



The Law of Dependent Arising

The Secret of Bondage and Release

Volume III

Bhikkhu Kaṭukurunde Ñāṇananda

The Law of Dependent Arising (Paṭicca Samuppāda)

The Secret of Bondage and Release

Volume III

by

Bhikkhu K. Ñāṇananda

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



*'He who sees Dependent Arising
sees the Dhamma
He who sees the Dhamma
sees the Dependent Arising'*

*“What, monks is Dependent Arising?
Conditioned by birth, monks, is decay-and-death.
Whether there be an arising of the Tathāgatas
or whether there be no arising of the Tathāgatas
that elementary nature
that orderliness of the Dhamma
that norm of the Dhamma
the specific conditionality
does stand as it is.*

*THAT – the Tathāgata awakens to
and intuits into.
Having awakened to it
and intuited into it
he explains it
preaches it
proclaims it
reveals it
analyzes it
elucidates it
and says –
LOOK!”*

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About the K.N.S.S.B.

It is the express wish of Venerable Bhikkhu Kaṭukurunde Ñāṇananda that all his Dhamma Books and recorded sermons be offered as a pure gift of Dhamma free of charge to the Dhamma-thirsty world.

Accordingly, K.N.S.S.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, www.seeingthroughthenet.net and the social networking site www.facebook.com/seeingthrough. Those wishing to participate in this multifaceted Dhammadāna may note the account number of our Trust given below.

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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 be published by the K.N.S.S.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



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I wish to thank Mrs. Lilian Ratnayake for translating on my behalf sermons No. 12, 13 and 14, in this volume. Due to failing health I could translate only sermons No. 11 and 15.

– Bhikkhu K. Ñāṇananda
(B.E.2559) April 2016



Abbreviations

Pali Texts:

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

- D. *Dīgha Nikāya*
M. *Majjhima Nikāya*
S. *Saṃyutta Nikāya*
A. *Anguttara Nikāya*
Dhp. *Dhammapada*
Ud. *Udāna*
Itv. *Itivuttaka*
Sn. *Sutta Nipāta*
Thag. *Theragāthā*
M.A. *Majjhima Nikāya Commentary*
S.A. *Saṃyutta Nikāya Commentary*
Vism. *Visuddhimagga*
Vin. *Vinaya*
- M.M. The Magic of the Mind
S.H.B. Simon Hewavitharana Bequest Series

Sermon 11

(Pahan Kanuwa Sermon – No. 193)

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

*Ye ca rūpūpagā sattā
ye ca arūpaṭṭhāyino
nirodham appajānantā
āgantāro punabbhavam*

*Ye ca rūpe pariññāya
arūpesu asaṅṅhitā
nirodhe ye vimuccanti
te janā maccuhāyino*

*Kāyena amataṃ dhātum
phusayitvā nirūpadhim
upadhipaṭinissaggam
sacchikatvā anāsavo
deseti sammāsambuddho
asokam virajam padaṃ*

– *Itivuttaka Tika Nipāta*¹

Those beings that go to realms of form
And those that are settled in formless realms
Not understanding the fact of cessation
Come back again and again to existence

Those who having comprehended realms of forms
Do not get settled in formless realms
Are released in the experience of cessation
It is they that are the dispellers of death

Having touched with the body the deathless element
Which is free from all assets
And realized relinquishment of assets
Being influx-free the perfectly enlightened one
Proclaims the sorrowless taintless state

Dear Listeners,

The Four Noble Truths, which the Fully Enlightened Buddha proclaimed to the world on an Esala Full Moon Poya day, is a wonderful teaching the world has never heard before.

Suffering, its arising, the cessation and the Path to it – all these Four Noble Truths are based on the norm of Dependent Arising. Therefore on this Esala Poya Day we have chosen as the topic of our eleventh sermon, in this series of sermons on Dependent Arising, the Noble Truth of Cessation. We have taken up three verses which declare that this truth of cessation is something that the world has never heard. Among the Threes of the *Itivuttaka* these three verses are introduced with this statement: ‘*Vuttam hetam bhagavatā vuttam arahatāti me sutam.*’ – ‘I have heard that this was said by the Fortunate One, the Worthy!’ What was said is mentioned in brief as follows:

‘*Rūpehi bhikkhave arūpā santatarā
arūpehi nirodho santataroti*’

“Monks, more peaceful than Realms of Form are the Formless. More peaceful than the Formless Realms is Cessation.” Then comes the brief introductory note:

"This fact the Fortunate One uttered. Therein it is said thus:" and then those three verses are given. Let us try to get at the meaning of these verses.

‘*Ye ca rūpūpagā sattā*’ – Whatever beings there are that go to Realms of Form. ‘*Ye ca arūpaṭṭhāyino*’ – and whatever beings that are in Formless Realms. ‘*nirodham appajānantā*’ –

Not understanding cessation. ‘*āgantāro punabbhavam*’ – come back again and again to existence.

‘*Ye ca rūpe pariññāya*’ – But those who having comprehended the nature of forms. ‘*arūpesu asaṅṅhitā*’ – do not get settled in Formless Realms. ‘*nirodhe ye vimuccanti*’ – and are released in the cessation. ‘*te janā maccuhāyino*’ – They are the dispellers of death.

‘*Kāyena amataṃ dhātuṃ – phusayitvā nirūpadhim*’ – Having touched with the body the Deathless Element that is assetless, ‘*upadhīpaṭṭinissaggam – sacchikatvā anāsavo*’ – And being influx free, realized the relinquishment of assets, ‘*deseti sammāsambuddho – asokaṃ virajaṃ padaṃ*’ – The Fully Enlightened One preaches the sorrowless taintless state.

*Poṭṭhapāda Sutta*² of the *Dīgha Nikāya* is a highly significant discourse which clearly portrays the ideas expressed in those three verses. The introductory episode is as follows:

When the Buddha was dwelling at Jetavana monastery in Sāvatti, the wandering ascetic Poṭṭhapāda was staying at *Mallikārāma* built by Queen Mallikā for ascetics of other sects, together with hundreds of wandering ascetics. One day the Buddha set out in the forenoon on his alms round and it occurred to him: “It is too early for me to go for alms in the city of Sāvatti. What if I were to meet the wandering ascetic Poṭṭhapāda in *Mallikārāma*.” Then the Buddha turned in the direction of *Mallikārāma* and as he was approaching, Poṭṭhapāda saw him from afar and silenced his crowd saying that the Buddha liked silence.

When the Buddha came there, Poṭṭhapāda welcomed him with the compliment: “Venerable Sir, it is a long time since you have done us the favor of paying a visit” and offered him a high seat. Seated on it the Buddha asked him what sort of a talk they were engaged in when he came in as an interruption. Poṭṭhapāda simply replied: “Venerable Sir, let that talk be. That is not the

type of talk which is not rare for your reverence to hear.” and raised a topic which he considered more important.

“In days past, Venerable Sir, among recluses and Brahmins of various sects assembled in the hall for discussing moot-points, a talk arose concerning the cessation of higher levels of perception (*abhisaññānirodha*). The topic of discussion was: ‘How does the cessation of higher levels of perception come about?’ When that topic came up, some put forward the view: ‘Without a cause or condition a man’s perception arises and ceases. At the time it arises, one is percipient. When it ceases, one is not percipient.’ This is how some explained the cessation of higher levels of perception. Then another said: ‘No, no. That is not the way it happens. Perception is a man’s self. It comes and goes. When it comes, one is percipient. When it goes one is non-percipient.’ Then a third interposed: ‘No no. That is not the way it happens. There are recluses and Brahmins of great psychic power and influence. They insert perception into a man and withdraw it. When it is inserted, he is percipient, when it is withdrawn he is non-percipient.’ Then a fourth objected: ‘No no. That is not the way it happens. There are deities of great psychic power and influence. They insert perception into a man and withdraw it. When it is inserted he is percipient, when it is withdrawn he is non-percipient.’ Having given a report of that discussion Potṭhapāda said: ‘And then Venerable Sir, I remembered the Fortunate One with the thought: ‘If only the Fortunate One, the Well-gone One were here who is proficient in those issues! The Fortunate One is knowledgeable in the cessation of higher levels of perception’.’ And then Potṭhapāda formally invited the Buddha to explain it with the words: ‘Venerable Sir, how does cessation of higher levels of perception come about?’”

Before presenting the Buddha’s answer to this question, let me mention something that enhances the relevance of the Buddha’s sermon. It was a time when yogins of India in their

spiritual quest found themselves in a dilemma. They had reached the highest level in the development of perception. There were some who had attained the *jhānic* level of neither-perception-nor-non-perception (*nevasaññānāsaññāyatana*). You may have heard of the two teachers our *Bodhisatta* prince *Siddhattha* approached after his renunciation namely *Ālāra Kālāma* and *Uddaka Rāmaputta*. Out of them, *Ālāra Kālāma* had attained the Formless Realm of Nothingness. (*Ākiñcaññāyatana*) and *Uddaka Rāmaputta* had attained the Realm of Neither-perception-nor-non-perception (*nevasaññānāsaññāyatana*). But our *Bodhisatta* aroused both those *jhānic* levels as soon as the two teachers uttered a few words about them and even as they were offering equal status as teachers he left them with the thought: “This is not the way to *Nibbāna*.”

From this we can infer that those yogins were in a problematic situation. The dilemma they were in is briefly mentioned in the *Pañcattaya Sutta*³ of the *Majjhima Nikāya* as follows:

“*Saññā rogo saññā gaṇḍo saññā sallam, asaññā sammoho. Etaṃ santam etaṃ pañītam yadidaṃ nevasaññānāsaññam.*”

“Perception is a disease, perception is a boil, perception is a dart, and absence of perception is delusion. This is peaceful, this is excellent, that is to say neither-perception-nor-non-perception.”

They understood the limitations of perception – that it is a disease, a boil, a dart. But on the other hand, to give up perception according to them – is tantamount to delusion. So for the nonce, they found a solution in the intermediate position – neither-perception-nor-non-perception. In an earlier sermon we compared it to a see-sawing. In short those yogins were see-sawing between perception and non-perception. It was in such a context that the Buddha was confronted with this problem. Let us see how he tackles it.

First of all, the Buddha tells Poṭṭhapāda: “If any recluses and Brahmins had said that perception arises in a man without any cause or condition, they have blundered at the very outset. Then the Buddha declares the conclusion that accords with the Dhamma.

“Sahetuhi Poṭṭhapāda sappaccayā purisassa saññā uppajjantipi nirujjhantipi.”

“For, Poṭṭhapāda, it is due to causes and conditions that a man’s perceptions arise and cease.” Now comes a highly significant statement which embodies a first principle. You all had better bear it in mind. It comes up again and again like a refrain in a song throughout the Buddha’s disquisition that follows. This is it:

“Sikkhā ekā saññā uppajjanti, sikkhā ekā saññā nirujjhanti”

“Through training some perceptions arise, through training some perceptions cease.”

Having presented that first principle, the Buddha himself offers to substantiate it with the explicatory question: “*Kā ca sikkha?*” “What is that training?” Since the long account that follows is very often met with in the discourses, we shall only give the gist of it.

A *Tathāgata*, Fully Enlightened, arises in the world and preaches the Dhamma which is excellent in the beginning, excellent in the middle, excellent in the end, having realized through higher knowledge the nature of the world as it is, in the world with its gods, Maras, Brahmas, recluses and Brahmins.

A householder or a householder’s son listens to that Dhamma, arouses faith in it and goes forth in the dispensation. Having gone forth, he becomes endowed with virtue, sense-restraint, mindfulness and full awareness and contentment. With that he goes into solitude and cleanses his mind of the five

hindrances – avarice, ill-will, sloth and torpor, restlessness, worry and remorse and doubt. Even from there one can see how the Law of Dependent Arising works in the mode of approach to the First *Jhāna*. That monk, as he reflects on the fact that the hindrances are abandoned within him, rapture arises. He subdues it and experiences joy. Due to his joyous mind, the body becomes tranquil. With the tranquil body, he experiences happiness and in that happiness his mind gets concentrated. About that monk, the Buddha says this much. Secluded from sense pleasures and unskillful mental states, he attains to and abides in the First *Jhāna* which is accompanied by thought applied and sustained with joy and bliss born of seclusion. In him, the former perception of sensuality ceases and the subtle but actual perception of joy and bliss born of seclusion is there at that time. And then the Buddha citing this as an illustration of the above first principle, makes the following declaration:

“Evampi sikkhā ekā saññā uppajjanti, sikkhā ekā saññā nirujjhanti”

“Thus it is that through training some perceptions arise and through training some perceptions cease.”

Then the approach to the Second *Jhāna*, briefly stated, is as follows: When that monk attains to the First *Jhāna* again and again, he realizes that some *Jhāna* factors are gross. First of all thoughts, initial and sustained, are found to be gross and he calms them down and attains to the Second *Jhāna*, which is accompanied by joy and bliss born of concentration. About that monk the Buddha says that in him the former subtle perception of joy and bliss born of seclusion ceases. Instead of it the subtle perception of joy and bliss born of concentration arises. Then again the Buddha comes out with the refrain-like corroborative formula: *“Evampi sikkhā ekā saññā uppajjanti, sikkhā ekā saññā nirujjhanti”*

“Thus it is that through training some perceptions arise and through training some perceptions cease.”

And then the Third *Jhāna* is attained by getting rid of joy which is felt to be gross and by arousing a bliss of equanimity. About him it is said that the former subtle perception of joy born of concentration ceases and in its place a subtle perception of bliss born of equanimity arises of which he is now conscious. Then that monk abandons both bliss and pain and having already done away with happiness and unhappiness arouses the Fourth *Jhāna* which is free from both pain and bliss and has pure mindfulness of equanimity. In him, it is said that the former subtle perception of bliss of equanimity has ceased and the subtle perception of the absence of pain and bliss has arisen. Again the same refrain-like formula comes up.

“Thus it is that through training some perceptions arise and through training some perceptions cease.”

Then the way of going beyond Spheres of Form is given. That monk by transcending perceptions of form, putting an end to perceptions of resistance and not attending to perceptions of multiplicity takes up the sign – ‘space is infinite’ and attains to the Sphere of Infinity of Space. In him, the perception of Form that he earlier had, ceases and the subtle perception of Infinity of Space arises. He becomes one with a subtle perception of bliss in the Sphere of Infinity of Space. Thus through training some perceptions arise and through training some perceptions cease.

Transcending the Sphere of Infinity of Space, that monk makes that consciousness which was directed to space itself the object and develops the Sphere of Infinity of Consciousness. And in him the former subtle perception of the Infinity of Space ceases and the subtle perception of the Infinity of Consciousness arises. He becomes one with the subtle perception of bliss in the Sphere of Infinity of Consciousness. Thus some perceptions arise through training and some perceptions cease through training.

Then he transcends the Sphere of Infinity of Consciousness and developing as the meditation object, the idea ‘There is nothing’, attains to and abides in the Sphere of

Nothingness. And in him the former subtle perception of Infinity of Consciousness ceases and the subtle perception of the Infinity of Nothingness arises. Thus through training some perceptions arise and through training some perceptions cease.

Now comes a turning point at this stage. The Sphere of neither-perception-nor-non-perception is too subtle to be made the base for developing insight. The Sphere of Nothingness is regarded as the central spot from which one turns either towards the Sphere of neither-perception-nor-non-perception or towards the attainment of Cessation of Perceptions and Feelings. But as mentioned above, until the advent of the Buddha, ascetics of other sects were not aware of this latter possibility. Instead they were see-sawing between perception and non-perception. The Buddha now goes on to describe how a monk in this dispensation makes the breakthrough.

“Poṭṭhapāda, when a monk in this dispensation is aware of his perception, he passes from one level of perception to another and gradually touches the peak of perception called ‘*saññagga*’ – which is a term for the Sphere of Nothingness. As he stands there at the peak of perception it occurs to him: “To go on intending is bad for me. It is better for me not to intend. (*‘cetayamānassa me pāpiyo acetayamānassa me seyyo’*). And he weighs pros and cons thus: “If I were to go on intending and engage in specially preparing (*‘āhañceva kho pana ceteyyaṃ abhisamkhareyyaṃ’*) these perceptions would cease and other grosser perceptions would arise. Then he makes a decision which it is not possible for one in an ordinary level of perception to make. It is worded as follows:

“*yannūnāhaṃ na ceva ceteyyaṃ nābhisamkhareyyaṃ*”

“What if I were not to intend and specially prepare”

And in accordance with that decision he neither intends nor prepares specially (*‘so na ceva ceteti na abhisamkharoti’*).

Now the Buddha explains what happens to the monk who carries out that crucial decision. “As he does not intend and prepare specially, those perceptions cease and other grosser perceptions do not arise. He touches cessation (*‘So nirodham phusati’*). Finally the Buddha sums up the whole account with this sentence:

“Evaṃ kho Poṭṭhapāda, anupubbābhisaññānirodha-sampajāna-samāpatti hoti.”

“It is in this way, Poṭṭhapāda that the attainment with full awareness to the gradual cessation of higher levels of perception comes about”

The long compound which marks the grand finale of this extraordinary discussion might need analysis. ‘*Anupubba*’ means gradual or by stages. ‘*Abhisaññā*’ we have already explained as higher levels of perception and *ābhisaññānirodha* is cessation of those higher levels of perception. ‘*Nirodha-sampajāna-samāpatti*’ means the attainment to the cessation with full awareness. By the way, the term ‘*anupubba*’ merits a little comment, as it is a very important term in this dispensation. You may have come across the phrase: ‘*anupubbāsikkhā anupubbakiriyā anupubbapatipadā.*’⁴ In this dispensation there is a gradual training, a gradual course of action and a gradual treading of the path. The term ‘*anupubba*’ (gradual) reminds one of the Law of Dependent Arising. Just think of a flight of steps. Like that by gradual stages, proceeding by stage to stage in the higher levels of perception, a monk in this dispensation gradually arrives at the cessation of perceptions and feelings.

Now that you are familiar with the constituents of ‘name’ in name-and-form (*‘nāmarūpa’*) that is to say feeling, perception, intention, contact and attention,⁵ you may note that the problem of yogins till then was how to get rid of feelings and perceptions. They were unable to give up perceptions for fear of falling into delusion. What is the reason? They were clinging to preparations.

(*saṅkhārā*). In the context of name-and-form preparations appear as intention (*cetanā*). So this is the crucial point. That monk when he took the extraordinary decision: “Let me not have intentions or preparations” was ready to give up even intention. Form is already gone and out of the constituents of name, feelings, perceptions and intentions are made to cease by that decision. So what is there to ‘contact’? Cessation itself. This is enough for you to understand the difference between the philosophy of those pre-Buddhistic yogins and the philosophy behind the Law of Dependent Arising with its Middle Path approach. At the end of this wonderful disquisition the Buddha asks Poṭṭhapāda:

“What do you think, Poṭṭhapāda? Have you ever heard of an attainment with full awareness to the gradual cessation of higher levels of perception like this?”

“No, indeed Venerable Sir.”

After that Poṭṭhapāda raises a number of questions. Let us take them up one by one.

The first question is:

“Venerable Sir, does the Fortunate One make known one peak of perception (*saññagga*) or does he make known several peaks of perception?”

To this question the Buddha gives a very strange answer:

“Poṭṭhapāda, I make known one peak of perception as well as several peaks of perception.”

Then Poṭṭhapāda asks:

“How is it, Venerable Sir, that the Fortunate One makes known one peak of perception as well as several peaks of perception?”

“In whatever way one touches cessation, in that way I point out a peak of perception. Thus it is Poṭṭhapāda that I point out one peak of perception as well as several peaks of perception.

As far as we understand this is how it should be understood. There is in the Dhamma a conclusive statement as follows:

‘*yāvatā saññāsamāpatti tāvatā aññāpaṭivedho.*’⁶

‘As far as is the range of attainments of perception, so far is there a penetration into full understanding.’

It means there are as many possibilities of penetration into arahanthood as there are attainments of perception. That is to say, the possibilities of reaching cessation through insight and realizing *Nibbāna*. Not only through attainment of cessation by gradual stages but through any one of the *jhānic* attainments (except the eighth) one can reach the peak of perceptions by ending intentions (*cetanā*) and special preparations (*abhisankhārā*) mentioned above. That is how the Buddha’s answer should be interpreted.

Then Poṭṭhapāda asks a second question:

“Venerable Sir, does perception arise first and later knowledge or knowledge arises first and later perception? Or else do perception and knowledge arise simultaneously?”

To this question the Buddha gives a straightforward answer:

“It is perception, Poṭṭhapāda that arises first. Knowledge arises later. Through the arising of perception is the arising of knowledge. And he understands. It is through this specific condition that knowledge has arisen in me.”

Here too, the commentator is in doubt and quotes several interpretations given by various teachers.⁷

According to our understanding, this is how the above subtle statement has to be explained.

Now what was the problem in regard to perception that the yogins were grappling with? For them perception was some sort of a ‘bug-bear’— a mystery. They either took it as self or as

some mysterious thing which someone else infused into them from outside. It was the Buddha who blasted the myth. Let us examine the implications of a certain term recurring in this discourse. That pregnant term is ‘*sakasaññī*’ – ‘with one’s own perception’ or ‘percipient of oneself’ It occurs in the decisive phrase:

“*Yato kho Poṭṭhapāda bhikkhu idha sakasaññī hoti.....*” – When Poṭṭhapāda a monk in this dispensation is percipient of oneself....

There is in this sutta the mention of the term ‘*sampajañña*’ – full awareness; So from the very beginning a monk is accompanied by ‘*sati-sampajañña*’ – mindfulness and full awareness. Then there is no place for mystic concepts, for mystery mongering with a ‘self’ or ‘soul’; instead from moment to moment he is proceeding in accordance with the Law of Dependent Arising. There is nothing to grasp. It is like climbing a flight of steps. All along it is the story of perception and knowledge of perception. For instance if you read this discourse you will come across the two highly significant phrases:

- i. ‘*vivekaja pītisukha sukhumasaccasaññā hoti*’
‘There is subtle and factual perception of joy and bliss born of seclusion.’
- ii. ‘*vivekaja pītisukha sukhumasaccasaññī hoti*’
‘.... He is percipient of the subtle and factual joy and bliss born of seclusion.’

So the two terms ‘*saññā*’ and ‘*saññī*’ used by the Buddha side by side are highly significant. Perception arises and one is aware of that perception. It is that awareness of perception (‘*saññī*’) that has to be understood as knowledge (‘*ñāna*’) in this context. It is not the case that perception has arisen and the monk is unaware of it. Because he has full awareness (‘*sampajañña*’) he gets to know it. That is the knowledge. But the commentator goes on dabbling with conflicting views of teachers.⁸ The issue is clear enough.

Well, the Buddha has answered that question too. But Poṭṭhapāda has yet another question – a serious one at that. He asks:

“Venerable Sir, is perception a man’s self or is perception one thing and self something else?”

Now this is a tricky question the type clever lawyers go on asking. Poṭṭhapāda here brings in a self as from nowhere. Why? Because he still has ‘*sakkāyadiṭṭhi*’ or ‘Personality View’. He was probably disappointed that the Buddha’s disquisition made no mention of a self. That is why he dragged in the question. Such questions put one in a dilemma. If you give a categorical answer, you get into difficulties. Take for instance a case like this in the law courts. A driver who has never taken intoxicants appears before the judge, but a lawyer wants to get him to admit that he has taken drinks. If the lawyer asks him sternly “Say ‘Yes’ or ‘No’. Are you still drinking or have you stopped it?” – the man would be in a fix. Whether he answers ‘yes’ or ‘no’ he would get caught in the lawyer’s trap. Poṭṭhapāda’s question is also of the same type. But the Buddha didn’t get caught. Instead he counter questioned Poṭṭhapāda:

“What do you mean by ‘self’, Poṭṭhapāda?”

The Buddha asked Poṭṭhapāda for a definition of the word ‘self’ because he himself has no conception of a self or soul. In discourses like *Alagaddūpama Sutta*, he called the concept of a ‘self’ an entirely foolish idea. (‘*kevala paripūro bāladhammo*’) ⁹ which the world is clinging on to.

The commentator reprimands Poṭṭhapāda for dragging in a self with a pungent simile.¹⁰ He says as if a pig, after it has been bathed clean and anointed with perfumes goes back and plunges into a pit of excreta, Poṭṭhapāda, in spite of the fact that he has been bathed and anointed with perfumes in the form of a subtle sermon emphasizing the three characteristics, went back and plunged into the same cesspit of self view. But the Buddha as if

to retrieve him counter-questioned him. Poṭṭhapāda, what do you mean by ‘self’?

Some questions admit of a categorical answer but some do not. Sometimes you have to get the question clarified by the questioner himself. Such questions are called ‘*patipucchā-vyākaranīya pañha*’ – questions that have to be answered after counter-questioning. This is such a question. Now Poṭṭhapāda gives a definition of the word ‘*attā*’.

‘Venerable Sir, I have the concept of a self that is gross and has form made up of the four great primaries and consuming food taken in mouthfuls. In short it means this body as it is. Now the Buddha says:

‘Poṭṭhapāda, if that is the self you are speaking of, then perception is one thing and self something else. Then he gives the reason.

“The perception I am speaking of is of this nature. Some perceptions arise and some other perceptions cease. (*aññā va saññā uppajjanti aññā va saññā nirujjhanti*). There is something deep in this statement. It means ‘perceptions arise as one thing and cease as another because they are subject to otherwiseness every moment. Take for instance the case of one attaining the First *Jhāna*. The perception that was there at the moment of attaining is not the same by the time it is transcended for it undergoes change by the training (*sikkhā*). That is to say, one level of perceptions arises, another level of perceptions ceases. There is no place for a self or soul in that explanation. When that definition is invalidated Poṭṭhapāda comes out with another definition.

“Venerable Sir, I mean a self that is mental replete with all limbs major and minor with senses intact. That in effect is their concept of *Jhānas* with Form (*rūpajjhāna*). Then the Buddha says: “Poṭṭhapāda, even if your self is of that description, perception is one thing and self is something else. When that

attempt also fails, Poṭṭhapāda puts forward yet another definition of self:

“Venerable Sir, I mean a self that is formless and consisting of perception.”

But the Buddha dismissed that too, saying:

“Even if your self is formless and consisting of perception, still the position is that perception is one thing and self another.”

Finally Poṭṭhapāda in his exasperation asks:

“Is it possible Venerable Sir, for me to know whether perception is a man’s self or else perception is one thing and self another?”

Poṭṭhapāda, however, is disappointed when the Buddha replies:

“It is difficult for you to know whether perception is a man’s self or else perception is one thing and self another, since you are of a different view with different convictions, with different predilections, practicing elsewhere under other teachers.”

When even that attempt failed Poṭṭhapāda as a last resort asks:

“If that is so Venerable Sir, may I know whether the world is eternal – this alone is true all else is false?”

