

# Wicked Māra, a true opponent of Nirvāṇa: A Critique

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## Abstract

In the Buddhist Mythology Māra possesses a very prominent figure. It always follows Buddha's religious and true austerity life. Due to Māra's bad intension for providing different materialistic happiness to the Buddha, his austerity life became prejudiced. But the great Buddha's sādhanā was free from Māra's bad influence and inert effort. The Māra was a dominant figure in Gautama Buddha's period as he has an assembly. Māra, the greatest opponent of enlightenment, is depicted in different Pāli texts in the appearance of a thoroughly personified supernatural and bitterest enemy of the Buddha, rather than in the form of an abstract (nirākāra) idea of metaphysical character; the idea of the evil and ignorance in opposition to the good and insight. The fetter of Māra was really an obstacle for Buddha in the way of his religious journey.

This paper will discuss in detail regarding Mara's ill activities to subdue Lord Buddha in several ways, but finally failed to get success over Lord Buddha. However, the paper will also discuss the victory of Buddha over his enemy Māra in a most commanding way.

**Keywords:** Māra, Nirvāṇa, Bodhisattva, Divine Lord and Tṛṣṇā (thirst).

The Sanskrit term 'māra' is derived from the root mṛ- with the suffix ghañ, meaning to kill, to slay, etc. In the Lexicon --Amaraśloka, *Māra* is stated as an epithet of Madana (*Kāmadeva*), the gods of Kāma (*madano manmatho māraḥ*). (*Amaraśloka*, I.1.25.)

In the Atharvaveda, the word *Māra* is used in the sense of Yama, death, the destroyer and killer of evil thoughts.

*Yamo Mr̥tyudhamāro Nir̥ratho Babhr̥śarvo'stā Nīlaśikhaṇḍaḥ* / (*Atharvaveda*, VI.93.1.)

The above verse is a prayer for protection from the enemy or danger. The gods like Yama, 'Death', killer of the evil and others are being prayed to protect our heroes.

At another place in the Atharvaveda, Māra is known as 'Pāpman', *i.e.* evil one or wicked one.

*Ava Mā Pāpmantsṛja Vaśī San Mr̥dayati Naḥ* /

*Ā Mā Bhadrasya Loke Pāpman Dhehyavihanutam* // (*Ibid.*, VI.26.1.)

In the Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa, 'Death' (*mṛtyu*) is explained as Pāpmā. (Tāni Asya Garbha' Eva Santi Pāpmā Mr̥tyuragr̥hṇāt... Sarvāṇi Bhūtāni Pāpmano Mr̥tyoḥ Spr̥ṇoti... Śatapatha-brāhmaṇa, VIII.4.2.1-2; cf. Kṛṣṇabandhu

Pāpīmaṃ... Mahāvastu Avadāna, II.238 (7) Māra is called Namuci in the Buddhist Literature. In the Pāli text like Sutta Nipāta (Padhāna Sutta, Verse 2 (P.T.S. 426). (*Namuci karuṇaṃ vācam*) and Bhddhist Sanskrit texts like Mahāvastu (Namuci Karuṇāṃ Vācam Bhāṣamāṇa Ihāgamat Mahāvastu Avadāna, II.238 (II.26.2). and Lalitavistara (XXI.173.), Māra is called Namuci. In the Ṛgveda also Namuci is described as a demon (asura). (Yuvaṃ Surāmanāśvinā Namucāvāsire Sacā Ṛgveda, X.131.4) The words like: Māra, Namuci and Pāpman (pāpimā) are found in the pre-Buddhist Literature in the sense of non-liberator, *i.e.* an opponent of liberation or Nirvāṇa.

In the Pāli Buddhist texts, Māra is known as Kaṇha. The Sutta Nipāta, however, describes it as :

*Kaṇhassa Sotaṃ DīgharttānusayitaṃA Atāri Jātīmaraṇaṃ Asesaṃ /* (Suttanipāta, verse 355; (II.12.13), cf. Kaṇhassa Pakkheti, *Ibid.*, 967.)

The Buddha has passed beyond all birth and death, the stream of Kaṇha, which has long been latent (in him). The Dīgha Nikāya (I.93.10.) also describes Māra as Kaṇha (*pisāce pi kaṇhā ti sañjānanti*).

