaṅgaṇi-mātikā (including internal commentary). |
| DOPN | Dictionary of Pali Names, Online version of the <i>Dictionary of Pali Proper Names</i> . |
| DP | Dictionary of Pāli; Margaret Cone, Pali Text Society. |
| Mhbh | Mahābhārata. |
| Mil | Milindapañha |
| MW | Monier-Williams Sanskrit-English Dictionary |
| PED | Pali English Dictionary, Pali Text Society. |
| S | Samyutta Nikāya |
| SA | Samyutta Nikāya Aṭṭhakathā |
| Sn | Sutta Nipāta |
| Vism | Visuddhimagga |

Translating Niyāma

⁵The Sanskrit *niyama* is derived from the verbal root \sqrt{yam} , ‘hold’, and etymologically means ‘holding-back’ (MW 552). It can mean an ethical ‘restraint’; *niyama* as the second of the eight limbs of *aṣṭāṅga-yoga* refers to five ‘observances’. The Pali *niyama* is used in this way in the *Milindapañha* (Mil 116). More importantly, however, the Sanskrit word also means ‘necessity’ (MW 552; Cappeller 1891: 272; MacDonnell 141; Edgerton 1953: 298). In the *Mahābhārata* (Mhbh 3.281.33), Sāvitrī addresses the god of death, Yama thus:

prajāś tvayemā niyamena saṃyatā; niyamya caitā nayase na kāmāyā

‘All beings are governed by you and your ordinances... and it is by ordinance that you bear them away, not from choice’ (Smith 2009: 225).

Yama’s ‘ordinance’ is a form of necessity. *Niyama* does not mean natural law or cosmic order so much as the way things necessarily happen. It has exactly the same sense in Pali (PED 368; DP).

In both Sanskrit and Pali *niyama* also appears as *niyāma*. *Sūtra* 3.3.63 in Pāṇini’s Sanskrit grammar, the *Aṣṭādhyāyī*, states that the two are alternative forms (Katre 1987: 289). Mrs Rhys

⁵ This section is largely from Dhīvan’s exposition (2010); I’ve substituted my own translations of the Pāli passages cited, and thereby changed the emphasis somewhat.

Davids, in an appendix to a translation of an Abhidhamma text, the Kathāvatthu, explains that in Pali *niyama* meaning ‘fixity’ while *niyāma* means ‘that which fixes’ (Shwe Zan Aung 1915: 383). However, the two forms are often enough alternatives in Pali too. While *niyama* does not appear in the Pali Canon, there are two main canonical uses of *niyāma*.

Firstly, the Buddha uses *niyāma* to describe the inevitable working of conditionality as set out in S 12.20:

“Whether *tathāgatas* arise or not, this element [of conditionality] is persistent, dhammas persist [in the presence of their condition] (*dhamma-ṭṭhitatā*), dhammas are constrained [by the condition] (*dhamma-niyāmatā*), and specific conditionality (*idappacchayatā*). A *tathāgata* awakens to the highest knowledge and realises this, then tells, teaches, declares, establishes, reveals, analyses, and makes it evident.”

The Buddha similarly uses *niyāma* to describe the intrinsic nature of things as impermanent, painful and non-self:

Whether *tathāgatas* arise or not, this element of constancy of nature (*dhammaṭṭhitatā*⁶) and inevitability about nature (*dhammaniyāmatā*) remains: All constructs are impermanent; all constructs are disappointing; all mental events are insubstantial. (A i.286).

The word *niyāma* in this sense occurs in the compound *dhamma-niyāmatā* which is discussed in the notes to S 12.20. The abstract *niyāmatā* seems to mean much the same as *niyāma*. Here it suggests a necessity; or as the commentary puts it, *svabhāva-niyāmatā*, ‘the necessity of intrinsic nature’. (AA ii.380).

The second canonical use of *niyāma* is in relation to the necessary good rebirth of the ideal Buddhist at least as *saddhānusārin* or *dhammānusārin*⁷:

“The one who believes in, and is drawn to these facts (*dhammā*) is called ‘a believer’ (*sassānusārin*), and enters the inevitability of perfection (*sammatta-niyāma*), rising to the level of a superior person, having surpassed the level of ordinary people. (S iii.225)⁸

Such a person cannot be reborn in a lower realm and must attain the fruit of stream-entry. In this context, *niyāma* once again means ‘necessity’ or ‘assurance’ in relation to the good destiny of one who has faith in the Buddha’s teachings. Compare A 6.86. This use of *niyāma* ties it to the word *sammatta* ‘perfection’ which Buddhaghosa links to the limbs (*aṅga*) of the eightfold path (*aṭṭhaṅgikamagga*); there being eight *sammattas* to correspond with the eight limbs. This sense of *niyāma* is often translated as ‘fixed course’ (c.f. Bodhi 2000, p.1004 translation of S 25.1); which is just another way of saying ‘certain outcome’. The occurrence at Sn v.55 appears to be similarly a reference to the assurance of liberation.

Niyāma, then, means ‘restraint, constraint, restriction; inevitability, assurance, necessity’ with some people interpreting this in terms of being fixed or on a fixed course, though my sense is that

⁶ AA glosses *dhamma* with *sabhāva* ‘nature; state of mind; truth, reality’, and where they crossover is in the sense of ‘nature’. This does not mean nature in the general, Romantic sense, as the outdoors, but nature as in the nature of experience. The three *lakkhaṇas* describe important aspects of the nature of experience. Pāli *ṭhita* ‘standing, remaining’; *ṭhitatā* ‘state or fact of standing or remaining; constancy.’ [the *ṭh* becomes *-ṭṭha* in compounds]

⁷ As noted below these two types are two of seven types of ideal Buddhist (*ariya-puggala*).

⁸ See also notes on S 25.1

fixed is not quite the right term here since one's progress is assured, but one's course can hardly be fixed unless one's will is negated entirely.

That there is some necessity or regularity about the behaviour of phenomena or nature implies an underlying order in the cosmos, but it would not be correct to translate *niyāma* as 'order'. We cannot equate the phenomena of regularity with the order itself. In early Indian thought the cosmic order was called *ṛta*; but this term was generally replaced by the word *dharma* by the time of the Buddha (so that *ṛta* as cosmic order plays no role in the Upaniṣads for example).

A translator is generally constrained to choose a single translation for each term, but the reader should always keep in mind that the alternative connotations would have been obvious to the intended audience and that they need to be kept in mind. The choice of translations is not unlimited, but neither does the making of a choice constrain the word to mean only that. Equally the English speaking reader must be cautious about applying the broad range of English connotations to the translated word, and must try to keep in mind that the author of the text lived centuries ago in India or Sri Lanka. Ideally someone who cannot read the original should always consult more than one translation, but in the mean time they must read these translations with a critical eye.

One last caveat needs to be made. These texts represent three periods in history separated by several centuries at least: the canon was probably written down in the first century BCE and developed over three or four centuries as an oral tradition; Buddhaghosa and Buddhadatta lived in about the 5th century CE; and the Medieval commentators lives in the 13th or 14th century CE. Comparing these periods is like comparing Beowulf with Chaucer and Shakespeare: the language and culture changes. Even though the formalising of Pāli means that it changes less than English did over a comparable period, the idiom changes quite markedly, and words can change their meaning. The footnotes reflect any problems of this kind that I noticed as I went along.

DA 2.431 Comment on *dhammatā* as *niyāma*

The *Sumaṅgalavilāsinī* (*Dīgha Nikāya Aṭṭhakathā*) is Buddhaghosa's commentary on the Dīgha Nikāya composed ca. 5th century in Sri Lanka.

