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The Experience of *Dukkha* and *Domanassa* among *Puthujjanas*

Ashin Sumanacara¹

Abstract

In the Pāli canon, the terms *dukkha* and *domanassa* are used with reference to different types and degrees of suffering that must be understood according to context. This article first examines the meaning of *puthujjana* in the Pāli *Nikāyas*. It then analyses the contextual meanings of *dukkha* and *domanassa*, including a discussion of their types based on a thorough investigation of the Pāli *Nikāyas*. Finally, it examines the explanation in the Pāli *Nikāyas* of the arising of *dukkha* and *domanassa*, and, in particular, how lust, hatred, delusion and some other negative emotions are considered to cause physical pain and mental pain among *puthujjanas*.

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Introduction

Dukkha characterizes the life of all sentient beings. The term *dukkha* is not restricted to the ordinary meaning of suffering, pain, painful experience, but in a deeper sense relates to impermanence and unsatisfactoriness of all phenomena. The First Noble Truth of Suffering (*dukkha ariyasacca*) shows that suffering is intrinsic in everyday life. Martin T. Adam comments on this idea from a Buddhist perspective, explaining that “what unites us to other sentient beings is the recognition of our shared suffering—the first noble truth. This is where Buddhist ethics, and indeed Buddhist practice, begins” (439). Suffering, together with impermanence and non-self, are said to form a significant part of philosophical basis of the ethics in Buddhism (Harvey 33). Suffering is a key to understanding the teaching of the Buddha, because everything he taught was aimed at eliminating it.

It is said that when *puthujjanas* experience a painful feeling (*dukkhā-vedanā*), they experience both a painful physical feeling (*kāyikā-dukkhā-vedanā*) and a painful mental feeling (*cetasikā-dukkhā-vedanā*) (S IV 209). These two painful feelings correspond to *dukkhā-vedanā* and *domanassā-vedanā*, respectively. Why is it that *puthujjanas* experience both types of painful feeling? How do they react to painful feelings? Through textual analysis of Pāli sources, this study will attempt to find the answers to these questions.

Persons Who Are *Puthujjanas*

The term *puthujjana* is a compound of *puthu* and *jana*. Here, *puthu* means “common,” “ordinary,” or “many,” while *jana* means “a creature,” “person,” or “the people of the household” (Cone 202; Rhys Davids and Stede 278, 466). *Puthujjana* is most commonly referred to as a “worldling” or

“ordinary person” who has not uprooted any fetters (*saṃyojana*) (9). In particular, a *puthujjana* is someone who is not free from fetters, and therefore has not yet “entered the stream (*sotāpanna*),” which is the second stage of the noble path. Here, it should be understood that the path to stream-entry (*sotāpatti-magga*) weakens the first three fetters, i.e., “the view of the transitory collection (*sakkāya-diṭṭhi*),” “skeptical doubt (*vicikiccha*),” and “attachment to discipline and vows (*sīlabbata-parā-māsa*),” while the fruition that is stream-entry (*sotāpatti-phala*) destroys these fetters. A stream-enterer (*sotāpanna*), the second noble person who has the fruition of stream-entry, has destroyed these three fetters. The one practicing for realization of stream-entry-fruit is neither a *puthujjana*, nor yet a stream-enterer. He is the first of the eight noble persons, “practising for the realization of the fruit that is stream-entry (*sotāpatti-phalacchikiriyāya paṭipanno*)” (A IV 292). In the opinion of Peter Harvey, such a person is “the lowest kind of *sāvaka-Saṅgha* member” (10). The eight kinds of noble persons (*ariya-sāvakas*) make up the members of the *sāvaka-Saṅgha*.² Thus, there is a contrast between, on one hand, someone who has destroyed the first three fetters and is called a “stream-enterer (*sotāpanna*)” and, on the other hand, someone who has not yet destroyed these fetters and is called an “ordinary person (*puthujjana*).”

Puthujjana is also often called an *assutavanta* (*a + sutavanta*), meaning “one who has not heard,” which refers to one who has not been instructed in the *Dhamma*. *Assutavā-puthujjana* is explained in the Pāli sources as an uninstructed ordinary person who has neither seen nor

² The noble persons are those who have achieved one of the eight stages of enlightenment; that is, the path to stream-entry (*sotāpatti-magga*), the fruition that is stream-entry (*sotāpatti-phala*), the path to once-returning (*sakadāgāmi-magga*), the fruition that is once-returning (*sakadāgāmi-phala*), the path to non-returning (*anāgāmi-magga*), the fruition that is non-returning (*anāgāmi-phala*), the path to arahantship (*arahatta-magga*), and the fruition that is arahantship (*arahatta-phala*) (D III 255).

comprehended the *Dhamma*. However, further nuances to the explanations are also found. For instance, the *Majjhima Nikāya* emphasizes the fact that an *assutavā-puthujjana* is someone who has no regard for the noble (*ariya*) and the righteous person (*sappurisa*), and someone who is unskilled (*akovidā*) and undisciplined (*avinīta*) in their *Dhamma* (M I 1).³ Here, the lack of respect means “an absence of insight or of intelligent reasoning.” In the *Majjhima Nikāya*, we find the further assertion that an *assutavā-puthujjana* does not have right wisdom regarding the *Dhamma* such as the Four Noble Truths (*ariya-saccas*) (M I 1ff.). Without right understanding and wisdom, one cannot realize the Noble Truths. Thus, *assutavā-puthujjana* is described as someone who does not realize or comprehend the *Dhamma*, and lacks right understanding and wisdom regarding the true nature of realities.

In a moral sense, a *puthujjana* can be compared to a fool. The Pāli *Nikāyas* describe a fool in various situations and conditions. According to the *Pāsādika Sutta* of the *Dīgha Nikāya*, a person is to be judged foolish if he takes pleasure and delight in killing, stealing, and lying, or gives over to indulgence in sense pleasures (D III 130-131). Similarly, the *Bālappaṇḍita Sutta* of the *Majjhima Nikāya* states that a fool is one who thinks unwholesome thoughts, speaks bad words, and commits immoral actions (M III 163). A foolish person engages himself in evil deeds that produce bad results and suffering. In this way, someone who commits any immoral actions or over-indulges in sense pleasures becomes foolish.