Those of you who have read our books must have come across the ten questions known as Unexplained Points with which the Buddha was confronted by many but which the Buddha laid aside as unexplained (*avyākata*). In our earlier sermons we have explained why the Buddha laid them aside. Now Poṭṭhapāda comes out with that questionnaire. Briefly stated, they are as follows: First, a dilemma. Is the world eternal? Is the world not eternal? Next comes another dilemma. Is the world finite? Is the

world infinite? Then another set of two questions which again poses a dilemma: ‘Life-principle (*jīvam*’ – a term suggestive of Soul or self) is the same as body. Life principle is one thing and body another.’ Then comes a tetralemma a four-cornered question: ‘Does the *Tathāgata* exist after death? Does the *Tathāgata* not exist after death? Does he both exist and not exist after death? Does he neither exist nor not exist after death?’ The tetralemma seeks to ‘corner’ the answerer into granting one or the other of possible alternatives. But the Buddha could not be cornered by dilemmas and tetralemmas. He rejected the questionnaire in toto every time he was confronted with it and refused to give a categorical answer. He simply laid them aside (*avyākata thapita*) because they were ill-founded. In this instance too, his response to every one of those ten questions was: “It has not been explained by me Potṭhapāda.” Then Potṭhapāda asks: “Venerable Sir, if that is so, is there anything you have explained categorically?” And the Buddha says that he has categorically explained the four propositions. “This is suffering. This is the arising of suffering. This is the cessation of suffering. This is the way of practice leading to the cessation of suffering – that is to say, the Four Noble Truths.”

Potṭhapāda, however, seemed satisfied with that explanation and with the assent: “That is so, Fortunate One. That is so, Well-gone One” (*Evametam Bhagavā, evametam Sugatha*) relieved the Buddha from the barrage of questions and the Buddha left on his alms-round. As soon as he left, the crowd of wandering ascetics got around Potṭhapāda and chastised him with verbal pricks, saying: “This Potṭhapāda approves of everything Recluse Gotama says. He doesn’t seem to have answered any one of the ten questions categorically.” Potṭhapāda rejoined saying: “I also don’t see any of those questions answered categorically. But Recluse Gotama lays down a true and factual path of practice, a statute of Dhamma, a norm of Dhamma. When Recluse Gotama is laying down a true and factual path of practice, a statute of Dhamma, a norm of Dhamma, how can I, as

an intelligent man, not approve of the well-spoken words of Recluse Gotama as well-spoken.

That phase of the discussion ends there. The sequence of events from there onwards is recorded in the discourse as follows. After two or three days, Citta Hatthisāriputta (Son of an elephant trainer) and the wandering ascetic Poṭṭhapāda came to see the Buddha.

The first thing Poṭṭhapāda came out with was a report of what happened after the Buddha had left the other day. “Venerable Sir, soon after the Fortunate One departed that day, they got around and gave me a shower of verbal pricks.” When he had reported all what had transpired, the Buddha said: “Poṭṭhapāda, all those wandering ascetics are blind. They lack vision. Only you are the one with vision. There are, Poṭṭhapāda, Dhammas that I have preached and laid down non-categorically and there are also Dhammas I have preached and laid down categorically. The former refers to the ten Indeterminates and the latter refers to the Four Noble Truths. Then the Buddha goes on to relate some of his own experiences with recluses and Brahmins in regard to the question of views of a self.

There are some recluses and Brahmins who declare and entertain such a view as this: *‘Ekantasukhī attā hoti arogo parammaraṇā’* – After death, self is of unmixed bliss and healthy’ I approach them and ask: “Is it true you declare and hold on to such a view as this?” They say, “Yes”. Then I ask them: “Do you dwell knowing and seeing a world of unmixed bliss?” They reply “No” I ask them: “Have you for one night or for one day, for half a night or half a day experienced an all-blissful self?” They say “No”. I ask them, “Do you have that knowledge to declare, “This is the path, this is the practice for seeing with one’s own eyes an all-blissful world?” They say “No”. I ask them: “ Have you heard the voice of deities reborn in an all-blissful world who go on saying: “Friends, be well-established on the path, be uprightly established on the path for seeing with your

own eyes a world all-blissful for we on our part, friends, with such a practice are reborn in an all blissful world?” They say, “No”. Then he asks Poṭṭhapāda: “What do you think Poṭṭhapāda when that is the position, does not the assertion of those recluses and Brahmins turn out to be baseless?” A peculiar word ‘*appāṭihīraka*’ is used in that context, which we have rendered by baseless: It means an assertion that lacks proof or evidence to substantiate it. The Buddha himself gives two similes to illustrate the connotations of the word.

The first simile is about a beauty queen “Suppose a man goes about saying: “I like and love the beauty queen of this province.” Others ask him: “ Good man, do you know of what clan she is?” He says, “No”. “Do you know her name?” He says, “No”. “Do you know whether she is tall or short or black or grey or brown?” He says “No”. “Do you know in what village or town she is?” He says: “No”. And then others ask him; “So you like and love a beauty queen whom you do not know or see?” After giving this simile the Buddha asks: “What do you think Poṭṭhapāda? In that case does not that man’s talk turn out to be baseless (*appāṭihīraka*)? Poṭṭhapāda says: “Indeed that is so Venerable Sir.”

Comparing it to the undemonstrable assertion of those recluses and Brahmins, the Buddha gives another simile to convince Poṭṭhapāda of the absurdity of it. “Supposing a man is building a staircase at the four cross-roads for climbing into a mansion. People ask him: “Good man, that mansion for which you are building this staircase do you know in which direction it is – whether in the East or West or North or South? Whether it is tall or short or medium-sized? He says “No”. Then they tell him: “Well then, good man, you are building a staircase for a mansion you do not know or see.” He says, “Yes”. Giving this simile the Buddha asks Poṭṭhapāda again: “What do you think Poṭṭhapāda? In that case, doesn’t that man’s talk turn out to be baseless? “Indeed that is so, Venerable Sir” replies Poṭṭhapāda.

Having thus invalidated the soul theories of those recluses and Brahmins the Buddha now explains the concept of *Jhānas* in this dispensation with the help of a peculiar term ‘*attapaṭilābhā*’ (acquisition of self). Instead of the term ‘*attā*’ the Buddha brings in the concept of ‘*attapaṭilābhā*’. He says: “*Tayo kho’me Poṭṭhapāda attapaṭilābhā oḷāriko attapaṭilābhho manomayo attapaṭilābhho arupo attapaṭilābhho*”

Poṭṭhapāda, there are these three acquisitions of self, (namely), the acquisition of a gross self, acquisition of a mental self, acquisition of a Formless self. They are defined with the same words as in the earlier discussion on self but they are not presented as states of a self but as acquisitions (*paṭilābhā*). The gross acquisition of self is qualified with the words ‘*cātummahābhūṭiko*’ (made up of four great primaries) and ‘*kabaliṅkārahārabhakkho*’ (consuming food taken in mouthfuls). The mind-made (*manomaya*) acquisition of self is described with the words ‘*sabbaṅgapaccaṅgī ahīnindriyo*’ (replete with all limbs major and minor, with senses intact). The Formless (*arūpa*) acquisition of self is described with the term ‘*saññāmayo*’ (consisting of perception).

So these are the three acquisitions (*paṭilābhā*). Let us try to get at the nuances of this term ‘*paṭilābhā*’ (lit. ‘profit’). For acquiring something you have to follow some course of action. In this context, what is the course of action? The ‘training’ (*sikkhā*). It is to indicate that these states are the outcome of some training that the Buddha introduced this term on this occasion. Where Poṭṭhapāda and other ascetics used the term ‘*attā*’ (self) to explain these *Jhānic* states, the Buddha used the term *attapaṭilābhā*’ because they are to be attained through some training. Now here is a revolutionary change in outlook. These three acquisitions of self (*attapaṭilābhā*) are given the same standard definitions. The first one is ‘*oḷāriko rūpī cātummahābhūṭiko kabaliṅkārahārabhakkho*’ (gross, has form, is made up of the four great primaries, consuming food taken in

mouthfuls). The second, is ‘*manomayo sabbaṅgapaccaṅgī ahīnindriyo*’ (mental, replete with all limbs major and minor, with senses intact). The third is ‘*arupī saññāmayo*’ (formless and consisting of perceptions).

But the Buddha didn’t stop with redefinition. He declares now: “Potṭhapāda, for the abandoning of the acquisition of the gross self, I preach the Dhamma by practicing according to which your defiling mental states would be abandoned, purifying mental states would be developed and you would by yourself realize with your higher knowledge the perfection and fulfillment of wisdom here and now and abide in it.” You may now recall what I have told about ‘*saññāgga*’ – the peak of perception. Even from the First *Jhāna* or from Formless (*arupa*) *Jhānas* one can attain *Nibbāna* provided one develops insight based on them. Then the Buddha tells Potṭhapāda that he preaches the Dhamma for the abandonment of all three types of acquisitions of self (i.e. gross, mind made and formless) or *attapaṭilābhā*. Thereby one attains to the perfection of wisdom here and now.

After the Buddha had answered Potṭhapāda’s questions to his satisfaction, Citta Hatthisāriputta comes out with his questions. In fact his questions go deeper into the subject of ‘*attapaṭilābhā*’ introduced by the Buddha. He asks:

“Venerable Sir, at the time there is the gross acquisition of self, is the mental acquisition of self and formless acquisition of self false (*moghā* – lit. empty) at that time? Is the gross acquisition of self alone real for him at that time?

Venerable Sir, at the time the mental acquisition of self is there, is the gross acquisition of self and the formless acquisition of self false at the time? Is only the mental acquisition of self real for him at that time?

Venerable Sir, at the time, the formless acquisition of self is there, is the gross acquisition of self and the mental acquisition

of self false at that time? Is only the formless acquisition of self real for him at that time?”

The Buddha’s answer brings out quite a deep aspect of the whole problem of self. He says: “*Citta*, at the time the gross acquisition of self is there, it is not reckoned (*‘saṅkham gacchati’* – lit. go into reckoning) as mental acquisition of self. It is not reckoned as formless acquisition of self. At that time, it is reckoned only as the gross acquisition of self.” He applies the same criterion to the other two acquisitions of self. At the time the mental acquisition of self is there, it is not reckoned in terms of the other two. Similarly when the formless acquisition of self is there, it is not reckoned as any of the other two, but only as formless acquisition of self.

Here the Buddha is trying to draw the attention of *Citta* to the problem of confusing the three periods of time – quite a deep point at that. To drive home the point, the Buddha poses the following questions to *Citta*.

Now *Citta*, if people ask you “ Were you in the past – not that you were not? Will you be in the future – not that you will not be? Are you now – not that you aren’t? What will you say in reply?”

Citta says: “Venerable Sir, if they question me like that, I would answer:

I was in the past – not that I wasn’t. I will be in the future – not that I will not be. I am now, not that I am not.”

Then the Buddha asks:

“If they ask you *Citta*, that acquisition of self you had in the past, is that acquisition of self alone real and the future acquisition of self false and the present acquisition of self also false? Whatever acquisition of self you will have in the future, is that alone real and the other two false? Whatever acquisition of self you have now that alone is real and the other two false?”

Then Citta says: “Venerable Sir, if they ask me that, I would reply:

Whatever acquisition of self I had in the past, at that time that acquisition of self alone was real and the other two false. Whatever acquisition of self I will have in the future at that time that acquisition of self alone will be real and the other two false. Whatever acquisition of self I have now, only that acquisition of self is real and the other two false at that time.”

Then the Buddha completes the analogy saying: “Even so Citta at whatever time the gross acquisition of self is there, at that time, it is not reckoned as mental acquisition of self nor as formless acquisition of self. At that time it is reckoned only as gross acquisition of self. So also in the case of the other two.

The illusion in the world which was the reason for the self view is the idea that the past and the future exist even as the present. In short, the confusion of the three periods of time. It is this myth that the Buddha is trying to explode. He does it with the following wonderful homely simile which is sure to help you understand this deep point.

“Just Citta, as from the cow comes milk, from milk curd, from curd butter, from butter ghee, and from ghee cream of ghee, at the time it is milk, it is not reckoned as curd, nor as butter, nor as ghee, nor as cream of ghee. At that time it is reckoned only as milk. Similarly, when it is curd, it is reckoned as curd, not assuming that there is milk in it or that there is ghee which is yet to come is hidden in it.” I shall give you a little story, a sort of parable found in Western literature to help you understand this point. A miserly man had a goose that lays a golden egg everyday. He thought of getting today itself the eggs that she will be laying tomorrow and the days to follow. He split it open and was disappointed. It is a similar fallacy to think that future exists or that past exists. These are only worldly usages. Simply because milk can become ghee in the future it is wrong to think that already there is ghee in it.

After giving this simile as an illustration of what he had told about the three acquisitions of self (*attapaṭilābhā*) the Buddha sums up the discussion with the following memorable statement:

“*Itīmā kho Citta lokasamaññā lokaniruttiyo lokavohārā lokapaññattiyo, yāhi Tathāgato voharati aparāmasam.*”

“For these, Citta, are worldly appellations, worldly expressions, worldly usages, worldly designations which the *Tathāgata* makes use of without tenacious grasping.”

It is due to tenacious grasping of these that all the confusion has arisen. We ourselves agree to give names to those various stages of milk preparations and then we go on wondering whether milk is found in curd or butter in curd. Indian philosophy with its involvement in soul theories was caught up in this confusion. In the *Taittiriya Upanishad* there is a theory of five selves encased in concentric shells. (*pañcakoṣa*) such as the ‘*annamaya*’ and ‘*prāṇamaya*’ (made-of-food, made-of-breath). This confusion about the three periods of time gave rise to dogmatic views of self.

The momentous declaration of the Buddha quoted above shows that he regarded all those concepts as mere worldly appellations, worldly expressions, worldly designations, which he used but did not grasp tenaciously. It is by that tenacious grasping that self-created problems of cause and effect arise. Whether the cause preceded the effect or whether the effect is already embedded in the cause. It is noteworthy that in a standard work on linguistics written by two modern scholars,¹¹ the milk simile of the Buddha is quoted expressing their surprise that 2,500 years ago the Buddha has revealed a truth which is enough to awaken modern semantic philosophers today.”

After this powerful declaration by the Buddha, Poṭṭhapāda confessed faith in him with great fervour.

“It is marvelous Venerable Sir, it is marvelous Venerable Sir, even as one were to set upright what had been overturned or reveal what had remained hidden, or tell the way to one who has lost his way or hold up an oil-torch in the darkness, so that those with eyes may see. So has the Fortunate One, in many ways declared the Dhamma. Venerable Sir, here I go for refuge to the Fortunate One, to the Dhamma and the Order of monks. Let the Fortunate One accept me as a lay-follower who has gone to him for refuge from today as long as life endures. Then Citta Hatthisāriputta, with a similar confession of faith went to his refuge and even begged for the going forth and higher ordination. He did go forth and was given higher ordination. Not long after his higher ordination he went into solitude and with diligent and ardent endeavor attained arahant hood.

So that is how the discourse ends. But in the remaining few minutes let me clarify whatever knotty points there could be in our explanation.

Regarding the three significant terms we brought up, there is an important discourse which mentions them in the *Saṃyutta Nikāya* – namely *Niruttipatha Sutta*.¹² There the Buddha pointedly deals with the confusion caused by mixing up the three periods of time. It begins with these words:

“*Tayome bhikkhave niruttipathā adhivacanapathā paññattipathā.*” – “Monks, there are these three pathways of linguistic usage of synonyms and of designations.” The Buddha says that these three should not be mixed up and cites them separately. For instance, as regards the aggregate of form he says:

“Whatever form, monks that is past ceased, transformed ‘it was’ is the reckoning (*saṅkhā*) appellation or designation. It is not reckoned as ‘it is’, or it will be. In the same way the reckoning used for any form that is future, the reckoning is ‘it will be’, and not ‘it was’ or ‘it is’. Likewise the reckoning for any form that is present is ‘it is’ and not the other two. The Buddha says the same thing about each of the other four aggregates. He

declares that whatever wise recluses and Brahmins there were, there will be and there are, have not, will not and do not mix up these three periods of time. Whatever is past is gone. It is a delusion to think that it exists. Whatever is future has not come yet. It may exist only when it comes.

It is in view of that tendency in mixing up, that the Buddha introduces the term '*attapaṭilābhā*' – 'acquisition of self'. A special phrase is used in that connection – '*tasmim̐ samaye*' (at that time). That is highly significant as a term for specification. For instance when there is the formless acquisition of self the other two acquisitions of self do not come in.

There too the Buddha warns against mixing up the three periods of time. It is by such a 'mixing up' that the Personality-view ('*sakkāyadiṭṭhi*' – lit. 'existing body view') has arisen. However language is not to be blamed for it. It is the fault of man's defilements. The 'father' and the 'mother' are to be blamed. Who is the father? Ignorance. Who is the mother? Craving. The hindrance of ignorance with its notion of the compact, covers up the perception of the heap in the world and presents it as a 'thing'. Craving with its glue pastes the heap together. Thereby the worldling is made to think that the body exists so that it clings to '*sakkāyadiṭṭhi*' ignoring the extremely rapid process of change going on within the body. So also in the case of other things. It is here that the self-view lies hidden. The purpose of this *Poṭṭhapāda Sutta*, therefore is to expose this fallacy. It is a wonderful discourse. Poṭṭhapāda as well as Citta Hatthisāriputta, are asking the same question which we ourselves would have asked had we not known the Dhamma. It was the same problem that blocked the progress of the yogins. They reached some high level of spiritual development, but they mystified it. They never thought that it is brought about by causes and conditions as shown in this discourse. Instead they attributed it to some non-descript soul or self or else they thought that some agent is manipulating perception. Why were they unable to

extricate themselves from perception? Because they had not recognized ‘*Saṅkhārā*’ or preparations. The most distinctive feature of the Dhamma proclaimed by the Buddha is the recognition of the part played by *Saṅkhārā* – a term that is integral to the Law of Dependent Arising. Even in making that extraordinary decision, the monk was directing his attention to *saṅkhāras*. “*yannūnāham na ceva ceteyyam nacābhi-sankhareyyam*” – “What if I were not to intend and specially prepare?” He was keen on getting free from intentions and preparations. He has been clinging on to intentions and preparations all this time. A simile given in the *Visuddhimagga* comes in useful here.¹³ Suppose there is a broad stream of water and no bridge to crossover. One way to get across is to hang on to a creeper hanging down from a tree on this side and go on swinging until enough momentum is gathered just to be well above the other bank. As soon as you can see the other bank below you when you look down, you have to let-go of the hold on the creeper-daring the drop. Otherwise the creeper would swing you back. That is why the Buddha compared this Dhamma to the raft. This simile smacks of the same technique.

Meditation for serenity (*samatha*) and insight (*vipassanā*) is only a creeper to hang on like that. After you have built up sufficient momentum by swinging holding on to it, you must let-go. But you are scared of the THUD. That is why until the Buddha showed the way to do it, yogins went on ‘see-sawing’ with the dilemma “to-be or not-to-be” in the ethereal plane of neither perception nor non-perception because of their soul-prejudice. They were scared of losing the ‘I’. The Buddha showed them that there is no ‘I’ to suffer the ‘thud’ through this novel concept of ‘sikkhā’ or training. To hark back to the wonderful refrain:

‘Sikkhā ekā saññā uppajjanti, sikkhā ekā saññā nirujjhanti’

“Through training some perceptions arise, through training some perceptions cease!”

It is the Law of Dependent Arising that blasts the view of self or soul. From beginning to end this discourse vibrates through and through with the Law of Dependent Arising. This is a marvelous discourse. So you had better bear in mind every one of the similes you have come across. Remember the breaking of ‘*sakkāyadiṭṭhi*’ or personality view is not something that happens with an audible sound. By assiduously developing insight on the Five Aggregates of grasping somehow or other you realize the vanity of grasping and let-go. Actually it is not that you let-go with an effort. It is an effortless letting –go in spite of yourself – so to say. What you touch by that letting-go is ‘contact with cessation’ (‘*nirodham phusati*’). One awakens from the Cessation of Perceptions and Feelings into *Nibbāna* – to Arahant hood. Why? Because on arising from the cessation of Perceptions and Feelings one is aware of the ‘signless’ (‘*animitta*’) ‘unestablished’ (‘*appanīhita*’) and void (‘*suññata*’). That is the awakening from the THUD on the other bank. If one has attained the Cessation of Perceptions and Feelings, one invariably awakens from it to *Nibbāna*. Why so? Because wisdom is the End. With it one wins to the conviction; ‘Exhausted is birth, lived is the Holy Life, done is what had to be done!’ (‘*khīnā jāti, yusitam brahmacariyaṃ kataṃ karanīyaṃ*’).

Well then, this is enough for you all. If life endures I might be able to expatiate in sermons to come. On this memorable *Esala Poya* day within this hour we have said something on the Law of Dependent Arising on which the Four Noble Truths are founded. If you can imbibe anything useful for the development of your serenity and insight meditations from this sermon, please do so and put forth your best efforts to win deliverance from this dreadful samsāric suffering and by going through the Fruits of the Paths to Stream-winning, Once-Returning and Non-returning realize the deathless *Nibbāna*!

Whatever beings there be, from the lowest hell to the highest Brahma world wishing to rejoice in this sermon, may they rejoice in our sermon! May the merits accrued thereby conduce to their realization of the highest aim – the Deathless *Nibbāna*!



1. Itiv. pp 64, *Samtatara Sutta*
2. D. I p 178 – 203, *Poṭṭhapāda Sutta*
3. M. II 231 *Pañcattaya Sutta*
4. M. III 1 *Gaṇaka Moggallāna Sutta*
5. S. II 2 *Vibhaṅga Sutta*
6. A. IV 426 *Kṭhana Nissaya Sutta*
7. *Sumaṅgala Vilāsini* D. A. I 246 (S.H.B.)
8. *Sumaṅgala Vilāsini* D. A. I 245 (S.H.B.)
9. M. I 138 *Alagaddūpama Sutta*
10. *Sumaṅgala Vilāsini* D. A. I 246
11. The Meaning of Meaning – Ogden and Richards
12. S. III 71 *Niruttipatha Sutta*
13. *Vism.* 505 (S.H.B.)

Sermon 12

(Pahan Kanuwa Sermon – No. 194)

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

*Cirassam vata passāmi – brāhmaṇam parinibbutam
appatiṭṭham anāyūham – tiṇṇam loke visattikam*¹

– *Oghatarāṇa Sutta, Saṃyutta Nikāya.*

It’s long since I see a Brahmin who has attained *Nibbāna*
Crossing over the sticky craving without stopping and
without struggling.

Dear Listeners,

The Buddha has on many occasions compared the crossing over of *samsāra* to a crossing over of the four floods. He taught the world the Middle Path as the technique of overcoming the four floods, namely lust (*kāma*), becoming (*bhava*), views (*diṭṭhi*), and ignorance (*avijjā*). We see the emphasis given to *Paṭicca Samuppāda*, the Law of Dependent Arising even in this Middle Path. Therefore we have selected a verse on crossing the floods as the topic for this twelfth discourse on *Paṭicca Samuppāda*. This verse is found in the *Oghatarāṇa Sutta*, the first sutta in the *Saṃyutta Nikāya*. This is how it goes.

When the Buddha was residing at the Jetavana Monastery in Sāvatti, a certain deity called on the Buddha one night and respectfully stood on a side. He had a question to ask. “*Katham nu tvam mārisa ogham atari?*” “How, friend did you cross over the flood?” The Buddha replied, “*Appatiṭṭham khvāham āvuso anāyūham ogham atarim*” “Friend, without stopping, without struggling I crossed the flood.” Unable to grasp the implication of this statement the deity asked for further clarification. ‘How

exactly did you, friend, cross the four floods?” Then the Buddha explained “Friend, whenever I stopped, I sank. Whenever I struggled, I got swept away. Therefore, I crossed over without stopping and without struggling.” The deity uttered this verse in praise of the Buddha, venerated him and vanished.

Now let us take up this verse for discussion.

‘Cirassam vata passāmi - brāhmaṇaṃ parinibbutaṃ’

It’s long since I see a Brahmin who has attained Extinction, *Nibbāna*

appatiṭṭhaṃ anāyūhaṃ - tiṇṇaṃ loke visattikaṃ

It’s long indeed since I see a Brahmin who has attained *Nibbāna* by crossing over the sticky craving called ‘*visattikā*’ without stopping and without struggling.

The earlier reference to a forceful flood will not be a problem to you because it is common knowledge that if we stop having gone a little way, we get drowned. If we struggle we would get swept away. Only a systematic middling effort will take us across. Similarly the Buddha has offered a Middle Path in this Dhamma, for crossing over the four floods, lust (*kāma*), becoming (*bhava*), views (*diṭṭhi*) and ignorance (*avijjā*).

Let us take them one by one for discussion. The flood of lust comes first. Ascetics and Brahmins contemporary of the Buddha had presented two extreme types of solutions for crossing the floods. As you have often heard about, they are *kāmasukhallikānuyoga* and *attakilamathānuyoga* (indulgence in sense pleasure and self mortification). Ascetics such as Pakudha Kaccāyana, Makkhalī Gosāla and Ajita Kesakambalī, who belonged to the group of six heretics ignored the significance of wholesome and unwholesome actions and their resultant effects. They were critical of this theory. They disregarded the idea of a

“this world and a next world”. They presented the theories of *ucchedavāda* (annihilation) *nāstikavāda* (nihilism) or *ahetu appaccayavāda* (causeless conditionless fortuity). This resulted in more and more people inclining towards *kāmasukhallikānuyoga* (indulgence in sense pleasures). If there is no next world, and no results in good and bad actions, the only alternative is self-indulgence. Although this idea is not mentioned in the suttas, the Chārvākians of later origin taught this view which is embodied in a Sanskrit verse familiar to many.

*Yāvat jīvet sukhaṃ jīvet
ṛṇaṃ kṛtvāpi ghṛtaṃ pivet
bhasmī bhūtasya dehasya
punarāgamaṇaṃ kutah*

Even today we hear young people expressing this idea “Let us enjoy ourselves as long as we live.” “*ṛṇaṃ kṛtvāpi ghṛtaṃ pivet*” “Drink ghee even if you run into debt.” Ghee was recognized as an expensive drink those days.

*bhasmī bhūtasya dehasya
punarāgamaṇaṃ kutah*

How could a charred dead body return? That was one type of philosophy. The other aspect was self-mortification (*attakilamathānuyoga*) taught by Nigaṇṭha Nāthaputta, as you may have heard about. Rejecting both clothes and food, this group followed extremely strict vows. What was their philosophy? *Pubbekata hetu*.² There are past actions, the results of which have to be paid off. New kammās should not be accumulated. They followed a code of torturous vows for that purpose known as *attakilamathānuyoga*.

These were the two extremes. In fact as you may have heard, the Buddha himself once followed self-mortification, until realization dawned on him. After renouncing the luxurious life of

royalty, the Buddha entered upon the other of extreme socially approved life of self torture. The *Mahāsaccaka Sutta* records how he realized after six years of self torture, its uselessness in achieving his goal. With this conviction he searched for a more effective path.³ Gradually it dawned on him how he entered the first *jhāna* under the cool shade of a rose apple tree at a ploughing ceremony of his father. Recalling this incident, he questioned himself “Why should I fear comforts (*sukha*) as long as they are free of sense pleasures and evil mental states?” “*Kim nu kho ahaṃ tassa sukhasa bhāyāmi yaṃtaṃ sukhaṃ aññatveva kāmehi aññatra akusalehi dhammehi?*” Finally, motivated by this reasoning, he entered upon the Middle Path. Here I would like to mention briefly that those who accepted self-indulgence, by their ‘stopping’ (in the flood) actually sank into hell. Those who took up self-mortification, struggled through self torture. It did not lead them to enlightenment either.

The Buddha taught the *Ariya Aṭṭhaṅgika Magga*, the Noble Eightfold Path which steers clear of those two extremes, and is known to you as the Middle Path. One cannot at a glance identify the Law of Dependent Arising, *Paṭicca Samuppāda* concealed within the Eightfold Path. But the *Mahā Cattārīsaka Sutta* in the *Majjhima Nikāya*⁴ offers the following explicit clarification of *Paṭicca Samuppāda* within the Eightfold Path.

