

Suicide and Euthanasia from a Buddhist Viewpoint— On *Nikāya, Vinaya Piṭaka* and the Chinese Canon⁽¹⁾

Kiyoyuki Koike

Contents

1 Introduction

2 Suicide

2-1 The case of *Godhika*

2-2 The case of *Vakkali*

2-3 The case of *Channa*

2-4 Forbidding suicide in *Vinaya Piṭaka*

3 The shortening of life and the abandoning of life

4 Discussion on suicide

5 Euthanasia

5-1 Commandment against the destruction of life

5-2 Forbidding involuntary euthanasia (mercy killing)

5-3 Forbidding voluntary euthanasia (assisted suicide)

6 On death with dignity or natural death and terminal care

7 Conclusion

⁽¹⁾ 仏教思想から見た自殺、安楽死・尊厳死問題 阿含・ニカーヤ、律を中心に—

1 Introduction

In this article, I have tried to understand how Buddhism recognizes suicide, euthanasia, the care of patients dying of terminal illness and the acceptance of death with its basic principle of *pāṇātipātā veramaṇī* (abstinence from the killing of all life) according to the original texts of the Buddhist Canon. There is something in common between suicide and killing as is evident from *Vinaya Piṭaka*. The concepts of euthanasia and the forbidding of suicide are included in the commandment against the destruction of life in *Vinaya Piṭaka*, which casts light on the present practices of euthanasia and physician- assisted suicide from ethical and religious viewpoints.

There is some cultural reason why the popularization of brain death and organ transplanting in Japan have been obstructed. We have not completed an examination of these issues from either ethical or religious viewpoints. And moreover, we need to examine the right to die, euthanasia and death with dignity problems from the above viewpoints. Assuredly there has been some discussion on the basis of Western thought, however we cannot apply their principles to ourselves as universals without any modification. We should propose further logical examination from the viewpoints of Japanese mentality and culture. This approach also has the potential of introducing our own original thoughts on these subjects to the world as a contribution to worldwide reasoning.

In Western countries, discussions of euthanasia and physician-assisted suicide have been vigorously undertaken. There have only been a few extremely rare instances in which cases were made public by being taken to court in Japan. We have not been active in this ethical examination. Generally speaking, Japanese families have been compassionate in their care of the elderly and the infirm. So far as I know, euthanasia and physician- assisted suicide

are extremely rare in Japan. This has helped the Japanese to have a longer average lifespan than the people of any other country.

Aside from that, Buddhism has been closely associated with death since its origin, and it still has both visible and invisible influences on Asian people's minds and daily lives. That is why the value of the Buddhist contribution to modern thought is in no way small. The same thing can be said about Christianity. We should not just link ancient thought to modern; however, we cannot help but recognize that ancient thought has an important role to play in our review of the subject of modern thought.

We must limit our subject so as to clarify what part of Buddhism we will try to study before we begin our study of this religion. It is impossible to generalize uniformly about a Buddhism that has displayed such diversity and extensiveness as it has spread throughout Asian countries over so many ages and has blended with and transformed native religious cultures. In this article, I have mainly selected *Samyutta Nikāya* (*S.*) and *Vinaya Piṭaka* (*Vin.*) of the *Pāli* Canon, which the *Theravāda* traditional school has preserved since the early era of its origin in India, and the Chinese Canon corresponding to *S.* and *Vin.*. I have also referred to *Abhidhamma*, The Commentary and other related writings, as well as to Travels of Chinese High Monks and similarly related writings, which are closely associated with my main theme.

I have tried to recognize Buddhist ethical thought through *Nikāya* and *Āgama* of the Chinese Canon, in which the acts of humans are described in some cases. Furthermore, I have tried to understand ethical thought from the actual examples of cases, explanations and judgments of acts in *Vinaya Piṭaka* (Discipline), which have been embodied as rules observable for monks in Asian countries even until the present day, because I think these case studies have some merit in accessing Buddhist thought.

2 Suicide

The Chinese word 自殺 ("suicide") is used in the Chinese Canon. Its meaning is "to kill somebody by myself" in *Vinaya Piṭaka*. I think this "suicide" has the same meaning as the modern English word. "Suicide is the act or an act of taking one's own life, self-murder" (OED, 1989). In China, there has existed the term 自殺, meaning "suicide," and it is explained as "suicide means to kill oneself"⁽²⁾, which is the same meaning as the corresponding words in English, German and French.

In European societies, the idea of forbidding suicide has been proposed ever since the explanation by Augustine, A.⁽³⁾ about the Sixth Commandment. He said, " 'Thou shalt not kill' means not only that one should not kill others, but that one ought not to kill oneself."

In modern Japan, suicide has a delicately complicated meaning, and maybe we cannot say that it is completely the same as in other languages. This is particularly true concerning the term 自死 (jishi), "death by myself," which has the nuance of attenuating the element of killing.

In Buddhism, if a monk kills another person by himself, he commits the gravest sin of 波羅夷 *pārājika*⁽⁴⁾, and if a monk kills himself by himself, he commits the sin of 偷羅遮 *thullaccaya*⁽⁵⁾ or 突吉羅 *dukkata*⁽⁶⁾. In *S.* and 『雜阿

⁽²⁾自己殺死自己。『漢語大詞典』8, 漢語大詞典出版社, 上海, 1991

⁽³⁾Augustinus, A. (426), *De Civitate Dei. Kami no kuni* (1). Japanese translation by Hattori, E. Iwanamibunko, 1982, Tokyo, pp.66-69

⁽⁴⁾The four gravest offenses for a Buddhist monk. Any monk, having committed one of these serious sins, is to be deprived of all the rights of a monk, and expelled from the saṅgha. *Japanese-English Buddhist Dictionary*, rev.ed. Daitoushuppansha, 1991, Tokyo, p.111

⁽⁵⁾An unconsummated offense of pārājika.

⁽⁶⁾A class of minor offenses of the Buddhist precept, requiring confession by the sinful monk before a good monk. *ibid.* 4, p.355

舎』, the cases of three monks who committed suicide, *Godhika*, *Vakkali* and *Channa*, are described in detail, and it is discussed in *Abhidhamma* whether *Godhika* had attained *nibbāna* by his suicide or not. And also, in the cases of two seriously ill monks, *Vakkali* and *Channa* in *S.*, it was put in doubt whether they had attained *nibbāna* or not. *Vinaya Piṭaka* forbids suicide in the clause of *pāṇātipātā veramaṇī*, abstinence from the killing of all life, i.e. *manussaviggahapārājika*, the commandment against the destruction of life. And in *S.I.8.8*, 『雜阿含』, there is the description of not giving oneself to others; furthermore, in *Dīgha Nikāya* (*D. XIII.13*), 『長阿含』, there is an important description forbidding suicide.

< devatā: >

kim atthakāmo na dade/ kiṃ macco na pariccaje/ kiṃ su muñceyya
kalyāṇaṃ/ pāpikaṅ ca na mocaye ti//

< Bhagavā: >

attānaṃ na dade poso / attānaṃ na pariccaje / vācaṃ muñceyya
kalyāṇaṃ/ pāpikaṅ ca na mocaye ti// (*S.I.8.8*)

”What should he not give who loves the good?

What should a mortal not relinquish?

What should one release when it is good,

But not release when it is bad?”

” A person should not give himself away;

He should not relinquish himself.

One should release speech that is good,

But not speech that is bad.”⁽⁷⁾

⁽⁷⁾Translated by Bhikkhu Bodhi, *The Connected Discourses of the Buddha, A New Translation*

According to *Sārattha-ppakāsinī* (*S.A.I.101*), it is said that we should not give our lives or sacrifice ourselves to a lion or a tigress⁽⁸⁾.

Na kho Rājāñña samaṇa-brāhmaṇā sīlavanto kalyāṇa-dhammā apakkaṃ paripācenti, api ca paripākaṃ āgamenti paṇḍitā. Attho hi Rājāñña samaṇa-brāhmaṇānaṃ sīlavantānaṃ kalyāṇa-dhammānaṃ jīvitena. Yathā yathā kho Rājāñña samaṇa-brāhmaṇā sīlavanto kalyāṇa-dhammā ciraṃ dīgham addhānaṃ tiṭṭanti, tathā tathā bahū puññaṃ pasavanti, bahujana-hitāya ca paṭipajjanti bahujana-sukhāya lokānukampakāya atthāya hitāya sukhāya deva-manussānaṃ. (*D.XXIII.13*)

”Moral and virtuous Wanderers and Brahmins do not force maturity on that which is unripe; they, being wise, wait for that maturity. The virtuous have need of their life. In proportion to the length of time such men abide here, is the abundant merit that they produce and accomplish for the welfare of many, for the happiness of many, out of compassion for the world, for the advantage, the welfare, the happiness of gods and men.”⁽⁹⁾

若沙門婆羅門。精勤修善戒德具足久存世者。多所饒益天人獲安。(『長阿含經』七, 大正 1,46b)

The above describes a way of life of the monk and also explains one of the basic thoughts of Buddhism. *Milindapañha* (*Miln.II.IV.5*) also refers to the forbidding of suicide quoted above in *D.* and *Vinaya Piṭaka*. The relationship between attempted suicide and final liberation was recited in

of the Saṃyutta Nikāya, Vol. I, Wisdom Publication, Boston, 2000, p.214

⁽⁸⁾Attānaṃ na dade ti, parassa dāsaṃ katvā attānaṃ na dadeyya. Tḥapetvā sabba-Bodhisatte ti vuttaṃ. Na pariccaje ti, sīha-byagghādīnaṃ na pariccajeyya. (*S.A.I.VIII.*) This sentence means that we should not confuse this with the story of *bodhisatta* in *Jātaka*.

⁽⁹⁾Translated by T. W. and C. A. F. Rhys Davids, 1910, *Dialogues of The Buddha, Part II*, p.358

the poem of *Theragāthā* and in *Therīgāthā* ; the monk and the nun tried to kill themselves for liberation, they were able to attain liberation just before death, and they survived their attempted suicides. This means that suicide was not required for their liberation. In the Travels of Fa-hsien ⁽¹⁰⁾ , there is an old legend of a monk who committed suicide, but I think this means that suicide among monks was probably rare in those days, since the suicide was deliberately recorded.

I realize that monks should not commit suicide by knowing that the concept of karma was taken into early Buddhism, and of course because of Buddha's precept on compassion. In spite of the rule of *Vinaya Piṭaka*, that is, abstinence from the killing of all life, the legends of monks who committed suicide were adopted into the scriptures, in my opinion, because they were exceptional and therefore required discussion. I will discuss later the topics of suicide and euthanasia with reference to the shortening of life and the abandoning of life.

