

A Study on Conceit (*māna*) with reference to Theravada Buddhist Tradition

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The great intoxications of youth (*yobbana-mada*), of health (*ārogya-mada*), and of life (*jīvita-mada*) cause the ignorant world-ling pursued evil courses in bodily actions, speech and thought. The disputes, conflicts, fighting, etc. would be rampaged in any society by the root of conflict springs from envy (*issā*) and selfishness (*macchariya*) generated by likes (*piya*) and dislikes (*appiya*). However it seems that one of the causes of origins of conflicts is *māna*. Therefore, the purpose of this paper is to show the way of eliminating *māna*.

The method of controlling conceit is given in relation to the fetters of envy and avarice (*issāmācchariyasaññojanā*) as they are the nearest causes for conflicts. Though, in the Sutta beloved and hatred (*piyāpiya*) are given as the second causes, conceit (*māna*) should be included before it since *taṇhā*, *māna*, *diṭṭhi* have been the regular terms placed in the Canon.

The term, ‘*Māna*’ generally used in day to day language, is interpreted as follow.

“*Māna* is a Buddhist term that is translated as "pride", "arrogance", or "conceit". It is defined as an inflated mind that makes whatever is suitable, such as wealth or learning, to be the foundation of pride. It creates the basis for disrespecting others and for the occurrence of suffering.”²

Abhabba Sutta explains the ten dhammās that should be eradicated for attaining the stage of Arahant such as *rāga* (passion), *dosa* (hatred), *moha* (ignorant), *kodha* (anger), *upanāha* (ill-will), *makkhā* (hypocrisy), *palāsa* (malice), *issā* (jealousy), *macchariya* (greedy), *māna* (conceit).³

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² <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/M%C4%81na>

³ *Dasāme, bhikkhave, dhamme pahāya bhabbo arahattaṃ sacchikātum. Katame dasa? Rāgaṃ, dosaṃ, mohaṃ, kodhaṃ, upanāhaṃ, makkhaṃ, palāsaṃ, issaṃ, macchariyaṃ, mānaṃ. Ime kho, bhikkhave, dasa dhamme pahāya bhabbo arahattaṃ sacchikātun’ti.*

Under the ten fetters *sakkaya-diṭṭhi*, *vicikiccā*, *sīlabbataparāmāsa*, *kāmarāga*, *paṭigha*, *rūparāga*, *arūparāga*, *māna*, *uddacca* and *avijjā*, the *mānā* is given as the eighth. With the complete eradication of the last five fetters (*rūpa-rāga*, *arūpa-rāga*, *māna*, *uddacca*, *avijjā*), one would be able to attain the Arahant-hood. Therefore, by eradicating *māna*, one would be able to achieve the liberation.

When the Buddhist teachings are taken into consideration, we could find the deep meaning of conceit hidden behind. Accordingly, Nina van Gorkom explains *Māna*:

“There is conceit or pride when we consider ourselves important. Because of conceit we may compare ourselves with others. There can be conceit when we think ourselves better, equal or less than someone else. We may believe that there can be conceit only when we think ourselves better than someone else, but this is not so. There can be a kind of upholding of ourselves, of making ourselves important, while we compare ourselves with someone else, no matter in what way, and that is conceit.”⁴

The *Atthasālinī*⁵ gives the following definition to conceit (*māna*) stating the ābhidhammic position:

“...Herein conceit is fancying (deeming, vain imagining). It has haughtiness as characteristic, self-praise as function, desire to (advertise self like) a banner as manifestation, greed dissociated from opinionatedness as proximate cause, and should be regarded as (a form of) lunacy.”⁶

In *Visuddhi Magga*, the characteristic of *māna* is stated in contrast to the Abhidhamma:

“The inconstant of pride is that it has the characteristics of haughtiness. Its function is arrogance. It is manifested as vain-gloriousness. Its proximate cause is greed dissociated from views. It should be regarded as like madness.”⁷

⁴ <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/M%C4%81na>

⁵ *Atthasālinī* II, Part IX, Chapter III, 256

⁶ <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/M%C4%81na>

⁷ *The Path of Purification*, Bhaddanta Cariya Buddhaghosa, tra. Bhikkhu Ñānamoli, Singapore Buddhist Meditation Centre, p. 531

According to the Sutta Piṭaka, there are six dhammas that should be eradicated for achieving liberation. They are, as given in Arahanta Sutta, *mānaṃ, omānaṃ, atimānaṃ, adhimānaṃ, thambhaṃ, atinipātaṃ*.⁸

However, in Mahāniddeśa Pali different numbers of *māna* are being introduced.

