The Law of Dependent Arising
(Paṭicca Samuppāda)
The Secret of Bondage and Release
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by
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‘yo paṭicca samuppādaṁ passati

so Dhammaṁ passati

yo Dhammaṁ passati

so paṭicca samuppādaṁ passati’



‘He who sees Dependent Arising sees the Dhamma

He who sees the Dhamma sees the Dependent Arising’

"What, monks is Dependent Arising?

Conditioned by birth, monks, is decay-and-death.

Whether there be an arising of the Tathāgatas or whether there be no arising of the Tathāgatas

that elementary nature

that orderliness of the Dhamma

that norm of the Dhamma the specific conditionality

does stand as it is.

THAT – the Tathāgata awakens to and intuits into.

Having awakened to it and intuited into it

he explains it

preaches it

proclaims it

reveals it

analyzes it

elucidates it

and says –

LOOK!"

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Paticca Samuppada Sermon 1
The Law of Dependent Arising
(Pahan Kanuwa Sermon – No. 183)

'*Namo tassa bhagavato arahato sammāsambuddhassa*'

'Homage be! To the Fortunate One – the Worthy, Fully Enlightened!'

Yadā have pātubhavanti dhammā
ātāpino jhāyato brāhmaṇassa
athassa kaṅkhā vapayanti sabbā
yato pajānāti sahetudhammaṁ
Yadā have pātubhavanti dhammā
ātāpino jhāyato brāhmaṇassa
athassa kaṅkhā vapayanti sabbā
yato khayaṁ paccayānaṁ avedi
Yadā have pātubhavanti dhammā
ātāpino jhāyato brāhmaṇassa
vidhūpayaṁ tiṭṭhati mārasenaṁ
suriyova obhāsayamantalikkhaṁ
– Udāna, Bodhivagga

When phenomena manifest themselves
To the ardently meditating Brahmin
Then all his doubts get dispelled Since he knows the Causal Law
When phenomena manifest themselves
To the ardently meditating Brahmin

Then all his doubts get dispelled

Since he knows the extinction of conditions

When phenomena manifest themselves

To the ardently meditating Brahmins

Dispelling hosts of *Māra* he stands

Like the sun illumining the firmament

Dear Listeners,

The Teacher of the Three Worlds, the Fortunate One, Fully Enlightened, after his attainment of Enlightenment in the province of *Uruvelā* on the banks of River *Nerañjarā*, remained seated under the Bodhi tree for seven days experiencing the bliss of emancipation. According to the first three discourses of the *Udāna*, the Buddha at the end of the seven days kept attending thoroughly to the Law of Dependent Arising during the three watches of the seventh night. The three verses we brought up as the topic of our sermon today were uttered by the Buddha as paeons of joy (*udāna*) proclaiming that he attended to the Law of Dependent Arising in three ways during the three watches of the night.

Although on the first hearing one might think that all three verses are similar, those who listened carefully would have understood that the second verse differs from the first after three lines by substituting a new line as the fourth. Then in the third verse after two lines, the third and fourth lines say something new. For all the apparent similarity, each verse has a significance of its own in that it describes one of the three ways in which the Buddha attended to the Law of Dependent Arising. It is perhaps due to the specific importance of each of those verses that this discourse collection, the *Udāna*, introduces each of the three verses with the same introductory story.

First of all, let us try to understand the meaning of the verse that comes at the end of the first discourse. Even by getting at the meaning of these three verses, we can get some idea of the Law of Dependent Arising. To begin with, let us form a general idea of the meaning.

'*Yadā have pātubhavanti dhamma – ātāpino jhāyato brāhmaṇassa'* 'When phenomena manifest themselves to the ardently meditating Brahmin' – according to the terminology of this dispensation, the term Brahmin, on occasion,

can refer to the arahant or to the Buddha. Here we have to understand it in that sense.

athassa kaṅkhā vapayanti sabbā

yato pajānāti sahetudhammaṁ

When those phenomena become manifest to that Brahmin, all his doubts get dispelled because he understands thereby the Law of Causality. This then is the meaning of the first verse.

Now, for the second verse. It begins in the same way. At whatever time phenomena manifest themselves to the ardently meditating Brahmin (that is to the Buddha), all his doubts get dispelled – '*yato khayaṁ paccayānaṁ avedi*' – since he now knows the cessation of conditions.

And now for the third verse. '*Yadā have pātubhavanti dhammā – ātāpino jhāyato brāhmaṇassa*'– when phenomena manifest themselves to the ardently meditating Brahmin – then, something new comes up '*vidhūpayaṁ tiṭṭhati mārasenaṁ – suriyova obhāsayamantalikkhaṁ*' – "like the sun illumining the sky, he stands dispelling the hosts of *Māra*. That is, just as the sun dispels the darkness, so he dispels (or exorcises, fumigates) the hosts of *Māra*."

So this is the meaning of the three verses. Let us now try to understand the Law of Dependent Arising with the help of these three verses. The three ways of attention are briefly stated in the three discourses as follows.

During the first watch of the night, the Buddha attended on the Law of Dependent Arising in the direct order and during the second or the middle watch in reverse order. During the last watch, he combined both ways of attending and attended in both direct and reverse order. Now we shall give a clue to the understanding of these three ways of attention.

The first line of the verse says:

'*Yadā have pātubhavanti dhammā*' – when phenomena manifest themselves. What are these phenomena? The discourse itself explains what they are. Those of you who are acquainted with the Law of Dependent Arising know that it consists of twelve factors. Some even recite the formula in their meditation.

'*Avijjā paccayā saṅkhārā,*

saṅkhārapaccayā viññāṇaṁ,

viññāṇapaccayā nāmarūpaṁ,

nāmarūpapaccayā saḷāyatanaṁ,

saḷāyatanapaccayā phasso,

phassapaccayā vedanā,

vedanāpaccayā taṇhā,

taṇhāpaccayā upādānaṁ,

upādānapaccayā bhavo,

bhavapaccayā jāti,

jātipaccayā jarāmaraṇaṁ,

sokaparidevadukkhadomanassupāyāsā sambhavanti.

Evametassa kevalassa dukkhakkhandhassa samudayo hoti.'

'From ignorance as condition (arise) preparations; from preparations as condition (arises) consciousness; from consciousness ……. name and form; from name and form ……. the six sense spheres; from the six sense spheres ……. contact; from contact ……. feeling; from feeling ……. craving; from craving ……. grasping; from grasping ……. becoming; from becoming ……. birth; from birth as condition arise decay and death, sorrow, lamentation, pain, grief and despair. Such is the arising of this entire mass of suffering.

It is the occurrence of these 12 conditions that is meant by the phrase 'when phenomena manifest themselves'. The 12 factors are called conditions (*paccayā)* because none of them arises by itself. They arise due to causes and conditions. When phenomena manifest themselves to the ardently meditating Brahmin, his doubts are dispelled. How? The last line gives the answer, '*yato pajānāti sahetudhammaṁ*' because he understands now the Law of Causality. What is called '*Paticca samuppāda*' is actually that norm, that Law of nature. That norm is stated as a formula in four lines. Only the first two came to light in the first sutta.

> *Iti imasmiṁ sati – idaṁ hoti*
>
> *imassa uppādā – idaṁ uppajjati*
>
> Thus:
>
> This being – this comes to be

With the arising of this – this arises.

Now this is the statement of the Law in its direct order. The first sutta deals with the two principles relevant to the direct order. One might wonder why the statement has 'this' and 'this' where we expect to have 'this' and 'that' as 'This being that comes to be'. There is a subtle point involved in this apparently awkward statement. The reason is that if we take up any couple of links in the twelve-linked formula of illustration of the Law conjoined by '*paccayā*', such as for instance '*avijja paccayā saṅkhārā*' (with ignorance as condition preparations), we have to say this being this arises. Only if we are referring to something outside the context, that is outside the couple of links we have taken up, we have to say 'that'. It is important to remember that the 12 links of the formula of Dependent Arising serve to illustrate the first principle:

This being – this comes to be

With the arising of this – this arises

Let us cite some such illustrations:

When there is ignorance – preparations come to be

With the arising of ignorance – preparations arise

When there are preparations – consciousness comes to be

With the arising of preparations – consciousness arises

When there is consciousness – name-and-form comes to be

With the arising of consciousness – name-and-form arises

It is this first principle that is called '*sahetudhammaṁ*' – the causal law. The essential thing is to understand the Law as such. But what often happens is to fully ignore it and be satisfied with the rattling off of the 12 links. Some are not even aware that there is a first principle involved.

On the other hand, this discourse begins with that first principle itself, saying that the Buddha attended thoroughly to the Law of Dependent Arising in direct order (*anulomaṁ*).

Iti imasmiṁ sati – idaṁ hoti

imassa uppādā – idaṁ uppajjati

Thus:

This being – this comes to be

With the arising of this – this arises.

Then the illustrations of that first principle are introduced with the conjunctive 'yadidaṁ' – 'namely'.

"Namely:

From ignorance as condition (arise) preparations, from preparations as condition (arises) consciousness, from consciousness … name-and-form, from name-and-form … the six sense spheres, from the six sense spheres … contact, from contact … feeling, from feeling … craving, from craving … grasping, from grasping … becoming, from becoming… birth, from birth as condition arise decay and death, sorrow, lamentation, pain, grief and despair."

Last of all comes the statement which explains what all this is about:

'Thus comes to be the arising of this entire mass of suffering.'

So the direct order explains the arising of this mass of suffering.

We said that there are three ways of attending. During the first watch of the night, the Buddha attended thoroughly to the arising aspect. That is why the first two lines amounted to saying:

'This being – this comes to be

With the arising of this – this arises'

It is as an illustration of this fact that the twelve links are stated as summed up by the sentence:

Thus comes to be the arising of this entire mass of suffering. The first verse expresses the same idea.

At the same time, let us try to understand the significance of the third line of the verse.

'*Athassa kaṅkhā – vapayanti sabbā*'

'All his doubts get dispelled.'

Now what are these doubts? In order to understand what they are, one has to read the *Sabbāsava Sutta* of the *Majjhima Nikāya*. The ordinary worldling has doubts and waverings in regard to the three periods of time, past, future and present. As to the past, the ordinary worldling who has not seen, this Law of

Dependent Arising is fully immersed in the personality view (*sakkāyadiṭṭhi*) thinking in terms of 'I' and 'mine' and attends unwisely to the past thus:

'Was I in the past? Was I not in the past? What was I in the past? How was I in the past? Having been what, what did I become, in the past? The ordinary worldling sets about, reasoning with the postulate 'I'.

Similarly, he attends to the future in five ways. This kind of attention is called '*ayonisomanasikāra*' wrong attention or non-radical attention. This is how he attends to the future:

Shall I be in the future? Shall I not be in the future? What shall I be in the future?

How shall I be in the future? Having been what, what shall I become in the future?' This may sound jocular. But all worldlings are in this jocular position. Then about the present, he attends in six ways which may sound even funnier. 'Am I? Am I not? What am I? How am I? Where has this being come from? Where will it go? The 'Being' here represents the self idea. He is involved in the self-view.

This sixteen-fold doubt gets dispelled by seeing the Norm of Conditionality. That is why the noble disciple, who has understood the Law of Dependent Arising by the Path of Stream winning entertains no doubts of this sort. All those doubts arise because of reasoning in terms of 'I' and 'mine' based on the personality view. The Buddha has declared that this way of reasoning leads to 62 views. They end up by falling into two extremes. Either they take up the view 'I exist' or go on asserting 'I do not exist' as regards the future. Thereby, on the one hand they uphold the eternalist view by claiming that they have a permanent soul or on the other hand they go to the annihilationist extreme by asserting that they would be no more after death since the body itself is the soul. *Brahmajāla Sutta* says that in between these two extreme views there are as many as 62 views. All those views get dispelled even by seeing the arising aspect of the conditions. That is the meaning of the first verse. What we have said so far is gleaned from the first verse. Out of the three modes of attending to the Law of Dependent Arising, the first is the direct mode which is concerned with the arising aspect.

The second verse refers to the way of attending during the middle watch of the night.

'*yato khayaṁ paccayānaṁ avedi*'

'Since he knows the extinction of conditions'

What the second verse says in particular is that the Buddha saw the extinction of conditions. When he attended to the reverse order, he saw that the conditions become extinct, precisely because they arise due to conditions. This fact is summed up in these two statements.

Iti – imasmiṁ asati – idaṁ na hoti

imassa nirodhā – idaṁ nirujjati

Thus:

This not being – this does not come to be

With the cessation of this – this ceases

The word '*nirodha*' (cessation) is introduced with it and the illustration follows:

'*Avijjā nirodhā saṅkhāranirodho,*

saṅkhāranirodhā viññāṇanirodho,

viññāṇanirodhā nāmarūpanirodho,

nāmarūpanirodhā saḷāyatananirodho,

saḷāyatananirodhā phassanirodho,

phassanirodhā vedanānirodho,

vedanānirodhā taṅhānirodho,

taṅhānirodhā upādānanirodho,

upādānanirodhā bhavanirodho,

bhavanirodhā jātinirodho,

jātinirodhā jarāmaraṇaṁ sokaparideva dukkhadomanass upāyāsā nirujjhanti.

Evametassa kevalassa dukkhakkhandhassa nirodho hotī.'

'With the cessation of ignorance, the cessation of preparations, with the cessation of preparations, the cessation of consciousness, with the cessation of consciousness, the cessation of name and form, with the cessation of name and form, the cessation of six sense spheres, with the cessation of six sense spheres cessation of contact, with the cessation of contact, the cessation of feeling, with the cessation of feeling, the cessation of craving, with the cessation of craving, the

cessation of grasping, with the cessation of grasping, the cessation of becoming, with the cessation of becoming, the cessation of birth, with the cessation of birth, decay and death, sorrow, lamentation pain grief and despair cease …..'

Then comes the conclusive statement:

'Thus there comes to be the cessation of this entire mass of suffering.' So this is the cessation aspect which is called 'the reverse order' (*paṭilomaṁ*). In this manner both the direct and the reverse order of the Law of Dependent Arising were attended to during the first two watches of the night.

Now for the third watch of the night. Here we have something that goes deeper. How did the Buddha spend the third watch? He combined both the direct and the reverse order in attending to the Law of Dependent Arising. One cannot easily understand the depth of this way of combined attention. It is presented in the discourse by citing all the four clauses of the Law of Dependent Arising together.

This being – this comes to be

With the arising of this – this arises

This not being – this does not come to be

With the cessation of this – this ceases

With this citation the norm of *Paticca Samuppāda* is expressed in full. Then, as the illustration of this norm, both the arising and cessation aspects of the 12 links are given. The formulation in the direct order begins as usual with the words '*Avijja paccayā saṅkhārā, saṅkhārapaccayā viññāṇaṁ'* etc., i.e – 'From ignorance as condition (arise) preparations, from preparations as condition (arise) consciousness' etc, summed up by the statement that this is the arising of this entire mass of suffering. But then comes the highly significant statement '*avijjāyatveva asesavirāganirodhā saṅkhāranirodho'* – that is 'But with the remainderless fading away and cessation of ignorance, there comes to be the cessation of preparations' and so on. Though easily overlooked, the 'BUT' here (Note:

avijjāya-tueva) is of prime importance in assessing the significance of this 'combined attention' as it may be called. The nature of the unimaginably long *Saṁsāra* is such that proverbially we say that there is no beginning to ignorance as the cause of it. But this phrase asserts that all the same, with the remainderless fading away of ignorance, the other links of the chain, preparations, consciousness, name and form etc. cease altogether culminating in the cessation

of the entire mass of *Saṁsāric* suffering. Hence the pivotal significance of ignorance in the formula.

This occurs immediately – not as generally understood in the course of three lives. You know how *Paṭicca Samuppāda* is explained nowadays. With the cessation of ignorance, all the other links up to decay and death cease. This is an extremely deep point that is to say, the combined attention in the 'direct and reverse order'. Even the simile given in this connection has deeper implications.

Vidhūpayaṁ tiṭṭhati mārasenaṁ

Suriyova obhāsayamantaḷikkhaṁ

Dispelling hosts of *Māra* he stands

Like the sun illumining the firmament

It would take one hour to give a full commentary to these two lines. This simile alludes to the change that the Brahmin undergoes as he attends to the direct and reverse order simultaneously. At that moment the Brahmin is dispelling the forces of *Māra*. In fact the word '*vidhūpayaṁ*' rendered literally means 'fumigating' or 'smoking out' as in the case of exorcising demoniac forces by caustic incense. So the allusion is to the Buddha's conquest of *Māra*. The sun illumining the sky is the light of wisdom. The army of *Māra* is the impelling power of thought. Those of you who have read the *Padhāna Sutta* of the *Sutta Nipāta* would know how the Bodhisatta himself has defined the ten armies of *Māra*.

Kāmā te paṭhamā senā

dutiyā arati vuccati

tatiyā khuppipāsā te

catutthī taṇhā pavuccati.

Sense desires is your first battalion

The second is called dejection

Hunger and thirst make up the third

And craving is called the fourth.

According to this definition the ten armies of *Māra* are the thoughts. Sense desires, dejection in regard to the holy life, thoughts about hunger and thirst and

craving etc. – all these are distracting thoughts. Now what does this imply? All these thoughts arise due to ignorance. These are the *saṅkhāras* or preparations which make up this world with its pleasures and pains. So at whatever moment one attends both in the direct and reverse order in an extremely subtle way, thoughts are simply displaced. What does this amount to? In our sermons we have pointed out on many occasions that deliverance is not something that comes in the other world but one that is realizable here and now in the arahant's mind by the subsidence of thoughts. You may have heard that *Nibbāna* is called the stilling of all preparations and the relinquishment of all assets (*upadhi*). This is a reference to the *arahattaphalasamādhi*. '*Avitakkasamādhi*' (thoughtless concentration) and '*avitakkajhāna*' (thoughtless absorption) are also allusions to it.

Now the last mentioned simile is a description of this *arahattaphalasamādhi*. The battalion of thoughts called the army of *Māra* is put to flight when the direct and reverse order of attending is accelerated. Sometimes in our sermons we gave a simile to illustrate this way of combined attention – the simile of sharpening a razor. In sharpening a razor on a whetstone or on a leather strap, the razor blade is moved up, up, up and down, down, down and at the final stage of sharpening the blade has to be moved rapidly up-and-down, up-and-down, up-and-down. Similarly, where both the direct and the reverse order unite 'razor-edge sharp', 'thoughts' can no longer survive. At that moment name-and-form is cut off and consciousness gains freedom as non-manifestative consciousness. The third stage Therefore, is in effect *arahattaphalasamādhi* itself.

So then we have sufficiently explained the three stages. We have here the Law of Dependent Arising as such. We mustn't mix up things. The basic law we have mentioned already – namely what is epitomized in the four lines. That is what is essential. Though many go on rattling off the 12 links they do not know what it is all about. The twelve links are only illustrations.

They are called '*paccayā dhammā*' (conditioned things). What is called '*sahetudhamma*' is the norm – the basic principle we have already mentioned.

> This being – this comes to be
>
> With the arising of this – this arises
>
> This not being – this does not come to be
>
> With the cessation of this – this ceases

Only a Buddha can discover this law. It is such a wonderful thing. Why? Because what up to then was explained in terms of 'I' and 'mine', the Buddha pointed out

as a phenomenon that occurred due to a collocation of factors casually conditioned. That is to say, the Law of Dependent Arising.

Let me add this much by way of clarification. Some of you may have heard about the two chief Disciples of the Buddha – Venerable Sāriputta and Moggallāna. As laymen they were called Upatissa and Kolita. These two Brahmin youths were going in search of Truth. Once they went to see a sort of concert called '*giragga samajja*' (hilltop festival). While they were watching the dramatic performances both of them got disgusted before long probably because of their Samsāric maturity. It might have served as a prelude to them for the realization of the vacuity of the drama of existence. Shortly afterwards Upatissa happened to come across Venerable Assaji, one of the first five disciples of the Buddha. Venerable Assaji was on his alms-round when Upatissa saw him. Impressed by his saintly appearance, Upatissa followed him and after he has had his meal approached him and asked him:

"Who is your teacher? What sort of Dhamma does he preach?"

Venerable Assaji modestly replied:

"I have gone forth only recently. I do not know much Dhamma."

"I am Upatissa" the other said "I can understand in detail what is said in brief."

Then Venerable Assaji uttered the following verse.

Ye dhammā hetuppabhavā

tesaṁ hetuṁ tathāgato āha

tesañca yo nirodho

evaṁ vādī mahāsamaṇo

Whatever things that arise from causes

Their cause the Tathāgata has told

And also their cessation

Thus teaches the great recluse.

Upatissa became a Stream-winner on hearing the first two lines of the verse. How did he become a Stream-winner? The secret is to be found on the commentary we have given above.

Ye dhammā hetuppabhavā

tesaṁ hetuṁ tathāgato āha

Whatever things that arise from causes

Their cause the Tathāgata has told.

With these two lines only the direct order has been explained. But about this many are confused – even the commentators. Things that arise from causes are what we called '*paccayā dhammā*'. According to the commentators, however, the cause of things arising from causes is ignorance (*avijjā*). The cause (*hetu*) is not ignorance but the Law of Conditionality itself as we explained above. Upatissa understood that all these are conditioned as soon as he heard the first two lines. The norm underlying them is what is expressed as 'This being – this arises'.

Since Uptissa was of mature wit, even by the first two lines he understood that whatever that arise from causes and conditions has to cease of necessity. Even before a hint to the reverse order was given, he inferred the norm in full. You may have heard that even when an ordinary person becomes a Stream-winner, the gist of his attainment is given in a short formula – in fact the shortest and purest expression of it – which runs as follows:

Yaṁ kiñci samudayadhammaṁ

sabbaṁ taṁ nirodhadhammaṁ

Whatever is of a nature to arise

All that is of a nature to cease.

Here we have the basic principle in a nutshell. Whatever arises due to causes and conditions has to cease of necessity. Though Upatissa attained the Fruit of Stream-winning merely by hearing the first two lines of Venerable Assaji's verse, his friend Kolitha attained it only when he heard all four lines. The other two lines are:

Tesañca yo nirodho

evaṁ vādī mahāsamaṇo

And also their cessation

Thus teaches the great recluse.

'Things arisen from causes ('*hetuppabhavā dhammā*') mentioned in the first line refer to the 12 links of the Law of Dependent Arising. All the 12 links are arisen

from causes. Their cause (*hetu*) is the basic principle – the law as such. Even if a small child realizes it, he is a Stream-winner.

So let us proceed from there. By now you might have got some idea of it. The 12 links are so many illustrations. What underlies them is the law of conditionality. 'From ignorance as condition, preparations, from preparations as condition, consciousness, and so on'. That is how the formula runs. But that is not all. It is only the direct order. But then the Buddha points out that if ignorance can be made to cease at whatever moment, that is to say, with the dawn of wisdom, preparations, consciousness, name and form, six sense spheres and all the rest of the links cease altogether.

Though we say so, it might not be easy to understand all this. To facilitate understanding deep points, the Buddha has allowed the use of similes. So let us now pass on to the world of similes. But before that there is something worth mentioning in particular. There is a wonderful relationship between consciousness and name and form. Even in the past, many of our scholars have granted the fact that there is a reciprocal relationship between them. This is something the Buddha himself has declared. Even the Buddha Vipassi had proclaimed that there is such a relationship between consciousness and name and form. That is to say, dependent on consciousness is name and form and dependent on name and form is consciousness. This is where many scholars get stuck – this inter-dependence. If one starts searching from the other end:

'What is the cause of decay and death? Birth. What is the cause of birth? Existence, or becoming'. If one goes on questioning like that and comes up to name and form, on searching further for its cause, one will find consciousness. But then search does not go beyond consciousness, for the cause of consciousness is name and form. Between these two there is an inter-dependence or a reciprocal relationship. This is the crux of the whole problem.

To explain this we have given various similes, such as the Vortex Simile. A current of water tries to run away from the main stream but when its attempt is foiled, it turns back. But on turning back it forgets its relationship with the mainstream. It is like the case of two halves. At whatever moment the cyclic process is complete, it becomes a 'Unit'. There is a similar magical illusion implicit in consciousness. In fact the Buddha has declared that consciousness is comparable to a magic show. The magical effect of this magic show is such that it reflects something. As we all know, a conscious being has the ability to look back – to reflect. This is not a property common to inanimate things like trees and rocks. All conscious beings possess the ability to reflect or retrospect. This reflection can be done rightly or wrongly.

To illustrate these two ways of reflection, we gave a simile – a simple one intelligible to anybody. The simile of a dog on a plank crossing a stream. We have mentioned this quite often. While crossing the stream on a plank over it, a dog looks down in to the water. Seeing a dog there, it either wags its tail in a friendly way or growls angrily. Or else out of curiosity it keeps on looking down again and again. Due to wrong attention it doesn't understand what really happens. The dog thinks that it is looking because it sees. But the truth of the matter is that it sees because it looks. Every time it looks it sees a dog. Consciousness has such a delusive magical quality about it. This is because consciousness has the property of reflecting something. What does it reflect? Name and from. Let me first explain what name and form is before giving other similes.

The term '*nāmarūpa*' (name and form) is variously interpreted by scholars. '*Nāma*' has nothing to do with 'bending' as sometimes explained. The constituents of '*nāma*' are feeling (*vedanā*), perception (*saññā*), intention (*cetanā*), contact (*phasso*) and attention (*manasikāro*). You may even count these five on your fingers.

Feeling, perception, intention, contact and attention are collectively called 'Name' (*nāma*). Why are they called 'name'? Generally, we recognize something with the help of a conventional name given to it. But a child gets to know something through feeling. Take for instance the case of a blind man. Isn't it by 'feeling' that a blind man gets to know something? Feeling gives him a 'sign'or perception. Perception gives rise to an intention. Intention directs him to some point of contact. Now that is where contact comes in. Last of all comes attention. There are many critics who question this counting of feeling as the foremost among constituents of name. As we sometimes pointed out, those who go by the commentarial tradition inadvertently put contact first. Did Venerable Sāriputta make a mistake? Did the Buddha himself go wrong? Definitely not. At this point we have to say something about consciousness.

Venerable Sāriputta clarifies it in the *Mahā Vedalla Sutta*. It is as if Venerable Mahā Koṭṭhita gets it clarified for us.

"Consciousness, consciousness, they say, friend, in how far is it friend called consciousness."

('*Viññāṇaṁ viññāṇanti āvuso vuccati*,

Kittāvatā nu kho āvuso viññāṇanti vuccati')

"Knows discriminatively, knows discriminatively, it is in that sense, friend, that consciousness is so called."

Then Venerable Sāriputta goes on to explain what sort of discrimination consciousness is doing. Now listen attentively. What is this basic discrimination?

"This is pleasant' – so one discriminates. 'This is painful' – so one discriminates. 'This is neither painful nor pleasant' – so one discriminates."

("*Vijānāti vijānātīti kho āvuso,*

tasmā viññāṇanti vuccati.

Kiñca vijānāti; Sukhantipi vijānāti,

dukkhantipi vijānāti,

adukkhamasukhantipi vijānāti ...")

So then the very first function of consciousness is the awareness of feeling. That is where consciousness awakens. It is true that even the rubber tree exudes latex when an incision is made on it. But surely we don't say that the tree is weeping. Therefore, the basic function of consciousness is feeling. It is through feeling that the notion of self awakens. Even that fact is clearly pointed out. Once the Buddha asked Ānanda:

"Therein, Ānanda, whoever says this:

"Feeling is not my self. My self is not of a nature of experiencing," he should be asked thus:

"Friend, where there is nothing felt in whatever way, would there be the notion 'Am' (or 'I am')?"

"There would not, Lord"

("*Tatr Ānanda yo so evamāha" na heva kho me vedanā attā, appaṭisaṁvedano me attāti "so evamassa vacanīyo yattha panāvuso sabbaso vedayitaṁ natthi api nu kho tattha 'asmīti' siyāti?"*

"No hetaṁ bhante.")

Now, that is the reason why feeling is counted first instead of contact. The basic function of consciousness is the discrimination between the three grades of feeling – the pleasant, the painful and the neither painful nor pleasant. As you are seated here , why do you now and then change your posture? Isn't it because of feeling? So in other situations too. 'Feeling' gives rise to 'perception'. Then comes 'intention'.

“Never mind listening to the sermon. Let me turn a little.”

That is the intention. Where does the next thought go? To the point of ‘contact’. With that ‘attention’ gets engaged.

I hope you all can now gather what the constituents of ‘name’ (*nāma*) are. Then what is called ‘form’ (*rūpa*)? There again many are confused. Here is the definition of ‘*rūpa*’in ‘*nāmarūpa*’.

‘*Cattāroca – mahābhūtā – catuññañca – mahābhitānaṁ – upādāya rūpaṁ*’

‘The four great primaries and form derived from the four great primaries.’

The word ‘*upādāya*’ in this definition is often mistranslated and misinterpreted. The four great primaries are like four ‘non-descript ghosts’ (eg. ‘*bhūta*’– ghostly being). They can be recognized only with the help of the factors listed under ‘*nāma*’ (name). So ‘*rūpa*’ is in effect ‘*rūpa saññā*’ (perception of form) derived from the four great primaries. Take it that way, for that is how the ‘non-descripts’ become ‘describable’. What we have here is not that ‘matter’ (*rūpa*) the scientists have in mind. To explain this, we coined various definitions:

‘Name in ‘name and form’ is formal name,

Form in ‘name and form’ is nominal form’

Now try to get this clear. What is meant by saying ‘Name’ in name and form is formal name is that it is not the type of conventional name known to the world like ‘clock’ and chair’. It is only the most preliminary or incipient stage in naming, as in the case of a blind man acquainting himself with some object through feeling, perception and the rest of the name group. Then about form in name and form, we said, it is nominal form (or form only in name) in the sense that it is not something existing by itself as known in the world. It can only be known through the constituents of name. As you all know, the earth-element is perceived as hard and soft and the fire-element in terms of hotness and coolness. The four great primaries are recognized by means of the factors on the name side. In fact, it is only a perception of form (*rūpasaññā*). That is why we called it

‘nominal form’ or ‘form only in name’. If one correctly understands ‘name and form’ he would realize that it is merely a reflection on consciousness. Think for instance, of what comes before the eyes – what falls on the retina. Isn’t that the beginning of the camera? It is only a reflection which the brain interprets as beautiful. That is why the Buddha calls perception a mirage.

What appears out there as beautiful is actually not there. That is to say, with eye as a condition it appears beautiful. To one who wears green spectacles, for

instance, it would appear green. Consciousness and name and form are inter-related. We use a special term in this connection – one that is found in the discourses, namely '*dvayatā*' (duality). Existence involves a duality. That is what we call '*vaṭṭa*' or vortex. We shall explain it in due course. There is a vortex between supply and demand on which price depends. The interdependence between consciousness and name and form involves the entire world in a vortical interplay.

Think of the cinema world or any other world we are familiar with – the sports world or the cricket world, for instance. First of all let us take the cricket world. Now what happens in the cricket world? The poor bat and ball become alive only when the two teams confront each other. Isn't that so? The rules of the game, and the prospect of winning represent 'name' in this case. The cricket world is sustained by the delusion with which the two teams take their stand on the two sides. That is the duality involved in this case.

Now think of the cinema world. It exists between the scenes on the screen and the audience. The darkness of ignorance provides the necessary background. In the case of the cricket game, the two teams forget their friendship in the heat of competition. That is the background of ignorance. Preparations arising out of that ignorance sustain the cricket-match, that is bodily verbal and mental preparations. Hopes and disappointments are bound by rules and regulations of the game. In the cinema world also, the background of darkness ironically highlights the delusion created by the make-up of actors and actresses. When one is enjoying a film-show, one is unaware of that background of darkness. One forgets that the scenes appear beautiful due to the darkness around. This gives us a clue to the significance of the darkness of ignorance. That is why the simile of the movie is helpful in understanding the Law of Dependent Arising. That is not a simile we have introduced. The Buddha himself has given the simile of the movie, though of course not in the modern sense. In the cinema world within the darkness of ignorance, preparations go on in the mind of the cinema fan with which he experiences joys and sorrows. In this way, we can create any number of worlds. As you turn the pages of a newspaper, you pass through several such worlds. Each world has its own 'name-factors' and 'form-factors'. The illusion of life goes on within a succession of such worlds.

Let us take another simile to illustrate another aspect of this illusion – the simile of the chess game. The basic hint for what I am going to tell you, I borrowed from a certain story about a Zen master. Some of you may have heard of Mahāyāna Buddhism. As it went on spreading, one section became apprehensive of the trend towards excessive philosophizing and began to lay emphasis on concentration and insight. That section came to be known as Zen Buddhists. Zen

masters are a strange lot. Sometimes they would train their pupils by giving them insoluble riddles called 'koans'. It is said that while grappling with the puzzle they attained enlightenment. This sudden enlightenment they called 'Satori'. So this is the background. Now I shall tell a story – whether it be true or not – is instructive all the same.

There was a Zen master who was very stern. He used to train his pupils by extremely stern methods. One day he ordered two of his pupils to play a game of chess without losing. In the story I read, no names are given. But I shall give two meaningful Sinhala names to the two pupils. One is Ajith ('invincible') the other is Sumith ('good friend'). Now the Zen master orders Ajith and Sumith to play chess imposing a strict condition.

"You must play without losing. Whoever loses I shall behead?"

Both knew that the teacher meant what he said – as he stood sword in hand. So these two obedient pupils took up the challenge in mortal fear and started the game while the teacher stood nearby with a raised sword.

As the game went on, before long invincible Ajith reached a point where it was obvious that with two more draws he would be the winner. Sumith – the good friend that he is, though terrified resigned himself to his fate without malice. However, Ajith, moved by compassion for his good friend, knowingly made a false draw in a spirit of self sacrifice. With the next draw, Ajith, who could have been the winner, would lose his head and Sumith would win – but lose his friend. Now what will the Zen master do? Will he cut off Ajith's head and keep his word – honest and truthful as he is?

Well, this is what he did. He bent down and swept the chess board clean. That was the end of the game. You might think that it was a 'tame-draw' with no winner or loser. But it seems <u>both</u> Ajith and Sumith emerged winners for the story ends with this enigmatic sentence:

'Both of them attained Satori!'

But how? No explanation was given in the book I read. Granted that it is a true story, let us try to understand how such a thing is possible. Invincible Ajith sacrificed his life for his friend. Sumith with an air of resignation was ready to accept the inevitable so that his friend would survive the fatal game. So they both were prepared to '<u>Let-go</u>'. The chess board was their WORLD. Their existence (*bhava*) in the chess-world was due to grasping (*upādāna*). The prospect of winning was for them, a question of life and death. When they both sacrificed

their lives, the 'Let-go' was complete. But neither of them had to die. Only 'Death' had to die, as they both gained insight into 'Deathlessness' (*amata*). How did it happen? When the Zen master swept the chess board declaring the game 'null and void' both pupils realized the delusion they were in. It was as if they woke up from a dream. The dream was the existence in a world of chess fully involved with the pieces. So it seems, by means of a game of chess in which no one won or lost, this tactful Zen master gave his pupils an insight into the Law of Dependent Arising – the secret of bondage and release.

One might think that such wonderful techniques of training are found only in Zen Buddhism. But that is not so. I shall tell you a similar story in our own tradition which perhaps you have already heard but not fully understood. It is about the acrobat Uggasena alluded to in the Dhammapada and related in detail in its commentary. It seems Uggasena was so skilful as an acrobat that he could stand balanced on a sixty – cubit bamboo pole. One day when he was performing in the midst of a crowd, the Buddha while on his alms-round came to the spot with Venerable Mahā Moggallāna. At the Buddha's request Venerable Moggallāna challenged Uggasena to display his acrobat feats. The latter in response made a number of circling leaps into the sky and stood up right on the bamboo pole precariously balanced. Then the Buddha uttered the following riddle verse which embodied a challenge similar to the one the Zen master had made.

Muñca pure

muñca pacchato

majjhe muñca bhavassa pāragū

sabbattha vimuttamānaso

na puna jātijaraṁ upehisi.

Let go what has gone before

Let go that which comes after

Let go thy hold on the middle as well

Thus with mind released in every way

Thou comest never more to birth and decay.

Here the words '*pure*' and '*pacchato*' stand for the temporal past and future. But for the acrobat precariously balanced, they are suggestive of the spatial 'before' and 'behind'. Likewise, '*majjhe*' temporally means 'the present' but for the

acrobat it could ironically refer to his risky spatial stance on the bamboo pole. So here we have something like a 'Koan'. However Uggasena with his *saṁsāric* maturity in wisdom, backed by his literally 'one-pointed' concentration on top of the bamboo pole, took it as a challenge for insight. The last two lines gave the necessary hint. That was enough. He attained Arahanthood then and there, came down from the pole and worshipped the Buddha.

So there too we have an instance of a subtle topic of meditation being presented as an insoluble riddle. Here again the question of duality comes up. Past and future is a duality like victory and defeat. By the way, regarding that story about winning and losing, there is a beautiful verse in the *Sukha Vagga* (Chapter on Happiness) in the *Dhammapada*. As we saw, it was for winning that Ajith and Sumith played chess. Both of them realized the mass of suffering involved. They understood that birth, decay and all the rest of suffering are dependent on grasping. The *Dhammapada* verse is a beautiful summary of this idea.

Jayaṁ veraṁ pasavati

dukkhaṁ seti parājito

upasanto sukhaṁ seti

hitvā jayaparājayaṁ

Victory breeds hatred

The defeated lies in sorrow

Happily lies the tranquil one

Giving up victory and defeat

Victory and defeat both have to be given up. That is what Ajith and Sumith finally realized. The duality of victory and defeat is sustained by ignorance as in the case of a cricket match. How many have gone crazy about it? It is the same in regard to films and teledrama. That is why the Buddha declared that all worldlings are insane. We don't like to be called mad. But the truth is that ignorance makes one forget, like darkness in the case of the film show. It is the darkness of ignorance that sustains the two teams in the sports world. The two teams with their respective well-wishers create their own worlds productive of hatred and malice.

So you should understand that the formula of *Paṭicca Samuppāda* is not something to be by hearted and rattled off meaninglessly. You must try to grasp

the deep meaning behind the statement of the formula in direct and reverse order. Let us try to understand why it is said that '*saṅkharā*' or preparations arise due to '*avijjā*' or ignorance. The term '*saṅkhārā*' itself has connotations of deception or spuriousness. In the Indian society in the past, it was associated with the 'make-up' and other preparatory activities of a drama. They could be bodily, verbal or mental. This applies to the cricket game as well. The magic show of consciousness is kept up by those *saṅkhāras*. Confroning consciousness (*viññāṇa*) in an inter-dependent partnership, there is name and form (*nāmarūpa*), that is feeling, perception, intention, contact and attention together with the four great primaries, earth, water, fire and air and form derived from them. The deepest point in *Paṭicca Samuppāda* is traceable to this interplay between consciousness and name and form. That is what we called the vortex. If all goes well, you might get the opportunity to hear more about the vortex next time.

For the present, just understand this much. *Paṭicca Samuppāda* as interpreted by many nowadays is divisible into three lives, with ignorance and preparations as the past, becoming, birth and death as the future and the intervening eight links as the present. Immediately, with the cessation of ignorance, preparations cease and along with it the consciousness. The cessation of consciousness is something like a subsidence or appeasement. One might mistake cessation of consciousness to be death itself.

That is not the case. It is the cessation of that conditioned or 'made–up' (*saṅkhata)* consciousness. What comes up then is the 'non-manifestative consciousness' (*anidassana viññāṇa*). This is an aspect of the Dhamma that had long remained neglected. There is a consciousness that is freed from name and form. It is a subsidence or appeasement which Arahants experience. It is within the conditioned consciousness that the worldlings are entrapped and bound.

This consciousness is six fold. The visual world, the auditory world and so forth. The Buddha has defined the world with reference to the six sense-spheres. As a matter of fact the so called world is the world of the six fold sense-sphere. It is not the world that modern scientists frame up. Now even they are becoming aware of their shortcomings in understanding. There is only a visual world, an auditory world, an olfactory world a gustatory world a tactile world and lastly a mental world. Let us not forget that the six sense-spheres are dependent on name and form. So the division, the bifurcation, the duality is maintained down the line as internal and external (*ajjhatta – bahiddhā*). Eye is the internal sphere and forms the external sphere. Both are made up of the four elements. But greater value is attached to the internal – to this conscious body ('*saviññāṇaka kāya*'). It is the

perception that this conscious body chases that the Buddha called a mirage. One simply goes on watching scenes on the 'eyescreen' and listening to the 'ear-drum'. That is the 'cinema' and the 'music' we enjoy. The Buddha pointed out to the world for the first time that it is due to the ignorance or 'not – knowing' at the moment of touch in the case of all sense-spheres, that feeling, perception and all the rest of it flow in. As a result of it beings keep running round and round in the cycle of existence (*bhava*). It was probably the difficulty of explaining it to the world that made him ponder over the Law of Dependent Arising in the direct order, in the reverse order and in the direct-and-reverse order. He must have thought how difficult it is to present it to the world through the medium of language. It is so deep as a Dhamma.

Therefore, you should not take it lightly as a mere jumble of words but apply it to your own lives and tread the path of Dhamma. The path is morality, concentration and wisdom. There is no other path to understand this Dhamma in all its depth. Whoever in the past had understood this Dhamma – be they arahants, laymen or laywomen, they all accomplished it through morality, concentration and wisdom. It is the same today too. Therefore, it is not, as some believe, attainable through haphazard methods – though we spoke about instantaneous realization.

Whatever it may be, the Law of Dependent Arising is one thing and its illustration another, as far as the twelve – linked formula is concerned. When you get down to the practice of *Satipaṭṭhāna* you will understand how the Buddha has made known the distinctions between the internal and the external and arising and ceasing. To those who had developed insight in their *Saṁsāric* past like Uggasena, the Buddha could impart instant enlightenment. But you must not think that all are similarly gifted. So you should make a genuine effort with that aim, making a start from morality itself.

Today you have made a good start. Most of you have observed the higher precepts. I hope you have spent the day fruitfully in meditation and the like. I do hope and wish that this sermon too would be useful to you in your insight meditation and help you realize your noble aspirations. Whatever, beings there be, from the lowest hell '*avīci*' to the highest Brahma world '*Akaniṭṭha*' – may they all rejoice in this insightful sermon! May it conduce to their attainment of *Nibbāna*! May you all realize those high attainments in this very life!



Paticca Samuppada Sermon 2
The Law of Dependent Arising
(Pahan Kanuwa Sermon – No. 184)

'*Namo tassa bhagavato arahato sammāsambuddhassa*'

'Homage be! To the Fortunate One – the Worthy, Fully Enlightened!'

Kuto sarā nivattanti

kattha vaṭṭaṁ na vaṭṭati

kattha nāmañca rūpañca

asesaṁ uparujjhati

Yattha āpo ca paṭhavī

tejo vāyo na gādhati

ato sarā nivattanti

ettha vaṭṭaṁ na vaṭṭati

ettha nāmañca rūpañca

asesaṁ uparujjhati

– Sara Sutta, Devatā Saṁyutta, Samyutta Nikkaya.

Wherefrom do currents turn back

Where whirls no more the whirlpool

Wherein does name and form

Get cut off with no trace left

Where water, earth, fire and air

Are unplumbed and find no footing

Here from do currents turn back

Here whirls no more the whirlpool

Here it is that name and form

Get held in check with no trace left

Dear Listeners,

The Fully Enlightened Buddha made known to the world that *Saṁsāric* existence is a cyclic process in that it is a going the same round again and again. That indeed is the true meaning of the term '*saṁsāra vaṭṭa*'. The two significant words '*saṁsarana*' and '*nissaraṇa*' are also suggestive of a going round and an exit from the vicious circle – the release. When one keeps going round and round for an inconceivably long period of time, one tends to build up a tension or an impulse to continue the process. That is what makes it extremely difficult to get out of the cyclic process. What the Fully Enlightened One proclaimed to the world through the Law of Dependent Arising is the cause of this cyclic process and the way of getting out of it.

The two verses we have taken up as the topic of our sermon today, also deals with these two aspects of running round (*saṁsarana*) and exit from the round – the centripetal and the centrifugal aspects. These two verses are found in the *Devatā Saṁyutta* of the *Saṁyutta Nikāya*. The first verse embodies a deep Dhamma question raised by a deity in the Buddha's presence. The second verse has the Buddha's answer to it. Let us try to get a general idea of the meaning of the two verses.

Kuto sarā nivattanti

kattha vaṭṭaṁ na vaṭṭati

From where do currents turn back? Where does the whirlpool not whirl?

kattha nāmañca rūpañca

asesaṁ uparujjhati

Where does name-and-form get cut off without residue?

This is the question posed by the deity, and here is the Buddha's reply:

Yattha āpo ca paṭhavī

tejo vāyo na gādhati

Where water and earth, fire and air find no footing.

ato sarā nivattanti

It is from there that currents turn back.

ettha vaṭṭaṁ na vaṭṭati

It is here that the whirlpool does not whirl.

ettha nāmañca rūpañca asesaṁ uparujjhati

It is here that name and form get cut off without residue.

You all might have understood that these are two riddle verses. It seems the most important word in the two verses is '*vaṭṭa*' – 'round'. The word '*vaṭṭa*' also has the sense of turning round or going round. Here the turning round is that of water currents. That is why we brought up a simile of a vortex in our explanation of the Law of Dependent Arising. It is not something contrary to the Buddha's teaching. But unfortunately, if you look up the standard Canonical translations in Sinhala for the meaning of this riddle verse, you will find something like this:

'*Kattha vaṭṭaṁ na vaṭṭati*' – 'Where does Saṁsāric rain not rain?' This talk about rain obfuscates a deep aspect of the Law of Dependent Arising. On this subject, we have spoken a lot in our sermons. In our last sermon too, we referred to the simile of the vortex. Today, I shall explain it in detail.

Let us try to understand how a whirlpool or a vortex comes to be formed. The mainstream of water in a river usually flows downwards. But some runaway current of water, rather pervertly or arbitrarily tries to run against the mainstream. It is trying to do something impossible. So after going a little way, it clashes with the mainstream, gets thrown off, turns round and pushed on by the mainstream, makes a vain attempt to go forward. Due to this vain attempt, which every time gets foiled, a whirlpool or a vortex is formed with the passage of time. As if because it fails to go forward, it starts moving downward in a revolving fashion due to the resulting tension. It goes on digging towards the bottom deeper and deeper until an abyss is formed. As you know, where there is a whirlpool, there is an abyss. Along with the formation of an abyss, something else happens. A vacuum is created on the surface water by the funnel-like churning motion downward. To fill this vacuum the whirlpool develops a dangerous power of attraction. That is why a swimmer is always apprehensive of a whirlpool. It attracts whatever that comes within its orbit. This power of attraction is comparable to grasping (*upādāna*) if the vacuum it tries to fill is craving (*taṇhā*). This peculiar behavior of a whirlpool makes it a centre of activity – a Unit.

Wherever there is a whirlpool in a river, one can point it out as a 'here' and a 'there'.

If we take this whirlpool or vortex in a metaphorical sense, we can interpret its formation this way:

The nature of the world is impermanence. But beings have in them four perversions:

Perception of permanence in the impermanent

Perception of beauty in the repulsive

Perception of happiness in the painful

4. Perception of self in the not-self.

Because of the ignorance (*avijjā*) represented by the four perversions, some impelling force of preparations (*saṅkhārā*) moves forward. Where it fails to go forward, it turns round and as we have already explained, gives rise to a whirlpool or vortex. It is the preparations that sustain the vortex.

So then the role of ignorance and preparations can explain the inter-relation between consciousness and name-and-form, which we compared to a vortex. Very often, we had to point out that name-and-form has to be understood differently and not as it is explained nowadays. To put it briefly – 'name' in name-and-form is only a formal name and 'form' in name-and-form is only a nominal form. Feeling, perception, intention, contact and attention are the factors on the mental side with which the four great primaries – earth, water, fire and air are recognized. That is why they are collectively called name. By that recognition, a 'perception of form' comes up, which in effect is a form only in name. So this vortex is something spurious. In fact, even the term '*saṅkhārā*' has connotations of spuriousness or deceptiveness, as for instance in its association with the drama. The motive force of preparations aroused by ignorance keeps up the vortical interplay between consciousness and name-and-form. In our last sermon, we pointed out with illustrations like the chess game and the dog on the plank, how the activity of the vortex gives rise to a duality which sustains the illusion of existence. In short, the vortex gives a perverted notion of an actual existence. That is what we meant by a 'here' and a 'there' giving a false impression of existence in a flowing river. Through those similes, we tried to present the basic facts underlying the Law of Dependent Arising.

In drawing out the implications of this simile further, let us not forget that the Buddha compared consciousness to a magical illusion. Consciousness has the

quality of reflection as in the case of water. Because of its quality of reflection, name and form are reflected on it. The world takes it to be real. Mistaking it to be an actual name and an actual form is the beginning of all the confusion. We described this bifurcation into two sides as a competition with the chess game and the cricket match as illustrations. As a simple illustration, we gave the simile of the dog on the plank which it seems, has now become popular among preachers.

More recently, we gave another simile which many would relish. It is about the handsome Greek youth Narcissus borrowed from Greek literature. Narcissus had never seen his own face. One day while wandering in a forest, he bent down into a pond to wash his face. Seeing his own face as a reflection, he imagined an angel in the water and tried to embrace her. Because of the ripples, he kept on repeating his vain attempt and finally pined away and died. We gave this simile to show that the interplay between consciousness and name-and-form is something similar.

Then how can one liberate oneself from this predicament? That is the problem before us now. This is not a problem we have introduced ourselves. There are a number of discourses preached by the Buddha himself which mention this inter-relation between consciousness and name-and-form (*aññamañña paccayatā* – mutual conditionality). The way of freedom from this vortex is clearly portrayed in the *Mahāpadāna Sutta*. In that discourse our Buddha relates how Vipassi Buddha in the distant past attained Buddhahood. He did not go through a period of rigorous austerities like our Gotama Buddha. Instead, when the time was ripe for his attainment, he used radical attention to understand by stages the Law of Dependent Arising. Starting from the very end, he went on tracing the causes for existence until he came to the mutual conditionality between consciousness and name-and-form. Briefly stated, his way of attending proceeded as follows:

'Given what, does decay and death come to be? Conditioned by what is decay and death?'

As you all know, decay and death is the last among the twelve links. This is the way of radical attention or '*yonisomanasikāra*'. The meaning of the term '*yonisomanasikāra*' should be properly understood. To analyze the word:

'*yoni*' means the matrix or the place of origin. So '*yonisomanasikāra*' is attention by way of the matrix – the point of origin. In short, it means reflection as to the causes and conditions. First of all, he thought:

'When what is there does decay and death come to be? Dependent on what is decay and death? Then it occurred to him:

‘When birth is there, decay and death comes to be. Dependent on birth is decay and death.’

In the same way, he directed radical attention further and thought:

‘When what is there does birth come to be? Dependent on what is birth? When existence is there does birth come to be. Dependent on existence is birth.’ This is because birth is the beginning of existence. Only when there is a concept of existence, can there be a concept of birth. Then he thought:

‘Given what does existence come to be? Dependent on what is existence?’ And he understood:

Given grasping does existence come to be, dependent on grasping is existence.

Going by the same mode of radical attention, he thought of the condition for grasping and found craving and likewise the condition of craving to be feeling, condition of feeling to be contact, condition for contact to be the six sense-spheres. What is called six sense-spheres is sometimes spoken of as twelve spheres. Then one has to understand by it the six internal spheres, that is the eye, the ear, the nose, the tongue, the body and the mind and the six external spheres, that is the forms, the sounds, the smells, the tastes, the tangibles and the ideas. Taken as pairs, they are the six spheres of sense. It is because of these spheres that contact comes to be. Then he thought:

‘What being there does the sixfold sense-sphere come to be? What is the condition for the sixfold sense-sphere?’ It occurred to him then:

‘When name-and-form is there does the six-fold sense-sphere come to be. Name-and-form is the condition for the six-fold sense-sphere.’ Going further, he thought:

‘What being there does name-and-form come to be? What is the condition for name-and-form?’ He understood that it is when consciousness is there that name-and-form comes to be, that consciousness is the condition for name-and-form. Then he pondered:

‘What being there does consciousness come to be? What is the condition for consciousness?’ He realized that it is when name-and-form is there that consciousness comes to be, that name-and-form is the condition for consciousness. With that he was convinced of the inter dependence of these two links.

It is said that at this point it occurred to the Bodhisatta Vipassi:

'Paccudāvattati kho idaṁ viññāṇaṁ nāmarūpamhā. nāparaṁ gacchati.'

'This consciousness turns back from name-and-form. It does not go to another.'

This is how he aroused the knowledge of the arising nature of things. On reaching that point in his radical attention, it occurred to him:

This consciousness does not go beyond name-and-form. Dependent on name-and-form is consciousness and dependent on consciousness is name-and-form. From there he reflected back:

Dependent on name-and-form is six sense-spheres, dependent on six sense-spheres contact, dependent on contact, feeling, dependent on feeling, craving and so on ending with the conclusion:

This is the arising of this entire mass of suffering. This, then, is the arising aspect of suffering. With that understanding, it is said, that the Bodhisatta Vipassi exclaimed:

'*Samudayo, samudayo*'

'Arising, arising'

At this juncture, the Bodhisatta Vipassi is said to have made an utterance of joy as we get in the *Dhammacakkappavattana Sutta* in the case of our Gotama Buddha.

'*Cakkhuṁ udapādi ñāṇaṁ udapādi, paññā udapādi, vijjā udapādi, āloko udapādi*'

'The eye arose, the knowledge arose, the wisdom arose, the science arose, the light arose.'

That is as regards the arising aspect.

Along with it, the Bodhisatta Vipassi attended to the cessation aspect and that too starting from the end.

'When what does not exist does decay and death not come to be? With the cessation of what does the cessation of decay and death come about? And he understood:

'When there is no birth, decay and death does not come to be; with the cessation of birth comes cessation of decay and death.' I hope you all can understand the reverse order in the same way. 'When what does not exist does birth not come to be? With the cessation of what does the cessation of birth come about? When

there is no existence, birth does not come to be; with the cessation of existence comes cessation of birth. Likewise, when grasping ceases existence or becoming would cease. When craving ceases, grasping would cease. When feeling ceases, craving would cease. When contact ceases, feeling would cease. When the six sense-spheres cease, contact would cease. When name-and-form ceases, the six sense-spheres would cease. When consciousness ceases, name-and-form would cease. When name-and-form ceases, consciousness would cease. With this, again, he reached the point at which the inter-relation between consciousness and name-and-form became obvious. Then the Bodhisatta Vipassi is said to have uttered this highly significant statement.

'*Adhigato kho myāyaṁ vipassanā maggo bodhāya*.'

'The way of insight to awakening has been aroused by me.'

This clearly indicates that the Law of Dependent Arising which in our tradition has been almost relegated to the limbo is directly relevant to meditation and helpful for enlightenment.

After understanding the cessation aspect, the Bodhisatta Vipassi exclaimed that the way of insight has been aroused because it is the decisive aspect in regard to insight. The reason is that along with the cessation of name-and-form, the six sense-spheres cease and with that contact, feeling and craving also cease. Thus the entire mass of suffering comes to cease. What comes after this is only the following information:

The Bodhisatta Vipassi, with the help of this mode of insight reflected on the rise and fall of the five aggregates of grasping as follows:

Thus is form, thus its arising, thus its passing away.

Thus is feeling, thus its arising, thus its passing away.

Thus is perception, thus its arising, thus its passing away.

Thus are preparations, thus their arising, thus their passing away.

Thus is consciousness, thus its arising, thus its passing away.

Finally, it is said that having contemplated on the rise and fall of the five aggregates, before long, he attained Enlightenment.

We can form some idea of the way of reflection in insight meditation by this account. What is meant by the contemplation of the rise and fall (*udayabbaya*) is

the contemplation of the arising and ceasing nature of phenomena. In contemplating on arising and ceasing, the question of causes and conditions comes up as a matter of course. As we mentioned the other day, according to discourses like *Mahāpuṇṇama Sutta,* the cause and condition for form is the four great primaries, namely, earth, water, fire and air. The cause and condition for feeling is contact. The cause and condition for perception is contact. The cause and condition for preparations is contact. But the cause and condition for consciousness is name-and-form. We can infer that the Bodhisatta Vipassi in his contemplation of rise and fall of the five aggregates of grasping, reflected lastly on consciousness and thereby became acquainted with name-and-form. As the radical attention on name-and-form became sharper and sharper, he realized the cessation of preparations and attained enlightenment.

From our analysis of this discourse, it should be obvious how important the Law of Dependent Arising is. Generally, we talk only about the Four Noble Truths. But from this episode, it is clear that when one examines the causes and conditions of consciousness, one would hit upon name-and-form. Let me elaborate a little on this point. However much we explain, it seems there are many who cannot budge an inch from the traditional interpretation. So often, I have pointed out with special reference to the Buddha's own definition found in the discourses that the factors on the 'name' side in name-and-form are feeling, perception, intention, contact and attention. It is with the help of these five that we recognize the four elements, earth, water, fire and air in terms of hard and soft, hot or cold, and so forth. That is why it is called *rūpasaññā* (perception of form). Those five factors are called name only in a formal sense. Primarily, recognition is not by 'name' in the conventional and linguistic sense. But by means of feeling, perception, intention, contact and attention. Some confuse the issue by arguing that contact has to precede feeling. However much we point out with quotations, they insist on putting contact first. Let me explain it in such a way that at least you all would not forget.

Please stretch your right hand if you can. Now stretch out the fingers. I am going to give you an exercise to drive out sleepiness if any. Now stretch your palm. Alright, start counting your fingers. 'One', what is the finger you bend? Is it the thumb?

Isn't it the little finger? This is how I call the small but mischievous little finger – 'Feeling'. Then comes number Two – the ring finger where you wear the signet ring. Well, call it 'Perception'. Now for number Three. Bend the decisive middle finger, prominent and intrusive. See how it digs into your palm. Let us call it 'Intention'. He is the one who calls the waiter and silences a meeting. You do your work when 'intention' steps in. Number Four is the index finger, fussy and busy

all the time. You may dub it 'Contact'. What comes last as Number five? The THUMB – 'standing apart but approachable to the rest' as lexicons define it. Take it as 'Attention'. So have this 'at your finger tips', this definition of 'Name'. When you clutch your fingers, the one nearest to your thumb (that is Attention) is the index finger (that is CONTACT). Well, that is why I prefer the original sutta definition of '*nāma'*. Of course, these similes are not found in the discourse. I brought these up only for clarification. Now, after this, at least you all, dear listeners, must not doubt the Buddha-word regarding '*nāma*' in '*nāmarūpa*'.

To impress you further on this point, let me say something more. There may be in this audience lawyers and other knowledgeable persons who know more about legal matters. I have heard that there is provision for such a tactic as this in legal affairs. Sometimes a case of murder or theft comes up in the law courts with no one to give evidence. When there is no evidence, the accused has to be discharged. In such circumstances our legal system has provision for a tactic like this. Suppose there are five persons accused in a case of planned theft of a very serious type. But no one comes forward to give evidence. In such a situation, the judge can give pardon to one of the alleged culprits under the oath:

"You must tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth."

Thereby that culprit is persuaded to give evidence holding nothing back. Now mind you, the Buddha himself resorted to such a "middle path" tactic.

The magical illusion of consciousness is an insoluable problem. This problem, which no one in the world not even the seers, could solve, the Buddha successfully solved through his 'Middle Path'. It is to illustrate this mode of solution that I employ this simile. I don't know much about law, but this much I know. So let me explain now. We identified THUMB with ATTENTION. He is the guy, who in the guise of non-radical attention (*ayoniso manasikāra*) led us up the garden path and brought us all this long way in *Saṁsāra*. He has dubious relations with the little finger (feeling), the ring finger (perception), with the middle finger (intention) and above all, with the index finger (contact). As a matter of fact, he is closely associated with the fussy and busy index-finger. The Buddha understood that out of the whole 'bunch', the biggest even in size is the THUMB (Attention). He is the guy who as 'non-radical attention' planned the whole crime. So what did the Buddha do? He converted 'nonradical attention' into 'radical attention' insisting on the confession of 'the Truth, the whole Truth and nothing but the Truth'. That is how the Buddha adjudicated this mysterious case of consciousness.

To put all this in a nutshell, let us go back to 'the-dog-on-the-plank'. That dog keeps on looking down into the water because of non-radical attention. If it

suddenly understands "It is not that, I look because I see, but that I see because I look, it will no longer go on looking."

Then there is the story of Narcissus we have cited in our books. In fact, we gave a revised version of that story about the handsome Greek youth Narcissus. In the original story, it is said that he fell in love with the reflection of his own face in the pond, mistaking it to be an angel's, and sacrificed his life for the imagined angel and that a flower nearby his dead body was named after him. That was all. But we revised the story and made a 'Buddhist version' of it. We 'resurrected' the youth and got him to realize the fact that it is his own reflection that he is in love with – that he is 'seeing' because he 'looks'. But this is only our 'post-script' to the story. If that youth had actually aroused that radical attention, he could have become a Stream-winner. Well, all this is to show that attention is the most important factor. That is why, with the change from non-radical attention to radical attention, everything became clear to the Buddha.

Let us pass on to another story. Some of you might not like those Greek stories. Well, we have our *Jātaka* stories. Among the *Jātaka* stories there is one called *Ummagga Jātaka* – a fairly long story. There we have an interesting and instructive story titled 'The gem problem'. I shall try to relate it in brief.

'King Vedeha of *Mithilā* was informed that there is a gem in the pond by the city gate. The king asked his senior-most advisor Senaka to procure it. He went there and looked into the pond. True enough there was a gem, so he got the people to empty the pond to get it. But they couldn't find the gem. Then he ordered them to dig out the mud but all in vain. However when the pond got filled again, the elusive gem was still there. Again and again he got the people to empty the pond but no one could trace it. At last, he reported the matter to the king who then entrusted that duty to his youngest advisor Bodhisatta Mahosadha. Wise as he was, Mahosadha, as soon as he looked into the pond, understood that it is only a reflection and that the gem must be in the crow's nest on the palm tree by the pond. In the presence of the king who also came there, he got a bowl full of water immersed into the pond. A gem was visible there too.

"Where then is the gem?" asked the king.

"It is in the crow's nest up there, Lord", replied Mahosadha and got it down for the king.'

So this is a good illustration for non-radical attention (*ayonisomanasikāra*). Senaka imagined a gem in the pond and dug out the mud. To Bodhisatta Mahosadha's wisdom-eye, it appeared only as a reflection on water. By the way, there is a certain detail in this episode, which, curiously enough, has a deeper

dimension. As you may remember, in the two verses that formed the topic of our sermon, there was the question:

Wherefrom do currents turn back

Where whirls no more the whirlpool

Wherein does name and form

Get cut off with no trace left

And what was the Buddha's answer?

Where water, earth, fire and air

Are unplumbed and get no footing

Here from do currents turn back

Here whirls no more the whirlpool

Here it is that name and form

Get held in check with no trace left

Now what does this mean?

Where the four great primaries – earth, water, fire and air – do not get a footing, that is to say, do not get established, it is from there that the currents turn back. So far in our commentarial tradition, no one could understand the import of the riddle verse and the Buddha's answer to it. Even from the episode we have just related, you can get a clue to it. According to Senaka's 'sight', there was a gem in the pond. Therefore, a gem got established in earth, water, fire and air. But to Mahosadha's 'insight', it appeared merely as a reflection. So there was no need to dig into the pond to find it. Now from that point onwards, let me sidetrack to another discourse which is also relevant to our topic. It is the *Kevaḍḍha Sutta* of the *Dīgha Nikāya*.

It is an extremely deep sutta which has puzzled many a scholar. It embodies a wonderful episode which the Buddha relates to a certain householder. According to it, a certain monk whose name is not given conceived a problem which is of the type that modern scientists are concerned with. 'Where do these four great primaries, earth, water, fire and air cease without residue?' He seems to have thought that there must be some place where they completely cease. He did not approach the Buddha to get an answer. Instead, because he had developed

psychic powers, went from heaven to heaven seeking an answer to his problem from the gods. They said:

“We do not know. Go and ask those in higher heavens. Passing from heaven to heaven and from Brahma world to Brahma world, finally he put his question to Mahā Brahmā. He was shy to confess his ignorance in the company of Brahmas. So he cautioned that monk to a side and confided:

“I myself do not know the answer. But why did you come all this way? You should have asked the Buddha himself.”

Then that monk came back to the Buddha and posed his question:

“Where do those four great primaries, earth, water, fire and air cease without residue?”

The Buddha, however, instead of answering the question as it is, remarked:

“Monk, that is not the way you should put the question. This is how you should word it:

Kattha āpo ca paṭhavī – tejo vāyo na gādhati

kattha dīghañca rassañca – aṇuṁ thūlaṁ subhāsubhaṁ

kattha nāmañca rūpañca – asesaṁ uparujjhati.

‘Where do water and earth, fire and air find no footing,

Where do long and short – subtle and gross, comely and ugly,

And name and form – get held in check with no trace left?’

First of all, let us try to understand the significance of the Buddha’s reformulation of the question.

‘Kattha āpo ca paṭhavī – tejo vāyo na gādhati’

Here too we have the word ‘*gādhati*’ (‘to find a footing’). ‘Where do water and earth, fire and air find no footing?’ It is not a question of destruction or complete cessation, but a case of getting not established by ‘not finding a footing’. Then there are these significant words too.

‘kattha dīghañca rassañca – aṇuṁ thūlaṁ subhāsubhaṁ

kattha nāmañca rūpañca – asesaṁ uparujjhati.'

Where do (the distinctions like) long and short, subtle and gross, comely and ugly, and name and form get held in check with no trace left. Instead of the word '*nirujjhati*' (ceases) in the original question, the Buddha introduced the significant word '*uparujjhati*' ('to hold in check'). After reformulating that monk's question in this way, the Buddha gave the following answer which, for a long time, has puzzled the scholars:

viññāṇaṁ anidassanaṁ

anantaṁ sabbatopabhaṁ

ettha āpo ca paṭhavī

tejo vāyo na gādhati

ettha dīghañca rassañca

aṇuṁ thūlaṁ subhāsubhaṁ

ettha nāmañca rūpañca

asesaṁ uparujjhati

viññāṇassa nirodhena

etthetaṁ uparujjhati

Consciousness which is non-manifestative

Endless lustrous on all sides

Here it is that water and earth

Fire and air no footing find

Here again is long and short

Subtle and gross, comely and ugly

Here is name as well as form

Are held in check with no trace left

Wherein consciousness comes to cease

All these are held in check therein

Now let us attempt a solution to this longstanding puzzle. The Buddha is declaring that there is something called '*anidassana viññāṇa*' – 'non-manifestative consciousness'. Since we have already told you about the 'Elusive Gem', you can easily guess what '*anidassana*' means. Or else, from the Narcissus story, you can get a clue to the meaning of the term '*anidassana*' (non-manifestative). For Narcissus, deluded as he was, the water in the pond manifested an angel. Had wisdom dawned on him, the manifestation – the angel – would be no more. Consciousness of an angel would have ceased. So also is the case with the Gemin-the-pond, King Vedeha as well as Senaka had a consciousness of a gem. After Bodhisatta Mahosadha dispelled the delusion, their consciousness ceased to manifest a gem, and along with that distinctions, based on earth, water, fire, air, long and short, comely and ugly, relating to the reflection of the gem were gone.

So then this is the meaning of the phrase '*viññāṇaṁ anidassanaṁ*'. What is it that the non-manifestative consciousness does not manifest? Whatever that has to do with the perception of form. Thereby the significance of the pairs of words the Buddha tagged on to that monk's question would also become clear.

'*...dīghañca rassañca aṇuṁ thūlaṁ subhāsubhaṁ*'

'Long and short, subtle-gross, comely-ugly'

All these distinctions are part and parcel with the perception of form. Finally, it is said that name-and-form are held in check without residue. That is by way of summary.

But then, what is the meaning of the last two lines?

'*viññāṇssa nirodhena – etthetaṁ uparujjhati*'

'With the cessation of consciousness, all these are held in check.'

What is meant is the cessation of the '*abhisaṅkhataviññāṇa*' ('the specifically prepared consciousness'). In other words, it is the deluded consciousness (e.g., the 'gemconsciousness' or the 'angel-consciousness').

Whatever pertains to the '*abhisaṅkhata-viññāṇa*' comes to cease in that all lustrous consciousness (*sabbatopabhaviññāṇa*). When light comes from all directions, consciousness becomes non-manifestative ('*viññāṇaṁ anidassanaṁ anantaṁ sabbatopabhaṁ*').

Let us go back to our simile of the film-show. When a beautiful film-star appears on the screen, one might be tempted to go and embrace her, like Narcissus. The

unreality of all what appears on the screen is understood when the cinema hall is fully illuminated. Only the screen is there. The scenes are gone. When Bodhisatta Mahosadha 'enlightened' them on the point, the King and Senaka understood that there is no gem in the water. All these are clues to the meaning of the phrase '*viññāṇaṁ anidassanaṁ*'. Consciousness becomes 'non-manifestative' when it is endless and lustrous on all sides. What is the lustre? Wisdom is the lustre. We have pointed this out on many occasions. Some people seem to think that the Buddha compared wisdom to a lustre or light only in a metaphorical sense. But that is not so. The Buddha's sermon on lustres (*pabhā*) is a very powerful one.

'*Catasso imā bhikkhave pabhā. Katamā catasso?*

Candappabhā, suriyappabhā, aggippabhā paññāpabhā.

Imā kho bhikkhave catasso pabhā.

Etadaggaṁ bhikkhave imāsaṁ catunnaṁ

yadidaṁ paññāpabhā'

'Monks, there are these four lustres. What four? The lustre of the moon, the lustre of the sun, the lustre of the fire, the lustre of wisdom. These, monks, are the four lustres. Of these four, monks, this is the highest, namely, the lustre of wisdom.'

All this time people took this declaration lightly. It is through this lustre of wisdom that this illusory magic show is exposed for what it is. If name in name-and-form is formal name and form in name-and-form is nominal form, it is dependent on such a spurious name-and-form that the six-fold sense-sphere bifurcates into two teams – eye and forms, ear and sounds etc. and then, it is as a result of the interplay between these two teams that we get a world. That is why the Buddha defined the world in terms of the six sense-spheres. The entire world is to be found within this duality. Last of all comes the duality of mind and mind-object. It is within this world of the six-fold sense-sphere that all those 'things' that we take seriously, cease. Some people are scared of the word '*suññatā*' (voidness). But one cannot help it. That is why the Buddha compared it to an awakening from a dream. The worldlings are in a dream world. If things seen in a dream are no longer there when one wakes up, there is no point in lamenting. Things non-existing are seen as non-existing. That is the 'knowledge-of-things-as-they-are' (*yathābhūtañāṇa*). The Truth came to light in the light of wisdom.

Regarding name-and-form, there are many significant references well worth quoting. For instance, there are these two lines which convey something deep:

‘*Taṁ nāmarūpasmiṁ asajjamānaṁ*

akiñcanaṁ nānupatanti dukkhā’

‘That one untrammeled by name-and-form

And possessionless – no pains befall’

Not to get entangled in name-and-form is equivalent to owning nothing. Then there is nothing to get attached to. There is also this revealing declaration:

‘*Anattani attamāniṁ*

passa lokaṁ sadevakaṁ

niviṭṭhaṁ nāmarūpasmiṁ

idaṁ saccanti maññati’

‘Behold the world with all its gods

Fancying a self where none exists

Entrenched in name-and-form it builds

The conceit: ‘This is the truth.’

Like Narcissus, like Senaka, the world has got entrenched in name-and-form. That is what the Buddha is pointing out to us. The lustre or light we spoke about is not like any form of light known to modern science. It is within this darkness, then, that the forms we see with our eyes and take to be real exist. That is why the Buddha compared all perceptions to a mirage.

Let me say something more to the same effect. There is an important discourse on duality we had discussed earlier too. It centres round the following highly significant verse:

‘*Yo ubhante viditvāna*

majjhe mantā na lippati

taṁ brūmi mahāpurisoti

so‘dha sibbanimaccagā’

This verse, actually found in the *Tissametteyya Sutta* of the *Sutta Nipāta* is so deep in meaning that, according to the *Anguttara Nikāya*, already during the Buddha's life time, monks cited it and gave six different interpretations to it in a sort of symposium.

Rendered simply, the verse conveys the following idea:

'Whoever, having known both ends, with wisdom, gets not attached to the middle, him do I call a Great Man. It is he who has gone beyond the seamstress.'

We have given a long commentary to this verse already.

Out of the six interpretations, two are relevant to our topic today. So we shall limit our discussion to those two. The common feature in all the six interpretations is the positing of two things as the two ends with something at the middle. The two ends are supposed to be stitched up ignoring the middle by a seamstress.

In one of the two interpretations we propose to discuss, one end is '*nāma*' (name), the second end is '*rūpa*' (form) and the middle is '*viññāṇa*' (consciousness). Just see, many scholars in defining '*nāma*' insist on including consciousness also in it. It is utterly wrong. The analysis of '*nāmarūpa*' in our commentarial tradition is contrary to the Law of Dependent Arising. Here it is clearly stated that 'name' is one end and 'form' is the other end and that 'consciousness' is in the middle. Craving is the seamstress. What does she do? She ignores the existence of consciousness in the middle and stitches up name and form, making one forget that the very distinction between name and form is due to consciousness. All this shows what a deep understanding those monks had even about one verse where present day scholars get stuck. Six monks gave six different interpretations to the same verse and the Buddha ratified all of them, specifying, however, that he himself had the first interpretation in mind when he uttered that verse. It seems that all the six interpretations are topics of meditation. So now we have dealt with one of them.

Well, there is another meditation topic like that. Only these two we are mentioning, as they are relevant to our theme. According to this particular interpretation, one end is the six internal sense-spheres. The second end is the six external sense-spheres. As we have already explained the six internal spheres are the eye, the ear, the nose, the tongue, the body and the mind. The six external spheres are their objects, the forms, the sounds, the smells, the tastes, the tangibles and the ideas. They are on either side and again consciousness is in the middle. But craving puts the knot. Just as in the case of name and form, craving stitches them up into a knot ignoring consciousness. So also in the case of the

sense-spheres, for instance, eye and forms are separated and craving, the seamstress, stitches them up ignoring consciousness which is in the middle.

Sometimes the difference between consciousness and wisdom is pointed out in the discourses. Their respective functions are also clarified. One such clarification is:

‘ . . . . *paññā bhāvetabbā – viññāṇaṁ pariññeyyaṁ*’

‘ . . . . wisdom is to be developed – consciousness is to be comprehended.’

In fact the development of wisdom is for the purpose of comprehension of consciousness. As wisdom develops, the nature of consciousness is understood. Now, what does this mean? To understand the nature of a magic show as it is, is to be free from its spell. That is ‘the end’ of the magic show. It is the same with the delusion about the cinema-screen or the T.V. screen. When wisdom comes up, consciousness goes down. That is the implication of the phrase ‘*viññāṇassa nirodhena*’– ‘with the cessation of consciousness’. Now you can understand what the cessation is. It is like the cessation of the ‘angel-consciousness’ of Narcissus and the ‘gem-consciousness’ of Senaka.

That monk thought that there is some place where the four great primaries cease completely. The Buddha, however, held that what matters is the perception of form derived from the four great primaries – that it is a case of grasping (*upādāna*). It is not a destruction of the four great primaries. If one takes ‘*rūpa*’ in the materialistic sense, like modern scientists, one cannot understand the deeper implications of these verses. What we have before us is a question of release from this vortical interplay – from the meaningless running in the same circle.

Between name-and-form and consciousness, worldlings keep running round and round in vain. We spoke about an abyss. You can understand this abyss in relation to the whirlpool we have described. It is to fill the vacuum arising out of the abyss that craving and grasping step in with the result the Five Aggregates get accumulated. That is like the flotsam and jetsam that the abyss attracts and engulfs. All these implications go with our simile of the vortex. But if one interprets the term ‘vortex’ as rain, all these deep meanings have no place. The point at which the currents turn back is the full understanding of the vortex. With that, the whirlpool of that individual ‘whirls no more’. He cannot be traced anymore. The whirlpool or the vortex of the Arahant has ceased. But there is nothing to lament. The whirlpool was in the water. The mainstream too is a body of water. So what has actually ceased is only a pervert notion of existence.

Just see, when we interpret these verses in this way, there are some who call it nihilistic. Even the Buddha was branded a 'Nihilist' by the Brahamins. In the body of water flowing downwards, there was a pervert formation called a whirlpool or a vortex as a result of a runaway current. Even Buddhas and *Pacceka Buddhas* have been so many *Saṁsāric* runaway water currents. After a vein vortical interplay for aeons and aeons, if through wisdom their name-and-form comes to an end, currents will never flow for them again. You can now understand what sort of a deep Dhamma the Buddha has presented to us through this vortex simile. The delusion is seen through by the light of wisdom. That is the path of insight Bodhisatta Vipassi followed.

It was when the radical attention (*yonisomanasikāra*) became razor-edge sharp that wisdom dawned on him. That is precisely why there is this significant phrase in that same discourse:

'*yonisomanasikārā ahu paññāya abhisamayo*'

'Through radical attention, there was the understanding through wisdom'

So then, radical attention is the seed of wisdom, and also its harbinger.

Well knowing this innate capacity of 'Attention'– the 'THUMB' – the Buddha gave him free pardon for the nonce. There is no other way to solve this Saṁsāric riddle. But one thing. When 'Attention' began exposing the inside story of the plot, confessing his own complicity in it as non-radical attention, something like 'catching-the-thief-red-handed' happened in the end. I shall tell you the whole story later. Why do we say it is like 'catching-the-thief-red-handed?

Because it is due to this guy 'Attention' that every 'thing' in the world becomes a 'THING'!

'*Manasikāra sambhavā sabbe dhammā*'

'All things have attention as their origin'

Everything originates from attention. Attention is the discoverer of 'the thing'. All things are rooted in interest ('*chandamūlakā sabbe dhmmā'*). There is a very important discourse bearing on this topic which we might have mentioned earlier. The special significance of attention lies in the fact that it makes a 'thing' what it is. That is why the 'THUMB' is so important. To anyone in this world 'a thing' becomes 'the thing' only when his attention picks it up. Isn't that so? Just think about it. Setting aside all your problems, you all are now listening to this

sermon. But as soon as you go home, problems crop up again. How? Your attention went there. Attention picks up the problems. When a problem comes up, it is 'the thing' for you. But it is 'nothing' for your neighbour. Your problem has made it 'the thing' for you. Although 'Attention' was granted free pardon, when he confesses his part in the plot, it becomes obvious that he is the biggest thief. It is as if he is caught red-handed. What is that he has stolen? 'THE THING' – the 'mind object' ('*mano-dhammā'*). 'Mind and mind objects' constitute the most formidable dyad of all. The other dyads, like eye and forms, ear and sounds, are simple. The subtlest point is where the mind strikes the 'mind-object' (*dhamma*). That is the most elusive object. What is it that we call 'what comes to my mind?' Let me quote from the first verse of the *Dhammapada*, as usual:

'*Mano pubbaṅgamā dhammā*

manoseṭṭhā manomayā'

'Mind is the forerunner of mind objects

Mind is their chief – they are mind-made'

These two lines are found in the two opening verses of the *Dhammapada*. Until the Buddha came on the scene, everyone thought that things exist in themselves and that mind comes later.

The Buddha, however, pointed out to the world that 'mind' comes first and 'things' come later. Not only that. '*Manomayā*'.

'Things' are mind-made. That 'gem-in-the-pond' was mind made,

The angel of Narcissus was mind-made. The Buddha proclaimed to the world this nature of phenomena.

Modern scientists should ponder over the Buddha's comparison of all perceptions to a mirage. Not only the scientists but some of our silly people also take up their viewpoint. That is not science but nescience. If the scientists get a hint to the correct direction, they might understand that they have got stuck somewhere. It is because they started from the wrong end. In the last analysis, they will have to grant the fact that 'things' originate from attention ('*manasikārasambhavā sabbe dhammā'*). In the final reckoning, 'attention' is found to be the culprit. What is the reason for attention? Interest (*chanda*). In the same discourse, it is said that 'all things are rooted in interest'

(*chandamūlakā*). Interest is the lightest shade of craving (*taṇhā*). That is why the Buddha preached that interest is also the root of the Five Aggregates of grasping. The word *chanda* has the sense of 'liking' or 'wanting'. It is because of '*chanda*' that Narcissus saw an angel and the King saw a gem. So one can understand why the Buddha has preached that in order to attain emancipation, ignorance and craving must be done away with.

We have to kill our Saṁsāric 'mother' and 'father'. Craving is the mother and ignorance the father, whom we have to kill according to a riddle verse in the *Dhammapada* (*mātaraṁ pitaraṁ hantvā* – having killed the mother and the father). We have come all this long way in *Saṁsara* because of the 'hindrance' (*nīvaraṇa*) of the father and the 'fetter' (*saṁyojana*) of the mother. That in short is the secret of the vortex. Interest is that lightest shade of craving, which comes in almost unknowingly. If you try to keep track of your thoughts, you will find that suddenly a thought breaks in as from nowhere. But if you are sharp enough, you will realize that in some subtle way as if in a dream a need or a wanting, surfaces. As soon as it arises, it becomes 'the thing'. There is a lot to be said on this point. I have put it in brief. If there is merit in you all and life in me, perhaps you will get the opportunity to listen to some more sermons like this.

So from what little we have told you, you might understand these things – though scholars may not – since you are now on higher precepts and in a meditative state of mind. We invite you to open up for yourselves the path of insight and realize your higher aspirations. Whatever beings there be, from the lowest hell to the highest Brahma realm, may they all rejoice in our sermon! May the merits in rejoicing conduce to the fulfilment of their higher aims! May you too as soon as possible in this very dispensation of the Buddha, understand the Four Noble Truths through knowledge of the Law of Dependent Arising and attain the Deathless Ambrosial *Nibbāna*!

Paticca Samuppada Sermon 3

The Law of Dependent Arising

(Pahan Kanuwa Sermon – No. 185)

'*Namo tassa bhagavato arahato sammāsambuddhassa*'

'Homage be! To the Fortunate One – the Worthy, Fully Enlightened!'

Ekamūlaṁ dvirāvaṭṭaṁ

timalaṁ pañcapattharaṁ

samuddaṁ dvādasāvaṭṭaṁ

pātālaṁ atarī isī

– Ekamūla Sutta, Devatā Saṁyutta, Samyutta Nikaya.

With but one root and turning twice

With triple stain and arenas five

The ocean with its eddies twelve

The quaking abyss – the sage has crossed

Dear Listeners,

In order to understand properly the Law of Dependent Arising, one has to have a deep insight into the inter-dependence between consciousness and name-and-form. In the last two sermons we compared this inter-dependence to a whirlpool. The deepest point in a whirlpool is the abyss. The riddle verse we have taken up today as the topic of our sermon, has a reference to an abyss. Let us examine whether there is any connection between the Law of Dependent Arising and this abyss.

This is a riddle verse that is found in the *Devatā Saṁyutta* of the *Saṁyutta Nikāya*. It seems that a certain deity has put together and presented seven factors in the Dhamma metaphorically as a sustained simile in this verse. First of all, let us try to get the literal (apparent) meaning of the verse. '*Ekamūlaṁ dvirāvaṭṭaṁ*' Having one root and with two turnings round. '*Timalaṁ pañca patthara*m' With

three stains and five expanses. '*Samuddaṁ dvādasāvaṭṭaṁ*'– the ocean with twelve whirlpools. '*Pātālaṁ atarī isī*' – 'The abyss the sage has crossed.'

Only this difficult riddle verse is found there in that context without any clue to its meaning. The commentary gives some meanings at random. Though it appears as a difficult verse, the similes alluded to in it are to be found elsewhere in the discourses. To begin with the abyss itself, there is a discourse by the same name in the *Vedanā Saṁyutta* of the *Saḷāyatana Vagga* in the *Saṁyutta Nikāya*. There the Buddha says:

'Monks, this is a synonym for painful bodily feelings, namely, the abyss.'

('*Sārīrikānaṁ kho etaṁ bhikkhave dukkhānaṁ vedanānaṁ adhivacanaṁ yadidaṁ pātāloti*')

So you all now know what the abyss is. Then as for the ocean, that too, we can understand by an open hint in the *Samudda Sutta* in the same section of the *Saṁyutta Nikāya*.

'Cakkhu bhikkhave purisassa samuddo. Tassa rūpamayo vego, Yo taṁ rūpamayaṁ vegaṁ sahati, ayaṁ vuccati bhikkhave atari cakkhusamuddaṁ saūmiṁ sāvaṭṭaṁ sagāham sarakkhasaṁ tiṇṇo pāragato thale ṭiṭṭhati brāhmaṇo.'

'The eye, O monks, is the ocean for a man. It has the force of waves of forms. Whoever endures that force of forms, he, O monks, is called one who has crossed the eye-ocean with its waves, whirlpools, seizures, and demons – the Brahmin who has crossed over and stands on dry ground on the further shore.'

Now what does this mean? The eye is called an ocean for a man. In that ocean, there are the waves of forms. Whoever is able to withstand the force of those form waves, is called the Brahmin who has crossed over this eye ocean with its waves, whirlpools, seizures and demons and stands on the dry ground having gone beyond. The reference here is to the Arahant.

The discourse goes on to give the same description in regard to the other sense spheres – namely, the ear, the nose, the tongue, the body and the mind, calling each of them an ocean for a man to cross over. The objects of the six senses are called waves. This is an instructive discourse for those meditators whose meditation topic is the six sense spheres. In the eye ocean there is the force of form waves. If one gets swept away by them and gets drawn into the whirlpool, one is seized by the form demons. So also in the case of the ocean of the ear. Here

the idea of waves is quite apt. One is carried away by sound-waves, gets drawn into the whirlpool and is seized by the sound-demons. It is the same with the other senses inclusive of the mind. In the case of the mind, it is the thought-waves. That is a concept relevant to insight meditation. The force of thought-waves develops into breakers which sweep us aloft and drag us into the whirlpool to be seized by the demon. This is by the way, but the important point is the explanation of the sustained simile of the ocean.

Then what about the eddies? We need not go in search of other discourses, since it is already implicit here. The word '*sāvaṭṭa*' (with eddies) qualifying the ocean can be taken as an allusion to the concept of the twelve eddies. Since the discourse speaks of six oceans, how are we to count twelve eddies in the six oceans? Worldlings regard each of the six senses as well as their respective objects as 'self'. That is why, for instance, there is the admonition to regard them as 'not-self' (*anattā*), in developing *anattasaññā* (perception of not-self) as a meditation subject. (e.g., *cakkhuṁ anattā, rūpaṁ anattā* – eye is not self, form is not self.) For instance, in the case of the eye, waves keep circling round the eye as well as its object, before one gets drawn into the whirlpool. So much for the twelve eddies. What, then, are the five oceans (*pañcapattharaṁ*)? In the *Māradhītu Sutta* of the *Sagāthaka Vagga* of the *Saṁyutta Nikāya*, we read:

'*pañcoghatiṇṇo atarīdha chaṭṭhaṁ*'

'Having crossed the five floods, he has here itself crossed the sixth as well.'

This is a reference to the Arahant. The five floods are the five arenas or expanses of sense-pleasures. Sense pleasures spread over the arenas of the five senses (*pañcapattharaṁ*) and in so spreading incur three stains (*timalaṁ*), a reference to which can be traced to the *Dutiyasamudda Sutta* in the *Saḷāyatana Saṁyutta*.

'*yassa rāgo ca doso ca avijjā ca virājitā*

so imaṁ samuddaṁ sagāhaṁ sarakkhasaṁ

saūmibhayaṁ duttaraṁ accatari.'

'He in whom lust, hate and ignorance have been made to fade away, has crossed this ocean, so hard to cross – the ocean with its seizures, demons, and the danger of waves. This, again, is a reference to the Arahant.'

Just see how all these fall into place. So you may take lust, hate, and ignorance as the three stains.

Then there is the term '*dvirāvaṭṭaṁ*', 'double-turning' or 'turning between two things'. These too we can understand through *Salla Sutta* in the *Vedanā Saṁyutta*. In that Sutta, there is this statement about the 'untaught worldling' (*assutavā puthujjano*).

'So dukkhāya vedanāya phuṭṭho samāno kāmasukhaṁ abhinandati. Taṁ kissa hetu ? na bhikkhave assutavā puthujjano pajanāti dukkhāya vedanāya nissaraṇaṁ aññatra kāmasukhā.'

'He, on being touched by painful feeling, delights in sensual pleasures. Why so? Monks, the untaught worldling does not know a stepping out from painful feeling except sensual pleasures.'

Because he doesn't see an exit from painful feeling other than a recourse to sensual pleasures, the ordinary worldling keeps on turning back and forth between pain and pleasure. That is why we call it a see-sawing between these two extremes due to ignorance about the neither painful nor pleasant (neutral) feeling at the middle. That is to say, for him, ignorance underlies the neither painful nor pleasant feeling, while the latencies to lust and hate underlie pleasant feeling and painful feeling, respectively.

Therefore, these three 'stains' keep on growing in him. So much for the 'turning twice' in the riddle verse.

Last of all we come to 'the one root' (*ekamūlaṁ*). Now, what is this 'one root'? That too, we can understand in the light of the *Phassamūlaka Sutta* ('Rooted in contact') in the *Vedanā Saṁyutta*. There we find the following declaration by the Buddha:

'Monks, there are these three feelings that are born of contact, rooted in contact, caused by contact and arisen from contact. What three? Pleasant feeling, painful feeling, neither painful nor pleasant feeling.'

The clue we need is already there in the title of the Sutta (*phassamūlaka*). All feelings have contact as their only root (*ekamūlaṁ*).

Although we have offered the above explanation, the standard commentary of the text which nearly everyone relies on gives a different interpretation to this riddle verse. We shall cite it too for the sake of those of you who prefer to follow it. We explained from 'the abyss' upwards whereas the commentator explains from 'the root' downwards. Now this is how the commentator explains the term '*ekamūlaṁ*'. The root causes for the Saṁsāric existence of beings are ignorance and craving. However, for some reason or other, the commentator opts for

craving as the root in this context. So remember, according to the commentary, the 'one root' is craving. Then '*dvirāvaṭṭaṁ*' or 'turning between two things' is explained as the alternation between the eternalist view and the annihilationist view, for the world is said to be turning round between these two extremes. The five arenas are the five-fold sense pleasures as we also have explained. The three stains are said to be lust (*rāga*), hate (*dosa*) and delusion (*moha*) whereas in our explanation ignorance (*avijjā*) figures as the third stain. The ocean (*samudda*) is taken to be craving. The twelve eddies are explained as the twelve internal and external sense spheres, which tallies with our interpretation. But then the abyss is said to be craving itself.

So it seems according to the commentary, three out of the seven similes of the riddle verse are to be interpreted as references to craving. You should consider whether the commentarial interpretation is plausible. According to it, the root is craving, the ocean is craving, and the abyss is also craving. Here is a riddle verse with a sustained simile. But the commentary seems to have gone off at a tangent, missing its true significance.

The most important term that emerged from our discussion is '*phassamūlaka*'– 'rooted in contact'. It is suggestive of the immense significance of contact. Out of the discourses dealing with the question of contact, the one that brings us the deepest analysis is the *Mahā Nidāna Sutta* of the *Digha Nikāya*. So let me now sidetrack to that discourse.

This *Mahā Nidāna Sutta* is of fundamental significance like the *Satipaṭṭhana Sutta* and, even like it, was preached at the township of *Kammāssadamma* in the *Kuru* country. By way of introduction it is said that once when the Buddha was staying at *Kammāssadamma* in the *Kuru* country, Venerable Ānanda approached him and said:

"It is wonderful, Venerable Sir, it is marvellous, Venerable Sir, how deep the Law of Dependent Arising is and how profound it appears! All the same, Venerable Sir, it appears to me as clear and clear."

The Buddha's response was this:

"Do not say so, Ānanda, do not say so. This Law of Dependent Arising is deep and it appears profound. It is through not understanding and not penetrating this Dhamma that this progeny has become a tangled skein, matted like a bird's nest, interwoven like *muñja* and babbaja grass, unable to pass beyond states of woe, bad bournes, downfall and the round of birth and death."

From there onwards, the Buddha, like a teacher explaining a deep point to a pupil, clarifies some deep aspects of the Law of Dependent Arising to Venerable Ānanda who is the Treasurer of the Dhamma in this dispensation. As a matter of fact, *Mahā Nidāna Sutt*a is considered by many as an extraordinary and profound discourse. Anyway let us try to understand it without undue fears.

To put it in brief, this discourse has something special to say about contact, which is the point we are concerned with. We have already mentioned that 'name' in name-and-form comprises feeling, perception, intention, contact and attention and that 'form' in name-and-form amounts to the perception of form derived from the four great primaries–earth, water, fire and air. In this discourse, the Buddha explains to Venerable Ānanda, step by step, the mutual relationship between name-and-form on the one hand as well as the mutual relationship between name-and-form and consciousness on the other. The discourse proceeds in the form of a catechism. But for facility of understanding, I shall try to present it in a simplified way.

To begin with, let me draw your attention to the special significance of the discourse. As we have mentioned earlier, the traditional way of analysis of the Law of Dependent Arising which many follow at present, is to start from '*avijjā*' or ignorance. However in the *Mahāpadāna Sutta,* we discussed the other day, the first two links '*avijjā*' and '*saṅkhārā*' are not mentioned. In this discourse too, those two links do not find mention. Instead, what is highlighted here as the basic and most important, is this inter-relation between name-and-form and consciousness. Generally, in reciting the formula of Dependent Arising we are used to the following order:

'Dependent on ignorance, preparations, dependent on preparations, consciousness, dependent on consciousness, Name-and-form, dependent on name-and-form, six sense spheres, dependent on six sense spheres, contact, and so on.'

That is to say, between name-and-form and contact we expect to get six sense spheres. But apparently this discourse makes no mention of six sense spheres. Instead, it has a reference to eye-contact, ear-contact, nose-contact, tongue-contact, body-contact and mind-contact. Therefore, one cannot say that the six sense spheres are fully omitted from this discourse. Contact is explained with special reference to the six senses, which makes good the apparent omission. The most important feature of this discourse is the exposition of the inter-relation between '*nāma*' (name) and '*rūpa*' (form). The other day we explained that '*nāma*' refers to what pertains to the question of recognizing something. There

are two aspects in contact or '*samphassa*', namely, the impact and the recognition of the impact. In this concern, the Buddha explains an extremely subtle point to Venerable Ānanda catechetically.

I shall try to give the gist of that detailed explanation whereby the Buddha convinces Venerable Ānanda step by step of the rationale of his explanation. The conclusive statement amounts to this:

"If all those modes, characteristics, signs and exponents by which the name group (*nāmakāya*) is designated were absent, there would not be manifest any verbal impression (*adivacana samphassa*) in the form-group (*rūpakāya*). You had better bear in mind that there are two significant terms which keep recurring in this discourse, namely, '*adivacana samphassa*' and '*paṭigha samphassa*'. It is these two terms that have puzzled many scholars. In connection with the concept of contact, we find the Buddha mentioning these two unusual terms in this discourse. Out of those two, '*adivacana samphassa*' can be easily explained, since we have associated the term '*nāma*' with 'naming'. '*Adivacana*' is a word connected with the linguistic medium. '*Adhivacana, nirutti, paññatti*' (synonym terminology, designation) are part and parcel of the linguistic medium. They are helpful in explaining something. So with this concept of contact, there is an aspect of recognition. That is what '*adhivacana samphassa*' (verbal-impression) means. Then there is also the 'impact aspect' to denote which the term '*paṭigha samphassa*' (resistance-impression) is used. It is to show how these two have a mutually reciprocal relationship that the Buddha first of all declares – as we have stated above – that if all those modes etc. by which the name-group is designated were absent, there would not be manifest any verbal impression in the form group. That is to say, no verbal impression about the form-group is possible, if not for the name-group. Then the Buddha goes on to give the converse. If all those modes, characteristics, signs and exponents by which the form-group is designated were absent, there would not be manifest any resistance impression (*paṭigha samphassa*) in the name-group.

Those of you who listened attentively might understand this. If I may give a simile, contact is like the Siamese twins born to the parents 'Name' and 'Form'. This is because for the full understanding of contact both the verbal impression offered by the name group and the resistance impression offered by the form-group are essential. That is as far as the animate world is concerned and not with regard to the inanimate world. In the animate world, an impact is understood with the help of the constituents of 'name'– feeling, perception, intention, contact and attention. What is called 'form' is the four great primaries which provide the scaffolding for the nomenclature– namely, earth, water, fire and air. A resistance too has to come in. On an earlier occasion, we gave as a simile the case of a blind

man going and striking against a block of ice. He would come back with a perception of earth. Supposing when he goes there for the second time, the block of ice is melting. He would come back with a perception of water. Next time he goes there, it is boiling. He would return with a perception of fire. If he goes again when it is evaporating, he might come back with a perception of air. The worldling gets acquainted with the four elements like that blind man and proceeds to name them according to his impressions. Whatever it is, a resistance has to come in.

So then, from the characteristics proper to the name-group, the form-group gets recognition, and from the characteristics proper to the form-group, the name-group encounters resistance. But the Buddha goes on to add something more to complete the picture.

“If, Ānanda, all those modes, characteristics, signs and exponents by which there is a designation of both name group and form group were absent, would there be manifest either any verbal-impression or any resistance-impression?”

“There would not, Venerable Sir.” replies Venerable Ānanda.

Lastly he asks the question which decides the issue:

“And if, Ānanda, all those modes, characteristics, signs and exponents by which there comes to be a designation of Name-and-form were absent, would there be manifest any contact?”

“There would not, Venerable Sir.”

These, then, are the four conclusions. Firstly, it is said that if there were no characteristics proper to the name-group, there would not be a verbal impression on the form-group. Secondly, if there were not the characteristics proper to the form-group, there would not be any resistance impression on the name-group. Thirdly, it is said that if the characteristics by which both name-group and form-group are designated were absent, there would be neither a verbal impression nor a resistance impression. Fourthly comes the culminating conclusion:

If there were no name-and-form there would be no contact.

Then the Buddha goes on to point out another important fact, namely, the mutual relationship between consciousness and name-and-form. This is the deepest point. Here too the Buddha questions Venerable Ānanda, convincing him step by step of the point at issue. He puts the questions in such a way that Venerable Ānanda has to reply in the negative. Now this is how the Buddha points out that the presence of consciousness is a necessary condition for name-and-form.

“If, Ānanda, consciousness were not to descend into the mother’s womb, would name-and-form be left remaining?”

“No, indeed, Venerable Sir.” replies Venerable Ānanda.

Now let us digress a little. Some of those western psychologists speak only about consciousness. They never speak of name-and-form. Everybody is talking about the moment of death these days. There is so much pep talk about NDE and ADE. But what the Buddha tells us is that before the dying moment, name-and-form is already sketched out in a mother’s womb. If consciousness does not go there and join it, name-and-form would not grow. In other words, without the support of consciousness, name-and-form would not remain in the mother’s womb. The next question the Buddha puts to Venerable Ānanda is that, having descended into the mother’s womb, if consciousness slips out for some reason or other, would Name-and-form grow up and get born into ‘this state of existence’ (*itthatta*)? The reply, as usual, is in the negative. The object of the last thought is ‘*nāma-rūpa*’ which is indicative of the next birth. It makes an imprint in the mother’s womb, like a light shade of the mind but until consciousness goes and joins with it, there is no animation. Even if consciousness unites with it and animates it, if it slips out during the period of pregnancy, an apparent miscarriage will result. Instead of a child, a lifeless ball of flesh will come out, because consciousness has slipped out due to some karmic reason. Consequently, no being will be born out of that ‘*nāma-rūpa*’ into ‘this state of existence’ or ‘*itthatta*’.

When Venerable Ānanda understood this point, the Buddha proceeds to put another question to him.

“If, Ānanda, the consciousness of a boy or a girl were to get cut off at the young age itself, would name-and-form come to growth and maturity?”

“No, indeed, Venerable Sir.”

Another important fact comes to light by this question. What is generally known as “*nāma-rūpa*” in the world is that which is activated by consciousness–which latter is taken for granted as it is invisible. But if consciousness slips out after the birth of a child, it is no longer reckoned as *nāma-rūpa*. It is only a dead body.

Having convinced Venerable Ānanda of these three corroborative facts, the Buddha finally draws the conclusion in a very emphatic tone:

“*Tasmātihānanda, esova hetu, etaṁ nidānaṁ, esa samudayo, esa paccayo, viññāṇassa yadidaṁ nāmarūpaṁ*”

“Therefore, Ānanda, this itself is the reason, this is the cause, this is the origin, this is the condition for name-and-form, namely, consciousness.”

Thereby the Buddha convinces Venerable Ānanda of the fact that there can be no name-and-form in the absence of consciousness.

Then he shows that the converse is also true just by one sentence:

“*Viññaṇaṁ va hi Ānanda, nāmarūpe patiṭṭhaṁ nālabhissatha api nu kho āyatiṁ jātijarāmaṇa dukkhasamudaya sambhavo paññāyethāti*”

“And if, Ānanda, consciousness were not to get a footing on name-and-form, would there be manifest an arising of birth,

decay, death and suffering in the future?”