Motizuki's Cyclopedia of Buddhism⁽¹¹⁾ quotes *Mahāprajñāpāramitopadeśa* (『大智度論』十一、十二) and 『大丈夫論』上 as explaining that the purpose of abandoning by *bodhisatta* is to take compassion on all sentient beings in pursuit of the wisdom of Buddha; however, Buddhism strictly forbids the suicide of such an ordinary person even if due to religiosity, and the author refers to the *Travels of I-ching* to support this⁽¹²⁾.

Since the description of Poussin, L.d.l.V. ⁽¹³⁾ , suicide has been forbid-

⁽¹⁰⁾ 『高僧法顯傳』(大正 51,857a) , He traveled throughout India from 399 A.D. to 414 A.D..

⁽¹¹⁾ Motizuki *Bukkyou Daijiten*. 1933, rev.ed.1958, Tokyo, p.2163 (in Japanese)

⁽¹²⁾ I-ching traveled throughout India and other countries from 671 A.D. to 695 A.D.. 義淨 『南海寄歸内法傳』

⁽¹³⁾ Poussin, L.de la Valée. 'Suicide (Buddhist)' in Hastings, J.(Ed.), *Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics*, Vol. XII , 1921,T & T. Clark, pp.24-26

den in Buddhism, but some interpretations have generally recognized that suicide was only rarely accepted in cases of arhat, and abandoning of life (self-surrender and worship) was praised later on in an era of new Buddhism, *Mahāyāna*. As Keown, D.⁽¹⁴⁾ notes, these interpretations should be reexamined. In a modern Japanese dictionary of Buddhism⁽¹⁵⁾, it is explained that Buddhism strictly forbids the suicide of ordinary people, and it is described in 『四分律』 that the monk violates the commandment if he encourages someone to commit suicide. Furthermore, there is a fully-detailed description of this matter in 『南海寄歸内法傳』.

2-1 The case of *Godhika*

Godhika, who has diligently, ardently and resolutely practiced Buddhism, has fallen away six times from temporary liberation of the mind. Therefore, he uses a knife (commits suicide) so as to not fall away from liberation again.

(*S. IV.3.3*, 『雜阿含』三十九、『別訳雜阿含』二). In this sutra, Buddha acknowledges that *Godhika* has attained final *nibbāna*; however, later on this issue is discussed in *Abhidhamma*, including *Abhidharma-mahāvibhāṣā-sāstra* 『大毘婆沙論』六十二, *Abhidharmakośabhāṣya* (AKB.) 『俱舍論』二十五, *Abhidharma-nyāyānusāra-sāstra* 『順正理論』六十八, as to whether *Godhika* has actually attained *nibbāna* or not. At the last moment before death, he attains arhat-ship (『俱舍論』二十五). The Commentary of *Dhammapada* (*Dhp.*) and *S.* both note that after he cuts his throat, he reaches the state of arhat.

Atha kho āyasmā Godhiko appamatto ātāpī pahitatto viharanto

⁽¹⁴⁾Keown, D., "Buddhism and Suicide, The Case of Channa". *Journal of Buddhist Ethics*, 3; 8-31, 1995

⁽¹⁵⁾Taya, R. et al.(Eds.) *Sinpan Bukkyougakujiten*. Houzoukan, Kyoto,1995, p.223 (in Japanese)

sāmayikaṃ cetovimuttiṃ phusi. atha kho āyasmā Godhiko tamhā
sāmayikāya cetovimuttiyā parihāyi.

—sattamam pi kho āyasmā Godhiko appamatto ātāpī pahitatto viha-
ranto sāmayikaṃ cetovimuttiṃ phusi. atha kho āyasmato Gohdikassa
etad ahoṣi: yāva chaṭṭhaṃ khvāhaṃ sāmayikāya cetovimuttiyā parihīno.
yan nūnāhaṃ satthaṃ āhareyyan ti.

< Bhagavā: >

so dhīro dhitisampanno/ jhāyī jhānarato sadā/
ahorattaṃ anuyuñjaṃ/ jīvitaṃ anikāmayam //
jetvāna maccuno senam/ anāgantvā punabbhavam/
samūlam taṇham abbuyha/ Godhiko parinibbuto ti//
(S. IV.3.3.)

And he, abiding in zealousness, ardently and strenuously study, touched
temporary emancipation of the mind, and then falls away therefrom.

—Then he thinks: 'Up to six times have I fallen away from temporary
emancipation of the mind. What if I were to now use the knife?'

The exalted one:

He strong in purpose and in steadfastness,
In contemplation rapt, to rapture given,
In loving self-devotion day and night,
Void of all hankering after life itself:
Now hath he overthrown the hosts of death,

Now cometh he no more again to birth;
 Craving and root of craving tearing out,
 Hath Godhika passed utterly away.⁽¹⁶⁾

獨一思惟。不放逸行修自饒。時受意解脫身作證。數數退轉。// …

彼尊者瞿低迦作是念。我獨靜處思惟。不放逸行精勤修習。以自饒。時受
 意解脫身作證。而復數數退轉。乃至六反猶復退轉。我今當以刀自殺。莫令
 第七退轉。// …

爾時世尊復說偈言。

如是堅固士 一切無所求 拔恩愛根本 瞿低般涅槃 (『雜阿含』三十九, 大
 正 2, 286a-b)

處於閑靜。勤行精進。以不放逸。斷於我見。得時解脫。自身作證。復還退
 失。第二第三。乃至第六。亦還退失。比丘念言。我今獨處。修行精進。六
 返退失。若更退失。以刀自割。// …

爾時世尊復說偈言。

若人不怯弱 堅修行精進 恒樂於禪定 晝夜修衆善 乾竭愛欲使 壞汝魔
 軍衆 今捨後邊身 永入於涅槃 (『別譯雜阿含』二, 大正 2, 382c-383a)

Because he was a steadfast man who had always devoted himself to religious practices, tearing himself away from craving, not attaching himself to life, indomitably resolving to attain *nibbāna*, Buddha approved of his death as having attained *parinibbāna*. As a logical consequence, Buddha was approving of his death by suicide. Buddha praised *Godhika's* way of life and his attitude, but he did not approve of this suicide on the basis of a value judgment. Here I simply see the compassion of Buddha for a man who committed suicide.

And it is said that *Godhika's* body was ravaged by a certain disease

⁽¹⁶⁾Translated by Mrs. Rhys Davids, *The Book of The Kindred Sayings, Part I*. PTS. pp.150-152

brought on by his diligent dedication to duty, and that he fell away from a trance in *Dhp. A.I.*⁽¹⁷⁾ He was also said to be suffering from the chronic diseases of wind, bile and phlegm, according to *Sārattha-ppakāsini* (*S.A.*)⁽¹⁸⁾. If this was so, he did not decide to commit suicide through religious reasoning, but committed the suicide of a sick monk who was suffering. The Commentary states that he had a physical disease, but I can assume that he had a depression like the condition that is today associated with religious exercises, similar to the attempted-suicide cases which appear in *Vinaya Piṭaka*. The explanation of his suicide as being caused by illness reflects the ideas of *saṅgha*, that suicide by a monk should not be permitted, and that an exceptional monk may commit suicide only during the serious suffering of a terminal illness.

Nakamura, H.⁽¹⁹⁾ commented, "In this description, the suicide of the monk who had been earnestly exercised in soul was accepted." Tamaki, K.⁽²⁰⁾ thinks that the suicide of *Godhika* was positively accepted, but he also explains his doubt concerning this example's supposed condoning of suicide in this way: "He (*Godhika*) aimed to attain *parinibbāna* because he was afraid to fall away from final liberation of the mind. Is there any problem with such a *parinibbāna* as this?" Fujita, K.⁽²¹⁾, who takes the stance that prim-

⁽¹⁷⁾ *Buddhist Legends, Dhammapada Commentary, Part II.* by Burlingame, E. W. (tr.), 1969, PTS, p.90

⁽¹⁸⁾ *Sārattha-ppakāsini I, iv, iii, 1*, 183: Therassa kira vātapitta-semha-vasena anusāyiko ābādho atthi. Rhys Davids quoted as follows; 'Why did he fall away six times? Because of an internal ailment effecting wind, bile and phlegm. Hereby he was unable to attain the requisite conditions for *samādhi*, and fell away after momentary ecstasy.' *Kindred Sayings I*, p.150

⁽¹⁹⁾ Nakamura, H. (tr.) *Mārasaṃyuttaṃ, II.* Iwanamibunko, Tokyo, p. 324, 1986 (in Japanese)

⁽²⁰⁾ Tamaki, K. 'A memorandum on 'Death''. Bukkyoushisoukenkyukai. *Buddhist Thought 10, Death.* Heirakuji, 1988, Kyoto, pp.476-477 (in Japanese)

⁽²¹⁾ Fujita, K. 'Death in primitive Buddhism', Bukkyoushisoukenkyukai. *Buddhist Thought 10,*

itive Buddhism prohibited suicide, says, "It is Buddha's passive acceptance of *Godhika's* death which shows us that *Godhika* should not be accused of committing suicide. There are some descriptions which may seem to indicate that Buddha praised suicide, but such praise was given because of the faithful practices of each of these monks. I think suicide itself has never been praised. Even if one could attain emancipation by suicide, as long as that one is a *bhikkhu* (monk), who ought to undertake actions beneficial to all sentient beings, suicide should be prohibited in principle." I agree with Fujita's view fundamentally.

2-2 The case of *Vakkali*

Vakkali, suffering from a serious illness, tried to attain emancipation by committing suicide because he could not attain it in any other way. As he could not walk, he requested the Exalted One to visit him. The Exalted One preached to *Vakkali*, and he answered the Master's questions. The cases of both *Vakkali* and *Channa* cast at us the double-sided question of whether or not suicide can be permitted in the case of a person dying of a serious illness, and whether or not the suicide of a monk should be permitted.

The Exalted One identified *Vakkali* as suffering from an incurable serious illness, asked him whether or not he had been keeping the rules, and also asked him about impermanence. *Vakkali* committed suicide by himself after answering all of these questions. The Exalted One recognized that *Vakkali* had achieved *parinibbāna* after his death (*S. XXII*, 『雜阿含』四十七).