According to the *Samyutta Nikāya*, the foolish one neither sees his transgression as a transgression nor lawfully pardons another who has confessed his transgression (S I 239). The foolish one can neither understand

³ The Buddha, the *Paccekabuddha*, and the eight types of noble person are considered *ariya*. *Sappurisa* is said to be equal to an *ariya*. Generally, the *Paccekabuddha* and the *ariya-sāvaka* are referred to *sappurisa* (M III 70; S III 160; A III 46, 421; IV 243-244, 372).

nor practice the *Dhamma*. A fool is also known as “unwise (*duppañña*)” because of not understanding the Four Noble Truths (M I 292). He is devoid of wisdom, and attached to worldly pain and pleasure. The wise one can be differentiated from the fool by considering that the wise person can recognize his or her action, and practices in accordance with the *Dhamma* (S I 239). So, one who does not engage in immoral or unwholesome actions is known as wise. According to the *Majjhima Nikāya*, the wise (*paññavā*) is one who understands well the Four Noble Truths (M I 292). Here, the term *paññavā* refers to “a wise person” who possesses wisdom. Bhikkhu Bodhi notes, “One who is wise (*paññavā*) is the person on the path of stream-entry” (1235). So, we can say that a wise person is one who possesses wisdom. A person without this kind of wisdom can be considered a *puthujjana*.

According to the commentary on the *Dīgha Nikāya*, a *puthujjana* produces different kinds of defilement (*kilesa*) (Sv I 59). Defilements are obstructions that make a *puthujjana* incapable of entering the wholesome *Dhamma*, which leads to the end of suffering. Thus, in this context, anyone who still possesses all the defilements is a *puthujjana*. A *puthujjana* has not yet realized the true nature of *Dhamma*, but engages in a low form of *Dhamma*—which includes such things as practicing discipline and vows—contrary to the *Dhamma* of the noble persons, who have some realization.

Through these different explanations above, we can glean that the term *puthujjana* refers primarily to an “ordinary person” who has not yet attained any path of the noble ones (*ariya-magga*).⁴ It is said that a *puthujjana* may be a lay or monastic, Buddhist, or a non-Buddhist

⁴ Here, *ariya-magga* refers to “the noble path of the eight kinds of noble persons.” Reaching the noble path, one begins the process of eliminating the fetters.

(Nyanatiloka Thera 161). Also, nonhuman beings such as ordinary celestial beings, animals, hungry ghosts, demons, hell beings, or various other unenlightened beings on different planes of existence can be considered *puthujjanas*.

Contextual Meanings of *Dukkha* and *Domanassa* in the Pāli *Nikāyas*

In the Pāli *Nikāyas*, *dukkha* and *domanassa* appear mainly in the context of the First Noble Truth of Suffering (*dukkha ariya-sacca*) and in the context of the feeling (*vedanā*). The term *dukkha* has been variously translated as “pain,” “suffering,” and “unsatisfactoriness” (Gombrich 68; Hamilton 63). Among these terms, “suffering” is the most common translation, though it does not convey the complete range of meaning of *dukkha*. As a noun it means “pain,” either physical or mental. In a broad sense, it refers to “existential suffering” rather than suffering as mere pain (Siderits 19). Daniel Breyer links *dukkha* with the “deep and gnawing un-satisfactoriness that pervades our normal lives” (542). When *dukkha* is used as an adjectival noun, it refers to “the painful,” which includes all those phenomena that are not a painful feeling but are connected with it. It is related to the unsatisfactory and painful nature of all experience.

Depending upon what source we examine, we find different ways of classifying the different kinds of things that are painful. According to the *Mahāsatipaṭṭhāna Sutta* of the *Dīgha Nikāya*, the following twelve types of *dukkha* form the First Noble Truth of Suffering:

Birth (*jāti*) is painful, decay (*jarā*) is painful, death (*marāṇa*) is painful; grief (*soka*), lamentation (*parideva*), physical pain (*dukkha*), mental pain (*domanassa*), and despair (*upāyāsa*) are painful; association with what one dislikes (*appiyehi sampayogo*) is painful, separation from what one

likes (*piyehi vippayogo*) is painful, not getting what one desires (*yam p'icchaṃ na labhati tam pi*) is painful. In brief, the five aggregates of existence connected with clinging (*pañc'upādānakkhandhā*) are painful.⁵ (D II 479 BJT; D II 243 CST)

These different types of *dukkha* indicate that life is unsatisfactory, unstable, and painful in nature. The above description also suggests that one experiences *dukkha* due to clinging to the aggregates and regarding them as “mine” or “self.”

In the *Dhammacakkappavattana Sutta* (and elsewhere) another way of classifying the different kinds of *dukkha* is found. In the *Dhammacakkappavattana Sutta*, we find only eight types of *dukkha* including *vyādhi pi dukkhā*—illness is painful, but the terms “sorrow, lamentation, physical-and-mental-pain, and despair (*soka-parideva-dukkha-domanass'upāyāsā*)” are missing from this *Sutta* (Vin I 10).⁶ These different types of *dukkha* are what one experiences from time to time. Narada Thera suggests that “when the Buddha addresses Devas and men, he speaks of eight kinds of *dukkha*. When he addresses only men, he speaks of twelve” (173). The *Dhammacakkappavattana Sutta* is said to have been addressed to the group of five ascetics (*pañca-vaggiya*) (Vin I 10). *Dukkha* characterizes all existence. *Dukkha* is said to be experienced even in the *deva*-world (*deva-loka*) (S I 200). Hence, birth in any realm of existence is unsatisfactory, though the degrees of *dukkha* are said to vary (Ledi Sayadaw 258ff; Ratnam 77).

⁵ I refer to the Sinhala-script edition (BJT) and Burmese-script edition (CST) of the *Dīgha Nikāya*. These two editions mention twelve types of *dukkha* (excluding *vyādhi pi dukkhā*). On other hand, the Roman-script edition (PTS) of the *Dīgha Nikāya* includes only ten types of *dukkha*, omitting “*appiyehi sampayogo dukkho*” and “*piyehi vippayogo dukkho*” (D II 305).

⁶ These terms are included in the Roman-script edition (PTS) of the *Samyutta Nikāya* (S V 421).

