



The Law of Dependent Arising

The Secret of Bondage and Release

Volume I

Bhikkhu Kaṭukurunde Ñāṇananda

Pothgulgala Dharmagrantha Dharmasravana Mādhyā Bhāraya

Pothgulgala Dhamagrantha
Dharmasravana Mādhya Bhāraya

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Kandy

2013.07.07

The Law of Dependent Arising (Paṭicca Samuppāda)

The Secret of Bondage and Release

Volume I

by

Bhikkhu K. Ñāṇananda

ISBN 978-955-41497-6-2

Sanghopasthāna Suwa Sevana
Kirillawala Watta
Dammulla, Karandana

Volume	P.S. series No.	P.K. Series No.
I	01 – 05	183 – 187
II	06 – 10	188 – 192
III	11 – 15	193 – 197
IV	16 – 20	198 – 202

Published by

Pothgulala Dharmagrantha Dharmasravana Mādhyā Bhāraya

Sri Lanka

2015

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First Impression – 2015

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Web Site: www.seeingthroughthenet.net

Printed by

Quality Printers (Pvt) Ltd.

17/2, Pangiriwatta Rd, Gangodawila, Nugegoda.

Tel: 011 4 870 333

*'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!”*

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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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(B.E. 2559) September 2015



The Law of Dependent Arising – Vol I
(First Impression – 2015 September)

‘The Gift of Dhamma excels all other gifts’

The contributors towards the publication of this volume extend their mettā and wishes for all blessings and health to Venerable Kaṭukurunde Ñāṇananda Thero.

May the power and purity of the Buddha Word explained in this volume be for the welfare of all beings.



Abbreviations

Pali Texts:

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

- D. *Dīgha Nikāya*
M. *Majjhima Nikāya*
S. *Samyutta Nikāya*
A. *Anguttara Nikāya*
Dhp. *Dhammapada*
Ud. *Udāna*
Sn. *Sutta Nipāta*
Jā. *Jātaka Commentary*
Vin *Vinaya*

Sermon 1 (Pahan Kanuwa Sermon – No. 183)

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

*Yadā have pātubhavanti dhammā
ātāpino jhāyato brāhmaṇassa
athassa kaṅkhā vapayanti sabbā
yato pajānāti sahetudhammaṃ*

*Yadā have pātubhavanti dhammā
ātāpino jhāyato brāhmaṇassa
athassa kaṅkhā vapayanti sabbā
yato khayam paccayānaṃ avedi*

*Yadā have pātubhavanti dhammā
ātāpino jhāyato brāhmaṇassa
vidhūpayam tiṭṭhati mārasenaṃ
suriyova obhāsaya mantalikkham¹*

– Udāna – Bodhivagga

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

When phenomena manifest themselves
To the ardently meditating Brahmin
Then all his doubts get dispelled
Since he knows the extinction of conditions

When phenomena manifest themselves
To the ardently meditating Brahmins
Dispelling hosts of *Māra* he stands
Like the sun illumining the firmament

Dear Listeners,

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

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

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

*‘Yadā have pātubhavanti dhammā
ātāpino jhāyato brāhmaṇassa’*

‘When phenomena manifest themselves to the ardently meditating Brahmin’ – according to the terminology of this dispensation, the term Brahmin, on occasion, can refer to the arahant or to the Buddha. Here we have to understand it in that sense.

*athassa kañkhā vapayanti sabbā
yato pajānāti sahetudhammā*

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

Now, for the second verse. It begins in the same way. At whatever time phenomena manifest themselves to the ardently meditating Brahmin (i.e. to the Buddha), all his doubts get dispelled – ‘*yato khayāṃ paccayānaṃ avedi*’ – since he now knows the cessation of conditions.

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

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

During the first watch of the night, the Buddha attended on the Law of Dependent Arising in the direct order and during the second or the middle watch in reverse order. During the last watch, he combined both ways of attending and attended in both

direct and reverse order. Now we shall give a clue to the understanding of these three ways of attention.

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

‘*Avijjā paccayā saṅkhārā, saṅkhārapaccayā viññānam, viññānapaccayā nāmarūpam, nāmarūpapaccayā salāyatanam, salāyatanapaccayā phasso, phassapaccayā vedanā, vedanāpaccayā tanhā, tanhāpaccayā upādānam, upādānapaccayā bhavo, bhavapaccayā jāti, jātipaccayā jarāmaranam sokaparidevadukkhadomanassupāyāsā sambhavanti. Evametassa kevalassa dukkhakkhandhassa samudayo hoti.*’

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

It is the occurrence of these 12 conditions that is meant by the phrase ‘when phenomena manifest themselves’. The 12 factors are called conditions (*paccayā*) because none of them arises by itself. They arise due to causes and conditions. When phenomena manifest themselves to the ardently meditating Brahmin, his doubts are dispelled. How? The last line gives the answer, ‘*yato pajānāti sahetudhammam*’ because he understands

now the Law of Causality. What is called ‘*Paticca samuppāda*’ is actually that norm, that Law of nature. That norm is stated as a formula in four lines. Only the first two came to light in the first sutta.

*Iti imasmim sati – idaṃ hoti
imassa uppādā – idaṃ uppajjati* ²

Thus: This being – this comes to be
With the arising of this – this arises.

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

This being – this comes to be
With the arising of this – this arises

Let us cite some such illustrations:

When there is ignorance – preparations come to be
With the arising of ignorance – preparations arise

When there are preparations – consciousness comes to be
With the arising of preparations – consciousness arises

When there is consciousness – name-and-form comes to be
With the arising of consciousness – name-and-form arises

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

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

*Iti imasmim̃ sati – idaṃ hoti
imassa uppādā – idaṃ uppajjati*²

Thus: This being – this comes to be
With the arising of this – this arises.

Then the illustrations of that first principle are introduced with the conjunctive ‘*yadidaṃ*’ – ‘namely’.

“Namely:

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

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

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

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

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

‘This being – this comes to be
With the arising of this – this arises’

It is as an illustration of this fact that the twelve links are stated as summed up by the sentence: Thus comes to be the arising of this entire mass of suffering. The first verse expresses the same idea.

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

‘*Athassa kaṅkhā vapayanti sabbā*’

‘All his doubts get dispelled.’

Now what are these doubts? In order to understand what they are, one has to read the *Sabbāsava Sutta*³ of the *Majjhima Nikāya*. The ordinary worldling has doubts and waverings in regard to the three periods of time, past, future and present. As to the past, the ordinary worldling who has not seen this Law of Dependent Arising is fully immersed in the personality view (*sakkāyadiṭṭhi*) thinking in terms of ‘I’ and ‘mine’ and attends unwisely to the past thus: ‘Was I in the past? Was I not in the past? What was I in the past? How was I in the past? Having been what, what did I become, in the past? The ordinary worldling sets about, reasoning with the postulate ‘I’. Similarly he attends to the future in five ways. This kind of attention is called ‘*ayonisomanasikāra*’ wrong attention or non-radical attention. This is how he attends to the future: Shall I be in the future? Shall I not be in the future? What shall I be in the future?

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

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

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

‘*yato khayam paccayānam avedi*’

‘Since he knows the extinction of conditions’

What the second verse says in particular is that the Buddha saw the extinction of conditions. When he attended to the

reverse order, he saw that the conditions become extinct, precisely because they arise due to conditions. This fact is summed up in these two statements.

*Iti – imasmim asati – idam na hoti
imassa nirodhā – idam nirujjati* ⁴

Thus: This not being – this does not come to be
With the cessation of this – this ceases

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

*‘Avijjā nirodhā saṅkhāranirodho, saṅkhāranirodhā
viññāṇanirodho, viññāṇanirodhā nāmarūpanirodho,
nāmarūpanirodhā saḷāyatananirodho, saḷāyatananirodhā
phassanirodho, phassanirodhā vedanānirodho, vedanānirodhā
taṅhānirodho, taṅhānirodhā upādānanirodho, upādānanirodhā
bhavanirodho, bhavanirodhā jātinirodho, jātinirodhā
jarāmaṇaṃ sokaparidevadukkhadomanassupāyāsā nirujjhanti.
Evametassa kevalassa dukkhakkhandhassa nirodho hotī.’*

‘With the cessation of ignorance, the cessation of preparations, with the cessation of preparations, the cessation of consciousness, with the cessation of consciousness, the cessation of name and form, with the cessation of name and form, the cessation of six sense spheres, with the cessation of six sense spheres cessation of contact, with the cessation of contact, the cessation of feeling, with the cessation of feeling, the cessation of craving, with the cessation of craving, the cessation of grasping, with the cessation of grasping, the cessation of becoming, with the cessation of becoming, the cessation of birth, with the cessation of birth, decay and death, sorrow, lamentation pain grief and despair cease

Then comes the conclusive statement:

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

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

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

With this citation the norm of *Paticca Samuppāda* is expressed in full. Then, as the illustration of this norm, both the arising and cessation aspects of the 12 links are given. The formulation in the direct order begins as usual with the words ‘*Avijja paccayā saṅkhārā, saṅkhārapaccayā viññāṇam*’ etc., i.e. – ‘From ignorance as condition (arise) preparations, from preparations as condition (arise) consciousness’ etc, summed up by the statement that this is the arising of this entire mass of suffering. But then comes the highly significant statement ‘*avijjāyatveva asesavirāgaṇirodhā saṅkhāraṇirodho*’⁵ – i.e. ‘But with the remainderless fading away and cessation of ignorance, there comes to be the cessation of preparations’ and so on. Though easily overlooked, the ‘BUT’ here (Note: *avijjāya-tu-eva*) is of prime importance in assessing the significance of this ‘combined attention’ as it may be called. The nature of the unimaginably long *Samsāra* is such that proverbially we say that there is no beginning to ignorance as the cause of it. But this

phrase asserts that all the same, with the remainderless fading away of ignorance, the other links of the chain, preparations, consciousness, name and form etc. cease altogether culminating in the cessation of the entire mass of *Samsāric* suffering. Hence the pivotal significance of ignorance in the formula.

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

*Vidhūpayam tiṭṭhati mārasenam
Suriyova obhāsayamantalikkham*

Dispelling hosts of *Māra* he stands
Like the sun illumining the firmament

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

*Kāmā te paṭhamā senā
dutiya arati vuccati
tatiya khuppipāsā te
catutthī taṇhā pavuccati* ⁶

Sense desires is your first battalion
 The second is called dejection
 Hunger and thirst make up the third
 And craving is called the fourth

According to this definition the ten armies of *Māra* are the thoughts. Sense desires, dejection in regard to the holy life, thoughts about hunger and thirst and craving etc. – all these are distracting thoughts. Now what does this imply? All these thoughts arise due to ignorance. These are the *saṅkhāras* or preparations which make up this world with its pleasures and pains. So at whatever moment one attends both in the direct and reverse order in an extremely subtle way, thoughts are simply displaced. What does this amount to? In our sermons we have pointed out on many occasions that deliverance is not something that comes in the other world but one that is realizable here and now in the arahant's mind by the subsidence of thoughts. You may have heard that *Nibbāna* is called the stilling of all preparations and the relinquishment of all assets (*upadhi*). This is a reference to the *arahattaphalasamādhī*. 'Avitakkasamādhī' (thoughtless concentration) and 'avitakkajhāna'⁷ (thoughtless absorption) are also allusions to it. Now the last mentioned simile is a description of this *arahattaphalasamādhī*. The battalion of thoughts called the army of *Māra* is put to flight when the direct and reverse order of attending is accelerated. Sometimes in our sermons we gave a simile to illustrate this way of combined attention – the simile of sharpening a razor. In sharpening a razor on a whetstone or on a leather strap, the razor blade is moved up, up, up and down, down, down and at the final stage of sharpening the blade has to be moved rapidly up-and-down, up-and-down, up-and-down. Similarly, where both the direct and the reverse order unite 'razor-edge sharp', 'thoughts' can no longer survive. At that moment name-and-form is cut off and consciousness gains freedom as non-manifestative consciousness. The third stage therefore is in effect *arahattaphalasamādhī* itself.

So then we have sufficiently explained the three stages. We have here the Law of Dependent Arising as such. We mustn't mix up things. The basic law we have mentioned already – namely what is epitomized in the four lines. That is what is essential. Though many go on rattling off the 12 links they do not know what it is all about. The twelve links are only illustrations. They are called '*paccayā dhammā*'⁸ (conditioned things). What is called '*sahetudhamma*' is the norm – the basic principle we have already mentioned.

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

Only a Buddha can discover this law. It is such a wonderful thing. Why? Because what up to then was explained in terms of 'I' and 'mine', the Buddha pointed out as a phenomenon that occurred due to a collocation of factors casually conditioned. That is to say, the Law of Dependent Arising.

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

asked him: “Who is your teacher? What sort of Dhamma does he preach?”

Venerable Assaji modestly replied: “I have gone forth only recently. I do not know much Dhamma.” “I am Upatissa” the other said “I can understand in detail what is said in brief.” Then Venerable Assaji uttered the following verse.

*Ye dhammā hetuppabhavā
tesaṃ hetuṃ tathāgato āha
tesañca yo nirodho
evaṃ vādī mahāsamaṇo*⁹

Whatever things that arise from causes
Their cause the Tathāgata has told
And also their cessation
Thus teaches the great recluse

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

*Ye dhammā hetuppabhavā
tesaṃ hetuṃ tathāgato āha*

Whatever things that arise from causes
Their cause the Tathāgata has told

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

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

*Yaṃ kiñci samudayadhammaṃ
sabbam taṃ nirodhadhammaṃ*¹⁰

Whatever is of a nature to arise
All that is of a nature to cease

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

*Tesañca yo nirodho
evaṃ vādī mahāsamaṇo*

And also their cessation
Thus teaches the great recluse.

‘Things arisen from causes (*hetuppabhavā dhammā*)’ mentioned in the first line refer to the 12 links of the Law of Dependent Arising. All the 12 links are arisen from causes. Their cause (*hetu*) is the basic principle – the law as such. Even if a small child realizes it, he is a Stream-winner.

So let us proceed from there. By now you might have got some idea of it. The 12 links are so many illustrations. What underlies them is the law of conditionality. ‘From ignorance as condition, preparations, from preparations as condition,

consciousness, and so on'. That is how the formula runs. But that is not all. It is only the direct order. But then the Buddha points out that if ignorance can be made to cease at whatever moment, that is to say, with the dawn of wisdom, preparations, consciousness, name and form, six sense spheres and all the rest of the links cease altogether.

Though we say so, it might not be easy to understand all this. To facilitate understanding deep points, the Buddha has allowed the use of similes. So let us now pass on to the world of similes. But before that there is something worth mentioning in particular. There is a wonderful relationship between consciousness and name and form. Even in the past, many of our scholars have granted the fact that there is a reciprocal relationship between them. This is something the Buddha himself has declared. Even the Buddha Vipassi had proclaimed that there is such a relationship between consciousness and name and form. That is to say, dependent on consciousness is name and form and dependent on name and form is consciousness. This is where many scholars get stuck – this inter-dependence. If one starts searching from the other end: 'What is the cause of decay and death? Birth. What is the cause of birth? Existence, or becoming'. If one goes on questioning like that and comes up to name and form, on searching further for its cause, one will find consciousness. But then search does not go beyond consciousness, for the cause of consciousness is name and form. Between these two there is an inter-dependence or a reciprocal relationship. This is the crux of the whole problem.

To explain this we have given various similes, such as the Vortex Simile. A current of water tries to run away from the main stream but when its attempt is foiled, it turns back. But on turning back it forgets its relationship with the mainstream. It is like the case of two halves. At whatever moment the cyclic process is complete, it becomes a 'Unit'. There is a similar magical illusion implicit in consciousness. In fact the Buddha has declared that

consciousness is comparable to a magic show. The magical effect of this magic show is such that it reflects something. As we all know, a conscious being has the ability to look back – to reflect. This is not a property common to inanimate things like trees and rocks. All conscious beings possess the ability to reflect or retrospect. This reflection can be done rightly or wrongly. To illustrate these two ways of reflection, we gave a simile – a simple one intelligible to anybody. The simile of a dog on a plank crossing a stream. We have mentioned this quite often. While crossing the stream on a plank over it, a dog looks down in to the water. Seeing a dog there, it either wags its tail in a friendly way or growls angrily. Or else out of curiosity it keeps on looking down again and again. Due to wrong attention it doesn't understand what really happens. The dog thinks that it is looking because it sees. But the truth of the matter is that it sees because it looks. Every time it looks it sees a dog. Consciousness has such a delusive magical quality about it. This is because consciousness has the property of reflecting something. What does it reflect? Name and form. Let me first explain what name and form is before giving other similes.

The term '*nāmarūpa*' (name and form) is variously interpreted by scholars. '*Nāma*' has nothing to do with 'bending' as sometimes explained. The constituents of '*nāma*' are feeling (*vedanā*), perception (*saññā*), intention (*cetanā*), contact (*phasso*) and attention (*manasikāro*).¹¹ You may even count these five on your fingers.

Feeling, perception, intention, contact and attention are collectively called 'Name' (*nāma*). Why are they called 'name'? Generally we recognize something with the help of a conventional name given to it. But a child gets to know something through feeling. Take for instance the case of a blind man. Isn't it by 'feeling' that a blind man gets to know something? Feeling gives him a 'sign' or perception. Perception gives rise to an intention. Intention directs him to some point of

contact. Now that is where contact comes in. Last of all comes attention. There are many critics who question this counting of feeling as the foremost among constituents of name. As we sometimes pointed out, those who go by the commentarial tradition inadvertently put contact first. Did Ven. Sāriputta make a mistake? Did the Buddha himself go wrong? Definitely not. At this point we have to say something about consciousness.