1. One kinds of *māna* - *cittassa unnati* (haughtiness of mind)
2. Two kinds of *māna* - *attukkaṃsanamāno, paravaṃbhanamāno*
3. Three kinds of *māna* - *seyyohamasmi māno, sadisohamasmi māno, hīnohamasmi māno*
4. Four kinds of *māna* - because of *rūpāna, sadda, gandha, rasa*.
5. Five kinds of *māna* - because of *rūpa, sadda, gandh, rasa* and *poṭṭhaba*.
6. Six kinds of *māna* - because of *cakkhu, sota, ghāna, jivhā, kāya* and *mano*
7. Seven kinds of *māna* - *māno, atimāno, mānātimāno, omāno, adhimāno, asmimāno, micchāmāno*.
8. Eight kinds of *māna* - because of *lābhena, alābhena, yasena, ayasena, paṣaṃsāya, nindāya, sukhena, dukkhena*.
9. Nine kinds of *māna* - *seyyassa seyyohamasmi māno, seyyassa sadisohamasmi māno, seyyassa hīnohamasmi māno, sadisassa seyyohamasmi māno, sadisassa sadisohamasmi māno, sadisassa hīnohamasmi māno, hīnassa seyyohamasmi māno, hīnassa sadisohamasmi māno, hīnassa hīnohamasmi māno*.
10. Ten kinds of *māna* - because of *jāti, gotta, kolaputtiya, vaṇṇapokkharatāya, dhanena, ajjhenena, kammāyatanena, sippāyatanena, vijjāṭṭhānena, sutena, paṭibhānena, aññataraññatarena, vatthunā*.⁹

⁸ Cha, bhikkhave, dhamme pahāya bhabbo arahattaṃ sacchikātuṃ. Katame cha? mānaṃ, omānaṃ, atimānaṃ, adhimānaṃ, thambhaṃ, atinipātaṃ A.N. 3. 429 Arahanta Sutta

⁹ *Mānoti ekavidhena māno - yā cittassa unnati. Dvidhena māno - attukkaṃsano, paravaṃbhanamāno. Tividhena māno - 'seyyohamasmi'ti māno, 'sadisohamasmi'ti māno, 'hīnohamasmi'ti māno. Catubbidhena māno - lābhena mānaṃ janeti, yasena mānaṃ janeti, paṣaṃsāya mānaṃ janeti, sukhena mānaṃ janeti. Pañcavidhena māno - 'lābhiṃhi manāpikānaṃ rūpāna'nti mānaṃ janeti, 'lābhiṃhi manāpikānaṃ saddāna'nti mānaṃ janeti, 'lābhiṃhi manāpikānaṃ gandhāna'nti mānaṃ janeti, 'lābhiṃhi manāpikānaṃ rasāna'nti mānaṃ janeti, 'lābhiṃhi manāpikānaṃ phoṭṭhabbāna'nti mānaṃ janeti. Chabbidhena māno - chakkhūsampadāya mānaṃ janeti, sotāsampadāya mānaṃ janeti, ghānasampadāya mānaṃ janeti, jivhāsampadāya mānaṃ janeti, kāyasampadāya mānaṃ janeti,*

In relation to Abhidhamma, eighteen kinds of *māna* are introduced in Vibhaṅga as *seyya māna*, *sadisa māna*, *hīna māna*, *seyya seyya māna*, *seyya sadisa māna*, *seyya hīna māna*, *sadisa seyya māna*, *sadisa sadisa māna*, *sadisa hīna māna*, *hīna seyya māna*, *hīna sadisa māna*, *hīna hīna māna*, *māna*, *atimāna*, *mānātimāna*, *omāna*, *adhimāna*, *micchāmāna*.¹⁰