In the Buddhist Mythology Māra possesses a very prominent figure. It always follows Buddha's religious and true austerity life. Due to Māra's bad intension for providing different materialistic happiness to the Buddha, his austerity life became prejudiced. But the great Buddha's *sādhanā* was free from Māra's bad influence and inert effort. The Māra was a dominant figure in Gautama Buddha's period as he has an assembly. In the Mahāparinibbāna Sutta of Dīgha Nikāya, Buddha tells Ānanda, one of his great disciples, that (out of eight *pariśadas*) (*Aṭṭha Kho*) *Imā, Ānanda, Parisā Katamā Aṭṭha?*) The eight *pariśadas* are : (1) Khattiyaparisā, (2) Brahmanaparisā, (3) Grahapatiparisā, (4) Samaṇaparisā, (5) Dhātumahārājikaparisā, (6) Tāvātimsaparisā, (7) Māraparisā, and (8) BrahmaṇaparisāA Dīghanikāya, II.109 (P.T.S.) the wicked Māra has a regular assembly (Māra-parisā), through which he was controlling over religious and saintly minded persons as well as Bodhisattvas. In Māratajjaniya Sutta of the Majjhima Nikāya, Mahā Moggalāna says that he was formerly a Māra, named Dūsī (in the sense of *duṣṭa* or *pāpi* or wicked in nature), and committed a number of sins in that life. As said in the text:

*Bhūtapubbāhaṃ, Pāpima, Dūsī Nāma Māro Aho Siṃ /*

It is known that Māra's nature and intention was not proper and favourable for the Buddha's austerity life. The Mārasamyutta chapter of Saṃyutta Nikāya contains twenty-five *suttas* (sub-chapters), which elaborately describes Māra's true nature and his real intension through various interesting and practical experiences of the Buddha's sāttvika life. These Suttas which deal with Māra's bad influence to disturb Buddha's true effort to obtain Nirvāṇa (enlightenment) as under:

(1) Tapaḥkarma Sutta, (2) Hastirājavārṇa Sutta, (3) Śubha Sutta, (4) Prathama Mārapāśa Sutta, (5) Dvitiya Mārapāśa Sutta, (6) Sarpa Sutta, (7) Svapiti Sutta, (8) Nandati Sutta, (9) Prathama Āyuh Sutta, (10) Dvitiya Āyuh Sutta, etc.

In these above Suttas, Māra tries either to threaten Buddha through various furious and wicked ways or to attract him through different worldly enjoyments for disturbing or not allowing him to move towards Bodhisattva-hood. As is known that a number of hurdles come in the religious path of the Buddha's, through māyā or Māra or any other ill motivated characters. The same happened in the case of Buddha when Māra appears in two different forms, viz. an elephant and a snake, in order to frighten him. (*Mahantam Hatthirāja-Vaṇṇam Abhinimitvā – Saṃyuktanikāya*, I.103 ff. (and *Mahantam Sapparāja Vaṇṇam...*) In addition to this; Māra assumes the form of a peasant and disturbs Buddha's ideal preaching. (*Saṃyutta Nikāya*, I, p. 114 (P.T.S.) He even tries to distract the audience by making a terrific noise.

It is found in the Suttas of Mārasaṃyutta, that Māra and his associates have advised Buddha to enjoy all the worldly enjoyments or pleasures to dwell in his father's place as long as he possessed youth and health, to rule his prosperous kingdom and make himself fit and active for immortal godhood by offering the various sacrifices. This way, Māra has tried his best to offer all sorts of worldly amenities to Buddha for diverting his mind from the way of *sādhanā* or meditation.

Lord Buddha, however, replied Māra that he had no use for the tiniest of merits, but he wanted to attain the state where there was no return (cf. *yad gatvā na nivartante tat dhāma paramam mama*). (Bhagavad Gītā, XV.6.) No body, he said to Māra, has power to stop his bright efforts in that direction. He has strongly desired to offer fight to Māra's hosts which consisted of desire, discontent, hunger, thirst, craving, sloth and torpor, fear, doubt and pride, etc. Only a cowardly person cannot overcome this host of Māra - so replied the Bodhisattva, but he was sure that in spite of Māra he would be able to reach the place where all ills cease. After this the wicked Māra along with his cruel associates vanished from sight. Even Māra's three daughters (*Trṣṇā*, *Aratī* and *Rāga*) have left the place, being defeated by the Lord. But in spite of their defeat, Māra has praised the virtuous eternal spiritual qualities of the Lord and said his daughters as:

*Selaṃ Va Sirasuhacca, Pātāle Gādhamesatha /  
Sthāṇuṃ Va Uramāsajja, Nibbijjāpe Gotamā 'ti //  
Dadṛllamānā Āgacchuṃ, Taṇhā, Ca Aratī Ragā /  
Tā Tatha Panudī Sathā, Tūlaṃ Bhaṭṭhaṃ Va Māluto 'ti //*  
- Saṃyuttanikāya, Mārasaṃyuttaṃ I.127 (P.T.S.)

