



The Law of Dependent Arising

The Secret of Bondage and Release

Volume II

Bhikkhu Kaṭukurunde Ñāṇananda

Pothgulgala Dharmagrantha Dharmasravana Mādhyā Bhāraya

Pothgulgala Dhamagrantha
Dharmasravana Mādhya Bhāraya

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The Law of Dependent Arising (Paṭicca Samuppāda)

The Secret of Bondage and Release

Volume II

by

Bhikkhu K. Ñāṇananda

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*'yo paṭicca samuppādaṃ passati
so Dhammaṃ passati
yo Dhammaṃ passati
so paṭicca samuppādaṃ 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!”*

Contents

Introduction	viii
Abbreviations	xi
Sermon 6	1
Sermon 7	29
Sermon 8	54
Sermon 9	84
Sermon 10	107

About the P.D.D.M.B.

It is the express wish of Venerable Bhikkhu Kaṭukurunde Ñāṇananda of Pothgulgala Aranyaya, Kandededara, Devalegama, that all his Dhamma Books and recorded sermons be offered as a pure gift of Dhamma free of charge to the Dhamma-thirsty world. The recently established Trust, officially named “Pothgulgala Dhamagrantha Dharmasravana Mādhyā Bhāraya” centred in the sacred city of Kandy enshrining the Tooth Relic of the Buddha, has dedicated itself to the task of fulfilling the noble wish.

Accordingly, P.D.D.M.B. has taken upon itself the duties of publication and distribution of books written by the venerable author as well as the recording and distribution of his sermons on C.D.s, in addition to maintaining the website, ‘seeingthroughthenet.net’. Those wishing to participate in this multifaceted Dhammadana may note the Account Number of our Trust given below. Our readers are cautioned that there is no other number in the same Bank to remit their contributions.

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Introduction

The Buddha, soon after his enlightenment, reflected on the depth of the Dhamma he had realized. He saw two points in this Dhamma that transcends logic (*atakkāvacara*), which it is difficult for the worldlings immersed in defilements to see. One is the Law of Dependent Arising (*Paṭicca Samuppāda*) or conditionality (*idappaccayatā*). The other is *Nibbāna* – the stilling of all Preparations (*sabba-saṅkhāra-samatha*).

Owing to the very profundity of the Law of Dependent Arising, hardly a century after the passing away of the Buddha, a number of Buddhist sects that sprang up offered a wide variety of interpretations of this central philosophy. Both as a term and as a philosophy *Paṭicca Samuppāda* happened to be a ‘stranger’ to the contemporary religious environment. The outcome of philosophical attempts to get familiar with this ‘stranger’ was a miscellany of treatises offering conflicting views. Each Buddhist sect had its own interpretation of *Paṭicca Samuppāda*. This makes it all the more difficult to ascertain the exact significance of the term that accords with the Buddha’s teaching.

Against this hazy background, the Pahan Kanuwa series of *Paṭicca Samuppāda* sermons came to be inspired by an urge to clarify the correct position in the light of the Buddha’s sermons. Some 25 years ago I happened to deliver a series of 33 sermons on *Nibbāna* before the assembly of meditative monks in Meetirigala Nissarana Vanaya hermitage, which came out in eleven volumes under the title ‘Nivane Niveema’. The English translation of it titled: ‘*Nibbāna The Mind Stilled*’ followed in seven volumes. There too, I took the opportunity to discuss the Law of Dependent Arising to some extent. However, some of our readers invited me to write a separate book on *Paṭicca Samuppāda*. Now that this series of 20 Pahan Kanuwa sermons on *Paṭicca Samuppāda* has come out in four volumes, I suppose the above request is fulfilled. The similes I used in the *Nibbāna*

sermons to explicate certain aspects of *Paṭicca Samuppāda* find fuller expression in this series addressed to the local audience.

I am glad that the translation of this series of sermons titled ‘**Law of Dependent Arising – The Secret of Bondage and Release**’ will also be published by the P.D.D.M.B. with the enthusiastic help of the generous supporters who appreciate the deep Dhamma.

Bhikkhu K. Ñāṇananda

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Sri Lanka
(B.E. 2559) September 2015



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‘The Gift of Dhamma excels all other gifts’

The cost of printing this volume has been borne by –

1. Mrs.Mutulakshmi Nāgahawatta in order to transfer merits of Dhammadāna to her departed parents and husband wishing also the understanding of Nibbāna to her two children, relatives and all beings, as well as undeterred progress in her own life-long efforts to understand the Four Noble Truths.
2. and Miss. Mayurī Suraweera in order to transfer merits to her departed father with the blessings of Dhammadāna to her mother and all other relatives.

May this Dhammadāna conduce to their well being and progress towards Nibbāna!