Sammā diṭṭhissa sammā saṅkappo pahoti
Sammā saṅkappassa sammā vācā pahoti
Sammā vācassa sammā kammanto pahoti
Sammā kammantassa sammā ājīvo pahoti
Sammā ājīvassa sammā vāyāmo pahoti
Sammā vāyāmassa sammā sati pahoti
Sammā satissa sammā samādhi pahoti
Sammā samādhissa sammā ñāṇaṃ pahoti
Sammā ñāṇassa sammā vimutti pahoti

This shows how beautifully each factor is closely linked with the other. When I explain one, you can easily understand the rest.

“*Sammā ditṭhissa sammā saṃkappo pahoti*”

Right thought dawns on him who has the right view. Right thought gives rise to right words. Right words give rise to right action. In this way the Middle Path is amazingly linked with each other. That itself is the Middle Path.

A superficial glance at the Middle Path does not reveal the Law of Dependent Arising within. One may argue that there is not even a reference to *Paṭicca Samuppāda* in the *Dhammacakka-ppavattana Sutta* which we all regard as of prime importance. If that is so, how did Venerable Aññā Koṇḍañña describe his attainment of *Sotāpanna* (Stream Entrant) as the realization of the vision that ‘Whatever is of the nature of arising, all that has the nature of ceasing’ (*Yaṃ kiñci samudayadhammaṃ sabbaṃ taṃ nirodhadhammaṃ*)?⁵ It follows the norm found in the *Paṭicca Samuppāda*. We have often explained to you that whatever has the nature of arising, all that is of the nature of ceasing. It is clearly evident in the Eightfold Path which begins with the fourfold truth. It closely follows the pattern of the *Paṭicca Samuppāda*.

Now that we have touched on the subject, let us see how the Buddha highlights other aspects of the Middle Path. The Jains by giving up clothes and food, followed a path of extreme self-mortification. In contrast to it, the Buddha allowed the monks the use of the four requisites (*paccaya*). Even the word *paccaya* has the idea of ‘dependent on’. The monks depended on the four requisites in order to fulfill their objectives. The ordinary laymen, the worldly people use them for sheer enjoyment. But you may have heard that the monks always reflect on the purpose behind the use of the requisites when using each of them. Taking food as

an example, monks reflect on the purpose of eating “*Neva davāya na madāya, na maṇḍanāya, na vibhūsanāya*”. This food is not for enjoyment, nor for pride, nor for adornment, nor for beautification.

“*Yāvadeva imassa kāyassa ṭhitiyā yāpanāya vihiṅsū-paratiyā brahmacariyānuggahāya.*”

“Only for the purpose of maintaining this body, for its sustenance, to prevent possible harm through hunger, as a support for holy life”. It is interesting to note here that the requisites rejected by the Jains, were converted into objects of meditation by the Buddha. You may have heard that the monks contemplate on the four elements (*dhātu*) found in their food as ‘*dhātu manasikāra*’ (attention on elements).

Let me explain the general idea behind it. This food is made up of the four elements. The pure food becomes impure as it enters this repulsive body. This becomes a very effective subject for meditation. You can see what an amazingly practical Middle Path the Buddha has taught. On the one hand, one avoids the extreme of self-indulgence, and does away with the idea of eating for embellishment. On the other hand, the process of eating is converted into a subject for meditation, instead of totally condemning food.

Another important factor attracts our attention. The ideal qualities of a monk and a meditative layman are simplicity (*appicchatā*) and contentment (*santuṭṭhi*). Yet another quality of a monk is *virīya* – effort, not to be wasted in practicing vows of self torture, as in Jainism, but to strive to cultivate the factors in the Middle Path in a balanced way called ‘*virīya samatā*’.

Now it is clear that the Buddha highlights Dependent Arising or *Paṭicca Samuppāda* in his Middle Path, and also deviates sharply from the two extremes. That is my brief explanation of the *kāmogha*, ‘the flood of lust’.

The next is *bhavogha*, ‘the flood of becoming’. In the second *Nipāta* of the *Itivuttaka*, there is a *sutta* that discusses *bhavogha* in detail. “*Dvīhi bhikkhave diṭṭhigatehi pariyuṭṭhitā devamanussā olīyanti eke atidhāvanti eke.*”⁶ Obsessed by two views, monks, are gods and human beings. Some of them lag behind, some overreach. Both these tendencies are described as “*bhavārāmā bhikkhave devamanussā bhavaratā bhava samuditā.*” These gods and men take delight in becoming, are attached to becoming, take pride in becoming. When the Dhamma is being preached for the cessation of becoming, they are not pleased with it. They fall back. They are displeased. The Buddha’s teaching based on the Middle Path, for the cessation of becoming does not appeal to the eternalists who have grasped the soul theory. Generally those who like becoming, dislike the cessation of becoming. They get drowned in the flood of becoming. They sink in the current of becoming. Their grip on the ‘soul’ prevents them from striving for an escape.

There is another group called the annihilationists, developing a revulsion towards becoming. (“*Bhaven’eva kho pana eke aṭṭiyamānā harāyamānā*”). They treat this body as the soul and reject the idea of a life beyond death. That is an overreaching. This is called ‘*vibhava*’. They go to the other extreme by denying re-becoming. They are those who overreach.

Here I would like to repeat a simile I had given earlier, though it is not found in the text. Some run forward hoping to step on their own shadow like little children who do it for fun. Of course they never succeed in doing so. Some others are scared of the shadow and try to run away from it, but on turning back, see the shadow right behind them. Now the two extremes are like that. The Buddha has proclaimed his Middle Path avoiding these two extremes. What did the Buddha do? Having referred to those two extremes with the words ‘*olīyanti eke*’ (some lag behind) and ‘*atidhāvanti eke*’ (some overreach), as the third alternative the Buddha declared ‘*cakkhumanto va passanti*’ (only they do see

who have eyes to see). This is how he really presents it. “*Dvīhi bhikkhave diṭṭhigatehi pariyuṭṭhitā devamanussā olīyanti eke atidhāvanti eke cakkhumanto va passanti.*” The third factor ‘*cakkhumanto va passanti*’ means ‘only those with eyes, see’. What does he mean by it? The two earlier groups of extremists were gripping on ‘*bhava*’ (becoming). Discarding them, the Buddha introduced a new word ‘*bhūta*’.

Bhūta means, what has arisen. You might recollect this word in connection with the phrase ‘*yathābhūta ñāṇadassana*’ ‘knowledge and vision of things as they are’. Therefore the Dhamma does not go to the extreme of existence as eternalists do. Nor does it go to the extreme of destruction of existence as nihilists. Instead, seeing what is arisen as ‘arisen’ is called ‘*yathābhūta dassana*’ (vision of things as they have arisen). If the simile of the shadows is brought in here, it is like understanding the shadow as a shadow. One who understands shadow as shadow will not run after it nor will he run away from it in fear. The shadow is a simile for *nāmarūpa* (name-and-form) as we have mentioned earlier.

You have already heard me use the simile of the dog on the bridge and the simile of Narcissus, in order to explain the Buddha’s teaching on *ogha* ‘floods’ and *bhava* ‘becoming’. He has also explained how *viññāna* or consciousness regarding which people had many rigid theories, is interdependent with *nāmarūpa*. We have referred to this shadow of *nāmarūpa* many a time. The Buddha avoided that extreme since he saw the shadow as the shadow. There too, we find a Middle Path.

Let us take up *diṭṭhoga* next. I am sorry we have to be very brief since there are four *oghas* to deal with. As I have mentioned earlier, it has been discussed in the *Kaccānagotta Sutta*⁷. Let me mention in brief its background because of its relevance to this question. Venerable Kaccānagotta once approached the Buddha and asked “To what extent does

sammādiṭṭhi (right view) become *sammādiṭṭhi*?” ‘Right view’ had been given various suitable interpretations on various occasions, particularly by the Buddha and Venerable Sāriputta. But they are not contradictory to one another.

As the occasion demanded, here the Buddha explained *sammādiṭṭhi* as follows. “*Dvayanissito khvāyaṃ kaccāyana loko yebhuyyena atthitañceva natthitaṃ ca*” ‘Kaccāyana, the worldlings for the most part rest on two extremes.’ *Dvayanissita* means holding on to a dyad. What are they? *Atthitā* ‘Is’ (everything exists) and *natthitā* ‘Is not’ (nothing exists). The world either says everything is or nothing is. Then the Buddha explains the Middle Path in his dhamma. “*Lokasamudayaṃ kho kaccāyana yathābhūtaṃ sammappaññāya passato yā loko natthitā, sā na hoti*”. When one sees with wisdom, the nature of constant arising in the world, the view of non-existence does not occur. Then he explains the other aspect. “*Lokanirodhaṃ kho kaccāyana yathābhūtaṃ sammappaññāya passato yā loko atthitā sā na hoti*”. When one sees as it is with wisdom, the nature of ceasing in the world, the view of existence (*atthitā*) does not occur. Just think about it. It is amazing. The world is constantly arising and ceasing. Some are caught up in the extreme view that the world really is or the world does not exist. What the Buddha says is that when one sees as it is with wisdom that the world is constantly arising, the extreme view that “The world is not” loses its hold on him. On the other hand when one sees as it is with wisdom, that the world is constantly ceasing, the extreme view that “The world is” fades away. When one sees with wisdom the nature of arising of the world, the extreme of non-existence disappears. When one observes the nature of ceasing in the world, the extreme view of existence of the world disappears.

Now the Buddha explains what lay between the two extremes. “*Ete te ubho ante anupagamma*”. Without approaching either of these extremes, “*majjhena tathāgato dhammaṃ deseti*” The *Tathāgata* takes a Middle Path in preaching the dhamma.

This Middle Path is the teaching on the Law of Dependent Arising that we have discussed so far.

Then he explains the Middle Path beginning with “*Avijjā paccayā saṃkhārā*” as you may have heard. Dependent on ignorance are preparations etc. and finally he explains how the five aggregates of grasping which is suffering, arises. He shows how with the cessation of ignorance, all that suffering ceases. So it is a philosophy of a Middle Way. Arising and ceasing. How the entire mass of suffering arises and then how it ceases.

The Buddha in this manner rejects both extremes. When both views of existence and non-existence are given up, what remains there, is a question of suffering. The notion of the soul is shattered then and there. Instead of a soul what actually exists is a problem of suffering, and its cessation. That is the Middle Path implied there. That means there is only the arising and ceasing or *samudaya* and *vaya*, free from the extreme views of existence and non-existence. As we have earlier mentioned, here too one might wonder why these facts are not found in the *Dhammacakkappavattana Sutta*. But we know that in the Noble Eightfold Path, what is shown as the right view is suffering, its arising, its cessation and the path leading towards it. Within these four truths, is found a right view, which avoids the extremes of absolute existence and absolute non-existence. Although many cannot comprehend it, right view begins right from the Middle Path shown by the Buddha. In fact we can treat the *Kaccānagotta Sutta* as a concise commentary on the *Dhammacakkappavattana Sutta*.

I would like you to think deeply on this point. A superficial glance at the *Dhammacakkappavattana Sutta* might make one think that the Law of Dependent Arising is missing there. But what we wish to point out is that *sammādiṭṭhi* embodies the Middle Path of the *Paṭicca Samuppāda*. It should be clear that there is no absolute existence

or absolute non-existence. Instead, there is an arising and a ceasing dependent on causes and conditions. If at all, what arises is an entire mass of suffering, and what ceases is an entire mass of suffering. Towards the end of the *Kaccānagotta Sutta*, the Buddha further explains that those who hold and cling to the aforementioned extreme views, thereby conceive an idea of a soul. The eternalists believe in an eternally present soul while the nihilists imagine that the body is the soul. The reason for this is their taking up a rigid stand point, their firm grip on a view.

The Buddha on the other hand proclaims right vision showing that where there is no grasping of a view, what arises is only suffering and what ceases is only suffering, “*dukkhaṃ eva uppajjamānaṃ uppajjati, dukkhaṃ nirujjhamānaṃ nirujjhati*”. That is why one who has this vision entertains no doubt or uncertainty regarding the past or the future. If at all, what had been there in the past was only these five aggregates of grasping. So will it be in the future. He realizes that there is nothing worthwhile here, but only suffering. With regard to that suffering what the Four Noble Truths imply is that very Middle Path.

Generally when we speak of the Middle Path, we are not aware that *Paṭicca Samuppāda* is implicit in it. It is to pinpoint that fact, that I say all this. In fact the *Kaccānagotta Sutta* serves as a concise commentary to the Right View in the Noble Eightfold Path.

So we have pinpointed that the Buddha offered a Middle Path to cross over the flood of sensuality (*kāmogha*) and he offered a Middle Path to cross over the flood of becoming (*bhavogha*). Moreover he offered a Middle Path to cross over the flood of views (*diṭṭhi ogha*). Rejecting both extreme views of existence and non-existence, he brought out the fact of suffering in the guise of arising and ceasing. “*dukkhaṃ eva uppajjamānaṃ uppajjati, dukkhaṃ nirujjhamānaṃ nirujjhati*” ‘What arises is

only suffering, what ceases is only suffering'. There too Dependent Arising is highlighted.

Now we come to the *avijjogha*, the flood of ignorance. This might sound unusual. Ignorance is here treated as a flood. This is the most difficult of the four to comprehend. The *Sammādiṭṭhi Sutta*⁸ expounded by Venerable Sāriputta provides an explanation as to why the Buddha called it a flood. In fact we come across several definitions of the term *sammādiṭṭhi*, at different levels. They are not contradictory to one another. They all are correct from different perspectives.

Here is one of them, “Monks, if a noble disciple understands ignorance (*avijjā*) its arising, its ceasing and the path leading to its cessation, even to that extent he is one with Right View, *sammādiṭṭhi*. “*Avijjam ca pajānāti, avijjā samudayam ca pajānāti, avijjā nirodham ca pajānāti, avijjā nirodhagāminī paṭipadam ca pajānāti*” A knowledge of these four is sufficient for *sammādiṭṭhi*. What is called ignorance (*avijjā*) in that context? It is already analyzed as “*Dukkhe aññānam, dukkhasammudaye aññānam, dukkhanirodhe aññānam, dukkhanirodhagāminiyā paṭipadāya aññānam*” Ignorance of suffering, ignorance of its arising, ignorance of its cessation and the ignorance of the path leading to its cessation. That is ignorance.

Then what is the arising of ignorance? How does ignorance come about? That is the crux of the problem. A surprise awaits us here. “*Āsava samudayā avijjā samudayo*”. It is with the arising of influxes that ignorance arises. This causes confusion in those who analyze *Paṭicca Samuppāda* because what precedes is ignorance. They presume that ignorance has no root cause but is simply present and other factors arise from it. Here is the solution to the problem. On behalf of the Buddha, Venerable Sāriputta explains “*Āsava samudayā avijjā samudayo, āsava nirodhā avijjā nirodho*”. With the arising of influxes ignorance arises. With the cessation of influxes ignorance ceases.

The ‘*avijjā nirodhagāminī patipadā*’ or the path that leads to the cessation of ignorance is none other than the Noble Eightfold Path.

From here onwards, I have something special to tell you. Perhaps you have already heard or even read the *Sabbāsava Sutta*,⁹ which appears as the second discourse in the *Majjhima Nikāya*. It explains how one could restrain all the influxes. That is why this *Sutta* enjoys so much recognition. Herein it gives influxes as the cause of the ‘arising’ of ignorance.

This particular term *āsava* is not easy to explain. It has been given different interpretations. We often resort to examples and similes to facilitate understanding. Let us take the term *ogha* (flood) to denote a body of flowing water. When speaking about a body of flowing water, we are not bothered about it. We are unharmed because it is just flowing downwards. Suppose we get down into this rapidly flowing body of water with the idea of crossing it. How would we feel about it then? Then, we feel it as flowing forcefully towards us. That is the obstacle we have. So far, we had seen it flowing away. Once we get into it to cross over we see it as **flowing towards us**. That is the basic idea of *āsava* or influxes.

The *Sabbāsava Sutta* speaks of seven ways in which influxes flow in. This is an extremely profound discourse. But let me condense it for our purpose. The Buddha begins his explanation as follows: “*Sabbāsava saṁvara pariyāyam vo bhikkhave dhammaṁ desessāmi*” ‘Monks, I shall teach you a way to restrain all influxes.’

‘*Saṁvaro*’ means restraint. You may be familiar with the term ‘*indriyasamvara*’ ‘sense-restraint’. Then the Buddha says: “*Jānato ahaṃ bhikkhave passato āsavānaṃ khayam vadāmi, no ajānato no apassato*” ‘I declare that the extinction of influxes should be done knowing and seeing – that is with awareness and

wisdom'. The Buddha himself asks and answers the question Knowing what? Seeing what? What are the two helpful factors for the restraint of influxes?

We have often mentioned the importance of understanding the *ayoniso manasikāra* and *yoniso manasikāra*. These are the two factors that help one to restrain the influxes. The Buddha's advice is to understand *yoniso manasikāra* and *ayoniso manasikāra* correctly with their specific characteristics. To put it in simple language, *ayoniso manasikāra* means unsuitable, wrong, disorderly, contemplation with a wrong approach. *Yoniso manasikāra* means to drive at the origin or the cause of a thing and understand it correctly.

Incorrect contemplation as well as correct contemplation should be clearly understood for the purpose of taming the influxes. Earlier I mentioned that seven types of *āsavas* are discussed in this *sutta*. Let me introduce them to you first. “*Atthi bhikkhave āsavā dassanā pahātabbā*” ‘Monks, there are some influxes that should be abandoned through vision (*dassanā*). That is the first group. Another group has to be abandoned through restraint (*saṃvarā*). The third group has to be abandoned through utilizing (*paṭisevanā*). Some others are removed through endurance (*adhivāsanā*). The fifth group is expelled through warding off or avoiding (*parivajjanā*). The sixth group has to be got rid of through *vinodanā*, dispelling. There seems to be a closeness between the fifth and the sixth. *Parivajjanā* and *vinodanā* appear to have some closeness in meaning. Let us understand *parivajjanā* as avoiding, shunning or keeping away. *Vinodanā* is eliminating through dispelling. It will be clear when you listen to my explanation. The seventh method is eliminating by developing – *bhāvanā*. *Dassanā pahātabbā, saṃvarā pahātabbā, paṭisevanā pahātabbā, adhvāsanā pahātabbā, parivajjanā pahātabbā, vinodanā pahātabbā* and lastly, *bhāvanā pahātabbā*. This is a fascinating *Sutta* with subtle meaning. Some have even confounded the facts in it.

Now, let me explain them as time permits. First let us discuss “*dassanā pahātabbā*”. The Buddha speaks of influxes that should be eliminated through vision. But there are certain people in the world who resort to wrong ways of attention, for instance recluses and Brahmins of the past. What is this unsuitable method of attention? Certain people presume that a person called ‘I’ really exists. With that presumption they go on asking themselves in terms of the three periods of time. Regarding the past they have fivefold doubts. “Was I in the past? Was I not in the past? Who was I in the past? How was I in the past? Having been what, what did I become in the past?” Regarding the future too they go on attending on the fivefold questions. Will I be in the future? Will I not be in the future? What will I be in the future? How will I be in the future? Having been what, what will I be in the future? Regarding the present they would think, Am I now? Am I not now? Who am I? How am I? Where has this being come from and where will it go? Taking the proposition I as the subject, as a permanent individual and indulging in irrelevant contemplation, they finally end up in the extreme ‘I have a soul’ or in the other extreme ‘I do not have a soul’. They are both extremes. That is the result of unwarranted contemplation, placing ‘I’ on a pedestal. It ends up in *ayoniso manasikāra*. People are engulfed in doubt very often regarding the past ‘Was I? Wasn’t I?’ The Buddha explains that the noble disciples who have the right vision, are not obsessed by such doubts since they think in terms of suffering, its arising, its cessation and the path leading to cessation.

When the mind is fashioned according to the four noble truths, such doubts do not arise. If at all, there would have been only the five aggregates of grasping (*pañca upādānakkhandā*) in the past, and the future will hold out only suffering. Therefore there exists only suffering, its arising, its cessation and the path leading to cessation. The Buddha ascertains that if the mind is cultivated (developed) in accordance with the four truths the

inevitable result would be the arising of the *Sotāpanna Maggañāṇa* (the wisdom of the Stream Entrant) wherein the first three fetters- *sakkāyadiṭṭhi*, *vicikicchā* and *sīlabbataparāmāsa* (view of self, doubt and clinging to rites and rituals) are expelled. We can see that *dassanā pahātabbā* refers to the controlling of the first three *saṃyojanas*. If the mind is cultivated in accordance with the four truths, one can eliminate them. That is the explanation to “*dassanā pahātabbā*”

Let us now discuss “*saṃvarā pahātabbā*” elimination through restraint. This is closely associated with *indriya saṃvara*, restraint of the senses. Here, the Buddha uses the term ‘*paṭisaṃkhā yoniso*’ one of his stunning stock of meaningful words. *paṭisaṃkhā* means scrutinizing with wisdom. After the noble disciples identify the difference between *yoniso manasikāra* and *ayoniso manasikāra*, they conduct themselves carefully as befits the occasion. The Buddha in trying to explain the rewards of practicing them and evils of neglecting them, uses another phrase, *āsavā vighātapariḷāhā*, which means the influxes that cause exhaustion and burning.

Giving an example the Buddha explains thus. If the eye is not guarded well, various lustful influxes are likely to sweep in. They could arouse the lust dormant within. They could bring about *vighāta pariḷāha*, exhaustion and burning within. One should scrutinize oneself with wisdom (*paṭisaṃkhā yoniso*), and restrain one’s eye. Since our subject is restraint of the senses, this procedure applies to the other senses as well, the ear, the nose, the tongue, the body and the mind. Why does the Buddha emphasize restraint? If restraint is lacking those tiresome oppressive influxes come flooding in. That is all about *saṃvarā pahātabbā*.

Next comes *paṭisevanā pahātabbā*, elimination through utilizing. The Buddha refers to the use of the four requisites here. We mentioned earlier that the *Nigaṇṭhas* discarded food and

clothes, claiming they could thereby become free of craving. But the Buddha shows that the use of the four requisites – robes, alms food, shelter and medicine is essential for maintenance of life. All four are absolutely essential in order to avoid the discomfort and hardship that would otherwise crop up. The Buddha had experienced it when leading a rigorous life. One has to follow the Middle Path here. The reflection on food goes as “*paṭisaṃkhā yoniso piṇḍapātaṃ paṭisevāmi*”. I shall partake of my alms food reflecting with wisdom. Next comes the purpose “*Neva davāya na madāya na maṇḍanāya na vibhūsanāya*” – not for delectation or gratification or adornment or beautification but simply to sustain my life. Now we are told how to convert this into a subject for meditation. The use of essential requisites in life, without which one would have to experience discomfort and hardship has been permitted, because the body has to be maintained at least for the worthy cause of crossing the *samsāra*. But they must be used reflecting wisely as a source of meditation. With the use of the four requisites, lustful thoughts of lay life may flood in. They have to be minimized through simplicity (*appiccatā*) and contentment (*santuṭṭhi*). That is *paṭisevanā* or utilizing.

Adhivāsanā pahātabbā comes next, elimination through endurance. It simply means that, meditators have to endure cold, heat, physical ailments, insects or even severe pain. Why endure? Otherwise exhaustion and burning will add up to his already unbearable pain. Take an example. Unable to bear up the pain of a wound, we shout and yell. This shouting and yelling will only add up to the pain. Enduring without reacting to problems, brings us closer to *Nibbāna*. That is why the Buddha has taught us to endure “*adhivāsanā pahātabbā*. Even criticism has to be endured. It helps in controlling the influxes.

Parivajjanā pahātabbā follows next, elimination through avoiding. Although this is treated very lightly by some, the Buddha attaches great importance to avoiding risks, threats to our

lives and blemish to our conduct. One must not have confidence when confronted with wild animals like elephants, horses, cattle and dogs, trusting in one's power of meditation. A monk must not frequent questionable places or develop friendship with people with bad reputation. Reflecting wisely a monk must avoid any situation that would affect his spiritual life adversely.

The next restraint *vinodanā pahātabbā* is perhaps more familiar to you. It appears in the *Girimānanda Sutta* as *pahāna saññā*.¹⁰ Since *pahāna* appears in all these seven factors, the term *vinodanā* is used to express the idea of *pahāna*. It means removing. What must be removed? This is how it is clarified. A noble disciple or a monk, “*uppannam kāmavitakkaṃ nādhivāseti pajahati, vinodeti, byantikaroti anabhāvaṃ gameti*” does not tolerate any lustful thoughts that arise, but discards them, removes them, terminates them and eradicates them. Here *vinodanā pahātabbā* means the elimination of *kāma vitakka* (thoughts connected with lust), *vyāpāda vitakka* (thoughts connected with ill-will), *vihimsā vitakka* (thoughts connected with harm) and the resultant evil thoughts immediately. Those are the influxes that have to be controlled by removing.

The next and the last is *bhāvanā pahātabbā*. These are influxes that have to be eliminated through mind development. This refers to the development of the seven *bojjhaṅgas* or enlightenment factors. I am sure you are familiar with them. *Sati, dammavicaya, viriya, pīti, passaddhi, samādhi* and *upekkhā*. Each of these has to be developed in an environment of seclusion (*vivekanissitam*), dispassion (*virāganissitam*), cessation (*nirodhanissitam*) and relinquishment (*vossaggapariṇāmiṃ*). It must not be forgotten that *paṭisaṃkhā yoniso*, wise reflection runs through each of these steps like a web.

The *Sabbāsava Sutta* introduces a process of eliminating the influxes (*āsavas*) in seven ways. They all lead to the same goal. “*Āsava samudayā avijjā samudayo āsava nirodhā avijjā*

nirodho.” When influxes arise, ignorance arises. When influxes cease, ignorance ceases. This statement caused confusion. Many wondered from where ignorance came into the scene. Now it is clear that influxes give rise to ignorance. Due to *ayoniso manasikāra* incorrect contemplation, influxes arise and already arisen influxes increase. Due to *yoniso manasikāra*, correct contemplation, the already arisen influxes cease and no new ones arise. That shows how rewarding *yoniso manasikāra* is.

Finally we can arrive at the conclusion that the ultimate purpose of the *Sutta* is *avijjā pahāna*, elimination of ignorance. Influxes have the nature of flowing in, every moment. As mentioned earlier watching the water flowing forcefully, while seated on the river bank, one cannot guarantee that one could swim across it in a straight line. No one could. One has to swim while allowing the water to flow. That is similar to the Middle Path, the *Paṭicca Samuppāda*. Each step is linked to the next.

Let me now summarize today’s discourse as time permits. By way of summary let me quote a wonderful statement made by Venerable Ānanda in praise of the Buddha’s technique of explaining the path. “*Nissāya nissāya bhante, Bhagavatā oghassa nītharaṇā akkhātā.*”¹¹ The method the Buddha has advocated in order to cross the great flood is *nissāya nissāya*. It means manipulating (improvising) one thing after the other, but not clinging to any. It is a technique of proceeding systematically forward, step by step.

You may have heard of crossing the floods by means of *saddhā*. “*Saddhāya tarati ogham.*”¹² That kind of crossing has to be undertaken with balanced effort *virīya samatā*.