In Mahāvagga of the Vinaya Piṭaka, Māra appears twice and tries to assert his evil power over Buddha, who sternly repels and repudiates him. (Vinaya Piṭaka, I, pp. 21-22 (baddho’si sabba pāsehi, etc.)). In Nidānakathā of the Jātaka, he attacks Buddha with nine different storms of rain, wind, rocks, weapons, charcoal ashes, sand, mud and darkness; and his mighty elephant is 150 leagues in height.(Jātaka, I. 72-73 (P.T.S.)). However, in different Pāli texts Māra is described as: *adhipati* (chief), *antegu* (destroyer), *pamatabandhu* (friend of the passionate), *maccu* (death), *kaṇha* (black), *namuci* (non-liberator entity of Nirvāṇa), active, mischievous imp and a celestial being. This is his personal aspect that he is considered as a mythological *Puruṣa* (being), with a distinct individuality, like *Sakka* and other devas. But there is also an impersonal aspect of Māra. In various texts he is regarded merely as the symbol of evil, sin, wicked, desire and temptation. Māra is even addressed as ‘*pāpi*’ by the Divine Lord in the Majjhima Nikāya.(‘*Māro Ayam Pāpimā’ Iti Veditvā... Saṃyuttanikāyapāli, Mārasaṃyuttaṃ 1 (P.T.S. I.103); cf Māraṃ Pāpimantaṃ Etadavoca – Majjhimanikāya, Māratajjanīyasuttaṃ, Sutta, 50.1.) Various sensuous pleasure, i.e. worldly enjoyments and the six fold ‘sphere of sense’, viz. śabda, sparśa (kāya), rūpa, rasa, gandha and manas are said to be Māra’s domain (pāpima, cakkhu, tava rūpā tava cakkhusamphassaviññāyatanam).(Saṃyutta Nikāya I.115 (IV.19.)) He cannot obtain entrance (otāra), if a monk practices virtue and self-control (*labhati tassa māro otāraṃ labhati tassa māro ārammaṇam*). (Majjhima Nikāya III.94.) In Padhāna Sutta of the Sutta Nipāta, Māra’s mythical personality is not prominent, he serves only as a symbol of temptation. When Buddha was meditating near the Nirañjanā River, Māra tried in vain to obstruct his effort for attaining enlightenment. He said that the way of meditation or sādhanā or tapasyā is very difficult and it is not even easy to obtain Nirvāṇa (*duggo maggo padhānāya, dukkaro durabhisambhavo*).(Sutta Nipāta, 429 (III.2.5.)) In spite of several obstructions by Māra, the Buddha was not disappointed. He addressed Māra as ‘*pamatabandhu*’, ‘*pāpi*’ and said: ‘why you have come here? I do not seek your advice to perform Agnihotra sacrifices and to step down from this tedious path of meditation. Because you are not a pious and faithful adviser, as sensual pleasures are your first *senā* (army), discontent is called your second; your third is hunger and thirst; the fourth is called craving. Sloth and torpor are your fifth; the sixth is called fear; the seventh is doubt; hypocrisy and obstinacy are your eighth *senā*’:*

*Kāmā Te Paṭhamā Senā, Dutiyā Arati Vuccati /*

*Tatiyā Khuppipāsā Te, Catutthī Taṇhā Pavuccati //*

*Pañcaṃ Thīnamiddhaṃ Te, Chaṭṭhā Bhīru, Pavuccati /*

*Sattamī Vicakicchā Te, Makho Thammo Te Aṭṭhamo //* (Ibid., 436-37

(III.2.12-13); cf. Mahāvastu Avadāna, II.240 (verse 19-21).)

The Māra's eight armies are always creating problems for the brāhmaṇas, śramaṇas and other *sadhakas*. One who is not a *asura* cannot conquer it, but having conquered it one obtains happiness— “*Na Tam Asūro Janāti, Jetvā Ca Labhate Sukham*” (*Ibid.*, 439 (III.2.15)). But the Buddha having positive approach in mind has defeated Māra's great army through his Divine wisdom and power. Thus, Māra had followed the Buddha for seven years, looking for any weakness in him, but finally failed to get an opportunity against the fully enlightened one, who possesses mindfulness. In the words of Māra:

*Satta Vassāni Bhagavantam, Anubandhim Padā Padam/*

*Aotāram Nādhigacchissam, Samnubbhassa Satīmato // (Ibid., 446 (III.2.22)).*

The Māra has also a personal and an impersonal aspect as found in the Buddhist Sanskrit literature. In his personal aspect, he is the chief of the devatās, who are collectively called ‘the mārakāyikas.’ (*Sarvamāramārakāyika Devatā Nirjetukāmena Nirjetukāmena Sarvāvaraṅyāni...A Śikṣāsamuccaya*, XIV. 20 (244, P.T.S.). There are good numbers of these gods. (Lalitavistara, 283.20.) In the Buddhacarita of Asvaghosa, Māra is known as the Lord of Kāma or Kāmadeva and also designated as the enemy of the eternal law and liberation (Kāmapracārādhipatiṃ Tameva Mokṣadviṣaṃ Māramudāharanti). (Buddha Carita, XIII.2cd.) He is the supreme ruler of the world where passions have their free play, and beings are all subject to disease, decay and death. When Siddhārtha was sitting at the foot of the Bodhi tree to obtain omniscience, Māra with his three sons, *Vibhrama* (caprice), *Harṣa* (gaiety) and *Darpa* (wantonness) and with his three daughters *Arati* (discontent), *Prīti* (delight) and *Tṛṣṇā* (thirst) and himself armed with the flowery arrow (*puṣpa-śara*), came to the Aśvattha tree to disturb him. (*Tato Dhanuḥ Puṣpamayam Gṛhītvā Śarāna Jaganmohakarāṅśca Pañca So 'śvatthamūlam Sasuto 'bhyagacchadasvāsthyakārī Manasaḥ Prajānām Ibid.*, XIII.7) His army consists of his followers who appear in many ghastly forms and carry various weapons. Some have the faces of boars, fishes, horses, asses, and camels, or the countenances of tigers, lions, and elephants; some are one-eyed, many-mouthed, three headed, with pendulous bellies and speckled bellies. (*Ibid.*, XIII.19.) All conceivable ugly, horrible and terrific shapes, forms and countenances are given to them. All grimaces, frowning; frightening, hurling, brandishing, wild orgies are described as their characteristic actions. Māra is a stubborn fighter and artful at the same time. All means he tries from the hurling of rocks and mountains down to coaxing and cajoling, enticing and softening to keep all under his sway. His daughters are the bewitchers of hearts of men; his sons are generators of violent passions in them, while his forces are suckers of



the vital essence and of the mind. However, in a different manner Māra tries to allure Siddhārtha (Buddha), the mighty kṣatriya and advised him to follow his own dharma, *i.e.* *kṣātradharmā* (to rule over the country as a king) and give up the dharma or path of liberation. Subdue the world both with arrows and with sacrifices and obtain the world of Vāsava, *i.e.* get the loka of Indra or Indrapada through the duty of a true kṣatriya. As the poet says in his words:

*Uttiṣṭha Bhoḥ Kṣatriya Mrtyubhīta Cara Svadharmā Tyaja Mokṣadharmam /  
Bāṇaiśca Yajñaiśca Vinīya Lokam Lokātpadam Prāpnuhi Vāsavasya // (Ibid.,  
XIII.9.)*

Māra tried to tempt Buddha in various ways, but in vain and finally, he left the Lord in despair.

In the Saundarananda Kāvya, Asvaghosa also describes Buddha's victory over Māra and his army, through his deep meditation and firm patience. By defeating Māra he has achieved the great eternal abode or graceful Nirvāṇa (*Mārabalamajayadugramatho Bubudhe Padam Śivamahāryamavyayam*) (Saundarananda, III.7cd.). The gods are delighted on Buddha's victory over Māra and his army. But on the contrary the associates of Māra are totally disappointed and returned.

### **Fetters of Māra (Māra Bandhana):**

Māra, the greatest opponent of enlightenment, is depicted in different Pāli texts in the appearance of a thoroughly personified supernatural and bitterest enemy of the Buddha, rather than in the form of an abstract (*nirākāra*) idea of metaphysical character; the idea of the evil and ignorance in opposition to the good and insight. The fetter of Māra was really an obstacle for Buddha in the way of his religious journey.

One is entangled in the snares (*pāśa*) of Māra, if he has any attachment towards any beautiful form, tasty food, attractive things, etc. Hence, it is recorded in the Saṃyutta Nikāya. (*Sanāyatanasaṃyuttam, Lokakāmaguṇavaggo Dutiyo, Paṭhamamārapāsasaṃyuttam* (Vol.IV, p.91, P.T.S.) :

*Santi, Bhikkhve, Cakkhuviññeyyā Rūpā Itthā Kantā Manāpā Priyarūpā  
Kāmūpasamhitā Rajanīyā. Tam Ce, Bhikkhu, Abhinanditi Abhivadati Ajjhosāya  
Tiṭṭhati- Ayam Vuccati, Bhikkave, Bhikkhu Avāsagato Mārasya, Mārasya Vasam  
Gato, Paṭimukkassa Mārapāso. Baddho Sao Mārabandhanena Yathākāmakaraṇīyo  
Pāpamato... Pe //*

Especially, a Bhikkhu who is practicing meditation for obtaining Nirvāṇa should remain separate from the worldly alluring things. Hence, it is observed that a Bhikkhu, who has some worldly attachment, is entangled by the snares of Māra. (Saṃyuttanikāya, Khandha Saṃyuttam, Arahanta Vaggo, Upādiyamāna-

suttam (Vol.III, p.73, P.T.S.).

