

# Carita (Temperament) in Theravada Buddhism

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The term 'carita' is derived from Pali language, the root 'car + ta'. The root 'car' has the sense of 'going (gati), eating (bhakkhana) and confidence (asmsaya). According to Pāli grammar, the term 'carita' is related to 'ciṇṇa, āciṇṇa, and samāciṇṇa. The connection between 'carita and ciṇṇa, āciṇṇa and samāciṇṇa' can be made clear in 'Niruttiḍḍipani and 'Kaccāyanabyākaraṇa' by understanding the sandhi a) car+ ta = carita, b) car+ ta =ciṇṇa, c) Ā +car+ta=āciṇṇa, and d) sam+a+car+ta=samāciṇṇa.

The term 'carita' usually comes with prefixes 'du' and 'su' such as 'duccarita (bad conduct or bad action) and sucarita (good conduct or good action)'. The term 'carita' in this paper is related to 'Rāga, Dosa, Moha, Saddhā, Vitakka and Buddhi. In some place, word 'cariya' can be found instead of 'carita' like 'Rāgacariya, Dosacariya, Mohacariya etc. The other synonyms of carita are personal nature (Pakati) and Idiosyncrasy (Ussannatā).

The phrases in the Tipiṭaka, Pāli canon can be seen as "sabbabuddhānamāciṇṇo ,which means, "the nature of all Buddhas or tradition of all Buddhas or (work) done usually by all Buddhas". Satam bodhisattānam DhammoBuddhakarako caritoācarito āciṇṇo means "the Dhamma followed or cared for repeatedly by the Bodhisatta". Another phrase to understand is "sabbabuddhānam āciṇṇsamāciṇṇoayam cetaso vitakko udapādi " meaning, "This thought that is the nature of all Buddha aroused".

In addition, the different definitions of the term 'Carita' given by the commentator can be found in the pāli texts as-

- i. Caritanti car, which means "Carita is behavior",
- ii. Caritanti ciṇṇam dānādipaṭipattim meaning 'Carita is the performing of charity.
- iii. Caritanti pubbe kataṃ kusalākusalam kammaṃ meaning 'Carita is the wholesome or unwholesome action which has been done in the past.
- iv. Caritanti cariya vuttīti attho, which means, Carita is behavior, becoming a lot.
- v. Caritanti caritā kāyavacīmanppavatti, which means 'the arising of body, speech, and mind'.
- vi. Caritanti kāyādīhi abhisankhataṃ kusalākusalam, Carita means the wholesome or unwholesome deed which has been done by body, and
- vii. Caritanti idha sucaritaṃ duccaritanti vuttaṃ, it is said that 'Carita' is good conduct or bad conduct.

In the Visuddhimagga, (Buddhaghosa-Thera) both 'Rāgacarita' and 'Rāgacariya' can be found in text. The term 'Cariya' is derived from the same root 'car+ya'. In Paramatthadīpanī, LedīSayadaw defines cariya as, *caranaṃ cariyā, samudācarāṇanti attho, pavattibahulatāti vuttaṃ hoti*; meaning "acting, behavior (caranaṃ,

*cariyā*), behaviour, practice, habit, familiarity (*samudācaraṇa*); the intended meaning is “the state of arising much” (*pavattibahulatā*).

In layperson’s language, habits strongly and rigidly conform to one’s characteristic. For example, even if you feed a dog well, he will surely nibble on an old worn-out shoe once he gets one. Or at the least he will sniff at the shoe, even if he is not hungry. Likewise, a person with bad habits will be mean, have *vasana* (characteristic or trait). He cannot get rid of his rooted habits. Therefore, it is important to examine one’s own *Carita* and of others, associated with what kind of *vasana* or *carita* one has?

*Carita* is a predominant nature in one’s behavioral pattern, means Temperament. Temperament (*Carita*) means personal nature, the character of a person as revealed by his or her natural attitudes and conduct. The temperament of people differ owing to the diversity of their past *Kammas* (deeds). The commentators state that temperament is determined by the *kamma*, productive of rebirth-linking consciousness.