Commenting on a passage from the *Mahāpadāna Sutta* (D ii.12⁹):

“It is natural¹⁰, bhikkhus, that when a bodhisatta falls¹¹ from his Tusita (Heaven) form, he enters his mother's belly... this is natural”.¹²

[Buddhaghosa says]: ‘this is natural’—here entering the mothers belly is natural (*dhammatā*) and is called ‘this nature (*sabhāva*¹³), this inevitability (*niyāma*¹⁴).’ And the five-fold inevitability¹⁵ has these names: inevitability of actions (*kammaniyāma*); inevitability of seasons (*utuniyāma*); inevitability of seeds (*bījaniyāma*); inevitability of thoughts (*cittaniyāma*); and the inevitability of natures (*dhammaniyāma*¹⁶).

This, ‘the giving of pleasant consequences for skilfulness, and unpleasant results for unskilfulness’, this is the inevitability of actions. There is an illustration. The grounds for this are in the [Dhammapada] verse:

Not in the sky, nor the middle of the ocean,
Nor in a mountain cave;
Though terrified there is nowhere on earth,
Where one might escape from an evil action.¹⁷

Moreover once a woman quarrelled with her husband and strangled him. Then wanting to die herself she put a noose around her neck. A certain man was sharpening a knife and saw her about to hang

⁹ *dhammatā, esā, bhikkhave, yadā bodhisatto tusitā kāyā cavitvā mātukucchiṃ okkamati... Ayamettha dhammatā.*

¹⁰ Walsh “it is a rule”; or ‘it is lawful’. The word *dhammatā* is an abstract noun from *dhamma*; so a first parsing suggests it means *dhamma*-ness. However which meaning of *dhamma* is being referred to. Translators and commentators agree that it is *dhamma* as ‘nature’ (i.e. having a particular nature) as when the Buddha says at his death *vayadhamma saṅkhārā* ‘all constructs are perishable’; i.e. they are of a nature (*dhamma*) to decay or die (*vaya*). The text is saying that it is in the nature of things, the nature of the universe that the life events of the Buddha happen as they do. I have no wish to get into the theological debate that necessarily ensues from this statement, I merely wish to establish what the text says, and, following K. R. Norman's dictum, why it says that. If something is in the state of having a nature (*dhamma-tā*), then that nature (*dhamma*), is natural (*dhammatā*) to it. Hence we may translate *ayamettha dhammatā* as ‘this here is natural’ or ‘in this case it is natural’. Alternatively it is possible to read *dhammatā* as ‘customary’, see note 9.

¹¹ Men die, but *devas* living in a *devaloka* (like Tusita) ‘fall’ (*cavati*).

¹² The term *dhammatā* is then used to describe all the miraculous events of the Buddha's hagiography. However *dhammatā* can also mean ‘customary’ which would work equally well here.

¹³ The word *sabhāva* later becomes a technical term in Mahāyāna Buddhism in its Sanskrit guise *svabhāva*. Here it just means ‘state (of mind), nature, condition.’ (PED)

¹⁴ *Niyama* or *niyāma* the two are confused in Pāli, can be translated several ways. Obviously here it refers to something which just happens, something which always happens in the life of a Buddha, and which must happen. I focus on the last aspect here.

¹⁵ *pañca-vidha niyāma* – *niyāma* ‘inevitability’ is singular, and *pañcavidha* ‘five-fold’.

¹⁶ As we will see the term *dhammaniyāma* is itself defined in terms of the events described above as *dhammatā*.

¹⁷ *Dhammapada* v.127 cited by number only in the text. This is the so-called ‘law of kamma’ or as here ‘the inevitability of actions’. This inevitability was eroded as time went on, and eventually the Vajrasattva mantra became a way to circumvent any evil *kamma*, even the *atekiccha*: “incurable” or “unpardonable” actions (see also Attwood 2008).

herself. Wanting to cut the rope, he ran up to relieve her [calling] ‘don’t be afraid, don’t be afraid.’ The rope having become a snake he froze. Frightened he ran. Shortly after the woman died. Thus the danger should be obvious.¹⁸

The trees in all the provinces acquire fruit and flowers etc. all at the same time¹⁹; the wind blowing or not blowing; the quickness or slowness of the sun’s heat; the devas sending rain or not;²⁰ day blossoming lotuses withering at night; this and similar things are the inevitability of seasons.²¹

From rice seed comes only the rice fruit; from a sweet fruit comes only sweet flavour, and from a bitter fruit comes only bitter taste. This is the inevitability of seeds.

From the first aspects of mind and mental events (*citta-cetasikā dhammā*), to the last, each is conditioned by a condition or precondition (*upanissaya-paccayena*). Thus that which comes forth from eye-cognition etc.²² is immediately in agreement [with that cognition].²³

The shaking of the 10,000 world system when the bodhisatta enters his mother’s belly and other such phenomena [associated with the life story of the Buddha as told in the *Mahāpadāna Sutta*], this is called the inevitability of natures (*dhammaniyāma*). Inevitability of natures is understood as consisting in this. This meaning is indicated in the text that begins ‘this bhikkhus is *dhammatā*’.²⁴

¹⁸ As best as I can make out this is a magical allegorical story—the rope turns into a snake to prevent the man from saving the woman, because this would have meant that she escaped from the fate she deserves after having strangled her husband. See also note above. Presumably the idea of a rope turning into a snake did not seem wholly improbable to the *bhikkhu saṅgha*.

¹⁹ Pāli: *ekappahāreneva* literally ‘with just one blow’.

²⁰ It is curious that modern translators often leave out the notion that it is *devas* who send the rain – they silently remove this supernatural cause and only allow that it rains.

²¹ The word *utu* means ‘[good or proper] season, time; annual seasons (in India hot, rainy, and winter; *gimha*, *vassa* & *hemanta*); the menstrual cycle.’ PED’s sense 2, which defines it as ‘physical order’ draws specifically on Mrs Rhys Davids’ distorted views on the *niyāmas* not from the textual references – which is to say that no Pāli text ever refers to *utu-niyāma* in this way! Related forms are *utuka* ‘seasonal’, *utunī* ‘a menstruating woman’, *utu-pariṇāma* ‘change of seasons’. The Sanskrit equivalent *ṛtu* has more or less the same range of meanings as Pāli *utu* (c.f. MW). It may be that we can connect *ṛtu* with *ṛta* ‘the cosmic order’ (Pāli lacks this word, but the form would be **uta*) since they derived from PIE **ar* ‘to fit together’. English has many words from this root including: *arm* and *art* and all their derivative and associated forms; *order*, *rate*, *ratio* and related forms. Sayadaw (1978) renders *utu-niyāma* as ‘caloric order’. In this he is most likely following the medieval *Abhidhamma* textbook *Abhidhammattha Saṅgaha* (Bodhi 1993) in which *utu* comes to mean ‘temperature’, and refers to the influence of the fire element in the origination of material phenomena (e.g. p.250). The date of this text is doubtful (though Nyanatusita 2008 assigns it to the 12th century). This late interpretation is not applicable to the 5th century texts which form the basis of the interpretation of *utuniyāma*. What is clearly intended in DA, As and Abhi-av (and its commentaries) is cyclic seasonal phenomena: the flowering and fruiting of trees in the same season throughout the land, winds, the heat of the sun in different seasons, and the day night cycles.

²² Meaning ear, nose, tongue, body and mind cognition.

