



## THE KĀLĀMASUTTA CONVICTION

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### **Abstract**

A study of “The Kālāmasūta Conviction” determined to explore contents and the meaning the 10 conviction principles of this Phra Sūtra on 1) the real reasons His Lord administers this sermon and the convictional contents; 2) the significant scope and meaning focused on; 3) the intention his Lord to communicate in this subject matter; and 4) the reasons for supportive elucidation. The author found that the essence His Lord expresses was “Kālāmasutta-kaṅkhāniyaṭṭāna 10” in the Tripitaka on how to deal with doubtful matters or conviction principle said in Kālāmasutta 10. His Lord concluded upon self- cognition that all these dharmas were then immoral, moral, punishable, and non-punishable but one should decide to detach or to practice accordingly. The principles of conviction witnessed in Kālāmasūta have been used as principle, evidence and criteria cohesive to thinking assertion, decisionmaking, and evaluation to believe or to accept what was true, what was false and what was credible. It was evident that His Lord wished each one exercises deliberation about matters by oneself before deciding to believe. It meant that Buddhism held evidence to prove that there were methodologies and criteria to reflect the causes of the matter.

**Keywords:** Kālāmasutta, Conviction

### **Introduction**

The ten conviction essences are found in a sutta entitled Kessaputtasūtra when His Lord Buddha administers sermon for the Kessaputta settlers in the Kālāma settlement. The Kessaputtasūtra content attracts many issues for investigation like the Kālāma people wish His Lord Buddha to introduce methods to reflect decisionmaking on belief and non-belief in the teachings of the sectarian priests in their era but their teachings contradict each other. His Lord demonstrates the ways to treat curious matters through pre-reflecting on either usefulness or uselessness. Had they been useless; they must be disregarded but if otherwise, they must be pretested through application but never rush to conclude or to pin conviction. His Lord preaches about conviction by pinpointing to see the truth under the punishment of greed, thinking to assault, illusion, and the benefits of non-greediness, and avoidance of assaults. At the same time, His Lord teaches about Brahmavihāra 4 (mettā/ loving-kindness; karuṇā/ compassion; muditā/ sympathy; and upekkhā/equanimity) (A.III.226; Dhs.262; Vism, 320). The implications of Brahmavihāra 4 are simplified and enabled for implementations that ‘never easily believe with superstitious irrationalization’. His Lord requires us to see the scourges of Akusalamūla 3 (lobha/greed; dosa/hatred; and moha/delusion) (D.III.275; It.45) while attaching with Brahmavihāra 4. In general, this Sūtra is a doctrine depicted ways to know information heard from others while the listeners are attaching to the Brahmavihāra 4 as the information recipients. It proves that the valuable issues for investigation are the causes beckoning His Lord to preach The Kessaputtasūtra and the principle of to believe and not to believe upon hearing from others.

As such, the author desires to investigate (interpret) contents and the meaning of the 10 conviction principles of this Phra Sūtra. What are the real reasons His Lord administers this sermon and the convictional contents? What are the significant scope and meaning focused on? What does His Lord want to communicate in this subject matter? Finally, what are reasons to supportive elucidation?

### **The Buddhist Conviction Criteria**

His Lord Buddha has regulated criteria of conviction on how to believe or how to reflect before conviction. His Lord indoctrinates the Kālāma settlers in the Kessaputta settlements of Kusala Kingdom, in ancient India. His rationale is in this kingdom there are many sectarian founders visiting and preaching to assert



that their doctrines are correct whereas others are all false. It could be also upon attending many sermons and from many founders; the Kālāma people get perplexed. When His Lord passes by, they appeal for His sermon whether who should they believe and how should they believe? His Lord administers sermons for them on the 10 prohibitions or 10 precautions before believing upon hearing preaching from various sectarian founders. They have been scribed in the Tripitaka entitled “The Kessaputtiasūtra” but generally popularized with “Kālāmasūta” because His Lord administers the sermon for the Kālāma tribe of the King caste. And this Phra Sūtra is called “The Kessaputtisūtra” because the Kālāma people are the settlers of Kessaputti-nikama or village.