### Classification of Carita

In brief, there are six categories of ‘*Carita*’, namely (1) *Rāgacarita*- greed temperament, (2) *Dosacarita*- hatred temperament, (3) *Mohacarita*- deluded temperament (4) *Saddhācarita*- faithful temperament, (5) *Buddhicarita*- intelligence temperament, and (6) *Vitakkacarita*- speculative temperament.

These six can still be further categorised into 63 or 64 that can be obtained by combining each factor with the rest. This shows that a person can have a combination of various temperaments and it is possible that one person can have more than one temperament, that is, one can be greedy while having faith or anger and so on, so is the case with other combinations making the other temperaments. For an example a person with *rāga carita* can also be *māna carita*. Because, according to *Abhidamma*, craving (*rāga*) and conceit (*māna*).

In brief, there are six kinds of temperament, that is, greedy temperament, hating temperament, deluded temperament, faithful temperament, intelligent temperament, and speculative temperament.

Moreover, it can be said that there are more than three kinds of temperament with craving (*taṇhā*), pride (*māna*), wrong view (*diṭṭhi*). Herein, craving is result of greed and pride also connects with greed. Therefore, they are counted into greed temperament. The temperament of wrong view falls within the deluded temperament because wrong views have their source in delusion.

According to the *Abhidhammatthavibhāvinī Sumangalasāmi-Thera*, there are six kinds of temperament stemming from the basic temperament mental factors and they can vary in sixty-three kinds of temperament by mixing each other. Sixty-three kinds of temperament are: seven temperaments by way of ‘*rāgāditika*’, seven by way of ‘*saddhāditika*’ twenty-one by way of ‘*ekamula*’, twenty-one by way of ‘*dvimula*’ and seven by way of ‘*tikamula*’, all together temperaments are sixty-three kinds. Some scholar note sixty-four kinds of temperaments by adding wrong view.

1. Seven temperaments are explained by way of *rāgāditika* as follows: (a) Greed temperament (b) hate temperament, (c) delusion temperament, (d) greed-hate temperament, (e) greed-delusion temperament, (f) hate-delusion temperament (g) and greed-hate-delusion temperament,
2. Seven temperament by way of '*saddhāditika*' are as follows: (a) Faith temperament, (b) intelligence temperament, (c) speculation temperament, (d) faith- intelligence temperament, (e) faith-speculation temperament, (f) intelligence-speculation temperament, (g) and faith-intelligence-speculation temperament,
3. Twenty-one temperament by way of '*ekamūla*' are noted as follows: (a) Greed-faith temperament, (b) greed-intelligence temperament, (c) greed-speculation temperament, (d) greed-faith-intelligence temperament, (e) greed-faith-speculation temperament, (f) greed-intelligence-speculative temperament, (g) and greed-faith-intelligence-speculative temperament. This way is counted based upon the '*rāga*' (*rāgamūlanaya*).

Furthermore, (a) hate-faith temperament, (b) hate-intelligence temperament, (c) hate-speculation temperament, (d) hate-faith-intelligence temperament, (e) hate-faithful-speculation temperament, (f) hate-intelligence-speculation temperament, (g) and hate-faithful-intelligence-speculative temperament. This way is counted based upon the '*dosa*' (*dosamūlanaya*). Besides there are, (a) deluded-faith temperament, (b) deluded- intelligence temperament, (c) deluded-speculation, (d) delusion-faith-intelligence temperament, (e) delusion-faith-speculation temperament, (f) delusion- intelligence-speculation temperament, (g) and delusion- faith-intelligence-speculation temperament. This is counted based upon the delusion. Therefore, by way of '*ekamūla*' there are twenty-one temperaments.

In the same way, by way of '*dvimūla*' there are twenty-one temperaments.

4. Seven temperaments by way of '*tikamūla*' are noted as follows: (a) Greed-hate-delusion-faith temperament, (b) Greed-hate-delusion-intelligence temperament, (c) Greed-hate- delusion-speculation temperament, (d) Greed-hate-delusion-faith-intelligence temperament (e) Greed-hate-delusion-faith-speculation temperament (f) Greed-hate-delusion-intelligence-speculation temperament (g) Greed-hate-delusion-faith-intelligence-speculation temperament. Thus, by way of '*tikamūla*' there are seven kinds of temperament.