“No, indeed, Venerable Sir.”

“Therefore, Ānanda, this itself is the reason, this is the cause, this is the origin, this is the condition for consciousness – namely, name-and-form.”

This amounts to saying that if consciousness does not get a footing in name-and-form, there is no state of existence. There is no question of birth again. What the Arahants have done is to bring consciousness to such a state where it gets no footing on name-and-form. In other words, it is the state of unestablished consciousness (*appatiṭṭhita viññaṇa*).

Having thus clarified the inter-relation between consciousness and name-and-form, the Buddha now makes a very strange declaration of extraordinary depth summing up this mutual relationship in the context of Saṁsāric existence.

“*Ettāvatā kho Ānanda jāyetha vā jīyetha vā mīyetha vā cavetha vā uppajjetha vā, ettāvatā adhivacanapatho ettāvatā niruttipatho ettāvatā paññattipatho ettāvatā paññāvacaraṁ ettāvatā vaṭṭaṁ vaṭṭati itthattaṁ paññāpanāya yadidaṁ nāmarūpaṁ saha viññāṇena*”

“In so far only, Ānanda, can one be born or grow old or die or pass away or reappear, in so far only is there any pathway for a verbal expression, in so far only is there any pathway for terminology, in so far only is there any pathway for designation, in so far only is there any sphere of wisdom, in so far only is there a whirling round for a state of ‘thisness’, that is to say, as far as name-and-form together with consciousness.”

The full significance of the whirling round for a designation of this existence (*ettāvātā vaṭṭaṁ vaṭṭati itthataṁ paññāpaṇāya*) emerges from this declaration. This is the standard quotation asserting the validity of our simile of the vortex between consciousness and name-and-form (*nāmarūpaṁ saha viññāṇena*). It is because of this whirling round, this vortex, that even a designation is possible. The entire problem of existence is traceable to this vortex and its solution through wisdom is also within this and not outside it. Even the price of an article is dependent on the whirling round of supply and demand. Likewise, it is between these two that is name-and-form and consciousness – that all concepts of a being in existence are at all possible.

Perhaps our explanation of '*phassa*' or contact might not be clear enough for many of you. As usual, let me digress into the world of similes for further clarification. When we speak of contact in the sentient or animate world, the idea of two things automatically comes in because consciousness discriminates between two things. But what about the insentient or inanimate world? If we throw heavily one big stone on another, even if the other gets cracked, it will not complain. There is no 'clash'. But supposing you accidentally collide with another while walking on the pavement in a rush hour, there could easily be a clash – verbally or even physically. There we see clearly a case of verbal impression (*adhivacanasamphassa*) and resistance impression (*paṭighasamphassa*), unlike in the earlier instance of inanimate objects. There was no 'clash', no offence or defence between the two stones.

Let us take up another simile. That is one which carpenters will understand easily. Suppose a carpenter is going to join two planks of wood to fix up a door. He might ask his apprentice to see whether the two planks properly touch each other. Strictly speaking, lifeless planks cannot 'touch'. But the concept of touch is attributed to it in mechanical parlance in various branches of technology. Mechanics even infuse life into the tools and machines they work with. I am told that there is 'someone' inside the computer too. Our delusion of self makes us attribute life into the inanimate objects also. The age of animism and anthropomorphism is not yet over. There was no clash when the two stones collided. But there was a clash when two pedestrians collided. This is enough for one to understand the two aspects of '*phassa*'– '*adhivacanasamphassa*' (verbal impression) and '*paṭighasamphassa*' (resistance impression). The recognition aspect is not there in the case of inanimate objects. But our primitive animistic instinct prompts us to attribute 'contact' and 'touch' to lifeless objects around us and arbitrarily infuse life into them.

The question of contact (*phassa*) brings us to an extraordinary feature of the Buddha's teaching which marks it off from all other religious teachings in the

world. No other religious teacher could go beyond contact. In the *Brahmajāla Sutta,* the Buddha dismisses all the 62 views with a brief but meaningful phrase '*tadapi phassa paccayā*'– 'that too is dependent on contact.' The implication is that the Buddha went beyond contact. How did he accomplish this? By his understanding of the Law of Dependent Arising. This itself reveals the special significance of the Law of Dependent Arising. But there are many who call in question our interpretation of *Paṭicca Samuppāda* by quoting a discourse which has an allusion to the descent into the womb.

The discourse they adduce in support of the commentarial three-life interpretation is the *Titthāyatana Sutta* of the *Anguttara Nikāya*. The special significance of that discourse is that it relates the Law of Dependent Arising to the Four Noble Truths.

"*Channaṁ bhikkhave dhātūnaṁ upādāya gabbhassa avakkanti hoti. Okkantiyā sati nāmarūpaṁ nāmarūpa paccayā saḷāyatanaṁ. Saḷātanapaccayā phasso. Phassaphaccayā vedanā. Vediyamanassa kho panāhaṁ bhikkhave idaṁ dukkhanti paññapemi. Ayaṁ dukkhasamudayoti paññapemi. Ayaṁ dukkhanirodhoti paññapemi. Ayaṁ dukkhanirodhagāmini paṭipadāti paññapemi*"

"Depending on the six elements, monks, there is a descent into the womb. When there is a descent, there is Name-and-form. Dependent on name-and-form, the six sense spheres, dependent on the six sense spheres, contact, dependent on contact, feeling. To one who feels, monks, I make it known thus:

'This is suffering. This is the arising of suffering. This is the cessation of suffering. This is the path leading to the cessation of suffering.'"

Now what are the six elements? Earth, water, fire, air, space and consciousness. Those of you who have read the *Dhātuvibhaṅga Sutta,* of the *Majjhima Nikāya* would remember how the Buddha begins his sermon to Pukkusāti.

"*Chadhāturo ayaṁ bhikkhu puriso*"

"Monk, this man is made up of six elements."

That means, man is a bundle of six elements, not four. The Sutta in question also begins with the words "*channaṁ bhikkhave dhātūnaṁ upādāya*"

"monks, depending on the six elements?"

That is to say, if there is a grasping of the six elements before the death of a person, '*gabbhassa avakkanti hoti*' there is a descent into a womb. Since the

presence of consciousness is already implied, here we have the same story of interdependence between name and form. This passage is misinterpreted by many scholars and preachers as canonical evidence in support of the commentarial three-life interpretation of *Paṭiccasamuppāda*. All what the Sutta passage in question asserts is that if one grasps the six elements, that is to say, as long as these elements are not made to fade away as stated in the *Dhātuvibhaṅga Sutta*, there is a descent into the womb. '*Okkantiyā sati nāmarūpaṁ*'. When there is a descent of consciousness into the womb, one can speak of name-and-form. Dependent on name-and-form, there is the six sense spheres. Dependent on six sense spheres, contact; and dependent on contact, feeling. Feeling is taken as the turning point to the Four Noble Truths '*Vediyamānassa bhikkhave idaṁ dukkhanti paññapemi*'. It is to one who feels that I make known 'this is suffering' etc. The formula branches off towards the Four Noble Truths, leading to the cessation of suffering. In this way, the law of Dependent Arising is conjoined to the Four Noble Truths.

All this shows the immense importance of the Law of Dependent Arising. There are many instances where the fundamental significance of the Law of Dependent Arising is highlighted. Once Venerable Sariputta brings up a quotation from the Buddha himself to emphasize the importance of the Law of Dependent Arising:

"*Vuttaṁ kho panetaṁ bhagavatā yo paṭiccasamuppādaṁ passati so dhammaṁ passati; yo dhammaṁ passati so paṭiccasamuppādaṁ passati*"

"This has been said by the Fortunate one:

'He who sees the Law of Dependent Arising sees the Dhamma. He who sees the Dhamma sees the Law of Dependent Arising.?"

If this is so I wonder how many are there who actually know the Dhamma. It seems according to the words of the Buddha that no one can claim to know the Dhamma unless he has understood the Law of Dependent Arising.

In the same connection, there is a very powerful peroration by the Buddha asserting in no uncertain terms the cardinal significance of the Law of Depdendent Arising. Even the tone of that declaration is so impressive that I shall try to quote it in full.

'*Katamo ca bhikkhave, paṭiccasamuppādo? Jātipaccayā bhikkhave jarāmaraṇaṁ. uppādā vā tathāgatānaṁ anuppādā vā tathāgatānaṁ ṭhitā va sā dhātu dhammaṭṭhitatā dhammaniyāmatā idappaccayatā. Taṁ tathāgato abhisambujjhati abhisameti abhisambujjhitva abhisametvā ācikkhati deseti paññapeti paṭṭhapeti vivarati vibhajati uttānīkaroti passathāti cāha*'

“What, monks, is Dependent Arising? Conditioned by birth, monks, is decay and death. Whether there is an arising of Tathāgatas or no arising of Tathāgatas, that element does persist, that stability of the Dhamma, that norm of the Dhamma, the specific conditionality. That, the Tathāgata awakens to, and intuits into. Having awakened to it and intuited into it, he explains it, preaches it, proclaims it, reveals it, analyzes it, elucidates it, and says ‘Behold’.”

This declaration shows the greatness of the Buddha as a peerless teacher in that he explained, analyzed and elucidated such a deep Dhamma in a way that we can understand and see for ourselves in our experience. The specific conditionality between any two links of the formula is called *Paṭicca Samuppāda* as evidenced from the following quotation:

“*avijjā paccayā bhikkhave saṁkhārā, yā tatra tathatā avitathatā anaññathatā idappaccayatā ayaṁ vuccati bhikkhave paṭiccasamuppādo*.” “Conditioned by ignorance, O, monks, are preparations. That suchness therein, that invariability, that not-otherwiseness, that specific conditionality–this, O, monks, is called Dependent Arising.”

All these declarations make it clear that this specific conditionality is an invariable law true for all times whether the Tathāgatas arise or not. This is a lion’s roar proclaiming the greatness of this eternal law.

Having come across such a Dhamma, we should not shrink from it, saying that it is too deep for us to understand. Without understanding it, one cannot be a Stream-winner. That is why even the poor leper Suppabuddha, when he became a Stream-winner, is said to have got the insight into the Law of Dependent Arising. Nowadays a meditator has to get a certificate from the meditation centre as proof of his attainment. All that was not necessary in the past. The sum total of the insight of a stream-winner is expressed in the following words:

‘*Yaṁ kiñci samudayadhammaṁ sabbaṁ taṁ nirodhadhammaṁ*’

‘Whatever is of a nature to arise, all that is of a nature to cease.’

As we explained the other day, the underlying principle of the Law obtains between any two links. One must understand the difference between the Law and its illustrations. There is a lot of confusion in this regard. The Buddha would cite just two links as in this instance–‘*avijjā paccayā saṁkhārā*’(conditioned by ignorance are preparations) –and emphasize the invariability of this Law, or else he would say ‘*jātipaccayā jarāmaraṇaṁ*’(conditioned by birth is decay and death) and assert the eternal validity of the Law implied by it. What is required is the seeing of this Law in one’s experience and not the recitation of the formula.

To break up the formula into three parts as applicable to three lives is to make the confusion all the more confounded–and this despite the fact that Dhamma is declared to be 'visible here and now' (*sandiṭṭhiko*) and 'timeless' (*akāliko*). It is with reference to this life itself that the Buddha presented the solution to this problem of suffering. There is no need to refer ignorance to a past life. Many scholars are puzzled by the nonmention of ignorance in the *Mahāpadāna Sutta* and the *Mahā Nidāna Sutta*. Apparently, both *avijjā* and *saṁkhārā* are missing in these two discourses. But all the same, they are implicit there in the discussion of Paṭiccasamuppāda. The non-understanding of the inter-relation between consciousness and name-and-form itself is '*avijjā*'. The going round, the whirling round resulting from that ignorance is sankhārā. So then one cannot say that those two links are overlooked. The *Mahā Nidāna* or the great cause in the *Mahā Nidāna Sutta* refers to the inter-relation between consciousness and name-and-form. There is so much talk these days about the consciousness of a person at death. But very few talk about name-and-form. The Buddha has clearly explained the inter-dependence of these two in his sermons on Dependent Arising. It is a case of a vortex or a whirlpool.

Then what about the freedom from this state of affairs? In the verse which forms the topic of this sermon, it is said that the sage has crossed the abyss –'*pātālaṁ atarī isī*'. What is the significance of this statement? We have explained that the abyss refers to the painful bodily feelings. Bodily pain is the deepest inescapable aspect of suffering. But the arahants have come out even from that abyss. On an earlier occasion, we described how Venerable Dabba Mallaputta, an arahant, set fire to his own body at the moment of *parinibbāna*. It is not a case of rash self-immolation. That was after he attained to *Arahattaphala Samāpatti*. The extraordinary feature of that concentration is that while in it one is free from all feelings. It is a well-known fact that *nibbāna* is called *avedayita sukha* (unfelt bliss). Once when the Venerable Sāriputta declared "Friends, this *nibbāna* is bliss! Friends, this *nibbāna* is bliss?"

Venerable Udāyi asked him:

"What bliss is there, friend, where there is no feeling?"

His reply was "This itself, friend, is the bliss therein–the fact that there is no feeling!" This is because all three grades of feeling– pleasant, painful and neither painful nor pleasant– are reckoned as suffering in the last analysis.

Crossing the abyss or to get over painful bodily feelings is to attain to that concentration peculiar to arahants. While in that state, the mind is said to be '*animitta*' (signless), *appaṇihita* (undirected) and '*suññā*' (void). Alternatively, it

is called *appatiṭṭhita viññāṇa* (unestablished consciousness). Earlier, we spoke of consciousness getting established in a mother's womb. It is then that the concept of a "person" is valid. But the highest aim of this dispensation is to reach that state where consciousness does not get established. That is freedom. That is the emancipation of the mind.

This emancipation of the mind is presented in various ways in various discourses. Now that we have mentioned about the six elements, let us briefly examine how the *Dhātuvibhaṅga Sutta* approaches the problem of emancipation. Here we are given a method of making the elements fade away (*virājeti*) from the mind–a sort of erasing from the mind. How can one erase them? These elements are there because of measuring. In our writings about meditation on elements, we have pointed out with special reference to Venerable Sāriputta's sermons, that earth, water, fire and air are drawn on our minds due to experiences obtained through name-and-form. It is a case of measuring. To do away with this measuring, Venerable Sāriputta recommends an elemental meditation. Head hairs, body hairs, nails, teeth etc., represent the internal earth-element. It is the same with the external earth-element in point of solidity. Compared with the larger earth element outside, the internal earth-element is puny and insignificant. By constant reflection on those lines, the mind is made to get disenchanted with the earth-element, thereby making it fade away from the mind. It is a mind liberated from the four elements that does not take birth in a mother's womb. On the other hand, so long as the grasp on the six elements is there, there is a descent into the womb as mentioned above. Having grasped the six elements or depending on the six elements, there is a descent into the womb. Only so long as there is a grasp on these elements, can one speak of a birth in a mother's womb. Along with birth goes the whirling between the two.

That is why we spoke of a vortex on an earlier occasion. A vortex can be recognized only so long as there is a whirling round. If one stretches one's arm towards the open sea saying 'there, there', others cannot guess 'where' he means unless there is a vortex. Where there is a vortex, one can point out a spot in the sea. Similarly, every being is a Saṁsāric vortex. In the previous sermon, we explained how a vortex is formed and how it ceases. Let us try to understand this formation of a vortex from another point of view. As you know, there is a word in common usage in referring to the body, namely, '*upādinna*'. This is a term variously interpreted by scholars. '*upādinna*' means 'what is grasped'. It actually refers to that which is grasped at the dying moment–the 'grasped par excellence', so to speak. That is what we try to protect at all costs. Isn't it the tiny speck of 'mud' (*kalala*) in the mother's womb– that foetus which we grasp as the first thing in this life? We grasp it with such tenacity that it is called '*gabbha*' or

'*garbha*' (Sanskrit). Its growth inside the womb is not simply due to the mother's care and caution. It is largely due to the tenacious 'grab' of the child. All this is because of the whirling round between consciousness and name-and-form. What we call 'beings' are so many whirlpools in the ocean of *samsāra*. This organic body as 'the grasped par excellence' (*upādinna*) represents that which has been grasped as internal from the four elements outside. All our efforts are directed towards the protection of this organic combination of elements. The disturbance of the humours is also symptomatic of our struggle to preserve this organic combination intact. That clash on the pavement gives a hint to the danger of possessing this conscious body. Birth, decay, disease, death and all the abysmal pains arise out of this Saṁsāric vortex. That is why the Buddha told Venerable Ānanda:

'It is through not understanding and not penetrating this Dhamma that this progeny has become a tangled skein matted like a bird's nest, interwoven like *muñja* and *babbaja* grass, unable to pass beyond states of woe, bad bournes, downfall and the round of birth and death.'

This tangled problem the Buddha successfully solved by pointing out that there are two aspects of contact called *adhivacanasamphassa* and *paṭighasamphassa*. He also pointed out that in relation to contact there are two things:

name and form and that there is a mutual relationship between consciousness and name-and-form. Finally, he showed how consciousness is made non-manifestative. In our earlier sermons we pointed out that name-and-form is like a reflection on consciousness. It is like a blind man's impression of a block of ice he strikes against through feeling, perception, intention, contact and attention. Worldlings arouse greed, hate and delusion based on that impression, making the tangle all the more tangled. With this body born of one's past kamma, one breaks the five precepts, comes into conflict with the world just for the sake of protecting this body and goes on amassing defilements thereby precipitating a continuity of the vortex. But what did the arahants do? They aroused wisdom in regard to the interrelation between consciousness and name-and-form, since in the last analysis that is the proper sphere for wisdom as the term '*paññāvacaraṁ*' in that key passage implies. If one rightly understands that interrelation through the path of practice outlined by the Buddha and frees the mind from the four primaries earth, water, fire and air as well as from feeling, perception, intention, contact and attention, one attains to that state of emancipation of the mind known as *anidassana viññāṇa* (non-manifestative consciousness) or *appatiṭṭhita viññāṇa* (unestablished consciousness). This is the end of '*bhava*' or Saṁsāric existence which the Buddha has made known to the world.

So then '*bhava*' does not mean a place of existence as the world is prone to believe. It is an existence dependent on grasping (*upādāna*). There is another term used to indicate this kind of '*bhava*', namely, '*itthatta*'. This term too is a problem to many. '*Itthaṁ*' means 'in this way'. '*Itthatta*' is thisness or 'this state of existence'. '*Itthatta*' is in conflict with '*aññathābhāva'* (otherwiseness). 'Thisness' is all the time turning into 'otherwiseness'.

This is the tragedy of existence – '*itthabhāvaññathābhāva*' which the Buddha lays bare in the following verse in the *Dvayatānupassanā Sutta*.

Taṇhādutiyo puriso dīghamaddhāna saṁsaraṁ

itthabhāvaññathābhāvaṁ saṁsāraṁ nātivattati

'The man who has craving as his partner (lit, 'second') and keeps going round for a long time, does not transcend this *saṁsāra* which is an alternation between 'thisness' and 'otherwiseness'.'

The worldling allied to craving who keeps wandering in *Saṁsāra* for a long time cannot get beyond the duality of 'thisness' and 'otherwiseness'. The moment he grasps a state of existence as a 'thisness', it becomes subject to otherwiseness. This is what is called impermanence, the inexorable tragedy of the conceit of existence. Life is a vain struggle to withstand 'otherwiseness'. It is the vortex that sustains '*itthatta*' and the vortex is the outcome of ignorance and craving. From another point of view, it can be attributed to the four perversions (*vipallāsā*). Impermanence is the nature of the world. But there is a perception of permanence in the impermanent. Also, there is a perception of beauty in the repulsive, a perception of pleasantness in the painful, and a perception of self in the notself. The vortex is kept up by these four perversions. Having followed the Noble Eight-fold Path and developed concentration and insight into the three characteristics– impermanence, suffering and not-self, one gets dejected with the five aggregates of grasping and attains emancipation. One can experience that non-manifestative (*anidassana*) state of consciousness. Thereby one would be fully convinced of the fact that '*bhava*' has ceased here and now. Because of that conviction, one is no longer 'qualified' to be born since name-and-form has slipped out. It is in view of this possibility of freedom from rebirth that the Buddha addressed the following question to Venerable Ānanda in the *Mahā Nidāna Sutta*.

'*Viññāṇaṁ va hi Ānanda nāmarūpe patiṭṭhaṁ nālabhissatha api nu kho āyatiṁ jātijarāmaraṇadukkhasamudaya sambhavo paññāyethā*.'

'*Nohetaṁ bhante*'

‘If, Ānanda, consciousness were not to get a footing on name-and-form, would there be manifest an arising of birth, decay, death, and suffering in the future?’

‘No, indeed, Venerable Sir.’

So then, you have listened to an analysis of a very important discourse today–the *Mahā Nidāna Sutta*. It is only by way of introduction that we brought up the *Ekamūla Sutta*. You should not regard all this as mere academic stuff meant for scholars. We invite you to make use of this knowledge of the Law of Dependent Arising in your practice with the aim of understanding the Four Noble Truths.

It seems today also as usual many of you have observed the higher precepts. Others too have listened to this sermon which is directed towards *Nibbāna* established on some precepts. May you all strive on diligently to attain the goal in this very life! Whatever beings there are from the lowest hell to the highest Brahma world, may they all rejoice in this sermon. May it conduce to the attainment of their aspirations! May they all realize the Deathless *Nibbāna*!



Paticca Samuppada Sermon 4
The Law of Dependent Arising
(Pahan Kanuwa Sermon – No. 186)

'*Namo tassa bhagavato arahato sammāsambuddhassa*'

'Homage be! To the Fortunate One – the Worthy, Fully Enlightened!'

Antojaṭā bahijaṭā

jaṭāya jaṭitā pajā

taṁ taṁ gotama pucchāmi

ko imaṁ vijaṭaye jaṭaṁ

Sīle patiṭṭhāya naro sapañño

cittaṁ paññañca bhāvayaṁ

ātāpī nipako bhikkhu

so imaṁ vijaṭaye jaṭaṁ

Yesaṁ rāgo ca doso ca

avijjā ca virājitā

khīṇāsavā arahanto

tesaṁ vijaṭitā jaṭā

Yattha nāmañca rūpañca

asesaṁ uparujjhati

paṭighaṁ rūpasaññā ca

ettha sā chijjate jaṭā

– Jaṭā Sutta, Devatā Saṁyutta, S

A tangle within and a tangle without

The world is entangled with a tangle

About that, O! Gotama, I ask you

Who can disentangle this tangle

The wise one established in virtue

Developing concentration and wisdom

That ardent and prudent monk

It is he who disentangles this tangle

In whom lust as well as hate

And ignorance too have faded away

Those who are influx-free – the arahants

It is in them that the tangle is disentangled

Wherein both name and form

Resistance and the perception of form

Are cut off without any residue

It is here that the tangle gets snapped.

Dear Listeners,

The Fully Enlightened Buddha has preached to Venerable Ānanda in the *Mahā Nidāna Sutta* that this entire progeny has got entangled like a tangled skein and get reborn again and again in woeful realms due to non-understanding the Law of Dependent Arising. In our last sermon we explained with reference to the *Mahā Nidāna Sutta* how name and form are inter related and how name and form and consciousness are mutually dependent upon each other. Today we have chosen as our topic four verses which serve as a prelude for a further elaboration of the same discussion.

First of all, let us try understand the meaning of these verses. These verses are found in the *Sagāthaka Vagga* of the *Saṁyutta Nikāya*. The first verse presents

a question which a certain deity put to the Buddha. The next three verses constitute the Buddha's answer to it. The general meaning is as follows:

Antojaṭā bahijaṭā jaṭāya jaṭitā pajā

There is a tangle inside and there is a tangle outside. The progeny is doubly entangled.

taṁ taṁ gotama pucchāmi ko imaṁ vijaṭaye jaṭaṁ

I question you Gotama, about that. Who will disentangle this tangle?

The answer given by the Buddha in the first verse amounts to this:

Sīle patiṭṭhāya naro sapañño cittaṁ paññañca bhāvayaṁ

The wise man having established himself on virtue, developing concentration and wisdom – ('*citta*' signifies concentration)

ātāpī nipako bhikkhu so imaṁ vijaṭaye jaṭaṁ

That monk who is ardent and prudent – it is he who disentangles the tangle.

Then the Buddha adds something more to the explanation:

Yesaṁ rāgo ca doso ca avijjā ca virājitā

Those ones in whom lust, hate and ignorance have been made to fade away –

khīṇāsavā arahanto tesaṁ vijaṭitā jaṭā

Those influx-free arahants – it is in them that the tangle is disentangled.

Then for the fourth verse:

Yattha nāmañca rūpañca

asesaṁ uparujjhati

paṭighaṁ rūpasaññā ca

ettha sā chijjate jaṭā

Where name and form, as well as resistance and the perception of form are cut off without residue, it is here that the tangle gets snapped.

Out of these four verses, perhaps many of you are familiar with the first two, because the commentator, Venerable Buddhaghosa has made them the basic topic for his treatise *Visuddhimagga*. But it seems the last verse is the most abstruse.

In our last sermon we explained how 'form' gets a verbal impression through recognition given by 'name' and how 'name' gets a resistance impression by the impact offered by 'form'. We mentioned in our last sermon that 'contact' is a combination of these two.

In short, 'name' and 'form' are intertwined like a tangle by their respective characteristics. As far as we can see, this is the tangle within (*antojaṭā*). The Buddha has pointed out in detail that 'name and form' and consciousness are mutually interrelated. This is the tangle without (*bahijaṭā*). Although we explain it this way Venerable Buddhaghosa gives quite a different interpretation of the two terms in his commentary to the *Jaṭā Sutta*. He takes *jaṭā* to mean 'craving' (*taṇhā*). According to him '*antojaṭā*' (tangle within) is craving for one's own requisites and '*bahijaṭā*' (tangle without) is craving for others' requisites. Alternatively, he suggests as a second interpretation, craving for one's own body is the tangle within and craving for another's body is the tangle without. He goes on to advance a third interpretation also. According to it, the six internal sense-spheres is the tangle within and the six external sense-spheres is the tangle without. This is how Venerable Buddhaghosa explains the two cryptic terms.

Venerable Buddhaghosa takes '*nāma'* to be a collective term for the four immaterial aggregates; feeling, perception, preparations and consciousness (*vedanā, saññā, saṅkhārā, viññṇaṁ).* But last time I got you all to count your fingers and be sure of the Buddha word that '*nāma*' stands for the five constituents:

feeling, perception, intention, contact and attention. Consciousness has no place in the definition of '*nāma*'. But just see.

All those who go by the commentarial tradition assert that '*nāma*' means the four immaterial aggregates. It is all wrong. Having defined '*nāma*' that way, the commentator takes up '*saññā*' for comment. According to him '*patighasaññā*' means '*kāma bhava*' (that is 'the sensual sphere'), and *'rūpasaññā*' means '*rūpa bhava*' (that is the Realm of form) and when these two are mentioned the formless Realm or '*arūpa bhava*' is already implied. This is how the line '*paṭighaṁ rūpasaññā ca*' is explained in the commentary. And then, as to the place where the tangle gets snapped the commentator says that on arriving at *Nibbāna* the tangle is snapped. That is all the commentary has to say. But we

must point out that by the very mention of the words '*paṭighaṁ rūpasaññā*', it is obvious that we have to understand this question of the 'tangle' in the light of the *Mahā Nidāna Sutta*.

Today there might be in this crowd those who were not present to listen to our last sermon. To facilitate their understanding of what I am going to say and also to refresh the memory of those who were present the other day. I wish to recapitulate the dialogue between Venerable Ānanda and the Buddha. Even the method of explanation the Buddha adopted in regard to Venerable Ānanda in the *Mahā Nidāna Sutta* is extraordinary. Venerable Ānanda approaches the Buddha and says:

"It is wonderful Venerable Sir, it is marvelous Venerable Sir, how deep the Law of Dependent Arising is and how profound it appears. All the same, Venerable Sir, it appears to me as clear and clear"

The Buddha's response to it was:

"Do not say so Ānanda, do not say so. This Law of Dependent Arising is deep and it appears deep."

And then the Buddha, like an expert teacher catechized Venerable Ānanda, step by step, getting him to respond rather rhetorically in the negative. Usually, an obedient pupil is only too eager to 'YES' the teacher. But the Buddha addressed his questions to Venerable Ānanda in such a shrewd way, that the latter had to think deeply and come out with the same emphatic negative answer throughout:

'*No hetaṁ bhante*' – 'No indeed Venerable Sir'

Unlike in reading a book, in listening to a sermon, it is difficult to follow the entire catechism step by step. So the other day we gave a summary of the procedure by which the Buddha convinced Venerable Ānanda of the mutual relationship between '*nāma*' ('name') and '*rūpa*' ('form') in four statements.

First of all, let us try to make some sense out of those four statements. '*Nāma*' has to be defined not with reference to the four aggregates as the commentary says. Feeling, perception, intention, contact and attention are the constituents of '*nāma*'. What is meant by '*rūpa*' is actually '*rūpa saññā*' – 'perception of form'. It is based on the four great primaries – earth, water, fire and air, none of which can stand alone or be recognized per se. They can be known only through the constituents of the name group. Now the first conclusive statement of the Buddha which Venerable Ānanda accepts through conviction amounts to this:

“If all those modes characteristics, signs and exponents by which the name group is designated were absent, there would not be manifest a verbal impression (‘*adhivacana saṁphassa*’) in the form group.”

‘*Adhivacana*’or synonym is a word representative of the linguistic medium, like *paññatti* (designation) and *nirutti* (terminology). So what is meant by the above statement is that there could be a recognition of the form group only through the constituents of name such as feeling and perception.

Then the second statement gives the converse:

“If all those modes, characteristics, signs and exponents by which the form group is designated were absent, there would not be manifest a resistance-impression (‘*paṭigha-samphassa*’) in the name group.”

That is to say, if there were no characteristics proper to the form group based on earth, water, fire, and air, there could be no resistance impression in the name group (that is: feeling, perception etc.). One cannot speak of resistance if there is no ‘form’. The other day we gave a simile of a blind man to illustrate this. The commentary also makes use of a simile of a blind man in connection with ‘*nāmarūpa*’. But that is not the one we brought up. Suppose a blind man goes and hits against a huge block of ice. He would come back with a perception of earth. Next time he goes there, it is melting. He would come back with a perception of water. By the time he goes there again, it is boiling and he would perceive the fiery element already at a distance. Finally, when it is evaporating, he might get the perception of air through it. In the same way, the blind worldling recognizes the ‘non-descript’ four great primaries with the help of feeling, perception, intention, contact and attention. We gave this simile just to show the mutual relationship between name and form. They are inextricably intertwined.

Now comes the third conclusive statement which drives home the point.

“If all those modes, characteristics, signs and exponents by which a name-group and form-group are designated were absent, there would not be manifest either a verbal-impression or a resistance-impression.”

Here the Buddha has adopted a very subtle way of argument. Firstly, it is said that the presence of one is a necessary condition for the other to exist. Then it is said that in the absence of both, there would be neither a verbal impression nor a resistance impression.

The fourth statement is all the more conclusive:

"If all those modes, characteristics, signs and exponents by which name and form is designated were absent, there would not be manifest any contact."

So, it seems according to the Buddha, there is no contact ('*phassa*'), where there is no name and form ('*nāmarūpa*'). Just think about this. One might be tempted to question its validity. Because name implies feeling, perception and intention, one can ask:

"Well then, are we to assume that trees and stones have no contact?"

We gave a little simile to explain this. While rolling a stone, if it goes and strikes against another hard enough to make a crack on it, there will be no retaliation. That is the way with the inanimate world. But if two pedestrians collide with each other on a pavement in a rush hour, there would be a 'clash'. In the case of inanimate objects, 'contact' is something we attribute to them.

In the inanimate world, there is no place for the concept of touch or contact. It is only something we attribute or superimpose. To clarify this point further, the other day, we gave the simile of a carpenter. When a carpenter is joining two planks to fix up a door, he might have to speak of the two planks as 'touching' each other. Think of the way a forest fire starts. In a hurricane two trees go on rubbing against each other until fire comes up. But there is no feeling, perception or intention in them.

In the *Sutta Nipāta* there is a discourse called *Kalahavivāda Sutta* (Discourse on quarrels and disputes). It is entirely in verse and unfold in the form of a dialogue. The opening question is:

'*kuto pahūta kalahā vivāda*' – 'Whence do quarrels and disputes arise?' By way of answer, a whole chain of causes is given towards the end of which there is the following question:

> "*Phasso nu lokasmiṁ kuto nidānā"*
>
> "What is the cause of contact in this world?"

The reply is:

> "*Nāmañca rūpañca paṭicca phasso*"
>
> "Depending on name and form arise contact."

Those two pedestrians quarreled and disputed because they had name and form. That was not the case with the two stones. Actually, contact is something peculiar to the animate world where there is consciousness. So then, name and form are intertwined by their modes, characteristics, signs and exponents. This is the tangle within (*antojatā*).

Then let us see what 'the tangle without' (*bahijatā*) is. In regard to that too, we can put into four conclusive statements the gist of the catechism the Buddha addressed to venerable Ānanda. First of all, the Buddha asks:

"Ānanda, if consciousness were not to descend into a mother's womb, would name and form be left remaining in the mother's womb?"

The question of 'remaining' implies that name and form has already gone there. To ask whether name and form would be left remaining in a mother's womb if consciousness were not to go there, is to grant that somehow name and form is already there. Now, how does that happen?

What we are going to say from now onwards could be of interest to those intellectuals who keep on dabbling with questions relating to consciousness, name and form and rebirth. Here too, we shall give some sort of illustration by way of clarification. Supposing a patient who has just undergone a serious operation in a hospital is engaged in a struggle between life and death. He might see some sign of his future birth – say, in some mother's womb – in a critical moment. But suppose the doctors manage to save his life. Afterwards he might say that he went somewhere while he was in the coma. It is only a half-truth. It is not that he actually went there –only a sign of that place became an object for his consciousness. Name and form has gone there for a moment but consciousness was held back. This fact is borne out by the following rhetoric question of the Buddha. "Ānanda, if consciousness having descended in to the mother's womb, were to come out, would name and form be born in to this state of existence?"

"No indeed Venerable Sir."

From this it is clear that if despite the doctors' attempts the patient died, his consciousness would join that mental object (name and form) because we have already pointed out that the relationship between consciousness and name and form is a whirling round as in the case of a whirlpool. Think of a flexible rubber-band for instance. It can get elongated if it is pressed down at one point and stretched away with tension. The moment the other end is pressed down and the former released, it would go and 'join' the latter to form a new centre. In the same

way consciousness gravitates towards its object – *nāmarūpa* – at the moment of death. However, as you all know, sometimes parents expect a child, but what comes out in the end is a still born grotesque form of a child. The reason is that due to some karmic force, consciousness has slipped out. This is the situation the Buddha points out as the second possibility.

This fact is clarified further by the third question:

"Ānanda, if the consciousness of a boy or a girl were to get cut off at the young age itself, will name and form come to growth and maturity?"

"No, indeed, Venerable Sir."

Even after the birth of a child if consciousness gets cut off name and form would not grow. Only a corpse will be left there.

When Venerable Ānanda granted that point, the Buddha draws the final conclusion.

"Therefore, Ānanda, this itself is the reason, this is the cause, this is the arising, this is the condition – for name and form

– namely consciousness."

This is an emphatic assertion that consciousness is a necessary condition for name and form. Then the Buddha goes on to point out that, as far as the concept of existence is concerned, consciousness has to be accompanied by name and form, but if somehow or other, consciousness does not get established on name and form, the whole problem of existence is solved.

"If Ānanda, consciousness were not to get a footing in name and form, would there be manifest an arising of birth, decay, death and suffering in the future?"

"No, indeed, Venerable Sir."

The gist of the whole discussion can be given in two sentences. The consciousness of a non-arahant is an established consciousness ('*patiṭṭhita-viññāṇa*'). The consciousness of an arahant is an un-established consciousness ('*appatiṭṭhitaviññāṇa*'). Usually, in the case of an individual, consciousness is established on name and form. But there is a possibility of an unestablished consciousness where all the problems of birth, decay, death and suffering would cease. That is the consciousness of the arahant which is free from name and form. Now you all can understand the meaning of the last verse.

Yattha nāmañca rūpañca asesaṁ uparujjhati

paṭighaṁ rūpasaññā ca ettha sā chijjate jaṭā

"Where name and form as well as resistance and the perception of form are cut off without remainder, it is here that the tangle gets cut off."

The 'tangle-within' between name and form as well as the 'tangle-without' between name and form and consciousness are all cut off. 'Where' refers to that '*Nibbānic mind*'. In an earlier sermon we spoke of a 'non-manifestative consciousness' ('*anidassana-viññāṇa*'). That is the state of an arahant's consciousness when he has attained to the concentration of the Fruit of Arahanthood (*arahattaphalasamādhi*). His consciousness does not manifest name and form. That unestablished consciousness ('*appatiṭṭhita-viññāṇa*') is sometimes qualified by the three terms. '*appatiṭṭhaṁ, appavattaṁ, anārammaṇaṁ* (not established, not continuing, object-less). To one who has attained that state there can be no rebirth.

As a rule, name and form and consciousness are found inter-related in the case of Saṁsāric beings. But the Buddha declared in one sentence that there is an exception to the rule. If somehow or other consciousness could be made to get unestablished on name and form, birth, decay, death and all the rest of suffering would come to an end. If this much is clear, let me give a little more explanation about the concept of rebirth and the significance of the established consciousness.

In this connection, there is a very important discourse in the *Nidāna Saṁyutta* of the *Saṁyutta Nikāya* by the name '*Cetanā Sutta*'. There the Buddha presents the point in question in a way that appeals to reason. It is presented in three short paras. The point at issue is the question as to how consciousness gets a footing – how consciousness gets established at the moment of death. In fact, it is an attempt to show us the connection between two lives. First of all, the Buddha declares to the monks the following statement:

"*Yañca bhikkhave ceteti yañca pakappeti yañca anuseti ārammaṇaṁ etaṁ hoti viññāṇassa ṭhitiyā. Ārammaṇe sati patiṭṭhā viññāṇassa hoti. Tasmiṁ patiṭṭhite viññāṇe virūḷhe āyatiṁ punabbhavābhinibbatti hoti.*"

"Monks, what one intends, what one mentally constructs, whatever lies latent in him, that becomes an object for the stationing of consciousness. There being an object, there comes to be an establishment of consciousness. When that consciousness is established and has come to growth, there is the production of future renewed existence."

In the second passage the Buddha makes the following declaration:

"*No ce, bhikkhave, ceteti no ca pakappeti, atha ce anuseti ārammaṇaṁ etaṁ hoti viññāṇassa ṭhitiyā. Ārammaṇe sati patiṭṭhā viññāṇassa hoti. Tasmiṁ patiṭṭhite viññāṇe virūḷhe āyatiṁ punabbhavābhinibbatti hoti.*"

"If monks, one does not intend and one does not mentally construct but one still has a latent tendency, this becomes an object for stationing of consciousness. There being an object, there comes to be an establishment of consciousness. When that consciousness is established and has come to growth, there is a production of future renewed existence."

There is something peculiar here. One does not intend nor does one mentally construct. The question very often raised is how one can think or intend in the case of one's instantaneous death. Though there is no intention or mental construction, there is that latent tendency. That is enough as an object for the establishment of consciousness. So there is still the possibility of rebirth in the future. This is the gist of the second statement.

In the third statement there is an allusion to arahanthood.

"*Yato ca kho bhikkhave, no ceva ceteti no ca pakappeti no ca anuseti, ārammaṇaṁ etaṁ na hoti viññāṇassa ṭhitiyā. Ārammaṇe asati patiṭṭhā viññāṇassa na hoti tadappatiṭṭhite viññāṇe avirūḷhe āyatiṁ punabbhavābhinibbatti na hoti*"

"But monks, when one does not intend and does not construct mentally and does not have a latent tendency, there is no object for the stationing of consciousness. When there is no object, there is no establishment of consciousness. When consciousness is not established and does not come to growth, there is no production of future renewed existence."

This passage gives a hint to the deliverance from the cycle of births and deaths. If at the moment of death one has neither an intention nor a mental construction nor a latent tendency, then there is no object for the stationing of consciousness. When there is no object, there is no question of rebirth. Here again, we have a distinction between the established consciousness and the unestablished consciousness.

Sometimes the Buddha points out the relation between one's last thought and the next birth.

“Monks, having encompassed a mentally corrupted person’s mind with my own mind, I understand that if this person were to die at this time, he would be deposited in hell as if brought there. What is the reason? Because of the corrupted mind, he gets reborn in hell.”

To some extent, it is like a latency.

Then the Buddha shows the other side.

“Monks, having encompassed a mentally pleased person’s mind with my own mind, I understand that if this person were to die at this time, he would be deposited in heaven if brought there.”

This reminds one of the story of Maṭṭakuṇḍali. Even though he had not done any meritorious deed, the last thought moment qualified him for rebirth in heaven. All this shows the power of one’s last thought. Even the shade of a thought is enough to bring about rebirth. That shade becomes a ‘photograph’ when conjoined with consciousness. We brought this up because it is relevant to the question of rebirth which everybody is talking about.

Let us consider another aspect of the same problem. The passage of consciousness is the talking point these days. Particularly, the western psychologists who are in the grip of the personality-view (*sakkāyadiṭṭhi*) whenever they speak about consciousness have an idea of it as a monolithic whole. They know nothing about name and form. They interpret consciousness as something jumping from one birth to another. This is not a recent development. The fallacy is pre-Buddhistic. Even in the *Upanishads* of the Brahmins rebirth is explained with the simile of the leech. Think of the way a leech moves from place to place. This is because they conceived of consciousness as a self or soul. According to them rebirth is transmigration from place to place. But in our Dhamma as we pointed out existence is always a whirling round as in the case of a vortex or a whirlpool. How is this vortex formed? Dependent on consciousness is name and form and dependent on name and form is consciousness (*viññāṇapaccayā nāmarūpaṁ nāmarūpapaccayā viññāṇaṁ*).

With the help of this idea of inter-relation between consciousness and name and form, the Buddha broke the tenacious self-view which had prevailed till then. It is not a case of just one thing. It is a turning round between two things as in the case of a vortex. In this connection there is a certain declaration by the Buddha which is very often misinterpreted.

"*Nāhaṁ bhikkhave aññaṁ ekadhammampi samanupassāmi yaṁ evaṁ lahuparivattaṁ yathayidaṁ cittaṁ, yāvañcidaṁ bhikkhave upamāpi na sukarā yāva lahuparivattaṁ cittaṁ.*"

"Monks, I do not see even one other thing which turns round so quickly as the mind. So much so, monks, it is not easy to give a simile to show how quickly the mind turns round."

Some Buddhist sects use the simile of a turning-round of a fire brand ('*aḷātacakravat*') to depict the rapidity of thought. But that is not what is meant by the above declaration. Between consciousness and name and form, there is an extremely rapid process of grasping an object and letting go of it only to grasp another. Think of every moment of our conscious life. How quickly our minds shift from one object to another.

There is another discourse which supports this interpretation:

"*Varaṁ bhikkhave assutavā puthujjano imaṁ cātummahābhūtikaṁ kāyaṁ attato upagaccheyya natveva cittaṁ.*

Taṃ kissa hetu? Dissatāyaṁ bhikkhave, cātummahābhūtiko kāyo ekampi vassaṁ tiṭṭhamāno, dvepi vassāni tiṭṭhamāno, tīṇipi vassāni tiṭṭhamāno, cattārīpi vassāni tiṭṭhamāno, pañcapi vassāni tiṭṭhamāno, dasapi vassāni tiṭṭhamāno, vīsatipi vassāni tiṭṭhamāno, tiṁsampi vassāni tiṭṭhamāno, cattārīsampi vassāni tiṭṭhamāno, paññāsampi vassāni tiṭṭhamāno, vassasatampi tiṭṭhamāno bhīyyopi tiṭṭhamāno. Yañca kho etaṁ bhikkhave vuccati cittaṁ itipi mano itipi viññāṇaṁ itipi taṁ rattiyā ca divasassa ca aññadeva uppajjati aññaṁ nirujjhati.

Seyyathāpi bhikkhave, makkaṭo araññe pavane caramāno sākhaṁ gaṇhāti taṁ muñcitvā aññaṁ gaṇhāti:

taṃ muñcitvā aññaṃ gaṇhāti, evameva kho bhikkhave yamidaṁ vuccati cittaṁ itipi mano itipi viññāṇaṁ itipi taṁ rattiyā ca divasassa ca aññadeva uppajjati aññaṁ nirujjhati."

"It would be better, monks, for the uninstructed worldling to take as self this body composed of the four great primaries rather than the mind. For what reason? Because this body composed of the four great primaries is seen standing for one year, for two years, for three, four or five or ten years, for twenty, thirty forty or fifty years, for a hundred years or even longer. But that which is called

thought and mind and consciousness arises as one thing and ceases as another by day and by night.

Just as a monkey roaming through a forest grabs hold of one branch, lets go of it and grabs another and then lets that go and grabs still another, so that which is called thought and mind and consciousness arises as one thing and ceases as another by day and by night."

The point of the discourse is that there is no justification whatever for taking mind as one's self. The phrase '*aññadeva uppajjati aññaṁ nirujjhati*' – 'It arises as one thing and ceases as another' has a very deep meaning. A clue to its meaning is found in the simile of the monkey. It gives a hint to the rapidity of the process of grasping and letting go. In the same way, consciousness grasps name and form (its object) incessantly. The incessant inter-relation between consciousness and name and form is what is meant by the term '*lahuparivattaṁ*'. In fact, the literal meaning of '*parivattati*' is 'to turn round'. This turning round is between consciousness and name and form – the vortical inter-play which sustains the conceit of existence. That same inter-relation which goes on during one's lifetime is instrumental in bringing about one's rebirth. Consciousness does not decide the issue by itself. Name and form has to come in. The simile of the leech is misleading. There is a discourse which shows that during the Buddha's time too, there were disciples who were influenced by this 'leech-explanation' of rebirth. It is the *Mahā Taṇhāsaṁkhaya Sutta,* of the *Majjhima Nikāya*.

In that Sutta it is said that a monk called Sāti went round misrepresenting the Buddha declaring that the Buddha had made the following statement regarding the question of rebirth.

"*Tadevidaṁ viññāṇaṁ sandhāvati saṁsarati anaññaṁ* "This same consciousness keeps running and wandering in *Saṁsāra* by itself without anything else."

The other monks remonstrated with him as follows:

"*Mā evaṁ āvuso Sāti avaca, mā bhagavantaṁ abbhācikkhi. Na hi sādhu bhagavato abbhakkhānaṁ. Na hi bhagavā evaṁ vadeyya. Anekapariyāyena hāvuso Sāti paṭiccasamuppannaṁ viññāṇaṁ vuttaṁ bhagavatā:*

aññatra paccayā natthi viññāṇassa sambhavoti."

"Friend Sāti, do not say so. Do not misrepresent the Fortunate One. The Fortunate One would not say so. For in various ways, friend, the Fortunate One

has stated consciousness to be dependently arisen. Without a condition there is no origination of consciousness."

Despite all this criticism, Sāti did not give up his wrong view. Then the monks reported the matter to the Buddha who summoned Sāti to his presence and questioned him. Sāti maintained the same standpoint that it is the same consciousness that runs and wanders in *Saṁsāra* by itself without anything else.

Then the Buddha asked:

"What is that consciousness, Sāti?" and Sāti replied:

"Venerable Sir, it is that which speaks and feels and experiences here and there the result of good and bad actions."

Sāti's reply brings out the typical Brahmin viewpoint represented by the simile of the leech. The Buddha rebuked him calling him a vain man (*moghapurisa*) asking him:

"To whom have you known me to teach the Dhamma in that way? Have I not stated in various ways consciousness to be dependently arisen, with the words 'without a condition, there is no origination of consciousness."

Then the Buddha goes on to explain to the monks this dependently arisen nature of consciousness, giving a very effective simile to illustrate it.

"Monks, dependent on whatever condition a consciousness arises, it is reckoned by that particular condition. A consciousness that arises dependent on the eye and forms is reckoned as eye-consciousness. A consciousness that arises dependent on the ear and sounds is reckoned as ear-consciousness. A consciousness that arises dependent on the nose and odours is reckoned as nose-consciousness. A consciousness that arises dependent on the tongue and flavours is reckoned as tongue-consciousness. A consciousness that arises dependent on the body and tangibles is reckoned as body-consciousness. A consciousness that arises dependent on the mind and mind objects is reckoned as mind-consciousness. Just as monks, a fire is reckoned by the particular condition dependent on which it burns – a fire that burns dependent on logs is reckoned as a log-fire, a fire that burns dependent on faggots is reckoned as a faggot-fire, a fire that burns dependent on grass is reckoned as a grass-fire, a fire that burns dependent on cowdung is reckoned as a cowdung-fire, a fire that burns dependent on chaff is reckoned as a chaff-fire, a fire that burns dependent on rubbish is reckoned as a rubbish-fire – even so a consciousness that arises dependent on the eye and forms is reckoned as eye-consciousness…… a

consciousness that arises dependent on mind and mind-objects is reckoned as mind-consciousness.

It seems, then, that dependent on whatever condition (*yaññadeva paccayaṁ paṭicca*) a consciousness arises, it is reckoned by that particular condition. There is no consciousness in the abstract as the consciousness. It is always specific as a consciousness, even as there is no fire in the abstract as the fire. It is always specific as a fire. This simile strikes at the root of the animistic concept of a primordial fire. This revelation by the Buddha, though worded simply, revolutionizes the entire course of Indian thought. This is the marvel of the Law of Dependent Arising.

But then, what has happened in our own tradition? As you all know, in the majority of books now available for you to read, the position has gone topsy-turvy. It is as if we have retraced our steps to the Vedantic philosophy, without being aware of it. Both Buddhists and non-Buddhists are talking about a consciousness that keeps jumping from one existence to another. They are unaware of the significance of the deepest point of the Law of Dependent Arising which the Buddha has proclaimed, namely, the mutual inter-relation between consciousness and name and form. That is the vortex of existence. Like the vortex in a river, it is indeed the deepest point. That is probably why the *Mahā Nidāna Sutta* was so named.

Truly it is the *Mahā Nidāna* – the Great Cause. Name and form themselves are inter-related. It is not something compact. There is no 'form' without 'name and there is no 'name' without 'form'. That is why we identified it with the cryptic 'tangle-within' (*antojatā*). Likewise, we identified the inter-relation between consciousness and name and form with the 'tangle-without' (*bahijatā*) because when it comes to the question of rebirth, consciousness is 'here' and name and form is 'there' – in the mother's womb. However, name and form has to have consciousness to complete the picture of a new existence.

So then wandering in *Saṁsāra* is not like the movement of a leech. On the other hand, it is something like the stretching out of a flexible circular rubber-band when pressed down at one point – as we have already explained. As soon as it is released at this end, it will go and join the far end, if it is pressed down at that end also. Or else one can understand it as the change of the centre of the whirlpool. What we call our existence has at its centre this organic body we had grasped inside the mother's womb. Once born, we reach out for the objects of the six senses, somewhat like an octopus. However far the 'octopus' extends its 'suckers' they come back to this organic body because that is 'the-grasped-par excellence'. But when the time comes to abandon this body, consciousness gravitates towards

its object already grasped (ie. *nāmarūpa*). The phrase '*imasmiñca saviññāṇake kāye bahiddhā ca sabbanimittesu*' – (In this conscious body and in all external signs) gives a hint to this same inter-relation. This conscious body is what comes out of the mother's womb as a result of that gravitation towards the '*nāmarūpa* object'. But once born, it pursues the objects of the senses as before. It is the same seething whirlpool. Only the centre – the rallying point – has changed. That is why it is called 'the established consciousness' ('*patiṭṭhita viññāṇa*'). The difficult thing is the putting an end to this process. The deepest point is Therefore, the vortex between consciousness and name and form.

There is an extremely important sutta in this connection where Venerable Sāriputta explains the mutual interdependence between consciousness and name and form with a very effective simile. It is the *Naḷakaḷāpa Sutta* in the *Nidāna Saṁyutta* of the *Saṁyutta Nikāya*. Once, Venerable Sāriputta and Venerable Mahā Koṭṭhita were staying at the Deer park in *Isipatana*. One evening Venerable Mahā Koṭṭhita, after his meditation in seclusion, approached Venerable Sāriputta and asked a question relating to *Paṭicca Samuppāda*.

"Friend Sāriputta, is decay and death created by oneself or is it created by another or is it created both by oneself and by another or has it arisen fortuitously being created neither by oneself nor by another?"

Venerable Sāriputta replied:

"Friend Koṭṭhita, decay and death is not created by oneself nor is it created by another, nor is it created both by oneself and by another, nor has it arisen fortuitously being created neither by oneself nor by another. But with birth as condition, decay and death comes to be."

Some of you might think it amusing to say that birth is the condition for decay and death, but this is the mode of conditionality. This is the starting point for analyzing *Paṭicca Samuppāda* from the very end. Decay and death is the last link and birth is the condition for it. Then Venerable Mahā Koṭṭhita asks:

"Friend Sāriputta, is birth created by oneself or is it created by another or is it created both by oneself and by another or neither by oneself nor by another?"

Venerable Sāriputta answers in the same way rejecting the tetralemma and showing that existence (bhava) is the condition for birth.

You had better remember that this is the procedure in radical attention (*yonisomanasikāra*). Then Venerable Mahā Koṭṭhita poses the same tetralemma regarding existence and Venerable Sāriputta rejects it and points out that

grasping (*upādāna*) is the condition for existence. I hope you can understand the sequence of question and answer. The condition for grasping is craving, the condition for craving is feeling, the condition for feeling is contact, the condition for contact is the six sense spheres. Now be prepared. We are now approaching the crux of the problem.

Having disallowed Venerable Mahā Koṭṭhita's tetralemma about the six sense spheres, Venerable Sāriputta says that name and form is the condition for the six sense spheres. Then Venerable Mahā Koṭṭhita puts the same question regarding name and form – as if he is ignorant of it. Actually, we do not know whether he is posing all these questions for his own sake or on our behalf, because both these venerables are veterans in the Dhamma. Well, whatever it is, this is the four cornered question regarding name and form.

"Friend, Sāriputta, is name and form created by oneself or by another, or both by oneself and by another or has it arisen fortuitously being created neither by oneself nor by another?"

"Name and form, friend Koṭṭhita, is not created by oneself nor is it created by another, nor is it created both by oneself and by another, nor has it arisen fortuitously being created neither by oneself nor by another but with consciousness as condition, name and form comes to be."

"Friend Sāriputta, is consciousness created by oneself, or is it created by another, or is it created both by oneself and by another or has it arisen fortuitously being created neither by oneself nor by another?"

"Consciousness, friend Koṭṭhita, is not created by oneself, nor is it created by another, nor is it created both by oneself and another, nor has it arisen fortuitously being created neither by oneself nor by another but with name and form as condition consciousness comes to be."

So you see, to the question regarding the condition for name and form, the answer is consciousness and to the question as to the condition for consciousness, the answer is name and form. Now we are at the crux of the problem. Dramatically enough, Venerable Mahā Koṭṭhita recapitulates Venerable Sāriputta's apparently contradictory statements in a rhetoric way.

"Friend Sāriputta, you yourself told me just now that consciousness is the condition for name and form but now you are telling me that name and form is the condition for consciousness. How am I to understand what you mean?"

But Venerable Sāriputta says:

“Well then, friend, I will make up a simile for you, for some intelligent people here understand the meaning of a statement by means of a simile.”

So this is how the stage is set for the highly significant and memorable simile of the ‘Two-Sheaves of-Reeds’ to come out.

“Just as two sheaves of reeds might stand supporting each other, so too with name and form as condition consciousness comes to be and with consciousness as condition name and form comes to be. With name and form as condition the six sense spheres come to be, with the six sense spheres as condition contact ..... Such is the arising of this whole mass of suffering.

If, friend, one were to remove one of these two sheaves of reeds, the other would fall and if one were to remove the other sheaf, the first would fall. So too, with the cessation of name and form comes the cessation of consciousness, with the cessation of consciousness comes the cessation of name and form, with the cessation of name and form comes the cessation of the six sense spheres, with the cessation of the six sense spheres, the cessation of contact.....Such is the cessation of this whole mass of suffering.

According to this simple but profound simile, the interdependence between consciousness and name and form is like that of two sheaves of reeds standing one supporting the other (*aññamaññaṁ nissāya ṭiṭṭheyyaṁ*). When name and form falls consciousness falls, when consciousness falls name and form falls, when name and form falls, the six sense spheres fall and along with it, contact falls, feeling falls, craving falls, grasping falls, existence falls, birth falls, decay and death and all the rest of it falls.

Imagine for a moment that the consciousness sheaf of reeds is standing on your left side and the name and form sheaf of reeds is on the right and leaning on the name and form sheaf of reeds stand the six sense spheres and the rest of the twelve links. The crucial point is the removal of the consciousness sheaf of reeds, with which name and form is removed. That is to say, with the cessation of name and form consciousness ceases. Cessation of consciousness is not tantamount to death. It is the state of ‘*anidassana viññāṇa*’ – Non-manifestative consciousness. Since that Non-manifestative consciousness does not manifest name and form, the six sense spheres also cease, as well as contact, feeling and all the rest of it. This is an extremely deep point in this Dhamma. You should try to understand this now. I wonder why our commentarial tradition has fully ignored this subtle point all this time. What we have already said about the vortex is implicit in this simile of the two sheaves of reeds. Just consider why Venerable Sāriputta did not choose for his simile two blocks of solid timber with pith. He probably wanted to

insinuate voidness (*suññatā*) by opting for pithless reeds. The common term for reed and bamboo in Pali is '*tacasāra*'. It means:

'having the bark itself as the pith'. The reed is hollow inside. It has no pith It is the same with sheaf of reeds. The insinuation is that consciousness is not something solid and compact. It is only a heap. The deluded world takes it to be a monolithic whole. Name and form is also a heap. That is what the insight meditator understands as he progresses in meditation. The net result of it is insight in to the not self-nature of phenomena. The meditator understands all this as impermanent, suffering and not-self.

The rapidity of the arising and ceasing of name and form is also implied. The inter-relation between name and form and consciousness is extremely rapid. That is the true meaning of '*lahuparivattaṁ*'. Existence is a conceit which tries to sit pretty on this inconceivably rapid mutual inter-relation between consciousness and name and form. Venerable Sāriputta has pointed out how the cessation of existence is brought about. When he revealed this fact, Venerable Mahā Koṭṭhita came out with a memorable eulogy as a joyous utterance.

"It is wonderful, friend Sāriputta. It is marvelous, friend Sāriputta, how well this has been stated by Venerable Sāriputta.

We rejoice in the Venerable Sārioutta's statement on these thirty six grounds. If friend, a monk preaches the Dhamma for the purpose of revulsion towards decay and death, for its fading and cessation, he can be called a monk who is a speaker on Dhamma. If a monk is practising for the purpose of revulsion towards decay and death, for its fading away and cessation, he can be called a monk practising in accordance with Dhamma. If a monk through revulsion towards decay and death, through its fading away and cessation, is liberated by non-grasping , he can be called a monk who has attained *Nibbāna* in this very life."

"If friend, a monk preaches the Dhamma for the purpose of revulsion towards birth ……. existence ……. Grasping ……. craving ……. feeling…….contact……. the six sense-spheres ……. name and form ……. consciousness ……. Preparations ……. ignorance, for its fading away and cessation, he can be called a monk who is a speaker on Dhamma. If a monk is practising for the purpose of revulsion towards ignorance, for its fading away and cessation, he can be called a monk who is practising in accordance with the Dhamma. If a monk, through revulsion towards ignorance, through its fading away and cessation, is liberated by non-grasping, he can be called a monk who has attained *Nibbāna* in this very life."

This eulogy voiced by Venerable Mahā Koṭṭhita has a practical value. That is why we quoted it in full. The thirty-six grounds are made up by multiplying the twelve

links of the formula by the three points of eulogy concerning the preaching of the Dhamma, the practicing of it and liberation through it. This is clear illustration of the pragmatic value of the Law of Dependent Arising. If one rightly understands each of the twelve links in the context of conditionality and breaks the chain at that point, the entire chain is broken. However, the most crucial point, the '*Mahā Nidāna*'– The Great Cause – is the inter-dependence between name and form and consciousness.

Well then, let me wind up for today. We have dealt with this topic in four sermons so far, because this aspect has remained hidden for some reason or other. That is why so many wrong views have come up.You had better give thought to this aspect without complaining that it is too deep. Of course, the Dhamma is deep, as the Buddha himself has said. There may be many here who wish to attain *Nibbāna* after seeing the Buddha. The other day we quoted the memorable words of the Buddha.

"*Yo paṭicca samuppādaṁ passati so dhammaṁ passati.*

Yo dhammaṁ passati so paṭcca samuppādaṁ passati"

"He who sees the Law of Dependent Arising, sees the Dhamma and

he who sees the Dhamma, sees the Law of Dependent Arising."

Similarly, when Venerble Vakkali was always gazing at the Buddha's body, the Buddha dismissed him saying:

"What is the use of looking at this putrid body, he who sees the Dhamma sees me. (*Yo dhammaṁ passati, so maṁ passati.*) So, dear listeners, if some of you wish to see the Buddha and attain *Nibbāna*, see this Law of Dependent Arising. *Nibbāna* is there, and the Buddha is there.

Well, enough for today. Perhaps all this came out through some inspiration. I am not sure whether you will get the opportunity to hear more about these things. Try to make use of what you have already heard. Today you have taken the higher precepts and spent the day in meditation. You had better remember these precious admonitions in the Dhamma and try to shape your lives accordingly. If you have any wrong views, get rid of them. It is only when you take up right view and having followed the path of practice, reach the goal of *Nibbāna*, that you realize the true value of those precious admonitions. May you all derive whatever inspiration possible from this sermon for your progress in your meditation, and be able to realize in this very life the supreme bliss of *Nibbāna*! Whatever beings there are, from the lowest hell to the highest Brahma world, may they all rejoice

in this sermon! May it conduce to the attainment of their higher aspirations! May they all realize the Deathless *Nibbāna*!



Paticca Samuppada Sermon 5

The Law of Dependent Arising

(Pahan Kanuwa Sermon – No. 187)

'*Namo tassa bhagavato arahato sammāsambuddhassa*'

'Homage be! To the Fortunate One – the Worthy, Fully Enlightened!'

Akkheyyasaññino sattā

akkheyyasmiṁ patiṭṭhitā

akkheyyaṁ apariññāya

yogamāyanti maccuno

Akkheyyañca pariññāya

akkhātāraṁ na maññati

tañhi tassa na hotîti

yena naṁ vajjā na tassa atthi

– Samiddhi Sutta, Devatā Saṁyutta, Samyutta Nikaya.

Beings are aware of what can be named

They take their stand on what can be named

By not fully understanding what can be named

They come back to go under the yoke of Death.

He who fully understands what can be named

And thinks not in terms of one who speaks

For such things do not occur to him

That by which they speak, that is not for him.

Dear Listeners,

The teacher of the three realms, the Fully Enlightened Buddha, has revealed to us, through the Law of Dependent Arising, that a good many of the

problems, controversies, debates and disputes in the world arise from linguistic conventions. The problem of *Saṁsāra*, which is the biggest problem, is also due to it. On this first full moon day of the new year, we have taken up as the topic of our sermon, two verses relating to that aspect of linguistic usage.

These two verses are found in the *Samiddhi Sutta* of *Sagāthaka Vagga* in the *Saṁyutta Nikāya*. There is an interesting introductory story to these two verses which has a flavor of Dhamma in it. When the Buddha was staying at the *Tapoda* monastery in *Rajagaha*, Venerable Samiddhi woke up at dawn and went to the hot springs at *Tapoda* to bathe. Having bathed in the hot springs and come out of it, he stood in one robe drying his limbs. Then a certain deity, who was exceedingly beautiful, illuminating the entire hot springs, approached Venerable Samiddhi and standing in the air addressed him in verse:

Abhutvā bhikkhasi bhikkhu

na hi bhutvāna bhikkhasi

bhutvāna bhikkhu bhikkhassu

mā taṁ kālo upaccagā

Not having enjoyed, you go for alms, monk You do not go for alms, having enjoyed. Having enjoyed, monk, you go for alms Let not the time pass you by.

'*Abhutvā bhikkhasi bhikkhu*' – Monk you have come to this monkhood which is dependent on alms not having enjoyed the fivefold sense-pleasures. '*na hi bhutvāna bhikkhasi*' – Not that you have come to monkhood after enjoying the sensepleasures. '*bhutvāna bhikkhu bhikkhassu*' – Monk, go to monkhood having enjoyed the sense-pleasures. '*mā taṁ kālo upaccagā*' – Do not let the best time for enjoying sensepleasures – that is youth – pass you by. Here is an invitation that goes against the Dhamma and here is the reply Venerable Samiddhi gave to it.

Kālaṁ vo'haṁ na jānāmi

channo kālo na dissati

Tasmā abhutvā bhikkhāmi

mā maṁ kālo upaccagā

I do not know the time of death

Hidden is the time – it is not seen

That is why I go for alms without enjoying

Let not the opportune time pass me by

'*Kālaṁ vo'haṁ na jānāmi*' – I do not know when I have to die, '*channo kālo na dissati*' – The time of death is hidden from me – it is not seen. '*Tasmā abhutvā bhikkhāmi*' – Therefore, I have come to monkhood without enjoying sense-pleasures. '*mā maṁ kālo upaccagā*' – With the thought:

'let not the opportune time for monkhood pass me by.' The deity's advice was not to let the time for enjoying sense-pleasures, that is youth, pass by. What Venerable Samiddhi says is that youth is the proper time for striving as a monk, since one cannot do it in decrepit old age.

But the deity did not give up his attempt to mislead Venerable Samiddhi. He came down and standing on the earth said:

"Monk, you have gone forth while young with a lad's black hair, endowed with the radiant youth, without having dallied with sensual pleasures. Enjoy human sensual pleasures, monk, do not abandon what is directly visible in order to pursue what takes time ('….*mā sandiṭṭhikaṁ hitvā kālikaṁ anudhāvī*.')
Venerable Samiddhi's rejoinder is exemplary.

"Friend, it is not that I abandon what is directly visible and run after what takes time. For the Fortunate One has said that sensual pleasures involve time, are full of suffering and full of despair and that the danger in them is still greater. Visible here and now is the Dhamma, immediate, inviting one to come and see, leading one onwards, to be personally experienced by the wise."

And then the deity asks:

"But how is it monk, that the Fortunate One has said that sensual pleasures involve time, full of suffering, full of despair and that the danger in them is still greater? How is it that this Dhamma is visible here and now, immediate, inviting one to come and see, leading one onwards and to be personally experienced by the wise?"

But the Venerable Samiddhi said:

"Friend, I am newly ordained, a new-comer in this Dhamma and Discipline. I cannot explain in detail. There is that Fortunate One dwelling at the Tapoda monastery in Rajagaha. You had better approach him and question him on this point. As he explains it to you, so you should bear in mind."

However, the deity says:

“Monk, it is not easy for me to approach that Fortunate One. He is always surrounded by other deities of great influence. If you go and question on this matter, we too will come to hear the Dhamma.”

Venerable Samiddhi agreed to the request and approached the Buddha and related the whole incident. That deity also was present. Then the Buddha addressed the above two verses to that deity.

Akkheyyasaññino sattā

akkheyyasmiṃ patiṭṭhitā

akkheyyaṁ apariññāya

yogamāyanti maccuno

These words might sound strange to some of you. If we go by etymology, *√khyā* in ‘*akkheyya*’ means ‘to tell’ and ‘*akkhāna*’ is ‘tale’. ‘*akkheyyaṁ*’ is Therefore, ‘what has to be told’. It can also mean ‘what can be named’ or verbally conveyed. The perception of beings is based on the ‘nameable’–

(‘*akkheyyasaññino sattā*’) They take their stand on what is named or expressed – (*akkheyyasmiṃ patiṭṭhitā*). Not having fully understood the nameable – (*akkheyyaṁ apariññāya*) they come back again to go under the yoke of Death – (*yogamāyanti maccuno*).

Akkheyyañca pariññāya

akkhātāraṁ na maññati

tañhi tassa na hotîti

yena naṁ vajjā na tassa atthi

Then the other side of the position is given which is relevant to the arahant. Having fully understood the nameable for what it is (*akkheyyañca pariññāya*), He does not conceive of a speaker – (*akkhātāraṁ na maññati*). If the limitations of language are correctly understood, one does not take seriously the subject-object relationship. Such imagining is no longer there in him (*tañhi tassa na hotîti*). Not for him is that by which one may speak of him (*yena naṁ vajjā na tassa atthi*). That means, the arahant has transcended linguistic limitations.

Having uttered these two verses, the Buddha, as if challenging the deity's powers of understanding, said – "*Yakkha*, if you understand, say so."

Sometimes in the discourses, even for deities and gods, the word '*yakkha*' is used. It is not to be taken as a derogatory term here. Even the *Sakka* is sometimes called a '*yakkha*'. Anyway the deity confessed that he could not understand in detail what the Buddha has said in brief and asked him to explain it in detail. As if to tease him, the Buddha uttered another deep verse.

Samo visesī athavā nihīno

yo maññati so vivadetha tena

tīsu vidhāsu avikampamāno

samo visesīti na tassa hoti

He who conceives himself equal, superior or inferior

Might thereby get involved in debate

But to one unshaken in the three grades of conceit

A fancying as equal or superior does not occur.

Equal (*samo*) superior (*visesī*) and inferior (*nihīno*) are the three grades of conceit. Whoever conceives in terms of these grades will dispute over them. But he who is unshaken by these three grades does not think in terms of equal or superior. With this verse as explanation, the Buddha again repeated the challenge:

"*Yakkha*, if you understand, say so."

The deity confessed that he still cannot understand and begged the Buddha once more for a detailed explanation. The Buddha responded by uttering a longer verse which goes even deeper than the previous one.

Pahāsi saṅkhaṃ na ca mānamajjhagā

acchecchi taṇhaṁ idha nāmarūpe

taṁ chinnaganthaṁ anīghaṁ nirāsaṁ

pariyesamānā nâjjhagamuṁ

devā manussā idha vā huraṁ vā

saggesu vā sabbanivesanesu

He cast off reckoning, no conceit assumed

Craving he cut off – in this name and form

That bond-free one – from blemish and longing free

Him no gods or men – in their search could ken

Searching here and beyond – in heavens and in all abodes.

The verse sums up the accomplishments of an arahant. '*Pahāsi saṅkhaṃ'* – he has given up reckoning. As we once explained, *'sankhā'* is literally, 'number.' We pointed out that the numeral is the most basic or primary ingredient in a linguistic medium. You may have seen how dumb people converse counting on fingers. So we may call it a 'reckoning' – a term denoting a characteristic of language in general. An arahant has given up 'reckoning' – that is, he does not go by it. '*na ca mānamajjhagā'* – he does not take up conceit. '*acchecchi taṇhaṁ idha nāmarūpe*' – he cut off craving in this name and form. We have pointed out that 'name' is not 'bending' as traditionally explained but that it is a collective term for feeling, perception, intention, contact and attention through which we get an idea of 'form' (*rūpa*) based on the four great primaries – earth, water, fire and air. Worldlings are attached to this name and form but the arahant has cut off that craving. Having severed that bond ('*taṁ chinnaganthaṁ'*), he is free from blemish and desire ('*anīghaṁ nirāsaṁ'*). Gods and men searching for the object of an arahants mind, cannot locate it in heavens or in other abodes.

With this profound verse, the Buddha repeated the challenging words:

"Yakkha, if you understand, say so."

This time the deity himself utters a verse in which he claims to give the detailed explanation of what the Buddha has preached in brief.

Pāpaṁ na kayirā vacasā manasā

kāyena vā kiñcana sabbaloke

kāme pahāya satimā sampajāno

dukkhaṁ na sevetha anatthasaṁhitaṁ

Let one not do any evil by word or by mind

Or else by body anywhere in this world

Giving up sense pleasures, mindful and fully aware

Let one not form ally with suffering bound up with woe.

With that, the episode ends. One might wonder why the Buddha addressed such deep verses to the deity. It may be that the Buddha wanted to impress the deity of the depth of this Dhamma since the latter made light of it by trying to mislead Venerable Samiddhi. Whatever it is, these verses are highly significant in revealing the Buddha's attitude to language. Let us try to analyse the meaning of these verses.

'*Akkheyyasaññino sattā*' – The perception of the worldlings is language-oriented. '*akkheyyasmiṁ patiṭṭhitā*' – They rely heavily on language. They are unaware of the limitations imposed on language by grammar and syntax. The subject-object relation is part and parcel of the linguistic medium. But the worldlings take it seriously. '*akkheyyaṁ apariññāya – yogamāyanti maccuno*' – by not fully understanding the nature of language, they come again and again to go under the yoke of Death.

On a previous occasion, while talking about *'nāma-rūpa'* (name and form) we brought up the simile of the dog on the plank. Later we improved on that simile by relating the story of Narcissus. The handsome Greek youth Narcissus who had never seen his own face, while roaming in a forest, bent down into a pond to wash his face. Seeing the reflection of his own face in the water, he imagined it to be an angel's, and fell in love with it. After a vain attempt to embrace it, he pined away and died by the pond. 'Narcissism' as a term for self-love, now found in the Dictionary, is reminiscent of that Greek youth. The sum-total of the 'nameable' is found in name and form of which beings are conscious and on which they take their stand. By not understanding fully name and form, beings go under the yoke of Death. Take for instance the case of a wealthy man. What is the self-love that comes up at the moment of his death? "How can I part with this house and property? How can I leave behind my wife and children?"

That is the name and form he grasps – the reflection of his own self. In that grasping there is a longing for another birth.

"Oh! Give me a chance to fulfill my desire!"

"There you are" says *Māra*, and gives him not exactly what he wants but what he deserves according to his *Kamma*. So he comes back to his own house either as a

rat, a snake or as a frog. Or else he comes back to sit on his own chair as a dog. That is how one takes one's stand on the nameable – (*'akkheyyasmiṁ patiṭṭhitā')*. Worldlings are involved in an inter-relation between consciousness and name and form. They are not aware that name and form is only a reflection. That is what the Buddha makes known to the world. If one takes one's stand on name and form, one comes under the yoke of Death.

There is another reason for our choice of this particular topic for today's sermon. You might remember that in a previous sermon we discussed at length an extremely important discourse which our commentarial tradition has not taken seriously – namely, the *Mahā Nidāna Sutta*. We showed how the Buddha explained to Venerable Ānanda, the inter-connection between name and form as well as the inter-relation between name and form and consciousness. Although we quoted the highly significant passage in which the Buddha sums up that exposition, we could not explain it the other day. It is with the aim of paving the way for a discussion of that passage that we brought up the above two verses, as the topic today. First of all let me cite that passage in full.

"*Ettāvatā kho Ānanda jāyetha vā jīyetha vā mīyetha vā cavetha vā uppajjetha vā, Ettāvatā adhivacanapatho, ettāvatā niruttipatho ettāvatā paññattipatho ettāvatā paññāvacaraṁ ettāvatā vaṭṭaṁ vaṭṭati itthattaṁ paññāpanāya yadidaṁ nāmarūpaṁ saha viññānena*."

"In so far only, Ānanda, can one be born, grow old or die or pass away or reappear, in so far only is there a pathway for verbal expression, in so far only is there a pathway for terminology, in so far only is there a pathway for designation, in so far only is there a sphere of wisdom, in so far only is there a whirling round for a designation of thisness, that is to say, as far as name and form together with consciousness."

Now for an explanation – here the Buddha is telling Venerable Ānanda that one could be said to be born, to grow old or die or pass away or reappear, that there is a pathway for verbal expression or terminology or designation, that there is any scope for wisdom and a whirling round for designating a thisness – all these are traceable to a connection between name and form and consciousness. The range of wisdom extends as far as consciousness and name and form.

The most important declaration is that there is a whirling round for a designation of 'this-ness' (*'ettāvatā vaṭṭaṁ vaṭṭati îtthattaṁ paññāpanāya'*). We have explained earlier the meaning of the term *itthatta*. '*Itthaṁ*' means 'this'. So '*itthatta*' is 'thisness'. It stands for 'the state of this existence.' Therefore, the

phrase in question means that there is a whirling round for designating this state of existence. You had better recall the simile of the vortex. Only when there is a vortex or a whirlpool in the ocean, can one point out a 'there' or 'here'. In order to explain this whirling round between two things, we cited the change of prices in the market based on supply and demand. In fact, all forms of existence are traceable to an inter-relation between consciousness and name and form. This, then is the Samsāric vortex.

When we see how a whirlpool in the sea or in a river draws in the flotsam and jetsam around it, we point it out saying 'There' or 'Here.' Likewise we call a heap of grasping – a 'live-whirlpool' – a Person. The 'first person' is of course 'I myself.' 'You are' the 'second person,' and 'He, over there' is the 'third person.' At least there has to be the latent conceit 'Am' ('*asmimāna*') to justify 'Existence'. With the recognition of this 'Person', the entire repertoire of grammar and syntax falls into place. Here 'I' am, yonder 'you' are and there 'he' is. This is the basic framework for grammar. The Buddha points out to us that it is because we are enslaved by the grammatical super-structure that we cannot understand *Nibbāna* and put an end to *Saṁsāra*. But if one reflects deeply, one would discover that the grammar itself is the product of ignorance and craving. Because of these, the worldlings get enslaved to linguistic usages. They do not understand the pragmatic purpose of linguistic usage. They think that the grammar of language conforms to the grammar of nature. The Buddha, on the other hand revealed to the world that language is merely a convention of limited applicability.

Let me mention another point that is relevant to this subject. Once a deity raised a question in the Buddha's presence regarding a doubt which even some of you might entertain. It is worded in the form of a verse but we shall give the gist of it. He asks why the arahants who have accomplished the 'TASK' still go on using such expressions as 'I say' ('*ahaṁ vadāmi*') and 'they tell me' ('*mamaṁ vadanti*'). Is it because they still have conceit (*māna*) in them? The Buddha explains that the arahant has given up bonds of conceit but that he uses the worldly parlance only as 'a way of speaking'.

'*Loke samaññaṁ kusalo viditvā*

vohāramattena so vohareyya'

Being skillful in knowing the worldly parlance

He uses such expressions merely as a convention

Not only the arahants but the Buddha himself uses such words as 'I' and 'mine' only by way of convention. So you may understand that the fault is not in using

worldly conventions, but in being unaware of the fact that it is merely a convention. It is due to the ignorance of this fact that all logicians, philosophers and scientists have got stuck in the 'WORD' and created a lot of confusion for themselves and for others to languish long in *Saṁsāra*.

There is a wonderful maxim made known by the Buddha which throws more light on this hidden aspect of language. The term '*akkheyyasaññino*' (lit, 'percipient of the expressible') reveals the close connection between perception and linguistic convention. The worldlings are in the habit of taking in perception. This perception has a connection with linguistic usage. The Buddha draws our attention to this fact with the following declaration, which is like a maxim. "*vohāravepakkāhaṁ bhikkhave saññaṁ vadāmi. Yathā yathā naṁ sañjānāti tathā tathā voharati evaṁ saññī ahosinti*."

"Monks, I say perception has as its result linguistic usage. In whatever way one perceives, just in that way one makes it known saying:

'I was of such a perception.'"

The word 'vipāka' implicit in the expression 'vohāravepakkāhaṁ' is not to be confused with '*kammavipāka*' or karmic result. It only means that perception matures into linguistic usage. In whatever way one perceives, so one makes it known. One does not stop at perception. There is an urge to express it – to make it known to others. There comes in the need for language. The way one conveys it to others is:

"I was of such a perception" or "I was percipient in this way."

One is already involved by saying so. In our writings we have explained the term '*papañcasaññāsaṅkhā'* as 'reckonings born of prolific perception.' Through prolific perception worldlings get caught up in language. '*Saṅkhā*' as reckoning includes not only numerals but linguistic usage as well.

It is very important to understand the connection between perception and linguistic usage. This understanding helps us to solve the problem of existence ('*bhava*') which is apparently insoluble. When it is said that perception gives rise to linguistic usage, one can ask whether it is possible to be free from the bane of perception. There are some discourses which, until recently have escaped the serious attention of scholars where it is said that the arahants, when they are in the attainment called the 'fruit of arahanthood' are free from all perception. Whatever there is in the world that could be regarded as an object of perception, from all that they are free while in that supramundane state. There are quite a number of discourses describing that extra-ordinary attainment. For instance in

the *Sandha Sutta* we find the Buddha explaining to Venerable Sandha the nature of that *Samādhi*. Within the context of a simile about an excellent thoroughbred of a horse, the Buddha calls an arahant 'an excellent thoroughbred of a man' (*'bhadro purisājāniyo'*) and describes the nature of this concentration. It is said that in him the perception of earth, water, fire and air as well as other perceptions are not there.

There are many who raise the question whether materiality is fully negated and only mind is asserted in this Dhamma. We gave a certain simile to illustrate the correct standpoint. Suppose a blind man in his groping hits against a block of ice. He might come back with a perception of earth in it. When he approaches it the next time it is getting heated and he would come back with a perception of fire. By the time he goes there again it has melted and he returns with a perception of water. When he goes there for the fourth time it is evaporating and he brings back a perception of air. To make this simile meaningful we may compare the worldling to that blind man. The four great primaries (*cattāro mahābhūtā*) cannot be recognized as they are because they are always found as a combination. They can be distinguished only according to their intensity by means of constituents of the name group – feeling, perception, intention, contact and attention. Because of the feeling of hardness at the collision, that blind man got a perception of earth in the block of ice. That way name and form are inextricably interwove. That we called the 'tangle-within' (*antojaṭā*). The 'tangle-without' (*bahijatā*) is the interrelation between name and form and consciousness, for which the doting on his own image by Narcissus is an illustration. The entire Samsāric puzzle is traceable to this vortex of existence.

How does word and concept aggravate this situation? The worldling, like that blind man, thinks that there is a 'thing' called 'earth', a 'thing' called 'water', a 'thing' called 'fire' and a 'thing' called 'air'. Surely, can one deny these 'things'? In the *Sandha Sutta* there is a complete list of such 'things', a perception of which is not there in the attainment of the Fruit of Arahanthood – the Realm of Infinity of Space, the Realm of Infinity of Consciousness, the Realm of Nothingness, as well as the seen, the heard, the sensed, and the cognized. Existence as a whole has ceased. Whatever perception there is characteristic of existence, whatever object of the mind there can be, from all that, that 'thoroughbred of a man' is free while in the *Arahattaphala Samādhi*.

The way the Buddha winds up that sermon is highly significant. Having said that the excellent thoroughbred of a man does not meditate (*'na jhāyati*") on any of the possible objects of concentration, the Buddha emphatically asserts in the end that he does meditate (*jhāyati ca pana*). Now comes the impressive final declaration.

"*Evaṁ jhāyiñca pana sandha bhadraṁ purisājānīyaṁ saindā devā sabrahmakā sapajāpatikā ārakāva namassanti. Namo te purisājaññā namo te purisuttama yassa te nābhijānāma yampi nissāya jhāyasīti.*"

Sandha, the thoroughbred of a man thus meditating

the gods with Inda, with Brahmā and with Pajāpati

even from afar bow down saying:

Homage to you, O thoroughbred of a man

Homage to you, most excellent of men

For what it is on which you meditate

That we can never comprehend"

This is the marvel of a Dhamma that transcends the world. The Buddha has presented this transcendental Dhamma through the *Arahattaphala Samādhi* (concentration of the Fruit of Arahanthood). This is none other than the experience of the cessation of existence (*bhavanirodha*). It is, at the same time the cessation of the six sense spheres (*saḷāyatananirodha*). All the six sense spheres are rendered inactive. It is within these six that all the turmoil of the world goes on. During that extraordinary concentration, the existence has ceased. It is in fact a reverting to an experience already gone through at the attainment of arahanthood. That is why we pointed out that the arahants are not reborn by virtue of the fact that their last thought is this cessation of existence:

'*Bhavanirodho nibbānaṁ.' Nibbāna* is the cessation of existence. The arahants experience the taste of *Nibbāna* while in this paradoxical *Samādhi*.

All this shows that this is an extraordinary Dhamma. The question of language is also implicit in the solution offered. When the mind is fully liberated from perception, it is completely free from objects. We have earlier mentioned the terms used with reference to the emancipated mind – '*appatiṭṭhaṁ, appavattaṁ, anārammaṇaṁ*.' That mind is not established anywhere, It has no continuity or existence and it has no object. '*Bhava*' or existence has ceased. The realization of cessation is itself the Deliverance. That is *Nibbāna* – not anything else. There is a lot of controversy among scholars regarding *Nibbāna*. Some would even call our interpretation Nihilistic.

Let me Therefore, bring up something special from this point onwards. In an earlier sermon we have already mentioned what the Buddha had said about consciousness. The nature of the consciousness of an arahant and the

emancipation meant by *Nibbāna* can be understood in the light of what we have discussed so far. If we are to clarify further in terms of the simile of the vortex, it is as if the vortex has ceased. As a matter of fact, this simile of the vortex or the whirlpool is not something we have arbitrarily introduced. It is there in the discourses as a word of the Buddha, but the commentarial tradition has ignored it. Commentators have not understood its true significance. There is a very important verse in the *Udāna* that can be quoted in support of this. It comes as a paean of joy uttered by the Buddha in praise of Venerable *Lakuṇtakabhaddiya* who was an arahant.

acchecchi vaṭṭaṁ

byagā nirāsaṁ

visukkhā saritā na sandati

chinnaṁ vaṭṭaṁ na vaṭṭati

esevanto dukkhassa

The whirlpool he cut off and reached the Desireless

Streams dried up flow no more

The whirlpool cut off whirls no more

This itself is suffering's end.

He cut off the whirlpool or vortex. That is to say, the whirling around between consciousness and name and form has been cut off. Thereby he reached the Desireless (*byagā nirāsaṁ*). The current of water is dried up and flows no more. The whirlpool thus cut off no more whirls. And this itself is the end of suffering.

Supposing a whirlpool in the ocean comes to cease. As long as there is a whirlpool we can point out a 'here' and a 'there', 'this place' and 'that place'– or personifying it, 'this person', and 'that person'. But once the whirlpool has ceased, all these words lose their point of reference. Now there is only the wide expanse of the ocean as it was before the whirlpool came in. That 'foolish' current of water went in search of permanence in an impermanent world. It was a perversion, pure and simple. If at any point of time that current of water got dried up there is no whirlpool or '*vaṭṭa*' anymore. This is the whole story going by the '*vaṭṭa*' terminology. But strangely enough the commentators brought in some other kind of '*vaṭṭa*' to explain *Paṭicca Samuppāda*. They speak of '*kamma vaṭṭa*', '*kilesa vaṭṭa*' and '*vipāka vaṭṭa*' (kamma-round, defilement-round and result-round).

They have fully ignored the most important story of the round. You all can now form some idea about *Nibbāna*, about the arahants mind, and about the objectless mind.

Because of this charge of Nihilism let me touch upon another aspect of the problem. While discussing *Mahā Taṇhāsankhaya Sutta* in the previous sermon, we said that the Buddha had compared consciousness to a fire. As you know there are six consciousnesses – eye-consciousness, ear-consciousness and so on inclusive of mind-consciousness. The Buddha has pointed out that each of these consciousnesses is like a specific fire dependent on a specific type of fuel. For instance consciousness dependent on eye and forms is eye-consciousness. It arises only in dependence and not otherwise. Apart from that there is no consciousness either in the eye or in forms. Because of eye and forms arises eye-consciousness. Because of ear and sounds arises ear- consciousness and so on. What is the simile that the Buddha has given to illustrate this point? A fire that burns dependent on logs is called a log-fire, a fire that burns dependent on faggots is called a faggot-fire and a fire that burns dependent on chaff is called a chaff-fire. There is no abstract fire. It is always a specific fire. The Buddha compared the six kinds of consciousness to six kinds of fire. There is no independent consciousness to be called 'the consciousness'. Whatever has arisen due to causes and conditions has, of necessity, to cease when these causes and conditions are not there. It is when all the six consciousnesses, namely eye-consciousness, ear-consciousness, nose-consciousness, tongue-consciousness, body-consciousness and mind-consciousness, cease that there is deliverance which is also called:

'*viññāṇūpasama*' (appeasement of consciousness). As you all know, it is compared to the going out of a lamp as we find in the famous verse in the *Ratana Sutta*.

Khīṇaṁ purāṇaṁ navaṁ natthi sambhavaṁ

Virattacittā āyatike bhavasmiṁ

Te khīṇabījā avirūlhicchandā

Nibbanti dhīrā yathāyampadīpo

Extinct is the old, nothing new to arise

Detached in mind as to future existence

They of extinct seed with no desire to sprout

Go out like this lamp – those Prudent Ones.

The verse figuratively conveys the situation at the last moment of the life of the arahants. '*Khīṇaṁ purāṇaṁ*' – All past kamma is finished. '*Navaṁ natthi sambhavaṁ*' – There is no arising of new kamma. '*Virattacittā āyatike bhavasmiṁ*' – They are detached in mind as to future existence. '*Te khīṇabījā*' – Their consciousness seed is extinct. '*Avirūlhicchandā*' – Therefore, no desire can sprout forth in them. '*Nibbanti dhīrā yathāyampadīpo*' – The prudent ones get extinguished even like this lamp.

The simile of the going out of a flame comes up again in the '*Upasīva māṇavapucchā*' in the *Sutta Nipāta*.

Accī yathā vātavegena khitto

atthaṁ paleti na upeti saṁkhaṁ

evaṁ muni nāmakāyā vimutto

atthaṁ paleti na upeti saṁkhaṁ

Like the flame thrown off by the force of wind

Goes to its end and comes not within reckoning

So the sage when released from the name-group

Goes to its end and comes not within reckoning

'*Accī yathā vātavegena khitto*' – just as a flame thrown off by the force of wind. '*atthaṁ paleti na upeti saṁkhaṁ*' – goes to an end and cannot be reckoned as gone somewhere. '*evaṁ muni nāmakāyā vimutto'* – even so the sage released from the name-group. '*atthaṁ paleti na upeti saṁkhaṁ*' – comes to his end and cannot be reckoned or predicated.

Upasīva is puzzled by this verse and implores the Buddha to explain further.

Atthaṁgato so udavā so natthi

Udāhu ve sassatiyā arogo

taṁ ve muni sādhu viyākarohi

tathāhi te vidito esa dhammo

Has he reached his end, or does he not exist at all

Or else is he eternally hale – not ill

That to me explain well, O'sage

For this Dhamma as such is known by you

Upasīva is asking reverentially whether that sage has gone to the end or whether he does not exist any more or else is eternally free from disease. Now the Buddha clarifies it further in the following verse with which the discourse ends. But unfortunately many scholars are confused over the grand finale.

Atthaṁgatassa na pamānamatthi

Yena naṁ vajju taṁ tassa natthi

Sabbesu dhammesu samūhatesu

Samūhatā vādapathāpi sabbe

Of one who has reached his end – no measure is there

That by which they may speak of him – that is not for him

When all objects of mind are rooted out

Rooted out too are all paths of debate

The Arahant who has reached his end is beyond reckoning. He cannot be measured. Name and form is that by which others may speak of him, but that he has given up. When all objects of the mind which were listed above are eradicated, all pathways of debate and controversy such as the dilemma and the tetralemma of the logicians are rendered ineffective. Logic is imprisoned between 'is' and 'is not'. Dhamma is beyond the pale of logic (*atakkāvacaro*). It is like the fire extinguished. This is an extremely clear-cut answer. But scholars have confounded the issue.

However, some Buddhist philosophers have correctly understood this position. *Aśvaghosa*, both a philosopher and poet, has beautifully presented this simile in his Sanskrit epic *Saundarānanda*.

Dīpo yathā nirvṛtiṁ abhyupeto

naivāvaniṁ gacchati nāntarīkṣaṁ

diśāṁ na kāncit vidiśāṁ na kāñcit

snehakṣayāt kevelameti śāntiṁ

Evaṁ kṛtī nirvṛtiṁ abhyupeto

naivāvaniṁ gacchati nāntarīkṣaṁ

diśāṁ na kāncit vidiśāṁ na kāñcit

kleṣakṣayāt kevalameti śāntiṁ

Even as the flame of a lamp when it goes out

Goes not to the earth nor to the firmament

Not to any direction nor to a sub-direction

By exhaustion of oil only reaches appeasement

So too the accomplished one when gone to extinction

Goes not to the earth nor to the firmament

Not to any direction nor to a sub-direction

By extinction of taints only reaches appeasement

When the flame of a lamp goes out by the exhaustion of oil, one cannot say that it has gone to the earth or to the sky or to any direction or sub direction. All one can say is that it has got extinguished. The term '*kṛtī*' stands for an arahant who has done his task (*katakaraṇīya*). He cannot be traced after his final attainment of *Parinibbāna* even like the flame of the lamp.

So it seems that although we started with *Paṭicca Samuppāda* as our topic, it automatically leads to a discussion of *Nibbāna*. As a matter of fact, *Nibbāna* cannot be understood without a knowledge of *Paṭicca Samuppāda*. Therefore, let me add a special message at this point that could be helpful to those who listen to these sermons. Twenty years ago when I was at Meethirigala Nissarana Vanaya, I happened to deliver thirty three sermons on *Nibbāna* to the group of meditating monks there. After a number of years the Dhamma Publications Trust of Colombo (D.G.M.B) published those 33 sermons in eleven volumes. An English translation also came out in seven volumes called "Nibbāna – The Mind Stilled."

The audio trust in Kandy (D.S.M.B) circulated those sermons and their translation in C.D. s and through its website all over the world. In those sermons on *Nibbāna*, we had occasion to say something on *Paṭicca Samuppāda* as well. However, now a new series titled 'Pahan Kanuwa Paṭicca Samuppāda Sermons' is just coming up. This is the fifth sermon. I do not know how many sermons would

make up this series. Let time decide it. Though the topic of the series is *Paṭicca Samuppāda*, we cannot help discussing *Nibbāna* as well.

There is an episode which clearly shows the connection between these two topics. You may have heard that the Buddha after his enlightenment reflected on the depth of this Dhamma. It is said in *Ariyapariyesana Sutta* that after comprehending this wonderful Dhamma which is so profound, hard to see and hard to understand, peaceful and sublime, the Buddha wondered how the worldlings can understand such a Dhamma. It occurred to him then that there are two truths which it is hard for the worldlings to see, namely, specific conditionality (*idappaccayatā*) or Dependent Arising (*Paṭicca Samuppāda*) and the stilling of all preparations, the relinquishment of all assets, the extinction of craving, detachment, cessation *Nibbāna*. It is because worldlings are confined within linguistic conventions that they cannot understand the links of the formula of Dependent Arising. They are imprisoned by logic and compelled to assert 'is' or 'is not' – absolute existence or absolute non-existence. But the correct position is otherwise.

We have clearly pointed out what the basic principle of the law of Dependent Arising is.

> This being – this comes to be
>
> With the arising of this – this arises
>
> This not being – this does not come to be
>
> With the cessation of this – this ceases.

Here itself is the transcendence of logic (*atakkāvacara*). Logic wants us to say 'yes' or 'no' to the question of existence. But this is what the Buddha says. Worldlings find it difficult to take it in. They think that when an arahant finally passes away, he could be located somewhere. In this Law of Dependent Arising, there is a direct order and a reverse order. In the direct order we have the nature of *Saṁsāra* as-it-is. Venerable Sāriputta became a stream-winner already as the ascetic Upatissa, when he heard only the first two lines of the verse uttered by Venerable Assaji.

> *Ye dhammā hetuppabhavā*
>
> *tesaṁ hetuṁ tathāgato āha*
>
> Whatever things that arise from causes.
>
> Their cause the Tathāgata has told.

Upatissa inferred by it, that if something arises from a cause, it has of necessity to cease when the cause ceases. The last two lines are on *Nibbāna*.

Tesañca yo nirodho

evaṁ vādī mahāsamano.

And also their cessation

Thus teaches the great ascetic.

If a problem is properly understood the solution is also in it. The direct order of the Law of Dependent Arising is the statement of the problem. The reverse order gives the solution. It is very difficult for the worldlings to understand that they are incarcerated between 'is' and 'is not'.

Given ignorance, a series of conditioned phenomena come to be. With the cessation of ignorance they cease to be. There is an extremely important discourse which highlights these distinctive features of the Dhamma. Let us briefly touch upon it for the present. It is the *Kaccānagotta Sutta* of the *Saṁyutta Nikāya*. A monk, *Kaccānagotta* by name, approaches the Buddha and says:

"Venerable Sir, 'Right View', 'Right View' it is said. In what way Venerable Sir, is there right view?"

You may have heard various definitions of right view.

Here is something peculiar:

The Buddha says:

"*Dvayanissito khvāyaṁ Kaccāna loko yebhuyyena atthitañceva natthitañca.*

Lokasamudayaṁ kho Kaccāna yathābhūtaṁ sammappaññāya passato yā loke natthitā sā na hoti.

Lokanirodhaṁ kho Kaccāna yathābhūtaṁ sammappaññāya passato yā loke atthitā sā na hoti."

"This world, Kaccāna, for the most part depends upon a duality – upon the notion of existence and the notion of non-existence. For one who sees the arising of the world as it really is with correct wisdom, there is no notion of non-existence in regard to the world. And for one who sees the cessation of the world

as it really is with correct wisdom, there is no notion of existence in regard to the world."

Here the Buddha points out that the world is resting on the two extreme views of existence and non-existence. Then this is how the Buddha shows us the middle way. For one who sees the arising of the world as it is with correct wisdom, there is no notion of non-existence. To the insight meditator who sees the arising aspect of the world, the notion of absolute non-existence does not occur. And to the insight meditator who sees the cessation aspect of the world, the notion of absolute existence does not occur. The world is holding on to the two dogmatic views of absolute existence and absolute non-existence. But the Buddha avoids this absolutism. *Paticcasamuppanna* means arisen in dependence on causes and conditions. The world is incessantly arising and ceasing. But the worldling resting on the notion of the compact due to craving and grasping, tenaciously believes that a thing exists absolutely. If absolute existence is one end the other end should be absolute non-existence, tantamount to annihilation. But as we sometimes pointed out, if anything is lost, it is only the ignorance that 'there is something' and the craving that 'there isn't enough.' That is all. There is nothing to lament. This is precisely why Gotama Buddha as well as Vipassi Buddha made known their realization with the words:

"*Samudayo samudayoti kho me bhikkhave pubbe ananussutesu dhammasu cakkhuṁ udapādi ñāṇaṁ udapādi paññā udapādi vijjā udapādi āloko udapādi.*

. . . .nirodho nirodhoti kho me bhikkhave pubbe ananussutesu dhammasu cakkhuṁ udapādi ñāṇaṁ udapādi paññā udapādi vijjā udapādi āloko udapādi."

"Arising, arising – thus monks, in regard to things unheard before, there arose in me the eye, the knowledge, the wisdom, the science, the light.

. . . .Cessation, cessation – thus monks, in regard to things unheard before, there arose in me the eye, the knowledge, the wisdom, the science, the light."

The process of arising and cessation is going on all the time, but the worldling has taken up the wrong view called '*sakkāyadiṭṭhi*' (personality view) misconstruing the whole group to be existing (*sat* + *kāya*). Because of that view they are imprisoned by the limitations of language and logic which rest on the duality of absolute existence and absolute non-existence. Not only the ordinary worldling, but the worldly philosopher as well as the modern scientist has got stuck there. Not being satisfied with the dilemma, the philosopher has created a tetralemma to make the confusion worst confounded. But the Buddha has transcended all these by this Dhamma which is *atakkāvacara* ('not moving

within the sphere of logic'). He transcended logic the moment he gained the insight into the incessant arising and ceasing. He understood that it is not possible to take a definite stand on 'is' or 'is not'.

Let me give a simple illustration for your easy comprehension – a simile I gave in my sermons on *Nibbāna*. I suppose you all like similes. Sometimes behind a shop window or in a showroom they display a 'magic-kettle', from which water flows non-stop into a basin under it. The kettle never goes empty nor does the basin overflow. That is the magic. The secret is that there is a hidden tube which conducts the water back into the kettle. Well, take it that the world itself is a 'Magic-kettle'. The process of arising and ceasing is going on all the time even within our bodies. So also in the world outside. World systems go on arising and ceasing – expanding and contracting (*vivaṭṭa* and *saṁvaṭṭa*). This is the profound truth the Buddha has revealed to the world. But the worldlings committed and limited as they are by 'personality-view' and enslaved as they are by perception, by language and logic, come again and again under the yoke of Death ('*yogamāyanti maccuno*').

Well, enough for today. I hope you will bear with me if some explanations appeared too deep. But you need not complain like that deity. Perhaps when the sermon comes in a form of a C.D. you can absorb it quietly. I take it that you all have spent the day observing higher precepts in a meditative atmosphere with *Nibbāna* as your aim. I wish this sermon too will help you realize your noble aspirations. Whatever beings there be, from the lowest hell to the highest Brahma-world, may they all rejoice in our sermon. May the merits accrued by that rejoicing conduce to the fulfilment of their higher aims!



Paticca Samuppada Sermon 6

The Law of Dependent Arising

(Pahan Kanuwa Sermon – No. 188)

'*Namo tassa bhagavato arahato sammāsambuddhassa*'

'Homage be! To the Fortunate One – the Worthy, Fully Enlightened!'