2 Tena kho pana samayena āyasmā Vakkali kumbhakāranivesane viharati
ābādhiko dukkhito bāḷhagilāno//

Death. Heirakuji, 1988, Kyoto, pp.74-80 (in Japanese)

29// … Ekam antaṃ t̥hitā kho āvuso ekā devatā Bhagavantam etad avoca// Vakkali bhante bhikkhu vimokkhāya cetetīti// Aparā devatā Bhagavantam etad avoca// So hi nūna bhante suvimutto vimuccissatīti// Bhagavā ca tam āvuso Vakkali evam āha// Mā bhāyi Vakkali mā bhāyi apāpakan te maraṇaṃ bhavissati apāpikā kālakiriya ti//

32 Atha kho āyasmā Vakkali acirapakkantesu tesu bhikkhūsu sattham āhāresi//

40 Apatiṭṭhitena ca bhikkhave viññāṇena Vakkali kulaputto parinibbuto ti//

(S. XXII.87) ⁽²²⁾, ⁽²³⁾

跋迦梨疾病困苦。思惟解脫。欲執刀自殺。不樂久生。// … 世尊復記說。汝善於命終。後世亦善。// … 然我今日。疾病苦痛猶故隨身。欲刀自殺。不樂久生。即欲執刀自殺。// … 爾時世尊。爲彼跋迦梨說第一記。(『雜阿含』四十七、大正 2, 346 c-347b)

According to S.A.II⁽²⁴⁾, 『增壹阿含』十九⁽²⁵⁾ and 『分別功德論』四, *Vakkali*

⁽²²⁾2 On that occasion the venerable Vakkali was staying in the Potter's shed, being sick, afflicted, stricken with a sore disease. 29 — So standing, one of those devas thus addressed the Exalted One: 'Lord, the brother Vakkali is bent on release'. And the other deva said to the Exalted One: 'Surely, lord, he will win the utter release'. — And as to that, friend Vakkali, the Exalted One says this: 'Fear not, Vakkali, Fear not, Vakkali, Your dying will not be evil. Your ending will not be evil.' 32 Then the venerable Vakkali, not long after the departure of those brethren, drew a knife (and threw himself on it). 40 'But, Brethren, with consciousness not stationed anew anywhere, Vakkali the clansman is utterly well.' Translated by Woodward, F. L., *The Book of The Kindred Sayings, Part III*, 1954, PTS, pp.101-106

⁽²³⁾"According to Thag. Comy., he suffered from cramps owing to insufficient food." *ibid.* 22

⁽²⁴⁾Sattam āharitvā marissāmī'ti tikhīṇena satthena kaṇḍa-nālim chindi. Ath'assa dukkhā vedanā uppajjati. So tasmim khāṇe attano puthujjana-bhāvam nātvā avissaṭṭha-kamma-tṭhānattā sīgham kamma-tṭhānaṃ ādāya sammāsanto arahattam pāpuṇitvā va kalam akāsi. (S.A. II. 314), PTS

⁽²⁵⁾爾時尊者婆迦梨身得重患。臥在大小便上。意欲自刀殺。—釋迦文佛弟子之中。所作非法。得惡利不得善利。於如來法中。不得受證而取命終。是時尊者婆迦梨思惟是五盛陰是此色。—諸有生法皆是死法。知此

was not an arhat, but he attained arhat-ship at some point between the time he stabbed himself and the moment of his death⁽²⁶⁾,⁽²⁷⁾,⁽²⁸⁾.

It can be said that there was one way of thinking which did not recognize death by suicide as *parinibbāna* unless the person also attained liberation. Monks have never been allowed to be excused from their religious exercises, even if they have been suffering from serious illnesses.

2-3 The case of *Channa*

The suicide of *Channa* was described in *S. XXXV.87, M.III*, 『雜阿含』四十七. *Sāriputta* asked *Channa* not to take the knife, told him to live, and kindly offered to attend to his needs. We can understand from this scripture that we need to live even if we are suffering, and also that we should take good care of our patients until their natural death. We can also catch a glimpse of the necessity of terminal care and the concepts of prohibiting both suicide and euthanasia.

Sāriputta and *Mahācunda* preached to *Channa* after they had already come to know that his illness had been exacerbated and was incurable, and

已便有漏心得解脫。爾時尊者婆迦梨於無餘涅槃界而般涅槃。——是時尊者阿難白世尊曰。此婆迦梨比丘何日得此四諦。世尊告曰。今日之中得此四諦。阿難白佛。此比丘抱病經久本是凡人。世尊告曰。如是阿難。如汝所言。但彼比丘嫌苦甚久。諸有釋迦文佛弟子之。信解脫者此人最勝。然有漏心未得解脫。我今可求刀自刺。是時彼比丘臨自刺時。即思惟如來功德。捨壽之日思惟五盛陰。——爾時彼比丘思惟此已。諸有集之法皆悉滅盡。此比丘已般涅槃。『增壹阿含』十九（大正 2, 642c-643a）

⁽²⁶⁾According to the commentary of 『增壹阿含』, i.e. 『分別功德論』四（大正 25, 46c-47a）, *Vakkali* reached the state of extinction of illusion during the cutting of his throat, and in the moment when his head fell down, he attained *nibbāna*.

⁽²⁷⁾Seki, M. 'On suicide', in *Essays in celebration of the 60th birthday of Dr. Fujita, Kotatsu.: Indian Philosophy and Buddhism*. Heirakuji, Kyoto, 1989, p.254-274. As he indicated, suicide is not necessarily accepted in Buddhism.

⁽²⁸⁾Nakamura, H. *Life Principles of Primitive Buddhism*. Shinjuusha, Tokyo, 1995, p.364 (in Japanese). He wrote that the suicide committed by *Vakkali* was accepted.

had come to know of his firm decision to commit suicide. *Channa* earnestly answered the questions put to him. In the case of *Vakkali*, the Exalted One preached to him; however, this method was common to both cases. Free will to commit suicide was accepted with severe restrictions. If monks like *Channa* and *Vakkali* had been intentionally planning to commit suicide for quite some time beforehand, I think it would have been emphasized in the scriptures that a monk could not have attained liberation in that way. This is why it is explained in the Commentary⁽²⁹⁾ that *Channa* attained arhat-ship after he had already cut his throat or in his last moment of life. The Exalted One confirmed the *parinibbāna* of *Channa* because he had never received another body after abandoning this body.

3 Tena kho pana samayena āyasmā Channo ābādhiko hoti dukkhito
bāḥagilāno//

12 Sattham āvuso Sāriputta āharissāmi nāvakañkhāmi jīvitunti//

13 Mā āyasmā Channo sattham āharesi// yāpetāyasmā Channo
yāpentam mayam āyasmantaṃ Channam icchāma// Sace āyasmato
Channassa natthi sappāyāni bhojanāni// aham āyasmato Channassa
sappāyāni bhojanāni pariyessāmi// Sace āyasmato Channassa natthi
sappāyāni bhesajjāni// aham āyasmato Channassa sappāyāni bhesajjāni
pariyessāmi// Sace āyasmato Channassa natthi patirūpā upaṭṭhākā//
aham āyasmantaṃ Channam upaṭṭhahissāmi// Mā āyasmā Channo
sattham āharesi// yāpetāyasmā Channo yāpentam mayam āyasmantaṃ
Channam icchāmā ti//

26 —Yo kho Sāriputta tañ ca kāyaṃ nikkhipati aññañca kāyam
upādiyati// tam ahaṃ Sa-upavajjo ti vadāmi// tam Channassa
bhikkhuno natthi// Anupavajjama Channena bhikkhunā sattham

⁽²⁹⁾S.A.II, 373, PTS

āharitanti evam etam Sāriputta dhārehīti// (S. XXXV.87) ⁽³⁰⁾

時有尊者闍陀。住那羅聚落好衣菴羅林中。疾病困篤。——尊者闍陀言。我今身病極患苦痛難可堪忍。所起之病但增無損。唯欲執刀自殺。不樂苦活。尊者舍利弗言。尊者闍陀汝當努力莫自傷害。若汝在世我當與汝來往周旋。汝若有乏。我當給汝如法湯藥。汝若無看病人。我當看汝必令適意。非不適意。——我不說彼有大過。若有捨此身已餘身不相續者。我不說彼有大過也。無大過故。(『雜阿含』四十七, 大正 2, 347b-348a)

2-4 Forbidding suicide in *Vinaya Pīṭaka*

In the commandment against the destruction of life (*manussa-viggahapārājika*), where praising the beauty of death in which the encouragement to commit suicide is included, the aiding and abetting of a homicide-suicide, and the aiding and abetting of homicide alone, as well as all forms of killing, are regarded as *pārājika* (defeat, 波羅夷、波羅市迦), which is the gravest offence, and for which a monk would be deprived of all rights and expelled from the *saṅgha*. When he is suspected of attempting to commit suicide, he is regarded as having committed the offence of *thullaccaya* (偷羅遮、偷蘭遮) (『四分律』『五分律』), or *dukkata* (*Vin.*).

Dukkata corresponds to the attempted sin of *pārājika* or *saṅghādisesa* (僧

⁽³⁰⁾— and the Venerable Channa was sick, afflicted, gravely ill. ”— I will use the knife, friend Sāriputta! I have no desire to live.” ”Let the Venerable Channa not use the knife. Let the Venerable Channa live. We want the Venerable Channa to live. If the Venerable Channa lacks suitable food, I will go in search of suitable food for him; if he lacks suitable medicine, I will go in search of suitable medicine for him; if he lacks a proper attendant, I will attend on him. Let the Venerable Channa not use the knife. Let the Venerable Channa live. We want the Venerable Channa to live.” ”Sāriputta, when one lays down this body and takes up another body, then I say one is blameworthy. This did not happen in the case of the bhikkhu Channa. The bhikkhu Channa used the knife blamelessly. Thus, Sāriputta, should you remember it.” Translated by Bhikkhu Bodhi. Vol. II, pp.1164-1167, ibid. 7

残)⁽³¹⁾, which makes it clear that it is not just a light offence⁽³²⁾. As rules do not apply to monks who are already dead, this is *sikkhāpada* (a rule) for the monk who attempts to commit suicide; therefore, I think this gave weight to its deterrent effect against attempting to commit suicide. I also describe later the characteristics of the rules of *Vinaya Piṭaka* (Discipline) in Buddhism.

若自殺身得偷羅遮罪 (『五分律』二、大正 22,7c)

問頗比丘奪人命不得波羅夷耶。答有。自殺身無罪。(『十誦律』五十二優波離問部問殺事、大正 23,382a)

頗有比丘人人想殺不犯波羅夷耶。答有。自殺。偷羅遮。欲殺他而自殺。偷羅遮。(『薩婆多部毘尼摩得勒伽』八、大正 23,614a-b)

In *Sarvāstivādin-vinaya* (『十誦律』五十八), suicide was not focused upon as the sin one could be guilty of, but rather the giving of the knife to the patient in the first place (大正 23, 435c); and in 『根本薩婆多律攝』, suicide is recognized as *dukkata* (「自殺者得吐羅罪」). Though there are some opinions which say that suicide is not a sin according to *Sarvāstivādin-vinaya* (五十二)⁽³³⁾,⁽³⁴⁾, having consulted *Sarvāstivādin-vinaya* (五十八) and other commentaries, I think that the above Discipline would have dealt with the first offender in a way more similar to its dealing with suicide in general. This is because the first offender cannot be accused of being sinful.