Bhikkhu K. Ñāṇananda
(B.E.2559) 2015 September



Abbreviations

Pali Texts:

(References are to page numbers in P.T.S. Editions)

- D. *Dīgha Nikāya*
M. *Majjhima Nikāya*
S. *Saṃyutta Nikāya*
A. *Anguttara Nikāya*
Dhp. *Dhammapada*
Ud. *Udāna*
Itv. *Itivuttaka*
Sn. *Sutta Nipāta*
Thag. *Theragāthā*
M.A. *Majjhima Nikāya Commentary*
S.A. *Saṃyutta Nikāya Commentary*
Vism. *Visuddhimagga*
M.M. *The Magic of the Mind*

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Sermon 6 (Pahan Kanuwa Sermon – No. 188)

‘Namo tassa bhagavato arahato sammāsambuddhassa’
‘Homage be! To the Fortunate One – the Worthy, Fully Enlightened!’

*Jāti maraṇa saṃsāram
ye vajanti punappunam
itthabhāvaññathābhāvam
avijjāyeva sā gati*

*avijjā hayam mahā moho
yenidaṃ saṃsitaṃ ciraṃ
vijjāgatā ca ye sattā
nāgacchanti punabbhavam¹*

– *Dvāyatānupassanā S. Sn.*

Those who go on wandering again and again
Alternating in saṃsāra 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 saṃsāric 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 ‘*Saṃsāra*’ 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 *Dvāyatānupassanā 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 *Sāvatti* 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 skillful 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 grasping we have deposited in this long *Samsāra*. 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 arahant hood 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.

*‘yam kiñci dukkham sambhoti sabbam 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 saṃsāraṃ – ye vajanti punappunam
itthabhāvaññathābhāvam – avijjāyeva sā gati’*

“Those who keep wandering again and again in this *saṃsāra* 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 hayaṃ mahāmoho – yenidaṃ saṃsitam ciraṃ
vijjāgatā ca ye sattā – nāgacchanti punabbhavam’*

“Ignorance is the great delusion due to which one has wandered long in this *saṃsāra*. 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*² of the *Saṃyutta 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 ayam 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:

“*Sabbam atthīti kho Kaccāna, ayam eko anto. Sabbam natthīti ayam dutiyo anto. Ete te Kaccāna ubho ante anupagamma majjhena Tathāgato dhammam deseti: avijjāpaccayā saṅkharā saṅkharāpaccayā viññāṇam,....., evametassa kevalassa dukkhakkhandhassa samudayo hoti. avijjāyatveva asesavirāganirodhā saṅkhāranirodho, saṅkhāranirodhā viññāṇanirodho, evametassa kevalassa dukkhakkhandhassa 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*’³ – 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*’.⁴ 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 evaṃ sikkhitabbam diṭṭhe diṭṭhamattaṃ bhavissati, sute sutamattaṃ bhavissati, mute mutamattaṃ bhavissati viññāte viññātamattaṃ bhavissati. Evañhite Bāhiya sikkhitabbam.*”

“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 diṭṭhamattaṃ bhavissati, sute sutamattaṃ bhavissati, mute mutamattaṃ bhavissati, viññāte viññātamattaṃ bhavissati, tato tvaṃ Bāhiya na tena, yato tvaṃ Bāhiya na tena, tato tvaṃ Bāhiya na tattha, yato tvaṃ Bāhiya na tattha, tato tvaṃ Bāhiya nevidha na hurāṃ 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 *Samsāra* 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 patisaṃyutta*’) which the Buddha addressed to the monks. That sermon too appears rather cryptic and riddle-like in its formulation. It is worded as follows:

*Nissitassa calitaṃ
 anissitassa calitaṃ 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 huraṃ na ubhayamantarena
 esevanto dukkhassa.*⁵

The first two words are probably familiar to you by now: ‘*Nissitassa calitaṃ*’. 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 (*calitaṃ*). 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 calitaṃ 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 calitaṃ 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 huraṃ 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 *Saṃsāra* 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 saṃsāraṃ – ye vajanti punappunaṃ
itthabhāvaññathābhāvaṃ – 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'*)?”⁶

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 *Samsāra* 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 *Neranjara*, 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.

*ayaṃ loko santāpajāto phassapareto – rogaṃ vadati attato
yena yenaḥi maññati – tato taṃ hoti aññathā*⁷

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 grief-stricken and enslaved by contact (‘*santāpajāto phassapareto*’) and calls a disease or a nest of diseases (i.e. the body) a self (‘*rogaṃ vadati attato*’). What happens as a result of taking this nest of diseases as a self? Now comes a significant statement: *yena yenaḥi maññati – tato taṃ 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 taṃ bhayaṃ
yassa bhāyati taṃ dukkhaṃ
bhavavippahānāya kho panidaṃ
brahmacariyaṃ vussati.’⁸*

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 (i.e. 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 taṃ bhayaṃ’*). What is fearful or dreadful is suffering (*‘yassa bhāyati taṃ dukkhaṃ’*). Then comes the solution to the problem: It is for

the abandoning of becoming that this holy life is lived (*‘bhavavippahānāya kho panidam – brahmacariyam 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, *‘maññati’*. Earlier too we called *‘maññanā’* 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 (i.e. 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 that” 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 jarāmarañam hoti, kim paccayā jarāmarañam.*’ 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 jarāmarañam hoti, jatipaccayā jarāmarañam.*’ ‘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 an 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.*’⁸

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

‘bhava 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 (‘*aññamañña paccayatā*’).