Therefore, seven temperaments by way of '*rāgāditika*', seven by way of '*saddhāditika*', twenty-one by way of '*ekamūla*' twenty-one by way of '*dvimūla*', and seven by way of '*tikamūla*', all together temperament are of sixty-three kinds.

In addition, *taṇhācarita*, a craving temperament and *Micchaditṭhacarita* a wrong view temperament each can be classified into a sharp faculty *mudindriya taṇhācarita* and a weak faculty *tikkhindriya taṇhācarita*. In *Netti*, these two are classified as weak and strong respectively.

According to the *cariyāpiṭaka* commentary, thirty perfection, performing of *dāna* etc., performing of benefit of the world (*lokattācariya*), performing of benefit of relatives (*ñātattācariya*), and performing of benefit of becoming a Buddha (*buddhattācariya*) are called '*cariya*'. Here, '*cariya*' is used instead of '*carita*' in the *cariyāpiṭaka* commentary.

There are eight kinds of ‘*cariya*’ that are fulfilled by the future Buddha or *Bodhisatta*. They are (1) *iriyāpathacariya*-practice of four postures for one who has prayed to be a Buddha, (2) *āyatanacariya*-practice of internal base for one who controls five faculties, (3) *saticariya*-practice of four foundations of mindfulness for one who lives with mindfulness, (4) *samādhicariya*-practice of four *jhānas* for one who has *adhicitta* (predominant), (5) *ñāṇacariya*-practice of four noble truth for one endowed with knowledge, (6) *maggacariya*-practice of four *magga* for one who has well practiced, (7) *patticariya*- practice of four *phala* for one who has attained four *phalas*, and (8) *lakatthacariya*-practice for the welfare of all beings for the future Buddha(*Bodhisatta*), *paccākabuddha*, and disciple of the Buddha (*Buddhasāvaka*).

Moreover, there are eight kinds of ‘*carita*’, namely, (1) *saddhācariya*-practice of faith (2) *viriyacarita*-practice of effort (3) *saticarita*-practice of mindfulness (4) *samādhi carita*- practice of concentration (5) *paññācarita*-practice of wisdom (6) *viññā carita*-practice of consciousness (7) *āyatanacarita*-practice of meditation on mental and physical bases, and (8) *visesacarita*-practice of special stage.

Furthermore, in the *Paṭisambhidāmagga* commentary, the term ‘*carita*’ is described for wholesome *kamma* and unwholesome *kamma* which has been done in the past. Here, wholesome and unwholesome *kammās* are called ‘*carita*’. There are three kinds of ‘*carita*’, namely, *puññābhisāṅkhāra*-moral volitions, *apuññābhisāṅkhāra*-immoral volitions and *ānañcābhisāṅkhāra*-unshakable volitions.

After studying the categories of *Carita*, one must study the causes and conditions of *carita* why these temperaments arise forming a trait. Why some have good temperament while others have bad temperament.

### The Causes of Carita

In order to understand *carita* thoroughly, it is necessary to know the causes of *carita*. Some scholars say that the first three temperaments, which are greed, hate and delusion temperaments have two causes, namely, previous habit (*pubbāciṅṇa*) and elements and humor (*dhātudosa*).

According to some scholars, one who had plenty of desirable tasks and gratifying work to do in the past, has greed temperament in the present life. Furthermore, he has reappeared here after dying in a heaven and he has greed temperament in the present life.

One who had plenty of stabbing, torturing, and brutal work to do in the past has hate temperament. He reappears in one of the hells or the *Nāga* existences. He has hate temperament in this present existence.

One who drank a lot of intoxicants and neglected learning and questioning in the past has delusion temperament. Moreover, he reappeared hereafter in the animal existence. He has delusion temperament in this existence.

Concerning elements of humor, one is of hate temperament because all four elements are equal, one is hate temperament because the two elements, water and air are prominent, and one is of greed temperament because earth and fire elements are prominent.

One with humor has phlegm in excess and one with delusion temperament has wind in excess. Also, one with delusion temperament has phlegm in excess and one with greed temperament has wind in excess.

Venerable Buddhaghosa did not like this idea, and mentioned “not all of those who have had plenty of desirable tasks and gratifying work to do, and who have reappeared there after dying in a heaven, are delusion temperament, or the others respectively of hating prominence of elements as that asserted; and only the pair, greed and delusion, are given in the law of humors, and even that subsequently contradicts itself; and no source for even one among those beginning with one of faithful temperament is given.

