

From *In the Buddha's Words* by Bhikkhu Bodhi

**Ch. III, 4: Investigate the Teacher himself
Vimamsaka Sutta[MN 47]**

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**1. Introduction (to the Selection, Ch III, 4).
By Bhikkhu Bodhi**

In the Vimamsaka Sutta – **Text III, 4** – the Buddha lays down guidelines by which a monk can test “the Tathāgata”, that is, the Buddha, to evaluate his claim to be perfectly enlightened. One benchmark of perfect enlightenment is freedom of the mind from all defilements. If a monk cannot directly see into the Buddha’s own mind, he can nevertheless rely on indirect evidence to ascertain that the Buddha is freed from defilements; that is, by evaluating the Buddha’s bodily deeds and speech he can infer that the Buddha’s mental states are exclusively pure, uninfluenced by greed, hatred, and delusion. In addition to such observational inference, the Buddha further encourages the monk to approach him and directly inquire about his mental states.

Once the pupil gains confidence that the Buddha is a qualified teacher, he then puts the Master to the ultimate test. He learns his teaching, enters upon the practice, and penetrates the Dhamma by direct knowledge. This act of penetration – here equivalent at minimum to the attainment of stream entry – brings the gain of “invincible faith”, the faith of one who is established upon the irreversible path leading to final release.

Taken in isolation, the Vimamsaka Sutta might give the impression that one acquires faith only after gaining realization of the teaching, and since realization is self-validating, faith would then become one-sided. The point the sutta is making is that faith becomes *invincible* as a result of realization, not that faith first enters the spiritual path only when one attains realization. Faith is the first of the five spiritual faculties, and in some degree, as trusting confidence in the Buddha’s enlightenment and in the main principles of his teaching, it is a prerequisite for the higher training. We see faith functioning in this preparatory role in **Text III, 5**, the Caṅki Sutta (to be considered next).

**2. Main Translation of Selected Text
by Bhikkhu Bodhi**

Investigate the Teacher Himself

1. Thus have I heard. On one occasion the Blessed One was living at Sāvathī in Jeta’s Grove, Anāthapiṇḍika’s Park. There he addressed the monks thus: “Monks!”– “Venerable sir!” they replied. The Blessed One said this:

2. “Monks, a monk who is an inquirer, not knowing how to gauge another’s mind,¹ should make an investigation of the Tathāgata in order to find out whether or not he is perfectly enlightened.”

3. “Venerable sir, our teachings are rooted in the Blessed One, guided by the Blessed One, have the Blessed One as their resort. It would be good if the Blessed One would explain the meaning of these words. Having heard it from him, the monks will remember it.”

“Then listen, monks, and attend closely to what I shall say.”

1. Read, with Be and Ce, *ajānantena*, as against Ee’s *ājānantena*. The negative is clearly required here, since the monk who cannot directly know the Buddha’s mind must infer from his bodily and verbal behaviour that he is fully purified.

“Yes, venerable sir;” the monks replied. The Blessed One said this:

4. “Monks, a monk who is an inquirer, not knowing how to gauge another’s mind, should investigate the Tathāgata with respect to two kinds of states, states cognizable through the eye and through the ear thus: ‘Are there found in the Tathagata or not any defiled states cognizable through the eye or through the ear?’² When he investigates him, he comes to know: ‘No defiled states cognizable through the eye or through the ear are found in the Tathagata.’

5. “When he comes to know this, he investigates him further thus: ‘Are there found in the Tathagata or not any mixed states cognizable through the eye or through the ear?’³ When he investigates him, he comes to know: ‘No mixed states cognizable through the eye or through the ear are found in the Tathagata.’

6. “When he comes to know this, he investigates him further thus: ‘Are there found in the Tathagata or not cleansed states cognizable through the eye or through the ear?’ When he investigates him, he comes to know: ‘Cleansed states cognizable through the eye or through the ear are found in the Tathagata.’

7. “When he comes to know this, he investigates him further thus: ‘Has this venerable one attained this wholesome state over a long time or did he attain it recently?’ When he investigates him, he comes to know: ‘This venerable one has attained this wholesome state over a long time; he did not attain it only recently.’

8. “When he comes to know this, he investigates him further thus: ‘Has this venerable one acquired renown and attained fame, so that the dangers [connected with renown and fame] are found in him? For, monks, as long as a monk has not acquired renown and attained fame, the dangers [connected with renown and fame] are not found in him; but when he has acquired renown and attained fame, those dangers are found in him.⁴ When he investigates him, he comes to know: ‘This venerable one has acquired renown and attained fame, but the dan- [connected with renown and fame] are not found in him.’