Once a youth called Kappa questioned the Buddha regarding the crossing of the flood.¹³

Majjhe sarasmim tiṭṭhataṃ, oge jāte mahabbhaye

*jarā maccu paretānaṃ, dīpaṃ pabrūhi mārisa
tvañ ca me dīpaṃ akkhāhi, yathāyidaṃ nāparaṃ siyā*

Friend, those marooned in the strong floods,
threatened by decay and death
are stranded in the lake
Show the island to them
since there is no other, please
show the island to me.

Responding to Kappa's request to show the refuge to those caught up in the strong floods, the Buddha gives an amazing reply.

*“Akiñcanaṃ anādānaṃ - etaṃ dīpaṃ anāparaṃ
Nibbānamiti taṃ brūmi - jarā maccu parikkhayaṃ”*

Akiñcanaṃ anādānaṃ means not possessing anything, not grasping anything. This is a reference to *Nibbāna* the highest goal. Nothing called mine and nothing to grip, getting washed away makes no difference.

“Possessing nothing, not desirous of grasping anything, where birth and death ceases is this island called *Nibbāna*.”

Kappa inquired what island is found beyond the floods. It does not correspond to any attractive island in our imagination - or rather the *Nibbāna* of *Siyadoris* (i.e. Simple Simon *Nibbāna*). The Buddha explains “Possessing nothing and grasping nothing. None other than that. I call it *Nibbāna*.” The Buddha finally winds up saying “Decay is decayed and death is dead” “*Jarā maccu parikkhayaṃ*”. If there is nothing possessed how can there be decay? If there is nothing grasped, how can there be death? “*akiñcanaṃ anādānaṃ*”. Please try to reflect deeply on the implication of this fascinating account. *Nibbāna* is merely a name. That alone is the island.

If there is nothing to protect, there is nothing to be washed away. If there is nothing grasped, again there is nothing to be washed away. That is why the Buddha calls it *Nibbāna*. The final result of crossing over the flood is “*akiñcanam anādānam etaṃ dīpaṃ anāparam*” Possesing nothing, grasping nothing. This is the island and no other. We explained ‘*jarā maccu parikkhayam*’ as ‘where decay has decayed and death is dead’.

Friends, we have attempted to condense this story of crossing over the floods into one hour. Treating *kāma* (lust), *bhava* (becoming), *diṭṭhi* (view) and *avijjā* (ignorance) as one forceful flood, our challenge is to cross over this *samsāra*. There lies before us a very delicate Middle Path to tread, possessing nothing, grasping nothing, leaning against nothing, but carefully working one’s way one step to the next to reach the final goal.

The path “*paṭipadā*” with each step leaning towards the other, or each step supporting the other is condensed in the Dhamma into three words: ‘*anupubba sikkhā, anupubba kiriyā* and *anupubba paṭipadā*’. It involves a gradual process of disciplining, a gradual process of training and a gradually ascending path. The *Paṭicca Samuppāda* is well incorporated within this path, as it was mentioned earlier. “*Sammā diṭṭhissa sammā saṃkappo pahoti*”. Right thinking dawns on him who holds right view and proceeds up the ladder gradually.

The Buddha’s clarification of the path in order to cross over the strong flood of *samsāra*, avoiding the two extremes is praiseworthy indeed. He has made clear what our destination is like after crossing. It is not another birth, or an extraordinary world as we imagine. That destination is where the desire to possess and the desire to grasp anything in the floods have been totally relinquished.

I have attempted to briefly explain a subject that deserves more elaborate treatment. I believe you are regular listeners of

my discourses. I advise you to make use of *Paṭicca Samuppāda* and other related topics, in your attempts at meditation. Today you have made a good start with the practice of *sīla*. From now onwards follow the Dhamma path of *sīla*, *samādhi* and *paññā* and utilize this knowledge for the advancement of your *samatha* and *vipassanā* meditation. I hope this discourse will contribute to some extent, towards your attempt to attain the Paths and Fruits of *Sotāpanna*, *Sakadāgāmi*, *Anāgāmi* and *Arahant*, which is called freedom from *samsāra*, before the light of the *sāsana* is extinguished.

Whatever beings there be, from the lowest hell to the highest Brahma world, may they all rejoice in our sermon. May the merits accrued by that rejoicing conduce to the fulfillment of their higher aims



1. S. I 1 *Oghatarana Sutta*
2. M. II 214 *Devadaha Sutta*
3. M. I 246 *Mahā Saccaka Sutta*
4. M. III 76 *Mahā Cattarīsaka Sutta*
5. S. V 423 *Dhammacakkappavattana Sutta*
6. Itiv. 43 *Diṭṭhigata Sutta*
7. S. II 17 *Kaccānagotta Sutta*
8. M. I 46 *Sammādiṭṭhi Sutta*
9. M. I 6 -12 *Sabbāsava Sutta*
10. A. V 108-112 *Girimānanda Sutta*
11. M. II 265 Sn. *Āneñjasappāya Sutta*
12. Sn. 33 *Ālavaka Sutta*
13. Sn. 211f. *Kappa Sutta*

Sermon 13 (Pahan Kanuwa Sermon – No. 195)

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

*Yam kiñci dukkham sambhoti – sabbam saṁkhāra paccayā
Saṁkhārānam nirodhena – natthi dukkhassa sambhavo*

*Etamādīnavam ñatvā – dukkham saṁkhāra paccayā
Sabbasaṁkhāra samathā – saññāya uparodhanā
Evam dukkhakkhayo hoti – etam ñatvā yathātatham*

*Sammaddasā vedaguno – sammadaññāya paṇḍitā
Abhibhuyya mārasamyogam – nāgacchanti punabbhavam¹*

– *Dvayatānupassanā S., Sutta Nipāta*

Whatever suffering arises, it is all dependent on preparations. When preparations cease, the arising of suffering ceases.

Knowing the evils of suffering dependent on preparations, with the stilling of all preparations, unobstructed by perceptions, that is the way suffering ceases. Thus, knowing this as it is,

The wise, endowed with correct vision and well versed in knowledge, realizing this as it is, overpowering the bonds of Māra, do not go into another birth.

Dear Listeners,

Sabbasamkhāra samatha or the stilling of the preparations, stands foremost in the phrase that declares the peaceful excellent nature of *Nibbāna*.² It is the *saṅkhāras* or preparations that take the first plunge into the endless misery of *Samsāra* in the darkness of ignorance. Therefore it is clear that an intensive and an extensive clarification of the cluster of interpretations of the Law of Dependent Arising is essential. To venture into that subject we have chosen three verses in the *Dvayatānupassanā Sutta* of the *Sutta Nipāta*, as the title for the 13th discourse on *Paṭicca Samuppāda*. Since this *Dvayatānupassanā Sutta* was the topic of three earlier discourses, I am sure you remember the technique, the pattern the Buddha followed. The speciality about this Sutta is that the Buddha has followed a technique of duality, a dual contemplation in clarifying the dhamma.

This is how the Buddha presents the problem about the *saṅkhāras* (preparations) to the monks. “Monks, if a question arises as to whether there is another method of practicing dual contemplation, do affirm that there is. Let me explain how it can be done.

“*Yaṃ kiñci dukkhaṃ sambhoti - sabbam saṅkhāra paccayā. Ayaṃ ekānupassanā.*” One method of contemplating is that whatever suffering arises, it is entirely dependent on *saṅkhāra*. “*Saṅkhārānaṃ ceva asesā virāga nirodhā, natthi dukkhassa sambhavo.*” With the total detachment and cessation of preparations, suffering ceases. That is the second method of contemplation. These two methods have been explicitly clarified by the Buddha in the three verses I recited earlier.

*Yaṃ kiñci dukkhaṃ sambhoti - sabbam saṅkhāra paccayā
Saṅkhārānaṃ nirodhena - natthi dukkhassa sambhavo*

Whatever suffering arises, it is all dependent on preparations. When the preparations cease, the arising of suffering ceases.

Etamādīnavam ñatvā - dukkham saṁkhāra paccayā

Knowing the evils of suffering dependent on preparations,

Sabbasaṁkhāra samathā - saññāya uparodhanā

Evaṁ dukkhakkhayo hoti - evaṁ ñatvā yathātatham

With the stilling of all preparations, unobstructed by perceptions, that is the way suffering ceases. Thus, knowing this as it is

Sammaddasā vedaguno - sammadaññāya paṇḍitā

The wise, endowed with correct vision and well versed in knowledge, realizing this as it is

Abhibhuyya mārasamyogam - nāgacchanti punabbhavam

Overpowering the bonds of Māra, do not go into another birth.

That is the meaning of the verses.

Coming back to our subject *saṁkhāra*, we see it occurs as the second factor in the *Paṭicca Samuppāda*, following *avijjā*. You know we have many a time repeated *avijjā paccayā saṁkhārā*, *saṁkhāra paccayā viññānam*, *viññāna paccayā nāmarūpaṁ*, *nāmarūpa paccayā saḷāyatanam* and so on. The Buddha has himself given a clarification of the term *saṁkhāra*, in the *Vibhanga Sutta*,³ in the *Nidāna Saṁyutta* of the *Saṁyutta Nikāya*.

“*Katame ca bhikkhave saṁkhārā. Tayo me bhikkhave saṁkhārā. Kāya saṁkhāro, vacī saṁkhāro, citta saṁkhāro*”
Monks, what are the preparations? There are three, preparations of the body, speech and mind. Remember they are in the singular. There is yet another clear analysis of these terms in the *Cūla*

Vedalla Sutta of the *Majjhima Nikāya*.⁴ We meet Arahant Therī Dhammadinnā making a comprehensive analysis of them in reply to lay disciple Visākha’s questions. He wished to know what exactly is meant by *kāya saṁkhāra*, *vacī saṁkhāra*, *citta saṁkhāra*.

Arahant Therī Dhammadinnā explained, “*assāsa passāsā kho āvuso visākha kāyasamkhāro, vitakka vicārā vacī samkhāro, saññā ca vedanā ca citta samkhāro.*”

Let me give the meaning. “Friend Visākha, inhalation and exhalation are the preparation of the body, reasoning and deliberation are the preparation of speech. Perception and feeling are the preparation of the mind.”

Again the layman Visākha questions, “Noble lady, how do inhalation and exhalation be the preparation for the body? How do reasoning and deliberation be the preparation for speech? How do perception and feeling be the preparation for the mind?” Then the Arahant Therī had to explain further.

“*Assāsa passāsā kho āvuso visākha kāyikā ete dhammā kāya paṭibaddhā. Tasmā assāsa passāsā kāyasamkhāro.*”

“Friend Visākha, inhalation and exhalation are physical and bound to be associated with the body. They are therefore the preparation of the body.”

Then she continues. “*Pubbe kho āvuso visākha, vitakketvā vicāretvā pacchā vācam bhindati. Tasmā vitakka vicārā vacī samkhāro.*” Here she explains something special. “Friend Visākha, first, one reasons out and deliberates. Then expresses in speech. Therefore, reasoning and deliberation are the preparation of speech.” Then she continues, “*saññā ca vedanā ca āvuso visākha cetasikā. ete dhammā cittapaṭibaddhā. tasmā saññā ca vedanā ca citta samkhāro.*” Perceptions and feelings are mental

phenomena. They are associated with the mind. Therefore they are the preparation of the mind.

Now let us explore the implications behind these words. According to the accepted theory of *Paṭicca Samuppāda*, consciousness leading to another birth is fashioned by *samkhāra* or preparations. But, this reveals something more fantastic. You know that your breathing does not take you to the Deva world or to the lower realms. Respiration is not considered as an action – *kamma*. But inhalation and exhalation provide the rehearsal for the drama of becoming. You know that inhalation and exhalation establish the first contact with the atmosphere, at birth. They represent the subtle act of grasping. Similarly, they make the last effort at death. Let me explain this with the help of a simile. Imagine an iceberg in the ocean. What you see is only one tenth of it. Nine tenths are hidden below the sea level. Similarly, the wholesome and unwholesome deeds we consider as greatly significant are merely the visible section. The nine tenths that lie below is inhalation and exhalation. Remember I said just now that breathing does not drag you to hell. But if you take a deep breath and deal a mighty blow on someone with a rod, you'll definitely end up in hell. What I want you to understand is that our breath is similar to the invisible portion or the rehearsal of the drama of becoming.

Next *vitakka vicāra*, reasoning and deliberation in speech are similar. It was specifically mentioned that before a word is uttered *vitakka* and *vicāra* are activated. We see that the word 'rehearsal' is ideally applicable to this process as well. The mind dwells on the word by way of reasoning and deliberation before it is uttered, similar to decorating the stage before the drama begins. Lying beneath the words are the invisible preparation called *vitakka vicāra* – reasoning and deliberation.

Now look at *saññā* and *vedanā* – perception and feeling – as the process of preparation for thought. Thought, according to

the Buddha is more fascinating than a painting – *cittaññeva cittataram*.⁵ But that thought is prepared by perception and feeling. Therefore the thought is essentially a preparation, a planning, a rehearsal.

What serves as the background for this rehearsal? It's *avijjā* ignorance. *Avijjā paccayā saṁkhārā*. It is familiar to you but let's go back to *Vibhanga Sutta* for further explanation. How does the Buddha interpret *avijjā* – “*dukkhe aññāṇam, dukkha samudaye aññāṇam, dukkha nirodhe aññāṇam, dukkha nirodha gāminiyā paṭipadāya aññāṇam*.” In brief, it is ignorance of the four Noble Truths. *Aññāṇam* means ignorance. That is the background. The rehearsal is done in this dark background, by inhalation and exhalation, reasoning and deliberation, perception and feeling.

Now, for what purpose is this rehearsal? Let us find out. *Samkhāras* (preparations) are followed by *viññāna* (consciousness). *Viññāna* is followed by *nāmarūpa* (name-and-form). We have already discussed *viññāna* and *nāmarūpa* at length. Certain books, when discussing *paṭicca samuppāda*, talk of a *paṭisandhi viññāna*, consciousness leading to a birth. But the Buddha has defined *viññāna* as six-fold. “*Katamaṁ ca bhikkhave viññāṇam? Cakkhu viññāṇam, sota viññāṇam, ghāna viññāṇam, jivhā viññāṇam, kāya viññāṇam, mano viññāṇam*.” Consciousness was explained this way, as six-fold. We have on an earlier occasion given the analysis of *nāmarūpa*, in Venerable Sāriputta's words. In the Buddha's words, this is how it is defined;

“*Katamaṁ ca bhikkhave nāmarūpaṁ? saññā, vedanā, cetanā, phasso, manasikāro. Idam vuccati bhikkhave nāmaṁ. Cattāro ca mahābhūtā catunnam ca mahābhūtānaṁ upādāya rūpaṁ. Idam vuccati bhikkhave rūpaṁ*.”⁶ “What monks is name-and-form? Perception, feeling, intention, contact and attention – this is called name. The four primaries and the form that arises

with a grip on the primaries – this, monks, is called form.” That’s the explanation. The words of the Buddha. As we earlier remarked contact or *phassa* cannot be brought forward. We have compared the five-fold factors of *nāma* to the five fingers, although later interpretations varied. “*Cattāro ca mahābhūtā catunnaṃ ca mahābhūtānaṃ upādāya rūpaṃ.*” This means the perception of *rūpa* arises in accordance with the four elements, that is, with a grip on the four elements. On either side of *rūpa* are *viññāna* and *nāmarūpa*. The vortex or whirlpool that we have often referred to, is also found between these two. The drama of becoming is also manifested between them.

This can be well explained as *aññamañña paccayatā – mutual interdependence*. The bodily preparation (*kāya saṃkhāra*) the verbal preparation (*vaci saṃkhāra*) and the mental preparation (*citta saṃkhāra*) are shown as only the rehearsals for this interdependence. The final outcome of the interdependent drama between *viññāna* and *nāmarūpa* is the preparation of the five aggregates of grasping (*pañca upādānakkhanda*). We have drawn many a comparison such as the game of draughts, the game of cricket etc. to illustrate the dual nature of *viññāna*. Becoming (*bhava*) is dependent on the performance between these two teams, and an apparent continuity is thereby prepared. The final outcome of this process is the accumulation of the five-fold aggregates of grasping.

Following the identification of consciousness as two-fold, the six sense spheres begin to function as a duality. And within the six sense spheres are produced the preparations that weave the web of becoming.

It is very significant that *cetanā*, intention is included among the five-fold *nāmadhamma* – constituents of name. The meditative yogins prior to the Buddha had already realized that respiration was suffering, that reasoning and deliberation (*vitakka vicāra*) were suffering, that perception and feeling were suffering.

Although they had no clear idea of *samkhāras* or the background of ignorance, through the attainment of *Jhānas* they became aware of the coarseness of preparations. As a result they were playing a game of see-saw, as I have already mentioned. According to the Buddha, there are six kinds of pacifications.⁷ You will understand them as I explain. What are the six?

Speech is pacified in him who enters the first *Jhāna*.

Reasoning and deliberation is pacified in him who enters the second *Jhāna*.

Joy is pacified in him who enters the third *Jhāna*.

Respiration is pacified in him who enters the fourth *Jhāna*.

Perception and feeling are pacified in him who enters the attainment of cessation of perceptions and feelings.

Finally, it is said that lust, anger and delusion are pacified in the monk whose influxes are extinct.

These six steps of pacification – *passaddhi* – are mentioned in the *Saṃyutta Nikāya*. The contemporary meditators of the time had attained the pacification of speech, reasoning and deliberation as well as inhalation and exhalation through *jhāna* practice, but were unable to move beyond that. Freeing themselves from perception – *saññā* – was a problem, a challenge. We referred to it as a game of see-saw.

Their highest attainment *nevasaññānāsaññāyatana* the realm of neither perception nor non-perception is explained in the *Pañcattaya Sutta* of the *Majjhima Nikāya* as follows:

“*saññā rogo, saññā gaṇḍo, saññā sallam, asaññā sammoho etaṃ santam etaṃ paṇītam yadidaṃ nevasaññānāsaññam.*”⁸ They realized that *saññā* is a disease, a wound, a dart but the absence of *saññā* is delusion. It was not possible to relinquish it. That’s why they were playing a game of see-saw. They held on to *nevasaññā nāsaññā*, an excellent

peaceful position, *santam pañitam*, which is neither perception nor non-perception.

What is found beyond *nevasaññā nāsaññā* I have discussed it, if you remember, drawing facts from *Poṭṭhapāda Sutta* of the *Dīgha Nikāya*⁹ which holds an amazing store of facts. It records how some ascetics and Brahmins asked the Buddha for an explanation of *abhisaññā nirodha*. The Buddha said it is the stage where even *cetanā* is given up.

Why was there a confusion regarding *abhisaññā nirodha*? I wonder whether you remember I explained it earlier. *Natthi kiñci* conveys the idea that ‘there is nothing’ (nothing exists). These ascetics with their yearning for becoming, saw *natthi kiñci* as referring to some ‘thing’. They made a *samāpatti* out of it, which took them to Brahma worlds with an unlimited life span. They could not attain anything beyond this due to ignorance of preparations - *samkhāras*.

Let us see what the Buddha has to say regarding this mental state. *Poṭṭhapāda Sutta* has a valuable statement as follows; A monk who attains *ākiñcaññāyatana* thinks “*cetayamānassa me pāpiyo, acetayamānassa me seyyo. Yannūnāham na ceva ceteyyam na cābhisamkareyyam ti.*”¹⁰

Using *cetanā* (intention) at this stage is not correct. I shall refrain from *cetanā*. *Cetanā* is a gross mental state. With the determination to avoid *samkhāras* finally he attains *saññā vedayita nirodha*.

Let me explain this with the simile of the five fingers, though it was not used by the Buddha. The last finger stands for feeling (*vedanā*). The fourth finger represents perception (*saññā*). The stubborn middle finger is intention (*cetanā*). With the pacifying of *cetanā* i.e. bringing the middle finger under control, one experiences *nirodha* (cessation) which is not a ‘thing’. *Nibbāna* is signless (‘*animitta*’), undirected (‘*appañihita*’) and

void ('*suññāta*'). It is the furthest end of the three signata – impermanence, suffering and not-self.

When you arise from the attainment of cessation – *nirodha samāpatti* – your attention is focused towards the signless state (*animitta*), the undirected state (*appaṇihita*) and the void state with no soul, no continuity (*suññata*). This is the special message from the Buddha to the world, the significance of which was unknown to the meditators of the time. You could remember this mental state as *Vimokkha*.

Since preparations – *samkhāras* – is our main topic, let us discuss it further depending on the time available. *Samkhāra* which we compared to the hidden part of the iceberg, is used here in the singular. In this background called *samkhāra* there is a drama of becoming between consciousness *viññāna* and name-and-form *nāmarūpa*. We have used similes such as the game of draughts, and the game Narcissus played with water. The ultimate outcome of this drama is the accumulation of the five aggregates of grasping.

Now we come to a significant aspect of the five aggregates of grasping. There is reference to *samkhāra* in the aggregates but used in the plural as *samkhārā*. This is the point that misleads us. It is also the most intricate point in our effort to understand *Paṭicca Samuppāda*. The end result of the activity of *Paṭicca Samuppāda* is the five aggregates of grasping. You know ignorance means the ignorance of the four Noble Truths. Due to that ignorance, preparations such as inhalation and exhalation are activated. It is followed by another step where, instigated by ignorance and the delusion of consciousness, a duality arises – *viññāna* and *nāmarūpa*. This is followed by a drama. As the final outcome of the drama, a multitude of forms appear. A multitude of feelings appear. A multitude of perceptions appear. A multitude of preparations appear. A multitude of consciousness

appear. It is important to understand them as prepared preparations – *saṃkhata saṃkhārā*. It is in the plural.

The Buddha has offered a clarification to the preparations – *saṃkhārā* – found in the five aggregates of grasping.¹¹

“*Katame ca bhikkhave saṃkhārā? Chayime bhikkhave cetanā kāyā. rūpa saṃcetanā, sadda saṃcetanā, gandha saṃcetanā, rasa saṃcetanā, phoṭṭhabba saṃcetanā, dhamma saṃcetanā.*” How does the Buddha explain *saṃkhārā* in the context of *pañca upādānakkhandha*? Not the same interpretation as in *vacī saṃkhāra*. ‘*cetanā kāyā*’ means a mass of intentions.

Intentions are of six kinds. *Rūpa saṃcetanā* is intention based on form. *Sadda saṃcetanā* is intention based on sound. You can understand the rest in relation to the six sense bases. Preparations are generated through intention. They are called *saṃkhata saṃkhāra*. They are intentionally prepared.

We know that inhalation and exhalation, reasoning and deliberation, perception and feeling can be compared to stage settings. The end result of the drama of becoming performed on the stage is the five aggregates of grasping. The *Mahā Saḷāyatanika Sutta*¹² sheds enough light to clarify this matter. To explain the coming together and the falling apart of the five aggregates of grasping, it uses the terms *upacaya* and *apacaya*. The Buddha takes the six *āyatanas* – sense bases one by one. The eye, the form, the consciousness resulting from those two, the contact that arises and its resultant feeling. Unless this process is understood clearly as it is, it might lead to conflict, delusion and result in the arising of the five aggregates of grasping. One may fall into the deception of believing “this is my form, this is my feeling, this is my perception, these are my preparations and this is my consciousness.” The *Khajjanīya Sutta*¹³ in the *Saṃyutta Nikāya* deals with this subject at depth very clearly. The Buddha begins the Sutta as follows; “Monks, among ascetics and

Brahmins, whoever recalled their past births, they did so basing their recollection on the five aggregates of grasping or at least one aggregate.” What the Buddha means is that their insight into the past births is not clear enough. They see a mass of forms that belong to the past. They identify the forms as “I”. They conclude “In the past I was”. In recalling the past, in bringing the past births back to memory, certain forms come to one’s view and thinks “In the past I was”. The same process takes place regarding *vedanā* (feeling) and other aggregates. We can see here the *samkata* pattern.

The Buddha then proceeds to give an amazing analysis of each word. *Rūpa*, we said, is an aggregate of grasping (*upādānakkhandā*) *upādāna* means a mass or cluster in one’s grip. As we often remind you, the ordinary worldling has the notion of compact. Within the view of self (*sakkāya diṭṭhi*) this notion of substance is apparent. Let us break up the term *sakkāya diṭṭhi*. ‘*Sat*’ means ‘there is’. ‘*Kāya*’ is a ‘bundle’ (collection). With this notion of ‘There is a bundle’ one attempts to establish one’s identity as “I am”. What is *rūpa*? It is only a collection. It is the same with the other aggregates.

Next, let us discuss the similes associated with the *khandhas*. Form (*rūpa*) is like a cluster of foam.¹⁴ Feelings (*vedanā*) are like bubbles. Perception *saññā* is similar to a mirage. Preparations are compared to the banana trunk. Consciousness is like an illusion. Why are these called *samkata samkhāra*? They are deceptive. These similes bring out their deceptive nature. At a distance a cluster of white foam appears like a stone. It reveals itself only if you look at it scrutinizingly at very close quarters. *Rūpa* is similar to foam but an ordinary man of the world will not be able to see through *rūpa* (form). Similarly, feeling is comparable to a bubble of water floating in mid-air. When it bursts (breaks) one realizes it is nothing more than a bubble. Feeling is only a mirage. You realize a mirage is an illusion only when you chase after it. You have to keep

peeling to the centre of the banana trunk to realize it has no hard core. Such is the nature of *saṃkhāras*. Only with penetrative wisdom could one realize that *viññāna* is a magical illusion.

These similes were given by the Buddha to enable the meditators to realize the intricate nature of the subject at depth, but the ordinary people are not prepared to accept it.

The Buddha offers a very interesting etymological interpretation of the words *rūpa*, *vedanā* etc. “*kiñca bhikkhave rūpaṃ vadetha?*” Monks, what is called *rūpa*? “*Ruppātīti kho bhikkhave tasmā rūpanti vuccati*”. Monks, it is *rūpa* because it hurts, is oppressed. Then comes a further analysis. “*kena ruppati, sītena pi ruppati, jighacchāya pi ruppati, pipāsāya pi ruppati, daṃsamakasa vātā tapa sirīmsapa samphassena pi ruppati.*” This *rūpa* or body, by what is it oppressed? By cold, heat, hunger, thirst, flies.

By *ruppati*, the Buddha meant that *rūpa* is a boil. One’s attention is drawn towards the body when one is oppressed by cold, heat, hunger etc. This interpretation of ‘*ruppati*’ as ‘oppressed by’ has a very deep meaning.

Next *vedanā* is explained as *vediyati*. It means one feels, one experiences. That’s not a complicating word. What does one feel? One feels happiness, unhappiness and neither happiness nor unhappiness. *Saññā* means *sañjānāti*. Perceives, identifies. What is perceived (identified)? In terms of colours, blue, red, yellow, white. That is how *saññā* is explained. Now comes the introduction to *saṃkhāra*. It is extremely deep in meaning. The Buddha’s technique of explaining *saṃkhāra* is different. “*Kim ca bhikkhave saṃkhāre vadetha. Saṃkataṃ abhisamkarontī ti saṃkhārā.*” “Monks, what is meant by *saṃkhārā*? A special preparation of the prepared.” *Abhisamkaronti* here means, making a special preparation. *Saṃkhāra* also has the idea of preparing. *Abhisamkāra* means special preparing. Here we must

remember that the Buddha explains *saṃkhāra* in his discussion of *pañca upādānakkhandha* as “*saṃkhataṃ abhisamkharontī ti saṃkhārā*”. That is ‘a special preparation of the prepared.’ The Buddha called the body an abscess. When afflicted by cold, heat hunger, discomfort, our attention is drawn towards it.

Then comes another intricate question about *saṃkhāra*. “*Kiñca saṃkhataṃ abhisamkharontī?*” “What preparation is specially prepared?”