Therefore, it seems unlikely that the Buddha would have introduced different types of *dukkha* depending on his audience, i.e., “human beings” and “*deva*.”

The insertion of “*vyādhi pi dukkha* (illness is painful)” seems to be redundant, as it does not occur in the definition of *dukkha ariya-sacca* given in some editions of the *Mahāsatipaṭṭhāna Sutta* of the *Dīgha Nikāya*, or the *Paṭisambhidāmagga*, and the *Vibhaṅga*.⁷ Why is the term *vyādhi* not included here, though it is common enough? One possible answer is that sometimes, and in some persons, illness does not arise, such as in Venerable Bakkula. He is described as healthy and as the foremost among the Buddha’s disciples in respect to good health (M III 124ff; A I 25). His perfect health suggests that not all persons are affected by illness. This might be the reason why *vyādhi* is not included in the description of *dukkha ariya-sacca*. Alternatively, it is perhaps included under *dukkha* or *domanassa*, in the phrase “*soka-parideva-dukkha-domanass’upāyāsā* (sorrow, lamentation, physical-and-mental-pain, and despair).”

Some scholars suggest that the term *vyādhi* refers to “physical pain” (*dukkha*) only (Mahasi Sayadaw 153–156; Nyanasamvara 26). Mahasi Sayadaw considers that “*vyādhi* is comprised in the word *dukkha* of the larger-sentence [phrase] of ‘*soka parideva dukkha domanassupāyāsapi dukkha*,’ whereas *soka*, etc., are not embraced by the term *vyādhi*” (156). As we know, *vyādhi* is the unhealthy state of body or mind. In fact, *vyādhi* and *roga* are both words for disease, which is categorized as physical disease (*kāyika-roga*) or mental disease (*cetasika-roga*) (A II 142–143). Physical disease can create mental disease as well because one’s mind gets distressed and anxious by physical pain. This is because both the body and the mind are closely related to one another. Kogen Mizuno explains as

⁷ Here, I refer to the Sinhala-script edition and Burmese-script edition of the *Dīgha Nikāya*. See D II 479 (BJT); D II 243 (CST); D II 305 (PTS); Paṭis 37; Vibh 99.

follows: “From the medical standpoint few people are completely healthy. Even people with nothing specifically wrong with them generally have physical weak points” (105–106). Whether physical disease is severe or trivial, it can lead to mental disease. Hence, it can be considered that *vyādhi* is comprised not only in *dukkha* of the phrase “*soka-parideva-dukkha-domanass’upāyāsā*,” but also in *domanassa*. Therefore, we can say that the term *vyādhi* is sometimes not included in the description of *dukkha ariya-sacca*, perhaps because it is already alluded to in the phrase “*soka-parideva-dukkha-domanass’upāyāsā*.”

The *Saccavibhaṅga Sutta* of the *Majjhima Nikāya* presents a detailed description of the ten types of *dukkha*. However, the terms “*appiyehi sampayogo dukkho*” and “*piyehi vippayogo dukkho*” are not found in this *Sutta* (M III 250 ff). The *Visuddhimagga* insists that “*appiyehi sampayogo*” generates mental distress (*vighāta*), whereas “*piyehi vippayogo*” generates grief (*soka*) (Vism 504–505). Therefore, we can consider that these two types of *dukkha* are perhaps included under either *domanassa* or *soka*.

Another possible reason for this disparity is that the reciters (*bhāṅakas*) who specialized in the recitation of each *Nikāya*, and “the bearers of the *Vinaya* (*vinayadharas*),” who specialized in the recitation of *Vinaya*, had different interpretation of doctrinal and historical matters found in the Pāli canonical texts.⁸ There was perhaps a lack of communication among those reciters. Kenneth Roy Norman observes that “the *bhāṅakas* had started their conservation work immediately after the first recitation, without consulting one another” (46). To some extent, the explanations they presented were dissimilar from one another. Maurice Walshe maintains that “the omission [of *vyādhi*] is probably accidental, perhaps reflecting a lapse in the tradition of the *Dīgha* reciters

⁸ For the points of difference in the opinions maintain by the reciters, see Adikaram 27ff.

(*bhāṇakas*)” (595). Therefore, we can say that these differences regarding the types of *dukkha* probably appear as a result of the influence of different groups of reciters.

From the above analysis, we see that *dukkha* appears within the Pāli canon both alone and in compound phrases with *domanassa*. In the combination of *dukkha-domanassa*, *dukkha* refers to physical pain (*kāyika-dukkha*), while *domanassa* is mental pain (*cetasika-dukkha*) (D II 306). Every aspect of pain not only oppresses the body, but also oppresses the mind. That is because a physical pain can lead on to a mental pain, or a mental one can lead on to a physical one. For instance, when the body is sick, it is called physical sickness. Once sick, one worries about the sickness, which eventually might create mental distress. There are also many other ways physical pain leads to mental pain and mental pain leads to physical pain.

In relation to the threefold *vedanā*, *dukkhā-vedanā* signifies the entire range of painful physical and mental feelings. However, in the fivefold *vedanā*, it stands for painful physical feeling only. On the other hand, *domanassā-vedanā* stands for a mentally painful feeling (S V 209). *Dukkhā-vedanā* and *domanassā-vedanā* are both called “the painfulness of pain (*dukkha-dukkhatā*)” as they bring affliction and pain through the body and mind (Gard 109; Mahasi Sayadaw 173–174). Hence, it is said that the experience of *vedanā* involves both the body and the mind (Anālayo 136). All forms of painful feeling are inherent in the life cycle—birth, aging, illness, and death. Our painful feelings become worse due to our negative mental attitudes that we constantly project out into the world of aggregates, or into the four realities of life: birth, aging, illness, and death.