9. “When he comes to know this, he investigates him further thus: ‘Is this venerable one restrained without fear, not restrained by fear, and – he avoid indulging in sensual pleasures because he is without lust through the destruction of lust?’ When he investigates him, he comes to know: ‘This venerable one is restrained without fear, not restrained by fear, and he avoids indulging in sensual pleasure because he is without lust through the destruction of lust.’

10. “Now, monks, if others should ask that monk thus: ‘What are the venerable one’s reasons and what is his evidence whereby he says: “That venerable one is restrained without fear, not restrained by fear, and he avoids indulging in sensual pleasures because he is without lust through the destruction of lust?”’ – answering rightly, that monk would answer thus: ‘Whether that venerable one dwells in the Sangha or alone, while some there are well behaved and some are ill behaved and some there teach a group, while some here are seen concerned about material things and some are unsullied by material things, still that venerable one does not despise anyone because of that.⁵ And I have heard and learned this from the Blessed One’s own lips: “I am restrained without fear, not restrained by fear, and I avoid indulging in sensual pleasures because I am without lust through the destruction of lust.”’

11. “The Tathāgata, monks, should be questioned further about that thus: ‘Are there found in the Tathāgata or not any defiled states cognizable through the eye or through the ear?’ The Tathāgata would answer thus: ‘No defiled states cognizable through the eye or through the ear are found in the Tathāgata.’

12. “If asked, ‘Are there found in the Tathāgata or not any mixed states cognizable through the eye or through the ear?’ the Tathāgata would answer thus: ‘No mixed states cognizable through the eye or through the ear are found in the Tathāgata.’

13. “If asked, ‘Are there found in the Tathāgata or not cleansed states cognizable through the eye or through the ear?’ the Tathāgata would answer thus: ‘Cleansed states cognizable through the eye or through the ear are found in the Tathāgata. They are my pathway and my domain, yet I do not identify with them.’

14. “Monks, a disciple should approach the Teacher who speaks thus in order to hear the Dhamma. The Teacher teaches him the Dhamma with its successively higher levels, with its successively more sublime levels, with its dark and bright counterparts. As the Teacher teaches the Dhamma to a monk in this way, through direct

2. “States cognizable through the eye” are bodily actions; “states cognizable by the ear” are words.

3. “Mixed states” would mean the conduct of one who is trying to purify his behaviour but is unable to do so consistently. Sometime his conduct is pure, sometimes impure.

4. Ps: The dangers are conceit, arrogance, etc. For some monks are calm and humble as long they have not become well known and popular; but when they become famous and popular, they go about acting improperly, attacking other monks like a leopard pouncing on a herd of deer.

5. Ps: This statement shows the Buddha’s impartiality. He does not extol some and disparage others.

knowledge of a certain teaching here in that Dhamma, the monk comes to a conclusion about the teachings.⁶ He places confidence in the Teacher thus: ‘The Blessed One is perfectly enlightened, the Dhamma is well proclaimed by the Blessed One, the Saṅgha is practicing the good way.’

15. “Now if others should ask that monk thus: ‘What are the venerable one’s reasons and what is his evidence whereby he says, “The Blessed One is perfectly enlightened, the Dhamma is well proclaimed by the Blessed One, the Saṅgha is practicing the good way”?’ – answering rightly, that monk would answer thus: ‘Here, friends, I approached the Blessed One in order to hear the Dhamma. The Blessed One taught me the Dhamma with its successively higher levels, with its successively more sublime levels, with its dark and bright counterparts. As the Blessed One taught the Dhamma to me in this way, through direct knowledge of a certain teaching here in that Dhamma, I came to a conclusion about the teachings. I placed confidence in the Teacher thus: “The Blessed One is perfectly enlightened, the Dhamma is well proclaimed by the Blessed One, the Saṅgha is practicing the good way.”’”

16. “Monks, when anyone’s faith has been planted, rooted, and established in the Tathāgata through these reasons, terms, and phrases, his faith is said to be supported by reasons, rooted in vision, firm; it is invincible by any ascetic or brahmin or deva or Māra or Brahmā or by anyone in the world.⁷ That is how, monks, there is an investigation of the Tathāgata in accordance with the Dhamma, and that is how the Tathāgata is well investigated in accordance with the Dhamma.”

That is what the Blessed One said. The monks were satisfied and delighted in the Blessed One’s words.

(MN 47: *Vimaṃsaka Sutta*; 1317-20)

3. Pali Text Society Translation

by I. B. Horner

47. DISCOURSE ON INQUIRING (*Vimaṃsakasutta*)

THUS have I heard: At one time the Lord was staying near Sāvathī in the Jeta Grove in Anāthapiṇḍika’s monastery. While he was there the Lord addressed the monks, saying: “Monks.” “Revered one,” these monks answered the Lord in assent. The Lord spoke thus

“Monks, an inquiring¹ monk, learning the range² of another’s mind, should make a study³ of the Tathagata so as to distinguish whether he is a fully Self-awakened One or not.”