The Dhammapada is one of the most popular books of the Tripitaka. It is a collection of the moral teachings of Lord Buddha. The pious discourses of Buddha advice to the Bhikkhus for controlling over their sense organs in order to stay dis-entangled from the fetters or snares of Māra. The kilesamāra or the defilements hindering the realization of Nirvāṇa, is as follows:

*Śubhamanupaśyantam Viharantam Indriyeṣu Asamvṛtam /  
Bhojane Cāmātrājñam Kusīdam Hīnavīryam /*

*Tam Vai Prasahate Māro Vāto Vṛkṣamiva Durbbalam //* (Dhammapada, Yamakavagga, verse 7.)

The verse clearly states that a Bhikkhu who keeps his mind on enjoyable objects, who is uncontrolled in his senses, immoderate in eating, and in lazy and lacking in energy, is overpowered by wicked Māra, just like a weak tree, uprooted in the stormy wind.

Those who can restrain their mind and check his propensities can escape from the snares of Māra:

*Aśubhamanupaśyantam Viharantam Indriyeṣu Susaṁvṛttam /  
Bhojane Ca Mātrājñam Ārabdhavīryam /*

*Ta Vai Na Prasahate Māro Vātaḥ Śāilamiva Parvatam //* (Ibid., verse 8.)

The Bodhisattva or the Bhikkhu who keeps his mind on the impurities of the body, who is well-controlled in his senses, moderate in his food, confident and energetic, cannot be overthrown by Māra, just as stormy winds cannot shake a mountain of rock.

Hence, it is clear that the Māra will certainly overthrow a *Bhikkhu* or a Bodhisattva who is unrestrained in his senses, immoderate in his food, idle and weak.

One should fight with Māra with the weapon of Divine knowledge or Spiritual wisdom.

*Dūragam Ekacaram Aśarīram Guhāśayam /*

*Ye Cittam Saryasyanti Mucyante Mārabandhanāt //* (Ibid., Cittavagga, verse 5.)

Going far, wandering alone, formless and lying or sleeping in a cave is the nature or function of mind. Those who control over their mind from the worldly objects and enjoyments are freed from the fetters of Māra.

Lord Buddha always advised to his disciples to keep distance from *vāsanā*, *taṇha*, *kāma*, etc. for obtaining Bodhisattva-hood or *Nirvāṇa*. He says: dig up the root of craving, just as one who wishes to have the fragrant root, digs up the *bīraṇa* grass. Do not let Māra to destroy you again and again, like the flood which destroys the reeds on the river bank. In the words of Buddha:

*Taṇhāya Mūlam Khaṇatha, Usīrttho Va Vīraṇam //*

*Mā Vo Nalam Va Soto Va, Mārobhañji Punappunam // (Ibid., Taṇhāvagga, verse 4.)*

The Lord further states: ‘O Bhikkhus! Give up the past, future and present. Having reached the end of existences, with a mind freed from all conditioned things, you will not again undergo birth and decay (*jarā*).’ He who delights in quieting his thoughts, who meditates on what, is unpleasant, and who is ever mindful in every aspect, will definitely get rid of craving. Finally, he cut the fetters of Māra. As rightly said:

*Vitarkopaśame Ca Yo Rato ’subham Bhāvayate Sadā Smṛtaḥ /  
Eṣa Khalu Vyantī Kariṣyati Eṣa Chetsyati Māravandhanam // (Ibid.,  
Taṇhāvagga, verse 17.)*

Hence, a desire less (without *vāsanā*) person can be freed from the bond of Māra.

According to Buddhism, the best of paths is the Eightfold Path (*aṣṭāṅgika-mārga*). This is the path pointed out by Buddha for liberation from the round of existences. According to the Dhammapada one can make oneself free from Māra, if one has attained the noble Eightfold Path.

*Eṣa Va Mārgo Nā’styanto Darśanastha Viśuddhaye /  
Etaṃ Hi Yuyam Pratipadyadhvam Mārsyaiṣa Pramohanah // (Ibid., Magga-  
vagga, verse 2.)*

This is the only Path, and there is none other that leads to the completely pure vision, *i.e.* understanding. Follow this Great Path and finally it will bewilder Māra.