The Experience of *Dukkha* and *Domanassa* among *Puthujjanas*

Analyzing the experience of physical pain (*dukkha*) and mental pain (*domanassa*), the *Āṅguttara Nikāya* narrates that every being in the world has to encounter gain (*lābha*), loss (*alābha*), fame (*yasa*), disgrace (*ayasa*), blame (*nindā*), praise (*paṣaṃsā*), pleasure (*sukha*), and pain (*dukkha*) (A IV 157). These eight worldly conditions (*aṭṭha-lokadhamma*) can be desirable or undesirable.⁹ Irrespective of whether they are desirable or undesirable, all human beings must face these worldly conditions, be they *puthujjanas* or *ariyas*, “the only difference lying in the way each person responds to and acts on them” (Payutto 42). The *Āṅguttara Nikāya* suggests that when *puthujjanas* face any of these worldly conditions, they neither reflect on them as impermanent (*anicca*), unsatisfactory (*dukkha*), or subject to change (*vipariṇāmadhamma*), nor do they understand their true nature. They are delighted in having gain, fame, praise, pleasure, and dejected in meeting with loss, disrepute, blame, and pain. As this causes *puthujjanas* to be engaged in repulsion (*virodha*) and attraction (*anurodha*), they experience both physical pain and mental pain (A IV 158). In this way, for *puthujjanas* who do not know or understand the true nature of things, physical pain and mental pain arise.

According to the *Majjhima Nikāya*, longing for gain or property eventually leads to physical pain and mental pain (M I 86). It causes misfortune and agitates the minds of *puthujjanas*. The *Āṅguttara Nikāya* narrates that *puthujjanas* long after possessions, but if they fail to obtain the possessions, they experience sorrow, fatigue, and lament. They weep by beating their own chests and become distraught (A IV 293–294). This is why they experience both types of pain. On the other hand, when *puthu-*

⁹ Among the worldly conditions, gain, fame, praise, and pleasure are generally considered as desirable or pleasant. On the other hand, loss, disgrace, blame, and pain are considered as undesirable or unpleasant (Payutto 42).

jjanas do obtain some gain or take possession of some property, they are in the habit of assuming that the obtained gain or possessed property is permanent. Then they develop craving and clinging to their gains or properties. However, the *Āṅguttara Nikāya* suggests that whenever *puthujjanas* are afflicted by loss of possessions, loss of relatives, or the misfortune of illness, they fall into agitation. After they have become agitated, they find it difficult to concentrate or control their thoughts. As a result, they experience both physical pain and mental pain (A II 173ff; III 54).

Aside from the problems with desire for gain, the *Āṅguttara Nikāya* explains the way that *puthujjanas* become distraught and experience both physical pain and mental pain whenever they face ageing, illness, death, and decay (A III 54). According to the above-mentioned text, it is true for all beings that “what is subject to ageing ages” (*jarādhammaṃ jīrati*), “what is subject to illness falls ill” (*vyādhidhammaṃ vyādhiyati*), “what is subject to death dies” (*maraṇadhammaṃ mīyati*), “what is subject to destruction is destroyed” (*khayadhammaṃ khīyati*), and “what is subject to loss is lost” (*nassanadhammaṃ nassati*) (A III 54; Bodhi 674). However, these five states cannot be understood by *puthujjanas*. If they fail to reflect upon the ageing and illness processes, when these come, they become agitated and experience physical pain and mental pain (A II 173ff; III 54).

Disease of the body (*kāyika-roga*) and disease of the mind (*cetasika-roga*) can be seen as causes of physical pain (*dukkha*) and mental pain (*domanassa*) (A II 143). *Puthujjanas* are afflicted with both of these diseases. The *Āṅguttara Nikāya* suggests that every *puthujjana* is subject to experiencing mental disease (A II 142–143) because *puthujjana* generally identify disease as “mine,” or “self.” Due to this misperception, their minds become inclined to disease. As a result, they face both types of disease, and experience both physical pain and mental pain.

A number of *Suttas* containing “*dukkha*” in their titles explain that suffering arises due to clinging (*upādāna*) to the five aggregates and regarding them as “mine” or “self” (S III 21–23, 77).¹⁰ Here, clinging is said to signify a “clutching that holds strongly,” i.e., to “an opinion” or “a view” (As 385). When one desires or craves for something, such desire provokes clinging. The aggregates are described as the “object of clinging,” as it is these aggregates that *puthujjana* would cling to as his self-related personality (S III 19ff; V 309). The notion of self grips an aspect of self-identification. As a consequence of self-identification, one is obsessed with constructing different notions about the so-called self. Among the four types of clinging, the clinging to views (*diṭṭhūpādāna*) and the clinging to the doctrine of self (*attavādūpādāna*) are concerned with view.¹¹ This wrong belief is said to prevent *puthujjanas* from seeing the true nature of things as they really are (S III 22). Some *puthujjanas* who are ignorant and untrained in *Dhamma*, regard their aggregates as unchanging, permanent and eternal self.¹² Their deluded conscious minds distort the perception of the true nature of things in order to protect the belief in a self. They cannot comprehend that all conditioned phenomena, including the aggregates, are not real or permanent, and are subject to arising and passing away. Due to this wrong view of self, they are said to experience physical pain as well as mental pain (S III 16–17). As long as *puthujjanas* identify “the aggregates are self or they belong to me,” there will always be physical pain and mental pain.

¹⁰ Even though the Arahant is subject to experiencing some physical pain (*dukkha*), for him the relevant clinging was in the past life that led to being born as a human being that can experience pain.

¹¹ The other two are the clinging to sensuality (*kāmūpādāna*) and the clinging to discipline (*silabbatūpādāna*) (D III 230).

¹² The eternalists view is meant here, but the annihilationists regard their aggregates as unchanging until they are all completely perished at death.

The *Mahādukkhakkhandha Sutta* of the *Majjhima Nikāya* highlights sense pleasures (*kāma*) as one of the main causes of physical pain and mental pain (M I 85). *Kāma* signifies sense pleasures for all types of sensual gratification. The above-mentioned text describes the gratification of sense pleasures with reference to the five qualities of sense pleasures (*pañca-kāmaguṇa*), which are connected with the five senses: eye, ear, nose, tongue, and body (M I 85). Any sensuous excitements of the five senses are sense pleasures. According to the *Majjhima Nikāya*, the physical pleasure (*sukha*) and the mental joy (*somanassa*) that arise dependent on these five cords of sense pleasures are the gratifying features of sense pleasures (M I 85). This text further describes the temptation of sense pleasures, and explains that physical pain and mental pain arise in one who seeks delight in these five qualities of sense pleasures (M I 85). The sense pleasures occur naturally, but one's craving for sense pleasures is likely to intensify if one fails to restrain one's senses and indulges in sense pleasures. This is because while there may be some satisfaction in sense pleasures, it is limited due to the nature of impermanence. The Pāli sources suggest that *puthujjanas* usually try to suppress their unhappiness and painful feelings by pursuing more sense pleasures. However, due to the unsatisfactory and impermanent nature of all things, they cannot fulfil their desires. When they fail to get the expected sense pleasures or the little they get fades away, they become unhappy and dissatisfied. Being dissatisfied and unhappy, they experience both physical pain and mental pain (M I 85; S IV 208–209).