²³ The point here seems to be the one made in the *Mahātañhasaṅkhaya Sutta* (M 38) from whatever condition cognition arises, it is named after that. The cognition that arises on condition of eye and form is eye-cognition: (*yaññadeva, bhikkhave, paccayaṃ paṭicca uppajjati viññānaṃ thena teneva saṅkhaṃ gacchati. cakkuñca paṭicca rūpe uppajjati viññānaṃ, cakkhuvīññāna-t-eva saṅkhaṃ gacchati* - M i.259). So a contact between eye and form does not give rise to ear cognition (the formula takes no account of synaesthesia). In a sense the point here is the same as the inevitability of seeds: you can’t have ear cognition from eye contact.

²⁴ I follow Dhīvan’s suggested translation in this sentence.

Atthasālinī 272-274. Pañcavidhaṃ Niyāma

The *Atthasālinī* is Buddhaghosa's commentary on the *Dhammasaṅgaṇī*, a text from the *Abhidhamma Piṭaka*; it was composed ca. 5th century, Sri Lanka.

In this place what's called the 'five-fold inevitability' is comprehended, i.e. the inevitability of seeds, the inevitability of seasons, the inevitability of actions, the inevitability of natures, and the inevitability of thoughts.

There: grass and shrubs grow upwards; a right-handed creeper, grows around the tree to the right; Sunflowers turn to face the sun; a vine grows by turning towards the tree; a coconut tree with its head cut off, doesn't grow; the seed always gives a similar fruit—this is the inevitability of seeds.

The fact that trees acquire flowers, fruits, and sprouts all in one go is called the seasonal inevitability.

Actions connected with three causes give results connected with three or two causes, or no cause. Actions connected with two causes give results connected with two causes or no cause, and do not give results connected with three causes. Getting a result which is similar to the cause is called the inevitability of actions. Additionally it is called the inevitability of actions because the result is in accordance with the action.²⁵

There are stories which illustrate this. Such as the crow that was flying along when a blade of grass rose up from a fire, and caught the crow around the neck and killed him.²⁶ Also the sailors who were becalmed on the great ocean. They passed around straws to see who should be expelled from the ship. [At this point the commentary tells us that the lot fell three times to the wife of the captain]. There's only one action to prevent us from all perishing: we must throw her overboard! The captain said, "I can't bear to see her floating in the water", so tie a pot of sand to her neck and throw her overboard. Then a bold man seized the opportunity and threw her overboard. One bhikkhu entered a cave and the mountain top fell down blocking the entrance. On the seventh day he was freed [when the boulder blocking the entrance miraculously moved itself].

The perfect Buddha sitting in the Jeta Grove teaching the Dhamma related these three examples at one time. The Teacher, seeing the past repeated, said "not that [action] done by another; but the action done by you!"

The crow was a man in a previous life. Unable to master one of his oxen, he wound a braid of straw around its neck and set fire to it, killing the ox. Now given that, he could not escape his action by flying through the air.²⁷ The woman [on the ship] was also a woman in a previous life. A dog becoming acquainted with her, followed when she went to the wilderness, and returned with her. People mocked her saying, "here come the hunter and her dog." Upset by this and unable to restrain the dog, she tied a pot of sand around its neck and threw it in the water. And because of that she could not escape even in the middle of the ocean. Similarly the bhikkhu was a cowherd in a previous life, [and seeing] a lizard enter a hole he covered it up with bunches of sticks. However seven days later he returned and uncovered it. The terrified lizard emerged. Out of compassion he did not kill it. He too

²⁵ This is the same principle as the seed always giving the same kind of fruit: apples from apple seeds, never apples from orange seeds!

²⁶ This and the subsequent stories come from the commentary on Dhammapada verse 127 (Dhp 127) which is cited below. It is Dhp 127 is also cited in the account of the fivefold *niyāma* at DA 2.431. In each of these stories something bad happens in this life due to an evil action in the past. This is a deterministic view of kamma in which a misfortune in this life is caused by having done a similar action in the past. This would appear to be the orthodox Theravāda view of *kamma*.

²⁷ Note that the manner of his death matches the way that he killed the ox in a past-life.

could not escape his action though he sat in a mountain cave. These three reasons being combined were put into this verse:

Not in the sky, nor the middle of the ocean,
Nor in a mountain cave;
Though terrified there is nowhere on earth,
Where one might escape from an evil action.²⁸

This is called the inevitability of actions. It could be told in other types of reason as well.

The shaking of the 10,000 world systems when the bodhisatta takes rebirth, comes out from his mother's belly, attaining of perfect awakening of the Tathāgata, turning of the wheel of the Dhamma, release from the components of life, and the complete extinction—this is called the inevitability of natures.

However in the striking of sense organ (*pasāda*²⁹) by a sense object (*ārammaṇa*³⁰)—"what you advert to (*āvajjana*), that you become; what you go to (*javana*) you become".³¹ There is no doer, nor anyone who causes it to be done. For anyone, however, from the time of striking of sense organ by sense object, [consciousness of the object] begins with the functional mind-element consciousness (*kiriya-manodhātu-citta*)³² causing an excitation in the subconscious (*bhavaṅga*³³), eye-cognition (*cakkhu-viññāṇa*) accomplishes the functions of perception (*dassana-kicca*), the resultant mind-element (*vipāka-mano-dhātu*) accomplishes the function of receiving (*sampañchana-kicca*), the resultant mental cognition element (*vipāka-mano-viññāṇa-dhātu*) accomplishes the function of examining [the object] (*santīraṇa-kicca*), the functional mental cognition element (*kiriya-mano-viññāṇa-dhātu*) accomplishes the function of determining [the nature of the object] (*voṭṭhapana-kicca*), and impulse (*javana*) experiences the nature (*rasa*) of sense-objects (*ārammaṇa*). This is called the inevitability of thoughts. This is understood.³⁴

²⁸ Dhammapada v.127. This is the so-called 'law of kamma' or as here 'the inevitability of actions' (see also Attwood 2008). This inevitability was eroded as time went on, and eventually the Vajrasattva Mantra became a way to circumvent any evil *kamma*, even the *atekiccha*: "incurable" or "unpardonable" actions (see for example A iii.146).

²⁹ This sense of *pasāda* 'clear, bright; joy, satisfaction' is peculiar to the Abhidhamma.

³⁰ The primary sense of *ārammaṇa* is 'foundation' (c.f. *dhamma*) but here the abstract idea of foundation upon which cognition arises is meant. The *pañicca* in *pañicca-samuppāda* means 'having rested on' implying something resting on a foundation.

³¹ The reference here is to a detailed Abhidharma model of the stages of cognition. See Nyanatiloka (2004) sv. *āvajjana & javana*.

³² The function (*kiriya*) of *manodhātu* in Abhidhamma thinking is to cause advertence (*āvajjana*) towards sense objects; and a *citta* is a moment of consciousness.

³³ Nāṇamoli translates *bhavaṅga* as 'life-continuum' because it is what allows *kamma* to manifest over lifetimes. In this it resembles the *alāya-vijñāna* of the Yogācāra-vāda. We perceive objects because impact of sense object on sense organ causes an excitation in the *bhavaṅga*. The problem of just how *kamma* follows us from life to life is one of the most difficult metaphysical problems presented by Buddhist doctrines. Without inventing metaphysical entities which store memories we cannot remember past lives (as Buddhist doctrine requires as *abhisambodhi*); or keep tally of our actions so that the results which should accrue to us do so. However such a metaphysical entity is intrinsically eternalist – it is virtually the *ātman* of the Upaniṣads. Continuity between lives creates insoluble metaphysical problems and leads to inconsistencies which cannot be reconciled.