“For us,⁴ Lord, things are rooted in the Lord, have the Lord for their conduit, the Lord for their arbiter. Well for us, Lord, if the Lord would reveal the meaning of this saying; having heard the Lord, the monks will remember.”

“Very well, monks; listen, attend carefully and I will speak.”

“Yes, Lord,” these monks answered the Lord in assent. The Lord spoke thus:

“Monks, an inquiring monk, learning the range of another’s mind, should study the Tathāgata in regard to two things: things cognisable through the eye and through the ear,⁵ thinking: ‘Do those that are impure states cognisable through the eye and the ear exist in a Tathāgata or not?’ While he is studying this he knows thus: ‘Those impure states which are cognisable through the eye and the ear do not exist in a Tathāgata.’ After he has studied this

6. *So tasmim̐ dhamme abhiññāya idh’ekaccaṃ dhammaṃ dhammesu niṭṭhaṃ gaccati.* In order to convey the intended meaning I have rendered the second occurrence of *dhamma* here as “teaching”, i.e. the particular doctrine taught to him, the plural *dhammesu* as “teachings”, and *tasmim̐ dhamme* as “that Dhamma”, in the sense of total teaching. Ps and Ps-Pt together explain the meaning thus: “When the Dhamma has been taught by the Master, the monk, by directly knowing the Dhamma through penetration of the path, fruit, and Nibbāna, comes to a conclusion regarding the preliminary teaching of the Dhamma about the aids to enlightenment (*bodhipakkhiyā dhammā*).”

7. This refers to the faith of a noble person (*ariyapuggala*), who has seen the Dhamma and thus can never acknowledge any teacher other than the Buddha.

1. *MA. ii. 378* distinguishes three kinds of inquiring; here inquiring about the Teacher is meant.

2. Here *pariyāya* is explained by *vāra*, track, and *pariecheda*, range or limit, *MA. ii. 378*.

3. *samannesanā*, search, quest.

4. As at *M. i. 309, etc*

5. *MA. ii. 380*, the Teacher’s bodily conduct is cognisable through the eye, his speech through the ear.

and knows thus: ‘Those impure states which are cognisable through the eye and the ear do not exist in a Tathāgata,’ he then studies further, thinking: ‘Do those that are mixed states⁶ cognisable through the eye and the ear exist in a Tathāgata or not?’ While he is studying this he knows thus: ‘Those mixed states cognisable through the eye and the ear do not exist in a Tathāgata.’ [380] After he has studied this and knows thus: ‘Those mixed states cognisable through the eye and the ear do not exist in a Tathāgata,’ he then studies further, thinking: ‘Do those that are absolutely pure states cognisable through the eye and the ear exist in a Tathāgata or not?’ While, he is studying this he knows thus: ‘Those which are absolutely pure states cognisable through the eye and the ear exist in a Tathāgata.’ After he has studied this and knows thus: ‘These absolutely pure states which are cognisable through the eye and the ear exist in the Tathāgata,’ he then studies further, thinking: ‘Has this venerable one been possessed of this skilled state for a long time or only for a short time?’ While he is studying this he knows thus: ‘This venerable one has been possessed of this skilled state for a long time, this venerable one has not been possessed of it for only a short time.’ After he has studied this and knows thus: ‘This venerable one has been possessed of this skilled state for a long time, this venerable one has not been possessed of it for only a short time,’ he then studies further: ‘Do there exist any perils for that venerable monk who has attained to fame and won renown?’

Monks, there are some perils that do not exist here for a monk until he has attained to fame and won renown. It is, monks, after a monk has attained to fame and won renown that some perils exist for him here. While he is studying this he knows thus: ‘Although the venerable monk has attained to fame and won renown, some perils do not exist for him here.’ After he has studied this and knows thus: ‘Although this venerable monk has attained to fame and won renown, some perils do not exist for him here,’ he then studies further: ‘Does this venerable one refrain out of fearlessness, does not he refrain out of fear?⁷ Is it because, through the destruction of attachment, that, being without attachment, he does not follow pleasures of the senses?’ As he is studying this he knows thus: ‘This venerable one refrains out of fearlessness, this venerable one refrains not out of fear; he does not follow pleasures of the senses because, through the destruction of attachment, he is without attachment.’

If, monks, others should question this monk thus: ‘What are the venerable one’s facts, what his evidence by reason of which the venerable one speaks thus: “This venerable one refrains out of [381] fearlessness, this venerable one refrains not out of fear; he does not follow pleasures of the senses because, through the destruction of attachment, he is without attachment”?’ Monks, a monk answering properly would answer thus: ‘This venerable one, whether staying in an Order or staying alone,⁸ whether those near him are progressing well, whether they are progressing badly, whether they lead a group, whether they are engaged with any material things here or whether they are unstained by any material things here – this venerable one does not despise them because of this.⁹ This have I heard face to face with the Lord, this have I learnt face to face with him: “I am restrained out of fearlessness, I am not restrained out of fear; without attachment because of the destruction of attachment, I do not follow pleasures of the senses.”’