Venerable Sāriputta clarifies it in the *Mahā Vedalla Sutta*.¹² It is as if Venerable Mahā Koṭṭhita gets it clarified for us.

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

(*Viññāṇaṃ viññāṇanti āvuso vuccati,
Kittāvatā nu kho āvuso viññāṇanti vuccati*)

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

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

“This is pleasant’ – so one discriminates. ‘This is painful’ – so one discriminates. ‘This is neither painful nor pleasant’ – so one discriminates.”

(*Vijānāti vijānātīti kho āvuso, tasmā viññāṇanti vuccati. Kiñca vijānāti; Sukhantipi vijānāti, dukkhantipi vijānāti, adukkhamasukhantipi vijānāti ...*)

So then the very first function of consciousness is the awareness of feeling. That is where consciousness awakens. It is true that even the rubber tree exudes latex when an incision is made on it. But surely we don’t say that the tree is weeping. Therefore the basic function of consciousness is feeling. It is

through feeling that the notion of self awakens. Even that fact is clearly pointed out. Once the Buddha asked Ānanda:

“Therein, Ānanda, whoever says this: “Feeling is not my self. My self is not of a nature of experiencing,” he should be asked thus: “Friend, where there is nothing felt in whatever way, would there be the notion ‘Am’ (or ‘I am’)?”

“There would not, Lord”

(“*Tatr Ānanda yo so evamāha*” na heva kho me vedanā attā, appaṭisaṃvedano me attāti “so evamassa vacanīyo yattha panāvuso sabbaso vedayitam natthi api nu kho tatha ‘asmīti’ siyāti?”

“*No hetam bhante.*”) ¹³

Now, that is the reason why feeling is counted first instead of contact. The basic function of consciousness is the discrimination between the three grades of feeling – the pleasant, the painful and the neither painful nor pleasant. As you are seated here , why do you now and then change your posture? Isn’t it because of feeling? So in other situations too. ‘Feeling’ gives rise to ‘perception’. Then comes ‘intention’. “Never mind listening to the sermon. Let me turn a little.” That is the intention. Where does the next thought go? To the point of ‘contact’. With that ‘attention’ gets engaged.

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

‘*Cattāroca mahābhūtā catuññañca mahābhitānaṃ upādāya rūpaṃ*’

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

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

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

Now try to get this clear. What is meant by saying ‘Name’ in name and form is formal name is that it is not the type of conventional name known to the world like ‘clock’ and chair’. It is only the most preliminary or incipient stage in naming, as in the case of a blind man acquainting himself with some object through feeling, perception and the rest of the name group. Then about form in name and form, we said, it is nominal form (or form only in name) in the sense that it is not something existing by itself as known in the world. It can only be known through the constituents of name. As you all know, the earth-element is perceived as hard and soft and the fire-element in terms of hotness and coolness. The four great primaries are recognized by means of the factors on the name side. In fact, it is only a perception of form (*rūpasaññā*). That is why we called it ‘nominal form’ or ‘form only in name’. If one correctly understands ‘name and form’ he would realize that it is merely a reflection on consciousness. Think for instance, of what comes before the eyes – what falls on the retina. Isn’t that the beginning of the camera? It is only a reflection which the brain interprets as beautiful. That is why the Buddha calls perception a mirage.

What appears out there as beautiful is actually not there. That is to say, with eye as a condition it appears beautiful. To one who wears green spectacles, for instance, it would appear green. Consciousness and name and form are inter-related. We use a special term in this connection – one that is found in the discourses, namely ‘*dvayatā*’ (duality). Existence involves a duality. That is what we call ‘*vaṭṭa*’ or vortex. We shall explain it in due course. There is a vortex between supply and demand on which price depends. The interdependence between consciousness and name and form involves the entire world in a vortical interplay.

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

Now think of the cinema world. It exists between the scenes on the screen and the audience. The darkness of ignorance provides the necessary background. In the case of the cricket game, the two teams forget their friendship in the heat of competition. That is the background of ignorance. Preparations arising out of that ignorance sustain the cricket-match, i.e. bodily verbal and mental preparations. Hopes and disappointments are bound by rules and regulations of the game. In the cinema world also, the background of darkness ironically highlights the delusion created by the make-up of actors and actresses. When one is enjoying a film-show, one is unaware of that background of darkness. One forgets that the scenes appear beautiful due to the darkness around. This gives us a clue to the significance of the darkness of ignorance. That is why the simile of the movie is

helpful in understanding the Law of Dependent Arising. That is not a simile we have introduced. The Buddha himself has given the simile of the movie, though of course not in the modern sense. In the cinema world within the darkness of ignorance, preparations go on in the mind of the cinema fan with which he experiences joys and sorrows. In this way, we can create any number of worlds. As you turn the pages of a newspaper, you pass through several such worlds. Each world has its own 'name-factors' and 'form-factors'. The illusion of life goes on within a succession of such worlds.

Let us take another simile to illustrate another aspect of this illusion – the simile of the chess game. The basic hint for what I am going to tell you, I borrowed from a certain story about a Zen master. Some of you may have heard of Mahāyāna Buddhism. As it went on spreading, one section became apprehensive of the trend towards excessive philosophizing and began to lay emphasis on concentration and insight. That section came to be known as Zen Buddhists. Zen masters are a strange lot. Sometimes they would train their pupils by giving them insoluble riddles called 'koans'. It is said that while grappling with the puzzle they attained enlightenment. This sudden enlightenment they called 'Satori'. So this is the background. Now I shall tell a story – whether it be true or not – is instructive all the same.

There was a Zen master who was very stern. He used to train his pupils by extremely stern methods. One day he ordered two of his pupils to play a game of chess without losing. In the story I read, no names are given. But I shall give two meaningful Sinhala names to the two pupils. One is Ajith ('invincible') the other is Sumith ('good friend'). Now the Zen master orders Ajith and Sumith to play chess imposing a strict condition. "You must play without losing. Whoever loses I shall behead!" Both knew that the teacher meant what he said – as he stood sword in hand. So these two obedient pupils took up the challenge in mortal fear

and started the game while the teacher stood nearby with a raised sword.

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

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

‘Both of them attained Satori!’

But how? No explanation was given in the book I read. Granted that it is a true story, let us try to understand how such a thing is possible. Invincible Ajith sacrificed his life for his friend. Sumith with an air of resignation was ready to accept the inevitable so that his friend would survive the fatal game. So they both were prepared to ‘Let-go’. The chess board was their WORLD. Their existence (*bhava*) in the chess-world was due to grasping (*upādāna*). The prospect of winning was for them, a question of life and death. When they both sacrificed their lives, the ‘Let-go’ was complete. But neither of them had to die. Only ‘Death’ had to die, as they both gained insight into ‘Deathlessness’ (*amata*). How did it happen? When the Zen master swept the chess board declaring the game ‘null and void’ both pupils realized the delusion they were in. It was as if they

woke up from a dream. The dream was the existence in a world of chess fully involved with the pieces. So it seems, by means of a game of chess in which no one won or lost, this tactful Zen master gave his pupils an insight into the Law of Dependent Arising – the secret of bondage and release.

One might think that such wonderful techniques of training are found only in Zen Buddhism. But that is not so. I shall tell you a similar story in our own tradition which perhaps you have already heard but not fully understood. It is about the acrobat Uggasena alluded to in the Dhammapada and related in detail in its commentary.¹⁴ It seems Uggasena was so skillful as an acrobat that he could stand balanced on a sixty – cubit bamboo pole. One day when he was performing in the midst of a crowd, the Buddha while on his alms-round came to the spot with Ven. Mahā Moggallāna. At the Buddha's request Venerable Moggallāna challenged Uggasena to display his acrobat feats. The latter in response made a number of circling leaps into the sky and stood up right on the bamboo pole precariously balanced. Then the Buddha uttered the following riddle verse which embodied a challenge similar to the one the Zen master had made.

*Muñca pure muñca pacchato
majjhe muñca bhavassa pārāgū
sabbattha vimuttamānaso
na puna jātijaraṃ upehisi*¹⁵

Let go what has gone before
 Let go that which comes after
 Let go thy hold on the middle as well
 Thus with mind released in every way
 Thou comest never more to birth and decay

Here the words ‘*pure*’ and ‘*pacchato*’ stand for the temporal past and future. But for the acrobat precariously balanced, they are suggestive of the spatial ‘before’ and ‘behind’. Likewise, ‘*majjhe*’ temporally means ‘the present’ but for the acrobat it could ironically refer to his risky spatial stance on the bamboo pole. So here we have something like a ‘Koan’. However Uggasena with his *samsāric* maturity in wisdom, backed by his literally ‘one-pointed’ concentration on top of the bamboo pole, took it as a challenge for insight. The last two lines gave the necessary hint. That was enough. He attained Arahant hood then and there, came down from the pole and worshipped the Buddha.

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

*Jayam veram pasavati
 dukkham seti parājito
 upasanto sukham seti
 hitvā jayaparājayam* ¹⁶

Victory breeds hatred
 The defeated lies in sorrow
 Happily lies the tranquil one
 Giving up victory and defeat

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

So you should understand that the formula of *Paṭicca Samuppāda* is not something to be by hearted and rattled off meaninglessly. You must try to grasp the deep meaning behind the statement of the formula in direct and reverse order. Let us try to understand why it is said that 'saṅkharā' or preparations arise due to 'avijjā' or ignorance. The term 'saṅkhārā' itself has connotations of deception or spuriousness. In the Indian society in the past, it was associated with the 'make-up' and other preparatory activities of a drama. They could be bodily, verbal or mental. This applies to the cricket game as well. The magic show of consciousness is kept up by those *saṅkhāras*. Confronting consciousness (*viññāṇa*) in an inter-dependent partnership, there is name and form (*nāmarūpa*), i.e. feeling, perception, intention, contact and attention together with the four great primaries, earth, water, fire and air and form derived from them. The deepest point in *Paṭicca Samuppāda* is traceable to this interplay between consciousness and name and form. That is what we called the vortex. If all goes well, you might get the opportunity to hear more about the vortex next time.

For the present, just understand this much. *Paṭicca Samuppāda* as interpreted by many nowadays is divisible into three lives, with ignorance and preparations as the past, becoming, birth and death as the future and the intervening eight links as the present. Immediately, with the cessation of ignorance, preparations cease and along with it consciousness. The cessation of consciousness is something like a subsidence or appeasement. One might mistake cessation of consciousness to be death itself. That is not the case. It is the cessation of that conditioned or ‘made-up’ (*saṅkhata*) consciousness. What comes up then is the ‘non-manifestative consciousness’ (*anidassana viññāṇa*). This is an aspect of the Dhamma that had long remained neglected. There is a consciousness that is freed from name and form. It is a subsidence or appeasement which Arahants experience. It is within the conditioned consciousness that the worldlings are entrapped and bound.

This consciousness is six fold.¹⁷ The visual world, the auditory world and so forth. The Buddha has defined the world with reference to the six sense-spheres.¹⁸ As a matter of fact the so called world is the world of the six fold sense-sphere. It is not the world that modern scientists frame up. Now even they are becoming aware of their shortcomings in understanding. There is only a visual world, an auditory world, an olfactory world a gustatory world a tactile world and lastly a mental world. Let us not forget that the six sense-spheres are dependent on name and form. So the division, the bifurcation, the duality is maintained down the line as internal and external (*ajjhatta – bahiddhā*). Eye is the internal sphere and forms the external sphere. Both are made up of the four elements. But greater value is attached to the internal – to this conscious body (*‘saviññāṇaka kāya’*). It is the perception that this conscious body chases that the Buddha called a mirage. One simply goes on watching scenes on the ‘eye-screen’ and listening to the ‘ear-drum’. That is the ‘cinema’ and the ‘music’ we enjoy. The Buddha pointed out to the world for the first time that it is due to the ignorance or ‘not – knowing’ at

the moment of touch in the case of all sense-spheres, that feeling, perception and all the rest of it flow in. As a result of it beings keep running round and round in the cycle of existence (*bhava*). It was probably the difficulty of explaining it to the world that made him ponder over the Law of Dependent Arising in the direct order, in the reverse order and in the direct-and-reverse order. He must have thought how difficult it is to present it to the world through the medium of language. It is so deep as a Dhamma. Therefore you should not take it lightly as a mere jumble of words but apply it to your own lives and tread the path of Dhamma. The path is morality, concentration and wisdom. There is no other path to understand this Dhamma in all its depth. Whoever in the past had understood this Dhamma – be they arahants, laymen or laywomen, they all accomplished it through morality, concentration and wisdom. It is the same today too. Therefore it is not, as some believe, attainable through haphazard methods – though we spoke about instantaneous realization.

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

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

it conduce to their attainment of *Nibbāna*! May you all realize those high attainments in this very life!



1. Ud.1-3 *Bodhi Sutta* 1,2,3
2. Ud.1 *Bodhi Sutta* 1
3. M.1-8 *Sabbāsava Sutta*
4. Ud.2 *Bodhi Sutta* 2
5. Ud.2 *Bodhi Sutta* 3-2
6. Sn. 435 *Padhāna Sutta*
7. S.I 124 *Dhūtaro Sutta*
8. S.II 43 *Paccayo Sutta*
9. Vin.I 40
10. Ud.49
11. S.I 3,4 *Vibhaṅga Sutta*
12. M.I 292 *Mahā Vedalla Sutta*
13. D.II 67 *Mahā Nidāna Sutta*
14. Dhp. A. *Uggasena seṭṭhiputtassa vatthu*
15. Dhp. V 348 *Taṇhā vagga*
16. Dhp. V 201 *Sukha vagga*

Sermon 2 (Pahan Kanuwa Sermon – No. 184)

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

*Kuto sarā nivattanti
kattha vaṭṭaṃ na vaṭṭati
kattha nāmañca rūpañca
asesaṃ uparujjhati*

*Yattha āpo ca paṭhavī
tejo vāyo na gādhati
ato sarā nivattanti
ettha vaṭṭaṃ na vaṭṭati
ettha nāmañca rūpañca
asesaṃ uparujjhati*

– *Sara Sutta, Devatā Saṃyutta, S.*

Wherefrom do currents turn back
Where whirls no more the whirlpool
Wherein does name and form
Get cut off with no trace left

Where water, earth, fire and air
Are unplumbed and find no footing
Herefrom do currents turn back
Here whirls no more the whirlpool
Here it is that name and form
Get held in check with no trace left

Dear Listeners,

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

The two verses we have taken up as the topic of our sermon today, also deals with these two aspects of running round (*saṃsarana*) and exit from the round – the centripetal and the centrifugal aspects. These two verses are found in the *Devatā Saṃyutta* of the *Saṃyutta Nikāya*.¹ The first verse embodies a deep Dhamma question raised by a deity in the Buddha’s presence. The second verse has the Buddha’s answer to it.

Let us try to get a general idea of the meaning of the two verses.

*Kuto sarā nivattanti
kattha vaṭṭam na vaṭṭati*

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

*kattha nāmañca rūpañca
asesam uparujjhati*

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

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

*Yattha āpo ca paṭhavī
tejo vāyo na gādhati*

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

ato sarā nivattanti

It is from there that currents turn back.

ettha vaṭṭam na vaṭṭati

It is here that the whirlpool does not whirl.

*ettha nāmañca rūpañca
asesam uparujjhati*

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

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

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

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

If we take this whirlpool or vortex in a metaphorical sense, we can interpret its formation this way: The nature of the world is impermanence. But beings have in them four perversions:²

1. Perception of permanence in the impermanent
2. Perception of beauty in the repulsive
3. Perception of happiness in the painful
4. Perception of self in the not-self.

Because of the ignorance (*avijjā*) represented by the four perversions, some impelling force of preparations (*saṅkhārā*)

moves forward. Where it fails to go forward, it turns round and as we have already explained, gives rise to a whirlpool or vortex. It is the preparations that sustain the vortex.

So then the role of ignorance and preparations can explain the inter-relation between consciousness and name-and-form, which we compared to a vortex. Very often, we had to point out that name-and-form³ has to be understood differently and not as it is explained nowadays. To put it briefly – ‘name’ in name-and-form is only a formal name and ‘form’ in name-and-form is only a nominal form. Feeling, perception, intention, contact and attention are the factors on the mental side with which the four great primaries – earth, water, fire and air are recognized. That is why they are collectively called name. By that recognition, a ‘perception of form’ comes up, which in effect is a form only in name. So this vortex is something spurious. In fact, even the term ‘*sāṅkhārā*’ has connotations of spuriousness or deceptiveness, as for instance in its association with the drama. The motive force of preparations aroused by ignorance keeps up the vortical interplay between consciousness and name-and-form. In our last sermon, we pointed out with illustrations like the chess game and the dog on the plank, how the activity of the vortex gives rise to a duality which sustains the illusion of existence. In short, the vortex gives a perverted notion of an actual existence. That is what we meant by a ‘here’ and a ‘there’ giving a false impression of existence in a flowing river. Through those similes, we tried to present the basic facts underlying the Law of Dependent Arising.

In drawing out the implications of this simile further, let us not forget that the Buddha compared consciousness to a magical illusion.⁴ Consciousness has the quality of reflection as in the case of water. Because of its quality of reflection, name and form are reflected on it. The world takes it to be real. Mistaking it to be an actual name and an actual form is the beginning of all the confusion. We described this bifurcation into two sides as a competition with the chess game and the cricket match as

illustrations. As a simple illustration, we gave the simile of the dog on the plank which it seems, has now become popular among preachers.