⁽³¹⁾Mori, S., "Āpatti-pratidesānā in the Pāli Buddhist Canon", *Ookurayama Ronshuu*. 43; 37-98, 1999 (in Japanese)

⁽³²⁾Sugimoto, T., "On the commandment against the destruction of life—with reference to the euthanasia problem-", *Tohokufukushidaigaku Bukkyōushakai/fukushikenkyūjo Kiyō*. 2; 21-52, 1976 (in Japanese)

⁽³³⁾Fujita, K., *ibid.* 21, p.78

⁽³⁴⁾Sugimoto, T., *ibid.* 32

In the commandment against the destruction of life in *Mahāsaṃghika-vinaya* (『僧祇律』) and *Mūlasarvāstivādin-vinaya* (『根本有部律』), there is no mention of any monk who committed suicide, and weight of the discussion is on the offence of monks who praised the beauty of death.

1) Reason for legislating the Commandment against the destruction of life (*Vin.III.1*)

Buddha recommended *asubha-bhāvanā*⁽³⁵⁾ in *Vesāli*, and monks devoted themselves to it and consequently they were disgusted with their bodies; that is why many of them were willingly killed by *migalaṇḍika* (the sham recluse) and many of them committed suicide by killing each other as well. And bad monks praised the beauty of death to an ill lay Buddhist, who then died as a result. The rule was legislated as follows:

”Whatever monk should intentionally deprive a human being of life or should look about so as to be his knife-bringer, or should praise the beauty of death, or should incite (anyone) to death, saying, ’Hullo there, my man; of what use to you is this evil, difficult life? Death is better for you than life,’ or who should deliberately and purposefully in various ways praise the beauty of death or should incite (anyone) to death: he also is one who is defeated; he is not in communion.”⁽³⁶⁾

豈不聞我所說慈忍護念衆生。—若自殺身得偷蘭遮罪。—從今是戒應如是說。若比丘手自殺。人斷其命。是比丘得波羅夷不共住 (『五分律』二、大正 22,7c)

In 『五分律』, many monks have killed each other, have been willingly killed by others or have committed suicide after they have practiced

⁽³⁵⁾Contemplation of the inherent impurity of objects. The way of forsaking affections by contemplating the impurity of the body. *ibid.* 4, p.68

⁽³⁶⁾Translated by Horner,I.B. *The Book of the Discipline, Vol. I, PTS, pp.125-126*

asubha-bhāvanā. Buddha has recognized suicide as *thullaccaya*, and killing as *pārājika*.

It has been pointed out that, although the foolishness of suicide was legislated against, killing was legislated against here; therefore, there is a discrepancy between the story and the rule⁽³⁷⁾. I think this is a misunderstanding that may reflect a way of thinking in Japan that suicide has nothing in common with killing.

2) A case of attempting suicide by one throwing away one's life while in the midst of being tormented by desire (*Vin.III.5.13*)

At one time a certain monk, tormented by chafing, having scaled the Vulture's Peak, fell down off of the precipice, and, hitting a certain basket-maker hard, killed the man. He was remorseful.—"There is no offence involving defeat, monk. But, monks, one should not throw oneself off of a precipice. Whoever shall throw (himself) off in such a way has committed an offence of wrong-doing," he said.⁽³⁸⁾

He was recognized as being not guilty because he had no intention to kill. There are some cases of one attempting to throw oneself to one's death because of the difficulty of giving up desire in the practice of some Discipline. According to the two cases in 『四分律』, this is *thullaccaya* and it is different from the *dukkata* of *Vin.*.

自投身墮斫竹人上。彼死比丘活疑。佛言。彼人死無犯。方便欲自殺偷蘭遮。
(『四分律』五十六, 大正 22,983a)

⁽³⁷⁾Sugimoto, T., *Around the five commandments, Dynamism of Indian life*, Heirakuji, 1999, Kyoto, ibid. 34, p.9 (in Japanese)

⁽³⁸⁾Ibid.36, p.142

3) Some cases of inciting a seriously ill monk to commit suicide

(『五分律』二、大正 22,7c-8b)

These cases, including the commandment against the destruction of life, such as inciting death, praising the beauty of death, aiding and abetting suicide and murder at the victim's request; that is why all of these cases below are recognized as *pārājika*. It is also explained in these cases that suicide is a sin for which one will be found guilty. Furthermore, these cases are important in regards to the matter of euthanasia in which incitement of suicide has been overlapped with that of euthanasia.

Example 1: Many monks asked many seriously ill monks, "Is your disease curable? Can you endure your suffering?" Those ill monks answered, "It is incurable and we cannot endure. Give us a knife, a rope, poison or rotting meals, or take us to a high precipice." These monks accepted the wishes of the ill monks; therefore the ill monks committed suicide. The Lord accused these assisting monks because there is no difference between killing and inciting suicide, and they were recognized as *pārājika*.

Example 2: As above, ill monks asked a certain monk about the way and the means of suicide; then he introduced the ill monk to a hunter, as he himself was forbidden to assist in suicide. The hunter persuaded him with the words, "Is it right that monks, who are said to be compassionate themselves, should employ someone for the purpose of killing another? There is no difference between killing and employing someone to kill." Those monks were recognized as *pārājika*, and it was a case of forbidding murder at the victim's request.

Example 3: A seriously ill monk said that he could not commit suicide, since suicide is *thullaccaya* and would therefore make it impossible for him

to perform *brahmacariya*⁽³⁹⁾ after recovering from his illness, if he had been incited to commit suicide by a monk.

Example 4: In this case, a monk incited a lay Buddhist suffering from a serious injury to commit suicide, and his advice was rejected by the lay Buddhist, the monk having been persuaded by the layman. The lay Buddhist answered, "I cannot commit suicide even though I have been suffering, because I can earn religious exercises by living with and receiving suffering." This is the story in which a layman taught the religious behavior of living with suffering to a monk.

我雖憂悲不能自殺。何以故。在世遭苦知修道業。

4) A case of attempting suicide by throwing oneself off of a precipice because of persistent illness (*Sarvāstivādin-vinaya* 『十誦律』 五十八, 大正 23,436c)

A certain monk who had been suffering from persistent illness hated living, and tried to commit suicide by throwing himself off of a precipice because of his persistent illness. Then he fell down by chance on an animal and killed it, but he was saved and also recovered from the illness. Buddha admonished him by saying to him that there was no offence involved in this incident, but that he should not throw himself off of a precipice anymore.

佛言。無罪。從今日莫以小因緣便自殺。

This does not always mean that theoretically suicide is no offence if we understand from these sentences that this was his first offence. As I described before, suicide is not recognized as a non-offence by other Disciplines.

5) A case of assisted suicide (『十誦律』 五十八、大正 23,435c)

⁽³⁹⁾Conduct of purity. A state of continence and chastity. *ibid.*4, p. 21

An ill monk requested a knife from another monk, and when questioned as to why he wanted the knife, he explained that he just innocently wanted to have knife. After receiving a knife from the monk, the ill monk committed suicide with the knife. Buddha admonished the monk that there was no offence, but that he should not give a knife to a patient anymore, and if he were to give one, he would be committing *dukkata*. As a result, this was a case of aiding and abetting suicide; however, he had no intention of killing anyone and therefore he was not praising the beauty of death. I can understand this description as a story of a first offence. This expression is characteristic of *Sarvāstivādin-vinaya*. That is to say, I think it should not be an offence in this case because this occurred before the legislation of the Rules of Discipline. It seems that this offence is lighter than any other offence in other Disciplines, and therefore he was not recognized as *pārājika* because he had no intention to kill.

It is clear that suicide should be an offence from the following commentaries in the *Sarvāstivādin* school (6)-8).

6) Suicide commits *dukkata* (『根本薩多婆多律攝』三、大正 24,538b)

敬法出家保命求脫。若自殺者得吐羅罪。

Here I take on the problem of double suicide and killing as follows:

7) Explanation of double suicide (『薩婆多部毘尼摩得勒伽』八、大正 23,614a, et. al.)

In the case of a monk who tries to commit suicide after killing his mother, he will have committed *pārājika* if his mother dies before he does, but he commits *thullaccaya* if he dies before his mother does. Also in a case of double suicide, the two have committed no offence if they stab each other and both of them die at the same time, because dead persons cannot be punished by the Disciplines.

以受戒誓畢一形故 (『薩婆多部毘尼毘婆沙』三, 大正 23,518c)

8) Explanation of the lack of distinction between killing and suicide

(『薩婆多部毘尼摩得勒伽』八, 大正 23,614a-b)

頗有比丘人人想殺不犯波羅夷耶。答有。自殺。偷羅遮。欲殺他而自殺。偷羅遮

It is clear that suicide is recognized as killing.

9) A case of telling an ill monk how to commit suicide

(*Mahāsaṃghika-vinaya* 『摩訶僧祇律』四, 大正 22,254a-b)

An attending monk told a persistently ill monk that he was tired as a result of nursing the ill monk, that he had not been able to do his practices because of this nursing, and that he also was disliked by the people because of his frequent requests for food and medicine for the ill monk. The ill monk begged this attending monk to kill him because he did not want to go on enduring the suffering from this persistent illness anymore. The attending monk answered that he could not kill him or give him a knife due to the rules of the Disciplines, but he told him how to commit suicide, and then went out. Then the ill monk committed suicide. This case was recognized as the praising of death, and the attending monk was said to have committed the offence of *pārājika*; however, there was no mention of the ill monk who committed suicide, since he was already dead.

Forbidding suicide in the Disciplines

As I mentioned before, suicide is recognized as the offence of *thullaccaya* or *dukkata*, and is lighter than *pārājika* (killing others, the praising of death and the aiding and abetting of suicide). Contemporary opinion considers it questionable that unintentional killing is not recognized as an offence; however, we should consider the way of thinking of Buddhism at that time, in which they looked upon motivation as important.

As I mentioned before, a first-time offender of any offence should not be declared guilty in principle, according to Disciplines such as *Sarvāstivādin-vinaya* (『十誦律』). Past studies have indicated that there are some rules in the Disciplines which approve of suicide, but we should not pass over the characteristic expression of *Sarvāstivādin-vinaya*. That is why I consider it questionable to say unconditionally that suicide has been approved of in the *Sarvāstivādin* school.

