

Abstract

This paper is focused on the early Buddhist cosmology. It briefly presents the general concepts of cosmology in Buddhism and the Pali Canon in order to better emphasize the characteristics of the primary text on which the work is based, namely the *Agāṇṇasutta* of the Pali canon. The author takes into account other suttas of the Pali canon and secondary literature as well. The *Agāṇṇasutta* represents one of the first cosmological texts of Buddhism and can therefore be considered as a very valuable source of information about the early cosmological ideas and the context in which these ideas were formed. It deals with the destruction of the world, its re-emergence, the emergence of creatures, human beings and social strata, the election of the first king and the establishment of the ascetic social groups. To gain a better orientation in the source material, the plot can be divided into the period until the development of human beings, the creation of social institutions with the election of the king and the emergence of alternative social institutions headed by a Buddhist monk.

The main aim of the present paper is to show that the *Agāṇṇasutta* contains the structure based on the necessity of the emergence of the human beings in their physical form and endowed with their moral faults, the society which mitigates these faults and then transcendence of this society by Buddhist monks to attain Nibbana. In doing so the author considers the previous interpretations of *Agāṇṇasutta* in secondary literature put forward by scholars Stanley Tambiah, Steven Collins and Michael Carrithers. The aim is to present and assess the previous interpretations of the *Agāṇṇasutta* with respect to the broader context of cosmology in the Pali Canon and to create a plausible interpretation of cosmology in the *Agāṇṇasutta*.

The thesis is built on the basis of structuralist interpretation of cosmology of the *Agāṇṇasutta*, the author departs from assumptions made by Stanley Tambiah, which are modified with the help of concepts put forward by Terence Turner and entirely different conclusions are drawn from them. The author also addresses the relationship of the *Agāṇṇasutta* with the two other texts which are part of the corpus of the Pali Canon, the *Moggallānasutta* and the *Vacchagottasutta*. These texts, which are listed as a part of the *Avyākatasamyutta*, problematize a straightforward interpretation of the *Agāṇṇasutta*, since in them the Buddha rejects almost any cosmological speculation.

Key words: Buddhism, cosmology, Nibbana, ascetism, monks, Pali Canon, *Agāṇṇasutta*