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

Then how can one liberate oneself from this predicament? That is the problem before us now. This is not a problem we have introduced ourselves. There are a number of discourses preached by the Buddha himself which mention this inter-relation between consciousness and name-and-form (*aññamañña paccayatā* – mutual conditionality). The way of freedom from this vortex is clearly portrayed in the *Mahāpadāna Sutta*.⁵ In that discourse our Buddha relates how Vipassi Buddha in the distant past attained Buddhahood. He did not go through a period of rigorous austerities like our Gotama Buddha. Instead, when the time was ripe for his attainment, he used radical attention to understand by stages the Law of Dependent Arising. Starting from the very end, he went on tracing the causes for existence until he came to the mutual conditionality between consciousness and name-and-form. Briefly stated, his way of attending proceeded as follows:

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

As you all know, decay and death is the last among the twelve links. This is the way of radical attention or ‘*yonisomanasikāra*’. The meaning of the term

‘*yonisomanasikāra*’ should be properly understood. To analyze the word: ‘*yonī*’ means the matrix or the place of origin. So ‘*yonisomanasikāra*’ is attention by way of the matrix – the point of origin. In short, it means reflection as to the causes and conditions. First of all, he thought: ‘When what is there does decay and death come to be? Dependent on what is decay and death? Then it occurred to him: ‘When birth is there, decay and death comes to be. Dependent on birth is decay and death.’

In the same way, he directed radical attention further and thought: ‘When what is there does birth come to be? Dependent on what is birth? When existence is there does birth come to be. Dependent on existence is birth.’ This is because birth is the beginning of existence. Only when there is a concept of existence, can there be a concept of birth. Then he thought: ‘Given what does existence come to be? Dependent on what is existence?’ And he understood: Given grasping does existence come to be, dependent on grasping is existence.

Going by the same mode of radical attention, he thought of the condition for grasping and found craving and likewise the condition of craving to be feeling, condition of feeling to be contact, condition for contact to be the six sense-spheres. What is called six sense-spheres is sometimes spoken of as twelve spheres. Then one has to understand by it the six internal spheres, i.e. the eye, the ear, the nose, the tongue, the body and the mind and the six external spheres, i.e. the forms, the sounds, the smells, the tastes, the tangibles and the ideas. Taken as pairs, they are the six spheres of sense. It is because of these spheres that contact comes to be. Then he thought: ‘What being there does the six-fold sense-sphere come to be? What is the condition for the six-fold sense-sphere?’ It occurred to him then: ‘When name-and-form is there does the six-fold sense-sphere come to be. Name-and-form is the condition for the six-fold sense-sphere.’ Going further, he thought: ‘What being there does name-and-form come to be? What is the condition for name-and-form?’ He understood

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

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

*‘Paccudāvattati kho idam viññāṇaṃ nāmarūpamhā.
nāparam gacchati.’*

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

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

This consciousness does not go beyond name-and-form. Dependent on name-and-form is consciousness and dependent on consciousness is name-and-form. From there he reflected back: Dependent on name-and-form is six sense-spheres, dependent on six sense-spheres contact, dependent on contact, feeling, dependent on feeling, craving and so on ending with the conclusion: This is the arising of this entire mass of suffering. This, then, is the arising aspect of suffering. With that understanding, it is said, that the Bodhisatta Vipassi exclaimed:

‘Samudayo, samudayo’

‘Arising, arising’

At this juncture, the Bodhisatta Vipassi is said to have made an utterance of joy as we get in the

Dhammacakkappavattana Sutta ⁶ in the case of our Gotama Buddha.

‘Cakkhum udapādi ñāṇam udapādi, paññā udapādi, vijjā udapādi, āloko udapādi’

‘The eye arose, the knowledge arose, the wisdom arose, the science arose, the light arose.’

That is as regards the arising aspect.

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

‘When what does not exist does decay and death not come to be? With the cessation of what does the cessation of decay and death come about? And he understood: ‘When there is no birth, decay and death does not come to be; with the cessation of birth comes cessation of decay and death.’ I hope you all can understand the reverse order in the same way. ‘When what does not exist does birth not come to be? With the cessation of what does the cessation of birth come about? When there is no existence, birth does not come to be; with the cessation of existence comes cessation of birth. Likewise, when grasping ceases existence or becoming would cease. When craving ceases, grasping would cease. When feeling ceases, craving would cease. When contact ceases, feeling would cease. When the six sense-spheres cease, contact would cease. When name-and-form ceases, the six sense-spheres would cease. When consciousness ceases, name-and-form would cease. When name-and-form ceases, consciousness would cease. With this, again, he reached the point at which the inter-relation between consciousness and name-and-form became obvious. Then the Bodhisatta Vipassi is said to have uttered this highly significant statement.

‘Adhigato kho myāyam vipassanā maggo bodhāya.’

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

We can form some idea of the way of reflection in insight meditation by this account. What is meant by the contemplation of the rise and fall (*udayabbaya*) is the contemplation of the arising and ceasing nature of phenomena. In contemplating on arising and ceasing, the question of causes and conditions comes up as a matter of course. As we mentioned the other day, according to discourses like *Mahāpuṇṇama Sutta*,⁷ the cause and condition for form is the four great primaries, namely, earth,

water, fire and air. The cause and condition for feeling is contact. The cause and condition for perception is contact. The cause and condition for preparations is contact. But the cause and condition for consciousness is name-and-form. We can infer that the Bodhisatta Vipassi in his contemplation of rise and fall of the five aggregates of grasping, reflected lastly on consciousness and thereby became acquainted with name-and-form. As the radical attention on name-and-form became sharper and sharper, he realized the cessation of preparations and attained enlightenment.

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

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

Isn't it the little finger? This is how I call the small but mischievous little finger – 'Feeling'. Then comes number Two – the ring finger where you wear the signet ring. Well, call it 'Perception'. Now for number Three. Bend the decisive middle finger, prominent and intrusive. See how it digs into your palm. Let us call it 'Intention'. He is the one who calls the waiter and silences a meeting. You do your work when 'intention' steps in. Number Four is the index finger, fussy and busy all the time. You may dub it 'Contact'. What comes last as Number five? The THUMB – 'standing apart but approachable to the rest' as lexicons define it. Take it as 'Attention'. So have this 'at your finger tips', this definition of 'Name'. When you clutch your fingers, the one nearest to your thumb (i.e. Attention) is the index finger (i.e. CONTACT). Well, that is why I prefer the original sutta definition of '*nāma*'. Of course, these similes are not found in the discourse. I brought these up only for clarification. Now, after this, at least you all, dear listeners, must not doubt the Buddha-word regarding '*nāma*' in '*nāmarūpa*'.

To impress you further on this point, let me say something more. There may be in this audience lawyers and other knowledgeable persons who know more about legal matters. I have heard that there is provision for such a tactic as this in legal affairs. Sometimes a case of murder or theft comes up in the law courts with no one to give evidence. When there is no evidence, the accused has to be discharged. In such circumstances our legal system has provision for a tactic like this. Suppose there are five persons accused in a case of planned theft of a very serious type. But no one comes forward to give evidence. In such a situation, the judge can give pardon to one of the alleged culprits under the oath: "You must tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth." Thereby that culprit is persuaded to give evidence holding nothing back. Now mind you, the Buddha himself resorted to such a "middle path" tactic.

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

To put all this in a nutshell, let us go back to ‘the-dog-on-the-plank’. That dog keeps on looking down into the water because of non-radical attention. If it suddenly understands “It is not that, I look because I see, but that I see because I look, it will no longer go on looking.”

Then there is the story of Narcissus we have cited in our books. In fact, we gave a revised version of that story about the handsome Greek youth Narcissus. In the original story, it is said that he fell in love with the reflection of his own face in the pond, mistaking it to be an angel’s, and sacrificed his life for the imagined angel and that a flower nearby his dead body was named after him. That was all. But we revised the story and made a ‘Buddhist version’ of it. We ‘resurrected’ the youth and got him to realize the fact that it is his own reflection that he is in love

with – that he is ‘seeing’ because he ‘looks’. But this is only our ‘post-script’ to the story. If that youth had actually aroused that radical attention, he could have become a Stream-winner. Well, all this is to show that attention is the most important factor. That is why, with the change from non-radical attention to radical attention, everything became clear to the Buddha.

Let us pass on to another story. Some of you might not like those Greek stories. Well, we have our *Jataka* stories. Among the *Jataka* stories there is one called *Ummagga Jataka*⁸ – a fairly long story. There we have an interesting and instructive story titled ‘The gem problem’. I shall try to relate it in brief.

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

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

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

Wherefrom do currents turn back
Where whirls no more the whirlpool
Wherein does name and form
Get cut off with no trace left

And what was the Buddha's answer?

Where water, earth, fire and air
Are unplumbed and get no footing
Herefrom do currents turn back
Here whirls no more the whirlpool
Here it is that name and form
Get held in check with no trace left

Now what does this mean?

Where the four great primaries – earth, water, fire and air – do not get a footing, that is to say, do not get established, it is from there that the currents turn back. So far in our commentarial tradition, no one could understand the import of the riddle verse and the Buddha's answer to it. Even from the episode we have just related, you can get a clue to it. According to Senaka's 'sight', there was a gem in the pond. Therefore a gem got established in earth, water, fire and air. But to Mahosadha's 'insight', it appeared merely as a reflection. So there was no need to dig into the pond to find it. Now from that point onwards, let me sidetrack to another discourse which is also relevant to our topic. It is the *Kevaḍḍha Sutta*⁹ of the *Dīgha Nikāya*.

It is an extremely deep sutta which has puzzled many a scholar. It embodies a wonderful episode which the Buddha relates to a certain householder. According to it, a certain monk whose name is not given conceived a problem which is of the type that modern scientists are concerned with. 'Where do these

four great primaries, earth, water, fire and air cease without residue?’ He seems to have thought that there must be some place where they completely cease. He did not approach the Buddha to get an answer. Instead, because he had developed psychic powers, went from heaven to heaven seeking an answer to his problem from the gods. They said: “We do not know. Go and ask those in higher heavens. Passing from heaven to heaven and from Brahma world to Brahma world, finally he put his question to Mahā Brahmā. He was shy to confess his ignorance in the company of Brahmas. So he cautioned that monk to a side and confided: “I myself do not know the answer. But why did you come all this way? You should have asked the Buddha himself.” Then that monk came back to the Buddha and posed his question: “Where do those four great primaries, earth, water, fire and air cease without residue?” The Buddha, however, instead of answering the question as it is, remarked: “Monk, that is not the way you should put the question. This is how you should word it:

Kattha āpo ca paṭhavī – tejo vāyo na gādhati
kattha dīghañca rassañca – anuṃ thūlaṃ subhāsubhaṃ
kattha nāmañca rūpañca – asesam uparujjhati.

‘Where do water and earth, fire and air find no footing,
 Where do long and short – subtle and gross, comely and ugly,
 And name and form – get held in check with no trace left?’

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

‘Kattha āpo ca paṭhavī – tejo vāyo na gādhati’

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

*‘kattha dīghañca rassañca – aṇum thūlam subhāsubham
kattha nāmañca rūpañca – asesam uparujjhati.’*

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

*viññāṇam anidassanam
anantaṃ sabbatopabham
ettha āpo ca paṭhavī
tejo vāyo na gādhati
ettha dīghañca rassañca
aṇum thūlam subhāsubham
ettha nāmañca rūpañca
asesam uparujjhati
viññāṇassa nirodhena
etthetaṃ uparujjhati*

Consciousness which is non-manifestative
Endless lustrous on all sides
Here it is that water and earth
Fire and air no footing find
Here again is long and short
Subtle and gross, comely and ugly
Here is name as well as form
Are held in check with no trace left
Wherein consciousness comes to cease
All these are held in check therein

Now let us attempt a solution to this longstanding puzzle. The Buddha is declaring that there is something called ‘*anidassana viññāṇa*’ – ‘non-manifestative consciousness’. Since

we have already told you about the ‘Elusive Gem’, you can easily guess what ‘*anidassana*’ means. Or else, from the Narcissus story, you can get a clue to the meaning of the term ‘*anidassana*’ (non-manifestative). For Narcissus, deluded as he was, the water in the pond manifested an angel. Had wisdom dawned on him, the manifestation – the angel – would be no more. Consciousness of an angel would have ceased. So also is the case with the Gem-in-the-pond, King Vedeha as well as Senaka had a consciousness of a gem. After Bodhisatta Mahosadha dispelled the delusion, their consciousness ceased to manifest a gem, and along with that distinctions, based on earth, water, fire, air, long and short, comely and ugly, relating to the reflection of the gem were gone. So then this is the meaning of the phrase ‘*viññāṇaṃ anidassanaṃ*’. What is it that the non-manifestative consciousness does not manifest? Whatever that has to do with the perception of form. Thereby the significance of the pairs of words the Buddha tagged on to that monk’s question would also become clear.

‘...*dīghañca rassañca aṇuṃ thūlaṃ subhāsubhaṃ*’

‘Long and short, subtle-gross, comely-ugly’

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

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

‘*viññāṇssa nirodhena – etthetaṃ uparujjhati*’

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

What is meant is the cessation of the ‘*abhisāṅkhata-viññāṇa*’ (‘the specifically prepared consciousness’). In other

words, it is the deluded consciousness (e.g., the ‘gem-consciousness’ or the ‘angel-consciousness’).

Whatever pertains to the ‘*abhisañkhata-viññāṇa*’ comes to cease in that all lustrous consciousness (*sabbatopabhaviññāṇa*). When light comes from all directions, consciousness becomes non-manifestative (‘*viññāṇam anidassanam anantaṃ sabbatopabham*’).

Let us go back to our simile of the film-show. When a beautiful film-star appears on the screen, one might be tempted to go and embrace her, like Narcissus. The unreality of all what appears on the screen is understood when the cinema hall is fully illuminated. Only the screen is there. The scenes are gone. When Bodhisatta Mahosadha ‘enlightened’ them on the point, the King and Senaka understood that there is no gem in the water. All these are clues to the meaning of the phrase ‘*viññāṇam anidassanam*’. Consciousness becomes ‘non-manifestative’ when it is endless and lustrous on all sides. What is the lustre? Wisdom is the lustre. We have pointed this out on many occasions. Some people seem to think that the Buddha compared wisdom to a lustre or light only in a metaphorical sense. But that is not so. The Buddha’s sermon on lustres (*pabhā*) is a very powerful one.¹⁰

‘*Catasso imā bhikkhave pabhā. Katamā catasso?
Candappabhā, suriyappabhā, aggippabhā paññāpabhā.
Imā kho bhikkhave catasso pabhā.
Etadaggaṃ bhikkhave imāsaṃ catunnaṃ
yadidaṃ paññāpabhā*’

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

All this time people took this declaration lightly. It is through this lustre of wisdom that this illusory magic show is

exposed for what it is. If name in name-and-form is formal name and form in name-and-form is nominal form, it is dependent on such a spurious name-and-form that the six-fold sense-sphere bifurcates into two teams – eye and forms, ear and sounds etc. and then, it is as a result of the interplay between these two teams that we get a world. That is why the Buddha defined the world in terms of the six sense-spheres.¹¹ The entire world is to be found within this duality. Last of all comes the duality of mind and mind-object. It is within this world of the six-fold sense-sphere that all those ‘things’ that we take seriously, cease. Some people are scared of the word ‘*suññatā*’ (voidness). But one cannot help it. That is why the Buddha compared it to an awakening from a dream. The worldlings are in a dream world. If things seen in a dream are no longer there when one wakes up, there is no point in lamenting. Things non-existing are seen as non-existing. That is the ‘knowledge-of-things-as-they-are’ (*yathābhūtañāṇa*). The Truth came to light in the light of wisdom.

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

*‘Taṃ nāmarūpasmim asajjamānaṃ
akiñcanaṃ nānupatanti dukkhā’*¹²

‘That one untrammelled by name-and-form
And possessionless – no pains befall’

Not to get entangled in name-and-form is equivalent to owning nothing. Then there is nothing to get attached to.

There is also this revealing declaration:

*‘Anattani attamānīm
passa lokam sadevakam
niviṭṭham nāmarūpasmim
idam saccanti maññati’*¹³

‘Behold the world with all its gods
Fancying a self where none exists
Entrenched in name-and-form it builds
The conceit: ‘This is the truth.’

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

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

‘*Yo ubhante viditvāna
majjhe mantā na lippati
taṃ brūmi mahāpurisoti
so ‘dha sibbanimaccagā’*’¹⁴

This verse, actually found in the *Tissametteyya Sutta* of the *Sutta Nipāta* is so deep in meaning that, according to the *Anguttara Nikāya*, already during the Buddha’s life time, monks cited it and gave six different interpretations to it in a sort of symposium.¹⁵

Rendered simply, the verse conveys the following idea:

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

We have given a long commentary to this verse already. Out of the six interpretations, two are relevant to our topic today. So we shall limit our discussion to those two. The common feature in all the six interpretations is the positing of two things as

the two ends with something at the middle. The two ends are supposed to be stitched up ignoring the middle by a seamstress.

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

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

craving, the seamstress, stitches them up ignoring consciousness which is in the middle.