The text further records that true meditation is the only way through which one can be freed from the fetters of Māra. (Pratipannāḥ Pramokṣyante Dhyāyino Mārabandhanā *Ibid.*, verse 4.) Because, those who practice the tranquility and insight meditation are freed from the snares of Māra.

Besides Dhammapada, some other Pāli texts also record the discussion on the fetters of Māra and the means to release from it. The Buddha had a strong belief that Māra cannot destroy the Dhammacakka, *i.e.* Wheel of Law. (Nettiprakaraṇa, pp. 8-9 (P.T.S.). According to the Udāna, a Bhikkhu whose mind is not protected, who has false belief and who is idle, comes under the control of Māra.

*Arakkhitena Kāyena Micchādiṭṭhagatena Ca /  
Thinamiddhābhībhūtena, Vasam Mārasya Gachati // (Udāna (Meghiyavagga)  
IV. 2 (P.T.S. 38). Cf. Arakkhitena Cittena... Vasam Mārasya Gacchatīti. Nettipra-  
karaṇa, III.13.1 (p.85, P.T.S.).*

It means, as a result of body being unguarded, and as a result of being slain by wrong view, as a result of being overcome by sloth and torpor, a *Bhikkhu* comes under the direct control of Māra.

The Visuddhimagga exclusively states that who has freed himself from



the ties of the world, is fit to overcome Mara with his strong associate army. (Visuddhimagga, Vol. I, p. 73 (P.T.S.) A *yogī* or *sādhaka*, who remains fixed in his seat spending his whole time in meditation, can easily subdue over Māra. (*Ibid.*, Vol. I, p. 79 (P.T.S.)). It is very interesting to note that Bhikkhus living within the Buddha's state are not overcome by the fetters of Māra. The Buddha assumed to the *Bhikkhus* by saying that if you regularly live within the state of your father or *guru* or Lord (*i.e.* Buddha), you will not be subdued by Māra. (Niddesa, Vol. I, p. 475 (P.T.S.)). According to the Itivuttaka, Māra is conquered by a *Bhikkhu* who is totally free from worldly attachment, and who has exalted triumphant over all pains and sufferings and will not be born again in this world. (Itivuttaka, p. 58 (P.T.S.)). Those who are under the domain of passion, delusion, anger and illusion, are really ignorant of the āryadharmas and they cannot liberate themselves from the snares of Māra. (*Ibid.*, p. 92 (P.T.S.)) The Aṅguttara Nikāya asserts that a Bhikkhu who follows true dharma can conquer over Māra. The text refers as:

*Dharmādhipo Ca Anudhammacārī, Na Hīyati Saccaparakkamo Muni*  
*Pasayha Māraṃ Abhibhuyya Antakaṃ, Yo Ca Phusī Jātikkhayaṃ Padhānavā*  
*So Tādimō Lokavidū Sumedo, Sabbesu Dhammesu Atammyo Munīḥ Ti.* (Aṅguttaranikāya Tikkapināto, Devadūtavaggo, Adhipateyyasuttaṃ (I.150, P.T.S.)).

On the basis of dharma, if the muni meditates God he never sees behind on the way of his religious journey. True devotion and sincere effort in practicing austerity must help him to vanquish over Māra. At another place in the Aṅguttara Nikāya it is clarified that a Bhikkhu who puts forth the right effort in performing yoga and transcendental meditation in a proper direction, and who has conquered the kingdom of Māra, is not subject to rebirth and death.

*Sammappadhānā Māradheyyābhibhūtā,*  
*Te Asitā Jātimaraṇabhayassa Pāragū*  
*Te Tusitā Jetvā Māraṃ Savāhinaṃ Te Ane Jā,*  
*Sabbaṃ Namucibalaṃ Upātivatā Te Sukhitāḥ Ti //* (*Ibid.*, Catukkanipāto, Padhānasuttaṃ (II.15, P.T.S.))

Finally, after destroying the evil power of *Namuci* (*i.e.* Māra), the muni lives in the *Tuṣita* world with full Bliss.

Māra went to that place where Buddha was staying and having approached him he addressed the Blessed One by the following verse:

*Baddho Si Mārapāsehi Ye Divyā Ye Ca Mānusā /*  
*Mahābandhanabaddhosi Na Mai Samaṇa Mokkhsī 'Ti' //* (Vinayapiṭaka, Mahāvagga, I.12.)

You are bound by Māra's fetters, human being and Divine. Thou art bound by strong fetters of mine and hence you will not be delivered from me, O Śramaṇa (Buddha).

Buddha, having pious thought in mind strongly replied Māra in the following words:

*Muttoham Mārapāsehi Ye Divyā Ye Ca Mānusā /*

*Mahābandhanamuttomhi Nihato Tvamasi Antakā Ti // (Ibid.)*

Being a Man or Divine, I am totally free from the strong fetters of Māra. You know this fact. Then the Māra understood that the Blessed One recognized me and my evil intension and vanished away.