*‘nāmarupāpaccayā viññāṇaṃ
viññāṇapaccayā nāmarupāṃ’*

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 *Samyutta Nikāya*.⁹ 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 sukhumaṃ kho bhikkhave Vepacitti bandhanaṃ.
Tato sukhumataraṃ mārabandhanaṃ’*

“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 maññītametaṃ
ayamaḥasmīti maññītametaṃ
bhavissanti maññītametaṃ
na bhavissanti maññītametaṃ
rūpī bhavissanti maññītametaṃ
arūpī bhavissanti maññītametaṃ
saññī bhavissanti maññītametaṃ
asaññī bhavissanti maññītametaṃ
nevasaññīnāsaññī bhavissanti maññītametaṃ
maññītaṃ bhikkhave gando, maññītaṃ rogo, maññītaṃ
sallāṃ.*

*Tasmātiha bhikkhave amaññītamanena cetasā
viharissāmāti evañhi vo bhikkhave sikkhitabbaṃ.’*

(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 asmīti hoti no anupādāya*’.¹⁰ 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
Rūpaṃ upādāya asmīti hoti no anupādāya
Vedanāṃ upādāya asmīti hoti no anupādāya
Saññāṃ upādāya asmīti hoti no anupādāya
Sankhāre upādāya asmīti hoti no anupādāya
Viññāṇaṃ 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:

‘*yaṃ kiñci rūpaṃ atītānāgata paccuppannaṃ ajjhattaṃ vā bahiddā vā oḷārikaṃ vā sukumaṃ vā hīnaṃ vā pañītaṃ vā yaṃ dūre santike vā sabbaṃ rūpaṃ*’,¹¹ 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. ‘*yaṃ kiñci rūpaṃ atītānāgata paccuppannaṃ*’ – ‘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. ‘*ajjhattaṃ vā bahiddā vā*’ – ‘internal or external’. You grasp not only your form but forms you see outside. ‘*oḷārikaṃ vā sukumaṃ vā*’ – ‘whether gross or subtle’. ‘*hīnaṃ vā pañītaṃ vā*’ – ‘inferior or superior’. ‘*yaṃ dūre santike vā sabbaṃ rūpaṃ*’ – ‘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 *Samsāra*. That is why we said in an earlier sermon that the complications in *Samsāra* 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 aparāmasam'*¹²

"*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 *Samsāra*. 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!



1. Sn. 142 *Dvayatānupassanā Sutta*
2. S. II 17 *Kaccānagotta Sutta*
3. S. V 421 *Dhammacakkappavattana Sutta*
4. Ud. 6 *Bāhiya Sutta*
5. Ud. 81 *Catuttha Nibbāna Sutta*
6. D. II 63 *Mahā Nidāna Sutta*
7. Ud. 32 *Lokavolokana Sutta*
8. D. II 31, *Mahāpadāna Sutta*
9. S. IV 201 *Yavakalāpi Sutta*

10. S. III 105 *Ānanda Sutta*
11. S. III 47 *Khanda Sutta*
12. D. I 202 *Poṭṭhapāda Sutta*

Sermon 7 (Pahan Kanuwa Sermon – No. 189)

‘Namo tassa bhagavato arahato sammāsambuddhassa’
‘Homage be! To the Fortunate One – the Worthy, Fully Enlightened!’

Anattani attamāniṃ – passa lokam sadevakam
niviṭṭham nāmarūpasmim – idam saccanti maññati

yena yena hi maññati – tato tam hoti aññathā
tam hi tassa musā hoti – mosadhammam hi ittarām

amosa dhammam nibbānam – tadariyā saccato vidū
*te ve saccābhisamayā – nicchātā parinibbutā*¹

– *Dvayatānupassanā S. Sn.*

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 *Samsāra* 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.

‘*yam bhikkhave sadevakassa lokassa samārakassa sabrahmakassa sassamanabrāhmaniyā pajāya sadevamanussāya idaṃ saccanti upanijjhāyitaṃ tadamariyānaṃ etaṃ musāti yathābhūtaṃ sammappaññāya sudiṭṭhaṃ – ayaṃ 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:

‘*yam bhikkhave sadevakassa lokassa samārakassa sabrahmakassa sassamanabrāhmaniyā pajāya sadevamanussāya idaṃ musāti upanijjhāyitaṃ tadamariyānaṃ etaṃ saccanti yathābhūtaṃ sammappaññāya sudiṭṭhaṃ – ayaṃ 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 arahantship 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 attamāṇiṃ – passa lokam sadevakam
niviṭṭham nāmarūpasmim – idam 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 taṃ hoti aññathā
taṃ hi tassa musā hoti – mosadhammaṃ hi ittaram’*

“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 dhammaṃ nibbānam – 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 Vepacitti² 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 (i.e. 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 maññitametaṃ’*). There the Buddha mentions a nine-fold 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 (*‘maññitaṃ bhikkhave rogo, maññitaṃ gaṇḍo, maññitaṃ sallam’*) and advises the monks to dwell with a mind free from imaginings (*‘amaññitamanena 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 himself, 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 Buddha-eye 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.

