

A Critical Study of the Number of Fetters

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Abstract

The term *saṃyojana* translated as a mental fetter. It means shackles a sentient being to *saṃsāra*. The commentary of Anguttara Nikaya defines the term *saṃyojana* as *sabbāneva cetāni bandhanaṅṅthena saṃyojanāti veditabbā*. Because of fetters that human beings bind the mind to the cycle of rebirth. The fetters are enumerated in different ways in both Sutta and Abhidhamma pitakas.

Samyojana Sutta in *dasaka nipāta* of Anguttara Nikaya, shows ten fetters systematically. They are personality-belief (*sakkāya-ditthi*), skeptical doubt (*vicikicchā*), clinging to mere rules and ritual (*sīlabbata-parāmāsa*), sensuous craving (*kāma-rāga*), ill-will (*vyāpāda*), craving for fine-material existence (*rūpa-rāga*), craving for immaterial existence (*arūpa-rāga*), conceit (*māna*), restlessness (*uddhacca*) and ignorance (*avijjā*).

Sangīti Sutta of *Dīgha Nikaya* and *Samyojana Sutta* in *sattaka nipāta* of Anguttara Nikaya, shows seven fetters respectively, named as sensual lust (*anunaya*), anger (*paṭigha*), views (*ditthi*), doubt, conceit, lust for existence (*bhava-rāga*) and ignorance. In *saṃyojanagocchaka* of *Dhammasangani pakaraṇa*, ten fetters are enumerated respectively as follow. sensual lust (*kāma-rāga*), anger, conceit, views, doubt, attachment to rites and rituals, lust for existence, jealousy (*issā*), greed (*macchariya*) and ignorance.

According to *Nalakapāna Sutta* of *Majjhima Nikaya* and *Samaṇamacala saṃyojana Sutta* of *Samyukta Nikaya*, a human being who attained stream enterer cuts off the first three fetters. One cuts the first three fetters and significantly minimize lust, hatred and delusion to be a "once returner". One cuts the first five lower fetters (*orambhāgiyāni saṃyojanāni*) to be a "non-returner." But in this sutta does not speak of other five higher fetters (*uddhambhāgiyāni saṃyojanāni*) or the spiritual stage of arahant.

Even though these fetters depicted in several places in the Pali canon the number of factors are remarkably different from each other. The purpose of this research paper is to examine the accurate order of these fetters with particular reference to their canonical occurrences.

Keywords: *saṃyojana*, Anguttara Nikaya, *Dhammasangani pakaraṇa*, order.