³⁴ This is an outline of part of an *Abhidhamma* analysis of the process of cognition known broadly as *cittivūthi* or cognitive series, which describes in detail the process by which the mind cognises sensory data. The *cittivūthi* is described (in great detail) at Vism xiv.111 ff. (= Nāṇamoli p.514 ff.). See also Ronkin (2005; esp. p.218) which takes a different approach to translation. Another resource is Nyanatiloka's *Buddhist Dictionary*.

Don't panic if you don't understand this long, highly convoluted, and jargon laden sentence. What it boils down to is a highly scholastic *Abhidhammika* version of the processes of cognition. All that is necessary is to understand that the *citta-niyāma* refers to the process of cognition.

Abhidhammāvatāra

A verse summary of Abhidhamma attributed to Buddhadatta, a South Indian contemporary of Buddhaghosa, ca. 5th century CE.³⁵

468. Inevitability of seasons and seeds, and the inevitability (*niyāmatā*³⁶) of actions and *dhammas*;
And the inevitability of thoughts, should be known as the five inevitabilities.
469. Regarding the bearing of fruits and flowers all in one blow,
By all the trees; this is the inevitability of seasons.
470. Whatever the seed, it becomes a comparable fruit
The beheaded coconut tree [doesn't grow],³⁷ this is the result of the seed (*bījajo*)³⁸
471. Three causes, two causes and no cause;³⁹
Give the appropriate result: this is the inevitability of actions.
472. The birth of a bodhisatta being accompanied by the shaking of the earth,
And the many universes etc, this is the inevitability of *dhammas*.
473. Hit in the sense-organ by the sense-field, however;⁴⁰
Apprehending the product, this is the inevitability of thought.⁴¹

³⁵ The text is in verse. One line of translation corresponds to one line of verse, but I've made no attempt to put it into verse.

³⁶ The two terms *niyāma* and its abstract counterpart *niyāmatā* 'the state of *niyāma*' seem to be used synonymously here.

³⁷ This is an allusion: 'cutting off the head of a coconut tree' (*matthake nāḷikerassa, chiddattam*). If you cut the head of a coconut tree or a palm tree, unlike other trees it will die. Another agricultural illusion sometimes used alongside this one is that a banana shoot dies when it has fruited. The coconut allusion suggests that *bīja* refers to all the different ways that plants reproduce and grow.

³⁸ Presumably *bījaniyāma* is abbreviated here to fit the metre, but *bījajo* gives us a further insight into the meaning of *niyāma* since the suffix *-ja* comes from √*jan* 'to bring forth, produce, cause'. Since *niyāma* here is treated as synonymous with *-ja* we can get some further insight into its meaning.

³⁹ *tihetu*, *duhetu* (or *dvihetu*) and *ahetu* are terms only found in the commentaries to the Abhidhamma, particularly in the *Atthasālinī*. Each refers to a type of rebirth (*paṭisandhi*). The three *hetu* are the opposites of the three poisons: craving, hatred, and confusion (*lobha*, *dosa*, & *moha*). A being possessing *tihetu* (i.e. *alobha*, *adosa*, & *amoha*) can only be reborn in the human realm or a god realm; a being with none (*ahetu*) will be reborn in the lower worlds (*apāya* = animal, *peta* (ghost), *asura* (demon), and hell realms), or if in the human realm afflicted by some disability. The fate of the *duhetu-paṭisandhika* (the one who is reborn with two causes) is not specified. (Nyanaponika 2004, p.167).

⁴⁰ In the Pāli model of sense cognition, the sense object hits the sense organ producing a sensation.

⁴¹ This is a very brief allusion to a more complex model which is given in more detail above in the *Atthasālinī*.

Abhidhammātika Internal Commentary

The Abhidhamma is a matrix⁴² of abstracts for the Abhidhamma, with lists of pairs and triplets of terms from which the whole of the text can theoretically be reconstructed. The passage on the *niyāmas* is from an internal commentary on the *mātika* associated with the *Dhammasaṅgaṇī* (the *niyāmas* don't appear to be mentioned in the *mātrix* itself, but only in this appendix.); and was composed in South India by Coḷaratta Kassapa (12–13th c.).

The five-fold inevitability: inevitability of seeds, inevitability of seasons, inevitability of actions, inevitability of natures, and inevitability of thoughts.

Regards this, from the seeds of the different kinds of tree, grass, shrubs, creepers, and celestial trees comes the same kind of fruit. This is called the inevitability of seeds.

The way that trees all get their sprouts, flowers and fruits all in one go, at the same time, this called the season inevitability. Actions which are skilful or unskilful give results of the same kind; give results in accordance with the action. This is called inevitability of actions.

The bodhisatta taking rebirth, emerging from his mother's belly, and the thirty-two portentous signs⁴³ including the awakening and turning of the wheel of the Dhamma. This is called the inevitability of natures.

According to the way it's said that the successive functions of the subconscious (*bhavaṅga*) and impulses (*āvajjana*) etc.⁴⁴ manifest in the mind (*cittappavatti*). This is called the inevitability of thoughts.

[⁴⁵Now however by the inevitability of thoughts should be understood—the twenty-five impulses of the cognitive mind element occurring successively amongst mind and mental events⁴⁶ having functions, [and] according their origin, states with a single function,⁴⁷ and the remaining states with two, three, four or five functions formerly mentioned.⁴⁸ And thus referring to one door etc.⁴⁹ And according to the classification on account of functions and [sense] doors of the mind and mental events should be understood. However there is this distinction—function is concerned with everything (14) doing functions like (7) the mind. Having renounced the five functions of seeing etc, there are however initial and sustained thought and resolve;⁵⁰ (9) having renounced receiving (*sampaṭicchana*) and examining (*santīraṇa*) because of that effort; (7) having renounced adverting and examining there

⁴² The words *mātika* and *matrix* are cognate and have almost the same meanings.

⁴³ *pubbanimitta*, literally “signs from the past”, i.e. signs that precede events, or portents. The traditional four sights (old age, sickness, death and the seeker) are also referred to as *pubbanimitta*. The 32 portents are probably the list referred to in *acchariya-abbhūta Sutta* (M 123) which lists an unnumbered series of miraculous events associated with the birth of the *bodhisatta*.

⁴⁴ See the version of the *niyāmas* in the *Atthasālinī*

⁴⁵ My translation of this passage is tentative – it requires a detailed knowledge of *abhidhamma* categories and idiom which I don't possess. However compare the discussion of the *cittaniyāma* in the *Atthasālinī* above. The numbers in parentheses don't seem to grammatically fit into the text, so I have not tried to translate them as such – they may be footnotes or references to the *mātika*. The resulting translation doesn't always make sense, and I suspect it wouldn't without considerable study of the Abhidhamma more generally, but I'm not very concerned as long as it is understood that what is being discussed is a complex Abhidhamma model of cognition. If we understand this whole passage as saying the *citta-niyāma* refers to the *process of cognition* we'll be on the right track.

⁴⁶ Theravāda Abhidhamma lists 89 kinds of *cetas*.

⁴⁷ *ekakiccaṭṭhānāni* i.e. *eka-kicca-ṭṭhāna* in the nominative or accusative plural (*-āni*) the places with a single function

⁴⁸ *pubbe vuttāni* – mentioned previously in the commentary? Not sure about this.

⁴⁹ In this context the five physical senses are referred to as doors (*dvāra*).