3 The shortening of life and the abandoning of life

The purpose of this chapter is to discuss the commonalities between the shortening of life (*āyur-utsarga*, 捨多壽行), the abandoning of life (*kāyasya nikṣepam*, 捨身), suicide and natural "death with dignity". The shortening of life was discussed in *Abhidharma-jñānaprasthāna-śāstra* (『毘婆沙論』十二, 大正 26, 981a)⁽⁴⁰⁾, as well as in *Abhidharma-mahāvibhāṣā-śāstra* (『大毘婆沙論』百二十六). According to *Abhidharmakośabhāṣya* (『俱舍論』三, 大正 29,15 c), the discussion went as follows:⁽⁴¹⁾

復何因緣捨多壽行。彼阿羅漢自觀住世於他利安樂事少。或爲病等苦逼自身。(『俱舍論』三, 大正 29,15 c, 玄奘訳)

Most of the arhats must have been aged, and they were almost certainly dying from incurable diseases. Death would have come soon anyway, due to climatic and medical conditions. The shortening of life under these conditions

⁽⁴⁰⁾云何_三芻捨多壽行。答阿羅漢。成就神通得心自在。如前布施。施已發願。即入邊際第四靜慮。從定起已。心念口言。諸我能感壽異熟業。願此轉招富異熟果。時彼能招壽異熟業。則轉能招富異熟果(『毘婆沙論』十二, 大正 26, 981a)

⁽⁴¹⁾" he sees that his dwelling in this world has only a small utility for the good of others, and so sees himself tormented by sickness," *AKB.I.* by Poussin, L.d. L. V., Eng. tr. by Pruden, L. M. p. 166

is regarded as accepting natural death rather than as committing suicide. Therefore, I believe that this shortening of life was not the same as suicide or religious suicide⁽⁴²⁾.

I think that the shortening of life⁽⁴³⁾ is different from the abandoning of life in *Mahāyāna*. The shortening of life is the opposite of the prolongation of life, as was thought about the death of Buddha at that time. Later, it was suggested that the highest arhat could be allowed to commit the shortening of life, and that an arhat could also be allowed to do so when he was seriously ill. However, it is hard to generalize from this theory that arhats could be allowed to commit suicide or to throw themselves off of precipices⁽⁴⁴⁾.

The abandoning of life

The abandoning of life/self-immolation has a variety of meanings; however, its primary meaning is the same as suicide or self-injury, even if its aim is to attain liberation or *pūjā* (veneration). As is common knowledge, abandoning of life/self-immolation is described in *Jātaka* and the *Mahāyāna* Canon. It was not that abandoning of life was encouraged, but that there were some suicidal cases of abandoning at that time (『続高僧伝』)⁽⁴⁵⁾. I-ching strictly criticized abandoning of life/self-immolation in his Travel.

⁽⁴²⁾In this article, I have omitted the discussion of the legend of Mahāprajāpatī (摩訶波闍波提、大愛道)(『增壹阿含』五十, 『根本説一切有部毘奈耶藥事』十, 『大毘婆沙論』『佛説大愛道般泥經』). I think that her death was very close to natural death.

⁽⁴³⁾Essays on the shortening of life, *āyur-utsarga* : Jaini, P.S., Buddha's Prolongation of Life, *Bulletin of the school of Oriental and African Studies* XXXI, 3, 546-552, 1958 : Kusama, H., "Death of Śākyamuni and the shortening of life" *J. Indology & Buddhist studies*, 29 (1) ; 242-247, 1980 (in Japanese)

⁽⁴⁴⁾I have also omitted the discussion of "meditation in fire", such as in Dabba-Mallaputta (陀驪摩羅子)(『雜阿含』三十八他).

⁽⁴⁵⁾Nei, J., "On shoushin-oujou during the Heian era", *J. Indology & Buddhist Studies*. 7(2); 634-635, 1979 (in Japanese)

Tao-hsuan (596-667), who restored the Disciplines in China, had the same opinion.

十誦不得自傷毀形。乃至斷指犯罪。

(道宣『四分律刪繁補闕行事鈔』中二, 大正 40,60b)

The abandoning of life was prohibited from within the Buddhist school in China. It was not the central subject of Buddhism but was a historical and geographical phenomenon in northern Buddhism, as Kawakatsu, M. ⁽⁴⁶⁾ indicated. And Ishida, M. ⁽⁴⁷⁾ quoted the idea of Chih-i (538-597) and others that abandoning of life is to teach the awareness of *bodhisatta*, and also to respect *Dhamma* and think little of life; therefore it is not indicating real abandoning life/self-immolation. Fukushima, M. ⁽⁴⁸⁾ said, "Chih-i demanded to kill desire, i.e. *tathāgata-vaṃśa*, by defining theoretical killing. This means that we should not affirm desire but deny *tathāgata-vaṃśa* similar to desire, because bad monks were casually affirming this world and enjoying desire according to *Mahāyāna* theories." Momoo, K. ⁽⁴⁹⁾ said, "Chih-i regarded self-immolation veneration as Dhamma veneration, and so this epoch-making idea would be a deterrent to self-immolation for veneration in practice".

We should also understand the point of view of *Mahāprajñā-pāramitopadeśa* (『大智度論』), in which the abandoning of life is regarded as

⁽⁴⁶⁾Kawakatsu, M., "Cultural History of a Buddhist Tradition of "Schechen" in the East Asia I" *J. The Graduate School Taisho University*. 23; 53-77, 1999 (in Japanese)

⁽⁴⁷⁾Ishida, M., *Buttenkouza 14 Bonmoukyou. Daizoshuppan*, 1971, Tokyo, p.174, (in Japanese)

⁽⁴⁸⁾Fukushima, K., "Chih-i's thought on *Sīla and Vinaya*., Sasaki, K. ed. *A study on Sīla and Vinaya*.,1981, pp.344-365 (in Japanese)

⁽⁴⁹⁾Momoo, K., "An interpretation on Shoushinkuyou of 法華藥王菩薩品 in Tendai-sect", *International Buddhist University Bulletin*. 449-464,1998 (in Japanese)

the highest veneration, within this context. Mizuo, G.⁽⁵⁰⁾ said, "Many monks continually began to carry out these instructions to the letter and abandoned their bodies. We have to say that this doesn't fit the original meaning of the scripture." And I agree with him. The religious concept includes many symbolic or transcendental meanings, so there is no doubt that some religious ideas have no real applicability to real-life.

Concerning this, for example, it is rather natural that many Buddhists who have grown up in historical Japanese culture are not actively in favor of organ transplanting from the brain-dead. As far as the donation of organs at the time of brain death is concerned, in the opinion of Umehara, T.⁽⁵¹⁾, he regarded these donations as the practice of *bodhisatta*-hood, which misses the mark. Okamoto, T.⁽⁵²⁾ and Fujii, M.⁽⁵³⁾ described the problem by explaining the three pure circles (三輪清浄) relating to abandoning. We should not identify abandoning of life with the allegory of self-immolation in *Jātaka* and the suicide of monks only for political appeal, which occurred during the Vietnamese civil war⁽⁵⁴⁾, ⁽⁵⁵⁾, ⁽⁵⁶⁾.

⁽⁵⁰⁾Mizuo, G. "Abandoning of the life from the viewpoint of *Sīla and Vinaya*", *J. Indology & Buddhist Studies*, 4(2) 680-684, 1966 (in Japanese)

⁽⁵¹⁾Umehara, T., "A student of Socrates is against brain-death", *Bungeishinjuu*. Dec.,1990 (in Japanese)

⁽⁵²⁾Okamoto, T., "On kāyasya nikṣepam in six dynasties of China" *J. Indology & Buddhist studies*. 2(2); 862-868,1974 (in Japanese)

⁽⁵³⁾Fujii, M., "Brain-death and organ transplantation from the living Buddhism", Umehara, T. ed., '*Braindeath' and organ transplantation*. Asahishinbunsha, pp.284-304,1992 (in Japanese)

⁽⁵⁴⁾Harvey, P., *An Introduction to Buddhism, teaching, history, and practices*.CUP, 1990, p. 203

⁽⁵⁵⁾Harvey, P., *An Introduction to Buddhist Ethics*. CUP, 2000, p. 292

⁽⁵⁶⁾*Piko* Mahā Phathaka Phathako answered my personal inquiry with the response that, in the Vietnamese case, the effect of self-immolation was good; however, he feels that we should interpret this situation using Buddha's wisdom. 5 Oct., 2002, in Siem Reap, Cambodia

4 Discussion on suicide

In an overview of studies about suicide in Buddhism, suicide is basically prohibited in Buddhism. But since Poussin, L. d. l. V., suicides of arhats have been recognized and accepted in many studies through the descriptions of suicides by monks and others. There are a few opinions in these studies which seem to have generalized exceptional cases like suicides by monks as being part of the general teaching of Buddhism, and also there are some discussions ignoring the historical and geographical diversity of Buddhism, as well as some explanations which had been strongly influenced by the thought of the time. However, it is impossible to make clear-cut conclusions from the Buddhist scriptures if the basic point is left unclear. A review of the literature is as follows:

Kato, N. ⁽⁵⁷⁾ said, " altruistic killing is not contrary to Buddha's will; rather, it establishes inestimable virtue and merits, and that altruistic suicide must be accepted providing that altruistic killing has already been accepted." Furthermore, he explained that it is natural that destruction of human life formally corresponds to *pārājika* because human life is an important cause which brings forth good results; however, the suicide, in *Hīnayāna* was selfish, and murder is strictly forbidden, but killing is not absolutely forbidden if one conjectures from Buddha's thoughts. His opinion is to be noted as an affirmation theory of killing when killing was emphasized under the influence of the times in order to promote national wealth and military build-up, and to affirm war. This to me was a fine idea in so much as I recognize that killing others was considered to be basically common to suicide fundamentally, but I do not agree with Kato's simple dichotomy of Buddhism from *Mahāyāna*,

⁽⁵⁷⁾Kato, N., " Suicide from Buddhist view", *Shuukyokai*. 9(8); 616-627, 1913 (in Japanese)

nor with his apologetics, nor with his affirmation of killing.

Sakamoto, S. ⁽⁵⁸⁾, concerning *Vakkali*, said that the suicide of this monk who attained liberation was accepted and therefore it later appeared in Buddhist scriptures as the shortening of life. Fukuhara, R. ⁽⁵⁹⁾ noted that the suicide of a monk is basically equal to the shortening of life. Sugimoto, T. ⁽⁶⁰⁾, who at one time accepted the idea of prohibiting suicide and euthanasia through his examination of the Disciplines, later referred to his acceptance of killing and his affirmation of euthanasia in his presentation ⁽⁶¹⁾, which included Tibetan and Chinese Buddhism.