When the result of eradication of conceit is taken into consideration, number of Suttas should be examined so as to get the exact meaning. Kiṃsīla Sutta states the benefits of suppressing conceit that if the person does not have conceit, he could easily approach to the teacher with the due respective manner. Then, he always reminds and practices the words, teachings, morality and celibacy taught by him.¹¹ And Arahanta Sutta gives that since the conceit has completely been eradicated by the Arahant, he does not have the faculty of conceit. He has defeated the conceit. Therefore, the skilled Arahant, knowing the conventional reality of the world, expresses the conventional form of language and he says ‘I say’ and ‘I am said’.¹²

manosampadāya mānaṃ janeti. Sattavidhena māno - māno, atimāno, mānātimāno, omāno, adhimāno, asmimāno, micchāmāno. Aṭṭhavidhena māno - lābhena mānaṃ janeti, alābhena omānaṃ janeti, yasena mānaṃ janeti, ayasena omānaṃ janeti, pasaṃsāya mānaṃ janeti, nindāya omānaṃ janeti, sukkena mānaṃ janeti, dukkheṇa omānaṃ janeti. Navavidhena māno - seyyassa seyyohamasmīti māno, seyyassa sadiso hamasmīti māno, seyyassa hīho hamasmīti māno, sadisassa seyyohamasmīti māno, sadisassa sadiso hamasmīti māno, sadisassa hīno hamasmīti māno, hīnassa seyyohamasmīti māno, hīnassa sadiso hamasmīti māno, hīnassa hīno hamasmīti māno. Dasavidhena māno - idhekacco mānaṃ janeti jātiyā vā gottena vā kolaputtiyena vā vaṇṇapokkharatāya vā dhanena vā ajjhenena vā kammāyatanena vā sippāyatanena vā vijjāṭṭhānena vā sutena vā patibhānena vā aññataraññatarena vā vatthunā.

Mahāniddeśa Pāli Vol.1, PTS, p. 19 / Mahāniddeśa Pāli Vol.2, PTS, p. 426

¹⁰ Vibhaṅga, PTS, p. 353

¹¹ *kālena gacche garunaṃ sakāsaṃ - thaṃhaṃ niraṃkatvā nivātavutti
atthaṃ dhammaṃ saṃyamamaṃ bhrahmacariyaṃ - anussare ceva samācare va*

Suttanipāta. Kiṃsīla Sutta, PTS, Stanza, 328

¹² *pahīṇamānassa na santi ganthā - vidhūpitā mānaganthāssa sabbe,
so vūtivatto maññanaṃ sumedho - ahaṃ vadāmīti’pi so vadeyya - mavaṃ vadantīti’pi so vadeyya
loke samaññaṃ kusalo viditvā - voharamattena so vohareyyā’ti.*

S.N. Vol. 1., PTS, p. 14

The conceit arises in the mind of the individual because of pleasurable objects such as form, sound, odour, taste, touch. The net result of that is telling lies, which is reasonable to be arisen disagreements, conflicts, etc.¹³

‘‘By the removal of [false] view, by the abolition of conceit, by ending of attachment: there is no individual methods for these three. But when he has discerned this materiality as described above and this immateriality as described here, then he sees that there is no living being over and above the material and the immaterial. As soon as he no longer sees a being, the perception of a being is removed. When he discerns formations with consciousness from which perception of a being has been removed, then [false] view is said to be removed. When he discerns formations with consciousness from which [false] view has been removed, then conceit does not arise in him. When conceit does not arise, conceit is said to be abolished. When he discerns formations with consciousness from which conceit has been abolished, then craving does not arise in him. When craving does not arise in him, attachment is said to be ended. This firstly is what is said in the Discourse of Purification.’’¹⁴

Vatthā Sutta in Majjhima Nikaya states that the person should eradicate the *māna* from the mind like the cloth cleared having washed out.¹⁵ The one who dwells in the forest, should well be controlled his mind by the eradication of conceit (*māna*) to defeat the *māra* (the Evil One).¹⁶ Manatthaddha Sutta states that Mānatthaddha Brahmana who is with full conceit asked the Buddha how to eradicate the conceit. The Blessed One said that the parents, elder brothers and sisters, and teachers should be reputed respectively.¹⁷ Pesala-

¹³ *piya vatthuṃ nissāya mānaṃ janenti, piyaṃ vatthuṃ nissāya atimānaṃ janenti. kataṃ piya vatthuṃ nissāya mānaṃ janenti? mayaṃ lābhino manāpikānaṃ rūpānaṃ saddhānaṃ gandhānaṃ rasānaṃ phoṭṭhabbānanti. evaṃ piya vatthuṃ nissāya mānaṃ janenti. pesuññanti idhekaccho pisuṇāvāco hoti,...*