Venerable Buddhaghosa provided four causes of carita in Visuddhimagga as follows: (1) previous habit, (2) element and humor, (3) past existence, (4) kamma and associated root (hetu). Unwholesome carita and one who used to enjoy performing desirable tasks and gratifying work develop *rāgacarita*; one who used to enjoy stabbing, torturing and brutal work develop *dosacarita*; and one who has formerly drunk a lot of intoxicants and neglected learning and questioning develop *mohacarita*.

Next cause pointed out, is physical element. It is said that a person who has excessive earth and water element develops *mohacarita*, one who has excessive air and fire element develops *dosacarita* and who has the balanced elements develops *rāgacarita*. Moreover, humors are also considered as cause of temperament. It is said, ‘a person of greedy temperament has phlegm in excess and a person of deluded temperament has wind in excess. Or a person of deluded temperament has phlegm in excess and a person of greedy temperament has wind in excess.

It seems that the commentator does not support former three views and support the fourth view held by the former commentator. He said that these definitions are indecisive because no references in Pāḷi, support these statements. The view supported by the commentator is that the kamma and its associated roots are causes of temperament (carita). With regard to the cause of temperament, the exposition according to the opinion of the teachers of the commentaries is given by Venerable Buddhaghosa in the Visuddhimagga. In fact, why all beings are of greed temperament, hate temperament, delusion temperament etc., is for their root cause in the past.

It should be explained in a little here. In one’s mind at the moment of his accumulation kamma, among the three unwholesome roots, when greed is strong, and the remaining two unwholesome roots are weak. This strong greed is the cause of greed temperament. Besides, among the three wholesome roots when non-anger and non-delusion are strong, non-greed is weak. This strong non-anger is the cause of faith temperament while strong non-delusion is the cause of intelligence temperament.

At the moment of accumulation kamma, among the three evil roots, when greed and hate are strong, delusion is weak, of them, strong greed is the cause of greed temperament while strong hate is the cause of hate temperament. At the time of kamma accumulation, among the three wholesome roots when non-greed and non-hate are weak, non-delusion is strong. This strong non-delusion is the cause of intelligence temperament.

And at the moment of performing kamma, among the three evil roots, when greed and delusion are strong, anger is weak, of them, strong greed is the cause of greed temperament while strong delusion is the cause of speculation temperament. At that time, among the three wholesome roots, when non-greed and non-delusion is weak, non-anger is strong. This strong non-anger is the cause of faith temperament.

Then, at the moment of accumulation of kamma in one's mind when all unwholesome roots are strong, all wholesome roots are weak, of them, strong greed is the cause of greed temperament, strong anger is the cause of hate temperament and delusion is the cause of delusion and speculation temperament.

Moreover, as to wholesome roots, at the time of accumulation kamma in one's mind, among the wholesome roots, when non-greed is the strongest, non-anger and non-delusion are weaker than the rest two wholesome roots. The strongest non-greed is the cause of faith temperament in the next life. On the other hand, among the unwholesome roots, when greed is weak, other unwholesome roots hate and delusion is strong at the moment of performing kamma. Of them, strong hate is the cause of hate temperament and strong delusion is the cause of delusion temperament and speculation temperament.

Next at the time of accumulation kamma, among the wholesome roots, non-greed, non-hate are strong while non-delusion is weak. The strong wholesome roots are the cause of faith temperament. Among the unwholesome roots, greed and hate are weak but delusion is strong. Of them, strong delusion is the cause of delusion temperament and speculation temperament.

When at the moment of one's accumulation kamma non-greed and non-delusion are strong while non-hate is weak, of them, strong non-greed is the cause of faith temperament while non-delusion is the cause of intelligence temperament. Among the unwholesome roots, greed and delusion are weak while hate is strong. The strong hate is the cause of hate temperament.

Moreover, at the moment of one's accumulating kamma all wholesome roots that are non-greed, non-hate and non-deluded, of them, non-greed and non-hate is the cause of faith temperament while non-delusion is the cause of intelligence temperament. All unwholesome roots are weak, of them, greed is the cause of greed temperament, hate is the cause of hate temperament and delusion is the cause of delusion temperament and speculation temperament. Then in the same way one has no greed and no hate and possesses understanding.