Rachels, J. ⁽⁶²⁾ explained how euthanasia had been forbidden in Christianity, Judaism and Islam, but it had been agreeably accepted among most Asians. And he also gave an example of suicide monks and noted that suicide that is aimed at attaining *nibbāna* does not hinder final liberation. However, this is a generalization from exceptional events, and his investigation of texts was inaccurate. Even if Asian people are tolerant of cases where individuals commit suicide, it cannot be said that they have come to willingly accept suicide. According to Harran, M.J. ⁽⁶³⁾, although suicide is not legislated in Buddhism, there are positive attitudes toward suicide or self-sacrifice in *Jātaka* and *Mahāyāna sūtra* and as an exception to the rules, suicide as

⁽⁵⁸⁾Sakamoto, S., "The meaning of death in Buddhism" *Shuukyōkenkyū*. 123; 32, 1950 (in Japanese)

⁽⁵⁹⁾Fukuhara, R., *On karma*. Nagataeishōdo, 1982, Kyoto, pp.112(in Japanese)

⁽⁶⁰⁾Sugimoto, T., *ibid.* 32

⁽⁶¹⁾Sugimoto, T., "On affirmation of killing (euthanasia) in Buddhist texts" *Tohokuhukushidaigaku Bukkyōshakaihukushikenkyūjo Kiyō*. 4; 43-75,1979 (in Japanese)

⁽⁶²⁾Rachels, J. *The End of Life, Euthanasia and Morality*, OUP,1986., Kamo,N. et al(Japanese tr.) Kooyoshobo, Tokyo, 1991, p. 32

⁽⁶³⁾Harran, M.J. in M. Eliade(editor in chief), *The Encyclopedia of Religion Vol. 14*, Macmillan, 1987, p.129,

self-sacrifice may be appropriate for an arhat. I think this opinion has been commonly accepted.

In an encyclopedia of philosophy for intellectual Japanese, Takezawa, S.⁽⁶⁴⁾ states, "Suicide tends to have been praised as the release of oneself in Hinduism and Buddhism, and sometimes it was positively valued as a form of social appeal." I think this is wholly a misunderstanding. This might be an indication of the level of understanding of intellectual Japanese in respect to Buddhism.

Nakamura, H.⁽⁶⁵⁾ regarded the case of the suicide monk as a public acceptance of suicide. He said, "A monk who had already completed his exercises before committing suicide was not always to be blamed." However, he also added another opinion in saying, "The suicide of the ordinary person causes all of the faithfully-carried out obligations and kindnesses shown to him by others who have helped him throughout his lifetime to become efforts made in vain." Tamaki, K.⁽⁶⁶⁾ explained that suicide has been generally forbidden but was accepted in the cases of the three monks above. Seki, M.⁽⁶⁷⁾ said that suicide had been prohibited in principle, mentioning *Vinaya Pitaka* and the matter of how to live; and by examining the above three monks he came to understand that suicide has never been warranted.

Becker, C. B.⁽⁶⁸⁾ generalized the theory of accepting suicide involving ill

⁽⁶⁴⁾Takezawa, S., *Iwanami Cyclopedia of Philosophy and Thought*. Iwanamishoten, p.627, 1998, Tokyo (in Japanese)

⁽⁶⁵⁾Nakamura, H., *ibid.*28, p. 365

⁽⁶⁶⁾Tamaki, K., *ibid.* 20, pp. 476-477

⁽⁶⁷⁾Seki, M.*ibid.*27, pp.255-274

⁽⁶⁸⁾Becker, C. B., "Buddhist views of suicide and euthanasia". *Philosophy East and West*, XL, 4, pp. 543 -556, 1990. Reprinted in *Applied Ethics, A Multicultural Approach*. L.May et al ed. Prentice-Hall, pp. 615-626, 1998

monks. But his opinion about Japanese thought concerning Buddhism and death was unilateral and not a detailed study; therefore the arguments are not convincing. According to Fujita, K.⁽⁶⁹⁾, early Buddhism was against suicide because *vibhava-taṇhā* (the desire for non-existence) was a condition of thirst. He thought that the suicide of a monk was accepted after he had already achieved liberation, but that this was a passive acceptance. I confirmed that suicide had been basically rejected in Buddhism by examining the three ill monks in *Āgama*, *Nikāya* and *Vinaya Piṭaka*⁽⁷⁰⁾. Keown, D. considered critically studies of suicide in the West, and discussed Buddhism and bioethics in detail⁽⁷¹⁾. But I have come to suppose that there are underlying Christian values shaping his opinion that suicide was not condoned but rather exonerated by Buddha⁽⁷²⁾.

It is a matter of record that practitioners and researchers of the Disciplines have confirmed the prohibition of suicide⁽⁷³⁾. P. de Silva⁽⁷⁴⁾ analyzed existential psychology to show the ambivalence of the suicide of a monk, and also denounced altruistic suicide from the perspective of Buddhism, such as the self-immolation of a monk for political appeal.

Also, Fujita, Kokan⁽⁷⁵⁾, who had considered *Bodhisattvabhūmi* in *Yogācāra-bhūmi*, said, "Practicing an evil such as killing in order to influence

⁽⁶⁹⁾Fujita, K. *ibid.* 21, pp.74-80

⁽⁷⁰⁾Koike, K., "On Buddhist Ethics." 1999, unpublished (in Japanese); Prof. Yamagiwa, N. of Bukkyo University gave me valuable advice.

⁽⁷¹⁾Keown, D., *Buddhism and Bioethics*. St. Martin's Press, 1995, p.58

⁽⁷²⁾Keown, D., *ibid.* 14

⁽⁷³⁾道宣『続高僧傳』大正 50, 678b-685c646: 義淨『南海寄歸内法傳』四, 大正 54, 231a-c, 691: Hirakawa, A., *Collected works of Hirakawa, A. Vol.14, Study on 250 rules, I*. Shinjusha, 1993, pp.276-277

⁽⁷⁴⁾P. de Silva, "Suicide and Emotional Ambivalence: An Early Buddhist Perspective", D. J. Hoffman & D. Mahinda Eds., *Pāli Buddhism*, Curson, 1996, pp.117-132

⁽⁷⁵⁾Fujita, Kokan., "On killing of Bodhisattvabhūmi", *Mikkyoubunka*. 191, 1995, pp.152-136

a social standard has never been accepted on either a secular or a general-public level. These stories, which were enumerated as examples from *Jātaka*, narrative and historical events, are symbolic proverbs meant to put an idea across to us as ordinary people. Their purpose was not to make us accept killing and the like literally.” I think this is the correct interpretation, as it is not the theme of this article to examine the affirmation of killing which appeared in the subsequent *Mahāyāna*.

Seki, M.⁽⁷⁶⁾ said, ”...even if *Godhika* was accepted as an arhat of *cetanā-dharma*⁽⁷⁷⁾, it is clear that *Vakkali* and *Channa*’s cases did not correspond to this one. Furthermore, it is hard to find in these stories the potential and capacity, according to the theory of the shortening of life, to say, ’voluntary choice of when one’s own last moment of life will occur is possible’. I think we should find it significant at this point that (these three monks) completely reached *parinibbāna* nonetheless.”

It can be said that those three monks committed suicide by negative motivation from the viewpoint of religious practices. That is to say, they were trying to escape from serious disease accompanied by suffering, and therefore these were suicides from the motivation not of a saint but of a mediocre person.

In the case of *Godhika*, he has been regarded as a religious suicide, but he was said to be sick according to the Commentaries. As I described before, *Vakkali* and *Channa* tried to commit suicide in order to avoid the torment of terminal illness, and succeeded in committing suicide. There are some common aspects between the descriptions of *Vakkali* and those of *Channa*, who were at the terminal stages of incurable diseases, as follows: Ill monks

⁽⁷⁶⁾Seki, M., *ibid.*27, p.268

⁽⁷⁷⁾One of six types of arhats who commit suicide not to retreat from liberation. AKB.XXV.

announce that they will commit suicide in order to avoid their torment, and then Buddha or his leading disciples confirm that they are in the agonizing stages of dying from incurable diseases. In the case of *Channa*, *Sāriputta* asked him not to commit suicide. He was questioned by Buddha or the leading disciples about the *dhamma* of impertinence, and he was able to answer correctly in spite of the fact that he had a serious disease and was suffering. Then he committed suicide alone for himself of his own free will after Buddha and the disciples had left him. They did not stop him from committing suicide by force, and needless to say it would have been impossible for them to have done that anyway. Buddha recognized *parinibbāna* after visiting him at the scene or receiving the report from his disciples, and preached about this to monks who had been unconvinced.

I found that it was basically common in the three cases of suicide monks that the most respected point was whether each one had attained liberation or not. I think that the free will to commit suicide was accepted; however, *Māra*, the Evil One, and other monks were unconvinced as to belief in *parinibbāna* because suicide is *adhamma*. In case of *Channa*, a disciple of Buddha offered his assistance in helping *Channa* to live out his life to the end and not commit suicide. According to a part of the scriptures, 『增壹阿含』十九, *Abhidhamma* and the Commentaries, those three monks were not arhats just before death. This may suggest that an arhat should not commit suicide even if he were dying from an intolerably serious disease accompanied by suffering. It was described that liberation was not recognized at the step of planning to commit suicide, but the monk was accepted as having attained final liberation as *parinibbāna* just before death. That is to say, confirmation of *parinibbāna* occurred after the event. I think that the compassion of Buddha effected the confirmation of *parinibbāna*. It can be said that *parinibbāna*

was recognized, but suicide itself was not specifically condoned in the scriptures. Anyway, some exceptional cases were focused on, and the discussion surrounding liberation was required in *Abhidhamma* and the Commentary, which would be due to the presence of the intention to prohibit suicide.

5. Euthanasia

5-1 Commandment against the destruction of life

It is important to note that the concepts of praising the beauty of death and inciting someone to die are equal to killing have penetrated into each of the Disciplines. That is to say, *pāṇātipātā veramaṇī*, abstinence from killing (not just forbidding it), represents the forbidding of euthanasia, i.e. involuntary euthanasia (mercy killing) and voluntary euthanasia as described in the following cases.

The Disciplines (*Vinaya Piṭaka*) are the rules of *saṅgha*, which are the other facets of *sīla* that explain the concept of *sutta* and the basic attitude of monks to the practices, so they are not just penal regulations. Monks come into *saṅgha* for the purifying of their minds (*sacittapariyodapana*); therefore, they never conceal their sinful deeds⁽⁷⁸⁾.

5-2 Forbidding of aiding and abetting suicide and murder at the victim's request (*Vin.III.2*)

According to *manussa-viggaha-pārājika* in *Vin.*, killing, murder at the victim's request, the praising of the beauty of death, advising one to die and aiding and abetting suicide are all recognized as *pārājika*.