The essence His Lord expresses is “Kālāmasutta-kaṅkhāniyaṭṭāna 10” in the Tripitaka on how to deal with doubtful matters or conviction principle said in Kālāmasutta 10 pertaining (1) Mā anuṣven (be not led by report- both verbal report and written report.) (2) Mā paramparāya (be not led by tradition.) (3) Mā itikirāya (be not led by hearsay or rumour.) (4) Mā piṭakasampadanen (be not led by the authority of texts.) (5) Mā takkahetu (be not led by mere logic.) (6) Mā nayahetu (be not led by inference and philosophy.) (7) Mā ākāraparivitakken ( be not led by considering appearances and common sense.) (8) Mā ditṭhijjhānakkhantiyā ( be not led by the agreement with a considered and approved theory.) (9) Mā bhāḅbarūpatāya (be not led by seeming possibility and because of creditability.) and (10) Mā samaṇo no garūti (be not led by the idea, ‘This is our teacher’.) (A.I.189)

Upon self-cognition that all these dharma are then immoral, moral, punishable, non-punishable; one should detach or practice accordingly Phra Brahmaganabhorn (P.A. Payutto, 2016). Reflecting the meaning of the teaching in each item, “mā” is found in the forefront of every item. “Mā” means “not”. It could have many meanings like “never believe” or “never admittedly believe” or “never attach” or “never admit” which are found so stringent. However, there is also soft meaning such as “delaying to believe” or “never rash to believe” and so on (Phramaha Bodhivongsacārāya (Thongdee Suratejo, Pālī Dharma Level 9, Rājapaṇḍit, 2016). In summary, it is the matter of delaying, and not to believe but pre-checking before believing. The meaning of each item is as blow.

## **Elucidation (Interpretation) of Kālāmasutta**

**Mā anuṣven** (be not led by report- both verbal report and written report). This item means social context that during the time of His Lord, there were varieties of sectarian belief. Common people likely believed when there were words-of mouth. To this cause, His Lord said, “Never adopt things because of sequential hearing and informing-upon hearing or from reading but still deliberation should be first taken because messengers may have distorted messages or we (recipient) may ourselves receive distorted messages.

**Mā paramparāya** (be not led by tradition). This item means common people in that time difficultly searching for source of information unlike these days. They likely believed by tradition. His Lord cautioned by not being led by traditions because traditionalism would mislead to fallacies. For example, in ancient time there were parades of “Hae Nang Maew” (the process of Ms. Kitty) to beseech for rain and begot rains because people have done it since ancient time.

**Mā itikirāya** (be not led by hearsay or rumour) - This item means rumors likely disable to find it sources or even cannot find them. Rumors or hearsay should be heeded and they must be first checked for clarity.

**Mā piṭakasampadanen** (be not led by the authority of the texts). This item means common people prefer to believe in textbooks and they may wrongly write or they may wrongly copy.

**Mā takkahetu** (be not led by mere logic). This item means one has to impose deliberation on Logics. Never adopt on just being logic. Logics could be wrong when defective reasoning has been imposed such as “birds have 2 legs and it can fly. Therefore, a human has 2 legs; he could then fly.” As such, it seems logical but in fact it is incorrect.

**Mā nayahetu** (be not led by inference and philosophy). This item means never adopt philosophy as a tool for dharma principle because philosophy is just a perspective and is not a perfect science. Science is still changeable when receiving additionally new information.

**Mā ākārāparivitaḥken** (be not led by considering appearances and common sense). This item means people likely believe upon reflecting the movement of surrounding emotions. His Lord cautions because some affairs we



cannot use our common sense or estimation or tendency because the appearance seems be it but reality may not.

**Mā diṭṭhinijjhānakkhantiyā** (be not led by the agreement with a considered and approved theory). This item means people likely believe because it matches their dogma or their opinion or their conviction. His Lord cautions that never admit one's dogma because it could also be biases.

**Mā bhaḥḥarūpatāya** (be not led by seeming possibility and because of creditability). This item means any speakers' trustful credibility or possibly believe because we have seen so as they speak. Cautions here are the past credible scholars may supply distorted information if they brood prejudices.

**Mā samaṇo no garūti** (be not led by the idea, 'This is our teacher'). This item means be cautious even the teaching of our gurus or teachers; if they brood prejudices (love, greed, rage and delusion). They would unintentionally supply distorted information.

Finally, His Lord concludes, "Upon self-cognition that all these dharmas are then immoral, moral, punishable, and non-punishable; but one should detach or practice accordingly.