Sensual indulgence is not beneficial and in fact generates suffering for oneself and others. Hence, the Buddha warned his disciples not to indulge in the extreme of sense pleasure (*kāmasukhallikānuyoga*) as it inevitably leads to physical pain and mental pain (S V 420). *Kāma* signifies desire or craving for all types of sensual gratification and is not limited to sexual desire. Padmasiri de Silva writes: “*Kāma* in the context of Buddhism is the enjoyment of the five senses, and ‘sexuality’ is only one of the ex-

pressions of man’s sensuous nature” (61). Nevertheless, sexual conduct is based on the craving for sense pleasures (*kāma-taṇhā*). Unrestrained sexual desire can cause not only physical pain but also mental pain. The *Aṅguttara Nikāya* illustrates the nature of ordinary people’s sexual desire, stating that the mind of a man is obsessed by the physical form of a woman. Similarly, the mind of a woman is obsessed by the physical form of a man (A I 1–2). While the sense objects do not cause physical pain and mental pain, one’s craving and indulgence in sense pleasures do. In Buddhism, even sexual feelings are considered to break the commitment to a celibate life (*brahmacariya*). Any sort of sexual activity can be considered disadvantageous to a life of *brahmacariya*. The *Aṅguttara Nikāya* states that whoever engages in sexual feelings is not free from physical pain and mental pain (A IV 54). Damien Keown discusses the dangers of sexual desire when he writes, “erotic desires are among the strongest human beings can experience, and sex represents a potent obstacle in the quest for liberation” (55). Sensual desire or craving hinders the mind, obstructs the arising of wisdom, and causes some physical pain and mental pain. The point is that letting oneself be channeled and imprisoned by sensual craving can be the cause of suffering.¹³

According to the *Cūladukkhakkhandha Sutta* of the *Majjhima Nikāya*, greed (*lobha*), hatred (*dosa*), and delusion (*moha*) are the three imperfections or defilements (*upakkilesa*) that defile the mind, manifest in unwholesome *kamma*, and cause physical pain and mental pain (M I 91). These defilements are also called the three unwholesome roots (*akusalamūla*) (D III 217). The term *lobha* refers to “greed” or “lust” and is a form of clinging, desire, or attachment to an object; it covers all degrees of wanting and clinging to the sensual and non-sensual objects. If one is unable to fulfil one’s greed, one worries and keeps thinking about it. This

¹³ Desire for sense pleasures (*kāma-cchanda*) or sensual lust (*kāma-rāga*) ceases only when one becomes a Non-returner (*anāgāmi*) (D III 234).

is how greed leads to suffering. As *puthujjanas* are governed by greed, they suffer from both physical pain and mental pain.

The term *lobha* has been commonly used as a synonym of *rāga*, which also means “lust” (S IV 42, 140; A IV 456).¹⁴ Literally, *rāga* means “coloring” or “dyeing” (the mind, or emotions). It denotes “lust” as it concerns the sense pleasures (*kāma*). *Rāga* is said to feature in the Second Noble Truth, according to which craving (*taṇhā*) is accompanied by passionate delight (*taṇhā nandirāgasahagatā*) (S V 421). In the opinion of Nyanaponika Thera, “It is always seeking fulfilment and lasting satisfaction, but its drive is inherently insatiable, and thus as long as it endures it maintains the sense of lack” (viii). In this way, *rāga* continues to grow as one feeds it with sense pleasures. When the pleasant feeling or happiness derived from sensual pleasures fades away, one’s lust becomes stronger. Even seeing, hearing, or smelling a pleasant object can intensify lust. When intensified, it becomes the source of physical pain and mental pain. According to the *Samyutta Nikāya*, temporary release from physical pain and mental pain through the indulgence of sensual desires only causes further misery and pain, and then intensifies lust (S IV 208–209). It also pollutes one’s behavior as well as personality, and motivates one to commit an unwholesome action. The unwholesome actions motivated by lust generate physical pain and mental pain. When sensual lust (*kāma-rāga*) arises, it burns up *puthujjanas*, defiles their minds, and causes physical pain and mental pain.

Sensual lust also distorts one’s perception by coloring the mind, and can lead to madness. The *Samyutta Nikāya* narrates that an ascetic or brahmin who is not free from sensual lust, might have his heart burst,

¹⁴ It is to be noted that *lobha*, *dosa* and *moha* are the three unwholesome roots, while *rāga*, *dosa* and *moha* are what an Arahant has destroyed.

might vomit warm blood from his mouth, might become mad (*ummāda*), or might become mentally distracted (*cittavikkhepa*) (S I 125–126). Madness is the derangement of the thoughts (*cittakkhepa*) (M I 237–238). In the *Āṅguttara Nikāya*, madness is considered one of the ten misfortunes (*vyasanas*) which befall a person who abuses or reviles ascetics and Brahmins (A V 169). In the Pāli *Nikāyas*, this is attributed to the transgression of the fundamental moral precepts. For instance, the *Majjhima Nikāya* states that one who fails to discipline mind and body is likely to experience a painful physical feeling (*sārīrikā-dukkhā-vedanā*) and a painful mental feeling (*cetasikā-dukkhā-vedanā*) (M I 237–238). This suggests that the transgression of the moral precepts can cause madness and generates physical pain and mental pain. The *Jātaka* stories illustrate many cases of madness among *puthujjanas* which are mostly caused by sensual lust. For example, the *Lomasakassapa Jātaka* reveals the story of a sage called Kassapa who, by merely looking at went out of his mind and lost his balance. It is said that, tempted by the princess's beauty, the sage agreed to offer a sacrifice and killed hundreds of animals (J III 514ff). Therefore, sensual lust can be considered maddening, as it agitates the minds of *puthujjanas*, and generates physical pain and mental pain.