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

‘ *paññā bhāvetabbā – viññāṇaṃ pariññeyyaṃ*’ ¹⁶

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

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

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

Between name-and-form and consciousness, worldlings keep running round and round in vain. We spoke about an abyss. You can understand this abyss in relation to the whirlpool we

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

Just see, when we interpret these verses in this way, there are some who call it nihilistic. Even the Buddha was branded a ‘Nihilist’ by the Brahamins. In the body of water flowing downwards, there was a pervert formation called a whirlpool or a vortex as a result of a runaway current. Even Buddhas and *Pacceka Buddhas* have been so many *Saṃsāric* runaway water currents. After a vain vortical interplay for aeons and aeons, if through wisdom their name-and-form comes to an end, currents will never flow for them again. You can now understand what sort of a deep Dhamma the Buddha has presented to us through this vortex simile. The delusion is seen through by the light of wisdom. That is the path of insight Bodhisatta Vipassi followed. It was when the radical attention (*yonisomanasikāra*) became razor-edge sharp that wisdom dawned on him. That is precisely why there is this significant phrase in that same discourse:

‘*yonisomanasikārā ahu paññāya abhisamayo*’

‘Through radical attention, there was the understanding through wisdom’

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

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

‘Manasikāra sambhavā sabbe dhammā’ ¹⁷

‘All things have attention as their origin’

Everything originates from attention. Attention is the discoverer of ‘the thing’. All things are rooted in interest (*‘chandamūlakā sabbe dhmmā’*). There is a very important discourse bearing on this topic which we might have mentioned earlier. The special significance of attention lies in the fact that it makes a ‘thing’ what it is. That is why the ‘THUMB’ is so important. To anyone in this world ‘a thing’ becomes ‘the thing’ only when his attention picks it up. Isn’t that so? Just think about it. Setting aside all your problems, you all are now listening to this sermon. But as soon as you go home, problems crop up again. How? Your attention went there. Attention picks up the problems. When a problem comes up, it is ‘the thing’ for you. But it is ‘nothing’ for your neighbour. Your problem has made it ‘the thing’ for you. Although ‘Attention’ was granted free pardon, when he confesses his part in the plot, it becomes obvious that he is the biggest thief. It is as if he is caught red-handed. What is that he has stolen? ‘THE THING’ – the ‘mind object’ (*‘mano-dhammā’*). ‘Mind and mind objects’ constitute the most formidable dyad of all. The other dyads, like eye and forms, ear and sounds, are simple. The subtlest point is where the mind strikes the ‘mind-object’ (*dhamma*). That is the most elusive

object. What is it that we call ‘what comes to my mind?’ Let me quote from the first verse of the *Dhammapada*, as usual:

‘*Mano pubbaṅgamā dhammā
manoseṭṭhā manomayā*’¹⁸

‘Mind is the forerunner of mind objects
Mind is their chief – they are mind-made’

These two lines are found in the two opening verses of the *Dhammapada*. Until the Buddha came on the scene, everyone thought that things exist in themselves and that mind comes later. The Buddha, however, pointed out to the world that ‘mind’ comes first and ‘things’ come later. Not only that. ‘*Manomayā*’. ‘Things’ are mind-made. That ‘gem-in-the-pond’ was mind-made, The angel of Narcissus was mind-made. The Buddha proclaimed to the world this nature of phenomena.

Modern scientists should ponder over the Buddha’s comparison of all perceptions to a mirage.¹⁹ Not only the scientists but some of our silly people also take up their viewpoint. That is not science but nescience. If the scientists get a hint to the correct direction, they might understand that they have got stuck somewhere. It is because they started from the wrong end. In the last analysis, they will have to grant the fact that ‘things’ originate from attention (‘*manasikārasambhavā sabbe dhammā*’). In the final reckoning, ‘attention’ is found to be the culprit. What is the reason for attention? Interest (*chanda*). In the same discourse, it is said that ‘all things are rooted in interest’ (*chandamūlakā*). Interest is the lightest shade of craving (*taṇhā*). That is why the Buddha preached that interest is also the root of the Five Aggregates of grasping. The word *chanda* has the sense of ‘liking’ or ‘wanting’. It is because of ‘*chanda*’ that Narcissus saw an angel and the King saw a gem. So one can understand why the Buddha has preached that in order to attain emancipation, ignorance and craving must be done away with.

We have to kill our Samsāric ‘mother’ and ‘father’. Craving is the mother and ignorance the father whom we have to kill according to a riddle verse in the *Dhammapada* (*mātaram pitaram hantvā*²⁰ – having killed the mother and the father). We have come all this long way in *Samsara* because of the ‘hindrance’ (*nīvaraṇa*) of the father and the ‘fetter’ (*saṃyojana*) of the mother. That in short is the secret of the vortex. Interest is that lightest shade of craving, which comes in almost unknowingly. If you try to keep track of your thoughts, you will find that suddenly a thought breaks in as from nowhere. But if you are sharp enough, you will realize that in some subtle way as if in a dream a need or a wanting surfaces. As soon as it arises, it becomes ‘the thing’. There is a lot to be said on this point. I have put it in brief. If there is merit in you all and life in me, perhaps you will get the opportunity to listen to some more sermons like this.

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



1. S.I 15 *Sara Sutta*
2. A.II 52
3. S.II 3-4 *Vibhaṅga Sutta*
4. S.III 142 *Phena Sutta*

5. D.II 30-35 *Mahāpadāna Sutta*
6. S.V 422
7. M.III 17 *Mahāpunṇama Sutta*
8. Ja.VI 129 (No. 546)
9. D.I 215 *Kevaḍḍha Sutta*
10. A.II 139
11. S.IV 87 *Loka Sutta*
12. Dhp.V 221 *Kodha Vagga*
13. Sn.V 756 *Dvayatānupassanā Sutta*
14. Sn.V *Tissa metteyya mānava puccā*
15. A.III 399 *Majjhe Sutta*
16. M.I 293 *Mahāvedalla Sutta*
17. A.V 106 *Kim mūlaka Sutta*
18. Dhp.vv 1,2, *Yamaka Vagga*
19. S.III 142 *Pheṇa Sutta*
20. Dhp.vv 294,295 *Pakiṇṇaka Vagga*

Sermon 3 (Pahan Kanuwa Sermon – No. 185)

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

*Ekamūlam dvirāvaṭṭam
timalam pañcapattharam
samuddam dvādasāvaṭṭam
pātālam atarī isī*

– *Ekamūla Sutta, Devatā Saṃyutta, S.*¹

With but one root and turning twice
With triple stain and arenas five
The ocean with its eddies twelve
The quaking abyss – the sage has crossed

Dear Listeners,

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

This is a riddle verse that is found in the *Devatā Saṃyutta* of the *Saṃyutta Nikāya*. It seems that a certain deity has put together and presented seven factors in the Dhamma metaphorically as a sustained simile in this verse. First of all, let us try to get the literal (apparent) meaning of the verse.

‘*Ekamūlam dvirāvaṭṭam*’ Having one root and with two turnings round. ‘*Timalam pañca pattharam*’ With three stains and five expanses. ‘*Samuddam dvādasāvaṭṭam*’– the ocean with twelve whirlpools. ‘*Pātālam atarī isī*’ – ‘The abyss the sage has crossed.’

Only this difficult riddle verse is found there in that context without any clue to its meaning. The commentary gives some meanings at random. Though it appears as a difficult verse, the similes alluded to in it are to be found elsewhere in the discourses. To begin with the abyss itself, there is a discourse by the same name ² in the *Vedanā Saṃyutta* of the *Salāyatana Vagga* in the *Saṃyutta Nikāya*. There the Buddha says:

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

(*Sārīrikānam kho etaṃ bhikkhave dukkhānam vedanānam adhivacanam yadidaṃ pātāloti*)

So you all now know what the abyss is. Then as for the ocean, that too, we can understand by an open hint in the *Samudda Sutta* ³ in the same section of the *Saṃyutta Nikāya*.

‘*Cakkhu bhikkhave purisassa samuddo. Tassa rūpamayo vego, Yo taṃ rūpamayaṃ vegaṃ sahati, ayaṃ vuccati bhikkhave atari cakkhusamuddaṃ saūmim sāvaṭṭam sagāham sarakkhasaṃ tiṇṇo pāragato thale tiṭṭhati brāhmaṇo.*’

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

Now what does this mean? The eye is called an ocean for a man. In that ocean, there are the waves of forms. Whoever is

able to withstand the force of those form waves, is called the Brahmin who has crossed over this eye ocean with its waves, whirlpools, seizures and demons and stands on the dry ground having gone beyond. The reference here is to the Arahant.

The discourse goes on to give the same description in regard to the other sense spheres – namely, the ear, the nose, the tongue, the body and the mind, calling each of them an ocean for a man to cross over. The objects of the six senses are called waves. This is an instructive discourse for those meditators whose meditation topic is the six sense spheres. In the eye ocean there is the force of form waves. If one gets swept away by them and gets drawn into the whirlpool, one is seized by the form demons. So also in the case of the ocean of the ear. Here the idea of waves is quite apt. One is carried away by sound-waves, gets drawn into the whirlpool and is seized by the sound-demons. It is the same with the other senses inclusive of the mind. In the case of the mind, it is the thought-waves. That is a concept relevant to insight meditation. The force of thought-waves develops into breakers which sweep us aloft and drag us into the whirlpool to be seized by the demon. This is by the way, but the important point is the explanation of the sustained simile of the ocean.

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

(*pañcapattharam*)? In the *Māradhītu Sutta* of the *Sagāthaka Vagga* of the *Saṃyutta Nikāya*, we read:

‘*pañcoghatinṇo atarīdha chaṭṭham*’⁴

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

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

‘*yassa rāgo ca doso ca avijjā ca virājitā so imam samuddam sagāham sarakkhasam saūmibhayam duttaram accatari.*’⁵

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

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

Then there is the term ‘*dvirāvaṭṭam*’, ‘double-turning’ or ‘turning between two things’. These too we can understand through *Salla Sutta*⁶ in the *Vedanā Saṃyutta*. In that Sutta, there is this statement about the ‘untaught worldling’ (*assutavā puthujjano*).

‘*So dukkhāya vedanāya phuttho samāno kāmasukham abhinandati. Tam kissa hetu ? na bhikkhave assutavā puthujjano pajanāti dukkhāya vedanāya nissaraṇam aññatra kāmasukhā.*’

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

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

Last of all we come to ‘the one root’ (*ekamūlam*). Now, what is this ‘one root’? That too, we can understand in the light of the *Phassamūlaka Sutta*⁷ (‘Rooted in contact’) in the *Vedanā Saṃyutta*. There we find the following declaration by the Buddha:

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

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

Although we have offered the above explanation, the standard commentary of the text which nearly everyone relies on gives a different interpretation to this riddle verse. We shall cite it too for the sake of those of you who prefer to follow it. We explained from ‘the abyss’ upwards whereas the commentator explains from ‘the root’ downwards. Now this is how the

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

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

The most important term that emerged from our discussion is ‘*phassamūlaka*’– ‘rooted in contact’. It is suggestive of the immense significance of contact. Out of the discourses dealing with the question of contact, the one that brings us the deepest analysis is the *Mahā Nidāna Sutta*⁸ of the *Dīgha Nikāya*. So let me now sidetrack to that discourse.

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

Kammāssadamma in the *Kuru* country, Venerable Ānanda approached him and said:

“It is wonderful, Venerable Sir, it is marvellous, Venerable Sir, how deep the Law of Dependent Arising is and how profound it appears! All the same, Venerable Sir, it appears to me as clear and clear.” The Buddha’s response was this:

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

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

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

To begin with, let me draw your attention to the special significance of the discourse. As we have mentioned earlier, the traditional way of analysis of the Law of Dependent Arising which many follow at present, is to start from ‘*avijjā*’ or ignorance. However in the *Mahāpadāna Sutta* ⁹ we discussed the other day, the first two links ‘*avijjā*’ and ‘*saṅkhārā*’ are not mentioned. In this discourse too, those two links do not find mention. Instead, what is highlighted here as the basic and most important, is this inter-relation between name-and-form and consciousness. Generally, in reciting the formula of Dependent Arising we are used to the following order:

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

That is to say, between name-and-form and contact we expect to get six sense spheres. But apparently this discourse makes no mention of six sense spheres. Instead, it has a reference to eye-contact, ear-contact, nose-contact, tongue-contact, body-contact and mind-contact. Therefore, one cannot say that the six sense spheres are fully omitted from this discourse. Contact is explained with special reference to the six senses, which makes good the apparent omission. The most important feature of this discourse is the exposition of the inter-relation between ‘*nāma*’ (name) and ‘*rūpa*’ (form). The other day we explained that ‘*nāma*’ refers to what pertains to the question of recognizing something. There are two aspects in contact or ‘*samphassa*’, namely, the impact and the recognition of the impact. In this concern, the Buddha explains an extremely subtle point to Venerable Ānanda catechetically.

I shall try to give the gist of that detailed explanation whereby the Buddha convinces Venerable Ānanda step by step of

the rationale of his explanation. The conclusive statement amounts to this:

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

Those of you who listened attentively might understand this. If I may give a simile, contact is like the Siamese twins born to the parents ‘Name’ and ‘Form’. This is because for the full

understanding of contact both the verbal impression offered by the name group and the resistance impression offered by the form-group are essential. That is as far as the animate world is concerned and not with regard to the inanimate world. In the animate world, an impact is understood with the help of the constituents of ‘name’– feeling, perception, intention, contact and attention. What is called ‘form’ is the four great primaries which provide the scaffolding for the nomenclature– namely, earth, water, fire and air. A resistance too has to come in. On an earlier occasion, we gave as a simile the case of a blind man going and striking against a block of ice. He would come back with a perception of earth. Supposing when he goes there for the second time, the block of ice is melting. He would come back with a perception of water. Next time he goes there, it is boiling. He would return with a perception of fire. If he goes again when it is evaporating, he might come back with a perception of air. The worldling gets acquainted with the four elements like that blind man and proceeds to name them according to his impressions. Whatever it is, a resistance has to come in.

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

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

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

Lastly he asks the question which decides the issue:

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

“There would not, Venerable Sir.”

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

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

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

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

Now let us digress a little. Some of those western psychologists speak only about consciousness. They never speak of name-and-form. Everybody is talking about the moment of death these days. There is so much pep talk about NDE and ADE. But what the Buddha tells us is that before the dying moment, name-and-form is already sketched out in a mother’s womb. If consciousness does not go there and join it, name-and-form

would not grow. In other words, without the support of consciousness, name-and-form would not remain in the mother's womb. The next question the Buddha puts to Venerable Ānanda is that, having descended into the mother's womb, if consciousness slips out for some reason or other, would name-and-form grow up and get born into 'this state of existence' (*itthatta*)? The reply, as usual, is in the negative. The object of the last thought is 'nāma-rūpa' which is indicative of the next birth. It makes an imprint in the mother's womb, like a light shade of the mind but until consciousness goes and joins with it, there is no animation. Even if consciousness unites with it and animates it, if it slips out during the period of pregnancy, an apparent miscarriage will result. Instead of a child, a lifeless ball of flesh will come out, because consciousness has slipped out due to some karmic reason. Consequently, no being will be born out of that 'nāma-rūpa' into 'this state of existence' or 'itthatta'.

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

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

"No, indeed, Venerable Sir."

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

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

“*Tasmātihānanda, esova hetu, etaṃ nidānaṃ esa samudayo esa paccayo viññāṇassa yadidaṃ nāmarūpaṃ*”

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

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

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

“*Viññāṇaṃ va hi Ānanda nāmarūpe patitṭhaṃ nālabhissatha api nu kho āyatim jātijarāmaṇa dukkhasamudaya sambhavo paññāyethāti*”

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

“No, indeed, Venerable Sir.”

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

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

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

“Ettāvatā kho Ānanda jāyetha vā jīyetha vā mīyetha vā cavetha vā uppajjetha vā, ettāvatā adhvācanapatho ettāvatā niruttipatho ettāvatā paññattipatho ettāvatā paññāvacaram ettāvatā vaṭṭam vaṭṭati itthattam paññāpanāya yadidaṃ nāmarūpaṃ saha viññāṇena”

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

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

Perhaps our explanation of ‘*phassa*’ or contact might not be clear enough for many of you. As usual, let me digress into the world of similes for further clarification. When we speak of contact in the sentient or animate world, the idea of two things automatically comes in because consciousness discriminates between two things. But what about the insentient or inanimate world? If we throw heavily one big stone on another, even if the other gets cracked, it will not complain. There is no ‘clash’. But

supposing you accidentally collide with another while walking on the pavement in a rush hour, there could easily be a clash – verbally or even physically. There we see clearly a case of verbal impression (*adhivacanasamphassa*) and resistance impression (*paṭighasamphassa*), unlike in the earlier instance of inanimate objects. There was no ‘clash’, no offence or defence between the two stones.

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

The question of contact (*phassa*) brings us to an extraordinary feature of the Buddha’s teaching which marks it off from all other religious teachings in the world. No other religious teacher could go beyond contact. In the *Brahmajāla Sutta*,¹⁰ the Buddha dismisses all the 62 views with a brief but meaningful phrase ‘*tadapi phassa paccayā*’– ‘that too is dependent on contact.’ The implication is that the Buddha went beyond contact. How did he accomplish this? By his understanding of the Law of

Dependent Arising. This itself reveals the special significance of the Law of Dependent Arising. But there are many who call in question our interpretation of *Paṭicca Samuppāda* by quoting a discourse which has an allusion to the descent into the womb.

The discourse they adduce in support of the commentarial three-life interpretation is the *Titthāyatana Sutta* ¹¹ of the *Anguttara Nikāya*. The special significance of that discourse is that it relates the Law of Dependent Arising to the Four Noble Truths.

“Channaṃ bhikkhave dhātūnaṃ upādāya gabbhassa avakkanti hoti. Okkantiyā sati nāmarūpaṃ nāmarūpa paccayā saḷāyatanāṃ. Saḷātanapaccayā phasso. Phassaphaccayā vedanā. Veditamanassa kho pañāhaṃ bhikkhave idaṃ dukkhanti paññapemi. Ayaṃ dukkhasamudayoti paññapemi. Ayaṃ dukkhanirodhoti paññapemi. Ayaṃ dukkhanirodhagāmini paṭipadāti paññapemi”

“Depending on the six elements, monks, there is a descent into the womb. When there is a descent, there is name-and-form. Dependent on name-and-form, the six sense spheres, dependent on the six sense spheres, contact, dependent on contact, feeling. To one who feels, monks, I make it known thus: ‘This is suffering. This is the arising of suffering. This is the cessation of suffering. This is the path leading to the cessation of suffering.’”