*ayaṃ loko santāpajāto phassapareto
rogam vadati attato*³

This anguished world given over to contact
Speaks of a disease in terms of a self

And then he says:

*yena yenahi maññati
tato taṃ hoti aññathā*

Whatever one thinks in terms of
Thereby it turns otherwise

Now comes the extraordinary statement:

*‘Aññathābhāvī bhavasatto loko bhavapareto
bhavamevābhinandati
yadabhinandati taṃ bhayaṃ
yassa bhāyati taṃ dukkhaṃ
bhavavippahānāya kho panidaṃ
brahmacariyaṃ 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*.⁴ 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 mūlapariyāyam vo bhikkhave desissāmi. Tam sunātha sādhuḥkaṃ 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 worldlyling 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 worldlyling 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* (*ekattaṃ*, *nānattaṃ*, *sabbaṃ*, *nibbānaṃ*).

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 (*‘paṭhaviṃ paṭhavito saññatvā’*) he imagines an earth (*‘paṭhaviṃ 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’ (*‘paṭhaviṃ meti maññati’*). He delights in earth (*‘paṭhaviṃ abhinandati’*). Then the Buddha asks: ‘Why is that?’ (*‘tam kissa hetu?’*) and gives this explanation: ‘It is because it has not been comprehended by him’ (*‘apariññātam tassāti vadāmi’*).

Then about the learner (*sekha*) who has not attained *arahanthood* this is what comes in the discourse: *‘paṭhaviṃ paṭhavito abhijānāti’*. In this case it is not *sañjānāti* (perceives) but *abhijānāti* i.e. 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: *‘paṭhaviṃ paṭhavito abhijānāti’*. He understands earth as earth. And then: *‘paṭhaviṃ paṭhavito abhiññāya’* – having understood earth as earth – now comes a peculiar expression: *‘paṭhaviṃ mā maññi, paṭhaviyā mā maññi, paṭhavito mā maññi, paṭhaviṃ meti mā maññi, paṭhaviṃ mā abhinandi.’* The use of ‘*mā*’ here is a big puzzle for the commentator.⁵ 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. ‘*paṭhavim 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 (‘*pariññeyyam 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: ‘*paṭhavim paṭhavito abhijānāti, paṭhavim paṭhavito abhiññāya, paṭhavim na maññati, paṭhaviyā na maññati, paṭhavito na maññati, paṭhavim meti na maññati, paṭhavim 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 veditvā bhavā jāti bhūtassa jarāmaranam*’ – ‘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 mūlam*’. 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.⁶ 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 therā 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.”⁷ 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 over-exertion. 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. ‘*Nibbānam paramam sukham*’ (*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 *Samsāra* in the guise of ‘non-radical 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 *Samsāra*. ‘*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*⁸

‘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 nibbānam.*’ ‘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 *saṅkhāra* – 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.⁹ Simply because of their long life-span Brahmas entertained the conceit: ‘We are eternal.’ The ascetic Bāhiya Dāruḥīriya 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 *Samsāra*. 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 *Samsāra* 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 *Saṃyutta 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 aghaṃ
anandī anigho bhikkhu
evaṃ jānāhi mārisa*¹⁰

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.¹¹ 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 (*dharmarāga 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 *Samsāric* suffering here and now, and gives him rebirth in the Pure abodes (*suddhāvāsa*) by that very attachment and delight (*‘teneva dhammarāgena tāya dhammanandiyā ...’*).¹²

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’*)¹³ 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 (*‘Kullūpamaṃ vo bhikkhave dhammaṃ desitaṃ 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 Arahant hood 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 Arahant hood in his presence, do so according to four normative factors.¹⁴ The path of practice they have followed comes under one or the other of the following four modes.

1. *‘Samathapubbangamaṃ vipassanaṃ 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.

2. ‘*Vipassanāpubbangamaṃ samathaṃ 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.

3. ‘*Samathañca vipassanañca yuganaddhaṃ bhāveti.*’

Develops both calm and insight together like yoked bulls pulling together. By that method also one can accomplish the task.

4. 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 mānasam 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:

1. Developing insight preceded by calm.
2. Developing calm preceded by insight.
3. 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 cāham etarahi ca dukkhañceva paññāpemi dukkhassa ca nirodham.”*)¹⁵

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 Saṃyutta* of the *Saṃyutta Nikāya*, which reveals the subtleness of the path from non-returnership to arahantship. On a former occasion too we brought it up. It is the *Khemaka Sutta*.¹⁶ 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 pāraṃ gamanāya.”¹⁷

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!