Hatred (*dosa*) is the second defilement that commonly arises in the minds of *puthujjanas*. It is considered an unwholesome mental state, which causes aversion (*paṭigha*) to an object (Abhidh-s-ṭ 61). Hate is a disposition to aversion and ill will, which arises when the mind encounters an unpleasant object or person. This is the immediate cause of *dosa*. An unwholesome state of mind that is associated with *domanassa* comes under the term *dosa*. When one is unable to fulfill one's greed or lust, it develops into hatred, which in turns generates further pain and misery. One who is under the destructive influence of hatred attempts to harm himself and others. It is said that an unrestrained hatred can cause much harm both physically and mentally (A IV 97). The *Āṅguttara Nikāya* states that *puthujjanas* who are angry and distraught may kill themselves by

various methods, such as hanging, swallowing poison, using a sword, or jumping into a mountain gorge (A IV 97). They engage in such self-destructive and self-harmful behavior due to the influence of hatred. Thus, hatred manifests itself bodily, verbally, and mentally. Moreover, hatred is said to be a reaction to believing that one has been harmed (A IV 408). When such thoughts become exaggerated, there arises resentment (*āghāta*). According to the *Dhammasaṅgaṇī*, hatred is resentment at the thought of harm done to oneself or to others, or the thought of good done to a person whom one hates or dislikes (Dhs 190). It springs up from the desire for revenge. One who is harmed or offended is likely to feel hurt and angry. It is often the case that the offended one decides to take revenge by doing just the same as the enemies did to him or to his dearest ones. As one continues planning or thinking about the (real or imagined) harm done by one's enemies, there arise unwholesome thoughts rooted in hatred. Such unwholesome thoughts are said to be associated with mental pain (*domanassa*) (Dhs 83, 85). Human beings who are not yet free from aversion or hatred experience both physical pain and mental pain. The Arahant and the Non-returner do not experience mental pain (*domanassa*) as they both have overcome aversion and hatred (Spk III 76–77).

Delusion (*moha*) is the third defilement that afflicts the mind and generates physical pain and mental pain. It is the deluded state of the mind that covers the true nature of the object, though it occurs by clinging to the object (Abhidh-s-ṭ 82). One who acts out of delusion does not see things as they are; it is a misconceived self-image which clouds one's perception. Whenever *puthujjanas* are blinded by delusion, they may easily engage in unwholesome *kamma*, or may transgress the moral precepts. It is the proximate cause of attentiveness into an immoral path; therefore, delusion is considered the primary root of all unwholesome *kamma* (Abhidh-s 1), hinders *puthujjanas* from seeing the true nature of things, and generates physical pain and mental pain.

A number of *Suttas* explain the consequences of the three defilements. According to the *Āṅguttara Nikāya*, the one who is by nature strongly lustful, hateful, and deluded is likely to experience both physical pain (*dukkha*) and mental pain (*domanassa*) born of that lust, hatred, and delusion (A II 153). The *Āṅguttara Nikāya* further states that one entangled and overcome by any of these defilements, with mind obsessed by them, intends his own harm, the harm of others, or the harm of both, and he therefore experiences both physical pain and mental pain (A I 216). Moreover, harm to oneself arises as an immediate result of these negative emotions. One becomes mentally sick when one's mind or perception is affected by any of these defilements. According to the *Itivuttaka*, the three unwholesome roots cause misfortune and agitate the mind. The person whose mind is agitated by the three roots neither knows what brings welfare, nor sees the *Dhamma* (It 83–85). Thus, in accordance with the universal law, one reaps the result of one's own *kamma*, which takes root in one's thought. Such are the consequences of these defilements. Thus, the three defilements are action-roots causing physical pain and mental pain.

Puthujjanas are also said to experience physical pain and mental pain whenever they express their grief (*soka*) and lamentation (*parideva*) (A IV 15). Here, grief is one of the features of suffering. Grieving is the particular nature of grief for grief, when it arises, burns, and afflicts the mind. The commentary on the *Vibhaṅga* suggests that although grief (*soka*) has the same meaning as mentally painful feeling (*domanassavedanā*), its particular nature is grieving (Vibh-a 103–104). In fact, hatred accompanies both grief and mental pain, tormenting the mind and the body of *puthujjanas*. According to the *Vibhaṅga*, grief is likely to arise for those who unexpectedly encounter the five kinds of loss or ruin (*vyasana*) in life, namely, the ruin of relatives, wealth, health, character (or morality), and (right) views (Vibh 99). It is mainly a reaction to the continual mourning caused by these types of loss, but it may also arise

from any other type of loss or damage that causes mind affliction or creates sadness, shock, anger, guilt, despair, fear, etc. with or without crying (Vibh-a 102–103). Thus, grief is connected to the mourning that naturally occurs in the form of a disturbed mind that has the object of loss or ruin, but it specifically refers to the deep sorrow following loss or destruction. This deep sorrow can lead to physical pain and mental pain. Whenever *puthujjanas* are stricken by any loss, they experience both physical pain and mental pain.

Grief also creates sadness, anxiety, shock, obsession, despair, and disbelief to *puthujjanas*. Anxiety may occur from the fear that the bereaved person will not be able to live without the loved one who has died. In some cases, anxiety occurs due to the fear of being besieged by feelings of grief. A grieved person may be obsessed by the thoughts of the dead person. In some cases, a grieved person may sense the presence of the dead; this is usually associated with the belief that the beloved one is still alive. The *Assaka Jātaka* reveals the story of a grieved king, who, having lost his beloved queen Ubbari, obsessed over thoughts of the dead queen, kept her corpse in his own bed and went on living with her for one week (J II 158). This may happen due to the shock, disbelief, obsession, or due to the strong desire towards the dead person. *Puthujjanas* who are preoccupied with these types of negative thoughts are likely to experience both physical pain and mental pain.

Grief (*soka*), lamentation (*parideva*), physical pain (*dukkha*), mental pain (*domanassa*), and despair (*upāyāsa*) are said to arise and originate from holding something dear (attachment) (*piya*) (M II 106).¹⁵ All these different types of *dukkha* are closely linked with one another for they not only burn or torment the mind but also create discomfort in the body.

¹⁵ Here, *piya* relates to a beloved person (as father, mother, husband, wife, etc.) or pleasant object.