Rūpaṃ rūpattāya saṃkhataṃ abhisamkharontī ti. Form is prepared into form by a process of specially prepared preparation. In a similar manner, *vedanā* feeling is prepared into feeling by a process of specially prepared preparation. “*Vedanāṃ vedanattāya saṃkhataṃ abhisamkharontī.*” The third one *saññā* has to be understood in a similar manner. The most wonderful interpretation is given to *saṃkhāra*. *Samkhāre saṃkhārattāya saṃkhataṃ abhisamkharontīti saṃkhārā. Saṃkhārā* or preparations are so called because preparations are prepared into prepared form by a process of special preparation.

Then comes consciousness, “*viññāṇaṃ viññāṇattāya saṃkhataṃ abhisamkharontī*”. “Consciousness is formed into consciousness by a process of specially prepared preparation.”

This explanation of the Buddha is enough proof of the importance of *saṃkhāra*.

All the *saṃkhāras* that come under these four categories are transformed into prepared form – specially prepared form. In that case all the people live within the ‘prepared’ state. *Samkhata* means prepared but the ordinary people do not understand it due to the perception of the compact or *ghana saññā*. The purpose of giving those similes such as ‘a mass of foam’, ‘a mirage’ etc., was to clarify the perception of the compact.

We came across some important words such as *cetanā*, *saṃcetanā*, *saṃkhāra*, *abhisamkhāra*, *saṃkhata* and its opposite *asaṃkhata*. Let's study them. *Cetanā*. Going by its etymology, it means adding up. Adding together. Think of feeling – *vedanā* – arising in you when a sense organ meets the sense object. It is followed by perception. With perception there is a tendency to add up everything. That is *cetanā*, intention. We said that *cetanā* is stubborn. Then comes *saṃcetanā*. *Samcetanā* arises as *rūpa saṃcetanā*, *sadda saṃcetanā*, *gandha saṃcetanā* and so on. In *rūpa saṃcetanā*, form is treated as a thing and a process of adding up takes place. In *sadda saṃcetanā* sound is treated as a thing and *cetanā* or adding up takes place accordingly. Understand the others in the same way. That's why the Buddha explained the term *saṃkhāra* as *saṃcetanā* in relation to *pañca upādānakkhandha*. “*cha ime bhikkhave cetanā*”. There are six intentions, *kāya cetanā* (bodily intentions) such as *rūpa saṃcetanā*, *sadda saṃcetanā* and so on. Now we have given a brief account of *saṃcetanā*.

We have already discussed *saṃkhāra* or preparation. Those who are interested in Indian literature and history know how stage make-up is done before a drama. To those who watch the modern tele-dramas, ‘make-up’ is nothing new. Such is the change brought about by make-up, that even the actor cannot be identified. That deception is indicated by the term *saṃkhāra*. So we see that drama actors make full use of the *saṃkhāra* technique. The kitchen is another place where *saṃkhāra* or preparation is done before food is brought to the table. That preparation is called *saṃkhatiyo*.¹⁵ The term ‘*susamkhata*’ is used for a well prepared meal. Once placed on the table, it is totally unidentifiable. There lies deception. The term *saṃkhāra* has this quality of deception within it. ‘*Samkhata*’ is the word used to indicate things prepared for deception. They are totally misleading.

Then the term ‘*abhisamkhata*’ means specially prepared. Beneath this superficial meaning *abhisamkhata* has a deeper meaning. Let us try to explore it. These different interpretations are all expressed in the suttas. *Pabbajjābhisamkhāro*¹⁶ indicates the urgency one feels for ordination. One’s impatient urge for ordination. *Gamikābhisamkhāro* refers to one’s anxiety to undertake a journey. The keenness to start on it is so strong that, one’s wish is somehow fulfilled.

In the *Pacetana Rathakāra Vagga* of the *Anguttara Nikāya*,¹⁷ the Buddha uses an ideal simile in a discourse. This etymological analysis is based on that simile. The carpenter of King Pacetana built two wheels. He let one roll forward. When a wheel is made to roll forward, it is given some momentum. This is how it is described “*yāvaticā abhisamkhārassa gati tāvatikam gantvā cimṅagulāyitvā bhūmiyam papati.*” As long as the infused force lasted, the wheel rolled forward, twirled and collapsed on the ground. Here, we are interested in the term *abhisamkhāra*. It conveys the idea of momentum, urgency, impatience. That is exactly why the term *abhisamkhāra* is used in discussing *kamma*.

*Kāya samkhāraṃ abhisamkharoti, vacī samkhāraṃ abhisamkharoti, mano samkhāraṃ abhisamkharoti.*¹⁸ It’s here that the serious problem of the resultant aspect of actions come in – *kamma vipāka*. *Cetanā* or intention plays a major role here. We have mentioned that mere breathing does not pave the way to hell. With reference to wholesome and unwholesome actions, the three terms used are *puññābhisamkhāra*, *apuññābhisamkhāra* and *āneñjābhisamkhāra*.

Puññābhisamkhāra consists of the preparatory force to prepare another birth in the deva worlds and the human world. A pleasant birth. *Apuññābhisamkhāra* on the other hand prepares the environment for birth in hell.

The third one, *āneñjābhisamkhāra* is more complex in meaning. *Āneñja* means steadfast, unshakable. It is closely associated with the *jhānas*. It is interesting to note that unshakability is also a moving force. I shall explain it with a simile. You know how to spin a top. You wind the thread round it, jerk it and let go. The force enables it to spin round remaining in an erect position. The top stands erect but keeps spinning round. It is similar to being born in formless spheres – *arūpa loka* – and continuing to live for aeons and aeons. They experience the results of the *jhānas* they have attained, like the never ending twirl of a top. You can now understand how terrifying the *samkhāras* are. Although one never committed unwholesome actions, one has to take birth in a Brahma sphere and keep spinning endlessly. That is *āneñjābhisamkhāra*.

Consider these important facts. They indicate the fearfulness of preparations. The Buddha has always emphasized the fearful nature and the sorrowful nature of these preparations. “*Jigacchā paramā rogā, samkhāraparamā dukhā, etaṃ nātvā yathābhūtaṃ - Nibbānaṃ paramaṃ sukkaṃ.*”¹⁹

This too has come under discussion in an earlier discourse. *Jigacchā paramā rogā*. Hunger is the most severe of illnesses. Modern medical men will not agree with this statement. Today what are called ‘diseases’ are those severe deadly diseases now known. But even if all those diseases are cured, what will endure is hunger. It has been called the disease that makes you groan. Hunger makes you groan automatically although you are healthy. That’s why hunger is the most serious of diseases. *Jigacchā paramā rogā*.

Samkhāraparamā dukhā. That statement too has a deep meaning. We grieve over the superficially manifested physical ailments. The story of the spinning top suggests how deep rooted the problem is. *Samkhārā paramā dukkhā* means, suffering originated by preparations continue, even after all the other

sufferings are allayed, that it is the furthestmost of sufferings. The top spins by the force of preparations. *Samkhāras* activate the continued becoming. *Samkhāraparamā dukkhā. Etam nātvā yathābhūtam* – If one realizes this as it is, *Nibbānam paramam sukham* – *Nibbāna* is the highest bliss. At the very outset we pointed out that the very first words expressing the peaceful excellent nature of *Nibbāna* were ‘stilling of all preparations’ – ‘*sabbasamkhāra samatho*’. Can you imagine how deep it is?

In order to free oneself from continued existence, wholesome and unwholesome preparations and specific preparations have to be stilled. Inhalation and exhalation have to be stilled. Reasoning and deliberation have to be stilled. Perception and feeling have to be stilled. The ordinary people, infatuated by desire for becoming, cannot comprehend this message. This subject is discussed in detail in the *Samcetanā Sutta*²⁰ of the *Catukka Nipāta* of the *Anguttara Nikāya*. It simply takes us by surprise “*kāye vā bhikkhave sati, kāyasamcetanāhetu, uppajjati ajjhataṃ sukhadukkham. Vācāya vā bhikkhave sati, vacīsamcetanāhetu uppajjati ajjhataṃ sukhadukkham, mane vā bhikkhave sati, manosamcetanāhetu uppajjati ajjhataṃ sukhadukkham avijjāpaccayā va.*”

Let us try to simplify this to our level. *Kāye vā sati*, means there being a body, due to specific preparations of the body, there arise happiness (pleasant feelings) and suffering within. There being speech, due to intentions based on speech (words, language, vocal usage) there arise happiness and suffering within. If we consider mind to be something existing, there being mind, due to intentions based on mind, happiness and suffering arise within. One prepares these preparations for oneself, and others too prepare them and pass them to you. One experiences the happiness and suffering intentionally or unintentionally. Then the Buddha explains the more interesting and more important part of the story ‘*avijjā paccayā va*’. It is due to ignorance that we take the body to be real, speech to be real and mind to be real. Then

the Buddha explains it in the reverse order. “*Avijjāyatveva asesā virāga nirodhā so kāyo na hoti yaṃ paccayāssa taṃ uppajjati ajjhataṃ sukhadukkhāṃ, sā vācā na hoti yaṃ paccayāssa taṃ uppajjati ajjhataṃ sukhadukkhāṃ so mano na hoti yaṃ paccayāssa taṃ uppajjati ajjhataṃ sukha dukkhāṃ.*”

This is a fantastic statement, a revelation. With the complete cessation of ignorance, the body ceases to be. Speech ceases to be and mind ceases to be. Whatever happiness and suffering arose dependent on those three, they cease. The Sutta ends this way “*khettaṃ taṃ na hoti, vatthum taṃ na hoti, āyatanaṃ taṃ na hoti, adhikaraṇaṃ taṃ na hoti, yampaccayāssa taṃ uppajjati ajjhataṃ dukhadukkhāṃ.*” “Whatever field there was, whatever ground there was, whatever land there was, whatever reason there was, dependent on which suffering arose within, that is no more.” That is how suffering is brought to an end. This explanation enlightens us on the deeper implication of *saṃkhāra*. They play their part first as a rehearsal, and then assist in the drama of becoming, and finally act as the specific preparations for another birth. Such is *saṃkhata*.

There are certain verses that confuse most people. Here is one;

*Sabbe saṃkhārā aniccāti
Yadā paññāya passati
Atha nibbindatī dukkhe
Esa maggo visuddhiyā²¹*

Considering all preparations as impermanent, if one realizes it with wisdom, one would be disillusioned about suffering. That is the path towards purity.

The second verse begins with “*sabbe saṃkhārā dukkhāti yadā paññāya passati*”. If one realizes through insight that all preparations are suffering, that is the path to purification. The

third verse poses a problem to everybody with “*sabbe dhammā anattāti yadā paññāya passati.*” The problem is the use of the term ‘*dhammā*’ instead of ‘*samkhārā*’. The first verse says “All preparations are impermanent”. The second verse says “All preparations bring suffering”. The third verse says “All *dhammas* are essenceless”. That is the problem. We have explained *dhammā* as mind objects or ‘things’. According to our ancient teachers, *Nibbāna* is not a ‘thing’ but it has been misinterpreted as a ‘thing’. The *Mūla Pariyāya Sutta* which deals with this subject is beyond the understanding of many. Some tend to misinterpret *samkhata* (prepared), *asamkhata* (non-prepared) and *Nibbāna* as *asamkhata dhamma* or *asamkhata dhātu* – a non-prepared ‘thing’, which has resulted in a lot of confusion. But what really is *asamkhata*? It is the cessation of preparation.

This point is further explained in the verse “*samkhārāṇaṃ khayam nātva akataññūsi brāhmaṇa.*”²² If one can understand the elimination of preparations as described in the *Dhammapada*, then the state of *asamkhata* (non-prepared) referred to as *akata* becomes clear. To make it more lucid, take the pattern woven on this mat. If the pattern is taken as a solid object the mind may get attached to it. If one takes a penetrative look at the straws illusively woven this way and that, the mind can detach itself from the pattern. *Asamkhata* – non-preparation is similar to that. The danger here lies in considering even *asamkhata* as a ‘thing’.

In the statement ‘*sabbe dhammā anattā ti*’, *Nibbāna* is also included. When we think of *Nibbāna* as the goal we wish to reach, it takes the form of an object for the mind. I hope it is clear to everybody. It has to be taken as an object to the mind. But in the end, if *Nibbāna* is treated as a ‘thing’, we will be misled like the ancient yogis.

‘*Natthi kiñci*’ or ‘There is nothing’ is mistakenly understood as a reference to a thing. If *Nibbāna* is also treated as a thing, one can enter *Samsāra* again. This is a subtle point in the

Buddha dhamma. *Asamkhata* must be correctly understood. The verse “*anekajātisamsāram*” ends with *visamkhāragatāṃ cittaṃ taṇhānaṃ khayamajjhagā*.²³ Here the phrase *visamkhāragatāṃ cittaṃ* is very significant. The mind once dominated by preparations is now free of them. The mind is liberated. That is why it is said that the moment intentions (*cetanā*) and specific preparations are abandoned, one experiences *nirodha* – cessation. There is yet another important phrase that describes *Nibbāna*, from another perspective. “*Viññānaṃ ca anabhisamkhacca vimuttaṃ*.” The consciousness (*viññāna*) of an ordinary person is prepared, *samkhata*. But if the mind is liberated from the specific preparations of name-and-form, we have a special term to describe that mind, *anidassana viññāna*. It is the consciousness that does not display any name-and-form, and is totally liberated. *Anabhisamkhacca vimuttaṃ*²⁴ also refers to the same state of mind. Similarly, *asamkhata* simply means to emancipate oneself from the *ghana saññā* or the perception of the compact, and begin to see through the perception of a cluster.

I would like to draw your attention to another point, at this juncture. Earlier I pointed out to you that the word *samkhāra* is used in the singular as *kāya samkhāro*, *vacī samkhāro* and *citta samkhāro*, but with reference to *kamma*, it is used in the plural. For example *kāya samkhārā*, *vacī samkhārā* but *mano samkhārā* instead of *citta samkhārā*. This may be slightly confusing. We have told you that the three preparations – inhalation and exhalation, reasoning and deliberation, and perception and feeling – make up the underneath layers. But they encroach the top layer when *mana* gets recognition, that is when the mind receives objects (*dhamma*) for thought. The moment these objects or *dhammā* are treated as ‘things’, *cetanā* or intention arises. It is the objects that flow into the mind that activate the stubborn middle finger.

Let us now arrange everything in its proper order. First we used the three words *kāya samkhāro*, *vacī samkhāro* and *citta*

samkhāro with reference to the three types of preparation. If we move on to the topic of *kamma*, *kamma* that prepares the ground for another birth, the terms used are *kāya samkhārā* (in the plural), *vacī samkhārā* and instead of *citta samkhārā*, the third is *mano samkhārā*. Why? When the sense objects grasped by the sense faculties reach the mind, they are transformed into ‘things’. *Chandamūlakā āvuso sabbe dhammā*.²⁵ All dhammas have desire (*chanda*) as their root. These are complicated points, although we try to summarize them. You know *samkhāra* is a term with deep implications.

Beneath *samkhata* or ‘the prepared’ runs an undercurrent of *taṇhā*, craving. These are the words of the Buddha. “*Avijjā samphassajena bhikkhave, vedayitena phutṭhassa assutavato puthujjanassa taṇhā uppaṇṇā tatojo so samkhāro*.”²⁶ Craving (*taṇhā*) arises in ordinary worldly people, who are afflicted by ignorance. Preparation or *samkhāra* is born out of this craving. Think of respiration for example. You may give up everything but you cannot give up breathing. It’s called the most elementary level of grasping. You know how hard a person gasps for breath at death. That shows that becoming is dependent on the three subtle preparations. The external factors come in later, and continue to follow from birth to birth. The fundamental force that helps in preparation is *taṇhā*, craving. The preparation done in the darkness of ignorance is three-fold, *kāya samkhāro*, *vacī samkhāro*, *citta samkhāro*. The third preparation *citta samkhāro* becomes a *mano samkhāra*, a preparation of the mind, when it assumes a gross state, when it becomes a prepared. With the mere arising of feeling and perception, there is no accumulation of *kamma*. That is called *mano samcetanā*. You know the first two verses in the *Dhammapada*.

As the last point in the talk, we have come to the first two verses of the *Dhammapada*.

Mano pubbaṅgamā dhammā

*Mano seṭṭhā manomayā
Manasā ce paduṭṭhena*

The subject discussed here is the mind – *mana*. The mind takes the responsibility, being in the forefront of mental objects – *dhammā*. Wholesome or unwholesome intentions *cetanā* are activated at this point. *Kamma* is thus accumulated.

Try to understand all the points we discussed today. We talked about *saṅkhāra*, *abhisāṅkhāra*, *cetanā*, *saṃcetanā*, *saṅkhata* and *asaṅkhata*. The summary of the talk is contained in these words. You can now understand the significance of the Buddha’s words “*Yaṃ kiñci dukkhaṃ sambhōti - sabbhaṃ saṅkhāra paccayā*.” But it is not a very popular statement.

It is very amusing to see that the most fascinating (interesting) ‘song’ in the Buddha’s teaching is the last thing we hear on earth.²⁷

*Aniccā vata saṅkhārā
Uppāda vaya dhammino
Uppajjitvā nirujjhanti
Tesaṃ vūpasamo sukho.*

To tell you the truth, my first impulse was to begin this discourse with this verse. But I knew you would walk out on hearing it. That’s why I brought it out last. “*Aniccā vata saṅkhārā*” is one of the most profound verses. But it has faced the same fate as the *Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta*. Both have been reduced to the level of a pumpkin among the funeral rites. But you can see that this verse carries a message at its very depth. *Aniccā vata saṅkhārā* – *uppāda vaya dhammino* – Impermanent are all preparations. They are of the nature of arising and passing away. *Uppajjitvā nirujjhanti* – They arise and cease. *Tesaṃ vūpasamo sukho* – Their pacification is bliss.

Now let's enrich this treasure of a verse with another Buddha word.

*Aniccā vata saṃkhārā
Uppāda vaya dhammino
Uppajjitvā nirujjhanti
Tesaṃ vūpasamo sukho.*

That is all the verse says, but let us expand on it. In the *saṃkhāras* referred to in the above verse, from inhalation and exhalation to the more gross preparations called *abhisamkhāra*, the nature of arising and ceasing is evident. “*Uppāda vaya dhammino*”. But there occurs a more revealing exposition of *saṃkhata*.²⁸ “*Tīṇimāni bhikkhave saṃkhatassa saṃkhata lakkhaṇāni*” Monks, three main characteristics are seen in preparations that have been prepared. What are they? “*Uppādo paññāyati, vayo paññāyati, thitassa aññathattam paññāyati.*” An arising is visible, a cessation is visible. Furthermore, “*thitassa aññathattam*” ‘*thiti*’ means ‘being’ “continuing”. While being, (while continuing) a change is visible. We saw that *saṃkhāra* has only an arising and ceasing. But regarding *saṃkhata* there is an arising, a passing away and an otherwiseness of the (apparently) static. The Buddha explains ‘*thitassa aññathattam*’ – ‘a turning otherwise of the apparently static state’ – what is mistakenly seen as ‘being, continuing, enduring’ undergoes change. The essence of the problem lies hidden there.

Now let us understand what is called *asamkhata dhātu*. You have heard that *asamkhata* refers to *Nibbāna*. This is how it is described. “*Tīṇimāni bhikkhave asamkhatassa asamkhata lakkhaṇāni*”. In the non-prepared state three non-prepared characteristics are to be found. What are the three? Arising is not found, cessation is not found, a change of an apparent static state is not found. With the cessation of consciousness, with the cessation of name-and-form, with the cessation of six sense spheres, everything ceases. There is no possibility of arising and

ceasing again. That is the point we tried to drive in, through our sermons on *Nibbāna*. A sphere or *āyatana*²⁹ is mentioned. Many did not understand the use of the term *āyatana* here. In this sphere, there is no going. There is no coming. There is no being. There is no continuing. There is no anything.

That is the explanation to *asamkhata*. We have tried our best to put across as much as we could within one hour. Try to digest them well. Try to understand them from diverse perspectives. What do I mean? All these years you have been listening to the conventional interpretation of *Paṭicca Samuppāda* where *samkhāra* (preparations) are supposed to prepare a *paṭisandhi viññāna* (a consciousness leading to another birth). Now you know it is not correct. It has two meanings, within the terms *samkhāra*, *abhisamkhāra samkhata*.

The purpose behind our explanation is not to argue or challenge, but merely to put the listeners into correct view. Meditation cannot proceed on misconceived views. Try and maintain the perfectly correct understanding in order to continue on this journey.

You have observed the valuable precepts and spent the day in meditation, as usual. You have developed awareness and mindfulness. You must also apply to your meditational practices, the contents of this discourse which will lead you to insight. Make the determination to attain the four stages on the path to emancipation, before the light of the Dhamma goes out.

Whatever beings there are, from the lowest to the highest state of existence, who wish to share in the merits of listening to this discourse, may they accomplish their aspirations and attain the peace of *Nibbāna*!



1. Sn. 142 *Dvayatānupassanā Sutta*
2. A. V 110 *Girimānanda Sutta*
3. S. II 4 *Vibhaṅga Sutta*
4. M. I 301 *Cūla Vedalla Sutta*
5. S. III 151 *Dutiya Gaddulabaddha Sutta*
6. S. II 3f. *Vibhaṅga Sutta*
7. S. IV 217f. *Rahogata Sutta*
8. M. II 231 *Pañcattaya Sutta*
9. D. I 180 *Poṭṭhapāda Sutta*
10. D. I 184f. *Poṭṭhapāda Sutta*
11. S. III 60 *Upādāna Privattha Sutta*
12. M. III 287-290 *Mahā Saḷāyatanika Sutta*
13. S. III 86-91 *Khajjanīya Sutta*
14. S. III 140-143 *Phenapindūpama Sutta*
15. M. I 448 *Laṭukikopama Sutta*
16. Ud. 57 *Soṇa Sutta*
17. A. I 111f.
18. M. I 389f. *Kukkuravatiya Sutta*
19. Dh. v 277 *Sukha Vagga*
20. A. II 157-159 *Samcetanā Sutta*
21. Dh. v 277 *Magga Vagga*
22. Dh. v 383 *Brāhmana Vagga*
23. Dh. v 154 *Jarā Vagga*
24. S. III 53f. *Udāna Sutta*
25. A. IV 339 *Kim Mūlaka Sutta*
26. S. III 96 *Pārileyaka Sutta*
27. D. II 157 *Mahā Parinibbāna Sutta*
28. A. I 152
29. Ud. 80 *Paṭhama Nibbāna Sutta*

Sermon 14 (Pahan Kanuwa Sermon – No. 196)

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

Idaṃ jātu vedagu – idaṃ jātu sabbaji
*idaṃ jātu apalikhatam – gaṇḍamūlam palikhaṇinti*¹

This is the perfect mastery of the Veda
This is called victory over all
This is the extraction of the root of the abscess hitherto
unextracted

– *Uddaka Sutta, Saṃyutta Nikāya*

Dear Listeners,

Any person with an inquiring eye could see that all activities pertaining to the continuum of life of beings in *Samsāra* take place within the six sense spheres. The internal sense spheres, namely the eye, ear, nose, tongue, body and mind are referred to as *saḷāyatana* in the teaching of the Law of Dependendant Arising. These six internal sense spheres coordinate with the six external sense bases i.e. external objects, sound, smell, taste, body contact and mental objects (*dhamma*). They attract the worldlings towards the vortex between consciousness and name-and-form.

We have chosen as the topic for this fourteenth discourse on *Paṭicca Samuppāda* a verse from the *Uddaka Sutta* of the *Saḷāyatana Saṃyutta* in the *Saṃyutta Nikāya*. On a certain occasion the Buddha addressing the monks recalled a certain past incident. “Monks, Uddaka Rāmaputta used to declare thus:”

“*Idaṃ jātu vedagu – idaṃ jātu sabbaji*
idaṃ jātu apalikhatam – gaṇḍamūlam palikhaṇinti”

Let's go through the meaning first. '*Idam jātu vedagu*' means "This is the perfect mastery of the *Veda*." "*idam jātu sabbaji*" means "This is called victory over all." "*Idam jātu apalikhatam - gaṇḍamūlam palikhaṇinti*" "This is the extraction of the root of the abscess hitherto unextracted." After uttering this verse the Buddha makes an unusual remark. "Monks, although Uddaka made this joyous utterance, it is only a monk in this dispensation who is qualified to do so." Then he proceeds to reinterpret this puzzle-like verse. "Monks, how does one gain mastery over the *Vedas*? "*Yato kho bhikkhave bhikkhu channaṃ phassāyatanānaṃ samudayaṇca atthagamaṇca assādaṇca ādīnavaṇca nissaranaṇca yathābhūtaṃ pajānāti, evaṃ kho bhikkhave bhikkhu vedagu hoti.*" "To the extent a monk realizes with wisdom, the six spheres of contact as they really are, with regard to their arising, ceasing, satisfaction, perils and stepping out, to that extent, he will have mastery of the *Vedas*."

The second question is then taken up. "Monks, how can one become a *sabbaji*, one who is victorious over all"? Then comes the explanation, similar to the first one. "*Yato kho bhikkhave bhikkhu channaṃ phassāyatanānaṃ samudayaṇca atthagamaṇca assādaṇca ādīnavaṇca nissaranaṇca, yathābhūtaṃ veditvā anupādāya vimutto hoti.*" He who realizes with wisdom the six spheres of contact earlier mentioned, with regard to their arising, ceasing, satisfaction, perils and stepping out, and will attain release with total detachment, such a person is *sabbaji*, a man who is victorious overall.

"Monks, how can one say that the root of the abscess so far unextracted, has now been extracted?" This is a more puzzling statement than the earlier two. "Monks *gaṇḍa* or abscess is a synonym for the body composed of the four primaries earth, water, heat and wind, born of mother and father, composed of gross food, inheriting the quality of impermanence, having the nature of rubbing, massaging, breaking up and scattering"

“What, monks, is the root of the abscess (*gaṇḍamūla*)? The root of the abscess is a synonym for craving. Monks to what extent can you say that the root of the abscess has been extracted? If a monk has eliminated craving, uprooted it, destroyed it like an uprooted palm, reduced to a state of non-arising, such a monk can be called one who has extracted the root of the abscess hitherto unextracted.

According to this explanation offered by the Buddha, we see that *vedagu* is a term borrowed from the Brahmins. From a religious point of view it means a person who has reached mastery over all knowledge. According to the specific interpretation of the Buddha, surpassing all knowledge means the perfect realization of the fivefold activity of the six sense spheres. Similarly victory over all refers to the above mentioned perfect realization of the sense spheres accompanied by the perfect release from all clinging towards them. It is by now clear that both “Mastery over all” and “Victory over all” must be understood in relation to the six sense spheres.

Since we have been referring to ‘*sabba*’ – ‘all’, I would like to introduce to you the *Sabba Sutta* of the *Saḷāyatana Saṃyutta*² for the purpose of supportive proof. *Sabba* means all. Once the Buddha addressed the monks and said “Monks, I shall explain to you ‘all’. Listen to me carefully.” “*Kiñca bhikkhave sabbam? Cakkhuñca rūpāca, sotañca saddā ca, ghānañca gandhā ca, jivhā ca rasā ca, kayo ca phoṭṭhabbā ca, mano ca dhammā ca.*” “The eye and external objects, the ear and sounds, the nose and smells, the tongue and tastes, the body and body contacts, the mind and mental objects. This is called ‘all’ – ‘*sabba*’. Following this explanation the Buddha offers an amazing challenge as follows; “*Yo bhikkhave evaṃ vadeyya.*” Monks if anyone were to say thus, “*Ahametaṃ sabbam paccakkhāya aññaṃ sabbam paññāpessāmi*” I disprove of that *sabba*, and declare another *sabba* in its place.” “Monks, that would amount to nothing more than foolish prattling. If

questioned he would be dumbfounded. Why? Because he has no understanding of the subject.” The Buddha thus confirms the meaning of *sabba*.