⁵⁰ *vitakka-vicāra-adhimokkhā*: This seems to refer to withdrawing from the physical senses in meditation.

is rapture (*pīti*); having abandoned avoidance of boundless states⁵¹ and abstinence⁵² together with examining, however, (20) and skilful (*kusala*) and indeterminate (*avyākata*) [actions]⁵³ and desire (*chanda*) and examining (*santīraṇa*) ; (5) abandoning sense objects because of boundless; (4) with abstinence (*virati*) they make skilful impulses and functions. And because the door of abstinence is just the mind-door, so there is compassion (*karuṇā*) and sympathetic joy (*mudita*). Just in the mind-door is abstention from bad conduct and grasping the concept of a being (*sattapaññattiggahaṇa*⁵⁴). Although the six doors are unskilful, any conceit, jealousy, avarice and misconduct (*māna-issāmacchariya-kukkuccāni*) come from the mind-door⁵⁵. What is left concerns the six doors and freedom from doors. The remainder is just like the mind. That comprising sense objects will be clearly protected on three grounds.⁵⁶]

⁵¹ I.e. the four boundless states or the *brāhmaviharas*: *mettā, karuṇā, mudita, upekkha*.

⁵² Probably a reference to abstinence from unskilful actions of body, speech and mind.

⁵³ *kusalāvyakatā* – I’m reading it as a dvandva, i.e. ‘skilful & indeterminate’ (two of the three kinds of mental state, with the third being unskilful ‘*akusala*’ represented by *chando*) but in fact it doesn’t really make sense to exclude skilful actions here so I suspect I am confused. Perhaps all mental states are to be rejected?

⁵⁴ For *sattapaññatti* ‘the concept of the being’ see S iv.39 which says that a ‘concept of being’ exists when there is sense object, sense faculty, and sense discrimination, and things to be discriminated by sense discrimination (e.g. *cakkhaviññānaviññātabbā dhammā*).

⁵⁵ I’m unsure about how to read *manodvārikānevāti*

⁵⁶ I’m unsure how to read *parittārammaṇattike* – but it is probably *paritta-ārammaṇa-(t)tike* (protect-conditions-three) in the accusative plural

Abhidhammāvatāra-purāṇatīkā

Composed by in Sri Lanka by Vācissara Mahāsāmi ca. 13th century or Sāriputta ca. 12th century. This text is a commentary on the text of the *Abhidhammāvatāra Nāmarūpa-parichedo* (tīka) so is technically a sub-sub-commentary. This commentary is an incomplete word by word commentary – words from the text being commented on are in single quotes (with the Pāli in parentheses or in notes).

(468.) ‘Inevitability of seasons and seeds’ (*utubījanīyāma*) means inevitability of seasons (*utunīyāma*) and the inevitability of seeds (*bījanīyāma*). And the ‘inevitability of actions and *dhammas*’ means the abstract inevitability of *kamma* [or the law of *kamma*]; and the inevitability of *dhammas* such as the perfection of ethics etc.⁵⁷; and the inevitability of thoughts (*cittassa nīyāmo*⁵⁸); [and these] five states of inevitability (*niyāmatā*) should be known by the wise.

(469.) ‘There’ [means] amongst there fives inevitabilities, all of the trees fruit & flowers etc all at once bear in season, this is the state of inevitability about seasons (*ujunīyāmatā*).

(470.) ‘Whatever the seed, it becomes a comparable fruit’: the origin of comparable fruits and comparable, from whatever seeds, this is the inevitability of seeds.’

‘The beheaded coconut tree’ means the fruit of the coconut tree comes from the head [and cutting off the head means there will not be any fruit]; ‘the state of being cut⁵⁹’; ‘this is the result of the seed’ (*ayaṃ bījajo*) means the inevitability of being born from a seed (*bījato jāto nīyāmo*).⁶⁰

(471.) A three cause action and a three cause result, and a two cause result, and an uncaused result, give the appropriate result, this is the inevitability of actions⁶¹.

(472.) ‘The birth of a bodhisatta’ A nascent conqueror (*jināṅkura*) born at the appointed moment being accompanied by the shaking of the earth in many ways, this is the inevitability of *dhammas* such as the perfection of ethics etc.

(473.) ‘While being hit in the sense-organ by this sense field’⁶²; ‘here’ in this process of thought⁶³; ‘apprehending’ means the product of thoughts.

⁵⁷ Pāli *sīlādi-pāramī-dhamma-nīyāmatā*. One of the ways that dhamma can be translated is ‘list item’ it is regularly used in this sense to the list of items typically called *nidānas* in English. In fact the list items as *dhammas*, and the relationship between them is that each *dhamma* forms the basis (*nidāna*) for the next. The author of this sub-commentary reads *dhammanīyāma* in this way. Perhaps because the usual reading is to list the kinds of miracles that occurs at the birth of a *tathāgata*?

⁵⁸ Here the author has resolved the compound *cittanīyāma* into its grammatical components the inevitability (*niyāma*) of thought (*cittassa*) where the form of *citta* is genitive singular ‘of thought, of intention, of the mind’.

⁵⁹ This is difficult to fit with my translation of the original. The verse has *matthake nāḷikerassa chiddattam*... which means ‘having cut the head from the coconut tree.’ And this sentence is split into two bits by the commentary so the previous comment comments on *matthake nāḷikerassa* ‘from the head of the coconut’; whereas this comment glosses *chiddattam* (an abstract noun from *chidda* ‘cutting’) with *chiddabhāvo* ‘the state of being cut’ which is sensible in isolation, but doesn’t seem to help in the context. It also seems to result in the strange punctuation of the verse which separates ‘cutting’ and ‘the head of the coconut’ into two phrases whereas they are more obviously part of the same phrase.

⁶⁰ The Pāli *bījajo* and *bījato jāto* are equivalents ‘born from a seed’.

⁶¹ The commentary just paraphrases the original closely. See notes on the original of verse 471.

⁶² Again this is just a close paraphrase of the original.

⁶³ My translation rather obscures the placing of *idha* ‘here’ in the sentence.

A 6. 86 Obstructions

Āvaraṇa Sutta, Aṅguttara Nikāya, iii.435.

Listening to the excellent teachings, [a person] endowed with six things is incompetent to come upon inevitability (*niyāma*) of perfection amongst skilful states:⁶⁴ endowed with an obstruction⁶⁵ by actions (*kamma*), an obstruction by defilements (*kilesas*), an obstruction by results [of former actions]; with a lack of faith (*saddha*), a lack of zeal (*chandika*), and foolishness (*duppañña*).

Listening to the good teachings, [a person] endowed with six things is competent to come upon inevitability of perfection amongst skilful states: not endowed with an obstruction by actions (*kamma*), nor an obstruction by defilements (*kilesas*), nor an obstruction by results [of former actions]; with faith, zeal, and intelligence (*paññavant*).

⁶⁴ This sentence is interesting for using *dhamma* in three different senses: things or list items; the teachings (*saddhamma*); and skilful [mental] states. The phrase ‘come upon inevitability of perfection amongst skilful states’ (*niyāmaṃ okkamituṃ kusalesu dhammesu sammattaṃ*) is a pericope or stock phrase and occurs in all the other *Aṅguttara* texts. Clearly it is related to phrase found in S 25.1 ‘entering the inevitability of perfection’ (*okkanto sammattaṃ- niyāma*). The verb *okkamati* (infinitive *okkamitum*, present participle *okkanto*) is from the root $\sqrt{\text{kam}}$ ‘to go’ with the suffix o- ‘down’ (= *ava-* c.f. *avakkamati*) and means ‘entre, fall into (as sleep), develop, to appear in (of a subjective state); to approach’. In conjunction with *niyāma* it means ‘come to inevitability, fall into an assured state’ and in these texts the inevitability is with reference to perfection ‘*sammatta*’ (an abstract noun from *sammā* ‘right, correct, perfect’) which is frequently associated with the limbs of the Eightfold Path. It seems to be something like ‘confirmed confidence’ *aveccappassāda*; else it relates to the idea that there is a point of no return beyond which progress is assured (*sotapanna*) c.f. S 25.1.