Monks, the Tathāgata should himself be further questioned hereon: ‘Do those impure states cognisable through the eye and through the ear exist in the Tathāgata or not?’ Monks, in answering,¹⁰ a Tathāgata would answer thus, ‘Those impure states cognisable through the eye and through the ear do not exist in a Tathāgata.’ ‘Do those mixed states cognisable through the eye and through the ear exist in a Tathāgata or not?’ Monks, in answering, a Tathāgata would answer thus: ‘Those mixed states cognisable through the eye and through the ear do not exist in a Tathāgata.’ ‘Do those absolutely pure states cognisable through the eye and through the ear exist in a Tathāgata or not?’ Monks, in answering, a Tathāgata would answer thus: ‘Those absolutely pure states cognisable through the eye and through the ear exist in a Tathāgata. This is my path, this my pasture¹¹ and no one is like (me) in this.¹² Monks, a disciple should draw near a teacher who speaks like this so as to hear *dhamma*. From further to further, from excellence to excellence, the Teacher teaches him *dhamma*, what is dark and what is bright, with their counterparts.¹³ As, monks, the Teacher gradually teaches [382] *dhamma* to the monk, from further to further, from

6. *MA. ii. 381*, those which are sometimes “dark” and sometimes “bright.”

7. The worldling has four fears, the “learner” (*sekha*) three, so he is restrained out of fear. But there is not even one fear for him whose cankers are destroyed, *MA. ii. 385*.

8. Temporarily (half a month or three months), for solitary meditation, as is implied by the references given (to *S. v. 320, 325*) at *MA. ii. 386*.

9. All are alike to the muni (sage). The verse stating this is found at *MA. ii. 387*; *DhA. i. 146*, and *cf. Miln. 410*.

10. There is no “aright” (*samma*) as at *Fur. Dial. i. 229*, for a Truth-finder could not do otherwise than speak aright, as noticed at *MA. ii. 387*.

11. *etapatho ‘ham asmi etagocarō. MA. ii. 387* gives *etapatha* as another reading, and explains by “utter purity of living and morality.”

12. In purity of moral habit without craving, *MA. ii. 387*.

13. *sappaṭibhāga* appears to mean savipāka, with their results, fruits.

excellence to excellence, what is dark and what is bright with their counterparts, so does he gradually by his superknowledge of point after point of *dhamma* come to fulfilment in *dhamma*. He has confidence in the Teacher, that: ‘The Lord is a fully Self-awakened One, well taught is *dhamma* by the Lord, the Order fares along well.’ Monks, if others should ask that monk: ‘But what, are the venerable one’s facts, what the evidence by reason of which he speaks thus: “The Lord is a fully Self-awakened one, well taught is *dhamma* by the Lord, the Order fares along well?”’ that monk, monks, answering rightly would answer thus: ‘I, your reverences, drew near the Lord so as to hear *dhamma*. The Lord taught me *dhamma* from further to further, from excellence to excellence, what is dark and what is bright with their counterparts. As the Lord gradually taught me *dhamma* from further to further, from excellence to excellence, what is dark and what is bright with their counterparts, so did I gradually by my superknowledge of point after point in *dhamma* come to fulfilment in *dhamma*. I have confidence in the Teacher, that: “The Lord is a fully Self-awakened One, well taught is *dhamma* by the Lord, the Order fares along well.”’

“Monks, in anyone in whom faith in the Teacher is established, rooted, supported by these methods,¹⁴ by these sentences, by these words,¹⁵ that faith is called reasoned, based on vision,¹⁶ strong; it is indestructible by a recluse or brahman or *deva* or Mara or a Brahma or by anyone in the world. Thus, monks, does there come to be study of the Tathagata’s *dhamma*, and thus does the Tathagata come to be well studied in the proper manner.”

Thus spoke the Lord. Delighted, these monks rejoiced in what the Lord had said.

4. Translation by Sister Uppalavanna

47 Vīmaṃsakasuttaṃ The Examination.

I heard thus.

At one time the Blessed One was living in the monastery offered by Anaathapindika in Jeta’s grove in Saavatthi. Then the Blessed One addressed the bhikkhus from there.

Bhikkhus, by a bhikkhu who could read the thought processes of another, an examination of the Thus Gone One should be done. Is he rightfully enlightened or not or only conscious of it? Venerable sir, the Blessed One is the origin of the Teaching, the leader and the refuge of the Teaching. Good that the meaning of these words occur to the Blessed One. Hearing it from the Blessed One, the bhikkhus will bear it in mind. Then bhikkhus, listen, I will teach.