We come across another similar explanation in the *Salāyatana Saṃyutta* itself. Venerable Samiddhi approaches the Buddha with a question. “*Loko loko ti Bhante vuccati, kittāvatā nu kho bhante loko vā assa lokapaññatti vā ti.*”³ “Lord, reference is made to a world, a world. To what extent is there a world or the manifestation of a world?” The Buddha replies as follows; “*Yattha kho Samiddhi atthi cakkhu, atthi rūpā, atthi cakkhuvīññāṇaṃ, atthi cakkhuvīññāṇā viññātabbā dhammā, atthi tattha loko vā lokapaññatti vā.*” Since the detailed explanation of the other senses is similar to that of *cakkhu*, let us confine our explanation to *cakkhu*. You will understand the rest. “Samiddhi, wherever an eye is present, and external objects are present, visual consciousness is present, phenomena that should be known through eye consciousness are present, there exists a world or the manifestation of a world.” This is followed by the description of other sense organs and lastly the mind. “Samiddhi wherever a mind is present, mental objects are present, mind consciousness is present, phenomena that should be known through mind consciousness are present, there exists a world or the manifestation of a world.” Now, he explains the reverse of it. “Samiddhi, wherever the eye does not exist, external forms do not exist, eye consciousness does not exist, phenomena that should be known through eye consciousness do not exist, there exists neither a world nor the manifestation of a world.” This explanation indicates that there is a state where the six sense spheres become non-existent.

Let us now change over to a *Sutta* we have often referred to earlier, the first *Sutta* of the *Dīgha Nikāya*. It’s the *Brahmajāla Sutta* that casts a net over sixty two views by way of rejecting them. After a critical review of these views the Buddha says that whatever views exist then, whatever views existed in the past,

and whatever views may arise in the future, can be categorized under these sixty two views. Then the Buddha has some interesting comment to make about the formulators of these views. “Monks, all those ascetics and Brahmins who hold views under these sixty two categories, to quote the Pāli words “*sabbe te chahi phassāyatanehi phussa phussa paṭisaṃvedenti.*”⁴ The different views they declare are based on various sense contacts they experience through the sense spheres.

What is the outcome of formulating views based on feelings gained through sense spheres? *Vedanā paccayā taṇhā, taṇhā paccayā upādānaṃ, upādāna paccayā bhavo, bhava paccayā jāti, jāti paccayā jarā maraṇa soka parideva.*” To them, from feeling as condition there arises craving, from craving as condition there arises grasping, from grasping as condition there arises becoming, from becoming as condition there arises birth, from birth as condition there arises decay, death, grief, lamentation. Since all these views have sprung up from feelings generated through contact with sense spheres, the ascetics and Brahmins who profess them are led from feeling to craving, from craving to grasping, from grasping to becoming. You see, they have no escape from *Samsāra*.

Next the discussion turns towards the identification of the real monk. In defining the term *vedagu* as ‘one who has mastery over all’ ascetics and Brahmins have based their interpretation on views. But the Buddha’s declaration is founded on a different footing. “*channaṃ phassāyatanānaṃ samudayaṃ ca atthagamaṃ ca assādaṃ ca ādīnaṃ ca nissaraṇaṃ ca yathābhūtaṃ pajānāti. Ayaṃ imehi sabbeheva uttaritaraṃ pajānāti.*” At any time in my dispensation a monk who understands with wisdom, the six bases of contact as they really are, with regard to their arising, ceasing, satisfaction, perils and stepping out, he far excels those others in his wisdom.” That is how the Buddha explains the word *vedagu*.

The discussion about *Salāyatana* continues further. There is another *Sutta* similar to the *Sabba Sutta* mentioned earlier. On this occasion the Buddha takes the monks by surprise by addressing them thus:⁵ “*Dvayaṃ vo bhikkhave desessāmi*” Monks I will teach you ‘two’. What are the two? “*Cakkhuñceva rūpā ca, sotañceva saddā ca, ghānañceva gandhā ca, jivhāceva rasā ca, kāyoceva poṭṭhabbā ca, manoceva dhammā ca.*” Each internal sense organ is stated together with its external sense object, the eye with forms, the ear with sounds, the nose with smells, the tongue with tastes, the body with body contacts and the mind with mental objects.

Here too the Buddha’s challenge vibrates: “This is the ‘two’. Anyone who says there is another ‘two’ apart from this, is only jabbering away like a fool. He cannot prove it.” It is further confirmed by the *Dvayaṃ Sutta* as well.

In this discussion about *salāyatana*, we made reference to *salāyatana nirodha*.” We have time and again explained in our discourses, that *Nibbāna* means the release from the six sense spheres in this world itself. It is the same as *nissaraṇa*. Now you see that cessation of the six sense spheres – *salāyatana nirodha* – is attainable within this life. That realization dawns within the *Arahatphala samāpatti*. *Nibbāna* is really the attainment of that *samāpatti*.

Now I wish to switch over to another *sutta* to continue my explanation . After the evening retreat Venerable Mahā Koṭṭhita came to meet Ven Sāriputta one day. He asked him a very complicating question indeed.⁶ “Friend Sāriputta, *channaṃ phassāyatanānaṃ asesā virāga nirodhā atthaññaṃ kiñci?*” “At the total cessation of the six spheres of contact, is there anything else left?” Venerable Sāriputta rejects the question altogether by saying “*māhevaṃ āvuso*” “Do not ask thus.” But Venerable Mahā Koṭṭhita pursued his questioning. “At the total cessation of the

six spheres of contact, isn't there anything else left?" Venerable Sāriputta's response was the same as earlier.

The third question was a combination of the first two questions. Is there and isn't there anything else left? That alternative was also rejected by Venerable Sāriputta. The final question was "At the total cessation of the six spheres is there anything that neither exists nor non-exists." Venerable Sāriputta again said "*māhevaṃ āvuso.*" Then Venerable Mahā Koṭṭhita plainly asked him "Friend, how can I understand what you say?"

Now comes Venerable Sāriputta's explanation. If one says that at the total cessation of the six sense spheres of contact there is something left, it would amount to – here he uses an unusual word – *appapañcaṃ papañceti*. I have explained this word *papañca* on earlier occasions to you. '*Appapañcaṃ papañceti*' means using linguistic jargon in an inappropriate place. Seeing it at depth, it is proliferating or arguing where argument must not take place.

The question whether there remains anything at the total cessation of the six sense spheres is in itself flawed. So are all the dilemmas and the quadrilemmas. They are all proliferations of theorists, as we have often reminded you.

That is why Venerable Sāriputta rejected them all as irrelevant. All four aspects of the argument are labeled as '*appapañcaṃ papañceti*', 'proliferating where proliferation must not take place'.

And finally he concludes by saying "*Yāvatā āvuso channaṃ phassāyatanānaṃ gati, tāvatā papañcassa gati. Yāvatā papañcassa gati, tāvatā channaṃ phassāyatanānaṃ gati.*" "Friend, as far as the six sense spheres reach, that far the proliferation reaches. As far as the proliferation reaches, that far the six sense spheres reach." "*Channaṃ āvuso phassāyatanānaṃ aśesa virāga nirodhā papañcanirodho papañcavūpasamo.*"

“Friend, with the total cessation of the six sense spheres, proliferation ceases, proliferation pacifies.” *Papañcanirodha* is a synonym for *Nibbāna*. Proliferation is impossible where the six sense spheres have ceased. We can see this *sutta* is extremely enlightening although it is deep.

In order to delve a little deeper into the subject, I wish to recall another *sutta* very briefly for our purpose. At the end of a discourse the Buddha once spoke thus to the Monks. “*Tasmātiha Bhikkhave, se āyatane veditabbe yattha cakkhuñca nirujjhati, rūpasaññā ca virajjati. se āyatane veditabbe, yattha sotañca nirujjhati saddasaññā ca virajjati.*”⁷ It goes on in a similar strain. I shall explain the first. You must try to understand the rest.

“Monks, therefore this sphere should be understood, this sphere which is very unusual. The eye is extinct there. Perception of external forms fade away. The ear is extinct. Sounds fade away. The nose is extinct. Smells fade away.” He continues until he winds up with “*mano ca nirujjhati, dhammasaññā ca virajjati.*” The mind is extinct. Perception of cognizable objects fade away. Thereby the Buddha finally firmly establishes the fact that “this sphere must be understood, this sphere must be understood.”

After this brief admonition, the Buddha leaves the assembly and withdraws to the monastery. He left his statements unexplained. The monks thought “The Buddha left us steeped in an unexplained puzzle. Perhaps we could seek a clarification from Venerable Ānanda who has been often complimented by the Buddha for his lucid explanations.” When the puzzle was presented to Venerable Ānanda, he though reluctantly, responded thus. “Well, let me give my brief comments to the problem, the way I understand it: *Salāyatana nirodham kho āvuso bhagavatā sandhāya bhāsitam.*” “Friends, the Buddha has spoken with reference to the cessation of the six sense spheres.” Earlier we

have explained that *saḷāyatana nirodha* is a synonym for *Nibbāna*. Here the Buddha refers to the cessation of the six spheres as a special *āyatana*. This has often posed a problem to the scholars.

It is now clear that crossing over this world is the extinction of the *saḷāyatana*, the six sense spheres. It is a state where one acquires mastery over all. There are many more references to this attainment in the texts. On one occasion, two giant tuskeders in wisdom, Venerable Mahā Koṭṭhita and Venerable Sāriputta, accost each other over a very subtle doctrinal issue. You must understand that their discussions are done solely for our benefit. Venerable Mahā Koṭṭhita questions.⁸ “The *saṃyojanas* or fetters are bonds. Is the eye bonded by external forms, or are external forms bonded by the eye? Is the ear bonded by sounds, or are sounds bonded by the ear? Is the nose bonded by the smells or are the smells bonded by the nose?” He goes on and lastly asks “Is the mind bonded by cognizable objects or are cognizable objects bonded by the mind?” Venerable Sāriputta’s response was as follows; “No friend, the eye is not bonded by external forms, neither are forms bonded by the eye. The ear is not bonded by sounds, neither are sounds bonded by the ear. But if lustful sensuality arises dependent on those two, that is the bond.” Next in order to illustrate this point, he cites an example. “In case, friend, a black ox and a white ox are tethered by the same chain, one cannot say that the black ox is bonded by the white ox or the white one is bonded by the black one, which statements are both inapplicable. The bond is the chain between them. Similarly friend, the eye is not bonded by forms, neither are external forms bonded by the eye. The bond is the lustful sensuality that is generated between the two. The bond is attachment.”

Let me bring in another episode by way of a simile. I know you like stories. This was related to a group of monks on a certain occasion.⁹ “Monks, one evening, a certain tortoise crossed

the river, and was going in search of food. At the same time a fox was also walking about in search of food. The tortoise saw the fox at a distance and withdrew his limbs and head into the shell. He lay there as good as dead. The fox too saw the tortoise and kept guard by him hoping to snatch off a limb the moment one comes out. But the tortoise continued his vigil, remaining perfectly still. The fox was compelled to give up hopes and depart.

Next comes the comparison. “Monks, remember that Māra is keeping constant vigil over you just like that fox, hoping to break in through your eye, or to break in through your ear.” The Buddha teaches the technique of guarding oneself from the Māra. He brings in the secret of restraining one’s senses, as he often does. “*Cakkhunā rūpam disvā na nimittaggāhī hoti, nānubyañjanaggāhī hoti.*” “Monks, on seeing an external object do not take in its characteristics or occupy yourself with its attributes.” The two terms *nimitta* and *anubyañjana* have to be differentiated. To cite an example, seeing an attractive form is *nimittaggāhī*, being drawn towards it, observing more attributes that make the form attractive is *anubyañjana*. That is *nimittaggāhī* and *anubyañjanaggāhī*. Here the Buddha tries to explain the results of getting attracted to form and searching for more of its attractive attributes. It generates influxes and leads one to deterioration. “If monks, you keep the six doors closed, Māra will withdraw defeated.” Due to that restraint of the senses, one could avoid committing evil actions through the six sense doors, like the tortoise who keeps his limbs withdrawn.

Next see the beauty of that simile converted into verse by the Buddha.

*Kummova aṅgāni sake kapāle
samodahaṃ bhikkhu manovitakke
anissito aññaṃaheṭṭhayāno
parinibbuto na upavadeyya kañci*

Just as a tortoise withdraws his head and limbs into its shell, a monk withdraws into himself against the mental reflections that are generated by the five sense bases – with the eye chasing behind visual objects and the ear chasing behind auditory objects etc. He keeps guard over the sense bases. Then ‘*anissito aññamaheṭṭhayāno*’ he does not lean against anything and ‘*na upavadeyya*’ does not blame anybody, does not harass anybody. ‘*Parinibbuto*’ He attains extinction.

Here we see that with reference to sense restraint the Buddha has taught the path leading to cessation or the total departure from the six sense spheres. When we touch on *saḷāyatana*, the topic of contact crops up. Since we have referred to the spheres of contact when discussing the *Paṭicca Samuppāda*, I think the following *sutta* will be of interest to you, though deep in meaning.¹⁰ The monk Moliya Phaggaṇa asked the Buddha “*ko nu kho bhante phusati?*” “Lord, who is it that touches?” This monk, due to his notion of self, seems to imagine there is a person who touches. The Buddha replies, “I do not say there is anyone who touches. Had I said so, your question would have been relevant. But since I do not say so, your question should be “*kimpaccayā nu kho bhante phasso?*” The Buddha corrects the question Moliya Phaggaṇa had asked. “Dependent on what is contact Sir?” It is not appropriate to refer to ‘anybody’ touching. “And my answer would be *Saḷāyatana paccayā phasso, phassa paccayā vedanā.*” “Dependent on the six sense spheres is contact. Dependent on contact is feeling.” Feeling being a new topic for Moliya Phaggaṇa, he got hold of it for further probing. He questioned “*ko nu kho bhante vedeti?*” Who is it Lord, who feels?”

Again the Buddha replied, “I do not say a person feels. Had I said so, your question would have been relevant. Since my statement is different, your question is inappropriate. This is how you should have questioned me. “*Kimpaccayā nu kho bhante vedanā?*” Conditioned by what, Lord, is feeling? If you put the

question in that form, I would answer thus: *Phassa paccayā vedanā, vedanā paccayā taṇhā.*” The Buddha introduced a term hitherto unspoken of i.e. *taṇhā*. Being in a questioning mood, Mōḷiya Phaggaṇa’s immediate response was “Lord, who is it that craves?”. This is the Buddha’s reply: “I do not say that anyone does the craving. The appropriate question would be “*Kim paccayā nu kho bhante taṇhā?*” and the Buddha continues in his own style “*vedanā paccayā taṇhā, taṇhā paccayā upādānaṃ.*” Concealed within this style of replying is something amazing. Please try to understand its significance. I shall explain it with a simile. Imagine an artist who wishes to draw a link in a chain. If he draws only one solitary link, identifying it would be difficult, don’t you think? He has to at least draw half of a link on either side, for the chain to take shape. Now I hope you understand why the Buddha added an extra link which Mōḷiya Phaggaṇa did not inquire about. It is to make him realize that this is a chain.

Salāyatana paccayā phassa” ‘Dependent on the six sense spheres contact comes to be’. The Buddha did not stop at that. He introduced *phassa paccayā vedanā*. I am sure you understand that the Buddha very effectively introduces the Law of Dependent Arising at each link. He overstepped the valid answer by annexing *vedanā* to his explanation. Venerable Mōḷiya Phaggaṇa got caught up in it. The Buddha led him on to *taṇhā* and finally to *upādāna*. Ultimately it shows that, whatever we speak in day to day usage, the Buddha firmly makes explicit the depth of the reality of *Paṭicca Samuppāda*. No one does the contacting. From *salāyatana* arises contact, *phassa*. From *phassa* arises feeling – *vedanā*. So it continues. You see what an important *sutta* this is.

If we were to go deeper into the subject, I am reminded of an occasion where a group of monks relate an experience of theirs to the Buddha.¹¹ “Lord, certain ascetics and Brahmins in other sects ask us “For what purpose do you lead the higher life under the Buddha? What is the aim of your renunciation? Then Lord we reply like this ‘We have renounced for the realization of

dukkha, suffering. Our aim is to understand *dukkha*.' Lord, in replying so, are we speaking in accordance with your teaching, or are we contradicting you? We have come to you for clarification."

The Buddha replies, "Well done monks. Your replies are perfectly correct. Suppose they ask you what this *dukkha* is that you wish to realize, then you must reply as follows." To put it in English "The eye is suffering, material forms are suffering. Eye consciousness is suffering. Eye contact is suffering, all the feelings both pleasant and unpleasant that arise through eye contact are suffering." You have to understand the other sense spheres similarly. You know quite well that under the four Noble Truths, the five aggregates of grasping are referred to as *dukkha*. Here the Buddha explains *dukkha* in terms of *saḷāyatana*, instead of the *pañca upādānakkhandha*. It exposes the nature of suffering with the six sense spheres.

There are several *suttas* of this nature that try to reveal the impermanent nature of the *saḷāyatanas*. One is the *Dutiya Dvayaṃ Sutta*¹² which closely follows the *Dvayaṃ Sutta* we discussed earlier. There the Buddha declares "*Dvayaṃ bhikkhave paṭicca viññāṇaṃ sambhoti.*" Monks the consciousness arises dependent on two. It does not arise without a cause. Two come together to give rise to consciousness. "*Cakkhuṃ ca paṭicca rūpe ca uppajjati cakkhu viññāṇaṃ.*" Dependent on the eye and the visual object, there arises visual consciousness. In a similar manner, the ear and sound give rise to auditory consciousness. Each consciousness is dependently arisen. It goes to prove that always "arising takes place dependent on two."

The next important statement is "*tiṇṇaṃ saṃgati phasso*". The implication here is quite deep. Let us discuss it now. The eye consciousness arises depending on the eye and the material object. Not being aware of this dependent nature, not being able to understand it, the moment it is treated as 'three' it becomes

contact. Based on the eye and form, there arises eye consciousness. But at this point if it is treated as three, “*tiṅṅam saṃgati phassa*” then, contact arises. This is a very deep aspect of *phassa*, contact. We usually say “somebody touched” in ordinary language, being ignorant of reality as it is. But here it is specifically explained that contact does not arise devoid of a dependent cause. We have repeatedly reminded you that an unspecified *viññāna* does not arise just as a fire does not arise without a dependent cause. If it is consciousness, it has to be either eye consciousness, or ear consciousness, nose consciousness, tongue consciousness, body consciousness or lastly mind consciousness. But you must remember, neither of these is stored up somewhere. They arise with the coming together of two. That is where the ‘*dvayam*’ interpretation comes in. That alone is the secret in the *Paṭicca Samuppāda*. Fire never arises on its own independently. Whatever causes a fire, that fire is identified by that name.¹³ A fire caused by paper or firewood or straw or paddy husk is identified each by the dependent cause. Similarly, a consciousness caused by the eye and the material form coming together is identified as *cakkhu viññāna*, visual consciousness.

But due to ignorance, or foolishness, if one does not heed the fact that eye consciousness arises dependent on those two causes, and treats everything as ‘one’, he would see ‘contact’ as real, and give chase behind the illusory image. The eye is here, the material form is there. He runs after the mirage. This explains a very deep aspect of consciousness.

Now we have explored several aspects of the useful topic *saḷāyatana*. We told you at the outset that one has to know the dependent causes of arising in order to get a perfect understanding of the *saḷāyatana*. So also one has to know their cessation, their satisfaction and perils. Then comes *nissaraṇa* or stepping out of the attraction towards *saḷāyatana*.

Next, I wish to discuss with you a very important *sutta* called the *Salāyatana Sutta* in the *Majjhima Nikāya*.¹⁴ It can be considered as the most important discourse on the six sense spheres. Here you find the Buddha doing a comparative analysis. On one side is the ordinary worldling who understands the six sense spheres at his mental level, and the satisfaction and perils that he experiences. On the other hand a person who has a realistic vision of the *salāyatana*, being convinced of the temporary nature of enchantment and the inherent unpleasantness, obtains release from them. This is how the Buddha commences his comparison.

“*Cakkhum bhikkhave ajānaṃ apassaṃ yathābhūtaṃ rūpe ajānaṃ apassaṃ yathābhūtaṃ cakku viññāṇaṃ ajānaṃ apassaṃ yathābhūtaṃ*” and he goes on. Let’s study the meanings. “*jānaṃ passaṃ*” means knowledge and vision. Not having knowledge and vision of the true nature of the eye as it is and external objects as they are – ‘as it is’ must be understood with regards to impermanence – not seeing the impermanence, not seeing the eye consciousness as it is, which is the outcome of those two, and not seeing eye contact as it is, and not seeing the resultant pleasant, unpleasant and neither pleasant nor unpleasant feelings, as they really are, one develops attachment towards the eye – “*cakkhusmiṃ sārājati*” – to the external objects, to the eye consciousness, to the eye contact and to the pleasant, unpleasant and neither pleasant nor unpleasant feelings resulting from eye contact. Now you can understand the entanglement of the worldlings with the six spheres. Did you notice that the clinging runs into the mind as well? Unable to understand the mind wisely as it really is, one gets attached to the mind, the mental phenomena that the mind focuses on, the mind consciousness, mind contacts and feelings arising thereof. Then the resultant perils of this process are discussed “*tassa sārattassa samyuttassa sammūlhasa assādānupassino viharato āyatim pañcupādānakkhandhā upacayaṃ gacchanti.*” That worldling, due to his ignorance, firmly clings to, and gets bound to the above

mentioned sense spheres, sense objects and the resultant consciousness, so that caught in the deception of apparent pleasure, he gets into deep trouble. “*Āyatim pañcupādānakkhandhā*” he accumulates the fivefold aggregates of grasping, again. As a result of gripping the temporary mass of phenomena that pass by, one develops the fivefold aggregates of grasping. Then its perils are explained. “*Tassa kāyikā pi darathā pavaḍḍhanti. Cetasikā pi darathā pavaḍḍhanti. Kāyikā pi santāpā pavaḍḍhanti. Cetasikā pi santāpā pavaḍḍhanti. Kāyikā pi pariḷāhā pavaḍḍhanti. Cetasikā pi pariḷāhā pavaḍḍhanti. So kāyadukkhampi cetodukkhampi paṭisaṃvedeti.*” These are the perils he has to experience. His physical distresses increase. His mental distresses increase. His physical pains increase. His mental pains increase. His physical burnings increase. His mental burnings increase. He experiences a mass of physical and mental grief. This explanation deals with the worldly aspect. Now look at the opposite aspect.

“*Cakkhuñca kho bhikkhave jānaṃ passaṃ yathābhūtaṃ rūpe jānaṃ passaṃ yathābhūtaṃ cakkuviññānaṃ jānaṃ passaṃ yathābhūtaṃ, cakkusamphassaṃ jānaṃ passaṃ yathābhūtaṃ.*” Thus continues the account. If one were to see the eye as it really is, which means to see the impermanent nature of the eye, and the physical objects as they really are, and see the resultant eye consciousness as impermanent in its very nature, and also the eye contact, and feeling as they really are, such a person – such a monk – who disciplines himself in this dispensation, seeing the perils of the sensory activity, undergoes this wonderful change.

Tassa pañcupādānakkhandā apacayaṃ gacchanti. The five aggregates of grasping diminish in him. Compare this with the worldling. Every experience is accumulated in his mind. He accumulates the relevant material objects as his own aggregate of form, and the feelings as his own heap of feelings. This is what leads him on in *Samsāra*. But the disciplined monk, in contrast, sees impermanence then and there. Nothing remains as residue.

Therefore, “*apacayaṃ gacchati*” they are gradually exhausted. Here *upacaya* and *apacaya* stand for *Samsāra* and *Nibbāna* respectively. The Buddha attempts to illustrate how the mind inclined towards *Nibbāna* disciplines itself to wipe out the five aggregates of grasping. Then the Buddha goes on to describe the result thereof. “*Tassa kāyikā pi darathā pahīyanti. Cetasikā pi darathā pahīyanti. Kāyikā pi santāpā pahīyanti. Cetasikā pi santāpā pahīyanti. Kāyikā pi pariḷāhā pahīyanti. Cetasikā pi pariḷāhā pahīyanti. So kāyasukhampi cetosukhampi paṭisamvedeti.*” “His physical distresses diminish. His mental distresses diminish. His physical pains diminish. His mental pains diminish. His physical burnings diminish. His mental burnings diminish. He experiences immense physical and mental happiness. Then the Buddha delves deeper into this discipline. A monk who disciplines himself thus, finds himself progressing unbelievably fast on the Noble Eightfold Path. I wish to remark that this *sutta* will be of immense help to those who meditate on the *saḷāyatana*. Then the Buddha proclaims the final result of this training. “*Yā tathābhūtaṃ diṭṭhi sāssa hoti sammādiṭṭhi.*” “If such a disciplined monk holds a view, that will definitely be the right view.” This refers, not to the ordinary *sammādiṭṭhi* that we talk of, but is the very path, right view at its deepest level. If such a monk holds an intention, it is the right intention. If he makes an effort, it is always a right effort. If he has awareness, it is a correct awareness. If he attains any concentration, it is bound to be the right concentration. Now did you notice that only five links in the Noble Eightfold Path are discussed here.

Now the Buddha explains why three items were left out. “*Pubbeva kho panassa kāyakammaṃ vacīkammaṃ ājīvo suparisuddho hoti.*” A monk who undertakes this strenuous discipline, at the very outset dispels all gross impure tendencies which have no place in the path to *Nibbanā*. He is beyond lowly talk and action. He is pure in word, action and livelihood – *Sammā vācā, Sammā kammanta, Sammā ājīva*. At the higher level of the path he concentrates on right view, right intention,

right effort, right awareness and right concentration – *Sammā diṭṭhi*, *Sammā saṅkappa*, *Sammā vāyāma*, *Sammā sati*, *Sammā samādhī*. Now the Buddha takes us further up the path. The monk who develops the Noble Eightfold Path in this manner attains purity of mind. “*Tassa evaṃ imaṃ ariyaṃ aṭṭhaṅgikaṃ maggaṃ bhāvayato cattāropi satipaṭṭhāna bhāvanā pāripūriṃ gacchanti. Cattāro sammappadhānā bhāvanā pāripūriṃ gacchatnti. Cattāro iddhipādā bhāvanā pāripūriṃ gacchanti. Pañca pi indriyāni bhāvanā pāripūriṃ gacchanti. Pañca pi balāni bhāvanā pāripūriṃ gacchanti. Sattapi bhōjjhaṅgā bhāvanā pāripūriṃ gacchanti.*”

This is a very clear explanation of how one perfects the thirty seven Factors of Enlightenment through this disciplinary training. In the process of practicing the Noble Eightfold Path, the fourfold mindfulness or *satipaṭṭhāna* develops spontaneously. So does the fourfold right effort, the four psychic powers, the four faculties, the five powers and the seven factors of enlightenment. This is a description of the transcendental stage or the Supramundane stage.