### **Elucidation (Interpretation) of His High Ven. Somdej Phra Buddhaghosacaraya (P.A. Payutto)**

His High Venerable embraced the principle of Kālāmasūṭta to bridge with personal faith to lead to sammādiṭṭhi (right view/right understanding) as the essence found in the Buddhadharmā page 593 saying, "upon common people who learn through relying on instructions of others; the training process would first begin with any forms of conviction and Buddhism calls it "Faith". This faith may be belief because of satisfying the primary reason of the dogma and/or justified belief or the characteristics of justification and trustfulness form the instructors themselves. Later, teaching was imposed and attending training until growing with understanding while visioning with rightful reasoning by oneself. Assumably, it was called sammādiṭṭhi (right view/ right understanding). When opinion and understanding gradually grew and elucidated through practices or for proving with experiences until turning into evident witnessing. It accounted of wisdom growth unto the level of sammāñāṇa (right knowledge/right insight).

It was the level above conviction (faith) and beyond any rational understanding (dīṭṭhi). This was the destination and goal arrival – the right deliverance or called sammāvimutti. (Phra Brahmagunabhorn (P.A. Payutto), 2013, p.245).

At this point, His High Ven. Somdej Phra Buddhaghosacaraya (P.A. Payutto) interpreted the principle of Kālāmasūtta as the Buddhist-verse to express the existing faith of believers or non-believers or those determining to be believers. The principle of Kālāmasūtta could then be taken as a criterion to decisionmaking for to believe or not to believe. To this point, His Most Venerable Phra Dharmapitaka elucidated that the prohibition of His Lord to believe in fact it was not to rush to conclude or to be abrupt to accept thing without deliberations. As such the introduction of Kālāmasūtta by His Lord was to allow listeners freedom of decisionmaking by their own. His Lord never encouraged belief but taught to reflect before justified decisionmaking as they saw it. To conclude, considering contents and explanation of His Most Venerable Phra Dharmapitaka, it could be described that the 10 principles of belief were just the criteria or the practical way guiding individuals in those days for deliberation and to decide whether to believe something or not. As such His Most Venerable did not explain any additional about the meaning found in the 10 principles of belief. His Most Venerable just presented that His Lord adopted and presented these principles for the purpose that individuals must use reasoning and beget self-intuition (Ramil Karnjanda, 2004).

### **Analysis of Kālāmasūtta**

In summary, 10 principles of conviction witnessed in Kālāmasūtta have been used as principle, evidence and criteria cohesive to thinking assertion, decisionmaking, and evaluation to believe or to accept what was true, what was false and what was credible. With the interpretation of His High Ven. Somdej Phra Buddhaghosacaraya (P.A. Payutto) supported the interpretation of the author that His Lord Buddha taught the Kālāma people to use self-deliberation to reflect conviction. The dogma and the simple method of teachings which the sectarian founders and His Lord Buddha themselves have done. His Lord Himself never claimed of being the enlightened where everyone must believe. His Lord told the King of Licchavī named King Bhaddiya found in the Bhaddiya Sutta, saying, “Bhaddiya, we have persuaded Your Majesty that Lo! Bhaddiya; may Your Majesty be our disciple and we shall be your founder as such (A.Ti.



20/66/257-261).” It was evident that His Lord wished each one exercised deliberation about the matters by oneself before deciding to believe. It meant that Buddhism held evidence to prove that there were methodologies and criteria to reflect the causes of the matter.

## Conclusions

In the study of Kesputtasūtra or Kālāmasūta and by summary, it was the matter of reservation of not to believe first for inspection before conviction. The dogma was about the interested principle of belief. In general, this Phra Sutta was a doctrine determined to guide and to grasp information heard from others while the listeners abode in Brahmavihāra 4 in perceiving information. When the 10 principles of belief have been interpreted; the Kālāmasūta was enabled to be used as principle, evidence and criteria related to references, decisionmaking, and evaluation on to believe or to accept what was true, what was false and what was credible. This was through implementing self-deliberation to reflect the conviction for a course of practices that guide people in those days. It meant for reflecting and decisionmaking on what to believe and not to believe. The principle of Kālāmasūta could bridge with individual faith leading to sammādiṭṭhi (right view/right understanding) which began the maggapaṭipada and growth to the nirvana. The dogma in Kesputtasūtra or Kālāmasūta deserved dissemination to be the tool in checking and screening our conviction for its real accuracy. This included investigation which should be studied for systematically disseminating results in depth and more broadness about their meaning and application for real life as well as the influences or the technical reflexion stemmed from this concept. This would lead to improvement of communication which would turn to be the tools enabling to create better reciprocal understanding for further perfection.

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