Here, with regard to cause of 'carita' that one who is reborn through kamma accompanied by non-delusion is of intelligence; one who is reborn through kamma accompanied by thoughts of sense desire is of speculation temperament; one who is reborn through kamma accompanied by mixed greed, etc., is of mixed temperament.

To support this idea, Venerable Janakābhivaṃsa explained thus: if one's deeds were mostly influenced by greed in the previous existence, then kamma and vipāka cause him to have greed temperament. If anger was significant in his deeds in the past life, his temperament in the present existence will be hate temperament. If ignorance surrounded his kamma in the past life, the temperament will be delusion temperament. If a person did meritorious deeds pertaining to wisdom, he will be reborn with intelligence temperament. Concerning to carita, in the same way, deeds accompanied by faith and thought will correspondingly result in faith temperament and speculation temperament. Thus, different temperaments occur depending on past kammas. One, therefore, should perform meritorious deeds, accompanied by faith and wisdom so as to acquire good temperament in his future existence. The primary cause of carita is the good or bad actions performed in the past. The carita of a person who has accumulated unwholesome action will be unwholesome. Similarly, the carita of who has accumulated wholesome actions will be wholesome. And one who has mixed types of kamma can have mixed carita. In this way, the past existence influence the present personality and propensity.

## Conclusion

Most people think that the two terms, temperament (*carita*) and propensity (*vāsanā*) are same. According to texts, 'carita' is arising consequently (*pavattibhahula*) but 'vāsanā' is remaining in mind.

The interpretation of 'vāsanā' is given in *Sāratthadīpanītikā* thus "pahīnakilesassapiappahīnakilesassapayogasadisapayoga-hethubhūto kilesanissito sāmattiyaṅviseṣo (*vāsanānāma*)" which means, "vāsanā is a special power of defilements, which is the ability of a worldly person". The Buddha is worthy to be called as an "araha" which means "one who has no defilement" because all defilements together with propensity are eradicated. Therefore, to the nine kinds of attributes the 'araha' is added. The other *arhants* excluding the Buddha can remove only defilements. They do not eradicate propensity that is the power of defilement.

Temperament and propensity seem to be same, but are different. Propensity occurs by means of suitable temperament. Propensity goes along with being in *samsāra*. The source of temperament is the productive kamma of rebirth-linking and associated roots. Propensity develops through the repeated action based on temperament.

Natural propensity is possibly the proper rendering of *vāsanā*. It refers to the special power of defilements etc. There are three types of natural propensity. They are wholesome propensity, unwholesome propensity and indeterminate propensity. From the perspective of eradication, there are two types of propensity: propensity that can be eradicated by Path and the other that cannot be eradicated by Path.

Unwholesome propensity that leads to woeful states can be eradicated by all Noble Path. There are two types of unwholesome propensity. The first is propensity, that is the cause of bodily and verbal effort. The other propensity is the cause which leads to the woeful states. The unwholesome propensity that is the cause of bodily and verbal effort can be removed only by the Buddha. It is because unwholesome propensities are too subtle. However, unwholesome propensity, which remains in Arahant are not included in ten kinds of Ducarita; and it is just propensity that is the cause of bodily damage and effort just like scar left after injury.

According to Venerable *Janakābhivamsa*, the propensity for bad things occur due to the force of defilements (*kilesā*); but the propensity for goods things is called wholesome desire (*sammā-chanda*). This *vāsanā* is inherent in the mind- continuum of all beings. Thus, if one who cultivated greed in his past kamma actions does not reform his bad temperament in his life, *vāsanā* will continue to dominate him in the future birth as well. Hatred, delusion, and speculation characters also will continue to dominate likewise. If one is endowed- with intelligence temperament now and if one cultivates wisdom as much as opportunity allows him, this tendency will adhere in him, and as a result of this tendency, one will be reborn as a person with intelligence embodied in him in forthcoming existences. In the field of wisdom, Venerable *sāriputta* is best disciple due to this *vāsanā* induced throughout many successive births. Therefore it is paramount that one should make effort to restraint from evil deeds and to develop good deeds in this very life.

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