Now what are the six elements? Earth, water, fire, air, space and consciousness. Those of you who have read the *Dhātuvibhaṅga Sutta* ¹² of the *Majjhima Nikāya* would remember how the Buddha begins his sermon to Pukkusāti.

“Chadhāturo ayaṃ bhikkhu puriso”

“Monk, this man is made up of six elements.” That means, man is a bundle of six elements, not four. The Sutta in

question also begins with the words “*channam bhikkhave dhātūnam upādāya*” “monks, depending on the six elements...” That is to say, if there is a grasping of the six elements before the death of a person, ‘*gabbhassa avakkanti hoti*’ there is a descent into a womb. Since the presence of consciousness is already implied, here we have the same story of interdependence between name and form. This passage is misinterpreted by many scholars and preachers as canonical evidence in support of the commentarial three-life interpretation of *Paṭiccasamuppāda*. All what the Sutta passage in question asserts is that if one grasps the six elements, that is to say, as long as these elements are not made to fade away as stated in the *Dhātuvibhaṅga Sutta*, there is a descent into the womb. ‘*Okkantiyā sati nāmarūpaṃ*’. When there is a descent of consciousness into the womb, one can speak of name-and-form. Dependent on name-and-form, there is the six sense spheres. Dependent on six sense spheres, contact; and dependent on contact, feeling. Feeling is taken as the turning point to the Four Noble Truths ‘*Vedīyamānassa bhikkhave idaṃ dukkhanti paññapemi*’. It is to one who feels that I make known ‘this is suffering’ etc. The formula branches off towards the Four Noble Truths, leading to the cessation of suffering. In this way, the law of Dependent Arising is conjoined to the Four Noble Truths.

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

“*Vuttaṃ kho panetaṃ bhagavatā yo paṭiccasamuppādaṃ passati so dhammaṃ passati; yo dhammaṃ passati so paṭiccasamuppādaṃ passati*”¹³

“This has been said by the Fortunate one: ‘He who sees the Law of Dependent Arising sees the Dhamma. He who sees the Dhamma sees the Law of Dependent Arising.’” If this is so I wonder how many are there who actually know the Dhamma. It seems according to the words of the Buddha that no one can claim to know the Dhamma unless he has understood the Law of Dependent Arising.

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

‘Katamo ca bhikkhave, paṭiccasamuppādo? Jātipaccayā bhikkhave jarāmarañam. uppādā vā tathāgatānam anuppādā vā tathāgatānam ṭhitā va sā dhātu dhammaṭṭhitatā dhammaniyaṃmatā idappaccayatā. Tam tathāgato abhisambujjhati abhisameti abhisambujjhiva abhisametvā ācikkhati deseti paññāpeti paṭṭhapeti vivarati vibhajati uttānīkaroti passathāti cāha’¹⁴

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

This declaration shows the greatness of the Buddha as a peerless teacher in that he explained, analyzed and elucidated such a deep Dhamma in a way that we can understand and see for ourselves in our experience. The specific conditionality between

any two links of the formula is called *Paṭicca Samuppāda* as evidenced from the following quotation:

“*avijjā paccayā bhikkhave saṅkhārā, yā tatra tathatā avitathatā anaññathatā idappaccayatā ayam vuccati bhikkhave paṭticasamuppādo.*”¹⁵

“Conditioned by ignorance, O, monks, are preparations. That suchness therein, that invariability, that not-otherwiseness, that specific conditionality—this, O, monks, is called Dependent Arising.”

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

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

‘*Yam kiñci samudayadhammaṃ sabbaṃ taṃ nirodhadhammaṃ*’¹⁶

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

As we explained the other day, the underlying principle of the Law obtains between any two links. One must understand the difference between the Law and its illustrations. There is a lot of confusion in this regard. The Buddha would cite just two links as in this instance—‘*avijjā paccayā saṅkhārā*’ (conditioned by ignorance are preparations) —and emphasize the invariability of

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

Then what about the freedom from this state of affairs? In the verse which forms the topic of this sermon, it is said that the sage has crossed the abyss – ‘*pātālam atarī isī*’. What is the significance of this statement? We have explained that the abyss refers to the painful bodily feelings. Bodily pain is the deepest inescapable aspect of suffering. But the arahants have come out even from that abyss. On an earlier occasion, we described how Venerable Dabba Mallaputta, an arahant, set fire to his own body at the moment of *parinibbāna*. It is not a case of rash self-immolation. That was after he attained to *Arahattaphala*

Samāpatti. The extraordinary feature of that concentration is that while in it one is free from all feelings. It is a well-known fact that *nibbāna* is called *avedayita sukha* (unfelt bliss). Once when the Venerable Sāriputta declared “Friends, this *nibbāna* is bliss! Friends, this *nibbāna* is bliss!” Venerable Udāyi asked him: “What bliss is there, friend, where there is no feeling?” His reply was “This itself, friend, is the bliss therein—the fact that there is no feeling!”¹⁷ This is because all three grades of feeling—pleasant, painful and neither painful nor pleasant—are reckoned as suffering in the last analysis.

Crossing the abyss or to get over painful bodily feelings is to attain to that concentration peculiar to arahants. While in that state, the mind is said to be ‘*animitta*’ (signless), *appaṇihita* (undirected) and ‘*suññā*’ (void). Alternatively, it is called *appatiṭṭhita viññāṇa* (unestablished consciousness). Earlier, we spoke of consciousness getting established in a mother’s womb. It is then that the concept of a “person” is valid. But the highest aim of this dispensation is to reach that state where consciousness does not get established. That is freedom. That is the emancipation of the mind.

This emancipation of the mind is presented in various ways in various discourses. Now that we have mentioned about the six elements, let us briefly examine how the *Dhātuvibhaṅga Sutta*¹⁸ approaches the problem of emancipation. Here we are given a method of making the elements fade away (*virājeti*) from the mind—a sort of erasing from the mind. How can one erase them? These elements are there because of measuring. In our writings about meditation on elements, we have pointed out with special reference to Venerable Sāriputta’s sermons, that earth, water, fire and air are drawn on our minds due to experiences obtained through name-and-form. It is a case of measuring. To do away with this measuring, Venerable Sāriputta recommends an elemental meditation. Head hairs, body hairs, nails, teeth etc., represent the internal earth-element. It is the same with the

external earth-element in point of solidity. Compared with the larger earth element outside, the internal earth-element is puny and insignificant. By constant reflection on those lines, the mind is made to get disenchanted with the earth-element, thereby making it fade away from the mind. It is a mind liberated from the four elements that does not take birth in a mother's womb. On the other hand, so long as the grasp on the six elements is there, there is a descent into the womb as mentioned above. Having grasped the six elements or depending on the six elements, there is a descent into the womb. Only so long as there is a grasp on these elements, can one speak of a birth in a mother's womb. Along with birth goes the whirling between the two.

That is why we spoke of a vortex on an earlier occasion. A vortex can be recognized only so long as there is a whirling round. If one stretches one's arm towards the open sea saying 'there, there', others cannot guess 'where' he means unless there is a vortex. Where there is a vortex, one can point out a spot in the sea. Similarly, every being is a Saṃsāric vortex. In the previous sermon, we explained how a vortex is formed and how it ceases. Let us try to understand this formation of a vortex from another point of view. As you know, there is a word in common usage in referring to the body, namely, '*upādinna*'. This is a term variously interpreted by scholars. '*upādinna*' means 'what is grasped'. It actually refers to that which is grasped at the dying moment—the 'grasped par excellence', so to speak. That is what we try to protect at all costs. Isn't it the tiny speck of 'mud' (*kalala*) in the mother's womb—that foetus which we grasp as the first thing in this life? We grasp it with such tenacity that it is called '*gabbha*' or '*garbha*' (skt). Its growth inside the womb is not simply due to the mother's care and caution. It is largely due to the tenacious 'grab' of the child. All this is because of the whirling round between consciousness and name-and-form. What we call 'beings' are so many whirlpools in the ocean of *samsāra*. This organic body as 'the grasped par excellence' (*upādinna*) represents that which has been grasped as internal from the four

elements outside. All our efforts are directed towards the protection of this organic combination of elements. The disturbance of the humours is also symptomatic of our struggle to preserve this organic combination intact. That clash on the pavement gives a hint to the danger of possessing this conscious body. Birth, decay, disease, death and all the abysmal pains arise out of this Samsāric vortex. That is why the Buddha told Venerable Ānanda: ‘It is through not understanding and not penetrating this Dhamma that this progeny has become a tangled skein matted like a bird’s nest, interwoven like *muñja* and *babbaja* grass unable to pass beyond states of woe, bad bournes, downfall and the round of birth and death.’

This tangled problem the Buddha successfully solved by pointing out that there are two aspects of contact called *adhivacanasamphassa* and *paṭighasamphassa*. He also pointed out that in relation to contact there are two things: name and form and that there is a mutual relationship between consciousness and name-and-form. Finally he showed how consciousness is made non-manifestative. In our earlier sermons we pointed out that name-and-form is like a reflection on consciousness. It is like a blind man’s impression of a block of ice he strikes against through feeling, perception, intention, contact and attention. Worldlings arouse greed, hate and delusion based on that impression, making the tangle all the more tangled. With this body born of one’s past kamma, one breaks the five precepts, comes into conflict with the world just for the sake of protecting this body and goes on amassing defilements thereby precipitating a continuity of the vortex. But what did the arahants do? They aroused wisdom in regard to the interrelation between consciousness and name-and-form, since in the last analysis that is the proper sphere for wisdom as the term ‘*paññāvacaram*’¹⁹ in that key passage implies. If one rightly understands that interrelation through the path of practice outlined by the Buddha and frees the mind from the four primaries earth, water, fire and air as well as from feeling, perception, intention, contact and

attention, one attains to that state of emancipation of the mind known as *anidassana viññāṇa* (non-manifestative consciousness) or *appatiṭṭhita viññāṇa* (unestablished consciousness). This is the end of ‘bhava’ or Saṃsāric existence which the Buddha has made known to the world.

So then ‘bhava’ does not mean a place of existence as the world is prone to believe. It is an existence dependent on grasping (*upādāna*). There is another term used to indicate this kind of ‘bhava’, namely, ‘*itthatta*’. This term too is a problem to many. ‘*Ittham*’ means ‘in this way’. ‘*Itthatta*’ is thisness or ‘this state of existence’. ‘*Itthatta*’ is in conflict with ‘*aññathābhāva*’ (otherwiseness). ‘Thisness’ is all the time turning into ‘otherwiseness’. This is the tragedy of existence – ‘*itthabhāvaññathābhāva*’ which the Buddha lays bare in the following verse in the *Dvayatānupassanā Sutta*.

*Taṇhādutiyo puriso
dīghamaddhāna saṃsaram
itthabhāvaññathābhāvam
saṃsāram nātivattati*²⁰

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

The worldling allied to craving who keeps wandering in *Saṃsāra* for a long time cannot get beyond the duality of ‘thisness’ and ‘otherwiseness’. The moment he grasps a state of existence as a ‘thisness’, it becomes subject to otherwiseness. This is what is called impermanence, the inexorable tragedy of the conceit of existence. Life is a vain struggle to withstand ‘otherwiseness’. It is the vortex that sustains ‘*itthatta*’ and the vortex is the outcome of ignorance and craving. From another point of view, it can be attributed to the four perversions

(*vipallāsā*).²¹ Impermanence is the nature of the world. But there is a perception of permanence in the impermanent. Also, there is a perception of beauty in the repulsive, a perception of pleasantness in the painful, and a perception of self in the not-self. The vortex is kept up by these four perversions. Having followed the Noble Eight-fold Path and developed concentration and insight into the three characteristics— impermanence, suffering and not-self, one gets dejected with the five aggregates of grasping and attains emancipation. One can experience that non-manifestative (*anidassana*) state of consciousness. Thereby one would be fully convinced of the fact that ‘*bhava*’ has ceased here and now. Because of that conviction, one is no longer ‘qualified’ to be born since name-and-form has slipped out. It is in view of this possibility of freedom from rebirth that the Buddha addressed the following question to Venerable Ānanda in the *Mahā Nidāna Sutta*.

‘*Viññāṇam va hi Ānanda nāmarūpe patiṭṭham nālabhissatha api nu kho āyatim jātijarāmaranadukkkhasamudaya sambhavo paññāyethā.*’

‘*Nohetaṃ bhante*’

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

‘No, indeed, Venerable Sir.’

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

It seems today also as usual many of you have observed the higher precepts. Others too have listened to this sermon which

is directed towards *Nibbāna* established on some precepts. May you all strive on diligently to attain the goal in this very life! Whatever beings there are from the lowest hell to the highest Brahma world, may they all rejoice in this sermon. May it conduce to the attainment of their aspirations! May they all realize the Deathless *Nibbāna*!



1. S.I 32 *Ekamūla Sutta*
2. S.IV 206 *Pātāla Sutta*
3. S.IV 157 *Samudda Sutta*
4. S.I 126 *Dhitaro Sutta*
5. S.IV 158 *Dutiya Samudda Sutta*
(Incorrectly titled *Bālisika Sutta* in the P.T.S.ed)
6. S.IV 208 *Sallattena Sutta*
7. S.IV 215 *Phassamūlaka Sutta*
8. D.II 55-71 *Mahā Nidāna Sutta*
9. D.II 1-54 *Mahāpadāna Sutta*
10. D.I 1-46 *Brahmajāla Sutta*
11. A.I 176 *Titthāyatana Sutta*
12. M.III 239 *Dhātuvibhaṅga Sutta*
13. M.I 190-191 *Mahā Hatthipadopama Sutta*
14. S.II 25 *Paccaya Sutta*
15. S.II 26 *Paccaya Sutta*
16. S.V 423 *Dhammacakkappavattana Sutta*
17. A.IV 415 *Nibbānasukha Sutta*
18. M.III 240-242 *Dhātuvibhaṅga Sutta*
19. D.II 63 *Mahā Nidāna Sutta*
20. Sn.144 *Dvayatānupassanā Sutta*
21. A.II 52 *Vipallāsa Sutta*

Sermon 4 (Pahan Kanuwa Sermon – No. 186)

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

*Antojaṭā bahijaṭā
jaṭāya jaṭitā pajā
taṃ taṃ gotama pucchāmi
ko imaṃ vijaṭaye jaṭaṃ*

*Sīle paṭiṭṭhāya naro sapañño
cittaṃ paññañca bhāvayaṃ
ātāpī nipako bhikkhu
so imaṃ vijaṭaye jaṭaṃ*

*Yesaṃ rāgo ca doso ca
avijjā ca virājitā
khīṇāsavā arahanto
tesaṃ vijaṭitā jaṭā*

*Yattha nāmañca rūpañca
asesaṃ uparujjhati
paṭighaṃ rūpasaññā ca
ettha sā chijjate jaṭā¹*

– *Jaṭā Sutta, Devatā Saṃyutta, S.*

A tangle within and a tangle without
The world is entangled with a tangle
About that, O! Gotama, I ask you
Who can disentangle this tangle

The wise one established in virtue
Developing concentration and wisdom
That ardent and prudent monk
It is he who disentangles this tangle

In whom lust as well as hate
And ignorance too have faded away
Those who are influx-free – the arahants
It is in them that the tangle is disentangled

Wherein both name and form
Resistance and the perception of form
Are cut off without any residue
It is here that the tangle gets snapped.

Dear Listeners,

The Fully Enlightened Buddha has preached to Venerable Ānanda in the *Mahā Nidāna Sutta* ² that this entire progeny has got entangled like a tangled skein and get reborn again and again in woeful realms due to non-understanding the Law of Dependent Arising. In our last sermon we explained with reference to the *Mahā Nidāna Sutta* how name and form are inter related and how name and form and consciousness are mutually dependent upon each other. Today we have chosen as our topic four verses which serve as a prelude for a further elaboration of the same discussion.

First of all, let us try understand the meaning of these verses. These verses are found in the *Sagāthaka Vagga* of the *Saṃyutta Nikāya*. The first verse presents a question which a certain deity put to the Buddha. The next three verses constitute the Buddha's answer to it. The general meaning is as follows:

*Antojaṭā bahijaṭā
jaṭāya jaṭitā pajā*

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

*taṃ taṃ gotama pucchāmi
ko imaṃ vijaṭaye jaṭaṃ*

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

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

*Sīle patitṭhāya naro sapañño
cittam paññañca bhāvayaṃ*

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

*ātāpī nipako bhikkhu
so imaṃ vijataye jaṭaṃ*

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

Then the Buddha adds something more to the explanation:

*Yesaṃ rāgo ca doso ca
avijjā ca virājitā*

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

*khīṇāsavā arahanto
tesaṃ vijatitā jaṭā*

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

Then for the fourth verse:

*Yattha nāmañca rūpañca
asesaṃ uparujjhati*

*paṭighaṃ rūpasāññā ca
ettha sā chijjate jaṭā*

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

Out of these four verses, perhaps many of you are familiar with the first two, because the commentator, Venerable Buddhaghosa has made them the basic topic for his treatise *Visuddhimagga*. But it seems the last verse is the most abstruse. In our last sermon we explained how ‘form’ gets a verbal impression through recognition given by ‘name’ and how ‘name’ gets a resistance impression by the impact offered by ‘form’. We mentioned in our last sermon that ‘contact’ is a combination of these two.