The separation from the dearest or beloved ones is so painful that it may even lead one to self-harming behavior. When pain becomes unbearable, thoughts about suicide or dying may arise. Some *puthujjanas* even attempt to commit suicide because of their separation from the loved or dearest one. Moreover, a bereaved person who has lost a loved person may withdraw himself from all kinds of social contacts and relationships. The obsession over the deceased person may be so influential that all social affairs come to be seen as irrelevant. The *Kusa Jātaka*, for instance, narrates the story of a grieving king called Kusa who, preoccupied with thoughts about the death of queen Pabhāvatī, lost interest in his personal life and royal duties. The Buddha told this story in reference to a monk who fell in love with a woman, neglected all his monastic duties and refused food (J V 278ff). This king's story suggests that even a powerful person may suffer pain and depression from losing a loved one. On the other hand, loneliness, which is associated with grief, arises from the loss of a loved one to interact with.

There are also some sufferings that arise specifically among women. For instance, the *Āveṇikadukkha Sutta* of the *Samyutta Nikāya* explains five types of suffering experienced only by women, namely: a woman moves to her husband's family and is separated from her relatives; a woman is subject to menstruation; a woman becomes pregnant; a woman gives birth; and a woman comes to serve a man (S IV 239). Among these, biological aspects of a woman, such as menstruation, pregnancy, and childbirth are physiological forms of suffering, whereas separation from her own family and having to serve a man are mental forms of suffering.¹⁶ In the traditional family system of South/Southeast Asia, a woman is expected to live with her husband's family after marriage, while a man

¹⁶ The explanation of the two mental forms of suffering is an expression of the ancient Indian patriarchal attitude towards women.

continues to live with his parents. In this case, the married woman may suffer from the stress of being separated from her parents and relatives. But if a married man moves to live with his wife's family, he is also likely to suffer from being separated from his parents and relatives. It is noteworthy to mention that women who remain celibate for the rest of their lives will not suffer from some or all of these sufferings. From a Buddhist perspective, man and woman are all equally capable of experiencing suffering or happiness. They also have equal potentiality for overcoming suffering and attaining enlightenment (Adam 439). Similarly, whenever *puthujjanas* meet any one or more of these physiological and mental problems, they experience physical pain as well as mental pain.

Sometimes, *puthujjanas* experience physical pain and mental pain arising from the consequences of their *kamma* (*kamma-vipāka*). The *Majjhima Nikāya* states that one undergoes kammic results either in the present existence or in the future existence (M III 202ff). Bad *kamma* arises dependent on defilements, whereas the consequence of one's *kamma* is derived from *kamma*. Accordingly, *kamma* is the cause, whereas *vipāka* is the effect or consequence of *kamma*, which can be either wholesome (*kusala*) or unwholesome (*akusala*). Padmasiri de Silva writes, "Two words, *kusala* and *akusala* are sometimes rendered by the purely ethical terms good and bad, or by the psychologically oriented terminology of the wholesome and the unwholesome or the skillful and the unskillful" (3). From a Buddhist perspective, the cultivation of good and performance of wholesome *kamma* go together. In this sense, we cannot separate ethics from psychology. For Buddhist psychology is not limited to concepts or theories, but it provides a principle to overcome all things that are painful in life.

All sentient beings are bound by *kamma*, though all painful feelings are not necessarily derived from *kamma*, but can also arise from other causes (S V 230–31, A V 110, A II 87). One's wholesome *kamma* produces welfare and happiness, while unwholesome *kamma* generates mis-

ery and pain. However, the consequence is determined by the nature of *kamma*. The *Cūḷakammavibhaṅga Sutta* of the *Majjhima Nikāya* provides a detailed exposition of *kamma* and its consequence. According to this *Sutta*, all human beings, even Arahants, experience some bad kammic results of *past kamma* (M III 202ff). *Puthujjanas* suffer from diseases and painful feelings as a consequence of past or present unwholesome *kamma*. The fact is that *kamma* and its consequence affect all beings. The commentary on the *Dhammapada* discusses a few cases of those evil doers who are said to have experienced physical pain and mental pain as a consequence of unwholesome *kamma*. For instance, Pūtigatta Tissa is said to have suffered from boils that broke out and developed into open sores all over his body. After a while, his bones began to disintegrate and his robes became stained with blood. He thus suffered a terrible physical pain and mental pain as a consequence of evil deeds committed in the previous existence (Dhp-a I 318–320). The above-mentioned text also narrates a story of a pork butcher who suffered severe pain for his cruelty towards animals. It is said that he crawled on his limbs grunting like a pig for seven days before his death. As a consequence of his evil deeds, he is said to have died in great agony and pain (Dhp-a I 125–126). These stories suggest that *puthujjanas* experience physical pain and mental pain even in this existence because of their evil deeds.

Is it possible to reduce the consequences of evil *kamma*? Some Pāli sources suggest that the consequences of *kamma* are absolutely inescapable. This principle is epitomized in the *Dhammapada*, which illustrates that there is nowhere in the world where one can escape from the consequence of one's evil or unwholesome *kamma* (Dhp v. 127). This suggests that karmic consequences cannot be avoided completely. One faces the law of *kamma* when the time appears for the karmic consequences to actualize. Keown writes, "Karma that has been accumulated but not yet experienced is carried forward to the next life, or even many lifetimes ahead" (6). Needless to say, there is weighty *kamma*, which certainly

produces its karmic results either in this life or in the next life.¹⁷ The *Aṅguttara Nikāya* suggests that when the practitioners practice morality and mindfulness, they are not bothered much by the effects of minor evil *kamma* (A III 99). In fact, through the attainment of Arahantship, one will be able to lessen the consequences of previous unwholesome *kamma* as in the case of Angulimāla (M II9 7ff). It is noteworthy that a stream-enterer will not have any future rebirths as an animal, ghost, or in a hell, which means any remaining bad *kammic* fruits will be experienced as a human or *deva*.

