

THE BUDDHA’S MIDDLE-WAY: THE CONNECTION BETWEEN THEORY AND PRACTICE

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The Middle-way is very significant and it is one of the central teachings of the Buddha. It is understood by the dependent arising and is practiced by the noble eightfold path in order to understand the reality of phenomena and gain ultimate happiness (*nibbāna*). Many recent scholars have attempted to see Buddhism as an attempt to present the same pre-Buddhist world view inherited from the Vedic tradition in different languages. This does not do justice to the obvious originality evidenced in the teachings of the Buddha. The Buddha himself claimed that he gained vision into a reality that has not been revealed by any existing tradition of revelation (*pubbe ananussutesu dhammesu cakkhum udapādi*). A close investigation of his teaching shows that this claim of the Buddha was a genuine one. The originality of his teaching is reflected in his philosophical Middle Way and the practical Middle Way that he affirmed in consistency with the former. From some explanations in the *Nidāna Saṃyutta* of the *Saṃyuttanikāya* the Buddha mentioned the tendency to cling to extreme view-points relating to the reality about the world and its living beings. He also pointed out in the *Kaccāyanagotta Sutta* of the *Saṃyuttanikāya* that veering towards one or the other of the extremes has recognized as a common tendency among the people of the world (*dvayanissitāyaṃ kaccāyana yebhuyyena loko*). This study is based on both canonical sources and sources of Indian philosophy. The aim of the study is to find the misinterpretations of the Middle Way and throw light upon it; what exactly is the middle way theory, philosophy or doctrine of the Buddha?; what exactly are the extreme standpoints it seeks to deny?; what exactly is the practical middle way of the Buddha designated as the *Majjhimā Paṭipadā* or the three-fold scheme of training and what extreme lifestyles does it intend to reject? Taking into account the pre-Buddhist Indian religious and philosophical background how is the theoretical middle way of the Buddha related to or consistent with his practical middle way?

Keywords: Middle-way, *Majjhimanikāya*, *Saṃyuttanikāya*