Bhikkhus, by the bhikkhu who could examine the thought processes of another the Thus Gone One should be examined on two things. On things cognisable by eye consciousness and ear consciousness. Are defiled things cognisable by eye and ear consciousness evident in the Thus Gone One or are they not? When examining he knows. These defiled things cognisable by eye and ear consciousness¹ are not evident in the Thus Gone One. Then he should make a further examination: Are mixed things cognisable by eye and ear consciousness evident in the Thus Gone One or are they not? When examining he knows. These mixed things cognisable by eye and ear consciousness² are not evident in the Thus Gone One. Then he should make a further examination: Are pure things cognisable by eye and ear consciousness evident in the Thus Gone One or are they not? When examining he knows. The pure things cognisable by eye and ear consciousness³ are evident in the Thus Gone One.

Then he should make a further examination. Has the venerable one attained to these things of merit since long or are they attained to recently? When examining he knows these things of merit were attained since long, and not recently. Then he should make a further examination. Is the venerable one internally convinced of this attainment? Is there a possible danger evident? He should make a thorough examination to know whether there is some danger evident. When examining he knows the venerable one is internally convinced of the attainment and there is no danger evident.

14. *MA. ii. 388*, by his inquiries as to the Teacher.

15. As at *M. i. 114*; cf. *S. v. 219*.

16. *MA. ii. 388* here says: based on the way of stream-attainment; it is the basis of faith; the faith of a stream-attainer cannot be destroyed by Māra.

1. Defiled things cognisable by eye and ear consciousness ‘*ye sankiliṭhā cakkhusota viññāneyyā dhammā*’ These are defiled perceptions born of eye and ear consciousness. Those are thoughts with greed, hate and delusion
2. Mixed things cognisable by eye and ear consciousness. ‘*ye vitimissā cakkhusota viññāneyyā dhammā*’ This is a mixed up perception, when not sure whether it is seen or heard. They are thoughts with a mixture of greed, hate and delusion.
3. Pure things cognisable by eye and ear consciousness ‘*ye vodātā cakkhusota viññāneyyā dhammā*’ These are pure perceptions and thoughts born of eye and ear consciousness, free of greed, hate and delusion.

Then he should further examine. Does the venerable one not indulge in sensuality, through destruction of greed or through fear? When examining he knows. The venerable one does not indulge in sensuality through destruction of greed, and not through fear.

Then the others should question that bhikkhu. On what grounds did the venerable one say, that the venerable one did not indulge in sensuality because greed is destroyed and not through fear? If that bhikkhu should reply rightly, he should say: Whether the venerable one is in the midst of the community, or living alone. Living there well or miserably, if when advising a crowd, he sees someone fallen for materiality, or someone not soiled by materiality, the venerable one does not look down on him: This I heard in the presence of the Blessed One, and he acknowledged it 'I do not indulge in sensuality because my greed is destroyed, not out of fear.'

Then further it may, even be questioned from the Thus Gone One himself: Are defiled things cognisable by eye and ear consciousness evident in the Thus Gone One or are they not? Then I would declare. 'Defiled things cognisable by eye and ear consciousness are not evident in the Thus Gone One'. Asked: Are mixed things cognisable by eye and ear consciousness evident in the Thus Gone One, or are they not? I would declare. 'Mixed things cognisable by eye and ear consciousness are not evident in the Thus Gone One'. Asked: Are pure things cognisable by eye and ear consciousness evident in the Thus Gone One, or are they not?. I would declare. 'Pure things cognisable by eye and ear consciousness are evident in the Thus Gone One. That is my path and pasture, but I do not make them mine'. Bhikkhus, a Teacher who says thus, is suitable to be approached to hear the Teaching. He teaches leading one to more and more exalted states, showing the dark and white counterparts'. When teaching leading to more and more exalted states, at a certain point he reaches the summit⁴ and establishes faith in the Teacher: The Blessed One is rightfully enlightened, the Teaching is well proclaimed, the Community of bhikkhus have gone well.

Then the others should question that bhikkhu. On what grounds did the venerable one say, the Blessed One is rightfully enlightened, the Teaching is well proclaimed and the Community of bhikkhus have gone well? That bhikkhu replying rightly should say, I approached the Blessed One to listen to the Teaching. The Blessed One taught me leading to more and more exalted states, showing the dark and white counterparts. When teaching, leading me to more and more exalted states, at a certain point I reached the summit, and then I established faith in the Teacher and came to the conclusion, the Blessed One is rightfully enlightened, the Teaching is well proclaimed, and the Community of bhikkhus has gone dwell.