The Buddha speaks further of the monk who has perfected himself thus far. “*Tassime dve dhammā yuganaddhā vattanti samatho ca vipassanā ca.*” “In him, these two factors, namely calm and insight prevail like yoked oxen.” Two oxen yoked to a cart have to step together. Similarly, you have heard I am sure as *samatha* and *vipassanā* meditators, that one attains concentration through calm and the three signata – *tilakkhana* – through insight.

There are three methods one could follow. After practicing *samatha*, one could proceed to practice *vipassanā*. “*Samatha pubbaṅgamam vipassanam.*” Or else practice *vipassanā* first and then *samatha*. “*Vipassanā pubbaṅgamam samatham.*” There is yet another method. “*Samatham ca vipassanam ca yuganaddham bhāveti.*” That is ‘pulling together’

like two oxen yoked to a cart. Both *samatha* and *vipassanā* develop “yoked together”.

Now the Buddha reveals the final result of this exertion. “*So ye dhammā abhiññā pariññeyyā, te dhamme abhiññā parijānāti. Ye dhammā abhiññā pahātabbā, te dhamme abhiññā pajahati. Ye dhammā abhiññā bhāvetabbā, te dhamme abhiññā bhāveti. Ye dhammā abhiññā sacchikātabbā, te dhamme abhiññā sacchikaroti.*” Whatever mental factors have to be comprehended through higher knowledge, he comprehends them through higher knowledge. Whatever mental factors have to be eliminated through higher knowledge, he eliminates them through higher knowledge. Whatever mental factors have to be developed through higher knowledge, he develops them through higher knowledge. Whatever mental factors have to be realized through higher knowledge, he realizes them through higher knowledge.

The Buddha then proceeds to explain these *dhammas*. What should be comprehended are the five aggregates of grasping. What should be eliminated are ignorance and craving. What should be developed are calm and insight – *samatha* and *vipassanā*. What should be realized and perfected are the wisdom of Arahant hood and emancipation through Arahant hood which are known by the terms *vijjā vimutti*. This is a wonderful *sutta* that deals with different methods applicable in practicing the path to *Nibbāna*.

It is clear that there are several methods to attain *Nibbāna*, depending on the object of meditation. Some may realize the impermanence of the five aggregates of grasping through the meditation of the three characteristics. Some may meditate on the primary elements. Some may meditate on impermanence in life through the medium of the six sense spheres. Finally, all this converge (add up) to reach the summit. Last of all, *samatha* and *vipassanā*, like two oxen yoked to a cart, ‘pull together’ in the final phase. Three factors in the Noble Eightfold Path having

been already eliminated, the remaining five are eliminated during this final phase. It is the transcendental Noble Eightfold Path that is referred to here. Misconduct through word, body and livelihood become inapplicable here, as they have been already wiped out. When the meditator's mind functions on a transcendental level, only the other five factors become active. The Buddha explains how one could reach the final goal of *vijjā vimutti phala*, through the analysis of the six sense spheres. When referring to impermanence, I am reminded of several more *suttas* that may confirm this position.

Once the Buddha addresses the Monks and declares¹⁵ “*Cakkhuṃ aniccaṃ vipariṇāmi aṅṅathābhāvī, rūpā aniccā vipariṇāmino aṅṅathābhāvīno cakkhuvīṇṇānam aniccaṃ vipariṇāmi aṅṅathābhāvī.*” The eye is impermanent, subject to change and subject to ‘otherwiseness’. They are the three sides of impermanence. “It is impermanent” is an incomplete statement. Due to its impermanent character it is subject to change. Finally become ‘otherwise’ or different from what it was. This same description is applicable to material objects and also to visual consciousness. They are impermanent, subject to change and becomes ‘otherwise’.

Now comes a question based on this discussion. “Monks, how can a permanent thing arise from an impermanent thing? If the eye is impermanent, if material objects are impermanent, how could eye consciousness become permanent? The eye contact resulting from eye consciousness is also impermanent. The experience that arises dependent on eye contact is also impermanent. The purpose of this explicit description is to drive the point home. The entire statement “*aniccaṃ vipariṇāmi aṅṅathābhāvī*” is repeated at every point. Everything is *calā ceva, vayā ca, aniccā, vipariṇāmino aṅṅathābhāvīno*. Here several terms are used to stress the character of impermanence, such as ‘quivers’, ‘withers’, ‘impermanent’, ‘subject to change’, ‘has the character of otherwiseness’. Somebody wishes to see some object

well. But the moment he looks, both the object and the eye undergo a swift change, although we are unaware of this change. They quiver. That's why they are called 'movies'. Unable to understand the fast quivering nature, one establishes oneself on the perception of compact and tries to grasp material 'objects'. "I saw this form with my own eye. It is the very same form." It is not easy to understand the change it undergoes every moment. In this manner the Buddha makes explicit the nature of change everywhere. This is the second *Dvayaṃ Sutta* in the *Salāyatana Vagga* of the *Saṃyutta Nikāya*, which is of immense help to meditators on impermanence. It winds up as follows: "*calā ceva, vayā ca, aniccā, viparināmino*" "they quiver, wither, has the nature of impermanence and change." It is invisible to the physical eye. It is visible only to the eye of wisdom.

As the meditator on vipassanā reaches higher and higher, he begins to see through the world as 'totally different' to what others see. The *Thera Theri Gatha* has recorded amazing objects of meditation, such as a flowing stream, a fire. He who has constantly cultivated the nature of impermanence will see impermanence in everything. The fallen leaf, the blossoming and fading flower is impermanent. That impermanence is very strong. At times the Buddha has declared "*Anicca saññā bhikkhave bhāvitā bahulikatā sabbam kāmārāgam pariyaḍiyati sabbam rūparāgam pariyaḍiyati sabbam bhavarāgam pariyaḍiyati sabbam avijjam pariyaḍiyati samūhanti.*"¹⁶ A thorough training in the perception of impermanence results in total elimination of the attachment to sensuality. The passion for material objects, the yearning for becoming, ignorance and finally the subtle conceit of self are totally eradicated. The Buddha has spoken so much in praise of the development of the perception of impermanence, that he has once remarked "It is incorrect to say there are two paths to *Nibbāna* because they all converge at the summit."

One has to practice either the Four Foundations of Mindfulness or the perception of impermanence. This point is

confirmed in the *Mahā Saḷāyatanika Sutta*. However, there is no contradiction here because both serve the same purpose. At a superficial glance, we see one disciplining oneself in Four Foundations of Mindfulness following the accepted methodology. He follows this one and only path until he realizes *Nibbāna*. That is the accepted method. But we see that impermanence is also declared as the path. “There are two paths to gain control over defilements. One is the development of the Four Foundations of Mindfulness, the other is the development of the perception of impermanence.” The latter serves as a strong support in developing the spiritual qualities such as the fourfold *satipaṭṭhānas*, and the four methods of right effort *sammappadhāna*. Everything that the Buddha has taught about impermanence is so amazingly relevant in the process of spiritual training. We have discussed here only a limited amount of that wealth of information.

We must understand that the Buddha uses a variety of comparisons to emphasize the importance of *saḷāyatana*. *Vedagu* refers to the Arahant. *Triveda* is not the three *Vedas* of the Brahmins but the *tevijjā* Arahants are endowed with i.e. the knowledge of recollecting previous births, the knowledge of the divine eye, the knowledge of the elimination of influxes – *pubbe nivāsānussati ñāna*, *dibba cakkhu* and *āsavakkhaya ñāna*. The entirety of *tevijjā* comes under the purview of *nissaraṇa* or stepping out mentioned under six sense spheres. The earlier ascetics and Brahmins unfortunately missed this aspect of *nissaraṇa*. Neither did they understand the origin of *saḷāyatana*, the six sense spheres. It was the Buddha who proclaimed that a *vedagu* is found only in his path, and so is all spiritual perfection. The *Mahā Saḷāyatana Sutta* in particular, emphasizes the teachings of *saḷāyatana*, as we see. Although my discourse is brief, I have tried to direct all my explanations towards the practice of meditation. I hope it will be helpful to you.

The doctrine of impermanence proclaimed by the Buddha is of immeasurable importance. Everything is included within it. On the other hand, everything in the world takes place within these six sense spheres. We cannot realize it because we are running after a mirage. The day we realize this truth, all problems will dissolve.

I think it is enough for today. You should read or listen to this topic of meditation more often, internalize it and put it into practice with determination. It will help you to tread the Buddha's path to *Nibbāna* as far as possible. The Buddha has clarified the direct path to *Nibbāna* or *vijjā vimutti*. Today we tried to expand your knowledge on the *Salāyatana*, in this series of discourses on *Paticca Samuppāda*. We hope to discuss the other topics if time permits, later.

I wish you would reach the path of *Dhamma* without delay, with the help of this series of talks. May you acquire the strength, determination and power to fulfill the requirements in perfecting the path and attaining fruition as *sotāpanna sakadāgāmi anāgāmi* and *arahant*. Whatever beings there be, from the lowest hell *Avīci* to the highest Brahma world *Akaniṭṭha*, may they all rejoice in this insightful sermon. May it be conducive to their attainment of *Nibbāna*! May you attain *Nibbāna* in this very life!



1. S. IV 83 *Uddaka Sutta*
2. S. IV 15 *Sabba Sutta*
3. S. IV 39 *Samiddhi Sutta*
4. D. I 45f. *Brahmajāla Sutta*
5. S. IV 67 *Dvaya Sutta*
6. A. II 161-163 *Mahā Koṭṭhita Sutta*

7. S. IV 98 *Kāmaguna Sutta*
8. S. IV 162-165 *Koṭṭhita Sutta*
9. S. IV 177-179 *Kummopama Sutta*
10. S. II 12-14 *Moḷiya Phagguna Sutta*
11. S. IV 50f. *Sambahula Bhikkhu Sutta*
12. S. IV 67-69 *Dutīya Dvaya Sutta*
13. M. I 259f. *Mahā Taṇhasankhaya Sutta*
14. M. III 287-290 *Mahā Saḷāyatanika Sutta*
15. S. IV 67-69 *Dutīya Dvaya Sutta*
16. S. III 155-157 *Aniccasaññā Sutta*

Sermon 15 (Pahan Kanuwa Sermon – No. 197)

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

*Tesaṃ phassaparetānaṃ
bhavasotānusārinaṃ
kummaggapaṭipannānaṃ
ārā saṃyojanakkhayo*

*Ye ca phassaṃ pariññāya
aññāya upasame ratā
te ve phassābhisamayā
nicchātā parinibbutā¹*

– *Dvayatānupassanā S. Sn.*

To them that are fully given to contact
And are swept by the current of becoming
To them that tread the wrong path
Destruction of fetters is far away.

But they that fully understand contact
And with full comprehension are attached to appeasement
It is they that by the understanding of contact
Are hungerless and fully appeased.

Dear Listeners,

The Dhamma that the Teacher of the Three Worlds, the fully Enlightened Fortunate One placed before the world is one that goes against the current. That Dhamma which flows against the pervert and narrow current of becoming is the massive body of water called ‘*Dhammasota*’ that takes one towards the cessation of becoming. The worldlings caught up in the current of becoming go on revolving in this Samsāric whirlpool. The Noble

Disciple who has fallen into the Dhamma current reaches *Nibbāna* which is called the cessation of becoming. The turning point between these two is contact.

Therefore, we have chosen as the topic of this 15th sermon, two verses on contact found in the *Dvayatānupassanā Sutta* of the *Sutta Nipāta*. Since we used as the topics of a number of earlier sermons, verses from this *Dvayatānupassanā Sutta*, you all might remember the style of preaching followed by the Buddha in that discourse. Introducing various items of Dhamma which incline to two sides and distinguishing their arising aspect and the cessation aspect is the style of preaching in this discourse. Now the two aspects of contact the Buddha first of all introduces to the congregation of monks with this statement in prose.

“If there are those who ask whether there could be another mode of contemplating the dualities, they should be told: ‘There is.’ How could there be? ‘Whatever suffering that arises, all that is due to contact.’ This is one mode of contemplation. With the remainderless cessation of contact, there is no arising of suffering. This is the second mode of contemplation.” Having made this declaration, the Buddha goes on to state the benefits of practicing this contemplation of dualities. “If a monk dwells diligently and ardently combatting defilements in accordance with this contemplation, one of two fruits could be expected of him; Either full comprehension here and now or if there is any residual clinging, non-returnership.

It is after this declaration that the Buddha uttered those two verses.

*“Tesaṃ phassaparetānaṃ
bhavasotānusāriṇaṃ
kummaggapaṭipannānaṃ
ārā saṃyojanakkhaya*

*Ye ca phassaṃ pariññāya
aññāya upasame ratā
te ve phassābhisamayā
nicchātā parinibbutā”*

“For them who are fully enslaved to contact and moving along with the current of becoming, who are on the wrong path the cutting off of the bonds of becoming namely the destruction of fetters, is far away. But they that have comprehended contact and take delight in the appeasement through knowledge born of realization, verily it is they by their higher understanding of contact are hungerless and fully appeased.”

I hope to give a special sermon today based on these two verses because this happens to be a significant day marking the end of the rains-retreat of the Sangha on which they hold the Vinaya act called *Pavāraṇā* – namely the Full Moon day ending the rains-retreat. Due to other reasons too I thought of presenting this sermon at a more practical level – though other sermons also are meditation topics. So let me request you all from this point onwards to listen attentively to what is being said from word to word and sentence to sentence. Speaking about contact, First of all I must mention something I had already brought out with reference to the very first discourse in the *Dīgha Nikāya* – namely *Brahmajāla Sutta* – that is to say, the fact that the Buddha dismissed all the sixty two wrong views listed there with a very brief phrase.

Now, what is that significant phrase? ‘*Tadapi phassa paccayā*’² – ‘That too is due to contact.’ Similarly towards the end of that discourse, the Buddha declares a statement like this with reference to the recluses and Brahmins who proclaim those views:

‘sabbe te chahi phassāyatanehi phussa phussa paṭisamvedenti’

‘They all go on experiencing through the six sense-spheres by contacting again and again.’

Then the consequences of it are also mentioned. Because of that feeling they get craving, and due to craving, grasping, due to grasping, becoming, due to becoming, birth and due to birth, decay and death and all the rest of suffering. What does it mean? As stated in the first verse all recluses and Brahmins who took up those sixty-two views are enslaved by contact, caught up in the current of becoming and fallen on the wrong track. Therefore they have not attained freedom from the fetters of becoming. Finally the Buddha proclaims what sort of Dhamma he preaches. About the monk who has attained arahanthood in this dispensation, it is said that he is one who has reached full appeasement by five kinds of understanding about the six sense-spheres. What are they? As we mentioned in a previous sermon, the understanding of the arising, going down, satisfaction, misery and stepping-out in regard to the six sense-spheres – that is to say, *samudaya*, *atthagama*, *assāda*, *ādinava* and *nissaraṇa*. This is the distinctive quality of this dispensation in regard to contact. From here onwards we shall take up a number of discourses to clarify further the phenomenon of contact. Now you had better take this as a pilgrimage – a pilgrimage to *Nibbāna*. With that idea uppermost in your minds please try to listen attentively to this sermon during this hour.

I need not mention this in particular for you know well enough about the twelve linked formula of Dependent Arising. In that formula beginning with ‘*avijjā paccayā saṅkhārā*’ – ‘dependent on ignorance, preparations’ – this is how contact comes to be mentioned: ‘.....*saḷāyatana paccayā phasso, phassa paccayā vedanā*’ – ‘dependent on the six sense-spheres, contact, dependent on contact, feeling.’ But the deepest philosophy of contact is presented to us with the utmost clarity by the *Madhupiṇḍika* (‘Honey ball’) *Sutta* which is rich in its flavour of meaning like a ball of honey. On previous occasions we have

discussed in full this *Madhupiṇḍika Sutta*³ of the *Majjhima Nikāya*. If we are to bring up what is relevant to this context, the venerable *Arahant* Mahā Kaccāna who was placed foremost among those disciples who are capable of expounding at length what is preached in brief, is seen explaining a brief utterance of the Buddha at the request of the company of monks. This sentence occurs in that explanation:

“...*cakkhuñcāvuso, paṭicca rūpe ca uppajjati cakkhu-viññāṇam, tiṇṇam saṅgati phasso*”

This statement presents a very profound philosophy.

‘*cakkhuñcāvuso, paṭicca rūpe ca uppajjati cakkhu-viññāṇam*’

‘Dependent on eye and forms arises eye-consciousness.’

Then comes the phrase:

‘*tiṇṇam saṅgati phasso*’

‘The concurrence of the three is contact.’

If you reflect on this deeply, you will discover an extremely knotty point – a subtle one at that. Now remember, here the two words ‘*paṭicca*’ and ‘*uppajjati*’ came up. This is a clear indication that the Law of Dependent Arising is concerned with the arising of consciousness. Because of eye and forms arises eye-consciousness. But once it arises, worldlings, because of their delusion, because of their ignorance, count them as three. It is not really justifiable to count these as three. Why? It is because of the eye and forms that consciousness arose. We have explained what eye-consciousness is. The nature of consciousness is the very discriminating as two things. Until consciousness arises there is no idea of eye and form as two things. It is when

consciousness arises that one gets the idea: ‘This is my eye and there is that form.’

That is why we say that the gap – the interstice – between the two is consciousness. But due to non-understanding one counts eye, forms and consciousness as three. It is when one imagines them as three, that contact arises. From there onwards it is all delusion. That is why we call contact the turning point. Now that regarding contact we spoke of two things and a gap, let us now turn to a powerful discourse we had discussed on various occasions – namely the *Majjhe Sutta*⁴ among the ‘Sixes’ of *Anguttara Nikāya*. First of all let me mention the introductory story for those who do not know about it. When the Buddha was dwelling at *Isipatana* in *Benares*, a group of Elder monks gathered in the assembly hall after the alms-round and initiated a Dhamma discussion – in modern parlance it may be called a symposium. What was the point at issue? A question to this effect came up in the Dhamma discussion. The Fortunate One has preached in the *Metteyya Pañha of Pārāyana* the following verse:

*Yo ubhante viditvāna
majjhe mantā na lippati
taṃ brūmi mahāpurisoti
sodha sibbanimaccagā*

Having taken up this verse, they extracted four questions as the subject for their symposium. What are they? Let me first explain the meaning of the verse. ‘*yo ubhante viditvāna*’ – ‘He who, having understood both ends’, ‘*majjhe mantā na lippati*’ – ‘does not get attached to the middle with wisdom’, ‘*taṃ brūmi mahāpurisoti*’ the Buddha is saying: ‘Him I call a great man’ – Why? ‘*sodha sibbanimaccagā*’ – ‘Because he has bypassed the seamstress in this world.’

So out of this cryptic verse four points are elicited as questions: ‘What is the one end mentioned in this verse? What is

the second end? What is the middle? Who is the seamstress? To these four questions, six Elder monks put forward six interpretations. They seem to be wonderful meditation topics. Let me bring up only what is relevant to the context. Relating to the question of sense-spheres the interpretation given by the fifth Elder monk is this: ‘One end is the six internal sense-spheres, namely eye, ear, nose, tongue, body and mind. The second end is the six external sense-spheres – forms, sounds, smells, tastes, touches, ideas. The middle is consciousness and the seamstress is craving. Talking about seamstress, nowadays there could be skilled seamstresses in the garment industry. But this seamstress can beat them all because she has three special qualifications, namely: ‘*ponobhavikā*’ – she puts the stitch for the next birth. ‘*nandirāgasahagatā*’ – she has delight and attachment and ‘*tatratrābhinandinī*’ – she delights now here now there. It is that seamstress who puts the knot between the two ends ignoring the middle. Consciousness which is in the middle has arisen because of those two. But ignoring that fact the seamstress craving puts the stitch to those two ends. For instance it stitches up eye and forms.

The story of stitching up eye and forms, we have mentioned on various occasions. If we are to give a simile, one that is easily understood is the mirage. In short the Buddha has compared the entire aggregate of perception to a mirage. When we say ‘mirage’ we have in mind only the eye and forms. But the comparison of the entire aggregate of perception to a mirage is a very deep dictum. However in this context, for simplicity’s sake, let us take the question of eye and forms. Most of you know what a mirage is, but let us briefly remind ourselves about it. There is a Sanskrit word for the mirage – namely ‘*mṛgatṛṣṇikā*’ which means a sight that arouses craving and thirst in a deer. At times when there is a drought there is an appearance in the distance which resembles flowing water. The deer imagines water in it. What is its stance? ‘I am here and water is there. I am here and water is there.’ Though it tells itself ‘I am here and water is there’

with every step it takes it is taking its eye with it. Still it goes on telling: ‘I am here, water is there.’ What it imagines to be water also recedes.

Now that is the nature of the mirage. It is an endless pursuit. The mirage is deceptive. What perpetuates that deception is the magic-like delusion in eye-consciousness. The deer keeps running unaware of the gap mentioned above. It is ignorant of the intervening space. Due to that delusion the deer runs and gets wearied. The Buddha has pointed out that not only the deer but the entire world of living beings is deluded like it by this mirage of perception. It is this seamstress ‘craving’ who is playing this subtle trick. It is said that this seamstress puts the knot. How can one get free from these knots. A clue to that release is found in this verse itself. ‘*Yo ubhante viditvāna – majjhe mantā na lippat*’, ‘*mantā*’ means wisdom. You might say: ‘But we don’t have wisdom. It is something that dawns on arahants automatically.’ You must not say so. The seed of wisdom is there in every one of us. It is ‘*yonisomanasikāra*’ – radical attention.

‘*Yonisomanasikāra*’ is a very powerful word in this dispensation – particularly for insight meditators. But unfortunately we have to mention that in the commentaries we do not get a clear explanation of it. It is explained as ‘*upāya manasikāra*’ (skillful attention) and ‘*patha manasikāra*’ (attention according to the path). We call it ‘wise attention’ for convenience’s sake. But there is a great depth in it. ‘*Yoni*’ means the place of origin – the matrix. Therefore ‘*yonisomanasikāra*’ means ‘attention by way of the place of origin’. Already you can guess what the place of origin is. It is contact (*phassa*) that we called the turning-point. That is why in the *Brahmajāla Sutta* we found the dictum: ‘*tadapi phassa paccayā*’ (‘That too is dependent on contact’). It seems for some reason or other that fact has not come to light so far. Contact is what seems to be the place of origin. So attending by way of the place of origin is *yonisomanasikāra*.

From here onwards we have to give various similes. There is a game called 'table-tennis'. Well, let us call to mind this game. What we call the Ping-Pong ball and the two rackets are the paraphernalia required. There is a short net in the middle of the T.T table. What is the procedure in this game? The ball that the player on the other side spins with his racket, has to be returned to the other side by the player on this side before it falls to the ground. Now for easy comprehension of our simile let us call the player on the opposite side Māra. The player on this side is the meditator. Take it as a table tennis game between Māra and the meditator. There is no 'racketeer' like Māra. Just call to mind the nuances of the term 'racket' in the society. We have come all this way in *Samsāra* because we got caught in Māra's racket. Now we are going to beat Māra. Even to beat him, the meditator has to take up the racket. What does the incompetent or unskillful player do? When the player on the other side sends the ball to this side he lets it bump off and with difficulty returns it bending his body this way and that way. He cannot go on like that. He will be the loser before long. On the other hand the competent one keeps standing straight and returns the ball to the other side as soon as it touches his side of the table. He does not allow it to bump off. You had better take this 'bumping off' itself as a simile for '*papañca*' – conceptual proliferation. In the context of the Dhamma, this 'bumping off' is comparable to *papañca*. Not to give way to '*papañca*' is attending then and there without allowing thoughts to bump off. What is the 'then and there'? The point of contact – '*phassa*'. So attending then and there to the point of contact is like returning the ball to the other side as soon as it touches this side. You have to do it with extreme rapidity. It is one who does it very rapidly that in the end beats Māra. Māra will have to throw away his racket.

Let us take up another simile. It is not a game but a fight. We are now going back to the age of sword-fights. Not only in Sri Lanka but in countries like England they used the sword both for offence and defense. They had a sword hung on the belt.

When two such persons fall out, one challenges the other to come for a fight and draws the sword from the scabbard. Sometimes the fight would go on as a duelling. With no shield to protect oneself, a parry and thrust would go on with the sword. Just think about it. How rapidly should one wield the sword in order to be the winner. One has to be prepared to ward off every blow of the opponent. We gave both these similes to show how rapidly one has to go on attending. Whether it is the racket or the sword, one has to accelerate attention to the utmost. Since we gave the simile of the table-tennis game as a practical illustration, let us assume that Māra is sending a ‘form-ball’. As soon as the ‘form-ball’ comes, without allowing it to ‘bump off’ into ‘*papañca*’, one should turn it to the opposite side. How does one do it? What is the racket used on this Buddha side? ‘*anicca, anicca*’ – ‘impermanent, impermanent.’ Māra may send the ball again. But with this ‘*anicca*’ racket we turn it to the other side. We gave this simile to acquaint you with ‘*aniccānupassanā*’ – ‘contemplation of impermanence.’

On an earlier occasion too we mentioned in passing a very powerful sermon on the contemplation of impermanence. In the *Salāyatana Vagga* of the *Samyutta Nikāya* there are two discourses with the same title ‘*Dvayaṃ*’. Last time we discussed one of them. Now what is relevant to the present context is the second ‘*Dvayaṃ Sutta*’.⁵ This is how the Buddha begins that discourse: “*Dvayaṃ bhikkhave paṭicca viññāṇaṃ sambhoti.*” ‘Monks, depending on a dyad consciousness arises.’ “*Kathaṅca bhikkhave dvayaṃ paṭicca viññāṇaṃ sambhoti.*” ‘How, monks, does consciousness arise depending on a dyad?’ “*Cakkhuṅca paṭicca rūpe ca uppajjati cakkhuvīññāṇaṃ.*” ‘Depending on eye and forms arises eye consciousness.’ Then comes a series of significant words. “*Cakkhum aniccaṃ vipariṇāmi aññathābhāvī, rūpā aniccā vipariṇāmino aññathābhāvino.*” ‘Eye is impermanent, changing and turning otherwise. Forms are impermanent, changing and turning otherwise.’ Then it is said: “*Itthetaṃ dvayaṃ calañceva vayaṅca aniccaṃ vipariṇāmi*

aññathābhāvī.” ‘Thus this dyad is unstable, liable to pass away, impermanent changing and turning otherwise.’ That is not all. “*Cakkhuvīññāṇam aniccam vipariṇāmī aññathābhāvī.*” ‘Eye consciousness is impermanent, changing, becoming otherwise.’ “*Yopi hetu yopi paccayo cakkhuvīññāṇassa uppādāya.....*” ‘Whatever condition there is for the arising of eye-consciousness, that too is impermanent.’ Then the Buddha poses a question to the monks: “Monks, how can something that arises due to a condition that is impermanent, be permanent?” If the conditions are impermanent, how can eye-consciousness arisen depending on them be permanent? There are three terms used to denote the collocation of these three factors: “*tiṇṇam dhammānam saṅgati sannipāto samavāyo*” – The concurrence, assemblage, togetherness – that is what is called ‘contact’. Then comes the statement: “*Cakkhusamphassopi anicco vipariṇāmī aññathābhāvī.*” ‘Eye contact too is impermanent, changing, becoming otherwise.’ Then again the question is posed: How can eye contact arisen due to impermanent conditions be permanent? Now comes a significant declaration: “*Phuṭṭho bhikkhave, vedeti, phuṭṭho sañjānāti, phuṭṭho ceteti.*” ‘contacted, monks, one feels, contacted one perceives, contacted one intends.’ Keep in mind, then: The origin and matrix of feeling, perception and intention is contact itself. It is not without reason that we stated that ‘*yonisomanasikāra*’ or radical attention is attending mentally to the point of touch. In conclusion it is said that all these things are unstable, passing away, impermanent and changing otherwise: “*itthetepi dhammā calā ceva vayā ca aniccā vipariṇāmino aññathābhāvino.*”

This is the wonderful presentation of the contemplation of impermanence by the Buddha. With that background you can now understand that whether it is the racket or the sword, what matters is the speed of directing attention. It is at the moment one has accelerated the speed of attention to the utmost, that one can understand the secret of that mirage. We have now said enough about the eye. There are six. So then, let us turn our attention to

the ear. I hope to explain that too with similes. Let me mention first of all that I have to hark back to the *Majjhe Sutta*, when speaking about every sense sphere. According to the exposition in the *Majjhe Sutta*, this is what is stated about the ear. Ear is one end, sound is the second end and ear consciousness is in the middle. The seamstress as usual is craving. What does this seamstress do? She puts the stitch on ear and sound ignoring ear-consciousness. In this case too accelerating attention is what is helpful. I would like to give a simile to illustrate the acceleration of attention. It may be a little unconventional.