⁶⁵ Pāli *āvaraṇatā* literally ‘a state of obstruction’

S 12.20 Conditions

Paccaya Sutta, Saṃyutta Nikāya, ii.25.

Dwelling at Sāvathī etc.⁶⁶

“Bhikkhus, I will teach you dependent arising, and dependently arisen phenomena. Listen to this, make your mind receptive and I will speak.”

“Yes, Bhante,” the bhikkhus agreed.

The Bhagavan said “Bhikkhus what is dependent arising? ‘With birth as condition there is old age and death.’ Whether *tathāgatas* arise or not, this element [of conditionality] is persistent⁶⁷, *dhammas*⁶⁸ persist [in the presence of their condition] (*dhamma-tt̥hitatā*⁶⁹), *dhammas* are constrained [by the condition] (*dhamma-niyāmatā*)⁷⁰, and specific conditionality (*idappacchayatā*).⁷¹ A *tathāgata* awakens to the highest knowledge and realises this, then tells, teaches, declares, establishes, reveals, analyses, and makes it evident.”

And he said, “You should see that with birth as condition there is old age and death.”

“With becoming as condition there is birth etc.; with grasping as condition there is becoming etc.; with craving as condition there is grasping etc.; with feeling as condition there is craving etc.; with contact as condition there is feeling etc; with the six sense spheres as condition there is contact etc.; with name and form as condition there are the six sense spheres etc.; with cognition as condition there is name and form etc.; with constructions as condition there is cognition etc.; ignorance as condition there are constructions. Whether *tathāgatas* arise or not, this element [of conditionality] is persistent, *dhammas* persist [in the presence of their condition], *dhammas* are constrained [by the condition], and specific conditionality. A *tathāgata* awakens to the highest knowledge and realises this, then tells, teaches, declares, establishes, reveals, analyses, and makes it evident.”

⁶⁶ The details are missing, but most of this *saṃyutta* are delivered in Jeta Grove of Anāthapiṇḍika’s park outside Sāvathī. See especially S 12.1, which also gives the full version of the *nidāna* chain that is abbreviated in this text.

⁶⁷ Pāli *thita* ‘standing, remaining’.

⁶⁸ One thing to keep in mind here is that though we call the twelve items in the list ‘*nidānas*’, in Pāli they are actually *dhammas*. *Nidāna* ‘basis’ describes the relationship between these twelve *dhammas*.

⁶⁹ Pāli *thitatā* ‘state or fact of standing or remaining; constancy.’ The initial *th* becomes *-tt̥* in compounds. Buddhaghosa sees *dhamma-* here as plural i.e. ‘mental objects’; and tells us that conditionally arisen *dhammas* persist with that condition (*paccayena hi paccayuppannā dhammā tt̥thanti* SA 2.40), i.e. as long as the condition persists. Confusingly Buddhaghosa commenting on the parallel phrase at A 3.134 glosses *dhamma-* with *sabhāva* ‘nature; state of mind; truth, reality’, most likely meaning ‘nature’ (AA 2.380). I can’t reconcile the two approaches.

⁷⁰ Buddhaghosa says here that *dhammaniyāma* refers to the way that ‘the condition constrains the *dhammas* [that arise]’ (*paccayo dhamme niyāmeti* SA 2.40). Note again *dhammas* in the plural. M i.259 explores this quality from the other side: ‘From whatever condition cognition arises, it is known as that kind of consciousness. (*yaññadeva, bhikkhave, paccayaṃ paṭicca uppajjati viññāṇaṃ tena ten'eva sañkhaṃ gacchati.*) Pāli Buddhism makes no allowance for synaesthesia: eye forms, and eye faculty only give rise to eye consciousness; never to ear, nose, tongue or body consciousness. This is a constraint (*niyāma*) of the Buddhist process of cognition.

⁷¹ There are four adjectives here describing the property of dependent arising *thitā*, *dhammatthitatā*, *dhammaniyāmatā*, and *idappacchayatā*. They, along with the pronoun (*sā*) follow the feminine gender of *dhātu*. Other translators ignore Buddhaghosa and take *dhammatthitatā*, *dhammaniyāmatā* as standalone phrases with ‘*the Dhamma*’ as the subject, rather than as adjectives describing *dhātu*. Hence Bodhi “the stableness of the Dhamma” & “the fixed course of the Dhamma” (p.551); and Thanissaro “this regularity of the Dhamma” & “this orderliness of the Dhamma” (ATI). I don’t think this is justified by the grammar or the context; and it is rare to encounter Bodhi disagreeing with Buddhaghosa. Compare A 3.134 which applies the first two qualities to the three *lakkhaṇas*. We could say that *thitā*, *dhammatthitatā*, *dhammaniyāmatā*, and *idappacchayatā* are the nature of experience; whereas the *lakkhaṇas* are a consequence of that nature.

And he said, “You should see that with ignorance as condition there are constructions.”

“Thus indeed, bhikkhus, these [conditions]⁷² have thusness⁷³, persistence⁷⁴, fidelity⁷⁵, and specificity⁷⁶—and this is called dependent arising.”

“And what, bhikkhus, are dependently arise dhammas? Ageing & death, bhikkhus is impermanent, constructed and dependently arisen⁷⁷, its nature is to decay, to perish, to fade to cease.⁷⁸ So to birth, becoming, attachment, craving, sensation, contact, the six sense spheres, name & form, cognition, constructs and ignorance.

“Since the ideal disciple⁷⁹ sees well, with perfect understanding as they are ‘this is dependent arising, these are dependently arisen dhammas’—

—it’s not possible that they will run to the past: ‘I existed in the past; I didn’t exist in the past; what was I in the past, why⁸⁰ was I in the past; having been what, what was I in the past?

— it’s not possible that they will run to the future: ‘I will exist in the future; I won’t exist in the future; what will I be in the future, why will I be in the future; having been what, what I become in the future?

— it’s not possible that in the immediate present there will be inward doubt: ‘do I exist; do I not exist; what am I; why am I; where is this being from; where will it go in the future?’

⁷² Thus Buddhaghosa reads *yā tatra*. (SA 2.41)

⁷³ Pāli *tathatā* ‘thusness’ (*tatha* + *tā*) according to Buddhaghosa is “from whatever condition, neither more or less, that *dhamma* is produced” insists on the relationship between the condition and the *dhamma* produced. This is the counterpart of *thita* from the previous set of four.

⁷⁴ Pāli *avitathatā*, the state of *avitatha*; from *vitatha* (*vi* + *tatha*) no-truth; the double negative makes the basic meaning of *avithata* ‘truth’. Buddhaghosa interprets: ‘while the necessary conditions come together, there is no non-production or non-existence of existing dhammas, even for a moment.’ In relation to the earlier adjectives this is related to *dhammaṭṭhitatā* ‘the persistence of dhammas’.

⁷⁵ Pāli *anaññathatā* ‘not otherness’ or ‘without error’. Buddhaghosa ‘*dhammas* are not produced from the conditions of other *dhammas*’ i.e. one set of conditions must give rise to the appropriate *dhamma* and no other; likewise a *dhamma* cannot arise from another set of conditions. This is the counterpart of *dhammaniyāmatā* the constraint of *dhammas*.