⁽⁷⁸⁾Hirakawa, A., *Collected works of Hirakawa, A. Vol.11, Buddhist community of primitive Buddhism I*. Shinjusha,2000, pp.107,129-130

5-3 Forbidding involuntary euthanasia (mercy killing)

Someone who praises the beauty of death or incites anyone to die is regarded as *pārājika*. This is the commandment against the destruction of life. In these Disciplines, we know of many cases of ill monks who were suffering from incurable serious diseases, and if they incite ill monks to commit suicide or aid and abet suicide, they are regarded as *pārājika*. They will also be regarded as *pārājika* when giving medicine to the patient to let him die on purpose, and if he dies, because the intention to kill is regarded as important. However, one is not guilty if one has no intention to kill⁽⁷⁹⁾ .

1) A case of ordering an executioner to kill a convict by one blow so as not to keep him in misery (*Vin.* III.5.32)

At one time a certain monk, having gone to the place of execution, said to the executioner: "Reverend sir, do not keep him in misery. By one blow, deprive him of life. The executioner was remorseful. " You, monk, have fallen into an offence involving defeat," he said⁽⁸⁰⁾ .

2) A case of ordering relatives to give certain medicine to a man whose hands and feet had been cut off (*Vin.* III.5.33)

At one time a certain man whose hands and feet had been cut off, was in the paternal home surrounded by relations. A certain monk said to these people, "Reverend sirs, do you desire his death?" "Indeed, honored

⁽⁷⁹⁾bhesajjaṃ nāma, sappiṃ vā navanītaṃ vā telaṃ vā madhuṃ vā phāṇitaṃ vā deti imaṃ sāyitvā marissatīti, āpatti dukkaṭassa; taṃ sāyite dukkhā vedanā uppajjati, āpatti thullaccyassa; marati, āpatti pārājikassa. (*Vin.* III.4.8)

Medicine means: he gives ghee or fresh butter oil or honey or molasses, saying, "Having tasted this, he will die"; there is an offence of wrongdoing. In tasting it, a painful feeling arises; there is a grave offence: if he dies, there is an offence involving defeat. Tr. by Horner, J. R., *The book of the discipline*, Vol. I. p. 133

⁽⁸⁰⁾Ibid.36, p.148

sir, we do desire it,” they replied. ”Then you should make him drink buttermilk,” he said. They made him drink buttermilk, and he died.⁽⁸¹⁾

The monk was recognized as *pārājika*, because he gave *takka*, medicine to the patient with the intention of letting him die by this medicine. ⁽⁸²⁾

There also have been three cases of nuns, but it seems that all of these cases involve involuntary euthanasia, i.e. mercy killing, and this is forbidden.

3) A case of death occurring by giving a patient whose hands and feet had been cut off medicine by his own order without any intention to kill him (『四分律』五十六, 大正 22, 982c)

有男子截手截脚。時比丘尼持蘇毘羅。—阿姨與我飲。比丘尼即與。彼飲便死疑。佛問言汝以何心。答言不以殺心。佛言無犯。

It is seemed that a criminal tried to commit suicide by voluntary euthanasia, and I think it was evaluated in the above cases whether the nun had intended to kill him or not.

4) A case of giving a patient whose hands and feet had been cut off medicine with the intention of killing him (『十誦律』五十八, 大正 23, 436b)

若有能與是人藥。使得時死者。則不久受苦惱。中有一愚直比丘尼。與蘇毘

⁽⁸¹⁾Ibid.36, p.149

⁽⁸²⁾Takka is buttermilk. *The Pali-English Dictionary*. P.T. S. There are many rules involving medicine, such as, 「藥者。知彼人病與非藥或雜毒或過限與種種藥。使死波羅夷。」(『四分律』二, 大正 22, 577a)、 「然諸_レ芻不問醫人。不應輒與病人藥服。…輒以自意與病人藥得越法罪。」(『根本說一切有部毘奈耶』八, 大正 23, 664b-c)、 「凡被傷人勿與醋飲」(『根本薩婆多律攝』三, 大正 24, 538c)。 However, it is important to consider in what ways one used the medicine. One used it with the intention of letting the patient die. Therefore, the comment of Hirakawa, A. ”Did one poison the medicine?” is not correct. Hirakawa, A., *Collected Works of Hirakawa, A. Vol. 14, Study on 250 rules*. Shinjusha, 1993, pp.276-277 (in Japanese)

羅。是人即死。汝以何心與。比丘尼言。我欲令早死不久受苦故與。佛言。是人死時。汝即得波羅夷。

5) A case of giving a patient whose hands and feet had been cut off medicine with the intention of killing him (『根本説一切有部毘奈耶』八, 大正 23, 665b)

我爲教化多得鹽醋。人各飽飲悉已命終。於當生處飲母新乳。佛言。此_三芻尼無犯。若有故心令他死者。得他勝罪。然諸_三芻尼不應於病人處而與其醋令飲命終應作其心。此之病人由斯藥故。令得早差者無犯。若_三芻_三芻尼作如是念。由此藥故當令命終。若因死者得他勝罪

We can also understand from this case that intention was evaluated.

5-3 Forbidding voluntary euthanasia (assisted suicide)

I already described that aiding and abetting suicide is *pārājika* through all the Disciplines. It is impossible to commit voluntary euthanasia without any assistance. Some terminally ill patients who suffer wish to commit suicide; however, they cannot do so by themselves, which is why they ask someone to make them die. The same problem exists in today's euthanasia and physician-assisted suicide. A person who committed suicide or was killed was not the object of the rules of the Disciplines, since he was already dead.

1) Forbidding of aiding and abetting suicide and murder by attending monks at the victim's request (『摩訶僧祇律』四, 大正 22, 253c-257c)

According to the Discipline of *Mahāsaṅghika* (『摩訶僧祇律』), killing by many attending monks and the sham recluse caused the legislation of the commandment against the destruction of life. It is noted that prohibitions against aiding and abetting suicide and murder at the victim's request and

active voluntary euthanasia from the viewpoint of ill monks were especially adopted in this book of Discipline. I think this is because there were not a few cases of such occurrences in *Mahāsaṅghika*. It forbade killing, but at the same time, it also forbade voluntary euthanasia.

2) **A case of aiding and abetting suicide by the attending monk** (『摩訶僧祇律』四, 大正 22,253c)

我亦患厭苦痛難忍汝若能殺我者善。是比丘即便殺之。—手自斷人命根。是比丘波羅夷不應共住。

3) **A case of murder at the victim's request** (『摩訶僧祇律』四, 大正 22,254a)

世尊制戒不得自手殺人。—汝可爲我求持刀者來。—求持刀者令奪人命。是比丘得波羅夷不應共住

It was a murder at the victim's request, but it was said to be a suicide (voluntary euthanasia) from the viewpoint of the ill monk.

4) **A case of advising methods for suicide** (『摩訶僧祇律』四, 大正 22,254a-b)

病比丘言。當如之何。我亦患此苦痛難忍。汝能殺我者善。是比丘言。汝不聞世尊制戒。不得手自殺人耶。—看病比丘言。汝但自求活不欲死。若欲死者汝自有刀。可用自殺。—自殺之法亦甚衆多。作是讚說已乃避出外。時病比丘於後自殺。—教死讐死。是比丘得波羅夷。不應共住

It is certain that the ill monk was intending to commit suicide (voluntary euthanasia).

6) **A case of aiding and abetting suicide** (『四分律』二, 大正 22,577a)

This case is also *pārājika*. It is same as that of 『五分律』(二, 大正 22,7c).

7) **A case of aiding and abetting suicide** (『十誦律』五十八, 大正 23,435c)

刀與我。比丘言。用作何等。病人言。但與我來。即持刀與。病人得刀。持入房坐床。以自割咽。一佛言。無罪。從今日不應令病人得刀。若令得刀得突吉羅。

A patient committed suicide by knife. It seemed that this was easier to evaluate than cases involving other rules of the Disciplines, but there was no intention to kill him. I think this offence was committed before legislation of the rule, considering the context as I described it before.

6 On death with dignity or natural death and terminal care

The term "Songenshi" (尊厳死, "death with dignity") has an obscure meaning due to the Japanese word "Songen" (尊厳, dignity). Likewise, the term "Anrakushi" (安楽死, euthanasia) has often been used with an obscure meaning.

"Death with dignity" has been accepted as death with dignity, but it is difficult to explain in common words what a death with dignity is, because this issue concerns a person's view of life and his own values. For example, suicide does not mean death with dignity for many people, but it may mean death with dignity for some people.

Now, the state of death to be called "death with dignity" means withholding or withdrawing life-sustaining treatment; however, there is an ethical problem here owing to the inclusion of people in vegetative states or who have severe mental disorders. Those who insist on "death with dignity" express the wish not to live "like a vegetable," connected to machines and being forced to receive inappropriate treatment and the inappropriate extension of their lives from their own viewpoint. Therefore, they call it "death with dignity". Such a kind of death would be the acceptance of death and also very close to natural death from another viewpoint. In these cases, individual

decision-making should be sine qua non.

If we admit the above-mentioned "death with dignity", however, how about cases of people who have had severe mental or intellectual disorders from early ages? The borderline is not clearly distinguished between people in vegetative states and people with dementia or severe mental disorders. Therefore, the discussion about "death with dignity" mentioned above must interfere with the significance of living with dementia or the purpose of living for severely handicapped people.

It is a matter of informed consent to choose a treatment or to reject a certain treatment. However, such an informed consent obviously exceeds the extent of usual informed consent because it includes the withholding or withdrawing of life-sustaining treatment, which will bring on death. As matters now stand, there are not a few borderline cases in which discrimination between suicide (which is connected with voluntary euthanasia) and natural death ("death with dignity") by withholding or withdrawing life-sustaining treatment is not clear ⁽⁸³⁾ .

Now, I will refer somewhat to the euthanasia or the "death with dignity" movement. Societies for the Right to Die in Europe and in the United States have been proposing a movement to legalize active voluntary euthanasia (accompanied with physician-assisted suicide) on the basis of the "right to die" as a right of self-determination. The Japanese Society for the Right to Death has been directed in the same way as have similar organizations in Western societies, but the name was changed to the "Songenshi" Society, because the members have the goal of being able to demand the right to reject life-sustaining treatment and to legislate for such a right, since there

⁽⁸³⁾Matino, S. et al, *Data, Bioethics and Law, II, Euthanasia, Death with Dignity, Terminal Medicine*. Shinzansha, 1997, p.159 (in Japanese)

has apparently been strong opposition to this legislation from handicapped people. However, when we think over its historical progress, the opinions of leaders⁽⁸⁴⁾ , Oota, T, Matsuda, M. and others, and also the campaigns in Western societies, it is obvious that they are claiming the right to die. Though the present meaning of being in the terminal state of dying is not exactly the same as it was for people living in the era when life-sustaining systems had not yet been developed, or as it is for people who are unable to use these systems even in developed countries, nevertheless a genuine state of dying does of course occur for everyone in every era.