1. Sn. 147 *Dvayatānupassanā Sutta*
2. S. IV 201 *Yavakalāpī Sutta*
3. Ud. 32 *Lokavolokana Sutta*
4. M. I 1 *Mūlapariyāya Sutta*
5. M.A. I 38 (S.H.B)
6. M.A. I 35 (S.H.B)
7. *Samantapāsādikā. 7* (S.H.B)
8. Dh. V1/ 1,2. *Yamaka Vagga*
9. M. I 326 *Brahmanimantanika Sutta*
10. S. I 54 *Kakudha Sutta*
11. Sn. 144 *Dvayatānupassanā Sutta*
12. M. I 352 *Atthakanāgara Sutta*
13. M. I 135 *Alagaddūpama Sutta*
14. A. II 156
15. M. I 140 *Alagaddūpama Sutta*
16. S. III 126 *Khemaka Sutta*
17. A. V 3 *Cetanākaraniya Sutta*

Sermon 8 (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
yāvataṭṭhīti vuccati*

*Sadevakassa lokassa
ete vo sukhasammata
yattha cete nirujjhanti
taṃ tesam dukkhasammataṃ*

*Sukhanti diṭṭhamariyehi
sakkāyassuparodhanam
paccanīkamidaṃ hoti
sabbalokena passataṃ¹*

– *Dvayatānupassanā S. Sn.*

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
yāvataṭṭhīti 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 sukhasammata*

The world with its gods has agreed to call them pleasant

*yattha cete nirujjhanti
taṃ tesam dukkhasammataṃ*

And where ever these six objects cease, that, they are agreed to call unpleasant.

But then comes the statement:

*Sukhanti diṭṭhamariyehi
sakkāyassuparodhanam*

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.

*paccanīkamidaṃ hoti
sabbalokena passataṃ*

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:²

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 ope’ 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 15th 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*³ in the *Samyutta Nikāya* found among the Connected Discourses on the six sense-spheres (*Salāyatana Samyutta*). That discourse includes among other things a riddle-like 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 ghaṇaṇca 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 ‘*taṃ āyatanaṃ veditabbaṃ*’ (‘*se*’ ‘*veditabbe*’ – *Māgadhism*) 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:

“*Saḷāyatananirodham kho āvuso bhagavatā sandhāya bhāsitaṃ.*”

“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*.⁴ 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 tadāyatanaṃ yattha neva paṭhavī na āpo na tejo na vāyo na ākāśānañcāyatanaṃ na viññānañcāyatanaṃ na ākiñcaññāyatanaṃ na nevasaññānāsaññāyatanaṃ nāyaṃ loko na paraloko na ubho candimasuriyā. Tatra pāhaṃ bhikkhave neva āgatiṃ vadāmi na gatiṃ na cutiṃ na upapattiṃ appattiṭṭhaṃ appavattaṃ anārammaṇamevetaṃ. Esevanto dukkhassa.*”⁵

“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 tadāyatanam*”, “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 (*appatiṭṭham*), not continuing (*appavattam*), and objectless (*anārammaṇam*). 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:

*“Nāhaṃ Bhikkhave gamanena lokassa antaṃ ñātayyaṃ daṭṭhayaṃ pattayanti vadāmi. Na ca paṇāhaṃ appatvā lokassa antaṃ dukkhassa antakiriyaṃ vadāmi.”*⁶

“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 lokasmim lokasaññī hoti lokamānī ayaṃ 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 lokasmim lokasaññī hoti lokamānī*”

“By what, friends, does one have a perception of the world and a conceit of the world?”

“*Cakkhunā kho āvuso lokasmim 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*.⁷ This discourse is so important that it occurs in two discourse collections, namely *Samyutta Nikāya* and *Anguttara Nikāya*.

This is how the discourse begins. Once when the Buddha was staying at the *Jetavana* monastery at *Sāvatti* 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.

*Nivutānaṃ tamo hoti – andhakāro apassataṃ
satañca vivaṭaṃ hoti – āloko passatāṃ iva
santike na vijānanti – magā dhammassakovidā*

Murk it is to those enveloped
 As darkness unto the undiscerning
 But to the good wide ope' 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*):

“*Etam santam etam panītam yadidaṃ sabbasaṃkhārasamatho sabbupadhipaṭṭinissaggo taṇhakkhayo virāgo nirodho Nibbānam.*”⁸

‘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 (*sabbasaṃkhārasamatho*). The five aggregates of grasping are the assets built up through the six sense spheres, and here is their relinquishment (*sabbupadhipaṭṭinissagga*). 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
nāyaṃ dhammo susambudho*

*Ko nu aññatramariyehi
padaṃ sambuddhumarahati
yaṃ padaṃ 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 state 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*⁹), 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*’¹⁰ – (‘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*: ‘*sabbasaṅkhārasamatho sabbupadhipaṭinissaggo taṇhakkhayo virāgo nirodho Nibbānaṃ.*’ – ‘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
nirodhaṃ appajānantā
āgantāro punabbhavaṃ’*