⁷⁶ Pāli *idappacchayatā* specific conditionality. From *idaṃ paccaya*—PED ‘having its foundation in this’; i.e. ‘having *this* as a condition’ or having a specific condition. Buddhaghosa is a little cryptic here: ‘from the condition of ageing & death etc., or from the removal of the condition.’ I differ from Bodhi on how to interpret this passage (see *Paccaya Sutta Vaṇṇanā* and notes below). Here I think the idea is that when the condition is present the *dhamma* arises, and when the condition ceases the *dhamma* ceases.

⁷⁷ Pāli *aniccam saṅkhatam paṭiccasamuppannam*.

⁷⁸ Pāli *khayadhammam vayadhammam virāgadhammam nirodhadhammam*. Note that *-dhamma* here means ‘nature’ so more literally ‘of a nature to be cut off, of a nature to perish, of a nature to wane, of a nature to cease’.

⁷⁹ Pāli *ariyasāvaka*.

⁸⁰ Pāli *katham* is often ‘how?’, but it can also mean ‘why? For what reason?’ which makes more sense here.

Paccaya Sutta Vaṇṇanā (SA 2.40) - extract

Commentary on S 12.20

‘*Iti kho, bhikkhave*’ti means ‘thus indeed bhikkhus’. ‘These’ (*yā tatrā*) from amongst [the list] ‘with birth as a condition there is ageing and death’ etc.; ‘thusness’ (*tathatā*) etc. are synonyms for the mode of conditions: ‘thusness (*tathatā*) means that from whatever condition, neither more or less, that *dhamma* is produced; persistence (*avitathatā*) means that while the necessary conditions come together, there is no non-production or non-existence of existing *dhammas*, even for a moment; ‘fidelity’ (*anaññatha*) means that *dhammas* are not produced from the conditions of other *dhammas*; ‘specificity’ (*idapaccayatā*) means from the condition of ageing & death etc., or from the removal of the condition.⁸¹

⁸¹ PED suggests that the use of ‘group’, per Kern, here is wrong, c.f. Bodhi’s reading “conditions taken as a group (*paccayasamūhto*)” (p.742, n.54). On the face of it *samūhata* is a pp. of *samūhanati* ‘remove, abolish’ (its etymology is *saṃ + ud + √han* or *saṃ + ava + √han*; *√han* ‘smite, strike’. This is confirmed by BHS forms in BHSD. Compare PED *samūha* ‘crowd; and *samūheti* ‘to gather, collect’. PED says *samūheti* is a causative of *saṃ + √vah* or *√uh*; but the indicative form (*samuhati?* *saṃvahati?*; c.f. Skt. *saṃ√vah* in MW) does not occur in PED, or in the texts. BHSD sv. *samūhati* sees any connection between *samūhati* and *samūha* as “implausible”. In short, though Bodhi’s reading makes sense, it is implausible on linguistic grounds. Instead we need to think in terms that while the conditions are present the *dhamma* is produced (*imasmim sati, idam hoti*) but when the conditions cease so does the *dhamma* (*imassa nirodhā idam nirujjhati*). This also makes sense, and conforms to Pāli morphology.

A 3.134 Arising

*Uppādā Sutta, Aṅguttara Nikāya, i.286*⁸²

Whether *tathāgatas* arise or not, this element of constancy of nature (*dhammaṭṭhitatā*⁸³), of inevitability about nature (*dhammaniyāmatā*) remains⁸⁴:

All constructs are impermanent.⁸⁵
All constructs are disappointing.⁸⁶
All mental events are insubstantial.⁸⁷

A *tathāgata* awakens to the highest knowledge and realises this, then tells, teaches, declares, establishes, reveals, analyses, and makes evident:

All constructs are impermanent.
All constructs are disappointing.
All mental events are insubstantial.

⁸² Numbered 3.137 in CST.

⁸³ AA glosses *dhamma* with *sabhāva* ‘nature; state of mind; truth, reality’, and where they crossover is in the sense of ‘nature’. This does not mean nature in the general, Romantic sense, as the outdoors, but nature as in the nature of experience. The three *lakkhaṇas* describe important aspects of the nature of experience. Pāli *ṭhita* ‘standing, remaining’; *ṭhitatā* ‘state or fact of standing or remaining; constancy.’ [the *ṭh* becomes *-ṭṭha* in compounds]

⁸⁴ Compare S 12.20 which adds ‘specific conditionality’ (*idappacchayatā*) to the first two qualities and applies them to dependent arising (*paṭiccasamuppādam*) and dependently arisen dhammas (*paṭiccasamuppannā dhammā*). We could say that *dhammaṭṭhitatā*, *dhammaniyāmatā*, are the nature of experience; whereas the *lakkhaṇas* are consequence of that nature.

⁸⁵ *sabbe saṅkhārā anicca*. C.f. Dh. 277-279.

⁸⁶ *sabbe saṅkhārā dukkha*

⁸⁷ *sabbe dhammā anattā*

S 25.1 The Eye Sutta

Cakkhu Sutta, Saṃyutta Nikāya, iii.225.⁸⁸

Based at Sāvathī.⁸⁹

“Bhikkhus, the eye is impermanent (*anicca*), changeable (*vipariṇāma*⁹⁰), and capricious (*aññathābhāvi*⁹¹); the ear, the tongue, the nose, the body and the mind are impermanent, changeable, and capricious.”

“The one who believes in, and is drawn to these facts (*dhammā*) is called ‘a believer’ (*sassānusārī*⁹²), and develops the inevitability of perfection (*sammatta-niyāma*⁹³), rising to the level of a superior person, having surpassed the level of ordinary people. It’s impossible that they could act in such a way as to be reborn in hell, an animal womb, or the ghost realm⁹⁴; and it’s impossible to die without having personally experienced the fruits of stream-entry.”

“For the intelligent one who approves of just these facts because of his measure of insight is called someone who conforms to the facts,⁹⁵ and enters the inevitability of perfection, rising to the

⁸⁸ The subsequent *suttas* in this *nikāya* apply precisely the same analysis to forms, sense cognition, contact, sensations, perceptions, intentions, craving, the elements, and the *khandhas*.

⁸⁹ Texts in this *Nikāya* often lack the conventional opening and closing statements. Here it just says: *sāvathinidānaṃ*

⁹⁰ (or perhaps *vipariṇāminī*) a denominative verb from *vipariṇāma* ‘changing for the worse, vicissitude’.

⁹¹ (or perhaps *aññathābhāvinī*): from *aññathā* ‘otherwise, otherness’ and *bhāvinī* ‘future’ ultimately from *bhāveti* (the causative form of $\sqrt{bhū}$) ‘beget, produce, increase, cultivate’.

⁹² Or more literally ‘one who follows [the teacher] out of faith’.

⁹³ Bodhi (2000 p.1004) “one who has entered the fixed course of righteousness”. Here Buddhaghosa glosses the term *sammatta-niyāma* as ‘entering the noble [eight-fold] path’ (SA 2.346). D iii.255 lists eight *sammattas* which equate with the eight limbs of the *ariyamagga*. *Sammatta* is an abstract from *sammā* ‘right, properly, perfect’ which word is used with each limb: e.g. *sammādiṭṭhi* ‘perfect vision’ etc; and therefore means ‘perfection’. Presumably the idea of a ‘fixed course’ derives from the idea that the person becomes a stream-entrant and cannot be reborn in the lower realms. We can see this as a variation on the theme of ‘reaping what we sow’, i.e. inevitability of the result, here applied to the eight-fold path. This could be a ‘fixed course’, but really it’s just another kind of necessity or inevitability. Woodward, for once, does better than those who come afterwards with “assurance of perfection” (Vol. 3, p.177).