Jāti maraṇa saṁsāraṁ

ye vajanti punappunaṁ

itthabhāvaññathābhāvaṁ

avijjāyeva sā gati

avijjā hayaṁ mahā moho

yenidaṁ saṁsitaṁ ciraṁ

vijjāgatā ca ye sattā

nāgacchanti punabbhavam

– Dvāyatānupassanā S. Sutta Nipātha.

Those who go on wandering again and again

Alternating in saṁsāra between birth and death

Are involved in a change from thisness to otherwiseness

Which is merely a journey of ignorance

This ignorance is the vast delusion

Whereby for long this saṁsaric journey has gone on

But those that have come by knowledge Come back never again to repeated birth.

Dear Listeners,

What is called 'life' is the period between birth and death. What is called '*Saṁsāra*' is the alternation between birth and death. We have taken up as the

topic of our sixth sermon on Dependent Arising two verses that highlight the connection between these two.

The two verses are found in the *Dvayatānupassanā Sutta* of the *Sutta Nipāta*. In the brief introductory story of this discourse which embodies a lot of deep points in the Dhamma, one can sense an intense fervour of the Dhamma. You had better form a mental picture of a moonlit night at *Pubbārāma* in *Sāvatthi* on a full moon day when the Buddha is seated in the open air surrounded by the congregation of monks. Having surveyed the company of monks with the Buddha-eye as they were seated quietly with rapt attention, the Buddha started a deep sermon with this prologue.

"Monks, whatever skilful contributory mental states there are, that are noble and effectively leading up to enlightenment, if there are any persons who question about the justifiable purpose of listening to them, they should be told:

"It is just for the purpose of knowing as it is the dualities in this Dhamma. And what would you call a duality?

'This is suffering – this is the arising of suffering. This is one mode of contemplation.

This is the cessation of suffering – this is the path of practice leading towards the cessation of suffering. This is the second mode of contemplation.'

And therein, monks, of a monk who thus dwells diligently zealous and ardent, rightly contemplating the dualities, one of two results maybe expected – either full comprehension in this very life or if there is any residual clinging, the fruit of non-returning."

After this initial exhortation, the Buddha uttered four verses pertaining to the Four Noble Truths.

Then again addressing the company of monks, the Buddha said:

"Monks, if there are any who put the question 'Could there be another mode of contemplating correctly the duality?' – they should be told:

'There is', and how?

'Whatever suffering that originates all that is due to assets' – this is one mode of contemplation.' But with the utter fading away and cessation of assets there is no origination of suffering – this is the second contemplation."

You had better note that what is here called '*assets*' or '*upadhi*' are the five aggregates of gasping we have deposited in this long *Saṁsāra*. So according to the Buddha the cause of the entire mass of suffering is the five aggregates of grasping. So much so that with the remainderless fading away and cessation of these assets there is no origination of suffering.

In the same way this discourse introduces as many as sixteen modes of contemplation. The special feature is that each mode of contemplation is introduced with the supposition that there are those who question the possibility of another mode of contemplation. Firstly the Buddha describes the topic under consideration in prose and then gives three or four verses concerning its importance as a mode of contemplation. We do not propose to discuss fully all the topics raised in this long discourse but the special significance of this particular sermon preached by the Buddha is that at the end of it all the sixty monks who listened to it attained arahanthood extirpating all influxes. It is such an important discourse.

It is the third mode of contemplation given in this discourse that we have taken up as the topic of our sermon today. Now this is the statement in prose with which the Buddha introduces the verses relevant to the topic.

'*yaṁ kiñci dukkhaṁ sambhoti sabbaṁ avijjā paccayā,*

avijjāyatveva asesavirāga nirodhā natthi dukkhassa sambhavo.'

Whatever suffering that originates all that is due to ignorance, with the remainderless fading away and cessation of ignorance, there is no origination of suffering."

It is after this declaration that the Buddha utters the two verses forming our topic.

'*Jāti maraṇa saṁsāraṁ – ye vajanti punappunaṁ*

itthabhāvaññathābhāvaṁ – avijjāyeva sā gati'

"Those who keep wandering again and again in this *saṁsāra* which is an alternation between birth and death tantamount to a 'thisness' and 'otherwiseness', are involved in a journey which is merely a perpetuation of ignorance."

'avijjā hayaṁ mahāmoho – yenidaṁ saṁsitaṁ ciraṁ

vijjāgatā ca ye sattā – nāgacchanti punabbhavam'

"Ignorance is the great delusion due to which one has wandered long in this *saṁsāra*. Those beings that are endowed with knowledge do not come back to repeated existence."

I wish to discuss these two verses in some detail. Let me cite at length a certain highly significant discourse which I touched upon briefly the other day, namely the *Kaccānagotta Sutta* of the *Saṁyutta Nikāya*. I shall give it in some detail so that even those of you who were not present the other day could easily follow it. This is how the discourse begins.

A monk named *Kaccānagotta* approaches the Buddha and asks him:

"Venerable Sir, Right view, Right View it is said. In how far Venerable Sir, does one have right view?" The Buddha replies:

"Dvayanissito kho ayaṁ Kaccāna loko yebhuyyena atthitañceva natthitañca"

"*Kaccāna*, this world for the most part, rests on a duality, namely existence and non-existence."

Then he proceeds to proclaim a wonderful middle path.

"*Kaccāna* to one who sees as it is with right wisdom the arising of the world, the view of non-existence about the world does not occur, and to one who sees as it is with right wisdom the cessation of the world, the view of existence about the world does not occur."

The reference here is to the two views of eternalism and annihilationism.

Then the Buddha goes on to say that this world for the most part is given to approaching, grasping and entering into views (*upaya upādanā-abhinivesa vinibandho*). But if one does not approach, grasp and take one's stand upon that tendency to approaching, grasping and that mental standpoint with the idea:

'This is myself', then one would not doubt nor waver about the fact that it is only suffering that arises and only suffering that ceases. He would have a knowledge of it which is not dependent on another. With this the Buddha gives the reply to *Kaccāna's* question saying:

"In so far *Kaccāna,* has one right view."

In conclusion he says by way of explanation:

"Sabbaṁ atthīti kho Kaccāna, ayaṁ eko anto. Sabbaṁ natthīti ayam dutiyo anto. Ete te Kaccāna ubho ante anupagamma majjhena Tathāgato dhammaṁ deseti:

avijjāpaccayā saṅkharā saṅkharāpaccayā viññāṇaṁ,....., evametassa kevalassa dukkhakkhandhassa samudayo hoti. avijjāyatveva asesavirāganirodhā saṅkhāranirodho, saṅkhāranirodhā viññāṇanirodho, ... evametassa kevalassa dukkhakhhandhassa nirodho hoti."

"Everything exists' – this, O *Kaccāna*, is one extreme. 'Nothing exists' – this, O Kaccāna, is the second extreme. Avoiding these two extremes *Kaccāna*, the Tathagatha preaches the Dhamma by the middle:

"Depending on ignorance preparations, depending on preparations consciousness, ... this is the arising of this whole mass of suffering. But with the remainderless fading away and cessation of ignorance (comes) the cessation of preparations, with the cessation of preparations, cessation of consciousness, ... thus is the cessation of this whole mass of suffering."

You all are familiar with the middle path as expounded in the '*Dhammacakkapavattana Sutta*' – namely the Noble Eightfold Path which avoids the two extremes of indulgence in sense pleasures and self-mortification. Now this *Kaccāna Sutta* is also a sermon preached by the Buddha. Here the concept of the middle path is the avoidance of the two extreme views 'Everything exists' and 'Nothing exists'. What does this middle way amount to? The Law of Dependent Arising.

As we mentioned earlier, the formula of Dependent Arising has a direct order and an indirect order. In the direct order the formula begins with 'Depending on ignorance, preparations, depending on preparations consciousness and so on and ends with the statement:

Thus is the arising of this whole mass of suffering. In the indirect order the formula begins by saying that with the remainderless fading away and cessation of ignorance comes the cessation of preparations, with the cessation of preparations the cessation of consciousness, ... , and concludes with the declaration:

Thus is the cessation of this whole mass of suffering. You had better note the significance of the direct order and the indirect order. Thereby the Buddha evolves a middle path between the above two extreme views. Talking about the

middle path, all this time we are used to identifying the middle path with the Noble Eightfold Path. You had better understand the reason for it.

It is true that the *Dhammacakkappavattana Sutta* preached to the group of five monks is undoubtedly the very first sermon and as such a great discourse. But there is a particular reason which inspired it. Those five monks entertained doubts about the Buddha's enlightenment because he gave up the austerities of self-mortification. That is why the Buddha adopted that mode of presentation of the Noble Eightfold Path as the avoidance of the two extremes of self-indulgence and self-mortification. All the same the Law of Dependent Arising is implicit in that discourse. The reason for the point of emphasis was the necessity of convincing them.

Unfortunately, however, our commentarial tradition has not taken sufficient cognizance of this aspect of the middle path. Owing to that, quite a number of very important discourses on *Nibbāna* have remained obscure. A lack of appreciation of the Law of Dependent Arising, or the middle path between 'is' and 'is not' views is responsible for this neglect. As we pointed out earlier, that spontaneous utterance of the Buddhas, namely, 'arising, arising' 'ceasing, ceasing,' soon after their realization, sketches out the middle path between those two extremes in that it is a reflection of the incessant process of arising and ceasing going on in the world.

On various occasions we have brought up important discourses relating to this particular middle path. One such popular but abstruse discourse is the '*Bāhiya Sutta'*. The middle path implicit in the *Bāhiya Sutta* is not understood by many who read it. Let us recollect it. *Bāhiya Dāruciriya* was an ascetic with a high degree of *samsāric* maturity. He had meditated on his own and reached a stage which he took to be arahanthood. A certain deity had pointed out to him that it is an overestimation and directed him to the Buddha. With an intense eagerness he came to see the Buddha. By that time the Buddha was on his alms round, and in all haste *Bāhiya* begged him to preach the Dhamma. For some reason or other the Buddha refused the request twice but upon the third insistent request came out with a wonderfully brief and cryptic sermon which begins with this initial injunction:

"*Tasmātiha Bāhiya evaṁ sikkhitabbaṁ diṭṭhe diṭṭhamattaṁ bhavissati, sute sutamattaṁ bhavissati, mute mutamattaṁ bhavissati viññāte viññātamattaṁ bhavissati. Evañhite Bāhiya sikkhitabbaṁ."*

"Well then *Bāhiya*, thus should you train yourself:

‘In the seen there will be just the seen, in the heard there will be just the heard, in the sensed there will be just the sensed, in the cognized there will be just the cognized.’ Thus should you train yourself.”

Then the Buddha outlines the final outcome of that training.

“Yato kho te Bāhiya diṭṭhe diṭṭhamattaṁ bhavissati, sute sutamattaṁ bhavissati, mute mutamattaṁ bhavissati, viññāte viññātamattaṁ bhavissati, tato tvaṁ Bāhiya na tena, yato tvaṁ Bāhiya na tena, tato tvaṁ Bāhiya na tattha, yato tvaṁ Bāhiya na tattha, tato tvaṁ Bāhiya nevidha na huraṁ na ubhayamantarena esevanto dukkhassa.”

“And when, to you *Bāhiya* there will be in the seen just the seen, in the heard just the heard, in the sensed just the sensed and in the cognized just the cognized, then *Bāhiya* you are not ‘by it’. And when *Bāhiya* you are not ‘by it’, then *Bāhiya* you are not ‘in it’. And when *Bāhiya* you are not in it, then *Bāhiya* you are neither here nor there, nor in between. This itself is the end of suffering.”

The implication is that at whatever time one stops short at the seen and takes it only as a seen and not something seen, and likewise in the case of heard, only as a heard and not something heard, in the sensed only as a sensed and not something sensed, and in the cognized only as a cognized and not as something cognized, that is to say, there is no imagining a ‘thinghood’, then one would not be thinking in terms of it. One would not imagine ‘by it’ (‘*tena*’) in the instrumental sense or ‘in it’ (‘*tattha*’) in the locative sense. As we said earlier, the problem of *Saṁsāra* lies hidden in the linguistic medium. For instance in the case of a seen, when one takes the concept of a chair in the substantive sense there will be ‘by’ or ‘with’ the chair as well as a positing of ‘in the chair’ or else, if one does not stop short at the heard but imagines a ‘music’ in it there will be a ‘by music’ and an ‘in music’. Thereby one takes a standpoint and tacitly identifies oneself with it. On the other hand, if one does not take such a standpoint, one is neither ‘here’ nor ‘there’ nor ‘in between the two’. A middle exists relative to two ends. When one is free from the two ends and does not take a stand in the middle saying ‘this is myself’ as stated in the ‘*Kaccānagotta Sutta’* one would win to the conviction that what arises is only suffering and what ceases is only suffering. That itself is the end of suffering.

Then there is another brief but highly significant sutta in the same text – *Udāna*. It is a sermon specifically dealing with *Nibbāna* (*‘Nibbāna patisaṁyutta’*) which the Buddha addressed to the monks. That sermon too appears rather cryptic and riddlelike in its formulation. It is worded as follows:

Nissitassa calitaṁ

anissitassa calitaṁ natthi

calite asati passaddhi

passaddhiyā sati nati na hoti

natiya asati āgati gati na hoti

āgati gatiyā asati cutūpapāto na hoti

cutūpapāte asati

nevidha na huraṁ na ubhayamantarena

esevanto dukkhassa.

The first two words are probably familiar to you by now:

'*Nissitassa calitaṁ*'. The word '*Nissitassa*' might remind you of the term '*dvayanissita*' (resting on a duality) in the *Kaccāna Sutta* discussed above. '*Nissita*' has the sense of 'resting on', 'leaning on' or 'being attached to'. To one who rests on the duality of eternalist view and annihilationist view, there is unsteadiness (*calitaṁ*). If you are leaning on something, when it moves or shakes you have to move or shake with it. This is the basic principle the Buddha puts forward first of all. Then he gives the converse of that statement:

'*anissitassa calitaṁ natthi*.' To one who does not rest or lean on something, there is no unsteadiness or shaking. As it is said in the '*Kaccānagotta Sutta'*, if one does not lean on extreme views by going the middle way, there is no unsteadiness (*'anissitassa calitaṁ natthi'*). When there is no unsteadiness, there is calm (*'passaddhi'*). When there is calm there is no inclination or bending (*'passaddhiyā sati nati na hoti'*). Understood deeply, it means the absence of craving. Where there is no inclination there is no coming and going (*'natiya asati āgati gati na hoti'*). When there is an inclining, there is a possibility of falling somewhere – a possibility of 'coming and going'. When there is no coming and going there is no question of death and rebirth (*'āgati gatiyā asati cutūpapāto na hoti'*). When there is no death and rebirth there is neither a 'here' nor a 'there' nor in between the two (*'cutūpapāte asati nevidha na huraṁ na ubhayamantarena'*). This itself is the end of suffering ('*esevanto dukkhassa*').

Here too we find the question of linguistic conventions coming in. As we have already mentioned the knotty problem of *Saṁsāra* can be traced to linguistic conventions which we ourselves have created. Language and logic are transcended in this Dhamma. That is why it is called '*atakkāvacara*' ('not moving

within the sphere of logic'). It grasps neither the two extremes nor the middle. This is the training which culminates in *Nibbāna*.

We put forward these ideas more or less as a commentary to the two verses in question. Let us now turn our attention again to these two verses.

'*Jāti maraṇa saṁsāraṁ – ye vajanti punappunaṁ*

itthabhāvaññathābhāvaṁ – avijjāyeva sā gati'

Here we have two peculiar terms:

itthabhāva aññathābhāva – 'thisness' and 'otherwiseness'. What is called 'birth' and 'death' is tantamount to an alternation between 'thisness' and 'otherwiseness'. Just ponder over this statement. So this alternation is merely a journey of ignorance. It is not someone's journey. Only a journey of ignorance. Therefore, ignorance is a vast delusion ('*mahā moho*') as stated in the second verse. However the two most important terms are '*itthabhāva*' and '*aññathābhāva*'.

As you might recall, while discussing *Mahā Nidāna Sutta* we happened to mention that the Buddha in his questioning of venerable Ānanda step by step about the mutual relationship between consciousness and name and form posed the following question:

"Ānanda if consciousness having descended into the mother's womb slips out, will name and form get born into a state of thisness ('*itthatta*')?"

There we came across the term '*itthatta*'; '*Itthatta*' is none other than '*itthabhāva*' just as '*nānatta*' is a synonym for '*nānābhāva*'. Granted that '*itthatta*' means '*itthabhāva*' we can gather something about it from the above reference itself. So it is only so long as consciousness and name and form are found together in a mother's womb, that we can expect the birth of a child. As we happened to mention in that context, if consciousness slips out only a ball of flesh would come out of the womb. It is only when these two continue to be together that a child is born into this world as a 'thisness'. This is because when the new born child looks around, he finds himself born into a world of six sense spheres. From his point of view it is a 'thisness'. Therefore, thisness is equivalent to 'birth'. Otherwiseness is his journey towards 'decay and death'. So then, 'thisness' and 'otherwiseness' is an inseparable pair. The worldling tries to separate birth from death and keep back birth and reject death. But this is an impossibility. It is an inseparable pair.

So it is clear that thisness (*itthabhāva*) is birth. The moment one grasps something as 'THIS' giving it a 'thingness' it starts becoming otherwise. He comes under the inescapable law of impermanence. Therefore, '*itthabhāva*' and '*aññathābhāva*' are tantamount to 'birth' and 'death'. The alternation between them in *Saṁsāra* is merely a journey of ignorance ('*avijjāyeva sā gati')*.

There is an important discourse which brings out the implications of the two terms '*itthabhāva*' and '*aññathābhāva*'. Although we happened to discuss it earlier too, we take it up again because it is relevant. Soon after his enlightenment the Buddha as he was seated cross legged under the *Bodhi* tree in *Uruvelā* on the banks of River *Neranjarā,* arising from his concentration after seven days, surveyed the world with his Buddha-eye and uttered this verse as a paean of joy. It is a powerful utterance showing how deeply he reflected on the pathetic condition of the world.

ayaṁ loko santāpajāto phassapareto – rogaṁ vadati attato

yena yenahi maññati – tato taṁ hoti aññathā

This grief-stricken world given over to contact

Speaks of a disease in terms of a self

Whatever 'thing' he thinks 'in terms of'

Thereby itself it turns otherwise.

In the introductory part of this discourse it is said that the Buddha in surveying the world with his Buddha-eye, saw beings stricken with grief due to various burning sensations born of lust, hate and delusion and uttered this verse. The world is griefstricken and enslaved by contact ('*santāpajāto phassapareto'*) and calls a disease or a nest of diseases (that is the body) a self ('*rogaṁ vadati attato')*. What happens as a result of taking this nest of diseases as a self? Now comes a significant statement:

yena yenahi maññati – tato taṁ hoti aññathā:

whatever one thinks in terms of, thereby it turns otherwise. The newly born child thinks 'I am in this world' and with that very thought the germ of impermanence takes over and that itself is the beginning of turning otherwise or change.

Then the Buddha goes on to explain what happens as a result of this 'minding' (*maññanā*).

'*aññathā bhāvī bhavasatto loko*

bhavapareto

bhavamevābhinandati

yadabhinandati taṁ bhayaṁ

yassa bhāyati taṁ dukkhaṁ

bhavavippahānāya kho panidaṁ

brahmacariyaṁ vussati.'

The world attached to becoming

And given over to becoming

Though becoming otherwise

Yet delights in becoming

What it delights in

Is a cause for fear

And what it is scared of

Is suffering itself

But for abandoning that becoming

Is this holy life lived.

This is an extraordinary analysis of the predicament the world finds itself in. The nature of the world is to become otherwise due to the inexorable law of impermanence. But the world (that is the worldlings) is attached to becoming and given over to becoming ('*Attathābhāvī bhavasatto loko bhavapareto*'). It Therefore, delights in becoming ('*bhavamevābhinandati*'). The very fact that it delights is a fear – a dread ('*yadabhinandati taṁ bhayaṁ*'). What is fearful or dreadful is suffering ('*yassa bhāyati taṁ dukkhaṁ*'). Then comes the solution to the problem:

It is for the abandoning of becoming that this holy life is lived ('*bhavavippahānāya kho panidaṁ – brahmacariyaṁ vussati*').

Just ponder over this paradoxical situation. It is in the nature of becoming to become otherwise. But the worldling is attached to and given over to becoming.

In fact it delights in becoming which itself is a cause of fear. What it is apprehensive of, is suffering bound up with the inexorable law of impermanence.

Then the Buddha makes this significant declaration:

"Whatever recluses or Brahmins spoke of release from existence by means of existence, I say that they are not released from existence.

Whatever recluses or Brahmins who spoke of a stepping out of existence by means of non-existence, I say that they all have not stepped out of existence.

All this suffering arises due to assets. By the destruction of all grasping there is no arising of suffering."

A peculiar word came up in this discourse namely,

'*mañña*ti'. Earlier too we called '*mañña*nā' a 'minding' – a 'thinking' – in terms of:

It is a fancying – in other words caused by ignorance. Once born into the world the child fancies itself to be a mannikin. Parents take it to be their own child – this combination of name and form and consciousness. Whether it likes it or not there is growth which in effect is decay. The Buddha speaks only of birth decay and death – not of any growth as such. From birth itself change takes over. That is to say from birth itself there is a progress towards decay and death. The world is imprisoned within this duality. That is what the Buddha calls suffering. Scholars suggest all sorts of etymologies for the word '*dukkha*'. We in our own way suggested a certain etymology in our *Nibbāna* sermons. '*Duh*' means with difficulty or hardship and '*kha*' means bearing up. So '*dukkha*' means though with difficulty one bears up. Though one bears up it is difficult.

Let me give a simple simile as an illustration. In fact I gave a simile of a 'serpent circle'. I borrowed the idea from a cartoon I saw in my boyhood. The cartoon had three cages or 'windows'. The first cage showed two serpents – say, a cobra and a viper – trying to swallow each other. In the first cage the viper's tail is shown to be in the cobra's mouth while the cobra's tail is in the viper's mouth. The second cage showed that the cobra has swallowed half of the viper and that the viper has swallowed half of the cobra. That means now we have a 'serpent circle'. Try to guess what could be in the third cage. Let us for a moment think that the cobra has swallowed the viper. Then the viper is not visible. If the viper has swallowed the cobra, the latter would not be visible. Whatever it is, the third cage only showed a few short lines in the centre suggestive of a "VOID".

But is it a possibility? can they successfully swallow each other? It is a possibility only in the realm of logic – never in the world of reality. So the actual situation in the world is as represented by the second cage – the 'serpent-circle'. It is a conflict – a deadlock. The cobra has to bear up somehow though it is difficult to do so. It started swallowing but cannot finish it. Same with the viper's attempt to swallow the cobra. Though it is difficult both have to bear up. Though they bear up, it is difficult. They are in a fix!

Well, this is our predicament too. You talk about income and expenditure. It is a similar attempt to swallow up – whether at state level or household level. Husband and wife are in conflict with regard to income and expenditure. 'Income' tries to swallow up 'expenditure' and 'expenditure' tries to swallow up 'income'. In economics there is the risk of inflation. Between supply and demand there is another 'serpent-circle'. Just think about the society at large-institutions and the like. 'Duties' try to swallow up 'rights' and 'rights' try to swallow up 'duties'. The result is strikes. What about our in-breath and out-breath and our blood circulation? It is the same conflict everywhere. This is the suffering. But the world refuses to understand this precarious situation for what it is. Instead it goes on craving for existence – for birth again and again.

It craves for birth but abhors death. This is the tragicomedy before us.

Talking about this liking for birth and disliking for death, let us bring up a little simile in the form of a parable. However much we explain this deep point some of you might not grasp it. But when it comes in the form of simile it is easily understood. Let us take one from the village life itself.

Simple *Siyadoris*, the habitual drunkard, suddenly dies. Usually in the case of a sudden death, a post-mortem is held. But before the formal inquest there is a tendency in the village to hold many informal inquests. First of all let us consult the venerable chief monk. His verdict is that his lay-supporter, *Siyadoris* died because he could not keep the fifth precept (that is abstinence from intoxicants). Now let us ask the village school master. His opinion is that this premature death is due to illiteracy. What does the Member of the Parliament say? He would put it down to abject poverty due to misgovernment by the ruling party. Let us ask the wife of the dead man who was at his bedside at the time of the death. She might say that her husband died because he could not breathe. What is the coroner's verdict? It states that the death is due to chronic cirrhosis. But all these are partial truths.

If we ask the Buddha he would say that *Siyadoris* died for the simple reason that he was born!

There you are laughing – but that is the fact. Of course you might say "You don't have to tell us that. We know tha?"

But that is precisely what has to be told. That is what the world does not KNOW!

You may recall what we pointed out in our discussion of the *Mahāpadāna Sutta*. When we analyse the *Paṭicca Samuppāda* formula these days we usually begin with the first two lines:

'*avijjā paccayā saṅkhārā'* ('dependent on ignorance preparations'). It is very easy for us now. But how did the Buddha lay bare this most wonderful truth for the first time?

It is through radical attention ('*yonisomanasikāra*'). *Yonisomanasikāra* means attending by way of the source or matrix. Therefore, not only our *Gotama* Buddha, but also Vipassi Buddha before him aroused the knowledge of Dependent Arising by attending to 'decay and death' upwards. We have already explained these things. For instance the Bodhisatta Vipassi asked himself:

'kimhi nu kho sati jarāmaraṇaṁ hoti, kim paccayā jarāmaranaṁ.'

When what is there (or "what being there") does decay and death come to be Dependent on what is decay and death?

Then it occurred to him:

'jatiyā sati jarāmaraṇaṁ hoti, jatipaccayā jarāmaranaṁ.'

'When birth is there, decay and death come to be, Dependent on birth is decay and death.'

Just see. There is nothing to laugh about it. Until then the world had not understood it. The worldlings only think up excuses for it. That is why they ask why a Buddha has to come and tell us that. But the Buddhas arouse the knowledge of this basic reason because they want to put an end to *samsāric* suffering. Worldlings are not concerned with radical solutions to the problem of suffering. Whether he observed the five precepts or not *Siyadoris* would die. Whether he is literate or illiterate he would die. Whether he held his breath or released it he would die. Whether he had cirrhosis or not he would die.

But if *Siyadoris* had put and end to birth, he would not have died.

To refresh your memory a little more – now you can make sense of the *Paṭicca Samuppāda* formula because radical attention starts from the very end. Then the Buddha asked himself:

'*kimhi nu kho sati jāti hoti. kimpaccayā jāti*.'

'When what is there does birth come to be? Dependent on what is birth?' And it dawned on him through wisdom:

'bhave kho sati jāti hoti, bhavapaccayā jāti'

'When becoming is there does birth come to be.

Dependent on becoming is birth'

So you can infer that the condition for birth is becoming or existence and likewise the cause and condition for becoming or existence is grasping because what you grasp that you are; the condition for grasping is craving since you grasp because of craving; the condition for craving is feeling since you crave because of feeling; the condition for feeling is contact because where you contact there you feel; the condition for contact is the six sense spheres since you contact because you have six sense spheres. The condition for the six sense spheres is name and form. Now we come to that deep point which we discussed earlier too. The condition for name and form is consciousness and then there is that crucial 'turning-back'. The condition for consciousness is name and form. The process of questioning through radical attention stopped at the point of this mutual conditionality ('a*ññ*ama*ññ*a *paccayatā*').

'nāmarupāpaccayā viññāṇaṁ

viññāṇapaccayā nāmarupāṁ'

Dependent on name and form is consciousness

Dependent on consciousness is name and form.

Although questioning stopped there the very ignorance of this mental conditionality itself is *avijjā* or ignorance and the consequent fumbling or groping about in that darkness is *sankhārā* or preparations. This is what we tried to illustrate by various similes – the delusion arising out of the duality. The tragic self-love of Narcissus is the best example. But the Buddha discovered the secret of this vortical interplay – namely, Dependent Arising ('*Paṭicca Samuppāda*'). That he accomplished through radical attention (*'yonisomanasikāra')*.

So you may understand that this discourse which is regarded as deep reveals that Dependent Arising or *Paṭicca Samuppāda*' is a middle path. It is due to a lack of understanding of this fact that many find it difficult to understand that the cessation of becoming is *Nibbāna*. We might have to take up for discussion several other deep discourses to clarify this aspect of the Dhamma.

Then there is what is called '*maññanā*' (lit. minding, thinking in terms of or imagining). Let us take up a short discourse to acquaint ourselves with this term and to clarify further the alternation between 'thisness' and 'otherwiseness' ('*itthabhāva*' – '*aññathābhāva*'). We pointed out that *maññanā* is an imagining. According to what the Buddha has pointed out to us we are living in a mirage of our own making. The mirage is mind-made. To reveal this fact to us he brings up a strange parable – the parable of Vepacitti in *Saṁyutta Nikāya*. It is a parable which conveys something extremely deep. The Buddha presents it to the monks as if relating an incident which actually happened in the past. Quite often in the discourses we find an allusion to a battle between gods (*sura*) and demons (*asura*). In this particular contest it is said that in the battle between gods and demons, demons lost and gods won. The gods bound Vepacitti, the king of demons in a fivefold bondage neck, hand and foot and brought him into the presence of *sakka* – the king of gods. The Buddha says that the bondage of Vepacitti has a peculiar mechanism about it. When Vepacitti thinks:

'Gods are righteous and demons are unrighteous, I will remain here in the *deva* world' with that very thought he finds himself released from the fivefold bondage and enjoying divine pleasures. But as soon as he thinks:

'gods are unrighteous and demons are righteous. I will go back to the asura world' he finds himself bound again in that fivefold bondage. The point here stressed by the Buddha is that the bondage is 'mind-made'. In summing up the Buddha says:

'*Evam sukhumaṁ kho bhikkhave Vepacitti bandhanaṁ. Tato sukhumataraṁ mārabandhanaṁ*'

"So subtle, monks, is the bondage of Vepacitti but more subtle still the bondage of *Māra*."

The bondage of Vepacitti is subtle as it is connected with the mind. But it seems the bondage of *Māra* is subtler.

Now comes the highly significant statement:

'maññanmāno kho bhikkhave baddho mārassa

amaññanmāno mutto pāpimato.'

"Imagining monks, one is bound by *Māra*, not imagining one is freed from that evil one."

Then the Buddha goes on to explain what this imagining is:

‘asmīti bhikkhave maññitametaṁ

ayamahamasmīti maññitametaṁ

bhavissanti maññitametaṁ

na bhavissanti maññitametaṁ

rūpī bhavissanti maññitametaṁ

arūpī bhavissanti maññitametaṁ

saññī bhavissanti maññitametaṁ

asaññī bhavissanti maññitametaṁ

nevasaññīnāsaññī bhavissanti maññitametaṁ

maññitaṁ bhikkhave gando,

maññitaṁ rogo,

maññitaṁ sallaṁ.

Tasmātiha bhikkhave,

“amaññitamanena cetasā, viharissāmāti”

evañhi vo bhikkhave sikkhitabbaṁ.’

‘(I) am’ – monks, this is an imagined

‘This am I’ – this is an imagined

‘I should be’ – monks, this is an imagined

‘I shall not be’ – monks, this is an imagined

‘I shall be one with form’ – monks, this is an imagined

‘I shall be formless’ – monks, this is an imagined

‘I shall be percipient’ – monks, this is an imagined

‘I shall be non-percipient’ – monks, this is an imagined

‘I shall be percipient nor non-percipient’ – monks, this is an imagined

Imagining monks, is a disease, imagining is an abscess, imagining is a barb.

Therefore, monks you must tell yourselves:

"We will dwell with a mind free from imaginings".

Thus must you train yourselves.

So here are nine ways of imagining. The first imagining is (I) am. We cannot help using 'I am' according to rules of grammar. But that itself is something imagined. That is not enough. We have to say 'This am I' identifying ourselves with one or the other of five aggregates. But that again is something imagined. So also is the assertion 'I shall be' or 'I shall not be'. Similarly even the Brahmas are bound since 'I shall be one with form' and 'I shall be formless' are imaginings. Whether one thinks 'I shall be percipient' or 'I shall be non-percipient' it is an imagining. So also the see-sawing 'I shall be neither percipient nor non-percipient'.

Having thus shown that the entire range of existence rests on imaginings, the Buddha declares:

'Imagining is a disease, an abscess, a barb and advises the monks to dwell with a mind free from imaginings. This is the moral behind the parable of Vepacitti's bondage. That is why we pointed out that delusion is ingrained in the linguistic medium. But we cannot afford to reject it altogether. That is precisely why even the Buddha uses it but without grasping.

The other day, while discussing the simile of the whirlpool we said something about 'that place' and 'this place' or 'here and there'. Corresponding to that we have the three 'persons' – "I am" the first person 'here you are' the second person in front of me and 'he' over there is the third person. That is the grammatical structure. There are verbs that go with the three persons. 'Am', 'are' and 'is'. According to the Buddha all these are part and parcel of the disease of imagining. The world is imprisoned by language and logic. The Buddha on the other hand offered us a Dhamma that transcends logic. That in short is the middle path implicit in the law of Dependent Arising. I wonder whether you remember our simile of the magic-kettle. It is not something found in books. It is based on a little bit of experience in my young days. While on a shopping round we once watched a continuous flow of water from a kettle into a basin behind a shop window. The kettle never got empty nor did the basin overflow. We later learned that a hidden tube conveyed the water from the basin back into the kettle. The world is also such a magic-kettle.

'*Samudayo samudayo*' (arising, arising) – there is an incessant process of arising, '*nirodho, nirodho*' (ceasing, ceasing) there is an incessant process of ceasing. But the worldling ignores the ceasing aspect and emphasizes the arising aspect in order to hold on to the personality view ('*sakkāyadiṭṭhi*'). Just ponder over the etymology of the term '*sakkāyadiṭṭhi*'. '*Sat*' means 'existing' and '*kāya*' means 'group'. It is because we take the entire group or the heap as existing that we insist on proving an identity which we do not have in reality. We have our identity cards. How can there be an identity if the nature of the world is otherwiseness ('*aññathābhāva*'). Forgetting about this fact we assert saying 'This is me' not only our present form but even the beautiful photographs taken in our childhood or at our wedding. That conceit is implicit in the stance 'Am'. The perception of the compact ('*ghana saññā*') is already there. The world forgets that there is an incessant process of arising and an incessant process of ceasing. This process defies language. When we say 'River flows' there is only a process of flowing. But when we give it a name, say River *Kelani*, then we presume that it is the river that flows. So also is the fluxional nature of this body. Which is concealed. Only a Buddha points it out to us. Though our commentators failed to notice it, some Buddhist sects highlighted the fact that the middle path which avoids the two extremes is *Paṭicca Samuppāda*. They give it prominence. This does not mean that we accept everything in those Buddhist sects. Some called it '*Sunyatā*'. The important point to note is that there is an incessant arising and ceasing which transcends logic because logic is based on the duality of existence and non-existence – on 'Is' and 'Is not'. Even the four-cornered logic the tetralemma – moves within this same duality. In place of this the Buddha introduced the law of Dependent Arising with its philosophy of incessant arising and ceasing summed up in the exclamation '*Samudayo Samudayo – Nirodho nirodho*.'

Let us reflect a little more on this imagining 'I am'. How does it come in? There is an important discourse which explains it for us. Once venerable Ānanda tells his fellow monks 'Friends when we were newly gone forth venerable *Punna Mantāniputta* was very helpful to us. He gave us an admonition like this '*Ānanda, upādāya asmiti hoti no anupādāya*'. Ānanda the notion 'I am' occurs in-dependence not without dependence. That is to say, due to grasping and not without grasping. So the notion 'I am' occurs due to causes and conditions – not fortuitously.

Then venerable Ānanda reiterates the words of venerable *Punna Mantāniputta* :

'*Kiñca upādāya asmīti hoti no anupādāya*

Rūpaṁ upādāya asmīti hoti no anupādāya

Vedanaṁ upādāya asmīti hoti no anupādāya

Saññāṁ upādāya asmīti hoti no anupādāya

Sankhare upādāya asmīti hoti no anupādāya

Viññāṇaṁ upādāya asmīti hoti no anupādāya'.

Dependent on form arises (the notion) 'I am' – not without dependence

Dependent on feeling arises (the notion) 'I am' – not without dependence

Dependent on perception arises (the notion) 'I am' – not without dependence

Dependent on preparations arises (the notion) 'I am' – not without dependence

Dependent on consciousness arises (the notion) 'I am' – not without dependence

So it seems that the notion 'I am' is fostered by grasping or *upādāna*.

Then venerable *Puṇṇa Mantāniputta* gives a wonderful simile. It is a deep simile which you may ponder upon.

Just as Ānanda, a young woman or a young man who likes adornment looking at the reflection of her or his face either in a clean mirror or in a bowl of clear water would be seeing depending on it and not without depending, even so Ānanda depending on form arises (the notion) 'I am', not without depending. Depending on feeling arises (the notion) 'I am', not without depending. Depending on perception arises (the notion) 'I am', not without depending. Depending on preparations arises (the notion) 'I am', not without depending. Depending on consciousness arises (the notion) 'I am', not without depending. It is when one grasps the mirror that one sees one's form reflected on it. Now think of what happened to Narcissus. Because he had never seen his face as soon as he saw the reflection of his face in the water he imagined an angel in the pond. The notion 'I am' is the result of a similar reflection. The reflection in the mirror does not reveal what is inside the entrails. It only shows the external form. That is what the world prides on as self.

One grasps not only form but feeling, perception, preparations and consciousness as well. The Buddha has clarified to us why each of them is called a group (*khanda*). On a previous occasion too we explained the significance of the word '*khanda*' in *pañcupādānakhanda* (the five groups of grasping). The Buddha has given us an elevenfold analysis of each of the 'groups'. For instance in the case of form, the formula runs as follows:

'yaṁ kiñci rūpaṁ atītānāgata paccuppannaṁ ajjhattaṁ vā bahiddā vā oḷārikaṁ vā sukumaṁ vā hīnaṁ vā panītaṁ vā yaṁ dūre santike vā sabbaṁ rūpaṁ', etc.

"Whatever form, whether past, future or present, internal or external, gross or subtle, inferior or superior, far or near, all form.., etc."

This elevenfold analysis is recommended for insight meditation to eradicate the conceit of self.

Let us try to clarify for ourselves the significance of this analysis. '*yaṁ kiñci rūpaṁ atītānāgata paccuppannaṁ'* – 'whatever form whether past, future or present' – even the past form is prided on as 'my own'. That beautiful child in your photo album you claim with pride:

'This is me'. So that is your past form. What about the 'future' form. When you are getting ready to go for a wedding you do a lot of 'make-up' before the mirror and ask yourself:

'How would I appear there?' That is your 'future form', you have already grasped. '*ajjhattaṁ vā bahiddā vā'* – 'internal or external'. You grasp not only your form but forms you see outside. '*oḷārikaṁ vā sukumaṁ vā'* – 'whether gross or subtle'. '*hīnaṁ vā paṇītaṁ vā'* – 'inferior or superior'. '*yaṁ dūre santike vā sabbaṁ rūpaṁ'* – 'whether far or near'. Every one of the five groups is an 'aggregate' of these eleven modes. A person 'deposits' his experiences in life according to these eleven modes. This applies not only to one's present life but to one's entire *samsāric* past. This is the 'bedrock' of *samsāric* experience which influences one as a 'latency' ('*anusaya*').

So then we have before us a stupendous *samsāric* problem of the highest order. But we are not going to blame language for it. Language is of our own creation. After we created it we fell under its spell. That is what we pointed out in our discussion of the term '*papañca*'. We alluded to the legend about the resurrected tiger. Three experts in magic while going through a forest saw the scattered bones of a tiger. One magic worker showed his skill by assembling them into a skeleton. The second one gave it flesh and blood. The third one infused life into it. The magically resurrected tiger sprang up and devoured all of them. Our language and logic worked a similar tragedy on us. We have been imprisoned by language and logic in this *Saṁsāra*. That is why we said in an earlier sermon that the complications in *Saṁsāra* are traceable to linguistic conventions. That is not with the idea of stigmatizing it. In fact we cannot help using it. Even the Buddha had

to use it. As the grand finale of the *Poṭṭhapāda Sutta* comes the following highly significant statement:

'Itīmā kho Citta lokasamaññā lokaniruttiyo lokavohārā lokapaññattiyo yāhi Tathāgato voharati aparāmasaṁ'

"*Citta,* these are worldly conventions, worldly expressions, worldly usages, worldly concepts which the *Tathāgatha* makes use of without grasping"

The *Tathāgatha* makes use of them but does not grasp them. That should be the aim of following this Dhamma. Therefore, it is from the misconceptions ingrained in the linguistic medium that we have to get free from. That can be accomplished only through insight and wisdom. By continuously seeing the arising and ceasing nature of phenomena in one's experience with insight we can extricate ourselves from these misconceptions and that too each one by himself.

So I think this is enough for today. It seems we are delving deeper and deeper into this Dhamma. But you shouldn't get disheartened. These sermons may not be as palatable as popular versified sermons. But it is here that we have the quintessence of the Dhamma. As we once told you if you wish to attain *Nibbāna* after seeing the Buddha, see *Paṭicca Samuppāda*. If you see *Paṭicca Samuppāda* you see the Dhamma and whoever sees the Dhamma sees the Buddha. So when you see *Paṭicca Samuppāda* you see both the Buddha and the Dhamma. You had better reflect wisely on these words.

I suppose you spent the day in meditation established on higher precepts. Today you had the opportunity to listen to a sermon which is particularly relevant to insight meditation. Making the best use of it in your meditation, I hope you all will put forth your best efforts to escape this terrible *Saṁsāra*. May you all be able to attain in this very life supramundane states and the bliss of the deathless *Nibbāna*. Whatever beings there be from the lowest hell to the highest Brahma world may they all rejoice in our sermon. May the merits accrued by that rejoicing conduce to the fulfillment of their higher aims!

Paticca Samuppada Sermon 7
The Law of Dependent Arising
(Pahan Kanuwa Sermon – No. 189)

'*Namo tassa bhagavato arahato sammāsambuddhassa*'

'Homage be! To the Fortunate One – the Worthy, Fully Enlightened!'

Anattani attamāniṁ – passa lokaṁ sadevakaṁ

niviṭṭhaṁ nāmarūpasmiṁ – idaṁ saccanti maññati

yena yena hi maññati – tato taṁ hoti aññathā

taṁ hi tassa musā hoti – mosadhammaṁ hi ittaraṁ

amosa dhammaṁ nibbānaṁ – tadariyā saccato vidū

te ve saccābhisamayā – nicchātā parinibbutā

– Dvayatānupassanā S. Sutta Nipātha.

Just see a world with all its goods

Fancying a self where none exists

Entering into name and form

It builds the fancy – 'Ah! This is the truth'!

In whatever way one fancies of a thing

Thereby itself it turns otherwise

And that itself is the falsity in it

Falsifying by nature – the puny thing.

But Nibbāna unfalsifying as it is

Noble Ones knew as the truth

And they by their understanding of the truth

Are hungerless and fully appeased.

Dear Listeners,

The Fully Enlightened Buddha has revealed to us that the worldlings are bound to *Saṁsāra* due to the conceit that there is a self where there is no self. The fancying or imagining caused by conceit is called '*maññanā*.' The release from this imagining which takes name-and-form as the truth is the release from the bondage of *Māra* – that is to say *Nibbāna* itself. Today we have taken up as the topic of our sermon three verses which declare this truth. These three verses also are found in the *Dvayatānupassanā Sutta* of the *Sutta Nipāta*. In our last sermon, we introduced this discourse as one that instils an intense fervor of the Dhamma. As the word '*dvayatā*' in the title of the discourse indicates this sutta analyses sixteen topics of Dhamma in the form of dualities. Here the Buddha analyses in sixteen ways the eternal law of bondage and release in a way that reminds us of the direct and the indirect order of the law of Dependent Arising.

Today we have taken up for comment the three verses pertaining to the fifteenth mode of contemplation of dualities. As an introduction to those three verses the Buddha gives this prose description of the fifteenth mode of duality.

'*yaṁ bhikkhave sadevakassa lokassa samārakassa sabrahmakassa sassamanabrāhmaniyā pajāya sadevamanussāya idaṁ saccanti upanijjhāyitaṁ tadamariyānaṁ etaṁ musāti yathābhūtaṁ sammappaññāya sudiṭṭhaṁ – ayaṁ ekānupassanā*'

"Monks, whatever that has been pondered over as 'This is true' by the world with its gods, *Māras* and *Brahmas* with its recluses and *Brahmins*, that by the Ariyans has been seen as it is with right wisdom as 'That is false.' This is one mode of contemplation."

And then the second mode of contemplation is introduced as follows:

'*yaṁ bhikkhave sadevakassa lokassa samārakassa sabrahmakassa sassamanabrāhmaniyā pajāya sadevamanussāya idaṁ musāti upanijjhāyitaṁ tadamariyānaṁ etaṁ saccanti yathābhūtaṁ sammappaññāya sudiṭṭhaṁ – ayaṁ dutiyānupassanā*'

"Monks, whatever that has been pondered over as 'This is false' by the world with its gods, *Māras* and *Brahmas* with its recluses and *Brahmins*, that by the Ariyans has been seen as it is with right wisdom as 'That is true.' This is the second mode of contemplation."

Having thus presented the two modes of contemplation, the Buddha, as he did in the case of other contemplations, declares that if any monk, rightly

contemplating in this way, dwells diligently, ardent and zealous, one of two fruits may be expected by him:

knowledge of arahanthood in this life itself or if there is any residual clinging, Non-returnership. The Buddha declares that this particular contemplation is so highly beneficial. It is after this declaration that the Buddha summed it up in these three verses.

Anattani attamāniṁ – passa lokaṁ sadevakaṁ

niviṭṭhaṁ nāmarūpasmiṁ – idaṁ saccanti maññati.

See the world with all its gods entertaining a conceit of self where there is no self. Having entered into or entrenched in name and form, it loves to fancy:

'This is the truth.' With that the Buddha is stating the condition of the world and then he says:

'*yena yena hi maññati – tato taṁ hoti aññathā taṁ hi tassa musā hoti – mosadhammaṁ hi ittaraṁ*' "In whatever way one fancies a thing thereby it becomes otherwise. That itself is the falsity in it – the puerile deceptive thing that it is."

Then the third verse:

'*amosa dhammaṁ nibbānaṁ – tadariyā saccato vidū te ve saccābhisamayā – nicchātā parinibbutā'* "*Nibbāna* is unfalsifying. That the wise ones knew as the truth. And they by their understanding of the truth being hungerless are fully appeased."

So from these words of the Buddha, it is clear that the entire world including gods and *Brahmas* are caught by this bondage of *Māra*, due to fancying by taking name and form to be real. This fact is borne out by the parable of Vepacitti we brought up in our last sermon. Just briefly remind yourselves of what we have related the other day. The Buddha once addressing the monks related the age-old legend of the battle between gods and demons. He said that demons lost and gods won in this particular battle and the gods bound Vepacitti, the king of demons, in a five-fold bondage (that is neck, hand and foot) and brought him before *Sakka*, the king of gods. This bondage had a peculiar mechanism about it. If Vepacitti thought:

"Demons are unrighteous, gods are righteous, I will remain in the deva world", he would find himself freed from that bondage and enjoying heavenly pleasures. But if he happened to think:

“Gods are unrighteous, demons are righteous, I will go back to the *Asura* world”, then he finds himself bound again in that fivefold bondage. After stating that, the Buddha goes on to say:

“So subtle monks, is the bondage of Vepacitti but more subtle still the bondage of *Māra*.”

And then he explains what this bondage of *Māra* is. The Buddha declares that even the basic postulate of existence, namely, the notion ‘(I) am’ is an imagining (‘*asmīti bhikkhave mañññitametaṁ*’). There the Buddha mentions a ninefold imagining. The notion ‘(I) am’ is an imagining. ‘This am I’ is an imagining. ‘I shall be’ is an imagining. ‘I shall not be’ is an imagining. ‘I shall be one with form’ is an imagining. ‘I shall be formless’ is an imagining. ‘I shall be percipient’ is an imagining. ‘I shall be non-percipient’ is an imagining. ‘I shall be neither percipient nor non-percipient’ is an imagining. Thus the entire gamut of existence extending up to the realm of neither perception nor non-perception, including the Sensuous Realm, the Realm of Form and the Formless Realm is the range of imagining. Having declared that existence as a whole is bound up with imagining, he says in conclusion:

“Imagining monks, is a disease, imagining is an abscess, imagining is a barb (‘*mañññitaṁ bhikkhave rogo, mañññitaṁ gaṇḍo, mañññitaṁ sallaṁ’)* and advises the monks to dwell with a mind free from imaginings (‘*amañññitamanena cetasā’).*

By means of the five constituents of name, that is to say, feeling, perception, intention, contact and attention, the worldlings take hold of the four great primaries, namely, earth, water, fire and air and due to self-love, enact a drama of Narcissistic affection best exemplified by the story of Narcissus itself, which we brought up several times. The handsome Greek youth Narcissus who had never seen his own face, while wandering in a forest, bent down into a pond to wash his face. Seeing the reflection of his own face he mistook it to be an angel’s and tried to embrace her. Every time he tried, the ripples foiled his attempt. If we bring this story in line with the point at issue, as soon as the worldling imagines a ‘thing’, it turns otherwise. To fancy a ‘thing’ is called ‘thisness’ and the ‘ripples’ of impermanence is its ‘otherwiseness’ or change. For instance now we take this clock as a ‘thing’. When it goes out of order, it turns in to otherwiseness. If we had not taken it as a ‘thing’ but as part of a heap of rubbish, such a situation would not have arisen, because there is no fancying. That is only by way of illustration. Through all this the Buddha puts across to us the truth of impermanence. In our last sermon we presented a deeper analysis of this truth. It is a very powerful sermon. Soon after his enlightenment, the Buddha surveyed the world with his

Buddhaeye and seeing how beings are afflicted with lust, hate and delusion, came out with an inspired utterance which is a wonderful blend of prose and verse. Let us quote a portion of it.

ayaṁ loko santāpajāto phassapareto

rogaṁ vadati attato

This anguished world given over to contact

Speaks of a disease in terms of a self

And then he says:

yena yenahi maññati

tato taṁ hoti aññathā

Whatever one thinks in terms of

Thereby it turns otherwise

Now comes the extraordinary statement:

'Aññathābhāvī bhavasatto loko bhavapareto

bhavamevābhinandati

yadabhinandati taṁ bhayaṁ

yassa bhāyati taṁ dukkhaṁ

bhavavippahānāya kho panidaṁ

brahmacariyaṁ vussati.'

The world attached to becoming, given over to becoming

Though becoming otherwise yet delights in becoming

What it delights in is a cause for fear

What it is afraid of is suffering itself

For abandoning this becoming

Is this holy life lived.

What is called existence has in it the nature of turning otherwise. To that existence which has the nature of turning otherwise, worldlings are attached. They are enslaved by it and they delight in it. But that delighting is dangerous and fearful. Why? Because the existence they take as a 'thisness' is turning otherwise. It is inevitable. So this is the actual situation in the world. That is why the term '*maññanā'* is of so fundamental an importance in this Dhamma.

"Well, then" one can ask "where lies freedom?" we said that in imagining or fancying one conceives of a 'thing'. We all know that there are six senses. The five external senses are eye, ear, nose, tongue and body. When the objects taken in by these five senses reach the mind, they take on a different mould. All objects of the mind are called '*dhammā*' – 'things'. So you may note first of all that the problem concerns those things that come to the mind. About this 'thing' which is the object of the mind, there is a highly significant discourse in the *Majjhima Nikāya*, namely *Mūlapariyāya Sutta*. It is probably because of its fundamental importance that those *arahants* who held the First Council placed this discourse as the very first in this discourse collection. But unfortunately nowadays teachers when they teach this book to their pupils ask them to skip the first sutta and start from the second. They say that this is so abstruse that even those who listened to it could not understand it. But we wish to point out that this discourse is like the basic alphabet to the understanding of the philosophy of this entire Dhamma. Why do we say so? Because this *Mūlapariyāya Sutta* reveals the basic pattern of all 'things' that occur to the mind (*mūlapariyāya*).

Let us now describe the way this discourse is presented. It has a very brief introduction. The Buddha seated under a *Sal* tree in the *Subhaga* forest in the *Ukkaṭṭhā*, addressing the congregation of monks preached this sermon presumably because he wanted to bring up a very important subject. He introduces the subject with this exhortation:

"Sabbadhamma mūlapariyāyaṁ vo bhikkhave desissāmi. Taṁ sunātha sādhukaṁ manasikarotha bhāsissāmi."

"Monks, I shall preach to you the fundamental mode of all things. Listen to it. Attend to it well, I shall preach."

What is meant by 'the fundamental mode of all things' is this:

There is a certain mode according to which all phenomena occur to our mind. It is this basic mode that is found in grammar. Within this linguistic usage, all phenomena that occur to the mind present themselves according to some grammatical pattern. In regard to that grammatical pattern this *Mūlapariyāya Sutta* analyzes the respective attitudes of the average worldling uninstructed in

the Dhamma, of the monk who is a learner not attained to arahanthood, of the *arahant* and of the Fully Enlightened One – the *Tathāgata*. But we can boil it down to three attitudes since the attitude of the *arahant* and of the Buddha are essentially the same. Because the *Tathāgata*, the Fully Enlightened One proclaimed this Dhamma as the teacher, he is in a category by himself. But for all practical purposes his attitude and that of the *arahant* are the same. So we are now going to analyze this discourse based on those three attitudes. We have already mentioned that this discourse describes the attitude of the worldling towards the grammatical pattern in usage in the world, the attitude of the learner training in this Dhamma and the attitude of the arahant. To represent all objects of the mind regarded as 'things' the Buddha lists 24 dhammas. It is not a complete list of all possible dhammas, but a fair representation of them as instances. They may be summed up as follows in brief. Firstly, the four great primaries:

earth, water, fire and air.

Then the eight classes of beings:

namely beings, gods, *Pajāpati*, *Brahmā*, the Radiant Ones, the Lustrous Ones, the *Vehapphala Brahmas*, the Overlord.

Then the four formless realms:

the realm of infinite space, the realm of infinite consciousness, the realm of nothingness, the realm of neither perception nor non-perception.

Then the sum-total of sense-experience:

The seen, the heard, the sensed and the cognized.

And finally, the concepts of unity, diversity, universality and *Nibbāna* (*ekattaṁ, nānattaṁ, sabbaṁ, nibbānaṁ*).

Having thus introduced 24 mind-objects (*dhammā*) The Buddha describes the different attitudes of the above three classes towards each of them. When we give one instance you all can understand the rest of it. Out of the four primaries given first, let us take earth. This is how the attitude of the uninstructed average worldling towards it is described. He perceives earth as earth – even as the deer perceives water. Having thus perceived earth as earth ('*paṭhaviṁ paṭhavito saññatvā*') he imagines an earth ('*paṭhaviṁ maññati*"). There we find that *maññanā* coming in. Then he imagines:

'In the earth' ('*paṭhaviyā maññati*'). He imagines 'from the earth' ('*paṭhavito maññati*'). He imagines 'earth is mine' ('*paṭhaviṁ meti maññati*'). He delights in earth ('*paṭhaviṁ abhinandati*'). Then the Buddha asks:

'Why is that?' ('*taṁ kissa hetu?*') and gives this explanation:

'It is because it has not been comprehended by him' ('*apariññātaṁ tassāti vadāmi*').

Then about the learner (*sekha*) who has not attained *arahanthood* this is what comes in the discourse:

'*paṭhaviṁ paṭhavito abhijānāti*'. In this case it is not *sañjānāti* (perceives) but *abhijānāti* that is understands through higher knowledge. Through his attainment of the Fruit of the Path, even for a split second he had an experience of the Truth. As if by a streak of lightening in a dark night, he had a glimpse of *Nibbāna*. Thereby he got an understanding which is of a higher order than mere perception. He has understood the true state of affairs though it is short of full comprehension. About him, this is what is stated in the sutta:

'*paṭhaviṁ paṭhavito abhijānāti*'. He understands earth as earth. And then:

'*paṭhaviṁ paṭhavito abhiññāya*' – having understood earth as earth – now comes a peculiar expression:

'*paṭhaviṁ mā maññi, paṭhaviyā mā maññi, paṭhavito mā maññi, paṭhaviṁ meti mā maññi, paṭhaviṁ mā abhinandi*.' The use of *'mā'* here is a big puzzle for the commentator. But it is the prohibitive particle in *Pāli* language. You may have heard the dictum:

'*mā nivatta abhikkama*' – 'Do not turn back, go forward.' However, the commentator goes off at a tangent here. He says that this particle conveys the idea that the noble disciple neither imagines nor does he not imagine. This is not the reason for this peculiar usage. The learner (*sekha*) is that noble disciple who is still training. Though he has higher knowledge beyond mere perception, he has not yet attained full comprehension (*pariññā*).

So he has to constantly remind himself to refrain from imagining, drawing inspiration from the higher knowledge he has won.

'*paṭhaviṁ mā maññi*' etc. means

'Do not imagine earth as earth,

Do not imagine in the earth,

Do not imagine from the earth,

Do not imagine earth is mine,

Do not delight in the earth.'

Why? Because he has yet to comprehend ('*pariññeyyaṁ tassāti vadāmi*').

This is an injunction for self-training.

Well then, that is as far as the noble disciple who is a learner is concerned. Now as for the attitudes of the *arahant* and the *Tathāgata*, we said that they are the same. For Instance, this is what is said about the arahant:

'*paṭhaviṁ paṭhavito abhijānāti, paṭhaviṁ paṭhavito abhiññāya, paṭhaviṁ na maññati, paṭhaviyā na maññati, paṭhavito na maññati, paṭhaviṁ meti na maññati, paṭhaviṁ nābhinandati.*'

That is to say, the *arahant* as well as the Buddha has the following attitude towards the concept of earth. The *arahant* by virtue of his higher understanding of earth has seen its voidness. He does not imagine earth as earth, he does not imagine 'in the earth', does not imagine 'from the earth', does not imagine 'earth is mine', does not delight in the earth.

We said that there are 24 concepts listed. With regard to each of them the same mode of imagining is given in detail. What is said in particular about the *Tathāgata*, the Fully Enlightened One is that he is the teacher who revealed this Dhamma. In conclusion, the Buddha says:

'*nandi dukkhassa mūlanti iti viditvā bhavā jāti bhūtassa jarāmaranaṁ*' – 'Having known that delight is the root of suffering. From becoming, birth and to the one born there is decay and death.' That is why there is no delighting in any of those concepts. '*Nandi dukkhassa mūlaṁ*'. Delighting is the root of suffering. It is by delighting that an existence comes to be, and that existence is turning otherwise. That is the beginning of suffering. Birth, decay and death and all the rest follow.

By way of explanation of this discourse we may cite the simile of the deer and the mirage. We have brought up this simile quite often. The deer imagines water in the mirage and runs after it. But if a person knows that it is not water but some seasonal phenomena, even if he thinks at first sight that it is water, he tells himself:

'No, no this can't be water' and trains himself. One who has full comprehension does not have to advise himself because he has perfect knowledge. The commentator has confounded the whole issue. He cannot appreciate the fact that it is a step of training. But confusion is worst confounded when he comes to explain the last of all twenty-four concepts – namely *Nibbāna*. When it is said that one should not delight in *Nibbāna*, quite understandably the question comes up:

"If we don't delight in *Nibbāna* how can we attain it?"

That may be the reason why the commentator says that *Nibbāna* here mentioned is not our *Nibbāna* but the concept of *Nibbāna* in other religious systems. With this observation the commentator makes an attempt to vindicate our *Nibbāna* despite the fact that the Buddha has here leveled an attack on linguistic usage as a whole. But it is a vain attempt because as long as one goes on imagining in terms of *Nibbāna* as 'in *Nibbāna',* 'from *Nibbāna'* and so on and as long as one delights in the concept of *Nibbāna,* one cannot attain it. Some of you might take it as an awkward position. We all look forward to attain *Nibbāna*. So if we cannot delight in *Nibbāna*, what else can we delight in? This is the problem for commentators too. But here we have something deep concerning linguistic usage. To explicate it a little let us give an illustration from the history of this dispensation.

In an earlier sermon too we have mentioned to you in brief, some incident recorded in the annals of the history of Buddhism. After the Buddha's demise, when the time came for the holding of the First Council, Venerable Mahā Kassapa Mahā thera was faced with a problem in selecting five hundred *arahants* for the recital of Dhamma and *Vinaya*. It was Venerable Ānanda who had committed to memory the entire Dhamma. But he had not attained arahanthood yet. Therefore, 499 *arahants* were selected at first. They were in a dilemma whether to take in Venerable Ānanda or not. However, at last they decided to take him on the ground that he is incapable of being influenced by prejudices. It is said that on the day before the Council the *arahants* reminded Venerable Ānanda of his obligation saying:

"Friend, tomorrow is our Council. It does not behove you to attend it as a non-arahant. Be diligent." Those of you who have passed examinations would remember how much you have crammed when you are reminded that tomorrow is the exam. Similarly, Venerable Ānanda too made a firm determination to put forth his best efforts. It is said that he determined thorough mindfulness in regard to the body (*kāyagatāsati*) and spent the greater part of the night in the promenade pacing up and down mindfully. Probably due to tiredness, in the last watch of the night, he thought of taking some rest, and went and sat on his bed.

He was going to lie down, his feet were raised from the floor and his head had not reached the pillow yet, and in the interim his mind was released from all influxes and he attained arahanthood.

Various explanations are given about this extraordinary illumination between two postures. The commentator says that Venerable Ānanda thought:

"Now I am striving too hard. Let me balance my spiritual faculties."

That can't be the reason. There is a subtle psychological norm involved here. Now for Venerable Ānanda, the concept *'Nibbāna'* appeared as a 'certificate' to enter the Council. That is to say, for him '*Nibbāna'* was something like a certificate. The word '*Nibbāna'* which stands for 'giving-up everything' became a 'thing' to be grasped.

"I must attain *Nibbāna*. It is beneath my dignity to attend the Council as a *non-arahant*."

There itself is conceit and restlessness due to overexertion. He imagined *Nibbāna* to be a 'thing' and that implies ignorance as well. That is why he could not attain *Nibbāna* after all that striving. But then, what happened at that particular moment? He had already determined on strenuous effort in all four postures. So if he had lied down on bed he would have continued to put forth strenuous effort. But there is something called 'posture-junctions'. Most probably he had reckoned without them. However, at that interim instance of bending his body to lie down, he suddenly became aware of an 'interval'. In that INTERVAL it might have occurred to him:

"Oh! I have made a 'THING' out of *Nibbāna! Isn't it a term for giving up everything? So why am I struggling?"*

In that moment of realization he realized *Nibbāna* and became an *Arahant*. That is our explanation.

On an earlier occasion too in the course of our sermons, we gave various similes by way of explanation. Even if you are driving in a hurry when you come to the cross-roads junction, you have to slow down. Likewise Venerable Ānanda found a brief interval at a 'posture-junction'. That is probably how he attained *Nibbāna*. So there is nothing to take delight in '*Nibbāna',* because to do so is to perpetuate the subtle notion of "I" and "mine".

But still you may have doubts. So let us bring up an illustration from our village life. Our National New Year Day is drawing near. Isn't that so? Now among the New Year festivities, there is a game called 'Blind man cracking the pot.' Though

we have no pots here we shall give a simile somewhat closer to it. You all have seen the artistically painted words on the wall at the far end of this hall. '*Nibbānaṁ paramaṁ sukhaṁ*' (*Nibbāna* is Bliss Supreme). After all isn't that our aim? *Nibbāna* is the supreme bliss and *Nibbāna* is over there on the wall. Now supposing I blindfold a young *upāsaka* in this crowd and ask you all to get to a side to make way for him and ask him to turn towards that *'Nibbāna'*. Of course he cannot see it as he is blindfolded. Then I ask him to do as I say. 'Take a step towards it. Take another step .... another step .... another step'. You all are now watching. He comes up almost against the wall, step by step. But he doesn't see it. And then I say:

'Take another step!' What happens then? When he lifts his foot he finds that he has to turn back! This is a simile for you to ponder over. '*Sankhārā*' or preparations have been associated with the simile of the pot. If you can understand this, perhaps you can crack the pot of *Sankhārā* and attain *Nibbāna*. The moral behind our simile is that *'Nibbāna'* as a term is a target not to be 'grasped' but to be 'seen through'. It is a question of penetration. At last you have to 'let-go' of it and free the mind of imaginings about it.

What do we mean by 'turning back' at the last step? You may recall the lesson we taught by getting you to count on your fingers, while explaining the five representatives of 'name' in name and form (*nāma rūpa*). The five fingers are feeling, perception, intention, contact and attention (*vedanā, saññā, cetanā, phassa, manasikāra*). 'Contact' is the nearest to 'attention' even as the index finger is to the thumb. Contact as the index finger is the trouble-maker. The index finger (contact) is always fussy and busy with the THUMB (attention). So let us now pay more attention to this attention (*manasikāra*). We have analyzed it in various ways while discussing the middle-path tactic by which the Buddha discovered the magical illusion behind consciousness. There we made use of a certain simile. Sometimes in courts of law, a case of murder or theft would come up with no one to give evidence. When there are no other witnesses, there is provision for making one of the alleged culprits the crown witness to get the whole story out. We pointed out that the Buddha had to do a similar thing. Out of the five representatives of name (*nāma)* it was 'attention' (*manasikāra*) who brought us all this way in *Saṁsāra* in the guise of 'nonradical attention' (*ayoniso-manasikāra).* It is due to this wrong attention that the deer keeps running after the mirage imagining water 'over there'. Now the Buddha converted this non-radical attention to radical attention (*yoniso-manasikāra).* What does '*yoniso'* mean? '*Yoni*' is matrix or place of origin and '*yoniso*' means 'by way of the place of origin'. So '*yoniso-manasikāra'* could be rendered by the term 'radical-attention'. The Buddha asks us to turn back and pay attention to the source or origin. The deer ran after the illusion of water misled by prolific

conceptualization or '*papañca*'. The worldling is in the same situation. With the change over to radical attention, the meditator lets go of '*papañca*', cuts off '*vitakka*' (thought), gives up '*saññā*' (perception), frees himself from the grip of '*vedanā*' (feeling) and finally comes back to '*phassa*' (contact).

That is the moment you are up against the wall!

If we analyze the word '*manasikāra*', '*manasi*' means 'in the mind' and '*kāra*' is 'doing'. So '*manasikāra*' is an activity within the mind. As a matter of fact, it is this 'guy' '*manasikāra*' who is responsible for the conspiracy that is *Saṁsāra*. '*Manasikāra*' is an activity going on in our mind. We do not understand it as it is. The object used for this activity 'within the mind', we put before it. But the actual state of affairs the Buddha has made known to us through the maxim in the two opening verses of the *Dhammapada*.

manopubbaṅgamā dhammā

manoseṭṭhā manomayā

'Mind-objects have mind as their forerunner,

mind is their chief.

They are mind-made.'

The worldling thinks otherwise. He argues from the other end. If he writes a *Dhammapada* he would put it the other way around. '*Dhammapubbaṅgamo mano.*' 'Mind has mind-objects as forerunners.' But the Buddha points out that the mind is the forerunner and that things are mind-made (*manomayā).* Venerable Ānanda finally realized that the term '*Nibbāna*' is mind-made – that it is only a target symbolic of complete relinquishment. You may have heard a number of terms denoting *Nibbāna*:

'*Sabbasaṅkhārasamatho Sabbupadhipaṭinissaggo taṇhakkhayo virāgo nirodho nibbānaṁ.*'

'The stilling of all preparations, the relinquishment of all assets, the destruction of craving, detachment, cessation, extinction.' Any one of these terms is sufficient to denote that attainment.

Now '*Sabbasaṅkhārasamatho*' means the stilling of all preparations. To think 'I must somehow get this certificate of *Nibbāna* as a qualification to go to the Council' is a *saṁkhāra* – a 'preparation.' The thought 'I must go' is also a

preparation. So then preparations are not yet stilled. '*Sabbupadhi paṭinissaggo'* (relinquishment of all assets) – The thought:

'I must take this bundle of five aggregates and get it seated at the council' shows that all assets are not relinquished as yet. Craving is also implicit in such a wish. *Nibbāna* implies a letting go of everything – an extinction. But the worldling grasps it as a term. That is why we say that the world is steeped in the delusion inherent in the linguistic medium.

The Buddha has clearly pointed out to us this deluding trait in linguistic usage. But our commentators as well as many Buddhist sects have not fully understood his enlightened vision regarding language. Due to that lack of understanding, they inclined to the same self-view. But here we highlighted the role of 'attention' (*manasikāra*). The object for the mind is '*dhamma*' (the 'thing'). In this context the mind-object is '*Nibbāna'*. What happens with the sudden realization that it is only a word? Mind-consciousness immediately goes down 'object-less'. We have already said that consciousness by definition is a discrimination between two things.

Now if the 'mind-object' is seen as something created by the mind itself (*manomaya*), how can one discriminate between two things?

Simultaneous with the realization that what had so far appeared as the object of the mind is 'mind-made', there comes a moment of non-discrimination. Mind-consciousness ceases then and there.

Try to understand this deep point. Granted that consciousness is a discrimination between two things, the moment that the deer becomes conscious of water in a mirage, it thinks:

'There is water over there and I am here'. That means there is a gap – an 'in between the two.' So now we come back to the same story of 'two ends and the middle'. Where there are two ends there is a middle. The deer thinks:

'Here I am and water is there. Once I pass through the intervening gap, I can reach that water'. That is the way the world thinks. The object is given precedence. It is projected when one thinks:

'I am here and the object is there.'

However, the Buddha points out to us quite a different way of thinking – not the imagining or fancying a 'thing' as implied by '*maññanā'*. To hark back to the *Mūlapariyāya Sutta,* the worldling makes a 'thing' out of 'earth' (*paṭhavi*). Not only earth, water, fire and air but all the 24 concepts listed there under the

heading '*Sabbadhamma mūlapariyāya*' (the basic mode of all things) are not to be taken as objects for '*maññanā*' – not even gods, beings, *Pajāpati* and *Brahmā*. The Buddha tamed even *Bhramā Baka* who boasted of his permanence. Simply because of their long life-span Brahmas entertained the conceit:

'We are eternal.' The ascetic Bāhiya Dārucīriya went through the necessary discipline within a very short time. He was able to stop short at the 'seen' in the seen. But we do not stop there. Instead we make (for instance) a 'chair' out of the seen so that we can sit on it. Similarly, we do not stop short at the 'heard' but make a music out of it. That way we make a 'thing' out of our sensory experience. It is due to this conceiving of 'things' that we linger long in *Saṁsāra*. As soon as we imagine a 'thing', the ripples of impermanence take over. The inexorable consequence is the 'turning otherwise'. There lies the tragic end of this drama of existence.

The moment one makes a 'thing' for oneself, it starts becoming 'another thing'. As in our illustration of the love scene enacted by Narcissus, throughout *Saṁsāra* we have been grasping something or other with self-love at the last moment of our life. That is the reason for the perpetuation of mutual interdependence between name and form and consciousness inside a mother's womb. But then one can ask again:

"If I cannot take delight in *Nibbāna*, what is the use of it?"

It may even seem useless to attain *Nibbāna*. If it is not good to delight in *Nibbāna* after all the trouble we take to attain it, one can ask:

"What is the purpose in attaining it?"

A deity named Kakudha also had the same problem, according to a discourse in *Saṁyutta Nikāya*. When the Buddha was dwelling at the Deer Park in the *Añjana* forest, a deity named Kakudha approached him in the night and asked:

"Recluse, do you rejoice?"

The Buddha retorted:

"On getting what, friend?"

Then the deity asked:

"If that is so, recluse, do you grieve?"

"On losing what, friend?" asked the Buddha rhetorically.

“Well, then, recluse, you neither rejoice nor grieve?” said the deity and the Buddha affirms it saying:

“That is so friend”.

The deity was also curious to know whether the Buddha is dissatisfied with the monk’s life as he is sitting all alone, now that he says that he neither delights nor grieves. The Buddha responds with an instructive verse:

Aghajātassa ve nandi

nandi jātassa ve aghaṁ

anandī anigho bhikkhu

evaṁ jānāhi mārisa

Joy is for him who is stricken with grief

And grief is for him who becomes joyful

But as for a monk – friend know this as a fact

He is neither joyful nor does he grieve.

What the Buddha means by this, is the bliss of equanimity free from joy and grief. In fact, as you know, *Nibbāna* is even called ‘*avedayita sukha*’ – a bliss free from feeling since all three grades of feeling are in the highest sense reckoned as suffering. Even from this brief comment you may understand that *Nibbāna* is not something to be grasped. It is only a target to reach – not to be grasped. In one’s striving for it, at last one reaches a stage which is something like a going ‘topsy-turvy’. The ultimate realization is a sort of turning upside down. That is why even the non-returner (*anāgāmin*) is said to have attachment and delight in the Dhamma (*dhammarāga dhammanandi*) as a residual taint to be eliminated. It is true that he has ‘*Nibbāna*’ uppermost in his mind. But there is a subtle attachment to it that prevents him from ending *Saṁsāric* suffering here and now, and gives him rebirth in the Pure abodes (*suddhāvāsa*) by that very attachment and delight (‘*teneva dhammarāgena tāya dhammanandiyā …’).*

That attachment and delight is the last thing to be given up since the Buddha has declared that this Dhamma is only for the purpose of crossing over and not for grasping (‘*nittharanatthāya no gahaṇatthāya*’) even like a raft. Similarly, the Buddha has preached that by those who fully understand, even good things (or mind-objects) have to be given up, what to say of bad things (‘*Kullūpamaṁ vo bhikkhave dhammaṁ desitaṁ ājānantehi dhammāpi vo pahātabbā pageva*

adhammā'). Now '*Nibbāna*' as a term is something pertaining to '*dhamma*'. Even that has to be given up at some juncture. The reason is that we use language only out of some practical necessity. It is not something to be 'grasped'. The moment we grasp it, we get into difficulties. This is the gist of what the Buddha has pointed out to us.

There is a certain depth in all what we tried to put across with the help of similes. There are some discourses which show that after the *Parinibbāna* of the Buddha, Venerable Ānanda was highly esteemed by monks and nuns so much so that when they attained Arahanthood they went and informed it to him. There is a particular discourse which reveals this fact very clearly. Once Venerable Ānanda addressing the monks at *Ghositārāma* said that those monks and nuns who declare their attainments of Arahanthood in his presence, do so according to four normative factors. The path of practice they have followed comes under one or the other of the following four modes.

'*Samathapubbangamaṁ vipassanaṁ bhāveti*.'

Develops insight preceded by calm (or serenity) and as one goes on practicing insight meditation like this, the supra-mundane path arises and by following it one abandons fetters and latencies thereby attaining arahanthood.

'*Vipassanāpubbangamaṁ samathaṁ bhāveti*.'

Develops calm preceded by insight. By this method too, a monk or nun can do away with the fetters and latencies and attain arahanthood.

'*Samathañca vipassanañca yuganaddhaṁ bhāveti*.'

Develops both calm and insight together like yoked bulls pulling together. By that method also one can accomplish the task.

The fourth method is very peculiar and its true significance is a problem to many scholars.

In this context, Venerable Ānanda brings up the case of a monk whose mind is in conflict due to restless thoughts ('*... bhikkhuno dhammuddhacca viggahita mānasaṁ hoti*'). But then he says:

"There comes a time when his mind becomes settled within – gets one pointed and concentrated."

It is then that the supra-mundane path arises, which he successfully follows to attain arahanthood.

It is very likely that here Venerable Ānanda is speaking out of his own experience. He had hit upon a special method (by fluke!). The usual mode of practice is classified under three headings:

Developing insight preceded by calm.

Developing calm preceded by insight.

Developing both calm and insight together like yoked bulls pulling together.

The fourth method which has remained a problem, most probably exemplifies Venerable Ānanda's own attainment. Because of his restless thoughts regarding the attainment as a qualification for attending the Council, he could not attain arahanthood. But there came a time when his mind got settled – at that posture-junction between sitting and lying down. This exceptional method he learnt by a happy accident, shows the depth of this Dhamma.

We are taking pains to explain all this because quite a lot of misconceptions and wrong views about *Nibbāna* are rampant in the world today due to a lack of understanding of the depth of this subject. In fact, I think the *Brahmins* of the Buddha's time knew more about what the Buddha was speaking of than many Buddhist scholars today. Those *Brahmins* knew full well that the *Nibbāna* preached by the Buddha had nothing in it to bolster up the craving for existence – that it meant the cessation of existence. Only thing, they viewed it as tantamount to annihilation. That was their mistake. According to the Buddha there is no real self or soul to be annihilated.

This is all what the Buddha proclaimed:

"Formerly as now, I make known a suffering and its cessation ("*Pubbe cāhaṁ etarahi ca dukkhañceva paññapemi dukkhassa ca nirodhaṁ*.")

This much we pointed out. What remains to be abandoned last of all is the basic postulate of existence, namely that lingering notion – that conceit (I) Am. There is a significant discourse in the *Khandha Saṁyutta* of the *Saṁyutta Nikāya*, which reveals the subtleness of the path from non-returnership to arahanthood. On a former occasion too we brought it up. It is the *Khemaka Sutta*. It records a sequence of events as follows.

A group of Elder monks were dwelling at *Ghositārāma* in *Kosambi*. A monk named Khemaka who was sick, was dwelling at *Badarikārāma* in *Kosambi* itself. Those Elders asked a monk named Dāsaka to go and inquire about the health of

that sick monk. When Dāsaka went and inquired, Venerable Khemaka told him that he is seriously ill and that pains are increasing. When Venerable Dāsaka brought that news, the Elder monks asked him to go there again and ask Venerable Khemaka whether he regards any of the five aggregates of grasping – form, feeling, perception, preparations and consciousness – as "This is mine, This am I and this is my self". Venerable Dāsaka did as he was instructed and Venerable Khemaka answered:

"Friend, in regard to these five aggregates of grasping I do not look upon any one of them as mine or myself, but I am not an influx free *arahant*. I have the notion 'I am' in regard to these five but I do not look upon any of them as "This am I".

When Venerable Dāsaka went and reported Venerable Khemaka's explanation to the Elders, they were still puzzled and sent back Venerable Dāsaka to get further clarification. This time, on hearing Venerable Dāsaka's request for clarification Venerable Khemaka said:

"Enough friend, Dāsaka, what is the use of running up and down, get me my walking stick. I will myself go and see those Elders."

So he went with his walking stick to the Elders and explained:

"What I said is true, I am not an *arahant*. But this is my position. I do not see any of the aggregates as mine. But I have a residual subtle conceit (I) am, a subtle desire as (I) am.

Then he gives a simile:

"Just as, friends, there is smell in a blue or red or white lotus, whoever says that the smell comes from the petal or from the colour or from the filament, is he speaking rightly?"

"No friend"

"Then how can one explain it rightly?"

"One has to say that it is the smell of the flower. That is all one can say about it."

"Even so, friend, I do not see any of the aggregates as myself. However there is in me a subtle conceit as (I) am."

Though there is that conceit, he illustrates the subtleness of the five higher fetters of a monk who has cut off the five lower fetters by the above simile of the smell of the flower. Then he says as that monk who is a non-returner goes on

attending to the rise and fall of the five aggregates, there comes a time when even that residual conceit gets worn out. Then he gives a simile for it.

Someone has a dirty cloth. He gives it to the washerman to clean. They clean it with some soap-like substance and return it to the owner. Though the cloth is now clean, it has the odour of the substance used to clean it. The owner puts it away in his wardrobe for the time being. But after some time even that odour is gone. In the same way, by constant contemplation of the five aggregates with insight even that residual conceit is eradicated and one attains arahanthood. The extraordinary thing about this reasoned explanation by Venerable Khemaka is that on hearing it, all the sixty monks who listened to him became *arahants* and he himself attained arahanthood by intuiting into his own insightful explanation.

There is such a subtle aspect in this question of language in the context of *Nibbāna*. We do make use of the linguistic medium like that cleaning agent. We often use the couple of words relative and pragmatic to describe the Middle Path principle involved. In the Buddha's Middle Path, there is neither an absolute negation nor an absolute affirmation. Instead there is a systematic procedure of choosing and using with an awareness of relative validity. Sometimes the Buddha would sum up a discourse with this grand finale epitomizing the basic principle underlying his extraordinary middle path technique.

"*Iti kho bhikkhave dhammāva dhamme abhisandenti*

dhammāva dhamme paripūrenti apārā pāraṁ gamanāya."

Though we say:

"I am going from this shore to the farther shore" in the end, there is no talk about an "I".

According to the Buddha, what we have in this dispensation is just this:

"Thus, O' monks, mere phenomena flow into other phenomena, mere phenomena fulfil other phenomena for the purpose of passing from the not-beyond to the beyond."

So we have now given you some deep points to ponder – all relevant to the Law of Dependent Arising. Just think about the depth of the constituents of name and form – what we told about '*manasikāra*' or attention. It is a doing within the mind (*manasikāra*). What the Buddha has presented in the *Mūlapariyāya Sutta* is a list of those 'things' pertaining to that attention. If you don't adjust your viewpoint in accordance with Right View, you are setting off on a path not towards *Nibbāna* but opposite to it. Therefore, I hope you all will make use of this

sermon for adjusting your viewpoint. We shall be presenting more facts on Dependent Arising in this series from various sources. We happened to quote several times the dictum:

“He who sees Dependent Arising sees the Dhamma.”

You had better remember it and take heart to tread this path of Dhamma. To clarify these points for yourselves, you should constantly dwell on the impermanence of the five aggregates. As you go on doing it, you can proceed on the path of insight provided you have a clear understanding of name and form. Mere listening is not enough. You should apply these teachings to your own lives. The five aggregates are there with you. Not somewhere else. With radical attention you should always attend to your ‘ins’ and ‘outs’ seeing their rise and fall (*udayabbaya*) as keenly as possible. You should understand the aggregates for what they are. That is what is known as ‘knowledge of things as they are’ (*yatābhūtañāna*).

I hope you will find this sermon too helpful to your meditation. May you all be able to develop both calm and insight drawing inspiration from this sermon backed by the precepts observed and the meditation done today, and attain the goal of your endeavours in this very life. Whatever beings there are from the lowest hell to the highest Brahma world, may they rejoice in our sermon! May the merits acquired thereby conduce to the fulfilment of their higher aims!



Paticca Samuppada Sermon 8
The Law of Dependent Arising
(Pahan Kanuwa Sermon – No. 190)

'*Namo tassa bhagavato arahato sammāsambuddhassa*'

'Homage be! To the Fortunate One – the Worthy, Fully Enlightened!'

Rūpā saddā rasā gandhā
phassā dhammā ca kevalā
iṭṭhā kantā manāpā ca
yāvatatthīti vuccati

Sadevakassa lokassa
ete vo sukhasammatā
yattha cete nirujjhanti
taṁ tesaṁ dukkhasammataṁ

Sukhanti diṭṭhamariyehi
sakkāyassuparodhanaṁ
paccanīkamidaṁ hoti
sabbalokena passataṁ

– Dvayatānupassanā S. Sutta Nipātha.

Forms, sounds, smells
Tastes, touches, ideas
All what they deem desirable
Charming pleasing things

Of which they claim ‘it is’

As far as their claim extends

The world with its gods is agreed

That these are pleasant things

And wherein they surcease

That’s unpleasant indeed say they

As bliss the Noble Ones have seen

The curb on self-hood bias Behold in contrast is their vision

With that of the entire world.

Dear Listeners,

The objects of the six senses – the eye, the ear, the nose, the body and the mind – namely, forms, sounds, smells, tastes, touches and ideas, are regarded by the world with its gods as really existing and pleasant. But Noble Ones consider that place where these things that the world takes as real and pleasant cease itself, as pleasant. Today, we have taken up three verses expressing these two contradictory viewpoints. These three verses deal with the sixteenth contemplation of dualities found in the *Dvayatānupassanā Sutta* of the *Sutta Nipāta*. In two previous sermons we explained to you two contemplations of dualities in this *Dvayatānupassanā Sutta*. As in the other two, in this contemplation of dualities we are going to discuss today, the contrast between the worldling’s point of view and the view point of the Noble Ones is explained. First of all, the Buddha declares this fact in prose as follows:

“Monks, whatever that has been pondered over as:

‘This is pleasant’ by the world with its gods, Māras and Brahmas, with its recluses and Brahmins, that, by the ariyans has been seen as it is with right wisdom as:

‘That is unpleasant’. Then the opposite viewpoint is stated:

“Monks, whatever that has been pondered over as unpleasant by the world with its gods, Māras and Brahmas, with its recluses and Brahmins, that, by the ariyans has been seen as it is with right wisdom as:

‘That is pleasant’. Having presented these two modes of contemplation, the Buddha, as he did in the case of the other contemplations, declares that if any monk, rightly contemplating in this way, dwells diligently, ardent and zealous, one of two fruits may be expected by him:

knowledge of arahanthood in this life itself or if there is any residual clinging, non-returnership. It is after this declaration that the same fact is presented in a set of verses out of which we have quoted the first three. First of all, let us try to understand the meaning of these three verses.

Rūpā saddā rasā gandhā

phassā dhammā ca kevalā

iṭṭhā kantā manāpā ca

yāvatatthīti vuccati

Forms, sounds, tastes, smells, touches and ideas that are considered desirable, charming and pleasant – whatever they speak of as existing,

Sadevakassa lokassa ete vo sukhasammatā

The world with its gods has agreed to call them pleasant

yattha cete nirujjhanti taṁ tesaṁ dukkhasammataṁ

And where ever these six objects cease, that, they are agreed to call unpleasant.

But then comes the statement:

Sukhanti diṭṭhamariyehi sakkāyassuparodhanaṁ

But it has been seen by the Noble Ones that the cutting off of the Five Aggregates of Grasping which is called ‘Personality’, is the bliss.

paccanīkamidaṁ hoti sabbalokena passataṁ

But this vision of the Noble Ones is in contradistinction to that of the worldlings.

This is what is conveyed by these three verses. In fact the same idea is carried further in the four verses that follow. Those of you who have listened to our earlier sermons might remember that when we were introducing the *Dvayatānupassanā Sutta* for the first time, we said that this is a discourse which vibrates with a powerful fervour of the Dhamma. Rather than taking up the other verses one by one and paraphrasing them, I think it is better to give at least a foretaste of that Dhamma fervour through a set of English verses with which we summed up the content of those verses in one of our books:

Sights, sounds, smells, tastes, touches, ideas,

All what they deem desirable charming pleasing things

Of which they claim:

'it is' – as far as their claim extends

The world with its gods is agreed that these are pleasant things

And wherein they surcease – that's unpleasant indeed, say they

As bliss the Noble Ones have seen

the curb of selfhood bias

Behold in contrast is their vision

with that of the entire world

What others spoke of in terms of bliss

that as woe the saints declared

What others spoke of in terms of woe

that as bliss the saints have known

Behold a Norm so hard to grasp

baffled herein are ignorant ones

Murk it is to those enveloped

as darkness unto the undiscerning

But to the good wide open' it is

as light is unto those discerning

So near and yet they know not

Fools! Unskilled in the Norm

By those who are given to lust for becoming

By those who are swept by the current of becoming

By those who have slipped into Māra's realm

Not easily comprehended is this Norm

Who else but the Noble Ones deserve

To waken fully unto that state

By knowing which, being influx-free

Tranquil *Nibbāna* they attain.

In an earlier sermon we dealt with the 15 contemplation of dualities. There too we came across two viewpoints which are diametrically opposed to each other. To refresh our memory let us cite them in brief:

"Monks, whatever that has been pondered over as:

'This is true' by the world with its gods, *Māras* and *Brahmas* with its recluses and *Brahmins*, that by the Ariyans has been seen as it is with right wisdom as:

'That is false'.

"Monks, whatever that has been pondered over as:

'This is false' by the world with its gods, *Māras* and *Brahmas* with its recluses and *Brahmins*, that by the Ariyans has been seen as it is with right wisdom as:

'That is true'.

In the course of that sermon we pointed out that the worldlings take name and form which is a reflection on consciousness to be real and true but that the Ariyans point it out as unreal and false. You all know that what comes after name and form in the *Paṭicca Samuppāda* formula is six sense-spheres. Now this sermon will deal with whatever that pertains to the six sense-spheres. Forms, sounds, smells, tastes, touches and ideas pertain to the six sense-spheres. What is known as the six sense-spheres comprise eye, ear, nose, tongue, body and mind and their respective objects – forms, sounds, smells, tastes, touches and ideas. Worldlings regard them as pleasant and where they cease as unpleasant. But the

Ariyans regard them as unpleasant and where they cease as pleasant. Where do these six sense-spheres cease? Is it in another world? They cease in *Nibbāna* which is regarded as the cessation of the six sense-spheres. *Nibbāna* is in fact defined as the realization of the cessation of the six sense-spheres.

So it is the very realization of the cessation of the six sense-spheres that is called *Nibbāna* and not something in another world. The state of that realization Ariyans regard as pleasant – as happiness. It is something that can be realized here in this world. Many present day scholars might have doubts about this. However much we write and preach on this there are many who cling to the 'Simple Simon' view of *Nibbāna* ('*Siyadoris Nibbāna*' as we nick-named it). For them it is some non-descript state of existence after death. There is a very important discourse which can be cited in support of the fact that *Nibbāna* is none other than the cessation of the six sense-spheres. It is the *Kāmaguna Sutta* in the *Saṁyutta Nikāya* found among the Connected Discourses on the six sense-spheres (*Saḷāyatana Samyutta*). That discourse includes among other things a riddlelike pronouncement by the Buddha which comes out as an abrupt exhortation. It runs as follows:

"Tasmātiha bhikkhave se āyatane veditabbe yattha cakkhuñca nirujjhati rūpasaññā ca virajjati se āyatane veditabbe, yattha sotañca nirujjhati saddasaññā ca virajjati se āyatane veditabbe, yattha ghanañca nirujjhati gandhasaññā ca virajjati se āyatane veditabbe, yattha jivhā ca nirujjhati rasasaññā ca virajjati se āyatane veditabbe, yattha kāyo ca nirujjhati phoṭṭhabbasaññā ca virajjati se āyatane veditabbe, yattha mano ca nirujjhati dhammasaññā ca virajjati se āyatane veditabbe se āyatane veditabbe"

'Therefore, monks, that sphere should be known wherein the eye ceases and the perception of forms fades away; wherein the ear ceases and the perception of sounds fades away; wherein the nose ceases and the perception of smells fades away; wherein the tongue ceases and the perception of tastes fades away; wherein the body ceases and the perception of tangibles fades away; wherein the mind ceases and the perception of ideas fades away – that sphere should be known, that sphere should be known.'

You might be amazed to hear this exhortation. Here the Buddha is repeating a certain phrase over and over again. The phrase:

'*se āyatane veditabbe'* is equivalent to 'taṁ *āyatanaṁ veditabbaṁ'* ('se' '*veditabbe' – Māgadhisṁ*) which means:

‘that sphere should be known’. Strangely enough, the Buddha is emphatically asserting with the repetitive phrase ‘that sphere should be known, that sphere should be known.’ What sort of a ‘sphere’ is that? A sphere wherein eye ceases and the perception of forms fades away, that sphere should be known. Likewise ‘that sphere wherein the ear ceases and the perception of sounds fades away’. You can understand the rest in the same way – with regard to the nose, tongue, body and finally, mind. The last mentioned is the most intriguing. ‘That sphere should be known wherein mind ceases and the perception of ideas fades away – that sphere should be known, that sphere should be known’. But now comes a strange incident. After making this riddle-like exhortation the Buddha got up from his seat and retired to his dwelling. This is a clever ruse that the Buddha adopts to afford an opportunity to his pupils to get a training in exegesis.

Then the monks who listened to the sermon discussed among themselves:

“Now the Fortunate One having made a concise utterance has got up from his seat and entered his dwelling without explaining its meaning in detail. Who will explain it for us in detail? Then it occurred to them:

‘this Venerable Ānanda has been praised by the Fortunate One so often and is highly esteemed by other monks. What if we approach him and ask him to explain this brief saying? So they went to him and requested him to do so. After some modest hesitation he agreed and gave the following commentary in just a few words:

“*Saḷāyatananirodhaṁ kho āvuso bhagavatā sandhāya bhāsitaṁ*.”

“Friends, it was uttered by the Fortunate One with

reference to the cessation of the six sense spheres.”

In this context even the commentary grants that the cessation of the six sense spheres is *Nibbāna*. That was all what Venerable Ānanda said in assent to the request for a commentary. From this we can conclude that *Nibbāna* was called ‘*Saḷāyatana nirodha*’(the cessation of six sense-spheres). The fact that the attainment of the six sense spheres has been emphatically asserted as a ‘sphere’ in this particular context is exceedingly important. This will serve as valid evidence in support of our interpretation of the following much vexed discourse on *Nibbāna*.

In the *Udāna* there are a number of discourses on *Nibbāna* out of which one in particular has puzzled our commentators as well as modern scholars. It runs as follows:

"*Atthi bhikkhave tadāyatanaṁ yattha neva paṭhavī na āpo na tejo na vāyo na ākāsānañcāyatanaṁ na viññānañcāyatanaṁ na ākiñcaññāyatanaṁ na nevasaññānāsaññāyatanaṁ nāyaṁ loko na paraloko na ubho candimasuriyā. Tatra pāhaṁ bhikkhave neva āgatiṁ vadāmi na gatiṁ na cutiṁ na upapattiṁ appatiṭṭhaṁ appavattaṁ anārammaṇamevetaṁ. Esevanto dukkhassa*."

"There is, monks, that sphere wherein there is neither the sphere of infinity of space, nor that of infinity of consciousness, nor that of nothingness, nor that of neither – perception – nor – non-perception, wherein is neither this world, nor a world beyond, nor moon, nor sun. There, monks, I declare is no coming, no going, no stopping, no passing away and no arising. It is not established, it continues not, it has no object. This indeed is the end of suffering."

Now this is that discourse. Let us try to understand it.

"*Atthi bhikkhave tadāyatanaṁ*",

"There is monks that sphere."

It is just here that the scholars get stuck. They interpret this sphere as some kind of realm attainable after death. From the discourse we have already discussed, you must have understood that the cessation of the six sense spheres itself has been emphatically asserted by the Buddha as a 'sphere'.

But let us delve deeper in to this discourse. After declaring that there is 'that sphere', the Buddha goes on to describe what sort of a sphere it is.

"There is monks, that sphere wherein (*yattha*) there is neither earth, nor water, nor fire, nor air. That means the four primaries that are said to be there in a world are not to be found in this sphere. Also the immaterial states – namely, the sphere of infinity of space, the sphere of infinity of consciousness, the sphere of nothingness and the sphere of neither – perception – nor – non-perception are not there. This world and the other world too are negated. So too the sun and the moon. All this sounds very strange. That is why everybody is puzzled. Then there is also something deeper. The Buddha declared that there is no coming, no going, no stopping, no passing away and no arising in this particular sphere.

Finally, he makes known the nature of that sphere by three terms:

Not established (*appatiṭṭhaṁ*),

not continuing (*appavattaṁ*),

and objectless (*anārammaṇaṁ*).

He sums up by asserting that this itself is the end of suffering (*esevanto dukkhassa*).

For quite a long time, in fact for centuries scholars have been trying to interpret this passage. They have literally turned this passage inside out in search of a solution but in most instances their interpretation was in terms of a non-descript realm with no sun or moon. But we pointed out that if mind ceases in that sphere and perception of mind objects also cease how can sun and moon be there? Even this much, those scholars could not understand, since due to craving for existence the world tends to interpret *Nibbāna* as some sort of after death state. However from the foregoing it is clear enough that the cessation of the six sense spheres itself is *Nibbāna*. Be it noted that this is a sermon specifically dealing with *Nibbāna* (*nibbānapaṭisaṃyutta*). The Buddha says conclusively that this itself is the end of suffering. It is in *Nibbāna* that suffering ends, certainly not in a non-descript realm. Whatever it is, this particular discourse is of cardinal importance. From here onwards we shall string up relevant discourses from here and there like pearls in a necklace for you all to get a clearer understanding of this problem.

Let us now take up a discourse which also appears as a riddle. Once the Buddha addressing the monks said:

"*Nāhaṁ Bhikkhave gamanena lokassa antaṁ ñātayyaṁ daṭṭhayyaṁ pattayyanti vadāmi. Na ca panāhaṁ appatvā lokassa antaṁ dukkhassa antakiriyaṁ vadāmi*."

"Monks, I do not say that it is possible by travelling to know and see and reach the end of the world. Nor do I say that without reaching the end of the world there is an ending of suffering."

Here again we have something of a riddle – a paradox. You all might think of the end of the world as some place one can reach by travelling. But the Buddha is telling us that by travelling one cannot reach the end of the world but on the other hand one cannot make an end of suffering without reaching the end of the world. After this declaration too the Buddha got up from his seat and entered his dwelling as before. Again the monks were puzzled and approached Venerable Ānanda to get an explanation. This time at their request he gave a fairly long commentary to the Buddha's declaration. However it amounted to a redefinition of the term 'world' according to the Noble One's Discipline (*ariyassa vinaye*).

"*Yena kho āvuso lokasmiṁ lokasaññī hoti lokamānī ayaṁ vuccati ariyassa vinaye loko*"

“Friends, that by which one has a perception of the world and a conceit of the world in regard to this world, that in the

Noble One’s Discipline is called a ‘world’.”

The two words ‘*lokasaññī*’ and ‘*lokamānī*’ are noteworthy

in this definition.

Then Venerable Ānanda himself raised the obvious question and offered the explanation:

“*Kena cāvuso lokasmiṁ lokasaññī hoti lokamānī*”

“By what, friends, does one have a perception of the world and a conceit of the world?”

“*Cakkhunā kho āvuso lokasmiṁ lokasaññī hoti lokamānī*”

“By the eye friends, one has a perception of the world and a conceit of the world.”

Likewise by the ear, by the nose, by the tongue, by the body and by the mind, one has a perception of the world and a conceit of the world. It is that perception and that conceit which in this Dhamma is called the world. From this it should be clear to you all that according to the Noble One’s discipline, the six sense spheres themselves are the world. Now from here onwards we shall draw your attention to another discourse which we had discussed earlier too but because of its relevance to this particular series on Dependent Arising, we shall bring up again. It is the *Rohitassa Sutta*. This discourse is so important that it occurs in two discourse collections, namely *Saṁyutta Nikāya* and *Anguttara Nikāya*.

This is how the discourse begins. Once when the Buddha was staying at the *Jetavana* monastery at *Sāvatthi* a deity named Rohitassa visited him in the night and asked the following question:

“Where, Venerable Sir, one does not get born, nor grow old, nor die, nor pass away, nor get reborn, is one able by travelling to come to know that end of the world or to see it or to get there?”

The Buddha replies:

“Where, friend, one does not get born, nor grow old, nor die, nor pass away, nor get reborn, that end of the world, I say, one is not able by travelling to come to know, to see or to reach.”

When the Buddha said this much the deity praised the Buddha with these words of approbation.

“It is wonderful Venerable Sir, It is marvellous Venerable Sir, how well said it is by the Fortunate One” and then went on to relate the whole story of his past life.”

“In times past, Venerable Sir, I was a seer, Rohitassa by name, son of Bhoja, gifted with such psychic power that I could fly through the air and so swift, Venerable Sir, was my speed that I could fly just as quickly as a master of archery, well trained, expert, proficient, a past master of his art, armed with a strong bow, could without difficulty send a light arrow far past the area coloured by a palm tree’s shadow; and so great was my stride that I could step from the eastern to the western ocean. In me Venerable Sir, arose such a wish as this:

I will arrive at the end of the world by walking. And though such Venerable Sir, was my speed and such my stride and though with a life-span of a century, living for a hundred years, I walked continuously for hundred years, except for the times spent in eating, drinking, chewing or tasting or in answering calls of nature and the time I gave way to sleep or fatigue, yet I died on the way without reaching the end of the world. Wonderful is it, Venerable Sir, marvellous is it Venerable Sir, how well said it is by the Fortunate One.”

“Where, friend, one does not get born, nor grow old, nor die, nor pass away, nor get reborn, that end of the world, I say one is not able by travelling to come to know or to see or to arrive at.”

It is at this point that the Buddha comes out with a momentous declaration while granting Rohitassa’s approbation:

“Where, friend, one does not get born, nor grow old or die, nor pass away, nor get reborn, that end of the world, I say, one is not able by travelling to come to know or to see or to arrive at. But neither do I say, friend, that without having reached the end of the world there could be an ending of suffering. It is in this very fathom long physical frame with its perceptions and mind, that I declare, lies the world, the arising of the world, the cessation of the world and the path leading to the cessation of the world.”

Unfortunately, the commentator is silent on this momentous declaration. Even western scholars wonder why the commentator is silent about it. The only reason we can think of is the fact that by then the concept of *Nibbāna* as an after death state has already won acceptance in scholastic circles. They were not prepared to grant the possibility of *Nibbāna* as purely an experience here in this world. That

is why in our writings we highlighted this deplorable situation by a trenchant translation of a few lines from the *Dvayatānupassanā Sutta* as an eye opener.