Dying while waiting for death without any treatment and care or receiving only ordinary treatment without life-sustaining methods are similar to dying a natural death, while from the viewpoint of medical staff, they are deemed as letting the patient die⁽⁸⁵⁾ . If we are letting the terminal patient die without treatment or professional care, should we be blamed as having abandoned the treatment of the patient?

There are some descriptions about forbidding suicide and euthanasia in *Nikāya*, *Āgama* and *Vinaya Piṭaka*. According to these, it is not acceptable to abandon nursing and let the patient die. Furthermore, it is preached that monks should be nursing severely ill monks according to Buddha's word; if not, they violate the Discipline, i.e. *thullaccaya* or *dukkata*.

An example is shown in *Vin. A. (Samantapāsādikā)* that has something in common with "death with dignity" at present. The monk can abstain from taking medicine and food when he is clearly near death; in this case, I think that he cannot eat any more. There is no such description in the

⁽⁸⁴⁾Oota, T., *Encouraging Euthanasia*, Sanichishobou, 1973, (in Japanese): Matsuda, M., *I want to die comfortably*. Iwanamishoten, 1997(in Japanese)

⁽⁸⁵⁾Beauchamp, T. I. ed., *Intending Death. The Ethics of Assisted Suicide and Euthanasia*. Prentice Hall, 1995

Discipline, because it lays emphasis on attending monks. The way of dying as an example is acceptance of death as it is today. Therefore, it makes no difference whether or not one accepts natural death but not the shortening of life in this case.

na ca bhikkhave attānaṃ pātetabban ti na attā pātetabbo, vibhattiv-
attayena paṇ'etaṃ vuttaṃ. — sace so ayaṃ attabhāvo paṭijaggiyamāno
pi na tiṭṭhati bhikkhū ca kilamantīti āhāraṃ upacchindati bhesajjaṃ na
sevati vaṭṭati. yo ayaṃ rogo kharo āyusankhārā na tiṭṭhanti ayaṃ ca
me visesādhigamo hatthappatto viya dissatīti upacchindati vaṭṭati yeva.
(*Vin.A.I.3.*)

佛告諸比丘。莫自殺身。殺身者。乃至不食。亦得突吉羅罪。若比丘病極。
若見衆僧及看病比丘料理辛苦。而自念言。此等政（正）爲我故。辛苦之
爾。自觀壽命不得久活。而不食不服藥善。又有比丘我病極苦。我壽命亦盡。
我道跡如在手。若見如此不食死無罪⁽⁸⁶⁾。（『善見律毘婆沙』十一，大正
24,752c）

On terminal care

1) Buddha's word that says we should sufficiently take care of the

⁽⁸⁶⁾*Shan-Chien-P'i-P'o-Sha, XI55.* A Chinese version by Saṅghabhadra of *Samantapāsādikā* (Eng.tr.) The Buddha has said to the Bhikkhus : " Do not commit suicide". One who commits suicide, even to the extent that he abstains from food, becomes guilty of Dukkaṭa offence. If, however, a Bhikkhu is very much afflicted with disease and sees the Saṅgha and other Bhikkhus attending upon him in his sickness put very much trouble on account of nursing him, he thinks thus: "These people are very much put to trouble on account of nursing me!" He then contemplates upon his life-span and finds that he is not going to live long and so he does not eat, does not clothe himself properly, nor does he take any medicine, then it may be excusable(lit. good). There may be a Bhikkhu, who is very much afflicted with a disease and (who finds) that his life-span is almost coming to an end and that soon likely to attain the Path which has almost come into the palm of his hand. If thinking, thus, he abstains from food and dies, then there is no offence.

ill person to his dying day (Vin. I. VIII.26)

The Lord saw that monk lying fallen in his own excrement; — ”Why do not monks tend to your needs?” ”I, Lord, am of no use to the monks, therefore the monks do not tend to my needs.”— the Lord sprinkled on the water, the venerable Ānanda washed him over; the Lord took him by the head, the venerable Ānanda by the feet, and having raised him up, they laid him down on a couch.⁽⁸⁷⁾

n’atthi te bhikkhave mātā n’atthi pitā ye te upaṭṭhaheyyuṃ.
tumhe ce bhikkhave aññamaññaṃ na upaṭṭhahissatha atha ko
carahi upaṭṭhahissati. yo bhikkhuhave maṃ upaṭṭhaheyya so
gilānaṃ upaṭṭhaheyya. sace upajjhāyo hoti upajjhāyena yāvajīvaṃ
upaṭṭhātabbo, vuṭṭhānassa āgametabbam. — sace na hoti upajjhāyo
vā ācariyo vā saddhivihārīko vā antevāsīko vā samānupajjhāyako vā
samānācariyako vā saṃghena upaṭṭhātabbo. no ce upaṭṭhaheyya, āpatti
dukkaṭassa. ⁽⁸⁸⁾

It is forbidden to abandon the nursing of seriously ill patients until the time of their death, as Buddha himself showed. It is well-noted that the nursing of a seriously ill patient had the same meaning as serving *Buddha*.

2) Buddha attended on an ill monk, unclean and stinking, whom nobody had been attending (『五分律』二十一,) 大正 22,139c-140a)

佛語阿難。汝等所作非法、比丘無有父母。自不相看誰看。

⁽⁸⁷⁾ *The Book of the Discipline IV.*, tr. by Horner, I.B. p.431

⁽⁸⁸⁾ Ibid. 87, p. 432, ”Monks, you have not a mother, you have not a father who might tend you. If you, monks do not tend one another, then who is there who will tend you? Whoever, monks, would tend me, he should tend the sick. ”If he has a preceptor he should be tended for life by the preceptor, who should wait for his recovery. — If he has neither a preceptor nor a teacher nor one who shares a dwelling-place nor a pupil nor a fellow-teacher, he should be tended by the Order. If it should not tend him, there is an offence of wrong-doing.

The message is almost the same as in 1).

3) A example of letting someone die by the abandonment of attending (『十誦律』五十八, 大正 23,436c)

有一比丘病久。看病比丘看視故。作是念。我看來久。是病人不死不差。今不能復看。置令死。是看病人便不看故。病人便死。是看病比丘生疑。我將無得波羅夷耶。是事白佛。佛言。不得波羅夷。得偷蘭遮。

An attending monk thought that his ill monk would never recover but would not die of his disease, and so he negligently let him die. The attending monk was said to have committed the offence, not of *pārājika* but of *thullaccaya*.

4) The example of abandonment of attending aimed at letting one die (『摩得勒加』四, 大正 23,589c-590a)

有比丘長病。看病人厭語病比丘。我不復看汝。作是念不看當速死。不看故命終尋即生悔。乃至佛言。不犯波羅夷。犯偷蘭遮。

An attending monk abandoned attending an ill monk, aiming at letting the ill monk die, and he died. The attending monk was said to have committed the offence of *thullaccaya*.

Opinions of the religious world on suicide and euthanasia

Durkheim, E. (1897) once indicated that religious and social structures influence the incidence of suicide. Suicide was not forbidden in the Old Testament nor in the New Testament. There were many suicidal cases of Christians at the end of the Roman era. But there has been a long history of forbidding suicide based on the Sixth Commandment since the time of Augustine, A. (426) and also of declaring those who commit suicide as being

guilty by secular laws⁽⁸⁹⁾,⁽⁹⁰⁾,⁽⁹¹⁾.

Forbidding suicide means forbidding euthanasia. The Roman Catholic Church and the Church of England oppose euthanasia (suicide, the right to die), while declaring that rejection of extraordinary treatment can be accepted under certain conditions⁽⁹²⁾. Under these conditions, the free will of a mentally competent subject is required.

The thought that human life is a gift from God has penetrated both Judaism and Christianity. There are various ways of thinking among Protestants. As modern Buddhism has significant diversity in Japan, various sects have been established; therefore, it is difficult to integrate their various pronouncements which have come into existence. Some Buddhists have been promoting hospice care. Western researchers of *Pāli* Buddhism oppose euthanasia, and they have taken the position that agrees with hospice care⁽⁹³⁾.

7 Conclusion

We Japanese can learn not a few things from Buddhism when we take up the subject of human death, since we have grown up in a mental and

⁽⁸⁹⁾Schopenhauer, A., *Parerga und Paralipomena: Kleine Philosophische Schriften*.1851, Saito, S. (Japanese tr.) Iwanamibunko, 1952

⁽⁹⁰⁾Alvarez, A., *The Savage God- A Study of Suicide*, Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1971, Saotome, T. (Japanese tr.) Shinchosha,1974

⁽⁹¹⁾Minois, G., *History of Suicide, Voluntary Death in Western Culture*, 1995, tr. by Cochrane, L. G., The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1999

⁽⁹²⁾The Declaration on Euthanasia in 1980 by the Sacred Congregation for Doctrine of Faith proposed the notion that "treatment for a dying patient should be 'proportionate' to the therapeutic effect to be expected, and should not be disproportionately painful, intrusive, risky, or costly, in the circumstances."

⁽⁹³⁾Barnes, M., "Euthanasia, Buddhist principle". *British Medical Bulletin*. 52(2):369-375,1996

cultural climate in which folk religion blended with Buddhism. I think that Buddhism also has the potential to come into the global spotlight.

In this article, I demonstrated Buddhism prohibiting both suicide and euthanasia by examining *Nikāya* and *Vinaya Piṭaka*, which are traditional texts from early Buddhism, and the corresponding texts of the Chinese Canon. And I also critically examined studies in the past, and I referred to the shortening of life and the abandoning of life in relation to suicide, euthanasia and natural death with dignity.

Euthanasia with physician-assisted suicide as a matter of killing at present was strictly forbidden in the above texts. In these texts, free will is accepted for suicide; however, the question is whether or not the person attained liberation, and such a person cannot be recognized as having attained *parinibbāna* without first having attained liberation. Suicide was forbidden from the viewpoint of killing in *Vinaya Piṭaka*. The practice of euthanasia is essentially the same as killing, and so the concerned monk is condemned to *pārājika*, the gravest offence of *Vinaya Piṭaka*. This is because euthanasia is based on the intention to let someone die or wishing to kill someone, no matter what the reason for doing so is.

On the matter of "death with dignity", it is preached that we should neither let someone die without taking any care of them nor abandon the nursing of a patient until the moment of death.

The influence of Buddhism on Asian mental culture is not small. Therefore, I think that most Japanese and a lot of Asian people are reluctant to accept the right to die in the depths of their minds. In this article, I have tried to reach upstream as far as the source of the river of Buddhist thought on death goes, and have attempted to explicate the development of the concept of compassion from early Buddhism.

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank Professor Esho Mikogami and Myosei Tatsuguchi of the Postgraduate Course, Ryukoku University, for valuable advice in the writing of this paper.

key words : Buddhism, suicide, euthanasia, nikāya, vinaya piṭaka, terminal care