⁹⁴ Respectively these are *niraya*, *tiracchāna-yoni*, and *pettivisaya*. The last is a modified form of the afterlife destination of a simple binary rebirth eschatology. In Sanskrit *preta* simply means ‘the dead’ and its etymology seems to combine the word for father ‘*pitṛ*’ since the dead went to the realm of the fathers’; and the verb *pra√ī* ‘gone before, departed’. Since the spirits of the dead did not cease to exist, but dwelt in the realm of the fathers for a long time before coming back to earth, such spirits were considered to be a living presence. Brahmins would offer sacrifices to the fathers to sustain them in the afterlife. This afterlife destination appears to be referred to in Buddhist texts as ‘the other world’ (*paraloka*). Buddhists made a parody of these spirits, depicting them as always hungry spirits unable to be satisfied, thus at the same time mocking the practice of sacrifice and ancestor worship. Gananath Obeyesekere (2002) has explored the way this simple eschatology changes under the influence of moral ideas. The first thing that happens is that the afterlife destination bifurcates into places of reward and punishment. Since the upwards direction was traditionally seen as good, the destination for wrong doers was in the downwards direction, hence the name: *niraya* = *nir* (down) + \sqrt{i} ‘going’. (Compare the description of judgement and torture in the *Devadūta Sutta*, M 130, M iii.178.) The word translated as ‘animal’ is *tiracchāna* which is literally ‘one who goes horizontally’ i.e. as opposed to upright like a human.

⁹⁵ This sentence contains considerable ambiguity and has thus produced various translations, none of which are analysed by the translators: Woodward, in Rhys Davids and Woodward (1917-30; vol. 3, p.177) “He, brethren, by who these doctrines by his insight are moderately approved”; Bodhi (2000, p.1004) “One for whom these teachings are accepted thus after being pondered to a sufficient degree with wisdom...”; Thanissaro “One who after pondering with a modicum of discernment, has accepted that these phenomena are this way”; Piya Tan (2005) “...one who accepts these truths after pondering over them with some wisdom thus”. Pāli *Yassa kho, bhikkhave, ime dhammā evaṃ paññāya mattaso nijjhānaṃ khamanti, ayaṃ vuccati ‘dhammānusārī’* (*dhammānusārī* is often translated as a Dhamma-devotee or Dhamma-follower). SA takes *mattaso nijjhānaṃ*

level of a superior person, having surpassed the level of ordinary people. It's impossible that they could act in such a way as to be reborn in hell, an animal womb, or the ghost realm; and it's impossible to die without having personally experienced the fruits of stream-entry.”

One who thus understands these facts and sees them thus is called a stream-entrant (*sotāpanna*), constrained to proceed towards full awakening without suffering states of ruin⁹⁶.

khamanti as a unit and glosses it with *pamāṇato olokanaṃ khamanti* which is no easier to translate! The ablative indicates the point of origin of the action so *mattaso... khamanti* ‘they accept... from a measure’; which suggests ‘they accept from a measure of insight (*nijjhāna*)’. However PED notes that combinations of *nijjhāna* and *khamati* often mean ‘finds pleasure in’, and that *mattaso* often functions adverbially ‘in moderation, doing moderately’. The case of the word *paññāya* is ambiguous so it is variously rendered ‘with wisdom’; ‘of discernment’; ‘with some wisdom’; I’m inclined to think that it goes with *yassa*. Woodward’s translation mistakenly has ‘walker in faith’ for *dhammānusārin* in 25.1-10. ST glosses *olokana* as ‘seeing constructs with comprehension of the truth’ (*saccābhisamaya-saṅkhātāṃ dassanaṃ*); and *khamanti* as ‘they overcome, bear, they are able’ (*sahanti*) and ‘they are true, they are fit’ (*ñāyanti*).

⁹⁶ Pāli *a-vinipāta-dhammo niyato*. *Niyata* is the past participle from *niḥyam* (the verb from which *niyāma* also derives) and literally means ‘held back’; *vinipāta* is a ‘ruin or punishment’ and *dhamma* here means ‘a state’; and *avinipātadhamma* is ‘not in a state of punishment’ or ‘without a state of punishment’. Bodhi translates *niyato* “fixed in destiny” which reflects the idea that the stream-entrant is bound to awaken. Thanissaro changes from “orderly” above, and here opts for “steadfast” which seems to miss the point.

Bibliography

- Bodhi. (2000). *The Connected Discourses of the Buddha: A Translation of the Saṃyutta Nikāya*. Boston: Wisdom.
- Bodhi, ed. (1993) *A Comprehensive Manual of Abhidhamma: The Abhidhammattha Sangaha of Ācariya Anuruddha*. Kandy, Sri Lanka, Buddhist Publication Society.
- Cappeller, Carl. (1891). *Sanskrit-English Dictionary*, Strassburg.
- Chatṭha Saṅgāyana Tipiṭaka* [Version 4]. Vipassana Research Institute. (CST)
- Dhīvan (2010) ‘The Need for Doctrine: the Five Nīyamas and Western Buddhism.’ (forthcoming)
- Edgerton, Franklin. (1953). *Buddhist Hybrid Sanskrit Dictionary*, New Haven: Yale University Press.
- Gethin, Rupert. (2004). ‘He Who Sees Dhamma Sees Dhammas: Dhamma in Early Buddhism.’ *Journal of Indian Philosophy*, 32: 513–542.
- Katre, S.M. (1987). *Aṣṭādhyāyī of Pāṇini*, University of Texas Press.
- Ledi Sayadaw. (1978). ‘Niyama-Dīpani or Manual of Cosmic Order’, in *The Manuals of Buddhism*, trans. Barua, B.M, Rhys Davids, C.A.F., & Nyana. Bangkok: Mahamakut Press (orig. publ. 1965). Online: www.dhammadownload.com/html/view.php?id=5
- MacDonnell, A.A. (1893). *A Sanskrit-English Dictionary*. London: Longmans.
- Monier Williams, M. (1899). *A Sanskrit-English Dictionary*. London: Oxford University Press.
- Ñāṇamoli. (1997) *The Path of Purification: Visuddhimagga*. Singapore Buddhist Meditation Centre.
- Nyanatiloka (2004). *Buddhist Dictionary*. 4th ed. [1980] Buddhist Publication Society.
- Piya Tan. (2005). ‘(Anicca) Cakkhu Sutta. The (Impermanent) Eye Discourse.’ <http://dharmafarer.org/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2009/12/16.7-Anicca-Cakkhu-S-s25.1-piya.pdf>
- Rahula, Walpola. (1974). ‘Wrong Notions of *Dhammatā* (*Dharmatā*)’, in L. Cousins et al, eds., *Buddhist Studies in Honour of I.B. Horner*, Dordrecht: Reidel, pp.181–91.
- C. A. F. Rhys Davids & F. L. Woodward. (1917–30). *The Book of the Kindred Sayings: or Grouped Suttas*. [5 vols], Pali Text Society.
- Ronkin (2005) *Early Buddhist Metaphysics: The Making of a Philosophical Tradition*. Routledge.
- Shwe Zan Aung & Rhys Davids, C.A.F. (1915). *Points of Controversy, being a translation of the Kathāvatthu from the Abhidhamma-piṭaka*. London: Pali Text Society.
- Smith, John. (2009). *The Mahābhārata*, London: Penguin.