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

Venerable Buddhaghosa takes ‘*nāma*’ to be a collective term for the four immaterial aggregates; feeling, perception,

preparations and consciousness (*vedanā, saññā, saṅkhārā, viññanam*). But last time I got you all to count your fingers and be sure of the Buddha word that ‘*nāma*’ stands for the five constituents: feeling, perception, intention, contact and attention. Consciousness has no place in the definition of ‘*nāma*’. But just see. All those who go by the commentarial tradition assert that ‘*nāma*’ means the four immaterial aggregates. It is all wrong. Having defined ‘*nāma*’ that way, the commentator takes up ‘*saññā*’ for comment. According to him ‘*paṭighasaññā*’ means ‘*kāma bhava*’ (i.e. ‘the sensual sphere’), and ‘*rūpasaññā*’ means ‘*rūpa bhava*’ (i.e. the Realm of form) and when these two are mentioned the formless Realm or ‘*arūpa bhava*’ is already implied. This is how the line ‘*paṭigham rūpasaññā ca*’ is explained in the commentary. And then, as to the place where the tangle gets snapped the commentator says that on arriving at *Nibbāna* the tangle is snapped. That is all the commentary has to say. But we must point out that by the very mention of the words ‘*paṭigham rūpasaññā*’, it is obvious that we have to understand this question of the ‘tangle’ in the light of the *Mahā Nidāna Sutta*.

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

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

The Buddha's response to it was:

“Do not say so Ānanda, do not say so. This Law of Dependent Arising is deep and it appears deep.” And then the Buddha, like an expert teacher catechized Venerable Ānanda, step by step, getting him to respond rather rhetorically in the negative. Usually, an obedient pupil is only too eager to ‘YES’ the teacher. But the Buddha addressed his questions to Venerable Ānanda in such a shrewd way, that the latter had to think deeply and come out with the same emphatic negative answer throughout: ‘*No hetam bhante*’ – ‘No indeed Venerable Sir’³

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

First of all, let us try to make some sense out of those four statements. ‘*Nāma*’ has to be defined not with reference to the four aggregates as the commentary says. Feeling, perception, intention, contact and attention are the constituents of ‘*nāma*’. What is meant by ‘*rūpa*’ is actually ‘*rūpa saññā*’ – ‘perception of form’. It is based on the four great primaries – earth, water, fire and air, none of which can stand alone or be recognized per se. They can be known only through the constituents of the name group. Now the first conclusive statement of the Buddha which Venerable Ānanda accepts through conviction amounts to this:⁴

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

‘*Adhivacana*’ or synonym is a word representative of the linguistic medium, like *paññatti* (designation) and *nirutti* (terminology). So what is meant by the above statement is that

there could be a recognition of the form group only through the constituents of name such as feeling and perception.

Then the second statement gives the converse:

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

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

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

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

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

The fourth statement is all the more conclusive:

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

So, it seems according to the Buddha, there is no contact (*‘phassa’*), where there is no name and form (*‘nāmarūpa’*). Just think about this. One might be tempted to question its validity. Because name implies feeling, perception and intention, one can ask: “Well then, are we to assume that trees and stones have no contact?” We gave a little simile to explain this. While rolling a stone, if it goes and strikes against another hard enough to make a crack on it, there will be no retaliation. That is the way with the inanimate world. But if two pedestrians collide with each other on a pavement in a rush hour, there would be a ‘clash’. In the case of inanimate objects, ‘contact’ is something we attribute to them.

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

In the *Sutta Nipāta* there is a discourse called *Kalahavivāda Sutta*⁵ (Discourse on quarrels and disputes). It is entirely in verse and unfold in the form of a dialogue. The

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

“*Phasso nu lokasmim kuto nidānā*”

“What is the cause of contact in this world?”

The reply is:

“*Nāmañca rūpañca paṭicca phasso*”

“Depending on name and form arise contact.”

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

Then let us see what ‘the tangle without’ (*bahijatā*) is.⁶ In regard to that too, we can put into four conclusive statements the gist of the catechism the Buddha addressed to venerable Ānanda. First of all, the Buddha asks:

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

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

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

“Ānanda, if consciousness having descended in to the mother’s womb, were to come out, would name and form be born in to this state of existence?”

“No indeed Venerable Sir.”

From this it is clear that if despite the doctors’ attempts the patient died, his consciousness would join that mental object (name and form) because we have already pointed out that the relationship between consciousness and name and form is a whirling round as in the case of a whirlpool. Think of a flexible rubber-band for instance. It can get elongated if it is pressed down at one point and stretched away with tension. The moment the other end is pressed down and the former released, it would go and ‘join’ the latter to form a new centre. In the same way consciousness gravitates towards its object – *nāmarūpa* – at the moment of death. However, as you all know, sometimes parents expect a child, but what comes out in the end is a still born grotesque form of a child. The reason is that due to some karmic force, consciousness has slipped out. This is the situation the Buddha points out as the second possibility.

This fact is clarified further by the third question:

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

“No, indeed, Venerable Sir.”

Even after the birth of a child if consciousness gets cut off name and form would not grow. Only a corpse will be left there. When Venerable Ānanda granted that point, the Buddha draws the final conclusion.

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

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

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

“No, indeed, Venerable Sir.”

The gist of the whole discussion can be given in two sentences. The consciousness of a non-arahant is an established consciousness (*‘patiṭṭhita-viññāṇa’*).⁷ The consciousness of an arahant is an un-established consciousness (*‘appatiṭṭhita-viññāṇa’*).⁸ Usually, in the case of an individual, consciousness is established on name and form. But there is a possibility of an un-established consciousness where all the problems of birth, decay,

death and suffering would cease. That is the consciousness of the arahant which is free from name and form. Now you all can understand the meaning of the last verse.

*Yattha nāmañca rūpañca
asesaṃ uparujjhati
paṭighaṃ rūpasaññā ca
ettha sā chijjate jaṭā*

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

The ‘tangle-within’ between name and form as well as the ‘tangle-without’ between name and form and consciousness are all cut off. ‘Where’ refers to that ‘*Nibbānic mind*’. In an earlier sermon we spoke of a ‘non-manifestative consciousness’ (‘*anidassana-viññāṇa*’).⁹ That is the state of an arahant’s consciousness when he has attained to the concentration of the Fruit of Arahant hood (*arahattaphalasamādhī*). His consciousness does not manifest name and form. That unestablished consciousness (‘*appatiṭṭhita-viññāṇa*’) is sometimes qualified by the three terms. ‘*appatiṭṭhaṃ, appavattaṃ, anārammaṇaṃ*’ (not established, not continuing, object-less). To one who has attained that state there can be no rebirth.

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

In this connection, there is a very important discourse in the *Nidāna Saṃyutta* of the *Saṃyutta Nikāya* by the name

‘*Cetanā Sutta*’.¹⁰ There the Buddha presents the point in question in a way that appeals to reason. It is presented in three short paras. The point at issue is the question as to how consciousness gets a footing – how consciousness gets established at the moment of death. In fact, it is an attempt to show us the connection between two lives. First of all, the Buddha declares to the monks the following statement:

“Yañca bhikkhave ceteti yañca pakappeti yañca anuseti ārammaṇaṃ etaṃ hoti viññāṇassa t̥hītiyā. Ārammaṇe sati patiṭṭhā viññāṇassa hoti. Tasmim̐ patiṭṭhite viññāṇe virūl̥he āyatim̐ punabbhavābhinibbatti hoti.”

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

In the second passage the Buddha makes the following declaration:

“No ce, bhikkhave, ceteti no ca pakappeti, atha ce anuseti ārammaṇaṃ etaṃ hoti viññāṇassa t̥hītiyā. Ārammaṇe sati patiṭṭhā viññāṇassa hoti. Tasmim̐ patiṭṭhite viññāṇe virūl̥he āyatim̐ punabbhavābhinibbatti hoti.”

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

There is something peculiar here. One does not intend nor does one mentally construct. The question very often raised is

how one can think or intend in the case of one's instantaneous death. Though there is no intention or mental construction, there is that latent tendency. That is enough as an object for the establishment of consciousness. So there is still the possibility of rebirth in the future. This is the gist of the second statement.

In the third statement there is an allusion to arahanthood.

“Yato ca kho bhikkhave, no ceva ceteti no ca pakappeti no ca anuseti, ārammaṇaṃ etaṃ na hoti viññāṇassa ṭhitiyā. Ārammaṇe asati paṭiṭṭhā viññāṇassa na hoti tadappaṭiṭṭhite viññāṇe avirūḷhe āyatim punabbhavābhinibbatti na hoti”

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

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

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

“Monks, having encompassed a mentally corrupted person's mind with my own mind, I understand that if this person were to die at this time, he would be deposited in hell as if brought there.¹¹ What is the reason? Because of the corrupted mind, he gets reborn in hell.” To some extent, it is like a latency. Then the Buddha shows the other side.

“Monks, having encompassed a mentally pleased person’s mind with my own mind, I understand that if this person were to die at this time, he would be deposited in heaven.¹² as if brought there.” This reminds one of the story of Maṭṭakundali. Even though he had not done any meritorious deed, the last thought moment qualified him for rebirth in heaven. All this shows the power of one’s last thought. Even the shade of a thought is enough to bring about rebirth. That shade becomes a ‘photograph’ when conjoined with consciousness. We brought this up because it is relevant to the question of rebirth which everybody is talking about.

Let us consider another aspect of the same problem. The passage of consciousness is the talking point these days. Particularly, the western psychologists who are in the grip of the personality-view (*sakkāyadiṭṭhi*) whenever they speak about consciousness have an idea of it as a monolithic whole. They know nothing about name and form. They interpret consciousness as something jumping from one birth to another. This is not a recent development. The fallacy is pre-Buddhistic. Even in the *Upanishads* of the Brahmins rebirth is explained with the simile of the leech. Think of the way a leech moves from place to place. This is because they conceived of consciousness as a self or soul. According to them rebirth is transmigration from place to place. But in our Dhamma as we pointed out existence is always a whirling round as in the case of a vortex or a whirlpool.¹³ How is this vortex formed? Dependent on consciousness is name and form and dependent on name and form is consciousness (*viññāṇapaccayā nāmarūpaṃ nāmarūpapaccayā viññāṇaṃ*). With the help of this idea of inter-relation between consciousness and name and form, the Buddha broke the tenacious self-view which had prevailed till then. It is not a case of just one thing. It is a turning round between two things as in the case of a vortex. In this connection there is a certain declaration by the Buddha which is very often misinterpreted.

“Nāham bhikkhave aññaṃ ekadhammampi samanupassāmi yaṃ evaṃ lahuparivattaṃ yathayidaṃ cittaṃ,¹⁴ yāvañcidaṃ bhikkhave upamāpi na sukarā yāva lahuparivattaṃ cittaṃ.”

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

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

There is another discourse which supports this interpretation:

“Varam bhikkhave assutavā puthujjano imaṃ cātummahābhūtikam kāyaṃ attato upagaccheyya natveva cittaṃ. Taṃ kissa hetu? Dissatāyaṃ bhikkhave, cātummahābhūtikō kāyo ekampi vassāṃ tiṭṭhamāno, dvepi vassāni tiṭṭhamāno, tīṇipi vassāni tiṭṭhamāno, cattārīpi vassāni tiṭṭhamāno, pañcapi vassāni tiṭṭhamāno, dasapi vassāni tiṭṭhamāno, vīsatipi vassāni tiṭṭhamāno, tiṃsampi vassāni tiṭṭhamāno, cattārīsampi vassāni tiṭṭhamāno, paññāsampi vassāni tiṭṭhamāno, vassasatampi tiṭṭhamāno bhīyyopi tiṭṭhamāno. Yañca kho etaṃ bhikkhave vuccati cittaṃ itipi mano itipi viññāṇaṃ itipi taṃ rattiyā ca divasassa ca aññadeva uppajjati aññaṃ nirujjhati.

Seyyathāpi bhikkhave, makkaṭo araññe pavane caramāno sākhaṃ gaṇhāti taṃ muñcivā aññaṃ gaṇhāti: taṃ muñcivā aññaṃ gaṇhāti, evameva kho bhikkhave yamidaṃ vuccati cittaṃ itipi mano itipi viññāṇaṃ itipi taṃ rattiyā ca divasassa ca aññadeva uppajjati aññaṃ nirujjhati.”

“It would be better, monks, for the uninstructed worldling to take as self this body composed of the four great primaries rather than the mind. For what reason? Because this body composed of the four great primaries is seen standing for one year, for two years, for three, four or five or ten years, for twenty, thirty forty or fifty years, for a hundred years or even longer. But that which is called thought and mind and consciousness arises as one thing and ceases as another by day and by night.¹⁵

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

The point of the discourse is that there is no justification whatever for taking mind as one’s self. The phrase ‘*aññadeva uppajjati aññam nirujjhati*’ – ‘It arises as one thing and ceases as another’ has a very deep meaning. A clue to its meaning is found in the simile of the monkey. It gives a hint to the rapidity of the process of grasping and letting go. In the same way, consciousness grasps name and form (its object) incessantly. The incessant inter-relation between consciousness and name and form is what is meant by the term ‘*lahuparivattam*’. In fact, the literal meaning of ‘*parivattati*’ is ‘to turn round’. This turning round is between consciousness and name and form – the vortical inter-play which sustains the conceit of existence. That same inter-relation which goes on during one’s lifetime is instrumental in bringing about one’s rebirth. Consciousness does not decide the issue by itself. Name and form has to come in. The simile of the leech is misleading. There is a discourse which shows that during the Buddha’s time too, there were disciples who were influenced by this ‘leech-explanation’ of rebirth. It is the *Mahā Tanhāsamkhaya Sutta*¹⁶ of the *Majjhima Nikāya*.

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

“Tadevidam viññāṇam sandhāvati saṃsarati anaññaṃ

“This same consciousness keeps running and wandering in *Saṃsāra* by itself without anything else.”

The other monks remonstrated with him as follows:

“Mā evaṃ āvuso Sāti avaca, mā bhagavantam abbhācikkhi. Na hi sādhu bhagavato abbhakkhānaṃ. Na hi bhagavā evaṃ vadeyya. Anekapariyāyena hāvuso Sāti paṭiccasamuppannaṃ viññāṇam vuttaṃ bhagavatā: aññatra paccayā natthi viññāṇassa sambhavoti.”

“Friend Sāti, do not say so. Do not misrepresent the Fortunate One. The Fortunate One would not say so. For in various ways, friend, the Fortunate One has stated consciousness to be dependently arisen. Without a condition there is no origination of consciousness.”

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

Then the Buddha asked: “What is that consciousness, Sāti?” and Sāti replied: “Venerable Sir, it is that which speaks and feels and experiences here and there the result of good and bad actions.”

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

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

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

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

It seems, then, that dependent on whatever condition (*yaññadeva paccayaṃ paṭicca*) a consciousness arises, it is reckoned by that particular condition. There is no consciousness

in the abstract as the consciousness. It is always specific as a consciousness, even as there is no fire in the abstract as the fire. It is always specific as a fire. This simile strikes at the root of the animistic concept of a primordial fire. This revelation by the Buddha, though worded simply, revolutionizes the entire course of Indian thought. This is the marvel of the Law of Dependent Arising.

But then, what has happened in our own tradition? As you all know, in the majority of books now available for you to read, the position has gone topsy-turvy. It is as if we have retraced our steps to the Vedantic philosophy, without being aware of it. Both Buddhists and non-Buddhists are talking about a consciousness that keeps jumping from one existence to another. They are unaware of the significance of the deepest point of the Law of Dependent Arising which the Buddha has proclaimed, namely, the mutual inter-relation between consciousness and name and form. That is the vortex of existence. Like the vortex in a river, it is indeed the deepest point. That is probably why the *Mahā Nidāna Sutta* was so named. Truly it is the *Mahā Nidāna* – the Great Cause. Name and form themselves are inter-related. It is not something compact. There is no ‘form’ without ‘name and there is no ‘name’ without ‘form’. That is why we identified it with the cryptic ‘tangle-within’ (*antojatā*). Likewise, we identified the inter-relation between consciousness and name and form with the ‘tangle-without’ (*bahijatā*) because when it comes to the question of rebirth, consciousness is ‘here’ and name and form is ‘there’ – in the mother’s womb. However, name and form has to have consciousness to complete the picture of a new existence.

So then wandering in *Samsāra* is not like the movement of a leech. On the other hand, it is something like the stretching out of a flexible circular rubber-band when pressed down at one point – as we have already explained. As soon as it is released at this end, it will go and join the far end, if it is pressed down at

that end also. Or else one can understand it as the change of the centre of the whirlpool. What we call our existence has at its centre this organic body we had grasped inside the mother's womb. Once born, we reach out for the objects of the six senses, somewhat like an octopus. However far the 'octopus' extends its 'suckers' they come back to this organic body because that is 'the-grasped-par excellence'. But when the time comes to abandon this body, consciousness gravitates towards its object already grasped (ie. *nāmarūpa*). The phrase '*imasmiñca saviññānake kāye bahiddhā ca sabbanimittesu*'¹⁷ – (In this conscious body and in all external signs) gives a hint to this same inter-relation. This conscious body is what comes out of the mother's womb as a result of that gravitation towards the '*nāmarūpa* object'. But once born, it pursues the objects of the senses as before. It is the same seething whirlpool. Only the centre – the rallying point – has changed. That is why it is called 'the established consciousness' ('*patiṭṭhita viññāṇa*'). The difficult thing is the putting an end to this process. The deepest point is therefore the vortex between consciousness and name and form.

There is an extremely important sutta in this connection where Venerable Sāriputta explains the mutual interdependence between consciousness and name and form with a very effective simile. It is the *Naḷakaḷāpa Sutta*¹⁸ in the *Nidāna Saṃyutta* of the *Saṃyutta Nikāya*. Once, Venerable Sāriputta and Venerable Mahā Koṭṭhita were staying at the Deer park in *Isipatana*. One evening Venerable Mahā Koṭṭhita, after his meditation in seclusion, approached Venerable Sāriputta and asked a question relating to *Paṭicca Samuppāda*.