Bhikkhus, in whomever faith is established in the Thus Gone One in this manner with these phrases and words, it becomes well established, thoroughly rooted faith and insight. It cannot be changed by a recluse, brahmin, god, Mārā Brahmā or by anyone in the world.

Bhikkhus, that is the search in the Teaching of the Thus Gone One, and is the propriety of reaching the summit⁵ in the Teaching of the Thus Gone One.

The Blessed One said thus and those bhikkhus delighted in the words of the Blessed One.

5. A Comment on the Sutta

By Victor Gunasekara

This title of this Sutta translates as the 'Sutta on Investigation'. But the object of investigation is limited to the investigation of a Teacher by his disciple to ascertain whether the disciple can repose faith in his teacher. In fact the scope of the investigation is even more limited as the Teacher referenced is the Buddha himself, called the Tathāgatha, which is the way the Buddha refers to himself. So a monk disciple of the Buddha is asked to investigate the Buddha so as to see if he should develop faith in him. This is not something that other religious teachers have not asked their disciples to do.

In the course of his investigation the disciple (in this case a Bhikkhu) is said to consider a series of questions relating to his teacher (in this case the Buddha). Only if these questions give the correct answer should the monk-disciple develop faith in the Buddha as Teacher. The questions to be resolved are basically six in number and could

4. At a certain point reaches the summit. '*idha ekaccaṃ dhammaṃ niṭṭhaṃ āgamaṃ*' Here, it is realising the Teaching of the Blessed One, and it is equivalent to attaining one or the other of the eight attainments of the Noble disciple. These attainments have to go in due order and the first of them is the entry into the stream of the Teaching. There is no progress without it.

5. The search in the Teaching of the Thus Gone One and the propriety of reaching the summit. '*evaṃ kho bhikkhave tathāgate dhammasammanesaṇā hoti. Evaṃ ca pana tathāgato dhammatāsusamanniṭṭho honti*' It means that the understanding of the Teaching should come from within, and it becomes the fitness to see through.

be stated as follows:–

1. *Are defiled (or mixed or pure) things cognizable by eye and ear consciousness evident in the Teacher or are they not?* Here the correct answer should be that these things (*dhammā*) should be cognizable in the Teacher. (What is meant by ‘things’ in this context are explained in the notes in Sister Uppalavanna’s translation).
2. *Has the Teacher attained to these things of merit since long or are they attained to recently?* It is expected that this should not be a recent accomplishment but one of some duration.
3. *Is the Teacher internally convinced of this attainment? Is there a possible danger evident?* The teacher should be internally convinced, and there should be no possible danger to the teacher.
4. *Does the Teacher not indulge in sensuality, through destruction of greed or through fear?* Non-indulgence in sensuality should be through the elimination of greed, not through some fear.
5. *On what grounds does the Teacher claim that he does not indulge in sensuality because greed is destroyed and not through fear?* Here when questioned thus the Teacher should be able to say: “That is my path and pasture, but I do not make them mine”.
6. *On what grounds can it be said that the Teacher is rightfully enlightened, the Teaching is well proclaimed and the Community of disciples have gone well?* Here the interrogating bhikkhu should after following the teaching be able to reach higher and higher levels until he reaches the highest.

Clearly it is the positive answer to the last question that enables the disciple to develop faith in the Buddha, the other questions are merely a progressive assessment which should culminate in this final question.

While this method of investigating has relevance in the Buddha’s time the question arises what relevance the sutta has for the present day. Clearly the Buddha is now not available for these questions to be posed but it may be argued that these questions could be asked of the Dhamma. Followers of the Theravada tradition will take the Pali Canon as giving what the Buddha said. The problem here is that there are various interpretations of the doctrines given in the Pali Canon, and some of its books and statements there may be late developments. But the last question could be formulated as whether any particular interpretation is “well proclaimed”, etc. Once again the test of this is that whether those following that interpretation have reached the highest level. It is only then that one can have faith in the particular interpretation of the Dhamma.

The fact is that “faith” (*saddhā*) is now used in a much looser sense as implying some kind of blind faith in statements attributed to the Buddha. This usage of *saddhā* (faith) is not justified on the basis of this sutta. Thus this sutta still plays an important role, even though the original one of testing the Buddha himself is no longer possible.