Nivutānaṁ tamo hoti – andhakāro apassataṁ

satañca vivaṭaṁ hoti – āloko passatām iva

santike na vijānanti – magā dhammassakovidā

Murk it is to those enveloped

As darkness unto the undiscerning

But to the good wide open it is

As light is unto those discerning

So near, and yet they know not

Fools unskilled in the Norm.

'The light' is the light of wisdom. 'So near' means within this fathom long body with its perceptions and mind. Suffering and its cessation are to be found within this fathom long body. That itself is the world. The world and suffering are congruent. The world, the arising of the world, the cessation of the world and the path leading to the cessation of the world are all found here, according to the Buddha. Only the light of wisdom is lacking in the worldlings to see this. The world thinks that the objects of the six senses are the bliss or name and form is the bliss. But the Noble Ones are saying that where they cease is the bliss. To hark back to the topic of our *Nibbāna* sermons, which is also the meditation topic for Recollection of Peace (*upasamānussati*):

"Etaṁ santaṁ etaṁ panītaṁ yadidaṁ sabbasaṁkhārasamatho sabbupadhipaṭinissaggo taṇhakkhayo virāgo nirodho Nibbānaṁ."

'This is peaceful, this is excellent, namely, the stilling of all preparations, the relinquishment of all assets, the destruction of craving, detachment, cessation, extinction.'

It is that same peaceful, excellent state which the worldlings cannot even think of – the stilling of all preparations. All what pertains to the six sense-spheres are preparations. So here is the stilling of them all (*sabbasaṁkhārasamatho*). The five aggregates of grasping are the assets built up through the six sense spheres, and here is their relinquishment (*sabbupadhipaṭinissagga*). All the aforesaid

objects of the senses are the involvements for craving and this is its destruction (*taṇhakkhayo*). That itself is detachment (*virāgo*) and cessation (*nirodho*). The cessation of the six sense-spheres (*saḷāyatana nirodha*) is also implicated. Whether you call it cessation of suffering (*dukkhanirodho*), the cessation of the world (*lokanirodho*), or the cessation of the six sense-spheres (*saḷāyatana nirodho*), it is the same. Finally comes that extinction or extinguishment of the conflagration. We are told that the worldlings are unable to understand this state. Though it is 'so near' they do not know it. Why is that? The reason is stated in the last two verses of this discourse:

Bhavarāgaparetehi bhavasotānusārihi māradheyyānupannehi nāyaṁ dhammo susambudho

Ko nu aññatramariyehi padaṁ sambuddhumarahati yaṁ padaṁ sammadaññāya parinibbanti anāsavā

Dvayatānupassanā Sutta, VV 764-765 *Sn*.

By those who are given to lust for becoming

By those who are swept by the current of becoming

By those who have slipped in to Māra's realm

Not easily comprehended is this Norm

Who else but the Noble Ones deserve

To waken fully unto that state

By knowing which being influx-free Tranquil *Nibbāna* they attain.

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It is as if the Buddha is exclaiming with a tinge of compassionate fervour. This is the true state of affairs. This is the truth. However the world is not prepared to accept it. So at first sight there is such a wide gap, such a disparity. But what the Buddha is telling us is that if a monk rightly contemplating this disparity, dwells diligently and zealously devoted to the path of practice, he will either become an arahant or a non-returner. So this is not an idle declaration meant to arouse cheap curiosity among scholars and intellectuals. It is to explain to those monks who are training on this path of practice, what the truth is and what the un-truth

is, what the bliss is and what suffering is, that the Buddha has revealed the wide gulf between the two viewpoints. Because we are all the time quoting from Pali Suttas you all might get tired of these sermons. So let us bring up same illustration as usual.

It is a sort of fable from village life which perhaps you already know and which you might recall as I go on relating.

'Gamarāla' (the legendary 'man-about-village') is going to hold a devil-dance at his house. As he is getting ready for it dark clouds gathered threatening a torrential downpour. So *'Gamarāla'* and the troupe of devil-dancers entered a huge gourd-shell and the devil dance started inside the thick shell of the gourd. Then it rained in torrents inundating the whole village. But blissfully unaware of it, the gourd-shell with its inmates got swept into the canal, and from the canal to the stream, and from the stream to the river and from the river to the sea. Once in the sea a shark swallowed it. Then the shark got caught in a net thrown by sea-going fisherfolk. A crowd from a wedding house going in search of fish bought the shark. They took it to the kitchen of the wedding house where they cut open the shark. And then – 'believe-it-or-not' – out stepped *Gamarāla* and the devil-dancers to the tune of the tom-tom:

'*Denna-denā-deno'*! The dance was still going-on.

Now what is the moral behind this age-old legend? Neither *Gamarāla* nor his troupe of devil-dancers knew what was happening to the gourd-shell. Why did we bring up this legend? Just to show that all worldly philosophers and all modern-day scientists – these '*Gamarālas'* and 'devil-dancers' – are holding their 'devil-dance' inside this gourd-shell of the six sense-spheres. In their 'blissful-ignorance' they are not even prepared to grant that there is something outside it. They could not reach even the outskirts of that gourd-shell with their space-craft. We haven't heard yet that they at least reached the lowest heaven – '*Cātummahārājika*'.

So this is the situation in the world. But the Buddha has made known a supra-mundane sate called the cessation of the six sense spheres. Why is it called 'supra-mundane'? It means 'gone beyond the world.' If the world is the six sense-spheres, there must be a state that goes beyond the six sense-spheres and that is '*Nibbāna*' – the experience of the cessation of the six sense-spheres. That itself is the end of suffering. Why is it that the worldlings cannot understand this much? It is because they are given to 'lust for becoming' and are swept by 'the current of becoming'. They desire existence in the name of *Nibbāna*. For them *Nibbāna* is some sort of existence. As we sometimes sarcastically put it, it is that *'Siyadoris' Nibbāna'* or 'Simple Simon *Nibbāna*' which is eternally charming – some after

death state that everyone likes to get. But that is certainly not the kind of *Nibbāna* the Buddha had made known to the world. In the discourse on the Noble Quest (*Ariyapariyesana Sutta*), it is said that the Buddha hesitated to preach the Dhamma because it is difficult for the world to understand it. If *Brahmā* Sahampati had not invited him to preach we would not have had the opportunity to hear it.

As we mentioned earlier too, when reflecting on the depth of this Dhamma, it occurred to the Buddha that there are two things which the worldlings delighting in and attached to existence find it difficult to understand. One is the Law of Dependent Arising or specific conditionality which we analyzed in various ways such as 'This being – this arises.' This is the middle way between and above the two extremes of absolute existence and absolute non-existence summed up in the couple of terms, '*samudayo samudayo* and *nirodho nirodho*' – ('arising arising' – 'ceasing ceasing'). Even that much is difficult for the world to understand. The fact that there is an incessant arising and ceasing is the first thing that the world cannot easily understand. Then the second thing is as the Buddha puts it in the *Ariyapariyesana Sutta*:

'*sabbasaṁkhārasamatho sabbupadhipaṭinissaggo taṇhakkhayo virāgo nirodho Nibbānaṁ.'* – 'The stilling of all preparations, the relinquishment of all assets, the destruction of craving, detachment, cessation, extinction.' This, too, is something the world cannot understand.

In the Law of Dependent Arising there are these two aspects, namely, arising *('samudayo')* and ceasing (*'nirodho'*). The world is always on the *'samudaya'* side. Worldlings keep jumping from 'arising' to 'arising' ignoring the 'ceasing'. In fact they are apprehensive of the ceasing aspect. They do not wish to see it. But it is in cessation that deliverance lies. The Buddha has stated this fact on many occasions.

'Ye ca rūpūpagā sattā

ye ca arūpaṭṭhāyino

nirodhaṁ appajānantā

āgantāro punabbhavaṁ'

'Those beings that go to realms of form

And those who are settled in formless realms

Not understanding the fact of cessation

Come back again and again to existence'

This is the situation in the world but then:

'Ye ca rūpe pariññāya

arūpesu asaṇṭhitā

nirodhe ye vimuccanti

te janā maccuhāyino.'

'Those who having comprehended realms of form

Do not settle in formless realms

Are released in the experience of cessation

It is they that are the dispellers of Death.'

However those who have comprehended form do not get settled even in the formless. Being released in the experience of cessation they dispel death. Now that we have brought up the folk tale of the devil-dance inside the gourd shell let us turn our attention to a simile that also has some connection with the fisherman's net. It is a simile made use of by the Buddha himself in the *Brahmajāla Sutta*. That is a discourse which all Buddhist scholars are familiar with since it happens to be the very first discourse in the *Dīgha Nikāya*. As a matter of fact, it has been counted as the first discourse in this discourse collection because of its cardinal importance. As we had mentioned earlier too, whatever views that are in the world and whatever views that could arise in the world are caught in a supernet (*Brahmajāla*) thrown by the Buddha in this discourse. There are sixty two views enumerated there which comprehend all possible speculative views. The list of sixty two is all inclusive and nothing falls outside of it. There is an extremely important point which is often overlooked by the scholars. The Buddha rejects every one of those views with just three words of a deep significance which recur throughout this discourse.

What are they:

. . . . . '*tadapi phassa paccayā . . . . . tadapi phassa paccayā . . . . . tadapi phassa paccayā*.'

. . . . . 'that too is due to contact . . . that too is due to contact . . . . that too is due to contact.'

After citing a particular view the Buddha invalidates it with the phrase '*tadapi phassa paccayā*' – 'that too is due to contact or dependent on contact'

How is it invalidated? Why is it regarded as the criterion? The answer is to be found in the Buddha's conclusive statement in the *Brahmajāla Sutta*. It is extremely important as it reveals the inherent flaw or fault in 'contact' (*phassa*).

". . . . . *sabbe te chahi phassāyatanehi phussa phussa paṭisaṁvedenti. Tesaṁ vedanāpaccayā taṇhā, taṇhāpaccayā upādānaṁ, upādānapaccayā bhavo, bhavapaccayā jāti, jātipaccayā jarāmaraṇaṁ sokaparidevadukkhadomanassupāyāsā sambhavanti*."

". . . . . They all experience by continually contacting through the six sense-spheres. And to them, dependent on feeling (there is) craving, dependent on craving, grasping, dependent on grasping, becoming, dependent on becoming, birth, and dependent on birth decay, death, sorrow, lamentation, pain, grief and despair arise."

In summing up, the Buddha bundles up all the views enumerated inclusive of those proclaimed by ascetics with higher knowledges (*abhiññā*) and psychic powers and refutes them with the above conclusive pronouncement. All those view holders derive their experiences on which they base their views by continually contacting through the six senses. By repeatedly contacting they are affected by feeling (*paṭisaṁvedenti*). Thereby they are caught up by the Law of Dependent Arising with the result they are subject to repeated birth and consequent *Saṁsāric* suffering.

What can one infer from this powerful declaration? The Buddha has gone beyond this state called 'contact' (*phassa*).

If all the sixty two views are invalidated on the grounds that they are dependent on contact, the Buddha has transcended that stage. As a matter of fact, that is what the understanding of *Paṭicca Samuppāda* means. To understand *Paṭicca Samuppāda* is to be free from its snare.

Now this might appear as a riddle. It is due to the nonunderstanding of Dependent Arising that one is drawn into the vortex between consciousness and name and form. We have told you about Narcissus and about the dog on the plank across the stream. What Narcissus had done, we all have been doing throughout our *Saṁsāra* – that is to say trying to embrace our own shadow. What is the shadow? Name and form. It is due to contact that one gets involved in it. That is a deep point. But then, we have yet to mention that simile we alluded

to. The Buddha sums up his sermon with the simile of a fisherman's net. It is a wonderful simile.

"Monks, just as a fisherman or a fisherman's apprentice were to go down into a small pool of water with a finely woven net. It would occur to him:

"whatever sizeable creatures there are in this small pool, all of them are caught in this net. When they come up, they come up attached to this net, they come up included in it, caught up well within the net, even so all those recluses and Brahmins who assert various views are caught in this super-net of 62 views."

The simile is highly significant. When a finely woven net is thrown over a small pool, fishes when they try to escape it by coming up are caught in the meshes. What is the fine mesh that holds back all view holders in the Buddha's super-net? The recurrent phrase:

'*tadapi phassa paccayā*' – 'that too is dependent on contact.'

As we said earlier, all the 62 views are dependent on contact. Try to understand the depth of this simile given by the Buddha. Like that fisherman's finely woven net, the Buddha's net of 62 views is capable of netting in all the speculative views in the world. All those view holders whether they be the legendary '*gamarālas*' and their devil-dancers or the modern scientists and philosophers, are well within this net. As the phrase '*phussa phussa paṭisaṁvedenti*' implies, they all owe their experiences to 'CONTACT'. When they can't see with the naked eye, they make use of a microscope or a telescope. But isn't it again resorting to contact? When they can't understand at once with the mind, they resort to logic and reasoning. It is mind-contact all the same.

However far they travel or speculate, they cannot reach the end of the world. They are still held well within the gourd shell. The very last sentence in that passage which repudiates the entire gamut of views, is the grand finale which solves the whole issue.

"*yato kho bhikkhave bhikkhu channaṁ phassāyatanānaṁ samudayañca atthagamañca assādañca ādīnavañca nissaraṇañca yathābhūtaṁ pajānāti, ayaṁ imehi sabbehi uttarītaraṁ pajānati*"

"In so far, monks, as a monk understands as they are, the arising, the going down, the satisfaction, the peril and the stepping out in regard to the six sense spheres, this monk has by far a higher understanding than all these (view-holders)."

One may take 'monk' mentioned above as denoting the arahant. This monk who understands as they are the arising, the going-down, the satisfaction, the peril and the stepping out (*samudaya, atthagama, assāda, ādīnava, nissaraṇa*) of the six spheres of sense contact has a knowledge far superior to that of all view-holders.

In referring to the Buddha's deliverance too, the above five aspects are mentioned. One might think that the Buddha is always experiencing the Fruit of Arahanthood – No. He has attained that synoptic vision. He understands how the six spheres of sense contact arise and how they go down – as if seeing the sun-rise and sun-set. He understands the satisfaction characteristic of the six sense spheres as well as the perils inherent in them. When the Buddha is partaking of food his tastebuds are in working order – not that they are inactive. He sees beautiful forms with his eyes. Only that he is not attached to them. He is aware of the satisfying aspect as well as the perilous aspect. Last of all comes the stepping-out (*nissaraṇa*). This is what concerns us in particular here. That is to say – the attainment to the Fruit of Arahanthood, which is the proper range for the arahants.

The state of that attainment has been described in many places in the discourses. It is often worded in paradoxical terms. Therefore, scholars are puzzled and instead of understanding it properly, speak of a *Nibbāna* that comes as an after-death state. Even the western scholars go astray in interpreting them. Just see what a delusion they are in. Right view is lacking in them. We have taken pains to clarify the correct position. As the Buddha has stated, the world is not prepared to accept the Law of Dependent Arising. They turn a blind eye to its most important aspect of cessation (*nirodha*). They keep on jumping from arising to arising ignoring the cessation aspect. That is why it is said that worldlings are always on the *samudaya* (arising) side. The Ariyans see the *nirodha*. For them it is the truth and the bliss.

Let me say something more about contact. Now it is a discourse of a different type. A Brahmin named *Uṅṅābha,* once came to see the Buddha. The way he addressed the Buddha shows that he had no respect for the Buddha. He says:

"Good Gotama, there are these five senses which have different ranges, different pastures and which do not partake of one another's pasture of objects. What are they? The eye, the ear, the nose, the tongue and the body. Good Gotama, for these five senses which have their different ranges, different pastures, and which do not partake of the objects of one another's pasture, what is the resort, who is it that partakes of, the objects of their different pastures?"

What *Uṅṅābha* means is that every sense faculty has its own particular range of objects. For instance, the eye can only see forms. It cannot hear sounds. The ear can hear but cannot see. They have their own pastures and cannot trespass on other's pastures. *Uṅṅābha* is curious to know the resort of all these five senses. He is asking whether there is someone who can partake of all objects received through the five senses. He must have been thinking of a soul (*ātman*) as the one who enjoys all those objects. But the Buddha says that the mind is the resort and that it is the mind which partakes of all those sense objects ('. . . *mano paṭisaraṇaṁ mano ca nesaṁ gocaravisayaṁ paccanubhoti*"). Whatever objects that come through the five external senses are received by the mind. The mind partakes of them.

Then the Brahmin asks:

"What is the resort of the mind?"

The Buddha replies that 'Sati' or mindfulness is the resort of the mind. *Uṅṅābha's* next question is:

"What is the resort of mindfulness?"

The Buddha says:

"The resort of mindfulness is Deliverance."

Then the Brahmin asks:

"What is the resort of Deliverance?"

The Buddha's answer is:

"The resort of Deliverance is *Nibbāna*."

But the Brahmin has yet another question:

"Good Gotama, what is the resort of *Nibbāna*?"

Then the Buddha corrects him with these words:

"Brahmin you have gone beyond the scope of the question. You were not able to grasp the limit of questioning. Brahmin, this Holy life is to be lived in a way that it gets merged in *Nibbāna*, that it has *Nibbāna* as the Goal and consummation."

Then the Brahmin was pleased and rejoicing in the Buddha's words worshipped him and left. But the discourse records something extraordinary. It is said that as soon as he left, the Buddha told the monks that the Brahmin attained the Fruits

of the Path while listening to the exposition. There is something deep involved here. As far as we can guess it has something to do with the philosophy of the Brahmins. For them the five external senses are all powerful. Above them stands the mind and above mind there is intelligence. Above intelligence there is the soul. This is the hierarchy in the Hindu tradition as recorded in the

Bhagavadgītā. But according to the Buddha instead of a soul there is mindfulness (*sati*) as the resort of the mind.

Here is something highly significant. Why has the Buddha declared the Four Foundations of Mindfulness (*cattāro satipaṭṭhānā*) as the direct way (*ekāyano maggo*) leading to *Nibbāna*? The resort of the mind is mindfulness. We happened to mention on an earlier occasion that all things originate from attention (*manasikārasambhavā sabbe dhammā*). The world thinks that the object of the mind is something far away. That is why we gave the simile of the cracking-of the-pot in our last sermon. When you come close to *Nibbāna* you have to give up even the concept of *Nibbāna*, just as one has to turn back when one finds oneself up against the wall. The final realization comes with the understanding that the 'thing' (that is the object of the mind or the 'mind-object') is produced by the mind itself. You may recall the occasion we gave you an exercise in folding your fingers so that you will have our definition of '*nāma*' (name) at your fingertips. We had to do all that because some critics questioned our definition of 'name' in name-and-form. We got you to count on your fingers as an illustration of the five constituents of name – feeling, perception, intention, contact and attention. Attention is the 'thumb' and nearest to it is contact – the index finger. We have mentioned above that all the objects of the five senses flow in and accumulate in the mind and that the mind partakes of them. 'Mind' partakes of them only after converting them into 'things' (*dhammā*). Forms, sounds, smells, tastes and touches are all converted into 'things'. What converts them into 'things' is attention ('*manasikāra*' – lit. 'doing-in the mind'). That is why we brought up various similes to explain this deep point. To solve this difficult case of the magical illusion of consciousness – 'this criminal case' against *Māra* – the Buddha adopted a Middle Path tactic. He gave crown pardon to the alleged culprit No 1. '*manasikāra*' (attention) who committed the crime with his gang – '*vedanā*' (feeling), '*saññā*' (perception), '*cetanā*' (intention) and '*phassa*' (contact). The 'accused' *manasikā* or attention had committed the crime in the guise of '*ayoniso-manasikāra*' (that is as non-radical attention). The Buddha made him the crown-witness on condition that he gave evidence as 'radical-attention' (*yoniso manasikāra*).

Now as for radical attention, it has to play its role within mindfulness. That is why in the field of insight, radical attention is regarded as the seed of wisdom.

What we have in the Four Foundations of Mindfulness (*cattāro satipaṭṭhānā*) is the journey of radical attention with mindfulness as its companion. The course of the journey lies through the Four Foundations of Mindfulness, the Four Right Endeavours, the Four Bases for Success, the Five Faculties, The Five Powers, The Seven Factors of Enlightenment to culminate in the Noble Eightfold Path for attaining *Nibbāna*. That is why the Buddha said that mindfulness is the resort of the mind. So then, the resort of the mind is mindfulness. If that mindfulness as Right Mindfulness (*sammā sati*) is properly directed, the crime perpetrated by this alleged culprit also becomes fully exposed. Finally, not only the other four culprits but the biggest culprit 'manasikāra' or attention is also found guilty. As we mentioned in an earlier sermon, it is as if a thief is caught 'red-handed'. What is it that was stolen? The 'THING'. The 'thing' or mind-objects which is 'mind-made' (*manomaya*) – a fake product of the mind. This is the clue to the entire Saṁsāric riddle. Worldlings think that 'things' exists in themselves. Now, we come back to the opening verse of the *Dhammapada*.

'*Manopubbañgamā dhammā*

Manoseṭṭhā manomayā'

'Mind is the forerunner of mind objects

Mind is their chief – they are mind-made'

If a worldling writes his '*Dhammapada*' he would begin with the words:

'*Dhammapubbañgamo mano'*

'Mind has mind objects as forerunners'

That is why we asked that boy to go towards the wall so that he will have to turn back at the last step. When one turns back with radical attention one will realize that chasing the object of the mind is like running after a mirage, which is sense-perception itself. The Buddha, on the other hand, asks us to turn back with radical attention. That is why, as we pointed out in discourses like '*Mahāpadāna Sutta*' the *Bodhisatta* discovered the Law of Dependent Arising by reasoning from the very end, asking himself "what is the cause of decay and death?"

In '*yonisomanasikāra*' (attention by way of the source or matrix) one has to come back to the source from where one already is. What one discovers last of all is that the 'witness' himself is the biggest culprit! The crime he committed is the concoction of a 'thing'. That is why in the end even the perception of mind objects fades away (*dhammasaññā ca virajjati*). You may recall now the statement:

'*mano ca nirujjhati dhammasaññā ca virajjati*' – 'mind too ceases and the perception of mind-objects fades away.' When a sense faculty ceases its object also has to cease. What was said in the verses forming the topic of this sermon is a description of the realization of *Nibbāna*. In other words, it is the realization of the cessation of existence (*bhavanirodha*). So, then the cessation of existence is not something to be experienced in another realm. It is a realization here and now. That itself is the highest truth (*paramaṁ saccaṁ*). That itself is the supreme bliss (*paramaṁ sukhaṁ*) – as it is said '*Nibbānaṁ paramaṁ sukhaṁ*' (*Nibbāna* is the supreme bliss).

Well, then you may understand that what we have said within this hour might require a long commentary. However, you should try to grasp whatever you can. What we wish to point out is that this is not some intellectual stuff to satisfy the curiosity of philosophers or scientists. You should try to assimilate whatever is helpful for your practice. As the Buddha has said, whoever dwells diligently reflecting on the gap between the two contemplations ardent and zealous, overcoming defilements would pass from the mundane to the supramundane level. The mundane level if it has such vicissitudes is false. The truth is here in the supramundane. One has to understand that what the world takes as bliss is itself the truth of suffering, and that *Nibbāna* is the bliss supreme as is evident from that Recollection of Peace which formed the topic of our *Nibbāna* sermons:

"Etaṁ santaṁ etaṁ paṇītaṁ yadidaṁ sabbasaṁkhārasamatho sabbupadhipaṭinissaggo taṇhakkhayo virāgo nirodho Nibbānaṁ"

"This is peaceful, this is excellent, namely the stilling of all preparations, the relinquishment of all assets, the destruction of craving, detachment, cessation, extinction."

The cessation of contact is also implicit in this. Even as depending on eye and forms eye consciousness arises, mind consciousness arises dependent on mind and mind-objects. When mind consciousness arises due to mind and mind consciousness there is a discrimination between mind and mind-object. With that separation, proliferation (*papañca*) sets in. But if one sees consciousness as a dependently arisen phenomenon, as a fact of experience and not as a mere logical inference, there is no room for proliferation. What is the final conviction that comes when radical attention is razor-edge sharp? That the object of the mind is mind-made (*manomaya*). Along with that conviction, consciousness ceases because thereby it is made ineffective. It has nothing to do. Since consciousness is the very discrimination between the two, how can there be a discrimination when the true state of affairs is seen? As we pointed out in our

‘Magic of the Mind’, when the secrets of the magic show are exposed, the magic-show ends. That is why it was said:

“Murk it is to those enveloped – as darkness unto the undiscerning

But to the good wide open’ it is – as light is unto those discerning”

You had better get the gist of what we have said so far. The most important thing is what we have highlighted in the *Brahmajāla Sutta*. Worldly philosophers and scientists have formulated various views. All those are dependent on contact (*phassa paccayā*). But the Buddha proclaimed a supra-mundane experience which falls outside the gourd-shell of the six sense spheres. It is in this transcendental experience that birth, decay, death and the entire mass of suffering ends. That is why the Buddha summed up with the words:

“*esevanto dukkhassa*”.

This itself is the end of suffering.

Making use of the practical aspect of our sermon today and helped by the precepts you keep and the meditation you do, may you all be able to attain that deliverance from *Saṁsāra* in this very life through the paths to Stream-winning, Once-returnership, Non-returnership and Arahanthood. Whatever beings there be from the lowest hell to the highest Brahma world, wishing to rejoice in this sermon, may they all rejoice in our sermon! May the merits accrued thereby conduce to the fulfilment of their highest aim – the Deathless *Nibbāna*!

Paticca Samuppada Sermon 9
The Law of Dependent Arising
(Pahan Kanuwa Sermon – No. 191)

'*Namo tassa bhagavato arahato sammāsambuddhassa*'

'Homage be! To the Fortunate One – the Worthy, Fully Enlightened!'

Yo ubhante viditvāna

Majjhe mantā na lippati

taṁ brūmi mahāpurisoti

sodha sibbanimaccagā

– Majjhe Sutta. Anguttara Nikāya.

He who having known both ends

Gets not attached at the middle with wisdom

Him I call a Great Man

He has gone beyond the seamstress here.

Dear Listeners,

It is on a Vesak Full Moon day like this, that the Fully Enlightened One, the Teacher of the Three Worlds realized the Deliverance from repeated birth in *Saṁsāra*. Through the understanding he achieved along with Full Enlightenment, he discovered the secret of Saṁsāric existence. He understood that for an incalculable period, beings in the world have been wandering in *Saṁsāra* hindered by ignorance and fettered to craving. We have chosen as the topic of our ninth sermon on Dependent Arising, a verse with a deep meaning that helps one to dispel ignorance and break free from the fetter of craving. This verse which according to the *Pārāyaṇa Vagga* of the *Sutta Nipāta*, was preached by the Buddha to the Brahmin youth Tissa Metteyya, was so deep in meaning that when the Buddha was dwelling at *Isipatana* in Benares, a group of monks there, made it the topic for a Dhamma discussion as evidenced by the *Majjhe Sutta* in the *Anguttara Nikāya*. A group of elder monks gathered at the assembly hall and

in the course of their Dhamma discussion, took up this verse as the topic for a sort of symposium. This is how the topic was introduced:

“Friends, this was said by the Fortunate One in the Metteyya question of *Pārāyaṇa Vagga*.

Yo ubhante viditvāna Majjhe mantā na lippati taṁ brūmi mahāpurisoti sodha sibbanimaccagā

He who having understood both ends, does not get attached at the middle with wisdom, him I call a Great Man. He has gone beyond the seamstress here.”

Having cited the verse, they extracted four questions out of it.

"What friends is the first end?

What is the second end?

What is the middle?

Who is the seamstress?"

The four questions resemble a topic for a symposium. When these four questions were put forward one Venerable Thera offered the following explanation:

"Contact, friends, is one end, arising of contact is the second end, cessation of contact is the middle, craving is the seamstress, for it is craving that stitches up for the birth of this and that specific existence.”

After giving this explanation, he goes on to say:

"In so far friends, does a monk understand by higher knowledge what is to be understood by higher knowledge, comprehend by full understanding what is to be comprehended by full understanding. Understanding by higher knowledge what is to be understood by higher knowledge, comprehending by full understanding what is to be comprehended by full understanding, he becomes an ender of suffering in this very life."

That is to say, this verse is in itself a meditation topic that takes one as far as Arahanthood. The term for higher knowledge is ‘*abhiññā*’ and the term for full understanding or comprehension is ‘*pariññā*’.

Then a second Venerable Thera offers his opinion.

According to his point of view the past is one end, the future is the second end, the present is the middle and craving is the seamstress. He too sums up the depth of the verse in the same words as the other Thera.

A third Venerable Thera gives a different interpretation. For him one end is pleasant feeling, the second end is unpleasant or painful feeling and the middle is neither unpleasant nor pleasant feeling. Craving is again the seamstress.

A fourth Venerable Thera opines that one end is name, the second end is form, the middle is consciousness and the seamstress is craving.

A fifth Venerable Thera puts forward the view that the one end is the six internal sense spheres, the second end is the six external sense spheres, consciousness is the middle and craving is the seamstress.

A sixth Venerable Thera is of the opinion that one end is *sakkāya* – a term for the five aggregates of grasping (lit. the existing body), the second end is the arising of *sakkāya*, the middle is the cessation of *sakkāya* and the seamstress is craving.

When six explanations had come up in this way one monk made this suggestion:

"Now that we have explained the verse according to our abilities, let us approach the Fortunate One and report our discussion. In whatever way the Fortunate One explains, so shall we bear it in mind."

Approving that suggestion, they all went to the Buddha and after reporting the discussion in full, asked:

"Venerable Sir, whose words are well spoken ('*Kassa nu kho bhante subhāsitam*?'). The Buddha replied:

"Monks, what you all have said is well said from some point of view or other, but that for which I preached that verse in the *Metteyyapañha* is this:

and quoting the verse in question, the Buddha explains:

"Monks contact is one end, and the arising of contact is the second end, the cessation of contact is in the middle, craving is the seamstress for it is craving that puts the stitch for the birth of this or that existence.

In so far Monks, does a monk understand by higher knowledge what is to be understood by higher knowledge and comprehend by full understanding what is to be comprehended by full understanding, understanding by higher knowledge what is to be understood by higher knowledge and comprehending by full

understanding what is to be comprehended by full understanding, he becomes and ender of suffering in this very life."

From this we can see that the Buddha's explanation happens to coincide with the interpretation given by the first speaker at the symposium. However the interpretations given by the other five monks are also correct. From this we can see how profound in meaning this cryptic verse is. It may be that the six Theras presented their own meditation topics through these interpretations. The common feature of these six interpretations is that the seamstress is identified with craving.

Let us now turn our attention to craving. Why is craving called the seamstress? Craving has a number of nicknames. It is called the 'glue' (*lepa*) or the 'sticker' (*visattikā*). In such discourses as the *Dhammacakkappavattana Sutta* this seamstress craving has been given a number of titles. By the way, since *taṇhā* happens to be in the feminine gender the idea of a seamstress is quite apt, and those titles are like her qualifications.

'*yāyaṁ tanhā ponobhavikā nandirāgasahagatā tatratatrābhinandinī*'.

She is the one responsible for bringing about rebirth (*ponobhavikā*) accompanied by delight and lust (*nandirāgasagatā*) delighting now-here, now-there (*tatratatrābhinandinī*).

Notoriously licentious as she is, this flirting trait of delighting now here, now there helps the seamstress in putting stitch after stitch in rapid succession as in the case of a sewing machine. The net result is the sewing together of two folds. Though this may sound as an anachronism, the sewing machine is a good illustration of the role of the seamstress. As soon as the needle goes down, the shuttle hastens to put the stitch. So the epithet 'seamstress' is quite apt since craving puts together the two ends ignoring the middle, even as the sewing machine stiches the two folds in sewing.

Let us now try to clarify for ourselves the characteristics of craving with reference to the six interpretations. First of all, we may take up the first interpretation which was approved directly by the Buddha himself. According to it, one end is contact, the second end is the arising of contact, the middle is the cessation of contact and craving is the seamstress. What can we understand by saying that contact is one end? Now as for contact, it is customary for the world to think of one who contacts, when the word 'contact or touch' comes up. For instance, one might say 'it touched my body' or 'I touched it'. We come across something to that effect in the *Nidāna Saṁyutta* of the *Saṁyutta Nikāya* where Venerable Moḷiya Phagguna asks the Buddha:

'Who is it Venerable Sir, that touches?' The Buddha disallows the question with the words '*na kallo pañho*' – 'not a proper question.' There the Buddha says:

'I do not say one touches' and instructs Venerable Phagguna to understand the occurrence of touch as a dependently arisen phenomenon. The correct mode of understanding according to the Buddha is:

'*saḷāyatana paccayā phasso, phassa paccayā vedanā*' – 'Dependant on the six sense spheres is contact and dependant on contact is feeling'. So it seems that what happens due to contact, the world attributes to a person because of the 'personality-view' (*sakkāyadiṭṭhi*). The phrase '*yo ubhante viditvāna*' means 'he who having understood both ends'. By understanding correctly both ends, with wisdom one does not get attached at the middle. The correct understanding of contact is in the way the Buddha has pointed out:

'*saḷāyatana paccayā phasso*' – 'Dependant on the six sense spheres is contact.'

'Arising of contact' (*phassa samudaya*) is a question that goes even deeper. It is not easy for one to understand how contact arises. We get a clue to its understanding from the *Madhupiṇḍika Sutta* of the *Majjhima Nikāya*. On previous occasions too, we may have explained to you in various ways the exposition by Venerable Mahā Kaccāna of the workings of the six sense spheres. There he says;

> '*cakkhuñcāvuso paṭicca rūpe ca uppajjati cakkhuviññāṇaṁ.*
>
> *Tiṇṇaṁ saṅgati phasso.*
>
> *Phassa paccayā vedanā ....*'
>
> 'Friends, depending on eye and forms arises eyeconsciousness.
>
> The concurrence of the three is contact.
>
> Dependent on contact, feeling .....'

Therein the words:

'*cakkhuñcā <u>paṭicca</u> rūpe <u>uppajjati</u> cakkhuviññāṇaṁ*' are noteworthy. The two words '*<u>paṭicca</u>*' and '*<u>uppajjati</u>*' reminds us of the term '*paṭicca samuppāda*.' It seems then that the arising of eye consciousness itself gives a clue to the understanding of the Law of Dependent Arising. Even consciousness is dependently arisen. The world takes consciousness to be self. But the Buddha points out that eye-consciousness arises depending on eye and forms. For a further clarification of this point one has to turn to the exposition given by

Venerable Sāriputta in the *Mahā Hatthipadopama Sutta*. Usually, we think that if something comes before our eyes we ought to see it. But that is not exactly the case. Venerable Sāriputta tells us that something subtle is involved in a perceptual situation.

First of all, in order to see, the eye must be in working order. Even if the eye is unimpaired and forms come within the visual range, still the eye consciousness does not arise.

The third requirement is expressed with an unusual phrase:

'*tajjo samannāhāro*'. '*Tajjo*' means 'born thereof', that is to say 'specific'. '*Samannāhāro*' has the sense of coming into proper 'focus'. But that focussing is part and parcel of that particular perceptual situation. It is not a focussing directed from elsewhere.

So then, simply because the eye is intact, one does not see. Even if forms come within the proper range, one does not see.

The third essential factor is what is called 'tajjo samannāhāro'. The focussing or the 'bringing together' implied by '*samannāhāro*' is 'born of that' (*tajjo*), that is the perceptual situation itself. That means it is conditionally arisen. It seems, Therefore, that even eye consciousness arises due to causes and conditions. This is something the worldling is not prepared to accept. Instead he brings in the idea of a self.

Venerable Mahā Kaccāna goes on to say something more. '*cakkhuñca paṭicca rūpe ca uppajjati cakkhuviññāṇaṁ tiṇṇaṁ saṅgati phasso*'

'Depending on eye and forms arises eye consciousness, <u>the concurrence of the three is contact</u>'.

Now, what is the 'three'? The eye, forms and eye-consciousness. It is not proper to count eye, forms and eye-consciousness as 'three' because the third is the outcome of the other two. But the world doesn't see it because of ignorance. Just try to understand this. Depending on eye and forms eye-consciousness arises, but it is by putting the three together that the situation called 'contact' comes to be. That means contact is something '<u>made-up</u>' – something '<u>prepared</u>' (*saṅkhata*). It is by forgetting or 'ignoring' the fact that consciousness is dependently arisen, that one puts together 'the three' to make up contact. So at whatever moment the dependently arisen nature of consciousness is seen as a matter of experience that contact ceases then and there.

Well, that is the cessation of contact, what prevents its occurrence? Craving. It stitches together contact and the arising of contact without allowing the worldling to see the cessation that is in the middle. One can see it only with keen insight. It is by seeing penetratively the impermanence of contact, that one gets the ability to see its cessation. Since this is the first interpretation which tallied with the Buddha's own explanation, we discussed it at length.

Let us now take up the second interpretation. According to it, one end is the past, the second end is the future and the middle is the present. There too it is craving that puts the stitch. The best illustration is found in the *Bhaddekaratta Sutta* which we had discussed earlier too. There we get the following instructive lines:

Atītaṁ nānvāgameyya

Nappatikaṅkhe anāgataṁ

Yadatītaṁ pahīnaṁ taṁ

appattañca anāgataṁ

paccuppannañca yo dhammaṁ

tattha tattha vipassatī

Let one not trace back the past

Or yearn for the future – yet to come

That which is past is left behind

The yet-to-come is unattained

And that which is present he discerns

With insight as and when it comes

The advice is not to run after the past nor to have expectations about the future because the past is gone and the future has not come yet. Even the present has nothing in it to hold on to when one sees it with insight. That is to say, as insight gets keener and keener, one finds nothing to grasp there. But what craving does is to stitch up past and future ignoring the present. On a previous occasion, we cited a highly significant verse in that connection based on the story of the acrobat Uggasena. That verse the Buddha addressed to Uggasena as he stood on top of the sixty-cubit bamboo pole, served as the meditation subject for him to attain arahanthood.

Muñca pure muñca pacchato

Majjhe muñca bhavassa pāragū

Sabbattha vimutta mānaso

Na puna jātijaraṁ upehisi

Let go what has gone before

Let go that which comes after

Let go thy hold on the middle as well

And get well beyond all existence

Thus with mind released in every way

Thou comest never more to birth and decay

As soon as he heard that verse, the acrobat Uggasena attained arahanthood even as he stood on top of the bamboo pole. He stood balanced on the bamboo pole having given up thoughts of the past and the future. It was for him a very critical moment. The middle is the present moment. To let-go of the middle is to give up the present. To the acrobat who has given up thoughts of the past and future to stand precariously balanced with concentration, it is easy to let go of the present. What the seamstress craving keeps doing is to tempt us to forget the present and hold us confused between memories of the past and dreams about the future. Instead of it, if one gets used to attending to the present preparations then and there, at the peak of insight meditation, one can by-pass the seamstress and win freedom.

Now as for the third interpretation, the pleasant feeling is one end, the unpleasant feeling is the second end and the middle is the neither unpleasant nor pleasant feeling. There too, craving is the seamstress. What is her job there? The Buddha says that the uninstructed worldling when touched by painful feeling, delights in the pleasant feeling because he doesn't see an escape from it other than sense pleasures. On a previous occasion when we were discussing this problem we said that the ordinary worldling is 'see-sawing' between pain and pleasure ignoring the neither unpleasant nor pleasant feeling in the middle. The Buddha puts across to us this truth in another way saying that what underlies pleasant feeling is the latency to lust, what underlies unpleasant feeling is the latency to hate and that what underlies neither unpleasant nor pleasant feeling is the latency to ignorance. That is why generally the neither unpleasant nor pleasant feeling is slurred over and ignored. It is by exploiting this ignorance that

the seamstress craving puts the stitch between pleasant feeling and unpleasant feeling.

However, the Buddha shows us a way out through insight here too by a peculiar analysis. He says that the counterpart of pleasant feeling is painful feeling and the counterpart of unpleasant feeling is pleasant feeling. But between these two, at the fulcrum of the see-saw, there is ignorance as the counterpart of the neither unpleasant nor pleasant feeling. Luckily, the counterpart of ignorance is knowledge, the counterpart of knowledge is deliverance and the counterpart of deliverance is *Nibbāna*. So instead of the 'dead-end' between pain and pleasure the Buddha points to a way out at the middle that goes deep. For deliverance, one has to delve deeper at the middle. In removing the ignorance underlying the neither unpleasant nor pleasant feeling, one hits upon knowledge. In other words, to give up ignorance is to arouse knowledge. Along with knowledge comes deliverance leading to *Nibbāna*. Exploiting the ignorance of the worldling of this exit at the middle, craving lures the worldling into an endless 'see-sawing' between pain and pleasure. So then here too, in order to bypass the seamstress, one has to have insight directed on the neither unpleasant nor pleasant feeling and understand it in the light of preparations (*saṅkhārā*) and attain deliverance. That is as far as the third interpretation is concerned.

Now for the fourth interpretation. Once again we are at a deep point. One end is name (*nāma*), the second end is form (*rūpa*) and the middle is consciousness (*viññāṇa*). This is a telling argument against the popular definition of *nāma* as the four immaterial aggregates – feeling, perception, preparations and consciousness. The aggregate of 'form' is taken as 'form' (*rupa*) in name and form (*nāmarūpa*). The fact that this popular definition is utterly ill founded is clearly revealed by this fourth interpretation since according to this interpretation consciousness comes in between name and form, it can in no way be included under name. Besides, we have quoted the words of the Buddha as well as of Venerable Sāriputta in support of the fact that feeling, perception, intention, contact and attention are the five constituents of name and that form is tantamount to the perception of form based on the four primaries as amenable to the constituents of name. In fact once we got you to count on your fingers so that you will have the constituents of name literally at your finger tips. On several occasions we pointed out that name in name and form is formal name and form in name and form is nominal form. Now what does the seamstress craving do? She makes one forget about consciousness and stitches up name with form. The deer runs after the mirage imagining it to be over there. It thinks the form it sees is real.

In this connection we brought up another simile – the story of the Greek youth Narcissus. Handsome Narcissus who had never seen his own face while roaming in a forest bent down into a pond to wash his face. Seeing the reflection of his face in the water he imagined an angel in the pond and made a vain attempt to embrace her and pined away and died by the pond. Here too Narcissus was deceived by the seamstress craving. This is an apt illustration of '*nāmarūpa'* since the five factors of name can be clearly understood through it. Now, feeling is the love or lust giving rise to the 'perception' of an angel prompting an intention to look again and again and there is an apparent 'contact' to sustain 'attention'. But as it was non-radical attention or '*ayonisomanasikāra*' Narcissus was deluded enough to think that he looked because the 'angel' appeared, but the truth is that an angel appeared because he looked. So he imagined an angel in the pond. Consciousness also has a reflective quality like that of water. That is the magical illusion about it. Psychologically, it makes 'reflection' a possibility. Reflection invites attention. Wrong or non radical attention creates delusion but radical attention enables one to understand the delusion. Here we can clearly see that consciousness is in the middle between name and form.

All this conclusively shows that in no way can consciousness be included in name (*nāma*) as traditionally explained. In order to bypass the seamstress craving with her tactful stitching up, one has to have a proper understanding of the nature of consciousness. Only when one understands the magical illusion in it, can one attain freedom from name and form (*nāmarūpa*).

The interpretation advanced by the fifth Venerable Thera has as the two ends the six internal sense spheres and the six external sense spheres. There too the middle is consciousness.

The sixth interpretation refers to a '*sakkāya*' which means the 'five aggregates of grasping', since the Buddha has said that '*sakkāya*' is a synonym for these five. The one end according to this interpretation is '*sakkāya*' or personality and the second end is '*sakkāya samudaya*' or arising of personality and the middle is '*sakkāya nirodha*' or cessation of personality. It is due to not seeing the cessation of personality that beings keep on arousing the notion of personality. Worldlings are always on the *samudaya* (arising) side. The seamstress craving hastens to put the stitch under the veil of ignorance. What helps to eradicate ignorance is the perception of impermanence. By developing it one comes to understand all these as 'preparations' (*saṅkhārā*). It is easy enough to understand the impermanence of past preparations. It is also not so difficult to understand the impermanence of future preparations. But what is difficult is the understanding of the present preparations. The fact that the perception of impermanence is helpful in winning freedom is clearly revealed by the story of the Arahant Venerable Adhimutta.

When he was going through a forest, a bandit chief caught him and was about to kill him as a human oblation. He addressed the bandit chief in some verses which are highly insightful.

He says:

'Na me hoti ahosinti

bhavissanti na hoti me

saṅkhārā vibhavissanti

tattha kā paridevanā'

It does not occur to me 'I was'

Nor does it occur to me 'I will be'

Mere preparations get destroyed

What is there to lament?

The next verse is all the more meaningful in the light of the simile of the seamstress.

Suddhaṁ dhamma samuppādaṁ

suddaṁ saṅkhāra santatiṁ

passantassa yathābhūtaṁ

na bhayaṁ hoti gāmaṇī

To one who sees as it is

The arising of pure preparations

And the sequence of pure preparations

There is no fear O! headman

'Seeing as it is pure preparations – that is to say, influx free preparations – arising and ceasing as a process of pure preparations, there is no fear, O! headman.'

If we bring this in line with the simile of the sewing machine, while the sewing is going on the shuttle may run out of its load of cotton. Then the needle will pierce through one fold giving a semblance of contact to the second fold but as it comes up there is no stitch, though the cloth has moved forward. There has been a cessation in the middle as there was no grasping. Craving puts the knot so long as there is grasping. That is why the Buddha says that there is deliverance when there is no grasping. Apparently stitching goes on and there seems to be a seam, but there is no seam. To go deeper into this simile of the sewing machine, we may say that what happens during the period an Arahant is in the *Arahattaphala-samāpatti* (attainment to the Fruit of Arahanthood) is similar to what we have already said about the sewing machine. His 'shuttle-free' mind is experiencing the cessation of existence. It is free from TIME and SPACE. It is 'time' and 'space' that 'prepare' this world – which is a 'prepared' (*saṅkhata*).

So then, as soon as grasping ceases this mind is free from the shackles of Time and Space. The needle goes down but there is no stitch. When there is no grasping there is no Death. What helps one to attain this Deathless is insightful attention directed on preparations (*saṅkhārā*). They have to be seen then and there with razor-edge sharp attention. Whether it is the name and form or the sense spheres there are these two ends and the middle. The world is imprisoned in the middle. The true state of affairs comes to light in the course of insight meditation. To understand the two ends the perception of impermanence has to be developed. The personality view (*sakkāyadiṭṭi*) has to be done away with in order to see preparations as and when they come up with keen insight.

To non-radical attention contact appears as something done by a person. But when one arouses radical attention it is seen as a phenomenon arisen due to causes and conditions. In that understanding craving loses its hold on the mind.

Craving seeks to stitch up the two ends with the help of the notion of the compact nurtured by the perception of permanence. The two ends could even be contact and the arising of contact. The worldling is said to be on the 'arising side' because he cannot see the cessation of contact. But at the peak of insight meditation generally known as the 'knowledge of breaking up' (*bhaṅgañāṇa*) one sees cessation at each and every touch, as it is said:

'*phussa phussa vayaṁ passaṁ*'

'touch after touch seeing how it wanes'

The Buddha is telling us that deliverance comes by seeing the fact of cessation. Venerable Nandaka explains the same fact to the nuns. He asks them:

'If the six internal sense spheres and the six external sense spheres are impermanent how can consciousness arising out of them could be permanent?' Their response to that question is:

'Tajjaṁ tajjaṁ bhante paccayaṁ paṭicca tajjā tajjā vedanā uppajjanti.

Tajjassa tajjassa paccayassa nirodhā tajjā tajjā vedanā nirujjhanti'

'Venerable sir, due to each and every specific condition each and every specific feeling arises. With the cessation of each and every specific condition, each and every specific feeling ceases.'

As one goes on directing penetrative radical attention to preparations, one comes to understand that each contact is specific (lit. 'born thereof' – '*tajjo*'). The eye is impermanent and forms are impermanent and consciousness arising out of them is also impermanent. As the perception of impermanence develops by accelerating attention, one comes to understand this state of affairs. Thereby the skill in attending to preparations then and there grows. In non-radical attention the notion of mine prevails. But in radical attention one is able to discern the process of arising and ceasing of preparations. By way of a simile, what happens at the peak of accelerating attention can be compared to the rapidity of parry and thrust of the sword in duelling. If one wields radical attention with such rapidity holding *Māra* at bay, one can see the present preparations as and when they come up. That is what is meant by the phrase '*tattha tattha vipassati*' ('seeing with insight then and there') in the *Bhaddekaratta Sutta*. As we said earlier, it is easy enough to understand what is past as past and what pertains to the future as future. But the present poses the biggest problem to the worldling. The present seems to be real. But to one who has developed the perception of impermanence by accelerating attention, in deep insight meditation the present crumples up then and there giving rise to dejection. It is as if while walking along a precipice with two steep slopes (that is Past and Future) on either side one is clutching on to a fence for safety. But as one proceeds one gets to know that the fence is rickety. The fence is present preparations.

As a matter of fact, attention is kept up through these preparations. However, it dawns on him at last that even these preparations are brittle. That is what gives rise to dejection. This is the middle path in insight shown by the Buddha. The instruction is to go on attending to these as preparations. But as one goes on attending, there comes a stage when they are seen to be breaking up at a dreadful rate. With that comes the knowledge of breaking up (*bhaṅgañāṇa*). At the start the understanding of impermanence is in terms of seeing the rise and fall. As that understanding deepens, one tends to see the falling more prominently and with it the cessation aspect reveals itself.

As soon as the cessation aspect becomes clear, a fear arises as the first reaction because what one is holding on to is breaking up. The question may come up:

'What should be done in such a situation?' Nothing other than deepening the insight into impermanence to such a level that one realizes the reason for that fear – namely the mis-taking of those fragile preparations to be one's own. The only solution is to let-go of the notion of I and mine with regard to them.

In fact all these interpretations when regarded as meditation topics, have to do with the perception of impermanence. On the one hand the line '*yo ubhante viditvāna*' – 'He who having known both ends' refers to the two ends. To understand the two ends is to see their impermanence. Ignorance becomes active through the notion of the compact – that is through the perception of permanence. If instead of it the meditator constantly attends to their impermanent nature, the understanding comes when they appear as name and form that everything is of a nature to arise and cease. When greater attention is directed towards the cessation aspect of preparations, their breaking up appears all the more vividly giving rise to the series of insight knowledges such as *bhaṅga* (breaking up) and '*bhaya*' (fear) leading on finally to what is called '*anupadā parinibbāna*, perfect extinction through not grasping. Since existence depends on grasping (*upādāna paccayā bhavo*) cessation of existence (*bhava nirodha*) comes with the giving up. Though craving as the seamstress puts the knots, if the mind is set in such a way as to by pass the seamstress, there is deliverance.

There is one discourse which clearly shows that for birth in this and that existence craving itself becomes the grasping. It is the *Kutūhalasālā Sutta* of the *Saṁyutta Nikāya*. There the wandering ascetic Vacchagotta puts forward a certain simile to the Buddha which became the subject for a controversy on '*antarābhava*' or 'intermediate existence'. Vacchagotta asks the Buddha what acts as the grasping (*upādāna*) when a flame thrown off by the wind travels even far – probably in the case of a forest fire. The Buddha says that at that time the flame has wind as the grasping. Vacchagotta's next question is when a being abandons this body and approaches a particular body, what is the grasping involved in it. The Buddha answers that craving itself is the grasping at that time. By misunderstanding this passage, some cite it as an argument for an intermediate existence between death and rebirth. This is definitely not a case of intermediate existence. It is craving that puts the stitch for this and that existence as it is stated after every one of the six interpretations in the explanatory note. The episode of Vacchagotta offers us a clear illustration of this phenomenon. At the moment of death, craving itself serves as the grasping (*upādāna*). If one has not abandoned grasping during one's life time, at the moment of death craving prompts a desire for another existence because one is holding on to name and

form. On the other hand, if one has given up the attachment to the five aggregates of grasping, then there is nothing to be grasped as a future existence.

With regard to the Five Aggregates of Grasping known as '*sakkāya*' a certain monk once asked the Buddha a peculiar question. He asked whether the Five Aggregates of Grasping and grasping mean the same thing or whether grasping is something apart from the Five Aggregates of Grasping. The Buddha says that the Five Aggregates of Grasping and grasping do not mean the same thing nor does grasping exist apart from the Five Aggregates of Grasping. But whatever desire and lust (*chandarāga*) there is in the Five Aggregates of Grasping, that is the grasping therein. So the advice of the Buddha is to get rid of the desire and lust for the Five Aggregates of Grasping. Once that is given up there is no possibility of a birth into a future existence. The conviction that no future existence is possible is received in the attainment of the Fruit of Arahanthood. The experience of the cessation of existence (*bhavanirodha*) can be compared to the seamless sewing we described above. The needle goes down piercing the two folds as the machine goes into action but there is no seam. This is the miracle of the arahant's 'shuttle-free mind', where grasping is no more. What everyone is grasping can be boiled down to the five groups – form, feeling, perception, preparations and consciousness. The term 'group' is defined as eleven-fold in each case, namely:

past, future, present, internal, external, gross or subtle, inferior or superior, far or near. We grasp these groups in these eleven ways. They are embedded in our memory as 'This is my form, this is my feeling' etc.

If at any time the desire and lust for these five groups are abandoned, then at the moment of death there will be no grasping. Not only at the moment of death, but even during the lifetime too when the arahant is in his attainment to the Fruit of Arahanthood, he experiences Deathlessness. It is like death but there is no fear because attachment is no more. That is the Ambrosial Deathless (*amata*) – the deliverance from existence. During that attainment name and form, which is the sum-total of existence, does not occur. The mind is emancipated.

The world is imprisoned within the six sense-spheres or in name and form – within spatial and temporal limitations. Consciousness is based on a duality – '*Dvayaṁ bhikkhave paṭicca viññāṇaṁ sambhoti*' – 'Monks, depending on a dyad consciousness arises.' Even consciousness arises depending on two things. Consciousness ceases on seeing their impermanence. The cessation of consciousness is the stilling of consciousness. Consciousness by definition is the discrimination between two things. The deer runs forward taking the mirage it sees in the distance to be water. What impels it to run towards it, is craving the THIRST. At every step the deer thinks it is coming closer to water. But the mirage

recedes. The Buddha has preached that not only what appears to the eyes but objects of all the six senses keep on receding the more we approach them. But the world does not understand it. Instead craving prompts:

'It is over there. Go further.'

What craving does is to put the knot under the veil of ignorance, kept up by the perception of permanence. Whether it be the past and the future or name and form, all the time craving keeps on putting the knot. The world doesn't see the workings of the preparations. Instead it grasps the personality view with the thought:

'This am I, This is mine'. Due to that grasping – that *upādāna* – they get pushed on from existence to existence. That is what is called the 'Saṁsāric journey'. What happens at the moment of death is not different from what is happening at this moment. Just as at this moment the mind keeps grasping this and that object, so also at the time of death since the lust for existence is there, one grasps the object presented to the mind by one's *kamma*. That is why craving itself is said to be the grasping (*upādāna*).

From all this it appears that all the six Elder monks have presented meditation topics leading to arahanthood. Out of them it is the first one that the Buddha directly approved. The world finds itself held between contact and the arising of contact. With its partiality for the arising aspect, it forgets about the cessation. Craving puts the knot blindfolding the worldling. Likewise, the world leans on the past and the future. It revels in memories of the past and dreams about the future, ignoring the present. The world is see-sawing between pain and pleasure without seeking release through the neither unpleasant nor pleasant feeling. Between name and form it is entangled like Narcissus who tried to embrace his own reflection on water unaware of the magical illusion of consciousness in the middle. Similarly, between the six internal spheres and the six external spheres there is a duality that ignores consciousness which is in the middle. Lastly comes the question of '*sakkāya*'. The cessation of the Five Groups of Grasping is not seen and due to that they go on accumulating. The Buddha points out that if one sees the impermanence of the eye, the forms, the consciousness and the rest, the five Groups get diminished. Impermanence has to be seen then and there to prevent that accumulation. The two terms '*upacaya*' and '*apacaya*' are used in this connection. '*Upacaya*' is accumulation and '*apacaya*' is effacement. As the phrase '*tattha tattha vipassati*' indicates by seeing with insight the impermanence then and there, one can attain deliverance.

Yo ubhante viditvāna Majjhe mantā na lippati

taṁ brūmi mahāpurisoti sodha sibbanimaccagā.

'*Mahāpurisa*' (Great Man) refers to the arahant. To understand the impermanent as well as the suffering fraught and not self nature is the higher level of understanding called '*abhiññā*'. The perfection of that understanding is '*pariññā*' – full comprehension. The stream-winner has higher understanding and he attains full comprehension on attaining arahanthood. This verse succinctly presents the course of training leading to arahanthood. Whether it be the Five Groups of Grasping or the six spheres of contact or name and form, by constantly reflecting on their impermanent, suffering fraught and not-self nature, one can realize the state indicated by this verse.

The Buddha has proclaimed the path to deliverance from *Saṁsāra*. As we have mentioned, ignorance is like the father and craving is like the mother to beings in *Saṁsāra*. Hindered by ignorance and fettered to craving beings keep running round. The Buddha has offered the solution to this Saṁsāric problem in the form of the Three Signata – impermanence, suffering and not-self. Seeing everything as not-self with insight if one liberates the mind from this condition by passing the seamstress craving, one can realize the cessation of existence here and now. That is why the dictum goes '*Bhavanirodho nibbānaṁ*' – 'Cessation of existence is *Nibbāna*.'

You should seriously consider why the Buddha has declared that beings have wandered in *Saṁsāra* for an incalculable period because of ignorance and craving. The verse we have discussed also says that if one understands the two ends and with wisdom does not get attached at the middle, by passing the seamstress one can attain deliverance. Getting whatever help you can from this sermon for your meditation, you should put forth your best efforts to attain deliverance from this *Saṁsāra* by realizing the Fruits of the Path to Stream-winning, Once-returning, Non-returning and Arahanthood. We wish you all success in that endeavour.

Whatever beings there be from the lowest hell to the highest Brahma world wishing to rejoice in this sermon, may they all rejoice in our sermon. May the merits accrued thereby conduce to their highest aim – the Deathless *Nibbāna*!

Paticca Samuppada Sermon 10

The Law of Dependent Arising

(Pahan Kanuwa Sermon – No. 192)

'*Namo tassa bhagavato arahato sammāsambuddhassa*'

'Homage be! To the Fortunate One – the Worthy, Fully Enlightened!'

Lobhajaṁ dosajaṁ ceva – mohajaṁ cāpaviddasu

yaṁ tena pakataṁ kammaṁ – appaṁ vā yadi vā bahuṁ

idheva taṁ vedanīyaṁ – vatthu aññaṁ na vijjati

Tasmā lobhañca dosañca – mohajaṁ cāpi viddasu

vijjaṁ uppādayaṁ bhikkhu – sabbā duggatiyo jahe.

– Devadūta Vagga Anguttara Nikāya.

'In the case of an ignorant one, whatever deed born of greed, hate or delusion done by him, be it little or much, has to be experienced here itself – there is no other site for it.

Therefore, let the wise monk, arousing knowledge, give up deeds born of greed, hate and delusion and all bad bournes'

Dear Listeners,

Poson Poya day is, for the Buddhists of this country, a day, which arouses a great enthusiasm in the Dhamma. Due to the establishment of Buddha's dispensation in this country by the mission of the arahant Venerable *Mahinda Thera* and his group of monks, King *Devānampiyatissa* and the inhabitants were able to build up a vision of life in accordance with the Right View. They formed a correct vision of values regarding good and bad, skilful and unskilful and merit and demerit.

By taking up two verses pertaining to that philosophy of life as the topic of our tenth sermon on Dependent Arising, we hope to present this sermon as a *Poson* sermon befitting the occasion. These two verses are found in the *Devadūta Vagga* of the *Anguttara Nikāya*. Even from the first paragraph of that discourse the relation between *kamma* and the Law of Dependent Arising is made clear.

This is how the Buddha begins the discourse:

"Monks, there are these three causes for the arising of deeds.

What are the three?

Greed is a cause for the arising of deeds.

Hate is a cause for the arising of deeds.

Delusion is a cause for the arising of deeds."

Then the Buddha says:

"Monks, whatever deed that is done with greed, born of greed, caused by greed, arisen from greed, wherever his selfhood is born, there that deed ripens, where that deed ripens, there he experiences the result of that deed either in this very life or in the next birth or in any subsequent birth."

A similar pronouncement is made in regard to deeds born of hate and delusion. Then a certain simile is given as an illustration.

"Just as, monks, when seeds unbroken, not putrid, not affected by wind and sun, and capable of sprouting and well stored up, are sown on a good field well prepared, if the rain also comes down in plenty, then those seeds, monks, will come to growth and plenitude, even so, monks, whatever deed that is done with greed..... hate..... delusion wherever his selfhood is born, there that deed ripens. Where that deed ripens, there he experiences the result of that deed either in this very life or in the next birth or in any subsequent birth."

We can see that this simile about seeds has some relation between cause and effect. Then about skilful deeds the following pronouncement is made.

"Monks, there are three causes for the arising of deeds. What are the three? Non-greed is a cause for the arising of deeds. Non-hate is a cause for the arising of deeds. Non-delusion is a cause for the arising of deeds.

Monks, whatever deed that is done with non-greed, born of non-greed, caused by non-greed, arisen from non-greed, when greed is gone thus is that deed abandoned, uprooted made like a palm tree divested of its site, made non-existent incapable of arising in the future."

The same is said about deeds born of non-hate and non-delusion and then a simile is given as an illustration.

"It is as if, monks, in the case of seeds unbroken, not putrid, not affected by wind and sun, capable of sprouting and well stored up, a man were to burn in a fire and having burnt it in a fire reduce them to ashes, and having reduced them to ashes blow off in a strong wind or get it swept away in a swift-flowing current of a river and thereby, monks, would those seeds be abandoned, uprooted, made like a palm tree divested of its site, made non-existent and incapable of arising in the future, even so, monks, whatever deed that is done with non-greed..... non-hate..... non-delusion..... when greed is gone..... when hate is gone..... when delusion is gone thus is that deed be abandoned, uprooted, made like a palm tree divested of its site, made non-existent and incapable of arising in the future."

The meaning of this peculiar simile is that deeds done with non-greed are exhausted with the ending of greed. Why is that? Because the net result of deeds done with non-greed is the ending of greed itself. Similarly, deeds done with non-hatred get exhausted with the complete ending of hate. So also deeds done with non-delusion get exhausted with the complete ending of delusion. What we have here is the norm of rise and fall. Though it seems simple enough, there is something deep involved here. Deeds done with greed, hate and delusion germinate like seeds on getting rain. In fact, craving, in some contexts is compared to rain. As a synonym, for craving "*sineha*" signifies moisture. Beings in *Saṁsāra* go on with greed, hate and delusion given the rain or moisture of craving. Then the results of those deeds have to be experienced, either in this very life, or in the next birth, or else in subsequent births. But the roots of skilful deeds, namely non-greed, non-hate and non-delusion behave differently. For instance deeds done with non-greed get exhausted with the ending of greed. They are abandoned, uprooted and destroyed. It is as if someone, instead of sowing seeds, which could germinate, were to burn them, reduce them to ashes and blow off against the wind or throw into a swift flowing river. When the Buddha gives a simile, it is thorough and conclusive.

Here we have something deep. This *Saṁsāra* goes on due to greed, hatred and delusion. What we call skilful deeds – namely those born of non-greed, non-hate and non-delusion – are those that we make use of for putting an end to *Saṁsāra*. In the last analysis they conduce to our deliverance from *Saṁsāra*. There too we have something like the norm of arising and ceasing. Now let us take up the moral law of deeds (*Kamma*). Here we propose to discuss *kamma* from the point of view of the Law of Dependent Arising. *Nibbedhikapariyāya Sutta* of the *Anguttara Nikāya* is a discourse revealing some highly significant aspects of the moral law of *kamma*. There the Buddha gives a six fold analysis of '*Kamma*' (deeds).

"Monks, *kamma* should be understood, the source and origin of *kamma* should be understood, the diversity of *kamma* should be understood, the result of *kamma* should be understood, the cessation of *kamma* should be understood, the way of practice leading to the cessation of *kamma* should be understood.

Having presented these six topics, the Buddha himself analyses them one by one. The analysis given to the first topic '*Kamma* should be known' is one that you all are familiar with.

"Cetanāham bhikkhave kammaṁ vadāmi. Cetayitvā kammaṁ karoti kāyena vācāya manasā."

"Monks, intention, I say, is *kamma*. Having intended one does *kamma* by body, by word, by mind."

This definition of *kamma* in terms of intention has quite a deep dimension in meaning. We can connect it with the analysis of Dependent Arising we have presented earlier. For the benefit of 'new comers' in this crowd let us mention it in brief. While analyzing name and form we brought up a certain simile. We compared the constituents of name to the five fingers of our hand. Feeling is the little finger, small but mischievous. Perception is the ring finger both popular and notorious. Intention is the middle finger prominent and intrusive. Contact is the forefinger, fussy and busy all the time Attention is the thumb standing apart but approachable to the rest. It is with these five members of the name group that we get hold of what constitutes "form".

Here too, it is the prominent and intrusive intention that the Buddha has called *kamma*. Of course it must be confessed that the simile of the five fingers is not found in the discourses.

Whatever it is, our comparison of intention to the 'prominent and intrusive middle finger' seems quite apt. As a matter of fact it is at the stage of intention that the notion of self becomes prominent and intrusive – and has to pay for that intrusion. Then the second point the Buddha has stated is the source and origin of *Kamma*. According to the Buddha, the source and origin of *Kamma* is contact. Just see, there again our simile is meaningful. We compared contact to the fore-finger fussy and busy all the time. It is the most proximate cause for the origin of *kamma* because next to it is 'attention' – the THUMB. It is attention that is instrumental in a change of focus from one thing to another. Those of you who have listened to our earlier sermons might remember our Narcissus simile. Narcissus was tempted to embrace his own reflection in water at the stage of intention. Then came contact and attention. Whatever it is, the Buddha has stated that contact is the source and origin of *kamma*.

Then comes the third point – the diversity (*vemattatā*) of *kamma*. This is explained as follows:

"There is monks, that *kamma* which has to be experienced in hell, there is that *kamma* which has to be experienced in the animal realm, there is that *kamma* which has to be experienced in the realm of ghostly beings, there is that *kamma* which has to be experienced in the human world, there is that *kamma* which has to be experienced in the deva world."

The diversity shown is according to the place where *kamma* has to be experienced. Then the result of *kamma* is said to be threefold.

"Monks, I say that the result of *kamma* is of three types:

in this very life, in the next birth, or in a subsequent birth."

The fifth point – the cessation of *kamma* is explained briefly:

"Monks, the cessation of contact is the cessation of *kamma*."

This is understandable. Since the origin of *kamma* is contact, its cessation has to be with the cessation of contact itself. Lastly comes the way of practice leading to the cessation of *kamma*. It is said to be the Noble Eightfold Path. In this way there is a six-fold analysis given in that context.

There are many other discourses on *kamma* some of which we will bring up as we go on. Now according to the doctrine of the *Nigaṇṭhas* there are three types of *kamma* – namely bodily *kamma*, verbal *kamma* and mental *kamma* out of which they give first place to bodily *kamma*. But according to the Buddha mental *kamma* takes precedence. It is clearly stated in the *Upāli Sutta* of the *Majjhima Nikāya* where the Buddha tells *Dīgatapassi* – the disciple of *Nigaṇṭha Nātaputta* that mental *kamma* is more serious. One can understand the reason for it even from the first verse of the Dhammapada:

Mano pubbaṅgamā dhammā

mano seṭṭhā manomayā

manasā ce paduṭṭhena

bhāsati vā karoti vā

tato naṁ dukkhamanveti

cakkaṁ va vahato padaṁ

Mind is the forerunner of mind-objects

Mind is their chief – they are mind-made

If with a mind corrupt with hate

One speaks or does an act

Then suffering trails him close behind

Like the wheel the ox that draws the cart.

The primacy of the mind is emphasized in the Dhamma whereas the *Nigaṇṭhas* give first place to the body. Because of this primacy of the mind, if one speaks or acts with a corrupt mind, one has to suffer the consequences. Morally culpable deeds are by definition intentioned. It is because the *Nigaṇṭhas* did not recognize the relevance of intention that they went to the extreme of self-mortification. The reason for the Buddha's Middle Path is the identification of *kamma* with intention.

Another important discourse portraying the results of *kamma* is the *Devadūta Sutta* of the *Majjhima Nikāya*. As you may have heard it is a discourse preached as a sermon by the Venerable Arahant Mahinda in *Anuradhapura* to acquaint the people of this island with the dreadful consequences of evil deeds.

In that discourse the Buddha first of all analyzes the way in which beings are born in various realms according to their good and bad conduct. There he mentions heavenly realm, human world, the realm of ghostly beings, the animal realm and lastly hell. However it is about the hell that the Buddha describes in particular in this discourse. The Buddha gives a vivid description of the terrible suffering undergone by beings in various hells. That is probably why the Venerable Mahinda preached this discourse to the people of this country. The sutta instils moral dread of this *Saṁsāric* existence. On a Poson Full moon poya day like this we should call to mind such instructive teachings of the Buddha.

Generally such discourses like *Cūla Hatthipadopama Sutta* in the *Majjhima Nikāya*, which also was preached to the people of this country by Venerable Arahant Mahinda have an appeal to the intellect. But we should consider why he thought of preaching a discourse like *Devadūta Sutta*. He probably wished to wean the people's minds from evil and turn them towards the good and skilful according to the word of the Buddha.

Another important discourse worth mentioning in this context is the *Cūla Kammavibhaṅga Sutta,* preached by the Buddha to the Brahmin youth, Subha.

There the pre-eminence of *kamma* and its pervasive influence on the lives of beings in *Saṁsāra* is brought out. Subha, the Brahmin youth asks the Buddha why there is a diversity among human beings. He says:

'Some human beings are short-lived, some are long-lived, some have many ailments, some have few ailments, some are ugly, some are comely, some are inferior, some are superior, some are poor, some are rich, some are low-born, some are high-born, some are unwise, some are wise.' He asks the Buddha the reason for this disparity. Then the Buddha comes out with the famous dictum on *kamma*.

"Kammassakā, māṇava, sattā kammadāyādā kammayoni kammabandhu kammapaṭisaranā. Kammaṁ satte vibhajati yadidaṁ hīnappaṇītatāya."

"Young man, beings are owners of their *kamma*, they have *kamma* as their inheritance, *kamma* is their origin, *kamma* is their relative, they have *kamma* as their resort. *Kamma* differentiates beings as inferior or superior."

'Kammassakā':

What one can call one's own is *kamma*.

'*Kammadāyādā':*

What one inherits is one's own *kamma*.

'*kammayoni':*

The place of one's birth is also decided by *kamma*.

'*kammabandhu':*

Kamma is one's true relative.

'*kammapaṭisaranā':*

Kamma is one's resort in *Saṁsāra*.

Kamma is also responsible for the distinction as high or low among beings.

Therefore, the Buddha has recommended the constant reflection of this pervasive influence of *kamma* as a means to refrain from misconduct in the *Ṭhāna Sutta* as follows:

"*Kammassakomhi*

kammadāyādo

kammayoni

kammabandhu

kammapaṭisarano.

Yaṁ kammaṁ karissāmi kalyānaṁ vā pāpakaṁ vā tassa dāyādo bhavissāmi."

"I am the owner of my *kamma*. I am the inheritor of my *kamma*. *Kamma* is my matrix. *Kamma* is my relative. *Kamma* is my resort. Whatever *kamma* I do whether good or bad I will be its inheritor."

Though it is stated like that there is in this Dhamma a way of freedom from *kamma*. On the other hand *Nigaṇṭhas* or Jains had an extreme view of *kamma*. They held that everything is due to past *kamma*. (*Sabbaṁ pubbekatahetu*) and put down all pleasures and pains one experiences now to things done in the past. Therefore, they advocated self-mortification as a means of paying off past *kamma* – a way of practice called '*nijjarā*' – 'wearing out'; They also observed rigorous vows and ascetic practices in order to prevent accumulation of new *kamma*. The Buddha sometimes interrogated the *Nigaṇṭhas* and refuted their views. He asked whether they can keep an account of *kamma* so far 'paid off' and 'to be paid off', thereby proving that the wanton infliction of bodily pain on oneself is meaningless.

In fact, there were other extreme views on *kamma* in the contemporary society. They were sometimes put forward within the framework of a tetralemma or four-cornered logic. Some – like the *Nigaṇṭhas* – held the view that all pleasure and pain one experiences is of one's own making (*sayaṁ kataṁ sukhadukkhaṁ*). Some others said it is done by others (*paraṁ kataṁ sukhadukkhaṁ*). Yet others combined these two views and said that it is done by both oneself and others (*sayaṁ katañca paraṁ katañca sukhadukkhaṁ*). Still others rejected both self agency and external agency and asserted that pleasure and pain one experiences is of fortuitous origin. (*adhicca samuppannaṁ sukhadukkhaṁ).*

The Buddha rejected all four types of view and introduced the correct view by declaring that *kamma* is dependently arisen (*paṭicca samuppannaṁ).* As he sometimes put it:

"*Kiṁ paṭicca? Phassaṁ paṭicca".*

“Dependent on what? Dependent on contact.”

So the correct position is this. It is not a case of self-agency nor of external agency nor both nor neither but due to contact (*Phassaṁ paṭicca)*. The term ‘*paṭicca’* represents *paṭiccasamuppāda* and negates the idea of fortuitous origin fairly and squarely. (Cp. The two terms: *adhicca-samuppanna* and *paṭicca-samuppanna)*. That is why the Buddha concludes:

“Monks the cessation of contact is the cessation of *kamma*.”

Now we are going deeper and deeper. But in the traditional analysis of *Paṭicca Samuppāda* an unfortunate trend is seen though it cannot be compared to the *Nigaṇṭha* view.

As you know there are 12 links in the *Paṭicca Samuppāda* formula. In the *Visuddhi Magga* and other later works these 12 links are divided into three periods of time in the analysis of *Paṭicca Samuppāda*. Ignorance and preparations are said to belong to the past. The eight links – consciousness, name and form, six sense spheres, contact, feeling, craving, grasping and becoming are included in the present. Birth and decay and death are referred to the future. The attempt is to prove that consciousness has arisen from a past cause. We have already shown that this explanation is untenable.

The most important point in the formula is the vortex between consciousness and name and form. Even from the Buddha’s analysis of the Law of Dependent Arising in the *Saṁyutta Nikāya*, the term *saṅkhāra* is defined in a way quite different from later definitions of the same term. Later analysis interpreted *saṅkhāra* as equivalent to *kamma*. But that is not the way the Buddha explained *saṅkhāra* in that context. He says:

“Katame ca bhikkhave saṅkhārā? tayoṁe bhikkhave saṅkhāra. Kāyasaṅkhāro, vacīsaṅkhāro, cittasaṅkhāro. Ime vuccanti bhikkhave saṅkhāra.”

“And what, monks, are preparations? Monks, there are these three preparations. Body preparation, speech preparation, thought preparation. These, monks, are called preparations.”

It is noteworthy that in this definition, the term *saṅkhāra* is used in the singular as *Kāyasaṅkhāro* (body preparation)*, vacīsaṅkhāro* (speech preparation*)* and *cittasaṅkhāro* (thought preparation). These three are defined in the Dhamma as follows:

Body preparation – in breath and outbreath

Speech preparation – thinking and pondering

Thought preparation – perception and feeling

So then in the *Vibhaṅga Sutta* where the Buddha defines each of the twelve links, the term *saṅkhāra* is defined as threefold. In breathing and out breathing cannot be taken as *kamma* that prepares another birth. Likewise thinking and pondering generally rendered as initial and sustained thought as well as perception and feeling are not reckoned as *kamma*. In fact whoever is wishing to put an end to existence (*bhava*) has to appease them. That is why they are called preparations.

Another instance of misinterpretation is the definition of consciousness. In the *Visuddhi Magga* and other later treatises consciousness is defined as 're-linking consciousness' (*paṭisandhi viññāṇa*) resulting from so-called '*saṅkhāras'* interpreted as past *kamma*. In other words it is supposed to be the outcome of past ignorance and preparations. Such an interpretation is unwarranted since the Buddha himself has defined consciousness as being sixfold in that particular context, in the *Vibhaṅga Sutta*.

"Katamañca bhikkhave viññāṇaṁ. Chayime bhikkhave viññāṇakāyā. Cakkhu viññāṇaṁ sotaviññāṇaṁ ghānaviññāṇaṁ jivhāviññāṇaṁ kāyaviññāṇaṁ manoviññāṇaṁ. Idaṁ vuccati bhikkhave viññāṇaṁ."

"And what, monks, is consciousness? Monks, there are these six groups (lit. bodies) of consciousness. Eyeconsciousness, ear-consciousness, nose-consciousness, tongueconsciousness, body-consciousness, mind-consciousness. These monks are called consciousness."

Since *saṅkhāra* and *viññāṇa* are defined as above by the Buddha, by no means can they be referred to the past. We have pointed out that all the twelve links pertain to the present.

Of course one may ask:

"Well then where do ignorance and preparations come in? That we have already explained. The very non-understanding of the mutual inter-relation between consciousness and name and form is itself ignorance. The activity sustained by that ignorance is preparations. To go back to our parable of *Narcissus* – that Greek youth Narcissus who imagined an angel in the reflection of his own face in the water, was tempted to embrace it again and again by that ignorance – that murk of delusion. So also are the worldlings. What we have in ignorance and

preparations is the background or setting. The crucial point however, is the vortex between consciousness and name and form – that vortical interplay or mutual inter-relation. That is something pertaining to the present. That precisely, is why it is possible to put an end to suffering here and now by experiencing the cessation of becoming or existence. We mentioned all this in particular because there is some confusion in explaining *kamma* in the context of *Paṭicca Samuppāda* by attributing it to something in the past.

However one can still raise a question regarding the significance of what are called '*puññābhisaṅkhāra*, *apuññābhisaṅkhāra* and *āneñjābhisaṅkhāra* and their relevance to *saṅkhāra:*

In that context, what is called '*abhisaṅkhāra*' are special preparations, that is to say, specially performed *kamma*. In the former context, *saṅkhāra* referred to such activities as inbreathing and out-breathing which are like the 'bedrock' of *saṅkhāras*. But here what is called *abhisaṅkhāra* are volitional preparations where intention comes in. *Puññābhisaṅkhāra* are meritorious special preparations, *apuññābhisaṅkhāra* are demeritorious special preparations and *āneñjābhisaṅkhāra* are imperturbable special preparations, which have to do with the meditative absorptions – which bring about rebirth in Brahma worlds. Of course these three forms of preparations are also the outcome of ignorance, but by dispelling that ignorance in this very life those forces of preparations are stilled. These special preparations are kept up by egotism. All in all, *kamma* is dependently arisen. Our aim should be the cessation of *kamma*.

The path of practice leading to the cessation of *kamma* is the Noble Eightfold Path. As you know the Right View in the Noble Eightfold Path is the Four Noble Truths of suffering, its arising, cessation and the path to that cessation. But there is another Right View called '*kammassakatā sammādiṭṭhi*' – the Right View that has *kamma* as one's own. It is the Right View which has ten points (*dasa vatthuka*) namely:

gifts, donations and offerings are not worthless. There is fruit and result of wholesome and unwholesome actions. There is this world and there is the next world. There is mother, there is father. There are in this world recluses and Brahmins of right practice who have by themselves understood and realized both this world and the next and are able to explain them. This Right View of ten points is called '*kammassakatā sammādiṭṭhi*' because in the context of *Saṁsāra,* this is the view which helps beings to avoid rebirth in bad bournes and win rebirth in heavenly realms.

That view which asserts just the opposite of these ten points is called a pervert view. You all can guess what it is like. It says for instance, gifts, donations, and offerings are worthless; there is no fruit or result in wholesome and unwholesome actions. There is no this world no next world and so on.

The term '*kammassakatā'* has a deep meaning. It means 'taking *kamma* as one's own'. This is where 'the prominent and intrusive middle finger' (that is intention) has to pay with responsibility for his prominence and intrusion – to hark back to our simile of the five fingers. Due to that prominence and intrusion one may do merit or demerit or attain *jhānic* states. From a supramundane 'point of view' even the high *jhānic* attainments of *Āḷāra Kālāma* and *Uddaka Rāmaputta* are of no account. That is why the Buddha left them with dejection. Deliverance from *Saṁsāra* is not to be found in *puññā – apuññā* and *āneñjābhisaṅkhāra* (meritorious, demeritorious and imperturbable special preparations). However they have their relevance in *Saṁsāra*. One should give up what is demeritorious and develop the meritorious and above all the imperturbable. They are useful for the development of the mind. But for deliverance from *Saṁsāra* there is only the Noble Eightfold Path, that is to say, Supramundane Noble Eightfold Path. You mustn't confuse the two views.

Some intellectuals dismiss the '*kammassakatā sammādiṭṭhi'* as irrelevant and say that there is no this world, no next world, no mother, no father and so on calling it '*suññatā'* or voidness. That is going to an extreme. The Buddha calls it a pervert view. Worldlings if they blunder end up in hell. If one trains in the view that is based on the recognition of one's responsibility for one's deeds, one could at least get rebirth in heavens because one knows the results of good and evil and trains accordingly. But in the last analysis all these are preparations. Therefore, the final aim should be the release from preparations.

As we pointed out our aspiration should be the cessation of becoming – *bhava nirodha*. In the journey towards that cessation of becoming, the Buddha had to take a Middle Path.

The Right View which takes *kamma* as one's own (*kammassakatā sammādiṭṭhi)* has its place in that Middle Path. He did not go to an extreme to approve a pervert view like Annihilationists who even went to the extreme of self-indulgence. As the Buddha proclaims in the *Devadūta Sutta* he could see beings getting reborn in heavens and hells according to their *kamma* as if someone standing between two houses would see human beings entering and leaving those houses. So if that is the position it cannot be contradicted. That is the situation in the world.

It is due to that condition in the world that the Buddha recognized the relevance of a Right View that takes *kamma* as one's own. We should now pay attention to this aspect too because some have confused issues. Of course from a deeper perspective what is helpful in attaining deliverance is the Noble Eightfold Path. It is based on the view that this is an entire mass of suffering. There is no question of oneself or another. But in truth that vision arises only at the moment of the Supramundane Path. Although it comes in to some extent even before it, only at the moment of the Supramundane Path moment it rightly surfaces. We brought up these deeper aspects to show that the analysis of the twelve links according to the three periods of time is incorrect and that *kamma* is conditionally arisen. (*Paṭicca Samuppanna)* Since *kamma* is conditionally arisen release from *Paṭicca Samuppāda* is tantamount to release from *Saṁsāra*.

Kamma is dependently arisen due to not seeing the Law of Dependent Arising. Therefore, to see it is to be free from it. In other words, the wrong course of action is the result of not seeing the inter-dependence between consciousness and name and form. Comprehension of it dispels the darkness of ignorance. In short, in the light of wisdom the vanity of that course of action is realized.

This then, is the supramundane freedom – the deliverance from *Saṁsāra*. As far as this Middle Path is concerned, it is obvious that the Buddha avoided both extremes, namely that of the *Niganṭhas* and that of the Annihilationists. The Middle Path shown by the Buddha is extraordinary in that it implies the twofold Right View to enable beings in *Saṁsāra* to avoid bad bournes and get rebirth in heavens and gradually to leave behind both hell and heaven and attain final deliverance from *Saṁsāra*. On one side there is the Right View that takes *kamma* as one's own and on the other there are the Four Noble Truths that lead one out of *Saṁsāra*.

There are a number of discourses in which the Buddha has preached about *kamma*. There is for instance, a very important sutta which shows the connection between *kamma* and views with an instructive simile. He declares that in the case of a person with a wrong view, whatever bodily, verbal or mental *kamma* he performs follows the pattern of the wrong view he has taken up and accepted, and whatever intention, aspiration, determination and preparations he has (*yā ca cetanā yā ca patthanā yo ca paṇidhi, ye ca saṅkhārā*) all those things will conduce to unwelcome, unpleasant, disagreeable, unwholesome and painful consequences because the view is evil. Then the Buddha gives a simile for it that you can easily understand.

When a margosa seed or a *kosātakī* seed or a bitter pumpkin seed is planted on wet ground, whatever essence of earth or essence of water it absorbs, all that will

conduce to bitterness, gives a bitter fruit. Similarly in the case of one who has taken up a wrong view, whatever bodily, verbal or mental *kamma* he has, all that produces a bitter and unpleasant result. On the other hand, in the case of a person who has right view, all his bodily, verbal and mental *kamma* – all intentions, aspirations and determinations he has, all that gives a sweet fruit and brings happiness. The simile given in that case is:

Just as a sugar-cane seedling, a sweet paddy seed or a grape seed when planted on wet ground whatever essence of earth or essence of water it absorbs, all that gives a sweet fruit. This shows the importance of the correctness of views. That is why we should always try to avoid wrong views and going to extremes. From the worldly point of view that Right View which takes *kamma* as one's own is helpful in the context of *Saṁsāra*. But when one is thinking of transcending the world what is helpful is the Noble Eightfold Path. Then there is no reference to persons. No talk of oneself or another. Just a whole mass of suffering. What is called the Five Aggregates of grasping is a mass of suffering. The cause of it is craving. The aim is the cessation of craving. The path to it is the Noble Eightfold Path. One should not mix up the two types of Right View. The Buddha has pointed out both because they pertain to the Middle Path. That is as far as views are concerned. There are many deep discourses on this subject, which are not easily understood.

On one occasion the Buddha addressing the monks, said:

"Monks, I shall preach to you the new and old *kamma*. What, monks, is old *kamma*? The eye, monks, is old *kamma* specially prepared (*abhisaṅkhātaṁ*) and specially intentioned (*abhisañcetayitaṁ)* which should be known as something to be experienced. (*'vedanīyaṁ daṭṭabbaṁ')*. So also are the other senses – the ear, the nose, the tongue, the body and the mind. That means the senses are the product of our own *kamma*. Then what is called 'new *kamma*' is what one performs now by body speech and mind. So it is a fact that this being with his senses is produced by *kamma*. But one has to get free even from these senses that are the product of *kamma*, sometime or other. It is that freedom that on several occasions we pointed out as something realizable here and now. In the end when describing the attainment of the Fruit of Arahanthood, it is said that the eye ceases and the perception of forms fade away, the ear ceases and the perception of sounds fade away and so on. Even the six senses which are produced by the force of our intentions and *kamma* generated in *Saṁsāra* can be made to cease in this very world. It is an experience of cessation realizable here and now. That is what has been called the cessation of the six sense spheres (*'saḷāyatana nirodha')*. By seeing it as a fact of experience the arahants realize a state of freedom from all the six senses that are made up or prepared by *kamma*.

Through it one can understand what is called the release from the prepared (*saṅkhāta),* which in other words is '*asaṅkhāta'* – the Unprepared.

The Buddha has pointed out that beings have *kamma* as their own (*kammassakā)*. Because of the responsibility for one's actions which is the result of ignorance and craving, one has to suffer the consequences. That is a norm common even to Buddhas and Arahants. As you all know, even Venerable *Mahā Moggallāna* had to undergo the result of a bad *kamma* he had committed in the distant past by killing his parents. This body is the product of our *kamma*. As a way of saying we call it the work of *Māra*. It is as if *Māra* has given us this body with a curse:

'you suffer!'; That is why in explaining what 'old *kamma*' is the Buddha said:

"*cakkhuṁ bhikkhave purānaṁ kammaṁ abhisaṅkhataṁ abhisañcetayitaṁ vedaniyaṁ daṭṭhabbaṁ"*

"The eye, monks, is old *kamma* specially prepared and specially intentioned which should be known as something to be experienced."

The eye, for instance, is something given to us 'to suffer', though we take pride in our eye. That is what the Buddha is telling us. Just think of one who has no eyes – a blind man deprived of vision. Or take the case of a person with only one eye. See how much they suffer. So also are the other senses. These are the results of our *kamma*. But we have to transcend them. It is for that purpose that we need the Noble Eightfold Path.

Then there are the three kinds of 'preparations' (*saṅkhārā)* –

body preparation (*kāyasaṅkhāro),*

speech preparation (*vacīsaṅkhāro)* and

thought preparation *(cittasaṅkhāro*).

Why are in-breathing and out-breathing regarded as a body preparation? It is because they prepare the body. No one can be blamed for breathing in and breathing out. However ignorance and craving are hidden beneath them. That is why every Buddha is said to have attained Buddhahood through Mindfulness of Breathing. There is something wonderful about it. Worldlings even entertain absurd views of self by taking it as '*prāna'* the principle of life. But the Buddha pointed out that this process of in-breathing and out-breathing which is an illustration of arising and ceasing is itself a suffering. Worldlings are ignorant of it. They are sometimes not even aware that they are breathing. They take it for

granted. Only the outward activities which we called '*abhi-saṅkhāra'* – 'special preparations' they take seriously. That is what appears prominently like that fraction of the iceberg visible above the surface. Like the vast portion submerged is the above mentioned body-preparation (*kāyasaṅkhāro).* In-breathing and out-breathing are *kāyasaṅkhāro* in the sense that they prepare the body for activity. Similarly thinking and pondering are *vacīsaṅkhāro* – speech preparation. There is far more thinking and pondering going on within a person than what comes out in speech. In fact, '*vitakka-vicāra'* can be regarded as sub-vocal speech. It is after a good deal of thinking and pondering that one breaks into speech. That again is like the submerged portion of an iceberg. That is a 'preparation for speech'.

Then there are the perceptions and the feelings, which prepare our thoughts and intentions. In the final reckoning they also have to be conquered. They have to be appeased or stilled. As you may have heard, when one is developing meditative absorptions one has to calm down thinking and pondering at some stage. Then he finds even breathing troublesome and calms that too. And finally he has to calm down perceptions and feelings. That is what the Buddha revealed to the world by the attainment of the cessation of perceptions and feelings. Until then the worldlings found their progress blocked by perceptions and were unable to make a breakthrough. That was due to egoism – the notion of 'I' and 'mine'. The Buddha showed the way to deliverance through the cessation of perceptions and feelings. It seems, Therefore, that there is a subtle level of preparations which escape our attention. It is incorrect to limit the meaning of '*saṅkhāra'* to *kamma* as such.

The term '*saṅkhāra'* has quite a broad meaning. There are many who interpret the term to mean only *kamma*. But there is a subtle nuance of the term which goes deeper than the implications of *kamma*. That is 'bhava *saṅkhāra'* – the preparations pertaining to existence. They tend to perpetuate existence. In the last analysis even perceptions and feeling are preparations which have to be calmed down. All these the Buddha understood as preparations. Within the dictum:

'*sabbe saṅkhārā aniccā'* (All preparations are impermanent) which we take lightly the entire Dhamma is included. All these are a heap of preparations. Not only the *kamma* that is outwardly visible. Even the underlying layers of in-breathing and out-breathing, thinking and pondering, perceptions and feelings have to be calmed down to attain that state of 'the stilling of all preparations' ('*sabba saṅkhāra samatha').*

On the one hand the Buddha has pointed out to beings in *Saṁsāra* the way of moulding their courses of action without involvement in wrong views so as to avoid rebirth in bad bournes and with Right View to get reborn in heavenly realms. On the other hand he has also pointed out the Noble Eightfold Path for transcending both good and evil and winning freedom from the entire heap of preparations. In the latter case it is not a question of persons. It is only a question of this whole mass of suffering. Internally or externally, it is just a case of suffering. What underlies it is craving. The cessation of craving itself is *Nibbāna*. And the path to it is the Noble Eightfold Path.

There is a wonderful discourse which describes that state of perfect stilling. There Venerable Sāriputta says:

"Ānanda, when the body is there, due to bodily intention, there arises inward pleasure and pain. When speech is there, due to verbal intention, there arises inward pleasure and pain. When mind is there, due to mental intention, there arises inward pleasure and pain – all conditioned by ignorance."

But he points out that with the remainderless cessation of ignorance, neither the body nor the speech nor the mind will be there.

"..... avijjāyatveva asesavirāganirodhā so kāyo na hoti yam paccayāssa taṁ uppajjati ajjhattaṁ sukhadukkhaṁ. Sā vācā na hoti yampaccayāssa taṁ uppajjati ajjhattaṁ sukhadukkhaṁ. So mano na hoti yampaccayāssa taṁ uppajjati ajjhattaṁ sukhadukkhaṁ.Khettaṁ taṁ na hoti, vatthuṁ taṁ na hoti, āyatanaṁ taṁ na hoti, adhikaranaṁ taṁ na hoti yampaccayāssa taṁ uppajjati ajjhattaṁ sukhadukkhaṁ."

"..... But with the remainderless fading away and cessation of ignorance, that body is not there owing to which there can arise for him inward pleasure and pain. That speech is not there owing to which there can arise for him inward pleasure and pain. That mind is not there, owing to which there can arise for him inward pleasure and pain. That field is not there, that site is not there, that base is not there, that reason is not there, owing to which there can arise for him inward pleasure and pain."

Now what does this mean? It is by taking this body as a unit – as my body – that all pleasure and pain arise. We do not understand it as a heap. We take the whole heap as a unit. We do not have an insightful understanding of it as a heap. By taking it as a unit, there is that experience of pleasure and pain. It is the same in the case of speech. Speech involves language. All depends on the meanings we attribute to a language. Supposing we go on scolding a person who doesn't know any language, with a smile on our face. However much we scold him, he wouldn't

know that he is being scolded. It is according to the meanings we infuse into some words we use that we experience pleasure and pain. So long as there is speech, in relation to the speech, we experience pleasure and pain. Isn't it the same with what we call the mind? A flux of thoughts that arise and cease we have grasped as a unit called 'the mind' with our personality view ('*sakkāyadiṭṭhi*'). There comes a time when even that mind ceases. It is as long as we have this mind that we suffer. So it seems this discourse has an extremely deep meaning.

Here is a journey towards the cessation of existence. All the same, we should try to understand why the Buddha has declared that beings in *Saṁsāra* tend to drift towards two extremes – self-indulgence and self-mortification. There is the view of eternalism on one side and the view of annihilationism on the other. If by taking dogmatically the idea that there is a self, one holds on to the view that suffering is of one's own making (*sayaṁ kataṁ dukkhaṁ),* there is no possibility of deliverance.

Due to that view of self, one will go on in *Saṁsāra*. If on the contrary, one puts down suffering to fortuitous origin and forgets one's responsibility one will get reborn in hell. The Buddha avoided both these extremes and proclaimed the Noble Eightfold Path as the Middle Path. While discussing the Noble Eightfold Path we mentioned the Right View that takes *kamma* as one's own (*kammassakatā sammādiṭṭhi)* because it brings out a deep point. In ordinary life worldlings are living with the two sections oneself and others. Therefore, if one through selfishness acts under the influence of the three roots of evil greed, hate and delusion one will end up in hell. Instead of it the Buddha recommends a course of action which is conducive to one's own welfare (*attahita*) as well as to the other's welfare (*parahita*).

Now in the case of virtuous deeds such as observing the moral precepts we see that criterion of taking care of ones own and another's welfare. One may like to kill beings for food or for revenge. One may like to steal. But the Buddha disapproved of it as it means harm to another. Thinking of the society at large the Buddha has pointed out that what is 'skilful' (*kusala*) in such contexts is whatever that is beneficial to both sides. The term '*kusala'* is often misunderstood and misinterpreted. The basic meaning is to be skilful. That 'skill' – so long as one is in *Saṁsāra* – is in avoiding rebirth in miserable realms and in getting reborn in heavenly realms. But to be skilful in the highest sense of the term is to give up both merit and demerit (*puññapāpapahīna*) and get beyond *Saṁsāra* for good. So then the term '*kusala'* has a deeper dimension of meaning than *'puñña'* (merit). Generally both terms are used together in some contexts. For instance in some discourses we find the terms '*puññābhisandā' and 'kusalābhisandā'* (streams of merit and streams of the skilful) used more or less like synonyms.

However out of the two terms '*kusala*' is of greater influence and intrinsic worth than *'puñña'*. It is directly connected with the mind.

We started with the roots of the skilful and the unskilful. The roots of the unskilful are greed, hate and delusion. The roots of the skilful are non-greed, non-hate and non-delusion. But have you ever heard of 'roots' of merit and demerit. Is there anything like that? There you are. Now you can understand the essential difference between '*puñña'* and '*kusala'*. '*Kusala'* or skilful has a direct relation to the mind.

The two words '*puñña'* and *'pāpa'* have been used from ancient times to denote deeds with pleasant and unpleasant results. The ten ways of making merit which you are familiar with namely liberality, morality, meditation, dedication of merits, rejoicing in merits, rendering service, honouring, preaching, listening to Dhamma and straightening of one's views – all these are reckoned as ways of making merit. But what is reckoned as skilful are the ten skilful deeds which apparently are negative in formulation for the most part. What is unskilful are killing, stealing, unchastity, lying, slandering, harsh speech, frivolous talk, avarice, ill-will and wrong views. What are called skilful are the abstention from killing, from stealing, from unchastity, from lying, from slandering, from harsh speech, from frivolous talk, non-avarice, non-ill-will and right view. In the case of unskilful what is difficult is abstaining. But one has to be skilful in abstaining.

The very distinction between the ten meritorious deeds and the ten skilful deeds shows the difference between '*puñña'* and '*kusala'*. As we mentioned above from the standpoint of the supramundane level, the highest '*kusala*' is to be skilful enough to transcend even the subtlest preparations that perpetuate existence – that is to say not only merit and evil but also in and out breathing, thinking and pondering, perception and feeling. The Buddha made known to the world a wonderful state of cessation of existence in the attainment to the Fruit of Arahanthood in which all that is prepared (*saṅkhata)* even eye, ear, nose, tongue, body and mind are made to cease.

In this age many wrong views about *kamma* are rampant in the world. People are thinking of big things but ignore *kamma*. In fact it is the intellectual approach that is holding sway in the world. Because of this intellectualism there is a neglect of such topics as *kamma* which tendency will eventually pave the way to hell. Venerable Arahant Mahinda did not preach only the *Cūla Hatthipadopama Sutta*. He also preached the *Devadūta Sutta* to arouse fear about *Saṁsāra* in the minds of the people. Venerable Mahinda Thera described to our people the dreadful sufferings in hell, which the Buddha had seen with his divine-eye, in

order to acquaint them with the distinction between good and bad in conduct. In an age like this you should make it a point to ponder over these things.

Although this is the tenth sermon in our series of sermons on *Paṭicca Samuppāda,* we dealt with the topic of *kamma* because today happens to be the Poson Poya Day. So on this hallowed day you had better take in whatever that is conducive to the future of the dispensation of the Buddha as well as to your own *Nibbāna* out of this sermon. If by any chance you have any wrong views, if instead of the Right View that takes *kamma* as one's own you entertain some pervert or distorted view, you should do well to rectify them. Or else if you have any doubts about the Four Noble Truths, which is basic to the Noble Eightfold Path, try your best to dispel them in the light of this sermon.

We wish that this sermon will help you to understand the Middle Path preached by the Buddha and encourage you all to develop virtue, concentration and wisdom. May that skilful kammic force enable you to attain deliverance from this dreadful *Saṁsāra* as soon as possible. Whatever beings there be from the lowest hell to the highest Brahma world wishing to rejoice in this sermon, may they all rejoice in our sermon! May the merits accrued thereby conduce to the fulfillment of their highest aim – the Deathless Nibbāna!

Paticca Samuppada Sermon 11
The Law of Dependent Arising
(Pahan Kanuwa Sermon – No. 193)

'*Namo tassa bhagavato arahato sammāsambuddhassa*'

'Homage be! To the Fortunate One – the Worthy, Fully Enlightened!'

Ye ca rūpūpagā sattā
ye ca arūpaṭṭhāyino
nirodhaṁ appajānantā
āgantāro punabbhavaṁ

Ye ca rūpe pariññāya
arūpesu asaṇṭhitā
nirodhe ye vimuccanti
te janā maccuhāyino

Kāyena amataṁ dhātuṁ
phusayitvā nirūpadhiṁ
upadhipaṭinissaggaṁ
sacchikatvā anāsavo
deseti sammāsambuddho
asokaṁ virajaṁ padaṁ

– Itivuttaka Tika Nipāta

Those beings that go to realms of form
And those that are settled in formless realms

Not understanding the fact of cessation

Come back again and again to existence

Those who having comprehended realms of forms

Do not get settled in formless realms

Are released in the experience of cessation

It is they that are the dispellers of death

Having touched with the body the deathless element

Which is free from all assets

And realized relinquishment of assets

Being influx-free the perfectly enlightened one

Proclaims the sorrowless taintless state

Dear Listeners,

The Four Noble Truths, which the Fully Enlightened Buddha proclaimed to the world on an Esala Full Moon Poya day, is a wonderful teaching the world has never heard before.

Suffering, its arising, the cessation and the Path to it – all these Four Noble Truths are based on the norm of Dependent Arising. Therefore, on this Esala Poya Day we have chosen as the topic of our eleventh sermon, in this series of sermons on Dependent Arising, the Noble Truth of Cessation. We have taken up three verses which declare that this truth of cessation is something that the world has never heard. Among the Threes of the *Itivuttaka* these three verses are introduced with this statement:

'*Vuttaṁ hetaṁ bhagavatā vuttaṁ arahatāti me sutaṁ*.'