‘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 asaṅghitā
nirodhe ye vimuccanti
te janā maccahāyino.’*¹¹

‘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 paṭisaṃvedenti. Tesam vedanāpaccayā tanhā, tanhāpaccayā upādānam, upādānapaccayā bhavo, bhavapaccayā jāti, jātipaccayā jarāmaranam 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 (*paṭisaṃvedenti*). Thereby they are caught up by the Law of Dependent Arising with the result they are subject to repeated birth and consequent *Samsāric* 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 non-understanding 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 *Samsāra* – 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 paṭisaṃvedenti*’ 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 channaṃ phassāyatanānaṃ samudayañca atthagamañca assādañca ādīnavañca nissaraṇaṃca yathābhūtaṃ pajānāti, ayaṃ imehi sabbehi uttarītaraṃ 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 Arahant hood – 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 taste-buds 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 Arahant hood, 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 *Uññābha*¹² 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 *Uññābha* 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. *Uññābha* 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 paṭisaraṇaṃ mano ca nesaṃ gocaravisayaṃ 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. *Uññābha*’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.¹³ 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*).¹⁴ 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’ (i.e. 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*’ (i.e. 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 Saṃsāric 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*’¹⁵ 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 (*dharmasaññā ca virajjati*). You may recall now the statement: ‘*mano ca nirujjhati dharmasaññā 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 (*paramaṃ saccaṃ*). That itself is the supreme bliss (*paramaṃ sukhaṃ*) – as it is said ‘*Nibbānaṃ paramaṃ sukhaṃ*’ (*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:

“*Etam santam etam paṇītam yadidaṃ
sabbasāṃkhārasamatho sabbupadhipaṭinissaggo taṇhakkhayo
virāgo nirodho Nibbānaṃ*”

“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.¹⁶ 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 ope’ 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 *Samsāra* in this very life through the paths to Stream-winning, Once-returnership, Non-returnership and Arahantship. 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*!



1. Sn. 148 *Dvayatānupassanā Sutta*
2. The Magic of the Mind P.79f.
3. S.IV 98 *Kāmaguna Sutta*
4. *Sāratthappakāsinī*. S.A. III 25 (S.H.B)
5. Ud. 80
6. S. IV 93 *Lokakāmaguna Sutta I*.
7. S. I 61 ; A. II 47
8. *Nibbāna* The Mind Stilled Vol.I.P2
9. M. I 167 *Ariyapariyesana Sutta*
10. S. II 10 *Gotama Sutta*

11. Itiv. 62

12. S. V 217 *Uṇṇābha Sutta*

13. *Bhagavadgītā* III 42

*‘Indriyāṇi parāṇy āhur indriyebhyah param manah
manasas tu parā buddhīyo buddheh paratas tu sah’*

‘Senses they say are great, but greater than the senses is mind. But greater than the mind is intelligence and that which is greater than intelligence is (that soul)’.

14. A. V 106f.

15. D. II 31

16. M. I 111 *Madhupiṇḍika Sutta*.

Sermon 9 (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
taṃ brūmi mahāpurisoti
sodha sibbanimaccagā¹*

– *Majjhe S. A.*

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 *Samsāra*. Through the understanding he achieved along with Full Enlightenment, he discovered the secret of Samsāric existence. He understood that for an incalculable period, beings in the world have been wandering in *Samsāra* 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 *Pārāyana 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
taṃ 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 Arahant hood. 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*² 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. ‘*yāyam tanhā ponobhavikā nandirāgasahagatā tatratrābhinandinī*’. She is the one responsible for bringing about rebirth (*ponobhavikā*) accompanied by delight and lust (*nandirāgasagatā*) delighting now-here, now-there (*tatratrābhinandinī*). 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 Saṃyutta* of the *Saṃyutta Nikāya* where

Venerable Moliya Phagguna asks the Buddha: ‘Who is it Venerable Sir, that touches?’³ 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*⁴ 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 cakkhuvīññānaṃ. Tiṇṇaṃ saṅgati phasso. Phassa paccayā vedanā*’

‘Friends, depending on eye and forms arises eye-consciousness. The concurrence of the three is contact. Dependent on contact, feeling

Therein the words: ‘*cakkhuñcā paṭicca rūpe uppajjati cakkhuvīññānaṃ*’ are noteworthy. The two words ‘*paṭicca*’ and

‘*uppajjati*’ 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*.⁵ 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*), i.e. 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 cakkhuviññāṇaṃ tiṇṇaṃ
 saṅgati phasso’*

‘Depending on eye and forms arises eye consciousness,
the concurrence of the three is contact’.