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

Venerable Sāriputta replied:

“Friend Koṭṭhita, decay and death is not created by oneself nor is it created by another, nor is it created both by oneself and by another, nor has it arisen fortuitously being created neither by oneself nor by another. But with birth as condition, decay and death comes to be. Some of you might think it amusing to say that birth is the condition for decay and death, but this is the mode of conditionality. This is the starting point for analyzing *Paṭicca Samuppāda* from the very end. Decay and death is the last link and birth is the condition for it.” Then Venerable Mahā Koṭṭhita asks:

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

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

You had better remember that this is the procedure in radical attention (*yonisomanasikāra*). Then Venerable Mahā Koṭṭhita poses the same tetralemma regarding existence and Venerable Sāriputta rejects it and points out that grasping (*upādāna*) is the condition for existence. I hope you can understand the sequence of question and answer. The condition for grasping is craving, the condition for craving is feeling, the condition for feeling is contact, the condition for contact is the six sense spheres. Now be prepared. We are now approaching the crux of the problem.

Having disallowed Venerable Mahā Koṭṭhita’s tetralemma about the six sense spheres, Venerable Sāriputta says that name and form is the condition for the six sense spheres. Then Venerable Mahā Koṭṭhita puts the same question regarding name and form – as if he is ignorant of it. Actually, we do not know

whether he is posing all these questions for his own sake or on our behalf, because both these venerables are veterans in the Dhamma. Well, whatever it is, this is the four cornered question regarding name and form.

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

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

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

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

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

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

But Venerable Sāriputta says:

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

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

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

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

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

Imagine for a moment that the consciousness sheaf of reeds is standing on your left side and the name and form sheaf of reeds is on the right and leaning on the name and form sheaf of reeds stand the six sense spheres and the rest of the twelve links. The crucial point is the removal of the consciousness sheaf of reeds, with which name and form is removed. That is to say, with the cessation of name and form consciousness ceases. Cessation of consciousness is not tantamount to death. It is the state of ‘*anidassana viññāna*’ – Non-manifestative consciousness. Since that Non-manifestative consciousness does not manifest name and form, the six sense spheres also cease, as well as contact, feeling and all the rest of it. This is an extremely deep point in this Dhamma. You should try to understand this now. I wonder why our commentarial tradition has fully ignored this subtle point all this time. What we have already said about the vortex is implicit in this simile of the two sheaves of reeds. Just consider why Venerable Sāriputta did not choose for his simile two blocks of solid timber with pith. He probably wanted to insinuate voidness (*suññatā*) by opting for pithless reeds. The common term for reed and bamboo in Pali is ‘*tacasāra*’. It means: ‘having the bark itself as the pith’. The reed is hollow inside. It has no pith. It is the same with sheaf of reeds. The insinuation is that consciousness is not something solid and compact. It is only a heap. The deluded world takes it to be a monolithic whole. Name and form is also a heap. That is what the insight meditator understands as he progresses in meditation. The net result of it is insight in to the not self-nature of phenomena. The meditator understands all this as impermanent, suffering and not-self.

The rapidity of the arising and ceasing of name and form is also implied. The inter-relation between name and form and consciousness is extremely rapid. That is the true meaning of ‘*lahuparivattam*’. Existence is a conceit which tries to sit pretty on this inconceivably rapid mutual inter-relation between consciousness and name and form. Venerable Sāriputta has pointed out how the cessation of existence is brought about.

When he revealed this fact, Venerable Mahā Koṭṭhita came out with a memorable eulogy as a joyous utterance.

“It is wonderful, friend Sāriputta. It is marvelous, friend Sāriputta, how well this has been stated by Venerable Sāriputta. We rejoice in the Venerable Sāriputta’s statement on these thirty six grounds. If friend, a monk preaches the Dhamma for the purpose of revulsion towards decay and death, for its fading and cessation, he can be called a monk who is a speaker on Dhamma. If a monk is practising for the purpose of revulsion towards decay and death, for its fading away and cessation, he can be called a monk practising in accordance with Dhamma. If a monk through revulsion towards decay and death, through its fading away and cessation, is liberated by non-grasping , he can be called a monk who has attained *Nibbāna* in this very life.”

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

This eulogy voiced by Venerable Mahā Koṭṭhita has a practical value. That is why we quoted it in full. The thirty-six grounds are made up by multiplying the twelve links of the formula by the three points of eulogy concerning the preaching of the Dhamma, the practicing of it and liberation through it. This is clear illustration of the pragmatic value of the Law of Dependent Arising. If one rightly understands each of the twelve links in the

context of conditionality and breaks the chain at that point, the entire chain is broken. However, the most crucial point, the ‘*Mahā Nidāna*’– The Great Cause – is the inter-dependence between name and form and consciousness.

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

“*Yo paṭicca samuppādaṃ passati so dhammaṃ passati. Yo dhammaṃ passati so paṭicca samuppādaṃ passati*”¹⁹

“He who sees the Law of Dependent Arising, sees the Dhamma and he who sees the Dhamma, sees the Law of Dependent Arising.”

Similarly, when Venerable Vakkali was always gazing at the Buddha’s body, the Buddha dismissed him saying: “What is the use of looking at this putrid body, he who sees the Dhamma sees me. (*Yo dhammaṃ passati, so maṃ passati.*)”²⁰

So, dear listeners, if some of you wish to see the Buddha and attain *Nibbāna*, see this Law of Dependent Arising. *Nibbāna* is there, and the Buddha is there.

Well, enough for today. Perhaps all this came out through some inspiration. I am not sure whether you will get the opportunity to hear more about these things. Try to make use of what you have already heard. Today you have taken the higher precepts and spent the day in meditation. You had better remember these precious admonitions in the Dhamma and try to shape your lives accordingly. If you have any wrong views, get

rid of them. It is only when you take up right view and having followed the path of practice, reach the goal of *Nibbāna*, that you realize the true value of those precious admonitions. May you all derive whatever inspiration possible from this sermon for your progress in your meditation, and be able to realize in this very life the supreme bliss of *Nibbāna*! Whatever beings there are, from the lowest hell to the highest Brahma world, may they all rejoice in this sermon! May it conduce to the attainment of their higher aspirations! May they all realize the Deathless *Nibbāna*!



1. S.I 13 *Jaṭā Sutta*
2. D.II 55 *Mahā Nidāna Sutta*
3. D.II 57-63 *Mahā Nidāna Sutta*
4. D.II 62 *Mahā Nidāna Sutta*
5. Sn. 168-171 *Kalahavivāda Sutta*
6. D.II 62-63 *Mahā Nidāna Sutta*
7. D.III 105 *Sampasādanīya Sutta*
8. D.III 105 *Sampasādanīya Sutta*
9. D.I 223 *Kevaḍḍha Sutta*
10. S.II 67 *Cetanā Sutta*
11. A.I 8 *Paṇihita Vagga*
12. A.I 8-9 *Paṇihita Vagga*
13. S.I 15 *Sarā Sutta*
14. A.I 10 *Paṇihita Vagga*
15. S.II 94-95 *Assutavā Sutta*
16. M.I 256-271 *Mahā Tanhāsamkhaya Sutta*
17. S.II 253 *Apagataṃ Sutta*
18. S.II 112-115 *Nalakalāpiyaṃ*
19. M.I 191 *Mahā Hatthipadopama Sutta*
20. S.III 120 *Vakkali Sutta*

Sermon 5 (Pahan Kanuwa Sermon – No. 187)

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

*Akkheyysaññino sattā
akkheyysamim patiṭṭhitā
akkheyyaṃ apariññāya
yogamāyanti maccuno*

*Akkheyyañca pariññāya
akkhātāraṃ na maññati
tañhi tassa na hotīti
yena naṃ vajjā na tassa atthi*¹

– *Samiddhi Sutta, Devatā Saṃyutta, S.*

Beings are aware of what can be named
They take their stand on what can be named
By not fully understanding what can be named
They come back to go under the yoke of Death.

He who fully understands what can be named
And thinks not in terms of one who speaks
For such things do not occur to him
That by which they speak, that is not for him.

Dear Listeners,

The teacher of the three realms, the Fully Enlightened Buddha, has revealed to us, through the Law of Dependent Arising, that a good many of the problems, controversies, debates and disputes in the world arise from linguistic conventions. The problem of *Saṃsāra*, which is the biggest problem, is also due to it. On this first full moon day of the newyear, we have taken up as

the topic of our sermon, two verses relating to that aspect of linguistic usage.

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

*Abhutvā bhikkhasi bhikkhu
na hi bhutvāna bhikkhasi
bhutvāna bhikkhu bhikkhassu
mā taṃ kālo upaccagā*²

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

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

*Kālaṃ vo’haṃ na jānāmi
channo kālo na dissati*

*Tasmā abhuvā bhikkhāmi
mā maṃ kālo upaccagā*³

I do not know the time of death
Hidden is the time – it is not seen
That is why I go for alms without enjoying
Let not the opportune time pass me by

‘*Kālaṃ vo’haṃ na jānāmi*’ – I do not know when I have to die, ‘*channo kālo na dissati*’ – The time of death is hidden from me – it is not seen. ‘*Tasmā abhuvā bhikkhāmi*’ – Therefore I have come to monkhood without enjoying sense-pleasures. ‘*mā maṃ kālo upaccagā*’ – With the thought: ‘let not the opportune time for monkhood pass me by.’ The deity’s advice was not to let the time for enjoying sense-pleasures, that is youth, pass by. What Venerable Samiddhi says is that youth is the proper time for striving as a monk, since one cannot do it in decrepit old age.

But the deity did not give up his attempt to mislead Venerable Samiddhi. He came down and standing on the earth said: “Monk, you have gone forth while young with a lad’s black hair, endowed with the radiant youth, without having dallied with sensual pleasures. Enjoy human sensual pleasures, monk, do not abandon what is directly visible in order to pursue what takes time (‘...*mā sandiṭṭhikaṃ hitvā kālikaṃ anudhāvī.*’)

Venerable Samiddhi’s rejoinder is exemplary.

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

And then the deity asks: “But how is it monk, that the Fortunate One has said that sensual pleasures involve time, full of

suffering, full of despair and that the danger in them is still greater? How is it that this Dhamma is visible here and now, immediate, inviting one to come and see, leading one onwards and to be personally experienced by the wise?”

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

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

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

*Akkheyyasaññino sattā
akkheyyasmim̐ patiṭṭhitā
akkheyyam̐ aparīññāya
yogamāyanti maccuno*

These words might sound strange to some of you. If we go by etymology, $\sqrt{khyā}$ in ‘akkheyya’ means ‘to tell’ and ‘akkhāna’ is ‘tale’. ‘akkheyyam̐’ is therefore ‘what has to be told’. It can also mean ‘what can be named’ or verbally conveyed. The perception of beings is based on the ‘nameable’– (‘akkheyyasaññino sattā’) They take their stand on what is named or expressed – (akkheyyasmim̐ patiṭṭhitā). Not having fully understood the nameable – (akkheyyam̐ aparīññāya) they come back again to go under the yoke of Death – (yogamāyanti maccuno).

*Akkheyyaṅca pariññāya
akkhātāraṃ na maññati
tañhi tassa na hotīti
yena naṃ vajjā na tassa atthi*

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

Having uttered these two verses, the Buddha, as if challenging the deity's powers of understanding, said – “*Yakkha*, if you understand, say so.” Sometimes in the discourses, even for deities and gods, the word ‘*yakkha*’ is used. It is not to be taken as a derogatory term here. Even the *Sakka* is sometimes called a ‘*yakkha*’. Anyway the deity confessed that he could not understand in detail what the Buddha has said in brief and asked him to explain it in detail. As if to tease him, the Buddha uttered another deep verse.

*Samo visesī athavā nihīno
yo maññati so vivadetha tena
tīsu vidhāsu avikampamāno
samo visesīti na tassa hoti*⁴

He who conceives himself equal, superior or inferior
Might thereby get involved in debate
But to one unshaken in the three grades of conceit
A fancying as equal or superior does not occur

Equal (*samo*) superior (*visesī*) and inferior (*nihīno*) are the three grades of conceit. Whoever conceives in terms of these

grades will dispute over them. But he who is unshaken by these three grades does not think in terms of equal or superior. With this verse as explanation, the Buddha again repeated the challenge: “*Yakkha*, if you understand, say so.” The deity confessed that he still cannot understand and begged the Buddha once more for a detailed explanation. The Buddha responded by uttering a longer verse which goes even deeper than the previous one.

*Pahāsi saṅkhaṃ na ca mānamajjhagā
acchecchi taṅhaṃ idha nāmarūpe
taṃ chinnaganthaṃ anīghaṃ nirāsaṃ
pariyesamānā nājjhagamuṃ
devā manussā idha vā huraṃ vā
saggesu vā sabbanivesanesu*⁵

He cast off reckoning, no conceit assumed
Craving he cut off – in this name and form
That bond-free one – from blemish and longing free
Him no gods or men – in their search could ken
Searching here and beyond – in heavens and in all abodes.

The verse sums up the accomplishments of an arahant. ‘*Pahāsi saṅkhaṃ*’ – he has given up reckoning. As we once explained, ‘*sankhā*’ is literally, ‘number.’ We pointed out that the numeral is the most basic or primary ingredient in a linguistic medium. You may have seen how dumb people converse counting on fingers. So we may call it a ‘reckoning’ – a term denoting a characteristic of language in general. An arahant has given up ‘reckoning’ – that is, he does not go by it. ‘*na ca mānamajjhagā*’ – he does not take up conceit. ‘*acchecchi taṅhaṃ idha nāmarūpe*’⁶ – he cut off craving in this name and form. We have pointed out that ‘name’ is not ‘bending’ as traditionally explained but that it is a collective term for feeling, perception, intention, contact and attention through which we get an idea of ‘form’ (*rūpa*) based on the four great primaries – earth, water,

fire and air. Worldlings are attached to this name and form but the arahant has cut off that craving. Having severed that bond (*‘taṃ chinnaganthaṃ’*), he is free from blemish and desire (*‘anīghaṃ nirāsaṃ’*). Gods and men searching for the object of an arahants mind, cannot locate it in heavens or in other abodes.

With this profound verse, the Buddha repeated the challenging words: “Yakkha, if you understand, say so.”

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

*Pāpaṃ na kayirā vacasā manasā
kāyena vā kiñcana sabbaloke
kāme pahāya satimā sampajāno
dukkhaṃ na sevetha anattasamhitam*

Let one not do any evil by word or by mind
Or else by body anywhere in this world
Giving up sense pleasures, mindful and fully aware
Let one not form ally with suffering bound up with woe

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

‘*Akkheyyasaññino sattā’* – The perception of the worldlings is language-oriented. ‘*akkheyyasmim patiṭṭhitā’* – They rely heavily on language. They are unaware of the limitations imposed on language by grammar and syntax. The subject-object relation is part and parcel of the linguistic medium. But the worldlings take it seriously. ‘*akkheyyam aparīññāya* –

yogamāyanti maccuno’ – by not fully understanding the nature of language, they come again and again to go under the yoke of Death.

On a previous occasion, while talking about ‘*nāma-rūpa*’ (name and form) we brought up the simile of the dog on the plank. Later we improved on that simile by relating the story of Narcissus. The handsome Greek youth Narcissus who had never seen his own face, while roaming in a forest, bent down into a pond to wash his face. Seeing the reflection of his own face in the water, he imagined it to be an angel’s, and fell in love with it. After a vain attempt to embrace it, he pined away and died by the pond. ‘Narcissism’ as a term for self-love, now found in the Dictionary, is reminiscent of that Greek youth. The sum-total of the ‘nameable’ is found in name and form of which beings are conscious and on which they take their stand. By not understanding fully name and form, beings go under the yoke of Death. Take for instance the case of a wealthy man. What is the self-love that comes up at the moment of his death? “How can I part with this house and property? How can I leave behind my wife and children?” That is the name and form he grasps – the reflection of his own self. In that grasping there is a longing for another birth. “Oh! Give me a chance to fulfill my desire!” “There you are” says *Māra*, and gives him not exactly what he wants but what he deserves according to his *Kamma*. So he comes back to his own house either as a rat, a snake or as a frog. Or else he comes back to sit on his own chair as a dog. That is how one takes one’s stand on the nameable – (‘*akkhēyasmim patit̥hitā*’). Worldlings are involved in an inter-relation between consciousness and name and form. They are not aware that name and form is only a reflection. That is what the Buddha makes known to the world. If one takes one’s stand on name and form, one comes under the yoke of Death.

There is another reason for our choice of this particular topic for today’s sermon. You might remember that in a previous

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

*“Ettāvatā kho Ānanda jāyetha vā jīyetha vā mīyetha vā cavetha vā uppajjetha vā, Ettāvatā adhivacanapatho, ettāvatā niruttipatho ettāvatā paññattipatho ettāvatā paññāvacaram ettāvatā vaṭṭam vaṭṭati itthattam paññāpanāya yadidaṃ nāmarūpaṃ saha viññānena.”*⁷

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

Now for an explanation – here the Buddha is telling Venerable Ānanda that one could be said to be born, to grow old or die or pass away or reappear, that there is a pathway for verbal expression or terminology or designation, that there is any scope for wisdom and a whirling round for designating a thisness – all these are traceable to a connection between name and form and consciousness. The range of wisdom extends as far as consciousness and name and form. The most important declaration is that there is a whirling round for a designation of ‘this-ness’ (*‘ettāvatā vaṭṭam vaṭṭati itthattam paññāpanāya’*). We

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

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

Let me mention another point that is relevant to this subject. Once a deity raised a question in the Buddha’s presence regarding a doubt which even some of you might entertain. It is worded in the form of a verse but we shall give the gist of it. He

asks why the arahants who have accomplished the ‘TASK’ still go on using such expressions as ‘I say’ (*‘aḥam vadāmi’*) and ‘they tell me’ (*‘mamaṃ vadanti’*). Is it because they still have conceit (*māna*) in them? The Buddha explains that the arahant has given up bonds of conceit but that he uses the worldly parlance only as ‘a way of speaking’.