Mahāniddeśa Pāli, Vol. 2, PTS, p. 259

¹⁴ The Path of Purification, Bhaddanta Cariya Buddhaghosa, tra., Bhikkhu Ñānamoli, Singapore Buddhist Meditation Centre, p. 730

¹⁵ M.N. Vol.,1, PTS, p. 36

¹⁶ *mānaṃ pahāya susamāhitatto - sucetaso sabbadhi vip̐pamutto
eko araṇṇe viharaṃ appamatto - sa maccudheyyassa tareyye pāraṇti*

S.N. 1,4. Mānakāma Sutta

¹⁷ *mātari pitarī cāpi, atho jeṭṭhamhi bhātari
ācariye catutthamhi, tesu assa sagāraṃ
tesu na mānaṃ kairātha, tesu assa sagāraṃ
tyassa apacitā assu; tyassu sādu supūjita*

atimaññanā Sutta deals with that conceit and even its object should be eradicated, because I have been experiencing the unbearable result of it. The beings who could not eradicate the conceit remain with proud and reborn in the hell for a long period of time.¹⁸ In Māna Sutta, addressing the monks, the Buddha explains: “Monks, you should eradicate one *dhamma* (fetter) for achieving non-returning (*anāgāmi*), that is conceit (*māna*). I affirm your state of non-returning. If the conceit which is relevant to be reborn in the hell should be eradicated having seen it through the insight meditation should completely be eradicated through right wisdom because one who eradicated the conceit is never reborn.”¹⁹

The *Nettipakaraṇa* under *Vicayahārasampāto* explains the duality of *māna* as wholesome and unwholesome. “If anyone gives up the conceit because of conceit, he experiences the wholesome. In other words, because of *māna*, if any one does the wholesome, that *māna* is wholesome.”²⁰ However, this cannot be applied since *māna* becomes an unwholesome mental element (*cetasika*) in the category of Akusal Cetasikas. There are number of places in the Canon where the followers do good deeds with the purpose of obtaining different results. If anyone does any deed (merits), it does not

S.N., Vol. 1, PTS, p. 177-8

¹⁸ *mānaṃ pajahassu gotama, mānapathāñca pajahassu
assosaṃ mānapathasmiṃ samucchito vipphaṇṇārahuvā cirarattaṃ
makkhena makkhitā pajā, mānahatā nirayaṃ patanti
socenti janā cirarattaṃ mānahtā nirattaṃ upapannā*
S.N., Vol. 1, PTS, p.187

¹⁹ *ekadhammaṃ, bhikkhave, pajahatha; ahaṃ vo pāṭibhogo anāgāmitāya. katamaṃ ekadhammā? mānaṃ,
bhikkhave, ekadhammaṃ pajahatha; ahaṃ vo pāṭibhogo anāgāmitāyā’ti. etamattaṃ bhagavā avoca.
tatthetaṃ iti vuccati.*
*yena mānena mattāse, sattā gacchanti duggatiṃ
taṃ mānaṃ sammadaññāya, pajahanti vipassino
pahāya na punāyanti imaṃ lokaṃ kudācana’nti.*
Khuddhaka Nikāya, Itivuttaka Pali, Māna Sutta

²⁰ *yaṃ mānaṃ nissāya mānaṃ pajahati, ayaṃ māno kusalo. Yo pana māno dukkhaṃ nibbattayati, ayaṃ
māno akusalo.*

Nettipakaraṇa, PTS, p. 86

become wholesome directly but meritorious. Therefore, *māna* cannot be grouped as wholesome.

The practice of meditation relevant for eradicating conceit should be examined with the characters. The individuals are categorised under six groups in *Visuddhimagga* such as *rāga*, *dosa*, *moha*, *saddhā*, *buddhi*, *vitakka*. Out of the six, the individual with conceit could be included into the category of *dosa* because conceit follows it. Therefore, the relevant meditations for those with conceit are on four sublime abodes and the four objects of meditation out of ten such as the object of colours; blue, yellow, red and white. Otherwise, the meditation on contemplating the Buddha is also reliable.

When the factors are considered, the teachings on conceit (*māna*) found in Theravada Buddhist Tradition can be concluded.