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 ‘made-up’ – something ‘prepared’ (*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*⁶ which we had discussed earlier too. There we get the following instructive lines:

*Aññam nānvāgameyya
Nappatikañkhe anāgatañ
Yadaññam pahīnañ tam
appattañca anāgatañ
paccuppannañca yo dhammañ
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.⁷ 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 jātijarañ 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.⁸ 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 Sāriputta⁹ 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.¹⁰ 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.¹¹ 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
tatha 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.

*Suddham dhamma samuppādam
suddam saṅkhāra santatiṃ
passantassa yathābhūtam
na bhayaṃ 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 Arahant hood) 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 vayaṃ passam*’¹²

‘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.¹³ 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:

‘Tajjam tajjam bhante paccayam paṭicca tadjā tadjā vedanā uppajjanti. Tadjassa tadjassa paccayassa nirodhā tadjā tadjā 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’*¹⁴ (‘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 (i.e. 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 – i.e. 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 *Samyutta Nikāya*.¹⁵ 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.¹⁶ 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 Arahant hood. 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.¹⁷ 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 Arahant hood, 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 – ‘*Dvayaṃ bhikkhave paṭicca viññāṇaṃ sambhōti*’ – ‘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.¹⁸ 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 ‘Saṃsāric 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 arahant hood. 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*’¹⁹ 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
taṃ 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.²⁰ 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 *Samsāra*. As we have mentioned, ignorance is like the father and craving is like the mother ²¹ to beings in *Samsāra*. Hindered by ignorance and fettered to craving beings keep running round. The Buddha has offered the solution to this Samsāric 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 nibbānam*’²² – ‘Cessation of existence is *Nibbāna*.’

You should seriously consider why the Buddha has declared that beings have wandered in *Samsāra* 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 *Samsāra* by realizing the Fruits of the Path to Stream-winning, Once-returning, Non-returning and Arahant hood. 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*!



1. A. III 399
2. S. V 421
3. S. II 13 *Phagguna Sutta*
4. M. I 111
5. M. I 190
6. M. III 187
7. Dh.A. 2.605-608 (S.H.B.)
8. S. II 207ff.
9. S. II 3, M. I 53
10. S. III 159 *Sakkāya Sutta*
11. Thag. vv, 715, 716
12. Sn. V 739
13. M. III 274
14. M. III 187
15. S. IV 399
16. M. III 16 *Mahā Puṇṇama Sutta*
17. M. III 16 *Mahā Puṇṇama Sutta*
18. Sn. V. 735 *Dvayatānupassanā Sutta*
19. M. III 287f. *Mahāsalāyatanika Sutta*
20. M. I 4 *Mūlapariyāya Sutta*
21. S. I 37f., *Janeti Sutta*
22. A. V 9

Sermon 10 (Pahan Kanuwa Sermon – No. 192)

'Namo tassa bhagavato arahato sammāsambuddhassa'
'Homage be! To the Fortunate One – the Worthy, Fully Enlightened!'

*Lobhajam dosajam ceva – mohajam cāpaviddasu
yam tena pakatam kammaṃ – appam vā yadi vā bahum
idheva tam vedanīyam – vatthu aññam na vijjati*

*Tasmā lobhañca dosañca – mohajam cāpi viddasu
vijjam uppādayam bhikkhu – sabbā duggatiyo jahe.¹*

– *Devadūta Vagga A.*

'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.² Beings in *Saṃsāra* 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 *Saṃsāra* 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 *Saṃsāra*. In the last analysis they conduce to our deliverance from *Saṃsāra*. 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*³ 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 kammaṃ vadāmi. Cetayitvā kammaṃ 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*⁴ 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 naṃ dukkhamanveti
cakkam va vahato padam*

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*⁵ 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 *Samsāric* 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*⁶ 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*⁷ 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 *Samsāra* 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 kammaṭṭisaranā. Kammaṃ satte vibhajati yadidaṃ 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.
 ‘*kammaṭṭisaranā*’: *Kamma* is one’s resort in *Saṃsāra*. *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 *Thāna Sutta*⁸ as follows:

“*Kammassakomhi kammadāyādo kammayoni kammabandhu kammaṭṭisarano. Yaṃ kammaṃ karissāmi kalyānaṃ vā pāpakaṃ 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*. (*Sabbaṃ pubbekatahetu*)⁹ 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 (*sayam kataṃ sukhadukkham*).¹⁰ Some others said it is done by others (*param kataṃ sukhadukkham*). Yet others combined these two views and said that it is done by both oneself and others (*sayam katañca param katañca sukhadukkham*). Still others rejected both self agency and external agency and asserted that pleasure and pain one experiences is of fortuitous origin. (*adhicca samuppannaṃ sukhadukkham*).

