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.

– M. M. P. 80

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*!