6. Pali Text of the Sutta

7. Vīmaṃsakasuttaṃ

487. Evaṃ (1.0392) me sutaṃ– ekaṃ samayaṃ bhagavā sāvatthiyaṃ viharati jetavane anāthapiṇḍikassa ārāme. Tatra kho bhagavā bhikkhū āmantesi– “bhikkhavo”ti. “Bhadante”ti te bhikkhū bhagavato paccassosum. Bhagavā etadavoca– “vīmaṃsakena, bhikkhave, bhikkhunā parassa cetopariyāyaṃ ajānantena, tathāgate samannesanā kātabbā ‘sammāsambuddho vā no vā’ iti viññāṇāyā”ti. “Bhagavaṃmūlakā no, bhante, dhammā, bhagavaṃnettikā bhagavaṃpaṭisaraṇā; sādhu vata, bhante, bhagavantaṃyeva paṭibhātu etassa bhāsitassa attho; bhagavato sutvā bhikkhū dhāressantī”ti. “Tena hi, bhikkhave, suṇātha, sādhukaṃ manasi karotha, bhāsissāmī”ti. “Evaṃ, bhante”ti kho te bhikkhū bhagavato paccassosum. Bhagavā etadavoca–

488. “Vīmaṃsakena, bhikkhave, bhikkhunā parassa cetopariyāyaṃ ajānantena dvīsu dhammesu tathāgate samannesitabbo cakkhusotaviññeyyesu dhammesu– ‘ye saṃkiliṭṭhā cakkhusotaviññeyyā dhammā, saṃvijjanti vā te tathāgatassa no vā’ti? Tameṇaṃ samannesamāno evaṃ jānāti– ‘ye saṃkiliṭṭhā cakkhusotaviññeyyā dhammā, na te tathāgatassa saṃvijjanti’ti.

“Yato naṃ samannesamāno evaṃ jānāti– ‘ye saṃkiliṭṭhā cakkhusotaviññeyyā dhammā, na te tathāgatassa saṃvijjanti’ti, tato naṃ uttarim samannesati– ‘ye vītimissā cakkhusotaviññeyyā dhammā, saṃvijjanti vā te tathāgatassa no vā’ti? Tameṇaṃ samannesamāno evaṃ jānāti– ‘ye vītimissā cakkhusotaviññeyyā dhammā, na te tathāgatassa saṃvijjanti’ti.

“Yato naṃ samannesamāno evaṃ jānāti– ‘ye vītimissā cakkhusotaviññeyyā dhammā, na te tathāgatassa saṃvijjanti’ti, tato naṃ uttarim samannesati– ‘ye vodātā cakkhusotaviññeyyā dhammā, saṃvijjanti vā te tathāgatassa no vā’ti? Tameṇaṃ samannesamāno evaṃ (1.0393) jānāti– ‘ye vodātā cakkhusotaviññeyyā

dhammā, saṃvijjanti te tathāgatassā'ti.

“Yato naṃ samannesamāno evaṃ jānāti- ‘ye vodātā cakkhusotaviññeyyā dhammā, saṃvijjanti te tathāgatassā'ti, tato naṃ uttarimṃ samannesati- ‘dīgharattaṃ samāpanno ayamāyasmā imaṃ kusalaṃ dhammaṃ, udāhu ittarasamāpanno'ti? Tamenamṃ samannesamāno evaṃ jānāti- ‘dīgharattaṃ samāpanno ayamāyasmā imaṃ kusalaṃ dhammaṃ, nāyamāyasmā ittarasamāpanno'ti.

“Yato naṃ samannesamāno evaṃ jānāti- ‘dīgharattaṃ samāpanno ayamāyasmā imaṃ kusalaṃ dhammaṃ, nāyamāyasmā ittarasamāpanno'ti, tato naṃ uttarimṃ samannesati- ‘ñattajjhāpanno ayamāyasmā bhikkhu yasappatto, saṃvijjantassa idhekacce ādīnavā'ti? Na tāva, bhikkhave, bhikkhuno idhekacce ādīnavā saṃvijjanti yāva na ñattajjhāpanno hoti yasappatto. Yato ca kho, bhikkhave, bhikkhu ñattajjhāpanno hoti yasappatto, athassa idhekacce ādīnavā saṃvijjanti. Tamenamṃ samannesamāno evaṃ jānāti- ‘ñattajjhāpanno ayamāyasmā bhikkhu yasappatto, nāssa idhekacce ādīnavā saṃvijjanti'ti.

“Yato naṃ samannesamāno evaṃ jānāti- ‘ñattajjhāpanno ayamāyasmā bhikkhu yasappatto, nāssa idhekacce ādīnavā saṃvijjanti'ti, tato naṃ uttarimṃ samannesati- ‘abhayūparato ayamāyasmā, nāyamāyasmā bhayūparato; vītarāgattā kāme na sevati khayā rāgassā'ti? Tamenamṃ samannesamāno evaṃ jānāti- ‘abhayūparato ayamāyasmā, nāyamāyasmā bhayūparato; vītarāgattā kāme na sevati khayā rāgassā'ti. Tañce, bhikkhave, bhikkhuṃ pare evaṃ puccheyyū- ‘ke panāyasmato ākāra, ke anvayā, yenāyasmā evaṃ vadesi- abhayūparato ayamāyasmā, nāyamāyasmā bhayūparato; vītarāgattā kāme na sevati khayā rāgassā'ti. Sammā byākaramāno, bhikkhave, bhikkhu evaṃ byākareyya- ‘tathā hi pana ayamāyasmā saṅghe vā viharanto eko vā viharanto, ye ca tattha sugatā ye ca tattha duggatā, ye ca tattha gaṇamanusāsanti, ye ca idhekacce āmisesu saṃdissanti, ye ca idhekacce āmisenā anupalittā, nāyamāyasmā taṃ tena avajānāti (1.0394). Sammukhā kho pana metaṃ bhagavato sutamṃ sammukhā paṭiggahitaṃ- abhayūparato hamasmi, nāhamasmi bhayūparato, vītarāgattā kāme na sevāmi khayā rāgassā'ti.