It is properly advised that those monks who know the great suffering provided by Māra are really unbearable in the way of their meditation. Hence, to be freed from the snares of Mara they must go for the shelter of Lord Buddha. This is the only way to get success in their spiritual life. The Majjhima Nikāya rightly says:

*Yo Etamabhijānāti, Bhikkhu Buddhasya Sāvako /*

*Tādisaṃ Bhikkhumāsajja, Kaṇha Dukhaṃ Nigacchasi // (Majjimanikāya, Māratajjanīya Suttam (337, P.T.S.).*

The Supernatural Powers of Buddha always protect Bhikkhus from the evil influence of Māra, because without proper guidance and kind Blessings of Lord Buddha it was difficult for the monks to attain the Highest Bliss.

Māra was confusing and ill-motivating to the Bhikkhus through his wicked sons, daughters and army personals. Although the sons of Māra are innumerable as the sands of the Ganges, but according to the Lalitavistara their number can find to thousand (*mārasya pāpīyasaḥ putra-sahasram*). (Lalitavistara, 387 (Ch. XXI.24). Some of the prominent sons of Māra as mentioned in the text (Chapter XXI (P.T.S. 387-397). are: *Sārthavāha, Durmati, Madhuranirghoṣa, Śatavāhu, Subuddhi, Ugratejā, Sunetra, Dīrgavāhu, Prasādapratilabdha, Bhayaṅkara, Ekāgramatirāha, Avatāraprekṣī, Puṇyālaṅkāra, Anivartī, Dharmakāma, Anupaśānta, Siddhārtha, Ratilola, Dharmamati, Vātajava, Acalapati, Brahmamati, or Mandamati, Simhamati, Sarvacaṇḍāla, Simhanādī, Duścintitācintī and Sucintitārtha.*

*Bhadrasena, the chief commander of Māra's army said to the Māra that "all the devatās, gandharvas, kinnaras are sincerely extending their regards and devotions to the Buddha. Besides, your wise and mighty sons are even liking and greatly respecting him. (Ye Ca Taveme Putrāḥ Prajñā Medhāvinaśca Balinaśca te Bodhisattvaḥṛdayaṃ Anuprāviṣṭā Namasyanti, Lalitavistara, XXI.68 (398, P.T.S). The Mahāvastu simply states that Māra's son Sārthavāha and Janīsuta tried to dissuade him from attacking the Bodhisattva. (Mahāvastu, II.408.10ff.)*

According to the Lalitavistara (chapter XXI; 377-378, P.T.S.), Māra dreams a dream with thirty-two ominous signs that seem to foretell his doom. Some of his dreams are described as: (1) Māra's place has been overshadowed by darkness; (2) he runs away through fear; (3) he sees that he is leaving his crown; (4) he

sees that the feathers of goose, crane, peacock, etc. are falling; (5) he sees that musical instruments, e.g. drums, kettle drums, conches, etc. break into pieces and fall down on the ground. For this Māra advised his followers to be careful and addressed them by saying, “One who is endowed with all the good signs and who has undergone many difficulties, comes of the Śākya family, and will subdue the members of the devil’s power and strength.” I have heard from the heaven that the Buddha, the Blessed One, has obtained the Highest Bliss, *i.e.* Nirvāṇa. So it is not bearable for us, because, after bodhiprāpti, Buddha will definitely seek the release of his disciples. Henceforth, you, all my followers, go there, *i.e.* near Bodhivṛkṣa, to puzzle the Blessed One, so that his mind will be diverted from the high spiritual path. (Lalitavistara, XXI.163 (P.T.S. 426) Durmati, one of the Māra’s devil son, has assumed to his father for destabilizing the Buddha. He said, “my eye-sight can render twain hearts of beings whom it will touch, and can divide the essence of the oldest tree in the world. No being, who shall fall my sight, can survive. Hence, I fix my cruel eyes on the Buddha, he will have no power to breathe again or survive.”) (*Kā Śaktirasti Mama Drṣṭi Hatasya Tasya Saṁjīvitum, Jagati Mrtyuhatasya – Vā’stu Ibid.*, XXI.26 (P.T.S. 388) Another devil son of Māra was also in a terrific mood. He also threatened Buddha to throw him into the deep sea. He further adds: *Sa Bodhivṛkṣamutpāṭya Kṣepsye Pāṇyā Diśo Daśaḥ // (Ibid.*, XXI.39cd (P.T.S. 391)

I will throw the Bodhivṛkṣa in ten different directions after cut into pieces.