– 'I have heard that this was said by the Fortunate One, the Worthy!' What was said is mentioned in brief as follows:

'*Rūpehi bhikkhave arūpā santatarā*

arūpehi nirodho santataroti'

"Monks, more peaceful than Realms of Form are the Formless.

More peaceful than the Formless Realms is Cessation."

Then comes the brief introductory note:

"This fact the Fortunate One uttered. Therein it is said thus:" and then those three verses are given. Let us try to get at the meaning of these verses.

'*Ye ca rūpūpagā sattā*' – Whatever beings there are that go to Realms of Form. '*Ye ca arūpaṭṭhāyino*' – and whatever beings that are in Formless Realms. '*nirodhaṁ appajānantā*' – Not understanding cessation. '*āgantāro punabbhavaṁ*' – come back again and again to existence.

'Ye ca rūpe pariññāya' – But those who having comprehended the nature of forms. '*arūpesu asaṇṭhitā*' – do not get settled in Formless Realms. '*nirodhe ye vimuccanti*' – and are released in the cessation. '*te janā maccuhāyino*' – They are the dispellers of death.

'*Kāyena amataṁ dhātuṁ – phusayitvā nirūpadhiṁ*' – Having touched with the body the Deathless Element that is assetless, '*upadhipaṭinissaggaṁ – sacchikatvā anāsavo*' – And being influx free, realized the relinquishment of assets, '*deseti sammāsambuddho – asokaṁ virajaṁ padaṁ*' – The Fully Enlightened One preaches the sorrowless taintless state.

Poṭṭhapāda Sutta of the *Dīgha Nikāya* is a highly significant discourse which clearly portrays the ideas expressed in those three verses. The introductory episode is as follows:

When the Buddha was dwelling at Jetavana monastery in Sāvatthi, the wandering ascetic Poṭṭhapāda was staying at *Mallikārāma* built by Queen Mallikā for ascetics of other sects, together with hundreds of wandering ascetics. One day the Buddha set out in the forenoon on his alms round and it occurred to him:

"It is too early for me to go for alms in the city of Sāvatthi. What if I were to meet the wandering ascetic Poṭṭhapāda in *Mallikārāma*."

Then the Buddha turned in the direction of *Mallikārāma* and as he was approaching, Poṭṭhapāda saw him from afar and silenced his crowd saying that the Buddha liked silence.

When the Buddha came there, Poṭṭhapāda welcomed him with the compliment:

“Venerable Sir, it is a long time since you have done us the favor of paying a visit” and offered him a high seat. Seated on it the Buddha asked him what sort of a talk they were engaged in when he came in as an interruption. Poṭṭhapāda simply replied:

“Venerable Sir, let that talk be. That is not the type of talk which is not rare for your reverence to hear.” and raised a topic which he considered more important.

“In days past, Venerable Sir, among recluses and Brahmins of various sects assembled in the hall for discussing moot-points, a talk arose concerning the cessation of higher levels of perception (*abhisaññānirodha*). The topic of discussion was:

‘How does the cessation of higher levels of perception come about?’ When that topic came up, some put forward the view:

“Without a cause or condition a man’s perception arises and ceases. At the time it arises, one is percipient. When it ceases, one is not percipient.”

This is how some explained the cessation of higher levels of perception. Then another said:

“No, no. That is not the way it happens. Perception is a man’s self. It comes and goes. When it comes, one is percipient. When it goes one is non-percipient.” Then a third interposed:

“No no. That is not the way it happens. There are recluses and Brahmins of great psychic power and influence. They insert perception into a man and withdraw it. When it is inserted, he is percipient, when it is withdrawn he is non-percipient.”

Then a fourth objected:

“No no. That is not the way it happens. There are deities of great psychic power and influence. They insert perception into a man and withdraw it. When it is inserted he is percipient, when it is withdrawn he is non-percipient.”

Having given a report of that discussion Poṭṭhapāda said:

“And then Venerable Sir, I remembered the Fortunate One with the thought:

‘If only the Fortunate One, the Well-gone One were here who is proficient in those issues! The Fortunate One is knowledgeable in the cessation of higher levels of perception’.”

And then Poṭṭhapāda formally invited the Buddha to explain it with the words:

“Venerable Sir, how does cessation of higher levels of perception come about?”

Before presenting the Buddha’s answer to this question, let me mention something that enhances the relevance of the Buddha’s sermon. It was a time when yogins of India in their spiritual quest found themselves in a dilemma. They had reached the highest level in the development of perception. There were some who had attained the *jhānic* level of neither-perception-nor-non-perception (*nevasaññānāsaññāyatana*). You may have heard of the two teachers our *Bodhisatta* prince *Siddhattha* approached after his renunciation namely *Ālāra Kālāma* and *Uddaka Rāmaputta*. Out of them, *Ālāra Kālāma* had attained the Formless Realm of Nothingness. (*Ākiñcaññāyatana*) and *Uddaka Rāmaputta* had attained the Realm of Neither-perception-nor-non-perception (*nevasaññānāsaññāyatana*). But our *Bodhisatta* aroused both those *jhānic* levels as soon as the two teachers uttered a few words about them and even as they were offering equal status as teachers he left them with the thought:

“This is not the way to *Nibbāna*.”

From this we can infer that those yogins were in a problematic situation. The dilemma they were in is briefly mentioned in the *Pañcattaya Sutta* of the *Majjhima Nikāya* as follows:

“*Saññā rogo saññā gaṇḍo saññā sallaṁ, asaññā sammoho. Etaṁ santaṁ etaṁ paṇītaṁ yadidaṁ nevasaññānāsaññaṁ.*”

“Perception is a disease, perception is a boil, perception is a dart, and absence of perception is delusion. This is peaceful, this is excellent, that is to say neither-perception-nor-non-perception.”

They understood the limitations of perception – that it is a disease, a boil, a dart. But on the other hand, to give up perception according to them – is tantamount to delusion. So for the nonce, they found a solution in the intermediate position – neither-perception-nor-non-perception. In an earlier sermon we compared it to a see-sawing. In short those yogins were seesawing between perception and non-perception. It was in such a context that the Buddha was confronted with this problem. Let us see how he tackles it.

First of all, the Buddha tells Poṭṭhapāda*:*

“If any recluses and Brahmins had said that perception arises in a man without any cause or condition, they have blundered at the very outset.

Then the Buddha declares the conclusion that accords with the Dhamma.

"*Sahetuhi Poṭṭhapāda sappaccayā purisassa saññā uppajjantipi nirujjhantipi.*"

"For, Poṭṭhapāda, it is due to causes and conditions that a man's perceptions arise and cease."

Now comes a highly significant statement which embodies a first principle. You all had better bear it in mind. It comes up again and again like a refrain in a song throughout the Buddha's disquisition that follows. This is it:

"*Sikkhā ekā saññā uppajjanti,*

sikkhā ekā saññā nirujjhanti"

"Through training some perceptions arise,

through training some perceptions cease."

Having presented that first principle, the Buddha himself offers to substantiate it with the explicatory question:

"*Kā ca sikkha?*"

"What is that training?"

Since the long account that follows is very often met with in the discourses, we shall only give the gist of it.

A *Tathāgata*, Fully Enlightened, arises in the world and preaches the Dhamma which is excellent in the beginning, excellent in the middle, excellent in the end, having realized through higher knowledge the nature of the world as it is, in the world with its gods, Maras, Brahmas, recluses and Brahmins.

A householder or a householder's son listens to that Dhamma, arouses faith in it and goes forth in the dispensation.

Having gone forth, he becomes endowed with virtue, sense-restraint, mindfulness and full awareness and contentment. With that he goes into solitude and cleanses his mind of the five hindrances – avarice, ill-will, sloth and torpor, restlessness, worry and remorse and doubt. Even from there one can see how the Law of Dependent Arising works in the mode of approach to the First *Jhāna*. That monk, as he reflects on the fact that the hindrances are abandoned within him, rapture arises. He subdues it and experiences joy. Due to his joyous mind, the body becomes tranquil. With the tranquil body, he experiences happiness and

in that happiness his mind gets concentrated. About that monk, the Buddha says this much. Secluded from sense pleasures and unskilful mental states, he attains to and abides in the First *Jhāna* which is accompanied by thought applied and sustained with joy and bliss born of seclusion. In him, the former perception of sensuality ceases and the subtle but actual perception of joy and bliss born of seclusion is there at that time. And then the Buddha citing this as an illustration of the above first principle, makes the following declaration:

"*Evampi sikkhā ekā saññā uppajjanti,*

sikkhā ekā saññā nirujjhanti"

"Thus it is that through training some perceptions arise

and through training some perceptions cease."

Then the approach to the Second *Jhāna,* briefly stated, is as follows:

When that monk attains to the First *Jhāna* again and again, he realizes that some *Jhāna* factors are gross. First of all thoughts, initial and sustained, are found to be gross and he calms them down and attains to the Second *Jhāna,* which is accompanied by joy and bliss born of concentration. About that monk the Buddha says that in him the former subtle perception of joy and bliss born of seclusion ceases. Instead of it the subtle perception of joy and bliss born of concentration arises. Then again the Buddha comes out with the refrain-like corroborative formula:

"*Evampi sikkhā ekā saññā uppajjanti, sikkhā ekā saññā nirujjhanti*"

"Thus it is that through training some perceptions arise and through training some perceptions cease."

And then the Third *Jhāna* is attained by getting rid of joy which is felt to be gross and by arousing a bliss of equanimity. About him it is said that the former subtle perception of joy born of concentration ceases and in its place a subtle perception of bliss born of equanimity arises of which he is now conscious. Then that monk abandons both bliss and pain and having already done away with happiness and unhappiness arouses the Fourth *Jhāna* which is free from both pain and bliss and has pure mindfulness of equanimity. In him, it is said that the former subtle perception of bliss of equanimity has ceased and the subtle perception of the absence of pain and bliss has arisen.

Again the same refrain-like formula comes up.

"Thus it is that through training some perceptions arise and through training some perceptions cease."

Then the way of going beyond Spheres of Form is given. That monk by transcending perceptions of form, putting an end to perceptions of resistance and not attending to perceptions of multiplicity takes up the sign – 'space is infinite' and attains to the Sphere of Infinity of Space. In him, the perception of Form that he earlier had, ceases and the subtle perception of Infinity of Space arises. He becomes one with a subtle perception of bliss in the Sphere of Infinity of Space. Thus through training some perceptions arise and through training some perceptions cease.

Transcending the Sphere of Infinity of Space, that monk makes that consciousness which was directed to space itself the object and develops the Sphere of Infinity of Consciousness. And in him the former subtle perception of the Infinity of Space ceases and the subtle perception of the Infinity of Consciousness arises. He becomes one with the subtle perception of bliss in the Sphere of Infinity of Consciousness. Thus some perceptions arise through training and some perceptions cease through training.

Then he transcends the Sphere of Infinity of Consciousness and developing as the meditation object, the idea 'There is nothing', attains to and abides in the Sphere of Nothingness. And in him the former subtle perception of Infinity of Consciousness ceases and the subtle perception of the Infinity of Nothingness arises. Thus through training some perceptions arise and through training some perceptions cease.

Now comes a turning point at this stage. The Sphere of neither-perception-nor-non-perception is too subtle to be made the base for developing insight. The Sphere of Nothingness is regarded as the central spot from which one turns either towards the Sphere of neither-perception-nor-non-perception or towards the attainment of Cessation of Perceptions and Feelings. But as mentioned above, until the advent of the Buddha, ascetics of other sects were not aware of this latter possibility. Instead they were see-sawing between perception and non-perception. The Buddha now goes on to describe how a monk in this dispensation makes the breakthrough.

"Poṭṭhapāda, when a monk in this dispensation is aware of his perception, he passes from one level of perception to another and gradually touches the peak of perception called '*saññagga*' – which is a term for the Sphere of Nothingness. As he stands there at the peak of perception it occurs to him:

"To go on intending is bad for me. It is better for me not to intend. ('*cetayamānassa me pāpiyo acetayamānassa me seyyo*'). And he weighs pros and cons thus:

"If I were to go on intending and engage in specially preparing ('*āhañceva kho pana ceteyyaṁ abhisaṁkhareyyaṁ*') these perceptions would cease and other grosser perceptions would arise. Then he makes a decision which it is not possible for one in an ordinary level of perception to make. It is worded as follows:

"*yannūnāhaṁ na ceva ceteyyaṁ nābhisaṁkhareyyaṁ*"

"What if I were not to intend and specially prepare"

And in accordance with that decision he neither intends nor prepares specially ('*so na ceva ceteti na abhisaṁkharoti*').

Now the Buddha explains what happens to the monk who carries out that crucial decision.

"As he does not intend and prepare specially, those perceptions cease and other grosser perceptions do not arise. He touches cessation ('*So nirodhaṁ phusati*'). Finally the Buddha sums up the whole account with this sentence:

"*Evaṁ kho Poṭṭhapāda,*

anupubbābhisaññānirodhasampajāna-samāpatti hoti."

"It is in this way, Poṭṭhapāda that the attainment with full awareness to the gradual cessation of higher levels of perception comes about"

The long compound which marks the grand finale of this extraordinary discussion might need analysis. '*Anupubba*' means gradual or by stages. '*Abhisaññā*' we have already explained as higher levels of perception and *ābhisaññānirodha* is cessation of those higher levels of perception. '*Nirodha-sampajānasamāpatti*' means the attainment to the cessation with full awareness. By the way, the term '*anupubba*' merits a little comment, as it is a very important term in this dispensation. You may have come across the phrase:

'*anupubbasikkhā anupubbakiriyā anupubbapatipadā*.' In this dispensation there is a gradual training, a gradual course of action and a gradual treading of the path. The term '*anupubba*' (gradual) reminds one of the Law of Dependent Arising. Just think of a flight of steps. Like that by gradual stages, proceeding by

stage to stage in the higher levels of perception, a monk in this dispensation gradually arrives at the cessation of perceptions and feelings.

Now that you are familiar with the constituents of 'name' in name-and-form ('*nāmarūpa*') that is to say feeling, perception, intention, contact and attention, you may note that the problem of yogins till then was how to get rid of feelings and perceptions. They were unable to give up perceptions for fear of falling into delusion. What is the reason? They were clinging to preparations. (*saṅkhārā*). In the context of name-and-form preparations appear as intention (*cetanā*). So this is the crucial point. That monk when he took the extraordinary decision:

"Let me not have intentions or preparations" was ready to give up even intention. Form is already gone and out of the constituents of name, feelings, perceptions and intentions are made to cease by that decision.

So what is there to 'contact'? Cessation itself.

This is enough for you to understand the difference between the philosophy of those pre Buddhistic yogins and the philosophy behind the Law of Dependent Arising with its Middle Path approach. At the end of this wonderful disquisition the Buddha asks Poṭṭhapāda*:*

"What do you think, Poṭṭhapāda? Have you ever heard of an attainment with full awareness to the gradual cessation of higher levels of perception like this?"

"No, indeed Venerable Sir."

After that Poṭṭhapāda raises a number of questions. Let us take them up one by one.

The first question is:

"Venerable Sir, does the Fortunate One make known one peak of perception (*saññagga)* or does he make known several peaks of perception?"

To this question the Buddha gives a very strange answer:

"Poṭṭhapāda*,* I make known one peak of perception as well as several peaks of perception."

Then Poṭṭhapāda asks:

"How is it, Venerable Sir, that the Fortunate One makes known one peak of perception as well as several peaks of perception?"

"In whatever way one touches cessation, in that way I point out a peak of perception. Thus it is Poṭṭhapāda that I point out one peak of perception as well as several peaks of perception. As far as we understand this is how it should be understood. There is in the Dhamma a conclusive statement as follows:

'*yāvatā saññāsamāpatti tāvatā aññāpaṭivedho*.'

'As far as is the range of attainments of perception, so far is there a penetration into full understanding.'

It means there are as many possibilities of penetration into arahanthood as there are attainments of perception. That is to say, the possibilities of reaching cessation through insight and realizing *Nibbāna*. Not only through attainment of cessation by gradual stages but through any one of the *jhānic* attainments (except the eighth) one can reach the peak of perceptions by ending intentions (*cetanā*) and special preparations (*abhisaṅkhārā*) mentioned above. That is how the Buddha's answer should be interpreted.

Then Poṭṭhapāda asks a second question:

"Venerable Sir, does perception arise first and later knowledge or knowledge arises first and later perception? Or else do perception and knowledge arise simultaneously?"

To this question the Buddha gives a straightforward answer:

"It is perception, Poṭṭhapāda that arises first. Knowledge arises later. Through the arising of perception is the arising of knowledge. And he understands. It is through this specific condition that knowledge has arisen in me."

Here too, the commentator is in doubt and quotes several interpretations given by various teachers.

According to our understanding, this is how the above subtle statement has to be explained.

Now what was the problem in regard to perception that the yogins were grappling with? For them perception was some sort of a 'bug-bear'– a mystery. They either took it as self or as some mysterious thing which someone else infused into them from outside. It was the Buddha who blasted the myth. Let us examine the implications of a certain term recurring in this discourse. That pregnant term is '*sakasaññī*' – 'with one's own perception' or 'percipient of oneself' It occurs in the decisive phrase:

"*Yato kho Poṭṭhapāda bhikkhu idha sakasaññī hoti*....." – When Poṭṭhapāda a monk in this dispensation is percipient of oneself....

There is in this sutta the mention of the term '*sampajañña*' – full awareness; So from the very beginning a monk is accompanied by '*sati-sampajañña*' – mindfulness and full awareness. Then there is no place for mystic concepts, for mystery mongering with a 'self' or 'soul'; instead from moment to moment he is proceeding in accordance with the Law of Dependent Arising. There is nothing to grasp. It is like climbing a flight of steps. All along it is the story of perception and knowledge of perception. For instance if you read this discourse you will come across the two highly significant phrases:

'*vivekaja pītisukha sukhumasaccasaññā hoti*' 'There is subtle and factual perception of joy and bliss born of seclusion.'

'*vivekaja pītisukha sukhumasaccasaññī hoti*'

'.... He is percipient of the subtle and factual joy and bliss born of seclusion.'

So the two terms '*saññā*' *and* '*saññī*' used by the Buddha side by side are highly significant. Perception arises and one is aware of that perception. It is that awareness of perception ('*saññī*') that has to be understood as knowledge ('*ñāna*') in this context. It is not the case that perception has arisen and the monk is unaware of it. Because he has full awareness ('*sampajañña*') he gets to know it. That is the knowledge. But the commentator goes on dabbling with conflicting views of teachers. The issue is clear enough.

Well, the Buddha has answered that question too. But Poṭṭhapāda has yet another question – a serious one at that. He asks:

"Venerable Sir, is perception a man's self or is perception one thing and self something else?"

Now this is a tricky question the type clever lawyers go on asking. Poṭṭhapāda here brings in a self as from nowhere.

Why? Because he still has '*sakkāyadiṭṭhi*' or 'Personality View'. He was probably disappointed that the Buddha's disquisition made no mention of a self. That is why he dragged in the question. Such questions put one in a dilemma. If you give a categorical answer, you get into difficulties. Take for instance a case like this in the law courts. A driver who has never taken intoxicants appears before the judge, but a lawyer wants to get him to admit that he has taken drinks. If the lawyer asks him sternly "Say 'Yes' or 'No'. Are you still drinking or have you stopped it?" – the man would be in a fix. Whether he answers 'yes' or 'no' he

would get caught in the lawyer's trap. Poṭṭhapāda's question is also of the same type. But the Buddha didn't get caught. Instead he counter questioned Poṭṭhapāda*:*

"What do you mean by 'self', Poṭṭhapāda?"

The Buddha asked Poṭṭhapāda for a definition of the word 'self' because he himself has no conception of a self or soul. In discourses like *Alagaddūpama Sutta*, he called the concept of a 'self' an entirely foolish idea. ('*kevala paripūro bāladhammo*') which the world is clinging on to.

The commentator reprimands Poṭṭhapāda for dragging in a self with a pungent simile. He says as if a pig, after it has been bathed clean and anointed with perfumes goes back and plunges into a pit of excreta, Poṭṭhapāda*,* in spite of the fact that he has been bathed and anointed with perfumes in the form of a subtle sermon emphasizing the three characteristics, went back and plunged into the same cesspit of self view. But the Buddha as if to retrieve him counter-questioned him. Poṭṭhapāda*,* what do you mean by 'self'?

Some questions admit of a categorical answer but some do not. Sometimes you have to get the question clarified by the questioner himself. Such questions are called '*paṭipucchāvyākaranīya pañha*' – questions that have to be answered after counter-questioning. This is such a question. Now Poṭṭhapāda gives a definition of the word '*attā*'.

'Venerable Sir, I have the concept of a self that is gross and has form made up of the four great primaries and consuming food taken in mouthfuls. In short it means this body as it is. Now the Buddha says:

'Poṭṭhapāda*,* if that is the self you are speaking of, then perception is one thing and self something else. Then he gives the reason.

"The perception I am speaking of is of this nature. Some perceptions arise and some other perceptions cease. (*aññā va saññā uppajjanti aññā va saññā nirujjhanti*). There is something deep in this statement. It means 'perceptions arise as one thing and cease as another because they are subject to otherwiseness every moment. Take for instance the case of one attaining the First *Jhāna*. The perception that was there at the moment of attaining is not the same by the time it is transcended for it undergoes change by the training (*sikkhā*). That is to say, one level of perceptions arises, another level of perceptions ceases. There is no place for a self or soul in that explanation. When that definition is invalidated Poṭṭhapāda comes out with another definition.

“Venerable Sir, I mean a self that is mental replete with all limbs major and minor with senses intact. That in effect is their concept of *Jhānas* with Form (*rūpajjhāna)*. Then the Buddha says:

“Poṭṭhapāda, even if your self is of that description, perception is one thing and self is something else. When that attempt also fails, Poṭṭhapāda puts forward yet another definition of self:

“Venerable Sir, I mean a self that is formless and consisting of perception.”

But the Buddha dismissed that too, saying:

“Even if your self is formless and consisting of perception, still the position is that perception is one thing and self another.”

Finally Poṭṭhapāda in his exasperation asks:

“Is it possible Venerable Sir, for me to know whether perception is a man’s self or else perception is one thing and self another?”

Poṭṭhapāda, however, is disappointed when the Buddha replies:

“It is difficult for you to know whether perception is a man’s self or else perception is one thing and self another, since you are of a different view with different convictions, with different predilections, practicing elsewhere under other teachers.”

When even that attempt failed Poṭṭhapāda as a last resort asks:

“If that is so Venerable Sir, may I know whether the

world is eternal – this alone is true all else is false?”

Those of you who have read our books must have come across the ten questions known as Unexplained Points with which the Buddha was confronted by many but which the Buddha laid aside as unexplained (*avyākata*). In our earlier sermons we have explained why the Buddha laid them aside. Now Poṭṭhapāda comes out with that questionnaire. Briefly stated, they are as follows:

First, a dilemma. Is the world eternal? Is the world not eternal? Next comes another dilemma. Is the world finite? Is the world infinite? Then another set of two questions which again poses a dilemma:

‘Life-principle (‘*jīvaṁ*’ – a term suggestive of Soul or self) is the same as body. Life principle is one thing and body another.’ Then comes a tetralemma a four-cornered question:

'Does the *Tathāgata* exist after death? Does the *Tathāgata* not exist after death? Does he both exist and not exist after death? Does he neither exist nor not exist after death?' The tetralemma seeks to 'corner' the answerer into granting one or the other of possible alternatives. But the Buddha could not be cornered by dilemmas and tetralemmas. He rejected the questionnaire in toto every time he was confronted with it and refused to give a categorical answer. He simply laid them aside ('*avyākata ṭhapita*') because they were ill-founded. In this instance too, his response to every one of those ten questions was:

"It has not been explained by me Poṭṭhapāda."

Then Poṭṭhapāda asks:

"Venerable Sir, if that is so, is there anything you have explained categorically?"

And the Buddha says that he has categorically explained the four propositions.

"This is suffering. This is the arising of suffering. This is the cessation of suffering. This is the way of practice leading to the cessation of suffering – that is to say, the Four Noble Truths."

Poṭṭhapāda, however, seemed satisfied with that explanation and with the assent:

"That is so, Fortunate One. That is so, Well-gone One" ('*Evametaṁ Bhagavā, evametaṁ*

Sugatha') relieved the Buddha from the barrage of questions and the Buddha left on his alms-round. As soon as he left, the crowd of wandering ascetics got around Poṭṭhapāda and chastised him with verbal pricks, saying:

"This Poṭṭhapāda approves of everything Recluse Gotama says. He doesn't seem to have answered any one of the ten questions categorically."

Poṭṭhapāda rejoined saying:

"I also don't see any of those questions answered categorically. But Recluse Gotama lays down a true and factual path of practice, a statute of Dhamma, a norm of Dhamma. When Recluse Gothama is laying down a true and factual path of practice, a statute of Dhamma, a norm of Dhamma, how can I, as an intelligent man, not approve of the well-spoken words of Recluse Gotama as well-spoken.

That phase of the discussion ends there. The sequence of events from there onwards is recorded in the discourse as follows.

After two or three days, Citta Hatthisāriputta (Son of an elephant trainer) and the wandering ascetic Poṭṭhapāda came to see the Buddha.

The first thing Poṭṭhapāda came out with was a report of what happened after the Buddha had left the other day.

“Venerable Sir, soon after the Fortunate One departed that day, they got around and gave me a shower of verbal pricks.”

When he had reported all what had transpired, the Buddha said:

“Poṭṭhapāda, all those wandering ascetics are blind. They lack vision. Only you are the one with vision. There are, Poṭṭhapāda, Dhammas that I have preached and laid down non-categorically and there are also Dhammas I have preached and laid down categorically. The former refers to the ten Indeterminates and the latter refers to the Four Noble Truths. Then the Buddha goes on to relate some of his own experiences with recluses and Brahmins in regard to the question of views of a self.

There are some recluses and Brahmins who declare and entertain such a view as this:

‘*Ekantasukhī attā hoti arogo parammaraṇā*’ – After death, self is of unmixed bliss and healthy’ I approach them and ask:

“Is it true you declare and hold on to such a view as this?”

They say,

“Yes”.

Then I ask them:

“Do you dwell knowing and seeing a world of unmixed bliss?”

They reply “N?”

I ask them:

“Have you for one night or for one day, for half a night or half a day experienced an all-blissful self?”

They say “No”.

I ask them,

“Do you have that knowledge to declare,

“This is the path, this is the practice for seeing with one’s own eyes an all-blissful world?”

They say “No”.

I ask them:

“ Have you heard the voice of deities reborn in an all-blissful world who go on saying:

“Friends, be well-established on the path, be uprightly established on the path for seeing with your own eyes a world all-blissful for we on our part, friends, with such a practice are reborn in an all blissful world?” They say,

“No”.

Then he asks Poṭṭhapāda*:*

“What do you think Poṭṭhapāda when that is the position, does not the assertion of those recluses and Brahmins turn out to be baseless?”

A peculiar word ‘*appāṭihīraka*’ is used in that context, which we have rendered by baseless:

It means an assertion that lacks proof or evidence to substantiate it. The Buddha himself gives two similes to illustrate the connotations of the word.

The first simile is about a beauty queen “Suppose a man goes about saying:

“I like and love the beauty queen of this province.”

Others ask him:

“Good man, do you know of what clan she is?”

He says,

“No”.

“Do you know her name?”

He says,

“No”.

“Do you know whether she is tall or short or black or grey or brown?”

He says “No”.

“Do you know in what village or town she is?”

He says:

“No”.

And then others ask him; “So you like and love a beauty queen whom you do not know or see?”

After giving this simile the Buddha asks:

“What do you think Poṭṭhapāda*?* In that case does not that man’s talk turn out to be baseless (*appāṭihīraka*)? Poṭṭhapāda says:

“Indeed that is so Venerable Sir.”

Comparing it to the undemonstrable assertion of those recluses and Brahmins, the Buddha gives another simile to convince Poṭṭhapāda of the absurdity of it.

“Supposing a man is building a staircase at the four cross-roads for climbing into a mansion. People ask him:

“Good man, that mansion for which you are building this staircase do you know in which direction it is – whether in the East or West or North or South? Whether it is tall or short or medium-sized? He says “No”.

Then they tell him:

“Well then, good man, you are building a staircase for a mansion you do not know or see.”

He says,

“Yes”.

Giving this simile the Buddha asks Poṭṭhapāda again:

“What do you think Poṭṭhapāda? In that case, doesn’t that man’s talk turn out to be baseless? “Indeed that is so, Venerable Sir” replies Poṭṭhapāda.

Having thus invalidated the soul theories of those recluses and Brahmins the Buddha now explains the concept of *Jhānas* in this dispensation with the help of a peculiar term ‘*attapaṭilābhā*’ (acquisition of self). Instead of the term ‘*attā*’ the Buddha brings in the concept of ‘*attapaṭilābhā*’. He says:

"*Tayo kho'me* Poṭṭhapāda *attapaṭilābhā oḷāriko attapaṭilābho manomayo attapaṭilābho arupo attapaṭilābho*."

Poṭṭhapāda, there are these three acquisitions of self, (namely), the acquisition of a gross self, acquisition of a mental self, acquisition of a Formless self. They are defined with the same words as in the earlier discussion on self but they are not presented as states of a self but as acquisitions (*paṭilābhā*). The gross acquisition of self is qualified with the words '*cātummahābhūtiko*' (made up of four great primaries) and '*kabaliṅkārāhārabhakkho*' (consuming food taken in mouthfuls). The mind-made (*manomaya*) acquisition of self is described with the words '*sabbaṅgapaccaṅgī ahīnindriyo*' (replete with all limbs major and minor, with senses intact). The Formless (*arūpa*) acquisition of self is described with the term '*saññāmayo*' (consisting of perception).

So these are the three acquisitions (*paṭilābhā*). Let us try to get at the nuances of this term '*paṭilābhā*' (lit. 'profit'). For acquiring something you have to follow some course of action. In this context, what is the course of action? The 'training' (*sikkhā*). It is to indicate that these states are the outcome of some training that the Buddha introduced this term on this occasion.

Where Poṭṭhapāda and other ascetics used the term '*attā*' (self) to explain these *Jhānic* states, the Buddha used the term *attapaṭilābhā*' because they are to be attained through some training. Now here is a revolutionary change in outlook. These three acquisitions of self (*attapaṭilābhā*) are given the same standard definitions. The first one is '*oḷāriko rūpī cātummahābhūtiko kabaliṅkārāhārabhakkho*' (gross, has form, is made up of the four great primaries, consuming food taken in mouthfuls). The second, is '*manomayo sabbaṅgapaccaṅgī ahīnindriyo* (mental, replete with all limbs major and minor, with senses intact). The third is '*arupī saññāmayo*' (formless and consisting of perceptions).

But the Buddha didn't stop with redefinition. He declares now:

"Poṭṭhapāda, for the abandoning of the acquisition of the gross self, I preach the Dhamma by practicing according to which your defiling mental states would be abandoned, purifying mental states would be developed and you would by yourself realize with your higher knowledge the perfection and fulfillment of wisdom here and now and abide in it."

You may now recall what I have told about '*saññāgga*' – the peak of perception. Even from the First *Jhāna* or from Formless (*arupa) Jhānas* one can attain *Nibbāna* provided one develops insight based on them. Then the Buddha tells

Poṭṭhapāda that he preaches the Dhamma for the abandonment of all three types of acquisitions of self (that is gross, mind made and formless) or *attapaṭilābhā*. Thereby one attains to the perfection of wisdom here and now.

After the Buddha had answered Poṭṭhapāda's questions to his satisfaction, Citta Hatthisāriputta comes out with his questions. In fact his questions go deeper into the subject of '*attapaṭilābhā*' introduced by the Buddha. He asks:

"Venerable Sir, at the time there is the gross acquisition of self, is the mental acquisition of self and formless acquisition of self, false (*moghā* – lit. empty) at that time? Is the gross acquisition of self alone real for him at that time?

Venerable Sir, at the time the mental acquisition of self is there, is the gross acquisition of self and the formless acquisition of self, false at the time? Is only the mental acquisition of self, real for him at that time?

Venerable Sir, at the time, the formless acquisition of self is there, is the gross acquisition of self and the mental acquisition of self, false at that time? Is only the formless acquisition of self, real for him at that time?"

The Buddha's answer brings out quite a deep aspect of the whole problem of self. He says:

"*Citta*, at the time the gross acquisition of self is there, it is not reckoned ('*saṅkhaṁ gacchati*' – lit. go into reckoning) as mental acquisition of self. It is not reckoned as formless acquisition of self. At that time, it is reckoned only as the gross acquisition of self."

He applies the same criterion to the other two acquisitions of self. At the time the mental acquisition of self is there, it is not reckoned in terms of the other two. Similarly when the formless acquisition of self is there, it is not reckoned as any of the other two, but only as formless acquisition of self.

Here the Buddha is trying to draw the attention of Citta to the problem of confusing the three periods of time – quite a deep point at that. To drive home the point, the Buddha poses the following questions to Citta.

Now Citta, if people ask you "Were you in the past – not that you were not? Will you be in the future – not that you will not be? Are you now – not that you aren't? What will you say in reply?"

Citta says:

"Venerable Sir, if they question me like that, I would answer:

I was in the past – not that I wasn't. I will be in the future – not that I will not be. I am now, not that I am not."

Then the Buddha asks:

"If they ask you Citta, that acquisition of self you had in the past, is that acquisition of self alone real and the future acquisition of self, false and the present acquisition of self also false? Whatever acquisition of self you will have in the future, is that alone real and the other two false? Whatever acquisition of self you have now that alone is real and the other two false?"

Then Citta says:

"Venerable Sir, if they ask me that, I would reply:

Whatever acquisition of self I had in the past, at that time that acquisition of self alone was real and the other two false. Whatever acquisition of self I will have in the future at that time that acquisition of self alone will be real and the other two false. Whatever acquisition of self I have now, only that acquisition of self is real and the other two false at that time."

Then the Buddha completes the analogy saying:

"Even so Citta at whatever time the gross acquisition of self is there, at that time, it is not reckoned as mental acquisition of self nor as formless acquisition of self. At that time, it is reckoned only as gross acquisition of self. So also in the case of the other two.

The illusion in the world which was the reason for the self view, is the idea that the past and the future exist even as the present. In short, the confusion of the three periods of time. It is this myth that the Buddha is trying to explode. He does it with the following wonderful, homely simile which is sure to help you understand this deep point.

"Just Citta, as from the cow comes milk, from milk curd, from curd butter, from butter ghee, and from ghee cream of ghee, at the time it is milk, it is not reckoned as curd, nor as butter, nor as ghee, nor as cream of ghee. At that time, it is reckoned only as milk. Similarly, when it is curd, it is reckoned as curd, not assuming that there is milk in it or that there is ghee which is yet to come is hidden in it."

I shall give you a little story, a sort of parable found in Western literature to help you understand this point. A miserly man had a goose that lays a golden egg everyday. He thought of getting today itself the eggs that she will be laying tomorrow and the days to follow. He split it open and was disappointed. It is a

similar fallacy to think that future exists or that past exists. These are only worldly usages. Simply because milk can become ghee in the future it is wrong to think that already there is ghee in it.

After giving this simile as an illustration of what he had told about the three acquisitions of self (*attapaṭilābhā*) the Buddha sums up the discussion with the following memorable statement:

"*Itīmā kho Citta lokasamaññā lokaniruttiyo lokavohārā lokapaññattiyo, yāhi Tathāgato voharati aparāmasaṁ*."

"For these, Citta, are worldly appellations, worldly expressions, worldly usages, worldly designations which the *Tathāgata* makes use of without tenacious grasping."

It is due to tenacious grasping of these that all the confusion has arisen. We ourselves agree to give names to those various stages of milk preparations and then we go on wondering whether milk is found in curd or butter in curd. Indian philosophy with its involvement in soul theories was caught up in this confusion. In the *Taittiriya Upanishad* there is a theory of five selves encased in concentric shells. (*pañcakoṣa*) such as the '*annamaya*' and '*prāṇamaya*' (made-of-food, made-of-breath). This confusion about the three periods of time gave rise to dogmatic views of self.

The momentous declaration of the Buddha quoted above shows that he regarded all those concepts as mere worldly appellations, worldly expressions, worldly designations, which he used but did not grasp tenaciously. It is by that tenacious grasping that self-created problems of cause and effect arise. Whether the cause preceded the effect or whether the effect is already embedded in the cause. It is noteworthy that in a standard work on linguistics written by two modern scholars, the milk simile of the Buddha is quoted expressing their surprise that 2,500 years ago the Buddha has revealed a truth which is enough to awaken modern semantic philosophers today."

After this powerful declaration by the Buddha, Poṭṭhapāda confessed faith in him with great fervour.

"It is marvelous Venerable Sir, it is marvelous Venerable Sir, even as one were to set upright what had been overturned or reveal what had remained hidden, or tell the way to one who has lost his way or hold up an oil-torch in the darkness, so that those with eyes may see. So has the Fortunate One, in many ways declared the Dhamma. Venerable Sir, here I go for refuge to the Fortunate One, to the Dhamma and the Order of monks. Let the Fortunate One accept me as a lay-

follower who has gone to him for refuge from today as long as life endures. Then Citta Hatthisāriputta, with a similar confession of faith went to his refuge and even begged for the going forth and higher ordination. He did go forth and was given higher ordination. Not long after his higher ordination he went into solitude and with diligent and ardent endeavor attained arahanthood.

So that is how the discourse ends. But in the remaining few minutes let me clarify whatever knotty points there could be in our explanation.

Regarding the three significant terms we brought up, there is an important discourse which mentions them in the *Saṁyutta Nikāya* – namely *Niruttipatha Sutta*. There the Buddha pointedly deals with the confusion caused by mixing up the three periods of time. It begins with these words:

"*Tayome bhikkhave niruttipathā adhivacanapathā paññattipathā*." – "Monks, there are these three pathways of linguistic usage of synonyms and of designations."

The Buddha says that these three should not be mixed up and cites them separately. For instance, as regards the aggregate of form he says:

"Whatever form, monks that is past ceased, transformed 'it was' is the reckoning ('*saṅkhā*') appellation or designation. It is not reckoned as 'it is', or it will be. In the same way the reckoning used for any form that is future, the reckoning is 'it will be', and not 'it was' or 'it is'. Likewise the reckoning for any form that is present is 'it is' and not the other two. The Buddha says the same thing about each of the other four aggregates. He declares that whatever wise recluses and Brahmins there were, there will be and there are, have not, will not and do not mix up these three periods of time. Whatever is past is gone. It is a delusion to think that it exists. Whatever is future has not come yet. It may exist only when it comes.

It is in view of that tendency in mixing up, that the Buddha introduces the term '*attapaṭilābhā*' – 'acquisition of self'. A special phrase is used in that connection – '*tasmiṁ samaye*' (at that time). That is highly significant as a term for specification. For instance, when there is the formless acquisition of self the other two acquisitions of self, do not come in.

There too the Buddha warns against mixing up the three periods of time. It is by such a 'mixing up' that the Personality-view ('*sakkāyadiṭṭhi*' – lit. 'existing body view') has arisen. However language is not to be blamed for it. It is the fault of man's defilements. The 'father' and the 'mother' are to be blamed. Who is the father? Ignorance. Who is the mother? Craving. The hindrance of ignorance with

its notion of the compact, covers up the perception of the heap in the world and presents it as a 'thing'. Craving with its glue pastes the heap together. Thereby the worldling is made to think that the body exists so that it clings to '*sakkāyadiṭṭhi*' ignoring the extremely rapid process of change going on within the body. So also in the case of other things. It is here that the self-view lies hidden. The purpose of this *Poṭṭhapāda Sutta,* Therefore, is to expose this fallacy. It is a wonderful discourse. Poṭṭhapāda as well as Citta Hatthisāriputta*,* are asking the same question which we ourselves would have asked had we not known the Dhamma. It was the same problem that blocked the progress of the yogins. They reached some high level of spiritual development, but they mystified it. They never thought that it is brought about by causes and conditions as shown in this discourse. Instead they attributed it to some non-descript soul or self or else they thought that some agent is manipulating perception. Why were they unable to extricate themselves from perception? Because they had not recognized '*Saṅkhārā*' or preparations. The most distinctive feature of the Dhamma proclaimed by the Buddha is the recognition of the part played by *Saṅkhārā* – a term that is integral to the Law of Dependent Arising. Even in making that extraordinary decision, the monk was directing his attention to *saṅkhāras*.

"*yannūnāham na ceva ceteyyam nacābhi-sankhareyyam*" – "What if I were not to intend and specially prepare?"

He was keen on getting free from intentions and preparations. He has been clinging on to intentions and preparations all this time. A simile given in the *Visuddhimagga* comes in useful here. Suppose there is a broad stream of water and no bridge to crossover. One way to get across is to hang on to a creeper hanging down from a tree on this side and go on swinging until enough momentum is gathered just to be well above the other bank. As soon as you can see the other bank below you when you look down, you have to let-go of the hold on the creeper-daring the drop. Otherwise the creeper would swing you back. That is why the Buddha compared this Dhamma to the raft. This simile smacks of the same technique.

Meditation for serenity (*samatha*) and insight (*vipassanā*) is only a creeper to hang on like that. After you have built up sufficient momentum by swinging holding on to it, you must letgo. But you are scared of the THUD. That is why until the Buddha showed the way to do it, yogins went on 'see-sawing' with the dilemma "to-be or not-to-be" in the ethereal plane of neither perception nor non-perception because of their soul-prejudice. They were scared of losing the 'I'. The Buddha showed them that there is no 'I' to suffer the 'thud' through this novel concept of '*sikkhā*' or training. To hark back to the wonderful refrain:

'*Sikkhā ekā saññā uppajjanti, sikkhā ekā saññā nirujjhanti*'

"Through training some perceptions arise, through

training some perceptions cease!"

It is the Law of Dependent Arising that blasts the view of self or soul. From beginning to end this discourse vibrates through and through with the Law of Dependent Arising. This is a marvelous discourse. So you had better bear in mind every one of the similes you have come across. Remember the breaking of '*sakkāyadiṭṭhi*' or personality view is not something that happens with an audible sound. By assiduously developing insight on the Five Aggregates of grasping somehow or other you realize the vanity of grasping and let-go. Actually it is not that you let-go with an effort. It is an effortless letting –go in spite of yourself – so to say. What you touch by that letting-go is 'contact with cessation' ('*nirodhaṁ phusati*'). One awakens from the Cessation of Perceptions and Feelings into *Nibbāna* – to Arahanthood. Why? Because on arising from the cessation of Perceptions and Feelings one is aware of the 'signless' ('*animitta*') 'unestablished' ('*appaṇihita*') and void ('*suññata*'). That is the awakening from the THUD on the other bank. If one has attained the Cessation of Perceptions and Feelings, one invariably awakens from it to *Nibbāna*. Why so? Because wisdom is the End. With it one wins to the conviction; 'Exhausted is birth, lived is the Holy Life, done is what had to be done!'("*khīṇā jāti, vusitam brahmacariyaṁ kataṁ karaṇīyaṁ*").

Well then, this is enough for you all. If life endures I might be able to expatiate in sermons to come. On this memorable *Esala Poya* day within this hour we have said something on the Law of Dependent Arising on which the Four Noble Truths are founded. If you can imbibe anything useful for the development of your serenity and insight meditations from this sermon, please do so and put forth your best efforts to win deliverance from this dreadful samsāric suffering and by going through the Fruits of the Paths to Stream-winning, Once-Returning and Non-returning realize the deathless *Nibbāna*!

Whatever beings there be, from the lowest hell to the highest Brahma world wishing to rejoice in this sermon, may they rejoice in our sermon! May the merits accrued thereby conduce to their realization of the highest aim – the Deathless *Nibbāna*!

Paticca Samuppada Sermon 12

The Law of Dependent Arising

(Pahan Kanuwa Sermon – No. 194)

'*Namo tassa bhagavato arahato sammāsambuddhassa*' 'Homage be! To the Fortunate One – the Worthy, Fully Enlightened!'

Cirassaṁ vata passāmi – brāhmaṇaṁ parinibbutaṁ

appatiṭṭhaṁ anāyūhaṁ – tiṇṇaṁ loke visattikaṁ

– Oghataraṇa Sutta, Saṁyutta Nikāya.

It's long since I see a Brahmin who has attained *Nibbāna*

Crossing over the sticky craving without stopping and without struggling.

Dear Listeners,

The Buddha has on many occasions compared the crossing over of *saṁsāra* to a crossing over of the four floods. He taught the world the Middle Path as the technique of overcoming the four floods, namely lust (*kāma*), becoming (*bhava*), views (*diṭṭhi*), and ignorance (*avijjā*). We see the emphasis given to *Paṭicca Samuppāda*, the Law of Dependent Arising even in this Middle Path. Therefore, we have selected a verse on crossing the floods as the topic for this twelfth discourse on *Paṭicca Samuppāda*. This verse is found in the *Oghataraṇa Sutta*, the first sutta in the *Saṁyutta Nikāya*. This is how it goes.

When the Buddha was residing at the Jetavana Monastery in Sāvatthi, a certain deity called on the Buddha one night and respectfully stood on a side. He had a question to ask.

"*Kathaṁ nu tvaṁ mārisa oghaṁ atari*?" "How, friend did you cross over the flood?"

The Buddha replied,

"*Appatiṭṭhaṁ khvāhaṁ āvuso anāyuhaṁ oghaṁ atariṁ*"

"Friend, without stopping, without struggling I crossed the flood."

Unable to grasp the implication of this statement the deity asked for further clarification. 'How exactly did you, friend, cross the four floods?"

Then the Buddha explained “Friend, whenever I stopped, I sank. Whenever I struggled, I got swept away. Therefore, I crossed over without stopping and without struggling.”

The deity uttered this verse in praise of the Buddha, venerated him and vanished.

Now let us take up this verse for discussion.

‘Cirassaṁ vata passāmi - brāhmaṇaṁ parinibbutaṁ’

It’s long since I see a Brahmin who has attained Extinction, *Nibbāna*

appatiṭṭhaṁ anāyūhaṁ - tiṇṇaṁ loke visattikaṁ

It’s long indeed since I see a Brahmin who has attained *Nibbāna* by crossing over the sticky craving called ‘*visattikā*’ without stopping and without struggling.

The earlier reference to a forceful flood will not be a problem to you because it is common knowledge that if we stop having gone a little way, we get drowned. If we struggle we would get swept away. Only a systematic middling effort will take us across. Similarly the Buddha has offered a Middle Path in this Dhamma, for crossing over the four floods, lust (*kāma*), becoming (*bhava*), views (*diṭṭhi*) and ignorance (*avijjā*).

Let us take them one by one for discussion. The flood of lust comes first. Ascetics and Brahmins contemporary of the Buddha had presented two extreme types of solutions for crossing the floods. As you have often heard about, they are *kāmasukhallikānuyoga* and *attakilamathānuyoga* (indulgence in sense pleasure and self mortification). Ascetics such as Pakudha Kaccāyana, Makkhalī Gosāla and Ajita Kesakambalī, who belonged to the group of six heretics ignored the significance of wholesome and unwholesome actions and their resultant effects. They were critical of this theory. They disregarded the idea of a “this world and a next world”.

They presented the theories of *ucchedavāda* (annihilation) *nāstikavāda* (nihilism) or *ahetu appaccayavāda* (causeless, conditionless, fortuity). This resulted in more and more people inclining towards *kāmasukhallikānuyoga* (indulgence in sense pleasures). If there is no next world, and no results in good and bad actions, the only alternative is self-indulgence. Although this idea is not mentioned in the suttas, the Chārvākins of later origin taught this view which is embodied in a Sanskrit verse familiar to many.

Yāvat jīvet sukhaṁ jīvet

ṛṇaṁ kṛtvāpi ghṛtaṁ pivet

bhasmī bhūtasya dehasya

punarāgamanaṁ kutah

Even today we hear young people expressing this idea "Let us enjoy ourselves as long as we live."

"*ṛṇaṁ kṛtvāpi ghṛtaṁ pivet*"

"Drink ghee even if you run into debt."

Ghee was recognized as an expensive drink those days.

bhasmī bhūtasya dehasya punarāgamanaṁ kutah

How could a charred dead body return?

That was one type of philosophy.

The other aspect was self-mortification (*attakilamathānuyoga*) taught by Nigaṇṭha Nāthaputta, as you may have heard about. Rejecting both clothes and food, this group followed extremely strict vows. What was their philosophy? *Pubbekata hetu*. There are past actions, the results of which have to be paid off. New kammas should not be accumulated. They followed a code of torturous vows for that purpose known as *attakilamathānuyoga*.

These were the two extremes. In fact as you may have heard, the Buddha himself once followed self-mortification, until realization dawned on him. After renouncing the luxurious life of royalty, the Buddha entered upon the other of extreme socially approved life of self torture. The *Mahāsaccaka Sutta* records how he realized after six years of self torture, its uselessness in achieving his goal. With this conviction he searched for a more effective path. Gradually it dawned on him how he entered the first *jhāna* under the cool shade of a rose apple tree at a ploughing ceremony of his father. Recalling this incident, he questioned himself

"Why should I fear comforts (*sukha*) as long as they are free of sense pleasures and evil mental states?"

"*Kiṁ nu kho ahaṁ tassa sukhassa bhāyāmi yaṁtaṁ sukhaṁ aññatreva kāmehi aññatra akusalehi dhammehi*?"

Finally, motivated by this reasoning, he entered upon the Middle Path. Here I would like to mention briefly that those who accepted self-indulgence, by their 'stopping' (in the flood) actually sank into hell. Those who took up self-

mortification, struggled through self torture. It did not lead them to enlightenment either.

The Buddha taught the *Ariya Aṭṭhaṅgika Magga*, the Noble Eightfold Path which steers clear of those two extremes, and is known to you as the Middle Path. One cannot at a glance identify the Law of Dependent Arising, *Paṭicca Samuppāda* concealed within the Eightfold Path. But the *Mahā Cattārīsaka Sutta* in the *Majjhima Nikāya* offers the following explicit clarification of *Paṭicca Samuppāda* within the Eightfold Path.

Sammā diṭṭhissa sammā saṁkappo pahoti

Sammā saṁkappassa sammā vācā pahoti

Sammā vācassa sammā kammanto pahoti

Sammā kammantassa sammā ājīvo pahoti

Sammā ājīvassa sammā vāyāmo pahoti

Sammā vāyāmassa sammā sati pahoti

Sammā satissa sammā samādhi pahoti

Sammā samādhissa sammā ñāṇaṁ pahoti

Sammā ñāṇassa sammā vimutti pahoti

This shows how beautifully each factor is closely linked with the other. When I explain one, you can easily understand the rest.

"*Sammā diṭṭhissa sammā saṁkappo pahoti*"

Right thought dawns on him who has the right view. Right thought gives rise to right words. Right words give rise to right action. In this way the Middle Path is amazingly linked with each other. That itself is the Middle Path.

A superficial glance at the Middle Path does not reveal the Law of Dependent Arising within. One may argue that there is not even a reference to *Paṭicca Samuppāda* in the *Dhammacakka-ppavattana Sutta* which we all regard as of prime importance. If that is so, how did Venerable Aññā Koṇdañña describe his attainment of *Sotāpanna* (Stream Entrant) as the realization of the vision that 'Whatever is of the nature of arising, all that has the nature of ceasing' (*Yaṁ kiñci samudayadhammaṁ sabbaṁ taṁ nirodhadhammaṁ*)? It follows the norm found in the *Paṭicca Samuppāda*. We have often explained to you that whatever

has the nature of arising, all that is of the nature of ceasing. It is clearly evident in the Eightfold Path which begins with the fourfold truth. It closely follows the pattern of the *Paṭicca Samuppāda*.

Now that we have touched on the subject, let us see how the Buddha highlights other aspects of the Middle Path. The Jains by giving up clothes and food, followed a path of extreme self-mortification. In contrast to it, the Buddha allowed the monks the use of the four requisites (*paccaya*). Even the word *paccaya* has the idea of 'dependent on'. The monks depended on the four requisites in order to fulfill their objectives. The ordinary laymen, the worldly people use them for sheer enjoyment. But you may have heard that the monks always reflect on the purpose behind the use of the requisites when using each of them.

Taking food as an example, monks reflect on the purpose of eating

"*Neva davāya na madāya, na maṇḍanāya, na vibhūsanāya*".

This food is not for enjoyment, nor for pride, nor for adornment, nor for beautification.

"*Yāvadeva imassa kāyassa ṭhitiyā yāpanāya vihiṅsūparatiyā brahmacariyānuggahāya.*"

"Only for the purpose of maintaining this body, for its sustenance, to prevent possible harm through hunger, as a support for holy life".

It is interesting to note here that the requisites rejected by the Jains, were converted into objects of meditation by the Buddha. You may have heard that the monks contemplate on the four elements (*dhātu*) found in their food as '*dhātu manasikāra'* (attention on elements).

Let me explain the general idea behind it. This food is made up of the four elements. The pure food becomes impure as it enters this repulsive body. This becomes a very effective subject for meditation. You can see what an amazingly practical Middle Path the Buddha has taught. On the one hand, one avoids the extreme of self-indulgence, and does away with the idea of eating for embellishment. On the other hand, the process of eating is converted into a subject for meditation, instead of totally condemning food.

Another important factor attracts our attention. The ideal qualities of a monk and a meditative layman are simplicity (*appicchatā*) and contentment (*santuṭṭhi*). Yet another quality of a monk is *viriya* – effort, not to be wasted in

practicing vows of self torture, as in Jainism, but to strive to cultivate the factors in the Middle Path in a balanced way called '*viriya samatā*'.

Now it is clear that the Buddha highlights Dependent Arising or *Paṭicca Samuppāda* in his Middle Path, and also deviates sharply from the two extremes. That is my brief explanation of the *kāmogha*, 'the flood of lust'.

The next is *bhavogha*, 'the flood of becoming'. In the second *Nipāta* of the *Itivuttaka*, there is a *sutta* that discusses *bhavogha* in detail.

"*Dvīhi bhikkhave diṭṭhigatehi pariyuṭṭhitā devamanussā olīyanti eke atidhāvanti eke."*

Obsessed by two views, monks, are gods and human beings. Some of them lag behind, some overreach. Both these tendencies are described as "*bhavārāmā bhikkhave devamanussā bhavaratā bhava samuditā."*

These gods and men take delight in becoming, are attached to becoming, take pride in becoming. When the Dhamma is being preached for the cessation of becoming, they are not pleased with it. They fall back. They are displeased. The Buddha's teaching based on the Middle Path, for the cessation of becoming does not appeal to the eternalists who have grasped the soul theory. Generally those who like becoming, dislike the cessation of becoming. They get drowned in the flood of becoming. They sink in the current of becoming. Their grip on the 'soul' prevents them from striving for an escape.

There is another group called the annihilationists, developing a revulsion towards becoming. ("*Bhaven'eva kho pana eke aṭṭiyamānā harāyamānā"*). They treat this body as the soul and reject the idea of a life beyond death. That is an overreaching. This is called '*vibhava*'. They go to the other extreme by denying re-becoming. They are those who overreach.

Here I would like to repeat a simile I had given earlier, though it is not found in the text. Some run forward hoping to step on their own shadow like little children who do it for fun. Of course they never succeed in doing so. Some others are scared of the shadow and try to run away from it, but on turning back, see the shadow right behind them. Now the two extremes are like that. The Buddha has proclaimed his Middle Path avoiding these two extremes. What did the Buddha do? Having referred to those two extremes with the words '*olīyanti eke'* (some lag behind) and '*atidhāvanti eke'* (some overreach), as the third alternative the

Buddha declared '*cakkhumanto va passanti*' (only they do see who have eyes to see). This is how he really presents it.

"*Dvīhi bhikkhave diṭṭhigatehi pariyuṭṭhitā devamanussā olīyanti eke atidhāvanti eke cakkhumanto va passanti.*"

The third factor '*cakkhumanto va passanti*' means 'only those with eyes, see'. What does he mean by it? The two earlier groups of extremists were gripping on '*bhava*' (becoming). Discarding them, the Buddha introduced a new word '*bhūta*'.

Bhūta means, what has arisen. You might recollect this word in connection with the phrase '*yathābhūta ñāṇadassana*' 'knowledge and vision of things as they are'. Therefore, the Dhamma does not go to the extreme of existence as eternalists do. Nor does it go to the extreme of destruction of existence as nihilists. Instead, seeing what is arisen as 'arisen' is called '*yathābhūta dassana*' (vision of things as they have arisen). If the simile of the shadows is brought in here, it is like understanding the shadow as a shadow. One who understands shadow as shadow will not run after it nor will he run away from it in fear.

The shadow is a simile for *nāmarūpa* (name-and-form) as we have mentioned earlier.

You have already heard me use the simile of the dog on the bridge and the simile of Narcissus, in order to explain the Buddha's teaching on *ogha* 'floods' and *bhava* 'becoming'. He has also explained how *viññāna* or consciousness regarding which people had many rigid theories, is interdependent with *nāmarūpa*. We have referred to this shadow of *nāmarūpa* many a time. The Buddha avoided that extreme since he saw the shadow as the shadow. There too, we find a Middle Path.

Let us take up *diṭṭhogha* next. I am sorry we have to be very brief since there are four *oghas* to deal with. As I have mentioned earlier, it has been discussed in the *Kaccānagotta Sutta*. Let me mention in brief its background because of its relevance to this question. Venerable Kaccānagotta once approached the Buddha and asked "To what extent does *sammādiṭṭhi* (right view) become *sammādiṭṭhi*?"

'Right view' had been given various suitable interpretations on various occasions, particularly by the Buddha and Venerable Sāriputta. But they are not contradictory to one another.

As the occasion demanded, here the Buddha explained *sammādiṭṭhi* as follows.

"*Dvayanissito khvāyaṁ kaccāyana loko yebhuyyena atthitañceva natthitaṁ ca*"

'Kaccāyana, the worldlings for the most part rest on two extremes.' *Dvayanissita* means holding on to a dyad. What are they? *Atthitā* 'Is' (everything exists) and

natthitā 'Is not' (nothing exists). The world either says everything is or nothing is. Then the Buddha explains the Middle Path in his dhamma.

"*Lokasamudayaṁ kho kaccāyana yathābhūtaṁ sammappaññāya passato yā loke natthitā, sā na hoti*".

When one sees with wisdom, the nature of constant arising in the world, the view of non-existence does not occur. Then he explains the other aspect.

"*Lokanirodhaṁ kho kaccāyana yathābūtaṁ sammappaññāya passato yā loke atthitā sā na hoti*".

When one sees as it is with wisdom, the nature of ceasing in the world, the view of existence (*atthitā*) does not occur. Just think about it. It is amazing. The world is constantly arising and ceasing. Some are caught up in the extreme view that the world really is or the world does not exist. What the Buddha says is that when one sees as it is with wisdom that the world is constantly arising, the extreme view that "The world is not" loses its hold on him. On the other hand when one sees as it is with wisdom, that the world is constantly ceasing, the extreme view that "The world is" fades away. When one sees with wisdom the nature of arising of the world, the extreme of non-existence disappears. When one observes the nature of ceasing in the world, the extreme view of existence of the world disappears.

Now the Budhha explains what lay between the two extremes.

"*Ete te ubho ante anupagamma*".

Without approaching either of these extremes,

"*majjhena tathāgato dhammaṁ deset?"*

The *Tathāgata* takes a Middle Path in preaching the dhamma.

This Middle Path is the teaching on the Law of Dependent Arising that we have discussed so far.

Then he explains the Middle Path beginning with "*Avijjā paccayā saṁkhārā*" as you may have heard. Dependent on ignorance are preparations etc. and finally he explains how the five aggregates of grasping which is suffering, arises. He shows how with the cessation of ignorance, all that suffering ceases. So it is a philosophy of a Middle Way. Arising and ceasing. How the entire mass of suffering arises and then how it ceases.

The Buddha in this manner rejects both extremes. When both views of existence and non-existence are given up, what remains there, is a question of suffering.

The notion of the soul is shattered then and there. Instead of a soul what actually exists is a problem of suffering, and its cessation. That is the Middle Path implied there. That means there is only the arising and ceasing or *samudaya* and *vaya*, free from the extreme views of existence and non-existence. As we have earlier mentioned, here too one might wonder why these facts are not found in the *Dhammacakkappavattana Sutta*. But we know that in the Noble Eightfold Path, what is shown as the right view is suffering, its arising, its cessation and the path leading towards it. Within these four truths, is found a right view, which avoids the extremes of absolute existence and absolute non-existence. Although many cannot comprehend it, right view begins right from the Middle Path shown by the Buddha. In fact we can treat the *Kaccānagotta Sutta* as a concise commentary on the *Dhammacakkappavattana Sutta*.

I would like you to think deeply on this point. A superficial glance at the *Dhammacakkappavattana Sutta* might make one think that the Law of Dependent Arising is missing there. But what we wish to point out is that *sammādiṭṭhi* embodies the Middle Path of the *Paṭicca Samuppāda*. It should be clear that there is no absolute existence or absolute non-existence. Instead, there is an arising and a ceasing dependent on causes and conditions. If at all, what arises is an entire mass of suffering, and what ceases is an entire mass of suffering. Towards the end of the *Kaccānagotta Sutta*, the Buddha further explains that those who hold and cling to the aforementioned extreme views, thereby conceive an idea of a soul. The eternalists believe in an eternally present soul while the nihilists imagine that the body is the soul. The reason for this is their taking up a rigid stand point, their firm grip on a view.

The Buddha on the other hand proclaims right vision showing that where there is no grasping of a view, what arises is only suffering and what ceases is only suffering,

"*dukkhaṁ eva uppajjamānaṁ uppajjati, dukkhaṁ nirujjhamānaṁ nirujjhati*".

That is why one who has this vision entertains no doubt or uncertainty regarding the past or the future. If at all, what had been there in the past was only these five aggregates of grasping. So will it be in the future. He realizes that there is nothing worthwhile here, but only suffering. With regard to that suffering what the Four Noble Truths imply is that very Middle Path.

Generally when we speak of the Middle Path, we are not aware that *Paṭicca Samuppāda* is implicit in it. It is to pinpoint that fact, that I say all this. In fact the *Kaccānagotta Sutta* serves as a concise commentary to the Right View in the Noble Eightfold Path.

So we have pinpointed that the Buddha offered a Middle Path to cross over the flood of sensuality (*kāmogha*) and he offered a Middle Path to cross over the flood of becoming (*bhavogha*). Moreover he offered a Middle Path to cross over the flood of views (*diṭṭhi ogha*). Rejecting both extreme views of existence and non-existence, he brought out the fact of suffering in the guise of arising and ceasing.

"*dukkhaṁ eva uppajjamānaṁ uppajjati, dukkhaṁ nirujjhamānaṁ nirujjhati*"

'What arises is only suffering, what ceases is only suffering'. There too Dependent Arising is highlighted.

Now we come to the *avijjogha*, the flood of ignorance. This might sound unusual. Ignorance is here treated as a flood. This is the most difficult of the four to comprehend. The *Sammādiṭṭhi Sutta* expounded by Venerable Sāriputta provides an explanation as to why the Buddha called it a flood. In fact we come across several definitions of the term *sammādiṭṭhi*, at different levels. They are not contradictory to one another. They all are correct from different perspectives.

Here is one of them,

"Monks, if a noble disciple understands ignorance (*avijjā*) its arising, its ceasing and the path leading to its cessation, even to that extent he is one with Right View, *sammādiṭṭhi*.

"*Avijjaṁ ca pajānāti, avijjā samudayaṁ ca pajānāti, avijjā nirodhaṁ ca pajānāti, avijjā nirodhagāminī paṭipadaṁ ca pajānāt?"*

A knowledge of these four is sufficient for *sammādiṭṭhi*. What is called ignorance (*avijjā*) in that context? It is already analyzed as "*Dukkhe aññāṇaṁ, dukkhasammudaye aññāṇaṁ, dukkhanirodhe aññāṇaṁ, dukkhanirodhagāminiyā paṭipadāya aññāṇa?"*

Ignorance of suffering, ignorance of its arising, ignorance of its cessation and the ignorance of the path leading to its cessation. That is ignorance.

Then what is the arising of ignorance? How does ignorance come about? That is the crux of the problem. A surprise awaits us here.

"*Āsava samudayā avijjā samudayo*".

It is with the arising of influxes that ignorance arises. This causes confusion in those who analyze *Paṭicca Samuppāda* because what precedes is ignorance. They

presume that ignorance has no root cause but is simply present and other factors arise from it. Here is the solution to the problem. On behalf of the Buddha,

Venerable Sāriputta explains "*Āsava samudayā avijjā samudayo, āsava nirodhā avijjā nirodho*".

With the arising of influxes ignorance arises. With the cessation of influxes ignorance ceases.

The '*avijjā nirodhagāminī patipadā*' or the path that leads to the cessation of ignorance is none other than the Noble Eightfold Path.

From here onwards, I have something special to tell you.

Perhaps you have already heard or even read the *Sabbāsava Sutta,* which appears as the second discourse in the *Majjhima Nikāya*. It explains how one could restrain all the influxes. That is why this *Sutta* enjoys so much recognition. Herein it gives influxes as the cause of the 'arising' of ignorance.

This particular term *āsava* is not easy to explain. It has been given different interpretations. We often resort to examples and similes to facilitate understanding. Let us take the term *ogha* (flood) to denote a body of flowing water. When speaking about a body of flowing water, we are not bothered about it. We are unharmed because it is just flowing downwards. Suppose we get down into this rapidly flowing body of water with the idea of crossing it. How would we feel about it then? Then, we feel it as flowing forcefully towards us. That is the obstacle we have. So far, we had seen it flowing away. Once we get into it to cross over we see it as **flowing towards us**. That is the basic idea of *āsava* or influxes.

The *Sabbāsava Sutta* speaks of seven ways in which influxes flow in. This is an extremely profound discourse. But let me condense it for our purpose. The Buddha begins his explanation as follows:

"*Sabbāsava saṁvara pariyāyaṁ vo bhikkhave dhammaṁ desessāmi*"

'Monks, I shall teach you a way to restrain all influxes.'

'*Saṁvaro*' means restraint. You may be familiar with the term '*indriyasaṁvara*' 'sense-restraint'. Then the Buddha says:

"*Jānato ahaṁ bhikkhave passato āsavānaṁ khayaṁ vadāmi, no ajānato no apassato*"

‘I declare that the extinction of influxes should be done knowing and seeing – that is with awareness and wisdom’. The Buddha himself asks and answers the question Knowing what? Seeing what? What are the two helpful factors for the restraint of influxes?

We have often mentioned the importance of understanding the *ayoniso manasikāra* and *yoniso manasikāra*. These are the two factors that help one to restrain the influxes. The Buddha’s advice is to understand *yoniso manasikāra* and *ayoniso manasikāra* correctly with their specific characteristics. To put it in simple language, *ayoniso manasikāra* means unsuitable, wrong, disorderly, contemplation with a wrong approach. *Yoniso manasikāra* means to drive at the origin or the cause of a thing and understand it correctly.

Incorrect contemplation as well as correct contemplation should be clearly understood for the purpose of taming the influxes. Earlier I mentioned that seven types of *āsavas* are discussed in this *sutta*. Let me introduce them to you first.

“*Atthi bhikkhave āsavā dassanā pahātabbā*”

‘Monks, there are some influxes that should be abandoned through vision (*dassanā*). That is the first group. Another group has to be abandoned through restraint (*saṁvarā*). The third group has to be abandoned through utilizing (*paṭisevanā)*. Some others are removed through endurance (*adhivāsanā*). The fifth group is expelled through warding off or avoiding (*parivajjanā*). The sixth group has to be got rid of through *vinodanā*, dispelling. There seems to be a closeness between the fifth and the sixth. *Parivajjanā* and *vinodanā* appear to have some closeness in meaning. Let us understand *parivajjanā* as avoiding, shunning or keeping away. *Vinodanā* is eliminating through dispelling. It will be clear when you listen to my explanation. The seventh method is eliminating by developing – *bhāvanā*. *Dassanā pahātabbā, saṁvarā pahātabbā, paṭisevanā pahātabbā, adhivāsanā pahātabbā, parivajjanā pahātabbā, vinodanā pahātabbā* and lastly, *bhāvanā pahātabbā*. This is a fascinating *Sutta* with subtle meaning. Some have even confounded the facts in it.

Now, let me explain them as time permits. First let us discuss “*dassanā pahātabbā*”.

The Buddha speaks of influxes that should be eliminated through vision. But there are certain people in the world who resort to wrong ways of attention, for instance recluses and Brahmins of the past. What is this unsuitable method of attention? Certain people presume that a person called ‘I’ really exists. With that presumption they go on asking themselves in terms of the three periods of time. Regarding the past they have fivefold doubts.

“Was I in the past? Was I not in the past? Who was I in the past? How was I in the past? Having been what, what did I become in the past?”

Regarding the future too they go on attending on the fivefold questions. Will I be in the future? Will I not be in the future? What will I be in the future? How will I be in the future? Having been what, what will I be in the future? Regarding the present they would think, Am I now? Am I not now? Who am I? How am I? Where has this being come from and where will it go? Taking the proposition I as the subject, as a permanent individual and indulging in irrelevant contemplation, they finally end up in the extreme ‘I have a soul’ or in the other extreme ‘I do not have a soul’. They are both extremes. That is the result of unwarranted contemplation, placing ‘I’ on a pedestal. It ends up in *ayoniso manasikāra*. People are engulfed in doubt very often regarding the past ‘Was I? Wasn’t I?’ The Buddha explains that the noble disciples who have the right vision, are not obsessed by such doubts since they think in terms of suffering, its arising, its cessation and the path leading to cessation.

When the mind is fashioned according to the four noble truths, such doubts do not arise. If at all, there would have been only the five aggregates of grasping (*pañca upādānakkhandā*) in the past, and the future will hold out only suffering. Therefore, there exists only suffering, its arising, its cessation and the path leading to cessation. The Buddha ascertains that if the mind is cultivated (developed) in accordance with the four truths the inevitable result would be the arising of the *Sotāpanna Maggañāṇa* (the wisdom of the Stream Entrant) wherein the first three fetters- *sakkāyadiṭṭhi, vicikicchā* and *sīlabbataparāmāsa* (view of self, doubt and clinging to rites and rituals) are expelled. We can see that *dassanā pahātabbā* refers to the controlling of the first three *saṁyojanas*. If the mind is cultivated in accordance with the four truths, one can eliminate them. That is the explanation to “*dassanā pahātabbā*”

Let us now discuss “*saṁvarā pahātabbā*” elimination through restraint. This is closely associated with *indriya saṁvara*, restraint of the senses. Here, the Buddha uses the term ‘*paṭisaṁkhā yoniso*’ one of his stunning stock of meaningful words. *paṭisaṁkhā* means scrutinizing with wisdom. After the noble disciples identify the difference between *yoniso manasikāra* and *ayoniso manasikāra*, they conduct themselves carefully as befits the occasion. The Buddha in trying to explain the rewards of practicing them and evils of neglecting them, uses another phrase, *āsavā vighātapariḷāhā*, which means the influxes that cause exhaustion and burning.

Giving an example the Buddha explains thus. If the eye is not guarded well, various lustful influxes are likely to sweep in. They could arouse the lust dormant

within. They could bring about *vighāta pariḷāha,* exhaustion and burning within. One should scrutinize oneself with wisdom (*paṭisankhā yoniso*), and restrain one's eye. Since our subject is restraint of the senses, this procedure applies to the other senses as well, the ear, the nose, the tongue, the body and the mind. Why does the Buddha emphasize restraint? If restraint is lacking those tiresome oppressive influxes come flooding in. That is all about *saṁvarā pahātabbā*.

Next comes *paṭisevanā pahātabbā*, elimination through utilizing. The Buddha refers to the use of the four requisites here. We mentioned earlier that the *Niganṭhas* discarded food and clothes, claiming they could thereby become free of craving. But the Buddha shows that the use of the four requisites – robes, alms food, shelter and medicine is essential for maintenance of life. All four are absolutely essential in order to avoid the discomfort and hardship that would otherwise crop up. The Buddha had experienced it when leading a rigorous life. One has to follow the Middle Path here. The reflection on food goes as "*paṭisaṁkhā yoniso piṇḍapātaṁ paṭisevāmi*".

I shall partake of my alms food reflecting with wisdom. Next comes the purpose "*Neva davāya na madāya na maṇḍanāya na vibhūsanāya*" – not for delectation or gratification or adornment or beautification but simply to sustain my life. Now we are told how to convert this into a subject for meditation. The use of essential requisites in life, without which one would have to experience discomfort and hardship has been permitted, because the body has to be maintained at least for the worthy cause of crossing the *saṁsāra*. But they must be used reflecting wisely as a source of meditation. With the use of the four requisites, lustful thoughts of lay life may flood in. They have to be minimized through simplicity (*appiccatā*) and contentment (*santuṭṭhi*). That is *paṭisevanā* or utilizing.

Adhivāsanā pahātabbā comes next, elimination through endurance. It simply means that, meditators have to endure cold, heat, physical ailments, insects or even severe pain. Why endure? Otherwise exhaustion and burning will add up to his already unbearable pain. Take an example. Unable to bear up the pain of a wound, we shout and yell. This shouting and yelling will only add up to the pain. Enduring without reacting to problems, brings us closer to *Nibbāna*. That is why the Buddha has taught us to endure "*adhivāsanā pahātabbā*. Even criticism has to be endured. It helps in controlling the influxes.

Parivajjanā pahātabbā follows next, elimination through avoiding. Although this is treated very lightly by some, the Buddha attaches great importance to avoiding risks, threats to our lives and blemish to our conduct. One must not have confidence when confronted with wild animals like elephants, horses, cattle and dogs, trusting in one's power of meditation. A monk must not frequent

questionable places or develop friendship with people with bad reputation. Reflecting wisely a monk must avoid any situation that would affect his spiritual life adversely.

The next restraint *vinodanā pahātabbā* is perhaps more familiar to you. It appears in the *Girimānanda Sutta* as *pahāna saññā*. Since *pahāna* appears in all these seven factors, the term *vinodanā* is used to express the idea of *pahāna*. It means removing. What must be removed? This is how it is clarified. A noble disciple or a monk,

"*uppannaṁ kāmavitakkaṁ nādhivāseti pajahati, vinodeti, byantikaroti anabhāvaṁ gameti*" does not tolerate any lustful thoughts that arise, but discards them, removes them, terminates them and eradicates them. Here *vinodanā pahātabbā* means the elimination of *kāma vitakka* (thoughts connected with lust), *vyāpāda vitakka* (thoughts connected with ill-will), *vihiṁsā vitakka* (thoughts connected with harm) and the resultant evil thoughts immediately. Those are the influxes that have to be controlled by removing.

The next and the last is *bhāvanā pahātabbā*. These are influxes that have to be eliminated through mind development. This refers to the development of the seven *bojjhañgas* or enlightenment factors. I am sure you are familiar with them. *Sati, dammavicaya, viriya, pīti, passaddhi, samādhi* and *upekkhā*. Each of these has to be developed in an environment of seclusion (*vivekanissitaṁ*), dispassion (*virāganissitaṁ*), cessation (*nirodhanissitaṁ*) and relinquishment (*vossaggapariṇāmiṁ*). It must not be forgotten that *paṭisaṁkhā yoniso*, wise reflection runs through each of these steps like a web.

The *Sabbāsava Sutta* introduces a process of eliminating the influxes (*āsavas*) in seven ways. They all lead to the same goal.

"*Āsava samudayā avijjā samudayo āsava nirodhā avijjā nirodho.*"

When influxes arise, ignorance arises. When influxes cease, ignorance ceases. This statement caused confusion. Many wondered from where ignorance came into the scene. Now it is clear that influxes give rise to ignorance. Due to *ayoniso manasikāra* incorrect contemplation, influxes arise and already arisen influxes increase. Due to *yoniso manasikāra*, correct contemplation, the already arisen influxes cease and no new ones arise. That shows how rewarding *yoniso manasikāra* is.

Finally we can arrive at the conclusion that the ultimate purpose of the *Sutta* is *avijjā pahāna*, elimination of ignorance. Influxes have the nature of flowing in, every moment. As mentioned earlier watching the water flowing forcefully, while

seated on the river bank, one cannot guarantee that one could swim across it in a straight line. No one could. One has to swim while allowing the water to flow. That is similar to the Middle Path, the *Paṭicca Samuppāda*. Each step is linked to the next.

Let me now summarize today's discourse as time permits. By way of summary let me quote a wonderful statement made by Venerable Ānanda in praise of the Buddha's technique of explaining the path.

"*Nissāya nissāya bhante, Bhagavatā oghassa nittharaṇā akkhātā*."

The method the Buddha has advocated in order to cross the great flood is *nissāya nissāya*. It means manipulating (improvising) one thing after the other, but not clinging to any. It is a technique of proceeding systematically forward, step by step.

You may have heard of crossing the floods by means of *saddhā*.

"*Saddhāya tarati oghaṁ.*"That kind of crossing has to be undertaken with balanced effort *viriya samatā*.

Once a youth called Kappa questioned the Buddha regarding the crossing of the flood.

Majjhe sarasmiṁ tiṭṭhataṁ, oghe jāte mahabbhaye

jarā maccu paretānaṁ, dīpaṁ pabrūhi mārisa

tvañ ca me dīpam akkhāhi, yathāyidaṁ nāparaṁ siyā

Friend, those marooned in the strong floods,

threatened by decay and death

are stranded in the lake

Show the island to them

since there is no other, please

show the island to me.

Responding to Kappa's request to show the refuge to those caught up in the strong floods, the Buddha gives an amazing reply.

"*Akiñcanaṁ anādānaṁ - etaṁ dīpaṁ anāparaṁ*

Nibbānamiti taṁ brūmi - jarā maccu parikkhayaṁ"

Akiñcanaṁ anādānaṁ means not possessing anything, not grasping anything. This is a reference to *Nibbāna* the highest goal. Nothing called mine and nothing to grip, getting washed away makes no difference.

"Possessing nothing, not desirous of grasping anything, where birth and death ceases is this island called *Nibbāna*." Kappa inquired what island is found beyond the floods. It does not correspond to any attractive island in our imagination - or rather the *Nibbāna* of *Siyadoris* (that is Simple Simon Nibbāna). The Buddha explains "Possesing nothing and grasping nothing. None other than that. I call it *Nibbāna*."

The Buddha finally winds up saying "Decay is decayed and death is dead"

"*Jarā maccu parikkhayaṁ*".

If there is nothing possessed how can there be decay? If there is nothing grasped, how can there be death? "*akiñcanaṁ anādānaṁ*".

Please try to reflect deeply on the implication of this fascinating account. *Nibbāna* is merely a name. That alone is the island.

If there is nothing to protect, there is nothing to be washed away. If there is nothing grasped, again there is nothing to be washed away. That is why the Buddha calls it *Nibbāna*. The final result of crossing over the flood is "*akiñcanaṁ anādānaṁ etaṁ dīpaṁ anāpara?"*

Possessing nothing, grasping nothing. This is the island and no other. We explained '*jarā maccu parikkhayaṁ'* as 'where decay has decayed and death is dead'.

Friends, we have attempted to condense this story of crossing over the floods into one hour. Treating *kāma* (lust), *bhava* (becoming), *diṭṭhi* (view) and *avijjā* (ignorance) as one forceful flood, our challenge is to cross over this *saṁsāra*. There lies before us a very delicate Middle Path to tread, possessing nothing, grasping nothing, leaning against nothing, but carefully working one's way one step to the next to reach the final goal.

The path "*paṭipadā*" with each step leaning towards the other, or each step supporting the other is condensed in the Dhamma into three words:

'*anupubba sikkhā, anupubba kiriyā* and *anupubba paṭipadā*'. It involves a gradual process of disciplining, a gradual process of training and a gradually

ascending path. The *Paṭicca Samuppāda* is well incorporated within this path, as it was mentioned earlier.

"*Sammā diṭṭhissa sammā saṁkappo pahoti*".

Right thinking dawns on him who holds right view and proceeds up the ladder gradually. The Buddha's clarification of the path in order to cross over the strong flood of *saṁsāra,* avoiding the two extremes is praiseworthy indeed. He has made clear what our destination is like after crossing. It is not another birth, or an extraordinary world as we imagine. That destination is where the desire to possess and the desire to grasp anything in the floods have been totally relinquished.

I have attempted to briefly explain a subject that deserves more elaborate treatment. I believe you are regular listeners of my discourses. I advise you to make use of *Paṭicca Samuppāda* and other related topics, in your attempts at meditation. Today you have made a good start with the practice of *sīla*. From now onwards follow the Dhamma path of *sīla, samādhi* and *paññā* and utilize this knowledge for the advancement of your *samatha* and *vipassanā* meditation. I hope this discourse will contribute to some extent, towards your attempt to attain the Paths and Fruits of *Sotāpanna, Sakadāgāmi, Anāgāmi* and *Arahant,* which is called freedom from *saṁsāra*, before the light of the *sāsana* is extinguished.

Whatever beings there be, from the lowest hell to the highest Brahma world, may they all rejoice in our sermon. May the merits accrued by that rejoicing conduce to the fulfillment of their higher aims

Paticca Samuppada Sermon 13

The Law of Dependent Arising

(Pahan Kanuwa Sermon – No. 195)

'*Namo tassa bhagavato arahato sammāsambuddhassa*' 'Homage be! To the Fortunate One – the Worthy, Fully Enlightened!'

Yaṁ kiñci dukkhaṁ sambhoti – sabbaṁ saṁkhāra paccayā

Saṁkhārānaṁ nirodhena – natthi dukkhassa sambhavo

Etamādīnavaṁ ñatvā – dukkhaṁ saṁkhāra paccayā

Sabbasaṁkhāra samathā – saññāya uparodhanā

Evaṁ dukkhakkhayo hoti – etaṁ ñatvā yathātathaṁ

Sammaddasā vedaguno - sammadaññāya paṇditā

Abhibhuyya mārasaṁyogaṁ – nāgacchanti punabbhavaṁ

– Dvayatānupassanā Sutta, Sutta Nipāta

Whatever suffering arises, it is all dependent on preparations.

When preparations cease, the arising of suffering ceases.

Knowing the evils of suffering dependent on preparations,

with the stilling of all preparations, unobstructed by perceptions, that is the way suffering ceases.

Thus, knowing this as it is,

The wise, endowed with correct vision and well versed in knowledge,

realizing this as it is, overpowering the bonds of Māra,

do not go into another birth.

Dear Listeners,

Sabbasaṁkhāra samatha or the stilling of the preparations, stands foremost in the phrase that declares the peaceful excellent nature of *Nibbāna*. It is the *saṇkhāras* or preparations that take the first plunge into the endless misery

of *Saṁsāra* in the darkness of ignorance. Therefore, it is clear that an intensive and an extensive clarification of the cluster of interpretations of the Law of Dependent Arising is essential. To venture into that subject we have chosen three verses in the *Dvayatānupassanā Sutta* of the *Sutta Nipāta*, as the title for the 13 discourse on *Paṭicca Samuppāda*. Since this *Dvayatānupassanā Sutta* was the topic of three earlier discourses, I am sure you remember the technique, the pattern the Buddha followed. The speciality about this Sutta is that the Buddha has followed a technique of duality, a dual contemplation in clarifying the dhamma.

This is how the Buddha presents the problem about the *saṇkhāras* (preparations) to the monks.

"Monks, if a question arises as to whether there is another method of practicing dual contemplation, do affirm that there is. Let me explain how it can be done.

"*Yaṁ kiñci dukkhaṁ sambhoti - sabbaṁ saṁkhāra paccayā. Ayaṁ ekānupassanā.*"

One method of contemplating is that whatever suffering arises, it is entirely dependent on *saṁkhāra*.

"*Saṁkhārānaṁ ceva asesa virāga nirodhā, natthi dukkhassa sambhavo.*"

With the total detachment and cessation of preparations, suffering ceases. That is the second method of contemplation. These two methods have been explicitly clarified by the Buddha in the three verses I recited earlier.

Yaṁ kiñci dukkhaṁ sambhoti -sabbaṁ saṁkhāra paccayā

Saṁkhārānaṁ nirodhena - natthi dukkhassa sambhavo

Whatever suffering arises, it is all dependent on preparations. When the preparations cease, the arising of suffering ceases.

Etamādīnavaṁ ñatvā - dukkhaṁ saṁkhāra paccayā

Knowing the evils of suffering dependent on preparations,

Sabbasaṁkhāra samathā - saññāya uparodhanā

Evaṁ dukkhakkhayo hoti - evaṁ ñatvā yathātathaṁ

With the stilling of all preparations, unobstructed by perceptions, that is the way suffering ceases. Thus, knowing this as it is,

Sammaddasā vedaguno - sammadaññāya paṇditā

The wise, endowed with correct vision and well versed in knowledge, realizing this as it is,

Abhibhuyya mārasaṁyogaṁ - nāgacchanti punabbhavaṁ

Overpowering the bonds of Māra, do not go into another birth.

That is the meaning of the verses.

Coming back to our subject *saṁkhāra*, we see it occurs as the second factor in the *Paṭicca Samuppāda*, following *avijjā*. You know we have many a time repeated

avijjā paccayā saṁkhārā,

saṁkhāra paccayā viññānaṁ,

viññāna paccayā nāmarūpaṁ,

nāmarūpa paccayā saḷāyatanaṁ and so on.

The Buddha has himself given a clarification of the term *saṁkhāra*, in the *Vibhanga Sutta*, in the *Nidāna Saṁyutta* of the *Saṁyutta Nikāya*.

"*Katame ca bhikkhave saṁkhārā. Tayo me bhikkhave saṁkhārā. Kāya saṁkhāro, vacī saṁkhāro, citta saṁkhāro"*

Monks, what are the preparations? There are three, preparations of the body, speech and mind. Remember they are in the singular. There is yet another clear analysis of these terms in the *Cūla Vedalla Sutta* of the *Majjhima Nikāya*. We meet Arahant Therī Dhammadinnā making a comprehensive analysis of them in reply to lay disciple Visākha's questions. He wished to know what exactly is meant by *kāya saṁkhāra*, *vacī saṁkhāra*, *citta saṁkhāra*.

Arahant Therī Dhammadinnā explained,

"*assāsa passāsā kho āvuso visākha kāyasaṁkhāro, vitakka vicārā vacī saṁkhāro, saññā ca vedanā ca citta saṁkhāro."*

Let me give the meaning.

"Friend Visākha, inhalation and exhalation are the preparation of the body, reasoning and deliberation are the preparation of speech. Perception and feeling are the preparation of the mind."

Again the layman Visākha questions,

“Noble lady, how do inhalation and exhalation be the preparation for the body? How do reasoning and deliberation be the preparation for speech?

How do perception and feeling be the preparation for the mind?”

Then the Arahant Therī had to explain further.

“*Assāsa passāsā kho āvuso visākha kāyikā ete dhammā kāya paṭibaddhā. Tasmā assāsa passāsā kāyasaṁkhāro*.”

“Friend Visākha, inhalation and exhalation are physical and bound to be associated with the body. They are Therefore, the preparation of the body.”

Then she continues.

“*Pubbe kho āvuso visākha, vitakketvā vicāretvā pacchā vācaṁ bhindati. Tasmā vitakka vicārā vacī saṁkhāro*.”

Here she explains something special.

“Friend Visākha, first, one reasons out and deliberates. Then expresses in speech. Therefore, reasoning and deliberation are the preparation of speech.”

Then she continues,

“*saññā ca vedanā ca āvuso visākha cetasikā. ete dhammā cittapaṭibaddhā. tasmā saññā ca vedanā ca citta saṁkhāro*.”

Perceptions and feelings are mental phenomena. They are associated with the mind. Therefore, they are the preparation of the mind.

Now let us explore the implications behind these words.

According to the accepted theory of *Paṭicca Samuppāda*, consciousness leading to another birth is fashioned by *saṁkhāra* or preparations. But, this reveals something more fantastic. You know that your breathing does not take you to the Deva world or to the lower realms. Respiration is not considered as an action – *kamma*. But inhalation and exhalation provide the rehearsal for the drama of becoming. You know that inhalation and exhalation establish the first contact with the atmosphere, at birth. They represent the subtle act of grasping. Similarly, they make the last effort at death. Let me explain this with the help of a simile. Imagine an iceberg in the ocean. What you see is only one tenth of it. Nine tenths are hidden below the sea level. Similarly, the wholesome and

unwholesome deeds we consider as greatly significant are merely the visible section. The nine tenths that lie below is inhalation and exhalation. Remember I said just now that breathing does not drag you to hell. But if you take a deep breath and deal a mighty blow on someone with a rod, you'll definitely end up in hell. What I want you to understand is that our breath is similar to the invisible portion or the rehearsal of the drama of becoming.

Next *vitakka vicāra*, reasoning and deliberation in speech are similar. It was specifically mentioned that before a word is uttered *vitakka* and *vicāra* are activated. We see that the word 'rehearsal' is ideally applicable to this process as well. The mind dwells on the word by way of reasoning and deliberation before it is uttered, similar to decorating the stage before the drama begins. Lying beneath the words are the invisible preparation called *vitakka vicāra* – reasoning and deliberation.

Now look at *saññā* and *vedanā* – perception and feeling – as the process of preparation for thought. Thought, according to the Buddha is more fascinating than a painting – *cittaññeva cittataraṁ*. But that thought is prepared by perception and feeling. Therefore, the thought is essentially a preparation, a planning, a rehearsal.

What serves as the background for this rehearsal? It's *avijjā* ignorance. *Avijjā paccayā saṁkhārā*. It is familiar to you but let's go back to *Vibhanga Sutta* for further explanation. How does the Buddha interpret *avijjā* – "*dukkhe aññāṇaṁ, dukkha samudaye aññāṇaṁ, dukkha nirodhe aññāṇaṁ, dukkha nirodha gāminiyā paṭipadāya aññāṇaṁ*." In brief, it is ignorance of the four Noble Truths. *Aññāṇaṁ* means ignorance. That is the background. The rehearsal is done in this dark background, by inhalation and exhalation, reasoning and deliberation, perception and feeling.

Now, for what purpose is this rehearsal? Let us find out.

Saṁkhāras (preparations) are followed by *viññāna* (consciousness). *Viññāna* is followed by *nāmarūpa* (name-and-form). We have already discussed *viññāna* and *nāmarūpa* at length. Certain books, when discussing *paṭicca samuppāda*, talk of a *paṭisandhi viññāna*, consciousness leading to a birth. But the Buddha has defined *viññāna* as six-fold.

"*Katamaṁ ca bhikkhave viññāṇaṁ? Cakkhu viññāṇaṁ, sota viññāṇaṁ, ghāna viññāṇaṁ, jivhā viññāṇaṁ, kāya viññāṇaṁ, mano viññāṇaṁ*."

Consciousness was explained this way, as six-fold. We have on an earlier occasion given the analysis of *nāmarūpa*, in Venerable Sāriputta's words. In the Buddha's words, this is how it is defined;

"*Katamaṁ ca bhikkhave nāmarūpaṁ? saññā, vedanā, cetanā, phasso, manasikāro. Idaṁ vuccati bhikkhave nāmaṁ. Cattāro ca mahābhūtā catunnaṁ ca mahābhūtānaṁ upādāya rūpaṁ. Idaṁ vuccati bhikkhave rūpaṁ.*"

"What monks is Name-and-form? Perception, feeling, intention, contact and attention – this is called name. The four primaries and the form that arises with a grip on the primaries – this, monks, is called form."

That's the explanation. The words of the Buddha.

As we earlier remarked contact or *phassa* cannot be brought forward. We have compared the five-fold factors of *nāma* to the five fingers, although later interpretations varied.

"*Cattāro ca mahābhūtā catunnaṁ ca mahābhūtānaṁ upādāya rūpaṁ.*" This means the perception of *rūpa* arises in accordance with the four elements, that is, with a grip on the four elements. On either side of *rūpa* are *viññāna* and *nāmarūpa*. The vortex or whirlpool that we have often referred to, is also found between these two. The drama of becoming is also manifested between them.

This can be well explained as *aññamañña paccayatā – mutual interdependence*. The bodily preparation (*kāya saṁkhāra*) the verbal preparation (*vaci saṁkhāra*) and the mental preparation (*citta saṁkhāra*) are shown as only the rehearsals for this interdependence. The final outcome of the interdependent drama between *viññāna* and *nāmarūpa* is the preparation of the five aggregates of grasping (*pañca upādānakkhanda*). We have drawn many a comparison such as the game of draughts, the game of cricket etc. to illustrate the dual nature of *viññāna*. Becoming (*bhava*) is dependent on the performance between these two teams, and an apparent continuity is thereby prepared. The final outcome of this process is the accumulation of the fivefold aggregates of grasping.

Following the identification of consciousness as two-fold, the six sense spheres begin to function as a duality. And within the six sense spheres are produced the preparations that weave the web of becoming.

It is very significant that *cetanā*, intention is included among the five-fold *nāmadhamma* – constituents of name. The meditative yogins prior to the Buddha had already realized that respiration was suffering, that reasoning and deliberation (*vitakka vicāra*) were suffering, that perception and feeling were

suffering. Although they had no clear idea of *saṁkhāras* or the background of ignorance, through the attainment of *Jhānas* they became aware of the coarseness of preparations. As a result they were playing a game of see-saw, as I have already mentioned. According to the Buddha, there are six kinds of pacifications. You will understand them as I explain. What are the six?

Speech is pacified in him who enters the first *Jhāna*. Reasoning and deliberation is pacified in him who enters the second *Jhāna*.

Joy is pacified in him who enters the third *Jhāna*. Respiration is pacified in him who enters the fourth *Jhāna*.

Perception and feeling are pacified in him who enters the attainment of cessation of perceptions and feelings.

Finally, it is said that lust, anger and delusion are pacified in the monk whose influxes are extinct.

These six steps of pacification – *passaddhi* – are mentioned in the *Saṁyutta Nikāya*. The contemporary meditators of the time had attained the pacification of speech, reasoning and deliberation as well as inhalation and exhalation through *jhāna* practice, but were unable to move beyond that. Freeing themselves from perception – *saññā* – was a problem, a challenge. We referred to it as a game of see-saw.

Their highest attainment *nevasaññānāsaññāyatana* the realm of neither perception nor non-perception is explained in the *Pañcattaya Sutta* of the *Majjhima Nikāya* as follows:

> *"saññā rogo, saññā gaṇḍo, saññā sallaṁ, asaññā sammoho etaṁ santaṁ etaṁ paṇītaṁ yadidaṁ nevasaññānāsaññaṁ."*

They realized that *saññā* is a disease, a wound, a dart but the absence of *saññā* is delusion. It was not possible to relinquish it. That's why they were playing a game of see-saw. They held on to *nevasaññā nāsaññā*, an excellent peaceful position, *santaṁ paṇītaṁ,* which is neither perception nor non-perception.

What is found beyond *nevasaññā nāsaññā* I have discussed it, if you remember, drawing facts from *Poṭṭhapāda Sutta* of the *Dīgha Nikāya* which holds an amazing store of facts. It records how some ascetics and Brahmins asked the Buddha for an explanation of *abhisaññā nirodha*. The Buddha said it is the stage where even *cetanā* is given up.

Why was there a confusion regarding *abhisaññā nirodha*? I wonder whether you remember I explained it earlier.

Natthi kiñci conveys the idea that 'there is nothing' (nothing exists). These ascetics with their yearning for becoming, saw *natthi kiñci* as referring to some 'thing'. They made a samāpatti out of it, which took them to Brahma worlds with an unlimited life span. They could not attain anything beyond this due to ignorance of preparations - *saṁkhāras*.

Let us see what the Buddha has to say regarding this mental state. *Poṭṭhapāda Sutta* has a valuable statement as follows;

A monk who attains *ākiñcaññāyatana* thinks

"*cetayamānassa me pāpiyo, acetayamānassa me seyyo. Yannūnāhaṁ na ceva ceteyyaṁ na cābhisaṁkareyyaṁ ti.*"

Using *cetanā* (intention) at this stage is not correct. I shall refrain from *cetanā*. *Cetanā* is a gross mental state. With the determination to avoid *saṁkhāras* finally he attains *saññā vedayita nirodha*.

Let me explain this with the simile of the five fingers, though it was not used by the Buddha. The last finger stands for feeling (*vedanā)*. The fourth finger represents perception (*saññā)*. The stubborn middle finger is intention (*cetanā)*. With the pacifying of *cetanā* that is bringing the middle finger under control, one experiences *nirodha* (cessation) which is not a 'thing'. *Nibbāna* is signless ('*animitta*'), undirected ('*appaṇihita*') and void ('*suññāta*'). It is the furthest end of the three signata – impermanence, suffering and not-self.

When you arise from the attainment of cessation – *nirodha samāpatti* – your attention is focused towards the signless state (*animitta*), the undirected state (*appaṇihita*) and the void state with no soul, no continuity (*suññata*). This is the special message from the Buddha to the world, the significance of which was unknown to the meditators of the time. You could remember this mental state as *Vimokkha*.

Since preparations – *saṁkhāras* – is our main topic, let us discuss it further depending on the time available. *Saṁkhāra* which we compared to the hidden part of the iceberg, is used here in the singular. In this background called *saṁkhāra* there is a drama of becoming between consciousness (*viññāna)* and Name-and-form (*nāmarūpa)*. We have used similes such as the game of draughts, and the game Narcissus played with water. The ultimate outcome of this drama is the accumulation of the five aggregates of grasping.

Now we come to a significant aspect of the five aggregates of grasping. There is reference to *saṁkhāra* in the aggregates but used in the plural as *saṁkhārā*. This is the point that misleads us. It is also the most intricate point in our effort to understand *Paṭicca Samuppāda*. The end result of the activity of *Paṭicca Samuppāda* is the five aggregates of grasping. You know ignorance means the ignorance of the four Noble Truths. Due to that ignorance, preparations such as inhalation and exhalation are activated. It is followed by another step where, instigated by ignorance and the delusion of consciousness, a duality arises – *viññāna* and *nāmarūpa*. This is followed by a drama. As the final outcome of the drama, a multitude of forms appear. A multitude of feelings appear. A multitude of perceptions appear. A multitude of preparations appear. A multitude of consciousness appear. It is important to understand them as prepared preparations – *saṁkhata saṁkhārā*. It is in the plural.

The Buddha has offered a clarification to the preparations – *saṁkhārā* – found in the five aggregates of grasping.

"Katame ca bhikkhave saṁkhārā? Chayime bhikkhave cetanā kāyā. rūpa saṁcetanā, sadda saṁcetanā, gandha saṁcetanā, rasa saṁcetanā, phoṭṭhabba saṁcetanā, dhamma saṁcetanā."

How does the Buddha explain *saṁkhārā* in the context of *pañca upādānakkhandha*? Not the same interpretation as in *vacī saṁkhāra*. '*cetanā kāyā*' means a mass of intentions.

Intentions are of six kinds. *Rūpa saṁcetanā* is intention based on form. *Sadda saṁcetanā* is intention based on sound. You can understand the rest in relation to the six sense bases. Preparations are generated through intention. They are called *saṁkata saṁkhāra*. They are intentionally prepared.

We know that inhalation and exhalation, reasoning and deliberation, perception and feeling can be compared to stage settings. The end result of the drama of becoming performed on the stage is the five aggregates of grasping. The *Mahā Saḷāyatanika Sutta* sheds enough light to clarify this matter. To explain the coming together and the falling apart of the five aggregates of grasping, it uses the terms *upacaya* and *apacaya*. The Buddha takes the six *āyatanas* – sense bases one by one. The eye, the form, the consciousness resulting from those two, the contact that arises and its resultant feeling. Unless this process is understood clearly as it is, it might lead to conflict, delusion and result in the arising of the five aggregates of grasping. One may fall into the deception of believing "this is my form, this is my feeling, this is my perception, these are my preparations and this is my consciousness."

The *Khajjanīya Sutta* in the *Saṁyutta Nikāya* deals with this subject at depth very clearly. The Buddha begins the Sutta as follows; "Monks, among ascetics and Brahmins, whoever recalled their past births, they did so basing their recollection on the five aggregates of grasping or at least one aggregate." What the Buddha means is that their insight into the past births is not clear enough. They see a mass of forms that belong to the past. They identify the forms as "I".

They conclude "In the past I was".

In recalling the past, in bringing the past births back to memory, certain forms come to one's view and thinks "In the past I was".

The same process takes place regarding *vedanā* (feeling) and other aggregates. We can see here the *saṁkata* pattern.

The Buddha then proceeds to give an amazing analysis of each word. *Rūpa*, we said, is an aggregate of grasping (*upādānakkhanda*) *upādāna* means a mass or cluster in one's grip. As we often remind you, the ordinary worldling has the notion of compact. Within the view of self (*sakkāya diṭṭhi*) this notion of substance is apparent. Let us break up the term *sakkāya diṭṭhi*. '*Sat*' means 'there is'. '*Kāya*' is a 'bundle' (collection). With this notion of 'There is a bundle' one attempts to establish one's identity as "I am".

What is *rūpa*? It is only a collection. It is the same with the other aggregates.