How do *puthujjanas* react to painful feelings? In the simile of the two darts, the *Saṃyutta Nikāya* narrates the *puthujjana*'s negative reaction to painful feelings, stating that when a *puthujjana* is being contacted by a painful feeling, he grieves, sorrows, laments, weeps beating his chest, and becomes distraught. Such a person experiences successively two kinds of painful feeling, physical then mental. It is like being pierced successively by two darts (S IV 208). In this simile, the first dart refers to painful physical feeling and the second dart refers to painful mental feeling that arises due to the physical pain (Spk III 76–77). The significant point of the above simile is that the negative reaction to painful physical feeling causes the painful mental feeling. Another point is that a *puthujjana* usually considers pain as “my pain,” or believes this is “I” who suffers. This self-identity fuels further pain. The *Saṃyutta Nikāya* further explains:

Being contacted by painful feeling (*dukkhā-vedanā*), a *puthujjana* harbors aversion towards it. When he harbors aversion towards that painful feeling, the latent defilement of aver-

¹⁷ The five types of heinous or weighty *kamma* are: matricide, patricide, murdering an Arahant, wounding a Buddha, and causing a schism in the order of monks. It has been said that no one can escape from the consequences of these weighty deeds (Mil 25).

sion (*paṭighānusaya*) against that painful feeling underlies this. Being contacted by painful feeling, he seeks delight in sensual pleasures. What is the reason? Because he does not know any escape from painful feeling apart from sensual pleasures. When he rejoices in sensual pleasures, the latent defilement of sensual lust (*kāmarāgānusaya*) for pleasant feeling (*sukhā-vedanā*) underlies this. As he does not know the true nature of these feelings, the latent defilement of ignorance (*avijjānusaya*) for neither-painful-nor-pleasant feeling (*adukkhamasukhā-vedanā*) underlies this. (S IV 208)

By resisting with aversion (*paṭigha*) these physical and mental painful feelings, *puthujjana* experiences both “painful physical feeling” (*dukkhā-vedanā*) and “painful mental feeling” (*domanassā-vedanā*). The commentary on the *Samyutta Nikāya* suggests that when a *puthujjana* experiences a painful feeling, he inclines naturally towards sensual pleasures in order to escape from painful experience. Moreover, he reacts to a painful feeling in a foolish way (Spk 77). From the above analysis, we understand that whenever *puthujjanas* experience a painful feeling, they develop aversion towards it and habitually try to get rid of that painful experience by resisting or trying to escape it. Such an ignorant way of reacting to that painful feeling gives rise to another painful experience. Elsewhere it is stated that due to the undisciplined state of the mind (*abhāvitacitta*), painful feeling occupies the body and mind of *puthujjanas*, manifesting itself in variable intense reactions, trembles, cries, sobs, groans, etc. (Mil 253–254). As a consequence, they successively experience two kinds of painful feeling, physical then mental.

The Buddhist teachings on overcoming suffering generally begin with ethical living, which improves one’s well-being and the well-being of others. From a Buddhist perspective, the abandoning of unwholesome actions and the cultivation of wholesome actions bring happiness and

tranquility in one's daily life (A I 99). Physical pain (*dukkha*) and mental pain (*domanassa*) can be reduced by living ethically or improving one's own ethical behavior. Ethical and spiritual practices are said to reduce the impact of painful feelings of the practitioner (Attwood 294). In this regard, Daniel Cozort writes, "Suffering is inevitable, but its effect on us can be minimized through conditioning; this is obviously helpful in all areas of life, not least in spiritual practice" (369). If a person is able to control his actions, he can restrain and lessen the negative emotions or defilements that are caused. Through right view, one sees and acknowledges one's own physical pain and mental pain. By observing one's own suffering, one will have a clear understanding of one's painful feelings. Whatever feelings or emotions arise, one needs to be aware of their presence. Through full understanding of pain, one will be able to cope skillfully with physical pain and mental pain. These two painful feelings cease when one attains final passing away (*parinibbāna*).

Conclusion

From the above analysis of the experience of physical pain (*dukkha*) and mental pain (*domanassa*), we see that *puthujjanas* suffer from both physical pain and mental pain if their actions are motivated by the unwholesome roots of greed, hatred, and delusion. More specifically, the unwholesome roots do not directly cause physical pain and mental pain. These defilements cause one to perform unwholesome actions, whose karmic consequences lead on to re-becoming, and continued suffering. All human beings, including noble ones, still experience physical pain due to past *kamma*. Human beings—except the Arahant and the Non-returner—may also experience some mental pain (*domanassa*) due to past *kamma*. Moreover, due to the influence of the negative emotions such as grief and lamentation, *puthujjanas* experience both physical pain and mental pain.

These two painful experiences are also caused when one's self-image is attached to the clinging of aggregates. It is this clinging that prevents one from seeing the true nature of phenomena. Instead, it deepens one's suffering. From a Buddhist perspective, all *puthujjanas* are bound to painful feelings, yet their painful experiences are different from one another. We ordinary sentient beings have different forms of behavior and characteristics that make us different from one another, and we all respond to painful experiences in different ways, yet as long as we are ordinary beings, we all continue to experience The First Noble Truth of Suffering in our everyday lives; the ethics and practice of Buddhism offer a path out of this suffering.

Abbreviations

A	<i>Aṅguttara Nikāya</i>
Abhidh-s	<i>Abhidhammatthasaṅgaha</i>
Abhidh-s-ṭ	<i>Abhidhammatthavibhāvinī ṭīkā</i>
As	<i>Atthasālinī</i>
D	<i>Dīgha Nikāya</i>
Dhp	<i>Dhammapada</i>
Dhp-a	<i>Dhammapada Aṭṭhakathā</i>
Dhs	<i>Dhammasaṅgaṇī</i>
It	<i>Itivuttaka</i>
J	<i>Jātaka</i>
M	<i>Majjhima Nikāya</i>

136	<i>Sumanacara, The Experience of Dukkha and Domanassa among Puthujjanas</i>
Mil	<i>Milindapañha</i>
Pp	<i>Puggalapaññatti</i>
S	<i>Samyutta Nikāya</i>
Spk	<i>Sāratthappakāsinī (Samyutta Nikāya Aṭṭhakathā)</i>
Sv	<i>Sumaṅgalavilāsinī (Dīgha Nikāya Aṭṭhakathā)</i>
Vibh	<i>Vibhaṅga</i>
Vibh-a	<i>Vibhaṅga Aṭṭhakathā (Sammohavinodanī)</i>
Vin	<i>Vinayaṭṭhaka</i>
Vism	<i>Visuddhimagga</i>

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