489. “Tatra, bhikkhave, tathāgatova uttarimṃ paṭipucchitabbo- ‘ye saṃkiliṭṭhā cakkhusotaviññeyyā dhammā, saṃvijjanti vā te tathāgatassa no vā'ti? Byākaramāno, bhikkhave, tathāgato evaṃ byākareyya- ‘ye saṃkiliṭṭhā cakkhusotaviññeyyā dhammā, na te tathāgatassa saṃvijjanti'ti.”

“Ye vītimissā cakkhusotaviññeyyā dhammā, saṃvijjanti vā te tathāgatassa no vā'ti? Byākaramāno, bhikkhave, tathāgato evaṃ byākareyya- ‘ye vītimissā cakkhusotaviññeyyā dhammā, na te tathāgatassa saṃvijjanti'ti.

“Ye vodātā cakkhusotaviññeyyā dhammā, saṃvijjanti vā te tathāgatassa no vā'ti? Byākaramāno, bhikkhave, tathāgato evaṃ byākareyya- ‘ye vodātā cakkhusotaviññeyyā dhammā, saṃvijjanti te tathāgatassa; etaṃ pathohamasmi, etaṃ gocaro, no ca tena tammayo'ti.

“Evaṃ vādiṃ kho, bhikkhave, satthāraṃ arahati sāvako upasaṅkamituṃ dhammassavanāya. Tassa satthā dhammaṃ deseti uttaruttarimṃ paṇītapāṇītaṃ kaṇhasukkasappaṭibhāgaṃ. Yathā yathā kho, bhikkhave, bhikkhuno satthā dhammaṃ deseti uttaruttarimṃ paṇītapāṇītaṃ kaṇhasukkasappaṭibhāgaṃ tathā tathā so tasmimṃ dhamme abhiññāya idhekaccaṃ dhammaṃ dhammesu niṭṭhamṃ gacchati, satthari pasīdati- ‘sammāsambuddho bhagavā, svākkhāto bhagavatā dhammo, suppaṭipanno saṅgho'ti. Tañce, bhikkhave, bhikkhuṃ pare evaṃ puccheyyū- ‘ke panāyasmato ākāra, ke anvayā, yenāyasmā evaṃ vadesi- sammāsambuddho bhagavā, svākkhāto bhagavatā dhammo, suppaṭipanno saṅgho'ti? Sammā byākaramāno, bhikkhave, bhikkhu evaṃ byākareyya- ‘idhāhaṃ, āvuso, yena bhagavā tenupasaṅkamimṃ dhammassavanāya. Tassa me bhagavā dhammaṃ deseti uttaruttarimṃ paṇītapāṇītaṃ kaṇhasukkasappaṭibhāgaṃ. Yathā yathā me, āvuso (1.0395), bhagavā dhammaṃ deseti uttaruttarimṃ paṇītapāṇītaṃ kaṇhasukkasappaṭibhāgaṃ tathā tathāhaṃ tasmimṃ dhamme abhiññāya idhekaccaṃ dhammaṃ dhammesu niṭṭhamagamaṃ, satthari pasīdimṃ- sammāsambuddho bhagavā, svākkhāto bhagavatā, dhammo, suppaṭipanno saṅgho'ti.

490. “Yassa kassaci, bhikkhave, imehi ākārehi imehi padehi imehi byañjanehi tathāgate saddhā nivīṭṭhā hoti mūlajātā patiṭṭhitā, ayaṃ vuccati, bhikkhave, ākāravatī saddhā dassanamūlikā, daḷhā; asaṃhāriyā samaṇa vā brāhmaṇa vā devena vā mārena vā brahmunā vā kenaci vā lokasimṃ. Evaṃ kho, bhikkhave, tathāgate dhammasamannesanā hoti. Evañca pana tathāgato dhammatāsusamanniṭṭho hoti'ti.”

Idamavoca bhagavā. Attamanā te bhikkhū bhagavato bhāsitaṃ abhinanduntī.

Vīmaṃsakasuttaṃ niṭṭhitaṃ sattamaṃ.