Next, let us discuss the similes associated with the *khandhas*. Form (*rūpa*) is like a cluster of foam. Feelings (*vedanā*) are like bubbles. Perception *saññā* is similar to a mirage. Preparations are compared to the banana trunk. Consciousness is like an illusion. Why are these called *saṁkata saṁkhāra*? They are deceptive. These similes bring out their deceptive nature. At a distance a cluster of white foam appears like a stone. It reveals itself only if you look at it scrutinizingly at very close quarters. *Rūpa* is similar to foam but an ordinary man of the world will not be able to see through *rūpa* (form). Similarly, feeling is comparable to a bubble of water floating in mid-air. When it bursts (breaks) one realizes it is nothing more than a bubble. Feeling is only a mirage. You realize a mirage is an illusion only when you chase after it. You have to keep peeling to the centre of the banana trunk to realize it has no hard core. Such is the nature of *saṁkhāras*. Only with penetrative wisdom could one realize that *viññāna* is a magical illusion.

These similes were given by the Buddha to enable the meditators to realize the intricate nature of the subject at depth, but the ordinary people are not prepared to accept it.

The Buddha offers a very interesting etymological interpretation of the words *rūpa*, *vedanā* etc.

"*kiñca bhikkhave rūpaṁ vadetha?*" Monks, what is called *rūpa*? "*Ruppatīti kho bhikkhave tasmā rūpanti vuccati*".

Monks, it is *rūpa* because it hurts, is oppressed. Then comes a further analysis.

"*kena ruppati, sītena pi ruppati, jighacchāya pi ruppati, pipāsāya pi ruppati, ḍaṁsamakasa vātā tapa siriṁsapa samphassena pi ruppati*."

This *rūpa* or body, by what is it oppressed? By cold, heat, hunger, thirst, flies.

By *ruppati*, the Buddha meant that *rūpa* is a boil. One's attention is drawn towards the body when one is oppressed by cold, heat, hunger etc. This interpretation of '*ruppati'* as 'oppressed by' has a very deep meaning.

Next *vedanā* is explained as *vediyati*. It means one feels, one experiences. That's not a complicating word. What does one feel? One feels happiness, unhappiness and neither happiness nor unhappiness. *Saññā* means *sañjānāti*. Perceives, identifies. What is perceived (identified)? In terms of colours, blue, red, yellow, white. That is how *saññā* is explained. Now comes the introduction to *saṁkhāra*. It is extremely deep in meaning. The Buddha's technique of explaining *saṁkhāra* is different.

"*Kiṁ ca bhikkhave saṁkhāre vadetha. Saṁkataṁ abhisaṁkarontī ti saṁkhārā*."

"Monks, what is meant by *saṁkhārā*? A special preparation of the prepared."

Abhisaṁkaronti here means, making a special preparation. *Saṁkhāra* also has the idea of preparing. *Abhisaṁkāra* means special preparing. Here we must remember that the Buddha explains *saṁkhāra* in his discussion of *pañca upādānakkhandha* as "*saṁkhataṁ abhisaṁkharontī ti saṁkhārā*".

That is 'a special preparation of the prepared.' The Buddha called the body an abscess. When afflicted by cold, heat hunger, discomfort, our attention is drawn towards it.

Then comes another intricate question about *saṁkhāra*.

"*Kiñca saṁkhataṁ abhisaṁkharontī*?"

"What preparation is specially prepared?"

Rūpaṁ rūpattāya saṁkhataṁ abhisaṁkharontī ti. Form is prepared into form by a process of specially prepared preparation. In a similar manner, *vedanā* feeling is prepared into feeling by a process of specially prepared preparation.

"*Vedanaṁ vedanattāya saṁkhataṁ abhisaṁkharontī*."

The third one *saññā* has to be understood in a similar manner. The most wonderful interpretation is given to *saṁkhāra*. *Saṁkhāre saṁkhārattāya saṁkhataṁ abhisaṁkharontīti saṁkhārā*. *Saṁkhārā* or preparations are so called because preparations are prepared into prepared form by a process of special preparation.

Then comes consciousness,

"*viññāṇaṁ viññāṇattāya saṁkhataṁ abhisaṁkharonti*".

"Consciousness is formed into consciousness by a process of specially prepared preparation."

This explanation of the Buddha is enough proof of the importance of *saṁkhāra*.

All the *saṁkhāras* that come under these four categories are transformed into prepared form – specially prepared form. In that case all the people live within the 'prepared' state. *Saṁkhata* means prepared but the ordinary people do not understand it due to the perception of the compact or *ghana saññā*. The purpose of giving those similes such as 'a mass of foam', 'a mirage' etc., was to clarify the perception of the compact.

We came across some important words such as *cetanā*, *saṁcetanā*, *saṁkhāra*,*abhisaṁkhāra*, *saṁkhata* and its opposite *asaṁkhata*. Let's study them. *Cetanā*. Going by its etymology, it means adding up. Adding together. Think of feeling – vedanā – arising in you when a sense organ meets the sense object. It is followed by perception. With perception there is a tendency to add up everything. That is *cetanā*, intention. We said that *cetanā* is stubborn. Then comes *saṁcetanā*. *Saṁcetanā* arises as *rūpa saṁcetanā*, *sadda saṁcetanā*, *gandha saṁcetanā* and so on. In *rūpa saṁcetanā*, form is treated as a thing and a process of adding up takes place. In *sadda saṁcetanā* sound is treated as a thing and *cetanā* or adding up takes place accordingly. Understand the others in the same way. That's why the Buddha explained the term *saṁkhāra* as *saṁcetanā* in relation to *pañca upādānakkhandha*.

"*cha ime bhikkhave cetanā*".

There are six intentions, *kāya cetanā* (bodily intentions) such as *rūpa saṁcetanā*, *sadda saṁcetanā* and so on. Now we have given a brief account of *saṁcetanā*.

We have already discussed *saṁkhāra* or preparation. Those who are interested in Indian literature and history know how stage make-up is done before a drama. To those who watch the modern tele-dramas, 'make-up' is nothing new. Such is the change brought about by make-up, that even the actor cannot be identified. That deception is indicated by the term *saṁkhāra*. So we see that drama actors make full use of the *saṁkhāra* technique. The kitchen is another place where *saṁkhāra* or preparation is done before food is brought to the table. That preparation is called *saṁkhatiyo*. The term '*susaṁkhata'* is used for a well prepared meal. Once placed on the table, it is totally unidentifiable. There lies deception. The term *saṁkhāra* has this quality of deception within it. '*Saṁkhata*' is the word used to indicate things prepared for deception. They are totally misleading.

Then the term '*abhisaṁkhata*' means specially prepared. Beneath this superficial meaning *abhisaṁkhata* has a deeper meaning. Let us try to explore it. These different interpretations are all expressed in the suttas. *Pabbajjābhisaṁkhāro* indicates the urgency one feels for ordination. One's impatient urge for ordination. *Gamikābhisaṁkhāro* refers to one's anxiety to undertake a journey. The keenness to start on it is so strong that, one's wish is somehow fulfilled.

In the *Pacetana Rathakāra Vagga* of the *Anguttara Nikāya*, the Buddha uses an ideal simile in a discourse. This etymological analysis is based on that simile. The carpenter of King Pacetana built two wheels. He let one roll forward. When a wheel is made to roll forward, it is given some momentum.

This is how it is described "*yāvatikā abhisaṁkhārassa gati tāvatikaṁ gantvā ciṁgagulāyitvā bhūmiyaṁ papati."*

As long as the infused force lasted, the wheel rolled forward, twirled and collapsed on the ground. Here, we are interested in the term *abhisaṁkhāra*. It conveys the idea of momentum, urgency, impatience. That is exactly why the term *abhisaṁkhāra* is used in discussing *kamma*.

Kāya saṁkhāraṁ abhisaṁkharoti, vacī saṁkhāraṁ abhisaṁkharoti, mano saṁkhāraṁ abhisaṁkharoti. It's here that the serious problem of the resultant aspect of actions come in – *kamma vipāka*. *Cetanā* or intention plays a major role here. We have mentioned that mere breathing does not pave the way to hell.

With reference to wholesome and unwholesome actions, the three terms used are *puññābhisaṁkhāra*, *apuññābhisaṁkhāra* and *āneñjābhisaṁkhāra*.

Puññābhisaṁkhāra consists of the preparatory force to prepare another birth in the deva worlds and the human world. A pleasant birth. *Apuññābhisaṁkhāra* on the other hand prepares the environment for birth in hell.

The third one, *āneñjābhisaṁkhāra* is more complex in meaning. *Āneñja* means steadfast, unshakable. It is closely associated with the *jhānas*. It is interesting to note that unshakability is also a moving force. I shall explain it with a simile. You know how to spin a top. You wind the thread round it, jerk it and let go. The force enables it to spin round remaining in an erect position. The top stands erect but keeps spinning round. It is similar to being born in formless spheres – *arūpa loka* – and continuing to live for aeons and aeons. They experience the results of the *jhānas* they have attained, like the never ending twirl of a top. You can now understand how terrifying the *saṁkhāras* are. Although one never committed unwholesome actions, one has to take birth in a Brahma sphere and keep spinning endlessly. That is *āneñjābhisaṁkhāra*.

Consider these important facts. They indicate the fearfulness of preparations. The Buddha has always emphasized the fearful nature and the sorrowful nature of these preparations.

"*Jigacchā paramā rogā, saṁkhāraparamā dukhā, etaṁ ñatvā yathābhūtaṁ - Nibbānaṁ paramaṁ sukkhaṁ*.

This too has come under discussion in an earlier discourse. *Jigacchā paramā rogā*. Hunger is the most severe of illnesses. Modern medical men will not agree with this statement. Today what are called 'diseases' are those severe deadly diseases now known. But even if all those diseases are cured, what will endure is hunger. It has been called the disease that makes you groan. Hunger makes you groan automatically although you are healthy. That's why hunger is the most serious of diseases. *Jigacchā paramā rogā*.

Saṁkhāraparamā dukhā. That statement too has a deep meaning. We grieve over the superficially manifested physical ailments. The story of the spinning top suggests how deep rooted the problem is. *Saṁkhārā paramā dukkhā* means, suffering originated by preparations continue, even after all the other sufferings are allayed, that it is the furthermost of sufferings. The top spins by the force of preparations. *Saṁkhāras* activate the continued becoming. *Saṁkhāraparamā dukhā. Etaṁ ñatvā yathābhūtaṁ* – If one realizes this as it is, *Nibbānaṁ paramaṁ sukkhaṁ – Nibbāna* is the highest bliss. At the very outset we pointed

out that the very first words expressing the peaceful excellent nature of *Nibbāna* were 'stilling of all preparations' – '*sabbasaṁkhāra samatho*'. Can you imagine how deep it is?

In order to free oneself from continued existence, wholesome and unwholesome preparations and specific preparations have to be stilled. Inhalation and exhalation have to be stilled. Reasoning and deliberation have to be stilled. Perception and feeling have to be stilled. The ordinary people, infatuated by desire for becoming, cannot comprehend this message. This subject is discussed in detail in the *Saṁcetanā Sutta* of the *Catukka Nipāta* of the *Anguttara Nikāya*. It simply takes us by surprise

"*kāye vā bhikkhave sati, kāyasaṁcetanāhetu, uppajjati ajjhattaṁ sukhadukkhaṁ. Vācāya vā bhikkhave sati, vacīsaṁcetanāhetu uppajjati ajjhattaṁ sukhadukkhaṁ, mane vā bhikkhave sati, manosaṁcetanāhetu uppajjati ajjhattaṁ sukhadukkhaṁ avijjāpaccayā va.*"

Let us try to simplify this to our level. *Kāye vā sati*, means there being a body, due to specific preparations of the body, there arise happiness (pleasant feelings) and suffering within. There being speech, due to intentions based on speech (words, language, vocal usage) there arise happiness and suffering within. If we consider mind to be something existing, there being mind, due to intentions based on mind, happiness and suffering arise within. One prepares these preparations for oneself, and others too prepare them and pass them to you. One experiences the happiness and suffering intentionally or unintentionally. Then the Buddha explains the more interesting and more important part of the story '*avijjā paccayā va*'. It is due to ignorance that we take the body to be real, speech to be real and mind to be real.

Then the Buddha explains it in the reverse order.

"*Avijjāyatveva asesa virāga nirodhā so kāyo na hoti yaṁ paccayāssa taṁ uppajjati ajjhattaṁ sukhadukkhaṁ, sā vācā na hoti yaṁ paccayāssa taṁ uppajjati ajjhattaṁ sukhadukkhaṁ so mano na hoti yaṁ paccayāssa taṁ uppajjati ajjhattaṁ sukha dukkhaṁ.*"

This is a fantastic statement, a revelation. With the complete cessation of ignorance, the body ceases to be. Speech ceases to be and mind ceases to be. Whatever happiness and suffering arose dependent on those three, they cease. The Sutta ends this way

"*khettaṁ taṁ na hoti, vatthuṁ taṁ na hoti, āyatanaṁ taṁ na hoti, adhikaraṇaṁ taṁ na hoti, yampaccayāssa taṁ uppajjati ajjhattaṁ dukhadukkhaṁ.*"

“Whatever field there was, whatever ground there was, whatever land there was, whatever reason there was, dependent on which suffering arose within, that is no more.”

That is how suffering is brought to an end. This explanation enlightens us on the deeper implication of *saṁkhāra* . They play their part first as a rehearsal, and then assist in the drama of becoming, and finally act as the specific preparations for another birth. Such is *saṁkhata*.

There are certain verses that confuse most people. Here is one;

Sabbe saṁkhārā aniccāti

Yadā paññāya passati

Atha nibbindatī dukkhe

Esa maggo visuddhiyā

Considering all preparations as impermanent, if one realizes it with wisdom, one would be disillusioned about suffering. That is the path towards purity.

The second verse begins with

“*sabbe saṁkhārā dukkhāti yadā paññāya passati*”.

If one realizes through insight that all preparations are suffering, that is the path to purification. The third verse poses a problem to everybody with “*sabbe dhammā anattāti yadā paññāya passati.*” The problem is the use of the term ‘*dhammā*’ instead of ‘*saṁkhārā*’. The first verse says “All preparations are impermanent”.

The second verse says “All preparations bring suffering”.

The third verse says “All *dhammas* are essenceless”.

That is the problem. We have explained *dhammā* as mind objects or ‘things’. According to our ancient teachers, *Nibbāna* is not a ‘thing’ but it has been misinterpreted as a ‘thing’. The *Mūla Pariyāya Sutta* which deals with this subject is beyond the understanding of many. Some tend to misinterpret *saṁkhata* (prepared), *asaṁkhata* (non-prepared) and *Nibbāna* as *asaṁkhata dhamma* or *asaṁkhata dhātu* – a nonprepared ‘thing’, which has resulted in a lot of confusion. But what really is *asaṁkhata*? It is the cessation of preparation.

This point is further explained in the verse "*saṁkhārāṇaṁ khayaṁ ñatvā akataññūsi brāhmaṇa.*"

If one can understand the elimination of preparations as described in the *Dhammapada*, then the state of *asaṁkhata* (non-prepared) referred to as *akata* becomes clear. To make it more lucid, take the pattern woven on this mat. If the pattern is taken as a solid object the mind may get attached to it. If one takes a penetrative look at the straws illusively woven this way and that, the mind can detach itself from the pattern. *Asaṁkhata* – non-preparation is similar to that. The danger here lies in considering even *asaṁkhata* as a 'thing'.

In the statement '*sabbe dhammā anattā ti*', *Nibbāna* is also included. When we think of *Nibbāna* as the goal we wish to reach, it takes the form of an object for the mind. I hope it is clear to everybody. It has to be taken as an object to the mind. But in the end, if *Nibbāna* is treated as a 'thing', we will be misled like the ancient *yogis*.

'*Natthi kiñci*' or 'There is nothing' is mistakenly understood as a reference to a thing. If *Nibbāna* is also treated as a thing, one can enter *Saṁsāra* again. This is a subtle point in the Buddha dhamma. *Asaṁkhata* must be correctly understood. The verse "*anekajātisaṁsāraṁ*" ends with *visaṁkhāragataṁ cittaṁ taṇhānaṁ khayamajjhagā*. Here the phrase *visaṁkhāragataṁ cittaṁ* is very significant. The mind once dominated by preparations is now free of them. The mind is liberated. That is why it is said that the moment intentions (*cetanā*) and specific preparations are abandoned, one experiences *nirodha* – cessation. There is yet another important phrase that describes *Nibbāna*, from another perspective.

"*Viññānaṁ ca anabhisaṁkhacca vimuttaṁ.*"

The consciousness (*viññāna*) of an ordinary person is prepared, *saṁkhata*. But if the mind is liberated from the specific preparations of name-and-form, we have a special term to describe that mind, *anidassana viññāna*. It is the consciousness that does not display any name-and-form, and is totally liberated. *Anabhisaṁkhacca vimuttaṁ* also refers to the same state of mind. Similarly, *asaṁkhata* simply means to emancipate oneself from the *ghana saññā* or the perception of the compact, and begin to see through the perception of a cluster.

I would like to draw your attention to another point, at this juncture. Earlier I pointed out to you that the word *saṁkhāra* is used in the singular as *kāya saṁkhāro*, *vacī saṁkhāro* and *citta saṁkhāro*, but with reference to *kamma*, it is used in the plural. For example *kāya saṁkhārā*, *vacī saṁkhārā* but *mano saṁkhārā* instead of *citta saṁkhārā*. This may be slightly confusing. We have

told you that the three preparations – inhalation and exhalation, reasoning and deliberation, and perception and feeling – make up the underneath layers. But they encroach the top layer when *mana* gets recognition, that is when the mind receives objects (*dhamma*) for thought. The moment these objects or *dhammā* are treated as 'things', *cetanā* or intention arises. It is the objects that flow into the mind that activate the stubborn middle finger.

Let us now arrange everything in its proper order. First we used the three words *kāya saṁkhāro*, *vacī saṁkhāro* and *citta saṁkhāro* with reference to the three types of preparation. If we move on to the topic of *kamma*, *kamma* that prepares the ground for another birth, the terms used are *kāya saṁkhārā* (in the plural), *vacī saṁkhārā* and instead of *citta saṁkhārā*, the third is *mano saṁkhārā*. Why? When the sense objects grasped by the sense faculties reach the mind, they are transformed into 'things'. *Chandamūlakā āvuso sabbe dhammā*. All dhammas have desire (*chanda*) as their root. These are complicated points, although we try to summarize them. You know *saṁkhāra* is a term with deep implications.

Beneath *saṁkhata* or 'the prepared' runs an undercurrent of *taṇhā,* craving. These are the words of the Buddha.

"*Avijjā samphassajena bhikkhave, vedayitena phuṭṭhassa assutavato puthujjanassa taṇhā uppaṇṇā tatojo so saṁkhāro.*"

Craving (*taṇhā*) arises in ordinary worldly people, who are afflicted by ignorance. Preparation or *saṁkhāra* is born out of this craving. Think of respiration for example. You may give up everything but you cannot give up breathing. It's called the most elementary level of grasping. You know how hard a person gasps for breath at death. That shows that becoming is dependent on the three subtle preparations. The external factors come in later, and continue to follow from birth to birth. The fundamental force that helps in preparation is *taṇhā*, craving. The preparation done in the darkness of ignorance is three-fold, *kāya saṁkhāro*, *vaci saṁkhāro, citta saṁkhāro*. The third preparation *citta saṁkhāro* becomes a *mano saṁkhāra*, a preparation of the mind, when it assumes a gross state, when it becomes a prepared. With the mere arising of feeling and perception, there is no accumulation of *kamma*. That is called *mano saṁcetanā*. You know the first two verses in the *Dhammapada*.

As the last point in the talk, we have come to the first two verses of the *Dhammapada*.

Mano pubbaṁgamā dhammā

Mano seṭṭhā manomayā

Manasā ce paduṭṭhena

The subject discussed here is the mind – *mana*. The mind takes the responsibility, being in the forefront of mental objects – *dhammā*. Wholesome or unwholesome intentions *cetanā* are activated at this point. *Kamma* is thus accumulated.

Try to understand all the points we discussed today. We talked about *saṁkhāra*, *abhisaṁkhāra*, *cetanā*, *saṁcetanā*, *saṁkhata and asaṁkhata*. The summary of the talk is contained in these words. You can now understand the significance of the Buddha's words

"*Yaṁ kiñci dukkhaṁ sambhoti - sabbaṁ saṁkhāra paccayā."*

But it is not a very popular statement.

It is very amusing to see that the most fascinating (interesting)

'song' in the Buddha's teaching is the last thing we hear on earth.

Aniccā vata saṁkhārā

Uppāda vaya dhammino

Uppajjitvā nirujjhanti

Tesaṁ vūpasamo sukho.

To tell you the truth, my first impulse was to begin this discourse with this verse. But I knew you would walk out on hearing it. That's why I brought it out last.

"*Aniccā vata saṅkhārā*" is one of the most profound verses. But it has faced the same fate as the *Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta*. Both have been reduced to the level of a pumpkin among the funeral rites. But you can see that this verse carries a message at its very depth. *Aniccā vata saṁkhārā – uppāda vaya dhammino* – Impermanent are all preparations. They are of the nature of arising and passing away.

Uppajjitvā nirujjhanti – They arise and cease. *Tesaṁ vūpasamo sukho* – Their pacification is bliss.

Now let's enrich this treasure of a verse with another Buddha word.

Aniccā vata saṁkhārā

Uppāda vaya dhammino

Uppajjitvā nirujjhanti

Tesaṁ vūpasamo sukho.

That is all the verse says, but let us expand on it. In the *saṁkhāras* referred to in the above verse, from inhalation and exhalation to the more gross preparations called *abhisaṁkhāra*, the nature of arising and ceasing is evident.

"*Uppāda vaya dhammino*".

But there occurs a more revealing exposition of *saṁkhata*.

"*Tīṇimāni bhikkhave saṁkhatassa saṁkhata lakkhaṇān?"*

Monks, three main characteristics are seen in preparations that have been prepared. What are they? "*Uppādo paññāyati, vayo paññāyati, ṭhitassa aññathattaṁ paññāyati."*

An arising is visible, a cessation is visible. Furthermore,

"*ṭhitassa aññathattaṁ*" '*ṭhiti*' means 'being' "continuing".

While being, (while continuing) a change is visible. We saw that *saṁkhāra* has only an arising and ceasing. But regarding *saṁkhata* there is an arising, a passing away and an otherwiseness of the (apparently) static. The Buddha explains '*ṭhitassa aññathattaṁ*' – 'a turning otherwise of the apparently static state' – what is mistakenly seen as 'being, continuing, enduring' undergoes change. The essence of the problem lies hidden there.

Now let us understand what is called *asaṁkhata dhātu*. You have heard that *asaṁkhata* refers to *Nibbāna*. This is how it is described.

"*Tīṇimāni bhikkhave asaṁkhatassa asaṁkhata lakkhaṇāni*".

In the non-prepared state three non-prepared characteristics are to be found. What are the three? Arising is not found, cessation is not found, a change of an apparent static state is not found. With the cessation of consciousness, with the cessation of name-and-form, with the cessation of six sense spheres, everything ceases. There is no possibility of arising and ceasing again. That is the point we tried to drive in, through our sermons on *Nibbāna*. A sphere or *āyatana* is mentioned. Many did not understand the use of the term *āyatana* here. In this sphere, there is no going. There is no coming. There is no being. There is no continuing. There is no anything.

That is the explanation to *asaṁkhata*. We have tried our best to put across as much as we could within one hour. Try to digest them well. Try to understand them from diverse perspectives. What do I mean? All these years you have been listening to the conventional interpretation of *Paṭicca Samuppāda* where *saṁkhāra* (preparations) are supposed to prepare a *paṭisandhi viññāna* (a consciousness leading to another birth). Now you know it is not correct. It has two meanings, within the terms *saṁkhāra*, *abhisaṁkhāra saṁkhata*.

The purpose behind our explanation is not to argue or challenge, but merely to put the listeners into correct view. Meditation cannot proceed on misconceived views. Try and maintain the perfectly correct understanding in order to continue on this journey.

You have observed the valuable precepts and spent the day in meditation, as usual. You have developed awareness and mindfulness. You must also apply to your meditational practices, the contents of this discourse which will lead you to insight. Make the determination to attain the four stages on the path to emancipation, before the light of the Dhamma goes out.

Whatever beings there are, from the lowest to the highest state of existence, who wish to share in the merits of listening to this discourse, may they accomplish their aspirations and attain the peace of *Nibbāna*!



Paticca Samuppada Sermon 14

The Law of Dependent Arising

(Pahan Kanuwa Sermon – No. 196)

'*Namo tassa bhagavato arahato sammāsambuddhassa*'

'Homage be! To the Fortunate One – the Worthy, Fully Enlightened!'

Idaṁ jātu vedagu – idaṁ jātu sabbaji

idaṁ jātu apalikhataṁ – gaṇḍamūlaṁ palikhaṇinti

This is the perfect mastery of the Veda

This is called victory over all

This is the extraction of the root of the abscess hitherto unextracted

– Uddaka Sutta, Saṁyutta Nikāya

Dear Listeners,

Any person with an inquiring eye could see that all activities pertaining to the continuum of life of beings in *Saṁsāra* take place within the six sense spheres. The internal sense spheres, namely the eye, ear, nose, tongue, body and mind are referred to as *saḷāyatana* in the teaching of the Law of Dependent Arising. These six internal sense spheres coordinate with the six external sense bases that is external objects, sound, smell, taste, body contact and mental objects (*dhamma*). They attract the worldlings towards the vortex between consciousness and name-and-form.

We have chosen as the topic for this fourteenth discourse on *Paṭicca Samuppāda* a verse from the *Uddaka Sutta* of the *Saḷāyatana Saṁyutta* in the *Saṁyutta Nikāya*. On a certain occasion the Buddha addressing the monks recalled a certain past incident.

"Monks, UddakaRāmaputta used to declare thus:"

"*Idaṁ jātu vedagu – idaṁ jātu sabbaji*

idaṁ jātu apalikhatam – gaṇḍamūlam palikhaṇinti"

Let's go through the meaning first. '*Idaṁ jātu vedagu*' means "This is the perfect mastery of the *Veda*."

"*idaṁ jātu sabbaji*" means "This is called victory over all."

"*Idaṁ jātu apalikhataṁ - gaṇḍamūlaṁ palikhaṇinti*"

"This is the extraction of the root of the abscess hitherto unextracted."

After uttering this verse the Buddha makes an unusual remark.

"Monks, although Uddaka made this joyous utterance, it is only a monk in this dispensation who is qualified to do so."

Then he proceeds to reinterpret this puzzle-like verse.

"Monks, how does one gain mastery over the *Vedas*?

"*Yato kho bhikkhave bhikkhu channaṁ phassāyatanānaṁ samudayañca atthagamañca assādañca ādīnavañca nissaranañca yathābhūtaṁ pajānāti, evaṁ kho bhikkhave bhikkhu vedagu hoti*."

"To the extent a monk realizes with wisdom, the six spheres of contact as they really are, with regard to their arising, ceasing, satisfaction, perils and stepping out, to that extent, he will have mastery of the *Vedas*."

The second question is then taken up.

"Monks, how can one become a *sabbaji*, one who is victorious over all"? Then comes the explanation, similar to the first one.

"*Yato kho bhikkhave bhikkhu channaṁ phassāyatanānaṁ samudayañca atthagamañca assādañca ādīnavañca nissaranañca, yathābhūtaṁ viditvā anupādāya vimutto hoti."*

He who realizes with wisdom the six spheres of contact earlier mentioned, with regard to their arising, ceasing, satisfaction, perils and stepping out, and will attain release with total detachment, such a person is *sabbaji*, a man who is victorious overall.

"Monks, how can one say that the root of the abscess so far unextracted, has now been extracted?"

This is a more puzzling statement than the earlier two.

“Monks *gaṇḍa* or abscess is a synonym for the body composed of the four primaries earth, water, heat and wind, born of mother and father, composed of gross food, inheriting the quality of impermanence, having the nature of rubbing, massaging, breaking up and scattering”

“What, monks, is the root of the abscess (*gaṇḍamūla*)?”

The root of the abscess is a synonym for craving.

“Monks to what extent can you say that the root of the abscess has been extracted? If a monk has eliminated craving, uprooted it, destroyed it like an uprooted palm, reduced to a state of non-arising, such a monk can be called one who has extracted the root of the abscess hitherto unextracted.”

According to this explanation offered by the Buddha, we see that *vedagu* is a term borrowed from the Brahmins. From a religious point of view it means a person who has reached mastery over all knowledge. According to the specific interpretation of the Buddha, surpassing all knowledge means the perfect realization of the fivefold activity of the six sense spheres. Similarly victory over all refers to the above mentioned perfect realization of the sense spheres accompanied by the perfect release from all clinging towards them. It is by now clear that both “Mastery over all” and “Victory over all” must be understood in relation to the six sense spheres.

Since we have been referring to ‘*sabba*’ – ‘all’, I would like to introduce to you the *Sabba Sutta* of the *Saḷāyatana Saṁyutta* for the purpose of supportive proof. *Sabba* means all.

Once the Buddha addressed the monks and said “Monks, I shall explain to you ‘all’. Listen to me carefully.”

“*Kiñca bhikkhave sabbaṁ? Cakkhuñca rūpāca, sotañca saddā ca, ghānañca gandhā ca, jivhā ca rasā ca, kayo ca phoṭṭhabbā ca, mano ca dhammā ca.*”

“The eye and external objects, the ear and sounds, the nose and smells, the tongue and tastes, the body and body contacts, the mind and mental objects. This is called ‘all’ – ‘*sabba*’. Following this explanation the Buddha offers an amazing challenge as follows; “*Yo bhikkhave evaṁ vadeyya*.”

Monks if anyone were to say thus,

“*Ahametaṁ sabbaṁ paccakkhāya aññaṁ sabbaṁ paññāpessāmi*” I disprove of that *sabba*, and declare another *sabba* in its place.”

“Monks, that would amount to nothing more than foolish prattling. If questioned he would be dumbfounded. Why? Because he has no understanding of the subject.”

The Buddha thus confirms the meaning of *sabba*.

We come across another similar explanation in the *Saḷāyatana Saṁyutta* itself. Venerable Samiddhi approaches the Buddha with a question.

“*Loko loko ti Bhante vuccati, kittāvatā nu kho bhante loko vā assa lokapaññatti vā ti.*” “Lord, reference is made to a world, a world. To what extent is there a world or the manifestation of a world?” The Buddha replies as follows; “*Yattha kho Samiddhi atthi cakkhu, atthi rūpā, atthi cakkhuviññāṇaṁ, atthi cakkhuviññāṇā viññātabbā dhammā, atthi tattha loko vā lokapaññatti vā.*”

Since the detailed explanation of the other senses is similar to that of *cakkhu*, let us confine our explanation to *cakkhu*. You will understand the rest.

“Samiddhi, wherever an eye is present, and external objects are present, visual consciousness is present, phenomena that should be known through eye consciousness are present, there exists a world or the manifestation of a world.”

This is followed by the description of other sense organs and lastly the mind.

“Samiddhi wherever a mind is present, mental objects are present, mind consciousness is present, phenomena that should be known through mind consciousness are present, there exists a world or the manifestation of a world.”

Now, he explains the reverse of it.

“Samiddhi, wherever the eye does not exist, external forms do not exist, eye consciousness does not exist, phenomena that should be known through eye consciousness do not exist, there exists neither a world nor the manifestation of a world.”

This explanation indicates that there is a state where the six sense spheres become non-existent.

Let us now change over to a *Sutta* we have often referred to earlier, the first *Sutta* of the *Dīgha Nikāya*. It’s the *Brahmajāla Sutta* that casts a net over sixty two views by way of rejecting them. After a critical review of these views the Buddha says that whatever views exist then, whatever views existed in the past, and whatever views may arise in the future, can be categorized under these sixty two views. Then the Buddha has some interesting comment to make about the formulators of these views.

“Monks, all those ascetics and Brahmins who hold views under these sixty two categories, …. to quote the Pāli words “*sabbe te chahi phassāyatanehi phussa phussa paṭisaṁvedenti.”* The different views they declare are based on various sense contacts they experience through the sense spheres.

What is the outcome of formulating views based on feelings gained through sense spheres?

Vedanā paccayā taṇhā, taṇhā paccayā upādānaṁ, upādāna paccayā bhavo, bhava paccayā jāti, jāti paccayā jarā maraṇa soka parideva.”

To them, from feeling as condition there arises craving, from craving as condition there arises grasping, from grasping as condition there arises becoming, from becoming as condition there arises birth, from birth as condition there arises decay, death, grief, lamentation. Since all these views have sprung up from feelings generated through contact with sense spheres, the ascetics and Brahmins who profess them are led from feeling to craving, from craving to grasping, from grasping to becoming. You see, they have no escape from *Saṁsāra*.

Next the discussion turns towards the identification of the real monk. In defining the term *vedagu* as ‘one who has mastery over all’ ascetics and Brahmins have based their interpretation on views. But the Buddha’s declaration is founded on a different footing.

“*channaṁ phassāyatanānaṁ samudayaṁ ca atthagamaṁ ca assādaṁ ca ādīnavaṁ ca nissaraṇaṁ ca yathābhūtaṁ pajānāti. Ayaṁ imehi sabbeheva uttarītaraṁ pajānāti.”*

At any time in my dispensation a monk who understands with wisdom, the six bases of contact as they really are, with regard to their arising, ceasing, satisfaction, perils and stepping out, he far excels those others in his wisdom.”

That is how the Buddha explains the word *vedagu*.

The discussion about *Saḷāyatana* continues further. There is another *Sutta* similar to the *Sabba Sutta* mentioned earlier. On this occasion the Buddha takes the monks by surprise by addressing them thus:

“*Dvayaṁ vo bhikkhave desessāmī*”

Monks I will teach you ‘two’. What are the two?

“*Cakkhuñceva rūpā ca, sotañceva saddā ca, ghānañceva gandhā ca, jivhāceva rasā ca, kāyoceva poṭṭhabbā ca, manoceva dhammā ca*.”

Each internal sense organ is stated together with its external sense object, the eye with forms, the ear with sounds, the nose with smells, the tongue with tastes, the body with body contacts and the mind with mental objects.

Here too the Buddha's challenge vibrates:

"This is the 'two'. Anyone who says there is another 'two' apart from this, is only jabbering away like a fool. He cannot prove it."

It is further confirmed by the *Dvayaṁ Sutta* as well.

In this discussion about *saḷāyatana*, we made reference to *saḷāyatana nirodha*."

We have time and again explained in our discourses, that *Nibbāna* means the release from the six sense spheres in this world itself. It is the same as *nissaraṇa*. Now you see that cessation of the six sense spheres – *saḷāyatana nirodha* – is attainable within this life. That realization dawns within the *Arahatphala samāpatti*. *Nibbāna* is really the attainment of that *samāpatti*.

Now I wish to switch over to another *sutta* to continue my explanation.

After the evening retreat Venerable Mahā Koṭṭhita came to meet Ven Sāriputta one day. He asked him a very complicating question indeed. "Friend Sāriputta, *channaṁ phassāyatanānaṁ asesa virāga nirodhā atthaññaṁ kiñci?*"

"At the total cessation of the six spheres of contact, is there anything else left?" Venerable Sāriputta rejects the question altogether by saying "*māhevaṁ āvuso*"

"Do not ask thus."

But Venerable Mahā Koṭṭhita pursued his questioning.

"At the total cessation of the six spheres of contact, isn't there anything else left?" Venerable Sāriputta's response was the same as earlier.

The third question was a combination of the first two questions. Is there and isn't there anything else left? That alternative was also rejected by Venerable Sāriputta. The final question was "At the total cessation of the six spheres is there anything that neither exists nor non-exists."

Venerable Sāriputta again said "*māhevaṁ āvuso.*"

Then Venerable Mahā Koṭṭhita plainly asked him "Friend, how can I understand what you say?"

Now comes Venerable Sāriputta's explanation. If one says that at the total cessation of the six sense spheres of contact there is something left, it would amount to – here he uses an unusual word – *appapañcaṁ papañceti*. I have explained this word *papañca* on earlier occasions to you. '*Appapañcaṁ papañceti*' means using linguistic jargon in an inappropriate place. Seeing it at depth, it is proliferating or arguing where argument must not take place.

The question whether there remains anything at the total cessation of the six sense spheres is in itself flawed. So are all the dilemmas and the quadrilemmas. They are all proliferations of theorists, as we have often reminded you.

That is why Venerable Sāriputta rejected them all as irrelevant. All four aspects of the argument are labeled as '*appapañcaṁ papañceti*', 'proliferating where proliferation must not take place'.

And finally he concludes by saying

"*Yāvatā āvuso channaṁ phassāyatanānaṁ gati, tāvatā papañcassa gati. Yāvatā papañcassa gati, tāvatā channaṁ phassāyatanānaṁ gati.*"

"Friend, as far as the six sense spheres reach, that far the proliferation reaches. As far as the proliferation reaches, that far the six sense spheres reach."

"*Channaṁ āvuso phassāyatanānaṁ asesa virāga nirodhā papañcanirodho papañcavūpasamo.*"

"Friend, with the total cessation of the six sense spheres, proliferation ceases, proliferation pacifies."

Papañcanirodha is a synonym for *Nibbāna*. Proliferation is impossible where the six sense spheres have ceased. We can see this *sutta* is extremely enlightening although it is deep.

In order to delve a little deeper into the subject, I wish to recall another *sutta* very briefly for our purpose. At the end of a discourse the Buddha once spoke thus to the Monks.

"*Tasmātiha Bhikkhave, se āyatane veditabbe yattha cakkhuñca nirujjhati, rūpasaññā ca virajjati. se āyatane veditabbe, yattha sotañca nirujjhati saddasaññā ca virajjati.*" It goes on in a similar strain. I shall explain the first. You must try to understand the rest.

“Monks, Therefore, this sphere should be understood, this sphere which is very unusual. The eye is extinct there. Perception of external forms fade away. The ear is extinct. Sounds fade away. The nose is extinct. Smells fade away.”

He continues until he winds up with “*mano ca nirujjhati, dhammasaññā ca virajjati.”*

The mind is extinct. Perception of cognizable objects fade away. Thereby the Buddha finally firmly establishes the fact that “this sphere must be understood, this sphere must be understood.”

After this brief admonition, the Buddha leaves the assembly and withdraws to the monastery. He left his statements unexplained. The monks thought “The Buddha left us steeped in an unexplained puzzle. Perhaps we could seek a clarification from Venerable Ānanda who has been often complimented by the Buddha for his lucid explanations.”

When the puzzle was presented to Venerable Ānanda, he though reluctantly, responded thus.

“Well, let me give my brief comments to the problem, the way I understand it:

Saḷāyatana nirodhaṁ kho āvuso bhagavatā sandhāya bhāsitam.”

“Friends, the Buddha has spoken with reference to the cessation of the six sense spheres.”

Earlier we have explained that *saḷāyatana nirodha* is a synonym for *Nibbāna*. Here the Buddha refers to the cessation of the six spheres as a special *āyatana*. This has often posed a problem to the scholars.

It is now clear that crossing over this world is the extinction of the *saḷāyatana*, the six sense spheres. It is a state where one acquires mastery over all. There are many more references to this attainment in the texts. On one occasion, two giant tuskers in wisdom, Venerable Mahā Koṭṭhita and Venerable Sāriputta, accost each other over a very subtle doctrinal issue. You must understand that their discussions are done solely for our benefit. Venerable Mahā Koṭṭhita questions.

“The *saṁyojanas* or fetters are bonds. Is the eye bonded by external forms, or are external forms bonded by the eye? Is the ear bonded by sounds, or are sounds bonded by the ear? Is the nose bonded by the smells or are the smells bonded by the nose?” He goes on and lastly asks “Is the mind bonded by cognizable objects or are cognizable objects bonded by the mind?” Venerable Sāriputta’s response was as follows; “No friend, the eye is not bonded by external forms, neither are

forms bonded by the eye. The ear is not bonded by sounds, neither are sounds bonded by the ear. But if lustful sensuality arises dependent on those two, that is the bond."

Next in order to illustrate this point, he cites an example.

"In case, friend, a black ox and a white ox are tethered by the same chain, one cannot say that the black ox is bonded by the white ox or the white one is bonded by the black one, which statements are both inapplicable. The bond is the chain between them. Similarly friend, the eye is not bonded by forms, neither are external forms bonded by the eye. The bond is the lustful sensuality that is generated between the two. The bond is attachment."

Let me bring in another episode by way of a simile. I know you like stories. This was related to a group of monks on a certain occasion.

"Monks, one evening, a certain tortoise crossed the river, and was going in search of food. At the same time a fox was also walking about in search of food. The tortoise saw the fox at a distance and withdrew his limbs and head into the shell. He lay there as good as dead. The fox too saw the tortoise and kept guard by him hoping to snatch off a limb the moment one comes out. But the tortoise continued his vigil, remaining perfectly still. The fox was compelled to give up hopes and depart.

Next comes the comparison.

"Monks, remember that Māra is keeping constant vigil over you just like that fox, hoping to break in through your eye, or to break in through your ear."

The Buddha teaches the technique of guarding oneself from the Māra. He brings in the secret of restraining one's senses, as he often does.

"*Cakkhunā rūpam disvā na nimittaggāhī hoti, nānubyañjanaggāhī hoti*."

"Monks, on seeing an external object do not take in its characteristics or occupy yourself with its attributes."

The two terms *nimitta* and *anubyañjana* have to be differentiated. To cite an example, seeing an attractive form is *nimittaggāhī*, being drawn towards it, observing more attributes that make the form attractive is *anubyañjana*. That is *nimittaggāhī* and *anubyañjanaggāhī*. Here the Buddha tries to explain the results of getting attracted to form and searching for more of its attractive attributes. It generates influxes and leads one to deterioration.

"If monks, you keep the six doors closed, Māra will withdraw defeated."

Due to that restraint of the senses, one could avoid committing evil actions through the six sense doors, like the tortoise who keeps his limbs withdrawn.

Next see the beauty of that simile converted into verse by the Buddha.

Kummova aṇgāni sake kapāle

samodahaṁ bhikkhu manovitakke

anissito aññamaheṭhayāno

parinibbuto na upavadeyya kañci

Just as a tortoise withdraws his head and limbs into its shell, a monk withdraws into himself against the mental reflections that are generated by the five sense bases – with the eye chasing behind visual objects and the ear chasing behind auditory objects etc. He keeps guard over the sense bases. Then '*anissito aññamaheṭhayāno*' he does not lean against anything and '*na upavadeyya*' does not blame anybody, does not harass anybody. '*Parinibbuto*' He attains extinction.

Here we see that with reference to sense restraint the Buddha has taught the path leading to cessation or the total departure from the six sense spheres. When we touch on *saḷāyatana*, the topic of contact crops up. Since we have referred to the spheres of contact when discussing the *Paṭicca Samuppāda*, I think the following *sutta* will be of interest to you, though deep in meaning.

The monk Moḷiya Phagguṇa asked the Buddha

"*ko nu kho bhante phusati*?"

"Lord, who is it that touches?" This monk, due to his notion of self, seems to imagine there is a person who touches. The Buddha replies,

"I do not say there is anyone who touches. Had I said so, your question would have been relevant. But since I do not say so, your question should be

"*kimpaccayā nu kho bhante phasso*?"

The Buddha corrects the question Moḷiya Phagguṇa had asked.

"Dependent on what is contact Sir?"

It is not appropriate to refer to 'anybody' touching.

"And my answer would be *Saḷāyatana paccayā phasso, phassa paccayā vedanā*."

“Dependent on the six sense spheres is contact. Dependent on contact is feeling.”

Feeling being a new topic for Moḷiya Phagguṇa, he got hold of it for further probing.

He questioned “*ko nu kho bhante vedeti*?” Who is it Lord, who feels?”

Again the Buddha replied,

“I do not say a person feels. Had I said so, your question would have been relevant. Since my statement is different, your question is inappropriate. This is how you should have questioned me.

“*Kiṁpaccayā nu kho bhante vedanā*?” Conditioned by what, Lord, is feeling? If you put the question in that form, I would answer thus:

Phassa paccayā vedanā, vedanā paccayā taṇhā.”

The Buddha introduced a term hitherto unspoken of that is *taṇhā*. Being in a questioning mood, Moḷiya Phagguṇa’s immediate response was “Lord, who is it that craves?”.

This is the Buddha’s reply:

“I do not say that anyone does the craving. The appropriate question would be

“*Kiṁ paccayā nu kho bhante taṇhā*?” and the Buddha continues in his own style “*vedanā paccayā taṇhā, taṇhā paccayā upādānaṁ.”*

Concealed within this style of replying is something amazing. Please try to understand its significance. I shall explain it with a simile. Imagine an artist who wishes to draw a link in a chain. If he draws only one solitary link, identifying it would be difficult, don’t you think? He has to at least draw half of a link on either side, for the chain to take shape. Now I hope you understand why the Buddha added an extra link which Moḷiya Phagguṇa did not inquire about. It is to make him realize that this is a chain.

Saḷāyatana paccayā phasso”

‘Dependent on the six sense spheres contact comes to be’. The Buddha did not stop at that. He introduced *phassa paccayā vedanā*. I am sure you understand that the Buddha very effectively introduces the Law of Dependent Arising at each link. He overstepped the valid answer by annexing *vedanā* to his explanation. Venerable Moḷiya Phagguṇa got caught up in it. The Buddha led him on to *tanhā* and finally to *upādana*. Ultimately it shows that, whatever we speak in day to day

usage, the Buddha firmly makes explicit the depth of the reality of *Paṭicca Samuppāda*. No one does the contacting. From *saḷāyatana* arises contact, *phassa*. From *phassa* arises feeling – *vedanā*. So it continues. You see what an important *sutta* this is.

If we were to go deeper into the subject, I am reminded of an occasion where a group of monks relate an experience of theirs to the Buddha. "Lord, certain ascetics and Brahmins in other sects ask us "For what purpose do you lead the higher life under the Buddha? What is the aim of your renunciation? Then Lord we reply like this 'We have renounced for the realization of *dukkha*, suffering. Our aim is to understand *dukkha*.' Lord, in replying so, are we speaking in accordance with your teaching, or are we contradicting you? We have come to you for clarification."

The Buddha replies,

"Well done monks. Your replies are perfectly correct. Suppose they ask you what this *dukkha* is that you wish to realize, then you must reply as follows."

To put it in English "The eye is suffering, material forms are suffering. Eye consciousness is suffering. Eye contact is suffering, all the feelings both pleasant and unpleasant that arise through eye contact are suffering."

You have to understand the other sense spheres similarly. You know quite well that under the four Noble Truths, the five aggregates of grasping are referred to as *dukkha*. Here the Buddha explains *dukkha* in terms of *saḷāyatana*, instead of the *pañca upādānakkhandha*. It exposes the nature of suffering with the six sense spheres.

There are several *sutta*s of this nature that try to reveal the impermanent nature of the *saḷāyatana*s. One is the *Dutiya Dvayaṁ Sutta* which closely follows the *Dvayaṁ Sutta* we discussed earlier. There the Buddha declares

"*Dvayaṁ bhikkhave paṭicca viññāṇaṁ sambhoti*."

Monks the consciousness arises dependent on two. It does not arise without a cause. Two come together to give rise to consciousness.

"*Cakkhuṁ ca paṭicca rūpe ca uppajjati cakkhu viññāṇaṁ*." Dependent on the eye and the visual object, there arises visual consciousness. In a similar manner, the ear and sound give rise to auditory consciousness. Each consciousness is dependently arisen. It goes to prove that always "arising takes place dependent on two."

The next important statement is "*tiṇṇaṁ saṁgati phasso*".

The implication here is quite deep. Let us discuss it now. The eye consciousness arises depending on the eye and the material object. Not being aware of this dependent nature, not being able to understand it, the moment it is treated as 'three' it becomes contact. Based on the eye and form, there arises eye consciousness. But at this point if it is treated as three,

"*tiṇṇaṁ saṁgati phasso*" then, contact arises. This is a very deep aspect of *phassa*, contact. We usually say "somebody touched" in ordinary language, being ignorant of reality as it is. But here it is specifically explained that contact does not arise devoid of a dependent cause. We have repeatedly reminded you that an unspecified *viññāna* does not arise just as a fire does not arise without a dependent cause. If it is consciousness, it has to be either eye consciousness, or ear consciousness, nose consciousness, tongue consciousness, body consciousness or lastly mind consciousness. But you must remember, neither of these is stored up somewhere. They arise with the coming together of two. That is where the '*dvayaṁ*' interpretation comes in. That alone is the secret in the *Paṭicca Samuppāda*. Fire never arises on its own independently. Whatever causes a fire, that fire is identified by that name. A fire caused by paper or firewood or straw or paddy husk is identified each by the dependent cause. Similarly, a consciousness caused by the eye and the material form coming together is identified as *cakkhu viññāṇa*, visual consciousness.

But due to ignorance, or foolishness, if one does not heed the fact that eye consciousness arises dependent on those two causes, and treats everything as 'one', he would see 'contact' as real, and give chase behind the illusory image. The eye is here, the material form is there. He runs after the mirage. This explains a very deep aspect of consciousness.

Now we have explored several aspects of the useful topic *saḷāyatana*. We told you at the outset that one has to know the dependent causes of arising in order to get a perfect understanding of the *saḷāyatana*. So also one has to know their cessation, their satisfaction and perils. Then comes *nissaraṇa* or stepping out of the attraction towards *saḷāyatana*.

Next, I wish to discuss with you a very important *sutta* called the *Saḷāyatanika Sutta* in the *Majjhima Nikāya*. It can be considered as the most important discourse on the six sense spheres. Here you find the Buddha doing a comparative analysis. On one side is the ordinary worldling who understands the six sense spheres at his mental level, and the satisfaction and perils that he experiences. On the other hand a person who has a realistic vision of the

saḷāyatana, being convinced of the temporary nature of enchantment and the inherent unpleasantness, obtains release from them. This is how the Buddha commences his comparison.

"*Cakkhuṁ bhikkhave ajānaṁ apassaṁ yathābhūtaṁ rūpe ajānaṁ apassaṁ yathābhūtaṁ cakku viññāṇaṁ ajānaṁ apassaṁ yathābhūtaṁ*" and he goes on. Let's study the meanings.

"*jānaṁ passaṁ*" means knowledge and vision. Not having knowledge and vision of the true nature of the eye as it is and external objects as they are – 'as it is' must be understood with regards to impermanence – not seeing the impermanence, not seeing the eye consciousness as it is, which is the outcome of those two, and not seeing eye contact as it is, and not seeing the resultant pleasant, unpleasant and neither pleasant nor unpleasant feelings, as they really are, one develops attachment towards the eye – "*cakkhusmiṁ sārajjati*" – to the external objects, to the eye consciousness, to the eye contact and to the pleasant, unpleasant and neither pleasant nor unpleasant feelings resulting from eye contact. Now you can understand the entanglement of the worldlings with the six spheres. Did you notice that the clinging runs into the mind as well? Unable to understand the mind wisely as it really is, one gets attached to the mind, the mental phenomena that the mind focuses on, the mind consciousness, mind contacts and feelings arising thereof.

Then the resultant perils of this process are discussed "*tassa sārattassa saṁyuttassa sammūḷhassa assādānupassino viharato āyatiṁ pañcupādānakkhandhā upacayaṁ gacchanti*."

That worldling, due to his ignorance, firmly clings to, and gets bound to the above mentioned sense spheres, sense objects and the resultant consciousness, so that caught in the deception of apparent pleasure, he gets into deep trouble.

"*Āyatiṁ pañcupādānakkhandhā*" he accumulates the fivefold aggregates of grasping, again. As a result of gripping the temporary mass of phenomena that pass by, one develops the fivefold aggregates of grasping. Then its perils are explained.

"*Tassa kāyikā pi darathā pavaḍḍhanti. Cetasikā pi darathā pavaḍḍhanti. Kāyikā pi santāpā pavaḍḍhanti. Cetasikā pi santāpā pavaḍḍhanti. Kāyikā pi pariḷāhā pavaḍḍhanti. Cetasikā pi pariḷāhā pavaḍḍhanti. So kāyadukkhampi cetodukkhampi paṭisaṁvedeti*."

These are the perils he has to experience. His physical distresses increase. His mental distresses increase. His physical pains increase. His mental pains

increase. His physical burnings increase. His mental burnings increase. He experiences a mass of physical and mental grief. This explanation deals with the worldly aspect. Now look at the opposite aspect.

"*Cakkhuñca kho bhikkhave jānaṁ passaṁ yathābhūtaṁ rūpe jānaṁ passaṁ yathābhūtaṁ cakkuviññāṇaṁ jānaṁ passaṁ yathābhūtaṁ, cakkusamphassaṁ jānaṁ passaṁ yathābhūtaṁ.*"

Thus continues the account. If one were to see the eye as it really is, which means to see the impermanent nature of the eye, and the physical objects as they really are, and see the resultant eye consciousness as impermanent in its very nature, and also the eye contact, and feeling as they really are, such a person – such a monk – who disciplines himself in this dispensation, seeing the perils of the sensory activity, undergoes this wonderful change.

Tassa pañcupādānakkhandā apacayaṁ gacchanti. The five aggregates of grasping diminish in him. Compare this with the worldling. Every experience is accumulated in his mind. He accumulates the relevant material objects as his own aggregate of form, and the feelings as his own heap of feelings. This is what leads him on in *Saṁsāra*. But the disciplined monk, in contrast, sees impermanence then and there. Nothing remains as residue.

Therefore,

"*apacayaṁ gacchati*" they are gradually exhausted. Here *upacaya* and *apacaya* stand for *Saṁsāra* and *Nibbāna* respectively. The Buddha attempts to illustrate how the mind inclined towards *Nibbāna* disciplines itself to wipe out the five aggregates of grasping. Then the Buddha goes on to describe the result thereof.

"*Tassa kāyikā pi darathā pahīyanti. Cetasikā pi darathā pahīyanti. Kāyikā pi santāpā pahīyanti. Cetasikā pi santāpā pahīyanti. Kāyikā pi pariḷāhā pahīyanti. Cetasikā pi pariḷāhā pahīyanti. So kāyasukhampi cetosukhampi paṭisaṁvedeti.*"

"His physical distresses diminish. His mental distresses diminish. His physical pains diminish. His mental pains diminish. His physical burnings diminish. His mental burnings diminish. He experiences immense physical and mental happiness. Then the Buddha delves deeper into this discipline. A monk who disciplines himself thus, finds himself progressing unbelievably fast on the Noble Eightfold Path. I wish to remark that this *sutta* will be of immense help to those who meditate on the *saḷāyatana*.

Then the Buddha proclaims the final result of this training.

"*Yā tathābhūtassa diṭṭhi sāssa hoti sammādiṭṭhi.*"

"If such a disciplined monk holds a view, that will definitely be the right view."

This refers, not to the ordinary *sammādiṭṭhi* that we talk of, but is the very path, right view at its deepest level. If such a monk holds an intention, it is the right intention. If he makes an effort, it is always a right effort. If he has awareness, it is a correct awareness. If he attains any concentration, it is bound to be the right concentration. Now did you notice that only five links in the Noble Eightfold Path are discussed here.

Now the Buddha explains why three items were left out.

"*Pubbeva kho panassa kāyakammaṁ vacīkammaṁ ājīvo suparisuddho hoti."*

A monk who undertakes this strenuous discipline, at the very outset dispels all gross impure tendencies which have no place in the path to *Nibbanā*. He is beyond lowly talk and action. He is pure in word, action and livelihood – *Sammā vācā, Sammā kammanta, Sammā ājīva*. At the higher level of the path he concentrates on right view, right intention, right effort, right awareness and right concentration – *Sammā diṭṭhi, Sammā saṁkappa, Sammā vāyāma, Sammā sati, Sammā samādhi*. Now the Buddha takes us further up the path. The monk who develops the Noble Eightfold Path in this manner attains purity of mind.

"*Tassa evaṁ imaṁ ariyṁ aṭṭhañgikaṁ maggaṁ bhāvayato cattāropi satipaṭṭhāna bhāvanā pāripūriṁ gacchanti. Cattāro sammappadhānā bhāvanā paripūriṁ gacchatnti. Cattāro iddhipādā bhāvanā pāripūriṁ gacchanti. Pañca pi indriyāni bhāvanā pāripūriṁ gacchanti. Pañca pi balāni bhāvanā pāripūriṁ gacchanti. Sattapi bhojjhañgā bhāvanā pāripūriṁ gacchanti.*"

This is a very clear explanation of how one perfects the thirty seven Factors of Enlightenment through this disciplinary training. In the process of practicing the Noble Eightfold Path, the fourfold mindfulness or *satipaṭṭhāna* develops spontaneously. So does the fourfold right effort, the four psychic powers, the four faculties, the five powers and the seven factors of enlightenment. This is a description of the transcendental stage or the Supramundane stage.

The Buddha speaks further of the monk who has perfected himself thus far.

"*Tassime dve dhammā yuganaddhā vattanti samatho ca vipassanā ca.*"

"In him, these two factors, namely calm and insight prevail like yoked oxen."

Two oxen yoked to a cart have to step together. Similarly, you have heard I am sure as *samatha* and *vipassanā* meditators, that one attains concentration through calm and the three signata – *tilakkhana* – through insight.

There are three methods one could follow. After practicing *samatha*, one could proceed to practice *vipassanā*.

"*Samatha pubbaṁgamaṁ vipassanaṁ*."

Or else practice *vipassanā* first and then *samatha*.

"*Vipassanā pubbaṁgamaṁ samathaṁ*."

There is yet another method.

"*Samathaṁ ca vipassanaṁ ca yuganaddhaṁ bhāveti."*

That is 'pulling together' like two oxen yoked to a cart. Both *samatha* and *vipassanā* develop "yoked together".

Now the Buddha reveals the final result of this exertion.

"*So ye dhammā abhiññā pariññeyyā, te dhamme abhiññā parijānāti. Ye dhammā abhiññā pahātabbā, te dhamme abhiññā pajahati. Ye dhammā abhiññā bhāvetabbā, te dhamme abhiññā bhāveti. Ye dhammā abhiññā sacchikātabbā, te dhamme abhiññā sacchikaroti.*"

Whatever mental factors have to be comprehended through higher knowledge, he comprehends them through higher knowledge. Whatever mental factors have to be eliminated through higher knowledge, he eliminates them through higher knowledge. Whatever mental factors have to be developed through higher knowledge, he develops them through higher knowledge. Whatever mental factors have to be realized through higher knowledge, he realizes them through higher knowledge.

The Buddha then proceeds to explain these *dhammas*. What should be comprehended are the five aggregates of grasping. What should be eliminated are ignorance and craving. What should be developed are calm and insight – *samatha* and *vipassanā*. What should be realized and perfected are the wisdom of Arahanthood and emancipation through Arahanthood which are known by the terms *vijjā vimutti*. This is a wonderful *sutta* that deals with different methods applicable in practicing the path to *Nibbāna*.

It is clear that there are several methods to attain *Nibbāna*, depending on the object of meditation. Some may realize the impermanence of the five aggregates

of grasping through the meditation of the three characteristics. Some may meditate on the primary elements. Some may meditate on impermanence in life through the medium of the six sense spheres. Finally, all this converge (add up) to reach the summit. Last of all, *samatha* and *vipassanā*, like two oxen yoked to a cart, 'pull together' in the final phase. Three factors in the Noble Eightfold Path having been already eliminated, the remaining five are eliminated during this final phase. It is the transcendental Noble Eightfold Path that is referred to here. Misconduct through word, body and livelihood become inapplicable here, as they have been already wiped out. When the meditator's mind functions on a transcendental level, only the other five factors become active. The Buddha explains how one could reach the final goal of *vijjā vimutti phala*, through the analysis of the six sense spheres. When referring to impermanence, I am reminded of several more *sutta*s that may confirm this position.

Once the Buddha addresses the Monks and declares "*Cakkhuṁ aniccaṁ vipariṇāmī aññathābhāvī, rūpā aniccā vipariṇāmino aññathābhāvīno cakkhuviññānaṁ aniccaṁ vipariṇāmī aññathābhāvī.*"

The eye is impermanent, subject to change and subject to 'otherwiseness'. They are the three sides of impermanence.

"It is impermanent" is an incomplete statement. Due to its impermanent character it is subject to change. Finally become 'otherwise' or different from what it was. This same description is applicable to material objects and also to visual consciousness. They are impermanent, subject to change and becomes 'otherwise'.

Now comes a question based on this discussion.

"Monks, how can a permanent thing arise from an impermanent thing? If the eye is impermanent, if material objects are impermanent, how could eye consciousness become permanent? The eye contact resulting from eye consciousness is also impermanent. The experience that arises dependent on eye contact is also impermanent. The purpose of this explicit description is to drive the point home. The entire statement "*aniccaṁ vipariṇāmī aññathābhāvī*" is repeated at every point. Everything is *calā ceva, vayā ca, aniccā, vipariṇāmino aññathābhāvino*. Here several terms are used to stress the character of impermanence, such as 'quivers', 'withers', 'impermanent', 'subject to change', 'has the character of otherwiseness'. Somebody wishes to see some object well. But the moment he looks, both the object and the eye undergo a swift change, although we are unaware of this change. They quiver. That's why they are called

‘movies’. Unable to understand the fast quivering nature, one establishes oneself on the perception of compact and tries to grasp material ‘objects’.

“I saw this form with my own eye. It is the very same form.”

It is not easy to understand the change it undergoes every moment. In this manner the Buddha makes explicit the nature of change everywhere. This is the second *Dvayaṁ Sutta* in the *Saḷāyatana Vagga* of the *Saṁyutta Nikāya*, which is of immense help to meditators on impermanence. It winds up as follows:

“*calā ceva, vayā ca, aniccā, viparināmino*”

“they quiver, wither, has the nature of impermanence and change.”

It is invisible to the physical eye. It is visible only to the eye of wisdom.

As the meditator on vipassanā reaches higher and higher, he begins to see through the world as ‘totally different’ to what others see. The *Thera Theri Gatha* has recorded amazing objects of meditation, such as a flowing stream, a fire. He who has constantly cultivated the nature of impermanence will see impermanence in everything. The fallen leaf, the blossoming and fading flower is impermanent. That impermanence is very strong.

At times the Buddha has declared “*Anicca saññā bhikkhave bhāvitā bahulīkatā sabbaṁ kāmarāgaṁ pariyādiyati sabbaṁ rūparāgaṁ pariyādiyati sabbaṁ bhavarāgaṁ pariyādiyati sabbaṁ avijjaṁ pariyādiyati samūhanti.*”

A thorough training in the perception of impermanence results in total elimination of the attachment to sensuality. The passion for material objects, the yearning for becoming, ignorance and finally the subtle conceit of self are totally eradicated. The Buddha has spoken so much in praise of the development of the perception of impermanence, that he has once remarked “It is incorrect to say there are two paths to *Nibbāna* because they all converge at the summit.”

One has to practice either the Four Foundations of Mindfulness or the perception of impermanence. This point is confirmed in the *Mahā Saḷāyatanika Sutta*. However, there is no contradiction here because both serve the same purpose. At a superficial glance, we see one disciplining oneself in Four Foundations of Mindfulness following the accepted methodology.

He follows this one and only path until he realizes *Nibbāna*. That is the accepted method. But we see that impermanence is also declared as the path.

“There are two paths to gain control over defilements. One is the development of the Four Foundations of Mindfulness, the other is the development of the perception of impermanence.”

The latter serves as a strong support in developing the spiritual qualities such as the fourfold *satipaṭṭhānas*, and the four methods of right effort *sammappadhāna*. Everything that the Buddha has taught about impermanence is so amazingly relevant in the process of spiritual training. We have discussed here only a limited amount of that wealth of information.

We must understand that the Buddha uses a variety of comparisons to emphasize the importance of *saḷāyatana*. *Vedagu* refers to the Arahant. *Triveda* is not the three *Vedas* of the Brahmins but the *tevijjā* Arahants are endowed with that is the knowledge of recollecting previous births, the knowledge of the divine eye, the knowledge of the elimination of influxes – *pubbe nivāsānussati ñāna, dibba cakkhu and āsavakkhaya ñāna*. The entirety of *tevijjā* comes under the purview of *nissaraṇa* or stepping out mentioned under six sense spheres. The earlier ascetics and Brahmins unfortunately missed this aspect of *nissaraṇa*. Neither did they understand the origin of *saḷāyatana*, the six sense spheres. It was the Buddha who proclaimed that a *vedagu* is found only in his path, and so is all spiritual perfection. The *Mahā Saḷāyatana Sutta* in particular, emphasizes the teachings of *saḷāyatana*, as we see. Although my discourse is brief, I have tried to direct all my explanations towards the practice of meditation. I hope it will be helpful to you.

The doctrine of impermanence proclaimed by the Buddha is of immeasurable importance. Everything is included within it. On the other hand, everything in the world takes place within these six sense spheres. We cannot realize it because we are running after a mirage. The day we realize this truth, all problems will dissolve.

I think it is enough for today. You should read or listen to this topic of meditation more often, internalize it and put it into practice with determination. It will help you to tread the Buddha’s path to *Nibbāna* as far as possible. The Buddha has clarified the direct path to *Nibbāna* or *vijjā vimutti*. Today we tried to expand your knowledge on the *Saḷāyatana*, in this series of discourses on *Paticca Samuppāda*. We hope to discuss the other topics if time permits, later.

I wish you would reach the path of *Dhamma* without delay, with the help of this series of talks. May you acquire the strength, determination and power to fulfill the requirements in perfecting the path and attaining fruition as *sotāpanna sakadāgāmī anāgāmi* and *arahant*. Whatever beings there be, from the lowest

hell *Avīci* to the highest Brahma world *Akaniṭṭha*, may they all rejoice in this insightful sermon. May it be conducive to their attainment of *Nibbāna*! May you attain *Nibbāna* in this very life!



Paticca Samuppada Sermon 15
The Law of Dependent Arising
(Pahan Kanuwa Sermon – No. 197)

'*Namo tassa bhagavato arahato sammāsambuddhassa*'

'Homage be! To the Fortunate One – the Worthy, Fully Enlightened!'

Tesaṁ phassaparetānaṁ

bhavasotānusārinaṁ

kummaggapaṭipannānaṁ

ārā saṁyojanakkhayo

Ye ca phassaṁ pariññāya

aññāya upasame ratā

te ve phassābhisamayā

nicchātā parinibbutā

– Dvayatānupassanā Sutta. Sutta Nipātha.

To them that are fully given to contact

And are swept by the current of becoming

To them that tread the wrong path

Destruction of fetters is far away.

But they that fully understand contact

And with full comprehension are attached to appeasement

It is they that by the understanding of contact

Are hungerless and fully appeased.

Dear Listeners,

The Dhamma that the Teacher of the Three Worlds, the fully Enlightened Fortunate One placed before the world is one that goes against the current. That Dhamma which flows against the pervert and narrow current of becoming is the massive body of water called '*Dhammasota*' that takes one towards the cessation of becoming. The worldlings caught up in the current of becoming go on revolving in this Saṁsāric whirlpool. The Noble Disciple who has fallen into the Dhamma current reaches *Nibbāna* which is called the cessation of becoming. The turning point between these two is contact.

Therefore, we have chosen as the topic of this 15th sermon, two verses on contact found in the *Dvayatānupassanā Sutta* of the *Sutta Nipāta*. Since we used as the topics of a number of earlier sermons, verses from this *Dvayatānupassanā Sutta,* you all might remember the style of preaching followed by the Buddha in that discourse. Introducing various items of Dhamma which incline to two sides and distinguishing their arising aspect and the cessation aspect is the style of preaching in this discourse. Now the two aspects of contact the Buddha first of all introduces to the congregation of monks with this statement in prose. "If there are those who ask whether there could be another mode of contemplating the dualities, they should be told:

'There is.' How could there be? 'Whatever suffering that arises, all that is due to contact.' This is one mode of contemplation. With the remainderless cessation of contact, there is no arising of suffering. This is the second mode of contemplation."

Having made this declaration, the Buddha goes on to state the benefits of practicing this contemplation of dualities.

"If a monk dwells diligently and ardently combatting defilements in accordance with this contemplation, one of two fruits could be expected of him; Either full comprehension here and now or if there is any residual clinging, non-returnership.

It is after this declaration that the Buddha uttered those two verses.

"*Tesaṁ phassaparetānaṁ*

bhavasotānusārinaṁ

kummaggapaṭipannānaṁ

ārā saṁyojanakkhayo

Ye ca phassaṁ pariññāya

aññāya upasame ratā

te ve phassābhisamayā

nicchātā parinibbutā"

"For them who are fully enslaved to contact and moving along with the current of becoming, who are on the wrong path the cutting off of the bonds of becoming namely the destruction of fetters, is far away. But they that have comprehended contact and take delight in the appeasement through knowledge born of realization, verily it is they by their higher understanding of contact are hungerless and fully appeased."

I hope to give a special sermon today based on these two verses because this happens to be a significant day marking the end of the rains-retreat of the Sangha on which they hold the Vinaya act called *Pavāraṇā* – namely the Full Moon day ending the rains-retreat. Due to other reasons too I thought of presenting this sermon at a more practical level – though other sermons also are meditation topics. So let me request you all from this point onwards to listen attentively to what is being said from word to word and sentence to sentence. Speaking about contact, First of all I must mention something I had already brought out with reference to the very first discourse in the *Dīgha Nikāya* – namely *Brahmajāla Sutta* – that is to say, the fact that the Buddha dismissed all the sixty two wrong views listed there with a very brief phrase.

Now, what is that significant phrase? '*Tadapi phassa paccayā*' – 'That too is due to contact.' Similarly towards the end of that discourse, the Buddha declares a statement like this with reference to the recluses and Brahmins who proclaim those views:

'*sabbe te chahi phassāyatanehi phussa phussa paṭisaṁvedenti*'

'They all go on experiencing through the six sense-spheres by contacting again and again.'

Then the consequences of it are also mentioned. Because of that feeling they get craving, and due to craving, grasping, due to grasping, becoming, due to

becoming, birth and due to birth, decay and death and all the rest of suffering. What does it mean? As stated in the first verse all recluses and Brahmins who took up those sixty-two views are enslaved by contact, caught up in the current of becoming and fallen on the wrong track. Therefore, they have not attained freedom from the fetters of becoming. Finally the Buddha proclaims what sort of Dhamma he preaches. About the monk who has attained arahanthood in this dispensation, it is said that he is one who has reached full appeasement by five kinds of understanding about the six sense-spheres. What are they? As we mentioned in a previous sermon, the understanding of the arising, going down, satisfaction, misery and stepping-out in regard to the six sense-spheres – that is to say, *samudaya*, *atthagama*, *assāda, ādīnava* and *nissaraṇa*. This is the distinctive quality of this dispensation in regard to contact. From here onwards we shall take up a number of discourses to clarify further the phenomenon of contact. Now you had better take this as a pilgrimage – a pilgrimage to *Nibbāna*. With that idea uppermost in your minds please try to listen attentively to this sermon during this hour.

I need not mention this in particular for you know well enough about the twelve linked formula of Dependent Arising. In that formula beginning with '*avijjā paccayā saṅkhārā*' – 'dependent on ignorance, preparations' – this is how contact comes to be mentioned:

'*.....saḷāyatana paccayā phasso, phassa paccayā vedanā*' – 'dependent on the six sense-spheres, contact, dependent on contact, feeling.' But the deepest philosophy of contact is presented to us with the utmost clarity by the *Madhupiṇḍika* ('Honey ball') *Sutta* which is rich in its flavour of meaning like a ball of honey. On previous occasions we have discussed in full this *Madhupiṇḍika Sutta*of the *Majjhima Nikāya*. If we are to bring up what is relevant to this context, the venerable *Arahant* Mahā Kaccāna who was placed foremost among those disciples who are capable of expounding at length what is preached in brief, is seen explaining a brief utterance of the Buddha at the request of the company of monks. This sentence occurs in that explanation:

"*....cakkhuñcāvuso, paṭicca rūpe ca uppajjati cakkhuviññāṇaṁ, tiṇṇaṁ saṅgati phasso*"

This statement presents a very profound philosophy.

'*cakkhuñcāvuso, paṭicca rūpe ca uppajjati cakkhuviññāṇaṁ*'

'Dependent on eye and forms arises eye-consciousness.'

Then comes the phrase:

'*tiṇṇaṁ saṅgati phasso*'

'The concurrence of the three is contact.'

If you reflect on this deeply, you will discover an extremely knotty point – a subtle one at that. Now remember, here the two words '*paṭicca*' and '*uppajjati*' came up. This is a clear indication that the Law of Dependent Arising is concerned with the arising of consciousness. Because of eye and forms arises eye-consciousness. But once it arises, worldlings, because of their delusion, because of their ignorance, count them as three. It is not really justifiable to count these as three. Why? It is because of the eye and forms that consciousness arose. We have explained what eye-consciousness is. The nature of consciousness is the very discriminating as two things. Until consciousness arises there is no idea of eye and form as two things. It is when consciousness arises that one gets the idea:

'This is my eye and there is that form.'

That is why we say that the gap – the interstice – between the two is consciousness. But due to non-understanding one counts eye, forms and consciousness as three. It is when one imagines them as three, that contact arises. From there onwards it is all delusion. That is why we call contact the turning point. Now that regarding contact we spoke of two things and a gap, let us now turn to a powerful discourse we had discussed on various occasions – namely the *Majjhe Sutta* among the 'Sixes' of *Anguttara Nikāya*. First of all let me mention the introductory story for those who do not know about it. When the Buddha was dwelling at *Isipatana* in *Benares*, a group of Elder monks gathered in the assembly hall after the alms-round and initiated a Dhamma discussion – in modern parlance it may be called a symposium. What was the point at issue? A question to this effect came up in the Dhamma discussion. The Fortunate One has preached in the *Metteyya Pañha of Pārāyaṇa* the following verse:

Yo ubhante viditvāna

majjhe mantā na lippati

taṁ brūmi mahāpurisoti

sodha sibbanimaccagā

Having taken up this verse, they extracted four questions as the subject for their symposium. What are they? Let me first explain the meaning of the verse. '*yo ubhante viditvāna*' – 'He who, having understood both ends', '*majjhe mantā na lippati*' – 'does not get attached to the middle with wisdom', '*taṁ brūmi mahāpurisoti*' the Buddha is saying:

'Him I call a great man' – Why? '*sodha sibbanimaccagā*' – 'Because he has bypassed the seamstress in this world.'

So out of this cryptic verse four points are elicited as questions:

'What is the one end mentioned in this verse? What is the second end? What is the middle? Who is the seamstress? To these four questions, six Elder monks put forward six interpretations. They seem to be wonderful meditation topics. Let me bring up only what is relevant to the context. Relating to the question of sense-spheres the interpretation given by the fifth Elder monk is this:

'One end is the six internal sense-spheres, namely eye, ear, nose, tongue, body and mind. The second end is the six external sense-spheres – forms, sounds, smells, tastes, touches, ideas. The middle is consciousness and the seamstress is craving. Talking about seamstress, nowadays there could be skilled seamstresses in the garment industry. But this seamstress can beat them all because she has three special qualifications, namely:

'*ponobhavikā*' – she puts the stitch for the next birth. '*nandirāgasahagatā*' – she has delight and attachment and '*tatratatrābhinandinī*' – she delights now here now there. It is that seamstress who puts the knot between the two ends ignoring the middle. Consciousness which is in the middle has arisen because of those two. But ignoring that fact the seamstress craving puts the stitch to those two ends. For instance it stitches up eye and forms.

The story of stitching up eye and forms, we have mentioned on various occasions. If we are to give a simile, one that is easily understood is the mirage. In short the Buddha has compared the entire aggregate of perception to a mirage. When we say 'mirage' we have in mind only the eye and forms. But the comparison of the entire aggregate of perception to a mirage is a very deep dictum. However in this context, for simplicity's sake, let us take the question of eye and forms. Most of you know what a mirage is, but let us briefly remind ourselves about it. There is a Sanskrit word for the mirage – namely '*mṛgatṛsṇikā*' which means a sight that arouses craving and thirst in a deer. At times when there is a drought there is an appearance in the distance which resembles flowing water. The deer imagines water in it.

What is its stance? 'I am here and water is there. I am here and water is there.' Though it tells itself 'I am here and water is there' with every step it takes it is taking its eye with it. Still it goes on telling:

'I am here, water is there.' What it imagines to be water also recedes.

Now that is the nature of the mirage. It is an endless pursuit. The mirage is deceptive. What perpetuates that deception is the magic-like delusion in eye-consciousness. The deer keeps running unaware of the gap mentioned above. It is ignorant of the intervening space. Due to that delusion the deer runs and gets wearied. The Buddha has pointed out that not only the deer but the entire world of living beings is deluded like it by this mirage of perception. It is this seamstress 'craving' who is playing this subtle trick. It is said that this seamstress puts the knot. How can one get free from these knots. A clue to that release is found in this verse itself.

'*Yo ubhante viditvāna – majjhe mantā na lippat*', '*mantā*' means wisdom.

You might say:

'But we don't have wisdom. It is something that dawns on arahants automatically.'

You must not say so. The seed of wisdom is there in every one of us. It is '*yonisomanasikāra*'– radical attention.

'*Yonisomanasikāra*' is a very powerful word in this dispensation – particularly for insight meditators. But unfortunately we have to mention that in the commentaries we do not get a clear explanation of it. It is explained as '*upāya manasikāra*' (skillful attention) and '*patha manasikāra*' (attention according to the path). We call it 'wise attention' for convenience's sake. But there is a great depth in it. '*Yoni*' means the place of origin – the matrix. Therefore, '*yonisomanasikāra*' means 'attention by way of the place of origin'. Already you can guess what the place of origin is. It is contact (*phassa*) that we called the turning-point. That is why in the *Brahmajāla Sutta* we found the dictum:

'*tadapi phassa paccayā*' ('That too is dependent on contact'). It seems for some reason or other that fact has not come to light so far. Contact is what seems to be the place of origin. So attending by way of the place of origin is *yonisomanasikāra*.

From here onwards we have to give various similes. There is a game called 'table-tennis'. Well, let us call to mind this game. What we call the Ping-Pong ball and the two rackets are the paraphernalia required. There is a short net in the middle of the T.T table. What is the procedure in this game? The ball that the player on the other side spins with his racket, has to be returned to the other side by the player on this side before it falls to the ground. Now for easy comprehension of our simile let us call the player on the opposite side Māra. The player on this side is the meditator. Take it as a table tennis game between Māra and the meditator.

There is no 'racketeer' like Māra. Just call to mind the nuances of the term 'racket' in the society. We have come all this way in *Saṁsāra* because we got caught in Māra's racket. Now we are going to beat Māra. Even to beat him, the meditator has to take up the racket. What does the incompetent or unskillful player do? When the player on the other side sends the ball to this side he lets it bump off and with difficulty returns it bending his body this way and that way. He cannot go on like that. He will be the loser before long. On the other hand the competent one keeps standing straight and returns the ball to the other side as soon as it touches his side of the table. He does not allow it to bump off. You had better take this 'bumping off' itself as a simile for '*papañca*' – conceptual proliferation. In the context of the Dhamma, this 'bumping off' is comparable to *papañca*. Not to give way to '*papañca*' is attending then and there without allowing thoughts to bump off. What is the 'then and there'? The point of contact – '*phassa*'. So attending then and there to the point of contact is like returning the ball to the other side as soon as it touches this side. You have to do it with extreme rapidity. It is one who does it very rapidly that in the end beats Māra. Māra will have to throw away his racket.

Let us take up another simile. It is not a game but a fight.

We are now going back to the age of sword-fights. Not only in Sri Lanka but in countries like England they used the sword both for offence and defense. They had a sword hung on the belt. When two such persons fall out, one challenges the other to come for a fight and draws the sword from the scabbard. Sometimes the fight would go on as a duelling. With no shield to protect oneself, a parry and thrust would go on with the sword. Just think about it. How rapidly should one wield the sword in order to be the winner. One has to be prepared to ward off every blow of the opponent. We gave both these similes to show how rapidly one has to go on attending. Whether it is the racket or the sword, one has to accelerate attention to the utmost. Since we gave the simile of the table-tennis game as a practical illustration, let us assume that Māra is sending a 'form-ball'. As soon as the 'form-ball' comes, without allowing it to 'bump off' into '*papañca*', one should turn it to the opposite side. How does one do it? What is the racket used on this Buddha side? '*anicca, anicca*' – 'impermanent, impermanent.' Māra may send the ball again. But with this '*anicca*' racket we turn it to the other side. We gave this simile to acquaint you with '*aniccānupassanā*' – 'contemplation of impermanence.'

On an earlier occasion too we mentioned in passing a very powerful sermon on the contemplation of impermanence. In the *Saḷāyatana Vagga* of the *Saṁyutta Nikāya* there are two discourses with the same title '*Dvayaṁ*'. Last time we

discussed one of them. Now what is relevant to the present context is the second '*Dvayaṁ*' *Sutta*. This is how the Buddha begins that discourse:

"*Dvayaṁ bhikkhave paṭicca viññāṇaṁ sambhoti*."

'Monks, depending on a dyad consciousness arises.'

"*Kathañca bhikkhave dvayaṁ paṭicca viññāṇaṁ sambhoti*."

'How, monks, does consciousness arise depending on a dyad?'

"*Cakkhuñca paṭicca rūpe ca uppajjati cakkhuviññāṇaṁ*."

'Depending on eye and forms arises eye consciousness.' Then comes a series of significant words.

"*Cakkhuṁ aniccaṁ vipariṇāmi aññathābhāvī, rūpā aniccā vipariṇāmino aññathābhāvino*."

'Eye is impermanent, changing and turning otherwise. Forms are impermanent, changing and turning otherwise.' Then it is said:

"*Itthetaṁ dvayaṁ calañceva vayañca aniccaṁ vipariṇāmī aññathābhāvī*."

'Thus this dyad is unstable, liable to pass away, impermanent changing and turning otherwise.' That is not all.

"*Cakkhuviññāṇaṁ aniccaṁ vipariṇāmī aññathābhāvī*."

'Eye consciousness is impermanent, changing, becoming otherwise.'

"*Yopi hetu yopi paccayo cakkhuviññāṇassa uppādāya……*"

'Whatever condition there is for the arising of eye-consciousness, that too is impermanent.' Then the Buddha poses a question to the monks:

"Monks, how can something that arises due to a condition that is impermanent, be permanent?"

If the conditions are impermanent, how can eye-consciousness arisen depending on them be permanent? There are three terms used to denote the collocation of these three factors:

"*tiṇṇaṁ dhammānaṁ saṅgati sannipāto samavāyo*" – The concurrence, assemblage, togetherness – that is what is called 'contact'. Then comes the statement:

"*Cakkhusamphassopi anicco vipariṇāmī aññathābhāvī.*"

'Eye contact too is impermanent, changing, becoming otherwise.' Then again the question is posed:

How can eye contact arisen due to impermanent conditions be permanent?

Now comes a significant declaration:

"*Phuṭṭho bhikkhave, vedeti, phuṭṭho sañjānāti, phuṭṭho ceteti.*"

'contacted, monks, one feels, contacted one perceives, contacted one intends.' Keep in mind, then:

The origin and matrix of feeling, perception and intention is contact itself. It is not without reason that we stated that '*yonisomanasikāra*' or radical attention is attending mentally to the point of touch. In conclusion it is said that all these things are unstable, passing away, impermanent and changing otherwise:

"*itthetepi dhammā calā ceva vayā ca aniccā vipariṇāmino aññathābhāvino.*"

This is the wonderful presentation of the contemplation of impermanence by the Buddha. With that background you can now understand that whether it is the racket or the sword, what matters is the speed of directing attention. It is at the moment one has accelerated the speed of attention to the utmost, that one can understand the secret of that mirage. We have now said enough about the eye. There are six. So then, let us turn our attention to the ear. I hope to explain that too with similes. Let me mention first of all that I have to hark back to the *Majjhe Sutta*, when speaking about every sense sphere. According to the exposition in the *Majjhe Sutta,* this is what is stated about the ear. Ear is one end, sound is the second end and ear consciousness is in the middle. The seamstress as usual is craving. What does this seamstress do? She puts the stitch on ear and sound ignoring ear-consciousness. In this case too accelerating attention is what is helpful. I would like to give a simile to illustrate the acceleration of attention. It may be a little unconventional.

As you know, there is an insect like a beetle, about two inches in size living on the trees which we call '*Rähäyyā*' (English. 'cicada') That creature starts a music around 4 o'clock in the afternoon. When one '*rähäyyā*' gives the start, others join in the chorus. It is an extremely rough music irritating the ear. If you bear with me I shall imitate it:

'R-R-R.....R-R-R-R-R.....R-R'

Sometimes I wonder whether it is called '*Rähäyyā*' because it teaches us how to roll our 'R's. Of course I do not know the etymology of the word. *Rähäyyā*'s music is a big disturbance to our meditation for calm and serenity (that is '*Samatha*') because it digs into the ear. But it reminds us that there is something called the 'ear-drum'. The most wonderful musical instrument in the world is the ear-drum. *Rähäyyā* reminds us of the fact that we have an ear-drum. Though it is our 'enemy' in '*samatha*', we can make it our 'friend' in '*vipassanā*' (Insight-meditation) if we use radical attention with mindfulness (*sati*) and full awareness ('*sampajañña*'). Between two 'R's (R....R) there is *Nibbāna*, if one focusses one's attention there. Only if you get caught in the 'knot' of the seamstress craving that it becomes a rough and irritating music. At last you will realize that it is only a concatenation of 'R's. According to the terminology of insight meditation, we may say, one can leave behind the 'perception of the compact' (*ghanasaññā*) and arouse the perception of the heap (*rāsisaññā*) if one directs one's attention then and there with mindfulness and full awareness. So after all, *rähäyyā* is an insect that gives us a meditation-topic for *Nibbāna*, though apparently it is a disturbance to calm.

I must confess, I forgot to mention one thing when speaking about the eye. All the similes I gave about the eye are gross when compared with the simile given by the Buddha in the *Indriyabhāvanā Sutta*. It is the last discourse in the *Majjhima Nikāya*. It is a wonderful discourse which the Buddha addressed to Venerable Ānanda. We may say, that the quintessence of that discourse is the supreme and incomparable development of sense faculties (*anuttarā indriyabhāvanā*). It is illustrated with a number of similes. The simile that the Buddha had given there with reference to the eye beats all our similes regarding the acceleration of attention. The simile is:

As quickly as a man with vision opens his eyes and closes them and closes the eyes and opens them, one should exercise radical attention with regard to forms coming before the eyes. So for the eyes, the Buddha has aptly given a simile based on the eye.

When it comes to the ear, he gives a simile about the ear itself. Just as a strong man snaps his fingers with perfect ease so quickly, should one attend to a sound. By the way, the snapping of the fingers is often taken as an indication of a moment (*khaṇa*). The Buddha says that on hearing a sound a monk might be pleased or displeased or have a mingling of both but that he should immediately get rid of them and bring his mind to rest in equanimity.

Then we come to the nose. There too, if we go back to the *Majjhe Sutta*, nose is one end, smell is the second end and nose consciousness is in the middle. The

seamstress craving ignores the middle and puts the stitch. When we smell something, we actually take in the air bearing the odour. If it is a pleasant smell we take it in with attachment. Air is the bearer of smell.

There is a story in the *Sagāthaka Vagga* of the *Saṁyutta Nikāya* regarding attachment to fragrant smells. In the *Kosala* country a forest dwelling monk was living in a hut in the jungle. One day on returning from his alms-round he went down into a pond and eagerly smelt a lotus flower. A forest deity saw it and accused him as a thief of fragrance. The monk in defense said:

"How can you call me a thief of fragrance? I didn't pluck the flower or take it away."

But the deity said:

"You are here purifying your mind. So, even a slight fault appears as a serious one."

The monk confessed his guilt and thanked the deity for pointing it out. So, it seems even intentionally smelling a flower is a defilement. The delusion of the mirage is perpetuated in doing so. One imagines that the fragrance is in the flower.In regard to the tongue '*Majjhe Sutta*' says:

Tongue is one end, taste is the other end and tongue-consciousness is in the middle.' When it comes to tasty things it may be ice-cream or a piece of instant chicken. What happens as soon as one sees the ice-cream or the piece of chicken? Saliva flows into the tongue. Saliva is the bearer of taste just as air is the bearer of smell. Saliva gets ready to receive the taste. So, one greedily gulps down the tasty thing. The craving for taste is so powerful that the Buddha has recommended the meditations on elements and loathsomeness to combat it. He declares that one who is greedy will never awaken his heart (to *Nibbāna*). '*Rasataṇhāya gadhito hadayaṁ nāvabujjhati*."

Sometimes he gives a simile that makes one shudder when reflecting on it. In the *Nālaka Sutta* of *Sutta Nipāta* when describing the path of practice befitting a *muni* (sage), he mentions it in brief:

'*Khuradhārūpamo bhava*.' – 'Be one who has the simile of the razor-edge in mind.' The simile about the razor-edge given by the Buddha is as follows:

A razor-blade is smeared with honey. To one who is greedy the razor-blade is given to lick. Can he do it without cutting his tongue? That is a simile which arouses fright in the greedy. Taste is such a subtle craving. Why does the Buddha

give us such a frightful simile? Because he has conquered the craving for taste. Even the other arahants cite the example of the Buddha.

"*Rasapaṭisaṁvedī kho pana so bhavaṁ Gotamo āhāraṁ āhāreti no ca rasarāgapaṭisaṁvedī*."

The Brahmin youth Uttara once observed:

"Experiencing taste that Venerable Gotama partakes of food but he is not one who experiences an attachment to taste."

The tastebuds of the Buddha are as acute as ours. They do not go inactive with the attainment of Buddhahood. But he has no attachment to taste. Nowadays people cannot understand this wonderful fact.

This means that there is *Nibbāna* even at the tip of the tongue. A meditator can realize this to some extent while taking food with mindfulness and full awareness. So after all, the taste is neither in the tongue nor in the 'instant-chicken'. It is only at the 'instant' the tongue and the instant-chicken come together that the flavour becomes active. Now that we have spoken of saliva, just see how aptly the Buddha has given a simile for it. When speaking about the eye, he gave a simile that befits the eye and in speaking about the ear, one that befits the ear. Now see how apt the simile about the tongue is. Just as a strong man with the greatest ease gathers a bit of saliva at the tip of the tongue and spews it out, so quickly should a monk, as soon as the attachment to taste has arisen, free his mind from likes and dislikes and bring it to rest in equanimity.

Let us now take up the question of body and tangibles. In this connection too the *Majjhe Sutta* says that the body is the one end, the tangible is the second end and body-consciousness the middle. There too it is precisely due to body and the tangible that body-consciousness arises. But the seamstress craving stitches up the two. You had better remember all these similes. That is why I cautioned you to listen attentively. It is here that what we actually call 'contact'(*phassa*) comes. That is why the Buddha called it a 'nutriment' (*āhāra*). He pointed out that there are four kinds of nutriments (*cattāro āhārā*) which sustain beings. The first is the gross or subtle food taken in morsels (*kabaliṅkāra āhāra*). The second is contact (*phassa*). The third is intentional thinking going on in the mind (*manosañcetanā*). The fourth is consciousness (*viññāṇaṁ*). It leads to a very deep dhamma disquisition. But there too the simile the Buddha has given for contact is one that makes one shudder. It is found in the '*Puttamaṁsa Sutta*'. Without relating the whole story we shall give only the simile.

There the Buddha uses the term '*niccammā gāvī*' – literally 'the cow that has been skinned.' But we have to understand by it not a cow that is fully skinned to death – only that in some parts of its body skin has come off. The Buddha is here speaking about such a cow. He says that if that cow stands near a wall, creatures in the wall would eat the flesh. If it stands near a tree, creatures in the tree would eat into the wound. If it goes down into water, creatures living in the water would eat into its body. If it stands in an open space, birds would peck at its wounds. Wherever that cow stands, creatures there would eat into it. Just ponder over the depth of this simile. How do we experience the pleasure of bodily contact? What is next to contact is feeling. You had better reflect on this statement:

There is a difference between the feeling experienced with the skin and the feeling experienced without the skin. Suppose we have an open wound. Let alone other soft things, a velvet cloth is extremely soft to the touch. When a velvet cloth touches the wound, do we get a pleasurable feeling? What has happened now?

Let us add a post-script to this simile. The Buddha has compared the entire body to a wound. If the whole body is a 'wound', what could be the skin? The skin is the 'bandage' on it. It is to decorate this bandage that worldlings, especially females, are spending so much. To 'paint' the bandage and make it fashionable, females in particular take a lot of pains. When a tiny scratch occurs the pleasure of touch is gone. I need not give you instances. Just reflect on the difference between the feeling with the skin and without the skin. So the simile of '*niccammā gāvī*' (skinned cow) given by the Buddha is extremely profound.

Let us now revert to the simile given by the Buddha with reference to the feeling of touch in the *Indriyabhāvanā Sutta*. It concerns the reaction to the feeling of touch. He even gives a formula to show how quickly a monk should dispel a liking or a dislike or a mixture of both on experiencing a touch sensation. He gives an insightful formula to be used in bringing the mind to rest in equanimity. A monk should reflect:

'Here is a liking, a disliking or both arisen in me. But that is something prepared, gross and dependently arisen. This is peaceful, this is excellent, namely equanimity (*....tañca kho saṅkhataṁ oḷārikaṁ paṭiccasamuppannaṁ. Etaṁ santaṁ etaṁ paṇītaṁ yadidaṁ upekkhā*'). In fact, that principle is applied to every sense faculty. With reference to the body this is the simile given in the *Indriyabhāvanā Sutta* to illustrate the rapidity of bringing one's mind to '*upekkhā*' or equanimity:

'As quickly as a strong man would stretch his bent arm or bend his outstretched arm.' This simile often occurs in the Buddhist scriptures with reference to the speed with which one who has psychic powers 'disappears' from one place and

appears at another place. So in speaking about the body, the Buddha has taken a simile from the body itself.

Now we come to the mind. It is with the idea of saving time for dealing with the mind that I dealt with the other senses in brief. Mind is the knottiest point in the stitch of the seamstress craving. It is the last 'trump' of Māra. That is where all beings in the world including the scientist and the philosopher has got stuck. There too, to begin with, let us take up the 'two ends' of the *Majjhe Sutta*. Mind is one end. The other end is mind-objects (*dhammā*). One who puts the knot between them is the seamstress craving. We have to explain a very deep point in this connection.

Let us hark back to the term '*manasikāra*'. In the Pāli language the etymology of the word is:

'*Manasi*' is in the locative case – that means 'in the mind' and '*kāra*' is 'doing'. So '*manasikāra*' is suggestive of some 'doing' in the mind. That 'doing' in the mind inadvertently we direct towards some object. That is a very deep point. Now that we have mentioned the word '*manasikāra*' let us bring in another discourse we came across earlier too. We have already discussed it. When I mention its title those of you who had listened to it earlier would easily understand – namely *Kimmūlaka Sutta*. That also is a very wonderful discourse.

The Buddha asks the monks:

"How, monks, would you reply if wandering ascetics of other sects raise a set of questions like this?" the monks confess:

"We do not know how to reply. Would the Fortunate One himself tell us the answers."

What is noteworthy is that the Buddha himself presents the set of questions. That indicates how important and how deep the questions are. Now the Buddha repeats the set of questions and says:

"If they question you, you had better give these answers."

We have discussed that discourse earlier. So in this context we shall take up only the first three questions that are relevant.

"*Kimmūlakā āvuso sabbe dhammā*?"

"What, friends, is the root of all things?"

"*kiṁ sambhavā sabbe dhammā*?"

“What is the coming up of all things?”

“*kiṁ samudayā sabbe dhammā*?”

“What is the arising of all things?”

The answer to the first question is:

“*Chandamūlakā āvuso sabbe dhammā*.”

“Interest, friends, is the root of all things.”

We defined ‘*chanda*’ as the lightest shade of craving. In fact it is so light that it is hardly recognizable. According to the traditional way of explanation “craving is bad but the desire for the skillful (*Kusalacchanda*) is alright.”

But even that has to be given up. That is why it is said in the Dhamma

“*Chandaṁ nissāya chandaṁ pajahatha*”

“Depending on desire give up desire.”

It is a wonderful Middle Path. In the final reckoning even that has to be abandoned. The desire for the skillful is good. One cannot do without it. The desire for calm and insight must be there. But there comes a time to give it up as well.

That shows the fact that ‘*chanda*’ which we rendered by ‘interest’ is the root of all things. Just think why a problem comes to our mind as if from nowhere. It is ‘interest’ however subtle it may be. But it comes up. What finds or discovers it is attention – ‘*manasikāra sambhavā*’. It arises from ‘contact’ – ‘*phassa samudayā*’. I do not know much about the computer but as far as I can see, all the above three are found in the computer. We spoke of ‘*chanda*’ (interest), ‘*manasikāra*’ (attention) and ‘*phassa*’ (contact). Out of these, ‘*chanda*’ is the ‘mouse’. As you know, the mouse works unseen – stealthily. One cannot even see it working. When the mouse is active what happens? The ‘cursor’ starts running. That is attention. So ‘interest’ is the ‘root’ – the ‘mouse’, which works stealthily. What does it do stealthily? It sets the ‘cursor’ working. What does the cursor aim at? The ‘menu’ – that is *phassa* – ‘contact’. It is from there onwards that one ‘enjoys’ what is ‘dished up’ by the computer. We gave this analysis to make the explanation as practical as possible.

So then it seems ‘interest’ is the root of all things. Until the Buddha pointed it out, the world was unaware of it. Every time we conclude a deep disquisition by citing two simple verses which everyone knows. Let us recall them – at least the

relevant portion. '*Manopubbaṅgamā dhammā – manoseṭṭhā mano-mayā*'. All this time the commentarial tradition had interpreted it differently. As we pointed out in explaining the line '*manopubbaṅgamā dhammā*', out of the two terms '*mano*' (mind) and '*dhammā*' (mind-objects) on either side, mind comes first as the 'forerunner' (*manopubbaṅgamā*). '*Manoseṭṭhā*' – the mind-objects have mind as their chief. Not only that, '*manomayā*' – the mind-objects are 'mind-made'. That is why there is that word with its peculiar etymology:

'*manasikāra*' (lit. doing within-the mind) that is attention. We were not aware that an object of the mind is of mind's own making. So then it seems that all this gimmick is carried on with something made by the mind itself. Just see how subtle the knotty stitch of the seamstress craving is. It is by accelerating the speed of attention as in the table-tennis game, that one can catch up with it. The secret of attention (*manasikāra*) is discovered by accelerating 'radicalattention' (*yoniso-manasikāra*). That is to say by attending promptly – then and there. This is something almost 'unimaginable'.

There comes a time when the place of origin of a thought comes to light. There is in fact a couple of lines of a verse in a certain discourse which even the commentaries do not explain correctly:

'*Disvā āyatanuppādaṁ – sammā cittaṁ vimuccati*.' 'Having seen the arising of sense-spheres – the mind is well released.' What is meant by saying that if at any time one sees the arising of the sense-spheres, the mind is emancipated? The arising of the sense-spheres occurs at a speed hardly discernible.

With extreme rapidity, the 'give-and-take' process goes on between the mind and the mind-object. Everyone thinks that the mind-object stands before the mind, for one can argue:

'How can we think without an object?' But from the etymology of the term '*manasi-kāra*', one can understand that the mind-object itself is mind-made. That is why we say '*manomayā*'. At whatever occasion one comes to understand it, the magic-show of consciousness gets exposed. It is this magician – this juggler – who creates this confusion. What we find in this magic-show is the mind and its object which is of its own making. In the final reckoning it amounts to the same problem of the deer and the mirage. Only when one accelerates radical attention to the utmost, one comes to understand it as it is.

We need not give a simile of our own. Any simile we can give falls far below the mark when compared to the simile given by the Buddha with reference to the mind.

“Suppose, monks, a man lets fall two or three drops of water into an iron-cauldron heated all day long. The dropping of those water-drops is slow but their drying up and evaporation is instantaneous.”

Just try to visualize it. You let two or three drops of water to fall from above into an intensely heated iron-cauldron. If you watch the drops as they fall, you fail to see them drying up.

In this simile we seem to get a hint to what is happening between mind and mind-object. But even that if a meditator realizes by accelerating radical attention, he has seen the arising of sense-spheres – how the two come together and consciousness arises. To see the arising of consciousness is to see the Law of Dependent Arising:

“*Cakkhuñca paṭicca rūpe ca uppajjati cakkhuviññāṇaṁ.”*

Note the significance of the two words:

‘*Paṭicca uppajjati*’ – Depending on eye and forms arises eye consciousness. The Buddha has preached that consciousness is a magic show. That is why it is said:

‘*Majjhe mantā na lippati*’. Gets not attached at the middle with wisdom. ‘*Yo ubhante viditvāna*’ – ‘He who having understood both ends.’ Why does one who understands both ends has no attachment to the middle? Because he has wisdom. He has discovered the magic of consciousness. We have so often said that if one sees the interior of a magic show the magic is no more for him. It happens at the above mentioned occasion. It is then that radical attention or ‘*yoniso manasikāra*’ which we called the ‘seed’ of wisdom bears its fruit as wisdom itself. In that wisdom, consciousness has no place. That is why it is said ‘*paññā bhāvetabhā viññāṇaṁ pariññeyyaṁ*’ – ‘wisdom has to be developed, consciousness has to be comprehended.’ In order to comprehend consciousness wisdom has to be developed. At the peak of the development of wisdom, the secret of consciousness is exposed. It is exposed at the above mentioned moment. The arising of sense-spheres is seen then and there. Along with the seeing of the arising of sense-spheres, their cessation becomes obvious, since whatever that has arisen has to cease. That is the realization of cessation (*nirodha*). Then, there is that peaceful and excellent *Nibbāna* as expressed in the memorable formula, beginning with ‘*Etaṁ santaṁ etaṁ paṇītaṁ*’ (This is peaceful, this is excellent.) etc.