The Buddha rejected all four types of view and introduced the correct view by declaring that *kamma* is dependently arisen (*paṭicca samuppannaṃ*). As he sometimes put it: “*Kim paṭicca? Phassaṃ 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 (*Phassaṃ 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.¹¹ 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 *Samyutta 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? tayome 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*¹² 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 viññāṇam. Chayime bhikkhave viññāṇakāyā. Cakkhu viññāṇam sotaviññāṇam ghānaviññāṇam jivhāviññāṇam kāyaviññāṇam manoviññāṇam. Idam vuccati bhikkhave viññāṇam.*”

“And what, monks, is consciousness? Monks, there are these six groups (lit. bodies) of consciousness. Eye-consciousness, ear-consciousness, nose-consciousness, tongue-consciousness, 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 ‘*puññābhisāṅkhāra*, *apuññābhisāṅkhāra* and *āneñjābhisāṅkhāra* and their relevance to *saṅkhāra*: In that context, what is called ‘*abhisāṅkhāra*’ are special preparations, that is to say, specially performed *kamma*. In the former context, *saṅkhāra* referred to such activities as in-breathing and out-breathing which are like the ‘bedrock’ of *saṅkhāras*. But here what is called *abhisāṅkhāra* are volitional preparations where intention comes in. *Puññābhisāṅkhāra* are meritorious special preparations, *apuññābhisāṅkhāra* are demeritorious special preparations and *āneñjābhisāṅkhāra*¹³ 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 *Saṃsāra*, 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.¹⁴ 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' (i.e. 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.¹⁵ Deliverance from *Saṃsāra* is not to be found in *puññā – apuññā* and *āneñjābhisankhāra* (meritorious, demeritorious and imperturbable special preparations). However they have their relevance in *Saṃsāra*. 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 *Saṃsāra* 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.¹⁶ 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 *Samsāra*. *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 *Samsāra*. As far as this Middle Path is concerned, it is obvious that the Buddha avoided both extremes, namely that of the *Nigaṇṭhas* and that of the Annihilationists. The Middle Path shown by the Buddha is extraordinary in that it implies the two-fold Right View to enable beings in *Samsāra* to avoid bad bournes and get rebirth in heavens and gradually to leave behind both hell and heaven and attain final deliverance from *Samsāra*. 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 *Samsāra*.

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.¹⁷ 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 *Samsāra*. 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 (*abhisāṅkhātāṃ*) and specially intentioned (*abhisañcetaṃ*) which should be known as something to be

experienced. (*‘vedanīyaṃ daṭṭabbam’*).¹⁸ 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 Arahant hood, 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 *Saṃsāra* 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:

“*cakkhum bhikkhave purānam kammaṃ abhisankhatam
abhisañcetaṃ vedaniyaṃ daṭṭhabbam*”

“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 (*kāyasāṅkhāro*), speech preparation (*vacīsāṅkhāro*) and thought preparation (*cittasāṅkhāro*). 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-sāṅkhāra*’ – ‘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 (*kāyasāṅkhāro*). In-breathing and out-breathing are *kāyasāṅkhāro* in the sense that they prepare the body for activity. Similarly thinking and pondering are *vacīsāṅkhāro* – 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 *Samsāra* 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.¹⁹ There the Buddha says:

“Monks, when the body is there, due to bodily intention, there arises inward pleasure and pain. Monks, when speech is there, due to verbal intention, there arises inward pleasure and pain. Monks, when mind is there, due to mental intention, there arises inward pleasure and pain – all conditioned by ignorance.”

But the Buddha 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 taṃ uppajjati ajjhataṃ sukhadukkhaṃ. Sā vācā na hoti yampaccayāssa taṃ uppajjati ajjhataṃ sukhadukkhaṃ. So mano na hoti yampaccayāssa taṃ uppajjati ajjhataṃ sukhadukkhaṃ. Khettaṃ taṃ na hoti, vatthuṃ taṃ na hoti, āyatanam taṃ na hoti, adhikaranam taṃ na hoti yampaccayāssa taṃ uppajjati ajjhataṃ sukhadukkhaṃ.*”

“..... 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 *Samsāra* 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

(*sayam kataṃ dukkhaṃ*), there is no possibility of deliverance. Due to that view of self one will go on in *Saṃsāra*. 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 *Saṃsāra* – 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 (*puññapāpahīna*) and get beyond *Saṃsāra* 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, honoring, 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-illwill 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 Arahant hood in which all that is prepared (*sankhata*) 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 *Samsāra* 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 *Samsāra* 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*!



1. A. I 136
2. Sn. V 209 *Muni Sutta*
3. A. III 410 *Nibbedhika Sutta*
4. M. I 371ff.
5. M. III 178ff.
6. M. I 175ff.
7. M. III 203
8. A. III 71
9. M. III 178ff. *Devadūta Sutta*
10. S. II 37f. *Bhūmija Sutta*
11. Vism. 435 (S.H.B)
12. S. II 2 *Vibhaṅga Sutta*
13. D. III 217 *Sangīti Sutta*
14. M. III 71ff. *Mahā Cattārīsaka Sutta*
15. A. I 268
16. M.I 160 *Ariyapariyesana Sutta*
17. A. I 32
18. S. IV 132 *Kamma Sutta*
19. A. II 157f. *Sañcetanā Sutta*

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