On the contrary, even some sons of Māra are worshipping and respecting Buddha as a ‘symbol of peace’. These honest and spiritual minded sons of Māra are: *Sārthavāha, Madhuranirghoṣa, Subuddhi, Sunetra, Prasāda-pratilabdha, Ekāgramati, Puṇyālarkāra, Dharmakāma, Siddhārtha, Dharmarati, Simhanādī, Sucintitārtha, Acalapati, etc.* They said to Māra and their wicked brothers: *Buddha is a saintly minded man. He is pure in body, mind and speech (vāc). He has seen your frightful and terrible army but does not get frightened. Surely he will conquer you all as a great hero. It is impossible, you must not think of harming him, but be humble and have faith in Buddha, the Blessed One. Hence, it is better to go back without fighting with him.* (*Tasmānnivartāmaha Tāta Sarve. Ibid.*, XXI.52 (393, P.T.S.) cf. *Nivartitavyaṁ Kṣamaṁ Prājñeh. Ibid.*, XXI.74 (398, P.T.S.). Also cf. *Śreyo Bhave Pratinivartitumadya Tāta. Ibid.*, XXI.137 (421, P.T.S.).

Māra’s religious minded sons this way tried to dissuade him from attacking the Buddha. But the wicked Māra being ignored the advice of his spiritual minded sons ordered his army to attack the Buddha for the last time with such a violent force as would not spare his life. Māra’s strong army charged the Buddha with all sorts of weapons and implements and with various satanic means but their hopes and cruel attempts was frustrated. His evil followers were utterly defeated

by the Divine Power of Buddha.

The Lalitavistara has elaborately discussed the victory of Buddha over the enemy Māra in a most commanding way:

*Devāsura-Garuḍa-Rākṣasakinnarendrā*

*Brahmātha Śakra Paranirmita Sākaṇiṣṭhaḥ /*

*Bhāṣānti Tasya Vijayaṁ Jaya Lokavīra*

*Yatredṛśo Namucasena Tvayā Nirastā // (Ibid., XXI.199 (438, P.T.S.))*

At the end, the Devendra (Indra), Asurendra, Garuḍendra, Rākṣasendra, Kinnarendra, Brahmā and other gods including the gods of Bodhivṛkṣas (The gods of (eight) Bodhivṛkṣas are: Śrī, Vṛddhi, Tapā, Śreyasī, Vidu, Ojobalā, Satyavādinī and Samaṅginī. *Atha Khalu Bhikṣavastasmīn Samaye 'ṣṭau Bodhivṛkṣadevatāḥ. Tadyathā – Śrīḥ, Vṛddhi, Tapā, Śreyasī, Viduḥ, Ajobalā Satyavādinī Samāṅhinī Ca. Ibid., 139, Prose text (421-422, P.T.S.)* had congratulated Lord Buddha for his great victory over the evil power Māra and his army. Then, while Buddha was being worshipped and honored by the *devatās* and Lord Brahmā with flowers, etc., Māra's religious minded (pious) sons brought an umbrella and a big canopy for the Buddha and with folded hands they eulogized the Great Lord in these words: "Oh Blessed One, we bow to you with sincere devotion and great respects, because you have defeated us. You are only Divine Being who exerts for the welfare of the beings in this universe. The devils and other harmful powers could not oppose your religious activity, nor could they shake you from your place of meditation under the pious Bodhi tree. Finally, Māra came to the Buddha and told him that it was the time for his attainment of Nirvāṇa and after obtaining this he should leave this universe. But Buddha was not pleased with the advice of Māra, rather he said, "My disciples are devoted and quite firm in their faith; until I see them free from sufferings and constantly establish in the world the name of Buddha, Dharma and Saṅgha, I shall not leave this world."

## Conclusion:

In the conclusion it can be said that the fight of the Bodhisattvas with Māra is a struggle against the fetters and hindrances that stand in the way to achieve the emancipation, *i.e.* mukti. It is just a war between good and bad ideology and between daivī-pravṛtti and āsuri-pravṛtti, just like the war of Indra and Vṛtra, as described in the Ṛgveda. (Ṛgveda, I.32 (cf. Griswold, H.D., The Religion of the Ṛgveda, pp. 178-86) (Oxford, 1923) However, by controlling over one's own mind and sense organs one can control over Māra, and finally he will reach at the destination of his life, *i.e.* emancipation or Nirvāṇa. This may be a war among the indriyas of human beings as happening in our day to day life. Sometimes, it is also seen, when we intend to perform any religious ceremony, many obstacles

come before us to complete it. As said: ‘*śreyārsi bahu vighnāni*’. Hence, Māra may be known as some weak state of mind through which the right decision or any auspicious work cannot be taken or performed properly.

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