The question now comes up about the object of the mind – dhamma. We said that a meditator cannot do without it. There is a very important discourse which

is relevant to the discussion of that point – namely, *Alagaddūpama Sutta*. In that discourse the Buddha has given the simile of the raft. He declares:

"*Kullūpamaṁ vo bhikkhave dhammaṁ desissāsi.*"

"Monks, I will preach to you a Dhamma which is comparable to a raft."

A man going on a long journey comes across a great expanse of water. There is no ferry boat or bridge. Since there is no other alternative he collects some branches from here and there, binds them together with creepers and improvises a raft. With its help and making an effort with his hands and feet, he gets across to the farther shore. Once he gets to the other shore, he no longer needs the raft. So he sets it adrift in the water. Drawing the moral from this parable the Buddha says:

"*Kullūpamo mayā bhikkhave dhammo desito nittharaṇatthāya, no gahaṇatthāya.*"

"I have preached the Dhamma with the simile of the raft just for crossing over, not for grasping."

In the same connection he says:

If one has understood this simile, even those things that have to do with Dhamma have to be given up. What to say of things on the side of Adhamma – that is those contrary to the Dhamma.

If I may allude to another simile for you to understand this moral in brief, I have already discussed the simile of the seven relay-chariots in the *Rathavinīta Sutta*. It is a simile resembling the modern relay-race. King Pasenadi of *Kosala* has some urgent business in *Sāketa* and seven relay-chariots are arranged for him. Because horses get tired the king dismounts from the first relay- chariot and mounts the second relay-chariot. Likewise from the second to the third and from the third to the fourth and so on and finally arrives at *Sāketa* by the seventh chariot. It is after getting down from the seventh chariot that he settles his business. The simile given is an illustration of the sequence of the seven purifications. The purification of virtue is purposeful as far as purification of the mind, purification of the mind is purposeful as far as purification of view and in this way seven purifications are mentioned. The seventh is purification by knowledge and vision but even that has to be given up because perfect *Nibbāna* is without clinging (*anupādā parinibbāna*). This is very wonderful. In no other religious system you find anything like this. Giving up itself is *Nibbāna*.

It is to explain this that we used two terms in our sermons and books, namely 'pragmatic' and 'relative'. Because it is pragmatic we make use of it, because it is

relative we give it up. Now I am going to give you a new simile of a type you had never heard before. As you know, there are relay-races. In this race I am going to describe, there are two teams – Māra team and the Buddha team. We are not concerned with the participants of the Māra team. In the Buddha-team there are four runners. In a relay race they make use of a baton to be carried and passed on. The baton has to reach the winning-post for a team to win. Runner No 1. starts running. He runs in self-sacrificing spirit. He runs with all his efforts, panting all the way. On reaching the second runner he successfully hands over the baton to him but himself falls dead. His partner does not look back to see whether his friend is dead but runs in the same spirit putting forth his best efforts. He runs and runs panting and passes the baton to the third and falls dead. The third in the same spirit and with the same vigour runs and passes the baton to the fourth but falls dead. The fourth likewise runs in the same spirit with all his might to reach the winning-post. There he hands over the baton to the judge and himself falls dead. Who gets the prize? Who won the race? Is the 'baton' the winner? There is no one to receive the prize. Take it that *Nibbāna* too is something like that.

Everyone seems to have the problem of 'self' and 'not-self' ('*attā*' and '*anattā*').

Who attains *Nibbāna*?

The Buddha has said in repudiation:

"These Brahmins are leveling at me a false charge of preaching annihilation."

We are also accused of it because of our sermons highlighting the Buddha-word. But this is how the Buddha answers the charge of preaching annihilation:

"Formerly, as well as now I point out only suffering and the cessation of suffering".

"*Dukkhameva uppajjamānaṁ uppajjati dukkhaṁ nirujjhamānaṁ nirujjhati.*"
"What arises is only suffering and what ceases is only suffering."

There is no question of persons at all. If so there is nothing to lament. Those who lament it are doing so because of ignorance.

Well then, if you all have come with me in this pilgrimage, the destination is the mind. But of course one can reach it through any of the six senses. That is why we said that there is *Nibbāna* even at the tip of the tongue, provided the meditator properly directs radical attention. Some ancient episodes can be true up to a point though there are exaggerations in the commentaries. It is said that in the past in such sacred cities like *Anuradhapura* and *Mihintale* there is no seat in the

monasteries seated on which some monk had not attained arahanthood while partaking of porridge at dawn by reflecting wisely on food. By practicing it regularly as soon as one discovers the secret at the tip of the tongue, one directly comes to the mind. Finally one arrives at the mind. Whatever is amassed through other senses at last boils down to mind and mind-objects. That is where insight reaches its peak. If one discovers that secret the magic-show of consciousness is exposed then and there. Wisdom is perfected and the journey ends. The Buddha team has won, and the Māra team has lost.

Now that, dear listeners, you have listened attentively to what we have said, try to bring victory to the Buddha team. Don't think that you go somewhere on attaining Arahanthood. Don't expect a 'Simple Simon' ('*Siyadoris*') *Nibbāna*. Try to boost up the Buddha team taking the cue from those dead runners. So that is the illustration for the Four Supramundane Paths and Four Fruits. Try to recognize the four runners. I wish to wind up now.

Out of all sermons given so far this is probably the most practical. Please make the best use of this sermon. May the merits of listening to this sermon conduce to your attainment of *Nibbāna* here and now! Whatever beings there be, from the lowest hell to the highest Brahma world wishing to rejoice in this sermon, may they, with the help of this sermon with its meditation topics, attain the highest aim – the Deathless *Nibbāna*!



Paticca Samuppada Sermon 16
The Law of Dependent Arising
(Pahan Kanuwa Sermon – No. 198)

'*Namo tassa bhagavato arahato sammāsambuddhassa*'

'Homage be! To the Fortunate One – the Worthy, Fully Enlightened!'

Sukhaṁ vā yadi vā dukkhaṁ – adukkhamasukhaṁ sahā

ajjhattañ ca bahiddhā ca – yaṁ kiñci atthi veditaṁ

etaṁ dukkhanti ñatvāna – mosadhammaṁ palokinaṁ

phussa phussa vayaṁ passaṁ – evaṁ tattha virajjati

vedanānaṁ khayā bhikkhu – nicchāto parinibbuto

– Dvayatānupassanā Sutta, Sutta Nipāta.

Dear Listeners,

Attainment of Nibbānic peace by overcoming saṁsāric suffering is generally considered as the aim of the Buddhist spiritual path. The problem of misery and happiness invariably reminds us of *vedanā*, feeling. The above two verses with a deep philosophical interpretation of feeling, which are chosen as the topic for this 16th discourse on *Paṭicca Samuppāda*, the Law of Dependent Arising, provides an ideal introduction to our discussion on the significance of feeling as revealed in the twelve links of the *Paṭicca Samuppāda*.

These two verses in the *Dvayatānupassanā Sutta* of the *Sutta Nipāta*, were uttered by the Buddha in order to emphasize the significance of the duality of arising and ceasing. In several of our previous discourses on *Paṭicca Samuppāda*, this *sutta* provided the key to our explanation. In the present context too the relevance of the above two verses is established by the Buddha's remark:

"Monks, if someone inquires whether there could be another mode of contemplating dualities, you must reply in the affirmative. How is it possible? Whatever suffering arises, all that is dependent on *vedanā* – feeling. That is one mode of contemplation. With total cessation and detachment from feeling, suffering ceases. That is the other mode of contemplation.

Monks, if a monk applies himself to the (*dvayatānupassanā*) twofold method of contemplation without delay, with undeterred effort at cleansing of defilements (*kiḷesa*) he may expect to attain either Arahanthhood, or the stage of Non-returner, *Anāgāmi* in case his clinging is not totally extinct."

The Buddha uttered the above two verses following this explanation.

Now let us find out their meanings.

Sukhaṁ vā yadi vā dukkhaṁ – adukkhamasukhaṁ sahā

ajjhattañ ca bahiddhā ca – yaṁ kiñci atthi veditaṁ

Whatever feelings one experiences, either pleasant, unpleasant or neither pleasant nor unpleasant, internally or externally,

etaṁ dukkhanti ñatvāna – mosadhammaṁ palokinaṁ

Realizing their deceptive and breakable nature,

phussa phussa vayaṁ passaṁ – evaṁ tattha virajjati

Seeing their waning at every sense contact, there arises disenchantment,

vedanānaṁ khayā bhikkhu – nicchāto parinibbuto

With the elimination of feeling, the monk overcomes the hunger for craving and attains extinction.

That is the meaning of the two verses. It is clear that all feelings, according to the Buddha, pleasant, unpleasant and neither pleasant nor unpleasant, lead to suffering due to their deceptive breakable nature and their total cessation amounts to extinction (*Parinibbāna*).

Now let us try to understand 'feeling' (*vedanā*) as found in the *Paṭicca Samuppāda*, the Law of Dependent Arising. You are familiar with the twelve links of the *Paṭicca Samuppāda* such as *avijjā* and *saṅkhāra*. Among them *vedanā* is described as '*Phassa paccayā vedanā, vedanā paccayā taṇhā*'. I have once mentioned that for the clarification of any particular link, the two links before and after it have to be put in place. To give a simile, in order to illustrate one link in a chain, the two links on either side must be visible at least in part. In this case *phassa* and *taṇhā* are the links on either side of *vedanā*, which need special mention here. In the previous discourse we discussed *phassa*, which was given a six-fold analysis by the Buddha, such as *cakkhu samphassa*, *sota samphassa* etc.

Similarly, *vedanā* is six-fold as *cakkhu samphassajā vedanā*, *sota samphassajā vedanā*, *ghānasamphassajā vedanā*, *jivhā samphassajā vedanā*, *kāya samphassajā vedanā* and *mano samphassajā vedanā*.

'*jā'* means arising.

Therefore, *cakkhu samphassajā vedanā* means feelings arising from (born of) eye contact. The others are the ear contact, nose contact, tongue contact, body contact and mind contact. The deepest implications on *vedanā* are brought out in the *Cūlavedalla Sutta* of the *Majjhima Nikāya*.By way of introduction to this discourse, I wish to quote a part of it. Visākha, an *anāgāmi* lay disciple, seeks explanation to a series of complicating questions from the nun Dhammadinnā, an Arahant *Therī*. She tackled them in an expert manner. We would like to quote the last few questions and answers which were based on *vedanā*.

"Venerable Lady, how do you classify *vedanā*?"

"Friend Visākha, *vedanā* is threefold, pleasant, unpleasant and neither pleasant nor unpleasant. *Sukhā vedanā*, *dukkhā vedanā* and *adukkhamasukhā vedanā*."

"Can you please explain what they mean?" (Visākha pretended not to know what they meant.)

"Whatever pleasant feeling is experienced physically or mentally, it is *sukhā vedanā*. An unpleasant physical or mental experience is *dukkhā vedanā*. Whatever physical and mental feeling is neither pleasant nor unpleasant is called *adukkhamasukhā vedanā*."

"Venerable lady, what is pleasant about a pleasant feeling? and what is unpleasant? What is pleasant about an unpleasant feeling and what is unpleasant? What is pleasant about a neither pleasant nor unpleasant feeling? and what is unpleasant?"

"Friend Visākha, a pleasant feeling is pleasant only as long as it lasts. Its change is unpleasant. *Ṭhitisukhā viparināma dukkhā*. An unpleasant feeling is unpleasant only as long as it lasts. Its change is pleasant. *Ṭhitidukkhā viparināma sukhā*. A neither pleasant nor unpleasant feeling is pleasant if surveyed with wisdom. It is unpleasant if surveyed without wisdom."

"What is the latency (*anusaya*) underlying a pleasant feeling? What is the latency underlying an unpleasant feeling? What is the latency underlying a neither pleasant nor unpleasant feeling?"

Before we quote Arahant Therī Dhammadinnā's reply to this question, let me explain the term *anusaya* in case it is unfamiliar to some. In discussing *kilesa*, we come across three stages, the dormant stage called *anusaya*, the awakening (activating) stage called *pariyuṭṭhāna*, and the active stage that violates a precept called *vītikamma*. Our present discussion is on the *anusaya* stage. The *Therī*'s reply is as follows:

"Friend Visākha, the latency that lies hidden underneath a pleasant feeling is lust (*rāgānusaya*). The latency that lies hidden underneath an unpleasant feeling is anger (*paṭighānusaya*). The latency that lies hidden underneath a neither pleasant nor unpleasant feeling is ignorance (*avijjānusaya*)."

"Venerable Lady, is the latency of lust found underneath every pleasant feeling? Is the latency of anger found underneath every unpleasant feeling? And is the latency of ignorance found underneath every feeling that is neither pleasant nor unpleasant?"

"No friend Visākha. Lust is not found underneath every pleasant feeling. Anger is not found underneath every unpleasant feeling. Ignorance is not found underneath every feeling that is neither pleasant nor unpleasant."

This position is further explained when the *Therī* answers Visakha's questions that follow.

"Venerable Lady, what must be eradicated in the case of pleasant feelings? What must be eradicated in the case of unpleasant feelings? What must be eradicated in the case of feelings neither pleasant nor unpleasant?"

"Friend Visākha, in the case of pleasant feelings, the latency of lust must be eradicated. In the case of unpleasant feelings, the latency of anger must be eradicated. In the case of feelings neither pleasant nor unpleasant, the latency of ignorance must be eradicated."

"Venerable Lady, must the latency of lust be eradicated in every instance of pleasant feelings? Must the latency of anger be eradicated in every instance of unpleasant feelings? Must the latency of ignorance be eradicated in every instance of feelings neither pleasant nor unpleasant?"

"No friend Visākha. *Anusayas* need not be eradicated in the case of every pleasant feeling or unpleasant feeling or every feeling that is neither pleasant or unpleasant."

With this brief reply the *Therī* presents an unusual description introducing three very special situations.

First and foremost a monk who deviates from lustful thoughts and unwholesome thoughts and immerses in seclusion with reflection and investigation (*vitakka vicāra*) attains the first absorption endowed with joy and ease (*pīti sukha*). The latency of lust is absent here although joy and ease are present. That is a very special mental state.

Secondly the Buddha declares something special about anger '*paṭigha*':

A meditative monk entertains a longing, a yearning to speedily attain the noble emancipation through *Arahatphala Samādhi*, which is signeless (*animitta*) undirected (*appaṇihita*) and void (*suññata*), which the noble arahants attain and continue to abide in. The longing to attain that spiritual state is identified in the Dhamma as *nekkammasita domanassa*, dejection within renounced life and not *gehasita domanassa*, dejection within lay life. Dhammadinnā Therī declares that underneath this dejection no anger is found. That is a very special situation. Only a yearning prevails that the spiritual state has not yet been acquired, but no anger prevails.

The third factor is then explained. A certain monk who keeps aloof from pleasant and unpleasant feelings attains the fourth absorption which has only feelings that are neither pleasant nor unpleasant. No latency of ignorance is found underneath it. That is a special situation.

Followed by this explanation, the lay disciple Visākha comes up with an out of the ordinary question.

> Venerable Lady, what is the counterpart of pleasant feeling?

This term needs explanation. Think of a coconut or something similar that has two halves. *Paṭibhāga* means the counterpart. Now let's get back to the questions and answers.

> Venerable Lady, what is the counterpart of pleasant feeling?
>
> Friend Visākha, the counterpart of pleasant feeling is unpleasant feeling.
>
> Then, what is the counterpart of unpleasant feeling?
>
> The counterpart of unpleasant feeling is pleasant feeling.

This answer establishes a relationship between the two. Then, what is the counterpart of feeling neither pleasant nor unpleasant.

> The counterpart, Friend Visākha, is ignorance (*avijjā*).

This answer is also unusual. The questioning continues.

What is the counterpart of *avijjā*, ignorance?

The counterpart is *vijjā*, knowledge.

What is the counterpart of *vijjā*, knowledge?

The counterpart is *vimutti*, emancipation.

What is the counterpart of *vimutti*?

The counterpart of *vimutti* is *Nibbāna*, extinction.

What is the counterpart of *Nibbāna*?

Friend Visākha, unable to restrain yourself from questioning, you are overstepping the boundaries. Higher life of *Brahmacariya* ends with *Nibbāna*, extinction. That is the end. Your question is erroneous.

But I am sure you can see, when you go deep into this subject, that the worldlings exist between pleasant and unpleasant experiences. Emancipation on the other hand arises in mid position called neither pleasant nor unpleasant.

Now we know the counterpart of pleasant feeling is unpleasant feeling, and the counterpart of unpleasant feeling is pleasant feeling. But the feeling neither pleasant nor unpleasant goes deeper. When ignorance that lies hidden is dispelled knowledge dawns. When knowledge is dispelled, emancipation dawns, and *Nibbāna* emerges. Everything ends there. There is another valuable *sutta* relevant to this subject in the *Vedanā Saṁyutta* named *Salla Sutta*. Here the Buddha directly calls a person ignorant of the Dhamma as an illiterate common man. Afflicted with unpleasant feelings he desires for sensual pleasure. What is the reason for this? Being illiterate and worldly, he can visualize no other escape from misery than through sense pleasure. He is totally ignorant of feelings that are neither pleasant nor unpleasant. In an attempt to clarify this point on an earlier occasion, we remember bringing out the simile of a seesaw. A ride on the see-saw is similar to the ride on the head of a coconut frond which was a game of long ago. We see the ordinary worldlings ride the see-saw between joy and misery. They are not aware of the neither pleasant nor unpleasant position in the center. Only the noble disciple who dedicates himself to the serious practice of contemplation on feeling according to the *Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta*, is capable of identifying the neither pleasant nor unpleasant feeling. The worldlings on the run between the two extremes know nothing about the mid-position.

This point is well illustrated in the commentary with the simile of deer footprints. On a stretch of flat land there was a rocky plateau. A deer used to walk across it leaving footprints on the bare land but no trace on the rock. The feeling neither pleasant nor unpleasant is similar to the rocky plateau. Emancipation lies there, although the worldlings are not aware. Emancipation is found concealed. Talking of the two extremes and the middle, I would like to switch on to *Majjhe Sutta* again for clarification, as we have done earlier. First let me give a summary of the *sutta* for the benefit of the new-comers.

When the Buddha was residing at Isipatana in Benaris, a group of *theras* (senior monks) while relaxing after the mid-day meal, initiated a dhamma discussion. They selected a riddle-like verse with subtle meaning from the *Metteyya Pañha* in the *Sutta Nipāta*, and sitting in conference as it were formulated four questions for interpretation.

Yo ubhante viditvāna

majjhe mantā na lippati

taṁ brūmi mahāpurisoti

sodha sibbanimaccagā

Knowing the two ends, he who with wisdom

refrains from attachment to the middle,

I call him a great man (*mahā purisa*)

who transcends the seamstress in this world.

The four questions formulated were What is the first end? What is the second end? What is the middle? Who is the seamstress? Six senior monks contributed their deep interpretations which were even suitable as objects of meditation. When presented to the Buddha he approved all six as correct. Here, we will discuss the third interpretation, as it is the most relevant to us.

"One end is pleasant feeling. The other is unpleasant feeling. In the middle is the feeling neither pleasant nor unpleasant. The seamstress is craving."

This makes it clear that the ordinary worldling runs between pleasure and pain driven by craving. Craving ignores the middle position and keeps tying knots with the two extreme ends. On the sly, she conceals 'neither pleasant nor unpleasant' feelings and keeps tying up the two ends. It is similar to the ride on the see-saw totally ignorant of the emancipation in the middle.

Now let's go into another relevant *sutta*, the *Phassamūlaka Sutta* in the *Vedanā Saṁyutta*. The Buddha begins as follows "Monks, there are three feelings".

To quote the Pāli statement

"*Tisso imā bhikkhave vedanā, phassajā phassamūlakā, phassanidānā, phassapaccayā*".

'Monks, Feelings are of three types whether arisen from contact, rooted in contact, founded on contact or conditioned by contact. What are they? Pleasant, unpleasant and neither pleasant nor unpleasant'. The Buddha further clarifies how they arise. 'Monks, a contact conducive to a pleasant feeling, generates a pleasant feeling".

That contact is referred to as '*tajjaṁ*' a word which has to be broken up as *tat+ja*. *Tajja* means 'born of that' 'arisen from that'. When a contact which gives rise to a pleasant feeling ceases, the resultant pleasant feeling ceases. The Buddha stresses this fact with reference to unpleasant feelings as well. '*dukkhavedaniyaṁ bhikkhave phassaṁ paṭicca uppajjati dukkhā vedanā*'. Dependent on contact which generates an unpleasant feeling there arises an unpleasant feeling. With the cessation of that contact, the unpleasant feeling ceases. The same applies to feelings neither pleasant nor unpleasant. With a contact conducive to the generation of a feeling neither pleasant nor unpleasant, such a feeling is generated. With the cessation of such contact, the resultant feeling ceases.

The Buddha gives an ideal simile in order to explain contemplation on feeling, *vedanānupassanā*. 'Monks, just as heat is generated by rubbing two pieces of wood together, that heat disappears then and there, when the two sticks are taken apart'. Here the word *tajja* is used.

"*Yā tajjā usmā sā nirujjhati*".

The heat that arises by rubbing ceases then and there. Heat is generated by rubbing. By separating the two sticks, it cools. The message conveyed here is very deep. The Buddha has brought it up as a very important theory regarding *vedanānupassanā*. Here, in the *Phassamūlaka Sutta,* the Buddha declares it in poetic Pāli words, which can be easily commited to memory, as follows.

"*Tajjaṁ tajjaṁ phassaṁ paṭicca tajjā tajjā vedanā uppajjanti. Tajjassa tajjassa phassassa nirodhā tajjā tajjā vedanā nirujjhanti*".

Let us see its meaning. We can translate *tajja* as 'specific'. Then the statement would be roughly converted into English as 'Depending on each different contact, each specific feeling is generated. With the cessation of each different contact,

each specific feeling ceases'. That is the general idea. You have to understand the implication of *tajja*, which has a very specific meaning.

Generated by different contacts, feelings arise. With their disappearance, feelings vanish. Contemplation on feeling rests on this reality. The ordinary worldlings are unable to see impermanence. They ignore the middle. They always lean towards the 'arising' aspect. With reference to this, let us discuss the first interpretation in the *Majjhe Sutta*. Out of the six interpretations the first one on contact will help us here. It was the first to be approved by the Buddha as well. He said he too meant this interpretation, when uttering the verse although the other interpretations are also correct. What then is the first interpretation? Contact (*phassa*) is one end. Arising of contact (*phassa samudaya*) is the other end. It is not easy to grasp this. The middle is the cessation of contact (*phassa nirodha*). Now think what the seamstress does. She always sews the two opposite ends of the cloth, avoiding the middle. So are the worldlings who always live between contact and the arising of contact. Each time one contact fades away, they manoeuvre another to take its place. They never see the cessation in the middle. What does the seamstress craving (*taṇhā*) do? As in the simile of the two sticks, the Buddha says, if feeling arises dependent on contact, feeling should cease when contact ceases. But the worldlings are inclined towards origination. When one disappears, the stage is set for others to appear immediately. The implication here is deep, since it is suggestive of the perception of impermanence (*anicca saññā*). The term *tajjaṁ* can be grasped through *yoniso manasikāra* or seeing as it is with true insight. You must keep this in mind.

Depending on different contacts, different feelings arise. With the cessation of these different contacts, those feelings cease.

I think much has been said about contemplation on feeling, (*vedanānupassanā*). Let us remember as background knowledge the similes the Buddha gave for each of the five aggregates of grasping. Many of you are aware of them. Physical form is a cluster of foam. Feeling is a bubble. Perception is an illusion. Preparations are a banana stump. Consciousness is a deception. They all suggest impermanence, lack of solidity, lack of essence. Take the above simile given for feeling, for further contemplation. 'Monks, rain coming down on water in large drops in the summer, causes bubbles to rise and break up fast. They arise and break up. A wise man will look at it as it is, and see its essencelessness. It ceases then and there. It ceases then and there'. That is the simile the Buddha gave to demonstrate the emptiness of feeling. Please retain it at the back of your mind.

Now let us go into a very special discourse among the *suttas*, with reference to contemplation on feeling, (*vedanānupassanā*), called *Nandakovāda Sutta*, in the

Majjhima Nikāya. It's a unique one. This is the background in brief. The Buddha was once residing at *Jetavanārāma*. According to a rule of discipline, senior monks were expected to give a fortnightly advisory talk to the nuns. On this particular day, Therī Prajāpatī Gotamī too dropped in, to remind the monks of the talk. The monks informed the Buddha that it was Nandaka Thera's turn to advise the nuns. But, he showed reluctance until the Buddha himself made a request. He approached the nunnery *Rājakārāmaya* and addressed the anxiously waiting nuns. He said at the outset that the discussion would take the form of a question and answer session. Whenever necessary they should clarify their doubts by questioning him. The discussion began with the usual subject of *tilakkhana*, the three characteristics, beginning with the internal sense organs.

'Sisters, is the eye permanent or impermanent?'

'Impermanent, Venerable Sir'.

'That which is impermanent, is it pleasant or unpleasant?'

'Unpleasant, Venerable Sir'.

'That which is impermanent, unpleasant and subject to change, is it worthwhile calling it I and mine?'

'Definitely not, Venerable Sir'.

The other internal sense organs the ear, the nose, the tongue, the body and the mind were also discussed through a similar series of questions. The nuns concluded their answering by saying 'Venerable Sir, we had already realized through noble wisdom the impermanence of all six internal sense spheres'.

The next series of questions was about the external sense objects.

'Sisters, is the physical form permanent or impermanent?'

'Impermanent, Venerable Sir'.

In a similar manner the nuns were questioned about sound, smell, taste, contact and cognizable objects. Again they concluded their answering by saying that they had already realized the impermanence of the six external sense objects through their noble wisdom.

The third series of questions was on the six *viññāṇa*s, the six types of consciousness.

'Sisters, is eye consciousness permanent or not?'

‘It’s impermanent, Venerable Sir’.

The series of questions was as above, to emphasis the quality of impermanence. At this point too, the nuns declared that they had already realized it.

Now this *sutta* offers us three wonderful similes. That I think makes this *sutta* invaluable. This is the first one:

‘Sisters, there is a kindled oil lamp. The oil in it is impermanent. The wick is impermanent. The flame is impermanent. So is the light. But if someone were to say that the oil, the wick and the flame are impermanent, but the light is permanent, would you agree?’

‘Definitely not, Venerable Sir, because if the oil, the wick and the flame are impermanent, the light produced by them is bound to be impermanent’.

Here the nuns spontaneously came out with the Buddha’s theory

“*tajjaṁ tajjaṁ phassaṁ*”.

They answered in unison as follows.

“*Tajjaṁ tajjaṁ bhante paccayaṁ paṭicca tajjā tajjā vedanā uppajjanti. Tajjassa tajjassa paccayassa nirodhā tajjā tajjā vedanā nirujjhanti*”

‘Venerable Sir, the reason is that different feelings arise dependent on different contacts. With the cessation of these contacts, the feelings cease’.

Paccaya or conditions here refers to *phassa* or contact, although the *sutta* doesn’t say so. We are compelled to believe that the nuns were not listening passively. For example, if they had continued to sit throughout in one posture, they would have experienced physical pain. They may have contemplated on *vedanā* in conformity with the discourse. That is why perhaps they answered in unison “*Tajjaṁ tajjaṁ*”,

“With the cessation of different contacts, the relevant feelings cease.”

Here the fundamental theory emerges, which is then applied to the simile as follows.

If someone says the internal sense spheres such as the eye, the ear and the nose are impermanent but the feelings that arise thereof such as happiness and pain are permanent, is that statement correct? It was in relation to this question that the similes were brought in. the simile of the oil lamp refers to the impermanence

of internal sense spheres, the eye, the ear, the nose, the tongue, the body and the mind. Now the Thera presents his second simile.

'Sisters, think of a huge tree. The roots are impermanent. The trunk is impermanent. The foliage is impermanent. The shadow is impermanent. If someone were to say that the root, the trunk and the foliage are impermanent, but the shadow is permanent, would you agree?'

'No Venerable Sir. If roots, the trunk and the foliage are impermanent, the shadow has to be impermanent as well.'

'Sisters, in the same way if the six external sense objects, physical form, sound, smell, taste, physical contact and cognizable objects are impermanent, the resultant pleasant feelings, unpleasant feelings and feelings neither pleasant nor unpleasant are bound to be impermanent'

To prove this argument the Buddha's theory is cited

"*Tajjaṁ tajjaṁ bhante paccayaṁ paṭicca tajjā tajjā vedanā uppajjanti. Tajjassa tajjassa paccayassa nirodhā tajjā tajjā vedanā nirujjhanti*".

With this logical argument most probably realization dawned upon the nuns regarding the cause – effect relationship although not mentioned in the *sutta*. The third simile is more peculiar.

'Sisters, a butcher or his assistant, slaughters a cow, and skins it with a very sharp butcher's knife. It is delicately done without damaging either the flesh or the skin. Only the nerves that joined the skin to the flesh were severed. He then expertly covers the body with the skin and says 'There you are. The cow is there just as she was. No difference whatever'. Do you think that statement is correct?'

'Certainly not, Venerable Sir. The nerves are severed between the skin and the flesh, with a butcher's knife'.

'Yes sisters. It is the simile I cited. Now I shall give you the interpretation. The flesh within the skin stands for the six internal sense faculties. The skin is compared to the external sense objects. The nerves that join the two, represent passion for lust, *nandirāga*.

Dear listeners, *nandirāga* is a synonym for *taṇhā* (craving). *Nandi* is to take delight in. *Rāga* is attachment. *nandirāga* is compared to the nerves that join the flesh and the skin of the cow together. Once the nerves are severed, the cow though apparently the same, is not really the same. The skin merely lies spread over the flesh.

Now I want you to recall some facts I stressed in the previous discourse. With reference to the Buddha's sensitivity to taste it is said

"*Rasa paṭisaṁvedi bhagavā hoti, no ca rasa rāga paṭisaṁvedi*".

He is sensitive to taste but not attached to taste. Let us interpret the simile of the cow on these lines. The nerves were severed by means of *Nibbāna*. The nerves are compared to passion for lust, *nandirāga*. *Nandirāga* is a synonym for craving. These nerves need not be cut off. It's the passion for lust that has to be eliminated. Finally, what is the butcher's knife? It is a synonym for noble wisdom. Noble wisdom is used, for the delicate job of severing the cow's flesh from the skin. Only the nerves are severed leaving the false appearance that the body is intact. But there is a difference, the difference between worldly and transcendental. You must try to understand it. Try to apply it to the simile of a drop of water on a lotus petal.

Nandaka Thera, before concluding the discourse, briefly touched on the seven Factors of Enlightenment *bojjhangas*, that is, mindfulness, investigation of Dhamma, effort, rapture, repose, concentration and equanimity.

'Sisters, if one disciplines oneself in each of these seven Factors of Enlightenment with *Nibbāna* as the goal, one is certain of Arahanthood. What does 'with *Nibbāna* as the goal' mean? The specific terms used are '*viveka nissitaṁ*', founded on seclusion, '*virāga nissitaṁ*', founded on detachment, '*nirodha nissitaṁ*', founded on cessation, '*vossagga parināmiṁ*', maturing in total relinquishment. They all stand for *Nibbāna*.'

'Sisters, now the time is up. You can leave.'

The nuns rose respectfully and proceeded to meet the Buddha. They stood by after venerating him. He then dismissed them saying briefly 'Sisters, you may go'. Then the Buddha addressed the monks. 'Monks, the *Cātuddasa* is the 14 day. The *pañcadasa* is the 15 day. Looking at the moon on the 14 day many will not notice that the moon is not fully visible, though really it is not. Similarly, here the Buddha makes the simile clear – the five hundred nuns were gladdened by Nandaka's discourse but their expectations were not fulfilled. Then he advised the Venerable Nandaka to repeat the same discourse, the following day. If technology had been as advanced as it is today the task would have been simple. Venerable Nandaka was asked to repeat word to word the entire discourse, the following day.

This second day's account is recorded briefly in the text. Venerable Nandaka, after the mid-day meal, entered the nunnery and repeated the discourse word for

word, in the form of questions and answers, and finally said 'Sisters, that's all for today'. The nuns, as on the previous day met the Buddha, and were given permission to leave. Once they left, the Buddha addressed the monks and cited his simile again. 'Monks, looking at the moon on the 15 day, many people have no doubt whether the moon appears full or not. It's full without doubt.

Similarly, the nuns are not only gladdened but their expectations are fulfilled. Their ultimate objective has been realized. The final statement in this account is amazing. Of these five hundred nuns, the nun who acquired the lowest spiritual attainment is *Sotāpanna*, that of stream winner. At the end of the first hearing of the discourse, there were no spiritual attainments but on the following day, the lowest attainment was *Sotāpanna*. It indicates that contemplation of feeling or *vedanānupassanā* as explained in the statement "*tajjaṁ tajjaṁ*" is the force underlying it.

I wish to now introduce to you a dangerously critical *sutta* in the *Māra Saṁyutta*. Take care. Even certain educated people have misinterpreted this and insulted the Dhamma. Some have even committed suicide through misunderstanding. Although it has caused a lot of confusion, this *Godhika Sutta* touches the Dhamma at its depth. This is how it goes. When the Buddha was residing in Rajagaha, the monk Godhika lived in a cell on the slope of the *Isigili* rock. Striving hard in meditation he attained a worldly state of concentration or *samādhi* called '*sāmayika ceto vimutti*'. Due to some mysterious reason as his mind touched on the *samādhi*, it slipped away. He made the highest effort again and again but for the second, third, fourth, fifth and sixth time the *samādhi* slipped away. In deep disappointment he decided to commit suicide by severing his neck.

This is how the text records it. The Māra, reading this thought of Venerable Godhika, approached the Buddha with a show of deep reverence and said 'Great Hero, a disciple of yours who is a *Sekha* (*Sotāpanna*) is planning to commit suicide. Please prevent him'. This request is very unusual of Māra. It reveals his shrewdness. Strange enough, at this very moment Venerable Godhika cut off his neck with a sharp weapon. Seeing this, the Buddha gives a very unusual reply.

"*Evaṁ hi dhīrā kubbanti – nāvakaṁkhanti jīvitaṁ,*

samūlaṁ taṇhaṁ abbuyha – Godhiko parinibbuto"

Instead of criticizing the monk he praised him.

"*Evaṁ hi dhīrā kubbanti*", 'That is how the wise men act'.

"*nāvakaṁkhanti jīvitaṁ*", 'They have no expectations in life'.

"*samūlaṁ taṇhaṁ abbuyha*", 'extracting craving at its very root'

"*Godhiko parinibbuto*", 'Godhika has attained *parinibbāna*'.

This story invites criticism. Let us see what followed. The Buddha informed the monks of this unusual incident and together with them climbed *Kālasilā* rock in *Isigili* to see the monk. At a distance they saw that the monk's neck was completely severed from the body. They also observed a smoky cloud floating in all ten directions.

The Buddha explained the mystery behind it,

"Monks, can you see that smoky cloud floating about? That's Māra trying to detect where Venerable Godhika's consciousness is established".

Finally what the Buddha disclosed was surprising

"*Appatiṭṭhitena viññānena Godhiko parinibbuto*",

'The Venerable Godhika attained *parinibbāna*, his consciousness unestablished'.

Let us explain the above statement. Those of you who have read our discourses on *Nibbāna* know that this reference is to the mind that wanders in continuous existence *Bhava*. The ordinary worldling is one who is forever grasping, forever pulling at. In *Pañca upādānakkhanda, upādāna* means grasping, grasping the five heaps of aggregates. A man grasping for life on his death bed is engaged in a tug-of-war with Māra or death. Death tries to pull him out of this life. The man, holding on to dear life pulls in the opposite direction. Now that's exactly what the shrewd Māra wishes for. He suddenly lets go saying 'Have it'. The unfortunate man falls back into continuous existence. Existence leads to birth. Birth has in store a package of birthday gifts such as decay, disease and death. That is the result of not letting the rope go at the moment of death. Holding on means victory to Māra. What is the benefit of letting go as Venerable Godhika did? This point is too subtle even for erudite westerners to understand. Too subtle. At the moment of death, Venerable Godhika lets go not only craving but also feeling which craving accompanies. Cutting off one's neck is unbelievable. Due to some hidden spiritual strength in him he was unable to retain the *samādhi* which he attained six times over. Perhaps he wished to practice insight meditation with the help of the *samādhi*, failing which he was determined to practice it simultaneously with the *samādhi*. Unbelievably bold, wasn't he?

Ultimately he seems to have succeeded. These are extremely disputable points. We have heard that certain monks misinterpreting this incident, committed suicide. Some are foolhardy. Those who think 'I have no more prospects in life' 'My health has deteriorated' or 'I wish to be physically stronger' and wish for a future life, easily get caught to Māra. It's essential to let go of everything. Some have attained *Nibbāna* even while being impaled, by letting go. You have heard perhaps of such stories in the commentaries, though somewhat superfluous. A monk in the grip of a tiger, gradually attained each stage of spiritual development with each attack and finally attained *Nibbāna* when his heart was being attacked.

To get back to our serious discussion, *vedanānupassanā* or contemplation on feeling is a very effective object of meditation. We sometimes call it a strenuous path to *Nibbāna*. Everyone is reluctant to practice it. But if you practice it correctly, victory is certain. Let's take another simile. In horse racing, the final stage is so uncertain that an instant camera decides the winner. The most unexpected horse may win. What Venerable Godhika did was similar to that. But anyone who believes, cutting off one's neck is a shortcut to *Nibbāna*, he is certainly on the wrong track. Some have tried it out, unfortunately. On the other hand some may be critical of this story ignorant of the fact that *vedanānupassanā* underlies it.

This subject needs serious thinking. Imagine the tug-of-war with Māra at the moment of death. What do the ordinary worldlings do? They think of sensuality in the presence of unpleasant feeling. They wish for *Deva loka* or the comforts at home. Māra lets go his firm grip saying 'Have it'. What Venerable Godhika did was quite the opposite. He let go when Māra was pulling with his might. We can imagine Māra*'s* plight when he crash-landed on his back. That's the lesson we learn here.

It would be beneficial, I think, to discuss the experiences of a *vipassanā* meditator, at this point. One of the main obstacles a meditator faces, is sitting in cross-legged position for long. Some cannot sit for more than thirty minutes at each sitting. Soon they reach the climax. That is the right moment to recall the fourfold effort practiced by the Buddha.

Kāmaṁ tacoca nahārū ca aṭṭhi ca avasissatu sarīre upasussatu maṁsa lohitaṁ, yaṁ taṁ purisa thāmena,

purisaviriyena, purisaparakkamena pattabbaṁ na taṁ apāpuṇitvā viriyassa santhānaṁ bhavissati

Let the skin nerves and the bones remain. Let the flesh and blood dry up. I shall not lay down my effort until I attain that stage which has to be attained through

unshaken manly energy, manly vigor, manly strength. With unshaken determination as demonstrated above, if a meditator takes his mind off the meditation object, to apply firmly on the pain saying 'Let it break to pieces. I don't care', that effort will strengthen the Enlightenment Factors (*bojjaṇga*). You might sweat as a result. But haven't we had more bitter experiences in life?

Putting up with unbearable pain unmoved, some meditators, even laymen, though without our advice, have tried out this method and have had strange experiences. The pain burns the meditator beyond the bearable point and suddenly turns cool and feels like concrete. Then one could sit for hours. Awareness develops under the circumstances which at the same time, introspection on feeling develops, the meditator comes to realize that feeling is not one solid unit but a cluster similar to a cluster of rain drops. He also realizes that he revolted against pain taking it to be one unit whereas he now sees each streak of pain revealing the true nature of name-and-form. Dear listeners, each streak of pain reveals the true nature of name-and-form. Finally, to use two terms I often repeat, the perception of the compact, *ghaṇa saññā* fades away allowing the perception of cluster or *rāsi saññā* to emerge. There lies introspection. The worldling lives within the perception of the compact. He sees things as a complete whole. Through meditation one realizes the plurality of everything, true to the Buddha's simile of a cluster of bubbles, arising and breaking. It takes one, deep into *vipassanā* , insight meditation and in fact, if applied correctly, one could firmly establish oneself in *samādhi*, awareness and even attain arahanthood while in that seat by means of *vedanānupassanā*, contemplation on feeling. That's why ancient books contain such stories as that of the monk in the tiger's grip. It's important to remember this topic is of practical importance to meditators. It's well worth taking Venerable Godhika as an example, not in the negative but in the positive aspect. It is not an invitation to commit suicide but an invitation to eliminate craving. Only an invitation to eliminate craving. In this discourse something practically useful to meditators cropped up. When we discussed feeling, contact and *taṇhā* automatically came into the scene.

From today's discourse if you got any inspiration, any courage to continue with your meditation practice, we will feel satisfied. If you give importance to *vedanānupassanā* in your daily meditation instead of casting it aside as only appropriate for the educated, you can go far. You can sit and practice awareness longer and also attain a *samādhi*. Through insight meditation you could attain transcendental paths and fruits and even attain Arahanthood in this very life.

If you wish to cross over the *samsara*, before the lamp of this dispensation goes out, I do wish you would make use of the objects of meditation we explained in this discourse. The lamp of the dispensation is about to go out. If you want

release from repeated births and deaths, it's worth practicing them even at the risk of your life as Venerable Godhika did. We wish 'May you soon attain release from continued existence'. Whatever beings there be, from the lowest hell '*Avīcī*' to the highest Brahma world '*Akaniṭṭha*' may they rejoice in this discourse. May it conduce to their attainment of *Nibbāna*. May they attain the Deathless *Nibbāna*!



Paticca Samuppada Sermon 17

The Law of Dependent Arising

(Pahan Kanuwa Sermon – No. 199)

'*Namo tassa bhagavato arahato sammāsambuddhassa*'

'Homage be! To the Fortunate One – the Worthy, Fully Enlightened!'

Taṇhā dutiyo puriso – dīghamaddhāna saṁsaraṁ

itthabhāvaññathābhāvaṁ – saṁsāraṁ nātivattati

etamādīnavaṁ ñatvā – taṇhā-dukkhassa sambhavaṁ

vītataṇho anādāno – sato bhikkhu paribbaje

– Dvayatānupassanā Sutta, Sutta Nipāta

Dear Listeners,

'Worldlings undertake the unending journey of births and deaths in a mad pursuit that holds no gratification' – revealed the Buddha. They do not realize the misery in the samsaric journey due to the foolish expectation of encountering contentment. Craving is the tempting force in hiding, which creates a false shadow of contentment. We hope to discuss the significance of craving, (*taṇhā*), as relevant to the subject of *Paṭicca Samuppāda*, the Law of Dependent Arising, taking the above two verses as the topic of the seventeenth discourse on *Paṭicca Samuppāda*, because they well demonstrate the worldling's samsāric journey with *taṇhā* as the partner. The two verses are found in the *Dvayatānupassanā Sutta* of the *Sutta Nipāta*. We have explained to you the style of presentation in the *sutta*, through several discourses on *Paṭicca Samuppāda*. It presents the different topics of the Dhamma one by one in a way conducive to contemplation as a duality. This is how the Buddha introduces the duality of craving.

"Monks, if someone inquires whether there could be another mode of contemplating dualities, you must reply in the affirmative. How is it possible? However much misery arises, all that is conditioned by craving. This is one mode of contemplation. With the complete detachment and cessation of craving, suffering ceases to arise. This is the second mode of contemplation. Monks, a monk who trains himself well in this duality of contemplation applying strenuous

effort to burn out the defilements, can hope to realize one of these two spiritual attainments, either Arahanthood in this very life or in case any residue of grasping is left over, the stage of Non-returner (*Anāgāmi*). At the end of this account the Buddha recited the two verses selected as our topic.

Taṇha dutiyo puriso – dīghamaddhāna saṁsaraṁ

The man wandering long, with craving as his partner

itthabhāvaññathābhāvaṁ – saṁsāraṁ nātivattati

Does not transcend this *saṁsāra* which is an alternation between 'thisness' and 'otherwiseness'.

Next he declares:

etamādīnavaṁ ñatvā – taṇhā dukkhassa sambhavaṁ

Seeing the evils of craving which generates misery

vītataṇho anādāno – sato bhikkhu paribbaje

Let the monk conduct himself mindfully with craving dispelled and grasping abandoned.

When discussing the topic craving, *taṇhā*, we must recall how *Paṭicca Samuppāda* deals with it. You all know the 'Law of Dependent Arising' with twelve links.

"*Vedanā paccayā taṇhā, taṇhā paccayā upādanaṁ*" from feeling as condition arises craving, from craving as condition arises grasping. You have to remember right along, the two links on either side of craving.

Craving is sixfold in the Buddha's analysis in the *Paṭicca Samuppāda Vibhaṇga Sutta* of the *Vibhaṇga Saṁyutta* in the *Saṁyutta Nikāya*. They are based on the six sense objects as craving for physical form, sound, smell, taste, physical contact and mental objects.

The most popular and the most heard of interpretation is found in the *Dhammacakkappavattana Sutta*. Those listeners who chant or listen to parittas know well, that the Buddha in the interpretation of the Four Noble Truths, analyses the origin of suffering in relation to craving. We have often emphasized that statement for your benefit.

"*Yāyaṁ taṇhā ponobhavikā nandirāga sahagatā tatratatrābhinandinī seyyathidaṁ kāma taṇhā, bhava taṇhā, vibhava taṇhā.*"

This craving is *ponobhavikā*. It has the inherent nature of causing repeated birth. *Nandirāga sahagatā* – Delights in and attaches to lust. *Tatratatrābhinandinī* – takes delight here and there. Those are the three characteristics of *taṇhā*. Then come the three types of craving *kāma taṇhā*, *bhava taṇhā* and *vibhava taṇhā*. *Kāma taṇhā* is craving for the five sense pleasures. *Bhava taṇhā* is in short, the longing for the soul to continue forever as the eternalists advocate. *Vibhava taṇhā* on the other hand is the craving to cease existence as nihilists teach. That is how craving is classified in the *Dhammacakkappavattana Sutta*.

Now I wish to introduce to you something that calls for serious thinking. The Buddha in the *Tiṭṭhāyatana Sutta* of the *Tika Nipāta* in the *Anguttara Nikāya* proclaims these words.

"*Katamaṁ ca bhikkhave dukkha samudayaṁ ariyasaccaṁ*?"

"Monks, what is the Noble Truth of the Arising of Suffering?"

Do you think it's craving? You are mistaken. The Buddha says it's the *Paṭicca Samuppāda* consisting of twelve links. *Avijjā paccayā saṅkhārā*, *saṅkhāra paccayā viññāṇaṁ*, *viññāṇa paccayā nāmarupaṁ* etc. This is sure to pose a problem to many. Are the Buddha's statements contradictory? In one place he says suffering is conditioned by craving. In another place it's *Paṭicca Samuppāda* with its twelve links. How do we clarify this? Why didn't the Buddha speak of craving in connection with suffering? It is simple logic that if there is a mother, a father has to be present somewhere. You all know that. Similarly the father is revealed through the *Paṭicca Samuppāda* Dhamma.

I shall now explain it to you. In the earlier discourses on *Paṭicca Samuppāda* I have repeatedly stressed the fact that the important point here is not *avijjā* but the inter-relation between *viññāṇa* and *nāmarūpa*. It is this inter-relatedness of conditions that was referred to as the vortex. It's the central spot in the *Paṭicca Samuppāda*. Then what is *avijjā* or craving? I think it will be more lucid if I put it this way.

In the blindness called ignorance, with the darkness of preparations, a process of groping takes place. During this groping, two things get caught within one's grip, consciousness, and name-and-form, *viññāṇa* and *nāmarūpa*. They have an interdependent relationship. But the worldlings being unable to see this connection, always treat them as two. As a result there arise greed (*lobha*), anger

(*dosa*), delusion (*moha*), attachment, clashes and deception and many more problems. We have given many a simile to illustrate this situation, so it suffices to touch on them in brief. The simplest simile of the dog on the bridge appears in "Nibbāna – The Mind Stilled".

A dog walking across a bridge sees its own shadow in the water and believing it to be another dog will react by wagging its tail or growling or staring inquisitively. That illustrates greed, anger and delusion (*lobha, dosa, moha*). We have modernized it using an ancient Greek mythical story. It has appealed to many. Narcissus the Greek youth who had never seen his handsome face in a mirror, saw its reflection in a pond as he bent towards it. Assuming it to be a goddess in the water, he spent several days in a futile effort to hold her in his arms and ultimately sacrificed his own life. He was not aware that it was his own reflection.

We have brought out many more similes to show the misconception of duality. We hope you remember in the first discourse, the game of draught between Ajith and Sumith which terminated in utter confusion. In the same way, in the game of cricket that you know so well, the moment two teams are formed, the original inter-relatedness is forgotten. Then there is the simile of the cinema. The worldlings are not capable of understanding this interdependent origin of things, due to its subtle nature. Ven Sāriputta has expertly demonstrated it using the simile of two bundles of reeds. Two bundles of reeds maintain their upright position supported by each other. When one is pulled out of position, the other is bound to fall. Interdependent origination is exactly like that. They are not one, and neither are they two. We have to refer to a simile from folk lore as the last resort in explaining this intrinsic relationship.

If consciousness is questioned "Who are you?" it would answer "Please ask name-and-form".

If *nāmarūpa* is questioned "who are you?" it would reply "please ask *viññāṇa*".

They are so closely inter-related. The worldlings cannot grasp this subtlety and hence the division into two teams. It should be now clear that *viññāṇa* and *nāmarūpa* are closely inter-dependent.

Now see whether you can agree with me here. It's name-and-form that is divided into six sense spheres. They are activated by craving (*taṇhā*), to function as craving for physical form, craving for sound, craving for smell and so on. Eye consciousness arises through eye and physical form coming together. Forgetting this truth the eye runs in pursuit of form, the ear in pursuit of sound. This apparent duality creates the deception of the five aggregates of grasping instigated by *lobha* (greed), *dosa* (anger) and *moha* (delusion). This analysis may

not correspond to what appears in certain books. Commentators attempt to find the root cause of ignorance, which I think is a futile attempt. Ignorance is the father. In other words, the duality of consciousness and Name-and-form springs up through preparations in the background of ignorance. The worldlings pick it up as a duality. Craving begins to function from this point. The Buddha proves this in several places such as the *Samiddhi Sutta* when he says

"*acchecchi taṇhaṁ idha nāmarūpe.*"

Cut off craving towards this name-and-form. It is this name-and-form that divides itself into six sense spheres. We think this explanation is sufficient because there is no contradiction here. In certain places where the Buddha talks of the Law of Dependent Arising the Noble Truth of the Arising of Suffering is directly identified as the Law of Dependent Arising.

What we have been discussing is the background of craving. To put it in brief what *Paṭicca Samuppāda* depicts is nothing more than the background of craving which is ignorance. It changes into a vortex and conceals the inter-relationship from the worldlings. The worldlings always live imprisoned between two ends, two extremes, which create attachments, friction and illusion. The final result is suffering, or the weaving of the five aggregates of grasping.

In the discourse on the Four Noble Truths, the Buddha specifically referred to craving as the Noble Truth of the Arising of Suffering. Even when talking of the cessation of suffering, he did not refer to ignorance.

"*Tassā yeva taṅhāya asesa virāga nirodho cāgo paṭinissaggo mutti anālayo*"

The total detachment and destruction of craving is called the cessation of suffering. At this point one may ask "Where is ignorance?"

In the earlier mentioned *Titthāyatana Sutta*, the cessation of suffering is explained through the reverse order of the *Paṭicca Samuppāda*.

"*Avijjāyatveva asesa virāga norodhā saṁkhāranirodho.*"

With the cessation of ignorance each of the other links cease to be. In fact the most detailed analysis of the Noble Truth of the Arising of Suffering is found in the *Mahāsatipaṭṭhāna Sutta* of the *Dīgha Nikāya*. Here the Buddha exposes the place where *taṇhā* arises and where it remains hiding, in the following words:

"*sā kho pana esā taṇhā kattha uppajjamānā uppajjati, kattha nivisamānā nivisati.*"

This is presented in the form of a question.

Before I proceed further, I want to point out to you that *taṇhā* is a feminine gender noun, in Pāli. It's useful to know this, because the term 'mother' is used in this context. Some *suttas* say "*taṇhā janeti purisaṁ*."

Craving gives birth to man. Craving is the mother.

"*Sā kho pana esā taṇhā…*" if translated in conformity with the gender rules in ancient Pāli grammar – though an accurate English translation is not possible – it would appear as follows.

"That this lass craving, in taking birth, where will she take birth?"

Another important point, dear listeners, is the correct rendering of '*nivisamānā*' into English. The idea of "lying under, hiding or creeping under" is implied here. So let's take it as 'lying in hiding'. Then the Buddha's question would be "That this lass craving (*taṇhā*), in taking birth where will she take birth?

In lying in hiding where will she lie hiding?"

Now comes the Buddha's reply'

"*Yaṁ loke piyarūpaṁ sātarūpaṁ etthesā taṇhā uppajjamānā uppajjati. Ettha nivisamānā nivisati*".

Please remember that '*piyarūpa'* here means 'delightful in nature'. '*Sātarūpa'* means 'agreeable in nature'. Since this reference is to the place where birth takes place, whatever is delightful in appearance and agreeable in appearance, that is where craving takes birth and lies in hiding.

Next the Buddha proceeds to analyze this position.

"*Kiñca loke piyarūpaṁ sātarūpaṁ*?"

What is delightful and agreeable in this world? The answer consists of a long list which begins with:

"*cakkhuṁ loke piyarūpaṁ sātarūpaṁ etthesā taṇhā uppajjamānā uppajjati ettha nivisamānā nivisati.*"

"The eye is delightful and agreeable in this world. Therein is craving born. Therein craving lies concealed."

In this manner the Buddha talks of the six internal sense spheres, the eye, the ear, the nose, the tongue, the body and the mind. Then he proceeds to list the six

external sense objects, physical form, sound, smell, taste, touch and mental objects. I hope you can understand them, though I have listed them in brief. They are all delightful and agreeable to the worldling so that craving takes birth in them and lies in hiding.

That is not all. The six-fold consciousness that arises due to contact between each pair such as the eye-consciousness, *cakkhu viññāṇa* the ear consciousness *sota viññāṇa* and so on are delightful and agreeable to the worldling. There too craving arises and lies in hiding. Then the Buddha points out that the six sense contacts eye contact, ear contact, nose contact, tongue contact, body contact and mind contact (*cakkhu, sota, ghāna, jivhā, kāya and mano samphassa*) are also delightful and agreeable so that craving can arise and wait in hiding. So also the six feelings generated through six sense contacts (*samphassajā vedanā*) are also delightful and agreeable. Next comes *saññā* or perceptions such as the perception of form, the perception of sound, the perception of smell and so on. This is followed by the six intentions *saṁcetanā*. Worldings like to think of the intention of physical forms, sounds, smells, tastes etc. as delightful and agreeable There too craving arises and waits in hiding.

Next comes an amazing statement from the Buddha.

"*Rūpataṇhā loke piyarūpaṁ sātarūpaṁ etthesā taṇhā uppajjamānā uppajjati*."

Worldlings are delighted by craving for physical form (*rūpataṇhā*). They are comforted by it. They are delighted by craving for physical form, craving for sound, craving for smells, craving for taste, craving for physical contact and craving for mental objects. This reveals the unbelievable truth that there is craving within craving, *taṇhā* within *taṇhā*. *Taṇhā* is born within itself and lies in hiding. Can you believe it? The next list is under *vitakka* or reflection. Reflection on physical form, *rūpavitakka* is enticing. So is investigation of form, *rūpavicāra*. The ten-fold analysis of craving with reference to its arising and lying in hiding is found in the *Mahā Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta*.

Then the Buddha explains how the cessation of craving is brought about. I shall put it briefly to you. I am confident you can follow the entire procedure.

"*Sā kho panesā taṇhā kattha pahīyamānā pahīyati, katta nirujjhamānā nirujjhati*."

Where does that *taṇhā* cease? Where does *taṇhā* get eliminated? Where craving arises, there it ceases.

"*Yaṁ loke piyarūpaṁ sātarūpaṁ etthesā taṇhā pahīyamānā pahīyati. Ettha nirujjhamānā nirujjhati.*"

A lengthy and descriptive analysis is given in this manner on the cessation of craving in the *Mahā Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta*.

Let us now move on to the *Majjhe Sutta* in the *Ekaka Nipāta* of the *Anguttara Nikāya*. In our discussion on craving or *taṇhā*, this *sutta* is of great relevance to us. We have discussed it several times because we are compelled to draw on its content when talking of craving. You will remember it when I tell you its background. Once when the Buddha was residing at Isipatana Deer Park in Benares, a group of Senior Monks, after the mid-day meal sat in conference in their conference hall. Their main topic was a verse from *Metteyya Pañha*, a discourse of the Buddha.

Yo ubhante viditvāna

majjhe mantā na lippati

taṁ bhrūmi mahā puriso'ti

sodha sibbanimaccagā.

Knowing the two ends, he who with wisdom refrains from attachment to the middle, I call him a great man who transcends the seamstress in this world.

Based on this verse four questions were formulated. What is the first end? What is the second end? What is the middle? Who is the seamstress? Six senior monks addressed the assembly and gave six different interpretations.

The first interpreter presented his view as follows. The first end is contact (*phassa*). The second end is the arising of contact. The middle is the cessation of contact. The seamstress is craving. Here he explains how craving functions.

"*Taṇhā hi naṁ sibbati tassa tasse'va bhavassa abhinibbattiyā.*"

"Craving stitches him on to repeated births."

That is why craving is called the seamstress.

To state the other interpretations in brief, the second monk said "The first end is the past, the second end the future and the middle is the present. The seamstress is craving."

We too can agree with this argument, watching how our thoughts work, running between the past and the future. We are not even aware of the existence of a

present. That's because craving keeps tying up the ends. The third interpretation suggests pleasant feelings as one end, painful feelings as the second end, the feelings that are neither pleasant nor painful as the middle and the seamstress of course *taṇhā*, craving. Here too we are so engrossed in the two ends, we are hardly aware of feelings that are neither pleasant nor painful. In the fourth, name (*nāma*) is one end. Form (*rūpa*) is the other. In the middle is consciousness (*viññāṇa*). Here again the seamstress is craving who keeps stitching together the two ends, name-and-form. What is the fifth interpretation? The internal sense spheres eye, ear, nose, tongue, body and mind constitute one end. The six external objects, physical form, sound, smell, taste, physical contact and cognizable objects form the other end. In the middle is consciousness. Craving, playing her role as the seamstress ties up the two ends, ignoring the middle. The sixth and final interpretation gives the view of self (*sakkāya*) or the five aggregates of grasping as one end. The other end is the arising of the view of self (*sakkāya samudaya*) or the arising of the five aggregates. The middle is the cessation of the view of self. Craving is the seamstress in this sixth interpretation as well, who keeps tying up the knots every moment, taking care that the cessation of *sakkāya diṭṭhi* and its arising, is impossible. These interpretations give ample proof of the vicious activity of *taṇhā,* craving.

We have occasionally used the sewing machine as a modern simile to explain the behavior of *taṇhā*. Each time the needle goes in, the thread of the shuttle ties a knot. Tying knots is a specific characteristic of craving. *Tatratatrābhinandinī nandirāgasahagatā* are words that well demonstrate the function of the needle, piercing into the machine, tying a knot and coming up and repeating the process. *Majjhe Sutta* well describes the ruthless behavior of craving.

I would like to discuss this topic from yet another angle, using another expression in the same verse, since I am very particular that you understand it clearly.

"*Taṇhā dutiyo puriso dīghamaddhāna saṁsaraṁ itthabhāvaññathābhāvaṁ saṁsāraṁ nātivattati.*"

The true nature of this *saṁsāra* is summarized as something found between 'thisness' and 'otherwiseness'. Let me explain it. Think of a being taking birth here from somewhere, let us say from the animal world. This baby seeing things, hearing sounds around him, he develops the notion 'here' followed by the idea of 'thisness' or *itthabhāva*. From the moment thisness is established, it keeps changing into 'otherwiseness', or *aññathābhāva*.

It is an amazing thing. The nature of '*bhava*' (becoming) – what is called *bhava* – is something that happens due to grasping. Whenever a being grasps – clings to – something, impermanence begins to function from that moment. Explaining this subtle point is no easy task. Try to comprehend it yourself. We have explained before that only subsequent to arising of a 'thing' that it becomes 'otherwise'. When something becomes a 'thing', from that point onwards it starts to change. I shall give a simile though not a perfect one. Think of buying a toy from a toy shop for a little baby. Paying for it adds more value to it. What they have brought home has its own nature or 'thisness' – *itthabhāva*. The moment the little one breaks it, it changes into 'otherwiseness' – *aññathābhāva*. From then onwards it begins to change. The notion of a 'thing' with its particular characteristics is called '*maññanā'*. It means to assume something to be a 'thing' with its own identity. From then onwards it begins to change.

The Buddha, immediately after his enlightenment has proclaimed as follows:

"*Aññathābhāvī bhavasatto loko bhavapareto bhavamevābhinandati*"

The worldling attached to *bhava* – continuous becoming – which has the nature of otherwiseness, and overcome by *bhava*, delights in it. It is the seamstress craving who instigates the worldling. For example, imagine you lost something. Craving would say "Don't worry. There is another one beyond. Have it."

It expresses what is implied by *tatratatrābhinandinī, taṇhā ponobhavikā*. *Ponobhavikā* is not merely suggestive of the moment of death. It takes place every moment. *Punabbhava* apparently means the next birth. But every moment something becomes a 'thing' or a 'this'. It keeps changing. Due to this change, it is discarded and another 'thing' is grasped. Another 'thing' is grasped. This grasping is done through craving, which lies in hiding. This process is referred to as *tatratatrābhinandinī*, the fact that the beings wander in *saṁsāra* between 'thisness' and 'otherwiseness'. This happens not only from life to life and birth to birth but also within a lifetime. This change is extremely subtle. I have given you these details to enable you to understand *itthabhāva* and *aññathābhāva*.

There are several meaningful verses in the *Taṇhā Vagga* of the *Dhammapada,* that expand on this subject but unfortunately the meanings of some verses are lost to us. Anyway let us discuss one verse for our purpose.

Tasiṇāya purakkhatā pajā

parisappanti sasova bādhito

saṁyojana saṁgasattā

dukkhamupenti punappunaṁ cirāya

Here is its meaning.

Tasiṇā is a synonym for *taṇhā* – craving.

"*Tasiṇāya purakkhatā paj?"*

The human race placed in the forefront by craving "*parisappanti sasova bādhito*" like a rabbit entrapped in a snare. What happens to the humans? The commentary says *parisappanti* means frightened. Frightened like a rabbit in a snare. This interpretation overlooks a very valuable implication referred to here. Why was the rabbit taken as simile? It can leap far. Think of a rabbit with its hind foot caught in a noose. Ignorant of the confronted plight it leaps far. Then realizing the perilous situation, it leaps in all directions but is hopelessly caught. Similar is the noose of craving. *Saṁyojanasaṁgasattā* – stuck in the bond of sticky craving.

"*Dukkhaṁ upenti punappunaṁ cirāya*" – humans are gripped by suffering repeatedly for long. In short, unless one attains the stage of Non-returner, even though born in Brahma world, one is destined to return here, due to the trap of craving.

This verse in the *Dhammapada* which you are quite familiar with, emphasises how strong the fetter of craving is.

Yathāpi mūle anupaddave daḷhe

chinnopi rukkho punareva rūhati

evampi taṇhānusaye anūhate

uppajjati dukkhamidaṁ punappunaṁ

"*Yathāpi mūle anupaddave daḷhe*" – When the root is uninjured and firm, *chinnopi rukkho punareva rūhati* – even though the tree is cut down, grows again and again.

"*Evampi taṇhānusaye anūhate*" – similarly as long as the latency of craving is not eliminated,

"*uppajjati dukkhamidaṁ punappunaṁ*" – this suffering arises again and again.

This verse reveals the strength of craving. It's not different from the plight of the rabbit. I am not trying to include everything in this discourse. I am only trying to

bring out the hidden meanings of these valuable verses, which have not been given their due.

Now let us look at another aspect of *taṇhā* as given in another *sutta*. we have explained how conditioned by craving, grasping (*upādāna*) arises. In some places craving itself plays the role of grasping. I would like to cite an example from *Kutuhalasālā Sutta* of the *Saṁyutta Niyāka*, which has been subjected to much criticism. To put it in brief, the *Paribbājaka* Vacchagotta visited the Buddha and made a critical comment. He said the six teachers such as Pūranakassapa, Makkhalī Gosāla and Ajithakesakambalī, when their ordinary followers die, reveal their destinations and also when their spiritually developed disciples pass away, reveal their destinations as well. But the Recluse Buddha reveals where ordinary followers are born, but is silent about the next birth of his disciples with the highest spiritual attainment. The Buddha only utters the phrase:

"*Acchecchi taṇhaṁ vāvattayī saṁyojanaṁ, sammā mānābhisamayā anta–makāsi dukkhassa*."

Even the Buddhists of today do not know what Vacchagotta knew about the Buddha. This statement is about the emancipated person.

"*Acchecchi taṇhaṁ*" – cut off craving.

"*Vāvattayī saṁyojanaṁ*" – reversed the hooks of bonds.

"*Sammā mānābhisamayā antamakāsi dukkhassa*" – comprehending pride correctly, expelled suffering. That is what the Buddha says about the emancipated person after death. Vacchagotta puzzled by this explanation, confesses his doubt, his confusion. The Buddha says he well understands Vacchagotta's confusion and explains his position as follows.

"*Saupādānassa khvāham vaccha uppattiṁ paññapemi no anupādānassa*."

I disclose the birth of him who grasps, not of him who is detached. The Buddha then gives a simile.

"Vaccha, just as a fire,

"*saupādāno jalati*."

Here the fire is a *saupādāno* fire, which needs an explanation. *Upādāna* is used in Pāli to mean fuel. A fire burns only when it grasps some sort of fuel, such as wood. The Buddha here explains that a fire burns "*saupādāno*" only by grasping a fuel,

"*no anupādānassa*" not without a fuel.

That is the simile of the fire. This simile prompts Vacchagotta to pose another question.

"Friend Gotama, if a flame (*acci*) is carried far by the wind, what would you say is the fuel – *upādāna*?"

You can imagine a forest fire, where the wind could carry a flame to a tree far away. That is the simile here. The Buddha replies that the wind is the fuel. We refer to this as

"caught by the wind."

The flame was definitely 'caught by the wind' and carried afar. This reply instigates Vacchagotta to ask an unusual question.

"Friend Gotama, if a being lays down this body and enters a certain other body, what then would you point out as the fuel?"

This *sutta* words it as "*aññataraṁ kāyaṁ anuppatto hoti*."

'*Aññataraṁ*' here means 'a certain'.

"A being reaching (entering) a certain other body, lays down this body" means he gives up this body and reaches another. The Buddha specifically states that craving is the fuel in that situation. This shows how forceful the functioning of craving is. But unfortunately, Dear listeners, due to misinterpretation of this simile and this paragraph, the modern readers understand this as '*antarābhava*' – a period of existence between death and next birth.

We have often explained in our books that the theory of interim birth is unacceptable. How did this misconception come about? One reason is the misinterpretation of the simile. Here Vacchagotta questions, not regarding the gap between two existences, but regarding the passage from one existence to the next. There is also a very intricate language problem visible here. In the process of the Buddha word passing from one generation to the next generation, confusion regarding phrases and words occurred. Sometimes the version in one written copy differed from another. Those who profess the theory of *antarābhava* read '*anuppatto*' which means 'reached' as '*anuppanno*' which means 'not born'. *Anuppatto* means the opposite of *anuppanno*. These theorizers explain their position thus.

A being lays down the body. Did he enter the next birth? No, not yet. '*anuppanno*' 'not born'. What is the grasping during this gap? That is their

interpretation. But I have emphatically pointed out the special word '*aññataraṁ*' that occurs here. It means 'a certain'. We use this adjective always with something existing, not with something non-existant. If we select something really existing and use the word *aññaṁ* before it, it is correct.

This is a very subtle point. But why go so far? It's clear that Vaccha questions how one birth leads to another. These theorizers, imagining that there is a time gap between the two, have in the recent past continuously argued that an interim birth exists. They have not understood the *suttas* correctly.

One thing is clear however. The Buddha confirms that craving itself is the grasping at the moment of death. It can be proved with several examples. A synonym for craving is '*bhavanetti*'. *Netti* is a projection, a point that juts out. *Bhavanetti* – 'bent' is another term used. During a rainy season like this, somebody levels a strip of high ground leaving a projection at the top. With a shower of rain that projection would collapse. Similarly, the projection in continuous becoming is craving. Why so? Because there is a shortcoming, a possibility to collapse. '*ūno loko atitto taṇhādāso*'.

In this world there is always a flaw, a shortcoming to be seen. '*atitto*' no contentment. *Taṇhādāso* – a slave to craving. *ūno loko atitto taṇhādāso* is a statement in the *Raṭṭhapāla Sutta*. The worldlings always find shortcomings. Even a millionaire would complain he is short of something or the other. '*Atitto*' means never gratified. *Taṇhādāso* means a slave to craving. In this sense craving is called *bhavanetti* because craving alone is sufficient to create continuous existence. Due to the presence of that projection '*netti*', one is bound to fall into existence somewhere. That itself explains why the Buddha referred to craving as grasping. This statement contains not one or two but several important facts.

Next let us talk about the cessation of craving. The term used to describe *Nibbāna* on certain occasions is '*taṇhakkhaya*'

"*taṇhakkhayo virāgo nirodho Nibbānaṁ*."

The very ceasing of *taṇhā* is treated as *Nibbāna*. It's the very ceasing of *taṇhā*, craving. Many educated people are confused by this. They argue if craving means 'wishing for' something, wishing for *Nibbāna* is also craving.

There is a *Sutta* that offers a solution to this problem.

When Venerable Ananda was residing at Ghositārāma in Kosambi, a certain Bhikkhunī sent a man to say that she was seriously ill and wished to meet him. Venerable Ananda accepted the invitation. As he was approaching the nunnery,

she lay down on her bed fully covered, with a hidden intention. Venerable Ananda, seeing through this lowly behavior, delivered an effective discourse to suit the occasion. Thanks to the nun's unseemly plan, we are rewarded with a valuable discourse.

Let us first listen to four statements which conveys the essence of the discourse.

Āhārasambhūto ayaṁ bhagini kāyo āhāraṁ nissāya āhāro pahātabbo.

taṇhāsambhūto ayaṁ bhagini kāyo taṇhaṁ nissāya taṇhā pahātabbā.

mānasambhūto ayaṁ bhagini kāyo mānaṁ nissāya māno pahātabbo.

methūnasambhūto ayaṁ bhagini kāyo

methūneca setughāto vutto bhagavatā.

Then follows an analysis of each statement by Venerable

Ananda. First let us understand their meanings.

"*Āhāra sambhūto ayaṁ bhagini kāy?"*

Sister, this body has arisen based on food,

"*Āhāraṁ nissāya āhāro pahātabbo*."

Food has to be eliminated through food.

Taṇhā sambhūto ayaṁ bhagini kāyo."

This body has arisen based on craving.

"*Taṇhaṁ nissāya taṇhaṁ pahātabbo*."

Craving has to be eliminated through craving. This sounds rather contradictory. Then he says

"*Māna sambhūto ayaṁ bhagini kāyo*."

Sister, this body arises based on conceit. But conceit has to be eliminated through conceit. The final statement seems rather queer.

"*Methuna sambhūto bhagini ayaṁ kāyo*."

Sister, this body arises through sexual intercourse. Here the phrase '*methunaṁ nissāya*' does not occur. It says '*methuneva setughāto'*. That bridge has to be

pulled down. All relations have to be severed. That is the approach suggested with reference to sex.

Now Venerable Ananda goes into detail taking one statement at a time.

"*Āhārasambhūto ayaṁ bhagini kāyo*."

That can be understood easily. Food is essential. One cannot go into total starvation like the Nigaṇṭhas. A monk partakes of food contemplating as follows; "*Neva davāya, na madāya, na maṇdanāya"* etc. It is known as '*ñāṇa saṁvara'*, restraint through wisdom. One partakes of food, contemplating on food. It turns out to be meditation. We have time and again reminded you that eating is not a game, not a source of entertainment. It's merely for maintenance of the body so that higher life could be fulfilled. Such a monk, says Venerable Ananda, will eliminate food eventually.

Next is '*taṇhā sambhūto*' which is rather difficult to grasp. Venerable Ananda explains it as follows. A certain monk comes to know that a certain bhikkhu attained Arahanthood, through destruction of influxes. This monk thinks "When will I be able to become an Arahant like that monk?"

A wish, a yearning arises in him. We admit that it is craving. But inspired by that wish, that yearning, he strives hard and becomes an Arahant.

Mānasambhūto is also somewhat similar. A certain monk comes to hear that a particular bhikkhu known to him had become an Arahant. The monk's thoughts are given in a peculiar phrase.

"*Kimañga pana aham*?"

Why can't I? It shows conceit. Perhaps this Arahant monk was uneducated or belonged to a low caste.

"If he can, why can't I achieve it?" is an expression of conceit. But this conceit might pave the way to Arahanthood.

The fourth statement was handled very briefly without explanation. Venerable Ananda only said "*Methuneca setu ghāto vutto bhagavatā*."

What he said about *methuna* is not similar to what he said about the earlier three. He advocated the breaking off of all connections. Thoroughly embarrassed, the nun, jumped off the bed, fell at the feet of Venerable Ananda and apologized for her disgraceful suggestion due to her foolishness and unwholesome thoughts. Through her foolishness and evil thoughts, we were rewarded with a useful *sutta*. Although we look at it positively, certain Buddhist sects have taken undue

advantage of it by misinterpreting the statement. The *Tantrayāna* sect took it as "*Methunaṁ nissāya methunaṁ pajahati*".

Methuna is abandoned through *methuna*. These are indecent trends not worth discussing.

I am reminded of another incident centered round Venerable Ananda, again at Ghositārāma in Kosambi, which sheds light on the same topic. One day a Brahmin named Uṇṇābha enquires of the Venerable Ananda "For what purpose do you practice celibacy (higher life) under the Ascetic Gotama?"

Being a non-Buddhist, he questioned out of curiosity. Venerable

Ananda's reply was "*chanda pahānattha?"*

We practice the disciplines of higher life in order to dispel desire (*chanda*). The second question was,

"Is there a path of discipline laid down to dispel desire?"

The reply was purposely given with the intention of arousing more critical inquiry.

"Yes. The path is the four bases of success – *iddhipādas*, desire, resolution, will and investigation."

Most probably you have heard of them. *Chanda* is described as

"*chanda samādhi padhāna saṅkhāra samannāgataṁ iddhipādaṁ bhāveti*."

Basing his effort on the contemplation of desire, a monk develops *iddhipāda*. It implies that desire can be eliminated by developing *iddhipāda*. It is a contradictory statement inviting criticism. Naturally, the Brahmin retorted,

"*chandeneva chandaṁ pajahissatīti netaṁ ṭhānaṁ vijjati*."

'Desire is dispelled by desire itself' is an impossibility. Venerable Ananda gives a simple simile to clarify the situation.

"Brahmin, do you admit that you had a desire to visit the monastery, but it vanished on arrival here?"

"Yes friend."

Do you admit you had some resolution to visit the monastery but it vanished on arrival here?"

“Yes friend.”

Do you admit you had the will to visit the monastery but it vanished on arrival?”

“Yes friend.”

“Do you admit you had a sense of investigation when arriving at the monastery but it vanished on arrival?”

“Yes friend.”

Similarly, Brahmin, a monk following the path of discipline with the support of the four *iddhipādas*, attains total destruction of desire, which is his goal. When the aspiration of a worldling is accomplished, more aspirations crop up. Goals in the life of a worldling are all created by craving. They help to multiply craving. But here, what is the goal? *Nibbāna* which is a synonym for the elimination of craving (*taṇhakkhayo*). The effort directed towards the destruction of craving, ends at achieving the goal. We have on earlier occasions given you various similes to clarify this point. Then the critics cannot say that the desire to attain *Nibbāna* is also desire. We have to face facts. Here we see the Middle Path in action. We have explained it in diverse ways such as the simile of crossing a current. The fundamental characteristics of the Middle Path are pragmatism and relativity.

Even what is harmful is not totally discarded but utilized to achieve the goal. To give an example, the Nigaṇṭhas gave up food altogether and even untied the knot of their robe. They walked about naked. The Buddha, with the experience he went through, always avoided the extremes. He introduced contemplation, through which the Middle Path was made a reality. Contemplation became an essential feature in it. *Saṁsāra* or continuous existence is such that, crossing the current of *saṁsāra* calls for extreme caution. That is exactly why the Buddha resorted to the middle path.

“*Taṇhaṁ nissāya taṇhā pahātabbā*” is perfectly applicable in this context. *Taṇhā* craving is abandoned by means of craving. The difference lies there. With regard to worldly goals, when one is achieved, when one is realized, another crops up. But *Nibbāna* terminates everything.

What is *Nibbāna*? It is not something like Siyadoris’s *Nibbāna –Nibbāna* of Simple Simon. ‘*Taṇhakkhayo*’ means the destruction of craving. In the discourse on the Four Noble Truths, the arising of suffering is illustrated by ‘*taṇhā ponobhavikā*’. Cessation of suffering was illustrated by “*tassāyeva taṇhāya asesa virāga nirodho cāgo paṭinissaggo mutti anālayo*.”

It speaks of nothing but the destruction of craving.

At the same time, remember the question asked by Vacchagotta Paribbājaka. In talking of the birth of the emancipated person, the Buddha used the most appropriate term '*Acchecchi taṇhāṁ*.' He cut off craving. '*Vāvattayī saṁyojanaṁ*.' Reversed the hooks of fetters (*saṁyojanas*). These fetters are fixed one to the other like the railway compartments connected to one another by hooks. Reverse the hooks and they are disconnected. Try to understand the fetters as similar. Hooks or bonds of rebirth are turned backwards. Another phrase that adds depth to this idea is '*sammā mānābhisamayā*'. It gives the reason for endless births. The final target is the destruction of *māna*, conceit. It is the final attack on Māra's *asmimāna* or conceit of self. In other words the pride of self as "I am" is the subtle attachment to continuous becoming. Those who have read the Dhamma will know, that after the attainment of *Anāgāmi* (Nonreturner) one is born in the Brahma world, because the conceit of self still remains. Concealed within the fivefold fetters such as passion for worlds of form, passion for formless worlds, conceit, agitation and ignorance, there is self-pride in a very subtle form. That too has to be eliminated. I have been trying to emphasize the significance of craving, which is treated as the mother.

There seems to be some confusion regarding the connection between the *Paṭicca Samuppāda* and craving. That's why some people, like the Hindus our Pāli commentators, keep guessing what the root cause of ignorance is. It is an unnecessary attempt. Let us understand it this way. The groping that takes place in the darkness of ignorance is called *kāya saṁkhara*, *vacī saṁkhara* and *mano saṁkhara*, that is the preparation of the body, speech and the mind. In this process of preparation, there arises *viññāṇa* and *nāmarūpa*, (consciousness and name-and-form). These are the two forces we referred to as the vortex. The worldlings unable to understand their inter-dependent nature take a firm stand, mistakenly seeing something to grasp in the form of subject-object. This is what activates in *upādāna* or grasping. To facilitate better understanding of this position, let me recall the simile of the mirage which I have often referred to. Imagine a row of posts fixed far apart on a flat land. The deer imagining there is water, runs upto the first post, then upto the second and the third, and so on. This is the deception which we call *taṇhā ponobhavikā* or craving that leads to continuous existence. Craving is the force that pushes beings forward. All this should make you realize the depth of the Buddha's Dhamma. It is an amazingly rewarding dhamma, if you have the correct vision of the goal. Many people understand *Nibbāna* to be another birth. When explaining the *Paṭicca Samuppāda*, we have emphasized that the speciality about the Dhamma is that one has to terminate the entire mass of suffering as the final goal. The attachment to continuous birth and the very notion of becoming has to be eliminated, or else

it will persist even after the attainment of a Non-returner (*Anāgāmi*). Such is the subtlety of the dhamma.

Now Dear Listeners, I hope you will support your meditation with what I have explained, particularly in seeing the negative aspect of craving as the Buddha has taught us. If you are aware of the conditions under which craving arises and ceases, you can definitely reach the spiritual attainment described as "*taṇhakkhayo virāgo, nirodho Nibbānaṁ*."

I want you to put this discourse into practical use in improving your meditation and religious practices, so that you could attain the different stages of the path and the peace of *Nibbāna* in this very life. Whatever beings there be from the lowest hell *Avīci* to the highest Brahma world *Akaniṭṭha*, may they rejoice in this discourse and may they attain the peace of *Nibbāna*!



Paticca Samuppada Sermon 18

The Law of Dependent Arising

(Pahan Kanuwa Sermon – No. 200)

'*Namo tassa bhagavato arahato sammāsambuddhassa*'

'Homage be! To the Fortunate One – the Worthy, Fully Enlightened!'

Upādāna paccayā bhavo – bhūto dukkhaṁnigacchati

jātassa maraṇaṁ hoti – eso dukkhassa sambhavo

tasmā upādānakkhayā – sammadaññāya paṇḍito

jātikkhayaṁ abhiññāya – nāgacchanti punabbhavaṁ

– Dvayatānupassanā Sutta, Sutta Nipāta

Dear Listeners,

Religious teachers from ancient times have introduced various theories and views in an attempt to reveal the secret of continued existence. Some even attempted to hand over the responsibility of existence to gods and Brahma. The Buddha, disproving all these theories and views disclosed that grasping (*upādāna*) is the root cause of existence as clearly explained in the Law of Dependent Arising, (*Paṭicca Samuppāda Dhamma*). We have chosen as the topic of this 18th discourse on *Paṭicca Samuppāda*, two verses that shed light on our subject. These two verses are also from the *Dvayatānupassanā Sutta*, of the *Sutta Nipāta* which has already provided us with suitable topics for several discourses on *Paṭicca Samuppāda*. I have explained its style of presentation on earlier occasions. It is a *sutta* where the Buddha makes a very impressive analysis of the duality of arising and ceasing, surveying it from different angles. This is how the Buddha introduces the two aspects – arising and ceasing – with regard to grasping – *upādāna*, which is a link in the *Paṭicca Samuppāda*.

"Monks, if someone enquires whether there could be another mode of contemplating dualities, you must reply in the affirmative. How is it possible? Whatever pain arises, all that has grasping as condition. This is one mode of contemplation. With the total detachment and cessation of grasping, pain ceases to be. This is the second mode of contemplation. A monk who practices the dual

technique of contemplation striving hard to burn out the defilements (*kilesa*) with vigilance, can expect one of these two rewards, either Arahanthood in this very life or the attainment of Non-returnership in case a trace of grasping remains as residue."

The above two verses were uttered to clarify that point.

Upādāna paccayā bhavo – Continued existence called *bhava*, depends on grasping called

upādāna bhūto dukkhaṁnigacchati – The born, experiences suffering

jātassa maraṇaṁ hoti – Death comes to the born

eso dukkhassa sambhavo – This is the origin of suffering

tasmā upādānakkhayā – Therefore, through the destruction of grasping

sammadaññāya paṇḍito – The well informed wise men

jātikkhayaṁ abhiññāya – realizing the extinction of birth

nāgacchanti punabbhavaṁ – will not seek birth again.

That is the meaning of the two verses. Let us try to first understand the term *upādāna*. Many of you know the position of '*upādāna*' in the Law of Dependent Arising.

"*Taṇhā paccayā upādānaṁ, upādāna paccayā bhavo*".

We have mentioned on earlier occasions that when making an analytical study of any one of the links of the *Paṭicca Samuppāda*, the two links on either side have to be taken into account. Then conditioned by craving is grasping, conditioned by grasping is continuous birth. In the analysis of the *Paṭicca Samuppāda*, the Buddha explains the significance of grasping through the question-answer method.

'*Katamañca bhikkhave upādānaṁ*?', What is grasping? '*Kāmupādānaṁ*', grasping of sense pleasure, '*diṭṭhupādānaṁ*', grasping of views, '*sīlabbatupādānaṁ*', grasping rules of morality and views, '*attavādupādānaṁ*', grasping of the notion of self.

This term *upādāna* also deserves some thought. The prefix '*upa*' gives the general idea of closeness, 'coming near', sometimes explained as '*upeti upādiyati*', 'reach close and grip'. In fact the implication here is to continue to

grip firmly. Gripping not with the hands but with the mind. Now, when discussing *upādāna*, you are automatically reminded of the often mentioned topic *pañca upādānakkhandha*, the five heaps of grasping – *rūpa*, *vedanā*, *saññā*, *saṅkhārā* and *viññāṇa* (physical form, feeling, perception, preparations and consciousness). These are the five heaps we reach and grip.

'*Etaṁ mama, esohamasmi, eso me attā*'

'This is mine, This am I, This is myself'.

The *Mahā Puṇṇama Sutta* of the *Majjhima Nikāya* refers to a certain moonlit night when the Buddha allowed the monks to ask him questions. A monk on this occasion asked two questions about *upādāna* and *upādānakkhandha*. What is the root cause of the five aggregates of grasping? *kiṁ mūlakā*? The Buddha replied "*Ime kho bhikkhu pañcupādānakkhandā chandamūlakā*".

Chanda or desire is the root of the five aggregates of grasping. The term *chanda* embodies the idea of *taṇhā*. *Chanda* is wish. Now comes his second question, which seems complicating at a glance.

"Venerable Sir, is *upādāna* the same as *pañca upādānakkhandhā* or are they different?"

The reply is "Monk, grasping and the five aggregates of grasping are not identical. Nor are they altogether different from each other. If there is any desire towards the five aggregates of grasping, that is called grasping."

Dear listeners, you must remember that the lustful desire towards the aggregates is the quality of grasping within it.

Now let us find out what *bhava* means in '*Upādāna paccayā bhavo*'. The general meaning is existence. But on hearing the word, many think of different worlds such as the world of sensuality, the world of form and the formless world. The connection between becoming (*bhava*) and the mind is not clear to many. That perhaps is the reason why Venerable Ānanda once asked the Buddha,"*Bhavo bhavo ti bhante vuccati. Kittāvatā nukho bhante bhavo hoti*?"

"Venerable Sir 'Existence existence' they say. To what extent can it be called existence?"

Then the Buddha replied as follows " Ānanda, in the absence of a *kamma* (action) that could carry its results into a sensual sphere or a sensual world (*kāma dhātu*), is sensual existence possible?"

Here *kāma dhātu* refers to a world of sensuality. Venerable Ānanda replies "No Venerable Sir".

Then the Buddha explains his position using some unusual terms "*kammaṁ khettaṁ*, *viññāṇaṁ bījaṁ*, *taṇhā sineho*".

Kamma is the field, consciousness is the seed, craving is the moisture.

The consciousness of beings who are overwhelmed by ignorance and tied down by craving, tends to seek birth in a sensual world. Now it's clear that birth in a sensual world takes place in a field called *kamma* with *viññāṇa* as the seed when the moisture of craving is available. Venerable Ānanda's second question was somewhat similar to the first, though based on a world of form. The Buddha explains 'Ānanda, in the absence of a *kamma* that could carry its results to a world of form (*rūpa dhātu*), is existence of form possible?' 'No Venerable Sir'. Here the explanation is similar to that of the earlier question. For beings overwhelmed by ignorance, and tied down by craving who seek birth in a world of form, *kamma* provides a field with *viññāṇa* as the seed and craving as the moisture. Apply this same explanation regarding birth in a formless world (*arūpa dhātu*). Existence in a formless world is possible only if a *kamma* conducive to such a birth is present. In short, in the analysis of the Law of Dependent Arising, the Buddha refers to existence as threefold, existence in the world of sensuality, (*kāma bhava*) in the world of form (*rūpa bhava*) and in the formless world (*arūpa bhava*).

Now we have discussed "*Bhava*".

What do you think is *bhūta* in "*Bhūto dukkhaṁ nigacchati*?"

A *bhūto* is one who has come into existence.

"*Upādāna paccayā bhavo – bhūto dukkhaṁnigacchati*", One who falls into continuous existence, one who enters continuous existence – he is referred to as *bhūta* – he experiences pain, suffering. How? Herein you must remember that contained within *bhava*, both birth and decay-death are found. These two inherent features birth and decay-death (*jāti*, *jarā-maraṇa*) are thereby proved.

"*bhūto dukkhaṁnigacchati*" implies that a person who comes into existence, has birth and decay-death, which are an inseparable pair yoked together. Every religious teacher has attempted to remove decay and death from birth, to create an external birth. The Buddha has confirmed the impossibility of such a position in the *Salla Sutta*.

"*Nahi so upakkamo atthi yena jātā na mīyare, jarampi patvā maraṇaṁ evaṁ dhammāhi pāṇino*"

There is no devise whatsoever by which a born person can avoid death. Death is certain even after decay. This makes it clear that *upādāna* (grasping) has existence within it. Grasping is suggestive of existence. If grasping is suggestive of existence, the idea of birth, decay and death are also obvious. That is why the above verse winds up with '*Eso dukkhassa sambhavo*'. That itself is the arising of suffering. That is the positive aspect. The other verse suggests '*Tasmā*' Therefore, with the total destruction of grasping, '*sammadaññāya paṇḍitā*' the wise with right understanding '*jātikkhayaṁ abhiññāya*'. This is an unusual phrase, which we will explain now. '*jātikkhayaṁ abhiññāya*' means seeing the destruction of birth, the non-existence of birth, with wisdom par excellence, *nāgacchanti punabbhavaṁ* – do not seek rebirth again.

Due to this series of discourses on the Law of Dependent Arsing, we were compelled to talk of a direct order procedure and a reverse order procedure. Now you are familiar with it by reading and listening to it often. This is how the direct order begins:

Avijjā paccayā saṅkhārā, saṅkhāra paccayā viññāṇaṁ, viññāṇa paccayā nāma rūpaṁ.

It ends with "*Jātipaccayā jarāmaraṇaṁ soka parideva dukkha domanassa upāyāsā sambhavanti. Evametassa kevalassa dukkhakkhandassa samudayo hoti*".

Although the entire process has not been mentioned here, we can see that conditioned by birth, there arise decay, death, grief, lamentation, suffering and dejection. In this manner the entire mass of suffering arises. That is the Law of Dependent Arising, in direct order, which reveals that dependent on birth, there arises the entire mass of suffering, decay, death, grief, lamentation, suffering, dejection and despair.

How do we look at this in the reverse order?

'*Avijjāyatveva asesa virāga nirodhā*'. With the total destruction, detachment and cessation of ignorance, '*saṅkhāra nirodho*' preparations cease. '*saṅkhāra nirodhā viññāṇa nirodho'*, with the cessation of preparations consciousness ceases. '*viññāṇa nirodhā nāmarūpa nirodho'*, with the cessation of consciousness, Name-and-form cease. It goes on till the last link. '*Jāti nirodhā, jarāmaraṇa soka parideva dukkha domanassa upāyāsā nirujjhanti.*

Evametassa kevalassa dukkhakkhandassa nirodho hoti.' This is the reverse order.

"With the cessation of birth, it is obvious that decay, death, grief, lamentation, suffering and dejection also cease. In this manner, the entire mass of suffering comes to an end."

But Dear Listeners, we have come across an unusual discourse, delivered by the Buddha himself, which suggests the possibility of attaining *Nibbāna*, through the direct order alone. It is the *Upanisa Sutta* of the *Abhisamaya Saṁyutta* in the *Saṁyutta Nikāya*. Most educated westerners, who dislike the negative quality in the discourses on causality, seem to prefer this *Upanisa Sutta*, which follows the direct order adding up link by link and finally ending up in *Nibbāna*. The simile used here is the same as what is found in any other discourse on Dependent Arising. This is how it goes "Just as, Monks, a shower of rain with piercing rain drops pours down on a summit of a hill and the water takes a downward course along the slopes filling rugged crevices, and small ditches, and when they overflow, the small holes and when they overflow, the large holes and when they overflow, the rivulets and large rivers and finally fills the great ocean, in the same way monks,...?"

Supported by this illustrative simile, the Buddha proceeds to explain the links of the Law of Dependent Arising. Please try to remember the links even though not familiar with the meanings.

"*Evameva kho bhikkhave, avijjūpanisā saṅkhārā. saṅkhārūpanisaṁ viññāṇaṁ, viññāṇūpanisaṁ nāmarūpaṁ, nāmarūpūpanisaṁ saḷāyatanaṁ, saḷāyatanūpaniso phasso, phassūpanisā vedanā, vedanūpanisā taṇhā, taṇhūpanisaṁ upādānaṁ, upādānūpaniso bhavo, bhavūpanisā jāti, jātūpanisaṁ dukkhaṁ.....*"

Now follows, from there onwards, a process that even you may prefer.

"*Dukkhūpanisā saddhā, saddhūpanisaṁ pāmujjaṁ, pāmujjūpanisā pīti, pītūpanisā passaddhi, passaddhūpanisaṁ sukhaṁ, sukhūpaniso samādhi, samādhūpanisaṁ yathābhūtañāṇadassanaṁ, yathābhūtañāṇadassanūpanisā nibbidā, nibbidūpaniso virago, virāgūpanisā vimutti, vimuttupanisaṁ khaye ñāṇaṁ.*"

This account is very unusual, because it follows only the direct order. The reverse order is inapplicable here. The turning point between the two processes is *Dukkha*, suffering. At this juncture, I wish to critically comment on the Sinhala translation of the *Tipitaka*, where the Pāli word *upanisā* has been conveniently

replaced by *paccaya*, thereby denying Sinhala readers the full significance of this special word *upanisā*.

The *Upanisā Sutta*, when translated, would appear as follows. Even without a knowledge of Pāli, one could notice its special quality. The earlier *sutta* was worded as followed,

"Dependent on ignorance arises preparations, Dependent on preparations arise consciousness."

But this *sutta*, translated grammatically would appear as follows.

The second part follows the same pattern.

In association with suffering (arises) confidence (*saddhā*)

In association with confidence (arises) delight (*pamoda)*

In association with delight (arises) joy (*pīti*)

In association with joy (arises) serenity (*passaddhi*)

In association with serenity (arises) ease (*sukha*)

In association with ease (arises) concentration (*samādhi*)

In association with concentration (arises) knowledge of things as they are (*yathābhūta ñāṇadassana*)

In association with knowledge of things as they are (arises) disenchantment (*nibbidā*)

In association with disenchantment (arises) detachment (*virāgo*)

In association with detachment (arises) emancipation (*vimutti*)

In association with emancipation (arises) wisdom of extinction (*khaye ñāṇa*)

I hope my listeners have got at least a general idea of the grammatical problem here. The translation appears different because what is conveyed here is peculiar. Let me try to give you a general idea. You know that the term *paccayā* in this twelve links of the Law of Dependent Arising is repeated without any change. *Aviijjā paccayā saṅkhārā, saṅkhāra paccayā viññāṇaṁ* etc. But the term *upanisa* is declined with the subject it qualifies keeping to case, gender and number. Those of you who know grammar, will agree that an adjective will take the case, gender and number of the noun it qualifies.

"*Avijjūpanisā saṅkhār?"*

Therefore, will have to be translated as 'Preparations exist in association with ignorance'. *Avijjā* is a feminine gender noun in Pāli.

"*Saṅkhārūpanisaṁ viññāṇaṁ*" has to be translated as 'consciousness exist in association with preparations'. *Saṅkhārā* is in the plural in Pāli.

'*Vedanūpanisā taṇhā*' has been translated in the feminine gender in grammatical Sinhala, although an identical version is not possible in English. I wish to draw your attention to an unknown aspect of the term '*upanisa*', though it is used often. You have heard of '*Upanissaya sampatti*'. *Upanisa* means 'in close association with'. Why the Buddha used the term *upanisa* instead of *paccayā* is a problem.

In order to clarify that point, I wish to quote as a brief commentary, the *Nibbedhikapariyāya Sutta* in the sixth *Nipāta* of the *Anguttara Nikāya*. This *sutta* holds within it several valuable facts about the Dhamma. The Buddha addresses the monks in one place as follows "*Katamo ca bhikkhave dukkhassa vipāko*?", 'What is the consequence of suffering?'. A person oppressed by suffering, overwhelmed by suffering will grieve as a consequence, will become feeble, lament and beat his chest and finally '*sammohaṁ āpajjati*' will fall into total delusion. There is another aspect. Instead of crying and lamenting overwhelmed by grief some may react in a different way.

"Bahiddhā pariyeṭṭi āpajjati, ko ekapadaṁ dvipadaṁ jānāti imassa dukkhassa nirodhāyāti."

He directs the searchlight outwards. 'Who knows a line or two to help me cease this suffering?' Here the Buddha summarises this situation into an amazing theory "*sammoha vepakkaṁ vāhaṁ bhikkhave dukkhaṁ vadāmi pariyeṭṭhi vepakkaṁ vā*"

" Monks, I declare two reactions to suffering, either total delusion (*sammoha*) or search

(*pariyeṭṭhi*)."

You may have now tuned in to the drama of Paṭācārā or Kisā Gotamī. Both reactions are involved here. Imagine the plight of Paṭācārā who lost her husband, her two sons and her parents, and was driven into a state of lunacy. She was humiliated and beaten on the roads. An unknown noble friend directed her to the

world's greatest and noblest friend. The outcome was that she became an Arahant Therī.

Kisā Gotamī's drama was not different either. A mad woman who walked the roads, seeking for medicine for her dead child on her shoulder. She was ridiculed though not beaten up. An unknown noble friend directed her to the Buddha. The mad walk finally ended up in Arahantship. It's clear now that 'delusion and search' are both present here. Then why is the word '*vā*' (*vepakkaṁ vāhaṁ…*) used here. It gives an alternative. *Paccaya* has a specific idea.

"*Jāti paccayā bhikkhave jarāmaraṇaṁ*",

"*Uppādā vā tathāgatānaṁ, anuppādā vā tathāgatānaṁ ṭhitā va sā dhātu.*"

Those are examples. 'Decay and death have birth as the only condition. Whether Buddhas are born or not, this law persists unchanged. But the Buddha declared that suffering has two consequences or results. Either one would fall into delusion or one would fall into a search outside.

Dear listeners, we have often fallen into the first of these two tracks, the reason being the absence of a noble friend. The search for a person who knows 'one or two lines' to direct us will be futile, until and unless a Buddha appears. That has to be well understood. The stories of Paṭācārā and Kisā Gotamī prove that the ordinary worldling's reaction to suffering is delusion. Lying hidden underneath it one may discover an *upanissaya sampatti* a kammic force which is visible to a Buddha though hidden from us.

In this context '*upanisā*' conveys the idea of 'relying on' or 'in association with'. Two possible results are seen in association with the experience of suffering. One is delusion. The other is search. The positive results of the search have already been mentioned. It is an upward path of purification where suffering (*dukkha*) leads to confidence (*saddhā*). Confidence leads to delight (*pāmojja*). Delight leads to joy (*pīti*). Joy leads to serenity (*passaddhi*). Serenity leads to ease (*sukha*). Ease leads to concentration (*samādhi*). Concentration leads to knowledge of things as they are (*yathābhūtañāṇa dassana*). It leads to disenchantment (*nibbidā*).

Disenchantment leads to detachment (*virāgo*). Detachment leads to emancipation (*vimutti*). Emancipation gives rise to the wisdom of extinction (*khaye ñāṇa*) or the wisdom to understand everything. Most educated westerners prefer this explanation which leads you on a positive track.

A certain erudite person of modern times named this discourse as the circular Law of Dependent Arising. It is called circular because it follows the direct order to the end instead of using the direct order and the reverse order. Even though many are familiar with the *Upanisa Sutta*, the subtle difference between '*paccaya*' and '*upanisā*' is hardly recognized, as a result of which even translations have treated both words as identical. You must understand that '*upanisā*' has an alternative implication. That is why this *sutta* says. 'In association with ignorance…' instead of 'Dependent on ignorance…', which suggests a definite result based on conditionality.

Assuming that the *Upanisa Sutta* clarifies the difference clearly, let us understand the final result of this path. What was the final attainment of those Arahant Bhikkhunis? The cessation of birth (*Jātikkhaya*). If grasping gives rise to existence, and existence gives rise to birth and decay-death, we have to eliminate birth. There is no other alternative but the elimination of birth. That is called '*Jātikkhaya*'. A great many humans who promote and love existence, dislike extinction (*Nibbāna*) for that reason. It becomes the *Nibbāna* of 'Siyadoris' (Simple Simon). You cannot bargain for birth totally free of decay-death. Elimination of birth is the only solution to the misery that follows.

How could birth be eliminated? By eliminating grasping.

It is the stage which is totally free of craving, desire and lust. You can understand the significance of this *sutta*, from whichever aspect you scrutinize it. Then let us look at it from another angle. We just now said that one comes to know through highest wisdom, the total eradication of birth (*jātikkhaya*). How is that possible? How can one know that birth has been totally wiped out? The Buddha has been able to, for some reason, declare that there will be no more rebirth for him.

"*Natthidāni punabbhavo*".