As you know, there is an insect like a beetle, about two inches in size living on the trees which we call ‘*Rähäyyā*’ (Eng. ‘cicada’) That creature starts a music around 4 o’clock in the afternoon. When one ‘*rähäyyā*’ gives the start, others join in the chorus. It is an extremely rough music irritating the ear. If you bear with me I shall imitate it:

‘R-R-R.....R-R-R-R-R.....R-R’

Sometimes I wonder whether it is called ‘*Rähäyyā*’ because it teaches us how to roll our ‘R’s. Of course I do not know the etymology of the word. *Rähäyyā*’s music is a big disturbance to our meditation for calm and serenity (i.e. ‘*Samatha*’) because it digs into the ear. But it reminds us that there is something called the ‘ear-drum’. The most wonderful musical instrument in the world is the ear-drum. *Rähäyyā* reminds us of the fact that we have an ear-drum. Though it is our ‘enemy’ in ‘*samatha*’, we can make it our ‘friend’ in ‘*vipassanā*’ (Insight-meditation) if we use radical attention with mindfulness (*sati*) and full awareness (‘*sampajañña*’). Between two ‘R’s (R...R) there is *Nibbāna*, if one focusses one’s attention there. Only if you get caught in the ‘knot’ of the seamstress craving that it becomes a rough and irritating music. At last you will realize that it is only a concatenation of ‘R’s. According to the terminology of insight meditation, we may say, one can leave

behind the ‘perception of the compact’ (*ghanasaññā*) and arouse the perception of the heap (*rāsisaññā*) if one directs one’s attention then and there with mindfulness and full awareness. So after all, *rāhāyyā* is an insect that gives us a meditation-topic for *Nibbāna*, though apparently it is a disturbance to calm.

I must confess, I forgot to mention one thing when speaking about the eye. All the similes I gave about the eye are gross when compared with the simile given by the Buddha in the *Indriyabhāvanā Sutta*.⁶ It is the last discourse in the *Majjhima Nikāya*. It is a wonderful discourse which the Buddha addressed to Venerable Ānanda. We may say, that the quintessence of that discourse is the supreme and incomparable development of sense faculties (*anuttarā indriyabhāvanā*). It is illustrated with a number of similes. The simile that the Buddha had given there with reference to the eye beats all our similes regarding the acceleration of attention. The simile is: as quickly as a man with vision opens his eyes and closes them and closes the eyes and opens them, one should exercise radical attention with regard to forms coming before the eyes. So for the eyes, the Buddha has aptly given a simile based on the eye.

When it comes to the ear, he gives a simile about the ear itself. Just as a strong man snaps his fingers with perfect ease so quickly, should one attend to a sound. By the way, the snapping of the fingers is often taken as an indication of a moment (*khaṇa*). The Buddha says that on hearing a sound a monk might be pleased or displeased or have a mingling of both but that he should immediately get rid of them and bring his mind to rest in equanimity.

Then we come to the nose. There too, if we go back to the *Majjhe Sutta*, nose is one end, smell is the second end and nose consciousness is in the middle. The seamstress craving ignores the middle and puts the stitch. When we smell something, we

actually take in the air bearing the odour. If it is a pleasant smell we take it in with attachment. Air is the bearer of smell.

There is a story in the *Sagāthaka Vagga* of the *Saṃyutta Nikāya*⁷ regarding attachment to fragrant smells. In the *Kosala* country a forest dwelling monk was living in a hut in the jungle. One day on returning from his alms-round he went down into a pond and eagerly smelt a lotus flower. A forest deity saw it and accused him as a thief of fragrance. The monk in defense said: “How can you call me a thief of fragrance? I didn’t pluck the flower or take it away.” But the deity said: “You are here purifying your mind. So, even a slight fault appears as a serious one.” The monk confessed his guilt and thanked the deity for pointing it out. So, it seems even intentionally smelling a flower is a defilement. The delusion of the mirage is perpetuated in doing so. One imagines that the fragrance is in the flower.⁸

In regard to the tongue ‘*Majjhe Sutta*’ says: tongue is one end, taste is the other end and tongue-consciousness is in the middle.’ When it comes to tasty things it may be ice-cream or a piece of instant chicken. What happens as soon as one sees the ice-cream or the piece of chicken? Saliva flows into the tongue. Saliva is the bearer of taste just as air is the bearer of smell. Saliva gets ready to receive the taste. So, one greedily gulps down the tasty thing. The craving for taste is so powerful that the Buddha has recommended the meditations on elements and loathsomeness to combat it. He declares that one who is greedy will never awaken his heart (to *Nibbāna*). ‘*Rasataṇhāya gadhito hadayam nāvabujjhati.*’⁹

Sometimes he gives a simile that makes one shudder when reflecting on it. In the *Nālaka Sutta* of *Sutta Nipāta* when describing the path of practice befitting a *muni* (sage), he mentions it in brief: ‘*Khuradhārūpamo bhava.*’¹⁰ – ‘Be one who has the simile of the razor-edge in mind.’ The simile about the razor-edge given by the Buddha is as follows: A razor-blade is

smearred with honey. To one who is greedy the razor-blade is given to lick. Can he do it without cutting his tongue? That is a simile which arouses fright in the greedy. Taste is such a subtle craving. Why does the Buddha give us such a frightful simile? Because he has conquered the craving for taste. Even the other arahants cite the example of the Buddha. “*Rasapaṭisamvedī kho pana so bhavaṃ Gotamo āhāraṃ āhāreti no ca rasarāga-paṭisamvedī.*”¹¹ The Brahmin youth Uttara once observed: “Experiencing taste that Venerable Gotama partakes of food but he is not one who experiences an attachment to taste.” The taste-buds of the Buddha are as acute as ours. They do not go inactive with the attainment of Buddhahood. But he has no attachment to taste. Nowadays people cannot understand this wonderful fact. This means that there is *Nibbāna* even at the tip of the tongue. A meditator can realize this to some extent while taking food with mindfulness and full awareness. So after all, the taste is neither in the tongue nor in the ‘instant-chicken’. It is only at the ‘instant’ the tongue and the instant-chicken come together that the flavour becomes active. Now that we have spoken of saliva, just see how aptly the Buddha has given a simile for it. When speaking about the eye, he gave a simile that befits the eye and in speaking about the ear, one that befits the ear. Now see how apt the simile about the tongue is. Just as a strong man with the greatest ease gathers a bit of saliva at the tip of the tongue and spews it out, so quickly should a monk, as soon as the attachment to taste has arisen, free his mind from likes and dislikes and bring it to rest in equanimity.

Let us now take up the question of body and tangibles. In this connection too the *Majjhe Sutta* says that the body is the one end, the tangible is the second end and body-consciousness the middle. There too it is precisely due to body and the tangible that body-consciousness arises. But the seamstress craving stitches up the two. You had better remember all these similes. That is why I cautioned you to listen attentively. It is here that what we actually call ‘contact’ (*phassa*) comes. That is why the Buddha called it a ‘nutriment’ (*āhāra*). He pointed out that there are four kinds of

nutriments (*cattāro āhārā*¹²) which sustain beings. The first is the gross or subtle food taken in morsels (*kabalīṅkāra āhāra*). The second is contact (*phassa*). The third is intentional thinking going on in the mind (*manosañcetanā*). The fourth is consciousness (*viññāṇam*). It leads to a very deep dhamma disquisition. But there too the simile the Buddha has given for contact is one that makes one shudder. It is found in the ‘*Puttamamsa Sutta*’. Without relating the whole story we shall give only the simile. There the Buddha uses the term ‘*niccammā gāvī*’ – literally ‘the cow that has been skinned.’ But we have to understand by it not a cow that is fully skinned to death – only that in some parts of its body skin has come off. The Buddha is here speaking about such a cow. He says that if that cow stands near a wall, creatures in the wall would eat the flesh. If it stands near a tree, creatures in the tree would eat into the wound. If it goes down into water, creatures living in the water would eat into its body. If it stands in an open space, birds would peck at its wounds. Wherever that cow stands, creatures there would eat into it. Just ponder over the depth of this simile. How do we experience the pleasure of bodily contact? What is next to contact is feeling. You had better reflect on this statement: There is a difference between the feeling experienced with the skin and the feeling experienced without the skin. Suppose we have an open wound. Let alone other soft things, a velvet cloth is extremely soft to the touch. When a velvet cloth touches the wound, do we get a pleasurable feeling? What has happened now?

Let us add a post-script to this simile. The Buddha has compared the entire body to a wound.¹³ If the whole body is a ‘wound’, what could be the skin? The skin is the ‘bandage’ on it. It is to decorate this bandage that worldlings, especially females, are spending so much. To ‘paint’ the bandage and make it fashionable, females in particular take a lot of pains. When a tiny scratch occurs the pleasure of touch is gone. I need not give you instances. Just reflect on the difference between the feeling with

the skin and without the skin. So the simile of ‘*niccammā gāvī*’ (skinned cow) given by the Buddha is extremely profound.

Let us now revert to the simile given by the Buddha with reference to the feeling of touch in the *Indriyabhāvanā Sutta*. It concerns the reaction to the feeling of touch. He even gives a formula to show how quickly a monk should dispel a liking or a dislike or a mixture of both on experiencing a touch sensation. He gives an insightful formula to be used in bringing the mind to rest in equanimity. A monk should reflect: ‘Here is a liking, a disliking or both arisen in me. But that is something prepared, gross and dependently arisen. This is peaceful, this is excellent, namely equanimity (...*tañca kho sañkhataṃ oḷārikaṃ paṭicca-samuppannaṃ. Etaṃ santaṃ etaṃ paṇītaṃ yadidaṃ upekkhā*). In fact, that principle is applied to every sense faculty. With reference to the body this is the simile given in the *Indriyabhāvanā Sutta* to illustrate the rapidity of bringing one’s mind to ‘*upekkhā*’ or equanimity: ‘As quickly as a strong man would stretch his bent arm or bend his outstretched arm.’ This simile often occurs in the Buddhist scriptures with reference to the speed with which one who has psychic powers ‘disappears’ from one place and appears at another place. So in speaking about the body, the Buddha has taken a simile from the body itself.

Now we come to the mind. It is with the idea of saving time for dealing with the mind that I dealt with the other senses in brief. Mind is the knottiest point in the stitch of the seamstress craving. It is the last ‘trump’ of Māra. That is where all beings in the world including the scientist and the philosopher has got stuck. There too, to begin with, let us take up the ‘two ends’ of the *Majjhe Sutta*. Mind is one end. The other end is mind-objects (*dhammā*). One who puts the knot between them is the seamstress craving. We have to explain a very deep point in this connection. Let us hark back to the term ‘*manasikāra*’. In the Pāli language the etymology of the word is: ‘*manasi*’ is in the locative case – that means ‘in the mind’ and ‘*kāra*’ is ‘doing’. So ‘*manasikāra*’ is

suggestive of some ‘doing’ in the mind. That ‘doing’ in the mind inadvertently we direct towards some object. That is a very deep point. Now that we have mentioned the word ‘*manasikāra*’ let us bring in another discourse we came across earlier too. We have already discussed it. When I mention its title those of you who had listened to it earlier would easily understand – namely *Kimmūlaka Sutta*.¹⁴ That also is a very wonderful discourse.

The Buddha asks the monks: “How, monks, would you reply if wandering ascetics of other sects raise a set of questions like this?” the monks confess: “We do not know how to reply. Would the Fortunate One himself tell us the answers.” What is noteworthy is that the Buddha himself presents the set of questions. That indicates how important and how deep the questions are. Now the Buddha repeats the set of questions and says: “If they question you, you had better give these answers.” We have discussed that discourse earlier. So in this context we shall take up only the first three questions that are relevant. “*Kimmūlakā āvuso sabbe dhammā?*” “What, friends, is the root of all things?” “*kiṃ sambhavā sabbe dhammā?*” “What is the coming up of all things?” “*kiṃ samudayā sabbe dhammā?*” “What is the arising of all things?” The answer to the first question is: “*Chandamūlakā āvuso sabbe dhammā.*” “Interest, friends, is the root of all things.” We defined ‘*chanda*’ as the lightest shade of craving. In fact it is so light that it is hardly recognizable. According to the traditional way of explanation “craving is bad but the desire for the skillful (*Kusalacchanda*) is alright.” But even that has to be given up. That is why it is said in the Dhamma “*Chandam nissāya chandam pajahatha*” “Depending on desire give up desire.” It is a wonderful Middle Path. In the final reckoning even that has to be abandoned. The desire for the skillful is good. One cannot do without it. The desire for calm and insight must be there. But there comes a time to give it up as well.

That shows the fact that ‘*chanda*’ which we rendered by ‘interest’ is the root of all things. Just think why a problem comes to our mind as if from nowhere. It is ‘interest’ however subtle it may be. But it comes up. What finds or discovers it is attention – ‘*manasikāra sambhavā*’. It arises from ‘contact’ – ‘*phassa samudayā*’. I do not know much about the computer but as far as I can see, all the above three are found in the computer. We spoke of ‘*chanda*’ (interest), ‘*manasikāra*’ (attention) and ‘*phassa*’ (contact). Out of these, ‘*chanda*’ is the ‘mouse’. As you know, the mouse works unseen – stealthily. One cannot even see it working. When the mouse is active what happens? The ‘cursor’ starts running. That is attention. So ‘interest’ is the ‘root’ – the ‘mouse’, which works stealthily. What does it do stealthily? It sets the ‘cursor’ working. What does the cursor aim at? The ‘menu’ – that is *phassa* – ‘contact’. It is from there onwards that one ‘enjoys’ what is ‘dished up’ by the computer. We gave this analysis to make the explanation as practical as possible.

So then it seems ‘interest’ is the root of all things. Until the Buddha pointed it out, the world was unaware of it. Every time we conclude a deep disquisition by citing two simple verses which everyone knows. Let us recall them – at least the relevant portion. ‘*Manopubbaṅgamā dhammā – manoseṭṭhā manomayā*’.¹⁵ All this time the commentarial tradition had interpreted it differently. As we pointed out in explaining the line ‘*manopubbaṅgamā dhammā*’, out of the two terms ‘*mano*’ (mind) and ‘*dhammā*’ (mind-objects) on either side, mind comes first as the ‘forerunner’ (*manopubbaṅgamā*). ‘*Manoseṭṭhā*’ – the mind-objects have mind as their chief. Not only that, ‘*manomayā*’ – the mind-objects are ‘mind-made’. That is why there is that word with its peculiar etymology: ‘*manasikāra*’ (lit. doing-within-the mind) i.e. attention. We were not aware that an object of the mind is of mind’s own making. So then it seems that all this gimmick is carried on with something made by the mind itself. Just see how subtle the knotty stitch of the seamstress craving is. It is by accelerating the speed of attention as in the

table-tennis game, that one can catch up with it. The secret of attention (*manasikāra*) is discovered by accelerating ‘radical-attention’ (*yoniso-manasikāra*). That is to say by attending promptly – then and there. This is something almost ‘unimaginable’.

There comes a time when the place of origin of a thought comes to light. There is in fact a couple of lines of a verse in a certain discourse which even the commentaries do not explain correctly: ‘*Disvā āyatanuppādam – sammā cittam vimuccati.*’¹⁶ ‘Having seen the arising of sense-spheres – the mind is well released.’ What is meant by saying that if at any time one sees the arising of the sense-spheres, the mind is emancipated? The arising of the sense-spheres occurs at a speed hardly discernible. With extreme rapidity, the ‘give-and-take’ process goes on between the mind and the mind-object. Everyone thinks that the mind-object stands before the mind, for one can argue: ‘How can we think without an object?’ But from the etymology of the term ‘*manasi-kāra*’, one can understand that the mind-object itself is mind-made. That is why we say ‘*manomayā*’. At whatever occasion one comes to understand it, the magic-show of consciousness gets exposed. It is this magician – this juggler – who creates this confusion. What we find in this magic-show is the mind and its object which is of its own making. In the final reckoning it amounts to the same problem of the deer and the mirage. Only when one accelerates radical attention to the utmost, one comes to understand it as it is.

We need not give a simile of our own. Any simile we can give falls far below the mark when compared to the simile given by the Buddha with reference to the mind. “Suppose, monks, a man lets fall two or three drops of water into an iron-cauldron heated all day long. The dropping of those water-drops is slow but their drying up and evaporation is instantaneous.” Just try to visualize it. You let two or three drops of water to fall from above

into an intensely heated iron-cauldron. If you watch the drops as they fall, you fail to see them drying up.

In this simile we seem to get a hint to what is happening between mind and mind-object. But even that if a meditator realizes by accelerating radical attention, he has seen the arising of sense-spheres – how the two come together and consciousness arises. To see the arising of consciousness is to see the Law of Dependent Arising: “*Cakkhuñca paṭicca rūpe ca uppajjati cakkhuvīññāṇaṃ.*” Note the significance of the two words: ‘*paṭicca uppajjati*’ – Depending on eye and forms arises eye consciousness. The Buddha has preached that consciousness is a magic show. That is why it is said: ‘*majjhe mantā na lippati*’. Gets not attached at the middle with wisdom. ‘*Yo ubhante viditvāna*’ – ‘He who having understood both ends.’ Why does one who understands both ends has no attachment to the middle? Because he has wisdom. He has discovered the magic of consciousness. We have so often said that if one sees the interior of a magic show the magic is no more for him. It happens at the above mentioned occasion. It is then that radical attention or ‘*yoniso manasikāra*’ which we called the ‘seed’ of wisdom bears its fruit as wisdom itself. In that wisdom, consciousness has no place. That is why it is said ‘*paññā bhāvetabhā viññāṇaṃ pariññeyyaṃ*’¹⁷ – ‘wisdom has to be developed, consciousness has to be comprehended.’ In order to comprehend consciousness wisdom has to be developed. At the peak of the development of wisdom, the secret of consciousness is exposed. It is exposed at the above mentioned moment. The arising of sense-spheres is seen then and there. Along with the seeing of the arising of sense-spheres, their cessation becomes obvious, since whatever that has arisen has to cease. That is the realization of cessation (*nirodha*). Then, there is that peaceful and excellent *Nibbāna* as expressed in the memorable formula, beginning with ‘*Etam santam etam paṇītam*’ (This is peaceful, this is excellent.) etc.

The question now comes up about the object of the mind – dhamma. We said that a meditator cannot do without it. There is a very important discourse which is relevant to the discussion of that point – namely, *Alagaddūpama Sutta*.¹⁸ In that discourse the Buddha has given the simile of the raft. He declares: “*Kullūpamaṃ vo bhikkhave dhammaṃ desissāsi.*” “Monks, I will preach to you a Dhamma which is comparable to a raft.” A man going on a long journey comes across a great expanse of water. There is no ferry boat or bridge. Since there is no other alternative he collects some branches from here and there, binds them together with creepers and improvises a raft. With its help and making an effort with his hands and feet, he gets across to the farther shore. Once he gets to the other shore, he no longer needs the raft. So he sets it adrift in the water. Drawing the moral from this parable the Buddha says: “*Kullūpamo mayā bhikkhave dhammo desito nittharaṇathāya, no gahaṇathāya.*” “I have preached the Dhamma with the simile of the raft just for crossing over, not for grasping.” In the same connection he says: If one has understood this simile, even those things that have to do with Dhamma have to be given up. What to say of things on the side of Adhamma – that is those contrary to the Dhamma.

If I may allude to another simile for you to understand this moral in brief, I have already discussed the simile of the seven relay-chariots in the *Rathavinīta Sutta*.¹⁹ It is a simile resembling the modern relay-race. King Pasenadi of *Kosala* has some urgent business in *Sāketa* and seven relay-chariots are arranged for him. Because horses get tired the king dismounts from the first relay-chariot and mounts the second relay-chariot. Likewise from the second to the third and from the third to the fourth and so on and finally arrives at *Sāketa* by the seventh chariot. It is after getting down from the seventh chariot that he settles his business. The simile given is an illustration of the sequence of the seven purifications. The purification of virtue is purposeful as far as purification of the mind, purification of the mind is purposeful as far as purification of view and in this way seven purifications are

mentioned. The seventh is purification by knowledge and vision but even that has to be given up because perfect *Nibbāna* is without clinging (*anupādā parinibbāna*). This is very wonderful. In no other religious system you find anything like this. Giving up itself is *Nibbāna*.

It is to explain this that we used two terms in our sermons and books, namely ‘pragmatic’ and ‘relative’. Because it is pragmatic we make use of it, because it is relative we give it up. Now I am going to give you a new simile of a type you had never heard before. As you know, there are relay-races. In this race I am going to describe, there are two teams – Māra team and the Buddha team. We are not concerned with the participants of the Māra team. In the Buddha-team there are four runners. In a relay race they make use of a baton to be carried and passed on. The baton has to reach the winning-post for a team to win. Runner No 1. starts running. He runs in self-sacrificing spirit. He runs with all his efforts, panting all the way. On reaching the second runner he successfully hands over the baton to him but himself falls dead. His partner does not look back to see whether his friend is dead but runs in the same spirit putting forth his best efforts. He runs and runs panting and passes the baton to the third and falls dead. The third in the same spirit and with the same vigour runs and passes the baton to the fourth but falls dead. The fourth likewise runs in the same spirit with all his might to reach the winning-post. There he hands over the baton to the judge and himself falls dead. Who gets the prize? Who won the race? Is the ‘baton’ the winner? There is no one to receive the prize. Take it that *Nibbāna* too is something like that. Everyone seems to have the problem of ‘self’ and ‘not-self’ (*attā* and *anattā*). Who attains *Nibbāna*? The Buddha has said in repudiation: “These Brahmins are leveling at me a false charge of preaching annihilation.”²⁰ We are also accused of it because of our sermons highlighting the Buddha-word. But this is how the Buddha answers the charge of preaching annihilation: “Formerly, as well as now I point out only suffering and the cessation of

suffering”. “*Dukkhamēva uppajjamānaṃ uppajjati dukkhaṃ nirujjhamānaṃ nirujjhati.*”²¹ “What arises is only suffering and what ceases is only suffering.” There is no question of persons at all. If so there is nothing to lament. Those who lament it are doing so because of ignorance.

Well then, if you all have come with me in this pilgrimage, the destination is the mind. But of course one can reach it through any of the six senses. That is why we said that there is *Nibbāna* even at the tip of the tongue, provided the meditator properly directs radical attention. Some ancient episodes can be true up to a point though there are exaggerations in the commentaries. It is said that in the past in such sacred cities like *Anuradhapura* and *Mihintale* there is no seat in the monasteries seated on which some monk had not attained arahant hood while partaking of porridge at dawn by reflecting wisely on food. By practicing it regularly as soon as one discovers the secret at the tip of the tongue, one directly comes to the mind. Finally one arrives at the mind. Whatever is amassed through other senses at last boils down to mind and mind-objects. That is where insight reaches its peak. If one discovers that secret the magic-show of consciousness is exposed then and there. Wisdom is perfected and the journey ends. The Buddha team has won, and the Māra team has lost.

Now that, dear listeners, you have listened attentively to what we have said, try to bring victory to the Buddha team. Don't think that you go somewhere on attaining Arahant hood. Don't expect a 'Simple Simon' ('*Siyadoris*') *Nibbāna*. Try to boost up the Buddha team taking the cue from those dead runners. So that is the illustration for the Four Supramundane Paths and Four Fruits. Try to recognize the four runners. I wish to wind up now. Out of all sermons given so far this is probably the most practical. Please make the best use of this sermon. May the merits of listening to this sermon conduce to your attainment of *Nibbāna* here and now! Whatever beings there be, from the lowest hell to

the highest Brahma world wishing to rejoice in this sermon, may they, with the help of this sermon with its meditation topics, attain the highest aim – the Deathless *Nibbāna*!

1. Sn. 143 *Dvayatānupassanā Sutta*
2. D. I 42,43 *Brahmajāla Sutta*
3. M. I 108 *Madhupiṇḍika Sutta*
4. A. III 399 *Majjhe Sutta*
5. S. IV 68 *Dutiya Dvayaṃ Sutta*
6. M. III 298 *Indriyabhāvanā Sutta*
7. S. I 204 *Padumapuppa Sutta*
8. The simile given in the *Indriyabhāvanā Sutta*:

“Just as Ānanda, drops of water roll over from the slightly tilted lotus petal, they do not stick to it, so quickly and easily a liking, a disliking or both liking and disliking arisen ceases and equanimity is established in one, this Ānanda, is called the supreme development of sense-faculties in this Noble One’s discipline regarding smells sensed by the nose.”

(Note the association of smell with the lotus.)

9. Thag. V 733 *Pārāsariya Theragāthā*
10. Sn. p.138 *Nālaka Sutta*
11. M. II 138 *Brahmāyu Sutta*; S. IV 164 *Koṭṭhika Sutta*
12. S. II 11 *Āhāra Sutta*; S. II 97 *Puttamaṃsa Sutta*
13. S. IV 83 *Uddaka Sutta*
14. A. IV 338 *Kimmūlaka Sutta*
15. Dh. Yamaka Vagga – vv. 1,2
16. A. III 378 *Soṇa Sutta*
17. M. I 293 *Mahā Vedalla Sutta*
18. M. I 135 *Alagaddūpama Sutta*
19. M. I 145 *Rathavinīta Sutta*
20. M. I 140 *Alagaddūpama Sutta*
21. S. II 16 *Kaccānagotta Sutta*



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 45. නිවනේ නිවීම - දසවන වෙළුම
 46. නිවනේ නිවීම - එකොළොස්වන වෙළුම
 47. නිවනේ නිවීම - පුස්තකාල මුද්‍රණය (1-11 වෙළුම්)
 48. පටිච්ච සමුප්පාද ධර්මය - 1 වෙළුම
 49. පටිච්ච සමුප්පාද ධර්මය - 2 වෙළුම
 50. පටිච්ච සමුප්පාද ධර්මය - 3 වෙළුම
 51. පටිච්ච සමුප්පාද ධර්මය - 4 වෙළුම
 52. මනසේ මායාව
 53. පැරණි බෞද්ධ චින්තාවේ සංකල්පය සහ යථාර්ථය
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නැවත මුද්‍රණය කරවීම පිළිබඳ විමසීම්
 කටුකුරුන්දේ ඤාණනඤ සදහම් සෙනසුන
 කිරිල්ලවලවත්ත, දම්මුල්ල, කරඳන

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