*‘Loke samaññaṃ kusalo viditvā
vohāramattena so vohareyya’*⁸

Being skillful in knowing the worldly parlance
He uses such expressions merely as a convention

Not only the arahants but the Buddha himself uses such words as ‘I’ and ‘mine’ only by way of convention. So you may understand that the fault is not in using worldly conventions, but in being unaware of the fact that it is merely a convention. It is due to the ignorance of this fact that all logicians, philosophers and scientists have got stuck in the ‘WORD’ and created a lot of confusion for themselves and for others to languish long in *Samsāra*.

There is a wonderful maxim made known by the Buddha which throws more light on this hidden aspect of language. The term *‘akkheyyasaññino’* (lit, ‘percipient of the expressible’) reveals the close connection between perception and linguistic convention. The worldlings are in the habit of taking in perception. This perception has a connection with linguistic usage. The Buddha draws our attention to this fact with the following declaration, which is like a maxim.

“vohāravepakkāhaṃ bhikkhave saññaṃ vadāmi.

*Yathā yathā naṃ sañjānāti tathā tathā voharati evaṃ
saññī ahosinti.”*⁹

“Monks, I say perception has as its result linguistic usage. In whatever way one perceives, just in that way one makes it known saying: ‘I was of such a perception.’”

The word ‘*vipāka*’ implicit in the expression ‘*vohāravepakkāham*’ is not to be confused with ‘*kammavipāka*’ or karmic result. It only means that perception matures into linguistic usage. In whatever way one perceives, so one makes it known. One does not stop at perception. There is an urge to express it – to make it known to others. There comes in the need for language. The way one conveys it to others is: “I was of such a perception” or “I was percipient in this way.” One is already involved by saying so. In our writings we have explained the term ‘*papañcasaññāsāṅkhā*’¹⁰ as ‘reckonings born of prolific perception.’ Through prolific perception worldlings get caught up in language. ‘*Sāṅkhā*’ as reckoning includes not only numerals but linguistic usage as well.

It is very important to understand the connection between perception and linguistic usage. This understanding helps us to solve the problem of existence (‘*bhava*’) which is apparently insoluble. When it is said that perception gives rise to linguistic usage, one can ask whether it is possible to be free from the bane of perception. There are some discourses which, until recently have escaped the serious attention of scholars where it is said that the arahants, when they are in the attainment called the ‘fruit of arahant hood’ are free from all perception. Whatever there is in the world that could be regarded as an object of perception, from all that they are free while in that supramundane state. There are quite a number of discourses describing that extra-ordinary attainment. For instance in the *Sandha Sutta* we find the Buddha explaining to Venerable Sandha the nature of that *Samādhī*. Within the context of a simile about an excellent thoroughbred of a horse, the Buddha calls an arahant ‘an excellent thoroughbred of a man’ (‘*bhadro purisājāniyo*’) and describes the nature of this

concentration. It is said that in him the perception of earth, water, fire and air as well as other perceptions are not there. ¹¹

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

How does word and concept aggravate this situation? The worldling, like that blind man, thinks that there is a ‘thing’ called ‘earth’, a ‘thing’ called ‘water’, a ‘thing’ called ‘fire’ and a ‘thing’ called ‘air’. Surely, can one deny these ‘things’? In the *Sandha Sutta* there is a complete list of such ‘things’, a perception of which is not there in the attainment of the Fruit of Arahant hood – the Realm of Infinity of Space, the Realm of Infinity of Consciousness, the Realm of Nothingness, as well as the seen, the heard, the sensed, and the cognized. Existence as a

whole has ceased. Whatever perception there is characteristic of existence, whatever object of the mind there can be, from all that, that ‘thoroughbred of a man’ is free while in the *Arahattaphala Samādhi*.

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

“*Evam jhāyiñca pana sandha bhadram purisājānīyam
saindā devā sabrahmakā sapajāpatikā ārakāva namassanti.
Namo te purisājañña
namo te purisuttama
yassa te nābhijānāma
yampi nissāya jhāyasīti*”¹²

“Sandha, the thoroughbred of a man thus meditating the gods with Indra, with Brahmā and with Pajāpati even from afar bow down saying:

Homage to you, O thoroughbred of a man
Homage to you, most excellent of men
For what it is on which you meditate
That we can never comprehend”

This is the marvel of a Dhamma that transcends the world. The Buddha has presented this transcendental Dhamma through the *Arahattaphala Samādhi* (concentration of the Fruit of Arahant hood). This is none other than the experience of the cessation of existence (*bhavanirodha*). It is, at the same time the cessation of the six sense spheres (*saḷāyatananirodha*). All the six sense spheres are rendered inactive. It is within these six that all the turmoil of the world goes on. During that extraordinary concentration, the existence has ceased. It is in fact a reverting to

an experience already gone through at the attainment of arahanthood. That is why we pointed out that the arahants are not reborn by virtue of the fact that their last thought is this cessation of existence: ‘*Bhavanirodho nibbānam.*’ *Nibbāna* is the cessation of existence. The arahants experience the taste of *Nibbāna* while in this paradoxical *Samādhi*.

All this shows that this is an extraordinary Dhamma. The question of language is also implicit in the solution offered. When the mind is fully liberated from perception, it is completely free from objects. We have earlier mentioned the terms used with reference to the emancipated mind – ‘*appatiṭṭham, appavattam, anārammaṇam.*’¹³ That mind is not established anywhere, It has no continuity or existence and it has no object. ‘*Bhava*’ or existence has ceased. The realization of cessation is itself the Deliverance. That is *Nibbāna* – not anything else. There is a lot of controversy among scholars regarding *Nibbāna*. Some would even call our interpretation Nihilistic.

Let me therefore bring up something special from this point onwards. In an earlier sermon we have already mentioned what the Buddha had said about consciousness. The nature of the consciousness of an arahant and the emancipation meant by *Nibbāna* can be understood in the light of what we have discussed so far. If we are to clarify further in terms of the simile of the vortex, it is as if the vortex has ceased. As a matter of fact, this simile of the vortex or the whirlpool is not something we have arbitrarily introduced. It is there in the discourses as a word of the Buddha, but the commentarial tradition has ignored it. Commentators have not understood its true significance. There is a very important verse in the *Udāna* that can be quoted in support of this. It comes as a paean of joy uttered by the Buddha in praise of Venerable *Lakuṇṭakabhaddiya* who was an arahant.

*acchecchi vaṭṭam byagā nirāsam
visukkhā saritā na sandati*

*chinnam vaṭṭam na vaṭṭati
esevanto dukkhassa*¹⁴

The whirlpool he cut off and reached the Desireless
Streams dried up flow no more
The whirlpool cut off whirls no more
This itself is suffering's end.

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

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

Because of this charge of Nihilism let me touch upon another aspect of the problem. While discussing *Mahā Taṇhāsankhaya Sutta* in the previous sermon, we said that the

Buddha had compared consciousness to a fire.¹⁵ As you know there are six consciousnesses – eye-consciousness, ear-consciousness and so on inclusive of mind-consciousness. The Buddha has pointed out that each of these consciousnesses is like a specific fire dependent on a specific type of fuel. For instance consciousness dependent on eye and forms is eye-consciousness. It arises only in dependence and not otherwise. Apart from that there is no consciousness either in the eye or in forms. Because of eye and forms arises eye-consciousness. Because of ear and sounds arises ear-consciousness and so on. What is the simile that the Buddha has given to illustrate this point? A fire that burns dependent on logs is called a log-fire, a fire that burns dependent on faggots is called a faggot-fire and a fire that burns dependent on chaff is called a chaff-fire. There is no abstract fire. It is always a specific fire. The Buddha compared the six kinds of consciousness to six kinds of fire. There is no independent consciousness to be called ‘the consciousness’. Whatever has arisen due to causes and conditions has, of necessity, to cease when these causes and conditions are not there. It is when all the six consciousnesses, namely eye-consciousness, ear-consciousness, nose-consciousness, tongue-consciousness, body-consciousness and mind-consciousness, cease that there is deliverance which is also called: ‘*viññāṇūpasama*’ (appeasement of consciousness). As you all know, it is compared to the going out of a lamp as we find in the famous verse in the *Ratana Sutta*.

*Khīṇaṃ purāṇaṃ navaṃ natthi sambhavaṃ
Virattacittā āyatike bhavaṃsmiṃ
Te khīṇabījā avirūhicchandā
Nibbanti dhīrā yathāyampadīpo*¹⁶

Extinct is the old, nothing new to arise
Detached in mind as to future existence
They of extinct seed with no desire to sprout
Go out like this lamp – those Prudent Ones.

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

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

*Accī yathā vātavegena khitto
atthaṃ paleti na upeti saṃkhaṃ
evaṃ muni nāmakāyā vimutto
atthaṃ paleti na upeti saṃkhaṃ* ¹⁷

Like the flame thrown off by the force of wind
Goes to its end and comes not within reckoning
So the sage when released from the name-group
Goes to its end and comes not within reckoning

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

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

*Atthaṃgato so udavā so natthi
Udāhu ve sassatiyā arogo
taṃ ve muni sādhu viyākarohi
tathāhi te vidito esa dhammo* ¹⁸

Has he reached his end, or does he not exist at all
 Or else is he eternally hale – not ill
 That to me explain well, O’sage
 For this Dhamma as such is known by you

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

*Atthaṃgatassa na pamānamatthi
 Yena naṃ vajju taṃ tassa natthi
 Sabbesu dhammesu samūhatesu
 Samūhatā vādapathāpi sabbe*¹⁹

Of one who has reached his end – no measure is there
 That by which they may speak of him – that is not for him
 When all objects of mind are rooted out
 Rooted out too are all paths of debate

The Arahant who has reached his end is beyond reckoning. He cannot be measured. Name and form is that by which others may speak of him, but that he has given up. When all objects of the mind which were listed above are eradicated, all pathways of debate and controversy such as the dilemma and the tetralemma of the logicians are rendered ineffective. Logic is imprisoned between ‘is’ and ‘is not’. Dhamma is beyond the pale of logic (*atakkāvacarō*).²⁰ It is like the fire extinguished. This is an extremely clear-cut answer. But scholars have confounded the issue.

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

*Dīpo yathā nirvṛtiṃ abhyupeto
naivāvaniṃ gacchati nāntarīkṣaṃ
diśāṃ na kāñcit vidiśāṃ na kāñcit
snehakṣayāt kevalameti śāntiṃ*

*Evaṃ kṛtī nirvṛtiṃ abhyupeto
naivāvaniṃ gacchati nāntarīkṣaṃ
diśāṃ na kāñcit vidiśāṃ na kāñcit
kleṣakṣayāt kevalameti śāntiṃ*

Even as the flame of a lamp when it goes out
Goes not to the earth nor to the firmament
Not to any direction nor to a sub-direction
By exhaustion of oil only reaches appeasement

So too the accomplished one when gone to extinction
Goes not to the earth nor to the firmament
Not to any direction nor to a sub-direction
By extinction of taints only reaches appeasement

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

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

volumes. An English translation also came out in seven volumes called “Nibbāna – The Mind Stilled.” The audio trust in Kandy (D.S.M.B) circulated those sermons and their translation in C.D. s and through its website all over the world. In those sermons on *Nibbāna*, we had occasion to say something on *Paṭicca Samuppāda* as well. However, now a new series titled ‘Pahan Kanuwa Paṭicca Samuppāda Sermons’ is just coming up. This is the fifth sermon. I do not know how many sermons would make up this series. Let time decide it. Though the topic of the series is *Paṭicca Samuppāda*, we cannot help discussing *Nibbāna* as well.

There is an episode which clearly shows the connection between these two topics. You may have heard that the Buddha after his enlightenment reflected on the depth of this Dhamma. It is said in *Ariyapariyesana Sutta* that after comprehending this wonderful Dhamma which is so profound, hard to see and hard to understand, peaceful and sublime, the Buddha wondered how the worldlings can understand such a Dhamma. It occurred to him then that there are two truths which it is hard for the worldlings to see,²¹ namely, specific conditionality (*idappaccayatā*) or Dependent Arising (*Paṭicca Samuppāda*) and the stilling of all preparations, the relinquishment of all assets, the extinction of craving, detachment, cessation *Nibbāna*. It is because worldlings are confined within linguistic conventions that they cannot understand the links of the formula of Dependent Arising. They are imprisoned by logic and compelled to assert ‘is’ or ‘is not’ – absolute existence or absolute non-existence. But the correct position is otherwise.

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

This being – this comes to be
 With the arising of this – this arises
 This not being – this does not come to be
 With the cessation of this – this ceases.²²

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

*Ye dhammā hetuppabhavā
tesaṃ hetuṃ tathāgato āha* ²³

Whatever things that arise from causes.
Their cause the Tathāgata has told.

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

*Tesañca yo nirodho
evaṃ vādī mahāsamano.*

And also their cessation
Thus teaches the great ascetic.

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

Given ignorance, a series of conditioned phenomena come to be. With the cessation of ignorance they cease to be. There is an extremely important discourse which highlights these distinctive features of the Dhamma. Let us briefly touch upon it for the present. It is the *Kaccānagotta Sutta* ²⁴ of the *Samyutta*

Nikāya. A monk, *Kaccānagotta* by name, approaches the Buddha and says:

“Venerable Sir, ‘Right View’, ‘Right View’ it is said. In what way Venerable Sir, is there right view?”

You may have heard various definitions of right view. Here is something peculiar:

The Buddha says:

“Dvayanissito khvāyaṃ Kaccāna loko yebhuyyena atthitañceva natthitañca.

Lokasamudayaṃ kho Kaccāna yathābhūtaṃ sammappaññāya passato yā loke natthitā sā na hoti. Lokanirodhaṃ kho Kaccāna yathābhūtaṃ sammappaññāya passato yā loke atthitā sā na hoti.”

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

Here the Buddha points out that the world is resting on the two extreme views of existence and non-existence. Then this is how the Buddha shows us the middle way. For one who sees the arising of the world as it is with correct wisdom, there is no notion of non-existence. To the insight meditator who sees the arising aspect of the world, the notion of absolute non-existence does not occur. And to the insight meditator who sees the cessation aspect of the world, the notion of absolute existence does not occur. The world is holding on to the two dogmatic views of absolute existence and absolute non-existence. But the Buddha avoids this absolutism. *Patīccasamuppanna* means arisen

in dependence on causes and conditions. The world is incessantly arising and ceasing. But the worldling resting on the notion of the compact due to craving and grasping, tenaciously believes that a thing exists absolutely. If absolute existence is one end the other end should be absolute non-existence, tantamount to annihilation. But as we sometimes pointed out, if anything is lost, it is only the ignorance that ‘there is something’ and the craving that ‘there isn’t enough.’ That is all. There is nothing to lament. This is precisely why Gotama Buddha as well as Vipassi Buddha made known their realization with the words:

“*Samudayo samudayoti kho me bhikkhave pubbe ananussutesu dhammasu cakkhum udapādi ñāṇaṃ udapādi paññā udapādi vijjā udapādi āloko udapādi.*
 *nirodho nirodhoti kho me bhikkhave pubbe ananussutesu dhammasu cakkhum udapādi ñāṇaṃ udapādi paññā udapādi vijjā udapādi āloko udapādi.*”

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

The process of arising and cessation is going on all the time, but the worldling has taken up the wrong view called ‘*sakkāyadiṭṭhi*’²⁵ (personality view) misconstruing the whole group to be existing (*sat + kāya*). Because of that view they are imprisoned by the limitations of language and logic which rest on the duality of absolute existence and absolute non-existence. Not only the ordinary worldling, but the worldly philosopher as well as the modern scientist has got stuck there. Not being satisfied with the dilemma, the philosopher has created a tetralemma²⁶ to make the confusion worst confounded. But the Buddha has transcended all these by this Dhamma which is *atakkāvacara*

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

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

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



1. S.I 11 *Samiddhi Sutta*
2. S.I 8 *Samiddhi Sutta*
3. S.I 9 *Samiddhi Sutta*
4. S.I 12 *Samiddhi Sutta*
5. S.I 12 *Samiddhi Sutta*
6. S.I 12 *Samiddhi Sutta*
7. D.II 63-64 *Mahā Nidāna Sutta*
8. S.I 14 *Araham Sutta*
9. A.III 413 *Nibbedhikapariyāya Sutta*
10. M.I 109 *Madhupiṇḍika Sutta*
11. A.V 324 *Sandha Sutta*
12. A.V 325 *Sandha Sutta*
13. Ud.80 *Paṭhama Nibbāna Sutta*
14. Ud. 75 *Dutiya Bhaddiya Sutta*
15. M.I 256 *Mahā Tanhāsankhaya Sutta*
16. Sn 41-42 *Ratana Sutta*
17. Sn 206 *Upasīvamāṇavapucchā*
18. Sn 207 *Upasīvamāṇavapucchā*
19. Sn 207 *Upasīvamāṇavapucchā*
20. M.I 167 *Ariyapariyesana Sutta*
21. M.I 167 *Ariyapariyesana Sutta*
22. Ud. 2 *Bodhi Sutta*
23. Vin.I 38ff
24. S.II 17 *Kaccānagotta Sutta*
25. S.III 159 *Sakkāya Sutta*
26. M.I 426 *Cūla Mālunkya Sutta*

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* Buddhist Publication Society P.O. Box. 61, Kandy

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