Similarly Arahants are referred to as 'eliminated birth' '*khīnā jāti vusitaṁ brahmacariyaṁ*'. The problem is, how are we to know whether birth has been eliminated? The solution to this problem will also clarify the *suttas* that deal with the profundity of *Nibbāna*. The *Ajāta Sutta* in the *Itivuttaka* provides an ideal solution to our problem. First make yourselves familiar with it in Pāli:

"*Atthi bhikkhave ajātaṁ abhūtaṁ akataṁ asaṁkhataṁ – no ce taṁ bhikkhave abhavissa ajātaṁ abhūtaṁ akataṁ asaṁkhataṁ nayidha jātassa bhūtassa katassa saṁkhatassa nissaraṇaṁ paññāyetha.*"

This declaration invites for deep contemplation. The Buddha emphasizes the existence of something, which the worldlings never ever thought of. You will understand it as we translate the statement.

"*Atthi bhikkhave ajātaṁ abhūtaṁ akataṁ asaṁkhataṁ*",

'Monks, there exists a state unborn, unsprung, undone, unprepared.'

"*no ce taṁ bhikkhave abhavissa ajātaṁ abhūtaṁ akataṁ asaṁkhataṁ*",

'if such an unborn, unsprung, undone, unprepared state was non-existent,

"*nayidha jātassa bhūtassa katassa saṁkhatassa nissaraṇaṁ paññāyetha*",

'it would be impossible to declare the security of a state unborn, unsprung, undone, unprepared, attainable in this birth itself.

Then the Buddha declares the same statement in the positive order.

"*Yasmā ca kho bhikkhave atthi ajātaṁ abhūtaṁ akataṁ asaṁkhataṁ, tasmā jātassa bhūtassa katassa saṁkhatassa nissaraṇaṁ paññāyatī ti*."

'Monks, since there exists an unborn, unsprung, undone, unprepared state, there is a release from the born, sprung, made, prepared state.'

Now we must understand why the Buddha repeated it, emphasizing the negative and the positive points of view. The ordinary worldling is unable to imagine the existence of such a state. That is why we highlighted it in our series of discourses on *Nibbāna*. The worldling is unable to comprehend it due to his craving for existence. What is expressed here is the cessation of birth through the cessation of continuous existence which the Arahants experience with the attainment of *Phala Samāpatti*. As they transcend the world, they experience that continuous existence is dependent on the six aggregates, and their cessation leads to the cessation of continuous existence. The final mental state of the Buddha and the Arahants is the fruition of this realization.

Based on this realization, *Nibbāna* is called '*tāṇaṁ*, *lenaṁ*, *dīpaṁ*, *saraṇaṁ*, *parāyaṇaṁ*' a protection, a cave, an island, a refuge, a support. Whenever the Buddha and the Arahants are in a relaxed state of mind, they dwell on the elimination of existence (*bhavanirodha*) described as '*Bhava nirodho Nibbānaṁ*'. If existence is a fire its elimination is the extinction of the fire. The mind firmly established in this state, far removed from the excitement of the world, cannot be disturbed even by thunder. What is the nature of the mind at that time? The truth has been realized. The end of birth has been attained. The

continuous existence having been eliminated, birth too is ended. Decay and death are thereby terminated. This truth has been realized. That is the quality of the mind free from continuous existence.

The following verses in the *Itivuttaka* effectively condenses the ideas expressed above.

Jātaṁ bhūtaṁ samuppannaṁ – kataṁ saṇkhatamaddhuvaṁ

jarāmaraṇasaṇghātaṁ – roganiḍḍaṁ pabhaṇguraṁ

āhāranettippabhavaṁ – nālaṁ tadabhinandituṁ

Tassa nissaraṇaṁ santaṁ – atakkāvacaraṁ dhuvaṁ

ajātaṁ asamuppannaṁ – asokaṁ virajaṁ padaṁ

nirodho dukkhadhammānaṁ – saṅkhārūpasamo sukho

Here is its meaning. It gives a realistic description of the world.

Jātṁ bhūtaṁ samuppannaṁ – born, sprung up, dependently arisen.

kataṁ saṇkhatamaddhuvaṁ – made, prepared, short lived.

jarāmaraṇasaṇghātaṁ – bonded by decay and death.

roganiḍḍaṁ pabhaṇguraṁ – a nest for sickness, perishable.

And what is the nest made up of?

āhāranettippabhavaṁ – born of craving for food.

nālaṁ tadabhinandituṁ – not fit to take delight in.

Tassa nissaraṇaṁ santaṁ atakkāvacaraṁ dhuvaṁ – departure from this called *Nibbāna* is peaceful, beyond reasoning and enduring.

ajātaṁ asamuppannaṁ asokaṁ virajaṁ padaṁ – unborn not dependently arisen, free from grief and attachment.

nirodho dukkhadhammānaṁ – ceasing of all factors of sorrow.

saṅkhārūpasamo sukho – stilling of all preparations is bliss.

What is remarkable is that any verbal account about *Nibbāna* begins with the term *saṅkhārasamatho*, stilling of preparations.

For instance, '*Etaṁ santaṁ etaṁ paṇītaṁ yadidaṁ sabba saṅkhārāsamatho sabbūpadhi paṭinissaggo taṇhakkhayo virago nirodho Nibbānaṁ*.' That is clear proof that with the cessation of preparations, all that is associated with it inclusive of existence ceases, because existence is dependent on preparations. I would like to make a comment here. Unfortunately, many have misinterpreted the term *asaṁkhata*. Instead of understanding it as a state free of preparations, it is treated as a 'thing'. The 'unprepared' has become a world. Even *Nibbāna* has been converted into a world. A transformation has taken place within the Dhamma. That is why we have tried to explain to you, the implication of *asaṁkhata*, the unprepared. That realization is called '*anidassana viññāṇa*', a state of consciousness which does not display name-and-form (*nāmarūpa*), which represents the entire world. This mental state too had been misinterpreted as a world. We have attempted to clarify in our discourses on *Nibbāna*, particularly in some of our recent discourses, that *anidassana viññāṇa* is not a world but a realization attainable through the cessation of continuous existence (*bhava*). As further clarification I would like to point out something unforgettable.

On the front cover of the book *Paṭicca Samuppāda* just out from the press, you see two bundles of bambo, one leaning against the other, so dependently that if one is pulled out the other falls. This demonstrates the mutual dependency (*aññamaññapaccayatā*) between consciousness and name-and-form, as explained by Venerable Sāriputta. With reference to this we have brought out as an analytical explanation, a very deep and valuable *sutta* called *Mahā Nidāna Sutta*.

The Buddha's declaration of mutual dependency (*aññamaññapaccayatā*) between consciousness and name-and-form based on dependent arising, is condensed in the *Mahā Nidāna Sutta* as follows.

"*Ettāvatā kho Ānanda jāyetha vā jīyetha vā mīyetha vā cavetha vā upapajjetha vā. Ettāvatā adhivacanapatho, ettāvatā niruttipatho, ettāvatā paññattipatho, ettāvatā paññāvacaraṁ, ettāvatā vaṭṭaṁ vaṭṭati itthattaṁ paññāpanāya yadidaṁ nāmarūpaṁ saha viññāṇena*."

This is its translation, 'Ānanda, to this extent does a person's birth or decay or death or departure or rebirth takes place'. Next he deals with another aspect. 'To this extent is a path of attribute (*adhivacana*) a path of etymology (*nirutti*) a path of manifestation (*paññati*) displayed'. Concealed within these three words is the secret of language and logic. Only to this extent is it possible to express a path of attributes, a path of etymology and a path of manifestation. Furthermore, the Buddha says '*ettāvatā paññāvacaraṁ*' 'To this extent does wisdom reach'. This

means that wisdom can reach in between name-and-form and consciousness but not beyond.

Next comes an explanation as to why the simile of the vortex was used. *Ettāvatā vaṭṭaṁ vaṭṭati itthattaṁ paññāpanāya yadidaṁ nāmarūpaṁ saha viññāṇena*'. 'Ānanda, to this extent does the vortex whirl, for the continuity of existence, that is as long as name-and-form together with consciousness.' We too have referred to the simile of *vaṭṭa*, the vortex to clarify this point. It is not our own creation but a simile hidden among the *suttas*. The vortex whirls only as long as name-and-form goes with consciousness. One can take birth, go through decay-death, pass away and seek birth again only as long as name-and-form twirls with consciousness. Only to that extent can language and logic hold sway over beings. Only to that extent can wisdom penetrate. It cannot go beyond. Only to that extent does the entire vortex (or whirlpool) of existence (*saṁsāra*) whirl.

The two words referred to above are the most significant, that is name-and-form and consciousness. '*nāmarūpaṁ saha viññāṇena*'. We have attempted to emphasize the significance of this duality by using similes such as Narcissus and that of the dog on the bridge. Inability to understand this mutual dependency *aññamaññpaccayatā* is at the very root of delusion. In popular games such as cricket or draughts you see a clear division into two sides without understanding the mutual dependency of one on the other. This inability to understand it, leads to a process of preparations (*saṅkhāra*) between name-and-form and consciousness that results in the six sense spheres. Here too the presence of duality is significant such as the eye and physical form, ear and sound. We have discussed this on earlier occasions. This process goes through contact, feeling, craving and ends up in suffering.

This is the secret hidden behind the statement 'Ānanda, to that extent does the undercurrent spin, for the continuity of existence, that is as long as name-and-form spins with consciousness'. Whenever one realizes this relationship and break them apart, suffering ends. I am sure you remember how the Bodhisatta Vipassi contemplated on the Law of Dependent Arising in the reverse order "*Kiṁ paccayā jarāmaraṇaṁ*?"

'Dependent on what is decay-death?' 'Birth', '*Jāti*'. In this manner he proceeded until he saw that name-and-form, *nāmarūpa* is dependent on consciousness, *viññāṇa* and consciousness is dependent on name-and-form. He couldn't proceed further because the secret key to the solution lay there. Due to the ignorance of the mutual dependency between these two, the view of self (*sakkāyadiṭṭhi*) or the view of 'I' arises. Ignorance paves the way for a division into two camps, two teams. An ideal example is the game of chess between two

good friends Ajith and Sumith, who challenged each other over a game. What takes place in this world is similar. Narcissus assumed his own shadow to be a goddess. That explains the notion of self, *sakkāya diṭṭi*. Now you can understand this delusion arises between these two, name-and-form and consciousness. It is absolutely essential to realize with wisdom that name-and-form is substanceless. It is a mere shadow. That is why we did an etymological study of these terms. 'Form' in 'name-and-form' is a 'nominal form', it is a form only in name. 'Name' in 'name-and-form' is a formal name. It is an apparent name. Here, name does not refer to the accepted names used in this world, but the five qualities of name called feeling (*vedanā*), perception (*saññā*), intention (*cetanā*), contact (*phassa*) and attention (*manasikāra*). It is a formal name given to name. Let us understand it as only a fomal name. Form (*rūpa*) here refers to the created notion of form in association with the four great primaries (*mahābhūta*). That's why we call form 'nominal form'. This game takes place within the illusion of consciousness due to the inability to identify the two. Two camps have been formed in *saṁsāra* as 'self and others', as 'myself and the world'. The root cause lies hidden there. The *Mahā Nidāna Sutta* has been named so because it reveals these underlying facts regarding the primaries.

Now let us discuss how to attain its realization. Instructive verses are found here and there for this purpose. The *Muni Sutta* of the *Sutta Nipāta* is one such example although it has not drawn much attention.

Saṅkhāya vatthūni pamāya bījaṁ

sinehamassa nānuppavecche

sa ve muni jātikhayantadassī

takkaṁ pahāya na upeti saṁkhaṁ

This verse is extremely deep in meaning. It discusses the qualities of a *muni*, an Arahant. This jewel of a verse uttered by the Buddha, extremely deep in meaning, describes a sage (*muni*) an Arahant. *Saṅkhāya vatthūni*, here *vatthūni* means land or a field. Try to recall what helped the *viññāṇa* to establish itself. '*Kammaṁ khettaṁ, viññāṇaṁ bījaṁ, taṇhā sineho*' ' if beings blinded by ignorance, tied by craving seek birth in a world of sensuality or a world of form or a formless world, *kamma* serves as the field, consciousness as the seed and craving as moisture.

This idea is condensed in '*saṅkhāya vatthūni pamāya bījaṁ*', correctly identifies the field and the seed of consciousness. '*sinehamassa nānuppavecche*'. He refrains from watering it. He identified the field correctly and he identified the seed correctly. So he waters it no more. Then what is the result?

'*sa ve muni jātikhayantadassī*'. He indeed is the sage who has seen the cessation of birth.

'*takkaṁ pahāya na upeti saṁkhaṁ*'. The term *takka* reminds us of *atakkāvacara*. '*takkaṁ pahāya*' given up reasoning. '*na upeti saṁkhaṁ*' seeks no recognition.

Here a special comment is necessary to clarify this phrase.

The worldlings do not recognize Arahants. What is the reason? Worldlings recognize people with assets (*upadhi sampatti*) such as the possession of land, houses, designations or vehicles. The Buddha and the Arahants have given up the five assets called the aggregates of grasping (which they had been carrying all the way through *saṁsara*) and as a result they are not reckoned (or taken seriously) by the worldlings.

'*takkaṁ pahāya*' too suggests a deep meaning.

The '*avyākata vatthu*' or the 'undeclared topics' seem to baffle many. We have earlier discussed four points out of the ten undeclared topics. They deal with the position of a *Tathāgata* after death. Not only the religious philosophers of that time but even the educated class today are baffled by the Buddha's silence regarding such popular topics. Educated westerners say that it revealed the Buddha's ignorance. But the true position was, Dear listeners, that the Buddha and the Arahants were beyond all limitations of logic. Language and logic restricted by dilemma and quadrilemma are incapable of penetrating the after-death position of the Buddha and Arahants. The four questions are mitigated by the misconception of a 'personality or a soul' after death.

This is how the Buddha rejects them. 'It cannot be said that a *Tathāgata* is' after death, or is not. Nor can it be said that he is both, 'is' and 'is not' or he is 'neither is' nor 'is not'. Please try to understand this subtle point. It is not possible to say 'yes' or 'no' to these four positions. Neither can you confirm the four positions wholesale or reject them altogether. As such '*saṁkhaṁ na upeti*', 'comes not within reckoning' is the best description of this post-*parinibbāna* position.

References made regarding the deep qualities of the Buddha in certain *suttas* are amazing. They are not empty sayings imposed on him. Here is an impressive one,

"*Rūpasaṅkhā vimutto kho tathāgato gambhīro appameyyo duppariyogāho seyyatāpi mahāsamuddo*."The *Tathāgata* is beyond reckoning by form. He is free from the qualities of form, having given them up. He carries a form which he has not grasped. For this reason, the world finds it too deep a concept to realize.

Gambhīro, deep. *Appameyyo*, immeasurable. *Duppariyogāho*, difficult to penetrate. *Seyyathāpi mahāsamuddo*, like unto the great ocean. The reason for comparing it to the ocean is that it is beyond understanding, beyond grasping through logic. We know that logic functions within the limitations of consciousness and Name-and-form. A break-through reveals the sphere unattainable through logic. *Atakkāvacaraṁ dhuvaṁ* means beyond reasoning and stable. Logic is unstable but the worldlings dwell within the framework of logic. Since the Buddha has surpassed the worldly characteristics of form he is called '*rūpa saṅkhā vimutto*'. Although it sounds amazing I can't help remarking here that the Arahants are the least recognized – ignored in the world due to the absence of expected qualifications. The world is reluctant to find out what *Nibbāna* is. Because of their craving for continuous existence they lean on logical reasoning. This problem is most serious among the educated westerners. The statement '*rūpa saṅkhā vimutto kho Tathāgato*' explains the reason. He is beyond reckoning by form. '*saṁkhaṁ nopeti vedagu*' the knowing of the *veda* (wisdom) does not yield to reckonings. Now you can understand the depth of the simile in the verse. '*saṅkhāya vatthūni*', An Arahant understands the true nature of the field, '*pamāya bījaṁ*' he understands the deceptive nature of the seed of consciousness. '*sinehamassa nānuppavecche*' and he prevents the rain of craving supplying moisture, '*sa ve muni jātikhayantadassī*' he is the sage who sees the cessation of birth. This idea is found in several places in the *Sutta Nipāta*.

Here is another statement about the sage in the *Sutta Nipāta*.

"*Yo jātamucchijja na ropaye – jāyantamassa nānuppavecche.*"

'*jātaṁ ucchijja*' – uprooting what is born. '*na ropayeyya*' – refrains from planting. '*jāyantamassa nānuppavecche*' – abstains from supplying water to what is growing. Arahants live but do not nourish life. They do not accumulate any *kamma*. This explains the "state of release", described in several *suttas*. To put it in brief the Arahant with correct understanding prevents the seed of consciousness growing in the field of *kamma*, nourished by the moisture of craving, thereby putting an end to existence.

Let us condense this idea further.

"*Upādāna paccayā bhavo – anupādā parinibbānaṁ*", 'existence is dependent on grasping. Detachment brings extinction'. Many get caught up here because *Parinibbāna* reminds them of the *Mahā Parinibbāna Sutta*. *Parinibbāna* does not refer to the 'death' of the Buddha or an Arahant. It refers to the moment the Buddha or an Arahant attains fruition of Arahanthood experiencing the cessation of existence, and the cessation of birth. Those who have a confused notion

regarding this, have distorted even very clear *suttas*. Let me give you an instance of a clear *sutta*. This is an occasion the Buddha talks of himself.

Tiṇṇo so bhagavā taraṇāya dhammaṁ deseti

santo so bhagavā samathāya dhammaṁ deseti

danto so bhagavā damathāya dhammaṁ deseti

parinibbuto so bhagavā parinibbānāya dhammaṁ desetī

If we attempt translating verbally it will cause confusion. Let us proceed carefully.

'*Tiṇṇo so bhagavā taraṇāya dhammaṁ deseti*',

Having crossed over, the Fortunate One teaches the Dhamma for others to cross over (the ocean of *saṁsāra*)

'*santo so bhagavā samathāya dhammaṁ deseti*',

Having attained peace the Fortunate One teaches the Dhamma for others to attain peace.

'*danto so bhagavā damathāya dhammaṁ deseti*',

Having restrained himself the Fortunate One teaches the Dhamma to restrain others.

The last sentence goes as

'*parinibbuto so bhagavā parinibbānāya dhammaṁ desetī*',

If *parinibbuto* means passing away, how could he teach the Dhamma? '*parinibbuto bhagavā*' means 'free from the world' 'free from everything worldly'.

Then the line reads 'Having released himself from the world, the Fortunate One teaches the Dhamma for the release of others'.

Please remember that *parinibbuto* means the total isolation of the Buddha or the Arahants from the world by entering the mental state of *Arahat phala samāpatti*. In that state they do not even hear the thundering. If one is unable to realize in this very life that one's existence has been totally eliminated, doubt will remain. Doubt is ignorance. That means ignorance has not been totally eliminated.

The most precious word in the Buddha's teaching crops up here. '*Diṭṭheva dhamme*', In this very birth. Many people try to evade this word. In this very birth, one can attain the cessation of existence following the Buddha's teaching. No other religious teacher has been able to show the path to cease existence, in this very birth.

The Buddha has shown the way to cessation of birth, cessation of decay-death, cessation of suffering. Which explains the '*jātikhayantadassī*', '*khīnā jāti*', '*natthi dāni punabbhavo*'. They testify to the fact that the Buddha had no more births. He had reached the highest stage, *Phalasamāpatti*. So had the Arahants. The ordinary worldlings are unable to understand this discontinuity of the relationship between consciousness and name-and-form. They can only see the continuity of the physical form and the natural functioning of the five senses. The Buddha and the Arahants live their lives, they partake of food but the release they attained (*vimutti*) continues, though not visible. It is the release *vimutti*, that becomes their refuge at the last moment.

Today we were compelled to speak in a forceful tone. The reason is, many have distorted the Dhamma, due to lack of penetrative understanding. Dhamma has been converted into a path that promotes continuity of existence. The educated class here as well as abroad are responsible for it. We have done our best in clarifying misconceptions. I am sorry I have to state facts.

Dear Listeners, this is enough for today. I wish to remind you to adopt yourselves to the Buddha word,

"*Sammoha vepakkāhaṁ bhikkhave dukkhaṁ vadāmi pariyeṭṭhi vepakkaṁ ?"*

I declare that the outcome of misery is twofold, either delusion or search. The search can be fulfilled only during a period the

Buddha's message survives. Suffering causes delusion endlessly in *saṁsāra*. Kisā Gotamī, Paṭācārā and many others overwhelmed by misery found the doors of *Nibbāna* open to them because the supreme friend (*kalyāna mitta*) the Buddha, showed the way. His path began with '*dukkhupanisā saddhā saddhūpanisaṁ pāmojjaṁ*' Misery gives rise to confidence, confidence leads to delight and proceeded on the positive track.

I want you to realize the value of this present moment and put it into practical use. This discourse may have appealed to some but irritative to some. Anyway I hope you will understand the Dhamma, realize the importance of *Diṭṭhevadhamme* (in this life itself) clarify any doubts and make the determination to tread the path of positivity even though you may be immersed

in misery. We wish you would realize the four paths and fruits of purity through the perfection of your meditation, inspired by the precepts followed, meditation practiced and the discourses you have listened to, before the lamp of the Dhamma is extinguished. Whatever beings there be from the lowest hell *Avīci* to the highest Brahma world *Akaniṭṭa*, may they rejoice in this discourse and may they attain the peace of *Nibbāna*.



Paticca Samuppada Sermon 19
The Law of Dependent Arising
(Pahan Kanuwa Sermon – No. 201)

'*Namo tassa bhagavato arahato sammāsambuddhassa*'

'Homage be! To the Fortunate One – the Worthy, Fully Enlightened!'

Yaṁ kiñci dukkhaṁ sambhoti sabbaṁ āhāra paccayā

ahārānaṁ nirodhena natthi dukkhassa sambhavo

Etamādīnavaṁ ñatvā dukkhaṁ āhāra paccayā

sabbāhāraṁ pariññāya sabbāhāramanissito

Ārogyaṁ sammadaññāya āsavānaṁ parikkhayā

saṅkhāya sevī dhammaṭṭho saṁkhaṁ nopeti vedagu

– Dvayatānupassanā Sutta, Sutta Nipāta

Dear Listeners,

Life of beings is dependent on food. But concealed within food is found craving which increases the misery of existence. As a result, the Buddha was compelled to present to the world an extraordinary vision based on nutriment. Full expression is given to this vision in three of the verses in the *Dvayatanupassanā Sutta* in the *Sutta Nipāta* which I have selected as the topic of this 19th discourse on the Law of Dependent Arising.

In several of our earlier discourses we have drawn your attention to the style of presentation in this *sutta*. To state briefly, it is a style of presenting facts for the contemplation of the nature of arising and ceasing. In this context the Buddha presents, for the first time, the method of dual contemplation on nutriment with regard to arising and ceasing aspects. He introduces it as follows:

"Monks, if someone inquires whether there could be another mode of contemplating dualities, you must reply in the affirmative. How is it possible? Whatever suffering arises, all that has nutriment as condition. This is one mode of contemplation. With the total detachment and cessation of grasping towards

nutriments, suffering ceases to be. This is the second mode of contemplation. A monk who practices this dual technique of contemplation, striving hard to burn out the defilements (*kilesa*) with vigilance, can expect one of these two rewards, either Arahanthood in this very life or the attainment of a non-returner in case a trace of grasping remains."

The above three verses were uttered to clarify this point further.

Yaṁ kiñci dukkhaṁ sambhoti – sabbaṁ āhāra paccayā

Whatever suffering arises, all that is dependent on nutriment.

ahārānaṁ nirodhena – natthi dukkhassa sambhavo

With the cessation of nutriment, there is no arising of suffering.

Etamādīnavaṁ ñatvā – dukkhaṁ āhāra paccayā

Knowing the consequences of suffering dependent on nutriment

sabbāhāraṁ pariññāya – sabbāhāramanissito

With complete understanding of nutriment, with detachment towards nutriment

Ārogyaṁ sammadaññāya – āsavānaṁ parikkhayā

With the perfect understanding of health, through the elimination of influxes

saṅkhāya sevī dhammaṭṭho – saṁkhaṁ nopeti vedagu

The Arahant who has the threefold higher knowledge and is firmly established in the Dhamma, does not come into reckoning.

The vision on nutriment presented in these three verses is extremely deep. The *Āhāra Sutta* of the *Āhāra Vagga* in the *Āhāra Saṁyutta* found in the *Saṁyutta Nikāya* presents a totally different attitude towards nutriment than that of the ordinary world. This is how the Buddha explains it to the monks:

"*Cattārome bhikkhave āhārā bhūtānaṁ vā sattānaṁ ṭhitiyā sambhavesīnaṁ vā anuggahāya. Katame cattāro? Kabaliṁkāro āhāro oḷāriko vā sukhumo vā, phasso dutiyo, manosañcetanā tatiyā, viññāṇaṁ catutthaṁ.*"

"Monks, there are four types of nutriments available for the maintenance of beings born, and for the welfare of those seeking birth. What are they? Material food either gross or soft, that can be made into lumps. Contact is the second. Mental intentions is the third. Consciousness is the fourth."

The root cause for all four, according to the Buddha is craving.

"*Ime ca bhikkhave cattāro āhārā taṇhā nidānā taṇhā samudayā taṇhā jātikā taṇhā pabhavā*."

"These four types of nutriments have craving as the root cause, craving as the reason for arising, craving as the place of origin and craving as the place of birth."

We come across another amazing account on this subject in the simile of 'the flesh of a son' in the *Nidāna Saṁyutta*. Although we have made general references to it earlier, I hope to analyse it now in direct reference to the Law of Dependent Arising. In this discourse on the "flesh of a son" capable of arousing intense emotions, the Buddha presents some valuable facts, as good as objects of meditation, in condensed form.

Let me first quote the Buddha word as it is.

"Monks, imagine a couple who enters a desert track with their only loving son, equipped with a small quantity of simple requirements. Halfway through, finding their food exhausted the couple confidentially surveying their plight decided to kill the son. They killed their only son, made an edible preparation of the flesh and the fleshy bones and managed to traverse the rest of the journey. Had they not killed the son, all three would have perished. But as they ate the meat, being overpowered by intense grief they beat their chests lamenting "Where is our only son."

At the end of the narrative the Buddha asked the monks a question.

"Monks, what do you think? Did those parents consume their only son's flesh as a sport or enjoyment? For strength or appearance or adornment?"

"Certainly not" replied the monks.

"Monks, did not the parents consume the flesh of the child, merely to cross over the desert?" (make note of the term merely).

"Yes Venerable Sir" responded the monks.

The fable ends there. Now the Buddha sets about to drive home the hard facts related to food.

"Monks, gross food has to be treated as illustrated in the simile. It has its rewards. A deep understanding of gross material food, partaken of in lumps, is equal to an understanding of lust in relation to the five-fold sensuality. The noble

disciple who grasps this fact of reality will attain the fruit of a Non-returner. He will not return to this world."

That is the Buddha's teaching.

At this point, we are compelled, though reluctantly, to expose the immature childish story replaced by the commentator which underestimates the significance of the Buddha's message. What did the man and wife traversing the desert do when they ran out of food? They sat down under a particular tree with few leaves and had a confidential discussion. The husband said,

"We have no more food. It is not possible to provide for you by farming or trade. The only possible solution is for you to kill me, and reach your destination, with the child."

Then the wife replied,

"I am unable to earn a living in this desert by an occupation such as weaving thread. So I suggest that you kill me, and cross the desert with the child."

To this the husband responded,

"The child will not survive if the mother is dead. The only obvious alternative is to kill the child and feed on the flesh until we cross the desert. If we survive we have the possibility of getting another son. Agreeing to this plan, the mother sent the son to the father.

Recalling the trouble he went through, in order to bring him up, the father refused to kill him, and sent him back to the mother.

Thinking of the innumerable prayers offered to the gods and the pain she bore for ten months, the mother couldn't kill the son. The boy walking between the mother and the father continuously – but mind you under that tree with few leaves – fell down dead. Then the parents after much lamenting and grieving, fed on the flesh.

Do you notice how the sensitivity found in the Buddha's story has been revised in the second? I would like to add my comments here. Those who read the Dhamma and the *Vinaya* today in Sinhala hear of this childish story only. Can you see how the Buddha's teachings are undermined? Perhaps the commentators feared that the earlier story would encourage parents to kill their children. But the Buddha's intention was to show how dangerous the desire for food taken as a whole can be. The idea here is very deep indeed. In case you, my listeners, too have your doubts, let me annex another simile here.

You may have perhaps read the Buddha's simile on *Dhātumanasikāra* (attention on the primaries) about a butcher. A certain butcher or his apprentice slaughters a cow, slices it and sells it at a crossroad. Nobody thinks of the flesh in terms of a cow. Similarly, says the Buddha, a meditator should survey his own body by dissecting into the four elements earth, water, fire and wind. Thereby the Buddha doesn't encourage slaughter of animals. It is only a simile. A butcher is a merciless person who slaughters, cuts into parts and sells cattle with cruelty. The Buddha's advice was to dissect the body one loves into the four elements as an object of contemplation. That is the message behind the simile.

Another doubt crops up regarding the simile of the son's flesh. Since vegetarianism and meat-eating are common subjects for discussion today, one might misunderstand this as an approval of meat-eating. The sole purpose of the simile here is to expose the danger concerning food in general. When discussing this topic once, I said if a grain of rice on our plate could speak, it would pour out the painful experience of misery in its life. With the introduction of agrochemicals that terminate thousands of insects, the grain of rice will not only complain but shed bitter tears, if it was possible. On the whole, food is a source of unhappiness. The purpose of the above simile was to bring about disillusionment regarding gross or delicate food, partaken of in lumps whether with or without meat. It must not be misinterpreted. I will touch on this again later.

Let us move on to contact as nutriment (*phassāhāra*).

"How, Monks, must contact as nutriment be understood? Imagine a cow with infected skin? (*niccammā gāvī*?"

The reference is not to a totally skinned cow in the slaughter house but to a cow with exposed wounds due to skin infection. If this cow stands by a wall, insects there would attack the wounds. If she rests under a tree, the insects on the tree would attack her. If she gets into the water, insects in the water would harass her. In an open area, animal life associated with the sky would inflict pain on her.

Wherever the cow is, she has no escape.

"That is how 'contact nutriment' should be understood" says the Buddha. If correctly understood, it's advantages are many. First it gives a profound understanding of the three aspects of feeling (*vedanā*) as pleasant, painful and neither pleasant nor painful. If a noble disciple reaches this level of understanding, nothing more remains for him to do. He becomes an Arahant. The Buddha reveals the strength of feeling (*vedanā*) as an object of meditation.

Considering the depth of the simile, I would like to offer a brief commentary here. We know that feeling is dependent on contact. Bodily contact rests entirely on the soft skin, as we all know. Let's imagine we have a wound on the right arm. A slight rub on the left arm with a velvet cloth brings immense comfort but the same impact on the right arm will cause the arm to be withdrawn with pain. Condensing and simplifying the statement of the Buddha, one could say he is comparing the pleasant feeling on the skin and the painful feeling on the raw flesh. In the ultimate sense, the skin is a mere bandage round a wound. If the entire body is a wound, a disease, and an ulcer, the skin is the bandage, as taught in the contemplation of impurities (*asubha bhāvanā*) as *gaṇḍabhūto, roga bhūto, vaṇa bhūto*. This subject of meditation leads one to disillusionment regarding contact and the attainment of *Nibbāna*. That is the nutriment of contact.

The next is mental intentions as food (*mano saṁcetanā āhāra*). How Monks should the food of mental intentions be identified?"

Another simile is given here deep in meaning. There is a pit of burning embers as deep as the height of a man. It emits no smoke or flames. A man who longs to live but fears death, longs for enjoyment but fears pain, approaches this pit. Two strong men grip him by his arms and drag him towards the pit. Although he is physically drawn towards the coal pit, his intention (*cetanā*), his aspiration (*patthanā*), his resolve (*paṇidhi*) is bent away from it. He wriggles about but is dragged on. That is the simile. Next the Buddha applies it to the subject.

"Monks, that is how mental intentions should be understood. The noble disciple who has the full understanding of the nutriment of mental intentions, will attain full realization of the craving for sensuality, the craving for existence and the craving of annihilation (*kāma taṇhā, bhava taṇhā, vibhava taṇhā*). To him who reaches this level of purity, Arahanthood is certain.

Here too a short commentary seems necessary. What is the painful nature of mental intentions? Here is an example. We have to find the money tomorrow to settle a heavy loan. Can we fall asleep relaxed tonight? We might toss and turn in bed and our thoughts might torment us. Mental intentions (*mano saṁcetanā*) will drag us away forcibly. Here is another example. The deer runs after the mirage due to craving. Due to craving for water. It runs due to the deception there is water. It keeps running. Although too exhausted to keep running, it drags itself forward, prompted by craving. Watching the behaviour of mental intentions, one can understand the nature of craving. I think that is enough about *mano saṁcetanā*.

The last one, nutriment of consciousness is the most subtle of the four.

"Monks, how would you understand the nutriment of consciousness? (*viññāṇa āhāra*). This is the simile given. "The ministers or the executioners catch hold of a criminal and present him before the king for the final verdict. In the morning, the king orders that a hundred stabs be inflicted on him with a sharp knife (known as *aḍayaṭi*). At noon the king is informed that the criminal was still alive. A repetition of the punishment is ordered. Again in the evening another round of hundred stabs was inflicted on him. Now the Buddha questions the monks,

"Monks, what do you think? Does this man who is inflicted with three hundred stabs a day with a sharp knife, experience pain? "Why not Venerable Sir? Even a single stab would definitely bring pain and distress on him."

The simile ends there. The Buddha says "That is how, Monks, the nutriment of consciousness should be understood. A thorough understanding of the nutriment of consciousness will lead to the understanding of name-and-form. The noble disciple who reaches this level of understanding has nothing more to do. That is the nutriment of consciousness, the most difficult to comprehend. No one likes to treat consciousness as misery. In place of the *aḍayaṭi* story a simple but modern illustration will make this clear.

TV addicts face continuous attacks from morning till night not with the *aḍayaṭi* of ancient times but – If I may coin a new word to suit modern times – with the 'ad'-yati blows leveled against them by the business executioner of the commercial world.

Here is another illustration. When you enter a street at night, electric bulbs in some business places keep winking so as to draw our attention, and to tempt us through subtle devices. The worldlings cannot realise the misery within this, due to the presence of consciousness. We have come through *Saṁsāra* suffering severe *aḍayaṭi* blows but totally ignorant of name-and-form, the mischief-maker behind it. The meditators have to understand the rest through meditation. He who realizes fully the functioning of the nutriment of consciousness, attains Arahanthood.

Let me emphasize another aspect on the subject of nutriments. Life depends on nutriments. We cannot do without it. What follows is deep. You know the Buddha spent six years of physical torture. The Nigaṇṭhas advocated self-mortification as the only way to happiness. Self-mortification was the most favoured path both among the ascetics and Brahmins. So naturally, the Buddha too went to its extreme until he collapsed by fasting. Through trial and error he realized the only solution to suffering was the middle path.

We have discussed earlier a *sutta* that discusses the middle path, which we wish to touch on briefly. Once a certain Bhikkhunī, instigated by hidden evil intentions, invited Venerable Ananda on the pretext of listening to a discourse. Venerable Ananda, reading her mind, delivered a discourse based on four sub-topics. The first topic is very much relevant to us.

This is how it is presented.

"*Āhāra sambhūto bhagini ayaṁ kāyo. Āhāraṁ nissāya āhāro pahātabbo*."

"Sister, this body is made up of nutriment. With the help of nutriment, should nutriment be eliminated."

It is a puzzling statement but the middle path lies therein. Venerable Ananda gives a brief explanation as to how nutriment can be instrumental in eliminating nutriment. You listeners are familiar with these facts. Monks are advised not to avoid food totally but to contemplate while partaking of food. With a clear perspective of the purpose of eating, it has to be converted into a subject of meditation through the restraint of wisdom (*ñāṇa samvara*). A monk when partaking of food, contemplates as follows with wisdom.

"I partake of this food not for enjoyment or strength or adornment or beautification (*paṭisaṇkhā yoniso, neva davāya, na madāya, na maṇḍanāya, na vibhūsanāya*) – merely (*yāvadeva*) – for the maintenance of this body (*imassa kāyassa ṭhitiyā*) – for survival (*yāpanāya*) – to refrain from destruction to life (*vihiṁsūparatiya*) – for the fulfillment of higher life (*brahmacariyānuggahāya*). I shall thus dispel the pain of hunger and prevent the arising of any future pain by overeating (*iti purāṇaṁ ca vedanaṁ paṭikankhāmi, navañca vedanaṁ na uppādessāmi*). In this journey of life, I shall deviate from wrong, being frugal in food and other requirements (*yātrā ca me bhavissati*).

To this noble quest in life, meditative monks add a subject of meditation. Its purpose is indicated as follows; "This food is merely a speck of the elements (*dhātu mattako*). It is a preparation consisting of earth, water, heat and wind. Taken in terms of elements it is clean but after entering this putrid body (*imaṁ pūtikāyaṁ patvā*) it becomes extremely repulsive (*ativiya jigucchanīyo jāyati*). This statement includes both subjects of meditation, contemplation on the elements and the repulsiveness of food. That is how food is converted into a subject of meditation.

Finally contemplation on the elements leads to emptiness (*suññatā*). This mere speck of the elements is essenceless (*dhātu mattako suñño*).

This almsfood is subject to conditionality. The individual partaking of it is not a being or a living entity, but an essenceless speck of the elements. This almsfood which is not loathsome becomes extremely repulsive after entering this body.

Yathāpaccayaṁ pavattamānaṁ dhātumattamevetaṁ yadidaṁ piṇḍapāto. Tadupabhuñjakoca puggalo dhātumattako nissatto nijjīvo suñño. Sabbo panāyaṁ piṇḍapāto ajigucchanīyo. imaṁ pūtikāyaṁ patvā ativiya jigucchanīyo jāyati.

This almsfood as a requisite is nothing but a speck from the elements. He who partakes of it is not a being or a living thing but a mere empty speck of elements. This almsfood though clean would become extremely repulsive, once inside the foul body.

This clarifies how one realizes the void (essencelessness) through contemplation on the elements. Contemplation on repulsiveness leads one to disillusion, letting go. Freedom from food, elimination of food is suggestive of the dispelling of craving. There lies the Middle Path. The *Sabbāsava Sutta* further clarifies this point. As we proceed in life we encounter certain things we can neither manage with nor without. The Buddha realized that food is one such requirement. The middle path has to be followed regarding food. Instead of rejecting it altogether, one partakes of food perfectly aware of its limitations, (*mattaññū*) with *Nibbāna* as the goal. Many other similes can be cited that are extremely effective in causing disillusionment towards food.

Khuraṁva madhunālittaṁ and *khuradhārūpamo bhava* are two wonderful similes mentioned earlier. A man fond of honey is offered a generous dose of it spread on a razor blade. He cannot enjoy it without risking his tongue. This simile helps to eliminate the greed for taste. Partaking of food is similar to applying medication on a wound (*vaṇasssa ropanatthāya*) and lubricating the axle of the cart (*akkhassabbhañjanaṁ yathā*) are two similes that clarify the place of food on the path to *Nibbāna*. Food is not a source of pleasure but an essential commodity to carry the five aggregates across the desert of *Saṁsāra* safely, not different from oiling the axle of a wheel. The simile of the son's flesh is also applicable here, although it stirs the emotions as well. The Buddha explains the repulsive nature of food inside the body and the importance of adopting the middle path with regard to food.

It is further explained in such *suttas* as the *Ogha Taraṇa Sutta*. If a person, on getting into a river with a strong current, to cross over, stops there without moving, he will sink. If he wriggles about, he'll get washed away. Wriggling is compared to self mortification, or rejecting all food. Stopping is compared to self

indulgence, or endless consumption of food. Avoiding both these extremes, one should eat only what is required for survival.

'*Mattaññū hohi bhojane*.' Know your limit when eating. Venerable Sarīputta's advice to meditative monks is to refrain from eating the last four or five mouthfuls of food so as to drink enough water.

"*cattāro pañca ālope abhutvā udakaṁ pive*."

This gives ease and lightness for meditation. By means of various similes, the middle path regarding food has been always emphasized. The topic of food is so important that, the first of the ten questions asked at the higher ordination of novice Arahant Sopaka was based on food. You may have heard of it, perhaps.

"*sabbe sattā āhāraṭṭhitikā*."

Although this is subject to ridicule today, a deep understanding of this will lead to dejection, detachment and cessation which leads to *Nibbāna*.

In the *Sammādiṭṭhi Sutta* we meet Venerable Sāriputta analyzing 'right view' in its diverse aspects, one after the other in response to the inquiry "Do you know yet another analysis?"

According to one mode of analysis, based on the pattern of the four truths, if a monk has a comprehensive understanding of nutriment, the arising of nutriment, the cessation of nutriment and lastly the path leading to the cessation of nutriment, that alone can arouse correct view in him, and practice the four truths regarding nutriment meaningfully. Nutriment is of four kinds, gross material food consumed in lumps, contact nutriment, nutriment of mental intentions and nutriment of consciousness. Understanding them at depth is to understand the misery associated with nutriment. The nature of craving underlying it represents the second Noble Truth. Cessation here stands for *Nibbāna*. The path is the middle path called '*paṭisaṅkhā yoniso*' or the restraint through wisdom, or in other words, partaking of food wisely reiterating its purpose as an object of meditation.

The last verse touched on a very profound aspect of the topic "*Ārogyaṁ sammadaññāya – āsavānaṁ parikkhayā saṅkhāya sevī dhammaṭṭho – saṁkhaṁ nopeti vedagu*".

Lets go through its meaning again. *Ārogyaṁ sammadaññāya* – We partake food in order to maintain health. But the implication in this line is deeper than that. It refers not merely to physical health but enduring health which is *Nibbāna*.

"*ārogyaṁ sammadaññāya*" understanding good health well,

"*āsavānaṁ parikkhayā*" through the destruction of influxes,

"*saṅkhāya sevī dhammaṭṭho*" well established in the dhamma,

"*saṁkhaṁ nopeti vedagu*" – *vedagu* refers to an Arahant endowed with three-fold knowledge, and not a Brahmin learned in the three Vedas.

"*saṁkhaṁ nopeti*" is not reckoned. An Arahant is 'Not reckoned' is a complicating concept which deserves some thought. Then let us discuss it at this point.

There is another *sutta* called the *Atthirāga Sutta* that mentions the four types of nutriments with a subtle simile. To begin with, the Buddha explains the four types of nutriments. Then three very significant words are introduced. If a disciple has passion (*rāga*) towards nutriment, pleasure (*nandi*) towards nutriment and craving (*taṇhā*) towards nutriment, its consequences are pointed out. If someone has passion, pleasure and craving towards, let us say, gross food which is made into lumps for eating, the consciousness gets established and strengthens itself. Many are interested in the secret of rebirth, an intricate subject. If passion, pleasure and craving are present towards nutriment, the consciousness towards nutriment gets established and strengthens. From then onwards the process of *Paṭicca Samuppada* is activated. Wherever consciousness gets established and grows, name-and-form activates itself there. Wherever name-and-form is established preparations are activated. Wherever preparations are established, there '*āyatiṁ punabbhavābhinibbatti*' another existence takes place. Existence gives rise to birth, decay, death. This is a very subtle point to grasp. This process is described in relation to gross food (*āhāra*), contact (*phassa*), mental intentions (*mano saṁcetanā*) as well as consciousness (*viññāṇa*). Attachment, pleasure or craving towards either of these four types of nutriments, leads to existence (*bhava*) with the consciousness well established there. It is followed by name-and-form (*nāma-rupa*), preparations (*saṅkhāra*) and then birth takes place.

The subtleness in this account is centered round the simile used by the Buddha "Monks, if a dyer or a painter were to paint on a smooth board or a wall or a cloth, using a rusty red, yellow or light red paint – now read the rest carefully – in the same way is created a figure of a male or a female, with details complete. (Now connect what was said). If at this point attachment, pleasure and craving are present towards nutriment, another birth is possible. Similar to a film reflected on a screen, the figure of the male or the female that seeks rebirth is

registered on the foetus in the mother's womb which we call the muddy patch. The Buddha discusses this at depth as if he was painting a picture. At this stage the three defilements passion, pleasure and craving (*rāga*, *nandi*, *taṇhā*) add a certain hue to the consciousness. That is what we call name-and-form. In brief it is a form in conformity with the name reflected on the consciousness. This is made explicit by the simile of the painter. This process takes place as long as the three-fold nutriments of consciousness ie passion, pleasure and craving last. A person excessively fond of food, may perhaps be born as a worm or a pig. It happens due to attachment to food. This illustrates the interrelatedness between consciousness and name-and-form.

The simile of the painter symbolizes defilements. The Buddha then deals with the opposite tendency with a deeper significance, which is a mystery to many.

"If one has no passion or pleasure or craving towards the four types of nutriments,?"

Here the Buddha brings out an amazing simile.

"Monks, there is a pavilion with windows on the north, south and east. When the sun rises, Monks, where will the sun's rays fall?

"On the western wall, Venerable Sir."

"If there was no wall on the west?"

"In that case, on the earth, Venerable Sir."

"If there was no earth?"

"On the water, if there was no earth."

"Well, if there was no water?"

"In that case, Venerable Sir, the sun's rays will not be established anywhere."

The word used here is '*appatiṭṭhita*' – 'not established'.

Can you see how deep its significance is.

"Venerable Sir, if the sun's rays do not fall on the wall or the earth or on the water, then it is not established" – '*appatiṭṭhita*'. We have earlier introduced the term '*anidassana viññāṇa*' – non-manifestative consciousness. In the absence of passion, pleasure or craving, consciousness is unable to establish itself. In explaining the meaning of *anidassana*, the simile of the painter suggests a mental state where there is nothing to be seen, to be revealed. We have explained this

position based on a simile in the *Kakacūpama Sutta*. Here too, the question answer method is used.

"A man appears with some colour paints and a brush and declares that he would paint a picture in the sky" says the Buddha.

"Monks, do you think it is possible?"

"No Venerable Sir. It is not possible because '*ayaṁ hi bhante ākāso arūpī anidassano*', this sky is formless, and is not capable of showing or revealing anything. This is a subtle point many cannot understand. We have discussed the significance of '*anidassana viññāṇa*' in the discourses on *Nibbāna*.

Viññāṇaṁ anidassanaṁ – anantaṁ sabbato pabhaṁ

ettha āpo ca paṭhavi – tejo vājo na gādhati

ettha dīghañca rassañca – aṇuṁ thūlaṁ subhāsubhaṁ

ettha nāmañca rūpañca – asesaṁ uparujjhati

viññāṇassa nirodhena – ettetaṁ uparujjhati

This verse remained an unresolved mystery for ever so long. Some interpreted it as a peculiar world. We have pointed out that the consciousness is there – *viññāṇaṁ anidassanaṁ* – but the released consciousness (*vimutta viññāṇa*) does not reflect name-and-form. Next, it discusses the characteristics of Name-and-form. '*Anantaṁ*' – as in the simile where there was no place for the sun's rays to fall. It is similar to that. *Anantaṁ sabbato pabhaṁ – ettha āpo ca paṭhavi – tejo vājo na gādhati*. In this *viññāṇa* the four elements earth, water, fire and wind can have no footing. Why? Contemplation on the four elements have brought about disillusionment. If this idea is attached to the story of rebirth discussed earlier, it would appear as follows. If the consciousness (*viññāṇa*) does not clasp the four elements firmly, gives up attachment towards them, then "*ettha āpo ca paṭhavi – tejo vājo na gādhati.*" – the four elements have no place in the consciousness.

On the other hand, if earth, water, fire and wind are present, the notion of long and short is present. Now think of its applicability to the painter. '*ettha dīghaṁ ca rassaṁ ca*'. Otherwise the concepts of 'long-short' would be inapplicable. *Subhāsubhaṁ* – beautiful or repulsive would also be inapplicable. As mentioned in the story, the figure of a man or woman is drawn with all the details. As long as

rāga, *nandi* and *taṇhā* (passion, pleasure and craving) are present, the human figure acquires its relevant colours automatically. The paint here is lust. But in the consciousness that is released, called *anidassana viññāṇa*, Name-and-form does not reflect itself. The verse *viññāṇaṁ anidassanaṁ* is extremely deep in meaning as you can see. Finally it says

"*ettha nāmañca rūpañca asesaṁ uparujjhati*".

Name-and-form is totally cut off here.

"*Viññāṇassa nirodhena*" – with the cessation of consciousness. The implication behind this phrase is not understood by many. This is not a reference to the prepared and specially prepared consciousness. By consciousness we mean the consciousness that is accompanied by name-and-form. The worldlings do not know of the other consciousness which is identified as the 'ceased consciousness' – '*niruddha viññāṇa*'. How does it cease? It has no foundation or object. That is what is described as "*appatiṭṭhaṁ anārammanaṁ*" in talking of an Arahant's mind. you may have heard that the void state is referred to as "*animitta*" – signless, '*appatiṭṭhita*' – not established, '*suññata*' empty and void, devoid of self. It is this void state that is emphasized. In support of this position, here are two verses from the *Dhammapada*.

Yesaṁ sannicayo natthi – ye pariññāta bhojanā

suññato animitto ca – vimokkho yesa gocaro

ākāseva sakuntānaṁ – gati tesaṁ durannayā

This verse too is deep in meaning. '*Yesaṁ sannicayo natthi*' – they have no accumulated load, '*ye pariññāta bhojanā*' – understood the intricacies of nutriment, '*suññato animitto ca vimokkho yesa gocaro*' – whose pasture ground is void, signless, has the nature of release. Nutriment is not their prey. Realizing the void inherent in nutriment, the Arahants conduct themselves with ease in their signless essenceless pastures. The path they traverse is not visible.

"*Ākāseva sakuntānaṁ gati tesaṁ durannayā*" – Like the path taken by the birds in the sky, the course taken by the Arahant's mind is untraceable, due to its signless, unestablished nature. Deities and Brahmins venerating the Arahants say they are unable to trace the object of the mind of the Arahants who have attained the Arahant *phala samāpatti*. The main thing emphasized here is the void (*suññato*) and signless (*animitto*).

The verse that follows emphasizes the above facts.

Yassāsavā parikkhīṇā – āhāre ca anissito

suññato animitto ca – vimokkho yassa gocaro

ākāseva sakuntānaṁ – padaṁ tassa durannayaṁ

The qualities of the Arahant who has destroyed all influxes stated here are similar to those in the above verse. Those who have well comprehended the four types of nutriments will know that the path taken by the Arahant is untraceable because it is signless (*animitta*) and is undirected (*appaṇihita*). Now you understand why the Arahants are called "*saṅkhāya sevī dhammaṭṭho saṁkhaṁ nopeti vedagu.*"

Those Arahants do not come into reckoning means, the worldlings do not recognize them. Once, the Brahmin youth Uttara, the pupil of Brahmin Brahmāyu curious to know how the Buddha partakes of food and in order to examine his conduct, followed him for seven months like a shadow. The outcome of it, an amazing account of the Buddha's daily routine is given in the *Brahmāyu Sutta*. The Buddha partakes of food contemplating on the eight factors beginning with "*neva davāya, na madāya*".

The most amazing revelation is that the Buddha is "*rasa paṭisaṁvedī bhagavā no ca rasa rāga paṭisaṁvedī* ."

He is aware of taste. His taste buds are active but there is no lust for taste. The reason is that his consciousness is void (*suñña*) and signless (*animitta*).

Dear Listeners, you must clearly understand that according to these two amazing verses, understanding the significance of nutriment at its depth does not imply giving up nutriment altogether. It is the elimination of craving and lust for nutriment that is required. Unless one reaches this stage, the ordinary mind gets established somewhere by the force of craving, whether we expect it or not. A film is produced either in a mother's womb or elsewhere. Everyone gets stuck there.

"*Āyatiṁ punabbhavo*."

Another existence takes place here if consciousness and name-and-form go together. If the consciousness is removed, no name-and-form arises there. Even while the person is living, if the consciousness has released itself from the name-and-form, he does not seek a goal at death. The simile of the pavilion illustrated the mind that is signless. The sun's rays had no place to establish itself, whether on the wall or on the earth or on the water. Can you understand how deep the vision regarding nutriment is in the Dhamma? A correct understanding of nutriment, its arising, its cessation and the path to the cessation of nutriment

corresponding to the Four Noble Truths, the final result would most certainly be Arahanthood. There is nothing more for him to accomplish. Dear listeners, considering the above facts, please treat this discourse as a subject for meditation. You must not put it away as too deep. It is true that the Dhamma is very deep. But if you train your mind on the lines of radical attention (*yoniso manasikāra*) the attainment of paths and fruits (*magga phala*) is not far away.

Today you have established yourselves on a higher *sīla* and disciplined your mind in meditation.

Not only the monks, but all those involved in meditation, contemplate on the nutriments. If this contemplation is correctly perfected, it certainly leads to paths and fruits in the Dhamma. I wish this discourse would be instrumental in the attainment of spiritual heights of *Sotāpanna* (Stream Entrant), *Sakadāgāmi* (Once-returner), *Anāgāmi* (Non-returner) and *Arahat* (Emancipation) and cross over this dreadful *Saṁsāra*. Whatever beings there be, from the lowest hell *Avīci* to the highest Brahma world *Akaniṭṭha*, may they rejoice in this discourse, and may they attain the peace of *Nibbāna*!



Paticca Samuppada Sermon 20
The Law of Dependent Arising
(Pahan Kanuwa Sermon – No. 202)

'*Namo tassa bhagavato arahato sammāsambuddhassa*'

'Homage be! To the Fortunate One – the Worthy, Fully Enlightened!'

Ye me pubbe viyākaṁsu

huraṁ gotama sāsanā

iccāsi iti bhavissati

sabbaṁ taṁ itihītihaṁ

sabbaṁ taṁ takkavaḍḍhanaṁ

nāhaṁ tattha abhiramiṁ

Tvañca me Dhammaṁ akkhāhi

taṇhānigghātanaṁ muni

yaṁ viditvā sato caraṁ

tare loke visattikaṁ

Idha diṭṭhasutamuta viññātesu

piyarūpesu Hemaka

chanda rāgavinodanaṁ

Nibbānapadamaccutaṁ

Etad aññāya ye satā

diṭṭhadhammābhinibbutā

upasantāva te sadā

tiṇṇā loke visattikaṁ

– Hemaka Sutta, Sutta Nipāta.

Those who explained to me before
Outside the dispensation of Gotama
All of them said:
'So it was and so it will be'
But all that is so-and-so talk
All that is productive of logic
I did not delight therein
But now to me, O! Sage
May you proclaim a Dhamma
That is destructive of craving
By knowing which and mindfully faring along
One might get beyond the world's viscosity
The dispelling here in this world
Of desire and lust for pleasant things
Seen, heard, sensed and cognized

Is *Nibbāna* that slips not away
Knowing this they that are mindful
And are fully appeased here and now
Are always calm and composed
They have crossed the world's viscosity.

Dear Listeners,

The uniqueness of the Law of Dependent Arising discovered by the Fully Enlightened One is the presenting of a solution to the Saṁsāric problem in the present itself. Until then, religious teachers in the world went on searching for a solution by entwining past and future with logic. In this well-preached (*svākkhāta*) Dhamma what becomes obvious by the other qualities like '*sanditthika*' (can be seen here and now) '*akālika*' (timeless) '*ehipassika*' (inviting one to come and see) '*opanayika*' (leading one onwards) and by the term often used '*diṭṭheva dhamme*' (in this very life) is that solution in the present. Today we chose as the topic for the twentieth sermon on Dependent Arising, the *Hemaka Sutta* of the *Pārāyana Vagga* in *Sutta Nipāta* in order to turn your attention to this unique quality. Paraphrased, this is the meaning of those verses.

'*ye me pubbe viyākaṁsu – huraṁ gotama sāsanā'*

Those, who, outside the dispensation of Gotama explained to me before –

'*iccāsi iti bhavissati*'

Said so 'it was', 'so it will be'

'*sabbaṁ taṁ itihītihaṁ*'

All that is 'so-it-was', 'so it was' talk

'*sabbaṁ taṁ takkavaḍḍhanaṁ*'

All that is productive of logic.

'*nāhaṁ tattha abhiramiṁ*'

I did not delight in it.

'*Tvañca me Dhammaṁ akkhāhi taṇhānigghātanaṁ muni*'

But may you preach to me the Dhamma that destroys craving, O! Sage.

'*yaṁ viditvā sato caraṁ tare loke visattikaṁ*'

Having understood which and faring mindfully, one can cross over from world's viscosity.

'*Idha diṭṭhasutamuta viññātesu piyarūpesu Hemaka*'

In regard to pleasant things seen, heard, sensed and cognized here in this world, O Hemaka.

‘*chanda rāgavinodanaṁ Nibbānapadamaccutaṁ*’

The dispelling of desire and lust is the state of *Nibbāna* that does not slip away.

‘*Etad aññāya ye satā diṭṭhadhammābhinibbutā*’

Knowing this, those that are mindful and fully appeased here and now.

‘*upasantāva te sadā tiṇṇā loke visattikaṁ*’

Are always calm and composed and they have crossed over the viscosity in this world.

In a previous sermon we happened to mention that according to the exposition in the *Visuddhimagga* that is now accepted, out of the twelve links the two links ignorance and preparations (*avijjā saṅkhārā*) are reckoned as belonging to the past, the last two links, birth, decay-and-death as belonging to the future, and the eight links in the middle, consciousness, Name-and-form, six sense-spheres, contact, feeling, craving, grasping and becoming (*viññāṇa*, *nāma-rūpa, saḷāyatana, phassa, vedanā, taṇhā, upādāna, bhava*) as belonging to the present. If we accept that exposition – that interpretation – what the Brahmin youth Hemaka had stated as a charge against other religious systems, the explaining as ‘so it was’ and ‘so it will be’, that is to say the ‘so-and-so’ charge could be levelled at our Dhamma as well. But, dear listeners, this is not a ‘so-and-so’ Dhamma. This is something unique. In support of his interpretation, Venerable Buddhaghosa, the author of *Visuddhimagga*, gives a twenty-fold analysis of *Paṭicca Samuppāda* made-up of groups of five:

Atīte hetavo pañca idāni phalapañcakaṁ Idāni hetavo pañca āyatiṁ phalapañcakaṁ

Five causes were in the past

Now there is a fivefold fruit

Now there are five causes

Which will have in future a fivefold fruit.

In the past there were five causes. In the present there are the five fruits. There are five causes in the present of which there will be five fruits in the future. What are these five causes? Ignorance, preparations, craving, grasping and becoming. What are said to be the five fruits in the present? Consciousness, Name-and-form, six sense-spheres, contact and feeling. Then again the five present causes are said to be ignorance, preparations, craving, grasping and becoming and the

five fruits are consciousness, name-and-form, six sense-spheres, contact and feeling. By this analysis the wonderful inter-connection between the twelve links which is called '*idappaccayatā*' (specific conditionality) is breached.

We have already explained to you all that the basic principle of the Law of Dependent Arising obtains between any two consecutive links of the formula. That is to say:

> This being – this comes to be
>
> With the arising of this – this arises
>
> This not being – this does not come to be
>
> With the cessation of this – this ceases.

The law holds good between any pair of links. It cannot be broken. It cannot take in additional things. Any two links are wonderfully interconnected. It is reinforced by the significant phrase '*yā tatra tathatā avitathatā anaññathatā idappaccayatā*' – 'That suchness, that invariability, that not-otherwiseness therein is the specific conditionality.' The Buddha has thus confirmed that connection. We have to point out that by the analysis in the *Visuddhimagga* that basic principle is violated.

Not only that. Venerable Buddhaghosa speaks of three rounds or 'vaṭṭas' – namely, '*kilesa-vaṭṭa*' (the round of defilements), the '*kamma-vaṭṭa*' (the round of action) and '*vipāka-vaṭṭa*' (the round of result). But, dear listeners, we have pointed out to you in our explanation of the *Mahā Nidāna Sutta* that the '*vaṭṭa*' interpretation that is actually relevant to the Law of Dependent Arising is that between consciousness and Name-and-form. We have cited on several occasions a very deep section of the Buddha's sermon that confirms it. On this occasion too let me quote it for the benefit of those who are new-comers.

"*... Ettāvatā kho Ānanda jāyetha vā jīyetha vā mīyetha vā cavetha vā uppajjetha vā, ettāvatā adhivacanapatho ettāvatā niruttipatho, ettāvatā paññattipatho ettāvatā paññāvacaraṁ ettāvatā vaṭṭaṁ vaṭṭati itthattaṁ paññāpanāya, yadidaṁ nāmarūpaṁ saha viññāṇena.*"

"In so far only, Ānanda, can one be born or grow old or die or pass away or reappear, in so far only is there any pathway for verbal expression, in so far only is there any pathway for terminology, in so far only is there any pathway for designation, in so far only is there any sphere of wisdom, in so far only is there a whirling round of pointing out a 'this-ness' – that is to say, as far as name-and-form together with consciousness"

In this exposition we have birth, decay and death and all the rest of it. Nothing is lacking. Venerable Sāriputta, the foremost in wisdom, presents this more clearly through a very simple simile in the *Naḷakaḷāpa Sutta* in answer to a series of questions raised by Venerable Mahā Koṭṭhita. It is a wonderful simile.

"Just as, friend, two sheaves of reeds are made to stand one supporting the other at the top, so consciousness stands with name-and-form as condition. And then with name-and-form as condition there are the six sense-spheres, contact, feeling, craving etc. Out of these two sheaves of reeds, if one is drawn, the other falls down. If the other is drawn, this will fall down. In the same way the cessation aspect is explained as follows:

With the cessation of consciousness, the cessation of name-and-form occurs and along with the cessation of name-and-form, six sense-spheres, contact, feeling, craving, grasping and the rest of it falls. Just try to visualize this:

Out of the two sheaves of reeds, suppose the one on the left is the consciousness sheaf of reeds. The one on the right side is the name-and-form sheaf of reeds. A number of other sheaves of reeds are leaning on the name-and-form sheaf of reeds. All those would fall if the name-and-form sheaf of reeds falls. Now you can understand why this is called '*sandiṭṭhika*' (visible here and now) '*akālika*' (timeless) and '*ehipassika*' (inviting one to come and see). There is no need to bring in three periods of time into the interpretation of the *Paṭicca Samuppāda* formula.

Now that we have said all this about the exposition in *Visuddhimagga*, let us go on to another point. Out of the above mentioned mutual interdependence, even as a corollary of it, something called a duality (*dvayatā*) comes up. We have made use of the *Dvayatānupassanā Sutta* in selecting topics for a number of our sermons. As you may recall, there is a duality of arising and ceasing (*samudaya-nirodha*). There is another duality of internal – external (*ajjhatta-bahiddhā*). It is these two dualities that you come across throughout the *Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta*. We have spoken about the two phrases '*iti ajjhattaṁ vā kāye, bahiddhā vā kāye*' (whether in the internal body or in the external body) and '*samudayadhammānupassī vā vayadhammānupassī vā*' (either seeing the arising nature or the passing away nature). This is the duality. But our *Theravāda* tradition has not recognized this term. It has not come up in the traditional exegesis. However we pointed out its importance. There are two discourses in the *Saḷāyatana Saṁyutta* of the *Saṁyutta Nikāya* by the same titled '*dvayaṁ*' (dyad). In one *Dvayaṁ Sutta* we find the Buddha addressing the monks and saying:

“monks, I shall preach to you about a dyad. What is the dyad? Eye and forms, ear and sounds, nose and smells, tongue and tastes, body and tangibles, mind and mind-objects. This is the dyad.”

Then the Buddha declares a very striking challenge:

“If someone says I will reject this dyad and make known some other dyad, it will only be a vain boast. When questioned he would not be able to make good his boast. And furthermore, he would come to vexation.”

Just see, all that is about the duality. In the other ‘*Dvayaṁ*’ *Sutta* this is how it comes up:

“*Dvayaṁ bhikkhave paṭicca viññāṇaṁ sambhoti.*”

“Consciousness, monks, arises depending on a dyad.”

“*Kathañca bhikkhave dvayaṁ paticca viññāṇaṁ sambhoti.*”

“How monks, does consciousness arise ‘depending on a dyad?”

“*Cakkhuñca paṭicca rūpe ca uppajjati cakkhuviññāṇaṁ.*”

“Depending on eye and forms arises eye-consciousness.”

Then the Buddha makes another declaration.

“*Cakkhuṁ aniccaṁ vipariṇāmī aññathābhāvī, Rūpā aniccā vipariṇāmino aññathābhāvino.*”

“Eye is impermanent changing and becoming otherwise. Forms are impermanent, changing and becoming otherwise.”

Then he goes on:

“*Itthetaṁ dvayaṁ calañceva vayañca aniccaṁ vipariṇāmi aññathābhāvi.*”

“Thus this dyad is unstable, passing away, impermanent, changing and becoming otherwise.”

Just understand in brief that the question of the two is resolved through the teachings on impermanence. There is another significant discourse that corroborates, the ‘internal-external’ part of the implications of *dvayaṁ* or dyad. There is in the *Saṁyutta Nikāya* a discourse titled ‘*Bālapaṇdita Sutta*’ – not to be confused with the ‘*Bālapaṇdita Sutta*’ of the *Majjhima Nikāya*. Let us bring up a section of that discourse:

"*Avijjānīvaraṇassa bhikkhave bālassa taṇhāya sampayuttassa evāyaṁ kāyo samudāgato. Iti ayañceva kāyo bahiddhā ca nāmarūpaṁ. Itthetaṁ dvayaṁ. Dvayaṁ paṭicca phasso saḷevāyatanāni yehi phuṭṭho bālo sukhadukkhaṁ paṭisaṁvediyati etesaṁ vā aññatarena.*"

"Monks, to the fool hindered by ignorance and fettered to craving, this body has come up. Thus (there is) this body and name-and-form as external (to it). Thus there is this dyad. Depending on the dyad there is contact and the six sense-spheres, contacted by which or by any one of them, the fool experiences pleasure and pain."

That would suffice as far as the significance of the dyad is concerned. Now let us pass on to the two words '*hetu*' and '*paccaya*'. During the Buddha's time those two words were used in every discourse as synonymous. Whenever the question comes up as

'*Ko hetu ko paccayo*' – 'what is the cause, what is the condition?' – the answer is one. There are no two answers. There is a delightful discourse titled '*Mahā Puṇṇama*', which has as its setting a moonlit night out in the open air. The Buddha is seen answering questions raised by the monks.

One monk strangely enough, rattled out five questions one after the other.

"Venerable Sir, what is the cause, what is the condition for the designation of an aggregate of form?

What is the cause what is the condition for the designation of an aggregate of feeling?

What is the cause what is the condition for the designation of an aggregate of perception?

What is the cause what is the condition for the designation of an aggregate of preparations?

What is the cause what is the condition for the designation of an aggregate of consciousness?"

Now the Buddha is answering:

"The four great primaries is the cause, the four great primaries is the condition for the designation of an aggregate of form.

Contact is the cause, contact is the condition for the designation of an aggregate of feeling.

Contact is the cause, contact is the condition for the designation of an aggregate of perception.

Contact is the cause, contact is the condition for the designation of an aggregate of preparations.

Name-and-form is the cause, name-and-form is the condition for the designation of an aggregate of consciousness."

What we need to glean from this quotation is the fact we had pointed out – namely that the two words were used synonymously in the discourses. But, dear listeners, it is evident that in the literature handed down as treatises – that is to say, in the '*pakaraṇa*' literature – a semantic change, an undesirable change of meanings has occurred. First of all, let me give an instance of it. In the section called '*Parikkhā Vibhaṅga*' in the Nettippakaraṅa, '*hetu*' and '*paccaya*' are distinguished as two words. This is how it comes up:

"*Dve dhammā janayanti hetu ca paccayo ca*'

'Two factors 'bring forth' ('*janayanti*') something – cause and condition.'

Out of them cause is said to be the special factor (*asādhāraṇo hetu*) and condition is said to be the common factor (*sādhāraṇo paccayo*). An illustration is also given. In the case of a germinating seed, the seed is called the cause and conditions are earth and moisture. Then is summing up *Nettippakaraṅa* says:

"*Iti sabhāvo hetu parabhāvo paccayo. Ajjhattiko hetu bāhiro paccayo. Janako hetu pariggāhako paccayo. Asādhāraṇo hetu sādhāraṇo paccayo.*"

In defining the two words it says, *hetu* or cause is intrinsic nature (*sabhāvo*) and *paccaya* or condition is extrinsic nature (*parabhāvo*). Here we find an unusual semantic twist. '*Sabhāva*' (Skt. *svabhāva*) is a word used in general for 'nature'. Now it has become a technical term. So '*sa-bhāvo*' is intrinsic nature. '*Parabhāvo*' is extrinsic nature. Just see what a distortion it is. For the birth of a sapling or a seedling the seed is said to be the cause (*hetu*) and other things such as earth, water, fire and air are conditions (*paccaya*). But from the verses uttered by Selā Therī it seems that all the three factors – seed, earth and moisture are essential. Then '*ajjhattiko hetu*' – cause is internal '*bāhiro paccayo*' condition is external. Then again, '*janako hetu*' – cause is what brings forth or gives birth – '*pariggāhako paccayo*' – condition is what helps or contributes to it.

Now we cannot help saying something about the *Paṭṭhānappakarana* too. When we come to it, we find the number of 'conditions' (*paccayā*) increasing up to twenty four. In the attempt to show the connection between thoughts, twenty

four conditions are listed. The first among them is called '*hetu*' but not in the sense we mentioned above. So it seems at last '*hetu*' (cause) became one of the '*paccayas*' (conditions). To add to the confusion now the scholars are at pains trying to establish the 'identity' of the two conditions '*anantara*' and '*samanantara*' because the definition given to both happens to be the same. So this is the situation. Anyway, we do not wish to labour the point. Let us now pass on to '*Paṭisambhidāmaggappakaraṇa*. When we come to it we find a similar semantic change. This is how the two words '*hetu*' (cause) and '*hetusamuppanna*' (arisen from a cause) are explained in the *Paṭisambhidāmagga*:

"*Avijjā hetu saṅkhārā hetusamuppannā, saṅkhārā hetu viññāṇaṁ hetusamuppannaṁ.*"

According to this interpretation, out of the twelve links, the one that precedes a link is the cause from which that particular link is arisen. But we have pointed out with reference to the first two lines of the verse '*ye dhammā hetuppabhavā – tesaṁ hetuṁ Tathāgato āha*' that what is called '*hetu*' is not ignorance or any other link but that basic principle of

'*idappaccayatā*' (specific conditionality) – 'This being – this arises' etc. We have also shown that as for '*hetusamuppanna*' each of these twelve links is arisen from a cause. Ignorance and other links are illustrations of the principle. This fact is further borne out by the qualification sometimes mentioned about a Stream-winner (*Sotāpanna*) that he has clearly seen the cause as well as things arisen from the cause ('*hetu ca sudiṭṭho hoti hetu samuppanne ca dhamme*').

But an even clearer proof of this fact – as we earlier pointed out – is the declaration made by the Buddha showing the distinction between the Law of Dependent Arising (*Paṭicca Samuppāda*) and things dependently arisen (*paṭicca samuppannā dhammā*). It is a momentous declaration.

"*Jātipaccayā bhikkhave jarāmaraṇaṁ.*

Uppādā vā tathāgatānaṁ

anuppādā vā tathāgatānaṁ

ṭhitā va sā dhātu

dhammaṭṭhitatā

dhammaniyāmatā

idappaccayatā".

"Dependent on birth is decay and death. Whether there be an arising of *Tathāgatas* or whether there be no arising of *Tathāgatas*, that elementary nature, that orderliness of the Dhamma, that norm of the Dhamma, the specific conditionality does stand as it is."

What corroborates the inter-connection between birth and decay is the norm that holds good whether there be an arising of Tathāgatas or there be no arising of Tathāgatas. That elementary nature 'stands as it is' – '*ṭhitā va sā dhātu*'. That is the 'suchness' which cannot be changed – '*tathatā*'. That specific conditionality (*idappaccayatā*) is *Paṭicca Samuppāda*. 'Things dependently arisen' (*paṭiccasamuppannā dhammā*) are the twelve links beginning with 'ignorance'. They all are '*hetusamuppannā*'. Every one of them is impermanent (*aniccaṁ*), prepared (*saṅkhataṁ*) and dependently arisen (*paṭiccasamuppannaṁ*). All this shows that an undesirable semantic change has occurred with the passage of time in regard to the Law of Dependent Arising.

There are enough instances in the discourses to prove that the twelve linked formula of *Paṭicca Samuppāda* has been presented as an answer to questions of extremists which are of the dilemma type. The world rests on a duality (*dvayanissita*) – the question of two things. Either 'it is' or 'it is not'. Either 'it exists' or 'it does not exist'. Either 'everything exists' or 'nothing exists'. Either it is 'one's own doing' or 'another's doing'.

The worldlings are immersed in such a duality (*dvayatā*). When such Brahmins come and raise questions, particularly in the *Kaccānagotta Sutta*, the Buddha pointed out that such questions with two ends rest on a duality ('*dvayanissita*').

"*Sabbaṁ atthīti kho Kaccana ayaṁ eko anto. Sabbaṁ natthīti ayam dutiyo anto. Ete te Kaccāna ubho ante anupa– gamma majjhena Tathāgato dhammaṁ deseti:*

avijjāpaccayā saṅkharā ...(etc.)"

"(To say) 'Everything exists', Kaccāna, is one extreme. 'Nothing exists' – this is the second extreme. Without going to both extremes, Kaccāna, the Tathāgata preaches the Dhamma by the middle:

Dependent on ignorance, preparations ... (etc.)"

Without going to both extremes the *Tathāgata* brings up the twelve linked formula of Dependent Arising. In that exposition both the direct (*anuloma*) and indirect (*paṭiloma*) orders are given. I hope you all can follow. Firstly, the direct order beginning with '*avijjā paccayā saṅkhārā*' (Dependent on ignorance,

preparations). Then the Buddha follows it up with the indirect order, '*avijjāyatveva asesa virāganirodhā*……(etc).' (But with the remainderless fading away and cessation of ignorance……etc.). Between these two we find '*samudaya*' (arising) and '*nirodha*' (ceasing). One cannot say something absolutely exists or absolutely nothing exists.

There is an 'arising' and a 'ceasing'. It is that norm that is called Dependent Arising or '*Paṭicca Samuppāda*'. Not only that. Sometimes a tetralemma beginning with 'one's own doing' (*sayaṁ kataṁ*) 'another's doing' (*paraṁ kataṁ*) and so on as well as six dilemmas were presented to the Buddha but he answered them with the twelve linked formula. There are many who do not know why the Buddha puts forward these twelve links as his answer. Why does he do so? In it there is the solution in the present. It lays bare the structure of the problem. What is the structure? Within the background of ignorance, preparations arise. It is these preparations that keep up the vortex between consciousness and name-and-form. The outcome of that vortical interplay is bifurcation within the six sense-spheres as internal and external.

Now comes up the story of the 'dyad' (*dvayaṁ*) – eye and forms, ear and sounds etc. That is why we illustrated the mutual interdependence (*aññamañña paccayatā*) with reference to the simile of the two bundles of reeds. As a result of the bifurcation as 'internal' and 'external' in the case of the six sense-spheres, the entire story of feeling, craving, grasping, becoming and birth unfolds itself.

Though we explain this way, you might not understand. Now you had better recall the similes we have given while discussing the Law of Dependent Arising. Many of you would follow when it comes in the form of similes. We have given various kinds of similes like the cinema and the magic world. Let us take it this way. Suppose there are several worlds. There is the cinema-world. Now that we have spoken of the chess game between Ajith and Sumith, let us call it the gambler's world. Then there is the magic world and the cricket world. There is another world which the dog on the plank represented earlier. Later we presented a more aesthetic simile in the form of the story of Narcissus. Everyone seems to like it. For those who haven't heard it before let me give a summary of it. It is a Greek story we have read. A very handsome Greek youth who had never seen his own face, while wandering in a forest bent down into a pond to wash his face. Seeing the reflection of his own face there, he imagined it to be an angel's. To embrace the angel he had a vain struggle with the ripples for several days and in the end sacrificed his life for love. That, of course, was self-love. Other affections are no better. We have to call it the world of romance. So we have now a lot of worlds. The cinema-world, the gambler's world, the magic-world, the cricket-world and the romantic world.

Now let us see how in each of these worlds those twelve links of the *Paṭicca Samuppāda* formula play their part. Think of the cinema-world to begin with. When does the film-show actually start? When the entire cinema hall is steeped in darkness. At that moment the eyes get focused on the screen. Then the deluded interplay begins. In that strange world all the 'preparations' of the actors and actresses become meaningful in the darkness. When the interval comes, and lights are turned on, all the variety of colours on the screen fade away. But it is between the screen and the background of darkness that a wonderful world is created with the help of the behaviour of actors and actresses. That is the delusion. Then why does one go to the cinema hall and buy a ticket? To get deluded. What is the reason? The entire world is a world of sensuality. Within this sensual world, there are many tiny tiny worlds which we already named. The cinema world is easily understood.

Then let us take up the magic-world.

The magic-world exists until the magician's subtle tricks are understood. As soon as one discovers them at least by hiding in some corner of the stage, the magic-world is no more. Now what about the gambler's world? We have clearly portrayed it with the help of the chess game between Ajith and Sumith. To put it in brief, that world exists on the chess-board. Those worthless pieces became 'chessmen'. When the Zen master compelled the two friends to play a deadly chess game – a gamble for life – with sword in hand threatening to behead the loser, both of them mutually made up their minds to sacrifice their life for each other. But just at the critical moment of judging the winner and the loser, what did the Zen master do? He bent down and swept off the pieces from the chess board and that was the end of the game. Isn't that enough for you to understand the gambler's world?

Then as for the cricket-world, we need not describe it for you. You all know about it. But this is what has to be pointed out as important. When the two teams get down to the cricket ground, the paraphernalia of the game dazzle with life. Players are dubbed with strange names. From then onwards it is all delusion. The cricket delusion is so powerful that in the end some even commit suicide. So that is the cricket-world. Between victory and defeat, all the twelve links are there – even birth and death, grief, lamentation, pain, unhappiness, despair and all the rest of it. Then the world of romance. About that you all know more than we do. There again either it is self-love or love for another. It is that love for each other that make them say:

'Of course the world outside is suffering but when we are together our world is wonderful!' The day that soap bubble vanishes into thin air there is suicide or

murder. So that is the world of romance. Remember, in everyone of those worlds, it is the twelve links that come into play.

What is of particular importance is that vortex – '*vaṭṭa*'. The real rallying point is the mutual inter-relation between consciousness and name-and-form. It is a very strange kind of delusion. That is why we said, if you ask consciousness

'Who are you?'

it would reply 'Ask name-and-form'.

If you ask name-and-form

'Who are you?'

It would also reply:

'Ask consciousness.'

The two are neither to be reckoned as two nor are they one and the same. There is a delusion involved. That is why we pointed out that what is called '*nāma-rūpa*' is a formal name and a nominal form. It is only a perception of form. But it is in Name-and-form that consciousness finds an object. It is here that a world is created. All that happens within the darkness of ignorance. In that darkness of ignorance a preparation goes on. It is that preparation that in the Dhamma is called '*kāyasaṅkhāro*' (body preparation), '*vacīsaṅkhāro*' (speech preparation) and '*cittasaṅkhāro*' (thought preparation). So much so, as we mentioned on an earlier occasion, in order to escape from the round of existence all those three preparations have to be stilled. Breathing in and breathing out are reckoned as the body preparation ('*kāyasaṅkhāro*'), thinking and pondering are the speech preparation ('*vacīsaṅkhāro*') and perception and feeling are the thought preparation ('*cittasaṅkhāro*'). These constitute the infra-structure of existence. That is why the yogins in the past stilled those preparations. *Nibbāna* is called '*sabba saṅkhāra samata*' – the stilling of all preparations. When all preparations are stilled, that is the end of the whole story. But these are not stilled automatically. It is when the light of wisdom dawns that they are stilled. That is what we call '*anidassana viññāṇa*' – nonmanifestative consciousness. Consciousness ceases, name-andform ceases. In various ways we described it. Whether you call it '*saḷāyatana nirodha*' (cessation of the six sense-spheres), '*viññāṇa nirodha*' (cessation of consciousness) or '*nāma-rūpa nirodha*' (cessation of name-and-form) it is the same. It shows that the Buddha solved this problem in the present itself. This is a wonderful Dhamma- a marvellous Dhamma.

Though we say so, you might wonder why all these facts have not come to light all this time. Neither the commentators, nor the Western scholars could understand such deep *sutta*s like *Mūlapariyāya*, *Madhupiṅḍika*, *Mahā Nidāna* and *Mahāpadāna*. They were relegated to the limbo as abstruse discourses. What is the reason? There must be some reason. What is it? This is the reason, dear listeners. In the history of this dispensation an unfortunate thing had happened at some stage or other. Those extremely deep discourses were branded as '*vohāra desanā*' (conventional sermons) and pushed into obscurity. In their place, other things came to be upheld as deep. The Buddha must have foreseen this predicament for he had made a prophesy that in future such monks would get the upper hand.

"*Ye te Suttantā tathāgatabhāsitā gambhīrā gambhīratthā lokuttarā suññatāpaṭisaṁyuttā tesu bhaññamānesu na sussū– sissanti na sotaṁ odahissanti na aññācittaṁ upaṭṭhapessanti na te uggahetabbaṁ pariyāpuṇitabbaṁ maññissanti.*"

"Whatever discourses that are preached by the *Tathāgata* that are deep and profound in meaning, transcendental and dealing with voidness, when those discourses are being spoken about, they would not listen to them, they would not lend ear to them, they would not make up their minds to understand them. They would not think it worthwhile learning and mastering them."

This is precisely what came to pass. At present '*vohāra desanā*' or the so called 'conventional teachings' are supposed to have been addressed to simple people like us. You know, there were instances when such discourses like *Bāhiya Sutta* helped the listeners to attain Fruits of the Path or even Arahanthood. But unfortunately for some reason or other those sermons were branded as conventional teachings and relegated to the background. That is the reason for all this confusion.

At present what is called *Paṭicca Samuppāda* is a formula to be by-hearted and recited up and down. It has no other significance. But it is with this formula that the Buddha not only solved the entire Saṁsāric puzzle but presented through it a wonderful principle that lays bare the structure of the Realms of Form and Formless Realms as well as that of the miniature worlds found within this sensuous realm – as we highlighted above. This fact has been ignored all this time. It is because of this ignorance that they went on taking liberties with the two words '*hetu*' and '*paccaya*'. We can't change the Buddha word. If the Buddha has used the couple of words synonymously we have to accept it as it is. Playing with these two words had gone so far that concepts totally foreign to the spirit of the Dhamma came to be tagged on with the passage of time. That is why they

went to the extent of bringing in like Brahmins, such concepts as 'one's own doing' and 'another's doing' or interpreting '*hetu*' as intrinsic nature (*sabhāvo*) and '*paccaya*' as extrinsic nature (*parabhāvo*). This confusion is not of recent origin. It has gone on for quite a long time. Our ideas may appear as revolutionary. But I cannot help pointing this out. The truth must come to light even in the face of criticism.

So then, dear listeners, in regard to the Law of Dependent Arising you should pay special attention to what we have said about '*Saṁsāra-vaṭṭa*' (the vortex of *Saṁsāra*) and '*aññamaññapaccayatā*' (the mutual inter-dependence) and the inter-connection between consciousness and name-and-form. The term *viññāṇa* itself is suggestive of two things. '*Vijānāti*' means discriminating as two things. It is due to that very discrimination that name-and-form becomes the object of consciousness. That happens in the darkness of ignorance which makes one grasp at the shadow. Name-and-form is only a shadow or a reflection. That is where the story of the deer and the mirage comes in. It leads to an imprisonment between two things.

"Eye is here, form is over there".

The deer is unaware of the fact that with each step it is taking it is taking its eye along with it. Therefore, it has posited two ends or driven two pegs for itself. The whole world has got caught between these two pegs and created a dichotomy to rest on ('*dvayanissita*'). The Buddha gave a solution to this problem by giving up both extremes not by putting them together nor by compromising with them, but by avoiding both. The solution he gave is the twelve-linked formula of Dependent Arising.

By this solution the Buddha, for one thing, solved the Saṁsāric puzzle. Why did the commentator bring in the question of past lives and future lives into the interpretation of this formula? They could not appreciate the fact that if you understand the present life in *Saṁsāra* correctly the past and the future are already understood. Just ponder over this, dear listeners. Must you go on removing the sheaves of a plantain trunk to ascertain whether the tree has a pith? If you take a sharp sword and cut the trunk in two in the middle, can you not see from the cross-section that it is pithless? That is why a streamrunner (*Sotāpanna*) is said to have seen *Nibbāna*. We have explained earlier that he is said to have seen *Nibbāna* because for a split second he has seen in a flash, the cessation of preparations in the light of wisdom. In one of our *Nibbāna* sermons, we have compared it to the legendary Herculean feat of the soldier Nīla in parting the sea water with a giant iron bar. If the *Sotāpanna* has had that flash of insight, he has discovered the secret of *Saṁsāra* to that extent. Of course all fetters to

existence are not broken by that initial insight. That realization is gradual but it is because of this insight into the truth that he is irreversibly inclined to *Nibbāna*. He has thereby won the assurance of *Nibbāna*. He has had a glimpse of the true state of affairs which is none other than the Law of Dependent Arising. 'This being – this comes to be'.

Nowadays when speaking about that attainment there are many who go on asserting:

"We keep our precepts unbroken. We are already '*sotāpanna*'."

That is not the criterion. One has to see the norm of the Dhamma couched in the phrase:

'*Yaṁ kiñci samudayadhammaṁ – sabbaṁ taṁ nirodhadhammaṁ*' –

'whatever is of a nature to arise – all that is of a nature to cease.'

Through that insight one has seen the norm of arising and ceasing. He has for a moment experienced the cessation of consciousness. Consciousness is what one grasps at last. By seeing its cessation he has understood the nature of arising and ceasing of the entire Five Aggregates. It is by that insight into the truth that he is inclined to *Nibbāna*. He is irreversible. By that much alone a stream-winner is great. Of course he has to proceed further. The Buddha has pointed out that it is when one directs radical attention (*yoniso-manasikāra*) that there is, this breakthrough.

I have now said enough about *Nibbāna*. About this series of sermons I have to say something more. I have shown that there has been some historical evolution in the interpretation of the Law of Dependent Arising. These sermons might give rise to all sorts of criticism. So I would like to mention that there is a history for this little series of sermons too. Though it is something personal, let me tell you about it. About 20 years ago, when I was at Mitirigala Nissarana Vanaya, my revered teacher, the Most Venerable Mātara Srī Ñāṇārāma Mahāthera, once when I saw him in his '*kuṭi*' invited me to deliver a series of sermons on *Nibbāna* to the meditative Sangha there as they had some problems in understanding it. He even said that the sermons should be taped. But my first response, with a simile, was that if I came out with what I have to say, I would be the target of heavy criticism. But the next day he encouraged me with a wonderful guarantee.

"You had better mention in the sermon itself that I invited you to give these sermons."

It is because of that guarantee that you had the opportunity to listen to the series of sermons on *Nibbāna* and read the '*Nivane Niveema*' volumes (that is, 'Nibbāna – The Mind Stilled' series in 7 volumes). If not for that these things would have continued to remain concealed under the sands of time. I came to know that those who had a myopic eye for the *Nibbāna* series twenty years ago, are now showing a deep interest in it.

In the meantime, some suggested to me the feasibility of writing a book on Dependent Arising. But instead of writing a book, I thought it easier to deliver a series of sermons to you all because you have already listened to more than a hundred of my sermons. I had the confidence that you would not get up and go complaining that the sermons are too deep. That is why I started this series of sermons. But one thing, dear listeners, a preacher's mode of presentation adapts itself to the level of understanding of the audience. Twenty years ago, I addressed those *Nibbāna* sermons to the meditative *Saṅgha* of Mitirigala Nissarana Vanaya. Some of the similes I gave in those sermons are now well known in the country. But in these sermons addressed to a village audience I gave similes direct from village-life – even rustic ones. I suppose it does not detract our respect for the Dhamma. Please try your best to understand this deep Dhamma through them. It is because of the depth of this Dhamma that the Buddha hesitated to preach it at first – that Brahmā Sahampati had to bend his knees to propitiate and invite him to preach.

We have already mentioned on an earlier occasion that there are two things in this Dhamma that are considered exceptionally deep. As it is said in *suttas* like *Ariyapariyesana,*

"*Duddasaṁ idaṁ ṭhānaṁ yadidaṁ idappaccayatā paṭicca– samuppādo*".

"This is something difficult to see, namely the specific conditionality – the Dependent Arising."

It is not easy for the worldlings immersed in defilements to see the Law of Dependent Arising. So also the cessation (*nirodha*) which is *Nibbāna*. That too is difficult for the world to see. It comes with the cessation of preparations. Instead of that, the worldlings are steeped in the craving for existence or becoming (*bhavataṇhā*), all speculative views come ancillary to it. This dispensation is threefold as Precept, Practice and Penetration (*pariyatti, paṭipatti, paṭivedha*). Out of these the first to suffer from neglect was Penetration. Then Practice too gradually went down. In the end only Precept remained. So the intellectuals came to the forefront. From there onwards, it was the age of commentaries, treatises and compendia. It happened not only in our Theravāda tradition, but in other

sects as well. It is said that eighteen sects sprang up even before the lapse of a hundred years from the Buddha's passing away. Not only that. Each sect had its scriptural heritage – cartloads of books. It was rarely that one with discernment took the trouble to make sense out of them.

Therefore, you must not rest satisfied merely with listening to these sermons but make an effort to understand them. Don't be discouraged thinking:

'We are worldlings without that wisdom to understand such things.' The Buddha has pointed out the seed of wisdom – that is, 'radical attention' (*yoniso manasikāra*). We all have that in us to some extent or other. I have shown it by the 'simile of the five-fingers'. I shall repeat it for the benefit of the new comers. Up to now they explained the constituents of '*nāma*' in *nāma-rūpa* differently giving first place to '*phassa*' or contact. I gave the simile of the five-fingers – feeling (*vedanā*) the little finger, perception (*saññā*) the ring finger, intention (*cetanā*) the middle finger, contact (*phassa*) the index-finger and attention (*manasikāra*) the thumb. Out of these taking 'attention' as the thumb we pointed out with the help of a simile of a case of murder or theft how a judge gives crown pardon to an alleged culprit when there are no witnesses and gets the whole mystery out through him. The Buddha had to do a similar thing because this Saṁsāric problem is so difficult to solve since consciousness is a magician's trick.

That is why the Buddha gave 'attention' out of the five constituents of name (*nāma*) free pardon and made him the crown witness. But he was made to give an oath of speaking the truth as if warning him.

"You are the guy in the guise of '*ayonisomanasikāra*' (non-radical attention) who committed this Saṁsāric crime with the other four guys plotting for the murder of all beings from beginningless times. At least now you had better be '*yoniso*' (radical)."

That was the beginning. We have shown what happens when '*yoniso manasikāra*' reaches the climax of its development. It is with the help of this radical attention that one understands feeling as feeling. You should think why in the *Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta* there are the apparently awkward phrases like '*Kāye kāyānupassī*' (contemplating body in the body) and '*vedanāsu vedanānupassī*' (contemplating feeling in feeling). When one gives evidence under an oath one cannot help coming out with the truth – feeling as feeling, perception as perception, intention as intention. But one thing. In the end the culprit – the biggest culprit – is found guilty through his own confession. He is caught by his talk about the 'thing' – '*manasikāra sambhavā sabbe dhammā*'. All 'things' are found out by 'attention'. That is the deepest point. Mind finds out a thing by means of '*manasikāra*'. As we already mentioned, out of the five members on the

'*nāma*' side namely, feeling, perception, intention, contact and attention – attention is the 'thumb'. It is the 'thumb' with the complicity of the other four fingers is carrying on this 'gangmurder'. He has the closest connection with contact (the index finger). We have identified the five fingers. Of course this is not a part of the Buddha's teaching. I gave this simile only for clarification of issues involved.

So then take it that we all have the ability to arouse '*yoniso-manasikāra*'. Get it awakened. It is then that there is the dispelling of the four perversions (*vipallāsā*). In place of the four perceptions so far pursued, namely the perception of permanence (*niccasaññā*), the perception of the pleasant (*sukhasaññā*), the perception of beauty (*subhasaññā*) and the perception of self (*attasaññā*), one begins to develop the perception of impermanence (*aniccasaññā*), the perception of suffering (*dukkhasaññā*), the perception of repulsiveness (*asubhasaññā*) and the perception of not-self (*anattasaññā*) according to the method of contemplation taught by the Buddha. That is the great revolution in one's way of attention. Then the world one sees is far different from the above mentioned worlds. This is a Dhamma that penetrates through the world. Gradually, the perception of the compact (*ghanasaññā*), which made one posit two ends, gets liquidated through the contemplation of impermanence (*aniccānupassanā*). What happens with that liquidation? The perception of the heap (*rāsisaññā*) emerges. One begins to see a thing as a heap. Thereby the contemplation of impermanence goes deeper. One sees the flux of arising and ceasing. It culminates in disenchantment or disgust (*nibbidā*). In this Dhamma '*nibbidā*' is the key to *Nibbāna*. There is such a norm of Dhamma in this teaching. Supramundane Paths and Fruits cannot be realized through by-hearting the Dhamma or by getting certificates. You have to get down into the practice proper. It is to those who had practiced deeply in this Dhamma in past births like Bāhiya, that the Buddha preached very brief sermons like 'In the seen – just the seen.' It may not apply to everybody. You have to start from the 'nursery' itself. That is why virtue, concentration and wisdom have to be developed. Backed by them gradually one comes to realize those Supramundane attainments. It may be a miserable leper like Suppabuddha. If he came to the Buddha with the correct Saṁsāric maturity, he could realize immediately on hearing the Buddha's sermon that norm of the Dhamma enshrined in the dictum:

'*yaṁ kiñci samudayadhammaṁ – sabbaṁ taṁ nirodhadhammaṁ*' – 'whatever is of a nature to arise – all that is of a nature to cease.'

It is the insight based on the Five Aggregates of Grasping which in effect is the insight into the Law of Dependent Arising.

The Buddha has proclaimed this regarding the Law of Dependent Arising.

"*Uppādā vā tathāgatānaṁ anuppādā vā tathāgatānaṁ ṭhitā va sā dhātu dhammaṭṭhitatā dhammaniyāmatā idappaccayatā*."

"Whether there be an arising of the *Tathāgatas* or whether there be no arising of *Tathāgatas*, that elementary nature, that orderliness of the Dhamma, that norm of the Dhamma, the specific conditionality does stand as it is."

About this Law of Dependent Arising, the Buddha has used such words of affirmation like '*tathatā avitathatā*, *anaññathatā, idappaccayatā*' – 'That suchness therein, the invariability, the not-otherwiseness, the specific conditionality.' When one sees this norm as a fact of realization – instead of saying 'impermanent – impermanent' – one begins to see the flux of arising and passing away. This is the path outlined in this Dhamma. Therefore, this series of sermons is not meant for the scholar to pass exams and get degrees. Think of the purpose of these sermons – their practical aspect.

But what has been happening all this time? A basket was simply handed down without examining what is in it.

"Our teacher has said this. We must not go beyond it. Our commentators have explained like this. We must not think beyond their explanations."

A vast delusion has gone on for a long, long period getting hold of the brains – lay – and monk – alike. Ignoring those extremely profound discourses, they ran after other things (I won't say what they are). But the truth is here. Worldlings do not see it. We had to say in our *Nibbāna* sermons too, that a path of Dhamma overgrown for a number of centuries, had to be cleared up. On this occasion too it has to be reiterated. We showed the inter-relation between name-and-form and consciousness in both aspects of arising and ceasing. The world is always on the '*samudaya*' side (arising side). 'Though there is nightfall today, there is a dawn tomorrow.' That is their way of thinking. They do not like even to think of '*nirodha*' (cessation). That is why we gave various similes. The seamstress craving stitches up those two ends, but it is when one sees the middle that there is a release. Now that we have mentioned about those two ends, let us hark back to that wonderful verse preached by the Buddha:

'*Yo ubhante viditvāna*

majjhe mantā na lippati

taṁ brūmi mahāpurisoti

sodha sibbanimaccagā'

'He who, having understood both ends, does not get attached to the middle with wisdom, him I call a great man. He has gone beyond the seamstress here.'

Six interpretations were given for this verse. But out of them, let me now mention a few. Pleasant feeling is one end. Painful feeling is the other end. The middle is neither painful nor pleasant feeling – which is the middle that no one is interested in. the six internal sense-spheres is one end. The six external sense-spheres is the second end. Consciousness is the middle. It is due to the magic trick of consciousness that those two ends are separated. Then again, 'name' is one end and 'form' is the other end. It is through ignorance of the fact that consciousness is in the middle that many scholars go on explaining 'name' and 'form' like materialistic scientists. The term '*rūpa*' is interpreted as in physics. But we have pointed out that what we have here is only a 'perception of form' (*rūpasaññā*). It is with the help of the constituents of the name group that form is recognized. That is the basics for any consciousness. '*Rūpa*' cannot be understood by such materialistic analysis. You can't change this Dhamma into an atomistic study. One has to see what actually is here. How can one see it? Certainly not through instruments. One can do it only through radical-attention (*yoniso manasikāra*). It is for that virtue, concentration and wisdom are required. This is what we presented through our sermons.

Therefore, you should not think that these are too abstruse for us. Some are even scared of the term '*Paṭicca Samuppāda*'. They would say:

'That is something even the author of *Visuddhimagga* could not understand. So how can we do it?' That seems to be the general attitude. But the truth is here in the discourses which they underestimate as too simple conventional teachings (*vohāra desanā*). It is in such under-rated discourses like *Mahā Nidāna* and *Mahāpadāna* that the true explanation of *Paṭicca Samuppāda* is found. One has to intuit into the meaning without getting involved in words. Of course all these are worldly conventions. There are the path ways of synonyms and terminology. Every vortex revolves round with the synonyms and terminology proper to it. Think for instance about the cricket world. As you know, it has its own ways of synonyms and terminology. It is within that environment that the cricket craze goes on. That is what gives rise to an '*itthatta*' or a level of existence. Birth, decay and death go with it. Regarding that too there is a very wonderful discourse which we have already discussed. Let me now mention it in brief.

"Kāye vā bhikkhave sati, kāyasañcetanāhetu uppajjati ajjhattaṁ sukhadukkhaṁ. Vācāya vā bhikkhave sati, vacīsañcetanāhetu uppajjati

ajjhattaṁ sukhadukkhaṁ. Mane vā bhikkhave sati, manosañcetanāhetu uppajjati ajjhattaṁ sukhadukkhaṁ avijjāpaccayā va."

To put it simply – "When one has taken for granted that there is a body, due to intentions about the body there arise inward pleasure and pain. When one takes for granted that there is speech, due to verbal intentions there arise inward pleasure and pain. When one takes for granted that there is a mind, due to mental intentions there arise inward pleasure and pain.

Finally, it is said:

'*avijjā paccayā va*' – all conditioned by ignorance."

But then it goes on to say:

'*avijjāyatveva asesa virāganirodhā so kāyo na hoti yaṁ paccayāssa taṁ uppajjati ajjhattaṁ sukhadukkhaṁ sā vācā na hoti yaṁ paccayāssa taṁ uppajjati ajjhattaṁ sukhadukkhaṁ so mano na hoti yaṁ paccayāssa taṁ uppajjati ajjhattaṁ sukhadukkhaṁ*.'

'But with the remainderless fading away and cessation of ignorance, that body is not there owing to which there arise for him inward pleasure and pain. That speech is not there owing to which there arise for him inward pleasure and pain. That mind is not there owing to which there arise for him inward pleasure and pain.' Then it is said in affirmation:

"*Khettaṁ taṁ na hoti, vatthuṁ taṁ na hoti, āyatanaṁ taṁ na hoti, adhikaranaṁ taṁ na hoti yampaccayāssa taṁ uppajjati ajjhattaṁ sukhadukkhaṁ*."

"That field is not there, that site is not there, that base is not there, that reason is not there, owing to which there can arise for him that inward pleasure and pain."

That field, that site, that base, that reason which sustained all those are not there once ignorance ceases. That is what we tried to point out in various ways.

Well, everything comes to an end. When I started this series of sermons, I expressed my misgivings – as I did in the case of *Nibbāna* sermons – whether I would live long enough to complete the series. However, I survived the series. So I would like to wind up with a transference of merit. Whatever merit that accrued by my efforts to clean up a path of Dhamma overgrown for centuries, may it be rejoiced over by my departed parents who brought me up, teachers who gave me the vision of knowledge, and lay-supporters who helped keep his frail body alive. Whatever beings there be, from the lowest hell to the highest Brahma world, may

they too rejoice over that merit! May it conduce to their attainment of Deathless *Nibbāna*! In this series of sermons I made use of various sections of the discourses. So let this floral garland of sermons woven out of the well-preached Dhamma flowers culled from the garden of profound discourses be a humble offering at the foot of the Dhamma shrine which received honour and worship from the Buddha himself!

